Saudi Aramco **world**

www.saudiaramcoworld.com

2008 marks the 75th anniversary of Saudi Aramco... providing energy to the world.

Energy for generations

January/February 2008

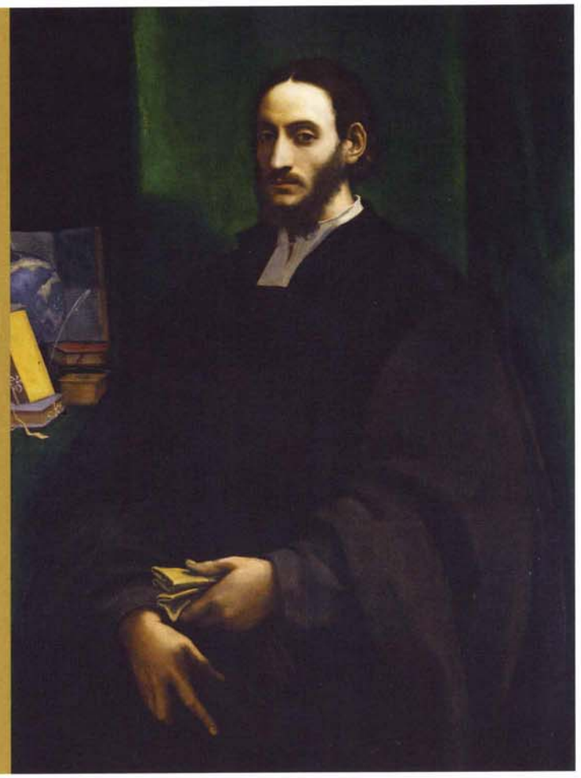
Saudi Aramco world

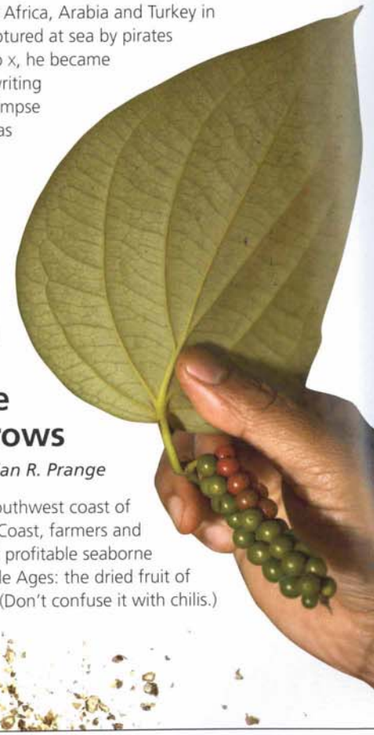
HEARTS OF THE NEW SILK ROADS

Saudi Aramco world

January/February 2008

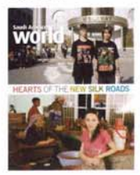
Published Bimonthly
Vol. 59, No. 1





2: SEBASTIANO DEL PIOMBO / NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART; 10: ANDREW WOODLEY / ALAMY; 34: APOLLINARY VASNETSOV / THE GALLERY COLLECTION / CORBIS

Cover:



New participants in the 21st-century trade networks that reach far beyond the web of the historic Silk Roads, boys in Almaty, Kazakhstan are among the city's new affluent for whom "Silk Way" is a shopping mall. Lower: The produce may look timeless at Tashkent's famous Chorzu market, but the 2400-year-old Silk Road capital now offers some of the region's most dynamic contemporary culture. Photos by Kevin Bubriski.

Back Cover:

The vivid literary imagery of *The Thousand and One Nights* has inspired countless artists and illustrators. German artist Carl Offterdinger, who illustrated many folk tales and classical musical works, depicted Sinbad carried aloft by the roc, a giant bird, for an edition published in 1900. Illustration © Bettman / Corbis.

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

President and Chief Executive Officer
Mohammed Y. Al-Qahtani

Director Public Affairs
Deya A. Elyas

ISSN
1530-5821

Editor
Robert Arndt

Managing Editor
Dick Doughty

Assistant Editor
Arthur P. Clark

Administration
Michelle Flores
Karim Khalil

Circulation
Edna Catchings

Design and Production
Herring Design

Printed in the USA
Wetmore & Company

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 seventy-five 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.saudiaramco.com

A MAN OF TWO WORLDS

WRITTEN BY TOM VERDE

In the "Northern Italian" room of Washington's National Gallery of Art hangs a somber, dark-toned likeness of a young scholar entitled "Portrait of a Humanist." Painted in Rome about 1520, the bearded, black-robed figure stands partially illuminated in a three-quarters pose. His dark eyes are fixed, his posture self-assured. His long, elegant hands seem well-suited to the tools of his trade at his side: quill and ink, leather-bound volumes and—a fairly recent invention—a globe.

Some have suggested that the "Humanist" may have been a poet friend of the artist, the Venetian Sebastiano del Piombo. But others suspect that the shadowy figure with the vaguely Moorish features was in fact Al Hassan ibn Muhammad al-Wazzan al-Fassi, better known to western scholars as Leo Africanus.

The fact that, even in portraiture, he remains elusive is characteristic of this man from Fez, who served both sultans and popes, may have inspired Shakespeare's *Othello* and remained the West's foremost authority on the geography, history and culture of sub-Saharan Africa for 500 years after his own time.

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

TOR EIGELAND

A traveler-historian in the tradition of Ibn Battuta, Ibn Khaldun and Ibn Jubayr, Leo was a man of many talents, occupations and adventures. He was, at various times, a diplomat, jurist, hospital administrator, geographer, teacher, political prisoner and international celebrity. In the course of his travels from Timbuktu to Istanbul, he survived Atlas mountain blizzards and Nile crocodile attacks only to be kidnapped by pirates and presented to Pope Leo X in Rome, where he ostensibly converted to Christianity. Though it's believed he eventually returned both to Islam and to North Africa, he gained fame while in Italy for his knowledge of the Maghrib, or North Africa, and the African interior, which he set down in a book whose English-language version was called *The History and Description of Africa and of the Notable Things Therein Contained*.

LEO IS CONSIDERED THE LAST OF THE GREAT MUSLIM INTELLECTUALS TO PASS ALONG ISLAMIC LEARNING TO THE PRE-RENAISSANCE WEST.

Even though modern Moroccans are proud to claim him as one of their own, some admit he is not so easily pinned down.

"His cultural and national identities can be hard to determine, because they were altogether subtle," said historian Lotfi Bouchentouf of Hassan II University at Ain Chok, near Casablanca. "He was a Muslim who lived as a Christian and wrote for a Christian audience about the world of Islam. He was a man of many levels."

No one, however, disputes the value of his writing. Titled *Cosmographia & Geographia de Affrica* in manuscript form, Leo's book was published in Venice in 1550 as *Della descrittione dell'Africa* (See "Found in Translation," page 6); it offered European scholars, explorers and mapmakers—not to mention gold-thirsty monarchs—detailed descriptions of the Barbary coast and the fabled, gold-trading kingdoms of Central Africa.

"It was a different vision of Africa and Morocco than had ever been set down before. It was completely new," said historian Ahmed Boucharb, former dean of the school of arts and sciences at Muhammad V University's Casablanca campus. "He was writing about things that hadn't attracted the attention of his contemporaries—how people lived, how they ate, how they dressed, their economy, their habits, superstitions, customs and cultural lives."

Such new information was highly prized at a time when western knowledge of the African continent amounted to little more than scattered medieval myths of monsters and classical accounts of headless men whose faces were on their torsos. In this respect, Leo is considered the last of the great Muslim intellectuals to pass along Islamic learning to the West—the final steward of a 500-year cultural exchange.

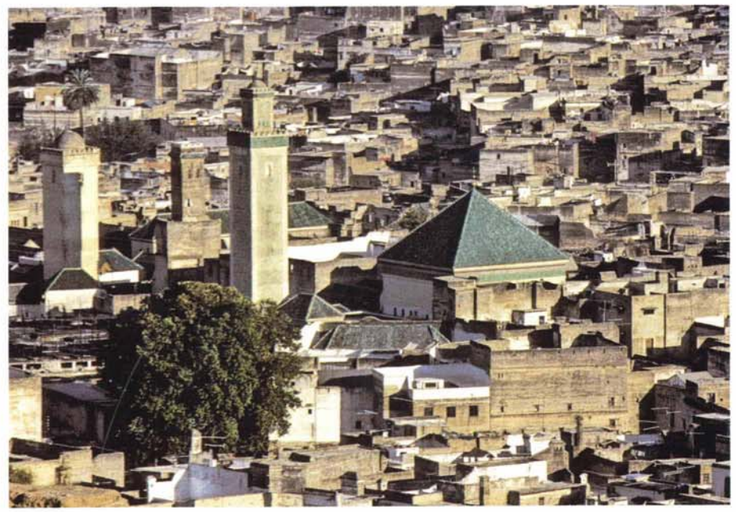
The gilding on that age had begun to fade at the time of Leo's birth in Granada, around 1494. Just two years earlier, the last of its Nasrid sultans surrendered Granada to the armies of the *Reconquista* before seeking refuge across the Mediterranean in Fez. He was followed by droves of his fellow Spanish Muslims, and Leo's family was among them.

Wealthy and well-connected, the al-Wazzans probably settled in Fez's Andalusian quarter, just across the Bou Khareb River from the Karaouine Mosque and its *madrasa*, the most important religious and intellectual center of a culture deeply devoted to learning.

"Those Arabians which inhabite Barbarie, or upon the coast of the Mediterran sea, are greatly addicted unto the studie of good artes and sciences," observed Leo in Book I of his *History*.

As a Karaouine student himself, Leo studied "Grammar, Poetrie, Rhetorick … Cabala, Astronomie and other ingenuous sciences," according to John Pory, translator of the only English-language edition of the *History*, published in 1600. Leo was a good student, and earned the title of *qadi*, or judge, by the age of 14. While a student, he also held down a sort of work-study job, moonlighting as a notary and bookkeeper at a medical center for indigent pilgrims and the mentally ill.

Like his law career, Leo's travels and adventures began at an early age. As a boy he accompanied his father on post-Ramadan pilgrimages to visit various shrines in the Middle Atlas mountains. At 10 or 12 he also joined the elder al-Wazzan



Two years before Leo was born in 1494, his family fled the Spanish conquest of Granada and settled in Fez, Morocco, where Leo attended school at the Karaouine Mosque. Its minaret, above, **remains a leading landmark of the city.**

on a trip to the coastal trading city of Azaphi (Safi), probably on a commercial mission. (The surname al-Wazzan means a person assigned to weigh and certify trade goods, which indicates that his family was probably involved in commerce.) On one of his first solo trips, traveling among the Berber tribes of the High Atlas mountains as an itinerant qadi, Leo once found himself captive for nine days in a village of "base and witless people" who wouldn't let him leave before he heard a lengthy backlog of their legal disputes. The rich and pampered city boy from Fez complained about having to sleep on the ground and "eate of such grosse meats as … barlie meale mingled with water, and of goats-flesh, which was extremely tough and hard by reason of the staleness and long continuance." On day nine, he was rewarded for his trouble not with gold, as he had expected, but with a chicken, some nuts and onions, "a handfull of garlicke" and—probably the last thing he needed—a goat. He fared much better in the mountain town of Medua (modern Algeria's Medea), where he earned nearly two hundred ducats in as many months and recalled being so "sumptuously entertained … that had not dutie enforced me to depart, I had remained there all the residue of my life."

Leo learned the ways of courts and traders in the company of his diplomat uncle, and probably spent many hours "awaiting an audience," like the subject of this 19th-century orientalist painting.

The wider world became Leo's oyster at about 16, when he accompanied his uncle on a diplomatic mission in the service of the Wattasid sultan of Fez, traveling to Timbuktu and Gao—the great imperial trading cities of the Songhai Empire, in what is now eastern Mali. Along the way, Leo so charmed a local mountain chieftain with verses he composed in the chieftain's honor that he was rewarded with "a stately breakfast, … fifty ducates and a good horse."

Impressed with these and other reports of young Leo's diplomatic skills, Sultan Muhammad deemed him one of his most trusted ambassadors and eventually dispatched him back to Timbuktu, east as far as Istanbul and perhaps beyond.

Such missions were critical for ensuring Fez's political autonomy and economic stability at a time when the Portuguese and Spanish were rapidly colonizing Africa's coastline, rival powers were growing in the south and the Ottoman Empire threatened to engulf all of North Africa. Keeping track of shifting powers and managing alliances was the job of the sultan's ambassador. While the sultans of Fez were confident enough to keep the Portuguese and the Ottomans at bay, they were also clever enough to know that they were useful to both powers only as long as they retained control of the lucrative trans-Saharan caravan trade routes.

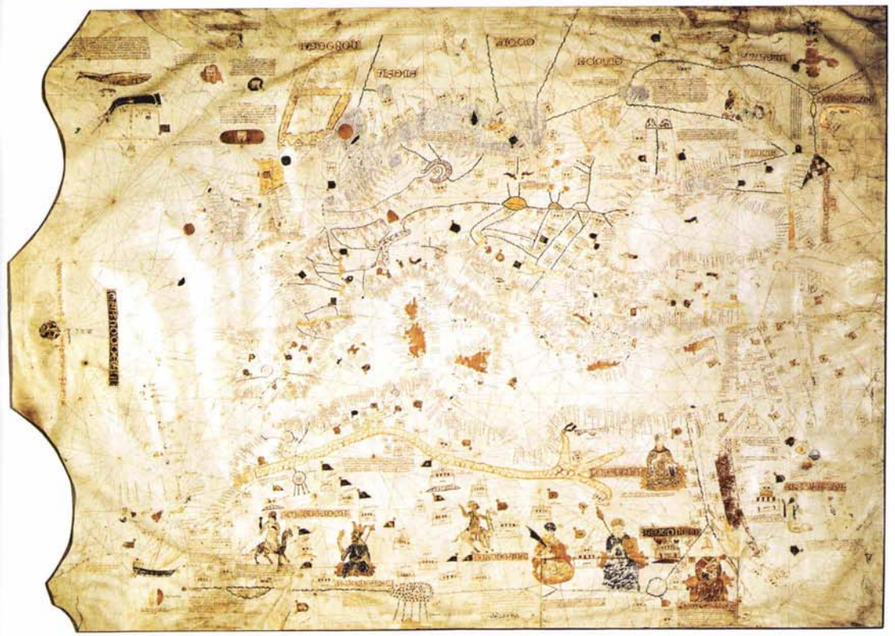
This ancient commercial network of rocky passes, desert treks and jungle trails crisscrossed more than 2400 kilometers (1500 mi) of Central and West Africa, from the foothills of the Atlas mountains through the western Sudan to the Gulf of Guinea. Along its well-worn camel paths flowed manufactured trade goods from the north—textiles from Europe, sugar from Sus in southern Morocco, leather-bound books from Fez, brass and copper vessels from the workshops of Marrakech—together with dates and horses, in exchange for the famed treasures of the *Bilad al-Sudan* ("Land of the Blacks"): gold, slaves, pepper and other spices, and civet cats, prized for their musk. These streams of commerce converged at major trading centers along the way, some of which now exist only in history books: Taghaza, Taodeni, Arawan, Walata, Gao and—that most fabled desert metropolis—Timbuktu, today still synonymous in the western imagination with the farthest of far-off exotica.

"The rich king of Tombuto hath many plates and sceptres of gold, some whereof weigh 1300 poundes and he keepes a magnificent and well furnished court," wrote Leo, who visited the city when the Songhai Empire was at its height, during the reign of Askia Muhammad I (1493–1538). As an ambassador, Leo would have been ceremoniously ushered into the king's presence and pushed peremptorily to his knees: "Whosoever will speake unto this king must first fall downe before his feete, & then taking up earth must sprinkle it upon his owne head & shoulders."

HIS NARRATIVE SEEMS STYLED TO INFORM RATHER THAN IMPRESS OR FLATTER.

From Timbuktu to Hausaland (now eastern Mali and southern Niger), across the neighboring kingdoms of Borno (now in northeastern Nigeria) and Kanem (now in Chad and Libya), on up through Egypt, along the Nile to Aswan, Chana (modern Qena, where "cruell and noisome" crocodiles "lurking about the bankes of the river, do craftily lay waite for men and beastes … and there devour them") and Cairo, and then on his trip back home via Tunisia and the Barbary Coast, Leo kept a meticulous account of everything he saw, smelled, tasted and heard. With characteristic thoroughness and attention to detail, he offered the good with the bad, the magnificent alongside the mundane, in an even-handed narrative that was clearly meant to inform rather than impress or flatter.

Thus, we learn that the pomegranates of Mecnase (Meknes) are "most pleasant of taste" but its "lemons are waterish and unpleasant"; that Cairenes are "people of a merrie, jocund and cheerful disposition such as will promise much, but performe little"; that the king of Borno doesn't pay his bills on time, yet has so much cash on hand that he can furnish his dogs with collars of "pure golde."



ERNST RUDOLPHE, "AWAITING AN AUDIENCE," 19TH C. / PRIVATE COLLECTION / BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY

BIBLIOTHEQUE NATIONALE, PARIS / BRIDGEMAN-GIRAUDON / ART RESOURCE

This *portolano* map, drawn in the early 15th century for Charles V, shows the trading empires of sub-Saharan Africa, through which Leo traveled. Right: Leo's diplomatic missions took him ultimately to Constantinople, where he met with Ottoman sultan Süleyman the Magnificent.

Leo did betray strong feelings when it came to some things, such as the table manners of the Berbers ("Cuscusa … is set before them all in one platter … out of which every one raketh with his greasie fists") or the destructiveness of the Portuguese, whose attack on Anfa (Casablanca) brought him to "teares when [he] beheld the miserable ruin of so many faire buildings and temples [mosques]." He reserved his harshest criticism for those who bred disharmony among fellow Muslims, who "procured followers by bloud and the cloake of religion." Here, Leo was referring to bellicose Saadians—tribesmen from the Souss region—who pillaged Muslim towns instead of defending them from foreign invaders, or fanatics like the shah of Persia who forced others "to receive … his sect … by force of arms." From Egypt, Leo wrote that he "traveled thence over the desert unto the red sea, over which … I crossed unto Jambu [Yanbu'], and Ziddem [Jeddah]." He made no mention, however, of continuing on to Makkah to perform the Hajj, though it seems unlikely that he would have let such an opportunity slip by. His silence may be merely editorial discretion: As he pointed out, Jambu and Ziddem "belong unto Asia," and further "discourse … should seem to transgresse the limits of Africa." He did promise, however, future volumes on his travels to Arabia, Asia, Constantinople and Europe, but none of them ever materialized—or, if they did, they are long lost.

Returning in June of 1518 by sea from Constantinople, his ship was attacked by pirates off the coast of either Crete or Djerba, in Tunisia. (Scholarly opinions vary.) His captors were in the employ of the Knights of Saint John, who maintained power in the eastern Mediterranean by harassing sea traffic, robbing Muslim ships and selling captives into slavery. Recognizing that Leo was a man of learning, as evidenced by the various maps, charts and notes he carried with him—essentially the *Cosmographia*'s first draft—the knights determined that the well-spoken Moor might be of more use to Pope Leo X than to the slave traders of Pisa and Genoa.

