Saudi Aramco
world

March/April 2004

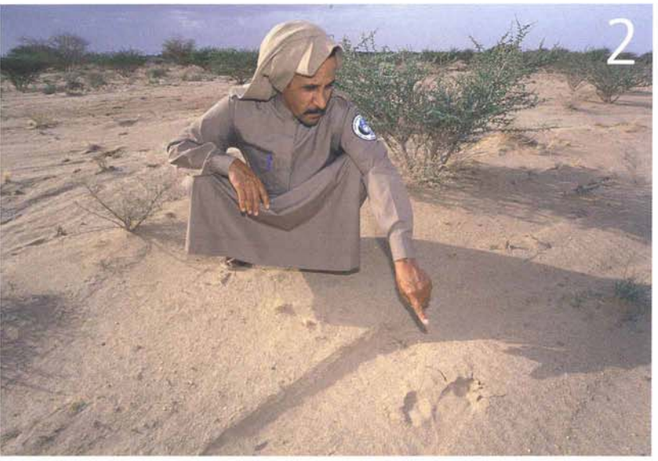
Saudi Aramco
world

Reading the Sands

Saudi Aramco world

March/April 2004

Published Bimonthly
Vol. 55, No. 2



Reading the Sands

Written and photographed by Peter Harrigan

Astonishing stories of Murrah trackers are as common in Saudi Arabia as sand: a tribesman who can spot an injured camel amid the jumbled prints of a herd; a hunter who can track quarry over bare rock; a tracker-detective who can spot a criminal's feet a year after viewing his footprints. These are no tall tales, say the Murrah tribesmen, who today are employed by the dozen in wildlife management (left), recreation and law enforcement. To see for himself, Peter Harrigan tracked down the renowned Mohammed Ali al-Amrah al-Murri—who agreed to a test.

12 **emel's Hope**
Written and photographed by Tor Eigeland

To define and foster the emerging culture of "British Islam," Sarah Joseph and Mahmud al-Rashid launched the UK's first Muslim lifestyle magazine, whose articles treat the full diversity of modern Muslim lives.

13 ***Azizah* Rising**
Written and photographed by Samia El-Moslimany

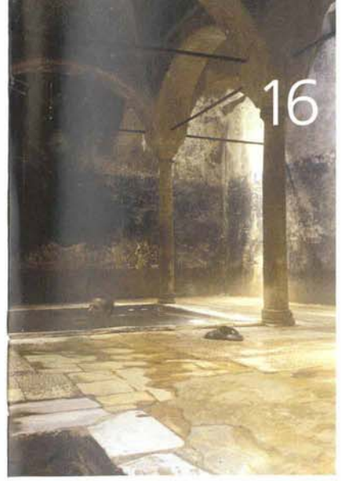
Produced by and for Muslim women in the United States, three-year-old *Azizah* magazine is where "we aren't being talked about. We aren't being spoken to. We are doing the speaking about our experiences," says editor and co-founder Tayyibah Taylor.

Cover:

Three days or more before this photograph was taken, a goat or ibex walked down the face of a dune on the edge of the Great Nafud desert, leaving large blurred tracks. The night before the photograph was made, a *tahayi* lizard angled across the dune, its track converging with the ibex's. Its prints are deeper on the right than on the left, so it was going uphill. Later, a *hattatta* beetle chugged straight down the dune. There are also signs of isolated raindrops. Photo by Peter Harrigan.

Back Cover:

Arches such as this are found throughout Aleppo's 15 kilometers of *suq*, which grew up along the thoroughfare laid out over even older roads by the Greeks of classical times. Though today surrounded by more fashionable shopping districts, the suq throngs daily with Aleppines and tourists alike. Photo by Kevin Bubriski.



The Joys of the Bath

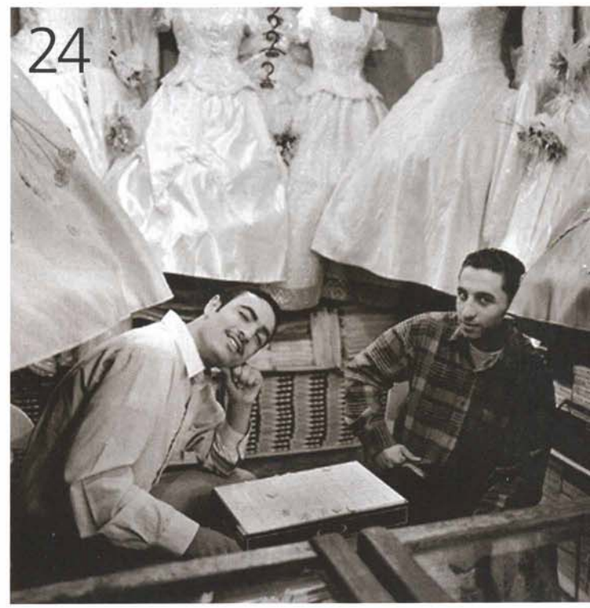
Written and photographed by John Feeney

Tucked along worn city streets and entered through decorated doorways, a handful of sky lit, steamy, marble-paved survivors remain from the time when, centuries ago, Cairo boasted more than 300 *hammams*, or public bathhouses. Though their water is now piped in (not hauled up from the Nile in oxskins) and it is heated electrically (not by fire), these are among the modern health spa industry's oldest working ancestors.

Suq: 4000 Years Behind the Counter in Aleppo

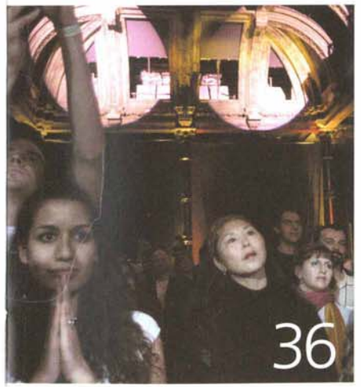
Written by Louis Werner
Photographed by Kevin Bubriski

The world's oldest continuously inhabited city lies between the Syrian plains to the east and the Mediterranean Sea to the west: Aleppo. Its labyrinthine, vaulted *suq*, or marketplace, is one of the largest in the Middle East. Nearly all of its businesses remain family-owned. Need rope? Spices? Curtains? A wedding dress? In their own words, the merchants of the world's oldest "mall" talk about life and, of course, business.



Becoming the Thing

Written by Banning Eyre
Photographed by Stephanie Keith



In January, a series of workshops and performances in New York brought concert promoters and theater booking agents together with Middle Eastern musicians to get to know each other, many for the first time. Their common goal: more Arab and Middle Eastern music on stages throughout the United States.

40 **Suggestions for Reading**

43 **Suggestions for Listening**
Written by Chris Nickson

44 **Reader's Guide**
Written by Julie Weiss

46 **Events & Exhibitions**

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

President and Chief Executive Officer
Mazen I. Snobar

Director Public Affairs
Jamil F. Al Dandany

ISSN
1530-5821

Editor
Robert Arndt

Managing Editor
Dick Doughty

Assistant Editor
Arthur P. Clark

Administration
S. Lee Vinzant

Circulation
Edna Catchings

Design and Production
Herring Design

Printed in the USA
Wallace Wetmore

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

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

Printed on recycled paper

www.aramcoservices.com

Reading the Sands

Written and Photographed by Peter Harrigan

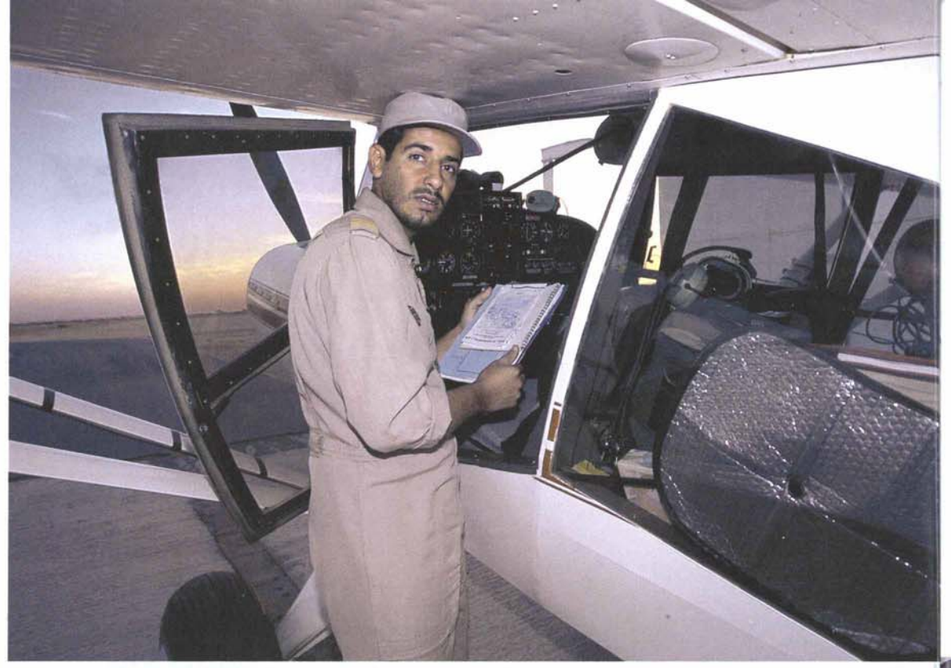
"The higher flights of desert-craft are as uncanny as the soarings of an Einsteinian brain.... In both cases the responsible factor would seem to be not instinct...but education. The habit, derived from generations of instruction..., of observing the material facts and applying a certain train of reasoning...can alone account for the miracles of the expert. And so in the Arabian desert the good guide is he who observes carefully, deduces accurately and remembers faithfully."

— H. St. John B. Philby, The Empty Quarter, *1933*

Above: **Abdulhadi Saleh al-Murri, administrator of some 100 professional trackers in the Saudi government's "Tracker Corps," explains how to determine the direction of a vehicle's travel from its tire tracks.** Main photo: **Camel hoofprints smooth a desert path in western Saudi Arabia. Skilled trackers read such trails as easily as you read the words on this page.**

"Take a look around you," says Abdulhadi Saleh al-Murri, declining a fourth pouring of Arab coffee with a shake of the thimble-sized cup. "As well as our host, at least 10 of the guests in this *majlis* are notable trackers. All of them are from the Murrah tribe. Half of them work with me in Riyadh."

Abdulhadi Saleh is among more than a dozen relatives and friends who have arrived over the course of the morning at the home of Shaykh Jaber Mohammed al-Amrah al-Murri. Jaber Mohammed works not with Abdulhadi Saleh in Riyadh but as general manager of some 250 rangers employed by Saudi Arabia's National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development (NCWCD). Located on the outskirts of the small town of Haradh in central Saudi Arabia, Jaber Mohammed's modern one-story home is set like a sentinel overlooking the northern fringe of the Rub' al-Khali, the Empty Quarter. New arrivals work their way around the assembly, greeting each in turn according to Murrah tradition: a single kiss on the nose or forehead and, for a foreign guest, a warm, firm handshake. In every encounter, eye contact is resolute.



Abdulhadi Saleh is the administrative head of some 100 professional trackers employed by the Ministry of the Interior. They make up an elite, uniquely Saudi crime-fighting and conservation corps that has existed, in one form or another, since the early 20th century. Some scholars believe that their skills, like those of trackers in other parts of the world but here honed over millennia in the desert, point toward the very origins of human rationalism and scientific thought.

Raised a nomad and well-grounded in desert lore, Abdulhadi Saleh took his interest in tracking and guiding a step farther than many, enrolling in the Prince Naif College of Security Studies in Riyadh (now Prince Naif Arab University), where he wrote a dissertation on those subjects for his master's degree in criminology. His trackers today are "deployed in shifts on constant call. They provide a specialist service for the Central Province and the capital, Riyadh, in the fight against crime and, more recently, in the war on terror," he explains. (See "Tracking Terrorism," page 10.)

When I mention that tracking schools have been established in the United States in recent years that keep alive some of the knowledge developed by Native Americans, Abdulhadi Saleh notes the decline of tracking skills in his own country, without any such schools on the horizon as yet. Other than his own thesis, he cannot recall a single recent book in Arabic on the subject of tracking or desert guiding: In Saudi Arabia, he says, there are only living practitioners, and their numbers are declining.

"In the past, trackers emerged and were picked for their specific skills as well as for their character. It was a big responsibility and an honorable status within any tribe and clan. Trackers were decision-makers and often leaders," he explains. "You'll see their ability today."

"It was a big responsibility and an honorable status within any tribe and clan," says Abdulhadi Saleh al-Murri of trackers. "They were decision-makers and often leaders."

If the feats of which I had been told were even partly true, then here, in the spacious, cushioned parlor at the northern edge of the Empty Quarter, was a gathering possessed of some of humanity's most refined powers of perception, detection and memory. Tales abound throughout Saudi Arabia of trackers' almost casual ability to read the sands with no more difficulty than a modern city dweller might read printed pages: "So-and-so passed this way three days ago with eight men and 10 camels. Three were carrying dates and the rest were lightly loaded. And look, the white camel has gone lame." Then there is a classic Holmesian tale about the Bedouin who, after four days on the trail of a camel-mounted fugitive, came upon a settlement where his quarry had taken refuge. He demanded, "Bring out the man with the eye ailment who rode in one night ago on a white camel with no tail that's also blind in one eye."

The tracker had taken in clues: the position of the camel's droppings relative to its rear footprints, the evidence of lopsided grazing on shrubs and a tell-tale finger-smear on a campfire stone near which the pursued rider had applied the juice of a desert plant used to treat the eyes.

While some of the tales hint at origins in legend and oral poetry, and some recur with frequency, few dispute their basis in fact.

"See for yourself," says Jaber Mohammed. He gestures for his guests to rise. "Test anyone here you like."

I had first met Shaykh Jaber Mohammed some weeks earlier as my quest for desert trackers was beginning in the office of Abdulaziz Abu-Zinada, general secretary of the 18-year-old NCWCD. Abu-Zinada is responsible for protecting the fragile ecosystems of 15 wilderness reserves that together measure more than 87,445 square kilometers (33,762 sq mi)—the area of Maryland or Moldova. He spoke of captive breeding and radio-collar monitoring as well as the NCWCD's nine aircraft and more than 300 vehicles that rangers use to watch for poachers. Amid the technology, I wondered, is there still a place for trackers?

"Of course," Abu-Zinada replied. "I'll call our best, Shaykh Jaber Mohammed al-Amrah al-Murri. His father tracked for rulers, and he himself scouted and tracked with Sa'ud Al Faisal ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz [now Saudi Arabia's foreign minister] in the days when the prince was an avid falconer."

Below: **Many rangers at Saudi wildlife reserves grew up as trackers. Along the perimeter fence of the Mahazzat al-Sayd reserve, rangers patrol for signs of poachers.** Opposite: **Though he grew up riding in pickup trucks more than on camels, Captain Hamid al-Murrah grew up "a reasonably good tracker," he says. Flying out of the Taif airstrip of the National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development (NCWCD), he monitors radio-collared Arabian oryx at the Harrat al-Harra wildlife reserve.**

An unassuming man whose face shows the rigors of some 60 years of desert life, Jaber Mohammed arrived at Abu-Zinada's office with a clutch of relatives. For two hours we sat at a conference table and listened to tales of Murrah trackers. It was here that he invited me to his Haradh home to meet the others.

The Murrah, I learned, are so renowned as trackers that in Saudi Arabia today the generic word for any tracker, regardless of background, is *murriyah*. Abdulhadi Saleh's corps is known as Al-Mujahidi al-Muriyyah, which means, loosely, "the tracker corps." In the early days of Saudi Arabia, when King 'Abd al-'Aziz used the Murrah to help bring law and order to his new nation, he is said to have remarked, "We have the telegraph overhead and the trackers on the ground." By the time the king died in 1953, nearly every police, frontier and administrative station had a tracker posted to it—more often than not, it was one of the Murrah.

Historically the Murrah are counted among the 20 leading Bedouin tribes of the Arabian Peninsula. They range with their camel herds over a territory of gravel plains and sand dunes that is larger than France, and that is also one of the least hospitable, most sparsely populated regions on Earth. Ceaselessly using the acute observation skills and faultless memory that survival requires, they have for centuries navigated their families and herds with pinpoint precision over nearly featureless terrain by day and night.

Donald Cole, who spent two years with the Murrah in the late 1960's and who is now a professor of anthropology at the American University of Cairo, says that among the Murrah and other tribes, "young boys were left to search for stray camels. They got to know their animals by name and by their tracks, and they were always able to tell which tracks were made by their own people. The Murrah were the most traditional of pastoral nomads, and their life and environment fostered tracking. They grew up looking at tracks and were taught the skill explicitly. As they got older, they were casually informed by sitting and listening to the stories of their elders."

In addition, the Murrah's skills go beyond tracking into the more distinctly human field known in Arabic as *firaasa*. This is an age-old skill by which lineage and blood relationships can be determined by scrutinizing feet and faces or, in some cases, by reading footprints. In old Arabia, the term *ka'if* was used to describe someone who could not only follow and interpret tracks on the ground but also establish kinship by likeness—primarily of the feet.

After lunch, we climb into Jaber Mohammed's four-wheel-drive GMC to search for terrain to use as a proving ground for a master tracker. Other vehicles with other guests follow in a motorized caravan, but one man stays behind: Mohammed Ali al-Amrah al-Murri, whose skills will be put to the test. He'll get a call—by mobile phone, of course—when we are ready. Western texts refer to practice and testing sessions such as this as "dirt time." Some recommend constructing and using sandboxes for practice, but we have much of a continent's worth of sand before us. After a few kilometers, Shaykh Jaber Mohammed finds a patch he likes. Upon inspection, the ground is hardly fresh. It is already deeply criss-crossed with tire and animal tracks.

I am wary: This trampled, pock-marked patch looks entirely unsuitable for serious "dirt time," and the Murrah are renowned for their sense of humor and their fondness for practical jokes. After Jaber Mohammed's hearty lunch and generous infusions of coffee and tea, under a sky heavily overcast and facing a stiff wind scented with winter rain, the Murrahs' spirits could hardly be higher.

Jaber Mohammed takes me by the hand and explains that this makes the test all the more complicated. "Choose any three of them," he says, gesturing to the several dozen men now gathered. "Make sure they are the same size."

I select three men of apparently similar seniority and stature. Jaber Mohammed lines them up, and, arms linked, they saunter barefoot for about five meters (16') over the sand. Within seconds of their rejoining the onlookers, I have lost their tracks in the confusion of the other marks.

"Which man was in the middle?" I ask Nawaf al-Rasheed, my driver and translator, who—importantly for my confidence—is not a Murri.

"Don't worry, I can remember," he says.

"But can you see which tracks he made?"

"I'm not so sure about that. They're kind of all mixed up," he answers.

A car draws up, and out steps the imposing figure of Mohammed Ali al-Amrah al-Murri. Wearing heavily tinted sunglasses, sporting a generous beard on a square face that I am told is unusual for a Murri, his stern, focused countenance appears to fit well the task ahead.

"Look here," Jaber Mohammed bellows to him over the wind, pointing to the sand. "These are the three sets of tracks. The one in the middle is the thief! Find him!" He grins.

Mohammed Ali leans forward. The wind catches and throws his red headscarf across his face so that only his dark glasses are visible. Looking only forward, he does not stop and stare but strides purposefully directly over and through the area of tracks. After just a few paces, he turns back toward the group. The tracks have received his seemingly casual scrutiny for no more than a few seconds.

"He's walking all over the tracks. How can he possibly know what he's looking at?" I say to al-Rasheed.

"He can read," says one of the young Murrah, sensing our bewilderment.

Reading tracks, says Tom Brown, Jr., tells us everything about the animal or person that made them, "its actions, reactions, its condition, whether it is full or hungry, thirsty or tired, healthy or sick, even what it is thinking or feeling." As one of the leading trackers and outdoorsmen in the United States, Brown founded a tracking-oriented survival school in the Pine Barrens of New Jersey and, over the past 45 years, has written some 15 books on the subject. "In essence, what I am saying is that one can know an animal or human far better through the tracks it makes than by actually seeing it," he contends. Like his Murrah counterparts, Brown also regularly works for and instructs law enforcement agencies and rescue services.

Brown—like other western experts—contends that tracks are in fact as distinctive as fingerprints. What makes them unique is not their outline—mere prints are "dead tracks"—but an infinite combination of more than 5000 definable pressure-release points. These are shaped and thrown up in and around the track in the moments the impressions are made.

Jaber Mohammed calls forward six of the onlookers, including the three whom I'd chosen to make the tracks. In rapid succession they parade past Mohammed Ali. He waves each one on impatiently, affording each new set of tracks only the briefest of glances. After the last one walks by, the old tracker stands back and quickly separates out the three who made the initial tracks. With his stick he points to the "culprit" who had walked in the middle.

I am stunned, both by his success and by his memory. He had marched over the tracks, obscuring them as he went and not once referring back to them. Once he had consigned them to memory, the physical tracks were apparently of no further use to him.

Then Jaber Mohammed says, "We will do it again, this time with 20 men in the walk-by, and six initial sets of tracks instead of only three."

In the Mahazzat al-Sayd reserve, ranger Sfayed al-Bugami, left, and bird ecologist Mohammed al-Shobrak found tracks of the lappet-faced vulture that demonstrated that the bird is a predator as well as a scavenger. Below: In a demonstration of his skills, tracker Mohammed Ali al-Amrah al-Murri marched over the tracks, obscuring them as he went. Once he had consigned them to memory, the tracks themselves were of no further use. "He can read," explained one of the Murrah.

Such remarkable powers of memory are apparently not unusual among trackers, and can be found well beyond the Murrah. In the small settlement of al-Muhayh, some 600 kilometers (375 mi) west of Riyadh, I met one of that area's best trackers, Mutlaq Ghaib al-Mugati, through Sulaiman al-Salem, head of the government district administrative office. Al-Salem spoke proudly of al-Mugati's accomplishments, including establishing both the mothers and the owners of stray baby camels, applying *firaasa* to help decide cases of lineage, apprehending criminals and finding missing people.

What, I asked al-Mugati, has been your most notable achievement?

He recalled a theft where he was asked to examine the tracks but afterward could find no one in the area whose prints matched. "A year later I was at mosque in a town a few hours away from here, and I spotted a pair of sandals at the door. After the prayer, I waited for the owner, and I confronted him. He immediately confessed to the theft he had committed a year ago. Once I've looked at tracks I never forget them, nor the person and the footwear that made them."

Al-Salem claimed that, without the memory and skills of al-Mugati, his own job and reputation would have been on the line more than once. For example, he said, "we had held a suspect for nearly a year after a series of unusual robberies in the area. There was pressure on us to close the case. Al-Mugati had been sent to the various scenes and had taken with him a pair of shoes from the suspect's home. Although they matched the tracks at one of the crime scenes, the owner of the shoes did not admit to the thefts." Finally a team of senior officials descended on the town with the case file. "They told us to lead four men, including the owner of the shoes, out over sand. Al-Mugati was then called in."

Al-Mugati took up the story. "'Those,' I said, pointing to one set, 'are tracks made by the shoes that were at the scene. But the wearer is not the thief.' And then I pointed out another set. They were not made with the shoes that were at the crime. But I could see that the man who made those tracks was the thief. Every person has a different way of walking, and when I look at tracks, I can see faces," explained al-Mugati.

The thief's ploy of using someone else's shoes had failed, and "the major almost fainted," said al-Salem.

Such satisfactions aside, the two agreed nonetheless that today the job of an official tracker is losing its appeal. "The pay is modest, and there are obvious disadvantages to the profession. People in a small community can be antagonistic toward one of their own doing this job," said al-Mugati, who remembers being set tracking tests when a child. "These days young, educated policemen do not look up to trackers as they used to. They say they now have DNA and other technology to help them."

Tracks are as distinctive as fingerprints, says US tracker Tom Brown. Each is made up of more than 5000 definable pressure-release points, which can be read "like a topographic map."

"Every person has a different way of walking, and when I look at tracks, I can see faces," says Mutlaq Ghaib al-Mugati, a tracker whom the government calls upon for detective work in the western town of al-Muhayh.

In the mountains south of the resort city of Taif, Mohammed al-Shobrak is a bird ecologist with the National Center for Wildlife Research (NCWR). He has spent eight years in the field researching the lappet-faced vulture (*Torgos tracheliotus*). He knows and respects both the rangers' tracking skills and the uses of DNA and other tools of modern science.

