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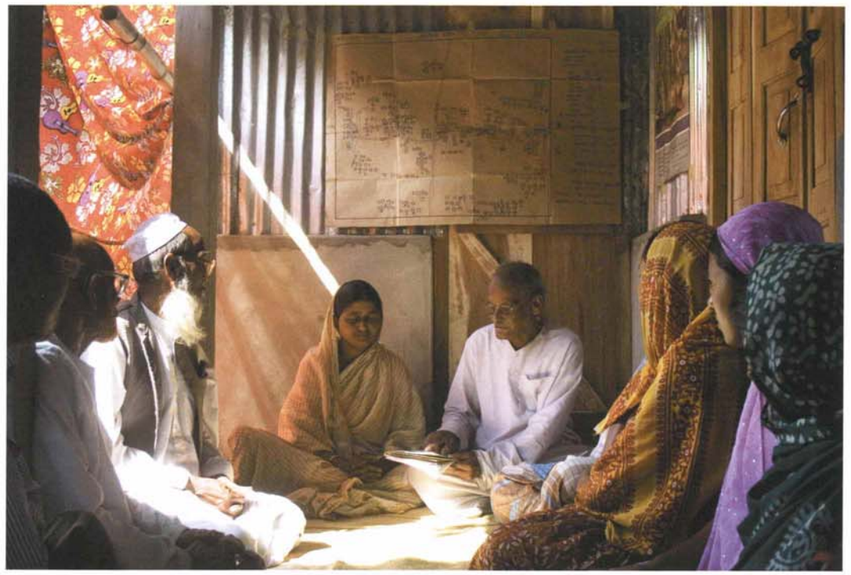

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ART TO HEART

AT WASHINGTON'S "ARABESQUE" FESTIVAL

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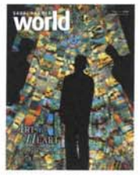
Cover



Mirrors combine fragments of photos and of her own work with visitors' silhouettes inside "Roba Vecchia," a walk-in kaleidoscope designed to evoke the "continuous rewriting of non-narrative history" of Cairo, created by artist Lara Baladi and shown at the Kennedy Center's "Arabesque" festival. Photo by Margot Schulman / Kennedy Center.

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Back Cover

With support and training from BRAC, local leaders meet twice monthly to guide hygiene improvements among the 267 families of Dicjan village in Bangladesh. Photo by Saikat Mojumder.

2 Raising the Maldives

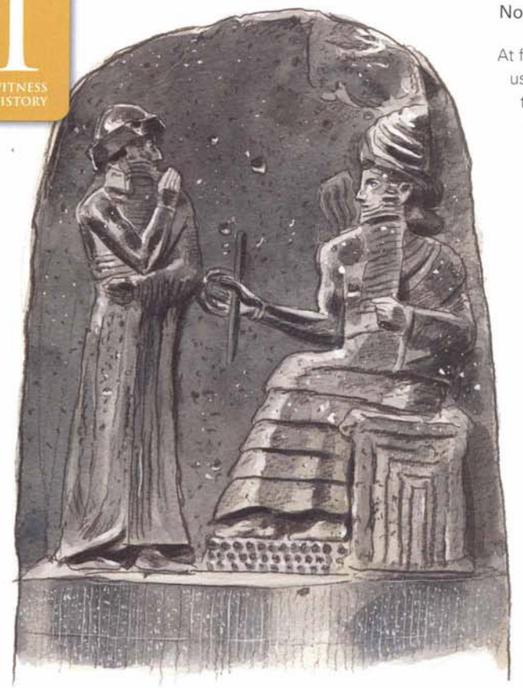
Written and photographed by Larry Luxner

Strung like a necklace of a thousand pearls barely afloat in the Indian Ocean, the coral atolls of the Maldives face the threat of rising seas. Among the steps the government has taken is the creation of a new island, Hulhumalé, which stands two meters above today's waterline.

I WITNESS HISTORY

10 I, Pillar of Justice

Written by Frank L. Holt
Illustrated by Norman MacDonald

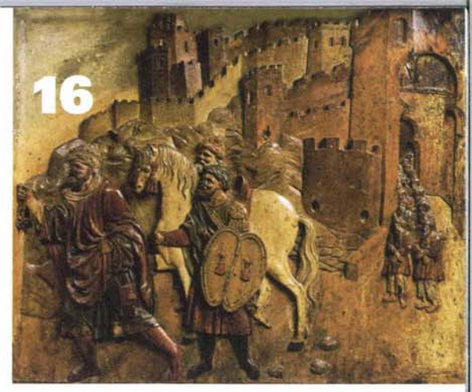


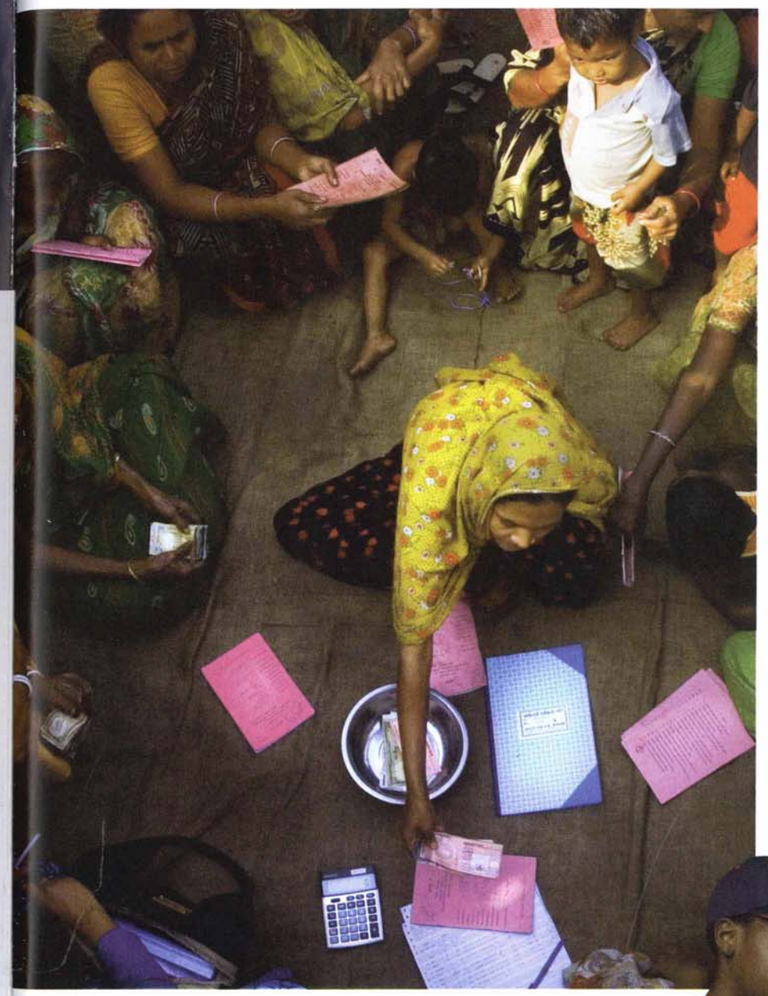
At first, you humans used us rocks for fighting and tool-making. Then I evolved, showing how we can actually mediate your incessant quarrels. In Akkadian cuneiform dictated by Hammurapi, my royal Babylonian collaborator, I formed of my stony flesh not weapons, but *words*; not tools, but *rules*.

The Past Is Not Yet Written

Written by Louis Werner
Illustrated by Jesús Conde Alaya

Spanish historians of the country's southern region have long trod controversial ground in analyzing what nearly eight centuries of Muslim rule means to the modern nation. A younger generation of scholars is finding that, despite new methods, common ground remains elusive.





22 Bangladesh's Audacity of Hope

Written by Richard Covington
Photographed by students at Pathshala, the South Asian Institute of Photography

In 1972, a former accountant dedicated his life to his newly independent nation and founded BRAC, the non-governmental antipoverty organization that has helped more than a hundred million Bangladeshis better their lives—and that is now seen as a global development model.

36 Art to Heart

Written by Piney Kesting
Photographs courtesy of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

Give 800 actors, musicians, dancers, poets, writers and artists—from 22 Arab nations—three weeks of full houses at the top US arts center, and attendees might be justified in wondering whether the success of "Arabesque" heralds a new era of cross-cultural appreciation.

16: DEA PICTURE LIBRARY / ART RESOURCE; 22: TANZIM IBNE WAHAB; 36: CAROL PRATT / KENNEDY CENTER

Raising the Maldives

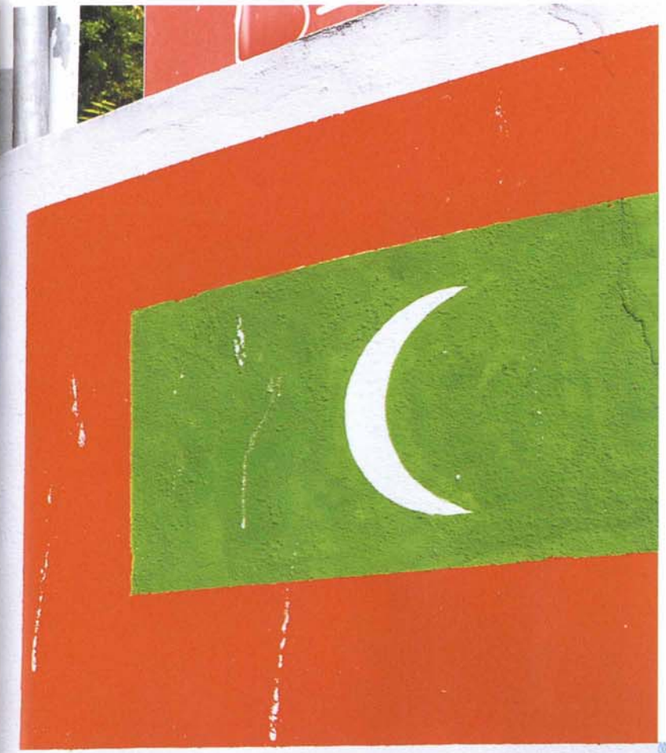
It's another hot afternoon

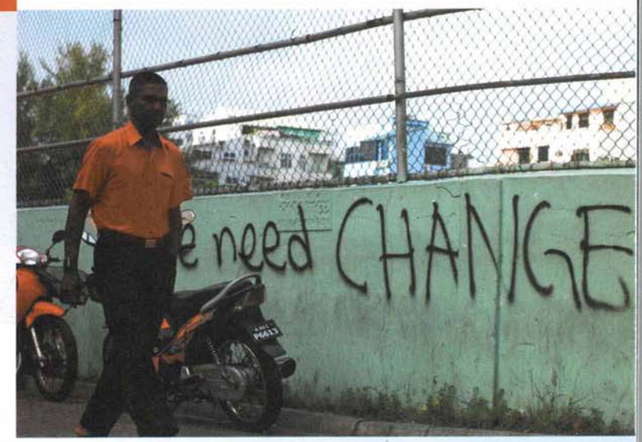
on the artificial island of Hulhumalé, as work crews lay asphalt for a new street and a loud-speaker atop the golden-domed Qatar Mosque calls Muslims to prayer.

Written and photographed by Larry Luxner

Roads, homes, businesses and the domed Qatar Mosque now appear at the north end of Hulhumalé, which the Maldivian government hopes will attract some 150,000 people over coming decades. Opposite: Stairway to a diver's heaven, a resort villa opens to the crystalline Indian Ocean that floats both the Maldives' tourism economy and the country's concerns for its future.

Malé and its jumble of high-rises is one of the most densely populated capital cities on Earth—an irony in a country comprised of 1192 islands, the vast majority of them remote and uninhabited.





A painted image of the Maldivian national flag adds color to a street in Malé, home to about one-third of the Maldives' 385,000 people. In November, elections brought a peaceful end to the 30-year rule of former President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom. Right: **Graffiti in Malé and,** below, **new construction in the capital.**

Inside the nearby Solitaire Café, half a dozen men sit in darkness, smoking cigarettes, as they wait for the lights to come back on after a midday power failure.

Despite the annoyance, café owner Abdullah Waseem is clearly upbeat.

"I love it here," says the 41-year-old father of two as he dishes out curried chicken and pours glasses of tea. Born and raised in Addu, at the southern tip of the 768-kilometer (475-mi) Maldive archipelago, he has spent most of his life in Malé, the capital city. There, his family was crammed into a two-room dwelling. Four years ago, he rented a four-room apartment and became one of the first of what are now some 5000 permanent residents of Hulhumalé, a box-shaped island built from landfill just across the sea from overcrowded Malé. "When we came here, there were very few facilities, no clinics, no police service, nobody to look after this place," he says. "People thought it would take a long time to develop Hulhumalé. But it's much better now, and it costs about 40 percent less to live here than in Malé."

So crowded is Malé, in fact, that roughly 90,000 of the 385,000 people who call the Maldives home are packed into the tiny island's 2.6 square kilometers (1 sq mi). That makes Malé and its jumble of high-rises one of the most densely populated capital cities on Earth—an irony in a country comprised of 1192 islands, the vast majority of them remote and uninhabited, smack in the middle of the Indian Ocean.

Ibn Battuta, the famous 14th-century Moroccan traveler, called the Maldives "one of the wonders of the world" and commented on the islands' proximity to each other: "A hundred or so are arranged in a circle like a ring, with an opening at one point to form a passage.... They are so close together that when leaving one, the tops of the palm trees on the next are visible."

Yet man-made Hulhumalé neither looks nor feels anything like its natural sister islands. From its conception only eight years ago, in 1997, to its official inauguration on May 12, 2004, this work-in-progress is being meticulously planned to boost the country's economic fortunes while staving off the rising seas that may one day wipe much of the world's smallest Muslim nation off the map.

For starters, Hulhumalé is, by Maldivian standards, high ground: It rises two meters (6' 6") above the sea, double the elevation of some 80 percent of the other islands, measured at their highest points. With worldwide sea level rising up to nine-tenths of a centimeter (1/3") per year, the entire country—save Hulhumalé—could be inundated within a century. And Hulhumalé's wide boulevards, carefully landscaped gardens and serried ranks of apartment blocks offer a dramatic contrast to the impromptu, colorful hubbub of Malé, only 20 minutes away by ferry.

Hulhumalé was the brainchild of former President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, who late last year stepped down after a 30-year dictatorship. Under Gayoom, the Maldives became the first country to sign the 1997 Kyoto Protocol urging reductions in greenhouse gas emissions believed by most scientists to cause global warming. It was Gayoom, too, who, after severe flooding in 1987, secured Japanese financing to build a concrete breakwater three meters tall (9' 10") around Malé. And well before "global warming" became a household term, at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, it was Gayoom who warned that his country might have less than a century before it disappeared underneath the waves.

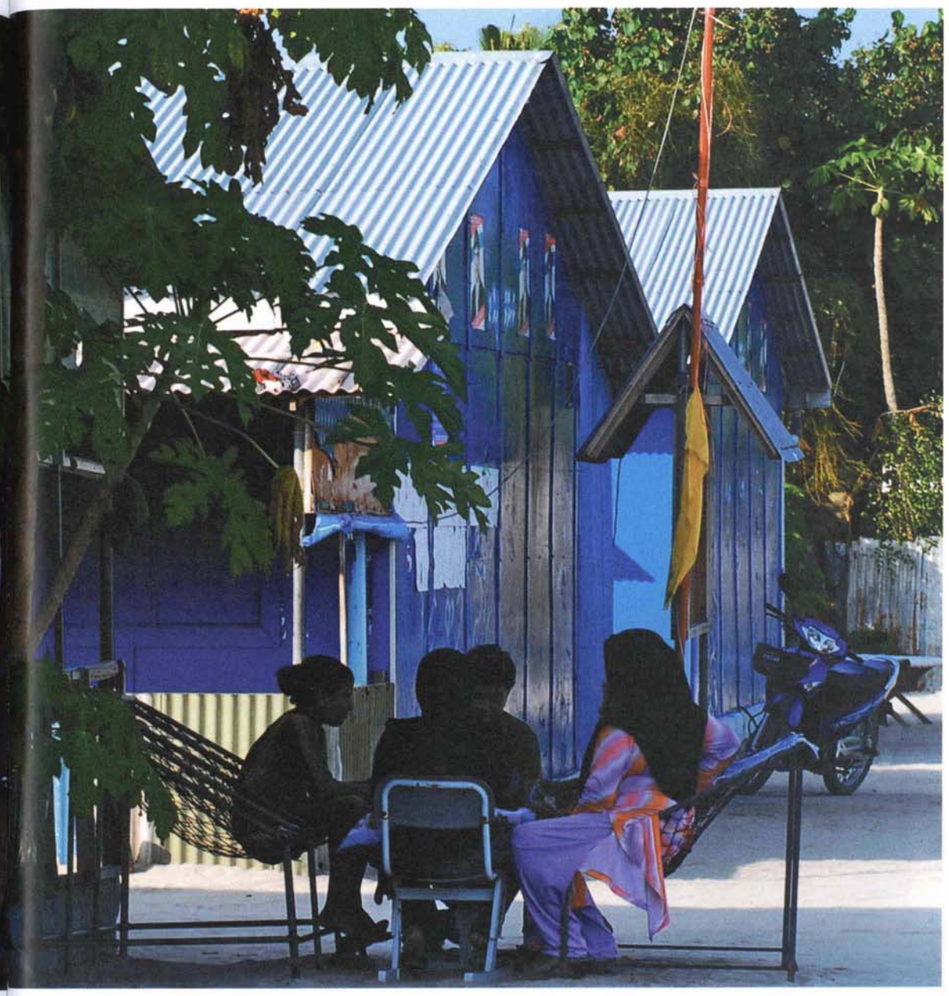
Until then, say scientists, the likely effects on the Maldives of gradually rising temperatures include increased coastal erosion, increasing salinity of freshwater sources, altered tidal ranges and patterns and, most significantly, the gradual deterioration, even destruction, of the coral reefs that comprise both the islands themselves and the natural breakwaters that protect them against the deep ocean just beyond.

"Over half of our islands are eroding at an alarming rate," Gayoom told delegates in 2007 at the United Nations climate change meeting in Bali. Already, "in some cases, island communities have had to be relocated to safer islands. Without immediate action, the long-term habitation of our tiny islands is in serious doubt."

One such island is Meedhoo, 140 kilometers (87 mi) north of Malé and home to around 2000 people.

Ishaag Ahmed, off duty from his job as a security guard at the health clinic, is lounging on a beach hammock with friends. His brother owns a shop that caters to the European tourists who arrive on day trips. Its name is Ozone.

Like most of his friends, Ahmed, 38, doesn't seem worried about climate change.



In Meedhoo, refugees from the 2004 tsunami reside in makeshift homes while awaiting completion of permanent homes on Dhuvaafaru, a previously uninhabited island. Above: A model shows the government's plan for a fully developed Hulhumalé.

"We have a government, and if the time comes to leave, the government will decide where to put us," says the former fishing-boat captain, speaking in Dhivehi, the national language of the Maldives. A tour guide translates for him. Ahmed insists there's no way he'd ever go live in Malé, and that in Hulhumalé "there's nothing special for us."

Just a 10-minute walk from Ozone is a makeshift camp housing some 200 refugees from Kandholhudhoo, an island heavily damaged in the December 2004 tsunami that killed more than 225,000 people in 11 countries, including more than 100 in the Maldives. In what might be a scene from the future, the people in the camp live in houses of wood and corrugated metal sheeting, 12 to 15 to a room. For nearly five years, the government has promised to build houses for them on another island, Dhuvaafaru. In the meantime, the refugees pass the time playing cards, learning English and kicking a soccer ball around a dusty field.

In Kandholhudhoo, a densely populated island north of Malé, tidal surges, with increasing frequency, flood the homes of those who remain. Some 60 percent of the island's residents have volunteered to evacuate over the next 15 years.

Maldivian President Mohamed Nasheed, who took office in November, is aggressively pushing forestation to hold back erosion, the cleanup of coral reefs to slow their deterioration, and the teaching of environmental protection in all Maldivian schools. In mid-March, he announced that the Maldives has set a goal to become the world's first carbon-neutral country by 2020. His government is working with international climate experts to plan for wind- and solar-energy production—something he hopes might also attract eco-tourists.

In the meantime, Nasheed has another plan. Soon after his election, he announced that part of the country's tourism income will go into a sovereign wealth fund that will be used to acquire land in nearby countries such as India, Sri Lanka or even Australia.

"We can do nothing to stop climate change on our own, and so we have to buy land elsewhere. It's an insurance policy for the worst possible outcome," Nasheed told the British newspaper *The Guardian*.

That idea doesn't sit well with Malé cabdriver Ahmed Hussain.

"Nobody wants to go to India or Sri Lanka. They're much poorer than the Maldives," says Hussain as he navigates Malé's narrow, congested streets. "We'd rather go to the Middle East or Europe. But I hope it won't happen, because we don't want to be climate refugees."

Considering the blunt warnings of President Nasheed and his predecessor, it's surprising Maldivians don't express more alarm at what might befall their beloved country only a few generations from now.

"It won't happen. The Maldives will not go under water," insists Mohammed U. Lantra, general manager of Adaaran Water Resorts, a cluster of pricey, stylish villas on Meedhuparru popular with high-end European, Russian and Japanese tourists. "Yes, the sea level is rising, but at the rate it's rising, it will take maybe 100 years or more. By that time, none of us will be living."

Lantra is far more worried about the global economic crisis than global climate change.

He has reason to worry: Last year, the Maldives attracted 500,000 tourists and earned more than a billion dollars from them. But this year, tourism is expected to be down sharply. Lantra points out that the Maldives are "not a cheap destination. In fact, we are considered one of the most expensive resorts in the world."

Owned by the Sri Lanka Insurance Corporation, Adaaran is the largest foreign hotel company in the Maldives, and its eight resorts employ more than 1000 people."When tourists want to visit a country, they're not interested in knowing what ocean it's in," says Lantra. "They want a nice destination where they'll be safe and get good value for their money."

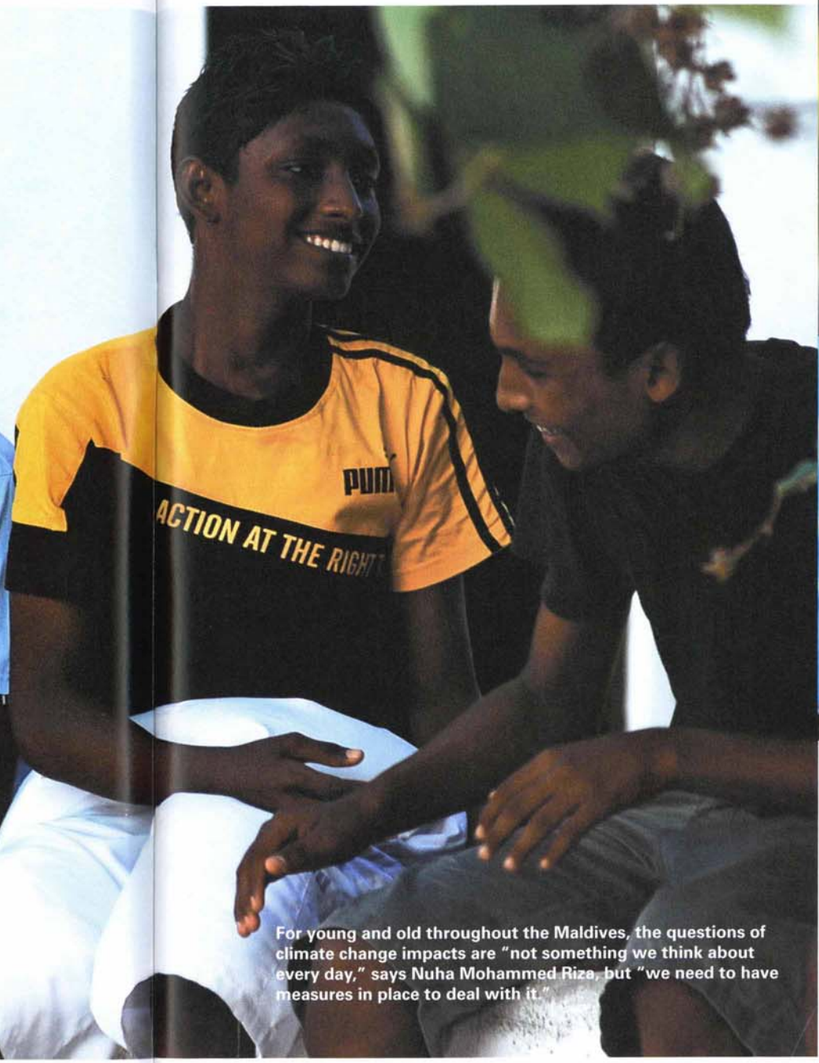
Bob Blake, ambassador from the United States to both Sri Lanka and the Maldives, agrees. "The Maldives has already seen a substantial economic transformation over the last 25 years, thanks largely to the beautiful resorts they have built," says Blake, who is one of the few ambassadors accredited to the Maldives. The US has given the Maldives both economic assistance and political support in its transition to an elected presidency. Thanks to tourism development, says Blake, "the Maldives has gone from being South Asia's poorest country to its richest in just one generation."