Leo's arrival in Rome was chronicled alongside other high-profile events on the Vatican calendar that year, such as the baptism of the French *Dauphin* and the establishment of new churches and religious orders. This suggests that Pope Leo considered Leo the traveler to be no ordinary prisoner—and he had good reason. As an envoy to Constantinople, he had intimate knowledge of the Ottoman Turks and their troublesome, yet formidable, sultan Süleyman the Magnificent, against whom the pope had recently declared a crusade. In addition, the prisoner's travels throughout Africa could provide invaluable commercial information, especially useful when the pope's reckless spending habits were draining the Vatican coffers. Thus, Leo became an immediate celebrity.

At the same time, he was hardly the first Moor (a term Europeans of the day used freely to refer to African Muslims, Berbers and even Indians and Asians) to be seen in the Holy City, or, for that matter, on stage or in the pages of European

literature during the Renaissance. Having a Moor or two around a royal court was, in fact, practically *de rigueur*, as Europeans grew increasingly enchanted with the exotic otherworldliness of new cultures and continents, like the one Columbus stumbled on while searching for Asia. It is widely believed that William Shakespeare patterned the character of Othello on Leo, whose book, translated by John Pory, was published in London just four years before the play's first performance in 1604. Like Leo, the Moor of Venice is an educated Muslim adventurer who travels "here and everywhere," before being captured by "the insolent foe / And sold to slavery" prior to his "redemption" and conversion to Christianity.

Leo's own conversion remains the subject of much speculation. He spent his first months in Rome imprisoned in the Castel Sant'Angelo, a barrel-shaped fortification in the shadow of St. Peter's Basilica. Though the castle featured an infamous dungeon, Leo was probably afforded one of Sant'Angelo's relatively comfortable apartments. He was also free to request Arabic books from the Vatican library, and did. Still, so long as he remained a Muslim he remained a prisoner, and that must have been hard on the restless traveler from Fez, who delighted in the luxuries and excitement of court life. So, when he found himself faced with a choice of conversion and freedom versus indefinite imprisonment, he opted for the former.

"This was very common at the time," said Boucharb. "Muslims and Jews converted to Christianity; Christians converted to Islam. The Turkish Empire, for example, was filled with mercenaries who had originally been Christians, while the Moroccan army had thousands who had converted to Islam."

Leo was baptized on January 6, 1520 by the pope himself, who christened his new convert "Johannes Leo de Medicis," or "Giovanni Leone" in Italian, a gesture of high favor, for Giovanni de' Medici was the pope's own name. For his part, Leo referred to himself by the Arabic version of his new name, Yuhanna al-Asad—John the Lion. In fact, he never used, and probably never even heard, the name Leo Africanus, a sobriquet assigned to him 30 years later by his Venetian publisher, Giovanni Battista Ramusio.

Scholars debate the sincerity of Leo's conversion, but the argument is literally academic, as Leo left no definitive

BETTMAN / CORBIS; DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE / ERICH LESSING / ART RESOURCE; OPPOSITE: AUGUSTE E.F. MAYER / CHATEAU VERSAILLES / BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY

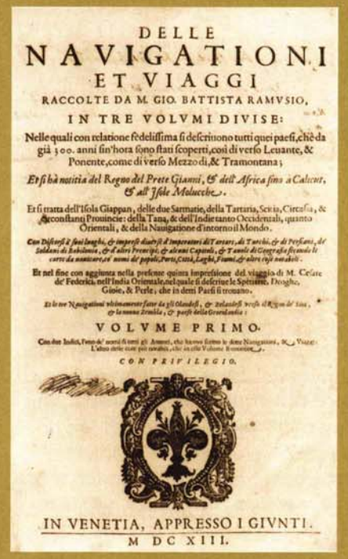
In 1518, pirates sacked the ship that bore Leo from Constantinople. The Knights of Saint John had him taken to Rome, where he was kept in the Castel Sant'Angelo (right), **until he professed a conversion to Christianity, at which Pope Leo X** (far right) **gave him the name "Leone" as a patronly favor. Leo was 24 years old.**

FOUND IN TRANSLATION

The *History* had its origins in the notes and journals Leo compiled during his travels. These were, naturally, written in Arabic. When asked by the pope to set it all down in a book, Leo dictated his narrative to an Arabic-speaking Vatican scribe, Elia Ben Abraham, a monk from Lebanon, who helped write the book in Italian. Leo entitled this handwritten manuscript *Cosmographia & Geographia de Affrica*. Leo's Arabic notes have not survived, but a contemporaneous copy of the original Italian manuscript exists.

In 1550, Giovanni Batttista Ramusio, a high-ranking Venetian official, published the *Cosmographia* as part of *Delle Navigationi et Viaggi*, a five-volume collection of geographical texts and travel narratives. Ramusio retitled Leo's contribution *Della descrittione dell'Africa et delle cose notabili che quivi sono*, and he bestowed on its author the pseudonym "Leo Africanus." Enormously popular, the book was reprinted numerous times and translated into French (1556), Latin (1556), English (the Pory edition of 1600) and Dutch (1665). In 1667, the soldier Luis del Mármol y Carvajal published a Spanish edition, which he supplemented with tales of his own adventures in North Africa. The first German edition was published in 1805.

All of these translations were made from the Ramusio edition, and not from the original manuscript of the *Cosmographia*, which was believed to have perished in a fire in 1557. Then, in 1931, Italian scholar Angela Codazzi discovered a handwritten copy of the manuscript in a pile of uncatalogued and unidentified documents in the Biblioteca Nazionale in Rome. The calligraphy matched that of known works of Leo's scribe, Elia Ben Abraham, thus indicating an original copy. Codazzi began the job of editing and publishing her find but was interrupted by World War II.


DELLE
NAVIGATIONI
ET VIAGGI
RACCOLTE DA M. GIO. BATTISTA RAMVSIO,
IN TRE VOLVMI DIVISE:
Nelle quali con relatione fedelissima si descrivono tutti quei paesi, chè da già 300. anni fin'hora sono stati scoperti, così di verso Leuante, & Ponente, come di verso Mezzo di, & Tramontana;
Et si hà nuttitia del Regno del Prete Gianni, & dell'Africa fino a Calicut, & all'Isole Molucche.
Et si tratta dell'Isola Giappan, delle due Sarmatie, della Tartaria, Scitia, Circassia, & Costantia Provincie: della Tana, & dell'Indie tanto Occidentali, quanto Orientali, & della Navigatione d'intorno il Mondo.
Con Discorsi & bei luoghi, & imprese dell'Ill. & Eccellentiss. Sig. del Turchi, & de' Tartari, de' Soldani di Babilonia, & d'altri Principi, & alcuni Capitoli, & Tavole di Geografia per trouar le carte da nauicare, & nomi de' popoli, Porti, Città, Laghi, Fiumi, & altre cose notabili.
Et nel fine con aggiunta nella presente quinta impressione del viaggio di M. Cesare de' Federichi, nell'India Orientale, nel quale si descrivono le Spetierie, Droghe, Gioie, & Perle, che in essi Paesi si trouano.
Et le tre Navigationi vltimamente fatte da gli Olandesi, & Zelandesi verso il Regno de' Sina, & la nuoua Zembla, & parte della Tartaria.
VOLVME PRIMO.
CON PRIVILEGIO.
IN VENETIA, APPRESSO I GIVNTI.
M DC XIII.

Giovanni Ramusio's compendium *Delle Navigationi et Viaggi* (shown here in a 1613 edition) gave Leo his pseudonym "Leo Africanus" and made the *Cosmographia* available in the West—but Ramusio often changed Leo's narrative.

What quickly became evident to Codazzi—and to subsequent scholars who consulted the *Cosmographia*—were the significant differences between the original Italian manuscript and the Ramusio edition. In some cases, these changes were organizational: dividing the work into books, chapters, sections and paragraphs, shuffling the order of the original manuscript and adding punctuation. (The original had none.) Yet in other instances, Ramusio edited with a heavy hand, deleting large sections of text, adding sentences that Leo never wrote, and altering the tone of the *Cosmographia* for the apparent political purpose of putting distance between Leo and African Muslim society so as to make him, and his narrative, more acceptable to Europeans.

For example, when Leo discussed the messy eating habits of the Berbers in the *Cosmographia*, he qualified his observation by stating that, nonetheless, the table manners of "an Italian nobleman" were no better than "any African nobleman." Ramusio, however, changed the text to compare the "poorest Italian nobleman" and the "most powerful African ruler." In the *Cosmographia*, where Leo described the Arab city of Bona (modern Algeria's Annaba), Ramusio inserted that it was once known as Hippo, "*dove fu episcopo santo Agostino*" ("where Saint Augustine was bishop"). The goal here, according to Moroccan-born historian Oumelbanine Zhiri of the University of California in San Diego—a leading Leo scholar—"was to show that North Africa, having been Christian, could become Christian again through a reconquest that would prolong the *Reconquista*."

PRIVATE COLLECTION / BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY

Then there are problems with Ramusio's lack of understanding of Islam, as Zhiri observed. Where Leo referred to some people as having "no knowledge of the limits" or living with "no rules," he meant Muslims who failed to abide by Islamic law—a qualification Ramusio simply edited out. Even Leo had trouble rendering some Arabic terms into understandable Italian, translating "caliph," for example, as "pontiff."

The 1556 French translation of Ramusio (upon which the even worse Latin and English translations were subsequently based) is more troubling in certain passages dealing with Islam. Not content with Leo's straightforward account of the coming of Islam to North Africa, French publisher Jean Temporal had him describe the spread of "the damnable Mohammedan sect" as a "pestilence"—language Leo would never have used.

Fortunately, modern translations have since addressed many of these biases. Of these, Alexis Épaulard's annotated French edition (1956, reprinted in 1980) is generally considered to be the most faithful to the original, as it is based on a line-by-line comparison between Ramusio and the *Cosmographia*. In 1999, German scholar Dietrich Rauchenberger published a selection of similarly researched passages from the *Cosmographia*—the sections dealing with the sub-Saharan Africa and the Sudan—in his exhaustive biography, *Johannes Leo der Afrikaner*. Another partial translation, in Hausa, was published in 1930 in Nigeria. It was not until 1982 that Leo returned home, as it were, with the publication of an Arabic translation by the late Muhammad Hajji of the Moroccan Association for Writing, Translation and Publication in Rabat.

All told, 33 editions of the *History* have been published in eight languages since 1550—an average of one new edition every 15 years. "No other travel writer, Muslim or Christian, ancient or modern, has bettered this average," observed Rauchenberger.

statement on the matter. He did, however, leave a hint by relating the story of "a most wily bird" who avoided paying taxes to the king of birds by living underwater like a fish. When the fish king began demanding taxes, the bird promptly left the water and returned to the sky.

"I will do like the bird," Leo wrote. "[W]hen I hear the Africans evil spoken of, I wil affirme my selfe to be one of Granada; and when I perceive the nation of Granada to be discommended, then I will professe my selfe to be an African."

While this may seem opportunistic, it is possible to interpret such a strategy as *taqiyya*, the custom of outwardly renouncing one's religion under coercion while inwardly maintaining devotion to one's faith. Rooted in the Qur'an (16:106) and supported by a religious decree in Leo's own time, *taqiyya* was a means of survival for many a Morisco (a forcibly converted Muslim) during the *Reconquista*.

Whatever Leo believed in his heart, his survival strategy kept him alive and well long enough to finish the *Cosmographia* in March of 1526. He wrote much of the book while teaching Arabic at the university in Bologna, where he moved after Pope Leo's death in 1524 in order to avoid the new, less Morisco-friendly pope, Hadrian IV. While in Italy, he also produced several other lesser-known works: a transcription of an Arabic translation of the Epistles of St. Paul, a treatise on the Muslim faith and Malakite law (now lost), a summary of Islamic history (also lost), an Arabic–Hebrew–Latin medical vocabulary (of which only the Arabic portion survives), and a biographical dictionary of 25 notable Islamic and Jewish scholars.

SINCE 1550, 33 EDITIONS OF LEO'S *HISTORY* HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED IN EIGHT LANGUAGES.

LEO IN LITERATURE

Leo's appearance in print extends well beyond the pages of his own work.

It is generally accepted that he served as the model for William Shakespeare's character Othello. The Bard and Leo's English publisher, John Pory, moved in the same circles, and they had a mutual friend in the famed geographer Richard Hakluyt. That Shakespeare would have had access to, or at least heard about, the Pory edition seems likely. And the playwright was not shy about borrowing plots and characters from others: Scholars draw parallels between *The Tempest*, for example, and published reports of a real-life shipwreck off Bermuda.

In the case of Leo-as-Othello, there are numerous similarities in the backstories of each figure. Othello claims noble parentage("I fetch my life and being / From men of royal siege" [Act I, Scene II]) while Pory asserts that Leo's "Parentage seemeth not to have bin ignoble." In the play, Othello is described as "an extravagant and wheeling stranger / Of here and everywhere" (I,I). Pory writes that Leo "was so diligent a traveller; that there was no kingdome, province, signorie or citie; or scarcelie any towne, village, mountaine, vallie, river, or forrest, &c., which he left unvisited." Othello boasts of "the battles, sieges, fortunes, / That I have pass'd ... of most disastrous chances; / Of moving accidents by flood and field; / Of hair-breadth scapes i' the imminent deadly / breach." Pory wonders how Leo "should have escaped so manie thousands of imminent dangers ... how many desolate cold mountaines, and huge, drie and barren deserts passed he? How often was he in hazard to have beene captived, or have had his throat cut by the prowling Arabians and wilde Mores? And how hardly manie times escaped he the Lyons greedie mouth, and the devouring jaws of the Crocodile?" Othello recounts "being taken by the insolent foe / And sold to slavery; of my redemption thence; / And portance in my travel's history," while Leo warns his readers of Sicilian pirates: "If any stranger should fall into their hands ... they presently carrie him to Sicilie, and there either sell or exchange him for corne." Perhaps most telling, considering Desdemona's fate and Othello's fatal flaw, is Leo's characterization of the Berber marriage temperament: "No nation in the world is so subject unto jealousy; for they will rather leese their lives, then put up any disgrace in the behalfe of their women."

More recently, Leo served as the title character of Amin Maalouf's 1986 historical novel, *Leo Africanus*. Maalouf sticks closely to the facts, using the thread of Leo's life to weave together an adventure that features everyone from Columbus to the Medicis, Martin Luther and Süleyman the Magnificent, while placing Leo at the center of the major events of the day.

Though hard evidence is lacking, scholars suppose Leo was a likely model for Shakespeare's character Othello.

BRITISH MUSEUM / ART RESOURCE

PRIVATE COLLECTION / BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY

Perhaps Leo's most bizarre literary appearance is in the writings of Irish poet William Butler Yeats. A student of mysticism and the occult, Yeats claimed to have made contact with Leo during a séance in 1912. Yeats came to consider Leo his "daimon," or alter ego, writing to him and receiving responses—Yeats claimed—in Leo's own hand. By 1917, Yeats's contact with Leo tapered off and ceased.

By 1527, Leo was back in Rome, under the nominal protection of yet another pope, Clement VII, who had much more on his mind than the fate of a resident Moorish intellectual. These were uneasy times for the papacy: The Ottomans continued to encroach from the east; the Protestant Reformation was wreaking havoc in Germany; England's Henry VIII cut ties with Rome over Clement's refusal to grant him a divorce, and France and the Holy Roman Empire were at war.

Perhaps it was political expediency, or perhaps a sign of where his true loyalties lay, but when the war spilled over into Italy and Emperor Charles V sacked the Holy City in May of 1527, Leo probably took the opportunity to slip away to North Africa. While some believe he lived out his days in Rome and others say he was killed during Charles's invasion, there is more convincing evidence that he spent his final years in Tunis. The writings of a contemporary German orientalist, Johann Albrecht von Widmanstetter (1506–1557), record that in 1531 Widmanstetter intended to travel to Tunis to meet the great Arab scholar "Leo Eliberitanus," as he called Leo. ("Eliberitanus" derives from "Elvira," the pre-Islamic name for Granada.) Though some argue that Tunis seems an unlikely final destination for Leo, as he had little connection to the city, they agree that he did end his days as a Muslim in North Africa and died some time after 1550. (This is a best-guess date based on the lack of any reference to Leo's death in Ramusio's original 1550 preface.) Leo himself, in the final chapters of the *Cosmographia*, expressed his desire to return one day "by Gods assistance...into mine owne countrie."

If Leo did in fact return to his "owne countrie" by 1550, he missed basking in the vast popularity and success of his *magnum opus*.

"Very quickly, the book was all over Europe," said Boucharb. "There were many people who were interested in knowing whatever they could learn about Africa, and the source for that was Leo."

Even as late as 1834, the Swedish consul in Tangier quoted the *History* in his reports on Morocco, as if Leo's descriptions were still accurate.

Yet in many ways they were—and still are.

"The Muslim world was approaching a crisis, a transition, that later on would lead to its colonization, and Leo Africanus recognized this," said Bouchentouf. "Some of the dimensions of this crisis were the Christian conquest of Spain, the appearance of Sufism and the superstition associated with mysticism, and civil war and the decline of civilization in the kingdom of Marrakech."

In addition to Leo's foresight, the hindsight gained by historians who study his writing is invaluable.

A decade after he painted his "Portrait of a Humanist" (see page 2), Sebastiano del Piombo sketched the meeting of Pope Clement VII and Holy Roman Emperor Charles V in 1530 in Barcelona. Charles had attacked Rome three years earlier, and Leo may have taken that opportunity to slip back to Africa.

"Read the chapter on Fez," suggested Boucharb. "It is extraordinary in its detail, making it possible to compare 16th-century Morocco with what we have now."

But Leo's modern relevance extends beyond the interest of a handful of specialized scholars. As Morocco and the European Union edge closer to forming what French president Nicolas Sarkozy called "a Mediterranean union linking Europe and Africa" economically and politically, a figure like Leo Africanus is practically a poster-boy for the effort.

"He plays directly into the modern cultural politics of the region," said cartographer and historian Martin Elbl of Ontario, Canada, co-creator of "The Leo Project," which will be an interactive Web site dedicated to Leo and his travels. "He stood poised on both the Muslim and Christian frontiers and was able to negotiate the crossover between them both."

A most wily bird indeed.

Free-lance journalist **Tom Verde** (writah@hotmail.com) has written for the *New York Times* and National Public Radio. He is pursuing a master's degree in Islamic studies and Christian–Muslim relations at Hartford Seminary in Connecticut. He traveled to Morocco on a scholarship from the Lilly Endowment through the Religion Newswriters Foundation.

Related articles from past issues can be found on our Web site, www.saudiaramcoworld.com. Click on "indexes," then on the cover of the issue indicated below.

Ibn Battuta: J/A 00, M/A 06
Ibn Khaldun: S/O 06
Arab travel writing *(rihla)*: J/A 00
Reconquista: J/F 93
Andalusians in North Africa: J/A 91
Timbuktu: N/D 95
Knights of Saint John: M/A 03, N/D 04

www.leoafricanus.com

Further Reading

Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim Between Worlds. Natalie Zemon Davis. 2006, Hill and Wang, 978-0-8090-9434-9, $30 hb; 2007, Hill and Wang, 978-0-8090-9435-6, $17 pb

Leo Africanus. Amin Maalouf. 1989, Norton, 0-393-02630-0, hb; 1998, New Amsterdam Books, 978-1-56131-022-7, $16.95 pb

Where the Pepper Grows

WRITTEN BY SEBASTIAN R. PRANGE

Before Europeans found their way to the Indian Ocean, Arab mariners and merchants dominated the all-important pepper trade on India's spice coast. There they established communities characterized by a unique blend of Islamic traditions and South Indian customs.

