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Cover



Fuad Kouichi Honda's "The Pink Spiral Nebula" features calligraphy of verses from the Qur'an's Surat Al-Naml (The Ants), beginning, "Who has created the heavens and the earth, and who sends you down rain from the sky?" To Honda, "calligraphy is an instrument by which humans express

respect for the Divine." Photo courtesy of the artist. In accordance with Muslim tradition, readers are requested to treat pages containing holy writ with due respect.

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Back Cover



Sailors aboard the Triumph of Righteousness celebrated with songs and drums as their ship entered Oman's Mutrah Harbor in 1939, completing a 4000-

kilometer voyage from Zanzibar. Photo by Alan Villiers/ National Maritime Museum.

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





Sons of the Wind

Photographed by Alan Villiers

Photographs courtesy of the National Maritime Museum

Intent on documenting the final days of commercial wind-powered sailing, Australian mariner and photographer Alan Villiers in 1938 boarded a traditional merchant ship of the Arabian Peninsula—a dhow—for a voyage

from Aden down the East African coast and back, then up the Arabian Gulf

to Kuwait. His photographs are a respectful and loving testament to

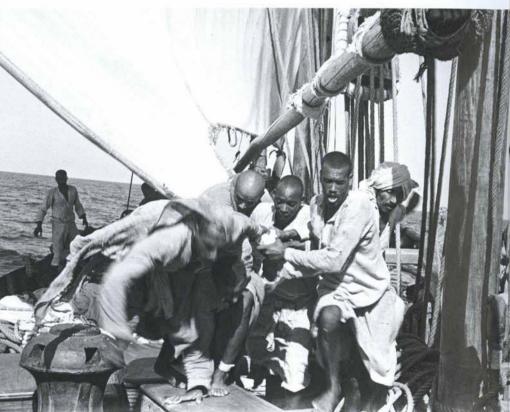
Written by William Facey

centuries of maritime skills.

Risotto's Roots

photographed by Jeff Koehler

Today's signature rice dish of northern Italy was developed in the Po River Valley, where rice arrived some 900 years ago, probably from Sicily. It was part of the long list of crops the Arabs brought to the northern Mediterranean.



"Shodo 'Arabi"

Written by Sheldon Chad Photographed by Michael Yamashita

Japan is home to one of the world's great traditions of calligraphy, and in Japanese shodo means "the way of writing." In recent years, a few Japanese calligraphers have tried their hand at Arabic, creating what master calligrapher Fuad Kouichi Honda calls shodo 'arabi--" the way of Arabic writing."

The Life of **Omar ibn Said**

Written by Jonathan Curiel Photographs courtesy of Derrick Beard

About one in five African slaves brought to the New World between 1500 and the mid-19th century was Muslim. Of them, only Omar ibn Said is known to have written a brief autobiography in Arabic. Remarkable for their humble eloquence and generosity of spirit, Said's handwritten pages live in the memory of Fayetteville, North Carolina.





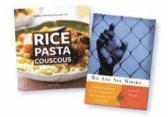


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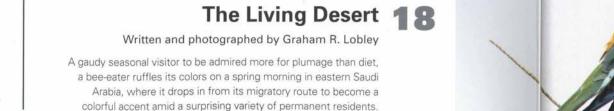


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Written by Julie Weiss





le rivers, rice thrived in the Po ley's clay-rich soil and warm,

seventh and eighth centuries, rice followed the expansion of Islam, and the agricultural revolution brought by the Arabs, to North Africa, southern Spain (al-Andalus) and,

from there, to Sicily, France,

Portugal and Italy. But in the north of Italy, rice has had a more enduring impact than anywhere else in the Mediter ranean, for it has transfigured the landscape, the economy, the cuisine and even the region's people

Rice did not arrive alone on the northern shores of the Mediterranean: The Arabs also introduced lemons, oranges, eggplant, artichokes, sugarcane, pomegranates, watermelon, figs and spices. Nor did rice arrive entirely a stranger: The Romans knew rice, but only as an expensive

In the wetlands south of Valencia, the Arabs of al-Andalus built some 8000 noria, or waterwheels, and rice was among the crops that have flourished there ever since. Ibrahim al-'Awwam, an agriculturist in Seville during the 12th

bright green frogs plopped into the water.



Rice produces more food energy per hectare than wheat,

maize or barley.

It took some 5000 years for rice to reach northern Italy from China via India, Persia, the Middle East and Sicily-though exactly who provided it to the monks of Lucedio remains unknown. The Po Valley region now grows more than half the rice produced by the European Union, and much of it is traded here, in Vercelli's Borsa Merci.

century, wrote in his Kitab al-Filaha (Book of Agriculture) about the seasonal phases of rice farming, its needs for irrigation and drainage, how to fight parasites and how to harvest and store the crop. Al-'Awwam's statement of the best way to cook it-with butter, oil, fat and milk, he wrote-is one of the earliest references to preparing rice in the Mediterranean region.

Following the Muslim conquest of Sicily in the ninth century, rice was grown and exported from there by the 10th century. Although risicoltura-rice growing-gradually died out in Sicily, it is likely that it was from there that production moved north to the moist, flat and fertile Vercelli plains.

In 1123, Cistercian monks from Burgundy, France founded Lucedio Abbey and began to dig channels to get water moving

through the marshy land. By the end of the 15th century, documents show they farmed 2700 hectares (6670 acres), and of those, 1732 grew rice-about one-third of the Vercelli plain's rice production at the time and more than three times what the Principato grows today. By the mid-16th century, rice cultivation in the region

> The expansion of rice was opportune, for bubonic plague had ravaged Italy, mainly in the mid-14th century. Rice, with higher nutritional content than millet, rve, sorghum or barley, was among the foods that helped nourish society back to strength. In addition, rice produces more food energy and protein per hectare than wheat, corn (maize) or barley, and its harvests are more dependable.

> In 1784, Pope Pius IV secularized Lucedio Abbey. The estate passed through successive owners, including the House of Savoy and Napoleon Bonaparte, and in 1822 was split among three investors. One was an ancestor of Count di Wiesenhoff, the current owner; another was the father of Camille Cayour. whose name is attached to an 85-kilometer (53-mi) canal, finished in 1866, that more

had grown to around 50,000 hectares (123,550 acres).



This farm advertising rice production and sales near Vercelli is one of more than 4500 rice farms throughout Italy. Below, from top left: Among Italy's more than 100 varieties of rice, the short-grained carnaroli, balto, vialone nano and arborio rices are the most popular among northern Italians, who eat almost twice as much rice as the average European

than doubled the area under rice cultivation in the region. Cavour himself died five years before the completion of what is now consid-

ered the most important water engineering project in the region, following a career in which he served not only as longtime prime minister of Piemonte, but also as the first prime minister of a united Italy.

The canal had effects beyond the region. Giuseppe Sarasso, a Vercelli agronomist and chairman of the Italian rice exchange, says Cavour had two goals: "Irrigation and industrial revolution. The second begins with water flowing." Engineers installed small turbines at water gates along the canal to produce electricity, and it became, to Spanish historian Rosa Tovar,

"one of the principal sources of wealth and [the] motor of the region's enormous economic development."

Today, Italy produces more than half the rice in Europe, and the provinces of Vercelli, Novara and Pavia account for 93 percent of that. Italy exports more than half of this production, mainly to northern Europe, Turkey and Syria.

Vercelli, a handsome, prosperous city of 45,000 a few minutes' drive from the Principato, is the capital of Italian rice. Near its medieval Torre dell'Angelo, which presides over the Piazza Cavour, the old market square, is an early-1970's building housing the Borsa Merci, the Vercelli rice exchange.

"We trade half of all Italy's rice here," Sarasso says, standing above the 51 tables in the marble-floored hall where farmers and their agents meet millers to sell harvested rice. A large computer screen at one end displays current prices. Trading takes place on

> Tuesdays and Friday mornings, and after trading each Tuesday, a group of eight representatives meets to set the week's minimum and maximum prices, which become the European standard.

More than 100 varieties of rice grow today on the Vercelli plains, though the most traditional, and the most soughtafter, are japonica short-grain varieties. Arborio is the bestknown outside Italy, largely because it was the first to be exported. Bulky, starchy baldo and stocky vialone nano are





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Until the 1970's, the Vercelli rice harvest depended on women who worked as seasonal harvesters. called mondine. In the 1940's and 1950's, Elvira Fusaro and Carla Varalda worked at Lucedio during the six-week harvest. They recall being paid not in money, but in rice. Meals were rice with beans. "Twice a week we ate pasta," Fusaro says. Varalda recalls the long walks back and forth from the fields and the strain on her back, which still bothers her. "The work was hard," Fusaro says, "but we sang all the time. And at night there was music." Both met local men during their mondine days, married and have remained near Lucedio.

local favorites, while Italian chefs regard carnaroli to be king of the rices, with its large, highly absorbent grain that holds its shape and texture while cooking-making it perfect for the region's most celebrated dish, risotto. (See "Risotto," page 7.) Thanks to the popularity of savory risottos and rice-based summer salads studded with garden vegetables, northern Italians consume about nine kilograms (20 lbs) of rice a year per person-three times that of southern Italians and nearly double the European average of five kilograms (11 lbs).

It was not only canals, however, that made the region's rice possible. From the mid-19th century until the early 1960's, the muscle for rice transplanting, weeding and, to a lesser extent, harvesting came from women known as mondine ("rice weeders"). In early summer, they arrived as seasonal

workers, mainly from small mountain villages, and for about 40 days they replanted rice and weeded the paddy fields, sleeping at night in barracks on straw mattresses, and taking much of their pay in rice from the previous harvest: The standard wage was one kilogram (35 oz) per day of work.

And the work was strenuous. Mondine stood bent over, thighdeep in sluggish water under the summer sun. Transplanting required more skill than weeding: It meant walking backward, bent over, with the weight on the spine, while using both hands to distribute the sprouted rice.

The peak of the mondine era came during the Korean War, when the global demand for rice skyrocketed. In the spring of 1953, the mondine numbered 157,000, and some 63,000 came from outside the region. But a decade later, Sarasso explains, "women were leaving this type of physical, outdoor work for factories, where the conditions were better." He shrugged his tall frame. "Farmers had to replace them with technology." In 1964 there were just 24,000 mondine.

The opening of the bavour banal in 1866 helped double the area of Vercelli's rice farms.

On Lucedio, mondine stopped coming altogether in the 1970's. Now, harvesting that once required 500 mondine is accomplished by only five people, and it's the same story on rice farms across the plains.

But the legacy of the mondine lives on. During those years when women traveled infrequently, the work in the rice paddies of the Vercelli plain offered a rare chance for communities to intermingle. As a result, some mondine from outside the region married and stayed on the plains, and their families are residents today. Rice, brought centuries before, helped mix the region's bloodlines.

On the July day I visited the Principato di Lucedio, the mondine would have been nearing the end of their short season's work. But I saw only the occasional tractor in the fields. Only the frogs wade among the green shoots now.



The writing, recipes and photographs of longtime Barcelona resident Jeff Koehler (www.jeff-koehler.com) have appeared in Saveur, Gourmet, Food & Wine, The Washington Post, The Los Angeles Times, dwell, Men's Journal, Afar, and Tin House. His new book, Rice Pasta Couscous: The

Heart of the Mediterranean Kitchen (2009, Chronicle Books) has been nominated for a Gourmand World Cookbook Award

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rice cookery: J/A 06, J/F 99, J/F 97, J/F 96, J/A 92 rice introduction: S/O 09, M/A 01 Muslim Sicily: N/D 78



Risotto is Italy's signature rice dish. A favorite primo (first course), its characteristic creamy texture and chewy-butfirm grains steeped in a savory, flavoring stock relate it to Spanish paella while standing distinct from Middle Eastern *pilaf* (or *pilau*) with its dry, individual grains. Generally just a few ingredients flavor the grains—fresh asparagus in spring, porcin

"Highly absorbent, short-grain rice is key," says chef Angelo Silvestro of Ristorante Balin, which stands a few kilometers

vialone nano all work well, too, he adds.