Yet increasing drug abuse and joblessness is having an effect on the country, not to mention the global economic crisis, which has already put a dent in tourism: The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation's 16th summit, which was supposed to take place in Malé this October, has been delayed until 2010.

"There is relatively high youth unemployment," says Blake. "Despite all the development, the country still has to import almost everything, and relies principally on tourism and fishing for all of its income."

"I used to go to Viligili for picnics when I was a kid, and the beach was bigger then."

Part of the country's tourism income will now go into a sovereign wealth fund dedicated to acquiring land in nearby countries.



For young and old throughout the Maldives, the questions of climate change impacts are "not something we think about every day," says Nuha Mohammed Riza, but "we need to have measures in place to deal with it."

One island tourists rarely visit is Hulhúmalé, though the Lonely Planet travel guide suggests "coming here makes a fascinating contrast to the chaotic capital–here the planning is so precise and mathematical, you could be on the film set of 'Brave New World.'"

Nuha Mohammed Riza is deputy director of the Hulhumalé Development Corp. (HDC), a government entity that's overseeing the construction of Hulhumalé.

Asked about global warming, she says it's "not something we think about every day, but we also understand that small, low-lying countries like the Maldives are at risk. We need to have measures in place on how to deal with it."

Ahmed Karam, who works in public relations for HDC, says beaches are shrinking, little by little. "I used to go to Viligili for picnics when I was a kid, and the beach was bigger then," he says, referring to an island 10 minutes west of Malé by ferry. "Now, the waves come right up to the trees."

In the meantime, HDC is working to attract investment to Hulhumalé.

"Our main objective was to relieve the congestion problem in Malé, and at the same time develop this island into a commercial and industrial hub," says Riza. "In Malé, there's no land available because it has gotten so crowded."

At present, Hulhumalé measures 1.8 square kilometers (0.69 sq mi), and a causeway connects it to Hulhulé, the "airport island" from which foreign visitors arrive and depart. Built entirely from reclaimed sand and coral dredged from the surrounding lagoon, Hulhumalé is envisioned to house 50,000 people when the first phase of its construction is completed by 2020. By then, the planners say, the island will boast government offices, an industrial zone, shopping centers, tree-lined boulevards, a marina, a national stadium and some dozen mosques.

A second, more ambitious phase involves reclaiming a further 2.4 square kilometers (0.92 sq mi), more than doubling the size of Hulhumalé and bringing the island's population to 150,000.

Investment in the project, Riza says, is mostly from the government, with "a bit" from the private sector. "We have three residential neighborhoods where most of the social housing is focused," she says. "In addition, we have an industrial area where plots of land are being leased for carpentry workshops, warehousing and small fish-processing plants. We already have two processing plants operating."

Cookie-cutter apartment buildings rising to 12 stories are beginning to dot the island, which already also has a school, a pharmacy, lots of shops and at least two Internet cafés.

"We sell the units to the public at cost. We have already sold close to 400 individual plots of land for development," she says. "The people who buy the land build their own houses. Land costs $30 per square foot here, compared to $600 per square foot in Malé."

As a result, snaring an apartment on Hulhumalé can feel like winning a lottery.

"For every round of social housing development we've announced, we see the number of applicants far exceed the available supply," she says, noting that more than 9000 people applied for the 504 housing units currently under construction.

"It's really overcrowded on Malé, and people want to have nicer accommodations. Also, I think Hulhumalé will provide better housing, education and health facilities," she says, adding that for the last two years she has been commuting by boat every day from Malé.

"I would also want to live here, once it's more developed," she admits. "But at the moment, there's not much entertainment. There aren't enough people here."

Indeed, not all is paradise in this utopia, which clearly lacks the charm and appeal of crowded, colorful Malé.

"In Hulhumalé, we have only one problem: Nobody is responsible for these islanders," complains Waseem, the café owner. "On Malé and other islands, there are island chiefs. But here we have only the HDC. And if somebody gets sick or injured, we don't even have a hospital."

Yet when asked about climate change, Waseem cheerfully brushes the question aside.

"I'm not worried," he says as he waits on a customer. "God will look after us."

Larry Luxner, news editor of *The Washington Diplomat* and publisher of *CubaNews*, has reported from nearly 90 countries in his journalistic career. More than 17,000 of his stock news and travel photos appear at www.luxner.com. He can be reached at larry@luxner.com.

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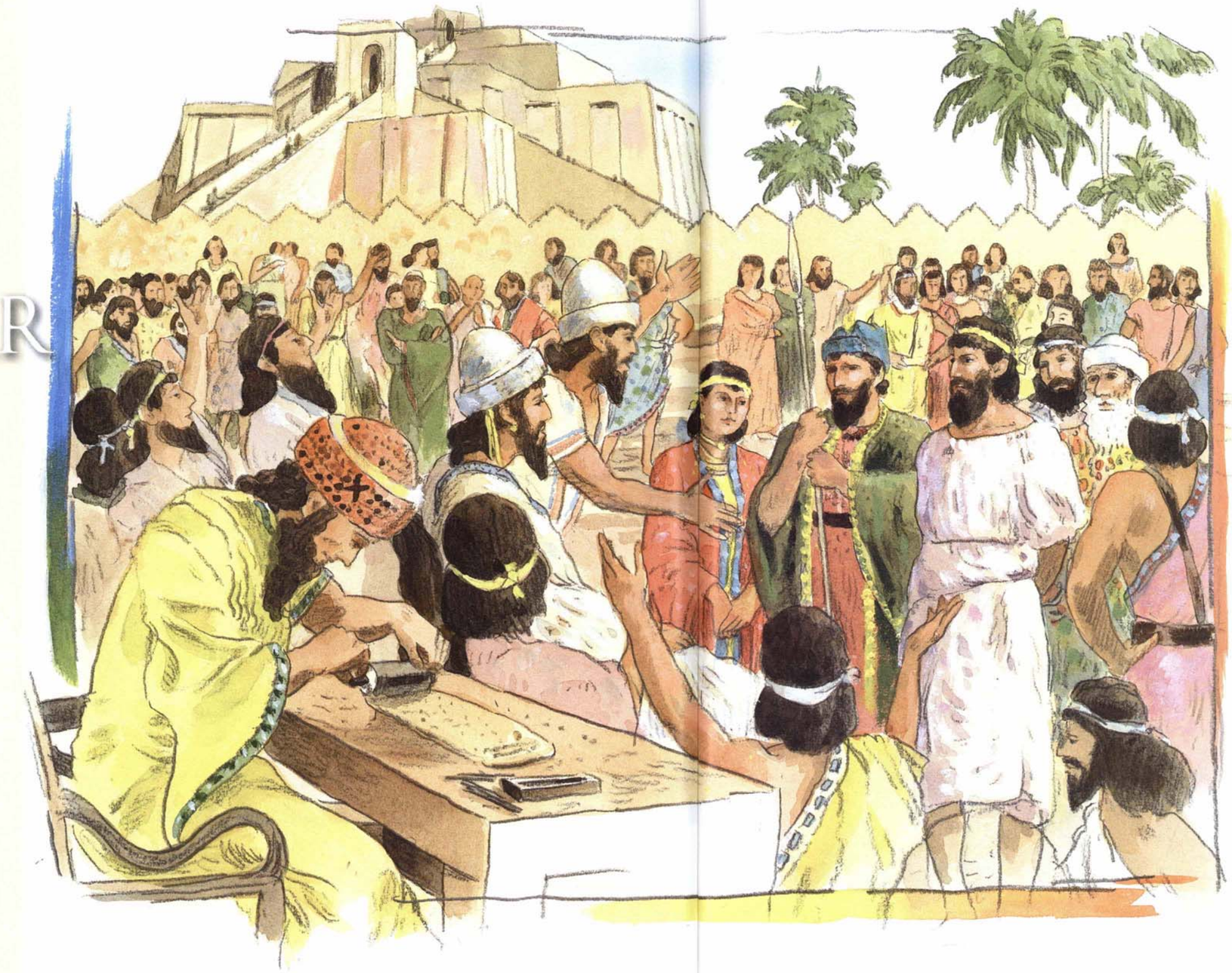
Ibn Battuta: S/O 00, M/A 06
Indian Ocean trade: J/A 05

WITNESS HISTORY

I, PILLAR OF JUSTICE



WRITTEN BY FRANK L. HOLT
ILLUSTRATED BY NORMAN MACDONALD

LOOK AT YOU LOOKING AT ME. YOUR BROW WRINKLES INTO LINES OF CUNEIFORM AS YOUR BRAIN RACES TO REMEMBER WHAT MAKES THIS BIG BLACK ROCK THE PRIDE OF MODERN PARIS. ADMIT IT: YOU DON'T HAVE A CLUE WHAT BASALT REALLY IS.

You can't identify the two figures carved on my face, and I seriously doubt that you can read a word of my ancient Akkadian. You probably arrived at the Louvre, like eight million others every year, more familiar with *The Da Vinci Code* than with the Code of Hammurapi. Well, *c'est la vie*, as they say around here. I can fix that—as I have fixed so much else for your struggling species. Now, try again: What should you know about me? Here's a clue: *Rock Rules!*

I, Pillar of Justice, mark an evolutionary triumph in the long, long history of stone. Before my time, for hundreds of millions of years, my lithic ancestors managed little more than the shaping and shifting of continents. After several fits and starts, a single-continent Pangaea finally divided itself into the separate land masses of our planet's present era. Along the way, my forebears learned to fashion themselves into mountains, valleys and vomiting volcanoes. Some made fossils, a magician's trick of mineralization with no real purpose but to pass the time. Only when rocks perfected the second act—erosion—before an astonished audience—you humans—did our idle fossilizing find true meaning, first as myths about giant men and then as the means to study dinosaurs. Somewhere between Pangaea and paleontology, we cultivated a brief Stone Age during which, for about 2.5 million years, my progenitors taught your progenitors the technology of tools and weapons. Men trusted in stone to capture, kill and carve their prey; to divide and defend their lands with makeshift walls and to arbitrate every dispute with spears and slings.

Then, my kind evolved and changed everything forever. I, Pillar of Justice, Pillar of Strength, showed rock a bolder way to mediate human conflict. I formed of my stony flesh something new: *words*, not weapons; *rules*, not tools. Thus, of all the things that rock has become (tabletops, T-Rex, temples, tombs), it is I who am by far the most advanced. On other branches of my phylogenetic tree, you will find obelisks—beautiful but not brainy—striving to be me. I overshadow in mind if not mass both the pyramids and the Parthenon. Mosaics? Dainty little pictures, to be sure, but I have progressed beyond gravel, to gavel. I am, after all, the rock of sages, the world's most famous code of law.

My story begins in Mesopotamia just a few millennia ago. There, after relying on rock for everything, some of your species foolishly tried to leave the Stone Age behind and start something of their own called *civilization*. This meant that men and women settled into cities, increased their crop yields through irrigation, opened trade routes to distant lands, divided themselves into different occupations and castes and invented writing to keep track of the whole experiment. Good old stone gave way to bronze for all their weapons, providing a keener edge for mutual slaughter. And, by golly, your ancestors sure did a lot more of *that* once they regressed into civilization. More people, more possessions, more inequality: It all added up to more conflict, mediated by muscle and metallurgy instead of stuff like me. War, crime and slavery inevitably increased as the role of rock declined. If your kind were to survive, stone would have to step up and lay down the law. I am the result of that evolutionary imperative.

I arrived on the scene as no more than a giant block of black basalt, a hard igneous rock cooled ages earlier from fiery magma. To save humankind, I took as my partner a member of your species named Hammurapi. (Some of you spell him Hammurabi. Humans cannot agree on anything.) He was a decent man descended from Amorites who had wandered from the western deserts into the little town of Bab-ilim ("Gateway of the God"), which you now call Babylon. In time, the immigrants became kings and, in 1792 BC, Hammurapi, the sixth in their dynasty, succeeded to the rule of their small realm. During his reign of 42 years, the new ruler of Babylon used both battle and diplomacy to extend his power

over all of Mesopotamia. He secured his place among the great empire-builders of antiquity, making him the envy of such modern-day leaders as Saddam Hussein, who vaunted the "Hammurapi Division" of his Republican Guard and who, as a precondition for oil-export deals, often demanded my return from France. Hammurapi himself had no armored divisions, but his forces more than matched those of his rivals in Elam, Assyria, Larsa and Mari. For the next thousand years, Babylon would be the region's most renowned city in this new experiment called civilization.

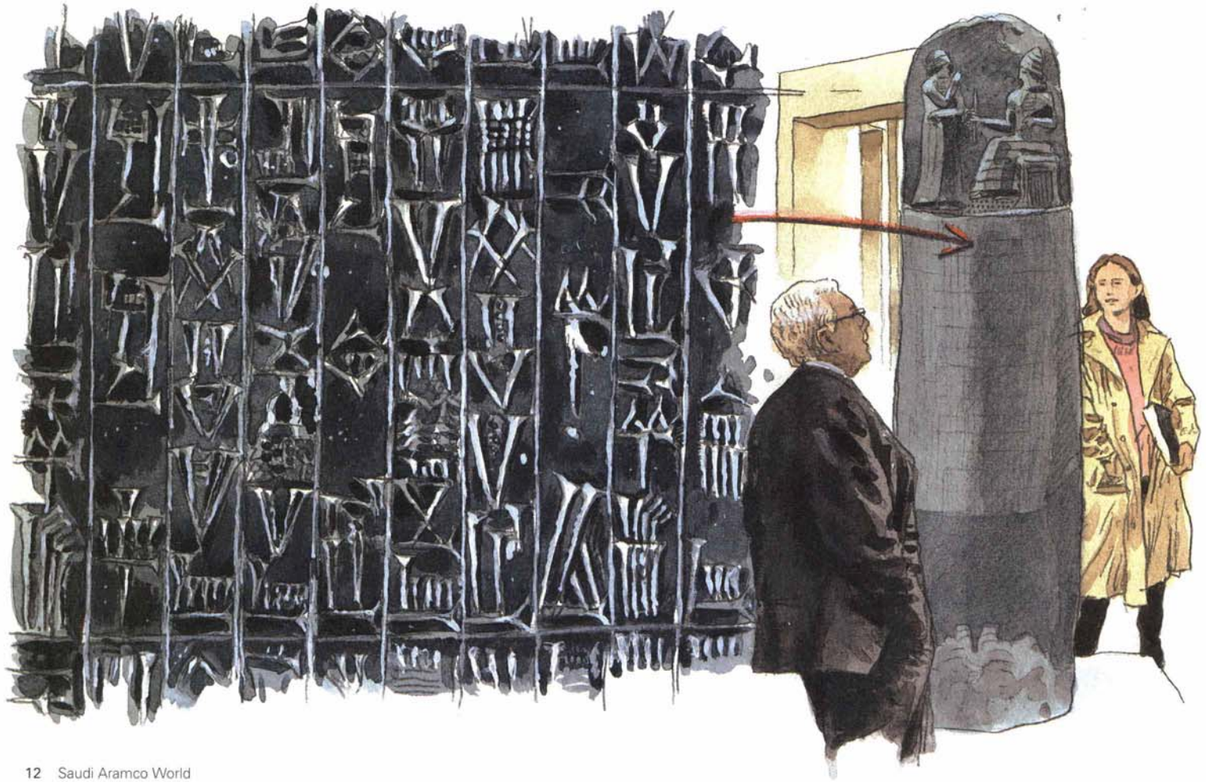
That fame would eventually have as much to do with culture as with conquest. Gifted in mathematics, astronomy and engineering, the Babylonians built with precision, worked out square and cube roots, devised complex calendars and employed the Pythagorean theorem a full millennium before the Greeks "discovered" it. Every time you calculate an angle or glance at a clock, you pay homage to the Babylonians' choice of 60 as their base unit of measure, the foundation of the so-called sexigesimal system they adapted from the earlier Sumerians. In literature, the great Babylonian creation epic *Enuma Elish (When on High...)* mirrors the ascendancy of Babylon over Mesopotamia, and of the city's patron deity, Marduk, over the older gods Anu and Enlil. Hammurapi the Warrior, Hammurapi the Wise, cultivated the arts and sciences with a lavish hand as he led his armies to victory. A rock like me can appreciate these rare qualities in a man.

Near the end of Hammurapi's reign, I made him more illustrious than ever. I, Pillar of Justice, crowned his achievements by publishing a set of laws to govern the lives of his quarrelsome subjects. I was not the first to try this, but my success speaks for itself. All prior attempts by lesser men, using such lesser materials as crumbly clay tablets, show my superiority. Thanks to me, the name of Hammurapi would henceforth and forever be linked with the rule of law–the saving grace of human society. Human, I say specifically, because if you look inside any comparable city built by bees or ants, you will never find a little stone pillar like me listing the rules that maintain insect order. No hive needs a Code of Hammurapi to prevent apiary anarchy. People, I'm afraid, are the problem.

MY 282 LEGAL RULINGS CONSTITUTE THE LITERAL BEDROCK OF JUDICIAL HISTORY.

To get everyone's attention, I knew I had to make a strong impression. I let the king polish me into a freestanding pillar called a *stele*, the ultimate message board of ancient Mesopotamia. I stand 2.25 meters (over 7') tall, my rounded conical shape topped with an arresting bas-relief carved into my basaltic face. To awe my onlookers, this image projects both earthly and heavenly power. Enthroned on the right sits Shamash the sun-god, the "Incorruptible Judge" whose piercing light exposes crime. Menacing flames rise from his shoulders. Receiving the deity's instruction, Hammurapi stands on the left. He raises his right hand to his mouth in a gesture of obeisance, just as all Babylonians did in turn when they encountered their king. This picture put people in the correct frame of mind to receive the extraordinary words cut into the remaining surfaces of my body, some 3800 lines of cuneiform covering me front and back.

As a lavish prologue, my first section pays homage to Hammurapi and his solicitude for gods and men. Some of what I say here about my partner has the ring of propaganda, I freely admit, but a certain amount of pomp was necessary at the time. This prologue enumerates at length the benefactions made by Hammurapi, "the exalted Prince of Babylon," to the many deities worshiped in his



polytheistic empire. I gush that he enriched temples and cities, increased the harvest, heaped up sacrificial offerings, smote bandits, pardoned enemies, protected slaves and, not least, established peace. I call him "the King of Righteousness" and "the Salvation-Bearing Shepherd" whose mission was "to destroy the wicked, punish evil-doers and ensure that the strong no longer harmed the weak."

EXCAVATED BEGINNING IN 1901 BY THE FRENCHMAN JACQUES DE MORGAN, I CAME TO LIVE IN THE LOUVRE.

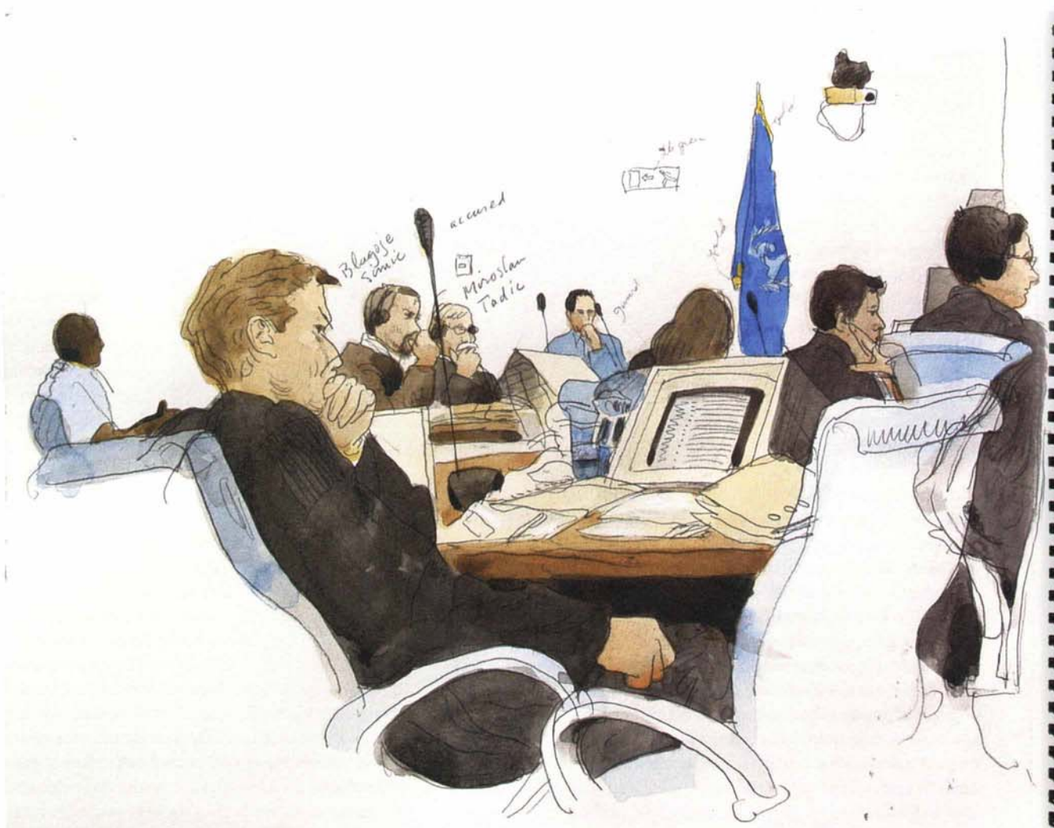
Next comes the important part: a collection of at least 282 legal rulings *(di-nat sharim)* that constitutes the literal bedrock of judicial history. This is our greatest gift to humankind since the Stone Age. Using mostly conditional "if–then" statements, I answer evil with punishment: "If anyone accuses another of a capital offense but fails to prove his case, then that accuser shall be put to death." This judgment is among the first five in the code, all dealing right at the start with the serious problem of bearing false witness. After all, any legal system is only as good as the evidence it allows. That is why my fifth ruling fines and removes from the bench any judge whose incompetence leads to a wrongful decision. Following these safeguards for judicial probity, my text then turns to matters of theft, land tenure, leases, loans, wages, family disputes, inheritance, personal injury and professional misconduct. In other words, I tackle the myriad ills arising from the day-to-day drama of people interacting with people.

Some of what I decree you moderns will find quite familiar, such as my prohibition of incest, adultery, kidnapping and slander. What you might consider exotic, however, are my many rules governing aspects of life no longer commonplace in your world. For example, I have an inordinate amount to say about oxen. What should be done if a person rents an ox and then somehow harms the animal? I list specific judgments for each kind of injury to the beast's neck, horns, eyes, tail or muzzle, as well as for those extreme cases where, say, the ox is eaten by a stray lion. Conversely, I cover disputes arising when the ox itself does the hurting. (Hint: The whole matter hinges on whether the owner knew his ox was dangerous and took appropriate measures to protect the public.) Dowries, debt slavery and sorcery require my attention, plus the occasional missing plow and defective irrigation ditch. On the subject of grain, I am a virtual encyclopedia.

My laws brim with decisions involving concubines, slaves and the rights of multiple wives within aggregate Mesopotamian families. I refuse to let a husband abandon an ill wife when he marries another, or let a husband sell a slave given to him by a wife once that servant has borne him children. I protect both husbands and wives from debts incurred by their mates before marriage. I put few obstacles in the way of divorce, except for grave concerns about the fair division of property and the welfare of any small children. Meanwhile, what must be done if a woman remarries while her husband is a prisoner of war? How many times must a father forgive a serious fault in his son? Can a prostitute bequeath her inheritance as she pleases? To be honest, I never imagined the amount of trouble humans could make for themselves–and thus for me.