RYNMAN CABANNES / PHOTOCUISINE / CORBIS. INSET: HERMAN MOLL (1736)

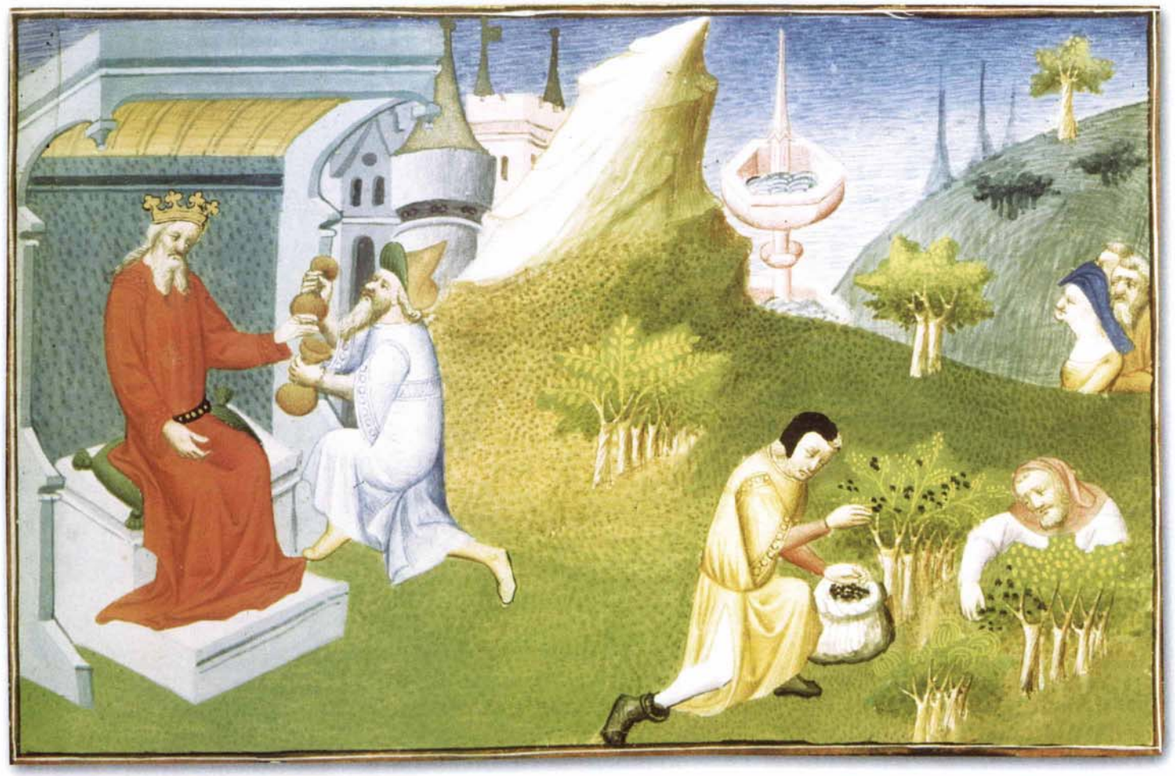
Today pepper is our single most commonly used spice, routinely offered in fine restaurants and fast food joints alike and universally available in stores and supermarkets. It is therefore hard to imagine just how highly prized pepper was in ancient and medieval times and how it spurred a complex trade that saw peppercorns travel distances so enormous that their origins remained obscure even to their purveyors. Along the way, fortunes were made, lives were lost, and the spice became enriched with its connotations of mystery and exoticism.

Since at least the first millennium BC, pepper was regarded as an ultimate luxury, inessential to survival yet highly desired for ritual, medicinal and culinary purposes. The origins of this desire stretch back to ancient Egypt, with the great pharaoh Ramses II being the first known consumer, albeit posthumously: peppercorns were found in the nostrils of his mummified corpse. In ancient Greece, pepper was used medicinally and the Chinese have used it in their cooking since at least the fourth century. The Romans' conquest of Egypt gave them regular access to pepper, and it became a symbol of luxurious cookery. It was traded ounce for ounce with precious metals: When Rome was besieged in the fifth century, the city allegedly paid its ransom in peppercorns, and the spice remained an accepted form of "currency" throughout the Middle Ages.

The period from roughly the first century BC to the first century of our era witnessed a surge in the pepper trade as navigators began to understand the pattern of the Indian Ocean monsoon, and the surge resulted in more detailed knowledge about the lands where the pepper grows.

In 70 AD, the *Periplus Maris Erythraei*, an anonymous merchant's guide to the Red Sea, recorded information on the spice trade and the now lost Indian port of Muziris. Large ships are sent there, the author reports, "on account of the great quantity and bulk of pepper" that is only grown in that region. Even though archeologists still debate its exact location, it is clear from the *Periplus* and other references that Muziris was located near the modern city of Kodungallor (formerly known as Cranganore, its colonial name) on India's Malabar Coast, where black pepper is native.

The Malabar Coast comprises a narrow sliver of land on the southwestern tip of peninsular India, hemmed in by the Arabian Sea to the west and the mountain range of the Western Ghats in the east. This region, now largely contained in the northern part of the Indian state of Kerala, is located in the humid equatorial tropics: the annual monsoon rains nourish the fertile soil, feed the extensive network of backwater canals, and support the region's rich biodiversity. In addition to being

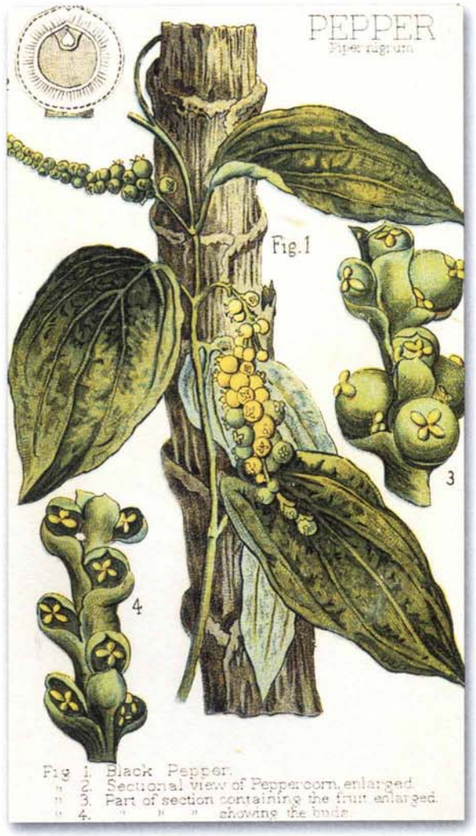


Pepper was once a gift fit for kings; above, **a French manuscript illustration from the early 15th century shows both harvesting and royal presentation.** Previous spread: **Alexander the Great is believed to have brought dried black peppercorns back from India. His travels brought back also its Sanskrit name, *pippali*, from which, via Greek and Latin, we derive both our word for the spice and the plant's scientific name, *Piper nigrum*.**

ABOVE: JAN VAN RYNE / PRIVATE COLLECTION / BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY; ABOVE RIGHT: CYNTHIA HART DESIGNER / CORBIS; OPPOSITE: BIBLIOTHEQUE NATIONALE / BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY

the source of pepper, Malabar's position at the center of the Indian Ocean made it a natural location for commerce and transshipping. For these reasons, foreign merchants hailing from the different corners of the Indian Ocean trading world established settlements in Malabar's ports and brought with them not only their commercial expertise but also their cultures and creeds.

As the original suppliers of pepper to the Mediterranean world, the Persians had sailed along the coast to Malabar since the earliest days of maritime navigation. Jews are believed to have arrived and established synagogues as early as the sixth century BC. The Christians of modern Kerala trace their ancestry to Thomas the Apostle, who they believe came to Muziris in the year 52; they are known to this day as St. Thomas Christians. In the same century, ships from China reached South India and created the long-lasting connection between the Chinese empire and Malabar: This was as evident to medieval visitors, who spoke of Malabari communities known as "sons of the Chinese," as it is to modern tourists who marvel at the peculiar shore-based fishing contraptions known as "Chinese nets." Traders from other parts of India, especially Gujarat to the north and Coromandel on the east coast, also established permanent trading communities on the Malabar Coast, often specializing in particular goods. But what would prove to be the most profound foreign influence on Malabar did not arrive for another five centuries, when a new religion spread across the lands around the Indian Ocean, galvanized their commerce and created immense wealth through the trade in pepper.

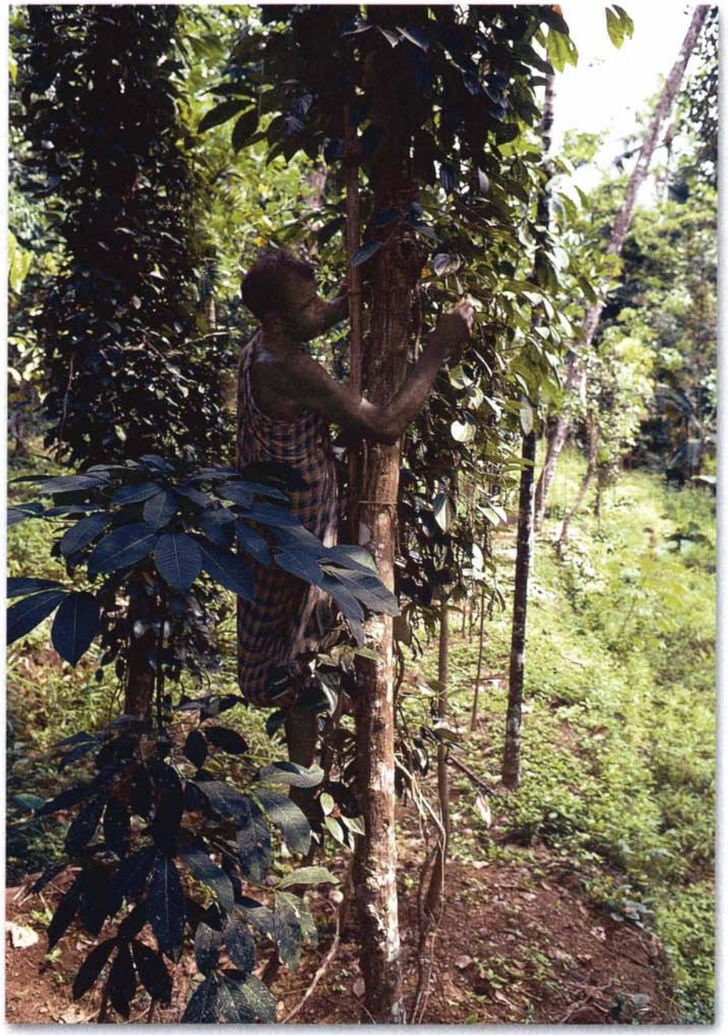


Above right: **Peppercorns are the dried fruit of the wild climbing vine *Piper nigrum*, which is native to the rich soil and humid climate of the Malabar Coast. It is unrelated to the American chili fruit, often called "chili pepper."**
Above: **Pepper's high profits helped propel European colonialism, and this engraving depicts the port of Bombay (now Mumbai) in the mid-18th century, when much of Malabar's pepper exports passed through that entrepôt into the holds of ships of the British East India Company.**

Despite their reputation as a desert people, Arabs had long been involved in maritime trade. Yet it was only with the unifying, expansionist and proselytizing energy of early Islam that Arabs were able to develop their traditional dominance over the caravan and Red Sea trade into a network of Muslim settlements that rapidly spread along the Indian Ocean littoral. Under the early caliphates, this Islamic network matured to encompass most of the Indian Ocean world from East Africa to the southern coast of China. It carried with it not only the beliefs of Islam but also the Arabic language, *shari'a* courts able to enforce common legal standards and shared commercial practices that favored the interaction of these settlements. Merchants residing in foreign ports were able to learn the local language, establish and maintain business contacts, and act as cross-cultural brokers. Muslim trade settlements developed into particularly effective organizations because of the political unity initially created by a burgeoning Islam, the great emphasis on literacy within its culture and the practice of pilgrimage, which kept its heartlands in communication with even the most far-flung settlements. Even though the bulk of Indian Ocean commerce was carried on Indian and Chinese ships, and despite the continued significance of Jewish merchants, Arab Muslims increasingly dominated trade in its most profitable commodity: pepper.

The momentous commercial expansion during the early centuries of Islam was driven by the demand for spices in Europe and in the grand capitals of the new Islamic states. Within the lucrative spice trade, pepper was the most important commodity in bulk and value, and so the Malabar Coast remained of central importance to the Indian Ocean trading world. In his description of Malabar, the 14-century Moroccan traveler Ibn Battuta recorded his astonishment at seeing pepper, elsewhere valued by the grain, "being poured out for measuring by the bushel, like millet in our country." It is therefore not surprising that Malabar was the first region of India to attract Muslim traders in significant numbers.

The Malabar Coast was originally inhabited by the Dravidian people, who were distinct in their languages and culture from the Indo-Aryans of northern India. Organized religions came to Kerala in the form of Jainism, Buddhism and later Hinduism, and expressed themselves in the construction of temples—their profusion in the region has led Kerala to be called "the land of temples." A revived Hinduism developed into the region's predominant religion from about the ninth century onward, when Kerala's royal houses patronized Brahmins from North India.



The *Piper nigrum* vine grows readily and widely, and it reaches several meters in height. Like Indian Ocean navigation, the rhythm of growing and harvesting is set by the monsoon. Black, white and green pepper are all fruits of the same plant, respectively dried, decorticated and brined or freeze-dried. Air-drying black pepper requires frequent turning, and is still most often accomplished simply by spreading the pepper out in the sun.

The origins of Islam on the Malabar Coast began, according to legend, with the last king of the South Indian Chera dynasty, which had ruled Malabar since the beginning of its recorded history. Cheraman Perumal, the tale goes, converted to Islam after having dreamt of a splitting moon and then meeting Arab pilgrims who reported that the Qur'an mentions just such a miracle (54:1–2). The king resolved to join the pilgrims in their journey to Makkah, but not before dividing his kingdom among his princes, a fragmentation that would characterize the region for many centuries.

Having fallen ill on the return journey and unable to make it to his homeland, the king entrusted the same pilgrims with the mission of founding mosques and propagating his new faith in Kerala. Many of the oldest mosques in the region are said to have been founded by these pilgrims, who were dispatched all along the coast to serve as *qadi*s to its fledgling Muslim communities.

The legend of Cheraman Perumal is similar to conversion myths in other parts of Asia and appears to be a confusion of two distinct traditions, one relating the end of unified Chera rule over Kerala and the other the conversion of a king. Its appeal and longevity, however, are testament to the exceptional circumstances that surrounded the introduction of Islam to Kerala and to the unique history of the communities it created. Furthermore, many aspects of this tale can be linked to historical truths. To begin to understand this blend of fact and fiction, therefore, we must look at the intriguing history of the Muslims of Malabar and their unique blend of Islamic traditions and South Indian customs.

Islam was introduced to the Malabar Coast peacefully by Arab traders in search of pepper and by Sufis who traveled within the commercial networks. To this day, most Muslims of Malabar adhere to the Shafi'i school of Islamic law, which was dominant among Muslim merchants across the Indian Ocean world. They are also more closely linked to Arab culture than to the Persian influence that was brought to the rest of India by invaders from the north. Muslim merchants settling in Malabar ports married (often multiple) local women. Their offspring were the first generation of Indian-born Muslims, and their upbringing in both Arabic and the local language, Malayalam (not related to the Malay language of Southeast Asia), was an excellent preparation for future work as brokers. In this manner, the ports of the Malabar Coast became ever more closely woven into the network of Islamic trade spanning the Indian Ocean, and the wealth of the expatriate merchants and their associates increased.

As the legend of Cheraman Perumal already suggests, another significant factor in the introduction of Islam to Malabar was conversion. Aside from rare exceptions, these did not, however, occur in the ruling class but in the lower strata of society. Hinduism in this part of South India had developed a particularly rigid system of caste division, with social intercourse between castes severely restricted to avoid ritual pollution. Conversion to Islam was therefore a chance for low-caste Hindus to break free of such limitations, and also opened new opportunities for economic interaction with the prosperous Arab merchants. This group of new Muslims native to Malabar developed into a distinct community known as Mappilas (or Moplahs). These new converts preserved many of their traditional practices and integrated them into their new Islamic identity. Some Mappilas, for instance, continued the practice of matrilineality in which descent is understood to be of the mother's bloodline. The particular cultural heritage of this community is preserved in the Mappila songs, an indigenous form of devotional folklore in the Malayalam language.

From about the thirteenth century onwards, Kozhikode (anglicized "Calicut") emerged as the coast's dominant port. It was the center of a princely state ruled by hereditary sovereigns known as Zamorins. These were particularly renowned for their tolerance on the one hand—they for instance granted merchant communities independent jurisdiction over their members—and their scrupulousness in upholding property rights on the other, and they built a reputation for honesty that helped to turn Kozhikode into the region's principal port. Ibn Battuta explicitly states that, because of this reputation, Kozhikode had become "a flourishing and much frequented city" and one of the most important ports in the world. Foremost among its cosmopolitan assemblage of foreign merchants

PHOTOGRAPHIC AYE (4)

Pepper

Pliny, writing his *Natural History* in the first century, was puzzled by the demand for pepper that dictated its high price: "Its fruit or berry are neither acceptable to the tongue nor delectable to the eye: and yet for the biting pungency it has, we are pleased with it and must have it set forth from as far as India." By Pliny's time, pepper had long been part of European commerce and imagination about the East. Alexander the Great is believed to have brought pepper back from his expeditions. He introduced its Sanskrit name, *pippali*, from which the Greek *piperi* was derived and passed on to the Semitic languages (Hebrew *pilpel* and Arabic *filfil*) as well as to the European languages through the Latin *piper*.

Today pepper is still considered the "king of spices" and added to almost any kind of recipe. Pepper was already the most frequently used oriental spice in medieval Europe, and descriptions of lavish banquets often refer to the luxuriously large quantities of pepper used in their preparation. Aside from its culinary function of spicing up foods, pepper was also valued for its supposed medicinal properties, in particular as an antidote to poisoning and as a cure for impotency. Its high price relative to volume also made it a useful currency: The Roman emperors stored great amounts of it in their treasury. As information about the East increased in late antiquity, so did the knowledge about the plants and regions that produced this most sought-after commodity.

Peppercorns are the dried fruit of the wild climbing vine *Piper nigrum*, which is native to Kerala. The vine grows readily and widely in the rich soil and humid climate of southern India and reaches several meters in height by climbing trees or trellises. Medieval travellers to Malabar were amazed at how widely the pepper vine was cultivated, with even the smallest gardens including at least a few plants. Black, white and green pepper are all fruits of *Piper nigrum*. The peppercorns are usually picked unripe. If they are then brined or freeze-dried, they remain green and keep a fresh, vegetal flavor and a mild tang. If they are sun-dried, the flesh of the fruit blackens and shrivels to a thin coating and the spice develops a richer flavor as well as more heat. To produce white pepper, with heat but little flavor, the peppercorns are soaked in water and the flesh is then rubbed off the seeds. Rarely, peppercorns may be allowed to ripen to red before being picked. The name "pepper" has been profitably applied to many other plants—Malaguetta pepper, long pepper and all the New World capsicums (chili peppers)—but true pepper is only *Piper nigrum*, and the connoisseur's choice is Malabar pepper, preferably the deep-flavored grade the trade calls Tellicherry Extra Bold.