"I've used tracks to advance our knowledge of this bird's behavior, and I'll show you how and where it happened," said al-Shobrak, whose family comes from the al-Sa'ar tribe of the southern fringes of the Empty Quarter. "I guess I still have some of the innate

Gazelle tracks in damp sand make for easy reading. The uniqueness of each impression offers a tracker clues to what the animal was doing, its size and condition, and how long ago it passed.

To tracker and researcher Louis Liebenberg, tracking is "the oldest continuous traditional knowledge practice of humans" and "the origin of science itself."

abilities of nomadic desert dwellers. Some people refer unfairly to the al-Sa'ar as 'wolves of the desert,' and here I am studying vultures with three-meter (10') wingspans."

Escorted by ranger Sfayed al-Bugami, we drove several hours east to the world's second-largest fenced wildlife reserve, Mahazzat al-Sayd. Its perimeter of 230 kilometers (150 mi) protects reintroduced, captive-bred endemic species, including Arabian oryx, red-necked ostrich, gazelle and houbara bustard—all species prized by poachers.

"Look. Here is where I found the vulture tracks," said al-Shobrak. Not long ago, he said, he deduced from bits of claws and skin in the pellets that vultures regurgitate that they were eating spiny-tailed lizards (*Uromastyx aegyptius*), called *dhub* in Arabic.

"I found vulture tracks that led to the burrow," he said. He pointed to the site of his discovery. "See, right behind the opening there, the tracks stopped. The deeper talon impressions revealed that the bird had remained there motionless and waiting. The *dhub* must have emerged from its burrow to bask in the morning sun. Perhaps it thought the shape crouched behind it was a bush. But the tracks and other spoor revealed a ferocious struggle, and one dead lizard eaten on the spot." Helped by rangers, al-Shobrak had established that the bird was acting as a predator—a fact well known to the Bedouins, but contrary to science's classification of the bird as a scavenger.

Later, as the sun dropped toward the distant Hijaz mountains, al-Bugami picked up the large, distinctive tracks of a red-necked ostrich (*Struthio camelus camelus*), now being captive-bred and introduced at Mahazzat al-Sayd by the NCWCD. Its close relative, the Arabian ostrich (*Struthio camelus syriacus*), had roamed across the gravel and sandy steppes of much of inland Arabia until hunting and increasing desiccation led to its extinction half a century ago.

We followed the ostrich's tracks over rough, sandy ground. Al-Bugami used the low sun to better see shadows and relief. "Here it stopped to eat from this plant. And here it began to turn to the left," he said, pointing to several faint prints that, to one not trained in tracking, were as inscrutable as the footprints of the men outside Shaykh Jaber Mohammed's house. Soon we reached an area of broken granite.

Al-Bugami continued to move briskly and confidently over the stony ground, pointing with his stick to where marks appeared. In most cases they were barely perceptible, and we were unable to follow his references unless he actually touched them. We stopped. "Look," said al-Shobrak, "that pebble was dislodged by the bird. It has perhaps been moved for the first time in thousands of years."

Al-Bugami was well ahead of us. He was tracking using time-honed skills of prediction, anticipating where the ostrich was going as it ran over the hard ground, leaving tracks more than two meters (6½') apart. Rather than hesitating to seek out spoor, al-Bugami looked ahead and maintained his pace.

Tracker Louis Liebenberg calls such intuitive tracking a form of "hypothetico-deductive reasoning." "The art of tracking is a continuous cybernetic process that represents a constant interplay or interaction between hypotheses and the logical consequences they give rise to," says Liebenberg, who specializes in evaluating trackers in southern Africa. Author of several books on tracking, he also develops tracking software. In his book *The Art of Tracking* (2001, New Africa), he argues that trackers use the very same intellectual and creative abilities as physicists and mathematicians. In historical terms, he maintains, tracking "represents the origin of science itself and therefore the oldest continuous traditional knowledge practices of humans."

Meeting the Murrah in the 1940's

Encounters between the Murrah and foreign travelers became frequent only in the 20th century. *The Arab of the Desert*, written in 1949 by H. R. P. Dickson, is still considered a standard on Arabian Bedouin desert life and ways. Born in Syria in 1881, Dickson had the good fortune to be suckled by a Bedouin woman, which made him a blood brother of her tribe, the 'Anizah. He spoke Arabic before he could walk, and he is one of the few writers who provides more than a passing reference to the subject of tracking, offering in his book a brief chapter, "Desert Guides and Trackers."

In 1935, Dickson met with Mutlaq al-Musailim, the paramount chief of the Rashaida, some of whom were renowned as guides. While the best of Shaykh Mutlaq's people, including Ibn Hadhabba, guide for King 'Abd al-'Aziz, could find their way anywhere, anytime, and never forgot a desert feature, the chief admitted freely to Dickson that those of his tribe were not trackers.

"The palm in this science goes easily to the Murrah tribe," wrote Dickson, observing that tracking was called *ma'rifat al-jarrah*, distinct from *ma'rifat al-dalala*, or guiding. The latter implied knowledge of landscape, terrain, flora, fauna and the night sky, whereas the former was based on the marks of a person or animal's passing: footprints, spoor and other signs. Shaykh Mutlaq contended that "the Murrah skill was so great that following the tracks of a human female a tracker could say whether the person was married or single, and whether she was pregnant or not."

While al-Bugami works the ground of Mahazzat al-Sayd, patrolling the reserve's perimeter, Captain Hamid al-Murrah is tracking radio-collared Arabian oryx (*Oryx leucoryx*) from a single-engined Maule STOL reconnaissance aircraft above another reserve, called Harrat al-Harra, in the Empty Quarter. "I found it easy to mentally pinpoint places below and guide rangers to the spot by radio even when the aircraft had left the area," he explained. "I seem to remember the big picture below without trying: details like colors, rocks, landforms and shapes, trees and plants, tracks, roads, gullies, dunes and other features."

Though pickup trucks had replaced load-carrying camels by the time he was born, al-Murrah recalled moving with the herds. "I was brought up in the desert for 14 years and went to a mobile school that traveled with us. I got used to focusing on the natural things around me and was a reasonably good tracker." Twelve years ago, he secured a job as a ranger, and his ability to mentally map and remember large areas earned him a reputation and, eventually, his pilot's rank and his own Maule.

The right-brain ability to absorb and remember landscapes may be a key to understanding tracking abilities that seem so uncanny to those who lack the skills. "Each track contains within its boundaries a miniature topographic map which reveals the maker's secrets," says Tom Brown, who attributes his own skills to instruction from an Apache elder called Stalking Wolf. "You read the pressure releases as you would a topographic map. In a way, the same forces that create our grander landscapes also work on the miniature landscapes of the track." It is here that the abilities of both trackers and guides converge to draw on memory and interpretation of physical landscapes at any scale, from millimeters to kilometers.

Besides crime-fighting and conservation, the trackers' talents are still essential in another arena: hunting. With the coming of motorized vehicles, sport hunting with falcons became widely popular in Saudi Arabia, and falconers employed Bedouins to track their birds' quarries. Traditionally, houbara bustard, stone curlew, desert hare and gazelle were the species that a Bedouin could usefully hunt for the pot, and the houbara was the prize among them. Weighing up to three kilograms (nearly 7 lb), capable of outsmarting and outflying all but the best falcons and so superbly camouflaged as to be virtually invisible on the ground, it is also the sport hunter's favorite prey. But today, with the houbara population dwindling fast throughout the Arabian Peninsula, hunting the bird is permitted in Saudi Arabia only during a short winter season, and a total ban applies in protected areas.

Only the best trackers are a match for houbara, and they must deploy all

The tracks of the houbara bustard, favored by hunters for its abundant meat, are now among the rarest in the desert.

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT (2)

Tracking Terrorism

In Saudi Arabia's counterterrorism crackdown, trackers are working alongside forensic experts. According to Abdulhadi Saleh al-Murri, administrative head of the Ministry of Interior's Al-Mujahidi al-Muriyyah ("Tracker Corps"), trackers have assisted in arms and explosives seizures and smuggling interdictions, sometimes under fire. Following the November 8 terrorist bombing of the al-Muhaya residential compound in Riyadh, Abdulhadi Saleh and his corps were among the first on the scene.

Exactly how their skills are deployed is not something officials will freely discuss. "Clearly, with trackers gifted with such acute skills of observation and detection, we are making effective use of them," says a senior official of the Ministry of Interior. "But while the results of interceptions, seizures and arrests become public, we do not advertise the methods and techniques employed by trackers."

The utility of trackers is surprisingly high, says the official, despite the development of asphalt roads in nearly all of the kingdom's population centers. He is quick to point out that, even in modern buildings and on paved surfaces, trackers find crucial clues and even prints. "Try finding the interior of a building or any manmade surface without a film of dust or sand over it at any time of year. You would be surprised what we can see on supposedly clean surfaces," he says.

Tom Brown agrees. "Master trackers observe tracks differently from everyone else. Our world of tracking is that of infinite detail and intense analysis. Our eyes become geared to the obscure, and in so doing, our ability to follow trails, even over solid rock, becomes as easy as tracking in sand," he says.

And what of countermeasures that may be used against trackers? "They are up against the collective knowledge of generations," says Abdulhadi Saleh. "Shoes worn back to front, oversized footwear, contraptions worn over feet, tires changed on vehicles—you name it and we've seen it, and it won't fool us. We'll know where the tracks are going and where they came from and when. And we'll usually find out what or who made them."

their skills: speculation, intuition, knowledge of the bird's behavior and of terrain and weather patterns, as well as the ability to place tracks in the context of time. Roger Upton, an enthusiastic falconer for half a century and author of *Arab Falconry: History of a Way of Life* (2002, Hancock House), calls the ability of trackers to spot faint houbara prints from a four-wheel-drive vehicle "astonishing. You can be trundling and bouncing along across sand at over 30 kilometers per hour [20 mph] and suddenly they will stop and point. Invariably, when you get out, you can't pick out the tracks even from a few feet. But they are always there." Upton recalled a day when a tracker came across houbara prints, "took a hard look at the tracks and dismissed them. 'So-and-so got that bird yesterday,' he told us."

Depending on the tracks' configuration, explained Upton, trackers can tell how long ago they were made. "Close-together prints mean the bird was feeding and moving around in the daytime; long, meandering strides mean the bird was moving around more confidently and feeding just before dawn. Long strides in straight lines, usually between bushes, probably reveal it has just seen you." And where tracks come to an end at a take-off point, speculative tracking comes into play, skills that to a city dweller seem simply magical. But in fact, the tracker can estimate how old the tracks are and what the wind was doing at that time of day. Since houbara fly off into the wind, the tracker can deduce where the bird may next have landed and hidden.

In the days when Bedouin were truly nomadic, tracks of camels and humans and perhaps occasionally horses, more than wildlife, presented a crucial journal, a diary of comings and goings, of threats and opportunities. Philby noted this on his 1932 expedition:

TOP: WAYNE EASTEP

"Dirt time" for tracker testing: Mohammed Ali al-Amrah al-Murri, left, **examines the footprints of 20 "suspects" one at a time, matching them in his mind with the tracks of six men who passed over the same ground a few minutes earlier.** Opposite: **Mohammed Ali and other Murrah relax after an afternoon of testing their skills.**

We crossed the tracks of a wolf and saw occasional traces of bustard, but the most interesting experience of this first day in the sands was an object-lesson in the noble art of tracking evoked by the sight of northward-trending camel-tracks spread out over a wide front. "Look," said 'Ali to Ibn Humaiyid, "it is the folk of Salih ibn 'Ali come up from the south. It is but a day, or perhaps two, since they passed this way. And look, there is So-and-So and So-and-So"—for there were human footprints too and these people were of his near kinship—"and there is Salih himself, God save him!" So they marched on against the current of the tracks, communing with each other aloud, exchanging notes on those eloquent prints in the desert sand. It was months since 'Ali had seen anything of his own folk, and he pored affectionately over the signs of their passing. What news had they, he wondered, of those further sands whither we would be going, of foes and pastures, of the oryx shooting and other things?

Back at the sand patch outside Haradh, Shaykh Jaber Mohammed prepares for the second, more complex tracking test. Tracker Mohammed Ali is sent away and a video camera is called in to record the preparations. This time, my translator and I are asked to participate along with four others of my choosing. I remove my shoes and socks, and the six of us walk across the "dirt time" patch—immediately, of course, losing sight of whose footprints belong to whom. Jaber Mohammed announces that my tracks, on the far right, are going to be those of the "thief." We all return to the gathering, replace our shoes and sandals, and mingle with the crowd.

For the second time, Mohammed Ali appears. Again he strides boldly over our tracks, like an actor walking out onto a stage. This time, he pauses.

"See," says a young Murri, "he's spotted your tracks right away. He knows all of ours by heart, and he can recognize you, the strangers, in the sand."

This time Mohammed Ali has all 20-odd men present walk past him barefoot. After each man passes, Mohammed Ali points with his stick to direct him into one or the other of two groups. For my walk-by, I try the ploy of removing my shoes but not my socks. I had heard of runaways covering their feet with rags or even strapping cans and pot lids to their feet to confuse trackers.

However, as all good trackers know, and as the texts on the science point out, it is not the prints, "the dead tracks," but the unique pressure-release points thrown up both in and around the prints that precisely distinguish any track and its maker. Mohammed Ali faultlessly identifies all six sets of tracks and, without a moment's hesitation, I am apprehended. He admits that on arriving at the scene he immediately spotted our tracks among the rest as those of strangers.

"*Shuf!*" ("Look!"), he says, pointing at one set of prints in the now-chaotic jumble on the sand patch. "When I see these tracks, it is as if a face stares back at me." ⊕

In the early 1980's, photographer Wayne Eastep lived for three months with the Amrah clan of the Murrah. One of the shots that Eastep later used in his 1986 book *Bedouin* showed a footprint made in the sand by one of the members of the clan, Nasser al-Amrah al-Murri. "Before printing the book, I took the layouts to Haradh for review by the Murrah," says Eastep. "The members of the Amrah had not seen any of the photographs, and the version they were looking at had only English captions, which they could not read. But when they turned to this image they spontaneously responded, 'Ah, Nasser al-Amrah!' recognizing this image of his footprint as instantly as one would spot a family member's portrait."

Peter Harrigan, a free-lance writer based in Jiddah, traveled some 16,000 kilometers across deserts and wildlife reserves in Saudi Arabia on this assignment. "Nearly everyone I met was fascinated by tracking and guiding," he says, "but, beyond anecdotes, few were able to explain how it is done. I'm very lucky to have seen these ancient skills put to use—and put to the test." Harrigan can be reached at harrigan@fastmail.fm

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

Oryx: J/A 82, S/O 89
Gazelles: N/D 94
Rub' al-Khali: N/D 73, J/F 75, M/J 89, M/J 90

www.ncwcd.gov.sa/englishmain.htm
www.arabianoryx.com
www.trackerschool.com
www.cybertracker.org
www.wayneeastep.com
www.almurrah.net (Arabic only)

For Further Reading

Nomads of the Nomads: The Al Murrah Bedouin of the Empty Quarter. Donald P. Cole. 1975, Harlan Davidson, 0-88295605-1, $10.95 pb.
The Arab of the Desert. H. R. P. Dickson. Ed. and abr. by Robert Wilson and Zahra Freeth. 1983 (3rd ed.), Unwin Hyman, 0-04-953010-0, hb.
Arab Falconry: History of a Way of Life. Roger Upton. 2002, Hancock House, 0-88839-492-6, $70 hb.
The Art of Tracking: The Origin of Science. Louis Liebenberg. 2001, New Africa Books, 0-86486-293-8, R104.45 pb.
Bedouin. Wayne Eastep. 1986, University of Pennsylvania, 0-8122-8032-6, $75 hb.
The Science and Art of Tracking. Tom Brown, Jr. 1999, Berkeley, 0-425-15772-5, $14 pb.

emel's Hope

Written and photographed by Tor Eigeland

emel's staff, from left: Sarah Joseph, editor; Ruh al-Alam, designer; Mahmud al-Rashid, publisher; Omair Barkatulla, senior designer; Rajul Islam Ali, art director; Maeve Tomlinson, picture editor and photographer.

emel is unique for more than just a missing capital letter. It's Britain's first Muslim lifestyle magazine. Glossy, well-written, with punchy design and visuals, its appeal crosses over from Muslims to curious non-Muslims.

"The name comes from pronouncing the letters *m* and *l*, as in 'Muslim life,'" says editor Sarah Joseph. The resulting sound also echoes the word *amal*—"hope" in Arabic. "The word has deep roots," she says. "It means not only 'hope' in the simple sense but also 'longings,' 'desires' and 'aspirations.'"

And those aspirations, says Joseph, are "to humanize, to be positive and to celebrate Muslim life. People link into that feeling, that passion."

Drawing on a small staff and numerous free-lancers, all driven more by "that passion" than money, *emel* covers current affairs and lifestyle topics in a way that is neither hesitant nor limited to Muslim-only points of view. The March/April issue featured protests and controversies in France and elsewhere about wearing the *hijab* (the Muslim woman's headscarf), an analysis of Muslim marriage practices, a look at Muslims on the London Metropolitan Police Force and a survey of African-American–Muslim hip-hop music. Lighter fare included how to make Lebanese food in a few hurried minutes, good recycling practices, a "Diary of a Young Mother" and more.

"We try to give a Muslim perspective," says Mahmud al-Rashid, Joseph's husband, who is a full-time trial lawyer as well as the magazine's volunteer publisher and editor-in-chief.

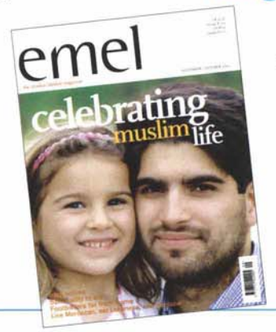
"In everything Mahmud and I do, we try to eradicate the misconceptions that became increasingly prevalent after 9/11," says Joseph, who in 1994 became the first female editor of *Trends*, a UK Muslim youth magazine, and who was also founding editor of *The Common Good*, a publication of the Muslim Council of Britain. Now 32, she is also a part-time doctoral student who lectures frequently and widely on interfaith issues, religious tolerance and women's issues.

"You have to make sure that people know about Islam and Muslims in a positive way. Muslim people do normal things, live normal lives. And the fact that we've got three children makes it paramount to make a better world for them. There is all this talk of clash of civilizations, but we've all got to coexist here!"

Al-Rashid explains that, in *emel*, "we wanted to produce something that we wanted to read ourselves—something with a Muslim perspective on life, looking through western Muslim eyes, something that could reveal the high culture of Islam, not the usual stereotypes."

emel caught the attention of the BBC in November and of CNN earlier this year. Now Joseph and al-Rashid are fielding requests from magazine distributors to produce editions of *emel* for markets in the United States, the Middle East, Australia, South Africa, Malaysia and Japan.

"Muslim people do normal things, live normal lives."
—Sarah Joseph



"We went into it with open hearts to produce the best we could," says Joseph. "And then we were taken aback by how well it was received. Now our feeling is, 'Hold on, we've got to get it out there.'"

With 1000 paid subscriptions to date, *emel*'s distribution is through mosques and two grass-

> page 14

Azizah Rising

Written and photographed by Samia El-Moslimany

Azizah's staff, from left: Mariam Aziz, editorial assistant; Amber Nadirah Khan, designer; Tayyibah Taylor, publisher and editor-in-chief; Saleemah Abdulghafur, chief operating officer; Suad Najeeullah, fashion coordinator.

Under a humid summer sun in Atlanta's Botanical Garden, six women adjust their poses before a photographer's camera. Modeling brightly colored wedding gowns, each seems styled with a different world culture in mind. Tayyibah Taylor, founder, publisher and editor-in-chief of *Azizah* magazine, adjusts a gold-embroidered, intricately wrapped turban on a model's head, while passersby in shorts and T-shirts cast curious glances their way. The next day, the photographs will be couriered across the country to Redmond, Washington, where Marlina Soerakoesoemah, the magazine's co-founder, creative director and designer, will put together a four-page spread.

First published as a quarterly in the winter of 2000, *Azizah* is the only nationally distributed magazine in the United States for—and by—Muslim women. The name, Taylor explains, means "strength" and "dearness" in classical Arabic; it's a common name among Muslim women worldwide. "Our reader is a woman who is striving to better herself in all areas of her existence—her spirituality, her religion, her social and intellectual life—a woman who makes no apology for being a Muslim, and who makes no apology for being a woman," says Taylor.

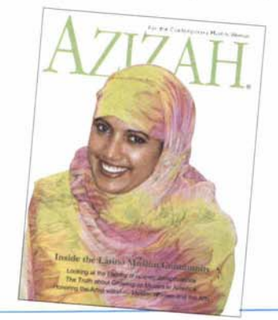
"It's inspiring," says Shakeel Syed, vice president for e-commerce of IslamiCity.com, an *Azizah* advertiser. "There hasn't been any Muslim magazine on the scale of *Azizah*. They have a wide-spectrum audience, irrespective of cultures and backgrounds."

"*Azizah* takes time to look inside the issues, and it's more self-critical," says Asifa Quraishi, an attorney who has written for the magazine.

Only Muslim women write the articles for *Azizah*. Mohja Kahf, author, poet, contributor and associate professor of comparative literature at the University of Arkansas, calls the *Azizah* perspective "primary, not secondary—women are writing the story; they are looking into the camera and speaking. They are not objects of someone else's analysis: They are the active agents."

"Our reader is a woman who is striving to better herself."
—Tayyibah Taylor

Taylor likens *Azizah*'s articles to a dinner party. "You talk about food, you talk about fashion, you talk about what is going on in the world—it is this great conversation."



It is not always an easy one. Taylor keeps the magazine broadly appealing by carefully walking what are often fine lines between conservative and progressive views on hot-button issues ranging from AIDS and disability to polygamy and marriage. Kahf comments, "They dance this dance by using a large variety of writers and contributors in every issue that keeps them interesting to the progressives, the middle-of-the-road Muslims and the conservatives."

Most criticism, Taylor says, has targeted *Azizah*'s cover portraits of women, who are always shown wearing a head scarf of one type or another. They are not fashion models, she explains, but the women whose accomplishments and viewpoints are covered in the magazine. They have included a state representative, a doctor, a filmmaker, and civil-rights and community activists. "*Azizah* is a magazine about Muslim women, and that is why they are on the cover," Taylor asserts. "We listen to both criticism and praise with a careful ear."

Other readers cheer on *Azizah*'s unabashed visual approach. "I love the big, glamorous, glossy pictures," exclaims Kahf, who is also a subscriber. "Finally! Complimentary, beautiful images of Muslim women!"

Azizah is the sole publication of WOW Publishing, Inc., founded in 1999 by Taylor and Soerakoesoemah. A year ago, Saleemah Abdulghafur, the magazine's chief operating officer, joined them. "WOW is a fluid acronym," Taylor explains with a laugh. "It stands for 'Women of Words,'

> page 15

roots organizations that help get it into Muslim bookshops around the country. It was picked up also by the international book conglomerate Borders, from whose shelves *emel* has been selling out regularly. Joseph and al-Rashid are aiming for 20,000 subscriptions from among the UK's Muslim population of 1.8 million. Advertising currently covers 30 percent of the magazine's cost, and until advertising plus subscription income reaches 100 percent, the deficit is being made up personally by Joseph and al-Rashid.

"We have been very well received by advertisers and ad agencies, but most require three to six issues on the table before they sign an advertising contract," says Joseph.

Using simple offices donated by a West London real-estate agency that operates downstairs, and doing its art work in a shared, but more spacious, ex-school building in Whitechapel, East London, *emel* has invested more in good people than in fancy quarters.

The startup last year was funded, modestly but enthusiastically, by friends and supporters. By talking to "a lot of good people, it wasn't very hard to find the money," says Joseph. Pledges totalling £20,000 (about $36,800) brought the first 100-page issue off the press in September.

emel staff watches Rajul Islam Ali design a layout. The bimonthly magazine is available in Muslim bookshops and most UK franchises of Borders.