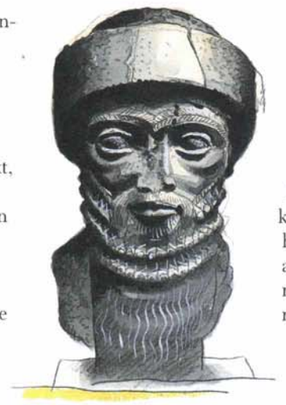
My penalties for misconduct might sometimes astonish you, especially the recurring sentence of death. I execute thieves, liars, harborers of runaway slaves, tavern-keepers who do not arrest conspirators meeting in their establishments and neglectful wives. I must point out that Mesopotamian civilization organized itself into three distinct classes, and the punishments meted out differed accordingly. The *awilum* (upper class) fared better than the *mushkenum* (subordinate free class), who in turn enjoyed many obvious social and legal advantages over the *wardum* (slaves). Between Babylonians of equal rank, I followed the principle of retaliatory justice: An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life. But, if an *awilum* should blind the eye of a *mushkenum*, then the noble keeps his (more valuable) eye and instead pays a fine to his victim. Injuries to a *wardum* draw a fine payable to the slave-owner. I allow physicians to charge more for performing the same operation on an *awilum* than on patients of a lower class, but the consequences for malpractice are commensurately greater: Botch the medical procedure on an *awilum* and the doctor loses the incompetent hand that held the scalpel. In some rulings, my devotion to reciprocity may appear extreme. For example, when the builder's shoddy work causes the death of a homeowner's son, then I decree the death not of the builder but of the builder's own son in return. Some offenses warrant impaling (for a cheating wife who murders her husband), drowning (for a father caught having sex with his son's wife), burning at the stake (for incest with your mother), removal of the tongue (for a prostitute's son impugning his foster parents) or court-ordered mastectomy (for a wet-nurse secretly swapping one child for another). My discipline may seem hard as stone, but I felt compelled to set stern examples at this critical early stage of your social development.

I, Pillar of Justice, put a heavy premium on reliable witnesses and well-written contracts. Still, your ancestors occasionally left me no choice but to resort to trial by ordeal. If, for example, a wife were accused of adultery but was not actually caught in the act, then to remove her from suspicion, I ordered her thrown into the Euphrates. If innocent, she swam to the other side; if guilty, she drowned. This method allowed the gods to determine her fate. Before you protest–I've heard it all before–let me remind you that, for a penal system placed under the nominal authority of Shamash, I afford the gods a minimal role in Mesopotamian justice. I am not really a very religious rock, although I do take into account the beliefs and superstitions of those I evolved to help. Whatever your own religion might be, give me credit for the good I have done under difficult circumstances. I set up a system of legal recourse for rich and poor,


Blagoje Simic
accused
Miroslav Tadic

free and slave. I spelled out a person's rights and responsibilities. I protected one human from another by declaring: *Let any person wronged by another bring his case before me, Pillar of Justice, and heed the judgments inscribed thereon. Let my laws bring order and put his mind at rest.*

In the final section of my massive cuneiform text, I again praise my partner Hammurapi. Of course, I mention me in this epilogue, too. Mostly, I call down curses upon any who might dare deface me. I warn that the sky-god Anu will destroy the scepter of any king who corrupts my words in any way. I swear that Babylon's great god Marduk will likewise bring him famine, that incorruptible Shamash will crush his troops, that Sin the moon-god will fill his shortened life with heavy sighs and sorrows, that the storm-god Adad will dry up the rivers and springs, plus all of the usual maledictions about barren wombs, raging fevers, incurable diseases and frightening omens of a dreadful future. On the other hand, I do include a more pleasant promise in the name of the gods that all subsequent rulers who respected me would surely prosper. Call it "good cop–bad cop," Mesopotamian style.



And so for 600 years I stood in Hammurapi's temple of the sun-god Shamash within the city of Sippar, known today as Abu Habbah, southwest of Baghdad. Empires rose and fell until there ruled a king who did not honor me. An Elamite conqueror, he was named Shutruk-Nahunte. Reigning from about 1185 to 1155 BC, he captured Sippar and carried me off to Susa among the spoils of war. He ordered me flayed and branded with some pompous inscription boasting of his own power–an unforgivable crime against the greatest rock in the world. His minions began their painful sacrilege–you can still observe the scars they inflicted at my base–but then they stopped. I'd like to think that one of my attackers spied in my epilogue the curses on all who defaced me and obediently laid down his chisel. Whatever the reason, I bear no inscription of Shutruk-Nahunte (whose infamy is a touchstone of the 2002 movie "The Emperor's Club," or so I am told). In time, my new home at Susa succumbed to other foreigners and I, broken in two pieces, fell silent in the courts of humankind. For 3000 years, as I lay lost, other codes built on what I had begun. Laws changed, but the need for laws never did.

> I PROTECTED ONE HUMAN FROM ANOTHER BY DECLARING: "LET ANY PERSON WRONGED BY ANOTHER BRING HIS CASE BEFORE ME, PILLAR OF JUSTICE .... LET MY LAWS BRING ORDER AND PUT HIS MIND AT REST."

In December of 1901, one of my fragments emerged from the soil. A few weeks later in 1902, the other half came to light. I had been excavated by a team of archeologists led by the Frenchman Jacques de Morgan. I, Pillar of Justice, was immediately hailed as the most complete code of ancient Mesopotamian laws ever discovered. Scholars eagerly sought in me parallels to the Hebrew Old Testament, even though our similarities do not really run very deep, and they studied scrupulously all I had to say about life in early Babylonia. Naturally, I came to live in the Louvre, surrounded by adoring crowds hard-pressed to notice the 30,000 other objects sharing this ornate palace with me. Granted, many visitors like you may not at first recall everything you should about me, but the light of Shamash soon dawns.

Now, modern-day *mushkenum*, you may go, but do obey all the posted rules on your way out–NO FLASH PHOTOGRAPHY; DO NOT TOUCH THE ARTWORKS; SMOKING IS PROHIBITED; NO FOOD OR DRINK IN THE GALLERIES–or else I might have to toss you into the Seine, just for old times' sake. Rock Rules.

Frank L. Holt (fholt@uh.edu) is a professor of history at the University of Houston and most recently author of *Into the Land of Bones: Alexander the Great in Afghanistan*. He is writing another book on ancient Afghanistan. This is his seventh article in the "I Witness History" series.

Norman MacDonald (www.macdonaldart.net) is a Canadian free-lance artist. "To me there is little difference between the trial scene in Babylon and the one [above] in The Hague," he says. "In each, there is the accused and the opportunity for defense. Then and Now are pretty much the same."

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The Past Is Not Yet Written

Written by Louis Werner — Illustrated by Jesús Conde Alaya

Ever since an Arab–Berber army sailed across the Strait of Gibraltar in the year 711 and founded what came to be known as Al-Andalus, Spanish scholars have looked back on the 800 years of Muslim rule that followed and asked questions: How much of the population of Spain converted to Islam?

"The year 711 was less an Arab invasion than it was an Islamic revolution in the midst of Visgothic chaos. That turns the subject from chronological history to political history."

Rafael Valencia, historian

How "Hispanized" did the arriving Arabs become? How much did Al-Andalus attach itself to the wider Islamic world *(dar al-islam)* and in what ways did it remain part of Spain? To what extent did the land return to Spain culturally–not just politically–after 1492, the year Ferdinand and Isabella forced Muslims to swear allegiance to the Spanish crown or leave the Iberian Peninsula? And today, how should the Arabic term "Al-Andalus" be used by Spaniards–if at all?

"Right off I wanted to break down the walls that kept scholars from talking to each other."

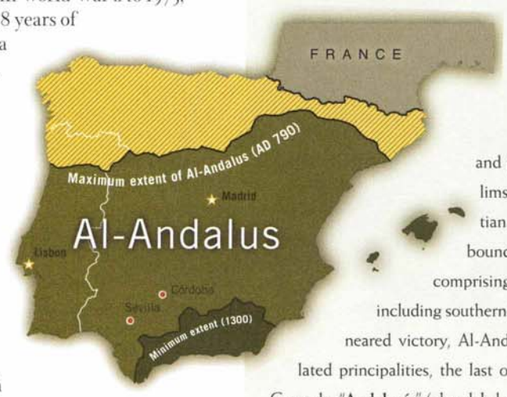
Margarita López, Fundación de Cultura Islámica

TOP: BILDARCHIV PREUSSISCHER KULTURBESITZ / ART RESOURCE

Near 1880, Andalucían painter José Moreno Carbonero depicted Boabdil, the last ruler of Al-Andalus, as he turned over the keys to the city of Granada to the Catholic monarchs.

The answers to these questions long defined how Spaniards saw themselves and their place in history. From World War II to 1975, during Generalísimo Francisco Franco's 38 years of rule, as the rest of Europe moved toward a post-nationalist, common-market future, Spain seemed to be stuck arguing about its past. Its leading intellectuals regarded their country as a bulwark of a purely Christian, anti-Communist Europe. In this environment, the historic case of Al-Andalus was particularly hard to digest, because its 800 years had so clearly marked many aspects of modern Spain.

Franco's death in 1975, and the transition to today's parliamentary monarchy, brought on a revival–some would call it a liberation–of intellectual life. With it, the study of Spanish history entered a new phase as scholars began to rely more on critical readings of historical documents and less on nationalist emotions and ideology.



"**Al-Andalus**" (ahl-**ahn**-da-loos) was the name Muslims gave to the southern parts of the Iberian Peninsula that lay under Muslim control between 711 and 1492. The name probably comes from the Arabic name, *al-Andaleesh*, for the Vandals, a Germanic tribe that inhabited the region from the beginning of the fifth century and went on to control North Africa. (Another Germanic tribe, the Visigoths, followed the Vandals into Spain and partly displaced them.) As the Muslims disputed territory with rival Christian powers to the north, the extent and boundaries of Al-Andalus varied, at times comprising much of the Iberian Peninsula, including southern Portugal. As the Christian *reconquista* neared victory, Al-Andalus was gradually reduced to isolated principalities, the last of which was the Nasrid emirate of Granada. "**Andalucía**" (ahn-dah-loo-**thi**-ah) is the most populous, and second-largest, of the 17 "autonomous communities" that comprise modern Spain. The capital of Andalucía is Sevilla (Seville).

Manuela Marín is one of the new generation of scholars. She served as chief consultant to the 1992 collection of essays titled *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*, in which many younger Spanish scholars were published in English for the first time. A professor at the Institute of Philology of the High Council for Scientific Research (CSIC) in Madrid, one of the leading research centers on Al-Andalus, she has mastered the nuances of the Andalucían dialect (which slowly fell out of use after 1492) in order to scrutinize original texts with an eye toward such subjects of present-day interest as gender and cultural assimilation.

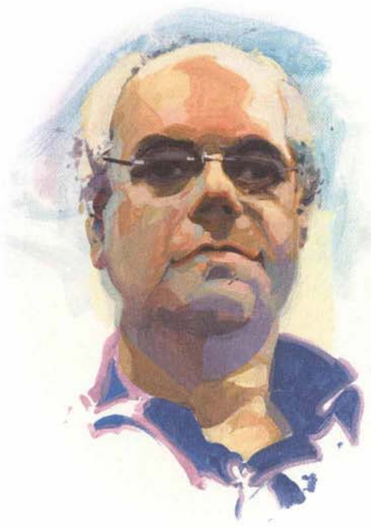
"No doubt about it," she says. "We have finally moved beyond the complicated meaning of 'Muslim Spain,' of discussing whether that period belongs to our own history or to the history of another people."

Still, the debate echoes today in ways faint and loud. One Spanish graduate student indignantly noted that in his university library's card catalogue, researchers seeking the subject heading "Al-Andalus" find only the cross-index referral "See 'Muslim Spain.'"

During the Franco years, it was common for scholars to argue that the Arab period had been a mere interruption of Spain's historical development, and that, after the completion of the reconquest in 1492, Spain again became a purely European country. Other historians accepted a lingering Arab inheritance—only to blame it for their country's apparent backwardness compared to its northern European neighbors. It was rare then for any Spaniard to admit Muslims—and, for that matter, Jews—as historical actors on an equal footing with Christians.

"The history of Al-Andalus begins with language."

Luis Molina, philologist



After World War II, one of these rare exceptions was Américo Castro, whose 1948 *Spain in History: Christians, Moors, and Jews* argued that the country was like a three-stranded rope in which Al-Andalus was an integral and positive influence. On the other hand, in 1956 Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz published a similarly sweeping volume, *Spain, an Historical Enigma*, that took the contrary, Islamophobic position that the legacy of Arab rule was an alien, harmful influence.

But neither Castro and nor Sánchez-Albornoz could read Arabic historical sources in the original language, and modern scholars now largely dismiss their work as ideological posturing.

Mercedes García-Arenal is Marín's junior colleague at CSIC and, typical of her generation's broader experience, has studied and taught abroad. Her special interests are racial and religious assimilation and conversion during the last centuries of the reconquest—subjects that fall under what might be called "frontier studies," a new rubric that has now bridged the previously compulsory choice between study of either Muslim or Christian Spain.

"Unfortunately, most Arabic texts on architecture and buildings are just not that helpful for our needs."

Antonio Almagro, forensic architect

García-Arenal mentions her debt to French historians who opened the study of Al-Andalus to new methods and concepts. She gives particular credit to Pierre Guichard's 1973 book *Al-Andalus: Anthropological Structure of an Islamic Society in the West*. "Even the words of the title—'anthropology,' 'Islamic society in the West'—indicate acceptance of new ways of thinking," she says.

She notes that the name of her department—"Institute of Philology"—had a fusty, antiquarian odor to it, and she is pleased that its new name—"Institute of Languages and Cultures"—captures a broader sweep of academic disciplines. "But historians should nonetheless be vaccinated against infatuations," she warns. "As long as we stick to critical methods, it shouldn't much matter if we call our subject area part of Spain or part of *dar al-islam*."

Yet the study in Spain of Al-Andalus will probably always be the subject of "infatuations." Ever since Blas Infante (1885–1936), the father of Andalucían political and cultural autonomy, converted to Islam in 1924 in a bid to reunite what he felt were the two halves—North Africa and Andalucía—of a lost entity, modern romanticizations of the past have been common.

Archeologists are now comparing the DNA of human remains from the Arab period in Spain with that of contemporary North Africans in an attempt to prove widespread blood ties in addition to their close cultural links. Another recent study has shown a high level of shared DNA between present-day Arabs and Spaniards. María Rosa Menocal, professor of Spanish literature at Yale University, published *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain* (2002) in the wake of 9/11, and despite the fitful nature of the "tolerance" she found, her arguments have been cited by nostalgists seeking evidence of a "golden age."

An organization seeking the middle ground in this muddle is Madrid's Fundación de Cultura Islámica (FUNCI), a public-education group led by Research Director Margarita López, who contributed two essays to *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*. "I know exactly how dry the study of Al-Andalus seems to a student," says López, "because I started my studies after completing degrees in law and political science. Entering that department was like shutting off my air supply. Right off I wanted to break down the walls that kept scholars from talking to each other."

Recent FUNCI art exhibits and catalogues, all with interdisciplinary contributions from Spanish scholars, have covered such areas as perfumery, gastronomy, science and gardens. But now López's challenge is even greater: to steer between what she calls the "cool methods" of academia and such hot topics as North African immigration or the Atocha train-station bombing of March 11, 2004.

Fascist supporters of General Francisco Franco march in Granada in 1946. Franco's death in 1975 ushered in a new era of civil liberties and intellectual freedom.

TORRES MOLINA / CORBIS

Rafael Valencia, professor of history at the University of Seville, takes pleasure in pointing a critical spotlight at conventional and sometimes lazy thinking in his field. "I like to say that what happened in the year 711," he says, "was less an Arab invasion than it was an Islamic revolution in the midst of Visgothic chaos. That turns the subject from chronological history to political history, where there is much more to talk about.

"For us to be called 'Spanish' Arabists," he protests, "is to imply that somehow we are closer in spirit and culture to, say, Danish Arabists, fellow Europeans, than we are to Moroccan Arabists. But Moroccans and I share much more common ground in Al-Andalus than Danes and I would. We merely have to walk through each other's old city quarters—Tangier's medina or Granada's Albaycín, with their similar urban plans—to get the same idea."

Valencia cites the name of the Río Guadiana, the river that forms Spain's southern boundary with Portugal. "A triply redundant toponym!" he laughs. "*Río* from Spanish, *wadi* from Arabic, and *ana* from ancient Iberian. Who is to say what that so-called 'border' is? It's certainly not a binary function, a matter of either 'here' or 'there.'"

"Our national hero, El Cid, switched sides several times," he adds. "And Seville's oldest religious fraternal order for Holy Week celebrations, which considers all other orders to be lesser Catholics, was founded by a man named Mateo Alemán, who had only recently been converted." Valencia ends with a telling quote from Seville's greatest poet, Antonio Machado: "El futuro no está escrito; el pasado tampoco"—"The future is not written; neither is the past."

In Granada, the Escuela de Estudios Arabes (EEA) looks like what

WRITING SPANISH HISTORY

The 19th and early 20th centuries were the zenith years for European "polymath scholars" of Al-Andalus. These included some non-Spaniards like the Dutchman Reinhart Dozy, author of *History of the Muslims in Spain* (1861), and the Frenchman Évariste Lévi-Provençal, author of *Arab Civilization in Spain, A General View* (1938). Both volumes are all-in-one summations of an entire civilization requiring a hubris of encyclopedic learning that is no longer dared today.

The first Spanish Arabist of this era was José Antonio Conde, the very title of whose book, *History of the Arab Domination in Spain* (1820–1821), reflected his unease with the subject. His followers Julián Ribera, Miguel Asín Palacios and Ramón Menéndez Pidal, more philologists than historians, took a primarily literary interest in their subjects, seeking the Arab roots of such western canonical texts as *The Divine Comedy*, *The Poem of El Cid* and *Don Quixote*.

The last of this "old school" was Emilio García Gómez (died 1995), who taught many of today's younger scholars. Most think there will never be another of his stature, although Professor María Jesús Viguera of Complutense University, at mid-career, has authored almost as many titles in fields ranging from poetry to law to history as García Gómez did in his entire life.

a research institute dedicated to Al-Andalus should look like, housed in a 16th-century Moorish palace with a view of the Alhambra from the patios. But forensic architect Antonio Almagro's office might fool you, as his computer spins out three-dimensional reconstructions of Seville's Alcázar Real just as it appeared in the 14th century.

Almagro is on a team of architects and archeologists using ground-penetrating radar, aerial photography, laser measurements and stratigraphic and pottery sequences, as well as comparative analysis of similar construction, to study buildings that have been rebuilt and added to over the centuries as they appeared at a particular time in history.

> *"I think some advocates for Al-Andalus are intellectually dishonest because they dress their political claims in academic clothes."*
>
> *Serafín Fanjul, historian*

"Unfortunately," he says, "as much as we would like help from our philologist colleagues, most Arabic texts on architecture and buildings are just not that helpful for our needs. We tell them we need facts and figures, meters and angles, not the meters and rhymes that their texts provide."

Across the EEA's patio, Luis Molina says he is proud to call himself a philologist, despite the title's old-fashioned ring. "Emilio García Gómez told me never to consider myself to be a mere translator in the service of historians, because we too were historians of a sort. After all, the history of Al-Andalus begins with language.

"In past decades," he notes, "we philologists have pushed deeper into the study of history than historians have pushed into our area. But I dislike the flimsiness of concepts like 'frontier studies.' A so-called frontier is a place where the same historical and philological processes are simply a bit more complicated—not a special place in and of itself."

Molina is just as dismissive of some of the old school's fuzzy concepts—like *convivencia*, a neologism meaning the "living together" of Christian, Jewish and Muslim cultures in Al-Andalus. "Why talk only of *three* cultures?" he asks.

"Why not one culture, or even a hundred cultures? Depending on what kind of culture we are referring to specifically, the number might be more or less than three, in order to be more precise." Yet here he thinks that Serafín Fanjul, the leading critic of Al-Andalus mythmaking, himself errs. Says Molina: "No reputable scholar repeats the popular clichés that Fanjul so fiercely attacks."

> *"We no longer make claims of identity, in either direction, which in the past we almost always did."*
>
> *Francisco Vidal, scholar of Islamic law*

Fanjul, a *catedrático* (distinguished professor) at the Autonomous University of Madrid, is in fact less critical of scholars than of popularizers of the "idea of Al-Andalus," whom he sees as making similar simplifications as those who formerly advocated the "idea of Spain." Fanjul finds little of an Andalusí legacy left in southern Spain today: not in its music, not in its food and not in most of its population.

"I think some advocates for Al-Andalus are intellectually dishonest," Fanjul says, "because they dress their political claims in academic clothes, arguing that yesterday's Al-Andalus is the same as today's Andalucía." Though his complaint is academic, it has been taken up by less disinterested parties, including politicians opposed to North African immigration and the forging of closer ties with Arab countries. That has put him in the midst of a growing polemic.

Francisco Vidal is a young scholar of Islamic law at the University of Jaén. He received his doctorate the same year his university was given full status within the newly decentralized system of higher education in Spain. His career thus stands as a counterweight in what had long been considered the "privileged field" of Arab studies, formerly conducted in only a handful of universities by the protégés of eminent professors.

Vidal's specialty is legal opinions, especially the 6500 *fatwahs* compiled by the 15th-century Moroccan jurist Ahmad ibn Yahya Wansharisi. To him these opinions express a unity of thought in western Islam and a sharp difference from legal thinking of the same time period in, say, Cairo or Damascus. His findings establish a new typology for legal theory in Al-Andalus, showing it as more closely related to North Africa and making it less a special case of "Islam in Europe."

"Few scholars still obsess about our identity in the study of Al-Andalus," Vidal says. "We no longer make claims of identity, in either direction, which in the past we almost always did. But our field will always follow an orthodoxy of one type or another. For instance, now we look more favorably at the Almohad period. Earlier Arabists thought they [the conservative Muslim Berber Almohads] came to Spain as destroyers, not as builders, but now we are crazy in love with Almohad architecture and urbanism—we look for it everywhere, and we say, 'Imagine these people from the desert who fell so quickly in love with city living!'"

Eduardo Manzano, in the department of medieval history in Madrid's CSIC Institute of Philology, has an interesting perspective on how the field of Arab studies has evolved, partly due to his academic seat outside it. "Much less is known about medieval Christian Spain than about medieval Muslim Spain," he says, "because Arabists have been quicker to adopt interdisciplinary tools. The government required salvage archeology to be conducted at construction sites during the 1980's and 1990's building boom, and Arabists were nimbler than medievalists in making use of these findings."

Manzano, like most historians today, takes a micro rather than a macro view, one that seeks to tease generalities out of local

ESTEBAN COBO / CORBIS

In 2007, the Spanish government banned all public references to Franco, resulting in the removal of statues such as this one in Santander.

phenomena. He cites the case of the *muwalladun*, descendants of some Visigothic converts to Islam who for two centuries remained publically identified as such, refraining from creating the false Arab genealogies that many other converts did. Then, after those two centuries, they suddenly disappeared from the record. "We have many such 'delayed fuse' effects during the Arab conquest and the Christian reconquest," he says. "That is of interest to me: Why the delay in their full assimilation?

"I've always tried to normalize the study of Al-Andalus," he says, "to reduce the emotional content of what the old texts tell us. But after the Atocha train bombings, we should make even more effort to steer clear of history, if what we really want is to debate politics. History is not an arsenal with fixed gun positions. It is about change, about when and why things became different from before."

Manzano is dismayed that Matamoros puppet plays, the popular entertainments stemming from the reconquest that symbolically pit Muslims against Christians, are still taught today, as they have been for centuries, in Spanish schools where most students are Spaniards. In schools with mostly immigrant children, however, the hero is not El Cid but "Al-Mansour"—a Muslim—and El Cid is the villain. Thus different national histories are being taught to different nationalities, all in the same country. "We should realize that history doesn't give credibility to people, but rather people give credibility to their own past," Manzano says.