Malabar Mosques

Kerala is known as "the land of temples" for its multitude of Hindu places of worship, but its little-known mosques are no less fascinating in their style and history. The Malabar Coast is believed to have been the site of the first mosques on the Indian subcontinent, but because of the destruction brought by Portuguese bombardments and subsequent invasions, there are no mosques that date before the 12th century. The earliest extant mosques are located in the old Muslim quarters of Kozhikode and Kochi and bear inscriptions noting donations from Arab merchants and shipmasters. These traditional mosques (*palli* in the local language, Malayalam) are remarkably different from the styles of Islamic architecture found in Arabia or elsewhere in India: For example, they do not feature domes or minarets. Rather, they show clear similarities to the design of vernacular houses and local Hindu temples. This is partly a result of the region's particular conditions (for instance, the steeply sloped roofs to cope with the large amounts of rainfall) and the available materials and skills. Yet the similarities were not only dictated by necessity but may also reflect the desire to find a place in the prevailing ritual landscape: New converts to Islam would have already had clear ideas about what constitutes a sacred space from the region's existing temples.

The archetypal Malabar mosque is a covered structure on a rectangular ground plan, often with verandas running around the prayer hall. Especially characteristic is the intriguing tiered roof structure, sometimes covered with copper sheets, with the upper stories often used as a madrasa and as offices for the imam. Mehrdad Shokoohy, a historian and architect, has recently studied the mosques of Malabar and describes in detail the amalgamation of local designs with specific features from the Arabian lands and Southeast Asia. In this view, Malabar's mosques are a fitting manifestation of the remarkable extent of the medieval Muslim trading world and its spirit of cross-cultural stimulation and exchange.

High roofs and slatted clerestories helped traditional Mappila mosques maintain comfort for worshipers in the hot coastal climate. From left: **a mosque in Ponnani, photographed in 1938; a mosque in an unrecorded location, circa 1939; a mosque near Chirakkal, circa 1855.** Opposite, far right: **The Nakhuda Mithqal Mosque (or Mithqalpalli) in Kozhikode is named for a 14th-century Arab merchant and dates to 1578, when it was rebuilt following destruction of the original by the Portuguese.**

BASEL MISSION PICTURE ARCHIVE (3); OPPOSITE, FAR RIGHT: SEBASTIAN PRANGE

were the Muslim traders. These became over time not only the Zamorins' main source of tax revenue but also allies in their ambitions to subjugate other princely states, often through the provision of ships and sailors for naval warfare. Historians such as K. M. Panikkar are of the opinion that the Zamorins were on course towards subjecting and unifying Malabar under their rule, but that "this very process gave rise to jealousies and feuds" that were easily exploited by the Portuguese after their arrival on the coast.

When Vasco da Gama's fleet reached Kozhikode in May 1498, he came "in search of Christians and spices." He was initially content to imagine having found the former: He believed the Hindus to be an aberrant Christian sect and even offered prayers at a Hindu temple, albeit somewhat puzzled by the depiction of "Our Lady" with multiple arms. The desire for a monopoly of the pepper trade, however, was more difficult to quench: The Portuguese soon realized the prominence of Arab traders in the town and their control over the pepper trade. Laden with a profound antagonism toward Muslims born of the *Reconquista*, the Portuguese were not content to trade alongside other merchant communities. When the second fleet reached Malabar in 1500, its commander, Cabral, demanded that the Zamorin expel all Muslim merchants from the port. This stood in marked contrast to the long tradition of free trade that had been the source of Kozhikode's prosperity, and the ruler responded (in the words of the Portuguese chronicler) that he could not comply "for it was unthinkable that he expel 4000 households of them, who lived in Calicut as natives, not foreigners, and who had contributed great profits to his Kingdom."

Already during the second European expedition to India, confrontation became inevitable: While the Europeans were no match for the economic strength of Muslim merchants, their ship-mounted artillery and military expertise proved to be the *force majeure*. The Portuguese seized and destroyed Muslim merchant vessels, regularly bombarded Kozhikode and other ports, and exploited rivalries among the coast's princely states to establish fortified factories. They used their advantage in maritime violence to enforce a royal monopoly on the spice trade and to sell permits to other ships that wished to trade on the coast, and the Portuguese "pepper empire" was born.

The initial returns on the expeditions were staggering, and Lisbon soon replaced Venice as the main importer of pepper to Europe. But the Portuguese violence in India also galvanized resistance. The Zamorins together with the Muslim merchants repeatedly assembled fleets, but despite some small victories they could not break the Portuguese domination of the sea. The ruler of Kochi (formerly Cochin) to the south of Kozhikode, who had long been a resentful subject of the Zamorins, allowed the Portuguese to build a factory as their base on the Malabar Coast. A long period of warfare at sea and on land ensued, and repeated attempts were made to incite other Islamic states to assist the Mappilas' struggle. Egyptian merchants were able to rouse the Mamluk sultan to send a fleet, but after inconclusive engagements his ships retreated. As Portugal's power in the Indian Ocean expanded over the following decades, Malabar developed into a major test case of their imperial ambitions. Foreign Muslims were able to move to safer ports and conduct their business from there. That they did so successfully is evident by the great quantities of pepper that again became available in the markets of Alexandria and Venice by the mid-16th century, often undercutting the prices at which the Portuguese could sell it at Lisbon. The local Mappila Muslims, on the other hand, had no choice but to stay and to resist or evade the Portuguese monopoly system.

Excluded from the opportunities of regular commerce, the Mappila communities became increasingly militarized. While some resorted to smuggling and indiscriminate piracy, others turned to forms of guerrilla warfare to harass Portuguese shipping. The Portuguese, claiming ownership of all of the sea, soon described all Mappilas as pirates and treated them as such. The Mappilas used small ports in northern Malabar as bases, and by the mid-16th century a Muslim called Kunjali Marakkar was granted the hereditary admiralty of the Zamorin's fleet. He and his successors inflicted several defeats on Portuguese armadas, but when, toward the end of the century, Kunjali IV asserted his independence of the Zamorin, the ruler allied with the Portuguese and together they eventually defeated the Mappila strongholds.

Around the same time, the Muslim historian Zain al-Din, whose family had come to Malabar from Yemen in the 15th century, wrote his famous *Tuhfat al-Mujahidin (Gift to the Holy Warriors)* describing the cruelty of the "Franks" in an attempt to persuade the Muslim states of northern India to assist the Mappilas in their struggle. The historian Stephen Dale argues that the Mappila Muslims developed a particular idiom of holy warfare that, instead of reflecting the conquest of new territories by Muslim powers, expressed a religious struggle born of individual desperation. This found expression in popular festivals (the *nerccas*), at which folk ballads celebrating the Mappila victims of the anti-colonial struggle are recited.

The profits of the pepper trade eventually motivated other European powers to join the fray, and in time the Portuguese were eclipsed first by the Dutch and later by the British. Throughout the centuries, economic and political circumstances continued to conspire against the Mappilas and led to recurrent riots and attacks. However, the Mappilas also preserved their link to the sea, mostly as fishermen in Kerala's rich waters, and strengthened their involvement in riverine trade and agriculture. Today, Muslims constitute about a quarter of Kerala's population and remain concentrated in the north of the state on the historic Malabar Coast; in contrast to other regions of India, Kerala experiences very little of the problems of sectarianism. In recent years, many Mappilas have found work in the Middle East, particularly in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, and so continue the long-standing ties that bind the regions and societies. While historically pepper may have been as much of a blight as a blessing for the Malabar Coast, there can be no doubt that, because of it, the region served as a nexus where the dynamics of world history were played out —a point for reflection on the next turn of the pepper mill.

Sebastian R. Prange (prange@soas.ac.uk) is a doctoral student in history at the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies, where he is researching the history of Muslim trading communities on the medieval Malabar Coast.

Related articles from past issues can be found on our Web site, www.saudiaramcoworld.com. Click on "indexes," then on the cover of the issue indicated below.

Pepper: M/A 88
Ibn Battuta: J/A 00
Indian Ocean trade: J/A 05

HEARTS OF THE NEW SILK ROADS

WRITTEN BY **RICHARD COVINGTON**
PHOTOGRAPHED BY **KEVIN BUBRISKI**

Once a compact trading oasis, Almaty now boasts a population of 2.7 million and growing.

With its panorama of Central Asia's emerging business hub, the park at Kök Töbe is popular for wedding photos.

From my seat in the dance studio, I watch as Valera props his trembling arms on a table and, with his back to the audience, struggles to raise his severely paralyzed 23-year-old body from the wheelchair. After great effort, he finally stands. Anton, a powerful, 30-year-old dancer, gently grasps his arms and pushes the wheelchair aside. Together, the pair begin slow, graceful, improvised movements. It is clear that, although Anton is supporting him, Valera is mastering his own fear, controlling involuntary spasms of his arms and legs to step in rhythm with the recorded music. The triumph of his spirit over his body is a near miracle, and Anton guiding him around the floor is a complementary vision of compassion. I suddenly find myself in tears.

Visage Movement, a troupe of physically and mentally disabled dancers who perform together with professionals, was about the last thing I expected to stumble across in Tashkent. Artistic director Lilia Sevastyanova, an angular, intensely focused woman in her late 40's, founded a conventional modern dance group in 1982, but she started working with disabled students in 1996 after she choreographed a performance for a paraplegic girl in France.

"I asked her to raise her arms like an angel taking flight and noticed that the audience rose from their seats in unison," Sevastyanova recalls. "It was then that I realized how moving it would be to create dances for disabled people."

Dancers Anton and Valera of Visage Movement bring a 21st-century esthetic to 2400-year-old Tashkent.

Native son Mark Weil directed the Ilkhom, one of Tashkent's 20-plus theaters, from 1976 until his death last September.

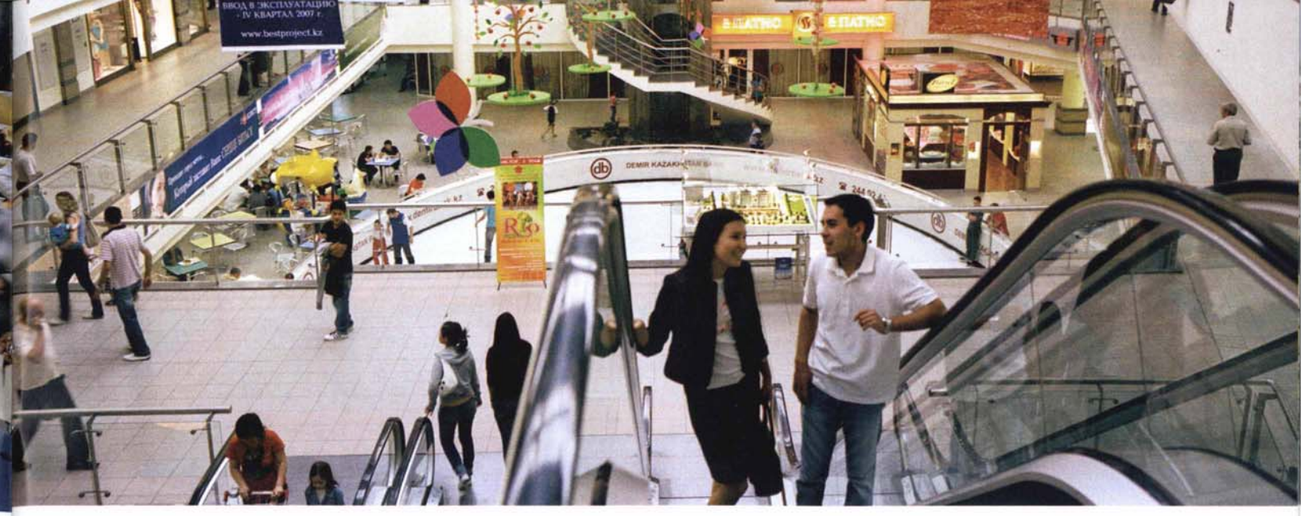
The results are breathtaking. "I've had doctors tell me that it was impossible for one of my dancers to extend his arms, but when I told the boy to stretch out his arm and imagine he was blowing on a feather in his hand, he could do it," she marvels. "Improvisation made him go beyond his limitations."

The choreographer's mission to inspire both audiences and her dancers was just one of many new discoveries on my journey into the heart of the 21st-century Silk Roads. I had set myself the task of discovering cultural and social transformations along these old trade routes, and two places stood out: Almaty, the financial capital of Kazakhstan, the emerging economic engine of the region with immense reserves of oil and natural gas, and Tashkent, the historic hub of Central Asia. Focusing on these urban centers was one way to gauge the tumultuous changes in arts, education, science and commerce that have swept across the region in the 16 years since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The Russian language still links Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, but each country relies increasingly on its native tongue. And even this is changing: Throughout Central Asia, educated young people are trying to master English, and many of them do so using the World Wide Web, the Silk Roads of the new century.

In these two capitals, I encountered artists, film and theater directors, actors, historians, archeologists, economists, sociologists, preservationists, scientists, hydrologists, museum curators, artisans, musicians, doctors, social workers, teachers, high-school and university students, NGO staffers and many moonlighting taxi drivers. (In Tashkent, I was told, more than half the adult males who own cars use them as taxis for extra income.) **The businessmen I found were modern Silk Road nomads, roaming by jet, train and SUV. I met not a single camel driver.**

But for some 1600 years—from the end of the second century BC to the middle of the 15th century—camel, horse and donkey caravans traversed Asia from China to the Mediterranean, following a network of routes across steppes and deserts, mountains and plains. Precious metals and stones,

Rooted in Turkic, the name "Almaty" refers to abundant apples; the city's huge Zelyony Bazaar is filled with local and imported produce.



With multilevel shops and a skating rink, Ramstor, Almaty's first of more than 20 modern malls, opened in 1999.

ALMATY

TASHKENT

ceramics, spices, paper, perfumes and, of course, Chinese silk traveled west in exchange for cotton and wool textiles, glass, amber, wine and carpets. Along with trade came exchanges in science, medicine, technology, ideas and religions. From India, Buddhism filtered to China and Japan; Islam, Judaism and Nestorian Christianity moved east from the Mediterranean; and Manicheanism and Zoroastrianism spread eastward from Persia.

In the heyday of the Silk Roads, the site of present-day Almaty was a compact oasis of yurts at the northern foot of the 4000-meter (13,000') Zailiysky Alatau mountains. Destroyed by the Mongols in the 14th century, the settlement was rebuilt in the 1850's as a Russian frontier post, first called Vernyi, then Alma-Ata ("Father of Apples").

Today's city of 2.7 million inhabitants (in a country of 14.7 million) is the leafiest I've ever seen. "When I first arrived here 30 years ago from Ukraine, I wondered where all the buildings were," says Ivan Apanasevich, an architectural preservationist, laughing. "All I could see was trees." Apanasevich, a forthright, voluble man with close-cropped gray hair, works for USAID, but his passionate avocation is the uphill battle to rescue Almaty's dwindling stock of historic buildings, many built of plaster-covered wood to resist earthquakes after a massive tremor leveled much of the city in 1887. In today's overheated and largely unregulated real-estate market, developers are bulldozing swaths of Almaty's vernacular architecture.

In Tashkent's Chorzu market, the largest in Uzbekistan, tradition comes in the form of warm, fresh flatbread.

Apanasevich is foregoing lunch to give me a whirlwind tour of what remains of the city's czarist legacy.

"There's no zoning, no building classification, no historic preservation," Apanasevich laments as we admire the interlacing stucco flowers decorating a children's library. Its blend of Palladian columns and glittering blue mosaic glass, an echo of Samarkand, makes it one of the city's gems. A few blocks away, dozens of wood-frame homes that embody traditional Russian country architecture are being dismantled. Across the street, whitewashed buildings, embellished by green and blue shutters, pedimented windows and intricate decorative friezes, will soon make way for multi-family apartment blocks.

At the corner of Furmanova and Kurmangazy streets, we marvel over a superb 1906 mansion, a neo-Baroque confection, painted an arresting aqua-blue pastel color and trimmed in white stucco, one of the best-preserved czarist-era buildings in the city. Further down Kurmangazy, we pass a brand new, high-rise office building faced in beige limestone. A Korean–Japanese restaurant on the ground floor has opened so recently that it doesn't yet have a sign. "No different from Singapore or Shanghai," sniffs Apanasevich deprecatingly.

These days, Almaty's ambitious pulse indeed seems to beat in rhythm with those cities. Mercedes convertibles and SUV's roar up its boulevards or idle in infernal traffic jams. More than 500,000 vehicles clog urban arteries every day. Flush with oil and gas wealth and eager to flaunt it, the moneyed classes flood glitzy shopping malls and tony boutiques, snapping up luxury French jewelry and suitcases, Hungarian porcelain and $2000 Italian suits. Next to an outdoor vendor doing brisk business in steaming plates of *plov* (rice with meat, carrots and onions) and *shashlyk* (skewered meat), one food emporium near the opera house stocks hundreds of French and Italian wines, Chinese pastries and Kenyan coffee.

Skateboarders clatter down the pavement in front of the old Parliament building, now home to the Kazakh–British Technical University. Up the street, prosperous businesspeople and

Korean refrigerators for sale on Navoi Street: Tashkent's population of some 4 million imports heavily from Turkey, Russia, China and Korea.

The Great Mosque was built in 1999. Islam is Kazakhstan's most widespread faith, but more than three dozen are practiced.

Almaty's 1904 Zenkov Cathedral, built without nails to withstand earthquakes, is the city's most renowned masterpiece of Russian craftsmanship.

families crowd into the Soho Almaty Club, an upscale restaurant decorated with Beatles posters, where they sample pizzas, quesadillas, burgers and other exotic western fare while a local singer belts out Abba tunes. Around midnight, the Cuba club collects a $17 cover charge to hear Bugarabu, a drumming trio whose leader trained in New Delhi and draws his incendiary rhythms from traditional Kazakh shamanistic drumming.

With an annual economic growth rate nudging 10 percent, Kazakhstan is also becoming a magnet for job-seekers from the rest of Central Asia and beyond. Oil and gas workers from Europe, the US and Australia flock to the port cities of Aktau and Atyrau on the Caspian Sea. Construction laborers from Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan propel building booms in Almaty and the capital, Astana. Turkish architects whip up million-dollar Italianate villas in the Almaty foothills for the *nouveau riche*, and other wealthy Kazakhs invest in towering apartment blocks, even though many units remain unsold.

"The reason there's so much construction is because there's hardly anywhere else but real estate to park your money," explains Ablet Kamalov, a historian who runs educational exchange programs with universities in Europe and the US. How long this bubble will last is the object of intense speculation, he says, adding that so far there are no signs of a softening of the market. Property values in Almaty have quadrupled in four years, he notes, with houses selling for upward of $5000 per square meter (around $450 a square foot)—comparable to San Francisco prices.

That a traditionally nomadic people should have caught real-estate fever is just one more irony of the new Silk Roads.