Now *emel* has three full-time staffers, three part-timers and a host of volunteers, and none of them says anything about "nine to five." Among them, only al-Rashid, who was born in Bangladesh, is not native English: The others have second- or third-generation family roots in Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and England itself.

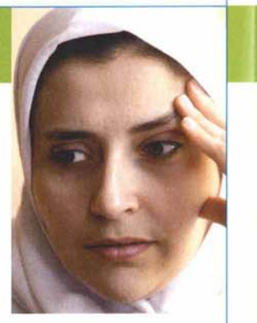
"We need to make *emel* available to more people," says Joseph. "There's no point in having a great product if people don't get to see it! Once we stabilize here in Britain, we hope to be able to expand to the other markets that want us."

And that is the great hope of *emel*.

Tor Eigeland (www.toreigeland.com) is a free-lance writer and photographer, now living in France, who has contributed to this magazine for more than three decades. Of the first two issues of *emel*, received while researching this story, he says, "I read them from cover to cover, something I normally never do."

www.emelmagazine.com

Outlining an Emerging Culture



Sarah Joseph and Mahmud al-Rashid come from backgrounds that could not be more different. Together, they have become one of the UK's most dynamic couples working for intercultural understanding.

Joseph comes from an old English Roman Catholic family that traces its roots to the Norman conquest. Her mother started Britain's first modeling agency, and Joseph recalls being surrounded by "the most beautiful people" in the agency's Bond Street offices. "But of course," she says, "when you see what actually goes on behind the scenes, I wasn't terribly impressed."

As a teenager, her brother became a Muslim, and at age 17, she did too. "I discovered prejudices in myself that I wanted to deal with," she says. At 19, she gave her first public presentation on Islam, and in the 12 years since, she has become a leading voice among UK Muslims.

Recalling his own upbringing, al-Rashid says, "When I was three years old in Bangladesh, we were so poor my mother couldn't even afford a pair of sandals." But his father found enough money to emigrate to England, where he saved, opened a restaurant and ultimately sent his son—as well as some of his five daughters—to university.

Now 39, al-Rashid is a busy trial and human rights lawyer. He has also helped lead youth and community organizations for more than 20 years, including the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), the UK's foremost Muslim representative body. Now he is also chairman of the Islamic Society of Britain.

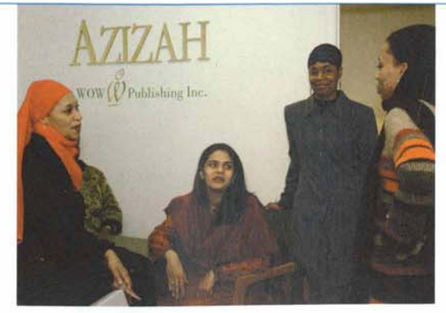
He and Joseph, he says, are deeply interested in articulating, through *emel*, what he calls "the emerging culture" of British Islam.

"What I mean by that is crystallizing Islamic values into a western environment. The cultures of our parents' generations were suitable for their own countries, but every culture has its geographical, environmental and linguistic limitations," he says. "Just as British Christian culture is different from Greek Christian culture, so will British Islamic culture be different from Saudi or Pakistani culture. British Islamic culture must be indigenous and reflect western Islamic values. Only that way will Islam find a true home in Britain."

'Women of Wit,' 'Women of Wisdom,' 'Women of Wealth'—we hope!—all depending on what we are feeling at the moment!"

The magazine started with the partners' personal savings, a few subscriptions and loans from family and friends. Three years on, its greatest challenge remains financial as advertisers wait for a track record of well-established publication and distribution. Fifteen percent of the magazine is now given over to advertising; Taylor would like to see that grow to 30 percent by the magazine's five-year mark—but without ads for cigarettes or alcohol. Although "we continue to survive by keeping our payments to ourselves at a minimum," she says, "we only accept advertisers that are in step with our readership—politically, spiritually and culturally."

In *Azizah*'s seventh-floor office on Peachtree Street, Taylor takes responsibility for editorial content, and Abdulghafur concentrates on advertising and circulation. From Redmond, Soerakoesoemah focuses on design and production, including the magazine's website. Backing them is a growing corps of more than 100 contributing editors, writers, photographers, artists and poets who, because of their desire to see *Azizah* succeed, have volunteered their talents or accepted nominal fees.



Taylor, editorial assistant Aysha Nasir, Najeeullah and Khan produce editorial and advertising pages in offices in Atlanta, and *Azizah* co-founder Marlina Soerakoesoemah (below right) designs each quarterly issue from her home near Seattle.

Soerakoesoemah finds the cross-country collaboration works well. "Tayyibah and I are on the same page. A lot of what I do she likes, and what she doesn't like, I've had no trouble changing," she says. "We trust each other."

Working on each issue, says Taylor, "I meet the most phenomenal women. I learn so many things. When I see the smiles that come to women's faces when they see the positive reflection of themselves and the excitement it brings—I love it. And I love it when women tell me it has made a difference in their lives."

Samia El-Moslimany (samiaelmo@yahoo.com) divides her time between Seattle, where she is a free-lance writer and photographer, and Jiddah, where she operates a portrait studio.

www.azizahmagazine.com

Creating Positive Images

Tayyibah Taylor's soft, caramel-voiced demeanor belies the depth of her determination. Born in Trinidad and raised mostly in Toronto, she became a Muslim following a 10th-grade field trip to a local mosque. Taylor's Christian parents supported her decision.

As a student at the University of Toronto in the early 70's, Taylor says her worldview began to crystallize in the Black Student Union during conversations over coffee with Muslim converts and US conscientious objectors to the Vietnam War. "As a result of our debates," she reflects, "my outlook was reshaped from the political, the earthly, to the spiritual."

But this led to involvement, not detachment. "I was profoundly affected by the absence of positive images of people of color. There were none—not in the media, not in textbooks or catalogs or billboards," she remembers. "I knew something was wrong." Her discovery of *Ebony* magazine was "an epiphany: seeing people of color positively portrayed." This, she says, was where *Azizah* began.

Later, Taylor moved to the US. She married and, after her third child was born, followed her husband to Jiddah, Saudi Arabia, where he had accepted a basketball coaching job. There, she began studying classical Arabic and the Qur'an.

Six years later, she returned to the US with her family. Taylor commuted to Seattle to serve as the director of an Islamic school. In the late 1990's, with virtually no resources, she formulated a plan to produce *Azizah*. "It was like a force taking over, propelling me—you find the people, you find the money, and you find all that you need."

Then she met Marlina Soerakoesoemah, and their partnership was born. "I knew that I wanted to work," says Soerakoesoemah, "but I felt that I had to do something different. I had asked God to help me to be a tool to help the *ummah* [the worldwide Muslim community], and working on *Azizah* was the way."

Following Taylor's move to Atlanta in 1998, the partners kept in touch. Now, thanks to electronic communications and couriers, *Azizah* thrives.

"Being a Muslim and being a woman in America is a powerful fusion," says Taylor. "We have our American legacy of free speech and the culture of critical thinking. We have our Islamic legacy of pursuit of knowledge and autonomy. Together these are an irresistible combination."

The Joys of the Bath

Written and photographed by John Feeney

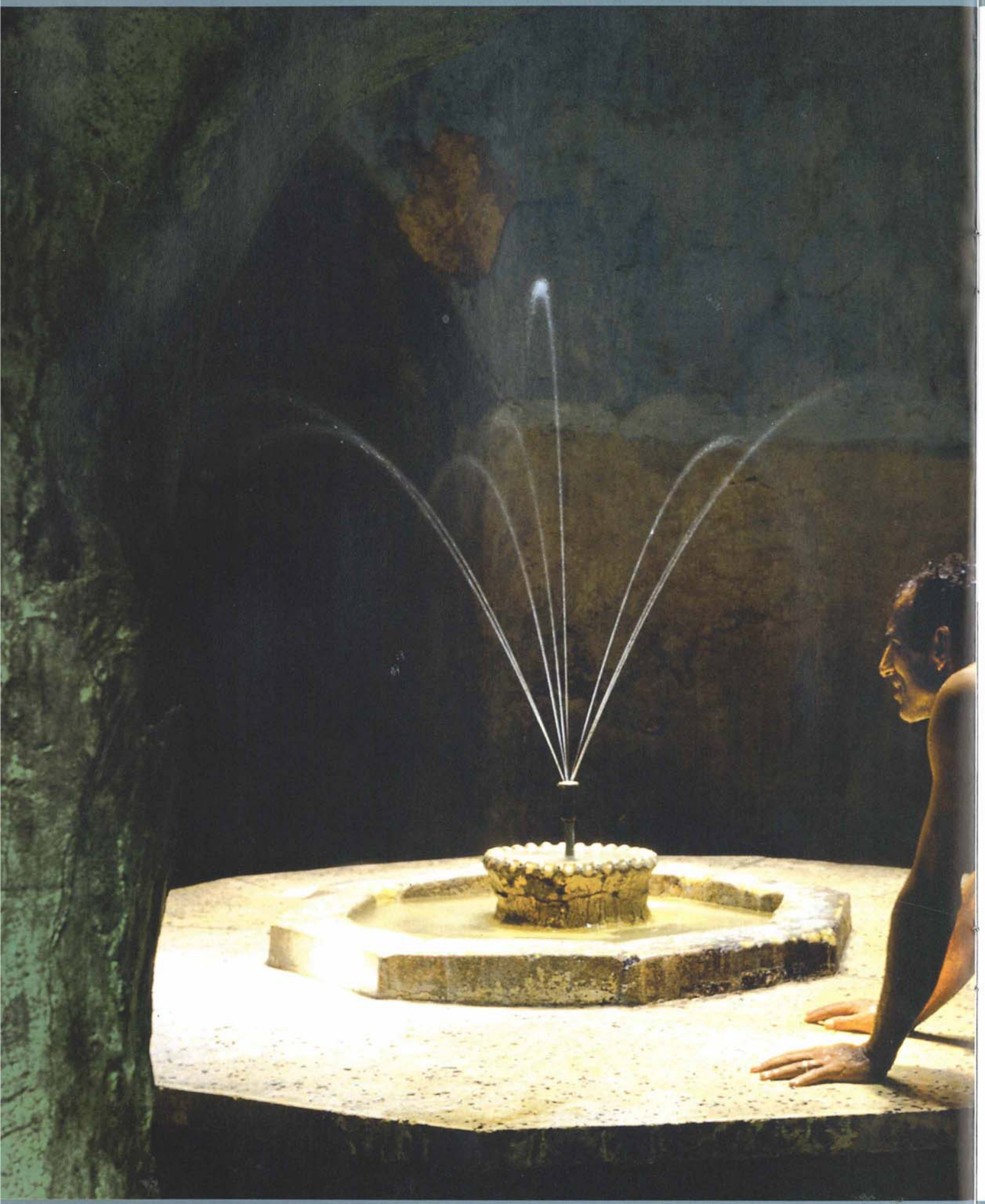
What watery glory it all was: To be steamed, scrubbed, rinsed and scented according to medieval Cairo's public-bathhouse ritual was to be cleansed like nowhere else on earth—or at least nowhere outside the former boundaries of the Ottoman Empire. Much of this ritual has long since evaporated with the vanishing of the bathhouses, called *hammams* in Arabic. In fact, two eminent scholars of the Middle Ages declared to me recently that the old hammams were entirely gone—extinct as the dodo. Well, I have news for them.

Often inconspicuous amid Cairo's bustle, the entrances to the city's few remaining baths are often as ornate as those of comparably sized mosques. Left to right: The Hammam al-Sultan Inal, built in 1456, opens off the old Qasaba, the first main street of Cairo. The Hammam Sinan Pasha, in the Nile-side neighborhood of Bulaq, dates from 16th-century Ottoman times. The colorfully decorated Hammam El-Doud was built in the 13th century, rebuilt in the 19th and damaged by earthquakes in recent years. The hammam attached to the Sultan Qala'un mosque also dates from the 13th century. Below: The square plunging pool at the 18th-century Hammam al-Tanbali.

There are still in Cairo half a dozen traditional hammams that have been busy washing bodies for centuries, places where you can still today have your joints cracked, your ears twisted (no damage, mind you) and your skin lathered up in the old manner.

Five hundred years ago, in the days of the ruling Mamluks, there were more than 300 hammams in Cairo, "one for every day of the year," as a modern hammam owner puts it. These were spread throughout the districts of what was one of the world's largest cities. During the 14th and 15th centuries, with a population fluctuating at around half a million, Cairo was larger by far than London, Paris or Rome. European travelers coming to Egypt in those times were inevitably amazed at the predilection of the people for washing—some saw it as an obsession, for in Europe too much washing was frowned upon. But Egyptians were a river people, and this habit was as old as Egypt itself. In the mid-19th century, Edward Lane noted in his classic *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*:

Bathing is one of the greatest luxuries enjoyed by the people of



Egypt. The inhabitants of the villages of this country, and those who cannot afford the trifling expense incurred in the public baths, often bathe in the Nile.

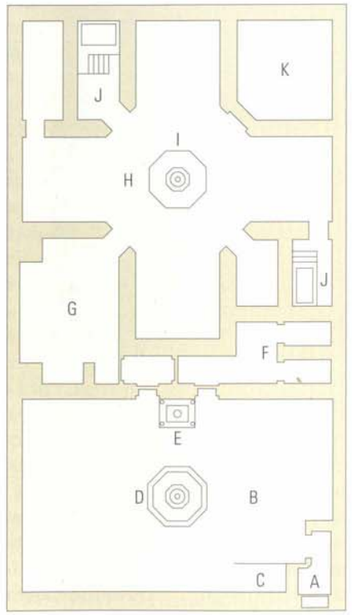
This may have been tradition, but it happened to dovetail with religion. In Islam, cleanliness is paramount, not only for the soul, but also for the body. According to Islamic law, the ritual washing of face, hands, ears and feet must be performed before each of the five daily prayers. So it was that the first of Cairo's hammams were attached to mosques. With large supplies of water always on hand for the washing of the faithful's hands and feet, it was but a short step for a mosque to also provide supporting services, from a full-scale hammam to a modest *sabil*, a fountain of free drinking water. The latter was a particularly welcome gift in a desert city where water had to be laboriously hauled daily from the Nile—and paid for.

But a hammam could just as well function independently of a mosque. Some public hammams were attached to local markets. Some were for men only; others were for women and children only. Many others were reserved for men during the morning hours, when they would be run by male attendants, and reserved for women and children in the afternoons, with a change to female staff. To this day a bath towel, or any piece of linen, hung across a hammam's entrance is a centuries-old signal that it is the time of day for women.

Consequently, Cairo's hammams became community focal points, often playing a role in all the main events of a person's life, from youth to old age. For the elaborate ceremonial washing of a bride, Lane wrote that hammams were often rented by the two families, and the women of the families would gather with their guests:

> There are few pleasures in which the women of Egypt delight so much as a visit to the bath, where they not infrequently have entertainments and often on these occasions, they are not a little noisy in their mirth. They avail themselves of the opportunity to display their jewels and their finest clothes and to enter into familiar conversation with those whom they meet there.

Above: **Colored glass set in a hammam's vaulted ceiling.** Opposite: **The *hararah* chamber, with a hot fountain such as this one at Hammam al-Tanbali, is typically the steamy heart of a Cairo hammam.** Below: **Floor plan of a Cairo hammam, after Edward Lane. A: entrance; B: *meslakh*, or reception and retiring room; C: *mallim*'s station; D: cold fountain; E: coffee stall; F: toilet; G: first steam room; H: *hararah*, or central steam room; I: *faskeeyah*, or hot fountain; J: *maghtas*, or plunging pool; K: boiler room.**



A bridal ceremony, Lane wrote, began with a procession from the house of the bride to the hammam. Seated under a gilded canopy, she was carried through the narrow streets escorted by family and friends, led by musicians, drummers and dancers. Likewise, the groom and his friends made a more subdued visit to their hammam. Today, according to Muhammad Mustafa Hegaze, chief masseur at the Al-Malatyali Hammam, bridegrooms come to the hammam, if they come at all, with only one best friend.

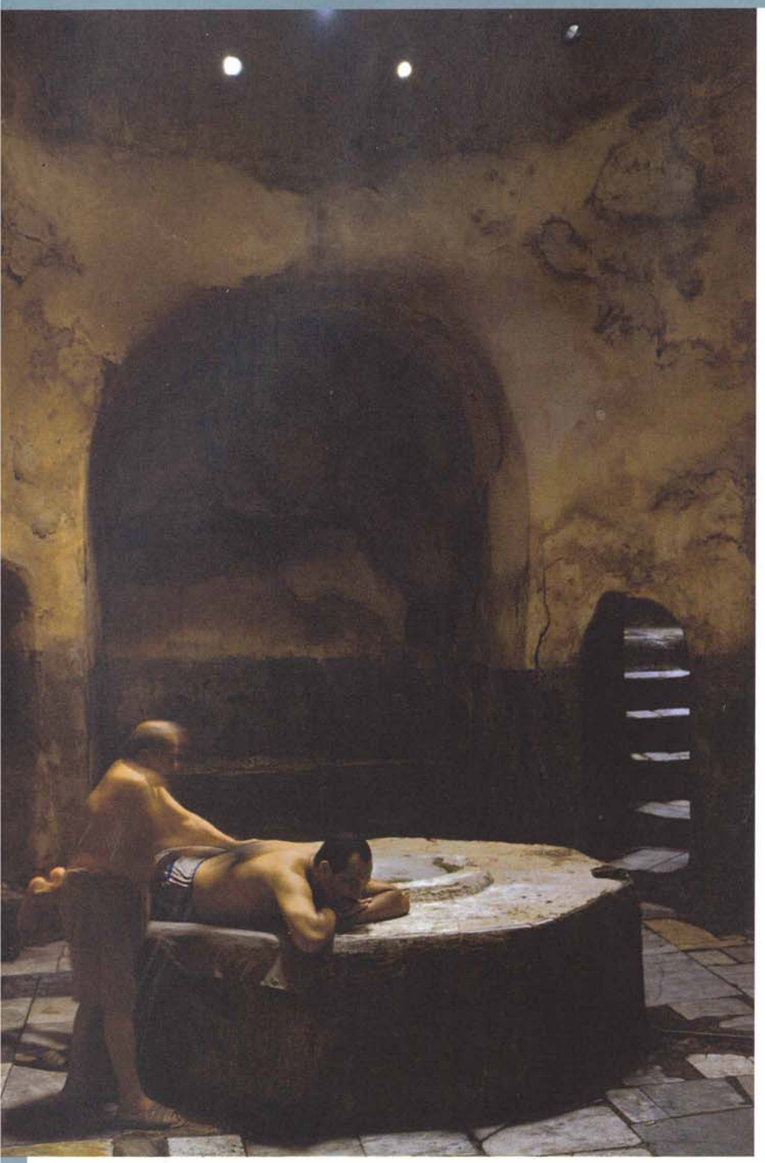
Another visit to the hammam was expected of mothers-to-be, and another visit took place 40 days after giving birth. A boy's circumcision procession through the streets always went first to the local hammam. A ritual washing also took place after an illness. To this day, Cairo's few remaining hammam owners adamantly claim, often in so many words, that "the hammam is a good doctor, and its soothing waters banish all anxieties."

On feast days a hammam could be rented for private parties. Thus on one occasion or another, it was not unusual to hear singing, drumming and clapping from within the walls of a hammam. Luxurious private hammams in palaces and in the houses of rich merchants might be paved with mosaic marble patterns and roofed with fantastical sunlit glass ceilings, making settings for even more elaborate parties.

With such joyous goings-on taking place amid the steam clouds, what outsider might not wonder if the hammam were some kind of madhouse? What is it indeed that makes humans react so in the presence of water? Certainly to swim and splash about in a summer sea, or a river, can cause reckless delight in people of all ages. So to hear singing and clapping from the hammam was perhaps not so outlandish. Is there not a natural inclination for some people to burst into spontaneous song under the shower? Even a canary sings when it hears the tap running.

Socially, what better place was there, immersed in the soothing, steaming waters, to discuss the latest scandal or to hatch intrigues? And for women especially, it was a place to see and be seen: Matchmakers were often on hand.

Cairo's hammams became community focal points, often playing a role in all the main events of a person's life.



Mukeyyisate (masseur) Muhammad Mustafa Hegaze rubs down a customer at the Al-Malatyali Hammam. The cost of a visit to a traditional Cairo hammam is often five to 10 Egyptian pounds, or about $1.25 to $2.50. Opposite: During its more than 500 years of operation, the level of the streets around the elaborately decorated entrance of the Hammam Bashtak has risen by more than two meters.

Together with mosques, hammams were thus vital social centers. Each district's hammam was usually named after the locality where it was situated. For example, the Nahhaseen hammam, the "coppersmiths' hammam," was located near that trade's section of the bazaar. The hammam of Sultan Qala'un was next door to his 13th-century mosque and his famous hospital, which in its day was considered one of the wonders of the world for its free treatment of 4000 patients a day. The hospital is now a ruin, but a bathhouse still functions on the same site, though more in decrepitude than splendor.

Not far away, in the street of the Suq al-Silah (Armorers' Market), where Mamluk soldiers purchased swords, daggers, shields and helmets, there was—and still is—the hammam built by a Mamluk amir. He commissioned it in AD 1322, and its marble façade is as ornate and grand as the entrance to a mosque. The beautifully carved inscription over the entrance reads: "His Most Noble and High Excellency, our Lord, the Great Amir Sayf al-Din Bashtak of al-Malik al-Nasir ordered this blessed bath built. May his glory last for ever."

The glory of Sayf al-Din's hammam, at least, has indeed lasted for more than six centuries. The external façade is in an excellent state, though the interior is very dilapidated. It is still used by women of the district living in surrounding apartments. The traditional towel hung across the hammam's entrance indicates men are not to enter.

Not far away on Muhammad Ali street, which leads to Saladin's 12th-century citadel overlooking Cairo, is the Hammam El-Doud, still showing its bright colors, though alas now ruined in the earthquake of 1972. But the Hammam al-Matili, which has been washing bodies for nearly five centuries, and the Al-Tanbali Hammam still do a brisk business. Tanbali is open for men on Friday and Sunday and for women on other days. Thursdays and Fridays, in medieval times, were the favorite days for visiting the hammam, the former to make ready for Friday prayers at the mosque and the latter to spruce up for a day of visiting friends and relations.

The most elaborate surviving hammam is that of Muhammad Ali, who ruled Egypt between 1805 and 1849. In an excellent state of preservation, but neither open to the public nor in use within the walls of the citadel, its two-meter-deep (6½') plunging pool is set beneath a scintillating canopy of glowing, sunlit green and pale-yellow glass skylight panels. Set into the wall is what must be the largest and most exquisite soap and sponge holder in the world, veiled by a curtain of marble carved in hanging folds.

Though the floor plan of each hammam was unique to its size and location, hammams all had their common points. Built of brick covered in plaster, the windowless walls were always far thicker than mere structure required, so as to keep in the heat. For the same reason, the entrance was always small and narrow—yet it was also usually imposingly framed and painted in bright colors, perhaps to signal the relief that could be found within. Some likened the "delights of the waters" to Paradise itself. But even in this urban paradise, danger lurked: Folklore held that the damp, dimly lit passageways were possible abodes for jinn, or spirits of unreliable intentions. It was therefore considered wise to say a brief prayer before stepping into the hammam's water—left foot first, according to custom, "lest you slip."

The actual washing of the body, according to established hammam custom, was a most vigorous affair. "The exertions of the bath" were not to be taken lightly. If you were

It was considered wise to say a brief prayer before stepping into the hammam's water—left foot first, according to custom, "lest you slip."

a man of medieval times setting out on foot for your favorite hammam, you would have joined the commotion of the narrow Qasaba, the main street filled with choruses of bells on the harnesses of passing horses and donkeys, the clashing brass saucers and the shouts of sellers of iced drinks, and the warnings and cracking whips of cart drivers. You would pass lines of haughty camels bearing dripping oxskins of Nile water that replenished the underground cisterns of mosques, sabils, and hammams. You might also pass someone picking up the camel droppings, which, along with the city's refuse, provided the fuel to heat, among other things, the water in the hammams.