Such is the intellectual journey that Spanish scholars of Al-Andalus have been making in the last two hundred years, away from the idea that history must argue for or against a particular definition of Spanishness and toward the ideal that Spaniards of all backgrounds should view their past in light of modern historical methods, not through the dusty lens of yesterday's polemics. In a country where fact-based history prevails, a library card that includes "Muslim Spain" but not "Al-Andalus" might be seen simply as a cataloguer's lapse, not as a *cause célèbre*.

Louis Werner (wernerworks@msn.com) is a frequent contributor to *Saudi Aramco World* and also writes for *El Legado Andalusí* and for *Américas*, the OAS magazine.

Jesús Conde Alaya (lolablanca@hotmail.com) is an artist living in Granada.

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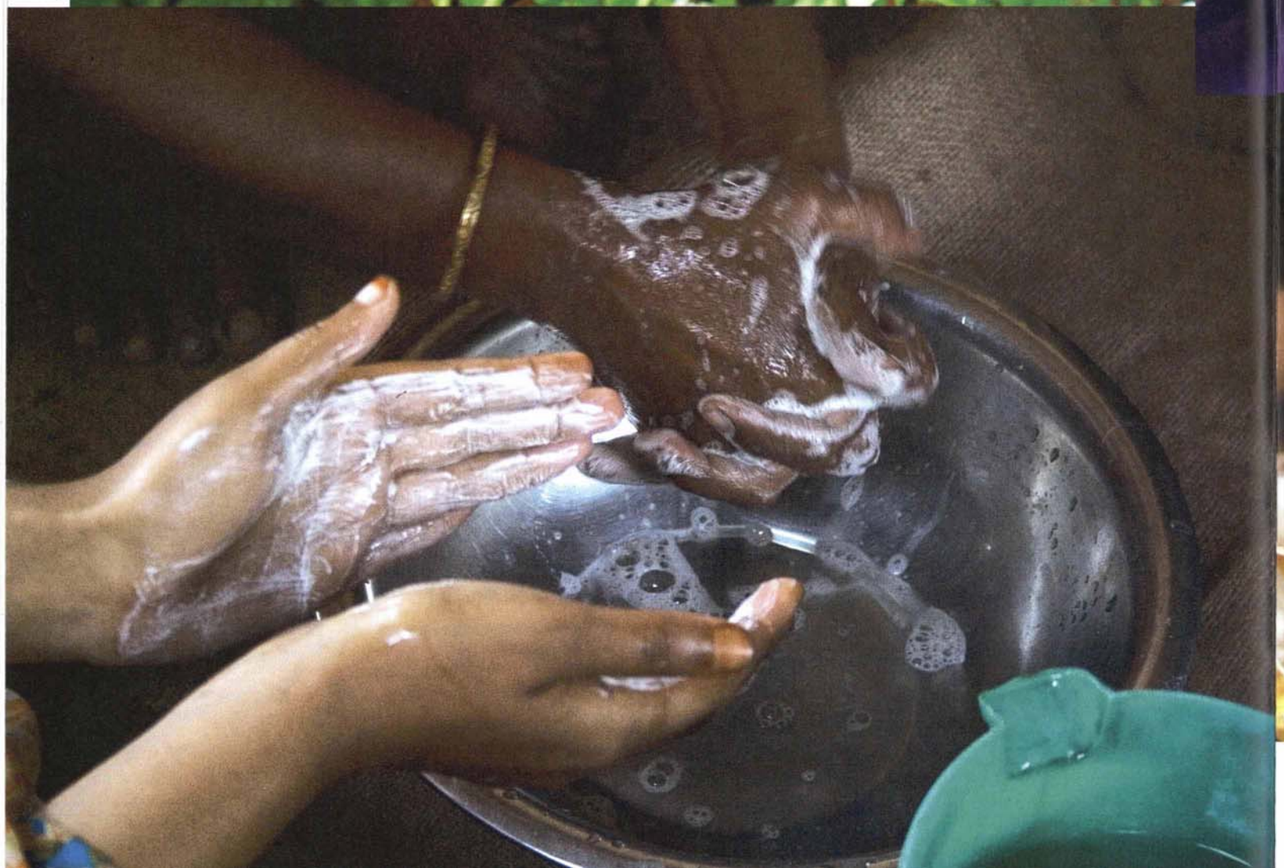
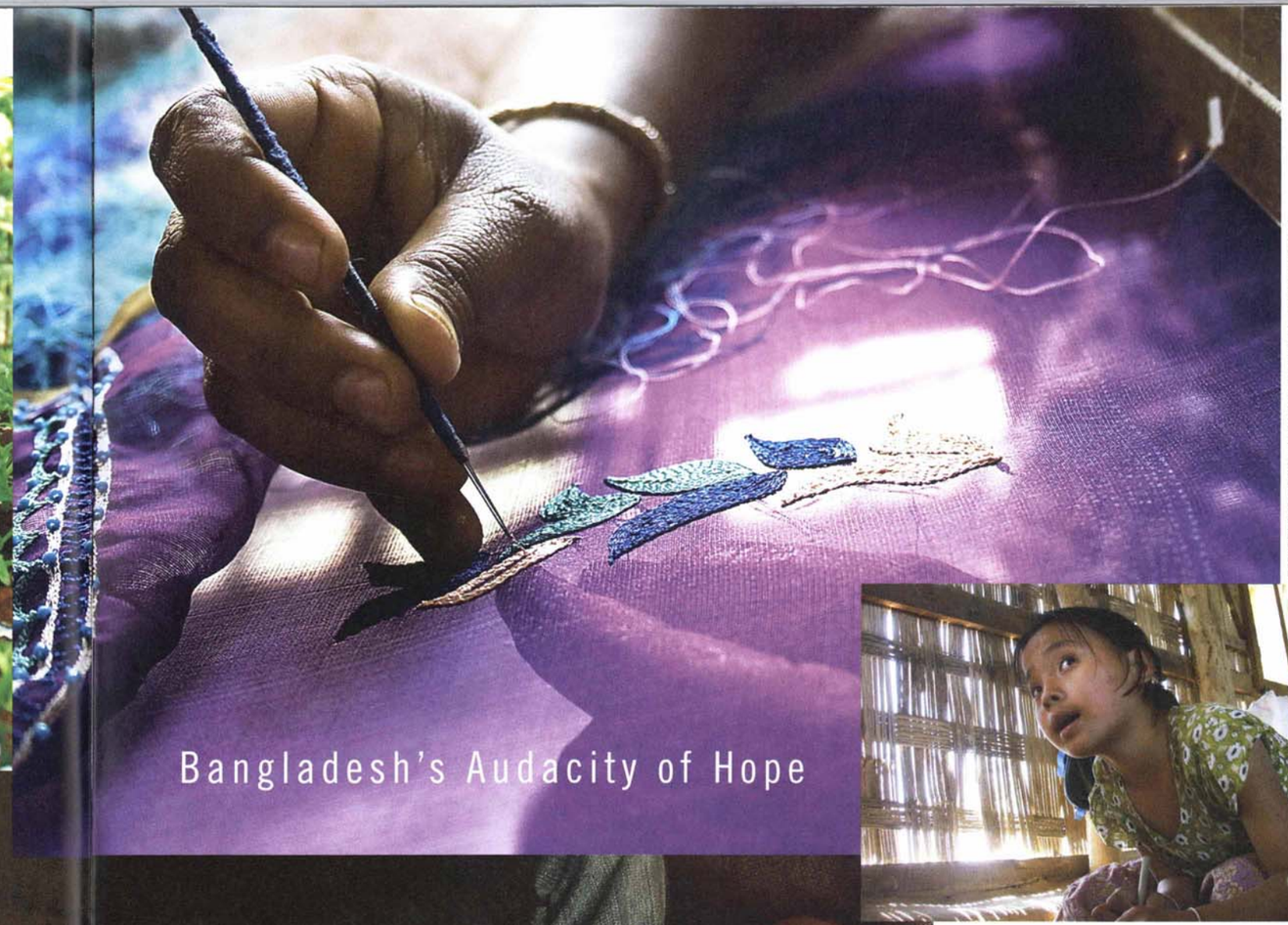
Alhambra: J/A 06, S/O 92
Alcázar Real: S/O 08, J/F 93
convivencia: S/O 03, M/A 01

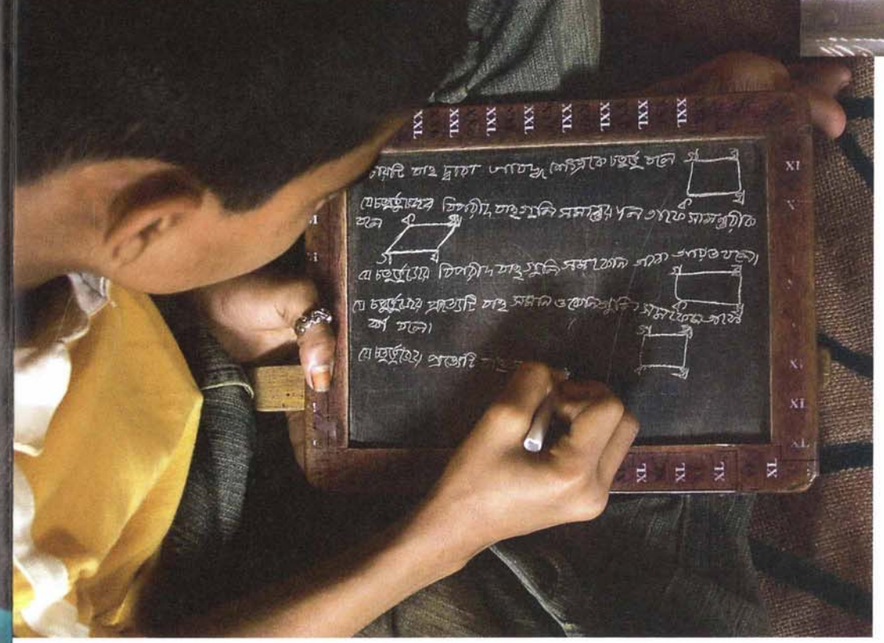
KHALED HASAN; LOWER: SAIKAT MOJUMDER



DEBASISH SHOM; BELOW: K.M. ASAD; LOWER: DICK DOUGHTY / SAWDIA



Bangladesh's Audacity of Hope



Written by Richard Covington
Photographed by students at Pathshala, the South Asian Institute of Photography

Inside a metal-roofed bamboo shed, teenage girls noisily amuse themselves playing chess, pool and board games. The girls are Marma, one of 11 ethnic and linguistic minorities who have inhabited the southeastern district of Bangladesh known as the Chittagong Hill Tracts for centuries. The twice-weekly meetings at this teen center, near the town of Bandarban, 30 kilometers (19 mi) west of the Burmese border, are supervised by Numei Prue, 26. Calling a temporary halt to the games, she leads the group in a love song, accompanying the choir on harmonium. Later, she directs a discussion that ranges from the business of running a tailor shop or a beauty parlor to the dangers of HIV/AIDS and the risks of early marriage.

"This center is a safe haven where the girls meet together to sing, dance, play games and talk about their futures," she

SHEHAB UDDIN

Fazle Hasan Abed
Founder and Chairperson of BRAC, Dhaka
JOB: "Chairperson of a development organization that works for the empowerment of the poor."
NOT SHOWN: "Empowering and motivating the management staff."
CHALLENGE: "Align government policy to meet the needs and aspirations of the poor."
REWARDS: "The changes and improvements in the lives of the poor people that our organization serves."

explains outside in a dirt courtyard shaded from the harsh January sunlight by an enormous rain tree. "It's a lifesaver for all of them; otherwise they're stuck at home." This scene is repeated time and again all across Bangladesh, where there are more than 8700 such centers, some of which give training in handicrafts as well as computer literacy, photography, lab research and even journalism.

This national network of centers for adolescent girls is one of the many brainchildren of 73-year-old Fazle Hasan Abed, who in 1972 founded BRAC, now the largest non-governmental organization (NGO) in the developing world. Providing microfinance, health care and free schools to 110 million of the poorest among Bangladesh's 155 million people, BRAC employs some 121,000 staff (including around 64,000 teachers) and relies as well on countless volunteers and part-time workers. Formerly known as the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee but now officially called "BRAC," the organization is present in virtually every village, town and urban slum of this 38-year-old democracy, one of the planet's most densely populated and impoverished countries, where one out of three people subsists on less than $1 a day.

One of BRAC's most notable early successes was its house-to-house campaign to teach young mothers to administer oral rehydration solution to treat life-threatening childhood diarrhea. Together with an immunization drive in partnership with the government, the campaign reduced infant mortality in Bangladesh dramatically: from one in four children—25 percent—dying before age five in 1979, to around seven percent today. And the greater survival rate, along with greater availability of contraceptives, has helped reduce the number of children in the average Bangladeshi family from seven 30 years ago to 2.7 today. Additionally, nearly 70,000 healthcare volunteers—mostly women drawn from 293,000 groups of microfinance borrowers—are helping cure tuberculosis (TB) and malaria. Now the quietly forceful Abed, a former oil executive with a fondness for quoting both Shakespeare and Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore, is expanding operations beyond Bangladesh into Afghanistan, Uganda, Southern Sudan, Tanzania, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Sierra Leone and Liberia.

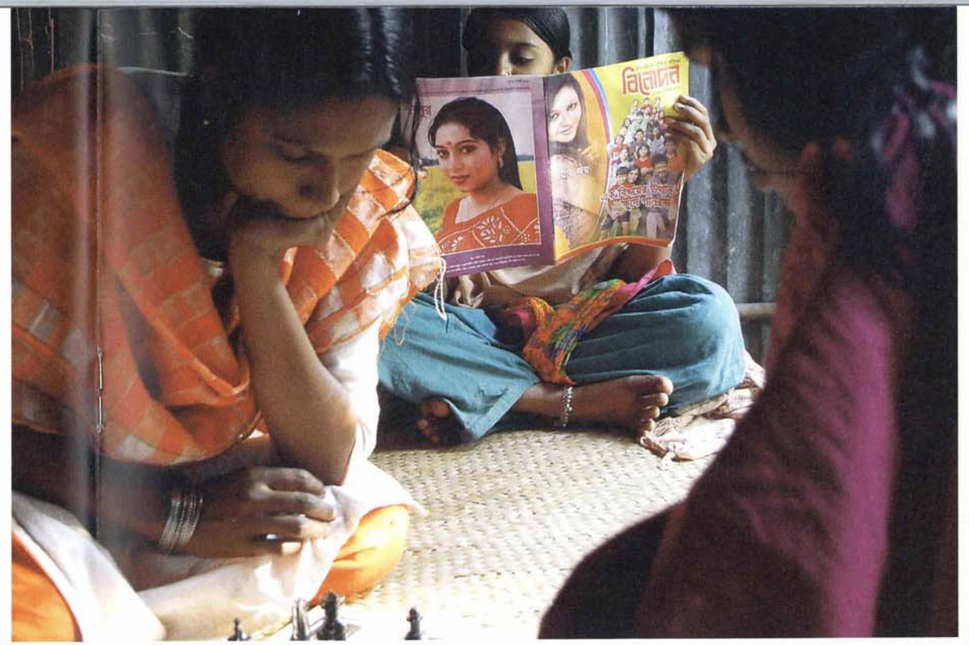
While less well-known than Grameen Bank, the microcredit empire founded by Nobel Peace Prize–winner Muhammad Yunus, BRAC casts a wider net. In addition to its antipoverty, health and education programs, BRAC's operations include a commercial bank, a university, a plant-tissue culture laboratory, seed-processing centers, dairies, chicken hatcheries, a poultry-feed factory, silk production and a chain of retail stores funding local artisans, as well as management of around $4.7 billion in microfinance loans to 8.5 million women.

Tamara Abed
Director of Aarong, Ayesha Abed Foundation and BRAC Dairy and Food Project, Dhaka
JOB: "CEO for the enterprises for which I am director."
NOT SHOWN: "Empowering people."
CHALLENGE: "Firing someone."
REWARDS: "Having a positive impact on people's lives."

DEBASISH SHOM

Throughout Bangladesh, girls between 14 and 18 can learn basic business skills through microcredit groups called Employment and Livelihood for Adolescents (ELA). Each ELA group, such as this one in Manikganj, central Bangladesh, opens its weekly meeting with a recitation of the group's rules and values.

CHANDAN ROBERT REBERIO



TANVIR-UL-HOSSAIN

After school, girls in Manikganj socialize at a BRAC Kishori Club, or adolescent center, one of more than 8700 such centers nationwide.

Last October, Abed was awarded the $1.5 million Conrad N. Hilton Foundation Humanitarian Prize, the world's richest humanitarian award, and in 2007, the Clinton Global Initiative, founded in 2005 by former US President Bill Clinton, presented Abed with its first Global Citizen Award. In conferring the Clinton prize, Kenyan activist and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Wangari Maathai noted that Abed founded BRAC "on the belief that poverty must be tackled from a holistic viewpoint, transitioning individuals from being aid recipients to becoming empowered citizens in control of their own destinies."

In 2004, Microsoft founder Bill Gates presented BRAC with the $1-million Gates Award for Global Health. "BRAC has done what few others have—they have achieved success on a massive scale, bringing lifesaving health programs to millions of the world's poorest people," Gates said at the ceremony.

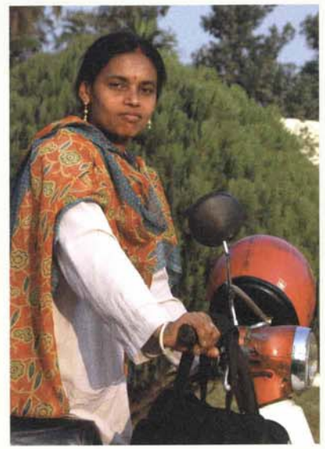
Like all of BRAC's myriad projects, the teen centers were established to meet a pressing need. "We were afraid that the girls who had gone to our primary schools might lose the literacy and self-respect they had earned and get pressured into early marriages," Abed explains in his Dhaka office. "Everybody is telling adolescent girls to be subservient to men and boys, that they can't go out on their own. We felt that this process needs to be attacked." A reserved, avuncular figure with snowy white hair and wire-rimmed glasses, the generally affable Abed raises his voice slightly to emphasize his passion for the subject. Behind his customary smile is the persuasive pragmatist who takes obstacles in his stride and calmly overcomes them, one by one, by refusing to accept "no" for an answer.

"We encountered some resistance from parents bent on marrying off their daughters," he continues, "but most parents realize that our free schools teach their children many things that government schools do not, and that the centers give the older girls further education, job skills and self-worth in a place that is all their own." Both parents and daughters see the centers as refuges from those men and boys who might look upon unmarried women outside their homes as fair game for aggression or even rape.

The fact that the female adolescent centers—along with microfinance groups, health volunteers treating TB and malaria, primary schools, community organizations, legal-services clinics and grants providing cows to the poorest of the poor—are available not only to the majority Bengali population, but also to remote minorities like the Marma, Chakma, Garo and other "hill tribes" is further testimony to the inclusive sweep of BRAC's humanitarian goals. During a little more than two weeks of visiting a wide range of projects, I witnessed firsthand how this mission gets in the blood, inspiring dignity and self-reliance in people who thought they had been forgotten—yet without making them dependent. "We can give the poor access to resources, like through microfinance," notes Abed. "But they have to pay for it—either in labor or money.

SHAH SAZZAD HOSSAIN

Shaila Ahmed
Senior Area Manager, BRAC Ultra Poor Programme, Dhaka
JOB: "There are four components of the program: two grant-based and two loan-based. I deal with the soft loans."
NOT SHOWN: "My feelings toward the poor. You have to experience it."
CHALLENGE: "Dealing with the poorest segment of the people. You cannot solve their problem in a group. You have to solve them individually. With some you have to be rude and firm, others polite."
REWARDS: "I am giving back what my country has given me."



CHANDAN ROBERT REBERIO

Shibani Rani Saha
Program Organizer, BRAC Health Programme, Manikganj
JOB: "I supervise five health workers and 62 health volunteers."
NOT SHOWN: "Monthly meetings to follow up and share with health workers and volunteers dealing with difficulties."
CHALLENGE: "If a patient needs help on a weekend, I give up my holiday."
REWARDS: "I treat my profession with love. In return, I receive peoples' love, caring and respect."

Weaver Shushama Bala Chakma, who lives in the Chittagong Hill Tract village of Manikchori, received treatment through BRAC's malaria-control program, in which BRAC has been joined by the Bangladeshi government and other NGOs. "We are now safer," she says. "BRAC provides mosquito nets and medicine." Opposite, top: **At BRAC's medical lab in Rangamati, analysts test blood samples for the malaria parasite.**

PRITO REZA

Mohammad Sdridullah
Sole Proprietor, FM Printing, Dhaka
JOB: Printer, since 1996.
NOT SHOWN: "I took a loan from BRAC in 2007."
CHALLENGE: "Loss of my garment factory that affected the printing business."
REWARDS: "Successfully running my printing business."

Ultimately, the poor have to change their own condition."

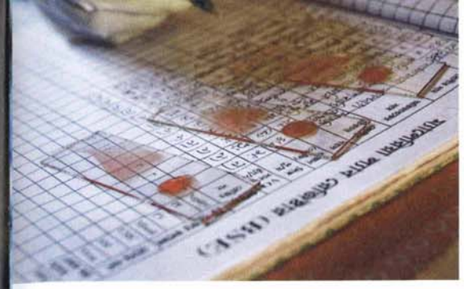
Take Momena, a 60-year-old widow who, like many villagers, goes by only one name. Today she is a beneficiary of BRAC's Ultra Poor Programme, founded in 2007. A year ago, she was a beggar, scraping by on less than 50 taka (85¢) a day in a rural settlement near Mymensingh, 150 kilometers (90 mi) north of the capital. Too poor to qualify for even the minimum microcredit loan of 4000 taka ($68), Momena received instead two cows, which sleep in part of her small hovel. Trained by BRAC instructors how to care for them, she now sells the milk from one and is fattening the other to sell for slaughter. With the proceeds, she plans to buy a small plot of land for rice cultivation and hire a laborer to help her farm it.

Perhaps the most successful aspect of BRAC's approach to poverty alleviation is that projects are driven largely by economic incentives. Women take small loans to start grocery shops or garment-manufacturing, cattle-raising and other ventures that, with hard work, ultimately earn profits, enabling the women to take larger loans and expand their businesses. Health "volunteers" aren't literally that: They earn money by fighting TB and malaria, and also by selling medicines at a small markup. The most radical aspect of BRAC, however, is what economists would call vertical integration: BRAC-run enterprises stretch from village fields to town markets and urban stores, plowing profits from dairy, poultry, silk, textile and handicraft productions, run by the poor, back into BRAC programs.

From individuals like Momena to entire communities, BRAC is remaking Bangladeshi society, encouraging low-income citizens to take part in—even to take charge of—political processes that have often left them out. For example, in a village courtyard near Mymensingh, it was heartening and somewhat astonishing to see some 200 farmers, laborers and housewives assemble beneath jackfruit trees and date palms for a bimonthly BRAC-sponsored *polli shomaj* ("rural society") meeting, at which government officials spelled out details of school stipends, employment programs, wheat allotments and marriage laws.

"These community pressure groups ensure that the poor get the government money, resources and legal help they're entitled to," points out Zarina Nahar Kabir, director of BRAC's social-development program. "We try to help people understand that democracy is something you have to practice to make a reality."

What I observed in Mymensingh was certainly democracy in action, with one woman from the audience vigorously complaining to the marriage registrar over the illegal (but still widespread) custom of demanding, even extorting, dowries from brides' families.



KHALED HASAN (2)

Apart from fielding more than 12,000 *polli shomaj* groups, BRAC also conducts nationwide classes in human rights and basic legal rights. It also trains hundreds of paralegal advisors, so-called barefoot lawyers who handle property and family disputes, as well as more serious cases.