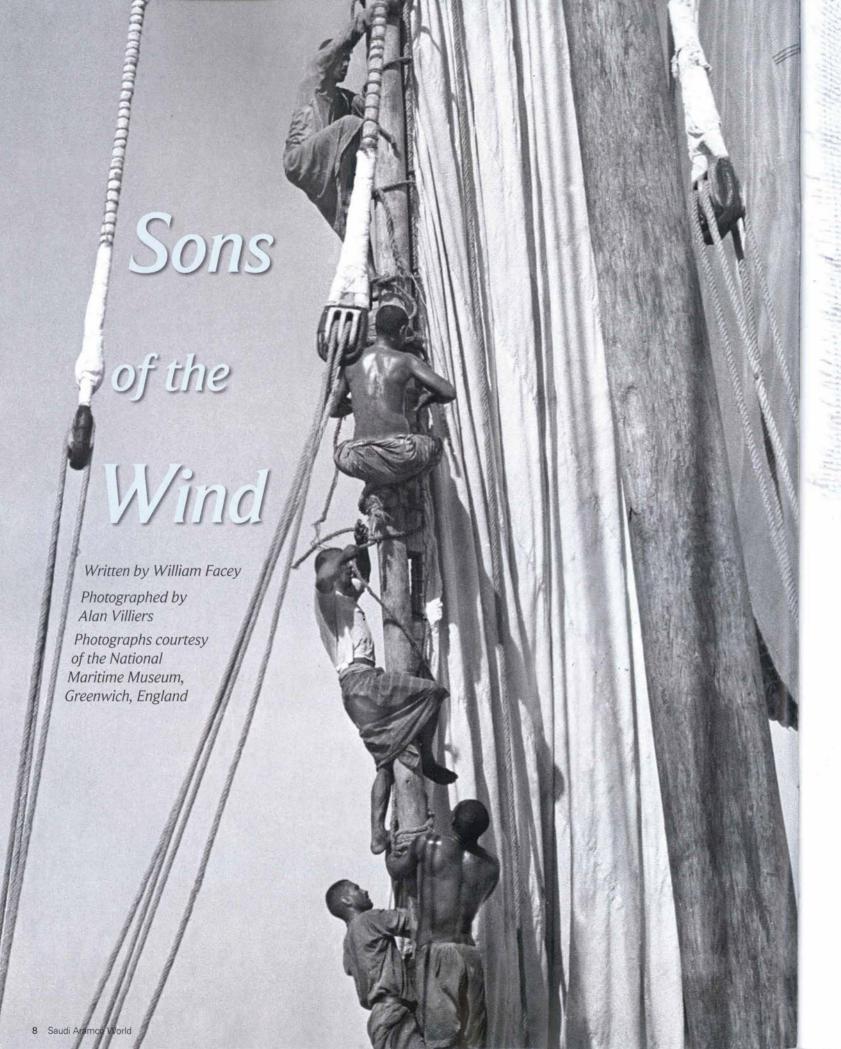
firm," he explains while vigorously stirring a copper pot of fresh tomato risotto. That's done by adding stock gradually, a ladle at a time, as it

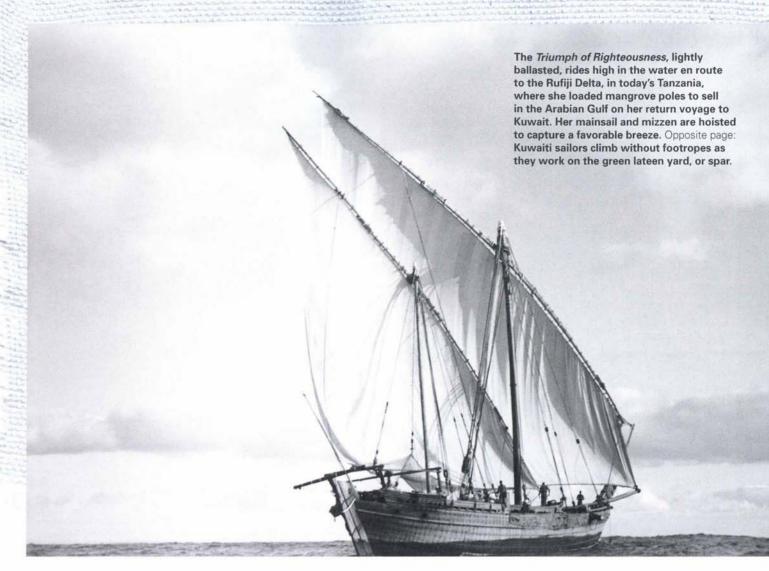
For a sublime risotto, Angelo points out that, in addition to top sea-onal, local ingredients, a risotto chef's most important tool is literally stirring in some parmigiano-reggiano cheese and dipping in a forefinger to taste the result. "You have to taste as you cook."

Above: Chef Angelo Silvestro of Vercelli's Ristorante Balin is a founding member of L'Associazione Gran Maestri del Risotto. Right Balin's tomato risotto is a refinement of an essentially simple process: The rice is first sautéed in butter, and then cooked by boiling it in a small amount of stock and-depending on the risotto-a few or many other ingredients. As the liquid begins to be absorbed by the rice, a bit more is stirred in, and so on until the rice is cooked and the flavors of the liquid have been absorbed.









"One cannot just go to Arabia, and expect to discover much about Arabs and their dhows."

o writes Alan Villiers in the preface to his remarkable sailing book, *Sons of Sindbad*.

Determined to defy his own prediction, Villiers then goes on to explain how he did just that. In the process, he records the swan song of an already ancient industry, and even of a way of life.

Granted, the Australian mariner and author was probably better prepared than any other outsider for the task. He had years of experience on sailing ships under his oilskins, and he would achieve fame in his own lifetime (1903–1982) as the leading documenter of the last days of commercial sail in square-rigged ships. After completing a three-year, 93,000-kilometer (57,800-mi) voyage around the world in his own three-masted schooner, *Joseph Conrad*, he ventured into new territory in 1938 and 1939, spending a year among seafaring Arabs. That's when he undertook the arduous, eye-opening journey from Aden to East Africa and then back east around the Arabian Peninsula to Kuwait on a high-prowed, 150-ton Kuwaiti dhow of the kind known as a boom. He wrote about the trip in *Sons of Sindbad*, published in 1940.

The book is among the classics of Arabian travel literature. Like his contemporary Wilfred

The siger, who won fame for twice crossing Arabia's great sand sea, the Rub' al-Khali, in the 1940's, Villiers was not only a writer finely attuned to his environment but also a gifted photographer. Indeed, these and

Ali bin Nasr al-Nejdi, the *nakhoda*, or captain, of the 150-ton *Triumph of Righteousness*, was a natural leader who elicited the unquestioning loyalty of his crew. He was about 30 years old.







Above: Mariners spent many hours on deck stitching sails, tasks as old as sailing itself. They are pictured off the Somali coast. Left: The vessel had two helmsmen, Hassan and Ibrahim, both highly skilled at maneuvering in tight situations and against the wind. Ibrahim is at the wheel.

other similarities between the two men entitle Villiers, who is much less known than his English counterpart, to be regarded as the Thesiger of the Arabian Sea.

Born in Melbourne, Australia, where his father, a tram driver, wrote articles for workingmen's papers and was something of a poet, Villiers was exposed from an early age to the idea of writing, and inculcated with a very Australian egalitarianism and sense of fair play. As a boy, he was irresistibly drawn to the docks and the ships engaged in the deep-sea bulk-cargo trade to Europe. These were still square-rigged tall ships, and he fell rapidly in thrall to the power of wind and sail, championing its continued use. Though he was not

against labor-saving technology in principle, his lifelong distaste for mechanized shipping was one that Thesigernotoriously repelled by modern conveniences-would have understood.

Several of Villiers's books

became best-sellers during his early career working and writing about life on board the grain ships voyaging between Australia and Britain. Here, he found the openness and egalitarianism he so admired among the young Swedish-speaking Finns who made up many of the crews.

In 1938-1939, he would be impressed by the same quality of instinctive teamwork and concern for one's crewmates he found on board the Kuwaiti boom Bayan (which he loosely translates as Triumph of Righteousness), the centerpiece of Sons of Sindbad. By the time he decided to travel to Aden, at the southwestern tip of the Arabian Peninsula, Villiers had already completed Cruise of the

Conrad (1937), about his circumnavigation of the globe, which would be another best-seller.'

While Villiers was engaged in that and earlier voyages, European sail had been steadily dwindling, and many of the ships he had known had been sold off as hulks or scrapped. After selling the Joseph Conrad to pay his debts from that trip (she was bought by an American millionaire who happened to see her in New York harbor) and after publishing the book named after her, he decided to turn his attention to seafaring in pre-industrial, cultures. He opted first for the Arabian-dhow world of the western Indian Ocean because it seemed to him, "having looked far and wide over a seafaring lifetime, that as pure sailing craft carrying on their unspoiled ways, only the Arab remained," he says in Sons of Sindbad. Certain he was living through the last days of sail, he was determined to record as much as he could of the way of life that masted ships represented.

In Aden, after spending a month on a trial voyage along the coral-rimmed Red Sea coast aboard a little dhow called Sheikh Mansur, Villiers immediately looked around for Arab dhow masters prepared to take on a lone westerner as a crewman, and was eventually put in touch with one of the great Kuwaiti ships then frequenting the port. Her nakhoda, or captain, Ali bin Nasr al-Nejdi, was making the ages-old voyage from the Arabian Gulf to East Africa, coasting on the northeast monsoon winds with a cargo of dates from Basra. Although somewhat suspicious, he took Villiers on as a passenger. The return voyage from the Rufiji Delta, in what is now Tanzania, to Kuwait with a

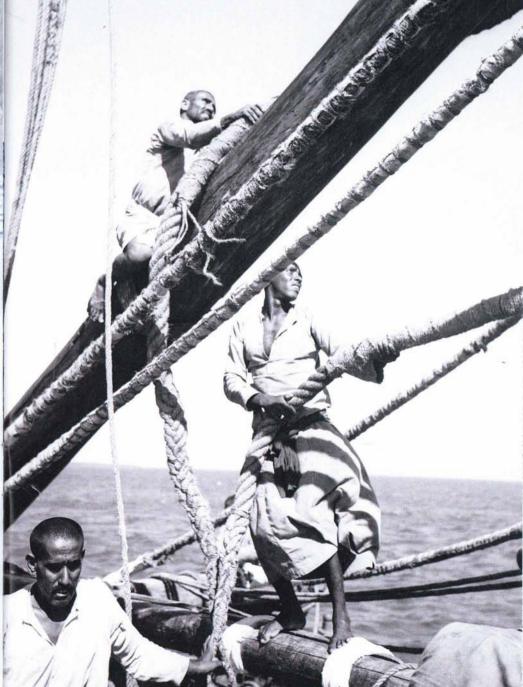
cargo of mangrove poles would take place in the early summer of 1939 on the first breezes of the southwest monsoon.