With his shaggy black hair, open sports shirt and jeans, the 46-year-old former Rockefeller Fellow at the US Library of Congress cuts a casual figure in the downtown offices of his non-profit organization for educational reform, Bilim–Central Asia. Kazakhstan, like other Central Asian countries, is trying to shake off authoritarian Soviet teaching methods in favor of western models that encourage student-teacher dialogue and independent thinking, says Kamalov. Schools are gradually shifting to instruction in Kazakh, abandoning Russian. Textbooks are undergoing major revisions, particularly in history where, for example, the Soviet conquest of Central Asia is no longer portrayed positively.

Although young Kazakhs are studying English in order to pursue advanced degrees abroad, "most want to return to the country because they really can find very good jobs here, particularly in business, banking and management," he explains.

What goes begging, however, are engineering, scientific-research and teaching posts, not just in Kazakhstan, but all across Central Asia. The independent governments have abandoned the high levels of support once provided by the former Soviet Union and, as a result, academics have lost prestige as well as funding. Medical doctors in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, for instance, earn around $50 a month, according to Khorlan Ismailova, health specialist with the Almaty office of USAID. In Tajikistan, it's only five dollars a month.

Almaty's art scene is also struggling for lack of money. Seven years ago, in 2000, there were 20 contemporary art galleries. Now there are three—including an impressive space opened by car dealer Nurlan Smurgalov and sited somewhat incongruously next to his Toyota showroom on the six-lane road to the airport. Yet despite the lack of galleries, it's not all grim, says 43-year-old painter Marat Bekeyev, who points out that the number of Kazakh collectors is growing with local wealth. "A few years ago, the 20 or so full-time artists in Almaty were all concerned with getting shown abroad, but now we're able to sell most of our work locally," he explains.

Europe and the US still hold the key to international recognition for Central Asian artists, however, and many are represented by galleries from Berlin to Milwaukee. Like a latter-day Marco Polo, curator Yuliya Sorokina, 42, brought Central Asia to Venice, presenting avant-garde works by 21 regional artists at the 2007 Venice

Tashkent's Juma Masjid (Friday Mosque) dates to 1451, when the city was already more than 1800 years old.

Mufti Abdurashid Bakhramov, spiritual leader of Uzbekistan's Muslims, visits the Khast Imom complex, newly restored following earthquake damage.

Maria Glebova is part of Almaty's drive to host a future Winter Olympics.
Kazakh film is turning "toward Asia," says festival organizer Gulnara Abikeyev.
Almaty's expansive parks offer leafy respites from its growing traffic woes.

Pop-rocker Batyrkhan Shukenov was named Kazakhstan's top male artist in 2006.
Painter and film director Sabit Kurmanbekov—with Timur and Genghis Khan.
Like the sightseeing tram that rises from the city, property values in Almaty have soared.

Vendors chat in Chorzu market, which attracts urban and rural shoppers.
Theater director Lilia Sevastyanova and artistic director Olingon Salimov.
Ring tones for sale on Navoi Street, Tashkent's hub for imported electronics.

Women seek charity from worshipers leaving prayers at Tashkent's Friday Mosque.
Russian poet Alexander Pushkin is honored with a three-day celebration each June.
Fountains line the plaza of the Senate, upper house of Uzbekistan's legislature.

Multi-ethnic Kazakhs, united by the Russian language for 130 years, increasingly use Kazakh, a Turkic language—or English.

Biennale. Sorokina, a woman of irrepressible energy who trained in arts management in Vienna and Salzburg, remains optimistic. "People here are oriented to the West, so if we get attention abroad, they sit up and take notice," Sorokina remarks. Earlier this year, she mounted a collaborative exhibition mingling Central Asian and British artists that showed in Manchester, London and Almaty.

Central Asian cinema is another reflection of changing tastes along the new Silk Roads. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, according to movie critic Gulnara Abikeyeva, "local directors are turning away from Russia and more toward Asia. Kazakh movies are close to Chinese cinema, Uzbekistan films are like India's, and the few new Tajik films look Iranian." A tireless champion of regional cinema, Abikeyeva organized September's Eurasian Festival in Almaty that showcased some 70 films in a weeklong program.

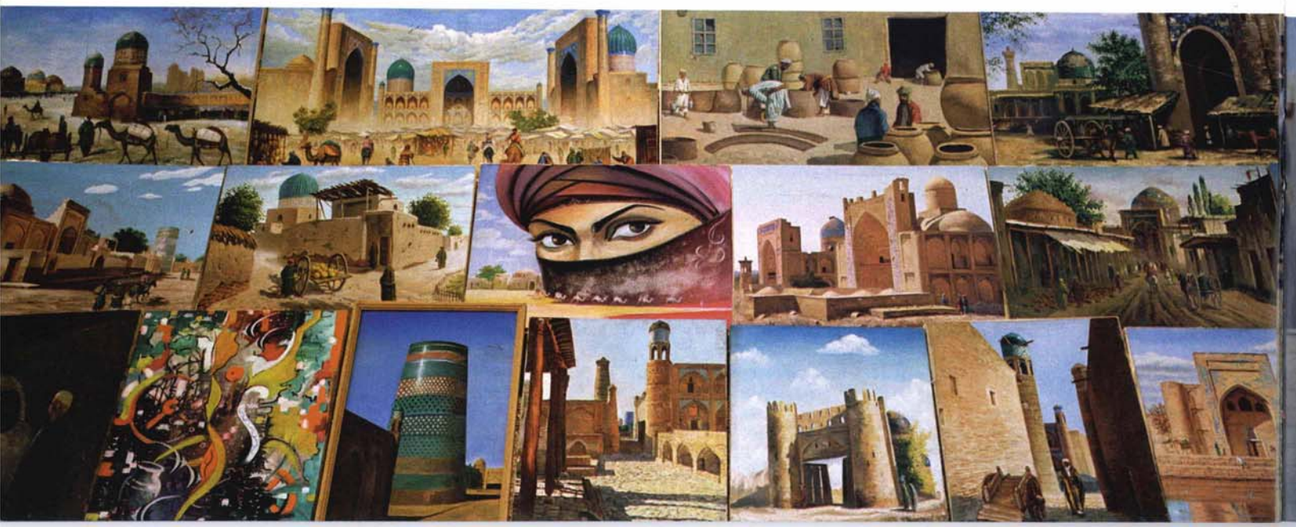
A recent spate of historical movies attempts to exalt the Kazakh national myths and heroes suppressed during the Soviet era. The $37-million epic "Nomad," released in 2005, was a glorification of Kazakh heritage that *The New York Times* compared to a John Ford western. Although Kazakh films—there are 22 currently in production—win festival prizes around the world, Abikeyeva complains that they're almost never distributed inside the country, except for a few airing on television.

Televisions are much on my mind when I land in Tashkent after a two-hour flight from Almaty.

Passing through Uzbekistan customs, it seems as if every other passenger is pushing a large, flat-screen TV. A couple of days later, I discover why.

Walking down Navoi Street, a tree-shaded thoroughfare with a tramway running down the middle, I happen on a sprawling electronics and appliance market that stretches for a mile or more. It proves an eye-opening update on the latest trading patterns in this ancient Silk Roads city. Rows of shops are filled with televisions, home-theater systems, computers and office furniture. Outside, the street is lined with a bewildering array of Korean refrigerators, Chinese air conditioners, Russian

Popular paintings for sale in a Tashkent park romanticize Timurid history and the rugged spirit of pre-industrial, nomadic steppe life.



Replicas of the fifth-century BC "Golden Man," a 4000-piece suit of gold armor, have become symbols of Kazakh independence.

washing machines and Byelorussian ovens. Salesmen have set up computers at desks on the street, and they are playing music over loudspeakers. I stop in one electronics store and find that a Panasonic television with a 127-centimeter (52") screen sells for $5000—far more than the price outside the country. No wonder customs was jammed with them. In Uzbekistan, where college professors earn $100 a month and many people work one or two extra jobs to supplement $50 monthly wages, I wonder who could afford such extravagances—much less the $12,000 and $24,000 automobiles manufactured inside Uzbekistan by Daewoo. I later learn from Kamal Asya, the Turkish ambassador, that individual Uzbeks annually import some $1 billion of goods from Turkey, mostly textiles, food and appliances—yet another lucrative link, by truck, air and rail, along the new Silk Roads.

Like Almaty, Tashkent too is minting a new bourgeoisie and not a few plutocrats. Lavish mansions, complete with crenellated walls and pointy-roofed turrets, sprout in some precincts. Even though these pleasure domes are modeled on the châteaux of the Loire and princely Czech residences, they are generically dubbed "Mickey palaces" after the castle at Disneyland.

Built on the second- or first-century BC site of Ming-Uruk ("A Thousand Apricot Trees"), Tashkent, whose 11th-century name means "City of Stone," is the most populous city in Central Asia, with around 4.5 million inhabitants in a country of 27 million. A major caravan junction in AD 751, when it was conquered by Arab Muslims, Tashkent is now divided into two sections: a Russian one, with broad boulevards, grandiose marble government edifices, parks and fountains, built mostly after the 1966 earthquake, and the older Uzbek neighborhoods with one- and two-story courtyard homes and bazaars that survived the massive temblor, which registered 7.5 on the Richter scale.

During the communist era, Uzbekistan was known as the most progressive country in Central Asia, attracting immigrants from other Soviet republics to the relative freedom of its intellectual and cultural life, especially in

Newcomers to a national cuisine long influenced by trade, hot dogs are becoming as Uzbek as *plov*.

Driven by the oil and gas industry, Almaty's economy expands some 10 percent annually. Cars are the new top status symbols.

Bubbles and pigeons make for a kid's day out in Almaty's Gorky Park, one of the city's largest.

Tashkent. Today it's still the most culturally active city in Central Asia, with a lively arts scene in theater, music, painting, dance and design.

But its heavily state-controlled economy, which depends on cotton as its main export, is now considerably weaker than that of its oil-rich northern neighbor. "In terms of foreign markets, we're even behind Afghanistan—although our economy is much bigger overall," complains Erkin Makhmudov, Moscow-trained chairman of the economics department at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy.

Makhmudov admits that, 15 years ago, he knew little about western economies. "After the collapse of the Soviet Union, my colleagues and I bought marketing texts in the US and UK and taught directly from them at first," he recalls. "Gradually, we started producing our own texts." Makhmudov also journeyed to the University of Oklahoma with a group of students to study western educational systems, and he has since welcomed Oklahoma professors and undergraduates to Tashkent, where he teaches them about Central Asian history and economy.

One of Makhmudov's former students later spent time in Europe with his father analyzing restaurant design and operation. After a few months, they returned to Tashkent and recently opened J. Smokers, which has become a wildly successful knock-off of a British pub.

"It's just one example of how a rising generation of entrepreneurs can stay in Uzbekistan and create private businesses that work," Makhmudov maintains. In a far-flung expansion of the trade in ideas, it's also tangible proof of the way Central Asia can now reach far afield for a trendy marketing concept.

While new restaurants and cafés spring up across the city, Tashkent's 20 or so theaters—the number is equivalent to Moscow's—are among the region's busiest. One popular children's venue recently staged Molière's "Les Fourberies de Scapin" in Uzbek. Only one, however—the experimental Ilkhom Theater—boasts a truly international reputation, having toured London, Seattle, Los Angeles, Tokyo, Jerusalem and Moscow and earned plaudits that compared the troupe to the Maly Theater in St. Petersburg, Peter Brook's Bouffes du Nord in Paris and Berlin's Schaubühne. Founded in 1976 by the late Tashkent-born Mark Weil, the fiercely iconoclastic Ilkhom ("Inspirations" in Uzbek) is one of only a handful of private theaters in Central Asia. It refuses government subsidies on principle. Weil produced plays about political dissent and homosexuality, thinly veiled political attacks on Uzbekistan's president, Islam Karimov, and works by Aeschylus, Chekhov and Albee.

"You know, I really was crazy," Weil reflected, smiling about defying the censors during the Soviet era. "Thank God, *perestroika* came and saved me."

I spoke with the director at the theater's café, where actors, audiences and students at Ilkhom's acting school gather for animated discussions in a surrealist décor—small tables and chairs are attached upside down to the ceiling, with lamps, books, cups and ashtrays glued to the tabletops—a visual metaphor, perhaps, for the way Ilkhom seeks to upend convention and conventional perspectives. A compact, engaging character in his mid-50's, Weil flitted from table to table, greeting friends and playgoers with his elfin grin and offhand humor.

"People are always amazed to find an experimental theater in Tashkent, but there's an openness and tolerance in this city that runs very deep," Weil declared. Tragically, three months after our interview, in early September, Weil was attacked and fatally stabbed by two men in the lobby of his apartment building. Despite much speculation that the attack was political, cultural or sectarian (Weil was Jewish), no suspects have been arrested. He died hours before the season premiere of "The Oresteia," and his last words were, "I open a new season tomorrow, and everything must happen."

Though with a heartbroken cast, the play did indeed open, and Ilkhom continued its season under deputy artistic director Boris Gafurov; a US tour in March and April of 2008 is still planned.

There are other culture creators in Tashkent, too: Among the most prolific organizations is the Swiss Agency for

As the nations of Central Asia assert new identities, historian Edvard Rtveladze hopes they will also strengthen their common bonds.

Students wait for tickets outside the Ilkhom Theater, whose Uzbek name translates as "Inspirations."

A bridal party arrives by carriage in Republic Square, which commemorates Kazakhstan's 1991 independence, ...

... and there transfers to a far more fashionable conveyance, fueled by one of the country's leading exports.

Development and Cooperation, which produces art, music, dance, film, video installations, photographic exhibitions and books on a shoestring budget of around $250,000 a year. One concert, later released on DVD, brought together Iranian musicians now living in Bukhara. In Tashkent, an annual documentary film festival and a separate laboratory workshop for theater and film directors draw participants from all over the region. A series of radio programs focuses on celebratory feasts by some of the country's 100 different ethnic groups.

"Our purpose is to help Uzbek culture survive without the level of government funding it had during Soviet times," explains Barno Turgonova, chief cultural officer for the Swiss agency and a Tashkent native. "It's a long process to find our identity after the breakup of the Soviet Union. Through arts, we can help people cultivate their democratic conscience and pluralism."

The emphasis on nurturing national identity is all well and good, argues producer-director Ovlyakuli Khodjakuli. "But our writers end up focusing too much on Uzbek heroes like Amir Timur [Tamerlane] and Mirzo Ulugh Beg [Timurid astronomer-ruler] instead of contemporary issues that really engage them."

With wispy braids making punctuation marks on his chin and shaven head, the 48-year-old director spent a year developing Rap-Shee, a hypercharged blend of local rap performers singing and dancing with traditionalist *bakhshi*, singer-narrators of the *dastan*, the Central Asian historical epics told in poetry and music. Sponsored by the Swiss agency, Rap-Shee toured Uzbekistan in the spring of 2006.

Edvard Rtveladze, a renowned historian and archeologist, also questions the rush by independent Central Asian countries to assert separate identities. His concern is that it can foster what he terms "ethnic exceptionalism," falsely pitting one country against another. "Each population claims it's the most ancient, the most Asian, the most authentic," he argues, "but in reality it's impossible to separate them.

"My biggest fear is that the countries of Central Asia will dissolve into fierce competition economically and politically," he warns. "We desperately need to generate more intensive cross-cultural contacts."

As in Kazakhstan, the Russian language is in retreat in Uzbekistan, its role as unifier of ethnic groups outweighed by the freight of its colonialist origins. The country has gone so far as to abandon the Cyrillic alphabet: The Uzbek language now appears in Roman characters. This linguistic curveball has had a chilling effect on literacy, because most older Uzbeks now find they cannot read current works in their own language, and there are few books or bookstores.

Yet with more than 150 years of shared linguistic, historic and cultural connections, Russia will remain an indelible influence on Uzbekistan, in the view of many observers. "The current generation is very pragmatic," argues journalist Boris Golender. "They look to move to places where they can make the most money—Russia and Kazakhstan. They go away for one or two years, come back, then go away again.

"Russia will be an important economic and cultural partner for decades, far more than China or India," he insists. I reflect on Golender's comments as I listen to professors and students at the Tashkent Conservatory render a heartfelt musical homage to Mstislav Rostropovich, the Russian cellist and conductor who passed away in April 2007, and again later during three days of celebrations to honor the 19th-century Russian poet Alexander Pushkin. It's clear that Russian culture retains a tenacious hold on the local imagination, even in the face of an insistent push for Uzbekification.

But if there's one place in Tashkent where Uzbek tradition still reigns supreme, just as it did in the epoch of the livestock-powered Silk Roads, it's the bustling, seemingly timeless Chorzu bazaar. Under the massive turquoise dome covering the spice and food market, eager vendors proffer samples from mounds of chili powder, cumin, coriander, nutmeg, paprika and cardamom seeds. Women with sharp Mongolian features chat with one another behind heaps of dates, pistachios and raisins, thumb-sized balls of yoghurt and rock crystals of sugar that gleam

Built in the late 16th century, the Timurid-style Kukeldash Madrasa still functions as a mosque and school.

With the food shortages of the Soviet era now only a memory, today's trade patterns fill the shelves in a Tashkent grocery.

Post-independence youth may know "Silk Way" best as the name of an upscale mall, a new bazaar with global connections.

amber in the slanting sunlight. Next to stands groaning with small green and red apples, pears, bananas, carrots and cassava, a butcher in white skullcap straddles a stool, ready to carve from a slab of meat in a cloth-covered basket before him.

But even here in the bazaar, where merchants hawk produce as they have for more than a millennium, the 21st-century transformation is inescapable—especially the intrusion of factory goods from China. Down a flight of steps, closer to the Friday Mosque, tables and stalls overflow with the manufactured output of Shanghai and Shenzen—shirts, leather sandals, knock-off sneakers, purses, jewelry, watches, giant stuffed pink bears and stacks of mass-produced bowls festooned with ceramic grapes.

Exiting, I take the number eight tram to the end of the line and emerge into a quiet, leafy suburb of low, pastel-colored houses surrounding enclosed courtyards. Kids play ball in the well-kept but rutted lanes lined with apple, plum and birch trees. After wandering a few of the streets, I catch the tram back into the city. On the way, I notice a woman fastidiously sweeping the ground beneath the high portal that marks the entrance to the Oq Masjid *mahallah*, one of the many distinct neighborhoods that make up the Muslim part of Tashkent. Civic pride in one's mahallah, the focus of family and religious life, is a constant that knits Uzbek society together.

The tram rumbles past a column of cherry trees so close that the branches slap the windows. Although the outbound trip slipped by quickly, we're returning at a crawl, for some reason, lumbering forward so deliberately I can count the orange carnations growing along the rails. The car grinds along at about the speed of a fully laden camel, and it occurs to me how quickly you can leave the teeming urban center behind, both physically and mentally. Souped-up Almaty may be supercharged for the Silk Roads of the future, but Tashkent, like this tram, is taking its own sweet time.

Today, Almaty's only camels are sculptures, each decorated by a different artist and placed whimsically about the city.

Paris-based author **Richard Covington** writes about culture, history and science for *Smithsonian, The International Herald Tribune, U.S. News & World Report* and the *London Sunday Times*. His e-mail is richardpeacecovington@gmail.com.

Kevin Bubriski (www.kevinbubriski.com) is a documentary photographer who lives in southern Vermont. His solo exhibition "Nepal Photographs: 1975–2005" recently showed at the Rubin Museum in New York City.

Related articles from past issues can be found on our Web site, www.saudiaramcoworld.com. Click on "indexes," then on the cover of the issue indicated below.

