Saudi Aramco World

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"Carrying Dates to Hajar"

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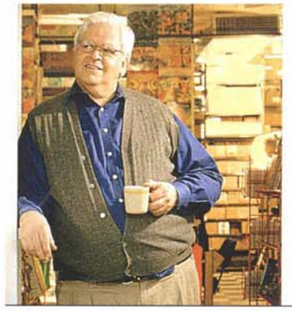

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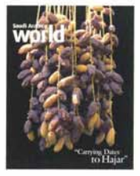
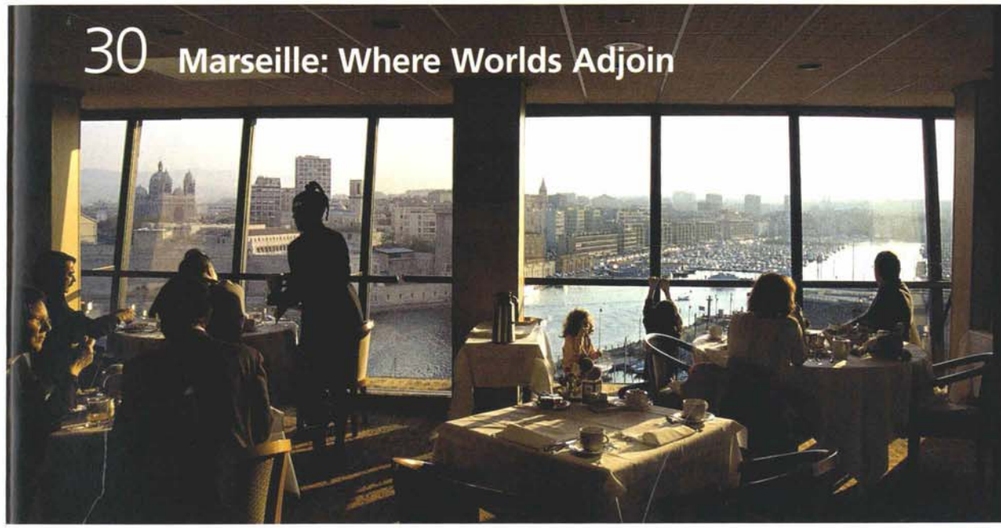


The deglet noor dates in this cluster from the Coachella Valley have ripened past both the unripe *kimri* stage and the crunchy *khalal* stage to become *rutab*, or semisoft. If picked early in this stage, they will hold their shape on the grocery shelf; if picked as late rutabs, they will be soft, melt-in-your-mouth "gourmet" dates, called "naturals." If picked later still, they will be *tamr*—dark brown and syrupy, and still delicious. Photograph by Eric Hansen.

Back Cover:

In a Marseille park, boys play while their mothers, immigrants from North Africa, tend toddlers. About one-fourth of the city's residents are Muslims, and nearly all of the city's Muslim population has arrived since the end of World War II and the independence of France's former colonies. It's the latest episode in the city's 2500 years of cultural cross-pollination. Photograph by Tor Eigeland.



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Written and photographed by Eric Hansen

Looking for the Khalasah

A FEW YEARS AGO I WAS DRIVING THROUGH WADI HADHRAMAWT, A REMOTE VALLEY IN THE EASTERN CORNER OF YEMEN THAT ADJOINS SAUDI ARABIA AND OMAN. IT IS AN AREA DISTINGUISHED BY OCHER-COLORED CITIES OF TOWERING MUD-BRICK BUILDINGS. SURROUNDING THE TOWNS ARE EXTENSIVE DATE GROVES, IRRIGATED BY WELLS AND RAIN-FED CANALS, PROBABLY THOUSANDS OF YEARS OLD.

IT WAS RAMADAN, AND SAVORING A FEW DATES WITH A SIP OF WATER IS A COMMON WAY TO BREAK THE FAST AT SUNSET. ONE EVENING, WHEN ABDUL ALI, MY DRIVER, OFFERED ME A PLATE FULL OF DATES, HE TOLD ME TO SELECT JUST ONE AND NOT TO CHEW IT, BUT TO LET IT MELT IN MY MOUTH. I HAD NEVER EATEN A DATE IN THIS WAY. AT FIRST THERE WAS NO TASTE. THEN THE DATE GRADUALLY WARMED. SOON THE OUTER SKIN BEGAN TO SLIDE OFF, AND BEFORE LONG, THE SMOOTH, SOFT, DISSOLVING FLESH BEGAN TO FILL MY MOUTH WITH COMPLEX FLAVORS OF HONEY, SWEET POTATOES, SUGARCANE AND CARAMEL. THESE TASTES WERE SOON JOINED BY A MORE SUBTLE, SLIGHTLY NUTTY FLAVOR INFUSED WITH A RICH NOTE OF TAFFY. IT TOOK ME AT LEAST 10 MINUTES TO FINISH THAT DATE. I DIDN'T THINK TO ASK THE NAME OF THE VARIETY, BUT ONE THING WAS CERTAIN: It was like no date I had eaten before.

Certainly my fasting that day had accentuated the experience, but as Abdul Ali and his friends began to discuss the subtle differences among the many varieties, I remembered that dates had been grown commercially in my home state of California since the early 1900's. I became curious about which varieties of dates were being grown in the United States and how the date palms had traveled there.

A street sign in Indio, California names the date variety first grown in the United States, planted in the Coachella Valley in 1903 using shoots imported from Algeria. Today it is still the most common variety sold in the US. Opposite: **Pride of the Coachella Valley** (left to right, top to bottom): ***halawy, khalasah, barhi, thoory, medjool, zahidi, derrie, khadrawy,*** **and** ***deglet noor.***

Late one night the conversation shifted to a legendary date from Saudi Arabia. In Arabic, Abdul Ali called it *khalasah* ("quintessence"), and he accented the second syllable: "kha-**lah**-sah." Villagers, shopkeepers and other people I met throughout Wadi Hadhramawt seemed to agree that the khalasah was the date against which all others were judged. I learned that the khalasah was one of the most famous dates of the Arabian Peninsula, and that the best ones came from near the town of Hofuf, in the al-Hasa region of Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province.

A few weeks after returning to California, I started to read up on the history of dates. The commercial date palm, *Phoenix dactylifera*, is thought to be the world's oldest cultivated fruit tree. Fossil records indicate that the date palm was common around the

HOENIX DACTYLIFERA GROWS BEST IN NORTH AFRICA, THE ARABIAN PENINSULA AND SOUTHERN IRAQ. OF THE 90 MILLION DATE PALMS IN THE WORLD, 64 MILLION GROW IN ARAB COUNTRIES, AND ONLY A QUARTER-MILLION GROW IN THE UNITED STATES. THERE ARE SOME 600 VARIETIES OF DATE, AND THE WORLD'S ANNUAL DATE HARVEST EXCEEDS THREE MILLION TONS.

Mediterranean and in Mesopotamia as early as the Eocene epoch, some 50 million years ago; among written records, an Akkadian cuneiform text from around 2500 BC mentions the date palm as a cultivated tree. Bas-relief sculptures from the palace of Sennacherib in Nineveh, Iraq, carved in the seventh century BC, clearly depict cultivated date groves.

The date palm grows best between 15 and 35 degrees north latitude, primarily in the arid regions of North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula and southern Iraq, where dates have been a staple food for millions of people over thousands of years. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations estimates that of the 90 million date palms in the world, 64 million grow in Arab countries. There are approximately 600 different varieties of dates, and the world's annual date harvest exceeds three million tons.

From my reading, I learned that the Prophet Muhammad had subsisted on little more than dates and water during his years in Madinah, and that he had built the first mosque using date palm trunks for pillars and woven date palm fronds for the roof. The Qur'an, in Chapter 6 ("Mary"), describes how Jesus was born under a date palm, and how the tree dropped fresh ripe dates in Mary's lap for her to eat—and I knew, from my many visits to Yemen, that villagers believe a steady diet of dates helps a nursing mother produce abundant milk.

At a farmer's market in San Francisco, I met Robert Lower, a grower of organic dates in the town of Thermal in the Coachella Valley—the heart of California's date-growing country. His company, a small-scale operation, is called the Flying Disk Ranch; he started it in 1979 with a row of palms and one irrigation ditch. At the market, Lower was selling dates with Arabic-sounding names like *medjool*, *khadrawy*, *derrie*, *zahidi* and *barhi*. The only one I recognized was the ubiquitous *deglet noor*, the date most commonly sold in the United States—the one my grandmother would stuff with almonds or a dab of cream cheese at Christmas time.

Deglet noor means "date of light" or "translucent one," and indeed its flesh is often so translucent that the seed can be seen if the date is held to the light. According to Paul B. Popenoe, author of the definitive *Date Growing in the Old World and the New*, the deglet noor was developed in the oasis of Balad al-Ahmar in the northern Sahara nearly 400 years ago. Distinguished by a pleasant, nutty aftertaste similar to that of a lightly roasted peanut, it is medium sweet and cures well. A deglet noor palm typically averages more than 45 kilos (100 lb) of dates, but an exceptional tree will produce up to 115 kilos (250 lb) of fruit.

In the California date-growing community, people also use Arabic terms to describe the degrees of ripeness. *Kimri* dates are green, unripe and inedible. After the dates achieve full size, have started to ripen and are in a fresh, crunchy stage, they are known as *khalal*. The ripe soft or semisoft stage, which is how most dates are sold in the US, is *rutab*; these dates are the most fragile and difficult to ship. In the Middle East, rutab dates are carefully graded according to subtle differences in color, complexity of flavor, translucency, freshness, taste, proportion of pit to flesh, skin texture and other exacting criteria. In California, if dates are allowed to ripen to the rutab state while still on the tree, they are known as "naturals." These are what Lower called "melt-in-your-mouth" dates. Naturals are rarely sold commercially because, within the same cluster, dates ripen at slightly different times and so the harvest of naturals requires repeated visits to the tree. Also, naturals tend to ferment, and do not keep as long as drier dates. The fourth stage of ripeness is *tamr*. These dates ripen on the tree and are then left there to dry. These are the least

In a grove of mature deglet noor palms more than 25 meters (80') tall, *palmeros* such as Carlos Rodrigues make more than a dozen climbs annually per tree to pollinate, protect, prune and harvest in stages. Opposite: **Medjool dates, shown with a demitasse of Turkish coffee, are the number two date crop in the US, and they came to the Coachella Valley from Morocco.**

perishable dates, and they are the easiest to pick because at this point they are nearly indestructible.

Hanging from a corner post in Robert's stall, a cluster of firm, round, light-yellow dates caught my eye. These, he told me, were barhi dates in the khalal state. The barhi, known in the trade as "the honey-ball date," was introduced to California in 1913, originally from Basra in southern Iraq, where it was named after the prevailing hot summer *bahr* winds near Basra. In the khalal state, the barhi is crisp, fibrous and slightly astringent for the first few bites. Then the sweet sugarcane, baked-apple, cinnamon and coconut flavors begin to reveal themselves. In its rutab, or soft, state, the barhi is dark brown, extremely fragile and tastes more of honey and melted butter.

The barhi is perhaps the most versatile date in the kitchen because it can be eaten in the khalal, rutab or tamr states. Barhis freeze well, and they can be used in cooking. Lower prefers the crisp, sweet taste of khalal barhis, but he also stuffs rutab barhi dates into cored apples and bakes them.

Two Tunisian brothers, Salah and Salam Harati, arrived at Lower's date stall while I was there. It was clear they were regular customers who knew their dates. They greeted Lower warmly and bought an entire box of khalal barhis to take home to their families.

"These dates? We have them in the morning with buttermilk," they told me. "Chew, chew. Don't swallow. Relax your mouth, and then just taste. These dates are the best."

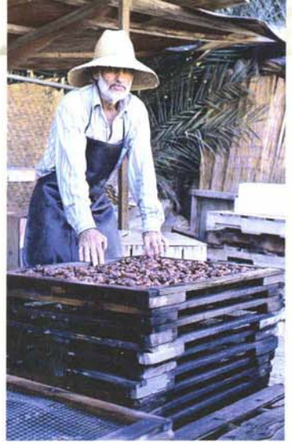
The brothers and their box of barhis disappeared into the market crowd. Lower suggested that I come down to Thermal to watch the date harvest that was getting under way. Before making the 10-hour drive south to the Coachella Valley, though, I decided to read up on the history of the California date industry.

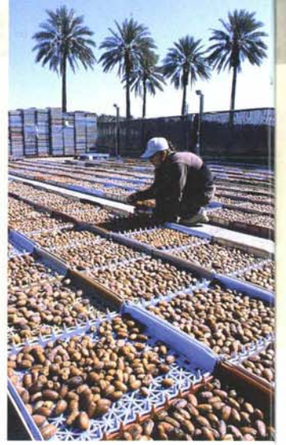
Today the Coachella Valley is a bit more than an hour's drive east of Los Angeles, north of the Salton Sea and below the San Bernardino Mountains. The area has very little rain, abundant groundwater for irrigation, good drainage, low humidity and a fairly uniform and intense heat during day and night. Around 1900, it was selected by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and private growers as an ideal region to try growing dates. The first commercial date grove consisted of 129 deglet noor date palm *jebbar*, or offshoots, from Algeria, planted in 1903 by Bernard Johnson. The next year, the USDA opened an experimental date research station in the Coachella Valley.

A date palm can grow from a seed, but the resulting fruit is usually inferior in size, flavor and taste to the original palm. A seed-grown palm can also turn out to be either male or female, and only the latter produces fruit, while a single male palm is sufficient to pollinate 50 females. On average, date palms are planted about 10 meters (32') apart. To ensure high quality dates, it is crucial to obtain jebbar from carefully selected, mature female palms of proven fruit-bearing quality. The offshoots grow at the base of the trees, and they can weigh anywhere from 10 to 50 kilograms (22–110 lb), with about 35 kilograms (77 lb) considered ideal.

To bring quality date palms to the Coachella Valley, it was necessary for enterprising plant collectors to travel to North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, where they visited remote date groves still under tribal control. Large amounts of cash were required if the collectors expected to persuade the owners of the best palms to part with quality offshoots.

One of the most important individuals in the California date industry—now largely forgotten—was Abderahman bin Ali bin Haouffef. He came from the Algerian oasis of Tolga and, in 1913, took the American date palm buyer Henry Simon deep into the Algerian Sahara, to Touggourt and Quargla Oasis and beyond, to buy deglet noor palm offshoots. When Simon had described his proposed itinerary to the French colonial police on the coast, he was told that they

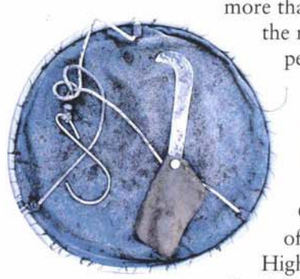




Left: **Robert Lower of the Flying Disk Ranch unwraps clusters of barhi dates prior to harvesting. The wrappings fend off insects, birds and dust.** Center: **Khadrawy dates are arranged in racks, washed and dried.** Far right: **In tray after tray, medjool dates are turned by hand to ripen evenly.** Inset, below: **Tools of a palmero's trade include a basket (*canasta*) and a machete; this one is hand-made from an automobile leaf spring.**

could not guarantee his safety, and that he was risking his life to visit the deep Sahara. In the end, however, Haouffef, with his connections and his local horticultural knowledge, made it possible for Simon to buy nearly 6000 offshoots. He arranged Simon's introductions to the local shaykhs, facilitated the selection process, checked the quality, arranged terms of payment and helped to organize armed camel caravans to the nearest port.

From the coast, palm offshoots were shipped to the United States by steamer, arriving several months later in Thermal, California. They were closely planted out and helped form the beginning of the West India Gardens, the first wholesale date palm nursery in the area. From 1913 until around 1922, huge numbers of date palm offshoots continued to be brought to the Coachella Valley by others, establishing the area as the date-growing capital of the United States. Today, there are more than a quarter-million palms in the region, and they produce 95 percent of the national crop.



Once I arrived in Thermal, my first stop was at the Oasis Date Garden. Set on the west side of the "Date Highway" (officially Highway 111) , the Oasis Date Garden was founded by Ben Laflin, Sr. in 1912. His son, Ben Laflin, Jr., is one of the most successful and influential date growers in the Coachella Valley. His success is due partly to his knowledge of irrigation, but primarily to his wise decision to plant medjool dates—locally referred to as "the Cadillac of dates."

The medjool comes from the Boudenib Oasis in Morocco. Its name—from the Arabic verb *jahal*, "to be ignorant"—means "unknown," a surprising choice for what is now probably the best-known "boutique" date widely available in the US and Europe. In terms of flavor, texture, attractive appearance and, above all, size—three by five centimeters, or 1¼ by 2 inches—it stands out from all the others. It has an attractive, deep reddish-brown color with the skin adhering to the flesh. The translucent, dark amber flesh is chewy, rich and delicious. It ships well and, after the deglet noor, is the second most important commercial date in California.

Tim Burke, the general manager at Oasis, told me how the medjool date originally came to California. In 1927, Walter Swingle, a horticulturalist employed by the USDA, was in Morocco on date business. A date disease was decimating the medjool date population there, but Swingle managed to find an isolated oasis where he obtained 11 medjool offshoots to take back to California. To avoid the possibility of spreading the disease, these medjool offshoots were planted in a remote desert region in southern Nevada near the California border. A well was dug, and for the next seven years the offshoots were tended by the Johnsons, an elderly Native American couple. The Johnsons' dogs dug up two of the offshoots, but the nine surviving palms not only eventually became the breeding stock for all medjool dates that now grow in the US, but also later served to restock medjool date groves in Morocco.