Sons of Sindbad captures the trials and the less-frequent joys of this voyage and is the sole work of Arabian travel to place the seafaring Arabs center stage. It is the maritime counterpart of Thesiger's Arabian Sands, which it predates by almost 20 years. Like Thesiger, Villiers traveled among his companions as an equal, deferring to their superior knowledge of their business and observing at close quarters their toughness and fortitude, their working methods and devotion to their way of life. The spirit they displayed in the face of extremely difficult

conditions astonished him. He writes that they had "a delight in living that we do not even know we lack."

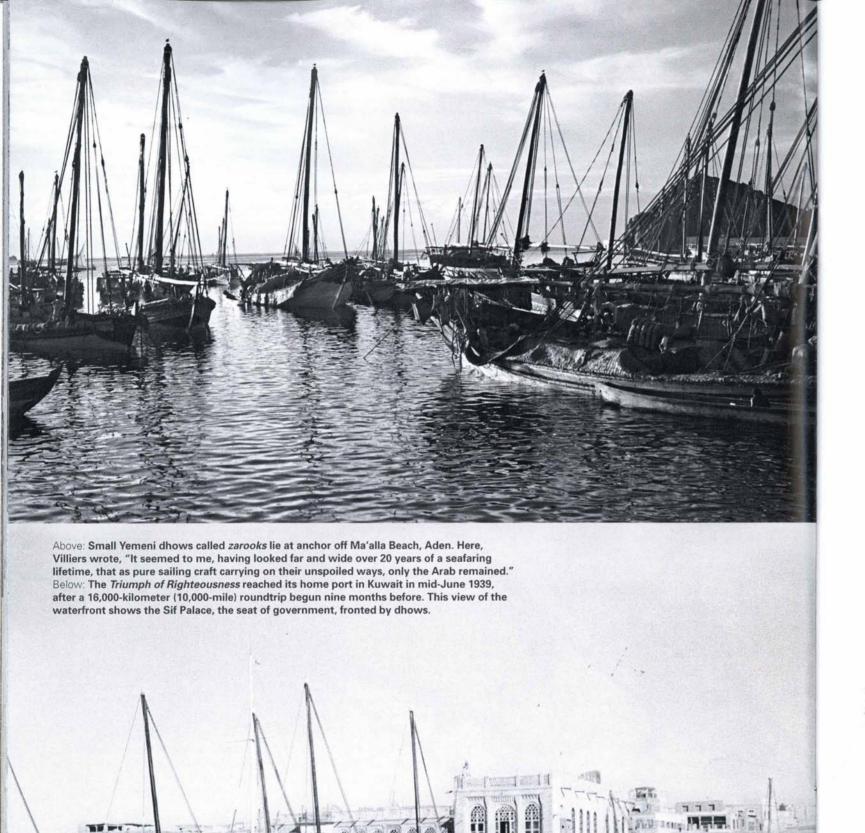
As rich as his text are the thousands of photographs Villiers took of the voyage. Of these, only around 50 were published in Sons of Sindbad in 1940. His photographic archive, located at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, England, remained largely unpublished until 2006, when Sons of Sindbad: The Photographs was co-published by the museum and Arabian Publishing. Villiers often dismissed his photography by saying that he would just point his camera and click, jokingly ascribing the quality of his images to the luminous light at sea, but he had a wonderful eve for detail and composition, and he developed a professional's knowledge of photographic and film techniques. He carried a 35-mm and a largeformat camera, along with a movie camera, with him on the dhow. The pictures from his voyage provide an unforgettably vivid memorial of the life and skills of Kuwait's sailors, of the ports along the route, of Kuwait itself and of the pearl divers of the Arabian Gulf.

As captain and owner of the Joseph Conrad, Villiers had for the first time achieved a status with which an Arab nakhoda would have identified. So he did not ship out on al-Nejdi's boom as an ordinary crewmember, but shared the poop deck with the captain, the mate, al-Nejdi's brother, the two helmsmen and any merchants voyaging as



Left: Kuwaiti sailors go about their work on the Triumph. Below: Merchants joined the ship at Shihr, on the coast of Yemen. They took places on the poop deck with the captain, the mate, Villiers and the helmsmen, while regular passengersmostly Bedouin-were relegated to the crowded main deck





passengers. (Upward of 150 other passengers-men, women and childrenrode elsewhere.)

In a telling episode, Villiers recounts the dramatic rescue of a Bedouin voungster who fell overboard near Ras Haifun, on the rocky Horn of Africa, five days after sailing from Shihr in Yemen. "Children scampered among the bulwarks, playing merrily," he writes,."...[when] suddenly I heard a splash." Two crewmen immediately jumped in after the child, "a sprawling bundle in his white gown streaming in the sea," who was rapidly receding astern. Unruffled, the captain barked an order and his sailors responded like lightning. They turned the ship across the wind and, sailing "within 50 yards of destruction" against the cliffs of Ras Haifun, launched the vessel's cutter and finally pulled all three back on board. The two rescuers received no thanks and-after the child was warned not to fall in againthe incident was never mentioned

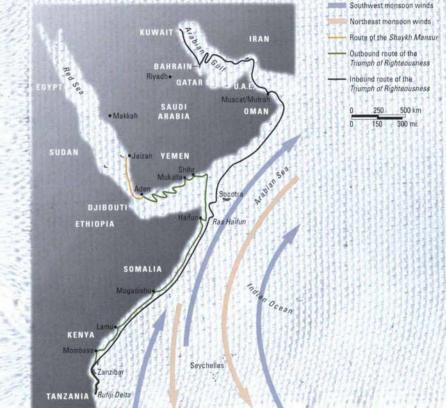
Villiers's special status did not deter him from trying to join in the arduous tasks of the sailors. But even though he was a hardened Cape Horner used to working aloft, taking in sail in a hurricane, he found the labor too taxing. He was amazed at the Kuwaiti sailors' ability to climb aloft and take in sail without any need for footropes. Also, he'd been felled by a serious accident early on, which initially blinded him and later handicapped him for the rest of the voyage. But he persevered to the end and dashed off Sons of Sindbad with his usual facility in the early weeks of World War II.

Sons of Sindbad is the work not only of an exceptional sailor, writer and photographer, but also of a shrewd businessman. Villiers was interested in the economics of the dhow and pearl trades and the social conditions of those engaged in them. In Kuwait, he interviewed people from every walk of life, from the ruler, Shavkh Ahmad Al-Sabah, to ministers, merchants, captains and homeless seamen on the waterfront.

His analysis of the bonds of debt tying the sailors and divers to the dhow captains, and the captains to the merchants, makes compelling reading. It goes to the heart of the inequities of the old system, as it stood

Kuwait had no water resources, so water was transported from the Shatt al-'Arab to the north by booms fitted with wooden tanks. A boom could be emptied in a few hours and its cargo loaded into skins carried by donkeys, or jerry cans shouldered by laborers





on the very threshold of being swept away by the wealth from oil that had just, in 1938, been discovered in Kuwait in commercial quantities. Villiers paints a graphic portrait of the society and economy of this maritime people who had managed to turn their

small, barren state into the foremost Arab dhow port in the Gulf.

So Sons of Sindbad is very much more than just a rattling good sea dog's yarn. Villiers's ambivalent position aboard The Triumph of Righteousness afforded him a



Dhows were fashioned by master builders. Shown left is a typical Kuwaiti boom under construction on the waterfront. Below: The Triumph joined larger baggalas like this one for a hull cleaning by the crew at Kwale Island, off today's Tanzania, before picking up its cargo of mangrove poles a little farther

Villiers's Australian egalitarianism found an echo in the instinctive teamwork of the crew of the Bayan.

unique perspective, for he was both a westerner connected with the imperial reach of British officials on the one hand and an Australian free-lancer on the other, who had little time for colonial niceties and was accepted as part of an Arab dhow crew.

When he turns a blind eve to the smuggling ventures of his crewmates, or is amused by al-Nejdi's attempts to evade new fangled, European-imposed navigation and immigration regulations, there is no doubt where his sympathies lie. Yet he could also see some benefit in modernization and administration. His awareness that he was witnessing the demise of an ancient tradition of wind-borne trade in the face of irreversible mechanization lends piquancy to his reporting, but he does not lull readers into romantic illusions about the life of the Gulf sailors and pearlers, exploited as they were by the traditional debt system and mostly living from hand to mouth.

Much of the book revolves around Villiers's relationship with the dashing young dhow captain, al-Nejdi. About 30 years old, just five years junior to Villiers, he was a natural leader whose crew gave him unquestioning loyalty. Confident in the enclosed little world of his dhow, he could air his opinions with unchallenged authority.

Nejdi was scornful of Villiers's project to write a book about the voyage, and there are other hints in Sons of Sindbad that

the two may at times have had a somewhat trying relationship. As Kate Lance has shown in her biography, Alan Villiers: Voyager of the Winds (2009), his diaries reveal that when he came to publish his voyages, he tended to underplay the difficulties he experienced with his fellow crew. But it is clear that in general the Kuwaiti captain humored his eccentric guest well enough.

Al-Nejdi was, after all, a nakhoda with a reputation to uphold. The laws of Arabian hospitality were as binding at sea as on land, and in any case, Villiers was a skilled navigator who could make himself useful. At first handicapped by the language barrier, he soon picked up sufficient Arabic to understand the management of the boom, and even to take part in conversations on the poop. These were dominated by al-Nejdi's pontificating on everything from politics, religion and the relative merits of Islam and the West, to the intricacies of the coastal navigation in which he specialized.

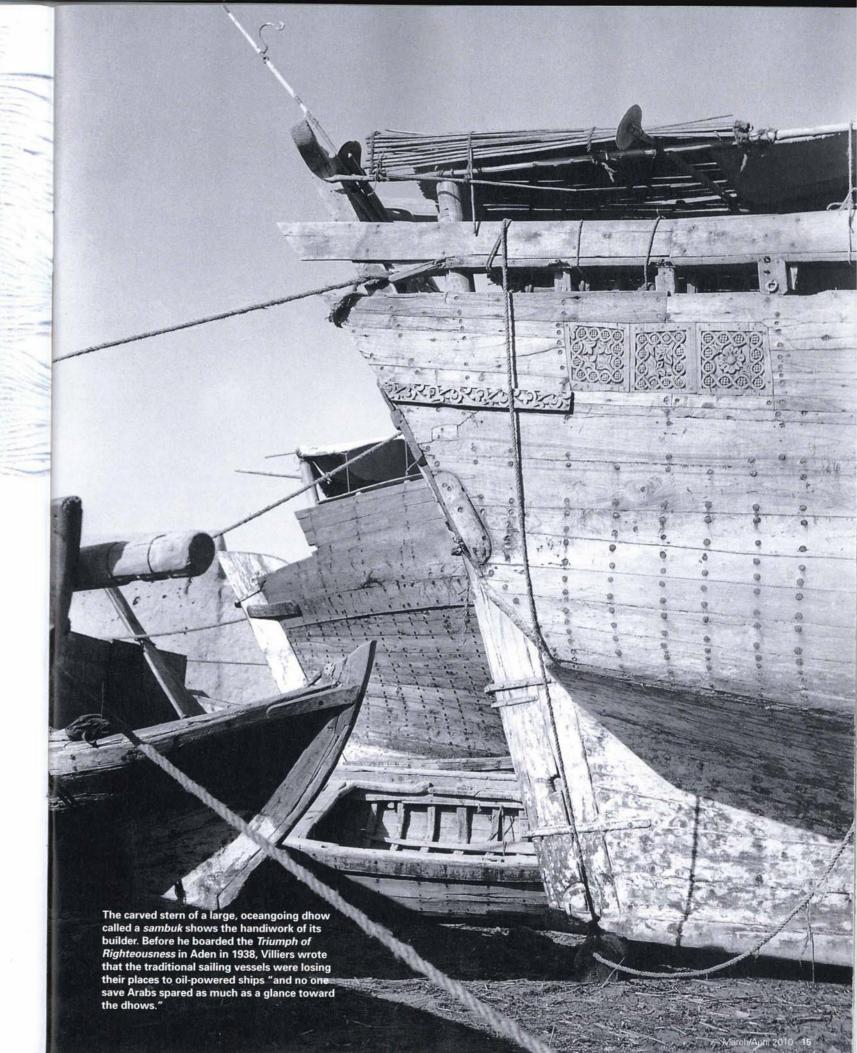
As Lance has also shown, Villiers could

era, but these seem never to have infected his attitude toward Arabs and Africans, and such judgments are refreshingly absent from Sons of Sindbad. Villiers's account is a heady brew of the people, ways of life, governments, trade ancient and modern, cultures and human relations at the western edge of the old Indian Ocean world.