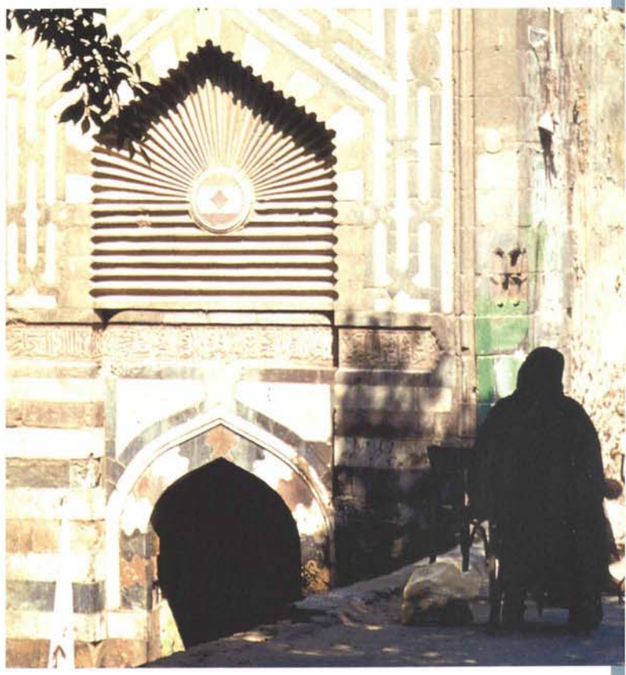
Arriving at the hammam's entrance, you passed into a quiet, steam-filled world. Down a narrow passageway (not without some trepidation if this was your first visit), you came into the *meslakh* ("reception room"), with its central, often octagonal fountain of cold water, in contrast to the hot to come. Everything about the hammam's internal operation was efficient. The *mallim* was the man in charge. The Master of the Furnace, assisted by his *wakked*, or stoker, kept the hammam's fires blazing and the cauldrons of water bubbling. In spite of—or perhaps because of—his euphemistic title, the "Superintendent of Dung Fuel" was looked down upon. Masseurs were designated by order of seniority. But before a masseur could get to work on you, the undressing procedure had to take place. As Lane described it in the mid-19th century:

> On entering, if he has a watch and a purse containing more than a trifling sum of money, he gives these to the mallim who locks them in a chest. His pipe and sword he commits to a servant-of-the-bath who takes off his shoes and supplies him with a pair of wooden clogs, the pavement being wet.

Divested of all you stood up in, wrapped from head to foot in towels and turban, you went clattering off over the slick marble floor, passing through a series of small rooms, each hotter than the one before, where little jets of gurgling hot water induce the profuse sweating required before the hammam ritual can begin in earnest.

As the heat becomes progressively more intense, servants remove your robes, one by one, until you are left with a loincloth. Opening yet another small door, a servant ushers you into the dim heart of the hammam, the *hararah*, a steam-filled chamber much hotter than any before. ("How much more of this can I stand?" not a few may have asked.) Overhead, a masonry dome, pierced with small glass openings, admits narrow shafts of sunlight down onto a *faskeeyah*, or fountain spouting steaming hot water. Laid out on the wide, octagonal marble perimeter of the faskeeyah are your fellow bathers, prostrate, sweating, some worked upon by equally sweaty masseurs. Here, amid the what-have-you of humanity, the masseurs are not above calling out sly asides to each other about the bodies in their grasp.

Emerging silently in his bare feet from a steam cloud and looking like a wrestler, your *mukeyyisate*



—your masseur—advances. "Good heavens, is this man friend or foe?" you may wonder. "What have I let myself in for?"

The mukeyyisate motions for you to lie down on a towel he spreads on the marble platform beneath the steaming fountain. You are now ready to submit to the onomatopoeic first stage of the hammam ritual, the *taktakah*, the "cracking of joints." Each limb of your body is wrenched first one way then the other, a process designed to make your joints supple. The pulling and cracking of fingers and arms is followed by similar work on your neck: a twist left (crack), then right (crack), yet done with such great skill that, as Lane wrote, "an accident is never heard of." Next, your

ears are twisted and made, yes, to crack too: You are not the first to wonder that this could be so at all. Your masseur sits you upright, and next jams his knee against your back and pops each vertebra: crack... crack...crack...such alarming sensations! But afterward the thought creeps in: "I'm beginning to enjoy it."

Another attendant advances and begins to rub the soles of your feet with a kind of rasp called a *hager el hammam*: "You've got to hand it to them, this is certainly thorough."

Left: **Illumination in hammams originally came exclusively from small skylights set in the buildings' vaults or domes like constellations in the dome of the night sky.** Below: **Towels hung before a hammam's entrance are the traditional sign indicating that the hammam is open to women only.** Opposite: **The plunging pool lies amid the time-worn walls and columns of Hammam al-Tanbali.**

The coming of piped water in the 19th century turned bathing from a public to a private experience.

But the scraping of the soles of the feet may send you into shrieks of laughter, and if you unwittingly kick the mukeyyisate and sprawl him over the wet floor, he is likely to rise, undeterred but perhaps glaring, and grab your feet again until you are properly done.

Then he turns gentler. Using the perfumed white fiber of a palm brought specially for the purpose from the Hijaz, the mukeyyisate starts to lather the flesh and rinse the sea of foam with ladles of hot water, repeatedly thrown.

Twisted, manipulated, washed, rinsed and wrung out to perfection, you are led into the hammam's last vaporous chamber, the *maghtas*. A steady stream of hot water pours down from the dome overhead into a deep plunging pool. This is the climax of the hammam's hidden glory. Remembering to say a quick prayer before you place "your left foot in first, lest you slip," you sink languidly down to your neck in the steaming tub. Catching your breath and gazing up, through the vapory haze you see the vaulted ceiling's geometric pattern of colored glass lit by the sun.

After all the vigor—to put it mildly—of the hammam ritual, to now recline in deep hot water, overlooked by such beauty, is a delight of delights. How could any anxiety fail to vanish? But life must go on. When you emerge, all aglow, a servant of the bath quickly re-swathes you from head to foot in turban and towels. A modicum of decorum having been swiftly restored, you are gently led back to the "retiring room," placed upon a mattress and cushions amid other swathed figures, and given coffee or fruit juice to sip. Not all of the swathed figures are awake. It's a good time for a snooze

Back at the entrance, you receive all you came in with: pipe, sword and what-have-you. Outside paradise, back in the dusty world, you stroll or ride gently home on the back of a donkey—automobiles not yet having been thought of.

Well, that's how it was done up through about the 1930's. But how times change! No more is dung fuel used to heat the water. Today, it's done with electricity or natural gas. No more is Nile water brought to the door of the hammam in dripping oxskins. It's still Nile water, of course, but it is piped in. In fact, it was the arrival of water piped into every Cairo home in the late 19th century—or at least many of them—that turned bathing into a private, no longer a public, experience, foreshadowing the end of the glory days of the city's hammams.

Exposed now to centuries of steam and with bathhouses having no appreciable commercial revenues, the walls of the few remaining hammams are faded and cracked, and so far no one has bothered to restore even one for posterity. But Muhammad Mustafa Hegaze, who has been washing bodies for more than half a century and who now works at the Al-Malatyali Hammam, is a skilled, old-school masseur. Like his predecessors, he is ready with a smile and will, at your request, "crack" every bone in your body. To take the full treatment once took about an hour, but even in today's no-frills world you might still get the most thorough scrubbing-down to be found this side of heaven, all in 30 minutes.

But will you have been "done" to perfection as in days gone by? It's worth finding out while you still can. But remember to say a small prayer before stepping into the plunging pool, and to go in left foot first, "lest you slip." The marble pavement is still wet.

John Feeney worked in Cairo as a free-lance filmmaker, photographer and writer for more than 30 years and still returns there frequently from his home in New Zealand (NH.Phua@xtra.co.nz). He dedicates this article to the late Prince Hassan Aziz Hassan, "who first took me to Cairo's few remaining hammams, according to his carefully researched list."

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

Sabils: M/J 87

For Further Reading

The Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians. Edward William Lane. Jason Thompson, intro. 2003, American University in Cairo, 977-424-784-1, $44.50 hb.

SUQ:

4000 YEARS BEHIND THE COUNTER IN ALEPPO

WRITTEN BY LOUIS WERNER
PHOTOGRAPHED BY KEVIN BUBRISKI

Though shops in Aleppo's Aziziyah district, above, and on Sharia Qawatli are more likely to resemble their western counterparts than those in the world's oldest covered market, right, the *suq* is no timeless arcade: Fax machines whir, international magazines inspire dress design, and antiquarian bric-a-brac sells to tourists at a good profit.

Aleppo vies with Damascus for the title of the world's oldest continuously inhabited city. Both are mentioned in Eblaite tablets from the third millennium BC, where Aleppo goes by the name *Hal-pa-pa*, but fine neo-Hittite reliefs recently found in Aleppo's towering citadel mound may give a slight edge in the antiquity contest to this more northerly of Syria's two largest cities.

Since those earliest times, the long-distance trade in rare exotics and the face-to-face retailing of everyday essentials have been Aleppo's sustenance. The clamor and calls emanating today from its *suq*s (markets) are the echoes of the same sounds that rang there four thousand years ago.

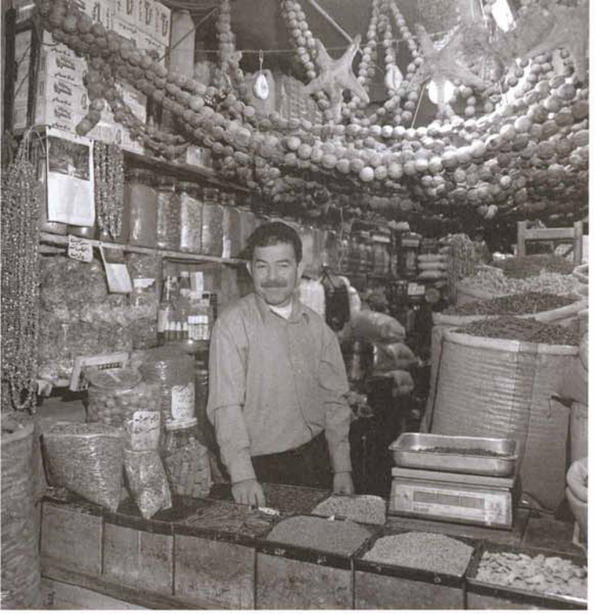
Today, some 15 kilometers (9 mi) of stall-lined streets, alleys and commercial cul-de-sacs wind off the suq's 1.5-kilometer (1-mi) main thoroughfare, covered in places with stone and brick vaulting. It follows the route of the Decumanus, the city's main east-west street that was laid out in Hellenic times, in Aleppo as in other cities of the Mediterranean world.

Aleppo in those times was the principal commercial entrepôt between East and West, where the riches of India and Mesopotamia met Mediterranean traders and middlemen who shipped the goods onward to the Greek mainland and, in later years, to Rome.

Starting up near the citadel, the Decumanus runs downhill through secondary suqs devoted to specific crafts or products, such as the Suq al-Attarine, the Perfumers' Suq. At the bottom end is the dog-legged Antioch Gate, high enough that camels did not even have to duck as they marched out, bound for the port at Antioch, 80 kilometers (50 mi) to the west.

Today, traders new to Aleppo fly in—from Moscow most often—or they come by bus from Turkey. What were once "exotics" have largely given way to global-brand consumer products: The French Nafnaf clothing brand is today as common in the market as no-logo lamp oil once was.

Conversations with Aleppo's salespeople, recorded here in the old suq and in the city's urban shopping quarters, capture both what has changed in less than a lifetime and what never seems to vary from one millennium to the next.



ABDEL QADIR NA'AAL

Spices, Perfumers' Suq

"Because I display everything I sell, like this *za'tar* pyramid trimmed with red sumac and shaved coconut, I get plenty of tourists asking to take my picture. My family name means 'farrier,' but I don't know to which of my ancestors that name was given. All I know is that my grandfather was a spiceman, named Abdel Qadir like me, and he sold spices in the days of the Ottoman Empire. I remember him selling spices in this very stall when I was small, dressed in Ottoman-style trousers.

"I sell all the usual things you expect to find from a spiceman: cinnamon, sweet and black pepper, coriander, dried ginger; *za'tar* [thyme] and cumin, and then there are the more unusual medicinal herbs. In fact, people think I'm a folk doctor. They rely on me to treat things no medical doctor can cure. They want me to give them medicines they'd never find in a clinic, like *zayzafoon* leaf for a cough, *za'roor* flowers for heart problems, anise seed for sleeplessness, chamomile for stomach aches, senna for constipation.

"I mill most of the spices in front of my buyers so they will see that what should be bought fresh hasn't been sitting and drying out on the shelf for ages. A spiceman must have everything in stock, even if it's rarely requested, and he must carry something to cure everything.

"My most unusual spice is *kleejah*. It looks like lichen. You use it to make kleejah biscuits. It's very old-fashioned. *Kashshar al-'ajouz*, "old man's hair," is something else that is rarely requested, but you can always find it in my stall. Anyway, I have no bugs here that might eat my stocks. With such strong herbs, they'd never last a minute here. Bugs don't like spices, but people can't seem to live without them."

SILVA JEZDANIAN

Clothing, Aziziyah Quarter

Aziziyah is Aleppo's most westernized neighborhood, home of many of the city's international chain stores. Among them, Kickers is a British casual-clothing brand heavily advertised throughout the Middle East.

"I've worked six months at Kickers, but I've been selling clothes since I turned 15. I'm a native Aleppine so I know what our people want to wear these days. Even kids have new ideas about fashion. Brands make a big difference to them. Here there are fewer customers than in the suq, but they are willing to pay big markups if they really want a brand name. Still, compared to Lebanon, Syrian markups are nothing. Businessmen come here from Beirut and load up on Nafnaf and Adidas and Polo and go home to make a profit selling piece by piece. Here European-label jeans cost almost half what they cost in Lebanon.

"When small children come in with their mothers and get fussy, I know it's best to make the baby happy. A happy baby is a quiet baby, and a quiet baby lets mother shop longer and buy more. Thursday and Friday are our busiest days. Since this is a largely Armenian quarter, we are closed Sunday, and Saturday is when everyone does household chores, not go shopping. Shopping for clothes like these is more entertainment than necessity. Everyone likes to shop, but only the rich can buy."

MUHAMMAD WARAAQ AND SONS FADIL AND ABDELRAHMAN

Wedding dresses, Handkerchief Suq

"Together with my sons and a brother, we have two stalls across from each other in this suq. It's called Suq al-Manadil because fancy items were always sold here. My great-great-grandfather was a paper dealer. In the 19th century, he traveled to Austria to buy and sell paper, so that is how we got our family name, Waraaq, which means 'paper seller.'

"We've got 15 boy tailors in our dressmaking shop. My brother Zein is the designer. He learned only through experience, not in school. We change the colors of our engagement dresses every year, because tastes in color change, but never, not ever, for wedding dresses. Brides must always wear white.

"Brides usually come with their whole family, but it's the father alone who pays! In Syria, we have a tradition that newly married women wear their wedding dresses every Thursday for the first three months. That way my dresses don't stay in the closet after only one day.

"I don't care how long a woman takes to decide or how often she changes her mind; what is important is that in the end she buys, because then I have a customer for life. For life, you ask? Yes, because next year she will bring in her friend when it is her turn to marry, and her daughter 20 years later, and maybe even her granddaughter long after that. She will remember me whenever she thinks back on the good years, and think I brought them to her because of the dress she wore on that one day.

"The most trouble is when a bride's aunt or a sister comes in full of her own opinions. She tries to persuade the bride, and a salesman makes a big mistake if he tries to please the aunt and convince the bride of the aunt's way of thinking, because the bride will eventually make up her own mind, and it will be something else.

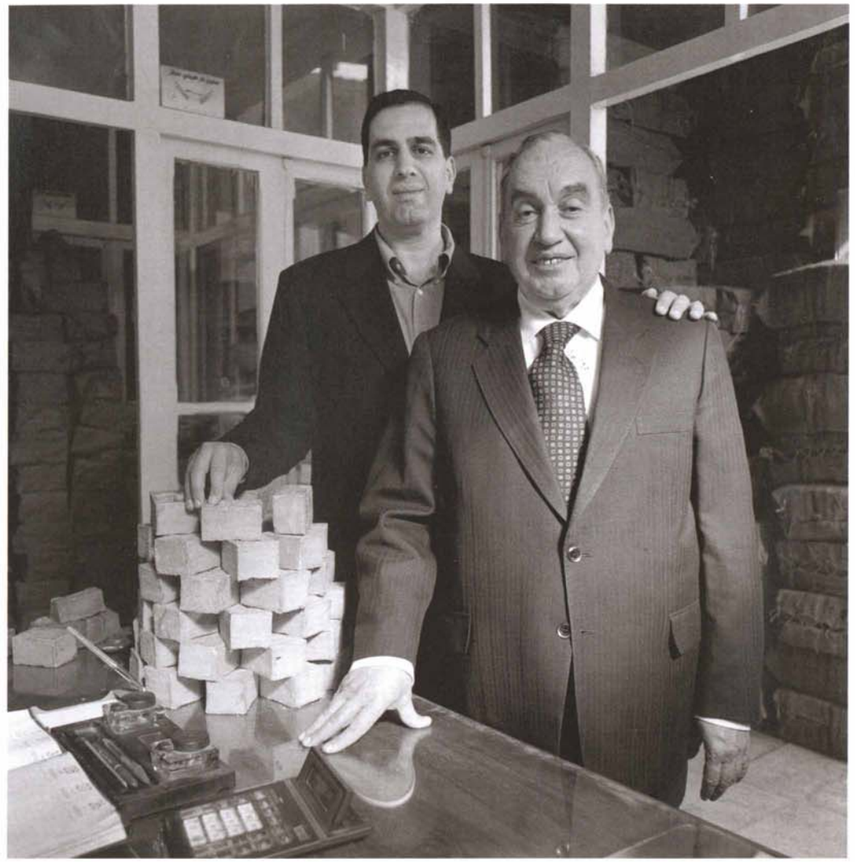
"Some brides can make up their minds in 10 minutes; others stay two hours and still walk out with nothing. I have seen brides scour the suq for days by themselves, and when they finally find the dress they like, they bring the groom along and pretend they just found it in the first store they've looked in, to show him they are decisive and practical. They want to please him, and even if I know different, I play along.

"The day Fadil sold his first dress, the customer thought he was very experienced because he knew where each model and each size was kept. When he started out, he gave bigger discounts than I approved because he wanted to make many sales. Selling wedding dresses to women is much harder than selling cars to men, because here you have to sell a complete ensemble, outer and inner wear. With a car, it's just the outside.

"Fadil is now used to being around nervous women. My wife says he'll make a good husband someday."

MUSBAH FANSA WITH SON FUAD

Soap, Bab al-Faraj (Gate of Deliverance)



"The Fansa family has been making and selling soap for generations. Aleppo has always been known not just for olive soap, which is common in many places, but laurel soap too, which only we Aleppines know how to make.

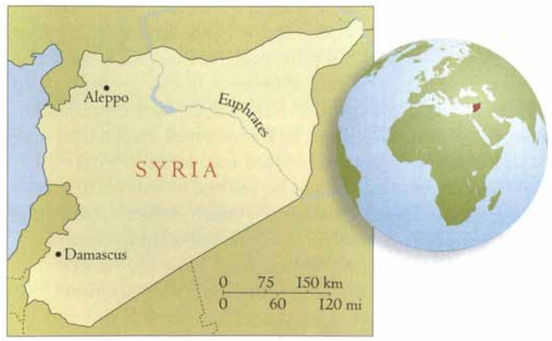
"My father, named Fuad like my son, started this business in 1952 under his own name, Fuad Fansa and Sons. That name is still stamped on every bar of soap we make, and we make a lot—about 500 tons a year. Whether it's a tiny hotel soap or the big 240-gram [half-pound] bar we sell to beauty shops, they all say Fuad Fansa, my father's name and my son's name.

"My son is a mechanical engineer, trained in heating and cooling equipment, so he helped a lot to improve production in the factory. But there's much we do the same as always: Pour the liquid soap straight onto the floor, then cut and stamp and stack by hand and air-dry it. And the caustic we use is still a natural ingredient. In the old days, we used a caustic made from a desert plant called *qilliq*, picked specially for the family by Bedouins near Palmyra, but it took five days to boil down. We don't have time for that any longer, not with hundreds of tons of soap to make, and each batch made in a three-meter [10'] cauldron.

"Now we export to France and America and Japan. We use new shapes and sizes to appeal to foreign demand, and new scents like jasmine and rose, and special packaging printed in Japanese and French for export. Our boxes have a drawing of the Aleppo citadel and a map of Syria. We want to be known all over as Aleppo's best soapmaker. We even registered our trademark in Japan, because you never know—we might expand into other products once we are well established there with our soaps. Fuad is building a website in other languages.

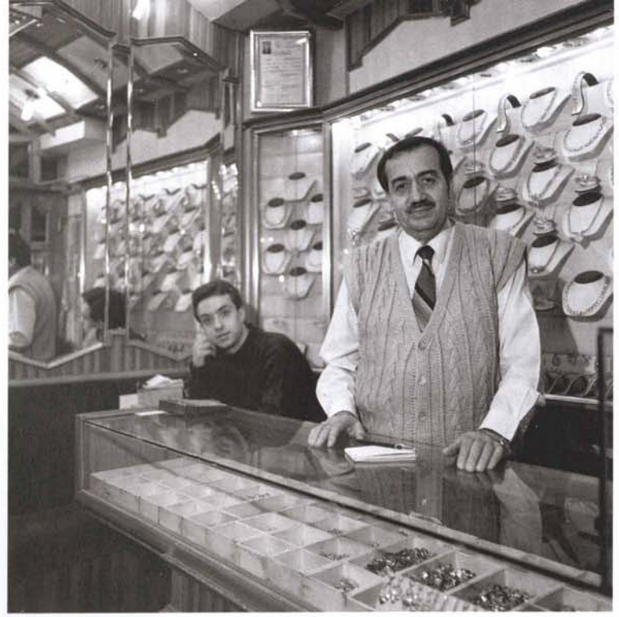
"We grade our soap depending on how much laurel oil it contains. We give either two or five stars depending on if we use two or five barrels of laurel oil per cauldron. We buy the laurel oil from Kassab, a town on the coast up near the Turkish border. I go there personally every fall to buy it. It's expensive, about 400 Syrian pounds per kilo ($3.65/lb). We use second-pressing olive oil, which costs less than a tenth of that.

"Aleppo's fine soaps originated in our hammam tradition, when the old men would gather at the bathhouse, and each wanted to show the others that his soap was the best. These bathhouses are not as popular now, but soapmaking continues. Europeans and Japanese want fancy soaps even if they are alone in the bathroom and no one else can see the soap. They want high quality and all-natural products above everything. In Japan they sell our soap in pharmacies, and in Europe the Green parties use it—at least that is what people tell me who travel there."



MUHAMMAD SAMI HAKIM AND SON MAMDUH

Gold, Handkerchief Suq



"My father had a clothes shop in the suq and set me up as a gold dealer when I was just starting out. He sent his steady customers to me, and I sent mine to him. That's how it always works in any business, anywhere in the world—trust between buyers and sellers, and fathers giving special help to sons.

"Syrians like to buy big pieces of jewelry, to show off to strangers, but foreigners buy smaller things. I don't think they like gold so much. I sell French and English coins, Napoleon III, George V and Ottoman-period, too—all gold. Some people, those who don't trust banks, like coins more than cash. My Bedouin customers prefer English and French coins to Ottoman. Don't ask me why.