Silk Roads (theme issue): J/A 88
Silk Roads (historic map): J/A 88
Kazakhstan: M/J 03
Uzbekistan history: J/A 84, N/D 80

To learn more about another "Heart of the New Silk Roads," read "Graduation in Kyrgyzstan" in this issue at www.saudiaramcoworld.com; you can also find a map of the historic Silk Roads archived in our July/August 1988 issue.

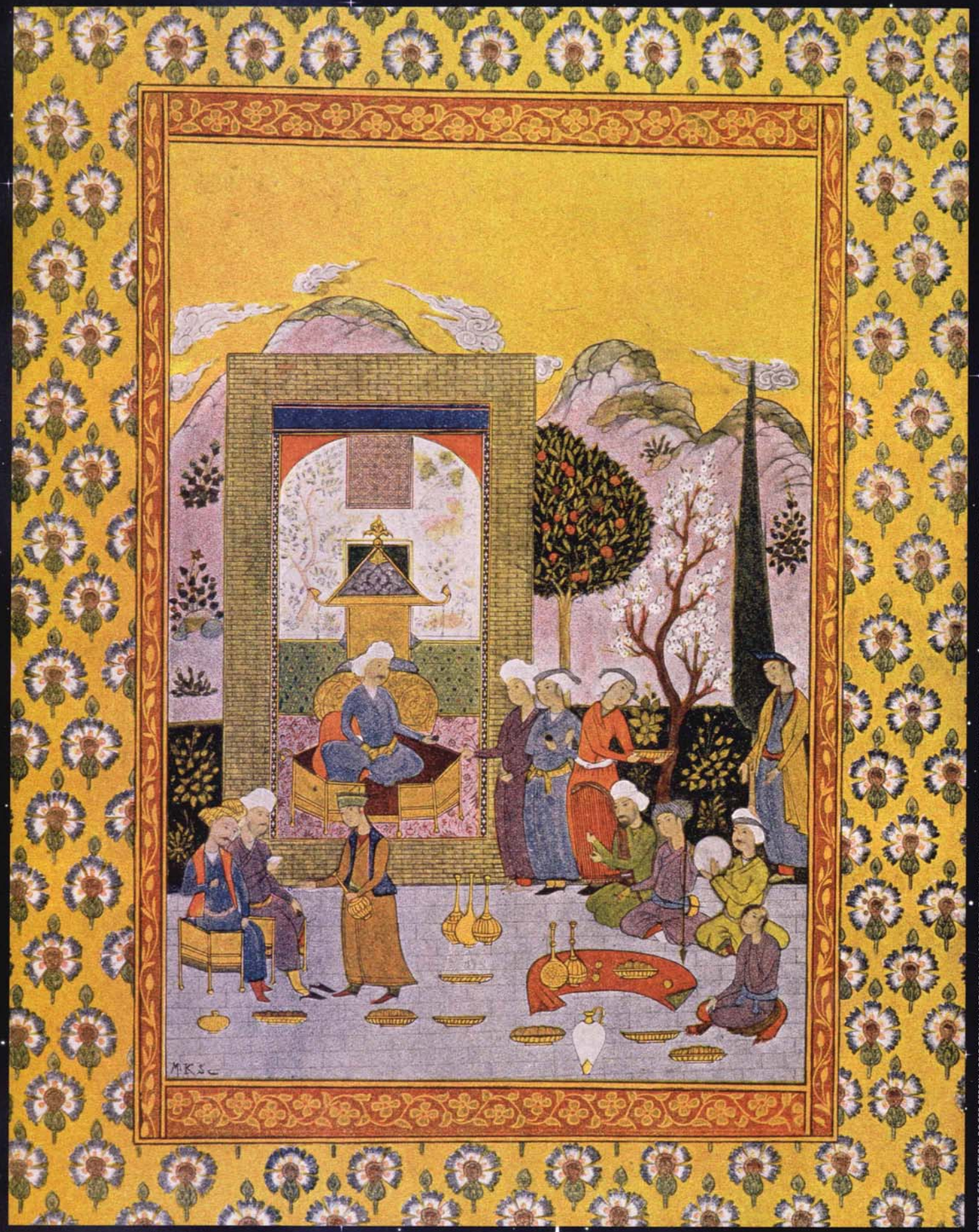
Remembering Mark Weil

I only spoke with him a couple of times, but like many, I felt an immediate and deep rapport with Mark Weil. Later, while writing this article, he and I exchanged a few e-mails about bringing Ilkhom to perform in France, where I live. He had a marvelous wit and an uncanny knack for putting people at ease—social skills exceeded only by his commitment to world-class theater in Tashkent, thousands of kilometers from better-established theater capitals. Both of these qualities inspired immense loyalty and respect from his actors and audiences alike. The extended professional family of Ilkhom is determined to honor Weil's legacy by continuing Ilkhom's courage on stage. ⓘ **www.remembermark.com**

—R.C.

The Art Gallery of Uzbekistan, opened in 2004, is a showcase for 20th- and 21st-century national art, as well as a regional numismatic collection.

Upscale shopping at the Oloy ("Supreme") Bazaar is now one more stop along the the region's new Silk Roads.



PRIVATE COLLECTION, ROGER PERRIN / BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY. OPPOSITE, TOP: FRANCES BRUNDAGE / BLUE LANTERN STUDIO / CORBIS; LOWER: J. CAZON / MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

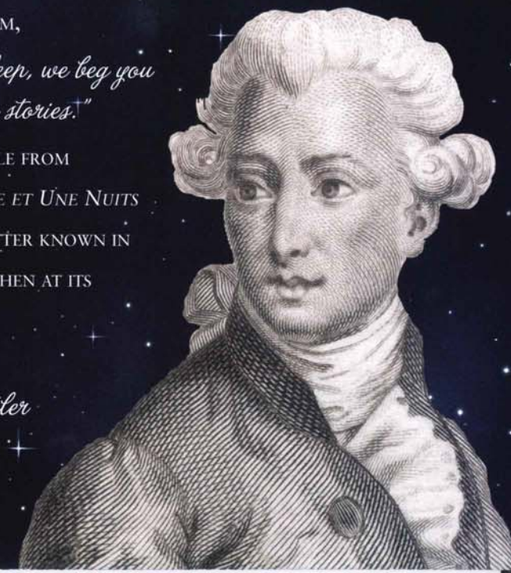
The Hakawati of Paris

Paris, 1713: A cheerful crowd gathers below Antoine Galland's bedroom window, calling his name. When the 67-year-old scholar appears in his nightshirt, they ask him,

"Monsieur Galland, if you aren't asleep, we beg you to tell us one of those agreeable stories."

They settle down to hear a tale from Galland's newly translated *Les Mille et Une Nuits* (*The Thousand and One Nights*), better known in English as *The Arabian Nights*, then at its peak of popularity.

Written by Pamela D. Toler



Top: **Scheherazade begins her tales, circa 1893.** Right: **Antoine Galland began his career as a scholar of Arabic, Turkish, Persian and Greek.** Opposite: **A color engraving, in Persian miniature style, from an 1895 French edition of *Les Mille et Une Nuits*.**

Antoine Galland was an unlikely Scheherazade. Born in 1646, he studied to be a classical scholar, and from 1670 to 1675 served as an interpreter for the French diplomatic mission in Constantinople. There, he studied Turkish, modern Greek, Arabic and Persian. Back in France, he became a curator of the royal collection of coins and medals, and he made two additional trips to the Levant to acquire manuscripts for the royal collection. He held the chair of Arabic at the Collège Royal from 1709 until his death in 1715. Over the course of his career, he transcribed and translated manuscripts from Turkish, Persian and Arabic, including another book of tales, *The Indian Tales and Fables of Bidpai and Lokman*. Galland was a student of the great orientalist scholar Barthélemy d'Herbelot, and after d'Herbelot's death he completed and published his teacher's monumental *Bibliothèque Orientale*, which served as the standard European reference work on the Middle East and India well into the 19th century.

The *Thousand and One Nights* was a diversion for Galland. He worked on the tales after dinner as a way to relax after a long day of scholarship. Ironically, as he told Dutch epigrapher and numismatist Gisbert Cuper in a letter in 1705, "that book of idle tales brings me more honor in the world than the most beautiful work I can compose about coins, full of erudite remarks on Greek and Roman antiquities."

The Arabic *Alf Layla wa Layla*, from which Galland drew his *Thousand and One Nights*, was not, strictly speaking, a text. Rather, it was a body of oral tradition—popular tales told by street entertainers, based on folklore that stretched from India to Egypt. Each storyteller augmented plots, embroidered descriptions and filled the tales with literary allusions and quotations to reflect both his own taste and that of his audience. Over time, Arab literati collected the stories, much as Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm collected fairy tales from German peasants in the 19th century, and the tales in the resulting manuscripts varied according to the time and place they were heard and the taste of the man compiling the collection. The framing story of Scheherazade, who tells stories each night to the Sultan of Persia and the Indies in a clever fight for her life, appears in an Arabic translation of a lost Persian story collection as early as the year 850.

For his collection, Galland acquired several manuscripts of collected tales between 1701 and 1704. Scholars have identified two of them: a manuscript version of the "Sinbad the Sailor" tales and a Syrian manuscript of collected tales dating from the 15th century. (Three volumes of the Syrian manuscript—one of the oldest of its kind—are now in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. A possible fourth volume, as well as the original for Sinbad, is lost.) It is likely, based on differences between Galland's translation and the Syrian manuscript, that Galland also had access to another early manuscript that has not been identified.

In addition, Galland's journal tells us he used another source: Hanna, a Christian Arab from Aleppo who had traveled to Paris in 1709. Hanna told Galland 14 "very beautiful Arabic stories," including "Aladdin," "Ali Baba" and "Prince Ahmed and the Peri Banou." Galland wrote summaries of the tales in his journal, and the fully developed versions that appeared in volumes nine and ten of the *Mille et Une Nuits* became some of the most popular in the collection.

In some ways, Galland was not unlike the *hakawati*, the Arab coffeehouse storytellers who recounted—and often tailored—familiar tales to their audiences. Galland selected the stories he deemed most suitable for a European audience, and in so doing established a canon of tales for Europeans that is distinct from the original material. Aimed at a courtly rather than a scholarly audience, Galland's translation was often deliberately inaccurate. As he wrote to Cuper, his version was not "attached precisely to the text, for that would not have given pleasure to the readers. To the extent that it was possible, I have rendered the Arabic into good French without being slavishly attached to the Arabic words." In doing so, he adapted the Arabic vernacular style to reflect the then current French literary taste for the precious. He also softened the frequently explicit sexuality of the popular street tales into suggestive coyness, a tone that was the literary equivalent of contemporaneous paintings in the rococo style by Watteau, Boucher or Fragonard. Except for occasional paraphrasing, Galland also excised the frequent passages of verse that were important parts of the tales in their original forms. He eliminated the repetitions that are central to any oral form of literature and inserted contextual explanations of Islamic culture where he believed they were necessary to assist the European reader. He abridged, omitted and altered as required to make the tales suitable for, as he wrote, "our language and our times."

Galland's *Thousand and One Nights* was published in France in 12 small volumes between 1704 and 1717. His timing was good: Charles Perrault's 1697 *Contes de ma Mère Oye (Tales of Mother Goose)* had already created an audience in Parisian society for fanciful tales. Galland himself had tested the waters in 1701 with his translation of the seven tales of Sinbad the Sailor, which were later included in volume three of the *Nights*, and he deliberately targeted the audience that had enjoyed Perrault. He dedicated the first volume of the *Nights* to his longtime patroness, the daughter of the Comte de Guilleragues, "Madame la marquise d'O, Dame du Palais de Madame la Duchesse de Borgogne," and the ladies of the court were so impatient to know what happened next that Galland had to lend them manuscript versions that they passed from hand to hand until the next volume was published.

Twelve volumes, however, were not enough: His readers wanted more, and while some of Galland's later collections were based on actual Arabic manuscripts, others were created from whole cloth by their "translators."

Galland and those who followed adapted the original vernacular tales to the popular literary tastes of their readers.

For the English-speaking audience, the first volumes of the *Thousand and One Nights* appeared in 1706, in an anonymous translation called the "Grub Street" version, under the name *The Arabian Nights Entertainments*. As in

By the late 19th century, the popularity of the tales and the availability of color printing technology inspired illustrators. At right, **an American boy rediscovers Aladdin's lamp in 1894; at** far right **a similarly bearded "genie," drawn in 1900, whisks captives over an imaginary cityscape.** Opposite, from left: **An 1851 edition published in Philadelphia combines motifs from China, the Middle East and Turkey; an 1878 illustration of "Aladdin accosted by a magician" is set in an imaginary China.**

"THIS CREATURE DEMANDED IN A DEEP, THUNDEROUS VOICE: 'WELL, WHAT IS IT?'"

MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY; WALTER CRANE / BRITISH LIBRARY / BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY; RIGHT: ST. NICOLAS / MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY; FAR RIGHT: BETTMAN / CORBIS

OPPOSITE: AMERICAN ILLUSTRATORS GALLERY / BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY; THIS PAGE: PRIVATE COLLECTION / BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY (2)

France, so in England: The tales proved wildly popular, and between 1713 and 1800 more than 40 editions of the *Thousand and One Nights* and its imitators appeared. Eight years after Gallard's death, beginning in 1723, the *London News* ran the collection as a serial over three years and 445 installments; it was only the second book to be published in serial form in England. (The first was Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*.)

"good French," Burton is burdened by his attempt to write "as the Arab would have written in English." Where Galland softened sexuality, Burton exaggerated it.

Though each translator claimed to provide a more authentic, accurate and complete translation, none replaced Galland's in the hearts of English-speaking readers. In fact, later translators, usually working from an Arabic edition known as "Calcutta II," published there in the 19th century, felt constrained to add versions of "Aladdin" and "Ali Baba" to their translations even though those stories were not included in the Calcutta edition.

sesame!" are now part of our shared cultural vocabulary, no more Arab than pizza is Italian. The very term "Arabian Nights" has become shorthand for a state of enchantment and wonder.

Galland's tales, still magical, await our return to our childhood copies of the *Thousand and One Nights*, ready to offer us a rediscovery of enchantment and wonder. All we have to do is murmur,

A color engraving for "Abdullah of the Sea," right, **for a French edition in 1895, draws from the miniature tradition.** Far right: **More than two centuries after Galland, French abstract painter Albert Gleizes titled this 1938 painting "Aladdin."** Opposite: **In 1929, Maxfield Parrish, one of the most popular American artists of the early 20th century, combined Neoclassicism and Romanticism with Art Deco graphic design in this color lithograph for the tale "The Young King of the Black Isles."**

It was a long time before anyone attempted a translation into English that wasn't based on Galland. Between 1839 and 1841, Edward William Lane published a highly annotated translation of carefully selected episodes in three volumes. From 1882 to 1884, John Payne published a "complete" translation in nine volumes. Richard Burton's infamous 15-volume translation—10 volumes of text and five volumes of notes—appeared in 1885 and 1886. None, however, eclipsed Galland: The Lane translation is weighed down by the erudition of its footnotes; Payne's language is ponderously archaic. And Burton's version is in some ways a reversal of Galland's: Where Galland translated the tales into

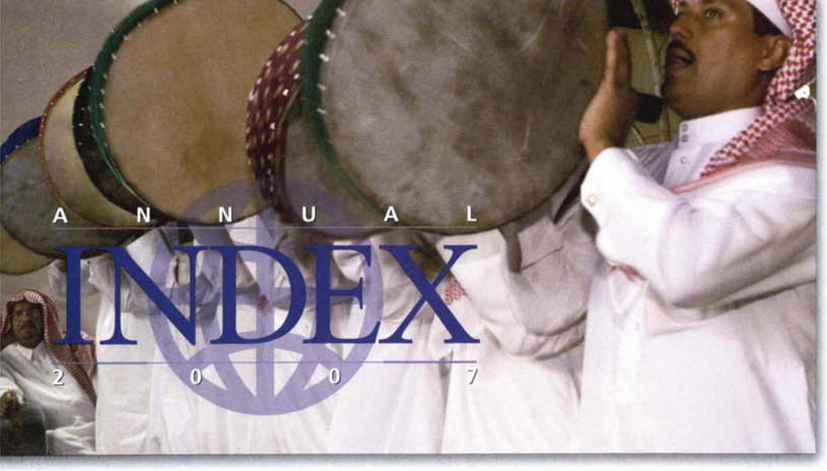
In some ways, Galland's *Thousand and One Nights* is as much a work of European literature as it is a translation from Arabic. The magic of the tales has been evoked in literary works as diverse as Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* and Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*. Authors as different as Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Jorge Luis Borges have written on how important the *Thousand and One Nights* was to them as children. Some elements of the tales, such as Aladdin's lamp and "open

"Monsieur Galland, tell us one of those agreeable stories of yours."

Free-lance writer **Pamela D. Toler** (pdtoler@sbcglobal.net) holds a Ph.D. in history from the University of Chicago, where her dissertation focused on British and French orientalism. She lives in Chicago.

Related articles from past issues can be found on our Web site, www.saudiaramcoworld.com. Click on "indexes," then on the cover of the issue indicated below.

Orientalism: J/A 84, N/D 89
Hakawati: J/F 96



ANNUAL INDEX 2007

SUBJECTS

NICOLE LECORGNE

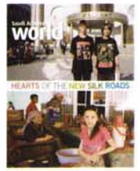
TITLES

CONTRIBUTORS

DICK DOUGHTY

ClassroomGuide

WRITTEN BY JULIE WEISS



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

—THE EDITORS

Class Activities

This Classroom Guide is organized around the theme of ***exchange****. The Visual Analysis section appears at the end.*

Theme: Exchange

Several articles in this edition of *Saudi Aramco World* address the theme of exchange. The National Economics Standards define exchange as "trading goods and services with people for other goods and services." Another way to put it is to say that to *exchange* means to give and receive equally, for either objects (goods) or things people do for each other (services). But exchange can involve more than just goods and services. It can refer to other less tangible things, too, such as values, religions and ideas. Keep in mind both ways of thinking about exchange as you work on these activities. Many focus on what *else* gets exchanged when people go about trading goods and services.

When and what have you traded?

Let's start close to home. Do you ever make trades? Maybe you've traded your sandwich for someone else's, or traded a book you've read for a book you want to read. Maybe you've traded money for something you wanted at a store. Think about a trade you have made recently. (Remember that paying money for something is a form of exchange.) What did you give up in the trade? Why were you willing to give it up? What did you get in exchange? Why did you want it? When you think about it now, was it worth it? Summarize your trade, either in writing or with a drawing, collage or other graphic. In your summary, express your feelings about the trade. Were you satisfied? Why or why not?

What do individuals and nations trade, and why?

Individuals like you make trades. So do groups of people. Read "Where the Pepper Grows." When you think about pepper as something to trade, ask yourself a few basic questions, and then, working with a small group, jot down answers. Where did pepper come from? Who wanted it? Why did they want it? What were they willing to exchange for it? How did the demand for pepper affect the producers? The merchants? The purchasers?

Now split the class into two groups. Have one read "A Man of Two Worlds" while the other reads "Hearts of the New Silk Roads." Then, if you read about Leo Africanus, find the part of the article that describes the trans-Saharan trade. If you read about the Silk Roads, find the part of the article that describes the trade along the Silk Roads during their heyday. Whichever group you are in, make a map that shows the trade. On your map, show which products moved in which directions. Now imagine that the only thing you know about the people involved in either the trans-Saharan or the Silk Roads trade is what they traded to others and what they got in return. What does this information tell you about them? What conclusions can you draw? Write down some thoughts on the subject. Then do a little research in a world history textbook or on the Internet and see if you're right.