The organization's community-development drive even extends into show business. With 400 amateur acting troupes staging some 1600 performances every month, BRAC literally dramatizes, village by village, the social, familial and economic conflicts that villagers face daily. For many rural inhabitants, BRAC's popular theater, presented at their doorstep, is the only live entertainment in the village all year.

One evening performance I attended brought a thousand villagers to congregate in the dark around a makeshift outdoor stage. With banging drum, clanging cymbals and a high-pitched vocal to set the scene, the attention-grabbing introduction gave way to a cautionary tale about an evil factory manager cheating his boss, exploiting his workers and even trying to seduce the teenage daughter of a poor family. At critical junctures in the plot, the actors would pause and ask the audience what should happen next. At the end, the audience clamored for the manager to be fired, but not before he was compelled to beg forgiveness of all the people he'd wronged. I was amazed that all the dialogue was largely improvised by non-professional, volunteer actors.

"The stories [for the dramas] are collected from the local community, and cover everything from workers' rights to forced marriages, HIV/AIDS, sanitation, even bird flu," Kabir explains. "We try to end with a positive message."

BRAC's positive messages began 37 years ago. That's when Abed first set up operations in the northeastern Sylhet district, near where he'd been born in 1936 in what was then the Bengal region of British India. (Following the partition of 1947, the district became part of East Pakistan, and then part of Bangladesh when that country won its independence in 1971.) Abed had come back from London in 1972 to help refugees, who were returning by the millions from India to their war-torn homeland.

Although Abed ventures into rural villages only infrequently these days, he's in his element when he does. He remains totally approachable, sitting on the ground to listen to hardscrabble residents' observations and complaints. His frank equanimity

A BRAC health worker demonstrates to women near Mymensingh the difference between safe and unsafe drinking water. Since 2006, BRAC's Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) program has promoted safe water practices in the country's poorest districts.

SAIKAT MOJUMDER

Shakila Yasmin
Branch Officer, BRAC Bank, Gulshan, Dhaka
JOB: "Transactions and customer care."
NOT SHOWN: "When I am really busy trying to put focus into my work."
CHALLENGE: "When I lose concentration."
REWARDS: "To deal with many different customers and see them happy with the service."

K.M. ASAD; ABOVE: SHUMON AHMED

Nasima
Packer, BRAC Dairy, Gazipur
JOB: "I am working here in the packaging sector."
NOT SHOWN: "After finishing my BRAC school, I joined the dairy milk factory. I manage two chickens with the money I earned from the dairy milk project. I get some extra money by selling eggs from those chickens."
CHALLENGE: "All the work is done by machine, so I have no problems in this job."
REWARDS: "I can maintain my family with my salary."

OAMRUZ ZAMAN

At a BRAC pre-primary school in Gazipur district, north of Dhaka, girls end their school day with a dance and song. BRAC operates 24,750 pre-schools nationwide.

Rani
Sari seller, Korail, Dhaka
JOB: "First I sold *pitha* [small cakes] with the loan of BRAC. But I got less profit, so I took an extra loan and started to sell saris."
CHALLENGE: "Waking early in the morning."

TANVIR-UL-HOSSAIN

sets even the humblest audiences at ease. "Every time I go into the field and see people operating under difficult circumstances, it reinforces my commitment," he maintains.

The son of a prosperous landowner and government official, Abed grew up in a house full of servants. "My mother was a very pious and kindhearted person, so we continuously had poor people coming through our home, getting food and small loans," he recalls from his top-floor office of BRAC's 21-story Dhaka headquarters. Behind him hang paintings by noted Bangladeshi artist Quamrul Hassan. (A knowledgeable art enthusiast, Abed faithfully sets aside time for museum visits on his trips abroad.)

After going to university in Dhaka and studying naval architecture in Glasgow, he migrated to London to become an accountant. Working for commercial firms, Abed was leading the comfortable life of a well-to-do expatriate. After a dozen years in the British capital, he returned to Bangladesh as treasurer, and later head of finance, for Shell Oil in the southern port city of Chittagong.

Two years later, in November 1970, the Bhola cyclone, the deadliest in history, slammed into the area, killing an estimated 500,000 people and leaving many more destitute. Abed joined friends volunteering to work in cyclone relief and was transformed by the experience. "I realized how fragile existence was for the poor, the ones who were hardest hit by the cyclone, and that I needed to start doing something more significant with my life," he recalls.

Part of his new resolve also took on a political dimension: going back to London to rally support for Bangladesh's liberation movement. "I lobbied members of Parliament, did television programs about Bangladesh being torn apart by racial murders and about the refugees streaming out of the country to escape the violence," he says. "Ultimately, we did get support from the international community, first from India, then from other countries."

After a nine-month war in which hundreds of thousands died (some say millions—the total is widely disputed), newly independent Bangladesh found itself at peace in December 1971, but with an economy in ruins—"an international basket case," in the cynical words of then US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, whose boss, President Richard Nixon, had backed Pakistan.

After the war, Abed took a non-partisan tack, selling his London flat and committing his own future to the new country. "After independence, I had no hesitation about going back to start relief work for refugees trekking home from India," he recalls. Using the $17,000 proceeds from his flat, Abed and a few friends soon focused on the needs of the poor with a new organization they dubbed the Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assistance Committee, which they changed the next year to "Rural Advancement."

The most crucial early goal, Abed explains, was simply to keep children alive. With the advice of diarrhea specialists, Abed devised a scheme, controversial at the time, to empower poor mothers to administer oral saline solution to their own youngsters. It was controversial because it relied not on doctors and clinics but on overwhelmingly illiterate villagers. The simple technique of mixing water, salt and sugar was taught door-to-door in every village, however remote, by BRAC instructors. It took years to get started and a decade to finish, but BRAC workers reached more than 12 million households, each worker earning $40 a month, on average, for carrying out this lifesaving, incentive-based health campaign. "Once we had gone to virtually every household in the country, Bangladesh became our backyard," Abed observes. "Lowering child mortality—knowing that more than 280,000 children are alive today because of BRAC—has been one of the biggest satisfactions of my entire career."

Starting in 1974, BRAC organized microfinance groups to build the economic, social and familial clout of women who would not qualify for conventional bank loans. In Korail, an urban slum of 30,000 inhabitants on a lake across the road from BRAC's headquarters, I attended a weekly meeting of a BRAC microfinance group—of which there are now 293,000 nationwide.

After navigating narrow lanes with open sewers, my BRAC guide and translator Fariduzzaman Rana led me into one of the thousands of corrugated metal shacks. Inside the one-room home of the group's leader, two dozen women sat on the floor beneath walls papered with newsprint. One by one, they handed over to the female BRAC coordinator installment payments on their 40-week loans. She jotted down each amount in a notebook.

Dressed in a pink-and-green sari, one of the loan recipients, Nurjahan, told me she has spent 18 of her 33 years in Korail. Like many residents, she fled here with her family after flooding and river erosion destroyed their home; hers was in the southern district of Barisal. Taking a loan

Mohammad Ekhlas
Embroiderer, Manikganj
JOB: "Doing embroidery on outfits sold in the Aarong shop."
NOT SHOWN: "Appliqué, cutwork."
CHALLENGE: "Cutwork is very precise and risky."
REWARDS: "I became a grade A worker from a trainer. My bosses praise my work. It pleases me most."

KHALED HASAN; ABOVE: OAMRUZ ZAMAN

M.A. Razzaque Shah, Ph.D.
Tissue culture specialist, BRAC Plant Biotechnology Laboratory, Gazipur
JOB: "Developing disease-free seeds for potato, banana, starfruit, jackfruit, olive, sweet *karamcha*, wood apple, lemon, strawberry and many more."
NOT SHOWN: "A vast portion of [my work] is done in the open fields .... I also have to work with the farmers to make them learn about the new crops."
CHALLENGE: "While researching stevia [a herbal sweetener suitable for diabetics] ... I had to research for about three years .... I see now there is a fake version of it on the market. This is harming the diabetic patients and the reputation of BRAC."
REWARDS: "When stevia was finally made and the people of my country started to accept it."

Volunteers and folk artists serve as actors in one of BRAC's more than 400 popular theater troupes. This evening's performance told the story of a laborer who fell ill and struggled against his boss's attempts to exploit his condition. As with all BRAC dramas, it concluded with a discussion among the actors and the audience. Opposite: **Men watch the performance, held in Mymensingh.**

SHAH SAZZAD HOSSAIN (2)

Sabina
Cleaner, Aarong (BRAC's craft-based department store)
JOB: "I sweep the entire floor area and stairs, clean the toilets, do the dusting and clean windows and mirrors."
NOT SHOWN: "I must have the toilets clean in the morning before the other female employees arrive."
CHALLENGE: "Sweeping."
REWARDS: "There is nothing rewarding at a cleaner's job. Do you have any other job for me?"

ZAID ISLAM

of 20,000 taka ($340) a few years ago, she started a business sewing clothes. Now she earns enough to employ two assistants and put aside 40 taka a week (68¢) in savings. Other women have invested in small grocery shops or in handicraft, weaving and tailoring businesses. In the countryside, in addition to such activities, borrowers also buy cows, poultry and modest plots of land to cultivate rice and other crops.

In this group, the loan repayment rate is 100 percent; nationwide, repayments run a remarkable 99.35 percent. "If anyone has difficulty making a payment, other members chip in," says Nurjahan.

"We felt that poor women are more disciplined than men about repayments," Abed later explains. "And it is a way to give them more control over decisions within the family," he adds. The organization does, however, make substantial loans of 50,000 to 500,000 taka ($850–$8500) to men with established small- and medium-sized enterprises, many in the garment and furniture industries.

After the meeting, Rana took me to BRAC's obstetric clinic. To get there, we passed carpentry and metal-working shops, crews of men chopping up scrap wood for cooking fires and ramshackle tea stalls with audiences glued to Bengali action films that crackled over aged television sets.

The clinic–the so-called "birthing hut"–is a clean, well-lit, cement-block building with an office and waiting room in front and a delivery room in back. Basic though it is, the two-year-old center is one of 79 located throughout the slums of Dhaka, part of BRAC's program to improve maternal and neo-natal health, which is powered by a $5.5-million grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. "It's far safer than traditional home birth," maintains program manager Sujatada Biswas. "Many expectant mothers in Korail are very afraid of hospitals, so now around 80 percent of them come here, but if there are complications, we refer them to private clinics or government hospitals."

Like the microcredit programs, health care–whether for pregnant women or TB or malaria patients–is primed by financial incentives. BRAC "volunteers" earn 30 taka (51¢) for each referral to the clinic, and another 200 taka ($3.40) for helping "their" referred woman keep coming to the clinic through the birth of her child. During the pregnancy, a full-time staff health worker also makes home visits to explain to the family what to expect and what to do in case of problems. After the baby is born, the health worker outlines such common ailments as diarrhea, dysentery and worms with the help of simple drawings depicting babies with various symptoms, together with appropriate medicines. Then, over the next six weeks, the BRAC workers make more home visits. "We've had eight to 12 births per month since we opened in early 2007 and are fortunate and very grateful that we have not lost any babies or any mothers," Biswas asserts.

Abed's commitment to saving mothers and their newborns is a deeply personal one: His first wife, Ayesha, died in childbirth in 1981, when his son Shameran was born; the boy is now an editor for a Dhaka newspaper.

"I thought at the time, 'My God, if my wife can die in a Dhaka hospital, it must be so much riskier for the poorest women having difficult childbirths in rural areas without any hospitals, without any support,'" he explains during our interview. "'That's what drives me still to cut down on maternal mortality.' At present, some 320 Bangladeshi women die for every 100,000 births, around 13,000 each year nationwide–more than 12 times the rate in industrialized countries.

"Right now, the program is in a pilot phase, targeting 30 million people," he explains. "But once we test it, make it more effective and efficient, then we will scale it up to cover the entire country." This procedure–testing a pilot program, correcting mistakes, making improvements, then scaling it up–has become the tried-and-true BRAC way of doing things.

Although the self-effacing former accountant is characteristically the first to credit others for ideas, he indeed originated many of BRAC's initiatives. About 15 years ago, Abed recalls, he had an eye-opening conversation with a woman in a village in northwest Bangladesh who had borrowed 6000 taka ($102) to buy a dairy cow. When he asked if she were pleased with her milk profits, he was shocked to hear that she had very few buyers in the village and had to sacrifice the milk for a pittance, a mere seven taka per liter (11¢ a quart).

"All of a sudden, I realized that if we could collect milk from these villages, we could sell it in Dhaka for four times as much," he explains. "That's when I got the idea of creating chilling plants in remote areas." Refrigerated trucks would then bring the milk to Dhaka, where BRAC factories would pasteurize it and produce butter, yogurt and other dairy products. After testing the idea on a limited basis, BRAC scaled it up into a nationwide grid of chilling stations. "We more than double the dairy farmers' incomes–and we also make money in the milk business, to plow the

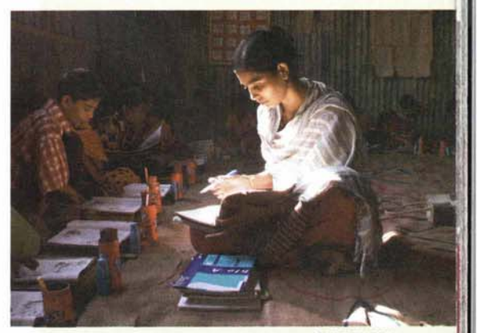
NURUN NAHAR NARGISH

Since 2007, BRAC's Ultra Poor Programme has given modest donations of animals and land to women among the poorest fifth of Bangladesh's population, including this woman near Mymensingh.

ZAID ISLAM

Each morning in Pachpara, in central Bangladesh, M. Idris Ali feeds 1000 chickens on the poultry farm he and his wife built over 26 years, aided by four loans she secured from BRAC.

Tahmina Akter
Teacher, Korail, Dhaka
JOB: "I teach at the primary level."
NOT SHOWN: "I have been married three years. I have one son. My husband is an employee of a life insurance company."
REWARDS: "I took this profession for the economic help of the family."



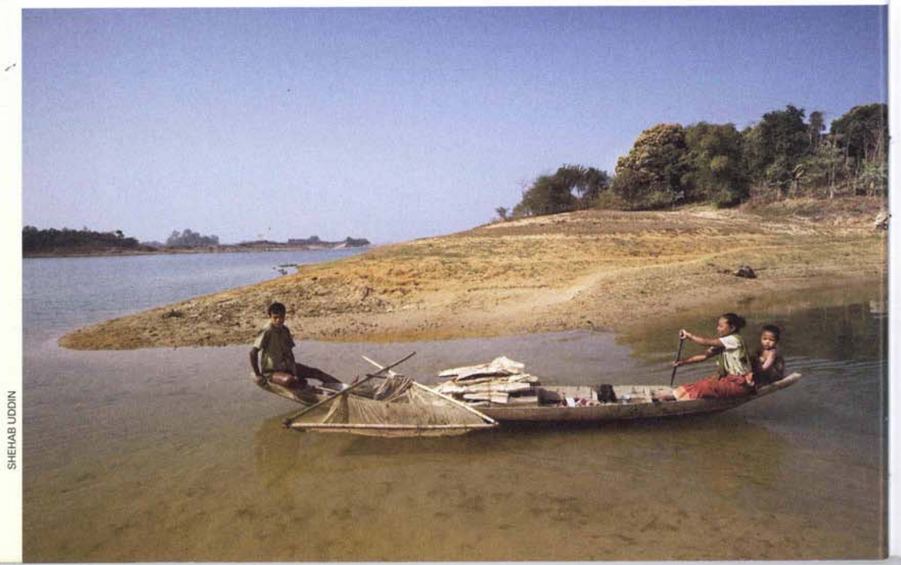
SAIKAT BHADRA

Rubina Mumtaz
Homeowner, Gazipur
JOB: Handicraft worker; Rubina came to BRAC seeking to keep the home and land that she had bought when she had a better job.
NOT SHOWN: Rubina's account of threats and abuse from her ex-husband's family in their effort to take her land.
CHALLENGE: "Keeping my home."
REWARDS: A secure home and support payments from her ex-husband. "I am very thankful to the people who have helped me fight this battle."

KHALED HASAN

The most crucial early goal, Abed explains, was simply to keep children alive.

With her son riding behind her and her husband on the lookout for fish, Khupi Tripura guides her family's boat to a meeting of her microfinance group in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.



SHEHAB UDDIN

DEBASISH SHOM

At one of BRAC's 13 craft centers, a worker in Manikganj lays out dyed fabric. Together, the craft centers employ more than 40,000 women; in addition, more than 25,000 rural cooperatives help women working from home, opposite, top, **find markets.**

profits back into other programs," Abed notes with evident satisfaction.

Conjuring up imaginative solutions to seemingly intractable problems, both in the private and public sectors, has become one of BRAC's great strengths. The organization frequently steps into the void left by a lack of private enterprise on the one hand and inadequate, poorly managed public services on the other.

Abed has assiduously kept politics at arm's length, and he has repeatedly turned down ministerial posts to avoid getting involved in factionalism. He acknowledges that the Bangladesh government may be envious, at times, of the organization's success in attracting foreign donors, who pour more than $120 million into BRAC's $485 million annual budget. "There is some tension," he admits. "When we get large sums from donors, the government thinks the money should have come to them." But donors are won over by BRAC's transparency and no-nonsense corporate approach that combines internal expense monitors and outside auditors.

Health care is a prime example of BRAC's critical role in supplementing government facilities and personnel. With the country's annual spending on health running an abysmal $12 per capita, the organization's network of close to 70,000 health volunteers literally makes the difference between life, chronic illness and death for millions of Bangladeshis.

Ask Golam Mostafa. The 45-year-old field hand, who lives in a village near Mymensingh, is recuperating from TB thanks to BRAC community health volunteer Josna Rani Sarkar. I met Mostafa and Sarkar in the village courtyard under coconut palms and towering teak trees; in the distance stretched refulgent yellow mustard fields and a patchwork of rice paddies in varying hues of green alternating with earthen brown plots awaiting planting. Sarkar, a 28-year-old housewife, was garbed in a stylish lavender *salwar kameez*, the loose-fitting pants-and-tunic outfit popular in Bangladesh, and was wearing a gold nose ring.

Four months ago, on her regular rounds to the 160 households she calls on each month, Sarkar was alarmed by Mostafa's persistent cough, and she asked him for a sputum sample for testing. When BRAC's lab confirmed TB, she started treatment—but only after the field hand had given her a 250-taka deposit ($4.25), to be returned in full after he completed the six-month regimen. It's an incentive to finish treatment, she explains, because some patients stop taking medicine when they start feeling better, before the six months are up. Not only does this potentially fatal mistake greatly heighten the risk of relapse, it also encourages the development of drug-resistant strains of TB. For her part, Sarkar earns 150 taka ($2.55) for each patient she identifies and cures. Now, every morning at eight, Mostafa stops by her house for his daily dose, supplied free by the government. Sarkar dutifully marks it down in her patient log. In two more months, he should be cured.

NURUN NAHAR NARGISH

Rahima
Health Volunteer, Manikganj
JOB: Care for patients in the Nobo Gram area of Manikganj.
NOT SHOWN: After the recent death of her husband, "I fought back in my life with a lot of struggle."
CHALLENGE: "Compared to losing my husband, none of this work is hard."
REWARDS: Pride in also being a social worker for the community.

SHEHAB UDDIN

Community health volunteers like Sarkar receive two weeks' training to identify TB, malaria and intestinal and respiratory ailments, as well as pregnancies and dental and vision problems. If necessary, they refer more serious cases to doctors. The volunteers make their rounds with portable pharmacies packed with oral saline solution, scabies and worm treatments, antihistamine syrup, vitamins, iron tablets, condoms and birth-control pills. (By offering cheap contraceptives, trusted volunteers have played a role in helping break widespread taboos around birth control.) BRAC sells the medicines and health products to the volunteers, who resell at a small markup to villagers who rarely if ever see a doctor.

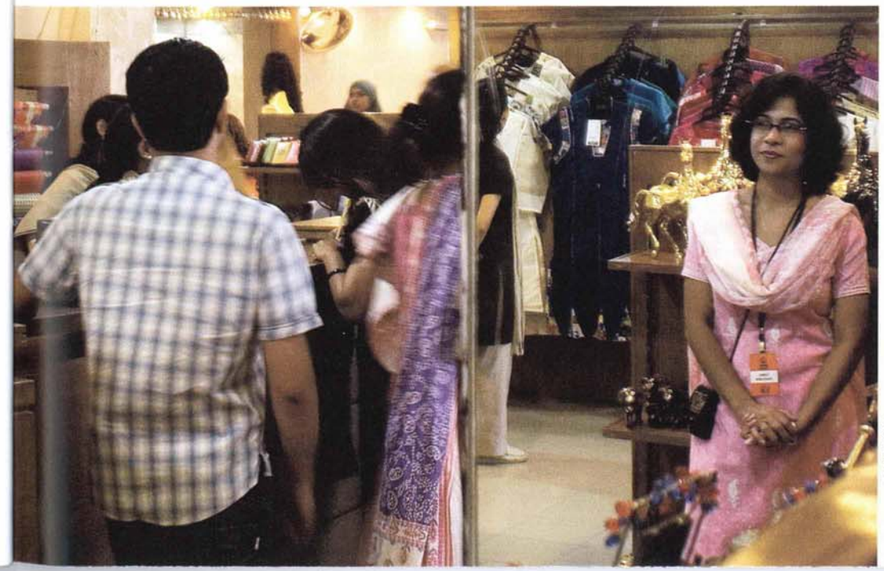
"Curing TB patients like Mostafa motivates people to come to me with their health problems," Sarkar says proudly. "I've gained a status as a healer in the community that I never had before." Her newfound ambition is to train as a full-time nurse.

Nurturing ambition is also a key function of BRAC's 63,000 pre-primary and primary schools—one of the largest private education systems in the world. It reaches 1.8 million, or around 10 percent, of the country's poorest children between the ages of four and 14. BRAC's free schools are meant for pupils who have never attended school and for dropouts, usually kids who cannot afford government school fees or who found government schools too boring, or both.

Talking with students in the three elementary schools I visited, I was impressed by how high they set their career aims, at their own "audacity of hope"—though the fact that they are in school at all is an accomplishment. "There is a sizable opportunity cost for poor parents to send their children to school," observes BRAC education director Safiqul Islam. "They're losing the income their children could have made working or begging, so school can be a painful sacrifice for the whole family."

Rouma, a bright-eyed 11-year-old girl dressed in an embroidered purple *salwar*

Exemplifying the vertical integration that is gradually increasing BRAC's self-sufficiency, the retail chain Aarong sells tradition-based clothing and home furnishings to fashion-conscious urbanites—and reinvests the profits.



ZAID ISLAM

Afsana Akhter
Medha Bikash Scholarship student, BRAC University, Dhaka
JOB: "I study in BRAC University."
REWARDS: "If I can complete my study successfully, that would be the ultimate reward for me."

MAZHAR HUSSAIN; LOWER: TANZIM IBNE WAHAB

Hosne Ara (left)
Health Volunteer, Maddha Badda, Dhaka
JOB: "I check whether anyone suffers from TB in my community. I take care of TB patients according to BRAC's instructions."
NOT SHOWN: "I get training and instruction from BRAC."
CHALLENGE: "My job is very easy. I get plenty of time to take care of my family."
REWARDS: "Smiling cured patients after six months of treatment."

BRAC has recently set up a climate-change adaptation program to work with communities coping with rising sea levels.

K.M. ASAD

Vertically integrated like its crafts operations, BRAC's dairy business now reaches from one-cow microfinance beneficiaries to the job-generating BRAC dairy in Gazipur.

SAIKAT MOJUMDER

Asia Begum
Midwife, Korail, Dhaka
JOB: "I worked as a midwife for a long time but in 2007 I received training from BRAC."
NOT SHOWN: "The development of love and emotion of a child for her mother."
REWARDS: "A mother and a midwife, both are actually the mothers."

kameez, aspires to become a journalist. She has spent part of every week discussing current events with her third-grade teacher and 31 classmates in a one-room brick schoolhouse near Manikganj, 65 kilometers (40 mi) northwest of Dhaka. Her father is a rice farmer; her mother takes care of the family cow. "I want to become a journalist because they get to travel to interesting places around the world," says Rouma, who has yet to travel outside her village.