In 1939, Ben Laflin, Sr. obtained 24 offshoots from the original nine medjool palms, and from these he began the long process of planting out the trees, collecting the best offshoots and slowly expanding the Oasis Date Garden to its present size of 70 hectares (175 acres) with nearly 8500 palms. Each year, Oasis sells about 410,000 kilograms (900,000 lb) of certified organic, hand-sorted, boxed medjool dates, and some 22,000 kilograms (50,000 lb) of various other varieties—including one of my favorites, the *halawy* ("sweet one"), an excellent, medium-sized, amber-colored, soft date from southern Iraq.

Seasonally, Oasis also sells "Ramadan" or "yellow-end specials," very moist and attractive rehydrated tamr medjool dates marketed to Muslim communities around Ramadan, when pallet-loads are shipped to mosques, community centers and Islamic schools in Florida, Iowa, Arkansas, Arizona, Minnesota, the Pacific Northwest and elsewhere.

As a matter of curiosity, I asked Tim whether he still ate dates outside his quality-control work, and whether he had a favorite variety or a preferred way of eating them. Without hesitation, he smiled and told me to try quarter-cut frozen tamr barhi dates on vanilla ice cream. All dates freeze well, and their high sugar content prevents them from freezing hard: They merely become more chewy. "Dates are an excellent source of potassium and iron," he said, "and they have a sugar content of 80 percent or higher." One date contains approximately 21 to 23 calories, and a steady diet of dates has been linked to very low rates of heart disease and cancer.

MORE THAN 400 VARIETIES OF DATES HAVE BEEN GROWN EXPERIMENTALLY IN FLORIDA, TEXAS, ARIZONA AND CALIFORNIA, YET ONLY A HANDFUL ARE COMMERCIALLY CULTIVATED TODAY, SELECTED ON THE BASIS OF YIELD PER TREE AND PER HECTARE, RESISTANCE TO DISEASE, PACKING AND SHIPPING REQUIREMENTS AND—LAST BUT NOT LEAST—AMERICANS' TASTE PREFERENCES.

The following morning, shortly after sunrise, at the base of a 25-meter (80') date palm, I scribbled notes while trying to avoid the shower of dates that fell from above. Standing next to me was Robert Lower from the Flying Disk Ranch. We were in a large commercial date grove less than a mile from where Lower's pampered, organically grown date palms are lovingly tended by hand. He wanted to show me how the big companies harvest deglet noor dates. High above us, at the top of the palm tree, was *palmero* Carlos Rodrigues. *Palmero* is Spanish, a term of respect for one of the highly skilled and fearless palm-tree workers. On the tallest palms, such as these, a palmero first climbs to the very top of a 16-meter (52') aluminum extension ladder. Then he must ascend a series of ladders that are chained to the tree crown.

Watching Rodrigues at the top of the swaying tree made me think of a rock climber or a trapeze artist. Seated in a date picker's saddle, suspended at the end of a heavy chain harness, Rodrigues swung around the tree just below the green canopy of fronds as he hacked off fruit stalks laden with bunches of dates. Rodrigues was wielding a hand-forged machete and wearing a heavy leather gauntlet designed to protect his wrist from the formidable mass of needle-sharp spines that grows at the base of each frond. Several detached date stalks were hung on a long metal hook at his waist and then periodically lowered by rope to his assistant on the ground, Hector Morales. Morales maneuvered the heavy clusters into a large collection box. The sun was hardly above the horizon, yet these two men had already filled two boxes.

Date palm cultivation is labor intensive. In nature, date palms are wind-pollinated, which is a very inefficient way to produce fruit. Therefore, a palmero must collect pollen from the male tree, then climb all of the female trees and hand-pollinate the flowers with powder-puff applicators. During the year, a palmero must climb each palm more than a dozen times: Besides doing the pollinating, he dethorns the fronds, cuts away dead fronds, thins the fruit to improve the air circulation needed for size and quality, ties down the young fruit stalks for ease of picking, wraps inverted waxed-paper cones over the fruit clusters to protect them from damaging rain, attaches fine mesh bags to keep out insects, rodents and birds, and finally climbs the trees four or five times to harvest the dates as they ripen through each phase.

"These are what we call 'grinders,'" Lower said as he picked up a date from the ground. "Dates that are too dry to put in gift packs. The flavor is good, but they don't present well. Some will be rehydrated in the packing house, but most of them are ground up to flavor packaged baked goods."

I selected a date out of the box, brushed off the dust and took a bite. It tasted fine to me. Lower told me that eating a "natural" rutab date with a moisture content around 25 percent was a completely different experience. We returned to the Flying Disk Ranch, and there I was introduced to my first naturals—fully sun-ripened, soft dates, right off the tree.

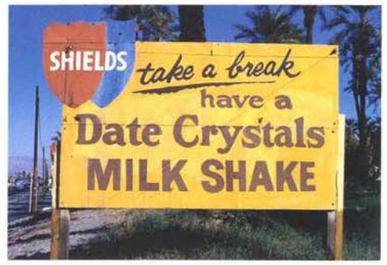
Pedro and Carolina, the date pickers at the Flying Disk Ranch, were busy picking barhi and khadrawy dates. The khadrawy ("verdant") ripens early in the Coachella Valley, around mid-September. This date variety, which is usually eaten in the rutab state, is from Basra, where well-to-do families traditionally offer it to honored guests. Its flesh has an extremely rich and pleasant flavor, and it is known for producing a heavy crop in California. The derrie (or *dayri*), another of Lower's dates, also comes from the arid lands of southern Iraq, and it is unusually drought-resistant, able to subsist on 25 percent of the water other varieties need. Before leaving, I asked Lower if he knew anyone who grew the khalasah.

"Khalasah?" he said. "Never heard of it."

I was not too surprised. More than 400 different varieties of dates have been grown experimentally in various parts of the US—mainly in Florida, Texas, Arizona and

Grading, sorting and packing dates for the US market means gentle handling at the Oasis Date Garden. Both taste and appearance affect the success of a crop.

Right: **Ben Laflin's father pioneered California's medjool groves, and when he was well-established, Moroccan growers came back to him to replenish their own groves following an epidemic. His jumbo medjools, shown here, are for sale; his few khalasahs are a private reserve.** Far right: **Lower sells his organic dates to urbanites at San Francisco's Farmer's Market.** Below: **If you can't drive the "Date Highway" to the Coachella Valley for this roadside treat, do the next best thing: pit the freshest dates you can find and toss them into a blender with crushed ice, milk and vanilla ice cream.**



California—yet only a handful of these varieties are grown commercially in California. The commercial dates have been selected over time on the basis of yield per tree and per hectare, resistance to disease, Americans' taste preferences and the packing and shipping requirements of large-scale facilities. The taste of the ripened fruit is only one of many factors one considers when planting a commercial date grove.

Before leaving the Coachella Valley, I made a last visit to the Oasis Date Garden. It was a hot, dusty day, and I wanted to try one of their famous date milkshakes. I also had to pick up an order of dates I had promised to friends at a neighborhood mosque in San Francisco. I ran into Ben Laflin, who was visiting for the day. We talked about the early days of date growing in the Valley, and we discussed the more obscure varieties. I asked him if he had ever heard of a date called khalasah. He eyed me carefully, and then paused for a few moments before answering.

"Where did you hear about the khalasah?" he asked.

"From a man I met in Yemen, just south of the Rub' al-Khali, the Empty Quarter of Saudi Arabia," I replied.

"That man knows his dates," Ben said.

To my surprise, the Oasis Date Garden actually has one khalasah palm. It is tucked away in a remote section of the acreage. Along with other varieties, khalasah offshoots were first brought to the Valley in 1912 from al-Hasa, the largest oasis in eastern Saudi Arabia, long famous for its dates. California growers experimented with the date because of its superior flavor, Ben said, but it didn't ship well because it was too soft.

"It is a shame that this particular date wouldn't go through a packing house in good shape, because the texture and flavor are unique," he said.

His khalasah dates, he added, were not for sale. The harvest is well under 100 kilograms (220 lb) per year, and the lone khalasah palm is part of Ben's private collection, a sentimental reminder of his early days as one of the country's pioneering date growers. He gives the khalasah dates to friends and people in the trade who appreciate the exquisite taste. He was generous, and that evening I drove home with two boxes of jumbo medjools, one box of halawys and a single precious packet of a dozen rutab khalasah naturals.

Since my trip to the Coachella Valley, I have eaten dates many different ways: I have baked them in apples and prepared date-nut bread—a waste of good dates—and frequently I eat them plain with a sip of buttermilk for breakfast. Sliced medjool dates with slivered red onions, julienned jicama, baby greens and mandarin orange segments, all tossed with a light vinaigrette, make a refreshing salad. Pureed dates are indeed delicious in milkshakes. I highly recommend halawy dates stuffed with a bit of *fromage blanc* or ripened goat cheese. Quarter-cut frozen barhis on vanilla ice cream are nothing less than addictive.

As for my meager supply of khalasahs, however, I wasn't sure how to eat them, until I remembered my experience in Wadi Hadhramawt. I have now come to the conclusion that the best way to eat the khalasah is to simply let a single date melt in my mouth—once a month. How to describe the experience? The khalasah has a tender, sticky, light orange-brown, silky skin. It possesses a translucent, reddish-amber, firm, delicate and complex caramel-flavored flesh that melts away to nothing. This is the sort of date that one can actually savor for an hour, exploring the entire range of date flavors, without being able to untangle the elusive flavor puzzle. I am now down to nine khalasahs, and I am thinking that my next trip in search of dates might need to go farther afield than the Coachella Valley.

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Date Growing in the Old World and the New. Paul B. Popenoe. 1913, West India Gardens

Written and photographed by Eric Hansen

As my supply of *khalasah* dates from California's Coachella Valley dwindled, I started to think seriously about where I could get more.

"Carrying Dates to Hajar"

I WAS CURIOUS: WOULD SAUDI-GROWN KHALASAHS TASTE BETTER, OR SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERENT? THERE WAS ONLY ONE WAY TO JUDGE: AN ON-THE-SPOT TASTE TEST. ON MY FLIGHT TO DAMMAM, THE NEAREST INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT TO THE OASIS OF AL-HASA, I CARRIED THREE OF MY CALIFORNIA KHALASAHS. THEY REPRESENTED THE BEST OF THE BEST, AND THEY WERE THERE TO HELP ME MAKE FAIR COMPARISONS.

I ALSO WANTED TO SAMPLE A BROAD SELECTION OF THE MANY SAUDI DATE VARIETIES THAT I HAD HEARD ABOUT, ESPECIALLY THE ONES THAT ARE NOT WIDELY AVAILABLE OUTSIDE THE KINGDOM. MANY RESIDENTS AND DATE CONNOISSEURS FROM THROUGHOUT THE MIDDLE EAST, ASIA AND AFRICA CONSIDER THE KHALASAH, KNOWN IN SAUDI ARABIA AS *KHLAS*, AND WHOSE ARABIC NAME LOOSELY TRANSLATES AS "QUINTESSENCE," TO BE THE VERY BEST. HOFUF, THE MAIN CITY OF THE AL-HASA OASIS, IN THE KINGDOM'S EASTERN PROVINCE, IS ITS HOME, AND FROM WHAT I HAD READ, THE ROUGHLY 100 DATE GROWERS FROM THE AL-MUTAIRFI VILLAGE IN THE OASIS ARE CONSIDERED TO BE THE UNDISPUTED MASTERS AT GROWING THE KHLAS. I ARRIVED AT THE END OF THE DATE-HARVEST SEASON, WHICH LASTS FROM MAY THROUGH OCTOBER.

Al-Hasa, known as Hajar in ancient times, covers about 20,000 hectares (50,000 acres) and it is said to be the largest date palm oasis in the world. The quality of its approximately 100 natural springs and artesian wells, some of them hot, the elaborate irrigation system, the well-drained, alkaline, sandy soils and the intense heat all make this area ideal for date cultivation, a practice that goes back at least 4000 years. The other primary date-growing areas in the kingdom are around the oasis cities of Qasim, Qatif, Bishah and Islam's second-holiest city, Madinah, which hosts the kingdom's most extensive date market.

From region to region, the most popular dates include *khlas*, *khunaizi*, *bukayyirah*, *gharr*, *shaishi* and *ruzaiz* in the Eastern Province, and *nubout sayf*, *sufri*, *barhi*, *sukkari*, *sullaj* and *khudhairi* in Qasim and the rest of the Central Province. In the west, including Madinah, people mainly favor *'anbara*, *'ajwah*, *rothanah*, *baidh*, *rabi'ah*, *barhi*, *hilwah*, *hulayyah*, *safawi*, *shalabi* and *sukkari*. Part of the reason that people in each region consider their own dates the best is because horticultural practices, soil, water and climate favor different dates in different areas. For example, the sukkari dates in al-Hasa are very good, but as a general rule, they are not considered quite as good as the sukkari dates from Qasim or Madinah.

Few roads in al-Hasa lead to al-Mutairfi, but those that do lead to the best of the best.

According to the Turkish census of 1871, approximately two million date palms then grew in and around Hofuf. And it was at about that time that the English traveler William

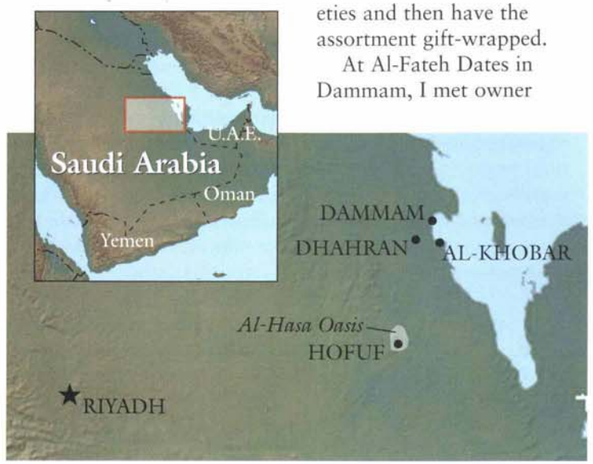
"*BUKAYYIRAH, MAJI, GHARR, RUZAIZ, KHUSAB, MIJNAZ, KHUNAIZI, KHLAS, SHAISHI, SHIHIL, BARHI, SUKKARI, HILALI, UM RUHAYM* .... THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 240 TO 360 DIFFERENT VARIETIES OF DATES, DEPENDING ON WHOM YOU TALK TO, BUT THESE ARE JUST SOME OF MY FAVORITES," HE LAUGHED. "DIFFERENT DATES TASTE DIFFERENT FROM PLACE TO PLACE."

In Sana'a, Yemen, a young vendor sells dates imported from Saudi Arabia. All are sorted and priced by variety and ripeness. Opposite: **Six of the leading varieties from diverse regions of the kingdom: *sekki, sukkari, 'ajwah, dekieri, nubout sayf* and *khlas*.**

Gifford Palgrave described the khlas of al-Hasa as "the perfection of the date." For centuries, khlas dates have been exported to India, Zanzibar and throughout the Middle East—but, like all premium date varieties within the kingdom, the khlas is primarily for domestic consumption. The American botanist and date hunter Paul B. Popenoe, author of the 1913 volume *Date Growing in the Old World and the New*, tried to visit Hofuf the year before his book was published to buy khlas *jebbar*, or offshoots, but the Turkish authorities could not guarantee his safety. In 1914, the date-growing region was taken from the Turkish forces by the growing power of the future founder of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 'Abd al-'Aziz Al Sa'ud, and since then has been under Saudi rule.

Before heading south to Hofuf, I visited several retail date outlets in the Eastern Province cities of al-Khobar and Dammam. I located the upscale retail date store Batil in al-Khobar's shiny Al-Rashid Mall. Surrounded by world-brand shops such as Estée Lauder, Body Shop, Swatch and Lacoste, Batil offered a changing assortment of 80 different varieties of dates, depending on the season. The display reminded me of a quality chocolate store where customers can select individual varieties and then have the assortment gift-wrapped.

At Al-Fateh Dates in Dammam, I met owner Abdullah al-Ghamdi. He is said to be the first store owner in Saudi Arabia to make date ice cream, but what caught my eye was his selection of rare varieties of dates from the different growing regions. To my good fortune, al-Ghamdi turned out to be somewhat of a date historian. We sampled several varieties: sukkari, khlas, 'ajwah and nubout sayf. Then I pulled out my three California-grown khalasahs for comparison.



Al-Ghamdi looked at my dates and laughed, politely. "We have a very old classical Arabic saying," he said. "'Carrying dates to Hajar,' or '*Hamil al-tamr ila Hajar*.' It is like the English expression 'Carrying coals to Newcastle.'"

Al-Ghamdi evaluated my best-quality California khalasahs without tasting them. "We call these dates *hawheel*," he said. "They are the dates from last year's harvest. The skin is dry and blistered, and—see here, where the sugar is crystalizing? Without tasting it, I know the complexity of flavor has deteriorated. They are edible, but we sometimes feed hawheel dates to the donkeys, sheep and goats."

The following day I met a friend of al-Ghamdi's, Muhammad Tahlawi, for whom dates are more than a matter of connoisseurship: They are one of his lifelong passions.