Now that you've looked at the past, shift your focus to the present. In "Hearts of the New Silk Roads," highlight the goods that writer Richard Covington sees in Almaty and Tashkent that come from other places. What do Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan offer in exchange for these products? (Notice that each country has a different primary export—the thing it sells the most of—and that what it exports affects its wealth.) Based on the imported goods Covington sees, what can you infer about what many people in Almaty and Tashkent value? What can you infer about the value of what they export?

What helps make exchange possible? What makes it harder?

Look again at "Where the Pepper Grows." The article explains that pepper was valuable for a long time before the pepper trade really took off. With your group, identify what made it possible for the pepper trade to thrive. Certainly one set of factors was economic: There was a supply of pepper in one place and a demand for it in another. But other factors had to be in place, too. Make a web entitled "Factors that Enhanced the Pepper Trade." In the center put "Pepper Trade." Branching off from the center, make circles labeled "Economics," "Politics," "Religion" and "Culture." Spin out the web with information from the article. Think about how the different factors came into play in the pepper exchange. Write a short summary.

Now think about the factors that made the trade harder, that inhibited it. The best examples in this edition are in "Hearts of the New Silk Roads." What factors in Uzbekistan limit its trade? Into which category do these factors fall—politics, religion and/or culture?

What gets exchanged along with goods and services?

So far you've thought about what people trade, why they trade, and what encourages or discourages trade. Now step back and think a little more abstractly. This month's articles are great examples of the fact that when people exchange *things*, they often exchange a lot of stuff you can't see.

Let's look at the pepper trade again. When Arab Muslims gained control over the pepper trade, what did they bring with them to the people along the trade routes? In other words, how did their presence change the people and the places they came into contact with? Use this prompt to begin your written answer: "When Arab Muslims controlled the pepper trade, they had a huge impact on the people of the Malabar Coast."

How is identity affected by exchange?

Read "A Man of Two Worlds." As you read, pay particular attention to the identity of the article's subject, the man called Leo Africanus, who was also called Al Hassan ibn Muhammad Al-Wazzan Al Fasi. Notice from the start that he is known by more than one name!

Class Activities (cont.)

Underline the parts of the article that relate to identity. Then work on these activities.

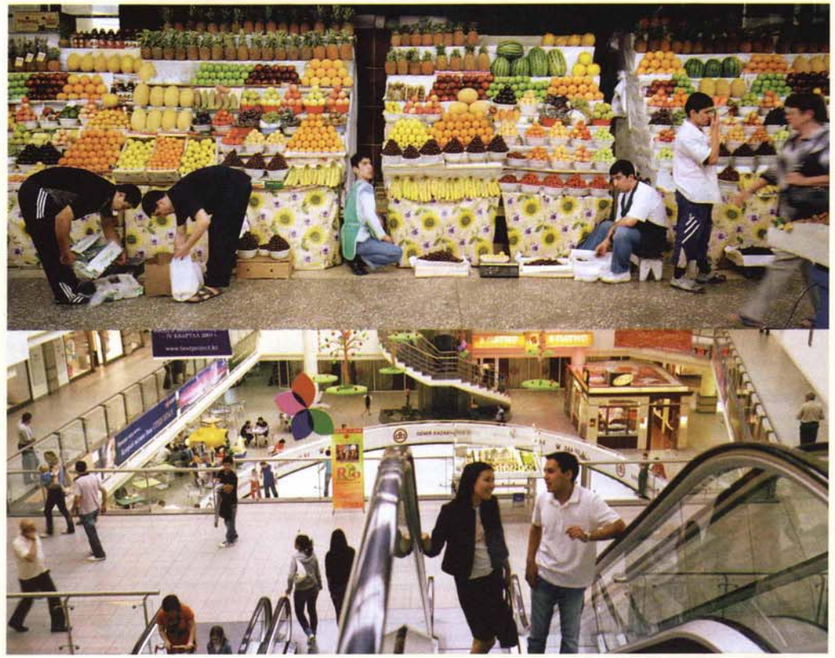
As a young man, Leo traveled with traders. Eventually he ended up working for the Pope in Rome as a kind of an expert in—and agent of—cultural exchange. The article quotes historian Lotfi Bouchentouf saying of Leo, "He was a Muslim, living as a Christian, writing for a Christian audience, about the world of Islam." As a class, use what you have read in the article to discuss the quote. Here are a few guiding questions: What might it mean to be "a Muslim living as a Christian"? How might it affect someone to hold one religion's beliefs but to practice a different religion in public? What kinds of problems do you imagine he would encounter from this dual identity? In what ways would the dual identity put him at a unique advantage to write about Islam for a Christian audience?

Describe the exchange that can take place when something from one culture moves to the place where there is another culture.

Finally, read "The Hakawati of Paris." Antoine Galland set out to bring Arabic tales to European audiences. Writer Pamela Toler says he purposely changed the stories for the new audience. What, then, did European culture contribute to Galland's *The Thousand and One Nights*? And what did *The Thousand and One Nights* contribute to European culture? Make a graphic that shows the exchange.

Analyzing Visual Images

"Hearts of the New Silk Roads" is laid out in an unusual way. Flip through the article and look at the photos that are spread across the tops and bottoms of each of the pages. (For now, ignore the center photo spread. We'll get to that shortly.) Before you look at any of the images closely, jot down your initial impressions of the layout. Think about why *Saudi Aramco World*'s editors might have chosen to use the photographs as top and bottom borders for the pages. What effect does the layout have? To help you think about it, look at the layout of the other articles in the magazine. None of them is like this one. How do they differ in appearance? How do they differ in their effects on you as a reader?



Now divide the class into groups. Assign each group one of the article's two-page spreads. With your group, look at the photos on your pages. What does each image show? As you describe each one, take into account the subject of the photo, as well as its visual composition. What images fill the frame? Where are they "placed" in the frame? Is the photo a close-up or a long shot? What colors does the photo include? How do light and shadow affect the photo? Then look at all four photos together. As a group, discuss what the photos convey about the new Silk Roads. Since you have already read the article, discuss how your photo spread illustrates the article's theme. What does it add? Present your spread, along with your analysis of it, to the rest of the class. As a class, discuss how the photos and the way they are laid out contribute to the article's main ideas.

Now look at the center spread. What makes it so unusual? Why do you think the editors chose to present the photos this way? How does the presentation affect you as a viewer? What about the contents of the photos? Again, what do they add to the article?

As a final activity, take the role of a reviewer—someone who evaluates, like a movie reviewer or a book reviewer. For this, you are a magazine reviewer, and your review is about "Hearts of the New Silk Roads." Discuss both the article and the photographs in your review, which can be half to a full page. Use a movie review from a magazine or the Internet as a model if you need one.

Julie Weiss is an education consultant based in Lowell, Massachusetts. She holds a Ph.D. in American studies. Her company, Unlimited Horizons, develops social-studies, media-literacy and English as a Second Language curricula and produces textbook materials.

Events&Exhibitions

European Cartographers and the Ottoman World 1500–1750: Maps From the Collection of O. J. Sopranos. This exhibition of maps, sea charts and atlases explores how mapmakers came to know and map the Ottoman world between the 15th and 18th centuries. It begins with the intellectual and geographical discoveries of the 15th century that undermined the medieval view of the cosmos and illustrates how cartographers sought to produce and map a new geography that reconciled classical ideas and theories with the information brought back by travelers. The exhibition is organized around such themes as the rediscovery of Ptolemy's *Geographia* and its impact on geographic thought and mapping practices; the practical tradition of sea charting that developed in the Mediterranean; the new cartographies of Gastaldi and Ortelius, who sought to hold up a mirror to the known world; the production of Ottoman geographies; and the ways in which enlightened French cartography affected the relationship between the Ottoman Empire and the rest of Europe. The exhibits include manuscript portolan charts and atlases, the earliest printed maps of the Ottoman Empire, an Ottoman sea atlas, bird's-eye views of cities, a rare printed Ottoman atlas from the early 19th century, decorative regional maps, a sea chart described as among the finest examples of 18th-century Dutch map art, and sketches, memoirs and reports from travelers whose observations and descriptions of the Ottoman world enabled cartographers to update their maps. The exhibition demonstrates the power of maps to reflect and shape geographical knowledge. Oriental Institute Museum, **Chicago,** January 17 through March 2.

This view of Constantinople by Hartmann Schedel is one of more than 600 woodcuts that comprise the 1493 Nuremberg *Chronicle*, one of the most richly illustrated printed books of the 15th century. The double-page view shows the city's double walls, defensive sea chain and major landmarks. Other city views in the Chronicle are entirely fanciful, and thus the Chronicle stands at a transitional point between Europe's medieval and Renaissance approaches to cartography.

Two galleries of the National Museum of Iraq are scheduled to reopen in December 2007, according to *The Art Newspaper*, quoting officials assisting the Iraqi State Board of Antiquities. The Assyrian Hall, containing stone panels from Khorsabad and other monumental pieces, and the Islamic Hall, which includes the eighth-century *mihrab* from Baghdad's Al-Mansur Mosque, have been refurbished and their contents restored where necessary. The museum has been closed since April 2003.

<< Current/January

Alexander's Image and the Beginning of Greek Portraiture retraces the development of Macedonian regal coinage from the first attempts to represent a ruler—the king as horseman—to portraiture based on actual physiognomy. The idealization of Alexander the Great led to the individualistic rendering of his successors. Coins became vehicles of political propaganda to justify a ruler's power. Sackler Museum, **Cambridge, Massachusetts**, through January 20.

Pharaohs, Queens and Goddesses, presented in tandem with Judy Chicago's *Dinner Party*, is dedicated to powerful female pharaohs, queens and goddesses of Egyptian history. The central object of the exhibition is a granite head of Hatshepsut, the fifth pharaoh of the Eighteenth Dynasty (1539–1292 BC) and one of the 39 women represented in *The Dinner Party*; other women and goddesses featured include queens Cleopatra, Nefertiti and Tiye and the goddesses Sakhmet, Mut, Neith, Wadjet, Bastet, Satis and Nephthys. **Brooklyn** Museum, **New York**, through January 20.

Afaf Zurayk's works function on personal, individual and public levels, evoking the energy, flow and contradictions of love. The 45 pieces on display were executed during the last seven years. Galerie Janine Rubeiz, **Beirut**, through January 25.

The Arts of Kashmir demonstrates the cultural riches of the region, with its Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic art dating from the fourth to the 20th century. The exhibition includes some 135 objects: carpets and embroidery, calligraphy, furniture, paintings, papier-mâché and sculpture. Asia Society, **New York**, through January 27.

Traces of the Calligrapher and **Writing the Word of God:** Calligraphy and the Qur'an brings together calligrapher's tools of the 17th through the 19th centuries from Iran, India and Turkey, including pens, pen boxes, chests, tables, paper scissors, knives and burnishers of superb manufacture and design. These objects are presented with contemporary examples of calligraphy and book binding: practice exercises, occasional works, wall hangings and manuscripts. In Islamic culture calligraphy is still regarded as the greatest art form, and calligraphers are among the most highly esteemed artists. *Traces of the Calligrapher* serves to reconstruct the intimate world of the calligrapher, bringing together the tools of the trade—works of art in their own right—and the exquisite products of these functional objects. The exhibition offers new insights into the environment in which the calligrapher worked during the early modern period of Islamic culture. Museum of Fine Arts, **Houston**, through January 27.

Art of Being Tuareg: Sahara Nomads in a Modern World. The elegance and beauty of the Tuareg peoples—their dress and ornament, their large white riding camels, their refined song, speech and dance—have all been rhapsodically described by travelers in Niger, Mali and Nigeria. This exhibition explores the history and culture of the Tuareg through more than 200 items of their silver jewelry, clothing, leather purses, bags and saddles, and other highly decorated items. National Museum of African Art, **Washington, D.C.**, through January 27.

Egypt's Sunken Treasures presents a spectacular collection of some 500 artifacts recovered from the seabed off the coast of Alexandria and in Aboukir Bay during a decade of painstaking archeology. The finds shed new light on the history of the ancient city of Thonis-Heracleion, the eastern reaches of Canopus, the sunken part of the Great Port of Alexandria and the city's legendary royal quarter, as well as of Egypt as a whole, over a period of almost 1500 years, from the last pharaonic dynasties to the dawn of the Islamic era. Art and Exhibition Hall, **Bonn, Germany**, through January 27.

<< Current/February

Re*Orient* 2008: The Eighth Annual Festival of Short Plays Exploring the Middle East features plays by Yussef El Guindi, Naomi F. Wallace, Ignacio Zulueta and others. Fort Mason Center, **San Francisco**, through February 3.

Splendor and Intimacy: Mughal and Rajput Courtly Life shows exquisite miniature paintings and decorative objects, including jades, jewelry and weapons, that demonstrate the richness of the arts produced in South Asia between the 16th and 19th centuries. The selection of objects in this exhibition offers a glimpse into the courtly life of the Mughal emperors (1526–1857) as well as that of their Rajput opponents and vassals. The interaction between the imperial Mughal dynasty and the rugged, proud Rajputs led to an immense flowering of art and architecture (seen most magnificently in the Taj Mahal) that greatly enhanced the architectural and artistic heritage of India and Pakistan. Art Institute of **Chicago**, through February 3.

Rumi and the Sufi Tradition exhibits more than 30 Islamic art objects—miniatures, calligraphy, ceramics, metalwork, glass and textiles—created between the 13th and the 19th centuries that evoke the world in which Rumi lived and suggest the scope of his legacy. Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York**, through February 3.

Babylon elucidates the unexpectedly close intellectual and spiritual connection between the ancient Near East and Europe over a time span of several millennia. In the first part of this extensive exhibition, archeological artifacts, thematically organized, document that the roots of European civilization reach back into the second millennium BC. The second part explores the reception of Babylonian culture into the intellectual history of Europe from late antiquity into the 21st century. Musée du Louvre, **Paris**, through February 6.

O. J. SOPRANOS COLLECTION / ORIENTAL INSTITUTE

The Badrans: A Century of Tradition and Innovation is an exhibition of art, architecture and design by members of the Badran family, whose roots in Jerusalem go back to the establishment of the Badran brothers' first art studio. The family patriarch, Jamal Badran, was responsible for the restoration of Al-Aqsa Mosque in the 1920's, and the exhibits include his drawings for the restoration of the *minbar* of Salah al-Din in that mosque. Architect Rasem Badran, an Aga Khan Award winner (1995), is known for his synthesis of traditional elements with modernism, and a series of architectural drawings and sketches is on display showing his work in Palestine and abroad. Visual artist Samira Jamal Badran presents 12 pieces of art exploring the notion of crossing barriers and its psychological and physical impact on the Palestinians. First of the third generation, architect Jamal Rasem Badran shows a video examining his use of contemporary language in architectural design. Ola Rasem Badran participates with drawings and two models of a stage set for a play about the transformation of human behavior during war and conflict. **Birzeit** University Ethnographic and Art Museum, **Palestine**, through February 9.

Overlapping Realms: Arts of the Islamic World and India, 900–1900 presents a sampling of visual arts produced by the varied peoples who inhabited the region stretching from southern Europe through South Asia. Shifting political circumstances and different religious faiths influenced the artists' worldviews and in many ways determined their opportunities and modes of expression. Relying primarily on ceramics and metalwork, the exhibition emphasizes commonalities and continuities, even as it explores diversity of intention and technique. Sackler Museum, **Cambridge, Massachusetts**, through February 10.

Novos Mundos—New Worlds: Portugal and the Age of Discovery centers on the early 15th to the 17th century and highlights the European expansion, with a focus on Portugal. Through such outstanding seafaring accomplishments as Bartolomeu Dias's circumnavigation of the Cape of Good Hope (1488), Vasco de Gama's opening of the sea route to India (1498), Cabral's "discovery" of Brazil (1500) and the first voyage around the world by Fernão de Magalhães (Magellan) (1519–21), the Portuguese kingdom of the 15th and 16th centuries made a decisive contribution to the globalization of sea and trade routes and in many cases to the first encounters of different cultures and nations. Alongside the history of Portugal, as well as the scientific and technical prerequisites and by-products of the sea journeys, the exhibition offers insight into the realms and cultures encountered by the Portuguese, the form of the various contact scenarios and the manner and significance of the relations that ensued and rapidly intensified—among them political conflicts, trade relations and cultural exchange.German Historical Museum, **Berlin**, through February 10.

Inscribing Meaning: Writing and Graphic Systems in African Art presents more than 100 artworks from a range of periods, regions, genres and peoples that testify to the richness and diversity of African scripts and graphic forms of communication. An introductory section focuses on the history of particular African scripts, including ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs, Vai and Mende from Liberia and Sierra Leone, the ancient Tifinagh script of the Tuareg people, Nsibidi from Nigeria and the liturgical Ge'ez script from Ethiopia. The use in Africa of imported writing systems, such as Arabic and Roman scripts, is also addressed, and selected works show how contemporary African artists engage with scripts or invent their own. Subsequent sections consider body inscription, sacred writing, power and politics, artists' books and words in art. Fowler Museum at UCLA, **Los Angeles**, through February 17.

Collector's Luck: Islamic Art from the Edmund de Unger Collection includes rock crystal from Egypt; early Arabic, Turkish and Persian miniatures; Andalusian and Turkish textiles and other objects complementing the museum's own world-famous collection. Pergamonmuseum, Museum for Islamic Art. **Berlin**, through February 17.

Gifts for the Gods: Images from Egyptian Temples is the first exhibition to focus on the art and significance of Egyptian metal statuary; it presents a new understanding of this type of statuary, its influences and its meaning. The ancient Egyptians used copper, bronze, gold and silver to create lustrous, graceful statuary that, most characteristically, stood at the crux of their interactions with their gods, from ritual dramas that took place within the temples and chapels that dotted the landscape everywhere, to the festival processions through the towns and countryside that were thronged by believers. On view from domestic and international collections are some 70 superb statues and statuettes created in precious metals and copper alloys over more than two millennia, including several of the extremely rare inlaid and decorated large bronzes from the Third Intermediate Period (1070–664 BC), which represents the apogee of Egyptian metalwork. Catalogue. Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York**, through February 18.

Shirin Neshat, photographer and video artist, is one of the best-known Persian artists in the West. She grew up in her native Iran and moved to the US after the Iranian Revolution. Drawing on the discrepancies between the culture she experienced growing up and that of post-revolutionary Iran, where she visited in 1990, Neshat's works address the social, political and psychological dimensions of women's experiences in contemporary Islamic societies. Gladstone Gallery, **New York**, through February 23.

Wine, Worship and Sacrifice: The Golden Graves of Ancient Vani presents gold, silver and ceramic vessels, jewelry, Greek bronze sculpture, Greek and Colchian coins and Greek glassware that together give a rich and informative archeological view of the ancient Asian country south of the Caucasus and its administrative center, Vani. The exhibition features the contents of a grave found in Vani in 2004 containing elaborate Colchian gold hair-ornaments and appliqués for clothing; a Persian silver bucket, ladle and libation bowls; Greek wine amphorae and red-figure pottery; and a Greek bronze torso. Additional highlights include Greek silver drinking cups of a kind that (though well documented) have not survived in Greece itself; a magnificent Colchian gold necklace with 31 pendant tortoises, each decorated with fine granulation; and a gold pectoral inlaid with carnelian and turquoise figures influenced by Egyptian, Greek and Achaemenid jewelry. Sackler Gallery, **Washington, D.C.**, through February 24.