His insights stimulate much thought on the nature of power, whether exerted by imperialism from without or by traditional merchant capitalism from within. Despite the bold brush strokes, he never offers simplicities. The picture he paints is complex, a depiction as much of man's capacity for benevolence as for inhumanity to his fellows.

Villiers's story is very different from the overland exploits of the more famous 19thand 20th-century Arabian travelers, Johann Burckhardt, Richard Burton, Charles Doughty, T. E. Lawrence and H. St. John B. Philby among them. Instead of bravely









Above: Kuwait lacked wood for ship building and relied mainly on imports from India, which were poled from dhow to boatyard. Left: Kuwaiti pearl divers rest alongside their ship. Each man would make 10 dives before going back on deck to rest while his replacement dived 10 times.

He traveled on equal terms with Kuwaiti mariners, eager to learn the details of their craft.

heading into an unmapped, potentially dangerous desert atop a camel, attended by Bedouin tribesmen as guides and protectors, Villiers's voyage was a rather cautious, coasting one, certainly perilous but not especially romantic.

He did not throw himself upon fortune in a quest to explore unknown lands, nor did he aim to shed light on supposedly biblical ways or purge his soul in a journey of spiritual redemption. Instead, he traveled on equal terms with Kuwaiti mariners, eager to learn the details of their craft. Like Thesiger, he took pains not to set himself above his

companions, even when he thought their methods could be improved, and came to respect their superior knowledge of their own techniques.

His modesty and willingness to work with his Arab comrades sits ill with that cliché of Orientalism: that western observers must inevitably be tainted by a superior sense of detachment from and power over the Orient. On the contrary, Villiers's admiration was boundless for those, such as Kuwait's seamen, who knew how to harness and exploit the wind. He was a modern man who was antipathetic to much of

the "progress" brought by western civilization, but—unlike Lawrence and Thesiger, who displayed a romantic attitude to the Arabian past—he was realistic about change.

After spending the summer of 1939 in Kuwait and on the pearl banks of the northern Gulf, Villiers returned to England to play his part in the war effort. After the war,

he settled with his family in Oxfordshire, where he would stay for the rest of his life. Nonetheless, he continued to travel widely until the mid-1970's in search of new adventures, from which emerged a steady stream of books, as well as articles for National Geographic. Growing fame brought more glamorous work, such as assignments as adviser on various films, including the Hollywood versions of the Melville classics Billy Budd and Moby Dick; in Moby Dick he had an onscreen role as master of the Pequod. In 1957, he commanded the Mayflower replica during its 55-day voyage to the United States. and in 1964 he recorded the Lisbon-Bermuda Tall Ships Race. He was much in demand as a broadcaster and lecturer on both sides of the Atlantic.

In all, Villiers published more than 40 books. One of his greatest satisfactions came when, just a year or so before his death, he received a doctorate of letters from the University of Melbourne in honor of his writings. His last book, *Voyaging with the Wind*, published in 1975, is a simple introduction to handling large square-rigged ships that returns to the essentials of his trade.

In a life spent largely at sea, Villiers both lived and recorded the last days of sail. He made a contribution to maritime history, research, training and public education equaled by few others, building up a unique body of work on the world of commercial sail that vanished during the first half of the 20th century. His papers are now at the National Library of Australia in Canberra; the University of Melbourne holds his library of 5000 volumes; and his film and



Top: A dhow crewman's life required dexterity, strength and courage. Villiers was constantly amazed at the Kuwaiti sailors' agility. Despite his own long experience as a crewman on sailing ships, he found the work too hard aboard the *Triumph of Righteousness*. Right: Villiers as photographed by a crewmate aboard the *Triumph* in 1939.

photographic archive are at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, England.

In Kuwait, Villiers is still a revered figure, and Sons of Sindbad is prized as a unique record of Kuwait's maritime past, despite having been written by a foreigner. Villiers kept in touch with some of his Kuwaiti friends over the years, and on his 1967 visit to Kuwait, a now-prosperous al-Nejdi met him at the airport. Their greeting, which Villiers included in the introduction to the second US edition of the book in 1969, forms a fitting valediction to the age of sail and the lifestyle it encompassed.

"Allah is great,' I said. 'His winds are free.'
"Allah is great,' Najdi replied.... 'And
sometimes I wish that I could use His winds
again. For it was a good life that my sons can
never know—no Kuwait sons shall know. We
cannot bring those ways back again."



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Publishing Ltd., London.

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dhows: M/J 99, S/O 81 Doughty: M/J 06, J/A 69 navigation: M/J 07, J/A 05 pearl divers: S/O 90 Philby: S/O 80, J/F 74 Thesiger: M/J 05, J/A 81 Alan Villiers: Voyager of the Winds. Kate Lance. 2009, National Maritime Museum, 978-0-948065-95-8. £20/\$34.95 hb.

Sons of Sindbad. Alan Villiers. Republication of the 1940 edition, with an introduction by William Facey, Yacoub Al-Hijji and Grace Pundyk. 2006, Arabian Publishing, 978-0-9544792-3-7, 675/550 hb.

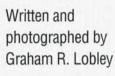
Sons of Sindbad: The Photographs. Selected and introduced by William Facey, Yacoub Al-Hijji and Grace Pundyk. 2006, National Maritime Museum and Arabian Publishing, 978-0-9544792-5-1, £30 hb.

Photographic prints from Alan Villiers's collection are available from the National Maritime Museum Web site:

www.nmmprints.com.



Written and



Desert.

The word conjures up visions of hot, lifeless expanses of drifting sand, or of gravel or volcanic plains, better crossed quickly than

explored. But a closer look reveals an intriguing range of hardy plants, animals and insects, each with specialized strategies for surviving an extremely arid climate. The stark beauty of the desert landscape and the remarkable resilience of its wildlife characterize an environment that is both extremely challenging and exciting.

A desert can be defined as a region that receives less than 25 cm (10") of rainfall a year. The amount of precipitation in most of Saudi Arabia falls below this figure, although violent rainstorms-such as the one that struck Jiddah, in the Hijaz area of western Saudi Arabia, last November-can cause severe flooding. In the east, the region with which I am most familiar, annual rainfall averages under 10 cm (4"), but can occasionally be double that. In the vast sand sea of the Rub' al-Khali, or Empty Quarter, in the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula, rain may not fall for years. In the summer, temperatures there and elsewhere can climb to 50 degrees Celsius (122°F).

Consequently, many desert animals are nocturnal, with breeding cycles that culminate during the cooler spring months. Resident birds have wider ranges than many



EASTERN IMPERIAL EAGLE

The eastern imperial eagle (Aquila heliaca) is a large, majestic bird with a wingspan of up to 2.1 meters (6'10"). Considered globally vulnerable, its estimated population is around 15,000 worldwide. It is a regular winter visitor across the Peninsula, albeit in relatively low numbers-perhaps 500 to 1000 birds. These eagles mature in six to seven years, and this bird is a juvenile, less than a year old. In Saudi Arabia, adults and subadults (birds four to five years old) are found along with younger birds, but youngsters predominate farther south in Oman, indicating that adults stay closer to their breeding ranges in Eurasia. Adults sport a distinctive golden-yellow crown and nape that recalls the golden eagle, hence the specific name heliaca, from the Greek heliakos, meaning "of the sun."

The hoopoe (Upupa epops) is unmistakable. It has distinctive pinkish-brown plumage with black and white wings. It raises its long crest momentarily when excited or alarmed. In 1998, I confirmed the hoopoe as an addition to the breeding avifauna of Dhahran, where it nests under the eaves of homes and in holes in the limestone hills. In the Mediterranean, nest sites include holes in old olive trees and even stone walls. In Dhahran, it is easy to observe when it is feeding on lawns and sandy patches, where it uses its long curved bill to probe for bugs and grubs, often tossing the latter into the air before swallowing them.

RÜPPELL'S SAND FOX

This elegant little fox (Vulpes ruepelli) has large ears and a bushy tail, and is mainly nocturnal, its short fur and large ears may keep it cool, helping it survive in high temperatures. Several foxes can emerge from a single den near dusk and remain active until after sunrise. The sand fox's diet consists mainly of small mammals, lizards and insects, but it can also take birds up to the size of doves. It is distributed sparingly across the deserts of North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula and east into Afghanistan.

SPINY-TAILED LIZARD

The spiny-tailed lizard (Uromastix microlepsis) is a large, impressive reptile fairly common in the eastern scrub desert of Saudi Arabia, especially in its northern reaches, up to and including the Dibdibah alluvial plains near Hafr al-Batin. Called dhub in Arabic, it is gray when cold, but turns beige-yellow basking by its hole in the morning sun. This lizard is mainly a vegetarian and may go its whole life without drinking, instead taking moisture from what it eats. Although agile and fast-it can run at speeds exceeding 25 kilometers per hour (15 mph)—it is definitely on the menu of raptors such as buzzards and even eagles, and is also a Bedouin dish. It uses its underground burrow, up to three meters (10') long and 1.5 meters deep, as a refuge from both the midday heat





of their counterparts in more clement environments. Although some are nocturnal or crepuscular-active at dusk-many are also nomadic, moving to locations where erratic rains have promoted vegetation. One year, the beautiful cream-colored courser nests in an area with suitable vegetation in eastern Saudi Arabia, but is completely absent the next, when conditions are better elsewhere.

Plants form the first link in the desert ecosystem and food chain. Seeds of the annuals germinate after spring rains, producing an ephemeral greening of the desert. Seed germination is often triggered after several showers rather than just one, increasing the

As many as three billion birds transit the Peninsula annually, traveling between their African winter quarters and breeding ranges in Europe and western Asia, and a number stop in the eastern Gulf region.

chances of successful growth, although a single soaking rain can have the same result. This vegetation, including unusual plants like the parasitic desert hyacinth, or desert candle, nurtures and shelters insects. These, in turn, provide sustenance for other creatures, such as birds.

Among the most visible insects are butterflies like the painted lady, a migrant, and the desert white, a full-time resident. The striped hawkmoth is another remarkable winged migrant. In wetter years, large numbers of these moths migrate north in spring, and their colorful caterpillars are soon feasting on the desert vegetation, including on Rumex, a sorrel. Successive generations of hawkmoth may range as far north as Scandinavia in a good breeding season.

But the best-known migrants, of course, are birds. Indeed, the spectacle of birds crossing the Peninsula every spring and fall has captured the imagination of humankind since ancient times. As many as three billion birds of more than 200 different species transit annually, traveling between their African winter quarters and their breeding ranges in Europe and western Asia, and a number stop in the eastern Gulf region to rest and refuel before continuing their long journeys. The stunning, harlequin-colored bee-eaters are among the most vividly feathered of these temporary visitors.