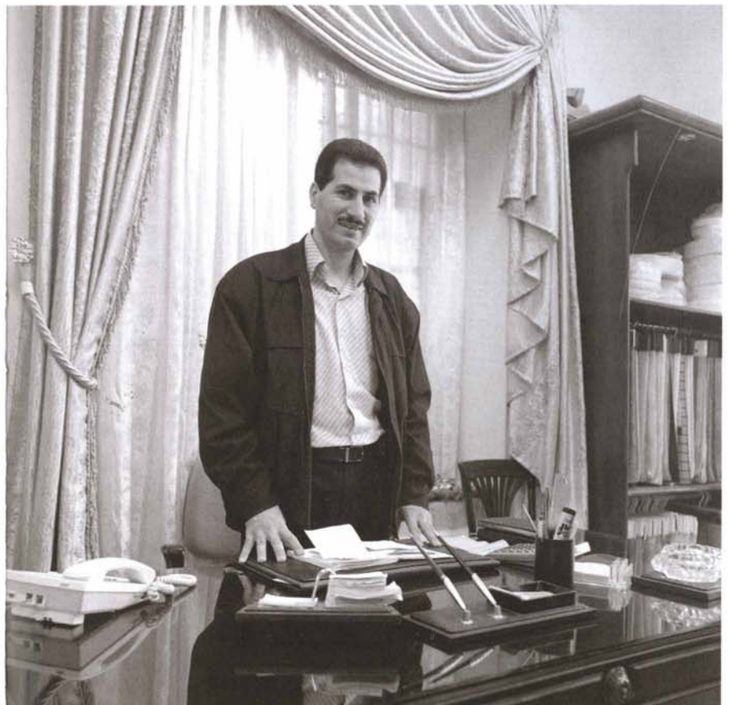
"It's forbidden to sell gold and silver from the same shop, so customers trust that the gold they buy from me is pure, nothing plated or mixed. The daily price of gold is published in national papers, so people know what to expect even before they come into my shop. Even the Bedouins have satellite dishes now.

"July and August are my busiest months. When the harvests come in, the pockets of farmers and shepherds are full of money. The first thing they do is to buy gold, even if just as a temporary store of wealth. I think they like to see wheat and sheep turn to gold. When the rains are good, the gold market is good. You can see every year how one affects the other."

AYMAN MEHMEH

Drapery material, Khan al-Jumruk

The Khan al-Jumruk is the customs caravanserai, where English, French and Dutch merchants stored their goods until they cleared Ottoman customs in the 17th century. It is the suq's largest khan, *its oversized, iron-studded wooden door opening onto an unroofed courtyard, its lower stalls meant for bulk storage and animal stabling, its upper story for merchant lodging. Some 150 stalls today surround the khan's lower level, all of which belong to merchants of cloth, from fancies to bulk quantities of Syria's ubiquitous blue school-uniform fabric.*

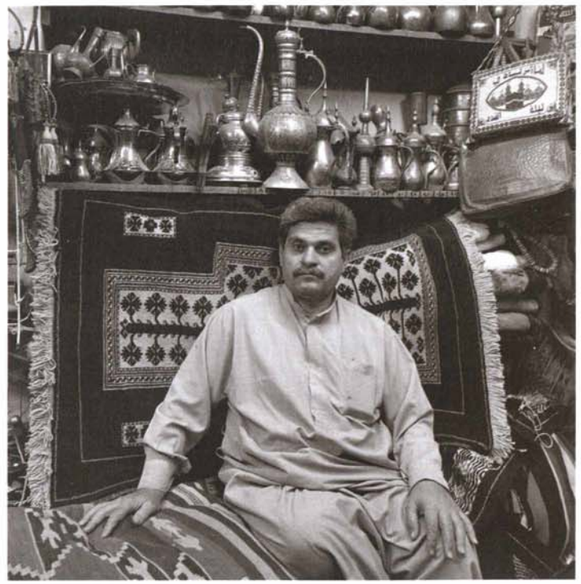


"My grandfather started out in this business with three looms in his house, weaving fabric on demand. As a young man, my father opened a stall here selling fine factory-made textiles. Thirty years ago he started his own factory, weaving floor mats. Now we have mechanical looms and 40 employees making fine brocaded fabrics and silk tassels and braided ropes. I also sell thread wholesale to market manufacturers. Our export orders come from all the Arab countries—Yemen, Libya, Jordan, Iraq.

"In the old days, it was easy to start up a factory and buy equipment. Capital costs were low because it was all hand looming. Nowadays you need new machines of industrial quality. I am the first person to go to the bank to ask for a loan. If I cannot grow this business, we will soon shrink back to where my grandfather started. That is how it is selling textiles. You must sell what you yourself produce, and each year you must produce more."

SALIH IBN MANSOUR

Animal skins and "eastern goods," Main Suq



"My father died when I was one year old, so I had no easy way to enter business in the suq. I began by gathering what others had cast off—old skins and broken bits of brass and copper, worn carpet and cracked glass. I have a good eye; I can see what is still of value, so I was able to resell these things quickly and make a profit. I also know how to stitch the *farwas* [sheepskin vests] worn by the Bedouins. I made them until my fingers ached, and sold them stall to stall, piled on my back. But now I can sit back here and wait for customers to come to me. I've been in this stall for 26 years, watching people walk past, and because it is at the top of the market, near the citadel gate, I often get lucky.

"I married at the age of 15 and now have many children. All have diplomas and none want to follow me in this work. They say it is not for them, that they cannot control their own destiny when they sit and wait for people to pass by and enter. But I say that destiny is in your own hands. Two years ago the stall across from me sold goat hides, a smelly business when the weather was damp and the hides had not been properly cured. But the owner changed his goods; now he sells fancy gold jewelry. I can do such a thing too—I can mend more than fleeces. I can repair all kinds of 'eastern' goods—water pipes needing refitting, copperware needing soldering, carpets needing patching. I can fix anything at all."

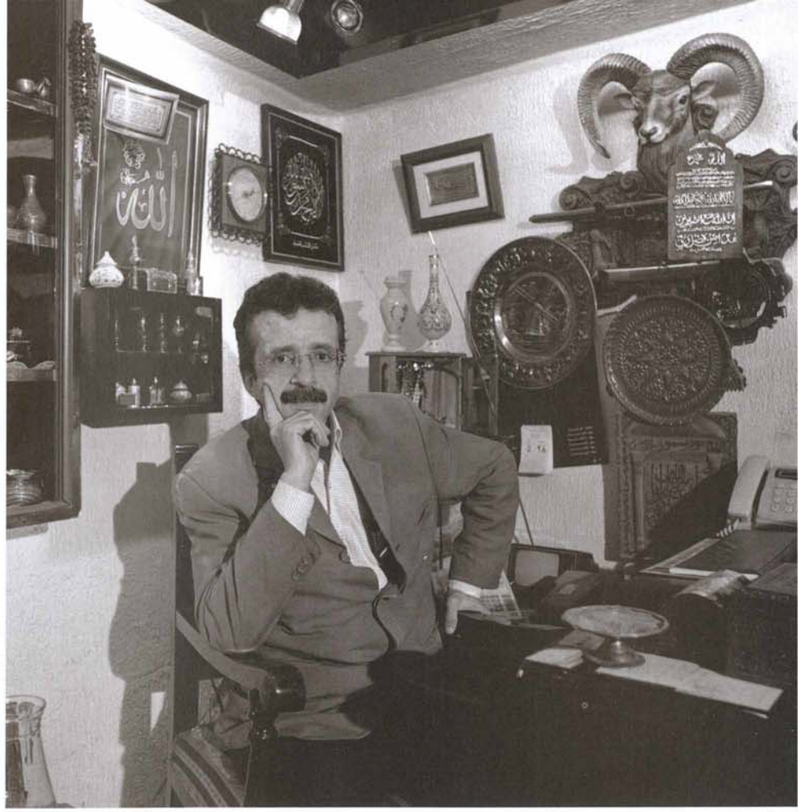
ALAA AL-DIN LABBAN

Men's clothing, Sharia Quwatli

"My family name means 'yogurt-maker.' Maybe 120 years ago, my family was in that business, but now it's just clothes that we sell. I sell readymade clothes, all made in Syria, under the Reindeer trademark—that's a British brand. I also sell custom suits, mostly to Russians—especially, it seems, to Russian pilots. There are so many direct flights to Moscow. I suppose someone has to fly all the Russian traders you see in Aleppo these days. I've worked in this store for 25 years, ever since I finished ninth grade. My father died and I had to take over his shop. I didn't even have a minute to think it over. It was either that or have nothing in my life. So I took over, and I did well at my job. Only I soon switched from ladies' to men's clothes. Selling to ladies is much more difficult. They are so picky—too picky for me. But children's clothes are even worse, because then you have to sell to picky kids and picky women at the same time."

ADNAN MUSTAFA QALIYET

Fine antiques, Main Suq



Qaliyet's glass-enclosed shop is piled to the ceiling with global bric-a-brac: African ivories, Sèvres porcelain, Aleppine brass, English cigarette lighters, Persian lacquerware, Damascene glass, Bedouin jewelry, Indian beads, Isfahani enamels and, displayed most prominently, old console radios specially made for Mediterranean and Middle Eastern markets, with tuning indicators for stations in Nice, Rome, Athens, Cairo, Rabat, Omdurman, Damascus and Tehran—a virtual gazetteer of colonial outposts and stopovers from the 19th century.

"For a hundred years, my family has had a shop right here. I remodeled it 13 years ago to appeal to tourists looking for souvenirs from all over the world. My father Mustafa died 20 years ago at the age of 105. He was a great family patriarch. He started this store back in the Ottoman period. At one time my father owned half the stalls in the entire suq. He was the landlord to spicemen and butchers, goldsmiths and ropemakers.

"I see tourists from every country in the world come to Aleppo to look for their favorite things. Germans come for gold. Americans come for carpets and coins. The French come for silver and lapis, Greeks come for amber, and Japanese come for medicinal plants and soap. I know what to offer them as soon as I hear what language they speak."

Aleppo's 13th-century citadel rises on an elliptical mound overlooking suq and city.

ALEPPO THROUGH TRAVELERS' EYES

IBN AL-SHIHNA (LATE 15TH CENTURY):
"Sales of a single day in Aleppo are often greater than those of a month in other cities.... Ten loads of silk, for instance, brought to Aleppo, are sold that very day for ready money, whereas ten loads taken to Cairo, though the largest of cities, are not sold there till the end of the month."

GERTRUDE BELL, *AMURATH TO AMURATH* (1911):
"A virile population, a splendid architecture, the quickening sense of a fine Arab tradition have combined to give the town an individuality sharply cut, and more than any Syrian city she seems instinct with an inherent vitality."

JOHN HATT, "SYRIA," WWW.TRAVELINTELLIGENCE.NET (2004):
"This souk must be the most enticing in the Middle East.... You are safe everywhere, probably several hundred times safer than in New York. You aren't hassled by shopkeepers or cheated by taxi-drivers. And so many people invite you for coffee or tea that after a few days you start to suffer from severe caffeine poisoning."

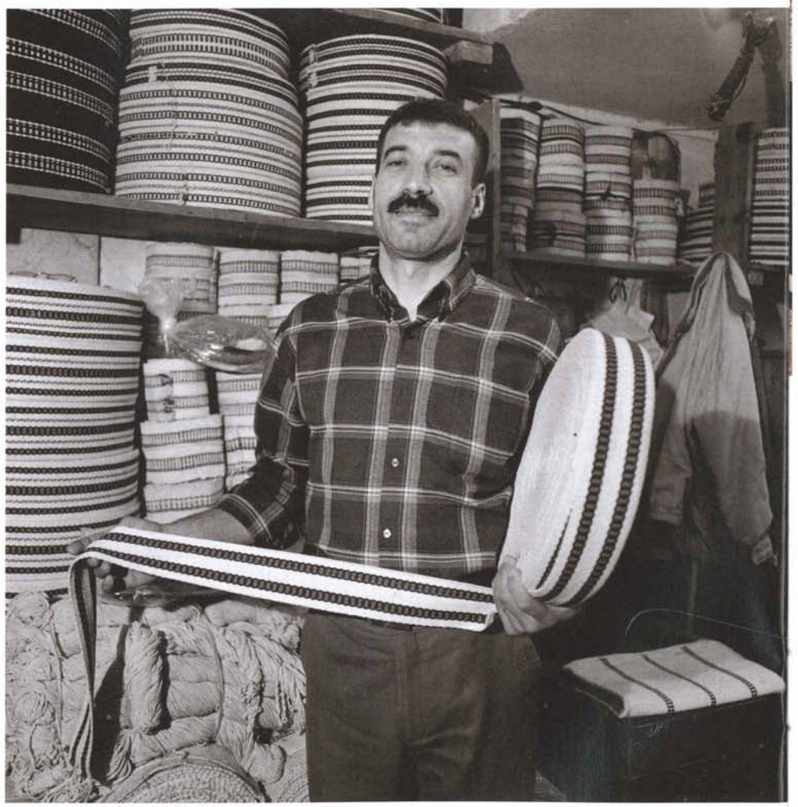
OLA AL KASSIR

Benetton clothing, Aziziyah

"I graduated from a commercial-training institute and now work in the children's department. I can move to any other department as needed. I have no plans for the future. I just like selling and wearing clothes. Benetton is the most expensive brand you can buy in Syria. Even if I cannot afford to buy a lot, at least I can see them all here every day."

ABDELRAHMAN QALI

Tent cloth, Main Suq

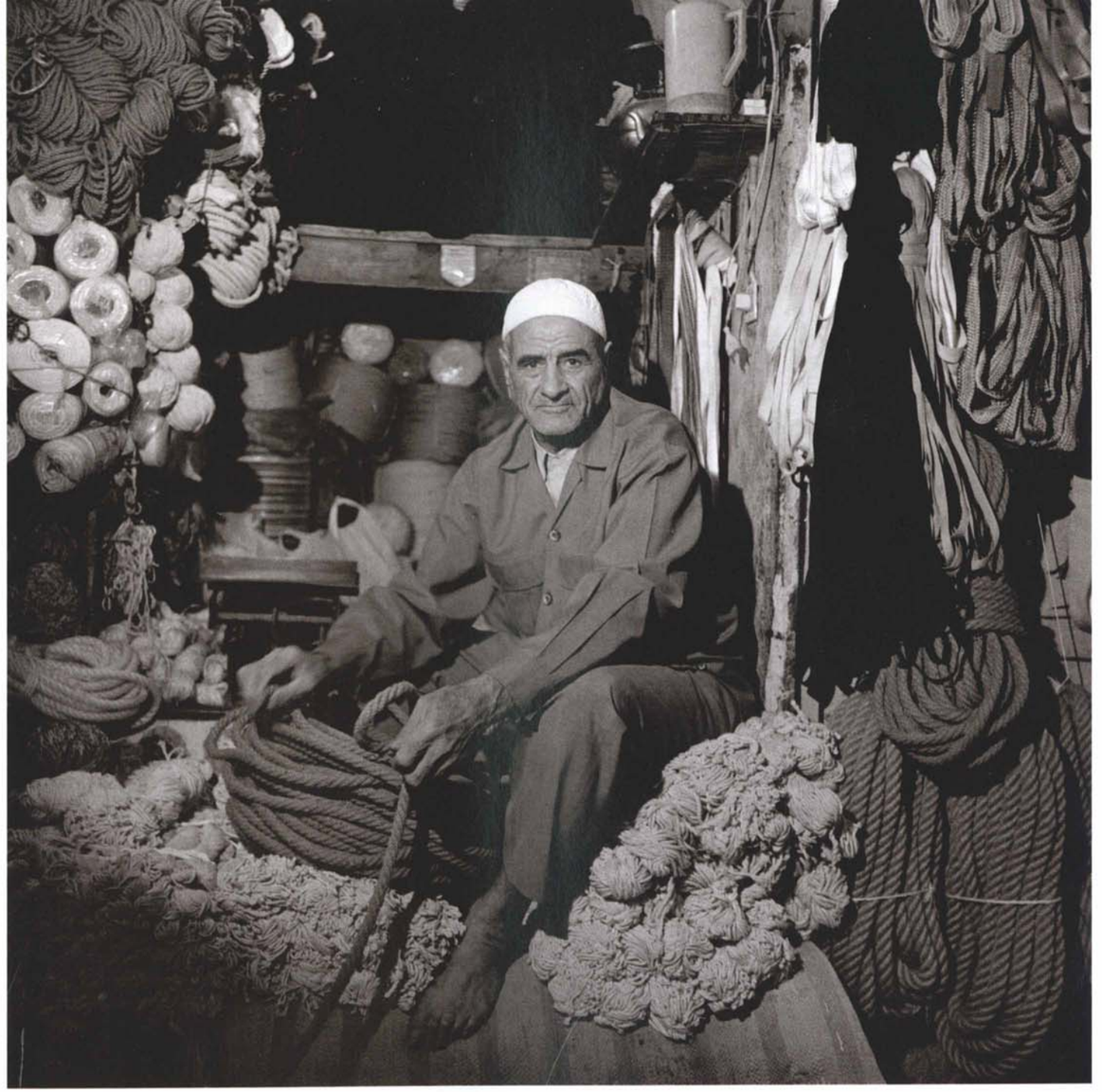


Qali, like Adnan Mustafa, belongs to the Qaliyet family, which holds a place of distinction in the suq as one of the major landlords in days gone by. His shop is filled with huge spools of woven white cotton rag, 1.5 meters (5') wide, similar in weight and quality to a heavy Indian dhurry rug and here called shaqqa. *The shaqqa is unspooled and then cut to a tent's desired width, normally either 15 or 30 meters (50 or 100'). Either four or 10 panels are then sewn together side-to-side to make the tent, either six or 15 meters (20 or 50') deep.*

"We sell tenting for both winter and summer: white cotton for summer, black goat-hair for winter. Even the white cotton tents we call *bayt sha'r*, 'house of hair.' All Syrian tribes use the same shape tent, but they decorate the interior according to their own customs and designs. The goat-hair panels we have made specially for us in the village of Jisr al-Shughur. They have to work on hand looms. Mechanical looms can work in cotton but not with hair.

"There are only two tent shops left in the Aleppo suq. Business is dying. Ten years ago we could sell 100 tents in a year to individual buyers. Now it's down to 40. I sold one to a German man who was opening an Arabian coffeehouse in Aachen and wanted a tent in the courtyard as a fantasy place. Maybe that is the future for our tents, as curiosities for foreigners.

"We keep up the wholesale business by selling to smaller shops in tribal areas, near al-Raqqa and Deir al-Zawr, al-Hazzakiah and Mayadin and Qamishli. We sell maybe 300 tents a year there. Look at a map of Syria—the tribal regions are east of here, along the Euphrates, and north along the Turkish border. That is our market, and as long as people continue to live in those areas, they will continue to live in tents, and they will have to do business with me."



ABDEL RIZAQ BAKIR

Rope, Ropemakers' Suq

"I open my stall at 8:30 every morning and have done since 1952, when I first came to the suq. In those days the other stallkeepers called me 'son,' but now everyone calls me 'grandfather.' I guess it's true that I have changed over the years. Before, I wore country clothes, and now I dress like anyone else in the city. But I still sell just rope and cording, some made of plastic and some that I make myself of hemp.

"Rope is less useful today than it was before. For automobiles you need chains, not ropes—that much I know, even though I don't drive. But people still come here to buy it. They have not changed the name of this suq, after all. Most of my cotton ropes I sell to Bedouins for tentmaking, to stitch panels together or to trim tent pillows. I also sell ropes they use to draw water from wells.

"My sons are not ropemakers. One is a goldsmith; another, a plumber; others a mechanic and a tailor. They tell me—and I tell them—there is no future here for ropemakers, so I am glad they are somewhere else. Even though I pay only 5000 Syrian pounds ($100) a year to rent this stall, I do not always turn a profit. The suq fire of 1980 almost finished me. I lost all my stock, worth 40,000 pounds ($800), and only with God's help was I able to collect my outstanding debts and get back to selling."

ABDELRAHMAN NAHHAS

Copper goods, Copper Market

"My grandfather, who also had my name, started out 70 years ago in this business making small pieces. He was the family's first real coppersmith, so he gave us our name. My father began exporting old copper, mostly covered trays and table lamps, to Europe, but to satisfy demand there, he had to manufacture new pieces that looked old. Most of my own business is custom work, one-of-a-kind pieces ordered by interior designers and architects, sized as big as you can imagine. I sent an 11-meter (35') hanging chandelier to the [Arabian] Gulf. It looked like the bottom of a flying saucer. It took 10 men a month to make it, working nonstop. I have an order now for 200 pierced-sheet sconces to hang in a new hotel's corridors. It seems that every hotel and restaurant in every Arab country is hung with lamps from Aleppo."

HUSSAM DASHIRNI

Internet cafe and pastry shop, Sharia Qawatli

"We opened this shop three years ago, my seven brothers and I. I'm the baker and my brother Ziyyad is the Internet manager. The others fill in as needed. My brother thought up the name for the shop, 'Concorde.' He said people would think of speed and quiet at the same time, just like traveling on the supersonic airplane. We serve a lot of milk cake, ice cream and *basbousa*. For Ramadan, we make the Syrian specialties *ma'rouk* and *ghazal al-banat*, several kilos a day of each. Many young couples come here to eat pastry together. The Internet customers are mostly men; they drink black coffee and sit at the keyboards for hours."

GHASSAN AL HUSSEIN

Appliances, Sharia Qawatli

"I've had this shop for 10 years. I sell microwaves and vacuum cleaners, water coolers and purifiers, washers and driers and space heaters. Most of my customers are men. I have no idea if the things they buy for their wives are given as gifts or as necessities, but I am sure their wives are glad to see something new come through the door. Modern appliances make their lives much easier, and they run more quietly, so the man is never bothered. He hardly even knows that his wife is working."

Louis Werner (wernerworks@msn.com) is a free-lance writer and contributing editor to *Americas* magazine. He lives in New York.

Free-lance photographer **Kevin Bubriski** (bubriski@sover.net) recently published *Pilgrimage: Looking at Ground Zero* (2002, Powerhouse). His photographs are in numerous museum collections worldwide.

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

Aleppo: J/A 87

ARTS PRESENTERS

CONFERENCE 2004

ARABIC ARTS-

2:45PM - 6:00PM

Becoming the Thing

Written by Banning Eyre Photographed by Stephanie Keith

"Where are my artists?" Dawn Elder exclaims, juggling two cell phones and an armful of promotional materials in a basement corridor of the New York Hilton. On a frigid Monday in January, the 47th annual convention of the Association of Performing Arts Presenters (APAP) has brought together some 4000 US-based planners and producers of music, theater and dance events. Amid dozens of panel discussions and several hundred exhibits, the centerpiece of the conference's first special focus on Arab culture features Elder's panel on Arab arts and culture. But as the first speakers finish their remarks, the musicians are nowhere in sight.

Tunisian vocalist Amina Annabi had been up on the 42nd floor rehearsing with Lebanese-American maestro Ali Jihad Racy—but not any more. Jivan Gasparyan, master of the Armenian *duduk* flute, had been asleep after his overseas flight—but no longer. Mercan Dede, leader of a genre-crossing Turkish trance-pop ensemble, is not answering his cell phone—or his urgent voice mails. "Just glitches," says Elder, checking for more messages. "This is show business. We're opening a new world. It's not always easy."

Above: **Dawn Elder, president of Dawn Elder Management and World Entertainment, hosted panel discussions January 10 and 12 to introduce artists whose names (and whose instruments,** top right) **are often household words in the Middle East, but who remain largely unknown in the US.** Right, center: **Simon Shaheen, Ali Jihad Racy and Jivan Gasparyan practice in Elder's hotel suite.** Below: **Tunisian singer-songwriter Amina Annabi brought her increasingly popular, classical-to-rap vocal range to New York.** Opposite: **Bassam Saba (left) and Youseff Kassab perform at Joe's Pub in Manhattan.**

Her confidence is rewarded when the musicians, errant no longer, take seats at a table before the audience of some 200 theater managers, booking agents and critics. A folksy exchange of stories ensues, bridging experiences in the Middle East, North Africa, Canada, France, Armenia, Turkey and the United States. It's an anecdotal tour of joys and frustrations along the world-music road in times that, for all their trouble, are the most promising in years.

"I think our very presence here is an accomplishment," says Ismael Ahmed, executive director of the Dearborn-based Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS). With Elder and APAP president and CEO Sandra Gibson, he is a key organizer of the conference's Arab focus. "APAP is the biggest gathering of arts presenters in the country. Trends are set here."

Since the late 1990's, world music aficionados within APAP had noticed that, while recordings of Arab music were making dramatic inroads in the US, concert tours by Arab artists—so crucial to building an enduring genre audience—were either rare or invisible outside urban Arab-American communities. "There really was a glass ceiling for presenting Arab music," says Ahmed, whose own background includes years of radio work as well as concert presentation. Now, he says, "we've punched a hole in it, and it's getting bigger. For me, this is a home run. It's not the game, but we got our first run."