A classmate wants to become a judge to try criminals: Like most of the students, she's been a horrified witness to local versions of mob justice. Another classmate, 10-year-old Shopna, dreams of following in the footsteps of Salma Akhter, a former BRAC student who won a national talent-search competition and who is now a Bangla pop star. Shopna's father sells puffed-rice balls in the market; her mother washes dishes there.

Drawings and stories, samples of the students' efforts in art and creative writing, decorate the school's walls. The layout of the classroom near Manikganj is replicated in BRAC schools across the country: Pupils sit in a U-formation on a burlap-covered floor; stacked in front of them are their books, a small slate and a can containing chalk, counting sticks and pencils.

In addition to a kid-friendly curriculum of Bengali, English, math, science, hygiene and environmental and social studies devised by BRAC staff to prompt students to ask questions and volunteer opinions, the pupils devote at least 20 minutes each day to singing, dancing and learning games. In one exercise, they stand up around the walls and clap, as each one randomly calls out the English name of a different country. If any child repeats a country name, the drill starts again from the beginning. The same clapping technique helps them memorize the names of flowers, birds and animals, too. At the end of my visit to the Manikganj classroom, Shopna, the singing hopeful, led the group in an enthusiastic, slightly off-key but nonetheless moving rendition of "We Shall Overcome."

Familiarizing pupils with current events, fostering imaginative writing, singing, dancing, performing and learning contests are all features that distinguish BRAC classes from government schools, which are characterized by rigid discipline and rote memorization. As a result, the dropout rate for BRAC primary schools is under five percent, compared to a disheartening 50 percent for government schools.

"Our kids take a real joy in learning," declares Islam. "They're able to go home and challenge their uncles to name 30 species of birds, like they can. This gives the students huge self-confidence.

"For girls, it's a place where they find they are equal to boys, unlike their homes, where the father usually dominates," he continues. "At school, the girls can be leaders." In fact, 70 percent of the students are girls, a forward-thinking strategy aimed at aggressively boosting the country's dismal female literacy rate of 31 percent. Parents are more likely to send their daughters to nearby BRAC schools than a longer distance to a government school; they also feel their children are safer with BRAC's married women teachers.

"Another dream I have is to create a top-level boarding school for the brightest one percent of our poor students, say 3000 kids, and give them a world-class education that would open the door for them to go to the best universities," Abed proposes. "We're now working on raising donor money for this project."

After these sheets of recycled paper are dry, other workers at BRAC's recycling plant in Mymensingh will use them to make envelopes and gift boxes.

SAIKAT BHADRA

Using a block stamp, a women creates a pattern on fabric at the Ayesha Abed Foundation craft center.

MAZHAR HUSSAIN

Elsewhere, at BRAC's biotechnology labs in Gazipur, a few kilometers north of Dhaka, researchers are developing disease-resistant strains of potatoes, strawberries, bananas and orchids that produce up to 20 percent higher yields than conventional varieties. Nearby, another lab is perfecting salt-tolerant and flood-resistant rice, as well as seeds designed to withstand the protracted and increasingly unpredictable droughts in the country's dry northwest.

Recently, BRAC set up a climate-change adaptation program to work with communities coping with rising sea levels, floods and cyclones, and is working on improving disaster preparedness and early-warning systems. "But," warns Abed, "global warming will create havoc in our country unless we can send more people abroad as emigrants."

Never one to let a crisis go to waste, the pragmatic humanitarian has a plan—one that, as usual, charts a course far into the future. Taking a puff of the Irish tobacco in his Turkish meerschaum pipe, Abed opens a folder on his desk to show me an agreement signed only a few hours earlier with officials from Ryukyu University in Okinawa for an exchange of Bangladeshi and Japanese students and researchers. "Japan is rapidly losing population, so our proposal is to create Japanese-speaking Bangladeshi entrepreneurs who will eventually send workers to Japan," he explains. "We could do the same for Korea, Spain, Italy and other countries that are facing aging societies—or even thinly populated places like Namibia," he adds, calmly taking another puff.

It's a breathtakingly bold vision. Coming from anyone less down-to-earth than Abed, it might seem quixotic. "It would take decades and could never be sufficient by itself to solve the question of where to settle our booming population," he admits, "but as a start, why not?"

Why not, indeed? After all, a generation or so ago, the very existence of an organization like BRAC would have sounded far-fetched. Today, however, this improbable, indispensable force for social change —vastly bettering the lives of 115 million of the poorest people in Bangladesh and beyond—is an undeniable reality, and it is only reasonable to expect it to continue working wonders.

Age 2
Ayesha Abed Foundation Day Care Centre, Manikganj
JOB: Spend Saturday through Thursday with 12 to 15 other children while her mother weaves, sews and dyes in the Foundation's craft center.
NOT SHOWN: Her future.

QAMRUZ ZAMAN

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About the Photographers
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Grameen Bank: M/J 99

Freedom From Want: The Remarkable Success Story of BRAC, the Global Grassroots Organization That's Winning the Fight Against Poverty.
Ian Smillie. 2009, Kumarian Press, 978-1-56549-285-1, $69.95 hb; 978-1-56549-294-3, $24.95 pb.

www.brac.net

A short article on BRAC's work outside Bangladesh can be found at www.saudiaramcoworld.com.

Art to Heart

at Washington's "Arabesque" Festival

Written by Piney Kesting
Photos courtesy of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

As the lights dimmed and the crowd hushed, not a seat was empty in the Opera House of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. Honored guests included officials of the Obama administration, the secretary-general of the Arab League, ambassadors, cultural ministers and diplomats from 22 Arab nations. As Arab music began to play, the doors of the hall opened and 140 children of the Al-Farah Choir of Damascus, Syria ran singing down the aisles. Dressed in long, colorful robes, they waved red and green scarves above their heads and spilled onto the stage to provide an exuberant opening for "Arabesque: Arts of the Arab World," the three-week festival of arts and culture that brought 800 performers from all 22 Arab nations to the United States capital.

"I found myself tearing up when these children performed," confesses James Zogby, president of the Washington, D.C.-based Arab American Institute. "I never expected to see the day when every single Arab country would be represented in America's premier institution for the performing arts."

Oman's ambassador to the United States, Hunaina Sultan Al-Mughairy, echoes Zogby. "I don't think one can overestimate the positive impact of this event, which celebrates Arab culture, being held in the United States."

> "And heart to heart is guided when they meet."
>
> –Abu 'l Atahia (748–828)

After the Al-Farah Choir's songs, the rest of the opening-night program delighted the audience with a classical performance by the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra and a performance by contemporary Lebanese composer Marcel Khalifé and his sons. There was a preview of Debbie Allen's "Oman...O Man!" commissioned especially for "Arabesque," and the finale came from the keepers of one of the world's oldest musical traditions, the Moroccan Master Musicians of Jajouka. In all, the February 23 opening was a "mezza"–a sampler–of the musical cultures that would reverberate throughout the center until March 15.

Headlining the three-week festival's opening with Byzantine, Muslim and Arab songs, children of the Joqat al-Farah ("Choir of Joy") filled the Eisenhower Theater with their voices.

CAROL PRATT

"When people talk about the Middle East, they tend to think of one 'Arab culture,'" comments Nail Al-Jubeir, director of information and congressional affairs at the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia. Admitting that he himself had never heard of Syria's Al-Farah Choir, Al-Jubeir emphasizes that the festival exposed not only westerners but also Arabs themselves to this diversity. "Isn't it ironic that the performers had to come to Washington for us to get to know each other?" he adds, laughing.

The seeds for "Arabesque" were planted more than four years ago. "I believe the arts create peace and provide a window onto understanding people," says Michael Kaiser, president of the Kennedy Center. He explains that since 2004, the Center has sponsored festivals focused on France, China and Japan; for 2009, he says, he wanted a larger festival focused on regions about which Americans have little cultural knowledge. "In the Arab world, we know only about politics and oil," Kaiser comments. "We have no knowledge of Arabs as human beings. I felt it was important for us to dispel this ignorance, and also to show the immense beauty that has been created by Arab people throughout the centuries."

Kaiser is the first to admit how little he himself knew about Arab cultures before the "Arabesque" project. "I knew what I read in the newspapers," he explains, adding that the past four years have taken him and his small staff on a "remarkable and challenging journey."

For the festival's 21 days, visitors found an open passport to the Arab world—no visas required. There were daily performances on several of the Center's nine stages; discussions of Arab literature with more than 30 authors; Arab films; an exhibition of 40 wedding dresses from all of the 22 Arab nations; contemporary art exhibits; shopping in "The Souk" ("Marketplace") and learning about the Islamic world's contributions to science in the "Exploratorium."

The Caracalla Dance Theatre, founded in 1968 in Lebanon, blended traditional costumes, an original score and modern choreography in "Knights of the Moon."

"Arabesque" is "an idea that's been a long time coming," says Alicia Adams, vice president of the Kennedy Center's international programming and "Arabesque" curator. After 9/11, she explains, the Kennedy Center kept waiting for the political situation to improve. Arguing that perhaps the best time to act is when things are at their worst, Kaiser's first step was to reach out to the Arab nation ambassadors in Washington and to the League of Arab States.

"This has been a long and fruitful relationship," comments Dr. Hussein Hassouna, the League of Arab States' ambassador to the US. Ambassadors from Arab countries gave the project unanimous early support, he says. Bader bin Saeed, head of the media section of the embassy of the United Arab Emirates, emphasizes that his country believes that "the best vehicles for crossing borders are arts and culture." The festival, he explains, "represents one of our first opportunities to display our culture to this wide an audience in the US." Jordanian ambassador Zeid Al-Hussein notes that the festival "not only showcases samples of Arab art and culture to Americans, but is also about emphasizing our humanity and shared values."

For its part, the League of Arab States served as the liaison between Kaiser and the Arab diplomatic community, and League secretary-general Amre Moussa signed the sponsoring agreement between the Kennedy Center and the Arab League.

K'Naan (left) **grew up in Mogadishu during the Somali civil war. Grandson of a renowned Somali poet, he brought his high-energy hope and protest to "Arabesque."**

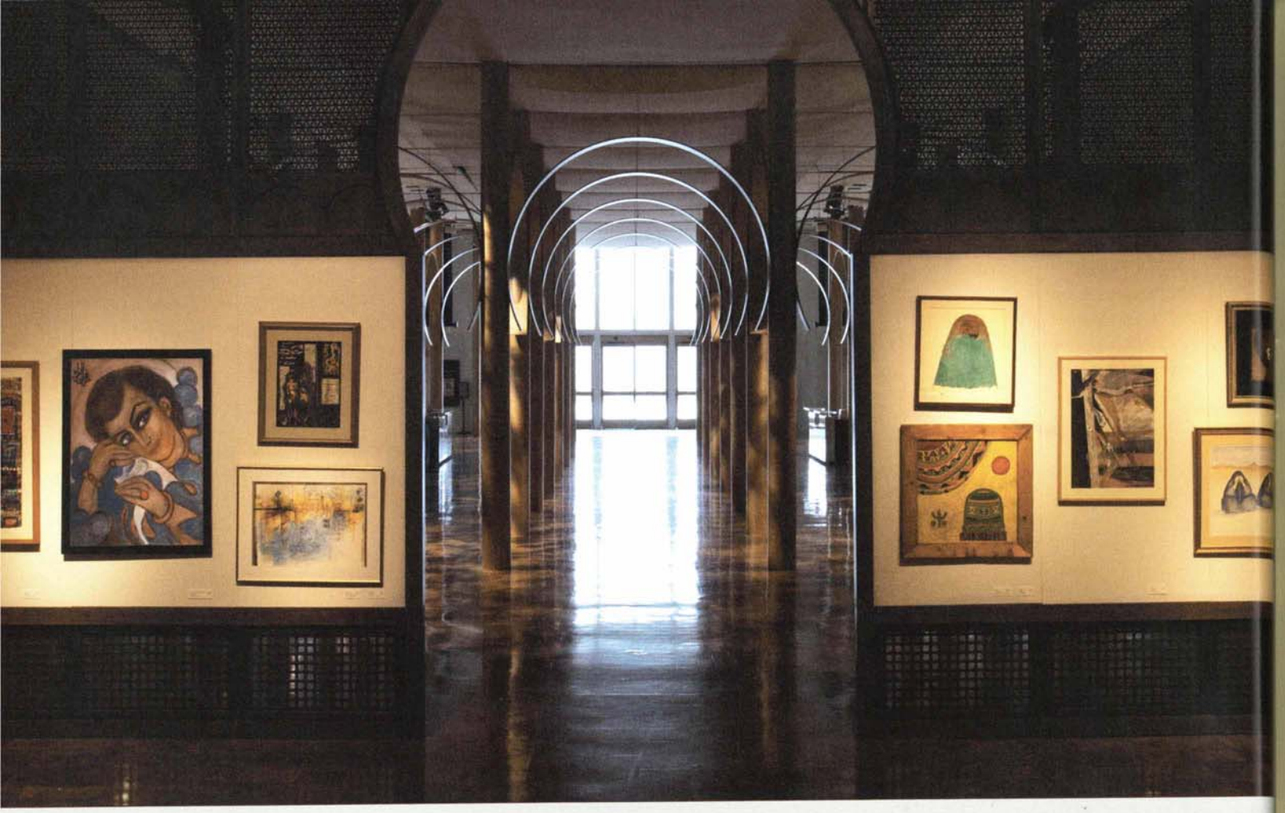
While Adams wore out her passport traveling to more than 15 countries as she scoured the region for artists, performers and co-sponsors, Kaiser reached out to the leaders of Arab organizations that, like the Kennedy Center, promote the arts. In 2007, the League of Arab States helped arrange a two-day workshop in Cairo, taught by Kaiser, for Arab arts managers. (See sidebar, p. 41.) Some 140 arts leaders from 17 Arab countries attended.

During the workshop, George Ibrahim, director of the Al-Kasaba Theatre and Cinematheque in the West Bank city of Ramallah, invited Kaiser to view first-hand the challenges in promoting arts in Palestine. Kaiser visited Ramallah twice. "I have developed a great affection for Arab culture over these past few years," he explains. "I spend a lot of time in Palestine, and I feel very much at home there."

At "Arabesque," Al-Kasaba performed "Alive from Palestine: Stories Under Occupation," both times to full houses and standing ovations. Ibrahim explains that the play is quietly powerful because each of the five actors has written a monologue based on his or her own real-life story. It changes the way the audience looks at Palestinians, he says: "We are not 'news,' we are human beings like you." Ibrahim feels that "Arabesque" will be a success if people come not to reinforce stereotypes "but to open their hearts."

CAROL PRATT (4)

Above: **Lining up before show time, some of the 4000 who filled the Millennium Stage wait to hear the free concert by hip-hop artist K'Naan.** Left: **"Brides of the Arab World" exhibited more than 40 masterpiece wedding dresses from all 22 member nations of the League of Arab States.**



RIGHT: ILAN MIZRAHI; LOWER: REGIS VOGT; LOWER RIGHT: MARGOT SCHULMAN

Exporting Expertise, Importing Art

"The Kennedy Center probably has one of the largest arts-education departments of any performing-arts center in the United States. We spend $25 million a year on arts education, out of a $150-million budget," says Darrell M. Ayers, vice president of education at the Kennedy Center. "Arabesque" has given quite a boost to the Center's ability to offer educators resources about the Arab world. According to Ayers, teacher workshops conducted in conjunction with the festival all sold out. Renowned musician and composer Simon Shaheen led two sessions that introduced teachers to Arab music, and Zeina Seikaly, director of educational outreach at the Center for Contemporary Studies at Georgetown University, guided three sessions titled "Taste of the Arab World," each focused on the cuisine of a different country. Ayers explains that "the objective is for all of these resources to be used long after the festival is over."

The part of the Kennedy Center's education department that looks outside the US is the International Arts Management Program, initiated in 2001 by Kennedy Center president Michael Kaiser when he stepped up to the post. "We can't be a national leader without being an international player," he comments.

One aspect of the international program is a nine-month fellowship that exposes 10 curators and directors of museums and performing-arts programs abroad to the methods of successful US arts organizations. There are seminars with senior Kennedy Center staff, three-month practical work rotations at the Kennedy Center and a weekly strategic planning seminar with Kaiser.

For Mohammed Abdallah, a program coordinator at the Mawred Foundation, a non-profit cultural organization in Cairo, the fellowship was "an excellent opportunity to be exposed to the American model of running arts organizations." Abdallah spent two work rotations helping the Kennedy Center with "Arabesque."

Last year, the Center launched a subsequent, four-week international summer fellowship program with four of that year's 10 fellows, from Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon and Palestine. This year, the summer program will include eight from Arab League countries.

Kaiser devotes much of his time to teaching arts leaders in the US and around the world how to improve their organizations. "If you say we need to use the arts to learn about other people, you can't then add 'but not the Arab people,'" says Kaiser. "There is tremendous value to be gained from Arab and American arts leaders working together. We hope to be teaching in the Arab world forever, and we hope American artists will find a home working in the Arab world as well."

"We can't be a national leader without being an international player," says Kennedy Center president Michael Kaiser.

For her part, Adams discovered as she traveled that despite–or at times perhaps because of–the fraught climate between Washington and the Arab countries, "everybody was delighted to have an opportunity to tell a different story and to put a new face on the region." Finding the right mix between traditional and contemporary performances and art for the exhibits was essential. "Generally, I try to focus on the contemporary, because I think it's very important for our audiences to see living, breathing countries of the 21st century," she explains.

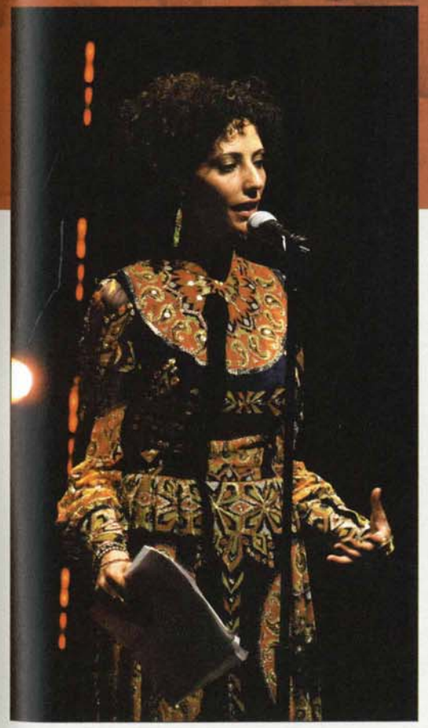
Once the performers were selected, festival coordinator Gilda Almeida and her two-person staff stepped up to arrange entry visas, air tickets, ground transport, hotels, chaperones, translators, identification badges, insurance, instrument transport, contracts and security–for all 800 performers. "People come and buy tickets to the events and they have no idea how much work went into this," she exclaims. "But that's the magic!"

Add to that effort the exhibits and the market: Two tons of cargo shipped in, including more than 60 delicately handcrafted wooden *mashrabiyyah* screens from Egypt, the 40 wedding dresses and designer Azza Fahmy's jewelry collection. "It's like pushing a hundred elephants every day at the same time," jokes Almeida. "But when you see the looks on the artists' faces, and realize how important it is to them, somehow you make it happen!"

The difficulty with exhibits that involve 22 countries, explains "Arabesque" exhibit designer Adrien Gardère, is finding "a common thread that emphasizes the legacy and the roots that link the artists." In the case of the Kennedy Center, which is neither a museum nor an exhibition hall, "you want the exhibits to enhance the performing arts and to capture the attention of a public that has come primarily for the performances," he says. In less than eight months, Gardère produced exhibits that used Islamic architectural elements and proved as fascinating and provocative as the artworks themselves.

Above: **French exhibit designer Adrien Gardère used architectural motifs associated with the Arab world to frame exhibits including "Breaking the Veils: Women Artists From the Islamic World."** Right: **A 3-D film highlighting Arab contributions to science played in the Exploratorium.**

MARGOT SCHULMAN (2)



Far left: **Poet Suheir Hammad performed "An Evening of Breaking Poems" as part of the festival's literary program.** Left: **Egyptian jewelry designer Azza Fahmy brought her blend of tradition and innovation to the exhibit hall.**

Visitors entering the Kennedy Center were captivated by a row of traditional wedding dresses in the "Brides of the Arab World" exhibit. Upstairs, Egyptian sound engineer Alaa El Kashef's "Soundscape: Souk" evoked a busy Cairo street. Nearby, the exhibit of Azza Fahmy's jewelry, a blend of traditional and modern design, was displayed nestled in stacks of unglazed clay pots. Women's art from throughout the Middle East appeared in a room constructed of *mashrabiyyah* windows–the traditional turned-wood screens that allow in exterior light while preserving interior privacy.

In the Exploratorium, visitors lay back and watched a 3-D film on the golden age of Islam, projected onto the ceiling.

By the end of the festival's first week, ticket sales for "Arabesque" stood 33 percent above the Kennedy Center's projections. Every performance was either sold out or nearly so. The daily free performances drew overflow crowds that waited in line sometimes more than an hour; in particular, Somalian hip-hop artist K'naan drew a standing-room-only audience of more than 4000 fans.

Caracalla, Lebanon's first and most prominent dance theater, was among those performing to full houses. Director Ivan Caracalla called "Arabesque" "a turning

Scouting New Horizons

On March 13, 500 Girl Scouts from the Washington, D.C. area were in the audience for the world premiere of *Oman...O Man!* Written and choreographed for "Arabesque" by Emmy Award winner Debbie Allen, the production features 37 young dancers from Los Angeles, Washington, D.C. and Oman who discover each others' cultures through dance and music.

"One of the goals of the Girl Scouts is to make our girls citizens of a multi-cultural, international world," explains Sabrina McMillan, co-service unit manager for Girl Scout Unit 42-1. "Leadership training, especially for this generation, needs to focus on problems among people."

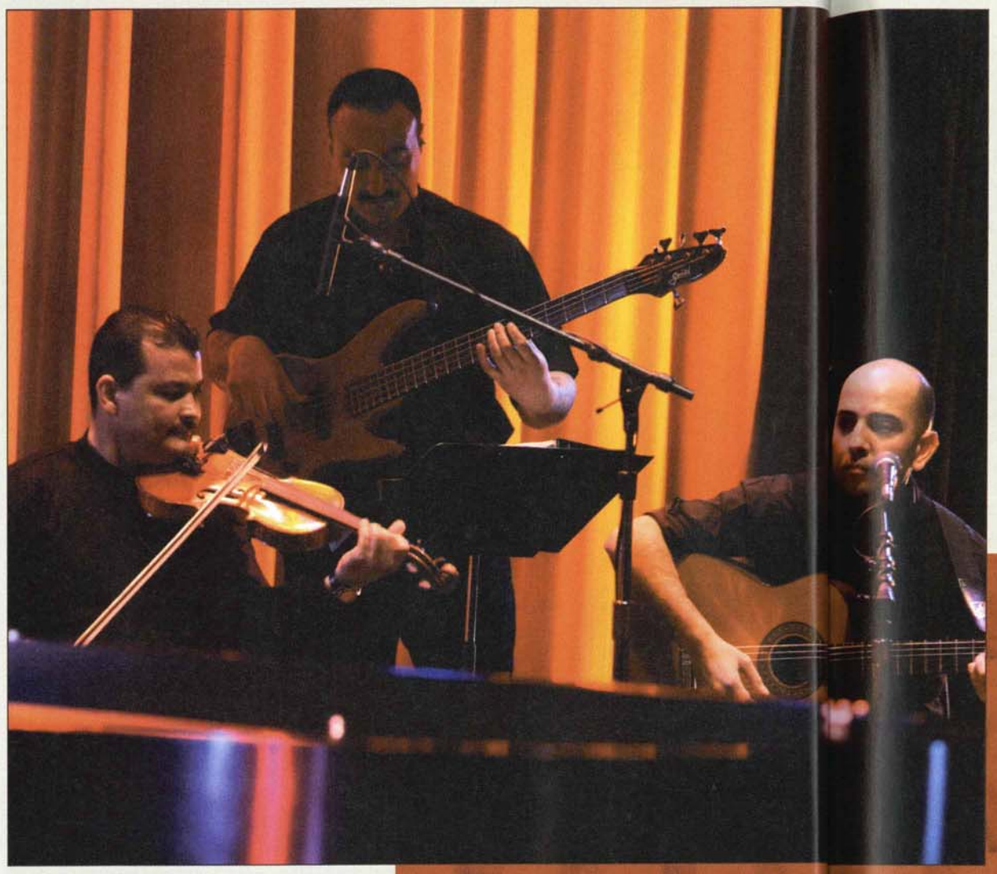
In 2008, McMillan's troop held a Muslim–Christian dialogue and invited 80 Muslim Girl Scouts to their Thinking Day that year. When she learned about "Arabesque" and the Allen production, she decided that focusing on Oman for their 2009 Thinking Day festival would be "a natural follow-up to the 2008 dialogue."