Going, going, gone

There are still wonderful opportunities to view the wildlife of the Arabian desert, but some iconic species are endangered or have been lost for good.

The Arabian oryx (Oryx leucoryx) was hunted to extinction in Saudi Arabia by the late 1960's. Fortunately, a zoo in London and private collections in the region had a few of these unique animals. Along with several caught in Yemen, they became the basis for successful captive breeding programs. Sizeable herds are now established at Mahazat al-Sayd in western-central Saudi Arabia and elsewhere in the kingdom, and other Gulf countries have also established breeding stock.

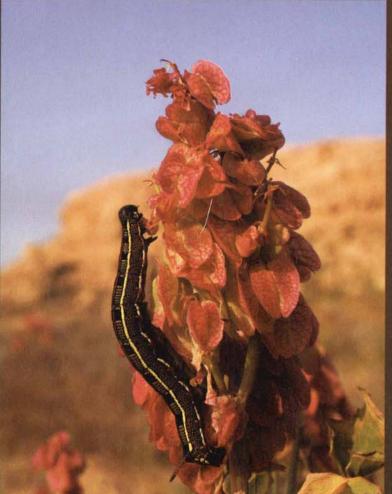
Intense hunting with saker falcons (Falco cherrug) has brought the houbara bustard (Chlamydotis undulata) to the brink of extinction and has affected the falcon population, too. The houbara was once widespread over much of northeastern Saudi Arabia and was also a common winter visitor. It now occurs as a breeding species only in a few locations, such as Harrat al-Harrah in northwestern Saudi Arabia, as well as in southern Oman. Recognizing the plight of the houbara and the related deterioration of fragile desert ecosytems, Prince Sa'ud Al Faisal promoted restoration and conservation, and the National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development (NCWCD) was formed in 1986. A captive breeding and reintroduction program based at the NCWCD's National Wildlife Research Center near Taif aims to repopulate some of the empty areas with breeding houbara.

The Arabian ostrich (Struthio camelus syriacus) was hunted to extinction in Saudi Arabia in the late 1930's. This subspecies had probably remained in equilibrium with predators who used only bows and arrows for millennia. Its demise was rapid following the introduction of modern firearms and off-road vehicles.









CARMINE DARTER DRAGONFLY

The striking carmine darter dragonfly (Crocothemis erythraea) is the most widespread in the Arabian Peninsula. The male is a handsome carmine red, while the female is a significantly drabber yellow-buff color. It prefers a habitat of rocky wadis (normally dry watercourses) and desert pools, especially in western Saudi Arabia. It avoids true oases, where it is replaced by the closely similar scarlet darter (Crocothemis chaldaeorum) in the east, at al-Hasa and Qatif. This photo was taken in late afternoon at a patch of vegetation that had attracted many dragonflies and

STRIPED HAWKMOTH CATERPILLAR

The striped hawkmoth (Hyles livornica) is common in the desert, where the nectar of blue Lycium flowers is the adult's preferred food. In wetter years, it breeds rapidly, and its striking caterpillars can then be found everywhere feeding on sorrels and other favored plants. Noted for their mass northerly migrations, successive generations of hawkmoths may travel as far as Scandinavia in a good breeding season.

The hoopoe, with its jaunty crest, is a typical migrant across the Arabian Peninsula, although there is a resident population in the more temperate Hijaz mountain region. Called hudhud in Arabic, this iconic bird is mentioned in the Qur'an as a messenger of the prophet Suleyman (King Solomon). Its principal breeding range is around the Mediterranean, extending into Turkey, Iraq and Iran. Remarkably, since 1998 it has also become a regular breeding bird in Dhahran, Saudi Aramco's headquarters town near the kingdom's east coast, reflecting the increasingly attractive habitat formed by this well-vegetated, man-made oasis.

To cope with torrid summer

temperatures, some perennial plants become dormant in a process called estivation. However, a few, such as Calotropis procera (giant milkweed) and Ochradenus, an important food plant for the desert white butterfly, even flower during summer, providing vital continuity for insects over the hot season. Small mammals like the gerbil, jird and jerboa retire into their burrows and survive on food stored in the spring. At the top of the food chain are predators, including owls, raptors and foxes. The large and impressive pharaoh eagle owl is a full-time resident, but several largely Asian eagle species winter in the deserts of the Arabian Peninsula.

During my 18 years working in Saudi Arabia, I became ever more fascinated by its deserts. The springtime flower displays that pop up almost overnight, and seem to disappear just as quickly, may be enjoyed by all, as can a variety of other typical desert wildlife shown here.



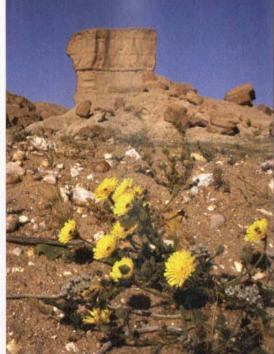
Dr. Graham R. Lobley is a metallurgical engineer, as well as an avid naturalist and wildlife photographer who has written extensively on the flora and fauna

of Saudi Arabia. He retired from Saudi Aramco in January after an 18-year career in the kingdom and now works in London.

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Arabian birds: S/O 93, M/J 91, J/A 90, N/D 86, M/A 04, S/O 68 S/O 80 butterflies: N/D 83, N/D 81, S/O 80, S/O 75 desert plants: J/F 68

desert reptiles: oryx: S/O 09, S/O 89 Rub' al-Khali: J/F 10, M/J 89, N/D 73 wildlife: S/O 95, N/D 94, M/J 90

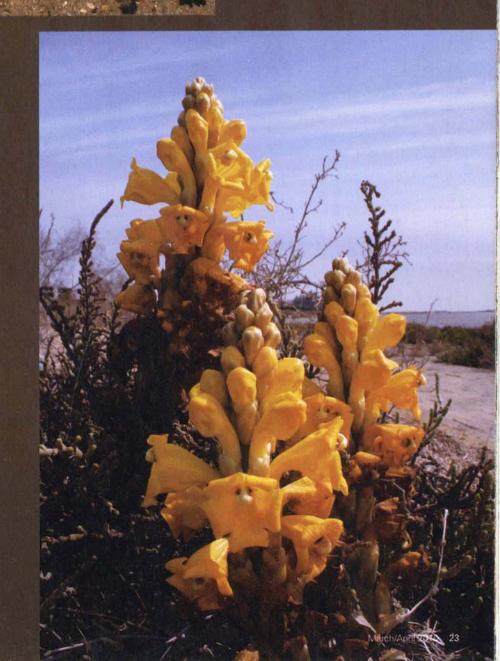


PICRIS FLOWERS

The 2006–2007 winter-spring season was relatively wet in eastern Saudi Arabia, so many different plants put on an excellent spring showing. These yellow Picris flowers were photographed with part of the Shedgum Escarpment in the background Picris are common in eastern Saudi Arabia and sometimes form floral carpets on the Dibdibah gravel plains in the north around Hafr al-Batin.

DESERT HYACINTH

Flowering in February, the widespread desert hyacinth (Cistanche tubulosa) adds a welcome splash of color to desert areas with its bright yellow spike of flowers. Called dhanun in Arabic and part of the broomrape family, this striking parasitic plant lacks chlorophyll and uses a long, threadlike root to tap nutrients from its host plant. It is an annual, and hundreds of tiny seeds are dispersed from an ovoid fruit capsule in the spring. This picture was taken on the seashore north of al-Khobar in eastern Saudi Arabia.





Written by Sheldon Chad Photographed by Michael Yamashita

nside the Arabic Islamic Institute in Tokyo, 15 students of calligraphy raptly practice writing verses from the Qur'an. Yet when the call to prayer is heard, few stir. The instructors and students are Japanese, and only two are Muslims. Here, their calligrapher's pens (qalam in Arabic) are not made of reeds, as is traditional in much of the Islamic world. Nor do they use the brushes (fude) favored by Japanese calligraphers. Their pens are made of bamboo, which is plentiful in Japan.

For centuries, educated Japanese have been taught the traditions of calligraphy beginning in grade school. At the Nitten, the annual arts exhibition in Osaka, calligraphy is important enough to merit its own section. An appreciation of calligraphy is a lifelong interest for many Japanese, and for some, acquiring proficiency at it is a lifelong study. Yet, over the past two decades, a few have quietly put down their fude and picked up a bamboo galam to try their hand at calligraphy in Arabic, which, they often find, is not as alien as they had thought.

Yukari Takahashi, who owns an elegant Tokyo nightclub, holds up a sheet of Japanese rice paper with embossed floral patterns framing immaculate calligraphy. I ask her why she studies Arabic calligraphy, and, in her limited English, she answers, "Very beautiful." Other practitioners—a retired consul-general, a choreographer and dancer, the head of the Tokyo City Retirement Fund-also mention beauty first when describing their attraction to Arabic calligraphy.



Choreographer, dance instructor and Arabic calligrapher Ko Reika stands with two of her pieces. Opposite page: An ink pot and pens cut from bamboo lie on top of a work in progress in the studio of Japan's leading master calligrapher of Arabic, Fuad Kouichi Honda.



Admiration runs in the other direction, too: In 2007, at the most recent international calligraphy competition of the Istanbul-based Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA), four Japanese entrants won prizes.

"It was a pleasant surprise...to see works of a satisfactory or promising level of success coming from a [country] where the tradition of Islamic or Arabic calligraphy is not yet established," says Ekmeleddin Ihsanoğlu, secretary general of the Organization of the Islamic Congress. "It is evidence of an emerging interest in and development of this art that is rather unexpected. It gives us pleasure."

Halit Eren, the director general of IRCICA, expresses his own amazement by turning the tables: "Would it not be a pleasant surprise if an Arab won an award in Japanese calligraphy?"

Al-khatt al-'arabi - Arabic calligraphy-comes in several styles and has long been regarded as one of the highest Islamic art forms. In Japanese, the word shodo refers to "the way of writing," which means the stylized drawing of pictographs in kana (Japanese script) or kanji (Chinese characters). Thus Japan's acknowledged master of the art, Fuad Kouichi Honda, calls the Japanese forms and practices of Arabic calligraphy shodo 'arabi-"the way of Arabic writing."

50-minute train ride from the urban whirl of Tokyo, Vanother Japan starts to lay itself out, revealing blue coastline and lush green hills. You arrive in Zushi, where Honda lives with his wife. Mitsuko, a kimono-dyeing artist.

Downstairs is Honda's studio, and on the floor is a work in progress, paper strips of penciled calligraphy lying jumbled atop a large blue background.

"My work is very different from traditional calligraphies," he says. It consists of an Arabic text surrounded by illumination of geometrical or natural forms, often made on marbled paper, which he calls by its Turkish name, ebru.

"According to my idea, I consider the most suitable design and color to match with the meaning of the words. This [Qur'anic chapter] Surat Ya-Sin praises the greatness of God, I use this very deep,

> profound blue, ultramarine blues, and there are many lines over these blues like in the depth of the sea or in the middle of the universe. This blue color does not stand for something concrete, but is an image of my expression."

Honda, who in 1999 received an ijaza (diploma) in calligraphy from the Turkish master Hasan Celebi, vouches for the traditional cursive diwani jali script he's chosen for the piece. "We don't break the existing rules. I cannot overcome the traditional shapes."

When asked about the cultural value behind a Japanese appreciation of Arabic calligraphy, Professor Yasushi Kosugi's simple reply echoes the calligraphy student's: "Beauty."

"Because that is the target," he says. "We have to attain the beauty."

We're sitting in a lounge at Kyoto

University, where Kosugi heads graduate studies in the Islamic world and serves as president of the Japan Association for Middle East Studies.