"The first date of the season," he told me, "is the bukayyirah. We have an expression about this date: '*Awwalha lil amir, wa akhirha lil hamir.*' In English this means, 'the first of the crop is for the amir, or governor, and the last of the crop is for the donkey.'"

Tahlawi went on to explain that *bukayyirah* means "early one," and growers once challenged each other to see who could deliver the first dates of the year to the town's amir. But later in the season, once other dates of better quality and flavor became available, the bukayyirah was fed exclusively to the donkeys.

When I asked Tahlawi about the ripening sequence of the kingdom's date varieties, he immediately began counting them on his fingers: "bukayyirah, maji, gharr, ruzaiz, khusab, mijnaz, khunaymi, khlas, shaishi, shihil, barhi, sukkari, hilali, um ruhaym...." The recitation seemed to go on for several minutes without pause. "There are approximately 240 to 360 different varieties of dates, depending on whom you talk to, but these are just some of my favorites," he laughed.

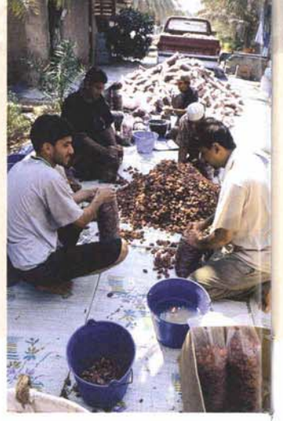
"Which are the best dates?" I asked.

"It is all a matter of personal preference and what is available locally," Tahlawi replied. "Different dates grow differently and taste different from place to place, and even within one date grove you will find a range of qualities in the same variety. Date varieties often taste better in areas where they have been grown for a long time. Part of this is due to the quality of the water, the type of soil and specialized local growing techniques. For this reason each region can rightfully claim that their dates are the best."

We discussed famous dates that I had read about but never tasted. "*Amir al-hajj*?" I asked. Tahlawi explained the name meant "commander of the pilgrimage [caravan]." This date, he said, is "very rare. Orange-brown and very translucent with a caramel taste. But it is an Iraqi date, from the oasis of Mandali, east of Baghdad. In Iraq dates are sometimes filled with clotted cream from the milk of water buffalo."

"I have heard that the 'ajwah date, from Madinah, was the favorite of the Prophet because of its chewy texture and flavor," I said.

"The word '*ajwah* is a noun from the verb '*aja*. which means to pacify an infant who is still being breastfed, but who is in the process of being weaned," Tahlawi explained.



Right: **Abdullatif Alkhateeb, director of the Date Palm Research Center in al-Hasa, holds *in vitro* seedlings that will bear fruit 30 percent more quickly than traditionally grown palm offshoots.** Center: **Date palm workers in Saudi Arabia generally use a climbing harness, not a ladder.** Far right: **Workers in al-Mutairfi wash and sort khlas dates according to color, size and condition. The entire crop from premier producers is pre-sold to wholesalers in the kingdom and Gulf countries.**

AT THE DATE MARKET OF HOFUF, ELDERLY DATE TASTERS 'ABDUL 'AZIZ AL-'UTAIBI AND IBRAHIM AL-JAWF SAT IN THE SHADE OF THEIR WAREHOUSE AND AGREED THAT THE BEST KHLAS DATES ARE LARGE, WITH A FIRM TEXTURE, A PRONOUNCED YELLOW COLOR, GOOD TRANSLUCENCE AND COMPLEX FLAVOR.

"It was a common practice among mothers in Arabia to use dates—especially the dry, chewy types, one of which is 'ajwah—to wean their infants. They would let their babies chew on the date to pacify them, strengthen their gums and overcome their teething pains. Most likely, 'ajwah got its name from this use, as it has the right texture and sweetness for the purpose."

When I asked Tahlawi how he preferred to eat dates, he told me that he liked them as dessert after lunch or dinner, or one or two with a cup of Arabic coffee on special occasions.

It didn't take long to realize that it is nearly impossible to get a consensus on the best variety from each region, but many people I talked to told me—and Tahlawi concurred—that any list of the best dates would certainly have to include these: nubout sayf, which is a long date shaped like a sword (*sayf*), from the Riyadh region on the Najd plateau in central Arabia; sukkari, meaning "sweet one," from the Qasim region north of Riyadh; the rare (and very expensive) *'anbar* or *'anbara* date from the Madinah region; and finally, the khlas of al-Hasa.

Suspecting that certain dates are preferred over others at different stages of ripeness, I asked Tahlawi about the best stages to eat his favorite date varieties.

"*Khalal, busr* and *saraban* are different names, from different parts of the kingdom, for the date when it is almost fully grown but still green and unripe. My favorite date at this stage is the gharr, or 'vigorous grower.' *Balah* is the term for dates when they are fully grown and colored. My favorite dates at this stage are khlas, gharr and barhi. The *rutab* stage is when the dates are partially or fully ripened. Half or all of the date turns light brown and very soft. My favorites in this category are khlas, gharr and khunaizi. *Tamr* is the stage when all of the date turns dark brown and sticky with its sugary syrup. Khlas is an excellent tamr date. The last stage is called *tamr yabis*, or dry dates. At this point, the dates have turned dark brown, tough and lacking in *dibs*. Sukkari and hulayyah are my favorite tamr yabis dates."

"What are dibs?" I asked.

"Dibs is a thick date syrup, similar to honey or molasses," Tahlawi replied. "It comes from dates when they are fully ripened and then pressed. The khunaizi date from al-Qatif Oasis produces excellent dibs. Dibs has a sweet, acidic, slightly bitter flavor. It is used in making or covering sweets. Dibs is also an ingredient in a popular fish recipe called *muhammar ma' samak maqli,* which translates as 'brown or red rice with fried fish.' In this dish, dibs is used to give the rice a brown color and a distinctive sweet and salty taste."

The next day I drove south in search of the best khlas dates grown in the al-Hasa Oasis. Of the Arab world's estimated 64 million date palms, some 14 million are in Saudi Arabia; of this number, more than three million grow in al-Hasa today. I spent the night in the city of Hofuf, and the following day I met Abdullatif Hamad Ali al-Salim, my driver and translator. On our way to the Al Hasa Bulk Date Factory, I asked him what he had eaten for breakfast. "Dibs mixed with tahinah and eaten with pieces of freshly baked pita bread. But sometimes I have five to eight dates with coffee or *laban*—or camel or goat milk," he replied, adding that laban was similar to yoghurt.

At the factory, we watched endless conveyor belts laden with dates as they were hand-sorted by variety and then machine-washed and dried. Coming in from the groves, delivery trucks were backed up more than a kilometer, waiting to be unloaded. Many of these dates would be donated worldwide by the Saudi government as humanitarian aid and distributed through the United Nations World Food Program. In the office we sampled pitted dates dipped in chocolate, dates stuffed with almonds, dates covered in sesame seeds and dates rolled in coconut. We ate date toffee and tasted date sugar, machine-extracted dibs, puréed dates and date-filled pastries called *ma'moul*—a favorite sweet during the 'Id al-Fitr at the end of Ramadan. The samples were plentiful, but they did not represent the quality of dates that I was looking for. I wanted to find khlas dates that had been grown on small, family-owned farms, hand-picked, sorted and prepared in the traditional way.

But our next stop was at the Date Palm Research Center. Because al-Hasa is the biggest producer of dates in the kingdom, the Center was established there by King Faisal University and the Ministry of Agriculture and Water in 1982. It carries out studies on cultivation, disease control, marketing, processing, quality control and the testing of new date varieties. At the Center, date farmers are taught how to incorporate newer horticultural techniques to complement what has been passed down to them by previous generations of growers.

The Center is an active member of the Arab National Committee for Date Palms, which, in turn, is part of the Arab Union for Food Industry. In recent years the Center has held several international scientific and business conferences to help study date growing and increase the production of fine dates. These gatherings have been attended by farmers, scientists, government officials, academics and others from around the world.

At the Center, Director Abdullatif Alkhateeb gave me a tour of the laboratory and the nursery. One of the most important research projects, he said, deals with tissue culturing, which creates large numbers of cloned seedlings from palms that produce large fruit of high quality.

"Traditionally, date palms are planted from offshoots that grow at the base of the palms. From planted offshoot to the first harvest usually takes seven years, and there is often a 50 percent mortality rate. In addition, planting from offshoots can pass on insect pests and diseases such as scale. What we do in the lab," Alkhateeb explained, "is to take a very small cutting from the heart of the palm. This is the growth bud, which is located at the very top and center of the palm. A small piece of tissue from the heart of the palm is placed in a sterile solution of what looks like cloudy gelatin. It takes about 11 to 12 months for the embryo to grow to the point that we can cut it into pieces that all have the identical genetic makeup. From this point, it takes about three more months to grow each piece into an *in vitro* seedling. About six months later, the seedlings are unflasked and planted out. After that it will be an additional two to three years before the young palms flower. In the fourth or fifth year, the palms start producing fruit. Using the tissue-culture method, we have a negligible mortality rate, and the farmer gets his first crop two or three years earlier than if he had used the traditional offshoot method. Our tissue culture work is focused on the finest commercial dates such as khlas, hilali, um ruhaym, barhi, ruzaiz, and sukkari. A date palm typically produces good harvests for about 75 years, and this saving of time, using tissue culture, has been a tremendous benefit to local growers."

The next day Abdullatif al-Salim drove me to the central wholesale date *suq* (market) in Hofuf. Out in the bright sun and stifling heat of mid-morning, dozens of pickup trucks and milling crowds of farmers and wholesale buyers went about the time-honored and boisterous task of buying and selling dates. I met with two elderly date tasters: 'Abdul 'Aziz al-'Utaibi and Ibrahim al-Jawf. They sat in the shade of their warehouse and explained that the best khlas dates are large, with a firm texture, a pronounced yellow color, good translucence and complex flavor. Once these two men had made their selections, based on samples, the truckloads of dates were delivered to the huge, open-air processing area where teams of men washed them to remove dust and road dirt. The dates were then sun-dried for about 10 days. There were no conveyor belts to deal with the mountains of dates. Once dry, each date was carefully sorted by hand, and weighed into plastic bags that held five kilograms (11 lb) of dates. The plastic bags were stacked three high on a piece of burlap, then hand-stitched into a tight bundle. This 15-kilogram burlap bundle,

At the al-Hasa date market, wholesalers negotiate 60-kilo (132-lb.) *marhalah* baskets of khlas dates and other date varieties while trucks laden with hundreds more *marhalah*s (far right) **line up outside the Al-Hasa Bulk Date Factory. Mid-range and lesser quality dates are often donated to food relief charities worldwide: Saudi donations of dates in 2002 totaled nearly 800,000 metric tons.**

ASKED AHMAD HUSSAIN AL-SHAYKH (BELOW) IF THESE KHLAS DATES WERE THE BEST EXAMPLES FROM THE BEST GROVE IN THE BEST GROWING REGION IN THE KINGDOM. "IT HAS BEEN A GOOD SEASON IN AL-MUTAIRFI, BUT WE ARE ONLY ONE OF SEVERAL HIGH-QUALITY GROWERS," HE REPLIED MODESTLY. "BUT THESE ARE PRETTY GOOD DATES."

known as a *kees*, is the standard unit of measure.

At this point in the processing, the packaged dates are stacked on pallets and then pressed with concrete-block weights for at least one month. Al-Salim explained that this is to mature the dates, develop their flavor, produce dibs, improve the texture and color, prevent infestation of insects or worms and prolong shelf life. The dates are prepared this way so that they will last until the following year's harvest, he said.

Before we left the date market I bought a five-kilo bag of khlas dates from 'Abdul 'Aziz al-'Utaibi. I asked him to hand-select the very best dates he had. Back in the car, al-Salim turned on the air conditioning and sipped from a bottle of chilled water as I quietly congratulated myself on finding the best dates in the kingdom.

"So, Abdullatif," I said, "after all of these days of searching and sampling dates, would you say these are some of the very best khlas dates in al-Hasa?"

"They are good, but I would not eat them or bring them to my family," he replied.

"You wouldn't eat them?" I said, thinking he was joking. "If these are not acceptable, then where does your family get dates?"

"We buy them freshly picked directly from a grower we know and trust, so we can handle each step of the preparation ourselves. It is a family tradition to spend several days preparing a supply of dates that will last us until the next harvest. In al-Hasa, each family has its own style of preparation. In my family, after washing and drying the dates, we lightly sprinkle them with aniseed or with toasted sesame seed. We sometimes use *habit al-baraka* ["blessed seeds," *Nigella sativa*] for a special flavor."

"Abdullatif, we have two days left before I must leave the kingdom. Where do we find a good grower?" I asked.

"It is the end of the season. I do not know anyone harvesting now, but if you really need to find the best, we must drive to al-Mutairfi. This area has the best khlas dates in al-Hasa."

And with that, we started our search all over again. Early the following morning, we were deep in the date groves of al-Mutairfi, searching for a grower who was still harvesting khlas dates. The confusing network of roads within al-Mutairfi is not signposted, and there are no numbers to identify individual properties. We drove up and down dusty dirt roads for hours, talking to the few people we saw, searching for fruit-bearing palms or the sight of trucks being loaded. Just after mid-day we found an open gate and a group of men crouched around a large pile of dates. We had arrived at Nakhal al-Rafi'ah ("Lofty Palm Grove"), the property of Ahmad Hussain al-Shaykh, who was busy overseeing the very end of his khlas harvest. In two days he would be done. He was preoccupied, but when al-Salim told him we were looking for the very best khlas dates in al-Mutairfi, he quickly warmed to the topic.

Al-Shaykh told us that discriminating customers from the Gulf states, Riyadh, Jiddah and elsewhere came to al-Hasa every year to buy dates. "Once they are in al-Hasa, they go to Hofuf, and from there all roads lead to the date groves of al-Mutairfi." Al-Shaykh's entire harvest is pre-sold to established customers who return year after year. The unit of measure for bulk sales is called a *mann*, equal to about 240 kilos, or 528 pounds; one mann of No. 1 khlas dates, direct from the farm, costs about 2000 riyals ($533); No. 2 khlas go for approximately 20 percent less. A big customer might buy up to 20 mann at a time.

Al-Shaykh gave us a brief tour of his date farm. Each palm annually yields anywhere from 60 to 100 kilograms (132–220 lb). He showed us a date palm climbing harness called *karr*, and the large, woven harvest baskets known as *marhalah*s, which hold approximately 60 kilos of dates. Al-Shaykh uses manure, mostly cow manure, to fertilize his palms, but he also enriches the soil by what he described as "burning the ground." This is a very old technique, confined to the al-Hasa area, in which a shallow trench is filled with dead fronds, which are then covered with the excavated

A worker bags khlas dates in the packing shed at the al-Hasa date market. Left: **A five-kilo (11-lb) bag of "Khlas Date First Class Supreme" from Al-Shaykh's Nakhal Al-Rafi'ah, "The Lofty Palm Grove."**

earth. The contents of the trench are set on fire, and later the burned earth and ash are spread beneath the palms.

We sat down for a mid-afternoon break in an open-air shed and drank lightly roasted coffee with freshly picked khlas dates. They tasted far better than anything I had tried in the previous week. Even al-Salim took notice. I asked al-Shaykh if the quality of dates differed within a single grove. He said that the shade and irrigation in the center of a grove causes higher humidity, which makes the dates there develop a softer flesh and a slightly less complex taste. He thought the dates on the sunny southern edge of his property were more chewy and had a more concentrated flavor, thanks to the hot wind and additional sunlight. Before I could ask, al-Shaykh read my mind and sent a man to bring back some dates from those palms. Within 20 minutes we were eating dates that were even better than what had been laid before us earlier. They were indescribably delicious.

I asked al-Shaykh if it would be fair to say that these khlas dates were the best examples from the best grove in the best growing region in the kingdom.

"It has been a good season in al-Mutairfi, but we are only one of several high-quality growers in this area," he replied.

Despite this modest response, there was little doubt in my mind that we were eating dates of extraordinary quality. But when I asked al-Shaykh to be more specific, he said merely, "These are pretty good dates."

Beneath the shade of the palms, I spotted a donkey tethered to a post. Remembering the saying about the earliest dates being suitable for the amir and the last ones for the donkey, I walked over to the animal. I held out my hand, palm up, and fed the donkey my last three California khalasahs.

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Al-Hasa Oasis: N/D 70, S/O 74, J/F 75
Saudi cuisine: J/F 99

Brooklyn's Musical Oasis

Now in the hands of 57-year-old Raymond Rashid, one of founder Albert Rashid's two sons, the business is stronger and better-known than ever, offering recordings found nowhere else in the country and mining its own holdings to release historical recordings that are putting a new generation in touch with virtuosos of the past.

Step a block and a half off Brooklyn's busy Atlantic Avenue into the modest storefront of Rashid Music Sales, and you can feel that you're entering a time warp: Black-and-white stills from classic Arab films hang on the wall. The floor is checkerboard tile, and beyond the small showroom, rows and rows of metal shelves hold boxes filled with Arab-music CDs. It looks as if a musical archive had taken over a 1950's soda shop.

It's a humble setting for the United States' oldest and largest purveyor of Arab music, a family-owned business that almost closed its doors in 2001.

In the United States, few people have done more than the Rashid family to keep Arab musical traditions alive. "There's no one like them. They have a deep historical consciousness, a sense of culture," says Ali Jihad Racy, professor of ethnomusicology at the University of California at Los Angeles. "They're more than sellers of good music; they're like an institution that has furnished the country with so much of the artistic heritage of the Arab world."