More than 100 Girl Scouts from 22 local troops took part in the February 13th festival. The Sultan Qaboos Cultural Center in Washington donated frankincense and bookmarks, and tables displayed the Omani flag and traditional dress and food, as well as information on Girl Scouts in Oman.

Left to right: **Zoe Sinkford; Ambassador to the United States from Oman Hunaina Sultan Al-Mughairy; Madison Harris; Sultan Qaboos Cultural Center Deputy Director Mubarak Al-Busaidi; and Angela Marsh-Coen.**

"It was very rewarding to see firsthand the girls' interest in Oman and how it was expanding their horizons and increasing their understanding of the world," comments Omani ambassador Hunaina Sultan Al-Mughairy, who visited the festival.

"This event, and attending 'Arabesque,' helps prepare the scouts to be international citizens," explains McMillan.



Jordan-based fusion ensemble "RUM – Tareq Al Nasser Musical Group" has offered up its explorations of Arab and western sounds to audiences in more than 40 countries.

point. This is a history-making event which will open up a new dimension, both for Arabs and the American public."

Ethnomusicologist Kay Campbell, who in 1997 co-founded the annual Massachusetts-based Arabic Music Retreat, is more cautious. She questions whether "Arabesque" can singlehandedly reinvigorate an East–West creative fusion that was beginning to flourish before 9/11. "Miracles happen in quiet connections that people make when the spotlight *isn't* on," notes Campbell. She adds that the numerous Arab and Arab–American cultural festivals that began more than 20 years ago (see sidebar, p. 43) remain critical to the ongoing effort in the US to build bridges among cultures. "The Kennedy Center festival is important because it serves up the arts of the Arab world on a silver platter, which, in a way, gives the culture credibility," says Campbell. Her hope is that, with the Kennedy Center's imprimatur, the success of "Arabesque" will encourage other presenters to bring Arab culture to American audiences nationwide.

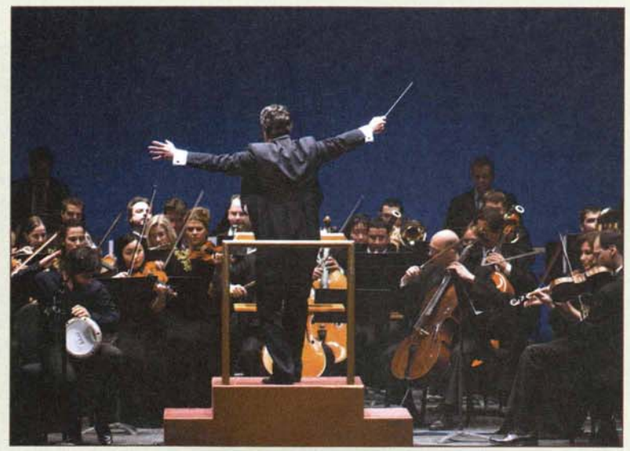
David Hamod, president and CEO of the National US–Arab Chamber of Commerce, agrees. "'Arabesque' represents a beginning, not an end," he says. "The next step is to 'take the show on the road' to communities around the United States. If we hope to improve the image of the Arab world in the US, it will take a sustained, multi-year commitment that will reach all walks of American life."

Kaiser notes that "Arabesque" is indeed just the first of many steps. "We will be bringing Arab culture here forever," he affirms. Kaiser explains that large festivals attract much more attention from both the public and the press. "We are not just trying to educate those who come: We are also trying to educate those who don't. This is an important part of our strategy," he notes.

"Twenty years from now, people will look back at this event and say, 'I remember going to that,'" comments Arab American Institute president Zogby. "Good seeds have been planted, and they will grow."

FAR LEFT: RUBY ONG; ABOVE: CAROL PRATT

TOP: MARGOT SCHULMAN; ABOVE: CAROL PRATT



Top: **On the opening night of "Arabesque," Andreas S. Wiser conducted the Qatar Philharmonic.** Above: **From the Comoros Islands off east Africa, singer/songwriter Nawal blended Indian, Persian and Arab traditions with east African Bantu polyphonies. She is the first woman musician from the islands to give performances in public.**

Piney Kesting is a Boston-based free-lance writer and consultant. Inspired by her first visit to Lebanon many years ago, she has been exploring and writing about the Middle East ever since. Published internationally, she is a frequent contributor to *Saudi Aramco World*.

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.

Master Musicians of Jajouka: N/D 01, M/A 00, J/A 96
wedding dresses: M/J 03, S/O 95, M/J 93
contributions of Arabic science: J/A 07
mashrabiyyah screens: J/A 99, J/A 93
Caracalla Dance Theatre: J/F 98
Arabic Music Retreat: S/O 02
pre–9/11 Arab music in the US: N/D 01
Simon Shaheen: M/J 96
Ali Jihad Racy: S/O 02, S/O 95

Building Bridges— One Festival at a Time

Ethnomusicologist Dr. Ali Jihad Racy of the University of California at Los Angeles notes that in the US, one of the earliest major cultural events to include performers from the Arab world was the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, also known as the World's Columbian Exposition, which brought in entertainers from what was then the Ottoman Empire. Singers, musicians, belly dancers and actors from Egypt and Syria filled the Cairo Pavilion, and one of the favorite midway attractions was the "Street in Cairo." This was an eye-opener to the American public, explains Racy, and it was one of America's first exposures to what was then referred to as "the Orient."

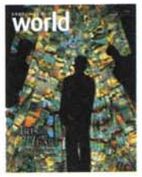
In the Arab world, scholars, musicians, composers and musicologists from across the Arab world and Europe gathered in Cairo in 1932 for the three-week Congrès du Caire. Convened by Egypt's King Fuad I, this was the first cross-cultural conference held in the Arab world. Fearing the decline of Arab music, the king had charged the attendees with its revitalization and preservation. As a result, some 360 recordings made during the congress are now in the sound archive of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris.

Today, the history of these and many subsequent cross-cultural festivals, both in the US and in the Arab world, makes a long and well-established list: The Brooklyn *Maqam* Arab Music Festival; the Arabic Music Retreat in western Massachusetts, now in its 12th year; the Aswat concerts and Zawaya-sponsored festivals in California; the ACCESS festivals in Dearborn, Michigan; Chicago's Global Fest; the International Friendship Festival in Long Beach, California; Jawaahir Dance Company in Minneapolis; and the Berklee School of Music's annual Middle East Festival in Boston, among others.

In April 2005, Yarbous Productions in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, organized the first Arab Festivals Networking Conference. Nineteen festival directors from 13 Arab nations were among the 100 participants; they represented festivals in Bahrain, Byblos, Madinah, Jerash, Marrakech, Jordan, Cairo, Mawazin and elsewhere. The conference in turn established the Arab Musical Festivals Network, which today promotes intrafestival cooperation, strengthens Arab–Palestinian cultural links and promotes emerging Arab arts and culture.

To this list we can now add "Arabesque" as a new ambassador of good will and a new affirmation, as Edward Said said, of "the power of culture over the culture of power."

Classroom Guide



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

WRITTEN BY JULIE WEISS

Julie Weiss is an education consultant based in Eliot, Maine. 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.

Teachers' Workshops: Teaching About Islam. The Center for Muslim–Christian Understanding at Georgetown University is offering a new series of full- and half-day professional-development workshops for teachers from elementary through high school. Outreach centers, school districts, civic organizations and educational institutions may select from a variety of content modules correlated to national and state academic standards and curriculum frameworks for teaching about Islam and other world religions. These modules link to many broader subject areas such as math, literature and the arts; modules on Islamic Spain and Islam in the media are included. For further information or to schedule a workshop (25 participants minimum), visit www1.georgetown.edu/sfs/acmcu/about/educationaloutreach/, contact susand@cmcuworkshops.net, or call 703-442-0638.

CLASS ACTIVITIES

This issue's activities, all of which focus on "Bangladesh's Audacity of Hope," fall into three sections. The first is based on the notion that "poverty must be tackled from a holistic viewpoint." ("Holistic" means trying to look at something from as many different ways as you can.) The second uses information about BRAC to understand key ideas about economics. The third section, Visual Analysis, analyzes one photograph that accompanies the article, and another one that doesn't!

Theme: A Holistic Approach to Tackling Poverty

In the article, Kenyan activist Wangari Maathai is quoted saying that Fazle Hasan Abed founded the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee "on the belief that poverty must be tackled from a holistic viewpoint." Through the activities in this section, you will have a chance to explore what that means.

Problems—Actions—Outcomes
"Bangladesh's Audacity of Hope" describes numerous problems that face the poorest people of Bangladesh. BRAC has tried to do something about many of these problems, and its actions have helped reduce the severity of the problems. Read the article, paying particular attention to what the problems are, what actions BRAC has taken, and what has resulted. Working with a small group, write what you discover into the following chart, which contains one completed example for you. Add more lines if you have to. After you fill in the chart, you will have a chance to study its contents more closely.

Problem	Intervention	Outcome
25% infant mortality (children dying very young)	Door-to-door education in oral rehydration	7% infant mortality

What Makes "Poverty"?
Poverty, of course, refers first to having little money and few material possessions. But there is more to it: There are many other problems that poor people often have to face. With your group, look at the problems you have listed in the left-hand column of your chart. Discuss the question: How does each relate to poverty? Does poverty cause the problem? Does the problem cause poverty? Or both? How? Let's look at the example above: a high rate of infant mortality. How does that relate to poverty? Poor people often lack access to good health care, which may cause babies to be born prematurely or with health problems. Poor people may also suffer from poor nutrition and the kinds of diseases that spread from poor sanitation (for example, the diarrhea that BRAC has tried to reduce). So a high infant mortality rate can be seen as a reality that often accompanies poverty.

With your group, go through the other problems on your chart. With each one, follow a train of thought modeled after the example in the previous paragraph. Write a sentence or two that explains the relationships you have identified between each problem and poverty. When you're done, you should have a good sense of the many problems people experience when they are poor, and how these make it difficult to escape from poverty.

A Holistic Approach
Now return to the quote that describes BRAC's philosophy: that poverty must be "tackled from a holistic viewpoint." Turn your attention to the second column of your chart. If the first column identifies the problems of poverty, the interventions in the second column identify ways of addressing those problems. Look closely at your second-column list. Each action on the list is one part of a bigger strategy to combat poverty. Based on these interventions, what do you think a "holistic" approach would be? Discuss the question with your group. After your discussion, work on your own to write a paragraph that uses examples from BRAC to answer these questions: What is a "holistic approach to tackling poverty"? Why do BRAC leaders believe that such an approach is necessary?

Theme: Economics

You may have studied economics in a textbook, or looked up economic terms in a glossary. But the ideas of economics make the most sense when you see them in action, and "Bangladesh's Audacity of Hope" has some great real-life examples. In this section of the "Classroom Guide," you'll define a few of these concepts, and you'll see how they play out in BRAC's work. By the time you're finished, hopefully you will have a deeper understanding of both economics and BRAC's efforts.

Incentives
As a class, discuss the meaning of the term *incentive*. If you're not sure what it means, go to an online economics glossary and find out. Then take two minutes and write down experiences with incentives that you've had in your own life, or examples of incentives that you've seen in movies or maybe in the news. Then have volunteers share some of their examples with the class.

Working with a partner, return to "Bangladesh's Audacity of Hope" and find the passages that deal with incentives. Reread and highlight them. With your partner, discuss how BRAC uses incentives in its programs. Then, working on your own, write a paragraph that defines incentives and then explains how BRAC uses incentives to improve the lives of people in Bangladesh. For good measure, add a concluding sentence or two explaining how providing incentives can be part of "tackling" poverty.

Opportunity Costs
Opportunity cost is another important economic concept. With your partner, find a definition of opportunity cost and brainstorm examples of opportunity costs in your own experience. Here's a hypothetical example to get you started. Let's say that you've saved enough money to buy a pair of shoes or a sweater, but not both. If you choose the sweater, the opportunity cost is the shoes you can't get; if you choose the shoes, the opportunity cost is the sweater. The concept of opportunity cost works for time, too. If you stay up an extra hour to study, the opportunity cost is the hour of sleep that you lose. If, on the other hand, you go to sleep rather than study another hour, the opportunity cost is whatever you might have learned in that extra hour.

Once you're clear on the concept of opportunity cost and have thought about it in your own experience, go back to the article with your partner and find where opportunity costs are addressed. What situation does the article describe? What is the opportunity cost in that situation? With your partner, discuss who in Bangladesh might think the benefit gained is worth the opportunity cost and who might not think so. Why do you think each person might hold the opinion he or she holds? If you were to try to persuade one of these people to change his or her opinion, how would you do it?

Vertical Integration
Vertical integration is a business term that describes what happens when a single business controls different stages of producing something and selling it to people. (For example, when the parent company of this magazine's publisher sells crude oil to a buyer who then refines it, that's *not* vertical integration; however, when Saudi Aramco refines its own crude oil into gasoline and sells it at gas stations that it owns in Saudi Arabia, that *is* vertical integration.)

According to "Bangladesh's Audacity of Hope," BRAC practices a form of vertical integration. Find the part of the article that addresses vertical integration. Make a graphic that shows how vertical integration works at BRAC. To help you in your thinking, you might want to make a graphic that also shows vertical integration for other products and businesses that feel familiar to you. Then see how the different kinds of projects at BRAC are like them, and different.

Microfinance
Microfinance is a term you might not find in your average economics textbook. But it's a term that you should know to be an informed citizen of the 21st century. *Microfinance* refers to making very small loans to very poor people, usually in developing countries. Microfinance institutions lend money to people that regular banks would likely ignore. The microfinancer's aim is to help those they lend money to work their way out of poverty. Do some Internet research to answer these questions: 1) What makes microfinance different from conventional banking? 2) What makes it so important in developing countries like Bangladesh? and 3) What are some of the effects of microfinance?

VISUAL ANALYSIS

The portrait on page 24 of BRAC founder and chairperson Fazle Hasan Abed was taken by Shehab Uddin, a student at Pathshala, the South Asian Institute of Photography in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Uddin took a magazine photography workshop with *Saudi Aramco World* Managing Editor Dick Doughty and photographer Amin Aminuzzaman.

With your classmates, take a long look at the picture. Here are a few questions to get you going: What is behind the subject? What is in front of him? What is the place he is in? What is he doing? What can you tell about him from the photo? How can you tell? Share your observations with the rest of the class.

Now look at Uddin's other photograph of Abed on this page. How is it different? What can you tell about Abed from this photograph? How? Which photo do you prefer? Why?

Now here is what Doughty had to say about what he and Uddin discussed in the workshop: "Shehab preferred [the lefthand photo of Abed on this page] because to him, the motion and color in the abstract painting behind Abed symbolized BRAC's rapid, positive changes in the country, as well as modernity. Also, he said that the painter is one of the most famous in Bangladesh. I argued that is meaningful if you know Bangladeshi art, but because most of our readers don't, they aren't likely to understand that. On the other hand, the background image in the portrait-with-desk has both a modern and a bit of a traditional look to it, and that fits better with what our readers will learn in this story. But most of all I liked the cluttered desk. It tells us he is busy and 'an ordinary guy,' because lots of us have cluttered work areas no matter what we do. This helps our readers relate to him, even though he lives in a place that's far away. Thus we concluded in our workshop that Shehab's photo would work well in a Bangladeshi magazine—it's a good shot, and it shows his face better—but my choice worked better for *Saudi Aramco World*."

Based on Doughty's explanation, list three considerations that went into publishing the photograph of Abed that appears on page 24. Now step back and think about magazine photography more generally. What does a photographer consider when he or she is taking a photograph of someone for a magazine? What does the choice of background do to what we think about a person in a photograph?

Now try it yourself. Pair up with another student and take four portraits of that person. Take each portrait in a different setting, remembering that the setting tells a viewer a lot about the person in a photograph. When the photos are done, divide the class into groups of four or five. Share your photos with your group. Ask group members what each photo "tells" them about the person in it. Then explain what you intended to convey with the settings your chose. Did you succeed?

SHEHAB UDDIN (2)

Events & Exhibitions

Garden and Cosmos: The Royal Paintings of Jodhpur

features 56 paintings from India that reveal a unique art tradition of the royal courts between the 17th and 19th centuries. During this period, the region of Jodhpur, in modern-day Rajasthan, produced a distinctive and inventive painting style. Paintings produced for the private enjoyment of the maharaja and his court brought traditional Rajasthani styles together with styles developed in the imperial court of the Mughals. The paintings range from miniatures to monumental artworks depicting the palaces, wives and families of the Jodhpur rulers. Later works depict epic narratives and demonstrate the devotion of one maharaja to an esoteric yogic tradition. Jodhpur artists rose to the challenge of creating images for metaphysical concepts and yoga narratives which had never previously been the focus of the region's court art. None of the paintings have been displayed before in Europe. British Museum, **London,** May 28 through August 23.

During the reign (1725–1751) of Maharaja Bakhat Singh, depicted at the window of his palace at Nagaur, his atelier developed a sensuous garden-palace esthetic. Painters conveyed the maharaja's pride in the opulent oasis he created by depicting palace architecture, working in an unusually large format—25 by 17 inches in this painting—and employing a bright palette reminiscent of a garden in full blossom.

CURRENT **May**

Hussein Chalayan, a Turkish Cypriot designer, has twice been named British Designer of the Year, and is renowned for his innovative use of materials, meticulous pattern cutting and progressive attitudes to new technology. This exhibition is the first comprehensive presentation of Chalayan's work in the UK. Spanning 15 years of experimental projects, it explores his creative approach, his inspirations and the many themes which influence his work, such as cultural identity, displacement and migration. Design Museum, **London**, through May 17.

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. An additional 70 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 is more than twice the size of the 1979 "King Tut" exhibition, and is on an "encore tour" of US museums. Tickets: +1-877-888-8587. **Dallas [Texas]** Museum of Art, through May 17.

Opening Tutankhamun's Tomb: The Harry Burton Photographs features 38 prints by the photographer who accompanied Howard Carter on the Tutankhamun expedition and documented the discovery of King Tut's untouched tomb. (See **Wonderful Things**, below.) The exhibition marks the first time the photographs have appeared with the Tutankhamun exhibition above. **Dallas [Texas]** Museum of Art, through May 17.

Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul explores the cultural heritage of ancient Afghanistan from the Bronze Age (2500 BC) through the rise of trade along the Silk Roads in the first century of our era. Among the nearly 230 works on view, all from the National Museum of Afghanistan in Kabul, are artifacts as old as 4000 years, as well as gold objects from the famed Bactrian Hoard, a 2000-year-old treasure of Bactrian grave goods excavated at Tillya Tepe in 1978 and long thought to have been stolen or destroyed, but rediscovered in 2003. The earliest objects in the exhibition, from Tepe Fullol in northern Afghanistan, are fragmentary gold vases dated between 2500 and 2200 BC. A second group, from the former Greek city Aï Khanum in a region conquered by Alexander the Great, reflects Mediterranean influence between the fourth and second centuries BC, and includes Corinthian capitals; bronze, ivory and stone sculptures representing Greek gods; and images of Central Asian figures carved in Hellenistic style. Trade goods from a third site, at Begram, date from the first century and include ivory statues and elaborately carved Indian ivory reliefs, as well as vases, bronzes and painted glassware, many imported from Roman, Indian, Chinese and East Asian markets. The Tillya Tepe group consists of some 100 first-century gold objects, including an exquisite crown and necklaces, belts, rings and headdresses, most inset with semi-precious stones. Many of the Bactrian objects reflect the distinctive local blend of Greek, Roman, Indian and Chinese motifs. Museum of Fine Arts **Houston**, through May 17; Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York**, June 23 through September 20.

Treasury of the World: Jewelled Arts of India in the Age of the Mughals presents more 300 pieces from the Al-Sabah Collection in Kuwait to demonstrate the artistic talents of jewelers working for Mughal patrons, the diversity of stones and styles they called on, and the purposes they served. Ivan the Great Bell Tower, State Museums of the Kremlin, **Moscow**, through May 20.

Tutankhamun: The Golden King and the Great 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 three-meter 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, including objects related to Khefren (Cheops), Hatshepsut and Psusennes I. Boisfeuillet Jones **Atlanta [Georgia]** Civic Center, through May 22.

Wonderful Things: The Harry Burton Photographs and the Discovery of the Tomb of Tutankhamun complements the Tutankhamun exhibition above. The tomb, one of the most famous archeological finds of all time, was one of the first large-scale excavations to be thoroughly documented through photography. The clearance of the tomb took 10 years, and in that time, photographer Harry Burton took more than 1400 large-format black-and-white images. The exhibition consists of 50 of Burton's photographs with explanatory labels, wall panels that discuss the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun and the role of the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute in its interpretation, the early use of photography in archeology, the photographic career of Harry Burton, and how the photographs fueled the public relations campaign of the excavators and spawned the myth of the curse of Tutankhamun. Carlos Museum, Emory University, **Atlanta, Georgia**, through May 25.

CURRENT **June**

Muslim Voices: Arts & Ideas is a 10-day, multi-venue arts festival and conference celebrating the extraordinary range of artistic expression of the Muslim world. Singer Youssou N'Dour, visual artist Shirin Neshat, actor Naseeruddin Shah and choreographer-dancer Sardono Kusumo highlight the festival, with venues throughout New York City. More than 100 artists and speakers from as far away as Asia, Africa and the Middle East—and as near as Brooklyn—will gather for performances, films, exhibitions, talks and other events ranging from the traditional (calligraphy, storytelling, classical music, chanting) to the contemporary (video installations, Arabic hip-hop). ⓘ MuslimVoices Festival.org. Venues: Asia Society, Brooklyn Academy of Music, NYU Center for Dialogues, Austrian Cultural Forum, Brooklyn Museum, Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Arts, Metropolitan Museum of Art and **New York** Public Library, June 5–14.

To Live Forever: Egyptian Treasures from the Brooklyn Museum uses some 120 pieces of jewelry, statues, coffins and vessels dating from 3600 BC to the year 400 of our era to illustrate the range of strategies and preparations that the ancient Egyptians developed to defeat death and to achieve success in the afterlife. The exhibition explores the belief that death was an enemy that could be vanquished, a primary cultural tenet of ancient Egyptian civilization. To survive in the next world, Egyptians would purchase, trade or even reuse a variety of protective objects. The exhibition explains the process of mummification, the economics and rituals of memorials, the contents of the tomb, the funeral accessories—differentiated by the class of the deceased—and the idealized afterlife. Exhibits include the vividly painted coffin of a mayor of Thebes, mummies, stone statues, gold jewelry, amulets and canopic jars. Catalog by curator Edward Bleiberg, $39.95. **Columbus [Ohio]** Museum of Art, through June 7; Chrysler Museum of Art, **Norfolk, Virginia**, October 9 through January 3.

COURTESY OF FREER AND SACKLER GALLERIES. © MEHRANGARH MUSEUM TRUST

***Evet!* I Do!** German and Turkish Wedding Culture and Fashion from 1800 to Today juxtaposes the customs and clothing associated with what is, for most people, still a very important occasion, when a simple "I do!" changes lives. Special clothing for bride and groom emphasizes the importance of the transition. Exhibits from Turkish and German museums, from the 19th century to contemporary designers' products, help answer such questions as "Why are bridal gowns traditionally white? What happens on the henna night? What—and why—is a shivaree?" Museum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte, **Dortmund, Germany**, through June 7.

What the Art Imparts: Understanding Islam Through its Visual Arts is a workshop for teachers conducted by Arab World and Islamic Resources (AWAIR). ⓘ www.awaironline.org or awair@igc.org. **Urbana-Champaign, Illinois**, June 14.