"Beauty is not individual discernment," he continues. "It's not an individual opinion. Shodo is an art based on the collective sense of beauty.

"Another element of Japanese culture is curiosity for things foreign," he adds.

It was during the 1970's that the Japanese came into regular modern contact with Arab cultures, and with it came their first modern look at Arabic calligraphy.

Japanese shodo, he explains, has "at least 10,000 letters. Now you find Arabic calligraphy. Wow! What is this? The same way of attaining beauty, but in a drastically different manner.

In Kosugi's opinion, in "extent, depths and energies," Arabic and East Asian calligraphies are the two greatest historic writing traditions of human history.

very two weeks, Koichi Yamaoka, who is Honda's partner in the Japan Arab Calligraphy Association (JACA), takes a shinkansen bullet train from Yokohama 600 kilometers (375 mi) west to the historic heartland of Japan-the cities of Kyoto, Osaka and Kobewhere he teaches Arabic calligraphy classes. As the train whizzes along, Yamaoka says, "People don't know about Islam. They only know Muslim people can marry four wives; they don't eat pork.... Only superficial knowledge. So when I teach Arabic calligraphy, I explain the background of the culture."

Yamaoka spent four years in Saudi Arabia in the early 1980's. A decade later, he started learn-

ing Arabic calligraphy. Recently, he took early retirement from his company to help JACA. "I decided to make some business with this Arabic calligraphy in Japan. I think I can do something."

In Kyoto, which for a thousand years was the seat of Japan's imperial court, his advertisement reads, "Welcome to the World of



Chieko Kinoshita, eft, travels from her home in Hiroshima to Yamaoka's class in Osaka on the shinkansen. or bullet train. "Just the letters themselves are beautiful. Some kind of art. Maybe art is the most important part," she says.

ower: Yasushi

Kosugi of Kyoto

University is

head of the Japan Association for Middle East Studies.

Muslims in Japan

The Nihon Musurimu Kyokai, or Japan Muslim Association (JMA), estimates there are 7000 to 10,000 Japanese Muslims—just a tiny fraction of the country's population of 150 million. (Another 90,000 non-Japanese Muslims also live in the country.)

This small community originated during World War II, after some 50 Japanese soldiers embraced Islam while serving in such countries as Singapore and Malaysia. Their numbers grew in the 1970's as Japanese companies sent staff to Arab countries and some students in Japan began to study Arabic to try for a chance at a better job. Many found "a way of life to their future," says Khalid M. Higuchi, the honorary chairman of the JMA.

It is not so great a leap for Japanese to choose Islam, he suggests.

"We are punctual, clean and very honest," he says. "Japanese behavior is Islamic behavior. I behave as a Japanese in the same way I do in Islamic life."

The Second Master

A generation younger than Honda and of a different philosophy, Nobuko Sagawa is Japan's second certified master of Arabic calligraphy. With Honda now in his 60's, Sagawa represents a different school of shodo 'arabi for the future.

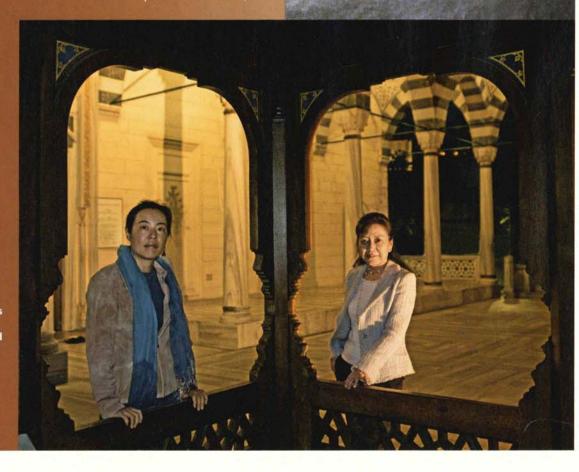
At university, Sagawa studied fine arts and became interested in the letters of the Arabic language. That led her to Damascus and to her teacher, Mohamed Al Qawi, who gave her "a feeling of something different in the line even though it's the same shape, even though it's the same balance, even though it's the same curve."

Sagawa's style is what she calls "a collaboration" among combinations of Japanese scripts (kana), Chinese characters (kanji) and Arabic. True to her Syrian training, she uses a reed rather than a bamboo galam for the Arabic,

and she uses a fude for the kana and kanji. She prefers Arabic poetry or phrases to sacred Qur'anic texts, and she chooses the kanji to "harmonize" with the meaning of the Arabic.

To her, whether Japa nese or Arabic, "Sho is sho"-writing is writing.

Nobuko Sagawa, right, uses both Middle Eastern reed pens (galam) for Arabic and Japanese fude (brushes) for Japanese and Chinese to produce what she calls "a collaboration." She is standing in Tokyo's Turkish mosque with student Naoko Ebihara, left.



Arab Calligraphy. First Thursdays. Time 2:45 to 4:45. Fee 4200 yen per month. Two classes."

Today, only three women are here, as they have been for the last vear and a half. They share a delicious matcha roll—a green-tea cake—as they do their calligraphy and talk about their art, their lives and their children.

"We try to match the feeling of Arabic calligraphy," says Manami Ali Syed. She says they are all dedicated to "building the pillar of Arabic calligraphy. Arab culture, Arabic calligraphy and Arabic

At Yamaoka's class in Osaka, I'm surprised to see Chieko Kinoshita, a woman I had seen in a Tokyo class just a few days before. She's again unfalteringly drawing the madd lengthened stroke in the middle of the Fatiha, the opening verse of the Our'an, time after time. I'm surprised to learn she is an office clerk from Hiroshima, which is some 850 kilometers (530 mi) and five hours' journey from Tokyo. To come to Osaka today, she's traveled 350 kilometers (215 mi). She is, Yamaoka says, "a very dedicated student."

To her, "Just the letters themselves are beautiful. Some kind of art. Maybe art is the most important part."

Yamaoka adds that it's often difficult for students to put their motivations into words. "It's quite difficult to explain the meaning of the life, of the fun, of the hobby. Some people have their history; some do not. Some just have feeling."

or Honda, it was a feeling that came slowly. When he graduated from Tokyo University of Foreign Studies in 1969, he says. "I made up my mind never to open an Arabic book again. I hated the Arabic language; I hated the professors. They only taught grammar; reading Arabic novels [was] impossible!

But five years into his first job, Honda's reluctant skills earned him a post in Saudi Arabia. There, the difference between colloquial Arabic and the classical, written Arabic of his studies stumped him. But he had both curiosity and perseverance on his side.

"Every day I would go to the suq [the market] and communicate with the local people. 'Please, what is this?' I registered all the words in katakana, Japanese letters. I believe my teachers in the true sense were ordinary citizens, like drivers, clerks, instead of Tokyo University of Foreign Studies."

Honda soon was so proficient that he was selected to lead a mineral-resources survey team run by the Saudi Ministry of Petroleum. The next three years he spent almost entirely in the desert, where his companions were largely Bedouins. "I became sensitive to the changes in nature.

"When I looked at the desert area, the Rub' al-Khali [the Empty Quarter] in the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula, I was amazed at the beauty of the movement of the desert, the natural flow of sand dunes, like living beings. I looked at my feet. A beautiful print made by the movement of the wind like a fingerprint. I thought [they were] very similar to the movement of Arabic calligraphy, Arabic letters. So when I came back, the vivid memory remained in my brain, especially the beautiful landscapes of the desert. The beauty of the sand dunes and the calligraphy combined together in myself."

Soon after returning, in 1979, Honda embraced Islam and took the Muslim name Fuad ("Heart"). He taught Arabic, and he taught himself Arabic calligraphy. In the late 1980's and early 1990's, he emerged onto the world calligraphy scene.

n the studio of Taisho Eguchi, a master calligrapher and a judge at the Nitten, Yamaoka wields a knife to fashion a bamboo galam on the spot from the handle of a fude. Eguchi goes over to jars and jars of fude and picks out one made of mongoose hair. He bows ever so slightly to Yamaoka.

Eguchi is the product of a long chain of masters and schools of calligraphy. He has been a student of shodo for 60 years, and I have come to his studio in Osaka to better understand the "shodo" part of shodo 'arabi.

But Eguchi has never seen Arabic calligraphy. Yamaoka kindly offers to demonstrate it. Eguchi, dressed in a modest gray cardigan, laughs at my very presence. "I've been to America before and I visited some cemeteries. On the stone, there's only printing, not handwriting. So I think American, European people haven't much interest in 'the line."

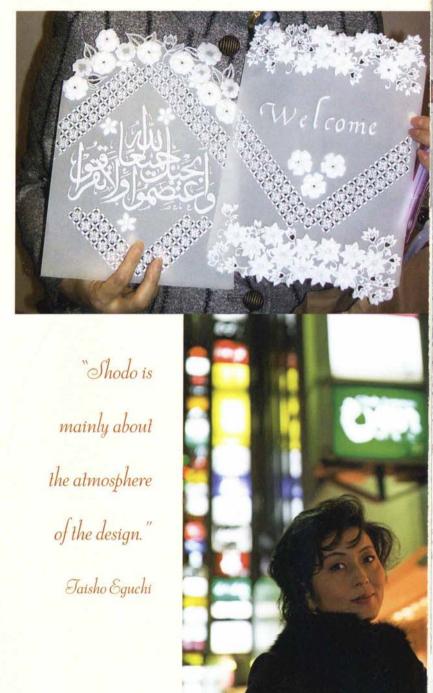
He explains his critique: "I think the wabi sabi is inside the line. When somebody writes the line, the line shows the man himself." (Part sensibility and part esthetic, the concept of wabi sabi is central to the Japanese understanding of beauty. It defies simple translation: "Transience," "simplicity," "ambiguity," "imperfection" and even "entropy" all touch its meaning.)

Eguchi realizes it's better to show than to tell. Yamaoka grabs a piece of thick glossy white paper, and Eguchi takes a long piece of washi paper.

In terms of their choices of paper, the Arabic and the Asian calligraphers seem to have changed places over the millennia. Originally, papyrus was used in the Middle East; its rough surface did not lend itself to the precision of calligraphy. It was only with the invention in China of polished paper that Muslim calligraphers were able to perfect the smooth flow of the lines in cursive scripts. But Eguchi's washi paper is rough, its fibers visible on the surface. much like papyrus. It drinks in the ink unevenly, giving his kanji variable textures.

Eguchi dips his fude-one dip-into the ash-black ink. He angles over the table and, in a controlled flurry, moves top to bottom: one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight strokes, in order, of kanji. Then he writes his signature in smaller characters, using the same brush. It is all over in 10 seconds. (A serious work, he says, like the one in the Nitten, can take up to four minutes.)

Yukari Takahashi owns an elegant Tokyo nightclub and studies calligraphy with Yamaoka.





Yamaoka sits down and dips his bamboo qalam. He fixes his hand on the paper, aligning the bottom of it and the flat of the angled nib on the paper, and starts writing. Slowly. Deliberately. One can hear the nib scratching the paper: It could be a bird chirping in the distance. Even with small strokes, he goes back and dips the galam for more ink. It ends not with a flourish but with a thoughtful punctuation mark.

For the first time in Eguchi's life, he sees a 1300-year-old kanchi

(Chinese poem) and a 1400-yearold surah from the Qur'an side by side. Even to the untrained eye, the two pieces of calligraphy trigger emotions from contentment to joy to awe.