The Rashids' legacy stretches from the horse and buggy to the Internet. In 1920, nine-year-old Albert Rashid's family left Syria and came to rest in

Written by Marc Ferris
Photographed by Naomi Harris

Raymond Rashid welcomes customers to the family store at 155 Court Street. It's the third location for the 55-year-old business, founded when Ray was two years old. Opposite: Ray holds a photo of his father, Albert Rashid, who posed with the Egyptian Mohammed Abdul Wahab (with fez) during Albert's visit to Cairo in 1937, a time when he was beginning to import Arab films and music to the United States.

Davenport, Iowa. Later, Albert sought work in Detroit, whose automobile factories were a magnet for Arab-Americans seeking work. His life changed in 1934, when he saw the Egyptian film "The White Rose," with a soundtrack scored and performed by Mohammed Abdul Wahab.

By then he also possessed a newly minted degree in business administration from Wayne State University, and he began importing Arab films and showing them across the country. He also made a good living selling movie soundtracks and other recordings. He moved to New York City in 1949, and he opened a shop in Manhattan.

Work on the Brooklyn–Battery Tunnel uprooted the Arab community that had grown up near the island's southern tip, and with others Rashid relocated to Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn. There, in 1951, he opened what became a legendary emporium that attracted Arab immigrants and other visitors to the United States, who all regarded it as a gathering place, something between a salon and an oasis. "People called that store an institution," says Raymond. "It was a place they would come to after leaving their homes behind. My father always helped people locate a relative or acquaintance, find a newspaper with news from home or get the latest recordings."

When the composers of the soundtrack for the 1998 Dreamworks film "The Prince of Egypt" sought Arab music to inspire them, they came to the Rashids.

Stan Rashid, Raymond's older brother who helped run the business until he retired in 2001, remembers one well-known musician who received old-world hospitality at Rashid Sales. "This singer came in and didn't have any money or anything," he says. "We knew who he was and knew he was in bad shape, so my Dad gave him some money and said, 'Pay me back whenever you can.' The guy actually became very successful. He came back and said, 'I'll never forget what your father did for me.' That's the way my Dad acted with people."

The influence of the Rashids' business soon reached beyond the confines of the Arab-American world. Folk musician Pete Seeger wandered in one day, and another day Raymond provided music for a party given by artist Andy Warhol. Stan remembers the day Malcolm X visited. "He was looking for music on 45's for the jukebox in his mosque in Harlem," he says. "I was impressed by him more than anyone else who ever came into the store. I found him to be quite engaging and knowledgeable."

Opposite: **Rashid stocks Arab pop and non-Arab "world music" in addition to the most extensive collection of Arab classical music for sale in the US. "I do a lot of research," he says. "Sometimes I find music the labels didn't even know they had." Recently he's tapped boxes of his father's forgotten reel-to-reel tapes to publish a "Masters of Arabic Music" series.** Right: **Pop posters show, from left, Egyptian pop heartthrob Amr Diab and Mohammed Mounir's latest release "Ahmar Shafafe" ("Red Lipstick").**

The family also showed Arab movies at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Detroit Institute of Art, and in San Francisco, Los Angeles and Texas. They also mingled with local musicians, since Raymond himself played the *dumbak* (the goblet-shaped drum) as an amateur. Composer and international multi-instrument virtuoso David Amram recalls meeting Raymond at a jam session at Cafe Feenjon in Greenwich Village in the 1960's. Thanks partly to such occasions, Amram incorporated Middle Eastern rhythms and melodies into several of his compositions. And of course, he stopped by the store to stock up on recordings. "I realized that here was a place where people not only loved the music as much or more than I did, but knew so much and had so many different kinds of music that I had never even heard of," Amram says. "It's still that way."

In the 1980's, the family began promoting concerts in the city, including the first Arab concert held in New York by the Manhattan-based World Music Institute, says Robert Browning, WMI's executive director.

Browning's institute sells discs from all over the world, and he gets the majority of his Arab titles from the Rashids. "They have the broadest range of styles imaginable," he says. "Most places that do bring stuff in only deal with pop, whereas they import a variety of classical and regional traditional music."

The brothers also supplied discs to major music retailers, including Tower Records, Virgin and HMV. Thanks to the Internet, they now sell around the world: Customers include a shepherd on the Baltic island of Gotland who likes Um Kulthum and a Saudi man who sought an archival recording of three Saudi singers that had been released in France. "He couldn't find it over there, but we had it," says Stan.

And when the composers of the soundtrack of the Dreamworks film "The Prince of Egypt" sought Arab music to inspire them, they too came to Brooklyn.

Raymond says he has made some changes since he took over the business, which moved to its present location on Court Street in 2000. In addition to giving the storefront a facelift and cataloguing every title, he has begun selling DJ mixes and recordings by Arab rap groups, and he's offering non-Arab world-music discs on the Putumayo label.

Perhaps most important, he's joined with Michael Schlesinger of Global Village Music, advised by Rashid's renowned Brooklyn musician neighbor Simon Shaheen, to tap the past for direction for the future. He has released eight new titles on the "Masters of Arabic Music" series, all culled from reel-to-reel recordings collected by his father that were mostly stored in unmarked boxes.

One find included a recording of a 1952 Cairo concert by Farid Ghosen, whom Raymond likened to Paganini and whose discs disappeared after his death in 1985.

"Ghosen was a remarkable performer," says Racy. "To have this made available again is a revelation! Who knows what else Ray is going to find?"

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Naomi Harris (naomiharris@earthlink.net) is a free-lance photographer living in New York and Toronto. World Press Photo has selected her to represent Canada in this fall's annual photojournalist's masterclass in Amsterdam.

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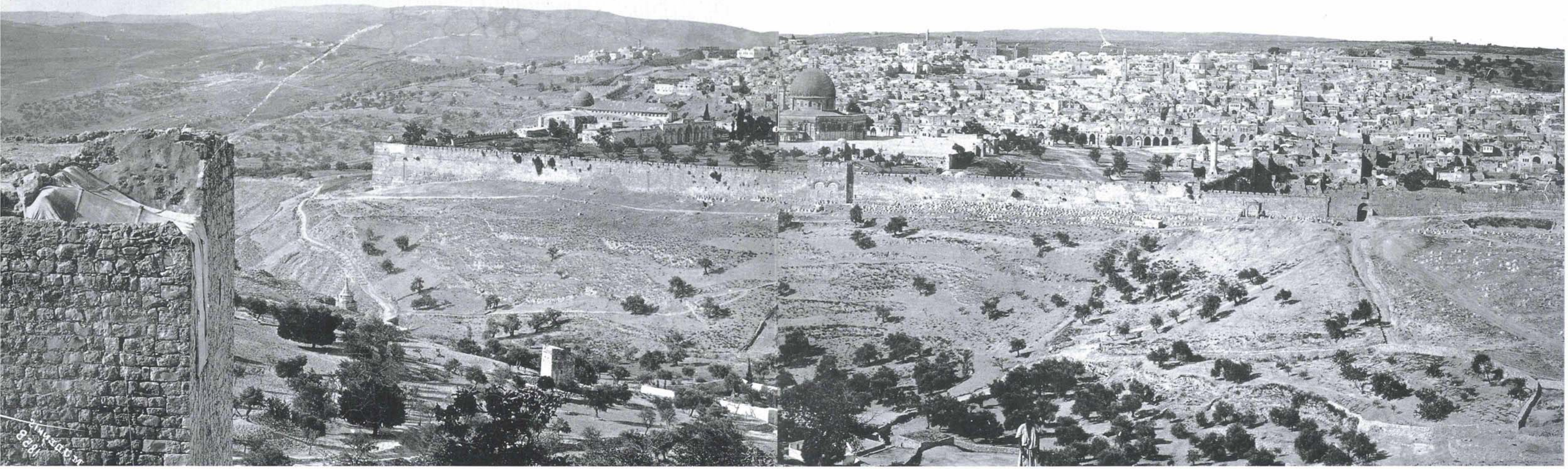


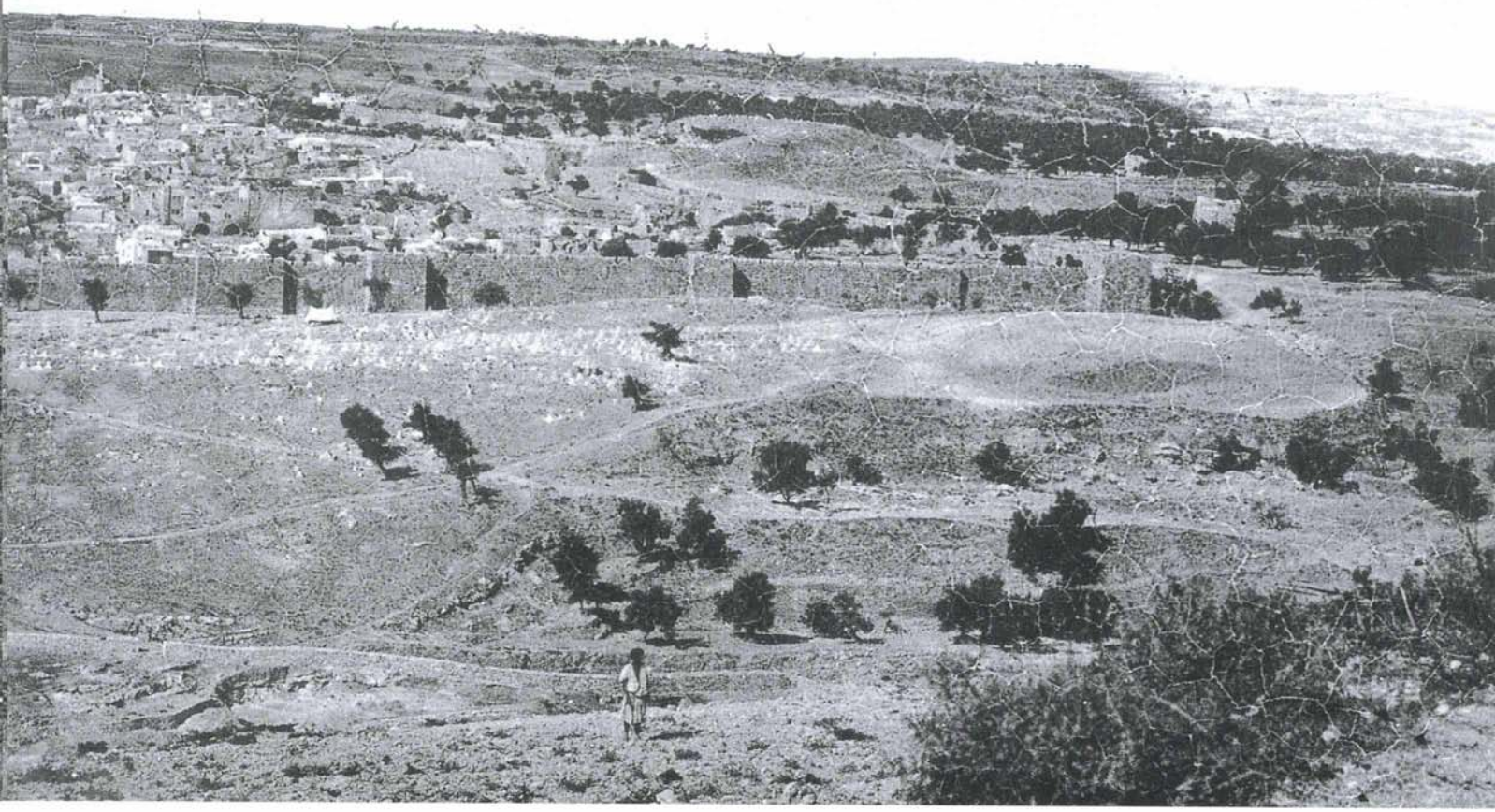
THE DINESS DISCOVERY

WRITTEN BY PINEY KESTING

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE ARCHIVES FOR HISTORICAL DOCUMENTATION AND THE MARI-CHA DINESS/BARNIER COLLECTION

John Barnier wasn't looking for treasure when he went to the garage sale in St. Paul, Minnesota in 1989. A photographer who specializes in historical printing techniques, Barnier had heard that this sale included glass-plate negatives. As he walked up to a cluttered table in the back of the dim garage, he spied eight wooden boxes. Barnier was delighted to find in them more than 100 glass plates, as well as a few albumen and silver prints and four handwritten notebooks. Assuming they were old copy negatives, Barnier and his friend bought the boxes and split the negatives between them.

In 1858, Diness used three 20 x 25 cm. (8 x 10") glass plates to make this panorama of Jerusalem from across the Kidron Valley on the Mount of Olives. At the far left foreground, the top of what is likely his darkroom tent is visible on the roof. Prominently visible in the city are, from left to right, **the mosque of Al-Aqsa; the Dome of the Rock, with Jewish and Armenian quarters behind it; the sealed Golden Gate; and the Lions Gate, which opens into Muslim and Christian quarters.**



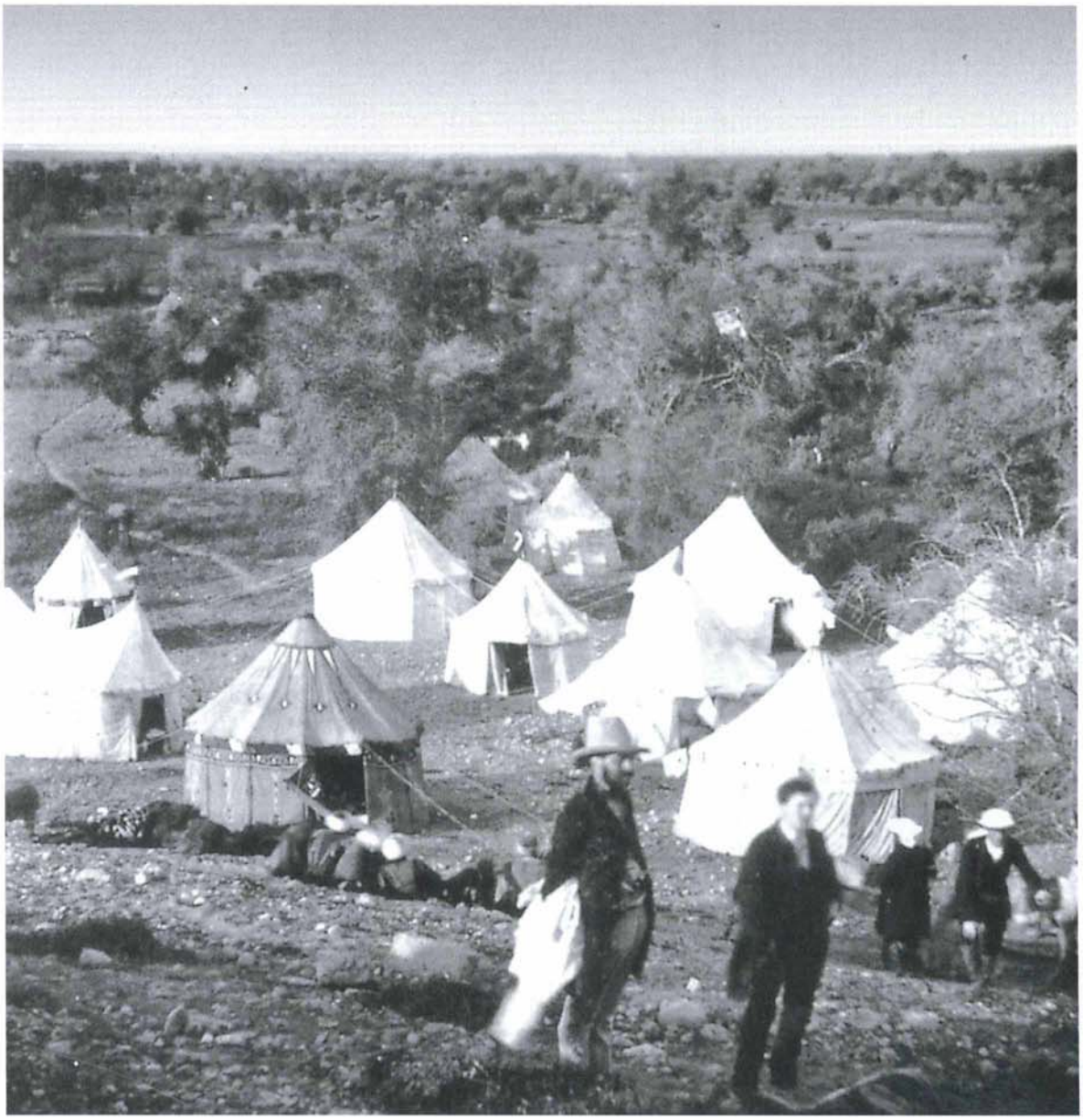
Months later, Barnier examined his portion of the purchase. He discovered that the negatives were not copies, but originals. More than that, they were wet-plate collodion negatives. (See "A Demanding Process," page 26.) The photographs showed Jerusalem and its environs, and the year 1858 was scratched into the emulsion of some of them. It seemed clear that the photographs would have some historical value, but the name that was scratched on some of them, "M. J. Dennis," was unfamiliar. Barnier wrote to the Harvard Semitic Museum in Cambridge, Massachusetts, which owns an extensive collection of early photographs from the Middle East.