Elder notes with irony that after September 11 many Arab-American presenters got cold feet "just at the moment when a broader audience was becoming curious." Mainstream presenters wanted to respond, claims Elder, but they were intimidated more by the complexities of touring untried international groups than by the uncertain political climate. International acts are always expensive, and to be successful, she says, you need to know both how to reach urban ethnic communities and how to draw a general American audience to pay to hear a show they may know little or nothing about.

Elder and Gibson first grappled with all of that back in 1998 when they organized the International Friendship Festival in Long Beach, California. It presented world-class Arab musicians, including Lebanese vocal stars Sabah and Rabih al Khaouli, and Palestinian *'ud* and violin virtuoso Simon Shaheen, to more than 100,000 listeners. Now, five years later, "we wanted to push that awareness to a new level, but also to stress that this is achievable," she says.

Others echo that sentiment. Leigh Ann Hahn, director of Grand Performances, a series of free outdoor events in Los Angeles, says that Arab music is "the thing now. There's a buzz; 9/11 sent a chill, but it also lit a fire.... The opportunity is huge, and if we don't use it in the right way we are missing a great moment."

Many at the conference credited Elder, who now manages many of the Arab artists touring in North America, for a catalytic role. "Dawn is a hole digger," says Hahn.

Arab music is "the thing now. There's a buzz." –Leigh Ann Hahn, director, Grand Performances, Los Angeles

"She decided early on to bring artists and art to a world that hadn't yet realized it needed them. She did that because it's her heritage. And to be doing that as a woman in such a male-dominated world is pretty remarkable. She has courage that borders on insanity."

Some presenters did seem daunted, though. Could you present an Arab concert in a church and not offend anyone? Do the audiences for popular and classical Arab artists overlap? Is it all just too political? And what about getting US visas for artists from Middle Eastern countries?

Woeful tales about artists' visas abounded. Artist manager Eva Skalla, who scrapped a tour by the Iranian Kurdish ensemble The Kamkars, called current US visa difficulties "a major chill factor." Mitchell Greenhill of Folklore Productions, who books tours for Sudanese-born star Hamza El Din, is hoping to book an ensemble tour from Pakistan later this year. But he isn't sure. "Even people with the best of intentions are daunted," he says. "We're a small office. How many resources can we devote to bringing 11 Pakistanis in?"

Brian Goldstein, who is among the most sought-after lawyers in the country when it comes to getting visas for foreign artists, told the conference that the process is "frustrating, gut-wrenching, expensive and difficult—but doable." There is no moratorium on Middle Eastern artists, he says. "Everybody is in the same boat."

Vexing as they can be, the visa issues often obscure a still greater obstacle to Arab-music tours: high artists' fees. Maure Aronson of World Music, Boston's premier presenter of international music and dance performances, says that to present shows that will appeal "to all the communities of greater Boston, ticket prices must be reasonable, $40 at most. The price quotes I get [from major Arab performers] would require me to charge $100, and I'm not prepared to do that." Hahn echoed this, noting that although recent performances by Iraqi superstar Kazem al Saher impressed her, "I can't afford to present him."

"There was a glass ceiling for presenting Arab music, but now we've punched a hole in it, and it's getting bigger." —Ismael Ahmed, executive director, ACCESS

This is logistics, Elder says, not greed. Over the years, bookers of world music acts have persuaded large African and Brazilian bands to pare down their lineups in order to make touring in the US financially feasible. Elder says many of her artists have yet to figure out how to do this. "They feel they need to bring a minimum of 10 musicians, up to as many as 36, because Arab music involves so many different instruments," she says. "You need a big string section, a powerful percussion section and a chorus. The artists feel it takes numbers to capture the essence of their music." In addition, travel costs from the Middle East and North Africa make tours legitimately expensive.

Elder has persuaded some artists to draw upon the wealth of talented U.S.-based Arab musicians, but established artists are often hesitant. She argues it this way, she says: The ultimate goal is not simply concerts, but a career in the world's largest music market. "This is the concept I have the hardest time getting across to the artists," she says.

Elder believes there's an opportunity here for Arab-world governments and cultural institutions. "In other countries—Japan, even France—there are grants from tourist and culture ministries to underwrite tour costs," she explains. "Just as we're educating here, people on the artists' sides too have to understand that there is a need."

For their part, American audiences are hard-pressed to comprehend the Arab-world stature of artists like Sabah Fakhri, Wadi al Safi or Kazem al Saher. Household names abroad, they are hard even to pronounce for Americans. At a summer festival last year in Amman, Hahn says, "I saw people diving through the crowd hoping just to snap Kazem's picture through the window of his limousine." Jeff Peters, a former tour manager for the Beach Boys, was doing al Saher's sound for the same show: "I hadn't seen anything like that crowd energy since the Beach Boys played a free concert on the Washington Mall."

Born in Turkey but now based in Montreal, Mercan Dede, left, in mirror, **waits with three of his teenage band members before their GlobalFest performance.** Above: **Ken Fischer has led the University of Michigan's decade-long effort to forge musical alliances with Detroit-area communities including ACCESS, which hosts the three-day annual Concert of Colors, Detroit's largest outdoor festival. "Our staff had grown up seeing this monolithic Arab community, but we weren't taking the time to get to know it," he says.** Top: **Amina rehearses with flamenco guitarist Arturo Martinez and Ali Jihad Racy.**

The Association of Performing Arts Presenters (APAP) annual convention is the largest assembly in the US of agents, promoters, venue representatives and artists. Right: **Mercan Dede mixes traditional Turkish rhythms and instruments with electronica at GlobalFest.**

For the live-performance highlights of the conference's Arab-music focus, attenders tasted direct musical power at GlobalFest, a sold-out, five-hour, three-stage extravaganza at the city's Public Theatre. Michael Orlove, program director for Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs, says it was "the hottest ticket in town." Among 16 world-music acts, visiting presenters could experience Marcel Khalife's fusion of Arab classical music and jazz and Mercan Dede's power-marriage of traditional Turkish and DJ beats. Two nights later, violin virtuoso Simon Shaheen hosted and performed a tour de force showcase at Joe's Pub, including an improvisation with Jivan Gasparyan, Ali Jihad Racy's collaboration with Amina, a piece Shaheen composed for *'ud* and string quartet, as well as sets by Shaheen's classical Near East Music Ensemble and his experimental fusion group, Qantara.

"I'm looking at the business cards I collected and the people who signed my lists, and there are lots who are not part of the world-music crowd," says Elder. "I think we've started to open the door."

The artists, of course, have their own take on the experience of touring in America. What advice would they give fellow Arab-world artists? Hamza El Din encourages them to "make the sacrifice" of putting up with visa hassles, arduous air travel and reduced gate revenues. Shaheen warns that the process of playing small clubs can be humiliating if you are accustomed to metropolitan theaters and stadium shows back home. Amina offers practical advice: "I would give them Dawn Elder's e-mail address and phone number!"

In the end, everyone present seemed motivated more by prospects than hurdles. As Anan Ameri put it, "The [US] government is making it harder," he says, while "the people are much more interested. I really think they want to learn more about Arab music and culture. The arts community is progressive."

After 22 years working to introduce Arab music in his adopted country, New York-based Shaheen has long since made peace with this apparent contradiction. "Americans are really great," he says. "They can absorb a lot. They want to reach out.... The contradictions go both ways. Arab musicians should come and play. If you have been doing your art with integrity and vision, you have to keep on. You cannot let a circumstance cancel your vision and cancel your past."

Banning Eyre is a free-lance writer specializing in African music and co-producer of "Afropop Worldwide," distributed by Public Radio International. He can be reached at banning@afropop.org.

Stephanie Keith (www.stephaniekeith.com) is a New York free-lance photographer whose work has also appeared in *The New York Times* and *U.S. News & World Report*.

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

Arab pop: M/A 00
Amina: N/D 01
Hamza El Din: J/A 91
New artists: N/D 01
Music reviews: S/O 02, M/A 03
Ali Jihad Racy: S/O 02, S/O 95
Simon Shaheen: S/O 02, N/D 01, M/A 00

www.artspresenters.org
www.afropop.org

Suggestions for Reading

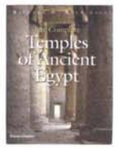
Readers of *Saudi Aramco World* who want to range more widely or delve more deeply than a bimonthly magazine can do will find interesting material, most of it recently published, in this list. Without endorsing the views of any of the authors, the editors nonetheless encourage varied and omnivorous reading as a sure, if winding, path to greater understanding. The books listed here are available in libraries, from bookstores—we urge our readers to patronize independent bookstores—or from their respective publishers; 10-digit International Standard Book Numbers (ISBN) are given to facilitate ordering. Please do not order books from *Saudi Aramco World*.

Archaeology of the United Arab Emirates: Proceedings of the First International Conference on the Archaeology of the U.A.E. Daniel Potts, Hasan Al Naboodah, Peter Hellyer, eds. 2003, Trident Press, 1-900724-88-X, £39.95 hb.
This handsome volume comprises the proceedings of a 2001 archeology conference held in Abu Dhabi. Although aimed at the specialist, it is well worth the time of anyone with an interest in how civilization evolved in this part of the world. Spanning some seven millennia, the book covers each archeological period by concentrating on key developments. Bronze Age trade, for example, is brought into focus by a paper detailing the considerable technology required to build a reed boat. Other papers analyze intriguing facets of the Iron Age, Late Stone Age, and the Pre-Islamic and Islamic periods. There is also a section on environmental archeology. Generously illustrated, it is sure to be as welcome to the armchair archeologist as to the specialist and student. —JANE WALDRON GRUTZ

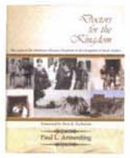
Bazaar to Piazza: Islamic Trade and Italian Art, 1300–1600. Rosamond E. Mack. 2002, University of California, 0-520-22131-1, $65 hb.
Rosamond Mack, an Italian Renaissance art historian, shows how "oriental" (primarily Islamic) influences, transmitted through travel, trade and diplomacy, shaped the Italian imagination in fine and decorative arts. In chapters on patterned silks, Arabic script in Italian paintings, carpets, ceramics, glass, bookbinding and lacquer, inlaid brass and pictorial arts, she points out extensive connections between objects from the Muslim world and Italian ones, and proposes that, in order to fully appreciate the familiar Italian works, it helps to understand the sources of the visual imagination that produced them. In the beginning of the period Mack covers, China and the Middle East produced virtually all the value-added silks, carpets, ceramics, glass, leatherwork and brass that reached Italy. Gradually, Italy developed its own centers of high-quality production, and trade in manufactured luxury goods became multidirectional—the Ottomans imported glassblowers from Murano to establish their Çeşmibülbül glassworks—but mutual cultural and religious ignorance remained. The reproductions in the book are of high quality and the sources range from well-known galleries to smaller specialized collections. The extensive bibliography includes English, Italian, French and German source material, but occasionally proves frustrating when a footnote draws a parallel to a work that is not illustrated in the book. —CHARLES SWEENEY

Before the Oil: A Personal Memoir of Abu Dhabi. Susan Hillyard. 2002, Ashridge Press, 1-901214-02-8, £20 hb.
The author was one of the first Europeans to live in Abu Dhabi, beginning in 1954. Because she spoke Arabic, she enjoyed close relationships with local women, including some in the emirate's ruling family. Her affectionate account of life there half a century ago, at the very beginning of Abu Dhabi's modern development, focuses on family matters, describing food and customs, disease and treatment, the relationships of daily life and such events as the arrival of the first automobile, but also records the beginnings of Abu Dhabi's oil industry. This is a fond and valuable source for the period.
—PETER HELLYER

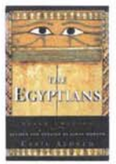
Brick Lane. Monica Ali. 2003, Scribner, 0-7432-4330-7, $25 hb; 2004, Scribner, 0-7432-4331-5,$14 pb; 2003, Doubleday, 0-385-60484-X, £12.99 hb; 2004, Black Swan, 0-5527-7115-5, £7.99 pb.
Before this first novel was even published, *Granta* named Monica Ali to its list of 20 Best Young British Novelists—a bad sign. Other reviewers called her "the new Zadie Smith": strike two. But in fact this tale of a woman who moves from complete will-lessness—even her survival at birth is a matter of merest accident—to the hard-earned capacity to take control of her own life is sharply and sympathetically observed, insightful, complex and hopeful. Humor and tragedy adjoin and intermingle inextricably, like the two cultures in which the sharply observed characters live and struggle, fail and succeed.



The Complete Temples of Ancient Egypt. Richard H. Wilkinson. 2000, Thames and Hudson, 0-500-05100-3, $39.95 hb.
Wilkinson, director of the University of Arizona Egyptian expedition and author of several books on ancient Egypt, breezes through scores of temples, both major and obscure, in an unadorned and lucid style. Separate chapters are devoted to the origin of Egyptian temples, their growth and decline and their modern rediscovery; the process of building and decorating a temple; the components of a temple; the temple's relationship to the pantheon of Egypt's gods, along with the roles and rituals of pharaohs and priests, and the sacred rites and festivals; and a catalog and guide to the ancient sites. Profusely illustrated with photographs, maps and reconstructions, this attractive volume, like the others in the series, is an entertaining guide and general reference book, useful for planning a trip, nurturing a budding interest in the subject or as a memento of your own expedition. More experienced readers may be disappointed in the brevity of the individual entries, however. —KYLE PAKKA

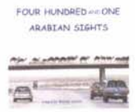


Doctors for the Kingdom. Paul L. Armerding. 2003, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 0-8028-2683-0, $39 hb.
This is an account of one of the earliest chapters of the US-Saudi relationship. In 1889, the "Arabian Mission" was a medical aid society formed in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Two years later, it set up a clinic in Basra, Iraq; in 1902 it opened a branch in Bahrain. In 1911, 10 men wounded in a raid on the Arabian mainland were transferred across the water to Bahrain for treatment. Several lives were saved, and this was the beginning of what would become a 42-year history of medical service to the kingdom, which included services to the royal family and personally to 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Sa'ud, both before and after his proclamation of Saudi Arabia in 1932. 'Abd al-'Aziz held the American doctors in high esteem, not least for their disinterested devotion, and this contributed to a larger positive regard for the other Americans who came later, and with whom the modern US-Saudi relationship was forged.

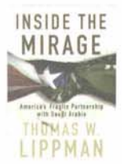


The Egyptians. Cyril Aldred. 3rd ed., revised and updated by Aidan Dodson. 1998, Thames and Hudson, 0-500-28036-3, $16.95 pb.
Cyril Aldred's classic work, first published in 1961 and revised by Aldred in 1984, receives a light freshening up in this third edition. Aidan Dodson, visiting fellow in archeology at the University of Bristol, has largely left intact Aldred's style—a "masterpiece of compression," according to Jacquetta Hawkes—interrupting only where new evidence warrants it. Early chapters cover the reawakening of interest in the ancient civilization—beginning with the Greeks'—the natural resources and the settlement patterns, and provide an overview of the significant places that feature in the millennial drama of dynastic Egypt. A complete chronology of Egyptian kings, from the Archaic through the Hellenistic period, an updated bibliography and ample photographs, many new to this edition, make this an indispensable one-volume introduction to ancient Egypt. —KYLE PAKKA

The Englishwoman in Egypt: Letters from Cairo Written During a Residence There in 1842–46. Sophia Poole. Azza Kararah, ed. 2004, American University in Cairo, 977-424-799-X, $29.50 hb.
It was at the suggestion of her brother, scholar and author Edward William Lane, that Sophia Poole composed her *Letters*, most likely to fill in the gaps about Egyptian women in Lane's own *The Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*. The results were first serialized and then published in two volumes in London in 1844, with a third volume appearing in 1846. This new edition by Azza Kararah, a retired professor of English literature at Alexandria University who published an Arabic translation of Poole's book in 1999, is a fine contribution to the portrait of an Egypt poised on the threshold of rapid change. Poole's descriptions of people and places are meticulous, whether describing the departure of the Hajj caravan, funeral processions, antiquities or the insane asylum attached to the *maristan* (hospital) of Sultan Qala'un. Unlike other European visitors to harems, such as Harriet Martineau or Florence Nightingale, Poole spoke Arabic and adopted local customs, allowing her greater access and insight into a way of life that was subject to much wild speculation by Europeans. She moved in the upper echelon of Egyptian society, and her book's crowning achievement is its description of the wedding of the youngest daughter of Mohammad Ali Pasha, Egypt's ruler—the only extant account of the event—from the dancers and fireworks to the fabulous jewels of the dowry. While not in the heavyweight class of her brother's works, *Letters* adds in no small measure to our understanding of the vibrant pageant of Cairo.
—KYLE PAKKA



Four Hundred and One Arabian Sights. Wendy Cocker. 2003, www.aramcoexpat.com, [no ISBN], 29.95, PhotoCD.
Drawing on amateur personal photography over more than 14 years of residence in Saudi Arabia, Cocker has compiled seven themed sets of photos that, when loaded into a personal computer, are like going to the local library on a Tuesday evening to see a bright "My Years in Saudi Arabia" travelogue. Aimed primarily at viewers who have shared her experience as an expatriate living in Saudi Aramco's main community in Dhahran, the collection nonetheless has a broader appeal, as it is one of the only systematic visual records of modern daily life in the kingdom through the eyes of a westerner. Her candid, often whimsical and nostalgic shots cover a broad range of daily-life subjects. Many are too ordinary to make the cut in a news or magazine feature, yet they show things you won't see anywhere else: Saudi grocery stores, townscapes, faces, family camping trips and the beaches where expatriates go swimming and sailing. All of it makes the country less exotic and, for that, more interesting.



Inside the Mirage: America's Fragile Partnership with Saudi Arabia. Thomas Lippman. 2004, Westview Press, 0-8133-4052-7, $27.50 hb.
This is an engaging, carefully researched, anecdote-laced account of how US companies and individual Americans managed their business and personal relationships in Saudi Arabia. Indeed, a more descriptive title would have been *Americans and Saudis: People of the Relationship*. Lippman has all the right stuff for this project—he is former Middle East bureau chief, energy reporter and diplomatic correspondent for the *Washington Post* and author of *Understanding Islam*—and he delivers accordingly. While the American–Aramco–Saudi link figures prominently, he also devotes chapters and passages to other Saudi–American partnerships, including the al-Kharj agricultural project, Saudia–TWA, the Ford Foundation, the US–Saudi Arabian Joint Economic Commission and Vinnell's contracts with the Saudi National Guard. Even readers familiar with the long and productive Saudi–US relationship may be surprised to learn that a Bahrain-based missionary physician was probably the first American whom 'Abd al-'Aziz Al Sa'ud met (in Kuwait in 1914); from him the future king received a positive impression of Americans that was reinforced later by philanthropist Charles Crane and mining engineer Karl Twitchell. Lippman does not shrink from reporting the darker moments of the American experience in Saudi Arabia, but an authentic, genuine relationship is seldom without such moments—and imperfection is the reality, not a mirage. —ROBERT L. NORBERG

The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity: AD 395–600. Averil Cameron. "Routledge History of the Ancient World." 1993, repr. 2000, Routledge, 0-415-01421-2, £16.99/$28.95 pb.
The Arabs' seventh-century conquest of large chunks of the old Roman Empire happened more quickly and easily than historians have well explained. Cities and garrisons surrendered; the process was relatively bloodless. The eastern Romans, or Byzantines, shouldn't have been such pushovers: A century earlier, they had become masters of North Africa, and only 10 years before Muhammad's death they had scored an impressive, crippling victory over the Sasanids of Persia. In Cameron's view, the reasons for the speed and ease of the Arab conquest lie neither in the traditional "Gibbon" argument of an empire in decline nor in religious differences between rulers and subject peoples. She focuses instead on profound and complex cultural changes that the Roman East was already experiencing before Muhammad, including its "Arabization." Having expended much blood and treasure on distant wars, the Romans hired Arab forces (often Ghassanid nomads) to patrol the empire's eastern frontiers. Financial crisis in Constantinople meant military payrolls weren't met, so it's not surprising that Byzantine garrisons laid down their arms and Ghassanid troops changed sides. As Cameron notes, Arab victory came at "a time of rapid change," posing problems with which "we might identify in our own post-modern world." —ROBERT W. LEBLING

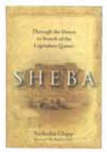
My Name Is Red. Orhan Pamuk. Erdağ M. Göknar, tr. 2001, Knopf, 0-375-40695-6, $26.95 hb; 2002, Vintage International, 0-375-70685-2, $14.95 pb; 2002, Faber & Faber, 0-5712-1224-7, £7.99 pb. Original title: Benim Adim Kirmizi.
In this extraordinary novel, successive chapters are told in the voices of various characters whose identities only gradually become clear and whose roles and interactions are revealed more slowly still. It is a murder mystery and a love story, but it is also the story of a milestone in art history and the seismic effects of an apparently trivial interaction between Ottoman and western culture of the 16th century.

Night and Horses and the Desert: An Anthology of Classical Arabic Literature. Robert Irwin, ed. 2000, Overlook Press, 1-58567-064-2, $40 hb.
Irwin, a historian of the Arab Middle East and a thoroughly entertaining writer, takes us on a thoughtful yet dizzying excursion down the literary alleyways of the Middle Ages, with a focus on the neglected 10th and 11th centuries. This is an anthology of extracts, both prose and poetry, and Irwin reminds us that some of the most esteemed works of medieval Arabic literature were "collections of other men's flowers." His goal is to give English readers "a taste of the authentic strangeness" of this particular corner of the medieval past. He does that well, but he can't help reminding us that human nature has changed very little in the past thousand years. He acquaints us with the swaggering poetry of Mutanabbi, who died trying to live up to his most famous line of verse: "I am known to night and horses and the desert, to sword and lance, to parchment and pen." He introduces the poet-commentator Ma'arri, who "carried the equivalent of a large library in his head" and who, as a strict vegetarian, refused to eat honey because it was cruel to the bees. Then there was Jahiz, the witty essayist and book-lover who penned a rambling seven-volume opus called *The Book of Animals*—a masterpiece of digression on the order of *Tristram Shandy*. The rambunctious parade of Arab literati is kept in line by Irwin's thread of lucid commentary. This is a very user-friendly introduction to an unjustly neglected body of literature. —ROBERT W. LEBLING

The Poetry of Arab Women: A Contemporary Anthology. Nathalie Handal, ed. 2001, Interlink Books, 1-56656-374-7, $22 pb.
This is a superbly crafted tapestry that weaves together vignettes of 83 of today's most distinct and diverse voices. For the first time in English, it answers the need for a record of the full range of Arab women poets, from well-established to regional to emerging figures, inside and outside the Arab world. It links all of them in a historic timeline that traces the development of pre-Islamic poets to the present, highlighting evolutions of forms from set and long-held rules to the current free verse. Their voices speak of survival, freedom, contention, the need for social reform, the quests for peace and cultural identity and the effects of war, as well as personal growth within contexts of community, religion and family life. This is a pioneering work that will broaden the reader's view of Arab women. —NI'MAH I. NAWWAB

Prince Henry "the Navigator": A Life. Peter Russell. 2000, Yale University Press, 0-300-08233-9, $35 hb; 0-300-09130-3, $16.95/£12 pb.
In the first reevaluation of Prince Henry's life in more than a century, Sir Peter Russell, long professor of Spanish studies and director of Portuguese Studies at Oxford University, reveals a personality that seems "to present a range of different images according to the various contexts in which we come across him." Henry largely succeeded in creating a myth about himself for posterity: the celibate ascetic devoted to science, navigation and the propagation of the faith who endowed schools, founded a religious order, led a successful crusade against Ceuta and opened up the uncharted waters of the African coast to explorations that founded a worldwide empire. Henry inspired his contemporaries, as well as later generations; largely through the force of his personality, he pushed Portuguese navigation beyond what were thought to be safe limits. (A terrible side effect of his exploratory zeal was the foundation of the Atlantic slave trade.) Russell succeeds brilliantly in presenting the man behind the myth: a medieval, not a Renaissance, character and an impetuous, rash, obsessive personality whose fixations brought him near ruin more than once. When he emerges from the shadows, Prince Henry proves to be a man of great contradictions, infuriating as well as inspiring and—as Russell promises in his introduction—"plainly a far more interesting if also a far more perplexing figure than the uncomplicated culture hero of the mythmakers." —CHARLES SWEENEY

Return to Baghdad: An American Woman's Journey. Cosette Marie Laperruque and Mary Alice Murphy. 2003, PublishAmerica, 1-59286-977-7, $19.95 pb.
As a teenager, the author moved to Baghdad with her family in 1957 and immediately fell in love with Iraq—and immediately thereafter with a Saudi-born Iraqi general more than 20 years her senior. The latter relationship lasted until his death more than 40 years later; the former continues still, and this memoir begins with Laperruque's risky return to Baghdad in 1991 to bring food and medicine to her husband's family there. Told in a series of flashbacks, this is a heartfelt and somehow invincibly innocent story of how personal qualities—honor, trust, friendship and love—can straighten the twists and turns of history and survive its rudest blows.