Eguchi, however, maintains that "shodo is not art," and that "ninety-five percent of the importance is in the space between the letters. Five percent is the ability to read the kanchi. Shodo is mainly about the atmosphere of the design."

hen I ask professor Yasushi Kosugi about this, he maintains that the growth of shodo 'arabi is evidence

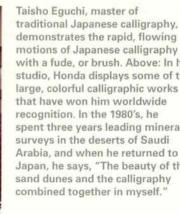
highly esteemed as a plant in this country for traditional art," says Kosugi. "I think that immediately corresponds to the value of the

> traditional Japanese calligraphy, demonstrates the rapid, flowing motions of Japanese calligraphy with a fude, or brush. Above: In his studio, Honda displays some of the large, colorful calligraphic works that have won him worldwide recognition. In the 1980's, he spent three years leading mineral surveys in the deserts of Saudi Arabia, and when he returned to Japan, he says, "The beauty of the sand dunes and the calligraphy

of cultural affinity.

"Japan has been taking from world civilization for at least 2000 years," he says.

"We cut the pen by our own hand out of bamboo, which is very





A Japanese shodo 'arabi calligrapher writes with a galam, or pen, made from a bamboo stem rather than the reed traditionally used by calligraphers in the Middle East. Master Fuad Kouichi Honda cuts the stems by the hundreds in the mountains, and, at home, he dries them in the sun.

"We have lots of bamboo. I am very happy," says Honda.

Under a staircase, in his "bamboo cellar," he picks through several boxes, the sticks rattling. "One year old. Two years old. [It takes] three years to dry,

and when bamboo is ready, I make a pen."

On a weathered brown piece of bamboo, he cuts out a nib like a duck's beak, at an angle. Then he cuts longitudinal grooves behind it so the ink won't run off so quickly—this is the "Honda style" innovation for the Japa-

nese bamboo galam.

"An Iranian calligrapher gave me reed from the Tigris river," says Honda, coming up with the pen from inside a box. "It doesn't have the width of bamboo. It's very thin, very difficult to grasp and very fragile."

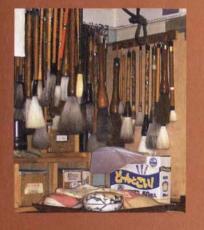
He eyes another pen, lovingly. "Ten years old," he says. "Very hard, like iron. It became too short from sharpening it every day, but I couldn't throw it away. I joined it to a new one, a young one. I like this pen so much."

In using the pen, he explains, "It is essential that the movement of the stroke should be natural and sharp. The nib of the pen should be solid enough not to wear, and its edge should remain as sharp as a knife, so that the calligrapher can write the thinnest line, like a hair.

"I think the most important factor for obtaining beauty in Arabic calligraphy is the variation in line width. This is achieved by turning the edge of nib to the required angle while at the same time floating the lower edge of the nib off the paper slightly. This technique is very difficult; it seems impossible for the beginner. I think it takes about 20 years to master such a technique."

I ask Honda whether the pen is an extension of himself, of the calligrapher. He places it even higher.

"According to the Qur'an, God gave the galam as an agent of wisdom," Honda explains. "It's the symbol of all human knowledge."



p: Grooves cut into a broad nib increase the amount of ink the nib can hold, explains Honda. "In the tradition of Arabic calligraphy, the calligrapher has to make his pen himself, unlike the tradition of Japanese or Chinese calligraphy in which calligraphers can easily obtain brushes by buying them from a stationery shop. This means the beauty of Arabic calligraphy depends largely upon how well the calligrapher can make his pens." Left: Fude (brushes)



reed pen in Arabic calligraphy.... [Shodo 'arabi] is something that can be achieved only by Japanese. Because I see the amalgamation of what is ultimately Japanese-the pursuit of beauty-with that kind of Arab calligraphy.

"I believe that explains why the lady from Hiroshima comes so far, twice a month, to her lesson. In earlier days, in the Tang era, we used to send students to China from this tiny island in pursuit of beauty. The beauty itself is truth."

he Web site of one of Japan's leading politicians features a pair of dancing robots. They're dancing to Arab music.

"They are very cute, right?" says Yuriko Koike, who served as Japan's environment minister from 2004 to 2006 and defense minister in 2007. She currently directs public relations for the Liberal

Democratic party, and some believe she could one day become Japan's first female prime minister.

"I try to keep people's eyes on the Middle East, because the area is so essential to Japan."

In her office, the Arabic word shams ("sun") is splashed on a large framed canvas.

"I just pick up my old brush and ink and write my favorite words in Arabic. That's all. I don't care whether the words can be read or not, because it's art. I am just in love with the Arabic letters, and I have no time to learn the old classical rules of calligraphy. I'm just

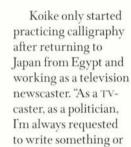
enjoying it for myself. It's my hobby."

Koike's father, an oil trader, sparked her fascination with the Middle East with souvenirs from his travels. Koike went on to study at the American University in Cairo, and she still uses Arabic when she attends international conferences related to the Middle East and when she is interviewed on Arabic-language television.



"Japanese minister of defense, with Arabic calligraphy on china, and on the bowl saying 'peace.' It's something, right?" Yuriko Koike

Opposite: Yuriko Koike, who has served as Japan's minister of defense, credits her father's work in the oil business with her decision to attend the American University in Cairo, Right: Koichi Yamaoka, who took early retirement to devote himself to calligraphy instruction, offers guidance to students Tomoko Fujii and Keiko Narita. "When I teach Arabic calligraphy, I explain the background of the culture," he says.



sign an autograph, and I felt that an ordinary autograph by me in Japanese is not interesting. So I invented," she says. It is common, she adds, for Japanese not only to sign a name in an autograph but to add some favorite word or letter.

"This is the way," she says, tapping on a typical autograph pad with the words salaam and shams written on it. "I started using [these] Arabic letters rather than writing Chinese kanjis. People love it. This is my style."

She delicately opens a wooden box and unwraps an object within. When she travels abroad on state business, she says, "I bring my own souvenir. When I went to the United States to Arlington [National] Cemetery, everybody who visits there officially is asked to bring some typical souvenir." (American soldiers, including many who fought Japan in World War II, are buried in Arlington National Cemetery.)

Out of the box comes a gorgeous ceramic bowl, handmade by an artist friend. On it, drawn in Koike's hand, the Arabic calligraphy reads "salaam salaam"-"peace peace."

"Japanese minister of defense, with Arabic calligraphy on china, and on the bowl saying 'peace'. It's something, right?"

Koike makes it a point to applaud Honda. "He is inventing some

About her own work, Koike says, "Because the brush is Chinese, the letters are Arabic, the ink is Japanese and I'm Japanese, it's a fusion of three cultures."

Like her student colleagues, each shodo 'arabi calligrapher brings two of the world's great calligraphic cultures a bit closer.



Sheldon Chad (shelchad@gmail.com) is an award-winning screenwriter and journalist for print and radio. From his home in Montreal, he travels widely in the Middle East, West Africa, Russia and East Asia



Michael Yamashita (www.michaelyamashita.com) has photographed throughout East Asia for National Geographic for more than 25 years. Winner of numerous photography awards, he is the author of Marco Polo: A Photographer's Journey (2004, Rizzoli). He lives in New Jersey.



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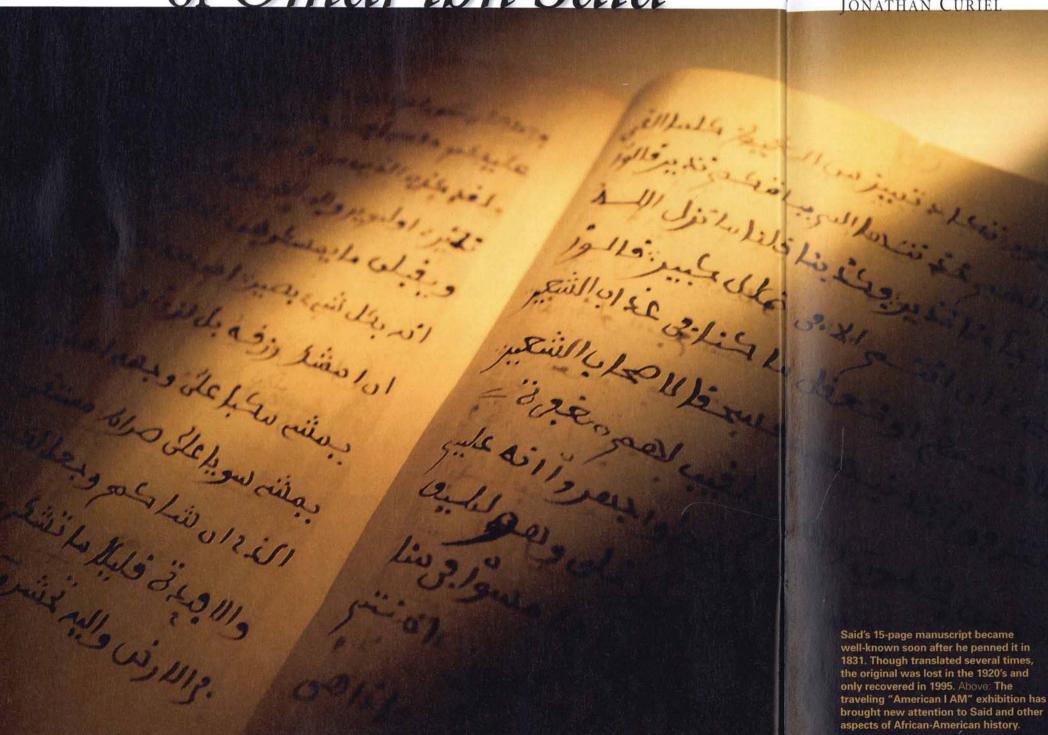
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Rub' al-Khali: J/F 10

The Life of Omar ibn Said

WRITTEN BY IONATHAN CURIEL





t's a summer night at the Civic Center in downtown Atlanta, and the guests, dressed in suits and evening gowns, walk amid glass cases displaying artifacts from America's slave period. There are the tall, wooden "Doors of No Return" from a 17thcentury slave-trading fort in Ghana. There is a plantation's whip. There are iron shackles. And there is a hush around these objects: they bring tears to the eyes of some visitors.

At a case titled "Cultural Gifts From Africa," the mood changes to upbeat.

"He offers a window into the

antebellum world of slavery

that is quite different from

our view of slavery."

Among the objects it displays is a small, yellowed, 15-page manuscript written in Arabic. Its owner, Derrick Beard, tells passersby that it was written in 1831 by a Muslim scholar. a slave from West Africa, named

Omar ibn Said, who was more literate than many of the slave masters he encountered in the Carolinas. Listeners tend to repeat the same interjection: "Really?"

Beard is used to it. Said's brief autobiography, The Life of Omar ben Saeed, is the only one known to have been penned in Arabic by an American slave. The manuscript's inclusion in the "America I AM: The African American Imprint" exhibition, which has toured the United States since early last year, is giving new audiences a firsthand look at a document Beard says "has more relevance today than it did in 1831."

Despite being enslaved by Christians, Said saw the importance of co-existence between Islam and Christianity in America. Addressing his words directly to Americans-but also indirectly to Muslims-he states that, despite the existence of the institution of slavery, there are nonetheless good people in the United States, notably his owners, whom he calls "a very good generation." Beard sees Said's manuscript as the first plea for religious co-existence written by a Muslim in America. Said had lived for 61 years

> when he wrote it; he had been a slave for 24 of them.

"This manuscript is important because here's a man who's advocating having an interfaith dialogue," says Beard, a collector of African-American history who acquired Said's autobiography at a 1996 auction.

"What else could be more appropriate to bring to the public today?'