Islamic Art in the Calouste Gulbenkian Collection shows the work of 50 artists active in the 12th through 20th centuries. The works on display include ceramics from Seljuk Persia, Syria and Ottoman Turkey; Mamluk mosque lamps; illuminated manuscripts and bindings from Safavid and Qajjar Persia; and silks and velvets from Persia, India, Turkey and Central Asia. Catalog. Palais de la Culture, **Algiers**, through February 28.

Modern and Beyond covers the history of art in Turkey from 1950 to the millennium, bringing together some 450 works by more than 100 artists and groups, focusing on the transformation art has undergone in a half-century of rapid change. Santralistanbul, **Istanbul**, through February 29.

<< Current/March

Butabu: Adobe Architecture of West Africa: Photographs by James Morris presents 50 large-scale images of structures from monumental mosques to family homes. For centuries, complex adobe structures have been built in the Sahel region of western Africa. Made only of earth mixed with water, these labor-intensive adobe structures display a remarkable diversity of form. Morris, a British photographer whose work centers on the built environment, has created both a typological record of regional adobe construction as well as a rendering of West African architecture that reflects the sensuous, surreal and sculptural quality of these distinctive buildings. Several ambitious religious buildings depicted seem to push the physical limits of mud architecture; more humble structures are highly expressive and stylish and often intricately decorated. Sonoma Valley Museum of Art, **Sonoma, California**, through March 2.

Plural Modernity: Contemporary Arab Art exhibits approximately 120 works from the Institute's collection, representing some 80 artists from 15 Arab countries, to reveal a panorama of contemporary creativity. Since many of the artists have left their native countries to study and establish themselves overseas, they have created strong bonds between West and East, and their work is rich in influences ranging from Africa and Asia to Europe and shows a great diversity of styles. The exhibition is a testament to the complexity and fertility of the Arab creative mind. Institut du Monde Arabe, **Paris**, through March 9.

Cihat Burak Retrospective: Modern Traveler, Daring Painter, Timeless Historian charts the life of an unconventional master of modern Turkish art and offers insight into Turkey's social and cultural history. Paintings, ceramics and prints are among the more than 200 works on display, complemented by 23 photographs of Burak taken by renowned photographer Ara Güler. **Istanbul** Modern, through March 23.

Mummies: The Dream of Eternal Life combines natural history and anthropology to take the visitor on a trip to the various regions, cultures and continents where mummification—of humans or animals—is practiced or natural mummification is used. The exhibition includes the Ice-Age "Windeby Girl," a complete Egyptian mummy with sarcophagus, a child mummy from Peru and mummified animals; the oldest exhibit is from the age of the dinosaurs and the most recent from the second half of the 20th century. Reiss-Engelhorn Museums, **Mannheim, Germany**, through March 24.

Egyptian Mummies: Immortality in the Land of the Pharaohs traces the origins of mummification, exploring the cultural background of the practice, ancient Egyptians' concept of the afterlife and their religious beliefs. It also tracks the development of mummification techniques over time. The exhibition includes more than 300 objects, not only human and animal mummies but also mummy masks, sarcophagi, protective amulets and statuettes of deities, as well as textiles, jewelry and tools. A separate exhibition is provided for children. Landesmuseum Württemberg, **Stuttgart, Germany**, through March 24.

The Phoenicians and the Mediterranean presents aspects of the culture of these famed navigators and merchants, beginning with their origins around the city-states of Byblos, Sidon and Tyre. Known primarily for their diffusion of the alphabet and their remarkable sculpture, the Phoenicians were also creators of household objects and furnishings of great refinement. The exhibition deals with Phoenicians' writing—on coins, seals, clay tablets and stone stelae—their religion—represented by stone and metal statues of their pantheon and commemorative plaques—their commerce—responsible for the pan-Mediterranean diffusion of purple cloth and cedar wood—and their craftsmanship. Institut du Monde Arabe, **Paris**, through March 30.

Continued from previous page

Women of Islam: Photographs by Rania Matar focuses on the issue of the headscarf in Muslim culture. The Boston photographer returns repeatedly to her native Lebanon in pursuit of images of her culture and heritage, and this newest body of her work, in black and white, provides insight into a way of life that is under fire in a secular world. **Chicago** Cultural Center, through March 30.

<<Current/April

Amarna: Ancient Egypt's Place in the Sun offers a rare look at the unique royal center of Amarna, the ancient city of Akhetaten, which grew, flourished and vanished in hardly more than a generation's time. The exhibition features more than 100 artifacts, including statuary of gods, goddesses and royalty, monumental reliefs, golden jewelry, personal items of the royal family and artists' materials from the royal workshops. University of **Pennsylvania** Museum, **Philadelphia**, through April.

From Gilgamesh to Zenobia: Ancient Arts From the Near East and Iran underlines the importance of those regions in the development of such aspects of western culture as writing, accounting, economy, case-law, the sciences, literature, religions and moral concepts. Objects on display include the famous Gilgamesh Plaque, Luristan bronzes, cylinder seals and inscriptions. Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, **Brussels**, through April 27.

For Tent and Trade: Masterpieces of Turkmen Weaving includes some 40 rugs and tent trappings from the museum's world-class collection, all woven from the white, long-staple, highly hydroscopic wool of adaptable, fat-tailed Saryja sheep, endemic to Central Asia. The work of Turkmen weavers, of which extant examples date back to the fourth century BC, is very skillful and highly patterned. de Young Museum, **San Francisco**, through April 27.

Fragmentation and Unity: The Art of Sari Khoury features more than two dozen abstract works by the internationally known artist and educator, who left Jerusalem at 17, in the 1950's, to forge a new life in the American Midwest. Khoury, who died in 1997, was a prolific writer and speaker; his words share gallery space with his artworks. Arab American National Museum, **Dearborn, Michigan**, through April 27.

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

Hidden Afghanistan traces the history of a country strategically placed along the trade routes that linked East and West, and presents some 250 archeological treasures that were heroically preserved from Taliban iconoclasts in 1993 and recovered only in 2004. The find sites were Tepe Fullol, representing the Bactrian Bronze Age around 2000 BC; Ai Khanum, a city that bears witness to Hellenism on the edge of the steppes (fourth to second centuries BC); Tillya-tepe, which yielded jewelry and other art objects from six graves from the first century of our era; and Begram, also from the first century, which revealed elaborate Indian furniture in ivory, glass, vases and Hellenistic objects. Nieuwe Kerk, **Amsterdam,** through April 20.

A pair of gold bracelets 18.5 centimeters around and finished with what seem to be horned lion heads was found in the Tillya-tepe excavation. They were made in the second quarter of the first century; the horns are turquoise.

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFGHANISTAN / © MUSÉE GUIMET / THIERRY OLLIVIER

<<Current/May

War Artists of the Middle East shows the work of British artists who have documented conflict in the Middle East, from World War I to Iraq and Afghanistan, and incorporates travel journals, interviews, film and photography, all documenting the complex landscape of social and political change that shaped the Middle East. Imperial War Museum, **London**, through May 11.

<<Current/Later

Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs includes 130 works from the Egyptian National Museum, among them a selection of 50 spectacular objects excavated from the tomb of Tutankhamun, including one of the canopic coffinettes, inlaid with gold and precious stones, that contained his mummified internal organs. Additional pieces in the exhibition derive from the tombs of royalty and high officials of the 18th Dynasty, primarily from the Valley of the Kings. These additional works place the unique finds from the tomb of Tutankhamun into context and illustrate the wealth and development of Egyptian burial practice during the New Kingdom. The exhibition, more than twice the size of the 1979 "King Tut" exhibition, marks the first time treasures of Tutankhamun have visited Britain in 26 years. Future venues include Dallas and two other US cities. O2, **London**, through August 30, 2008.

Magic in Ancient Egypt: Image, Word, and Reality explores how the Egyptians, known throughout the ancient world for their expertise in magic, addressed the unknown forces of the universe. Ancient Egyptians did not distinguish between religion and magic, and believed that the manipulation of written words, images and ritual could influence the world through a divinely created force known as Heqa, personified as the eldest son of the solar creator Atum. The exhibition also examines connections between magic and medicine, and the use of magic after death. **Brooklyn** Museum, **New York**, through September 28, 2008.

Treasures: Antiquities, Eastern Art, Coins and Casts presents more than 200 of the most significant objects in the Ashmolean's world-renowned collections. The exhibition provides visitors with a rare opportunity to discover the historic crossing of time and culture in this portrayal of artistic achievement and the development of civilization in Europe, the Near East and the Far East. The treasures represent more than 30 cultures dating from Paleolithic times to the present day, and are presented in nine sections reflecting basic aspects of human activity and interest throughout history. Ashmolean Museum, **Oxford [UK]**, through December 31, 2008.

<<Coming/January

Truly God is Beautiful and Truly Loves All is part of the 500-piece "Arts of Islam" exhibition of objects from the Nasser D. Khalili collection of Islamic art, displayed for the first time in the Middle East. The works exhibited include calligraphy, miniature painting, carpets and other textiles. TDIC, **Abu Dhabi**, January 23 through April 31.

<<Coming/February

Yehia Hassan's intimate sketches, fast becoming his signature art form, capture their subjects in fluent and subtle lines, whether they show a pregnant mother, her shoes or the way she carries her baby. New **Cairo** Atelier, February 1–21.

Noah Alireza, Saudi photographer, explores the unexpected results of the marriage of computers and photography, producing images at once familiar and foreign. XVA Gallery, **Dubai**, February 2–21.

Impressed by Light: Photographs From Paper Negatives, 1840–1860 is the first exhibition to highlight British photographs made from paper negatives, and features approximately 120 works by such leading artists as Roger Fenton, Linnaeus Tripe and B. B. Turner, as well as many now unfamiliar practitioners. The exhibition follows the progress of the movement from the invention of the process by William Henry Fox Talbot in 1839 to the Great Exhibition of 1851, where the esthetic possibilities of the calotype were amply illustrated, to its flowering in the years immediately thereafter. During the 15 years of the calotype's existence, a body of work was created that significantly expands the understanding of photographic history. Most of the works in the show have never before been exhibited in the United States. National Gallery of Art, **Washington, DC.**, February 3 through May 4.

Anna K Mair: I: Woman: Flower displays macro flower photographs that are abstract, yet blatantly feminine, their shapes reminiscent of a womb or an embryo. Inspired by the words of writer Anaïs Nin, "And the day came, when the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom," the images, full of vibrant life, mirror the California photographer's own blossoming. Bait Al-Baranda, **Muscat, Oman**, February 7–14.

Origins of the Silk Roads: Sensational New Finds from Xinjiang presents Han Dynasty (Bronze Age) grave goods from the Tarim Basin, including rare textiles and other organic objects preserved by the region's extraordinary aridity, that open a new window on people's lives and lifestyles—and the development of the Silk Roads—in the period from the second millennium BC to about AD 500. More than 190 objects are on display. Reiss-Engelhorn Museum, **Mannheim, Germany**, February 9 through June 1.

Masterpieces of Islamic Art From the Aga Khan Museum Collection reveals a millennium's worth of artistic production from the ninth to the 19th century. With provenances ranging from Spain to Indonesia, these objects from the Aga Khan Museum Collection testify to the craftsmanship of centuries of artisans. Among the works on display are illuminated manuscripts, metal and glass, as well as jewelry and paintings. Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, **Lisbon**, February 29 through May 18.

<<Coming/March

Curiouser and Curiouser: What a Wonder is This World presents selected images from the life's work of documentary photographer Brynn Bruijn. The traveling retrospective exhibition shows images—many originally photographed for *Saudi Aramco World*—of the daily activities of people in Africa, China, Europe, Russia and Tibet, while accompanying text references from Lewis Carroll's *Alice* encourage us to look at the ordinary in extraordinary ways. Von Liebig Art Center, **Naples, Florida**, March 8 through April 27.

Tutankhamun and the World of the Pharaohs is [another] extensive exhibition of more than 140 treasures from the tomb of the celebrated pharaoh and other sites. It includes his golden sandals, created specifically for the afterlife and found on his feet when his mummy was unwrapped; one of the gold canopic coffinettes, inlaid with jewels, that contained his mummified internal organs; and a colossal figure depicting Tutankhamun as a young man, which originally may have stood at his mortuary temple. Providing context and additional information are 75 objects from other tombs in the Valley of the Kings. Museum für Völkerkunde, **Vienna**, March 9 through September 28.

Babylon is a bold attempt to reconcile history and legend by assembling objects from around the world to document both the factual foundation of the ancient city in about 2300 BC and the myth rooted in that fact. This approach is made possible by the use of new studies that do not depend on either biblical or classical sources; rather, the great eras of Babylonian history are represented by stelae, statues and statuettes, precious objects, and documents and texts in the form of cuneiform tablets, papyri and manuscripts. The evolution of the mythical and psychological representation of Babylon is presented through a collection of printed works, drawings, paintings and miniatures. The exhibition thus allows the viewer to evaluate the influence of Babylon's cultural heritage in past and present-day civilizations, and to affirm the role of that heritage at the roots of western culture. Drawings, texts and other works elucidate the various phases of Babylon's "rediscovery" from the 17th century to today. Musée du Louvre, **Paris**, March 14 through June 2.

Maps: Finding Our Place in the World features more than 100 unique, rare and often beautiful artifacts, including maps on cuneiform tablets, medieval maps, manuscript maps of explorers, globes, maps of areas all around the earth, and maps of nowhere: utopias and imaginary maps. This ambitious exhibition broadens visitors' understanding of the almost universal human activity of mapmaking. Walters Art Museum, **Baltimore**, March 16 through June 8.

Masters of the Plains: Ancient Nomads of Russia and Canada examines two of the world's great nomadic cultures side by side for the first time, providing a unique look at the bison hunters of the Great Plains of North America and the livestock herders of the Eurasian steppes. More than 400 artifacts from Canada and Russia permit exploration of food preparation, sacred ceremonies, art, trade, housing design, modes of travel and warfare in the two cultures, which each took shape some 5000 years ago and lasted into recent times—a longevity that compares favorably with history's greatest civilizations. Albin Museum, **Samara, Russia**, opens in March.

<<Coming/April

Exploring South Asian Photography is a series of lectures and conversations. A conversation with photographers Ram Rahman and Sunil Gupta of New Delhi takes place April 2; a lecture on "Women Photographers in India" by Sabeena Gadihoke (Jamia Millia University, New Delhi) takes place on May 7. ⓘ janet_sartor@harvard.edu. Both events at Sackler Lecture Hall, Harvard University Art Museums, **Cambridge, Massachusetts.**

Butabu: Adobe Architecture of West Africa: Photographs by James Morris presents 50 large-scale images of structures from monumental mosques to family homes. For centuries, complex adobe structures have been built in the Sahel region of western Africa. Made only of earth mixed with water, these labor-intensive adobe structures display a remarkable diversity of form. Morris, a British photographer whose work centers on the built environment, has created both a typological record of regional adobe construction as well as a rendering of West African architecture that reflects the sensuous, surreal and sculptural quality of these distinctive buildings. Several ambitious religious buildings depicted seem to push the physical limits of mud architecture. More humble structures, such as private homes or neighborhood mosques and churches, are highly expressive and stylish, and often intricately decorated. These African adobe buildings share many of the qualities now much admired in the West: sustainability, sculptural form and the participation of the community in conception, fabrication and preservation. Queens Library Gallery, **Jamaica, New York**, April 12 through June 21.

<<Coming/May

Muraqqa: Imperial Mughal Albums From the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin. Among the most remarkable of Mughal paintings and calligraphies are those commissioned by the Emperors Jahangir (1605–1627) and Shah Jahan (1627–1658) for display in lavish imperial albums. A window into the worldviews of the emperors, these exquisite images depict the rulers, the imperial family in relaxed private settings, Sufi teachers and mystics, allies and courtiers and natural history subjects. Many folios are full-page paintings with superb figural borders; others are collages of European, Persian and Mughal works collected by the emperors. Produced by the atelier's leading artists, they reveal the conceptual and artistic sophistication of the arts of the book at their apex in the early 17th century. The exhibition brings together 86 masterpieces—many not previously exhibited in the United States—from the renowned Dublin collection. Sackler Gallery, **Washington, D.C.**, May 3 through August 3.

<<Coming/June

Babylon elucidates the unexpectedly close intellectual and spiritual connection between the ancient Near East and Europe over a time span of several millennia. In the first part of this extensive exhibition, archeological artifacts, thematically organized, document that the roots of European civilization reach back into the second millennium BC. The second part explores the reception of Babylonian culture into the intellectual history of Europe from late antiquity into the 21st century. Museum of the Ancient Near East, Pergamonmuseum, **Berlin**, June 26 through October 5.

The Arts of Kashmir demonstrates the cultural riches of the region, with its Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic art dating from the fourth to the 20th century. The exhibition includes some 135 objects: carpets and embroidery, calligraphy, furniture, paintings, papier-mâché and sculpture. **Cincinnati [Ohio]** Art Museum, June 28 through September 21.

<<< Permanent

Objects of Instruction: Treasures of the School of Oriental and African Studies displays parts of its rich collection of artifacts known only to specialists: Islamic manuscripts, ceramics, African textiles and archeological finds. Brunei Gallery, SOAS, **London**.

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 on the World Wide Web, and our Web site, saudiaramcoworld.com, contains more extensive listings. Readers are welcome to submit information for possible inclusion in this listing. Some listings have been kindly provided by *Canvas*, the art and culture magazine for the Middle East and the Arab world, on the Web at www.canvas online.com.

Saudi Aramco World is published bimonthly in print and on-line editions. Subscriptions to the print edition are available without charge to a limited number of readers worldwide who are interested in the cultures of the Arab and Muslim worlds, their history, geography and economy, and their connections with the West.

To subscribe to the print edition electronically, go to www.saudiaramcoworld.com/about.us/subscriptions/new.aspx. Fill out and submit the form. To subscribe by fax, send a *signed and dated* request to +1-713-432-5536. To subscribe by mail, send a *signed and dated* request to *Saudi Aramco World*, Box 469008, Escondido, California 92046-9008, USA, or mail the subscription card bound into the printed magazine. If requesting a **multiple-copy subscription** for a classroom or seminar, please specify the number of copies wanted and the duration of the class. All requests for subscriptions to **addresses in Saudi Arabia** must be mailed to Public Relations, Saudi Aramco, Box 5000, Dhahran 31311, Saudi Arabia.

Change of address notices should be sent electronically to www.saudiaramcoworld.com/about.us/subscriptions/change.aspx, or by fax or mail to the addresses above. In the latter cases, please be sure to include your customer account number, or an address label from a recent issue, or your complete *old* address.

Back issues of *Saudi Aramco World* and *Aramco World* from 1960 onward can be read on-line, downloaded and printed at www.saudiaramcoworld.com. Click on "Indexes." The issues are available in text form 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 (+1-713-432-5536) 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: An annual index is printed in the January/February issue of each year. A cumulative index is available on-line at www.saudiaramcoworld.com; it is fully text-searchable and can also be searched by title, subject or contributor.