Sheba: Through the Desert in Search of the Legendary Queen. Nicholas Clapp. 2001, Houghton Mifflin, 0-395-95283-2, $26 hb; 2002, Mariner Books, 0-618-21926-9, $14 pb.
The author of *The Road to Ubar* takes readers on another quest, this time to Yemen, with side trips to Jerusalem, Palmyra and Aksum. Clapp sets out to unravel the mystery of Bilqis, the storied Queen of Sheba, but before taking to the field, he equips his reader with fascinating lore on the queen and her encounter with King Solomon, preserved in the scriptures and traditions of three major faiths, in particular the Arab legends in al-Kisa'i's *Tales of the Prophets*. Some say Bilqis is buried at Palmyra, Syria. Ethiopians insist she was the mother of their first emperor, Menelik. The most popular Arab tradition makes her the queen of the kingdom of Saba, a trading power that straddled the Frankincense Route in Yemen. Clapp travels to the ruins of the Sabaean capital Ma'rib, on the edge of the Empty Quarter. He marvels at Sheba's Moon Temple and wonders what might lie buried in its still-unexcavated circular precinct. Clapp may not find all the answers, but this is a journey worth taking, if only to watch this tenacious investigator and deft storyteller in action. —ROBERT W. LEBLING

A Sky So Close. Betool Khedairi. Muhayman Jamil, tr. 2001, Pantheon, 0-375-42096-7, $23 hb; 2002, Anchor Books, 0-385-72078-5, $13 pb. Original title: Kam Badat al-Sama' Qareebah!!
Khedairi's unnamed narrator, like the author, is the daughter of an Iraqi father and a Scottish mother; neither can bear to live in the other's country. The girl discovers that growing up between two cultures means growing up in neither, means being a stranger—however well-disguised—in both houses, and ultimately means making a home in homelessness itself. This is a poignant and honest story of coming of age.

Traces of Paradise: The Archaeology of Bahrain 2500 BC–300 AD. Harriet Crawford and Michael Rice, eds. 2002, I. B. Tauris, 1-86064-742-1, £24.95, pb.
To the Sumerians, the islands of Bahrain and the nearby Arabian coast were Dilmun, a paradise of milk and honey linked to the origins of the world. Beyond myth, however, Dilmun was also a center of international trade, blessed with fine harbors and abundant supplies of fresh water, whose capital was at Qal'at Bahrain, on the main island's north coast. Dilmun supplied Mesopotamia with valuable goods including pearls from the Gulf, copper from Oman and lapis lazuli from Afghanistan. In Alexander's day, Dilmun was known as Tylos, and it remained a vital commercial nexus for further centuries as it had for centuries past. The archeology of these eras—a story seldom told and still strewn with major puzzles—is the subject of this attractive, well-produced book. It includes Bahrain's well-known "vast sea of sepulchral mounds" but goes far beyond it. The reader's eye tends to linger long over the lush photography—a silversmith's hoard, rare snake bowls, ornate golden jewelry, delicate alabaster bowls and even a free-blown glass baby-bottle from the first century of our era. The images complement a strong, lucid text written by a well-chosen team of experts. —ROBERT W. LEBLING

The Tree & other stories. Abdullah al-Nasser. Dina Bosio, Christopher Tingley, trs; Salma Khadra Jayyusi, intro. 2004, Interlink Books, 1-56656-498-0, 12.95 pb.
The author was born in Dir'iyah, the historic capital of the Al Sa'ud west of Riyadh; this is his first collection of stories to be translated and published in English. Each is tightly focused, even episodic, and, as Salma Khadra Jayyusi points out in the book's introduction, they draw from the classical genre of factual, anecdotal narrative called *khabar* in Arabic. Within this framework, the author treats themes of modernity and cultural intermingling amid the events of our time. One touching story, "The Snow Siege," tells of a first-person encounter in Scotland with a Dutch woman unable to pay her bill in a snowbound hotel. The story's resolution shows the depth of the well of hospitality that still waters Arab culture, and which so often leaves visitors humbled, stunned and eager for closer ties.

Why I Am a Muslim: An American Odyssey. Asma Gull Hasan. 2004, ThorsonsElement, 0-00-717533-7, $22.95 hb.
Why do Muslims like being Muslims? This is a question that many non-Muslims don't stop to ask, but Hasan, an attorney and the child of immigrant parents, goes right to the heart of it with a self-effacing humor not often found in anyone's discussions of religion. This is Hasan's second book, and it confirms her growth as one of the most articulate, candid and downright friendly voices among young Muslims in America today. She writes conversationally, much as if you'd posed a casual question to her over lunch. She speaks of her own pride in her name (which to her chagrin was regularly mispronounced in grade school, to embarrassing effect); of how forgiveness and personal growth have been integral to her faith; of the differences among cultural and religious practices; of what it feels like to be all of female, Muslim and American; and of how being a Muslim makes her a better American.

Suggestions**for**Listening

COMPILED BY CHRIS NICKSON

Allem Alby. Amr Diab, Mondo Melodia
For 15 years now, Amr Diab has been the fastest-beating heartthrob of Egyptian pop. His American debut is more satisfying to the overseas ear than much of his previous paint-by-numbers work despite stumbling through a frothy opening cut before finding its feet. At times his voice can sound generic and superficial, but not always: On the brooding "Allemny Hawak," he dominates convincingly, and on tracks like "Enta Ma Oltesh La," where he starts to skip away from western influences, he is actually powerful. There's pleasure here, and enough substance to make this a good introduction—enough to make you wish Diab would keep his eyes on his art instead of his charts.

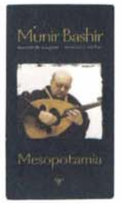
Among Brothers. Abdelli, Real World
The idea of a Berber singer recording with musicians in all of Cape Verde, Azerbaijan and Burkina Faso in order to create wide-ranging musical fusion could be a recipe for an intercultural disaster. But with a firm grip on its Maghrebi roots, the other cultures provide musical colors and textures that reach and branch out in surprising, even loving directions. Much credit is due to Abdelli's focused writing and profound sense of melody, and his ability to maintain a desert rawness in his voice while making it easily accessible to western ears. This agile balancing act works well.

Deb. Souad Massi, Universal France
On her debut, Massi displayed a formidable but unfocused talent as a singer and songwriter. This time around, she's allied her abilities to her Algerian roots, and the results are a stunning mix of intelligence and emotion. The gorgeously lulling "Yemma" and "Houria" evoke Al-Andalus, and "Moudja" drapes a soft melody in minimal colors. Massi displays growing control over her warm, American-folk-rock-influenced voice. There's not a wasted note in these compositions. Watch for her crossover success.

Hafiat Al Kadamain. Kazim Al Saher, Stallions
Al Saher is Iraq's most accomplished and prolific contemporary singer and songwriter—and in the Middle East, he's a wildly popular stadium-filler. Performed with a full orchestra and chorus, songs like "Al Helwa" and "Hewar Ma'a Al Nafs" bring out the depth of his voice and the complexity of his arrangements. Marketers are noting to western listeners that the record closes with a duet with British diva Sarah Brightman, "The War Is Over"—but its overblown sentiment jars after 11 finely crafted Arab tracks. While less obvious than his 2002 release *Impossible Love*—a good place to begin—this offers a powerful, lyrical and epically melodic experience.

Lebanese. Clotaire K, self-released
Born in France to Lebanese parents, Clotaire K is a self-styled innovator, a full citizen of the 21st century. Beats, hip-hop and sampling sit comfortably next to *maqams* here, and there's a diamond fire to his trilingual rapping, with tracks like "Beyrouth Ecoeurée" and "Ya Saryam" standing out for stripped-down muscularity. He's even a talented *'ud* player. If only he'd jettisoned the pointless and annoying narrative-voice "skits" between several of the music tracks—what was he thinking? After seven years of live work in clubs, this is the recording debut of a unique artist.

The Lost Songs of Palestine. Anatolia, Edward Hines Music
This spirited introduction to the folk music of Palestine is an unexpected gem. Although the title sounds like ethnomusicology, the energetic clarity with which the 10 songs are rendered makes for a 51-minute survey that is well-paced, cohesive and easy on an ear to which Arab musical styles are unfamiliar. Working with traditional vocals and instrumentation as well as occasional adrenalin bursts of improvisation (*taqasim*), the seven-member acoustic band, based in western Massachusetts, preserves in the US music market folk songs that once were well-known in Palestinian lands—as some still are. —DICK DOUGHTY



Mesopotamia. Munir Bashir, Le Chant du Monde
He was arguably the greatest *'ud* player of the 20th century. Munir Bashir deeply understood and loved the *maqams* of Arab classical music, but he was also a relentless improviser. This solo two-CD set, recorded in his Baghdad studio a decade before his death in 1997, proudly shows intelligence, passion and superb technique that make him a paragon among the world's instrumental virtuosos. His playing holds the listener spellbound in artful musical journeys that have no sense of ego. **Mesopotamia** is a celebration of musical genius.

The Rough Guide to the Music of Egypt. Various artists, World Music Network
It seems heretical, and perhaps downright misleading, to claim to survey Egyptian music without including Um Kalthoum, but that's exactly what this album does, and she barely receives passing mention. One of her successors, Warda, has a track, and the great Mohamed Abdel Wahab is included, and the lightly lyrical Abdel Halim Hafez makes an appearance, but the concentration here seems to be on contemporary talent like Amr Diab, Angham and several Nubian artists. In other words, it's a mixed bag, with an incomplete sense of history.

The Rough Guide to the Music of Morocco. Various artists, World Music Network
Morocco has long been a cultural melting pot, where North Africa and Europe come together. That's reflected in some of the mostly contemporary artists here, like the electronica of U-Cef, or Nass Marrakech, who bring jazz into the Moroccan *gnawa* trance sound. Indeed, *gnawa* music is well explored on the disc, with Jil Jilala and Nass El Ghiwane, among others. Pride of place, though, goes to the female Berber group Bnet Marrakech, who ratchet the intensity levels into the red. As an entry point, this is excellent: Welcome to a new Morocco.

Secret Tribe Nar. Mercan Dede, Doublemoon
Born in Turkey and now resident in Canada, the twenty-something multi-instrumentalist, DJ and producer Dede and his band prowl the boundaries of trance and traditional musical forms. Across nine extended pieces, they create subtle, undulating grooves and interwoven melodies, using both electronics and traditional acoustic instruments. It's a gentle trip, with sometimes unexpected turns, like the slightly Celtic-inflected vocal on "Yar," for example, or the Gypsy influence on "Aşk." But it's also intense, and so this isn't a record to dip into lightly. Submerge yourself in its textures for the full pleasure that's hypnotic, sensual and hugely satisfying.

Wild Serenade. DuOud, Label Bleu
It's a simple idea, really: two superb *'ud* players, a tight band, a fully loaded computer and busloads of imagination. But it's never been done quite like this. Mehdi Haddab and Smadj are constantly pushing each other further musically, yet leaving room for bandmates and electronics. While the sound constantly scales impressive heights, at its most powerful—as on "Racailles" and "For Nedim"—this album becomes combustible. *Wild Serenade* draws from Arab, rock, jazz and even the avant-garde to create music with its own space and logic. It demands attention, which it repays with invigorating performances.

Reader's Guide

BY JULIE WEISS

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

Understanding What You Read

Pre-Reading Activities

An easy way to improve reading comprehension is to do something you probably already do: Flip through the magazine. Start with the Table of Contents. Look at the pictures, and read about the articles. What intrigues you? Go to the article. Read the headline. Look at the pictures. Read the captions. Jot down a few notes about what the article seems to be about and a question or two you hope it will answer.

Reading-Comprehension Questions

The following activities are here to sharpen your reading by pointing you toward the most important parts of the articles. Complete them as written, or another way if it will work better for you.

"Reading the Sands" (pages 2–11)
What do trackers do? Why is the number of trackers declining? What feats do stories attribute to them? Describe the test in which the author participated. What did it demonstrate? What traits do the trackers described in the article possess? Why is tracking losing its appeal as a job? Explain how tracking might represent "the origin of science itself." What is tracking used for today? What are "dead tracks"? What is more useful than these "dead tracks"?

"The Joys of the Bath" (pages 16–23)
When were *hammam*s most numerous? How does bathing relate to Islamic rituals? What functions did the hammams fill in Egyptian communities? What did all hammams have in common? How did the baths work? Describe a bather's experience. What led to the decline of the hammams?

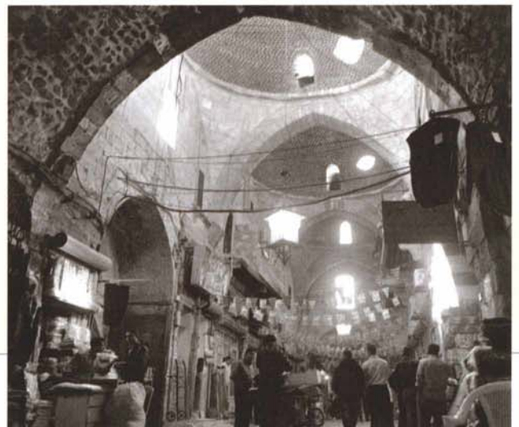
"*emel*'s Hope" and "*Azizah* Rising" (pages 12–15)
What makes *emel* unique? What group of readers does it target? How do the magazine's founders feel about relationships among Muslims and non-Muslims? How is *emel* financed and distributed? What makes *Azizah* unique? What group of readers does it target? What does it mean to say that women "are active agents"? How does the concept apply to *Azizah*? How is the magazine financed?

Analyzing Visual Images

We spend a lot of our time looking at visual images—on television and computer screens, in newspapers and magazines, in art galleries and on billboards. Most of us enjoy them without thinking too much about them. It's a good idea, though, to be able to look at visual images with a critical eye—to know what draws you in, how it does so and what you get from it.

Once color photography became widely available in the mid-1960's, you didn't see many black-and-white photos any more. That makes the photographs that accompany "Suq: 4000 Years Behind the Counter in Aleppo" somewhat unusual. Consider the article's opening photograph on pages 24 and 25.

- Imagine the scene as it looked when the photographer took the picture. What colors might he have seen?
- Light and shadow are extremely important in black-and-white photos. Locate the brightest areas of the photo. Squint your eyes so you no longer see the specific images; instead you just see where the light is. How is it distributed in the frame? What is the greatest source of light in the scene? What mood does it create?
- Black-and-white photographs actually include black, white and shades of gray. Photos with almost no shades of gray look like silhouettes. This photo, however, has many shades of gray. If you were going to paint this photo using white, black and grays, how many shades of gray would you need to capture it? Count them. Compare your answers with someone else, and discuss you how you might have arrived at different numbers.



- Perhaps people at the market were wearing bright colors—blue and orange, for example. Why would the photographer sacrifice color? In the absence of color, what draws your attention?
- Why might the photographer have chosen to shoot in black and white rather than color? Discuss the question with a partner. Write a statement in the photographer's voice explaining why you chose black and white to render this scene.

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 the concepts **community** and **traditional and modern**.

Theme: Community

Each of the six features in this issue of *Saudi Aramco World* describes a kind of community. The activities that follow invite you to use the articles as case studies of communities.

What is community?
People use the word *community* a lot. But what exactly is a community? Let's look at the word itself. *Com* means "with." *Unity* means "one." Community, then, refers to a situation in which we unite with others to become one whole. For example, people who live in the same area might form a community of neighbors, or people who pledge membership in a fraternity or sorority form a community of family-like members. As a class, brainstorm different examples of communities. If you get stuck, use the following categories to spark your thinking: communities based on a shared location, a shared history, shared beliefs, language, activities, goals and so on.

What types of interaction create community?
Turn your attention to three articles in this month's *Saudi Aramco World*: "Reading the Sands," "The Joys of the Bath" and "Suq: 4000 Years Behind the Counter in Aleppo." Using your class's list of examples as a guide, ask of each article, "What type of interaction described here creates community?" Another way to think about it is to ask of each article, "What brings people together in the situations described in this article?" Now look at your own experiences. What communities are you part of? Choose one to focus on. What type of interactions is it based on? Make a list of five things that are necessary for your communities to exist.

Can communities exist among people who are not together geographically?
So far you have probably thought mostly about communities that exist among people who unite in one physical place. Three other articles raise the question of whether communities can exist—can people unite?—despite physical separation. Read "*emel*'s Hope," "*Azizah* Rising" and "Becoming the Thing." Each article depicts a kind of unity. Write a sentence describing it. With a small group, discuss the question, "Can communities exist among people who are not together geographically?" Write down the evidence and arguments that support each answer. When you're done, see which answer seems more convincing. Compare them with other groups' answers.

How do new technologies affect community?
"The Joys of the Bath" reports that the public baths nearly became extinct when private homes got running water. Similarly, tracking has become nearly obsolete with the development of DNA identification and other technologies. With a partner, list five technologies you use regularly—e.g., car, microwave, computer, etc. Think about each technology on your list, one at a time. What kinds of communities do they make possible? Then imagine what people's communities were like before the technology was available. Would they have been different? If so, how? Write a short essay that answers the question, "Do new technologies always change communities?"

Theme: "Traditional" and "Modern"

What happens when new meets old? These activities will help you think about it.

Define "progress."
Progress literally means "step forward." Yet it isn't always clear what constitutes a step forward. What advances might at the same time set someone else back? Are they, then, "progress"? It's a difficult question. Try this as a way to explore it. Working in a small group, choose one of the following items: penicillin, flush toilets, mapping the human genome, splitting atoms or moving businesses to other countries. Make a web that shows as many effects of this discovery or occurrence as you can think of. Do the positive effects outweigh the negative, or vice versa? Or is it hard to tell? Why? Join with two other groups and use your graphics to come up with a one-sentence definition of progress. Share it with the class.

What is of value in tradition?
Modern technology might displace trackers as it nearly ended all of Cairo's hammams over the last century and a half. In each case, tradition has survived, but barely. In your life, what has come down to you that is at least 100 years old? Is there any value simply in its oldness? In the situation you explored in the previous activity on progress, think of examples of what might survive from tradition. Is its survival a good thing? If so, how?

Who decides?
We often think of change as inevitable. Cell phones become available, so we use them. It isn't quite that simple. People create change by making choices. Running water didn't magically appear in Cairo 100 years ago. People worked hard to make running water possible, and other people liked the idea and decided to go to the trouble and expense of having it piped to their homes. What do you think motivated them? To get a handle on the question, try thinking about a more recent example: When microwave ovens first became available, some people refused to buy them. "We like cooking the *real* way," they said, "and besides, microwaves aren't good for our health."

What might have changed their minds? Divide the class into groups. Have several group members take the role of running-water promoters in Cairo. Develop a newspaper advertisement for running water that will encourage people to install it in their homes. Have at least two group members read the ad, and then role-play a conversation in which one is eager to get running water while the other prefers the traditional ways of getting water.

How do you balance the traditional and the modern?
Both *Azizah* and *emel* join the cultures of Islam with the cultures of mass media. Most of us, in different, often very individual ways, probably maintain our own balances among traditional, modern and things that seem somewhere in between. Write a letter to the editor of one of the magazines about a day in your life, and tell how you encounter both old and new, traditional and modern. For a good example of a traditional-modern blend, review the text that follows the initial capital letter on page 5 of "Reading the Sands," where the author describes using modern conveniences—a four-wheel-drive truck and a mobile phone—to set up a test by which the traditional trackers can prove their skill.

Julie Weiss is an education consultant based in Eliot, Maine. She holds a Ph.D. in American studies and develops curricula and assessments in social studies, media literacy and English as a Second Language.

Events&Exhibitions

Caliphs and Kings: The Art of Islamic Spain highlights the longevity, continuity and onward transmission of the Islamic sciences and decorative arts of medieval Spain through some 90 objects from the collection of the Hispanic Society of America. The exhibition features works dating from as early as the Muslim conquest of the Iberian Peninsula in the eighth century to as late as the final phase of Muslim life in Spain in the 16th century, including objects from 10th-century Córdoba and 14th- and 15th-century Granada. It 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"—one whose creative spirit still resonates.

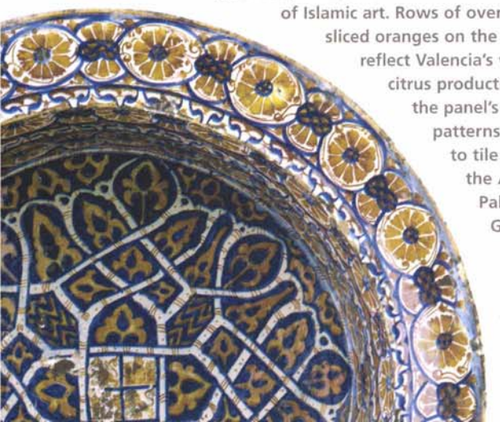
Scholars, scientists and craftsmen of al-Andalus made advances that are reflected today in fields from architecture to medicine, mathematics, geography and philosophy. Later objects show the eclectic artistic, intellectual and political culture that resulted from the Christian conquests of the cities of al-Andalus between the 11th and 15th centuries.

The conquest of Granada by Isabel I and Fernando V in 1492 marked the end of Muslim political rule, but not of Muslim life in the Iberian Peninsula. During the 15th and 16th centuries, Muslim craftsmen working in the Kingdom of Granada and for Christian—and occasionally Jewish—patrons in cities such as Seville, Toledo and Valencia produced some of the most beautiful and evocative ceramics and textiles of the time. These were exported throughout Europe and served as models for silk and ceramic industries in regions such as the Italian peninsula.

The exhibition, in the **Sackler Gallery** of the Smithsonian Institution in **Washington, D.C.**, from May 8 through October 17, is part of the Washington-based Mosaic Foundation's 2004 Al-Andalus Festival Cultural Program, and was made possible by a gift from the Foundation. Guest curator Heather Exeter will discuss a variety of objects on exhibit May 11 at 12 p.m.

A symposium on al-Andalus that will explore Muslim, Christian and Jewish relations will be held at the Georgetown University Center for Muslim–Christian Understanding on May 13. The festival also includes a film series focusing on the Muslim cultural legacy in Spain, held at the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates May 8, 15 and 22, and performances by Al-Andalus Ensemble.

Repeating elements on a basin with cobalt and luster glaze from Valencia (ca. 1425–50) and a section of a large silk panel from Granada (ca. 1400) vividly demonstrate a favorite theme of Islamic art. Rows of overlapping sliced oranges on the plate's rim reflect Valencia's well-known citrus production, while the panel's geometrical patterns are similar to tile work at the Alhambra Palace in Granada.



Palestinian Cinema presents "Rana's Wedding" by Hany Abu-Assad (March 18, 21 and 25) and "Ticket to Jerusalem" by Rashid Masharawi (March 18 and 20), in Arabic with English subtitles, and "Peace, Propaganda & the Promised Land: U.S. Media & the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict" by Bathsheba Ratzkoff and Sut Jhally (March 20). Remis Auditorium, Museum of Fine Arts, **Boston**.

An Evening of Arabic Music, Dance and Culture performed by Karim Nagi Mhammed combines demonstrations of Arab music with an explanation of its cultural context. Participants will learn to make Arab music and the steps and stomps of *dakka*, a form of group line-dancing. 6 p.m. Andover Hall, Harvard Divinity School, **Cambridge, Massachusetts**, March 19.

Art for Eternity is a lecture about ancient Egyptian treasures. ⓘ 44-20-7323-8181. 6:30 p.m. Stevenson Lecture Theatre, British Museum, **London**, March 19.