Mary Ellen Taylor, then the museum's photo archivist, remembered that "Mendel John Diness" was a name mentioned in *Focus East: Early Photography in the Near East 1839–1885* (1988, Abradale Press), a book which also reproduced two prints attributed to the name. The book indicated that the extent of this photographer's work was unknown, and that the rest of his photographs and negatives had disappeared. Taylor compared the prints in the book to the copy slides Barnier had sent. "I kept thinking, 'This *can't* be true,'" she recalls. "'We are not going to find a collection like this so late in the game.' But we did, and it turned out to be an amazing story."

Father Carney Gavin, then curator of the museum and now president of the Archives for Historical Documentation in Brighton, Massachusetts, laughs when he recalls his own reaction to Barnier's inquiry. "'Minnesota!' I thought. 'How on earth did negatives of Jerusalem end up in a yard sale in St. Paul?'" Suspecting that Barnier's "Dennis" and Taylor's "Diness" were one and the same, Gavin persuaded Barnier to buy back the other half of the collection, print the images and send them to the museum for inspection. "There wasn't much research we could do until John sent us copies," says Gavin, who admits that despite his years of specialization in early photography from the Middle East, he had no prior knowledge of Diness.

Diness's view of the Dome of the Chain (at left) and the Dome of the Rock from the northeast. The figure at far left is Ermete Pierotti, who in 1864 published *Jerusalem Explored*, two volumes that used photographs by Diness and others as source material for lithographs.

Prior to the discovery of the salt prints in 1985 and Barnier's much larger 1990 find, it was assumed that Diness's work survived only in the form of the lithographs in Pierotti's book.



Diness moved to Cincinnati in 1860. Though his photography businesses failed, his stereoscopic views from the Holy Land sold well. This is half of one of the 40 Diness stereographs that survive, and it shows a travelers' encampment, probably in the Jordan Valley.

Diness was the first resident photographer in Jerusalem, and the first to take stereoscopic views in Palestine.

"No one at the museum knew who he was," adds Nitza Rosovsky, then curator of exhibits and a Jerusalem scholar. "If Barnier had found the photographs 10 years earlier, I don't think we would have been able to make the connection." She explains that Diness first came to the attention of scholars in 1985, when Dror Wahrman, a doctoral candidate in history at Princeton, published an article identifying Diness as one of Jerusalem's earliest photographers. Wahrman's research was based on mentions of Diness that Wahrman found in the memoirs of travelers Titus Tobler and William Mason Turner, who explored Palestine in the mid-19th century.

"Except for the mystery of Minnesota, it was extremely easy, almost cut-and-dried, to identify Barnier's purchase as the missing Mendel John Diness photographs," explains Gavin. In September 1990, Barnier and Wahrman met with Gavin and his staff at the museum. Barnier brought 40 stereoscopic images, along with 80 silver prints probably printed in the 1890's. Wahrman came with copies of lithographs from Ermete Pierotti's two-volume *Jerusalem Explored*, published in London in 1864. Prior to the discovery of the prints in 1985, it was assumed that none of Diness's work had survived except for several images reproduced as lithographs in Pierotti's book.

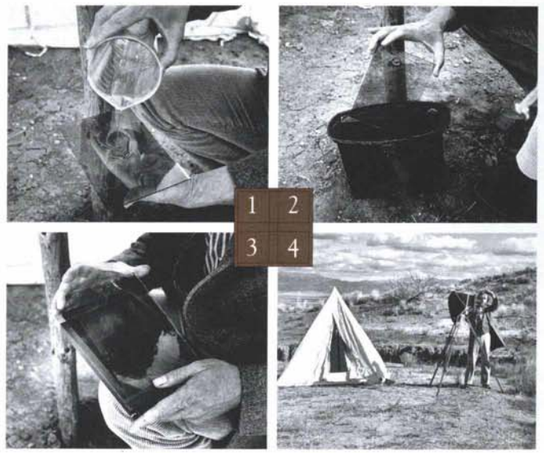
The lithographs and the prints were identical: Barnier's negatives were the Mendel John Diness collection. Emphasizing the importance of the discovery, Gavin explains that Diness's work marked the beginning of photography in Jerusalem. He was not only one of the very earliest photographers, but the first to be trained in Palestine itself. He was also the first resident photographer in Jerusalem, and the first to take stereoscopic views in Palestine. "As far as I know, Diness was also the first person to make a visual travelogue of the Holy Land with his photographs of Galilee, Nazareth and Bethlehem," Gavin adds.

According to Gavin, the Pierotti–Diness connection establishes Diness's place in the cultural and photographic heritage of the Middle East. The Italian architect and engineer hired Diness in 1856 to take photographs for him as he researched the topography and ruins of Jerusalem for his book. Pierotti and Diness were among the first on the site when the smaller "Ecce Homo" arch was discovered in 1857. In 1859, when the Ottoman governor of Jerusalem, Sürayya Pasha, hired

A DEMANDING PROCESS

When Mendel John Diness used the wet-collodion method in 1858, the process was only seven years old. It was widely used until 1880, when it was displaced by gelatin dry plates.

"Historically, I think the collodion process is the single most demanding and difficult process in photography," explains John Barnier. The photographer had to carry his darkroom, as well as highly combustible chemicals, wherever he went in order to develop the glass negative immediately after the photograph was taken. Thus Diness's equipment consisted of chemicals—which he mixed himself—slotted wooden boxes filled with glass negatives, and water for washing them. Of course there were also his cameras, his tripod and the bulky darkroom tent. "The sheer physical effort was incredible," notes Barnier. "When Diness stood on top of the Golden Gate [Bab al-Rahmah, in the eastern wall of Jerusalem], shooting over to the Haram al-Sharif, he and his helpers first had to carry all of his equipment up there."



That's when the real work began. In the darkroom tent, Diness would coat a sheet of glass with collodion—guncotton dissolved in alcohol and ether. When the glass was slightly dry, he sensitized it to light by dipping it into a silver-nitrate solution. Then he carefully fitted it into the camera, moved the camera into position and held the lens open to expose the plate, all before the plate could dry. Removing the plate, Diness would move quickly to process it with chemicals, wash it and dry it. If the image wasn't good, he would scrape the emulsion off the glass and start over. When the shoot was finished, Diness and his helpers would pack up and return to his studio to make salt or albumen prints from their day's work.

Pierotti to make restorations on the Dome of the Rock, Diness was one of the few non-Muslims granted access to the interior of the structure. His consequent access to the pasha resulted in the first photographic portrait of an Ottoman ruler of Jerusalem. (See page 29.)

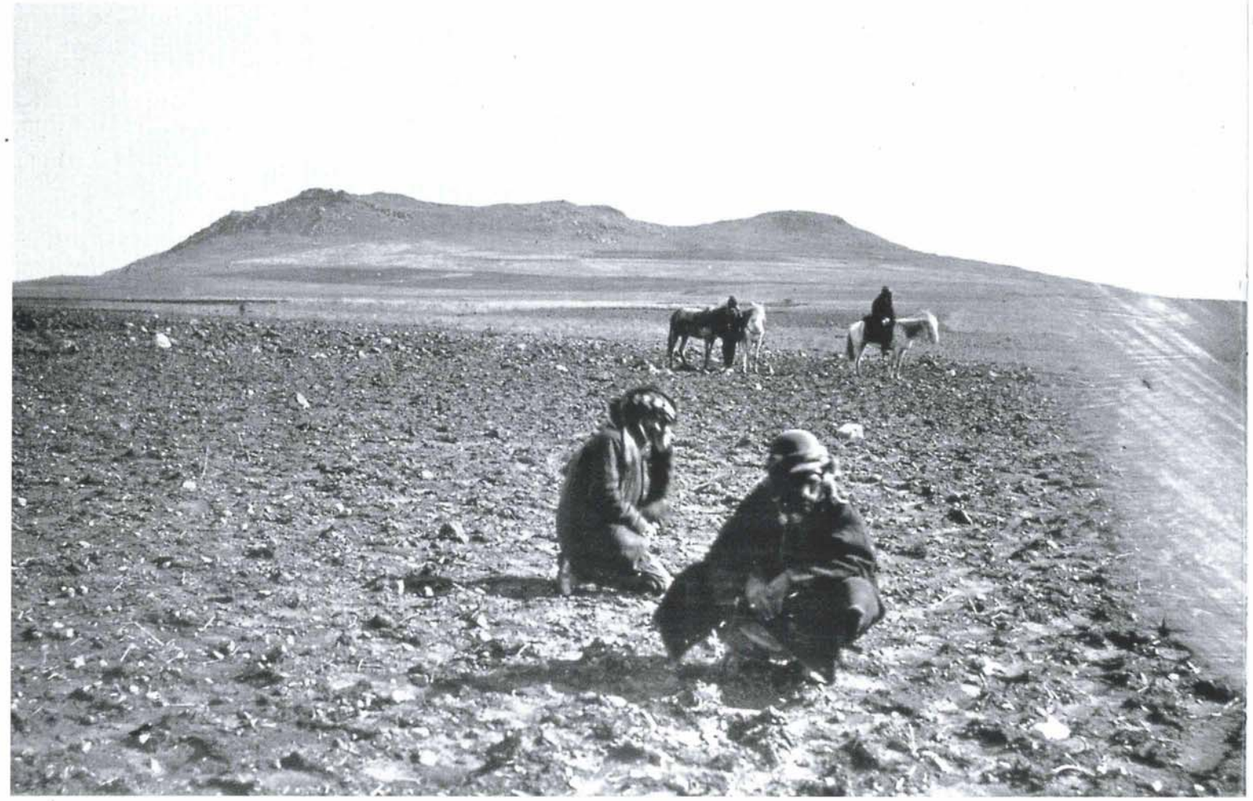
"Esthetically and technically, Diness was an extraordinarily good photographer, but Pierotti gave his photographs a *raison d'etre*," says Gavin. "This was photography directed toward the preservation, restoration and understanding of historic sites."

How did Diness's photographs end up in a Minnesota garage sale? A search into missionaries' archives and historical societies provided clues to Diness's life and employment in the United States—and, incidentally, led to another lucky discovery in the archives of the Speer Library at the Princeton Theological Seminary, where an obscure, unmarked paper bag was found to contain 60 original silver prints that also proved to have been made by Diness.

From 1861 on, Diness anglicized his name to "Dennis."

In April 1992, Kitty Eisele, a Minnesota-based producer for National Public Radio (NPR), broadcast a story on Barnier's discovery, and as her interview with him aired, one listener in Minneapolis couldn't believe his ears. "That's my stuff! That's the junk from my attic!" exclaimed William Poland, who contacted NPR, which in turn put him in touch with Gavin.

View of the Lions Gate from inside Jerusalem's walls. The gate has been sealed since the departure of the Crusaders. Pierotti can be seen here, too, between the cupolas, and his repeated presence in Diness's photographs hints at the extent of their collaboration. Left: An 1885 family portrait shows Mendel John Diness at center. Standing second from left is his daughter Mary Bishop Dennis, in whose New Jersey attic Diness's negatives resided until her grandson William Poland carried them to Minnesota.



North of Jerusalem, between Tiberias and Acre, Diness photographed the double-peaked hill known as the Horns of Hattin, where in 1187 Saladin defeated the Crusaders.

Poland explained that in the process of moving his elderly mother to Minneapolis in the late 1980's, he had cleared out her home in Summit, New Jersey. There he had found the wooden boxes, which he recalled had previously been stored in his grandmother's attic. He had offered them to a New Jersey historical society, which rejected them. In Minneapolis, he donated them to his friend's garage sale.

When Poland met Barnier and Gavin several months later, he shared his family history, including the facts that his grandmother's maiden name had been Mary Bishop Dennis, and that his great-grandfather, who died in 1900, had been Mendenhall John Dennis. Information from the family tree, as well as a handwriting sample that matched the notebooks found in the boxes, confirmed that Mendel Diness and Mendenhall John Dennis were the same.

The man who died as Mendenhall John Dennis on December 1, 1900 in Port Townsend, Washington was born Mendel Diness in 1827 in Odessa, in today's Ukraine. Trained as a watchmaker, Diness moved to Jerusalem in 1848, where one year later he caused a family scandal by accepting baptism as an Anglican Christian. Several years later he was baptized yet again, this time as a Campbellite, by an American missionary named James Turner Barclay. Diness's relationship with Barclay and other missionaries apparently launched his career: A Scottish missionary named James Graham taught him photography.

At the time of his death, he was known only as an author and minister.

By the time Graham left Jerusalem in 1856, Diness was sought after as the only local photographer. Both the Swiss physician Titus Tobler, one of the foremost 19th-century explorers of Palestine, and American traveler and author William Mason Turner compared his work to that of the best European photographers. Over the next three years, however, growing competition from other photographers —among them James Robertson and O. von Ostheim— encroached upon Diness's livelihood, and he decided it was time to search for a better life in America. Armed with letters of recommendation from Barclay, Diness and his family arrived in Cincinnati in October of 1860.

Over the next three decades, Diness struggled variously as a watchmaker and photographer, and finally as an itinerant preacher and lecturer. For reasons unknown, the profession which had earned him a place in the photographic history of 19th-century Jerusalem failed him in his new life. Partnerships in Cincinnati with H. S. Bosworth and Benjamin St. James Fry proved unsuccessful. Diness preached and lectured at churches in Ohio, Kentucky and Missouri, using his own photographs and stereoscopic images to illustrate talks about Jerusalem and Palestine. He spent several years as a clergyman in Boston; in Dayton he spent seven years, from 1887 to 1894, as chaplain at the Dayton Asylum for the Insane. At the time of his death, he was known only as an author and minister.

"I don't think any of us in the family ever knew he was a photographer," comments Poland. "I'm glad someone found the photographs who realized their value and didn't just try to resell them. This is how we keep history alive."

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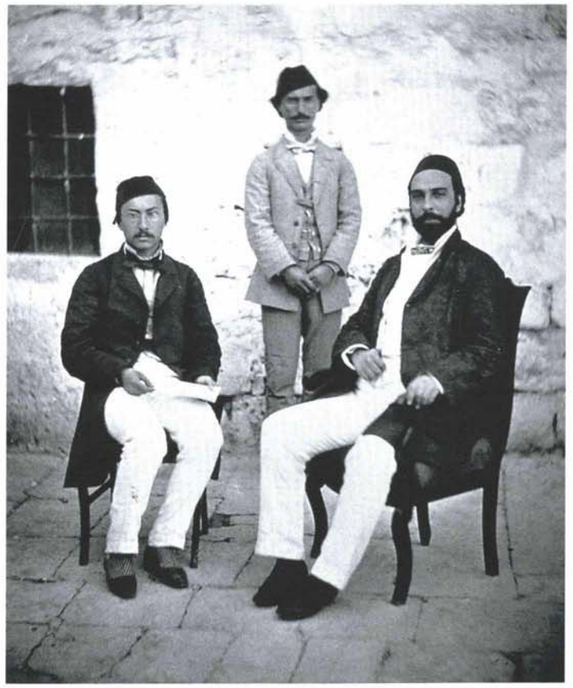


One of the only known portraits of Sürayya Pasha, governor of Jerusalem, who posed for Diness in 1859 with a secretary (left) and a servant.

THE DINESS COLLECTION

The first exhibition of the long-lost Diness collection was at the Harvard Semitic Museum in 1993, three years after Barnier contacted the museum about his mysterious discovery. Father Carney Gavin, then curator of the museum and now president of the Archives for Historical Documentation in Brighton, Massachusetts, organized the exhibition with his team and produced the accompanying catalogue, *Capturing the Holy Land: M. J. Diness and the Beginnings of Photography in Jerusalem*, illustrated with 59 of the Diness prints. That same year, part of the Diness collection was exhibited at the University of Portland, Oregon, as well as in Jordan.

In 1996, Barnier sold the original collection of prints, glass-plate negatives and boxes to the Israel Museum, where it is currently stored. From November 1996 through March 1997, selected reproductions of the

Diness prints were included in the exhibition "Jerusalem: Pictorial and Descriptive. The Holy City in 19th-Century Literature" at the John J. Burns Library of Boston College in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts.

In 2003, Robert and Marie Chantal Miller purchased the complete set of platinum prints that John Barnier had meticulously made from Diness's original glass-plate negatives. As curator of this collection, called the Mari-Cha Collection, Gavin and his team exhibited the prints in the spring of 2004 in Rome, Sulmona and Venice, Italy. "There is so much to be learned from these photographs," explains Gavin, who is now planning a series of seminars and exhibits that will take the Mari-Cha collection back to Italy for exhibition through the spring of next year. These exhibitions will also include a selection of Ermete Pierotti's maps and lithographs, the latter based on Diness photographs. "It is important to live lives linked with the past," Gavin notes, "and with these exhibits we are providing visual, personal and interactive access to the oldest accurate, on-the-spot photographs of people and places in Jerusalem."

MARSEILLE

Where Worlds Adjoin

"Come on, hurry up!" I heard a woman call in Arabic as I disembarked from a taxi downtown. A well-dressed lady wearing a head-scarf was urging her two children on, probably to school. Across the street I spotted a Restaurant Oriental announcing Tunisian specialties—*couscous, tajine, grillades, salades*. On the opposite corner was the Syrian Air office. A tall black woman in a long African dress strode majestically across the street, ignoring cars. Rolling leisurely past between me and the airline office were three bicycle-mounted police officers, two men and a woman, unarmed.