From the Land of the Taj Mahal: Paintings for India's Mughal Emperors in the Chester Beatty Library. 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, 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. Catalog $45. Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, **Kansas City, Missouri**, through June 14; **Denver [Colorado]** Art Museum, July 4 through September 27.

Akhenaton: Pharaoh of the Sun presents some 200 objects from large sculptures to personal possessions of the monotheist pharaoh and his wife, Nefertiti, to tell the political and individual stories of an extraordinary period on Egyptian history. Palazzo Bricherasio, **Turin, Italy**, through June 14.

Excavating Egypt: Great Discoveries from the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology offers a view into the lives of both royal and average Egyptians, showing more than 200 ancient objects and works of art from the earliest periods of Egyptian history to the late Roman period. The exhibition also tells the story of archeologist William Matthew Flinders Petrie (1853–1942), one of archeology's greatest pioneers, and captures the adventurous spirit of the early days of Egyptian archeology. The exhibits include one of the world's oldest garments, a rare beaded-net dress from the Pyramid Age, ca. 2400 BC; a fragment of a history book from 2400 BC; the earliest examples of metalwork in Egypt; the earliest examples of glass—so rare the Egyptians classed it with precious gems; the oldest "blueprint," written on papyrus; and the oldest known royal monument, from the reign of the legendary Scorpion King about 3100 BC. University of **Kentucky** Art Museum, **Lexington,** through June 14.

Shah 'Abbas: The Remaking of Iran explores 17th-century Iran through the reign and legacy of one of its most influential rulers, Shah 'Abbas I (reigned 1587–1629). He was a stabilizing force in Iran following a period of civil war and foreign invasion, strengthened the economy by establishing global trade links between Asia and Europe and revitalized the state religion, Shi'a Islam, which is still practiced today. The exhibition demonstrates Shah 'Abbas's social, religious and artistic influence on Iran through the gifts he endowed to major shrines in Mashhad, Ardabil and Qum and to his magnificent new capital at Isfahan. The objects, many of which have not been seen outside Iran, include copies of the Qur'an, mosque lamps, paintings, carpets, calligraphy, porcelain and silks. British Museum, **London,** through June 14.

Geometry, Illumination and Beyond: A Contemporary Artist's Dialogue With Structure and Form in Iranian Manuscript Illumination is artist Anita Chowdry's exploration of classic Iranian and Mughal manuscript illumination and its underlying geometric structure through drawings, paintings and digital images. She also examines the relationships that link traditional structure with new concepts in geometry, analyzing the structures, visual grammar and painting methods employed by 16th-century manuscript illuminators and continuing to the discovery of similar forms generated by digital fractal programs. The transcendent language of mathematics is one reason for the mesmeric quality and abstract beauty of Islamic art. Brunei Gallery, SOAS, **London,** through June 20.

"And So to Bed": Indian Bed Curtains From a Stately English Home. During the later part of the 17th century, Indian *callico* or chintz became a fashionable fabric to use in the decoration of bedrooms and small cabinets or dressing rooms. Unfortunately, little evidence of the massive number of textiles imported from India to Europe during this period has survived. Among the rare survivals are two sets of hangings—one of Indian embroidered cotton and the other of hand-painted Indian chintz—that hung in the bedroom of a member of the Ashburnham family. Using these curtains as a starting point, the exhibition explores the influence of the "Indies" on interior decoration of private spaces in 17th-century British architecture, the design and production of the curtains, and the textile trade between Europe and the East. Museum of Fine Arts, **Boston**, through June 21.

The Gates of Heaven: Visions of the World in Ancient Egypt presents about 350 artifacts spanning three millennia, from the Old Kingdom to the Roman period, placing the everyday objects in their social, religious and artistic context. In the ancient Egyptian language, "the gates of heaven" referred to the doors of a sanctuary housing the statue of a divinity. Symbolizing the passageway into the afterworld, this expression also applies to other points of contact between the different elements of the universe as conceived by the Egyptians. Musée du Louvre, **Paris**, through June 29.

CURRENT **July**

The Splendour of Isfahan: Coins From Iran features coins, images and other objects illustrating the rich history of the beautiful city in central Iran, from its pre-Islamic foundation until the present day. Exhibits show the development of numismatic styles, from the Arabic religious inscriptions of Safavid times to Persian couplets in beautiful calligraphy in the time of Shah Sultan Husayn (1694–1722). British Museum, **London**, through July 5.

Omar Khayyam, Edward FitzGerald and *The Rubaiyat* is a bi-local conference celebrating the 200th anniversary of the birth of Edward FitzGerald and the 150th anniversary of the first publication of his famous *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, which has become perhaps the most widely known poem in the world. The first two days of the conference, in Leiden, will examine the life and work of Omar Khayyam, writer, scientist, mathematician and astronomer. The second two days, in Cambridge, will focus on the life and work of the Victorian English author Edward FitzGerald (Trinity College), with emphasis on the impact of his poem, its reception in different languages and literatures, and the illustrations of the numerous editions of the text. ⓘ www.tcmo.leidenuniv.nl/index.php3?c=584 or cv223@cam.ac.uk. University of **Leiden, Netherlands**, July 6–7; **Cambridge** University, UK, July 9–10.

Perspectives: Anish Kapoor. The "Perspectives" series of contemporary Asian art resumes with "S-Curve" (2006) by internationally renowned Indian sculptor Anish Kapoor. Consisting of two seven-foot-high, 16-foot lengths of highly reflective polished steel, gently curved to create a continuous convex and concave wall, the work recalls the exploration of form that Kapoor most famously presented in "Cloud Gate" in Chicago's Millennium Park. Known for his sublime approach to pure form, space and materials since the early 1980's, Kapoor continues to examine spatial perception and the immateriality of the object through this work. Sackler Gallery, **Washington, D.C.**, through July 19.

CURRENT **August**

Sadegh Tirafkan: Persepolis Part II. Tirafkan was born in Iraq and forcibly repatriated to Iran by Saddam Hussein in 1971. Like other Iranian artists of his generation, his photographs and videos capture a society caught between the present and the past. **Los Angeles** County Museum of Art, through August 2.

A Decade of Dedication commemorates the 10th anniversary of the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia and takes visitors behind the scenes to explore exhibitions, galleries and display concepts, as well as the activities of the conservation and education departments and the remarkable Scholar's Library. Islamic Arts Museum **Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur**, through August 9.

A Yemeni Community: Photographs from the 1970s by Milton Rogovin. When social documentary photographer Milton Rogovin visited Lackawanna, New York in 1977, it was a bustling steel town with a small but unique community of immigrants from Yemen. Devastating plant closings were a few years away, and daily life for Lackawanna's Yemenis was a combination of old-world traditions and contemporary American experiences. The exhibition resurrects that community and era with 30 photographs—never before exhibited together—that serve as a meditation on immigration history, cultural identity and the ways people adapt to a constantly changing world. Arab American National Museum, **Dearborn, Michigan**, through August 16.

CURRENT **September**

Five Centuries of Indonesian Textiles: Selections from the Mary Hunt Kahlenberg Collection highlights Indonesia's rich and diverse textile traditions with more than 90 works dating from the early 15th through the 20th century, including extremely rare pieces radiocarbon dated to as early as 1403. The cultural origins and influences of the varied ethnic, linguistic and religious groups inhabiting the many islands of Indonesia show a dazzling array of abstract, figurative and geometric design motifs. **Los Angeles** County Museum of Art, through September 6.

Carvers and Collectors: The Lasting Allure of Ancient Gems features intaglios and cameos carved by master engravers in Mesopotamia and Egypt as well as Greece, Rome and Etruria. In antiquity, gems were engraved with personal or official insignia that, when impressed on wax or clay, were used to sign or seal documents, and were also often used as decorative elements in a range of media, not only set in rings and pendants but also mounted in book covers and regal paraphernalia. They were valued not only for their distinctive designs, but also for the beauty of their stones, some of which were believed to have magical properties, and thus, from the Middle Ages to the 19th century, rulers, nobles and wealthy merchants sought and traded classical gems, and carvers produced replicas and forgeries. Getty Villa, **Los Angeles**, through September 7.

Living Line: Selected Indian Drawings from the Subhash Kapoor Gift is a selection of 58 master drawings, principally from the 18th century and executed in black ink, sometimes enhanced with watercolor, typically on fine laminated papers. Such drawings were produced in the royal ateliers of the courts of Rajasthan and the Pahari hills of the Punjab and were generally retained within artist studios as reference works upon which finished paintings were based. They were also enjoyed as connoisseurs' objects in their own right, to be viewed by royal patrons in the privacy of their palaces. The exhibition signals the importance of the art of drawing in the later court arts of India. Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York**, through September 7.

Genghis Khan features artifacts from the reign of the legendary leader, including a newly discovered mummy and tomb treasures. Genghis conquered an empire three times the size of Julius

Caesar's or Alexander's, but also established national parks, a postal system and the concept of international law, and set the boundaries of some modern nations. His empire was the safest and most tolerant of lands. Approximately 200 artifacts are on display, including Mongolian costumes, headdresses and instruments from the National Museum of Mongolian History; and imperial gold, metal ornaments, beads and a tombstone from Russia's State Hermitage Museum. **Houston** Museum of Natural Science, through September 7.

The Tsars and the East: Gifts from Turkey and Iran in the Moscow Kremlin features more than 60 objects, ranging in date from the late 16th to the late 17th century, that large embassies, diplomatic missions and trade delegations of Ottomans and Safavids presented to the tsars of imperial Russia. These lavish gifts and tributes include arms and armor and jeweled ceremonial vessels and regalia intended for the Russian court or the Orthodox church. Some of the finest pieces are equestrian: stirrups with pearls, golden bridles with turquoises and rubies, and saddles covered with velvet and silk. The exhibition explores the reasons these extraordinary gifts were presented, their artistic and cultural impact, and the aesthetic styles and ceremonial etiquette they inspired that came to characterize the Russian court in the 17th century and beyond. Sackler Gallery, **Washington, D.C.**, through September 13.

Daughters of India: Photographs by Stephen P. Huyler celebrates the strength, courage, resourcefulness and creativity of Indian "everywomen" from a wide variety of backgrounds. Artistic creativity plays an important part in the lives of many of them, as they express themselves and address others through paintings, sculpture, embroidery and the creation of decorative elements in their households. For others, the full force of their creativity is brought to bear simply in overcoming the severe obstacles presented by poverty, caste prejudice, and other hardships. Fowler Museum at UCLA, **Los Angeles**, through September 13.

Nagas: Hidden Hill People of India are divided into a number of tribes and subtribes that speak as many as 30 different languages and live in the low Himalayan hills of northeastern India and Myanmar. Photographer Pablo Bartholomew offers a visual anthropology of these former headhunters now faced with both tradition and transition, particularly the preservation of their traditional culture and their interaction with western religion and influence. Rubin Museum of Art, **New York**, through September 21.

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The Secrets of Tomb 10A:

Egypt 2000 BC introduces the concepts of the afterlife in the Middle Kingdom (2040–1640 BC) by a journey through the remarkable tomb of Djehutynakht and its many objects. In a 1915 excavation, the MFA found, in jumbled disarray, the largest Middle Kingdom burial assemblage ever discovered. The tomb was filled with the funerary equipment of a local governor and his wife, and contained four beautifully painted coffins, one of which may be the finest painted coffin Egypt produced and a masterpiece of panel painting. Additionally, it included Djehutynakht's jewelry, walking sticks, canopic jars and other objects, plus models of what must have been the governor's estate, including some 60 different model boats and two dozen models of daily life, such as individual shops of carpenters, weavers, brick-makers, bakers and brewers. Most of the objects have never been displayed before. Museum of Fine Arts, **Boston**, October 18 through May 16.

The carved-wood "Bersha procession" shows a male priest leading female offering-bearers, one of many small-scale representations of life in Egypt's Middle Kingdom. Discovered in 1915 by the Harvard University–Boston Museum of Fine Arts Expedition, it dates from between 2040 BC and 1926 BC.

CURRENT **October**

Dance of Fire: Iznik Tiles and Ceramics is designed to give a comprehensive picture of Iznik ware: the tiles used to decorate monumental works of Ottoman architecture and the wide range of ceramic vessels in demand within and beyond the Ottoman Empire. The exhibition traces the development of this unique art form from the earliest examples, dating from the 15th century, to the last ones from the 17th century. The wide range of exhibits illustrates the outstanding creativity of the craftsmen of Iznik—ancient Nicea—the extraordinary diversity of their decorative repertoire, their skilled use of color and their constant search for technical innovation. The juxtaposition of pieces made from the same clay, shaped by the same potter and sometimes fired in the same kiln is important from the point of view of both art history and the history of technological change in Ottoman pottery manufacture. Sadberk Hanım Museum, Büyükdere, **Istanbul**, Turkey, through October 11.

CURRENT **November and Later**

Shrunken Treasures: Miniaturization in Books and Art highlights more than 30 small-scale manuscripts and rare books, ranging from Books of Hours and copies of the Qur'an to almanacs and books of poetry, and explores the many reasons for miniaturizing art, from the need for portability, through the desire to concentrate supernatural powers, to the ambition to make boundary-stretching works of art. Walters Art Museum, **Baltimore, Maryland**, through November 8.

The Life of Meresamun: A Temple Singer in Ancient Egypt focuses on the life of a priestess-musician in Egypt—probably Thebes—in about 800 BC. Centered on her coffin and mummy—recently scanned and "virtually" unwrapped—the exhibit illustrates the duties of a temple singer and explores what her life was like inside, as well as outside, the temple. Her temple duties are illustrated by such ritual objects as a sistrum, an ivory clapper, a harp and cult vessels; the section on her life outside the temple includes an examination of the social and legal rights of women in ancient Egypt and the professions open to them. Examples of domestic objects include dishes, jewelry and cosmetic vessels, while home religious rituals are illustrated by objects related to ancestor cults and fertility. Catalog. Oriental Institute Museum, **Chicago**, through December 6.

COMING **May**

The David Collection will reopen to the public after three years of closure and renovation. The renowned Islamic collection—some 1400 works of art and about 350 coins—will be displayed on the top floors of the collection's two buildings, guiding the visitor chronologically and geographically through 1200 years of art history. Three special galleries will concentrate on Islamic miniatures, calligraphy and textiles, and a fourth will deal with cultural-history themes common to the Islamic world. **Copenhagen**, May 15.

Walls of Algiers: Narratives of the City examines a complex history through 19th- and 20th-century photographs, postcards, illustrated books and drawings. Legendary for its white walls cascading to the Mediterranean, Algiers served as an experimental site where intricate colonial strategies were rehearsed and tested, from the time of the French conquest in 1830 until independence in 1962. These policies changed the city, creating an urban duality that separated the "Arab" quarters (the Kasbah) from the new French settlements. The exhibition also features historical voices drawn from government and military reports, scholarly essays, travel accounts, novels and poems—records annotated by a range of critics, including architect Le Corbusier, philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, filmmaker Gillo Pontecorvo, psychoanalyst Frantz Fanon and novelist Assia Dje-bar. A symposium, "Walls of Algiers: Reconsidering the Colonial Archive," will take place May 28. Getty Center, **Los Angeles**, May 19 through October 18.

Gamelan: Music of Java shows the ornate great gong from a Javanese gamelan and explores the historical and cultural context of the instrument and the role of gamelan music in Java. Gamelan ensembles are sets of wooden and metal instruments used to accompany ceremonies, feasts and dance and shadow-puppet performances. Gamelan music has a long history in Java and remains central to ritual and cultural performance today. British Museum, **London**, May 21 through July 12.

COMING **June**

The Qur'an: Text, History and Culture is the topic of the Sixth Biennial Conference on the Qur'an, to be held November 12–14. The conference will focus on textual study of both the Qur'an itself and the history of the religious, intellectual and artistic activity that developed around it, but will also deal with Qur'an-related non-textual cultural, sociological and anthropological studies. Deadline for abstracts: June 1. ⓘ www.soas.ac.uk/islamicstudies/conferences/quran2009/. School of Oriental and African Studies, **London**.

Perspectives: Women, Art and Islam features the work of five female artists whose primary commonality is their personal relationship to Islam. Their art—video, photography and installation—shows the influence of Islam on their work. Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Arts, **Brooklyn, New York**, June 4 through September 13.

Persian Visions: Contemporary Photography From Iran presents more than 60 images that provide a revealing view of Iranian life and experience. The 20 artists featured are among Iran's most celebrated and include Esmail Abbasi (references to Persian literature), Bahman Jalali, Shariyar Tavakoli (family histories), Mehran Mohajer, Shoukoufeh Alidousti (self-portraits and family photographs) and Ebrahim Kahdem-Bayatvin. Some have lived abroad and returned to view their homeland from a changed perspective. Anti-exotic and specific, these images make up the first survey of contemporary Iranian photography to be presented in the United States. Telfair Museum of Art, **Savannah, Georgia**, June 10 through August 31; Haggerty Museum of Art, **Milwaukee, Wisconsin**, October 15 through January 17.

A Collector's Passion: South Asian Selections from the Nalin Collection highlights the breadth of the holdings of Dr. David Nalin and explores South Asian art through a single collector's point of view. Rubin Museum of Art, **New York**, June 12 through November 9.

Palestine: Creation in All Its States follows on the IMA's 1997 show "Contemporary Palestinian Artists"—and the selection of Jerusalem as the Arab cultural capital for 2009—to present contemporary artists from Palestine or the diaspora who are working to identify elements of a distinctively Palestinian esthetic through the lens of their uniquely complex historical and political situation. The current exhibition adds depth by allowing comparisons of the work of women artists (Reem Bader, Rana Bishara, Rula Halawani, Mona Hatoum, Noel Jabbour, Raeda Saada, Ahlam Shibli), "grand old men" (Kamal Boullata, Samia Halaby, Laila Shawa, Suha Shuman) and "young lions" (Fawzy Amrany, Hazem Harb, Steve Sabella). Institut du Monde Arabe, **Paris**, June 23 through November 22.

COMING **July**

Access and Rights is the topic of the Fifth Islamic Manuscript Conference. Improving access to manuscripts through digitization and electronic ordering and delivery systems while ensuring their proper long-term preservation is fundamental to the successful future study of the Islamic heritage. ⓘ tima@islamicmanuscript.org. Christ's College, University of **Cambridge, UK**, July 24–26.

COMING **August**

Raqs Nouveau: Turath wa Jadid (Traditional and New) is a new Jawaahir Dance Company production that presents new spins on traditional styles of Middle Eastern dance and music, with the Georges Lammam Ensemble providing the music. Southern Theater, **Minneapolis, Minnesota**, August 13–23.

COMING **September**

Rhythms of India: The Art of Nandalal Bose is the first comprehensive exhibition outside Asia to survey the expansive repertoire of Nandalal Bose (1882–1966), the father of modern art in India. It features close to 100 of Bose's finest paintings, executed in a variety of styles and media, and reveals how Bose contributed to the success of India's nonviolent struggle for independence through his close association with Mahatma Gandhi. The exhibition thus explores the crucial period of India's transition from British colony to independent nation through the lens of the country's premier artist of the time, and reveals how he laid the foundation for modern visual culture in India. Art Institute of **Chicago**, September 13 through November 29.

Dutch New York Between East and West: The World of Margrieta van Varick explores the life, times and possessions of a 17th-century New York shopkeeper. Born in the Netherlands, Margrieta van Varick spent part of her life in Malacca (now Malaysia) and arrived in Flatbush in 1686 with an astonishing array of eastern and European goods. A 1696 inventory—the heart of the exhibition—documents her personal and commercial belongings but no other information about her is known. The exhibition reveals much about van Varick's time and place, demonstrates ways in which much else about her can be inferred, and examines why various of her possessions, including those from the Muslim East, might have been in the hands of a Flatbush minister's wife and shopkeeper. Catalog. ⓘ 212-501-3011 or programs@bgc.bard.edu. Bard Graduate Center, **New York**, September 17 through January 3.

COMING **October**

Alexander the Great and the Opening of the World: Asia's Cultures in Transition follows the conqueror through Central Asia and focuses on the extensive cultural, economic and social changes unleashed by his passage. The exhibition includes objects lent by Uzbek museums (Samarkand, Tashkent and Ter-mes) and the Tajikistan's National Museum of Antiquity as well as the Louvre, the British Museum and the Berlin Museums. Reiss-Engelhorn Museums, **Mannheim, Germany**, October 3 through February 21.

Grass Roots: African Origins of an American Art features approximately 225 humble but beautifully crafted coiled baskets that teach about the creativity and artistry of Africans in America from the 17th century to the present. The exhibition traces the parallel histories of coiled baskets in Africa and the Americas starting from the domestication of rice in Africa two millennia ago, through the history of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the Carolina rice plantation, to the present. Fowler Museum at UCLA, **Los Angeles**, October 4 through January 10.

Maharaja: The Splendour of India's Royal Courts opens with the period of chaos and adventure that followed the collapse of the Mughal empire in the early 18th century and closes at the end of British rule in 1947. It explores the extraordinary culture of princely India, showcasing both Indian and western works that reflect different aspects of royal life. The exhibits include paintings, photography, textiles and dress, jewelry, jeweled objects, metalwork and furniture, and are explored within a broader historical context of princely life and ideals, patronage, court culture and alliances. Victoria and Albert Museum, **London**, October 10 through January 17.

Heroes and Villains: The Battle for Good in India's Comics examines the legacy of heroes and heroines of ancient Indian mythology in contemporary South Asian culture through the comic-book genre. Indian superheroes and their archenemies are visualized from ancient archetypes long depicted in traditional painting and sculpture, and are deeply ingrained in India's historical imagination. At the same time, the stylistic rendering of comic-book characters draws upon a wide range of modern genres from America and Asia, so the history of Indian comic books can be understood as an ongoing dialogue between American and South Asian visual culture. The exhibition presents a selection of vintage Indian and American comics and contemporary pencil-and-ink–drawn character explorations from the current Virgin Comic series *Ramayan* and *Devi*, as well as a selection of historical Indian court paintings, underlining the continuity of the heroic narrative tradition in Indian art. Approximately 57 works will be on view in addition to an on-screen display showing the multi-layered process of comic book production. **Los Angeles** County Museum of Art, October 15 through February 7.

Falnama: The Book of Omens is the first exhibition ever devoted to a category of extraordinary illustrated texts known as *Falnama* (Book[s] of Omens). Notable for their monumental size, brilliantly painted compositions and unusual subject matter, the manuscripts, created in Safavid Iran and Ottoman Turkey in the 16th and early 17th centuries, remain largely unpublished. Yet, whether by consulting the position of the planets, casting horoscopes or interpreting dreams, the art of divination was widely practiced throughout the Islamic world, and these texts were the most splendid tools ever devised to foretell the future. The exhibition sheds new light on their artistic, cultural and pious significance, displaying some 60 works of art. Catalog. Sackler Gallery, **Washington, D.C.**, October 24 through January 24.

Nubian Vault Adobe Workshop gives participants hands-on instruction in building the classic self-supporting Middle Eastern adobe-brick vault, roofing a 30-by-10-foot structure. ⓘ swan@adobealliance.org. **Presidio, Texas**, October 27 through mid-November.

PERMANENT

Egyptology Galleries: A new display of some 600 objects from the museum's superb collections of Egyptian and Sudanese material—including the mummy of an ancient Egyptian girl showing the full decorative details, two coffin cases featuring a very rare depiction of a three-headed god, and a magnificent stela (grave-marker) with a prayer to the dead in hieroglyphics—has opened at the **Brighton [UK]** Museum and Art Gallery.

The Tomb-Chapel of Nebamun: Ancient Egyptian Life and Death displays 11 wall-paintings from the tomb-chapel of a wealthy Egyptian official. Dating from about 1350 BC, they are some of the most famous works of art from ancient Egypt. Following 10 years of conservation and research, the paintings are now on display together for the first time. Objects dating from the same time period and a 3-D animation help set the tomb-chapel in context. British Museum, **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 at their Web sites. Readers are welcome to submit information for possible inclusion in this listing. Some listings have been kindly provided to us by Canvas, *the art and culture magazine for the Middle East and the Arab world.*

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