Moufida Tlati, award-winning Tunisian film director, will appear at screenings of two of her feature films, "The Season of Men" ("La Saison des Hommes"), March 20, and "The Silence of the Palaces" ("Samt al-Qusur"), March 21. Harvard Film Archive, **Cambridge, Massachusetts**.

Norouz, Persian new year, is a spring festival with poetry, music and dance, as well as Persian stalls and a traditional festive dinner, organized by the Persian Society of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). 7:30 p.m. Brunei Gallery, SOAS, **London**, March 19.

"The White Balloon," an award-winning firm about Norouz, the Persian new year, and the first Iranian film to get a US art-house release, will be shown. Tickets are free. 2 p.m. ⓘ 44-20-7323-8299. British Museum, **London**, March 20.

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

Iraq: Heritage in Crisis will present an up-to-date report on the crisis facing Iraqi archeological sites and museums, and the response of the British Museum and other national and international institutions. 1:15 p.m. British Museum, **London**, March 24.

The Seventh American Conference on Oriental Rugs features an educational program, exhibitions, workshops, demonstrations and a Dealers' Row. ⓘ www.acor-rugs.org. Bell Harbor International Conference Center, **Seattle**, March 25–28.

Egyptian Art Across the Ages is a day-school program organized by the Egyptian Embassy. ⓘ 44-20-7491-7720. Egyptian Embassy, **London**, March 27.

Middle Eastern Music: Drumming is a workshop organized by Caravansary. ⓘ 44-794-44-89527, www.caravansary.org. 12 p.m. St. Mark's Church, **London**, March 28.

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** Public Museum, March 28 through August 8.

Illuminations of the East is an intensive five-day workshop in Indo-Persian miniature manuscript painting and decoration. ⓘ 44-20-8442-8623. Victoria and Albert Museum, **London**, starting March 29.

Breaking the Veils: Women Artists from the Islamic World presents the work of 51 artists with the goal of breaking the stereotypes of Muslim women. It includes 63 paintings and etchings in a variety of genres. The artists reflect the various faiths and cultures within the 13 Islamic countries represented in the show. Co-organized by the Royal Society of Fine Arts, Jordan, and FAM (Femme Art-Mediterranean). Foundation Laboratorio Mediterraneo, **Naples**, through March.

The Films of Abderrahmane Sissako, a series focusing on the work of the Mauritanian-born, Malian-raised filmmaker, explore themes of exile and return, place and identity. Documentaries by other filmmakers included in the series broaden the discussion and offer alternative views. All screenings are followed by a moderated discussion. National Museum of African Art, **Washington, D.C.**, March 18 and 21.

Explore the Middle East is an event for families that includes performances by gymnasts and dancers, as well as demonstrations by Middle Eastern craftsmen and musicians. Opening night will feature a performance of "Queen of the Night," along with presentations by a variety of storytellers. British Museum, **London**, April 2–4.

Activities and Workshops for Children and Families.
The Epic of Gilgamesh, for children 7–8 years old: April 5 and 10 and May 5, 10:30 a.m.; May 19, June 12 and July 12 and 16, 2:15 p.m.;
The Birth of Writing: Cuneiform for children 10–13 years old: April 7 and 10, June 16 and 19 and June 30 and July 1, 2:15 p.m.;
King Darius and His Scribe for children 6–8 years old: April 8 and 22, June 16 and August 28, 10:30 a.m.; July 2 and August 30, 2:30 p.m.
Living Egypt for children 9–13 years old: April 14–17, 10:30 a.m. or 2:15 p.m., or July 5 and 7–9, 10:30 a.m.;
The Language of Birds for children 6–8 years old: April 21 and 29, August 30, 10:30 a.m.; June 16, August 20, 2:15 p.m.;
Artistic Conventions in Pharaonic Times for children 6–8 years old: April 28, 2:15 p.m., July 2, 10:30 a.m.; for children 8–12 years old: May 5 and June 23, 2:15 p.m.;
Hieroglyphs for children 10–13 years old: May 19 and July 12, 2:15 p.m.;
The Creation of the World According to the Egyptians for children 7–10 years old: July 5 and 7–9, 2:15 p.m. or August 25–28, 2:15 p.m.
Musée du Louvre, **Paris**.

Recitations in *'Ishq* presents Arabic calligraphy by Mustafa Ja'far featuring verses from al-Hallaj and other poets. Clore Education Centre, British Museum, **London**, April 5 through May 28.

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

Thematic Tours invite reflection on a theme through the study of artifacts relating to a particular period. They include: *Calligraphy in Islamic Art* (April 5 or June 14, 7:45 p.m., June 21, 2:30 p.m., May 26, 11 a.m.); *Women in Ancient Egypt* (April 7, 12:30 p.m., and May 26 or June 16, 2:30 p.m.); and *What Is Islamic Art?* (June 28, 7:45 p.m., April 28, 11 a.m., May 22, 2:30 p.m.). Musée du Louvre, **Paris**.

Tutankhamun—The Golden Beyond: Treasures from the Valley of the Kings is a worldwide exhibition of artifacts from the tomb of Tutankhamun and other royal tombs of the 18th Dynasty (15th and 14th centuries BC). Many of the artifacts are being shown for the first time outside the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. Basel Museum of Ancient Art and Ludwig Collection, **Switzerland**, April 7 through October 2.

The Ptolemies: Fact and Fiction is a talk by novelist Duncan Sprott. British Museum, **London**, April 8, 6:30 p.m.

Rug and Textile Appreciation Mornings include: *Potpourri: Carpets from the Middle East* (April 10); *A Rug Collector's Odyssey: From Caucasus to Kyrgyzstan* (May 8); *Prayer Rugs* (June 12); *Caucasian Carpets* (June 19); and *Turkmen and other Textile Treasures* (June 26). Visitors are invited to bring clean, well-vacuumed examples relating to the program. Textile Museum, **Washington, D.C.**, 10:30 a.m.

Tours of a Collection include *Roman Egypt* (April 10, 11 a.m., May 3, 7:45 a.m.), *Egyptian Antiquities* (April 15, May 15, June 7, 11 a.m.), *Islamic Art* (April 26, June 21, 7:45 p.m., May 12, 11 a.m., June 5, 2:30 p.m.) and *Coptic Egypt* (May 27, June 1, 11 a.m.). Musée du Louvre, **Paris**.

What Do We Know About Ancient Egypt? and **What Do We Know About Mesopotamia?** (April 10), and **Egyptian Royal Sculpture** (April 13) are free lectures, British Museum, **London**.

An Oriental Pepys? Abu'l-Fazl Bayhaqi's Memoirs of Court Life in Eastern Iran and Afghanistan, 1030–1041 is a lecture organized by the Royal Asiatic Society. ⓘ 44-20-7724-4741. Royal Asiatic Society, **London**. April 11.

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

The Arab and Chaldean American Writers Series features noted writers reading from their published works and private collections. Wafa Hajj, March 16, 4–6 p.m., and Khaled Mattawa, April 13, 4–6 p.m. 1030 CASL Building, University of **Michigan–Dearborn**.

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.**, April 16 through August 1.

The Aga Khan Lecture Series: A Forum for Islamic Art and Architecture presents "Encounters With and Beyond Empire: Urban Imagination in Ottoman Travel Writing." The free lecture is at 5:30 p.m. ⓘ 617-495-2355. Sackler Museum, **Cambridge, Massachusetts**, April 17.

The Collaboration of Civilizations: The Future of Muslim, Jewish and Christian Relations is an interfaith lecture series including "It Is the Religion of Your Father Abraham," and "The Children of Abraham, a Muslim Perspective." 7:30 p.m. Alumni Memorial Union, Marquette University, **Milwaukee, Wisconsin**, April 19.

The Levant in Transition is an international conference focusing on the eastern Mediterranean world. British Museum, **London**, April 20–21.

Music of Armenia: Shoghaken Ensemble is a presentation by a group that has helped revive traditional Armenian music with its double reeds (*duduk* and *zurna*), fiddle (*kamancha*), zither (*kanon*) and percussion (*dhol*). The ensemble was featured in the 2002 Smithsonian Folklife Festival and on the soundtrack of Atom Egoyan's acclaimed 2002 film "Ararat." 7:30 p.m. Freer Gallery, **Washington, D.C.**, April 22.

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

Works to Discover in Islamic Art exhibits paintings by Iranian artists of the late 17th and the 18th centuries, and Iranian and Indian calligraphy from the 14th to the 17th century. These include pages of the master Iranian calligrapher Mira' Ali, embellished in India with sumptuous marginal figures. Musée du Louvre, **Paris**, April 28.

Egyptian Art: Living Images is a workshop that attempts to answer such questions as: Who were the artists? What were their techniques? How has this art evolved over 3000 years? (Wednesdays April 28, May 5, 19 and 26, June 2, 16, 23 and 30, and July 7, 6:30 p.m.; Thursdays May 6 and 27 and June 3 and 17, 10 a.m. and 2:30 p.m., and June 24, 10 a.m.; Saturdays May 22 and 29 and June 5 and 19, 10 a.m. and 2:30 p.m., and July 3, 10 a.m.). Other workshops are *Initiation into Cuneiform Writing* (Wednesdays June 2, 9, 16, 23 and 30, 10 a.m.; Mondays May 17 and June 7, 14, 21 and 28, 6:30 p.m.; and July 19 and 21–24, 10 a.m.), and *Initiation into Hieroglyphic Writing* (July 5 and 7–9, 10 a.m. and 2:30 p.m.). Musée du Louvre, **Paris**.

The Nomadic Tribes: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives is a lecture organized by the Iran Society. ⓘ 44-20-7235-5122, www.iransoc.drcon.co.uk. Middle East Association, **London**, April 29.

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

Antoin Sevruguin and the Persian Image offers a glimpse of turn-of-the-20th-century Iran though the eyes of one of the country's most creative photographers. Sevruguin moved effortlessly back and forth between Iran and Europe, in the process creating a diverse body of photographic work that oscillates between East and West in its subject matter—veiled women, the shah, court life, western tourists and commoners—and its approach: portraiture, archeological studies and street scenes. Gallery talk April 29, 12 p.m. Williams College Museum of Art, **Williamstown, Massachusetts**, through May 2.

Forbidden Image: Persian and Mughal Painting from the Collection complements the Sevruguin exhibition above, treating the complex and disputed issue of representing people in Islamic art. The exhibit's 12 paintings and drawings from the 15th through the 19th century depict a variety of men and beasts and reflect Sevruguin's study of traditional Persian painting, which influenced his photography. Williams College Museum of Art, **Williamstown, Massachusetts**, through May 2.

Veil is a touring exhibition that examines the veil as a symbol in contemporary culture through the selected and commissioned work of 20 artists and filmmakers. The show explores the roles of photography, film and video as modern tools for addressing notions of the veil. Kulturhuset, **Stockholm**, through May 2.

Charles Prendergast and Persian Paintings shows how the American artist experimented with techniques and media he admired in Persian painting. Williams College Museum of Art, **Williamstown, Massachusetts**, through May 2.

A discussion on **Islamic Art in Museums** (May 5, 10 a.m.–6:30 p.m.) and a colloquium on *The Thousand and One Nights* in the Western Eye (June 26, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.) are among the events focusing on Islamic Art that feature in the reopening of the Auditorium at Musée du Louvre, **Paris**.

The Ardabil Carpet: A 16th-Century Masterpiece Conserved marks the return of the huge carpet, created during Iran's Safavid Dynasty (1501–1732), from the Conservation Studios at Hampton Court, London. The renowned silk and wool carpet is so finely worked that it probably required six weavers working side by side, possibly in Tabriz, at least four years to complete. **Los Angeles** County Museum of Art, through May 11.

An Albertopolis for Doha: A Museum Complex for the 21st Century is a lecture organized by the Royal Asiatic Society. ⓘ 44-20-7724-4741. Royal Asiatic Society, **London**, May 13.

Secret Gardens of the Wild displays porcelain sculptures, plaques and botanical paintings by artist-explorer Patrick O'Hara inspired by the rare wildflowers and medicinal plants he has studied on travels across the Muslim world from Morocco to Pakistan and beyond. O'Hara has viewed and lectured on desert flora in Saudi Arabia, Oman and the United Arab Emirates, as well as Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California. Fota House, **Fota Island, County Cork, Ireland**, May 14 through June 1.

Empire of the Sultans: Ottoman Art from the Khalili Collection explores the influence of the Ottoman sultans on affairs of state and religion with displays of calligraphy, Qur'anic and other manuscripts, arms and armor, metalwork, ceramics, textiles and scientific instruments from the Khalili Collection of Islamic Art. Catalog. **Worcester [Massachusetts]** Art Museum, through May 16.

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

The Coinage of Ancient South Arabia is a lecture by Andrew Oddy, retired

Continued from previous page

keeper of conservation at the British Museum. School of Oriental and African Studies, **London**, May 27, 5:30 p.m.

<<< June

Archeological Research on Oriental Antiquities lectures include: "Terra-Cotta Figurines of Susa" (May 28). Egyptian Antiquities conferences include: "New Ruins of Abydos: The Monuments of Pharaoh Ahmosis and his Family" (June 7) and "The Discovery of Heraklion of Egypt in Aboukir Bay" (June 24). Musée du Louvre, **Paris**.

Steel: A Mirror of Life in Iran features some 400 objects from the renowned Tanavoli collection and a number of items from the Library's collection of Persian miniatures and manuscripts. Steel was an integral part of the economic, social and religious life in Iran during the Safavid and Qajar periods (16th to early 20th century). Through the display of more than 300 intricately decorated items of steel—tools and implements used at home, in the bazaar, in war and for ceremonial occasions, for religious purposes, and for horsemanship and entertainment—the exhibition tells the story of traditional life in pre-modern Iran. Almost every item, no matter how mundane and pragmatic its function, is itself a work of art, an example of the exquisite workmanship of the traditional Iranian craftsman. The exhibition will be held in conjunction with a conference on metalworking in Islamic Iran September 3–4. ⓘ www.cbl.ie/whatson. Chester Beatty Library, **Dublin**, June 2 through September 15.

Draped, Wrapped and Folded: Untailored Clothing highlights how simple, untailored clothing can reveal a great deal about both the wearer and the culture from which the clothing originates. While some cultures prefer to make highly tailored garments that echo the human form, others favor rectangular lengths of cloth worn draped, wrapped or folded about the body. Despite the latter's simplicity of form, the design and decoration can reflect a high degree of visual complexity and artistic expression, and pieces are often deliberately crafted with the outfit's three-dimensional appearance in mind. The exhibition will also explore how clothing often communicates information about social distinctions within a culture. It features 19 garments from around the world, including Tunisia and Indonesia. The annual hands-on Celebration of Textiles festival will offer insights into the exhibition and allow visitors of all ages to try on similar garments, June 5, 10 a.m.–4 p.m., June 6, 1–4 p.m. Textile Museum, **Washington, D.C.**, through June 6.

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

Pharaoh's Creatures: Animals from Antiquity features more than 100 works dating from 3500 BC to the first century of our era that highlight the important role played by animals such as birds, baboons, crocodiles, cattle and cats in early Egyptian culture. Ancient Egyptians believed that deities could take the form of animals, which were considered the earthly manifestation of a god or goddess. Cats, as well as beasts, birds and insects from the marshy areas around the Nile, were frequently depicted. Domestic and grazing animals were of great importance and those that inhabited the desert uplands, such as the ibex, became symbols of life and death. Catalog. Rupert Wace Ancient Art Limited, **London**, June 9 through July 9.

Homelands: Baghdad–Jerusalem–New York is a retrospective of the sculpture of Baghdad-born artist Oded Halahmy that 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. Greater **Washington, D.C.** Jewish Community Center, through June 24.

The Study of Persian Culture in the West is a conference organized by the State Hermitage Museum and Iran Heritage Foundation. ⓘ 44-20-7493-4766, www.iranheritage.org/hermitageconference/. State Hermitage Museum, **St. Petersburg, Russia**, June 24.

Heavenly Bodies: The Egyptian in French 19th-Century Art is a lecture organized by the Friends of the Petrie Museum. ⓘ 44-20-7679-2369. Institute of Archeology, **London**, June 25.

The Hunt for Paradise: Court Arts of Safavid Iran 1501–1576 explores the origins and evolution of the distinctive Safavid style that emerged during the first half of the 16th century. The show focuses on the great hunting carpet by Ghyas al Din Jami in the Poldi Pezzoli Museum and includes other carpets, ceramics, metalwork, lacquer and hardstones, as well as important examples of miniatures, bindings and other arts of the book. Poldi Pezzoli Museum, **Milan**, through June 28.

Kings on the Tigris: Assyrian Palace Reliefs highlights five restored Assyrian wall reliefs, four from Dresden and one from Berlin, that have not been exhibited since 1945. Skulpturensammlung, Albertinum, **Dresden**, through June 30.

<<< July

Luxury Textiles East and West: Dress and Identity celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Museum's costume and textiles department with the second part of a tripartite presentation highlighting more than 75 items dating from the 14th through the 20th century, including an Ottoman sultan's ceremonial barbering apron, a Mughal velvet tent and an Indonesian gilded wedding skirt. **Los Angeles** County Museum of Art, through July 5.

Chocolate, Coffee, Tea focuses on the utensils developed to serve these drinks that were introduced into 17th-century Europe as the result of sustained seagoing contacts with the Arab world, China and Mexico. Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York**, through July 11.

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. "Ancient Writing, Ancient Signs" will be presented for children ages 6 to 11 March 20, and "Infinite Potential: Islamic Calligraphy in the 20th and 21st Centuries" will be presented April 17. Sackler Museum, **Cambridge, Massachusetts**, through July 18.

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-foot) *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.

<<< August

Luxury Textiles East and West: Opulent Interiors celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Museum's costume and textiles department with the third part of a tripartite presentation highlighting more than 75 items dating from the 14th through the 20th century, including an Ottoman sultan's ceremonial barbering apron, a Mughal velvet tent and an Indonesian gilded wedding skirt. **Los Angeles** County Museum of Art, August 26 through July 10, 2005.

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.

er

Kingdoms of the Ancient Nile: Treasures from the National Museum of Khartoum is an exhibition organized by the British Museum, **London**, September 9 through January 9, 2005.

<<< Later

Urban Islam offers a look 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 with diverse backgrounds in the Netherlands express their ideas about Islam on-screen, providing a continuous record of public opinion. The exhibition also provides background information about Islam, with 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.

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 that document the European rediscovery of Petra. **Cincinnati** 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.

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.

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 *buta*—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.

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 (50-foot) 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.

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.

The Crescent and the Rose: Ottoman Imperial Textiles from the 16th and 17th Centuries presents for the first time approximately 100 of the world's finest and most luxurious Ottoman royal textiles from the collections of the Topkapı Palace Museum in Istanbul, the Kremlin Armory in Moscow and other national and international collections. Fashioned into clothing, furnishings and movable architecture such as tent hangings, silk textiles denoted rank and privilege and played important political, economic and ceremonial roles in the life of the Ottoman Empire (1342–1924). Most raw silk came from neighboring Iran which, from 1501 to 1722, was under the control of the Safavids, persistent rivals of the Ottomans. Bursa, in northwestern Turkey, was the main center of the Ottoman silk industry and one of the richest cities in the world, and both raw and woven silk were exported to Europe, the Balkans and Russia—the Ottoman Empire's greatest market. The artistic influence of Ottoman textile motifs endures to this day, inspiring artists like William Morris, who incorporated Ottoman motifs into his textiles and wallpapers. Sackler Gallery, **Washington, D.C.**, October 29, 2005 through January 22, 2006.

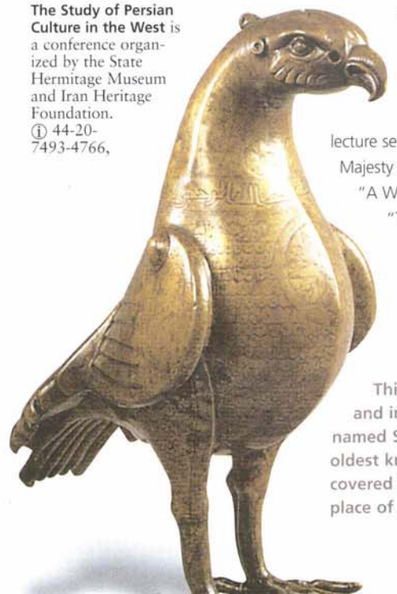
The Lila Acheson Wallace Galleries of Egyptian Art feature several new galleries following reconstruction. The work includes the reconfiguration of the architecture of the tombs of Pernab and Raemkai (ca. 2350 and 2440 BC) to more closely resemble their original settings. Metropolitan Museum of Art,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

Spirit of Islam: Experiencing Islam through Calligraphy is a website introducing visitors to the esthetics, spirituality and educational principles of the Muslim world through the time-honored art of calligraphy.

Spanish Sculpture and Decorative Arts: 1500–1750 offers 85 works of art showing the varied strands of influence—Islamic, Flemish and Italian—that contributed to the vibrant material culture of Spain from the early 16th to the mid-18th century. Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York**.

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.



THE STATE HERMITAGE MUSEUM

This "Eagle" aquamanile, or water pourer—made of bronze and inlaid with silver and copper—was crafted by an artisan named Sulayman in the late eighth century of our era, making it the oldest known piece of dated Islamic metalwork. The vessel was discovered in the northern Caucasus Mountains of Ingushetia, but its place of origin is unknown.

Heaven on Earth: Art from Islamic Lands provides a dazzling introduction to the art and artifacts of the Islamic world. The exhibition draws from the collections of the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia, and the Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art in London, each of which is lending more than 60 works. The show features masterpieces representing the finest decorative arts of Islam, including textiles, jewels, metalwork, ceramics and paintings dating from the Middle Ages up to the 19th century and covering an area stretching from Spain to Persia and the Indian subcontinent. Lunchtime talks Fridays, 1:15–1:30 p.m.: "The Majesty of God" (April); "Figural Imagery" (May); "Persian Miniatures" (June); "Art for Palaces" (July); "East meets West" (August). Associated free lecture series, Courtauld Institute of Art, Somerset House, 5:30 p.m.: "Piety and Majesty in Islamic Art" (April 27); "Russia as an Islamic Country" (May 4); "A World of Wonder: Sculpture in Medieval Persian Islamic Art" (May 11); "The Prince in the Garden: Frontispieces of Persian Manuscripts, 1575–1630" (May 18); "The Art of the Qur'an" (May 25). Family Workshops for 6- to 12-year-olds, 2–3:30 p.m.: "Mother-of-Pearls" (April 14); "Heaven on Earth" (April 15); and "Thousand and One Nights" (April 17). Catalog. ⓘ www.hermitagerooms.org.uk. Hermitage Rooms, Somerset House, **London**, through August 22.

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

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

Subscriptions to *Saudi Aramco World* are available without charge to a limited number of readers interested in the cultures of the Arab and Muslim worlds, the history, geography and economy of Saudi Arabia, and their connections with the West. We can also provide multiple-copy subscriptions for seminars or classrooms. From Saudi Arabia, please send subscription requests to Public Relations, Saudi Aramco, Box 5000, Dhahran 31311, Saudi Arabia. From all other countries, send subscription requests to *Saudi Aramco World*, Box 469008, Escondido, California 92046-9008, USA.

Change of address notices should be sent to the addresses above. Please include an address label from a recent issue.

Back issues of *Saudi Aramco World* and *Aramco World* can be read online, downloaded and printed at **www.saudiaramcoworld.com**. Click on "indexes." The issues are available in text form from 1960 through September/October 2003, and with photographs and illustrations for subsequent issues. Printed copies of back issues, to the extent they are still in print, can be requested by e-mail (saworld@aramcoservices.com), fax (+713-432-5536) or postal mail (Special Requests, *Saudi Aramco World*, Box 2106, Houston, Texas 77252-2106, USA). Bulk copies of specific issues for use in classrooms, workshops, study tours or lectures will also be provided as available.

Indexes: A cumulative index through 1994 and subsequent annual indexes through 2003 are available in printed form and can be requested in the same way as back issues (above). An online cumulative index is under construction. Many articles from 1960 to the present can now be searched by title, subject, contributor or keyword (full text) at **www.saudiaramcoworld.com**. Click on "indexes."