Europe? Yes, sort of. This is Marseille, *le Vieux Port* ("the Old Port"), the pulsating heart of the oldest city in France and Europe's third largest port, after Amsterdam and Rotterdam.

A block away, a small crowd of tourists stands around a brass plaque set into the Old Port's quay. "Here in 600 BC Greek sailors came ashore from Phocea, a Greek city of Asia Minor. They founded Marseille, from which civilization spread throughout the western world."

The leader of the Greeks was a certain Protis, and the trend of Mediterranean immigration to Marseille that began with him has not stopped since. The Ligurian tribe that inhabited the area set a precedent for welcome, according to legend, by allowing the daughter of the Ligurian king to marry Protis. Soon a small town, Massalia, grew up here and traded in oil, wine, bronze objects, arms, salt, slaves and ceramics. In time, the power and

Marseille's *Vieux Port*, or Old Port, has sheltered ships for more than 2600 years—though today's craft are pleasure boats rather than the Massalian trading vessels of the past. Now as then, the mingling of residents, immigrants, mariners, fishermen and traders gives the city a unique cosmopolitan hum.

WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY TOR EIGELAND

influence of the Massalians reached north into the Rhone Valley and west to the Iberian Peninsula and, later, as far south as Senegal and farther north to Brittany. The Massalians even explored other northern coasts as far as Iceland.

Run as a republic, the city was reputed for wise laws, and it was known as a center of culture. Even when it was occupied by Rome in the first century BC, and later when it came under the sway of other powers, it never lost its independent, sometimes rebellious, spirit, and it usually enjoyed some degree of autonomy. In 1800 it formally aligned—reluctantly—with France.

The leader of the Greeks was a certain Protis, and it was he who started a trend of circum-Mediterranean immigration to Marseille that has hardly stopped since.

Ever a place of merchants, traders and seamen, it was Marseille that established France's first chamber of commerce in 1599. Almost as important: The first sidewalk café opened in Marseille in the 17th century. (Parisian ones came later.)

But back to the bronze plaque: All around it there was the great buzz of the popular morning fish market. Although the Old Port now harbors mostly pleasure craft and ferries, small, tubby fishing boats still chug in every morning around nine to unload colorful catches. Chefs searching for the multiple ingredients of the world-famous, complex *bouillabaisse marseillaise* mingle with housewives and curious tourists.

Lining the other quays of the Old Port are well-kept five- or six-story modern buildings, every one with an outdoor café or restaurant putting the ground floor to commercial, social and esthetic use. They range from fancy seafood and bouillabaisse restaurants to pizzerias and ice-cream parlors.

As the day wears on to evening, the cafés' population gradually increases. Business is done here, papers are read, friends met; the nearby noise of traffic seems to bother no one, and

Above: **The construction of a shopping center near downtown uncovered Greek ruins from the second and third centuries BC.** Opposite: **Traffic runs thick around the quays of the Old Port, which reaches well into downtown.** Below: **The city's oldest neighborhood, Le Panier, rises onto Les Moulins, a hill named for the windmills that once topped it. The hill was the site of the original Massalia.**

the brilliant Mediterranean light reflects off the water, bathing the port in light from above and below.

There is, I believe, no better place in the world to have a cup of coffee. I sat down at La Samaritaine, a local favorite on the quay. I studied the people around me: southern French, Arab, Italian, Corsican—and noticeably few from the northern half of France. It is this human mixing, thanks to what Protis started, that makes Marseille unlike any other French city: It is truly a city of the south.

Everything seemed gentle and friendly, and I realized I felt at home here, comfortable, safe, enjoying life. What had happened to that stereotype of Marseille as a rough-and-tumble city that was the French version of Al Capone's gangland Chicago?

"Marseille has been cleaned up and no longer has this image of insecurity.

We have not had serious crime in a long time. The municipal police are not even armed," says Dominique Vlasto, president of the Marseille Tourism Office and a member of the European Parliament. "What we have mostly are problems of what we call *petite insecurité*—the grabbing of a handbag or stealing something out of a car. By worldwide standards we don't have great problems."

And gone are the days, she says, when the activity of the port was driven by colonial commerce from Indochina, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Ivory Coast and Senegal. "There used to be great hotels all around the port area," she says. This is, however, coming back, thanks in great part to cruise ships, conventions and tourism. In the last decade, the city has expanded and

In 1599, Marseille opened France's first chamber of commerce. In the next century, it opened the country's first sidewalk café. (Parisian ones came later.)

improved its beaches and restored old quarters of the city. Since 2001, France's bullet train, the *train à grande vitesse* (TGV), has put Marseille within three hours of Paris—less than the time the journey would take by air, if you count pre-departure waiting time.

"This place used to be weather-beaten sea dogs and gangsters," says free-lance writer Nick Constance. "Now it's truly cosmopolitan. Of course, there are still problems, but the multi-ethnicity, once a liability, is now being seen as a rich vein of artistic discovery and business opportunity. It's a place of great liberality where, once you make the effort, the locals are enthusiastically accommodating."

All this, along with the concurrent two-year-old boom in cheap European airfares, means that people from cooler northern climes are not only vacationing and attending conventions in Marseille, but are also buying secondary residences, pushing real estate values upward by some 30 percent.

Being "back on the map" in such a positive way makes the city feel as if someone had turned on bright lights. Everything in Marseille today seems interesting, and walking is the best way to explore the city.

A good place to start, tourist guide Christine Fournier told me, is the site of the original Massalia, which rises above the Old Port onto a hill called Les Moulins ("The Mills"), where 500 years ago there were 16 windmills. As is true in many Mediterranean cities, says Fournier, wherever the Marseillais today try to build something new, they often run into something old. Builders of a parking lot just above the Old Port recently found evidence of the Roman-era port and realized that theirs had been a large and important city in Roman times as well. So they made a museum out of their discovery: the Museum of the Roman Docks.

A few steps up the hill from the museum, there is a shop selling traditional Marseille soap. There used to be 80 soap factories in Marseille, but now only two are left. This too, says Fournier, may be changing, for Marseille is also a city rediscovering its roots.

"We know that soap made from olive oil originated in the Middle East a long time ago," she says. "It is very good for the skin. For washing clothes it's cheap and will last a very long time. The real thing is made from 72 percent vegetable oils—mostly olive oil—water and soda."

Winding our way up to the top of the hill, we find the neighborhood today called Le Panier ("The Basket"), traditionally a home for immigrants. In its narrow streets and lanes, interrupted occasionally by stairs, we enjoy a calm entirely different from the buzz of the Old Port. The three- and four-story apartments lining the streets are painted in natural Provençal colors—mostly yellows and oranges—some with pale blue shutters and multi-colored laundry lines stretching out the windows. At the top of the hill is Place des Moulins, a little square that is an amazing, compact melting-pot of humanity: Italians, Corsicans, Muslim Cormoreans, North Africans, Vietnamese, Catalans, Armenians and West Indians, to mention a few. It is a wonderful place to people-watch.

As much as Le Panier invites lingering, I was curious to see the concentrations of Muslims in the city, for nearly a quarter of the population—some 200,000 out of 800,000—is officially Muslim, and the true numbers may well be higher. We returned to the Old

Below: **Fruit and produce from all over the Midi region of France, along with fish from the Mediterranean, are staples of the morning market in the heavily Arab and African neighborhood of Capucins-Noailles.** Below right: **The elaborate fish stew known as *bouillabaisse* is Marseille's culinary signature. It's made with—at a minimum—*rascasse* and *chapon de mer* (both types of scorpion fish), whiting, conger eel, red mullet and john dory. Spiny lobster, crab and *cigale de mer* (a lobster-like crustacean) should be used minimally if at all. Olive oil, onions, tomatoes, garlic, parsley, saffron, fennel, thyme, bay leaf and orange peel all add up to one of the world's great seafood dishes. The broth and the fish are eaten separately.**

Below: **Olive oil soap has been made for some 1000 years in the south of France, and since the 16th century in Marseille, its ingredients defined by a royal decree of 1688. According to local historians, there were once 80 soap factories in the city. An old-style soapmaster mixes olive and vegetable oils, alkaline ash from sea plants and Mediterranean salt water, and heats them for 10 days in cauldrons. The mixture is poured into shallow stone pits and allowed to harden partially, and is then cut into cubes and molded. Today, the fragrant, distinctively stamped cubes are a specialty item popular with tourists.** Below right: **At the morning fish market at Le Vieux Port, a restaurateur shops for the freshest daily fare.**

Port and turned right a few hundred meters up the city's main thoroughfare.

At once we found ourselves in another urban world of narrow streets and lanes which might as well have been in Marrakech or Cairo. North African Arabic mixed with French, and many men wore traditional *jellabas*, or gowns. The women often seemed to be running small businesses.

One of the busiest markets here is the Marché des Capucins ("The Capuchin Market"), where beautifully fresh fruit and vegetables, as well as spices from all over the world, sell at reasonable prices, all amid cafés with sidewalk tables. Just up the street there is a small, friendly Muslim bookshop, and around the corner is a mosque, really just a modest prayer hall, one of 51 in the city.

Despite the firm and vibrant Muslim presence, there are no old Muslim monuments, no great mosques nor ruins of such as one finds in Spain. In fact, there is hardly any physical trace of Muslim history here. I had read that Marseille has always been a practical, unsentimental city, but I wanted to know more.

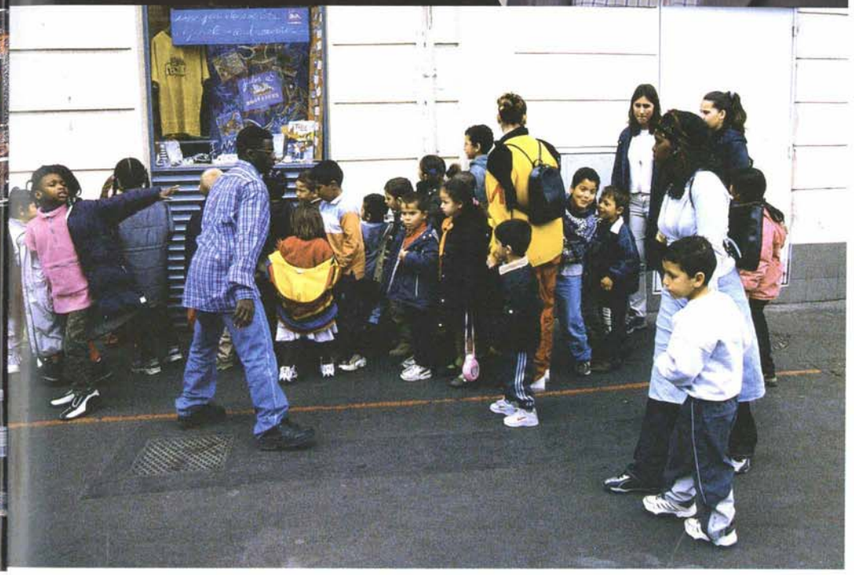
Soheib Bencheikh is an Algerian cleric, a young intellectual I had read about as a man of peace and a promising leader of European Muslims; some call him "the Grand Mufti of Marseilles," though there is no such official position. Why, I ask him, is the history of Muslims in Marseille so blank?

Early on, he explains, the first Muslims to come to Marseille were "ambassadors, or traders, or merchants. They did not come here to settle. That was unthinkable. In the Middle Ages, Muslims who came here had a choice we call 'B or B'—'baptism or the boat.' The first group to have the right to a Muslim place of prayer was Turkish merchants at the time of the French Revolution. Then Napoleon, not yet emperor, brought in through Marseille a corps of Egyptian soldiers called the Mamluks, like a foreign legion." Around 1906, more Turkish and Arab merchants started to appear.

During World War I, France recruited some 200,000 Moroccan and another 200,000 Algerian soldiers, and although all passed through Marseille, "the survivors didn't stay in France," Bencheikh says. The first "durable migration" came with economic growth after the war. The greatest migrations took place in the three decades after World War II, a time Bencheikh calls "the glorious 30 years." "Even after the French had lost their whole colonial empire, France remained economically very strong.

In a city fueled by blends of foods, languages, histories and religions, "We don't integrate ourselves; we adjoin each other. The word foreigner is totally foreign."

Top: **About one-quarter of Marseille's residents are Muslims. Though the city's first place of Muslim prayer was established at the time of the French Revolution, the greatest waves of Muslim immigration came after World Wars I and II and, especially, between 1945 and 1975.** Upper: **Some of the most popular new music in France is coming out of Marseille, where artists such as hip-hopper and scratchmaster DJ Rebel** (left) **works his craft at A.M.I. Studios in the city.**



During the 1950's, 1960's and the beginning of the 1970's, there was an organized voluntary immigration. That was the beginning of the massive presence of Islam here." The greatest shifts in the population came in the 1960's, when tens of thousands of North Africans, as well as Algerian-born French, flooded into the "mother" country as France lost control of Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria.

Today, Bencheikh continues, in this city fueled by a rich cultural blend of new foods, languages and religions, "we don't integrate ourselves; we *adjoin* each other. The word *foreigner* is totally foreign. There is a total tolerance here. I have never seen such a *mélange* as here: Jews, Arabs, Christians, Armenians, turbans, jellabas. The point is that nobody really bothers anyone else."

Despite this, says Salah Ezziddin Bariki, an Algerian-born city councilor who fights juvenile delinquency, economic opportunity is not always spread around equally. "We need some positive discrimination. There are about 3000 Arabs in the postal service, that's all. And there are some in the security business, the restaurant industry and of course in those parts of general commerce that are directed toward our own community and toward trade with North Africa," he says.

Upper: **Soheib Bencheikh and Shaykh Abdul Rahman are two of the city's top Muslim leaders. For them, tolerance is a watchword—along with jobs and education.** Lower: **Young members of the city's next generation of leaders take a break from the classroom to visit Le Vieux Port.**

On the cultural side, Marseille's star is rising nonetheless. The couscous of North Africa has evolved into a national French dish, eaten by everyone—even more than bouillabaisse. (It is much cheaper and infinitely easier to make.) Marseille's radio stations offer as much *rai*, Algeria's rock-pop, as anything else, and Marseille is a hotbed of Maghreb-French hip-hop blends. In sports, the world's top soccer player, Zinedine Zidane—known as "Zizou" to his fans—is from Marseille, the son of Algerian parents.

To keep its cultural blending and adjoining strong, Marseille has a line of defense against racism that is unique in France. Imam Bachir Dahmani, a middle-aged man with, I believe, the kindest face in all Marseille, told me about Marseilles Espérance ("Marseille Hope"), an interfaith council created by city hall in 1990 with Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Buddhist leaders who meet once a month "to iron out any problems there may be."

"We, the religious leaders of Marseille, pray all the time for tolerance," Dahmani says quietly. More than in many French cities, that prayer is being answered in Marseille.

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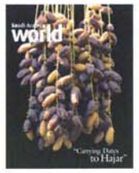
Related articles from past issues of *Aramco World* or *Saudi Aramco World* can be found on our website, www.saudiaramcoworld.com; click on indexes, then subjects:

Zinedine Zidane: S/O 98
Rai music: M/A 00

Reader's Guide

WRITTEN BY JULIE WEISS



For students: We hope this two-page guide will help sharpen your reading skills and deepen your understanding of this issue's articles.
For teachers: We encourage reproduction and adaptation of these ideas, freely and without further permission from *Saudi Aramco World*, by teachers at any level, whether working in a classroom or through home study.

—THE EDITORS

Analyzing Visual Images

This issue of *Saudi Aramco World*'s Reader's Guide offers an unusual opportunity to analyze photographs that were taken in the 1850's, when photography was still new. How can you tell that the photographs in "The Diness Discovery" are early photographs? How do early photographs differ from today's? The following guidelines can help you find responses.

- **Focus:** Which objects in the photos are sharply focused? Which appear to be blurry? What might account for the difference? How do photographers today use in-focus and out-of-focus images in their photos? Find examples. How do they compare to these early photos?

- **Production Process:** What evidence do you see in the photos of the process by which they were taken and developed? (Hint: Check out the lower left-hand corner of the panoramic photo on page 20.) Read the sidebar "A Demanding Process" on page 26 about the wet-plate collodion process. How does knowing about the process affect your thinking about the photos themselves?

- **Subject matter:** "The Diness Discovery" reports that Mendel John Diness's photography business failed in the 1860's, but that his stereographs of the Holy Land sold well. Why were people in the 1850's particularly interested in photos of the Holy Land? To answer the question, research the role of religion in the United States in the 1850's. How is it similar and how is it different from today?

While photos are much more common today than they were in the 1850's, there are still certain subjects that people love to see photos of. Think, for example, of recent photos of Mars, or images from the Hubble telescope, or photographs of the discovery of the *Titanic*. What other photo subjects do people today find particularly interesting? Why?

Class Activities

The activities in this section are designed to engage students with the material in *Saudi Aramco World* while encouraging them to connect it to the larger themes they explore in their other studies. This month's activities revolve around two themes: **Treasure Hunt** and **Variation**.

Theme: Treasure Hunt

Have you ever been on a treasure hunt? You're given a list of objects, and you have to go out and find them. Most of us go on small-scale treasure hunts quite regularly. Can you find a pair of shoes you like that also fit? Can you find your favorite flavor of ice cream at the convenience store? Concert tickets after they're sold out? A stove bolt in the basement? This issue of *Saudi Aramco World* presents three instances of treasure hunting. Take a look—and see what you can find!

How do people decide what they want to find?
In a treasure-hunt game, someone else tells you what to look for. In real life, you need to make your own decisions. Read "Looking for the Khalasah" and "'Carrying Dates to Hajar.'" In the articles, Eric Hansen provides a written map of the route he took to find the world's best dates. Translate his story into a timeline or flow chart that shows how he became interested in dates and what made him want to find the world's best dates. Now think about something you want. How did you come to want it? Write a narrative identifying what you want and explaining why you want it. Then describe how

Class Activities (cont'd.)

you might obtain it, taking into account such sources as your needs (e.g., for shoes), your resources (e.g., your friends) and so on.

When you're trying to find something, how do you decide where to look?
Sometimes it's hard to know. Read "The Diness Discovery." It describes a treasure hunt—more or less in reverse. John Barnier began his hunt by finding a treasure: glass-plate negatives and albumen and silver prints. His hunt then focused on finding information: Where did the treasure come from? In a small group, make a board game that shows the path Barnier took to find the answers. Include his findings along the way, his setbacks and detours he took or might have taken. Use a little artistic license here. Remember that there are many places to look, and it's not always clear which will be the most productive. And don't forget to include chance! Use photographs from the magazine to illustrate your board game—as the background, or as stops along the way, or maybe as goals.

What happens when there's one best place to look for certain "treasures"?
"Brooklyn's Musical Oasis" suggests that anyone, anywhere in the world, who wanted to locate a specific piece of Arab music—particularly one that was rare or obscure—would do well to look first at Rashid Music Sales. What makes Rashid one of the world's major hubs for Arab music? How does the Rashid family benefit from being a major source for Arab music? How do the Rashid clients benefit? What drawbacks, if any, might arise because the Rashid stock is so large and comprehensive? You might look at the big, multi-store bookstores like Barnes and Noble or Borders for a possible comparison. Both sellers and buyers benefit from the large scale of the stores, yet some people worry about how such large stores diminish a sense of local community and reduce the diversity of things for sale, whether it's books or music. Might similar concerns apply to Rashid Music Sales? What other concerns can you think of?

Now think about your own experience. Describe a treasure hunt you've been on, or might go on, that probably has only one place to look. What is it? Have all class members write their places on chart paper so you have a class list. Ask the same questions about the destinations on your list that you asked about Rashid Music Sales. What generalizations can you make about single-destination treasure hunts?

Theme: Variation

Variation, according to the dictionary, refers to different forms of something. Take dogs, for example. All dogs are dogs (you can tell the difference between a dog and a cat), but numerous varieties (breeds) exist within the species. The following activities will give you a chance to explore variations in both the physical and cultural worlds.

How does variation function in the natural world?
Charles Darwin, whom you probably know as the scientist who devised the theory of evolution, observed that each island in the Galapagos Islands had its own kind of finch. Each was recognizable as a finch, but he observed distinct variations among different members of the species. What caused the variations? In his theory of natural selection, Darwin wrote that the species and varieties that survive and thrive are those that are best suited to their environment. What exactly does that mean? Let's bring the theory down to earth. Let's say you plant a garden in a shady yard. You plant five different types of flowers, but only one survives—the hosta, which is the only one of the five that grows best in shade. The plants that need a lot of sun—the marigolds and asters, for example—died in your garden because they didn't get enough light. Now think of that same situation on a larger scale, and you've got the idea behind variation and natural selection.

Why do so many varieties of dates exist?
According to "Looking for the Khalasah" and "Carrying Dates to Hajar," 600 different varieties of dates exist. All biological creatures vary. Nature produces variations among dates, just as it did among finches in the Galapagos. Here's the question Darwin might have asked about dates: What is the best fit between dates and the environment? Read "Looking for the Khalasah." Highlight the passages that explain where dates grow best; which types of dates flourish in which environments; and the decisions about where to cultivate dates in the United States. Which of the selection processes occurred naturally? Which did humans help along? To answer the questions, make two lists. On the first, list examples of natural selection among dates. On the other, list examples of how people decided which types of dates to plant. For example, what reasons did American farmers have for preferring medjool dates rather than khalasah? How important were commercial factors?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of variation among dates?
After reading the two articles on dates, brainstorm as a class reasons why variation among dates is a good thing—for farmers, consumers, and date plants themselves. Then brainstorm how variation might cause problems for the same three groups. Overall, would you say the benefits outweigh the drawbacks, or vice versa? Explain.

How does cultural variation compare to biological variation?
Now turn your attention to cultural variation. One important difference between cultural and biological variation is that culture is human-made; it does not refer to physical variations among humans (such as height, body type, and eye, skin and hair color). People create cultures, and there are as many variations among them as there are physical variations among the date palms. How do different cultures coexist?

Read "Marseille: Where Worlds Adjoin." Write answers to these questions: How did Marseille come to be a meeting place for quite different cultures? How did colonialism affect Marseille's cultural landscape? What cultural groups coexist in Marseille today? How do the people of Marseille ensure their peaceful coexistence?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of cultural variation in Marseille?
It's nearly a cliché to say that cultural diversity is a good thing, but here's a chance to explore what makes it so, and what problems might come along with diversity. Repeat the brainstorming activities you did above in order to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of cultural variation.

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Events&Exhibitions

In late summer and early fall, two exhibits in London complement each other. **Heaven on Earth: Art from Islamic Lands** is an intimate introduction to the decorative arts of the Islamic world that draws from the State Hermitage Collection of St. Petersburg and the Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art of London. The show's 133 works include calligraphy, textiles, jewelry, metalwork, goldsmithing, ceramics, and paintings; their dates range from the eighth to the 19th century and their provenance from the Iberian Peninsula to Persia and the Indian subcontinent. The exhibit introduces broad themes: the varying roles of religion, geometry and the human figure, and the tension between the glorification of God on the one hand and the glorification of earthly rulers—for whom many of the works were created—on the other. Five pages from the 16th-century Royal "Houghton" *Shahnama (Book of Kings)*, one of the finest manuscripts to come from the arts of the book in Persia, is a highlight of the show. Lunchtime talks on "East Meets West" are held each Friday in August, 1:15–1:30 p.m. Catalog. ⓘ www.hermitagerooms.org.uk. Hermitage Rooms, Somerset House, **London**, through October 3. Then, **Encounters: The Meeting of Asia and Europe 1500–1800** assembles more than 200 objects from the centuries after Europeans discovered the sea route to Asia that illuminate ways East and West perceived each other during a period of intense cultural, commercial and technological exchange that prefigured our own age of global economic integration. From Europe to Japan and lands in between, all sides traded in the exotica of the times: Porcelains, jewel-encrusted boxes, miniature paintings, silks, wallpapers and cashmere all fascinated the Europeans; clocks, mirrors and western-style perspective in paintings were no less exotic to Indians and Asians. ⓘ www.vam.ac.uk. Victoria and Albert Museum, **London**, September 25 through December 5.

Top: **In a detail from the *Shahnama*'s miniature "Sam and Zal are welcomed into Kabul," members of the household observe the courtly reception below.** Above: **This detail from a 17th-century Japanese Namban screen shows commerce with a Portuguese ship.**

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 of this expression, evolved into a powerful and flexible form of esthetic and spiritual art. 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 the 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**, through July 18.

Cleopatra in the Mirror of Western Art focuses on various visual interpretations of the legendary queen of Egypt. A selection of works traces the complex and fertile trajectory of the image and idea of Cleopatra in western culture. Musée Rath, **Geneva**, through August 1.

Timeless Connections: Exploring Tapestry Weave demonstrates the broad geographic dispersion and historical continuity of one of the world's oldest and most versatile textile techniques. The exhibition includes Tunisian and Iranian kilims, Egyptian Coptic material and objects from Mali. Textile Museum, **Washington, D.C.**, through August 1.

Tulipomania: The Tulip in the Art of the 16th and 17th Centuries. Europeans first encountered tulips as diplomatic gifts, as devices on Turkish arms and standards and as decorative motifs on textiles, jewelry and ceramics. Their exotic beauty overwhelmed botanists, gardeners and flower lovers, and tulip bulbs became objects of financial speculation that ultimately led to a tremendous economic crash in Holland. Tulips then took the role in Europe's cultural and artistic life that they had held in Turkey's, and this exhibition presents more than 200 appearances of tulips as and in art objects, gathered from some 50 private and public collections: tulips in silver, ivory, mother-of-pearl and enamel; tulips as Delft vases, as furniture inlay, on watches, in lace; and tulips in paintings, drawings and engravings. Catalog. Kunstgewerbemuseum, Schloss Pilnitz, **Dresden**, through August 8.

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. **Milwaukee [Wisconsin]** Public Museum, through August 8.

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. Closing reception attended by the artist August 26, 6–8 p.m. ⓘ 202-777-3208. Jewish Community Center, **Washington, D.C.**, through August 26.

Tied, Bound, Folded and Stitched: Tie-Died Textiles From the Academy's Collection pays tribute to master dyers from India, Indonesia, Cambodia, Japan and the Philippines who practice one of the simplest and most complex of the textile arts. The technique of binding individual areas of the cloth to shield them from the dye is known in India as *bandhani* or *bandhej*, which gave us the English word *bandana*, a blue or red handkerchief with white dots. Similar reserved-dot dying is known by the Malay word *plangi* in much of Southeast Asia; there and in Japan, the patterns made by the dots became extremely complex and beautiful. **Honolulu [Hawaii]** Academy of Arts, through August 29.

Ivories from the Ancient Orient to Modern Times approaches the art of carving in ivory and related substances (tortoiseshell, coral, ostrich-egg shell and antler) from the viewpoint of the different techniques and materials used in different times and places and the long history of the skills involved. Since the fourth millennium BC, most civilizations on five continents, including those of the Islamic world and of medieval Europe, appreciated ivory's beauty and tractability, and used it most often for objects of religious or dynastic significance. This is the first of three exhibitions devoted to specific materials and their use over time; the others will deal with faïence (glazed non-clay ceramics) and stucco and plaster. Musée du Louvre, **Paris**, through August 30.

The Arts of Fire: Islamic Influences on the Italian Renaissance focuses on the luxury glass and ceramics produced in Italy in the 15th and 16th centuries, establishing taste in European courts and becoming prized items for other collectors for 300 years. Techniques developed by Islamic glassmakers and potters in the Middle East between 800 and 1350 paved the way for the groundbreaking art forms of Renaissance *cristallo* (fine glass) and majolica (highly decorated glazed pottery), which represented high points of Renaissance art production. Objects on display include bottles, beakers, jars, lamps and tiles from the Getty Museum, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Catalog $65/$40. Getty Museum, **Los Angeles**, through September 5.

Evolutions uses a blend of Arabic, Persian and Turkish music and a variety of dance pieces inspired by the musical selections to explore cross-cultural influences and globalization. "Border Crosser" is a multimedia collaboration between filmmaker Michelle Mehri Mousavi, musician MaryAm Yusefsadeh and dancer Margo Abdo O'Dell that attempts to define the concept of home as the grounding force in the shaping of one's identity. In "Exotic," musicians and dancers address the evolution of the Hollywood stereotype of Middle Eastern dance and Middle Eastern women. Thursday–Saturday 8:00 p.m., Sunday 7:00 p.m. ⓘ 612-871-4444, www.margo1.com. Intermedia Arts, **Minneapolis**, September 9–12.

The Silk Road: Trade, Travel, War and Faith presents treasures from the collection of archeologist and explorer Aurel Stein, considered one of the richest in the world. Stein worked at the turn of the last century to uncover long-lost multicultural civilizations that had lain buried for up to 2000 years beneath the sands of eastern Central Asia. The show highlights more than 200 of Stein's seldom-seen manuscripts, paintings, objects and textiles on a journey that moves eastward from Samarkand via Dunhuang to Turfan in China through the Taklamakan and Gobi deserts. Exhibits range from antiwar poetry and court documents to reclaim land from squatters, down to mousetraps, desert shoes and a letter apologizing for behaving badly at a dinner party. British Library, **London**, through September 12.

Urban Islam looks at contemporary Islam in five cities: Paramaribo, Surinam; Dakar, Senegal; Marrakech; Istanbul; and Amsterdam. Young Muslims in the first four cities discuss how they experience their faith and talk about their lifestyle and youth culture—pop music, fashion, television and new media. In the Amsterdam section, people in The Netherlands with diverse backgrounds express their ideas about Islam on-screen, providing a continuous record of public opinion. The exhibition also provides background information about Islam and explanations of its basic principles, illustrated with classical Islamic objects, including beautifully decorated copies of the Qur'an and 18th-century miniatures from Iran. In addition, different views on Islam are discussed extensively on www.urbanislam.nl. KIT Tropenmuseum, **Amsterdam**, through September 12.

From Homer to the Harem: The Art of Jean Lecomte du Nouÿ displays more than 100 of his paintings, oil sketches and drawings, including some Orientalist pictures whose subjects were derived from his travels to Egypt and Morocco. This is the first retrospective of Lecomte du Nouÿ's work since his death in 1923. Dahesh Museum of Art, **New York**, through September 19.

Kings on the Tigris: Assyrian Palace Reliefs presents large alabaster reliefs depicting religious-magical scenes from the Assyrian court of Assurnasirpal II in Nimrud. The panels, newly restored from fragments, testify to the culture of the Assyrian Empire of the ninth century BC, showing in images and words the deeds of the rulers of the Tigris as well as aspects of life in Assyria. Also on display are more than 20 royal cuneiform inscriptions, originally concealed in building foundations, whose intended spiritual functions shed light on the reliefs. Catalog. Albertinum, **Dresden**, through September 29.

Treasures from the Royal Tombs of Ur returns to its Philadelphia home for a limited engagement following a five-year, 10-city tour and before traveling to additional sites. The show features more than 200 Sumerian treasures revealing traditions of royal life and death, excavated in the 1920's by Sir Leonard Woolley. They include the famous "Ram in the Thicket"—a statuette of a goat nibbling the leaves of a tree—jewelry, a comb, a wooden lyre decorated with a gold-and-lapis bull's head, games, furniture, seals and vessels of gold, silver and alabaster, many found in the intact tomb of a woman —a queen or high priestess—named Pu-abi who died between 2600 and 2500 BC, a high point of Sumerian culture. Catalog $75/$50. University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archeology and Anthropology, **Philadelphia**, through September.

Archaeologies of Childhood: The First Years of Life in Roman Egypt gives a glimpse into the lives of children in that place and time. As they do today, factors including status, ethnicity, gender and individual circumstances made for varying experiences of childhood. Objects displayed—including toys, dolls, remnants of children's clothing, images of children, protective amulets and educational tools—show what children looked like and how they learned and played, and also provide insight into the expectations and concerns of children in a North African culture that existed 2000 years ago when child mortality rates were high, health care and education limited, natural dangers abounded and child abandonment and slavery were facts of life. The exhibition also will feature material resulting from investigations of a child mummy from Roman Egypt. Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, **Ann Arbor, Michigan**, through September.

Tutankhamen—The Golden Beyond: Treasures from the Valley of the Kings is a worldwide exhibition of some 120 artifacts from the tomb of Tutankhamen and other royal tombs of the 18th Dynasty (15th and 14th centuries BC), many shown for the first time outside the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. **Basel [Switzerland]** Museum of Ancient Art and Ludwig Collection, through October 3. Thereafter Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle, **Bonn, Germany**.

Caliphs and Kings: The Art and Influence of Islamic Spain. In the eighth century, allies of the first Islamic dynasty, the Umayyads, conquered much of the Iberian Peninsula, today's Spain and Portugal. For the next seven centuries, this fertile and strategically located region, known in Arabic as "al-Andalus," was controlled by a succession of Muslim rulers. Inhabited by Christians, Muslims and Jews, it blossomed into the most culturally sophisticated region in the Mediterranean world and became—through trade, translation and migration—the center of dissemination of Islamic literature, sciences and arts to the rest of medieval Europe. The age of al-Andalus was, as Yale scholar María Rosa Menocal has written, "the chapter of Europe's culture when Jews, Christians and Muslims lived side by side and, despite their intractable differences and enduring hostilities, nourished a complex culture of tolerance." The art and influence of Islamic Spain are highlighted in this exhibition, which presents 89 objects from the renowned collection of the Hispanic Society of North America that have never before been lent to another institution, including works dating from the time of the Arab conquest in the eighth century through the 15th century, when the Muslims were expelled from Spain. The exhibition is part of the Washington-based Mosaic Foundation's 2004 Al-Andalus Festival Cultural Program. Catalog $35. Sackler Gallery, **Washington, D.C.**, through October 17.

The Trip to the Nile: Maxime du Camp and Gustave Flaubert in Egypt. Within months of the invention of photography in 1839, daguerreotypes were being made of Egyptian subjects. A decade later, the French government financed an expedition specifically to photograph the landscapes and monuments of Egypt, Palestine and Syria. It was led by Maxime du Camp, accompanied by Gustave Flaubert, then an entirely unknown writer. The expedition not only produced a collection of 214 photographs, of which du Camp published 125 in Paris in 1855, but also inspired diary entries and letters by Flaubert; together, their words and images constitute an uncommonly impressive documentation not only of the monuments of 19th-century Egypt but also of its people and the ways they lived. Sixty photographs are displayed. The book *The Trip to the Nile 1849–1850: Maxime du Camp and Gustave Flaubert in Egypt, Palestine and Syria* is on sale for €18 during the exhibition. Kestner-Museum, **Hannover, Germany**, through October 17.

Eternal Egypt: Masterworks of Ancient Art From the British Museum presents 3000 years of history from one of the world's earliest, most sophisticated and most fascinating civilizations. Ranging from intimate possessions to monumental statues, the 144 diverse works on display include stone sculptures, papyri, jewelry, cosmetics and funerary objects as well as portraits and personal items of famous pharaohs such as Akhenaten, Amenhotep III, Tutankhamen and Ramesses the Great. None have been previously exhibited in North America. Ancillary event: "Egyptomania!" celebrates the lasting influence of ancient Egyptian culture on October 16–17. Local restaurants offer Egyptian-themed menus during the exhibition's run. Royal British Columbia Museum, **Victoria, BC, Canada**, through October 31.

The Thracians: The Golden Realm of Orpheus presents more than 1000 artifacts that demonstrate the extraordinary artistic ability and craftsmanship of the Thracians, an Indo-European people, originating in present-day Bulgaria, who settled southeastern Europe and parts of Asia Minor. The exhibition presents the artworks, many of them in gold and silver, within the Thracian civilization's full context, which extends from 7000 BC to the second century of our era. Trade and cultural connections with Greece and Persia, with the Scythians and other Eurasian steppe peoples, and with the Celts, the Romans and even the ancient Egyptians formed Thracian culture, whose expressions—represented in this exhibition—include the Orphean religion, with its close ties to Greek mythology; the magnificent work of Thracian metalsmiths; and the richly furnished graves of Thracian aristocrats. Also displayed are recently discovered wall-paintings from the Aleksandrovo burial and the communal hall of the village of Drama, with its clues about Thracians' everyday life. Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle, **Bonn, Germany**, through November 28.

The Queens of Sheba: Traditional Clothes of Yemen features spectacular women's costumes from the eight geographical regions of Yemen, accompanied by shawls, veils and other accessories, along with men's garments. The commercial development that accompanied the spread of Islam, beginning in the seventh century, helped Yemeni fabrics reach a wide public. Today, some textile techniques—such as weaving on horizontal hand looms and resist dyeing using horizontal binding—have survived, along with the natural dyes that have characterized the country's products for centuries: indigo, *wars* (which dyes yellow and orange) saffron and woad. The exhibition is complemented by a photographic archive locating each of the textiles in its particular regional architecture, landscape and society. ⓘ www.cdmt.es, +34-93-731-5202. Centre de Documentació i Museu Tèxtil, **Barcelona**, through December.

Mummy: The Inside Story uses cutting-edge computer graphics and the latest scientific and medical research to allow visitors to view a "virtual unwrapping" and autopsy of the 2800-year-old mummy of Nesperunnub, priest of Karnak in Egypt. Visitors sit in a state-of-the-art immersive theater where, wearing 3-D glasses, they can scrutinize the mummy's body and objects inside the wrappings. British Museum, **London**, through March 27, 2005.

Masterpieces of Islamic Art from the Metropolitan Museum presents some 1000 works from what is considered

UPPER: KHALILI COLLECTION; LOWER: PRIVATE COLLECTION / VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM

the finest collection of Islamic works in America. The objects cover a period from the ninth century to the zenith of Islamic culture reached by the great empires of the modern era. The most spectacular object is a large enameled and gilded glass bowl, produced in Syria in the 13th century. Other exquisite works come from 10th- and 11th-century Egypt, medieval Iran, 14th-century Granada and 16th-century India. Musée du Louvre, **Paris**, through April 2005.

Mirrors of the East explores the impact of the East on Europe, especially Spain, between the mid-19th and the 20th century by examining three episodes: "The Legacy of the Moorish Queen" discusses the rediscovery of the world of al-Andalus and Islam; "The Garden of the Rising Sun" explores the presence of China and Japan in European fashions, and the contacts with the Philippines; and "Mirages of Paradise" examines the supposed sensuous, dream-like world that was one of the most important influences on the modernist and Art Déco periods. Centre de Documentació i Museu Tèxtil, **Terrassa, Barcelona**, through May 2005.

Art of the Ancient Mediterranean World: Ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome shows 204 works that span a period from predynastic Egypt—6000 years ago—to the Roman late imperial period about AD 350. Egyptian, Greek and Roman civilizations developed neither in sequence nor in parallel, but rather underwent changes in a complicated and interactive manner in terms of both era and region, and this exhibition demonstrates how they influenced one another throughout their histories through travel and trade on the Mediterranean Sea. Drawing on history, archeology, folklore, geography, religion and culture, the exhibition traces the rise and fall of power-seekers over thousands of years, the unchanging daily needs of ordinary people and, above all, their creative energy. BYU Museum of Art, **Provo, Utah**, through June 4, 2005.

Luxury and Luminosity: Visual Culture and the Ming Court includes 48 objects —not all of them blue-and-white,

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Steel: A Mirror of Life in Iran features some 250 objects from the renowned Tanavoli Collection supported by Persian miniatures and manuscripts selected from the Library's collections. Steel was an integral part of economic, social and religious life in Iran during the Safavid and Qajar periods (16th to early 20th century). Through the display of tools and implements used at home, in the bazaar, in war, on ceremonial and religious occasions, for horsemanship and for entertainment, the exhibition tells the story of traditional life in pre-modern Iran. Spoons, pen cases, padlocks, mirrors and tiny axes used to cut sugar blocks; helmets, buckles, standards and sheathes; cosmetic tools, jewelers' tools and butchers' scales: Almost every item, no matter how mundane and pragmatic its function, is an example of exquisite workmanship by an Iranian craftsman. The exhibition will be held in conjunction with a conference on metalworking in Islamic Iran on September 3–4 and a lecture on September 3. ⓘ www.cbl.ie/whatson. Chester Beatty Library, **Dublin**, through September 15.

Tin snips crafted in the 19th century.

TANAVOLI COLLECTION / CHESTER BEATTY LIBRARY

and not all porcelain—that demonstrate the dynasty's connections with other cultures and the artistic influence it exchanged with them. Ming artists' use of turquoise and cobalt blue probably derived from imported ceramics from the Islamic world; a tankard in the exhibition is shaped to emulate Iranian models; and Ming porcelain was exported in enormous quantities to Egypt, Turkey and other parts of the Muslim world. Freer Gallery, **Washington, D.C.**, through June 26, 2005.

<<< July

Activities and Workshops for Children and Families include: "The Epic of Gilgamesh" for children 7–8 years old: July 16, 2:15 p.m.; "King Darius and His Scribe" for children 6–8 years old: August 28, 10:30 a.m. and August 30, 2:30 p.m.; "The Language of Birds" for children 6–8 years old: June 16, August 20, 2:15 p.m. and August 30, 10:30 a.m.; and "The Creation of the World According to the Egyptians" for children 7–10 years old: August 25–28, 2:15 p.m. Musée du Louvre, **Paris**.

Palace and Mosque: Islamic Art from the Victoria and Albert Museum in London presents more than 100 works from one of the world's premier collections of Islamic art. The four-section traveling exhibit covers the full range of the decorative arts, including ceramics, textiles, metalwork, glass and woodwork, and treats the Islamic art of the Middle East as the product of a culture in which not everyone was Muslim but in which Islam played a dominant role. The sections are "The Written Word," featuring calligraphy from the 10th to the 18th century; "Court and Courtiers," displaying decorative objects made for the ruling elite; "Mosques, Shrines and Churches," including the six-meter (20') *mimbar* (pulpit) of Sultan Qait Bay, made for a mosque in Cairo; and "Artistic Exchange," displaying works of Islamic, European and Chinese manufacture. An eponymous book accompanies the exhibition. National Gallery of Art, **Washington, D.C.**, July 18 through February 6, 2005.

Initiation into Cuneiform Writing is a hands-on workshop. 10 a.m. Musée du Louvre, **Paris**, July 19 and 21–24.

<<< August

The 50th International Assyriology Meeting will host Assyriologists, Near Eastern archeologists and scholars in related fields for discussions about the flora and fauna of the ancient Near East. **Skukuza** (Kruger National Park), **South Africa**, August 2–6.

Closely Focused, Intensely Felt: Selections from the Norma Jean Calderwood Collection of Islamic Art offers examples of Iran's most celebrated achievements in the arts, such as the brilliant luster and *mina'i* ceramics of the 12th and 13th centuries and the highly refined court painting of the 16th and 17th centuries. Also included are objects that reflect the collector's more individual pursuits, such as her fascination with manuscript painting from Shiraz during the 14th through the 16th century. "Closely focused, intensely felt," is how Calderwood sought to convey to her students the character and appeal of Persian art. Her collection, of which this exhibition displays less than a fifth, spans a thousand years of Persian art, ranging from the powerful epigraphic ceramics of the Samanid era to the somber introspection of mid-19th-century Qajar portraiture. Sackler Museum, **Cambridge, Massachusetts**, August 7 through January 2, 2005.

The Eighth Annual Arabic Music Retreat, led by Arab musician and composer Simon Shaheen, for students, performers, and scholars of Arabic music, includes seven days of instruction in chamber music and large-orchestra performance. It also offers private lessons and classes in Arab music theory, analysis and ear-training. Instruction includes voice, violin, 'ud, qanun, buzuq, nay and percussion. ⓘ www.simon-shaheen.com. Mount Holyoke College, **Holyoke, Massachusetts**, August 14–21.

Opulent Interiors presents a selection of 23 of the museum's finest textile treasures in the finale of the three-part exhibition **Luxury Textiles East and West**. Dating from the 14th through the 20th century and originating in Asia, Europe and the Americas, the exhibits demonstrate the role textiles played in ceremonies and celebrations, dress and identity, and public and private interiors. They include floor coverings, chair and table covers, bed hangings, quilts, curtains and cushions, in particular the 17th-century Mughal Indian architectural panel, the 16th-century Turkish double-niche carpet, and a bed or wall hanging with a design of flowering trees, also from Mughal India. **Los Angeles** County Museum of Art, August 5 through January 30, 2005.

Poetry Reading. Ni'mah Isma'il Nawwab comes from a long line of Makkan scholars. Her essays and articles on Saudi society and customs, Islam, art, crafts, cuisine and calligraphy have been published in Saudi Arabia and abroad. Her poems on women, freedom, life in Arabia, wars, death and life, the younger generation and universal issues have been published online and in print. Her first volume of poetry, *The Unfurling*, will appear in August. Her reading will be accompanied by music and the poetry of Iraqi-American poet Wafaa' Al-Natheema. $15. 7:30 p.m. ⓘ Institute of Near Eastern and African Studies, 617-864-6327. 38 Cameron, **Cambridge, Massachusetts**, August 19.

Floral Perspective in Carpet Design explores how flowers and their representations can provide a kind of language that expresses a state of mind or spirit. The exhibition uses a variety of floral motifs in 17th- to 19th-century Persian, Turkish, Central Asian, Indian and Chinese textiles to investigate cultural diversity. Textile Museum, **Washington, D.C.**, August 27 through February 6, 2005.

<<< September

Queen of the Night, an exhibition of a spectacular terra-cotta plaque of a Babylonian goddess of the underworld that was crafted in Mesopotamia (today's Iraq) some 4000 years ago, also features storytelling, talks and workshops. National Museum and Gallery, **Cardiff**, Wales, September 7 through November 28; **Birmingham** Museum and Art Gallery, December 1 through April 19, 2005.

Kingdoms of the Ancient Nile: Treasures from the National Museum of Khartoum displays many little-known pieces—the majority new discoveries—for first time, highlighting the contrasts among the rich and diverse Sudanese cultures, from demonstrations of the worldly power of the Kerma kings, who were accompanied to their deaths by 400 sacrificed persons, to the humble graves of Christian rulers, and from the grandiose temples of the Nubian pharaohs of Egypt to the churches and mosques of later periods. British Museum, **London**, September 9 through January 9, 2005.

World Archery Traditions: Celebrating Cultures and Their Use of Archery features professional archers from across the globe who demonstrate forms of traditional archery alongside lectures, workshops and live presentations of horse archery. Bowyers from around the world also display their wares. **Fort Dodge, Iowa**, September 9–12.

Digging Up a Story: The House of Claudius Tiberianus is an innovative interdisciplinary exhibition that combines archeological artifacts and translated papyri from a single house in Kiranis, in Roman Egypt, to show what life was like there for a man and his family almost 2000 years ago. The papyri are particularly illuminating: They include letters from Claudius Tiberianus's son, Claudius Terentianus, who was on active duty with the Roman army in Alexandria, asking for money and supplies, asking for parental blessings to marry and complaining about lack of promotion. The artifacts, such as faïence bowls, help to place Tiberianus's household within the socio-economic spectrum of Graeco-Roman society of the time. Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, **Ann Arbor, Michigan**, September 10 through May 2, 2005.

Petra: Lost City of Stone, a traveling exhibition, features extraordinary art and artifacts from the red sandstone cliff city in southern Jordan. Petra was a major crossroads of international trade routes from the first century BC to the second century of our era, when it was governed by the Nabataeans, who were renowned for their skills in trade, agriculture, engineering and architectural stone carving. The exhibition presents some 200 objects, including stone sculptures and reliefs, ceramics, metalwork and ancient inscriptions, and a selection of 19th-century artworks documenting the European rediscovery of Petra. **Cincinnati [Ohio]** Art Museum, September 14 through January 30, 2005.

The International Conference on Oriental Carpets is organized by The Oriental Rug Society in **Sydney, Australia**, September 16.

From Mind, Heart, and Hand presents 76 masterpieces of Persian, Turkish and Indian drawings from Harvard University's Sackler Museum. The exhibition, one of the few ever to focus exclusively on drawings from the Middle East and South Asia, features works from the 15th to the 18th century, and showcases the role that drawings played within the artistic traditions of Persia, Turkey and India. Asian Art Museum of **San Francisco**, September 17 through November 28; Fogg Art Museum, **Cambridge, Massachusetts**, March 19 through June 12, 2005.

The New Mexico Muslim Women's Association's Ninth Annual Retreat will include a two-part talk on "Understanding the Qur'an" by Kecia Ali, Harvard Divinity School. ⓘ casadelrio@newmexico.com, 505-753-2035. **Abiquiu, New Mexico**, September 17–19.

<<< October

A Garden of Shawls: The Buta and Its Seeds reflects the natural grace of the gardens of Mughal India, as shown in the patterns of trees, vines and flowers that decorated textiles such as Kashmir shawls of the period. The exhibition presents spectacular variations of the *buta* or *boteh*—a design based on the flame-shaped leaf, tree or cluster with a bent tip—in both Asian and western shawls, and explores its history. Textile Museum, **Washington, D.C.**, October 1 through March 6, 2005.

Musalsalat! Prime-Time Ramadan is a look through the lens of New York free-lance photographer Stephanie Keith at the Egyptian television and film industries' annual bonanza of productions for the Holy Month. Keith made many of the photographs on assignment for *Saudi Aramco World*, and her story ran in the November 2003 issue. Sony Gallery (formerly Ewart Gallery), American University in **Cairo**, October 11 through November 11.

Pharaohs retraces major steps in the history of ancient Egypt through its rulers, including Kheops, Khephren, Akhnaton, Tutankhamen and Ramses II. The majority of the 200 important works displayed have been lent by the Egyptian Museum in Cairo and are being shown for the first time in France. Institut du Monde Arabe, **Paris**, October 12 though April 10, 2005.

People of the Red Sea, featuring Islamic and pre-Islamic culture, history and archeology in the regions on both the Arabian and African sides of the waterway, is the theme of the next session of the Red Sea Project, organized by the Society for Arabian Studies. ⓘ www.britac.ac.uk/sas. British Museum, **London**, October 29–30.

Iraq and China: Ceramics, Trade and Innovation focuses on revolutionary and enduring changes in Iraqi ceramics that took place in the ninth century as the character of Islamic pottery responded to a wave of luxury Chinese goods imported by Arab and Persian merchants. During this period, Iraq became a center for Islamic ceramic production as new technologies transformed common earthenware into a vehicle for complex, multicolored designs. Following the gradual disintegration of the Abbasid Empire after the 10th century, migrating Iraqi potters transmitted these techniques to Egypt and Iran, from where they traveled to Europe, giving rise to the great majolica tradition in medieval Spain and Renaissance Italy. A 15-meter (48') boat excavated from a harbor in southeastern China and a video presentation of Wilfred Thesiger's photographs of the Marsh Arabs of southern Iraq complement the exhibition. Sackler Gallery, **Washington, D.C.**, October 30 through April 24, 2005.

<<< Permanent

The Lila Acheson Wallace Galleries of Egyptian Art feature several new exhibit spaces following reconstruction. The work includes the reconfiguration of the architecture of the tombs of Pernab and Raemkai (ca. 2350 and 2440 BC) to more closely resemble their original settings. Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York**.

The Bishop Jades is a selection of the finest examples of Chinese and Mughal Indian jades from the renowned collection of Heber R. Bishop. Formed in the last quarter of the 19th century, the collection of some 1000 objects was the first of its kind in the United States. Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York**.

Arts of the Islamic World flourished in a vast geographic area from Morocco and Spain to the islands of Southeast Asia. Although distinct in their cultural, artistic, ethnic and linguistic identities, the people of this region have shared one predominant faith: Islam. The works on view represent the three principal media for artistic expression in the Islamic world: architecture (both religious and secular), the arts of the book (calligraphy, illustration, illumination and bookbinding), and the arts of the object (ceramics, metalwork, glass, woodwork, textiles and ivory). Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, **Washington, D.C.**

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

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

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