For almost 200 years, those familiar with Omar ibn Said have debated how complete or genuine his supposed conversion to Christianity was. Said began his autobiography with the 67th surah of the Qur'an, Al-Mulk ("dominion" or "ownership"). Starting, as do all surahs but one, with Bismillah ("In the Name of God..."), its text continues, "Blessed be He in Whose hands is Dominion; and He over all things hath power...." Said's meaning is clear: It is God who holds sway over creation.

Compared to other slaves, Said was treated well by his owner, James Owen, a prominent North Carolinian whose brother had been governor. Said was excused from manual labor on the plantation belonging to Owen, "who does not beat me, nor call me bad names," he wrote.

"During the last twenty years I have not seen any harm at the hand of Jim Owen."

From his retention of Arabic-which even after decades in America he could write complete with the diacriticals that indicate short vowels-to his relatively friendly relationship with the Owen family. everything about Said was exceptional, and this drew public attention to him across the United States during his own lifetime, too. In the 1820's, Francis Scott Key, who authored America's national anthem, sent Said an Arabic-language Bible, hoping it would help convert him to Christianity. Newspapers wrote about Said, including one article from 1825 that described Said as "good natured" and speculated that he had been a prince in Africa, because of his "dignified deportment." Around the mid-1850's, when

Said was over 80 years old, a daguerreotype of him was taken, followed a few years later by an ambrotype. These images, like those made of abolitionist Frederick Douglass, cemented the public's perception of Said as an important African-American figure. That perception grew especially after 1995, when Said's manuscript, thought to have been lost in the 1920's, re-emerged in Alexandria, Virginia, from a trunk discovered by descendants of Howland Wood, a noted numismatist who once owned the autobiography.

The re-emergence prompted new attention to Said's words and called forth fresh

insights into his 94-year life. In the first years after Said wrote the manuscript, the Arabic experts who examined it were mainly missionaries or evangelists who gathered from it little more than proof of Said's conversion to Christianity. Yet Ala



One of two known portraits of Said, this daguerrotype was made in the 1850's, when Said was about 80 years old. The other portrait, an ambrotype, appears on page 1 (Table of Contents).

Alryyes, Yale associate professor of comparative literature, is among those who say Said left important clues that testify otherwisenot the least of which is the manuscript's opening surah. Alrvyes's book "O, People of America": The Arabic Life of Omar Ibn Said, A Muslim American Slave is due to be published this year.

Said's is not the only Muslim American

slave narrative, but most of the other authors dictated their words to intermediaries who wrote them down in English. These include Job "Ayuba" Ben Solomon. whose account dates to 1734; Ibrahim Abd ar-Rahman ("the Prince Among Slaves") in

> the 1820's; and Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua in 1854.

It is significant, says Alryves, that Said wrote himself in a language that demonstrated that he had been literate, even learned, before he was enslaved."He offers a window into the antebellum world of slavery that is quite different from our standard, 'normal' view of slavery," Alryves says. "Other slaves acquired their literacy from their masters. Muslim slaves-because they read the Qur'an-had some literacy."

Muslims comprised upward of 20 percent of African slaves brought to the United States. and like Said, a number of them impressed white Southerners with their proficiency in Arabic and their desire to maintain their observance of Islam's requirement of five daily prayers. Both of these traits humanized them in the eves of their owners-sometimes suffi-

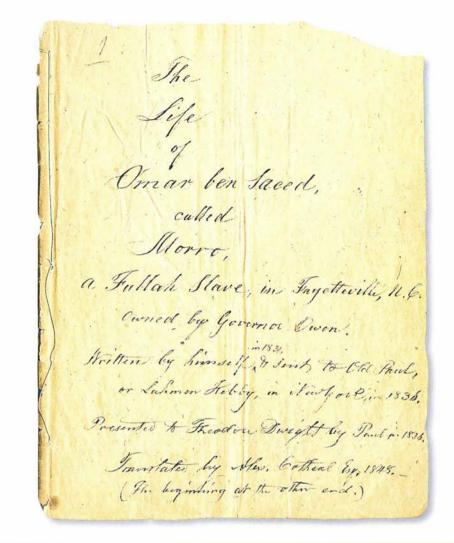
ciently to lead the owners to infer they were Arabs or noble Africans deserving of better treatment than other slaves, according to historian Allan D. Austin, who authored two books on the subject. What made Said more exceptional still was his maturity: When a warring African army captured and sold him in 1807, he was already 37 years old.

Born in Futa Toro ("the land between two rivers"), in what is now northern Senegal, Said came from a large, prosperous, pious family. In his Life, Said wrote that he "continued seeking knowledge for twenty-five years," learning from his brother Muhammad and two other "shaykhs," a word that

The English-language title page added to Said's autobiography offers details about how Said's story was disseminated.

can mean "learned men." He claimed 15 siblings, and he waxed proud of his adherence to Islam in Africa-ablutions, prayers and alms "every year in gold, silver, harvest, cattle, sheep, goats, rice, wheat and barley." He was. Austin says, "a scholar and a teacher,"

In the United States, Said was initially taken to Charleston, South Carolina, where he was sold to "a small, weak, evil man called Johnson, an infidel who did not fear God at all." Johnson forced him to hard labor. "I am a small man who cannot do hard work. I escaped from the hands of Johnson after a month," wrote Said. On foot for another month, he finally went to Favetteville, North Carolina, where he saw a church, and he went inside to pray. "A young man saw me," wrote Said, and two men with "many dogs" walked Said 12 miles to the "big house called jeel" (jail) in Favetteville. There, after "sixteen days and nights," he was bought by James Owen, whose brother was a former governor. Said spent the rest of his life with Owen's family, even turning down overtures from colonizers who offered to help him return free to Africa-if he would go there as a Christian evangelist.



المدور الا والدحل الرهب م الحددال ٤ ٤ والا حداران من فد م والجود والمن والا جلال والكرم الممدلاه الذه خله الخلق لمعباء فسيدع حتني زرجا إصعالهم وافواهم م عمرالي شأخ دنته سالتيران اكتب الحيات الماليمن المستطيع المستدارة والمنافي المستطيع المستطيع المستطيع المستطيع المستطيع المستدارة المس مع الكلام العرب ا ذلا بفي ع فوط اله فليلا لا لغود الافلا بالفرة هالتك بالله لاتكومون الالعين فعيق المعدد والا السم عمرابه سيه مال مولد ع جوت نور ديس البي بي كله العلم بند وجوت نيبن بسمي معمد سيد انوق وشيخ سليمل عصبه وشيغ بسريل عبال ex in a was alellallouis و مان سنة جاء و بالديل جيس كسر فتل الانسان كثيرا فلا فيومنن كبسى البي باعوا وبد النصرة نى المسترى جملت الى المسعينة الطبيراليم الطبير

Excerpts from The Life of Omar ben Saeed

In the name of God, the Gracious, the Merciful. Thanks be to God, for his goodness is of old, his generosity and favor.

I cannot write my life for I have forgotten much of my talk as well as the talk of the Arabs. Also I know little grammar and little vocabulary. O my brothers, I ask you, in the name of God, not to blame me, for my eye is weak and so is my body.

My name is Omar ibn Said; my birthplace is Fut Tur, between the two rivers.... There came to our country a big army. It killed many people. It took me, and walked me to the big Sea, and sold me into the hand of a Christian man who bought me and walked me to the big Ship in the big Sea. We sailed in the big Sea for a month and a half until we came to a place called Charleston.

O, people of North Carolina; O, people of South Carolina; O, people of America, all of you: Are there among you men as good as Jim Owen and John Owen? They are good men, for whatever they eat, I eat; and whatever they wear, they give me to wear. Jim with his brother read from the Bible that God is our Lord, our Creator, and our Owner, and the restorer of our condition, health and wealth by grace and not duty.

Excerpted from "The Life of Omar Ibn Said, Written by Himself," Ala A. Alryyes, tr., in The Multilingual Anthology of American Literature. Marc Shell and Werner Sollors, eds. 2000, New York University Press, 0-8147-9753-9 pb.



Fayetteville tax accountant Adam Beyah also serves as an imam at Fayetteville's Omar ibn Sayyid mosque. He is one of few people to have sought out the site and the few remains of the Owen plantation.

Like many other Muslim slaves in the antebellum south, Said was under powerful pressure to adopt his master's religion. By 1831, Said was attending church and reading the Bible-in Arabic. However, his written emphasis on Quranic surahs convinces Alryyes that Said "was playing an in-between game," professing enough Christianity to pass as a convert without denying Islam.

To bolster his point, Alrvyes points to two Muslim slaves who won back their freedom. Born in what is now central Guinea, Ibrahim Abd ar-Rahman was repatriated after 40 years of slavery, thanks to diplomatic intervention by Morocco. When he returned to African soil in 1829. he renounced his conversion to Christianity. Similarly, in 1836 Lamine Kebe, who was a teacher in Guinea before enduring 30 years of slavery, reclaimed his Muslim roots after sailing to Liberia with the help of the American Colonization Society.

It is thanks in part to Kebe that we have Said's words today: After Kebe received his freedom in 1834, but before his departure to Liberia, Said sent him the manuscript of his autobiography. Kebe passed it on to an abolitionist named Theodore Dwight. Since then, it has been translated three times. most recently in 2000 by Alryves.

To Beard, "everything [Said] writes and looks at is from an Islamic perspective. Even before he writes the Lord's Prayer, he contextualizes it with the Fatiha ("The Opening"), the first chapter of the Our'an. He writes that first, then he writes the Lord's Prayer. There's a clear reason for that: He believes the Fatiha has pre-eminence over the Lord's Prayer."

The night I interviewed Beard and saw Said's manuscript behind glass was the opening night of the "America I AM" exhibition in Atlanta. The night had the feel of an Academy Awards ceremony. By special invitation, guests heard live African music and speeches (paraphrasing W. E. B. Du Bois, organizer Tavis Smiley asked, "Would America be America without its Negro people?"), then walked through an exhibition whose entry mirrored those of traditional mud-and-timber buildings in West Africa. Images of famous African Americans adorned the walls, from Frederick Douglass to Barack Obama-and including Omar ibn Said.

It's not only here that Said is remembered, but also in southeastern North Carolina. A few years ago, Adam Beyah, a member of a Fayetteville mosque named the Masjid Omar ibn Savvid, drove about an hour south to the small town of Bladenboro, where "Owen Hill"-Said's plantationhad been located. Bevah and his companions were seeking Said's grave, but they found that the plantation had disappeared, covered over by smaller, subdivided properties. "We

were driving down the street. and we saw a lady in the yard," says Beyah. "We pulled over



and she asked what we were looking for. We told her, 'Omar.' She said, 'Oh, you're talking about the Prince?""

She pointed Beyah to a nearby property, which they explored until they found "remnants of an old house and some grave stones," says Beyah. "I'm not going to say it was Omar's grave. I don't know whose grave it was."

According to research by Thomas C. Parramore, a North Carolina historian and professor who died in 2004, Said's tombstone, which read "Omar the Slave," disappeared many years ago. Today, people who want to honor his life often come to the Masjid Omar ibn Sayyid, where Beyah or others can show them Said's daguerreotype and tell his story.

Said died in 1864, one year before Congress passed the Thirteenth Amendment that officially abolished slavery in the United States. Beard believes Said knew that his autobiography would be read for many years. "It's almost as if he wrote this manuscript for today," Beard says.

Including Alryyes' forthcoming work, more than 50 books have now devoted at

least some attention to Said. In North Carolina, Bevah says, public-school history books describe Said's life in detail. In addition to Favetteville's mosque, a boarding school in New Haven, Connecticut, has taken its name from Said. In the future, Beard hopes a movie version of Said's life might be produced.

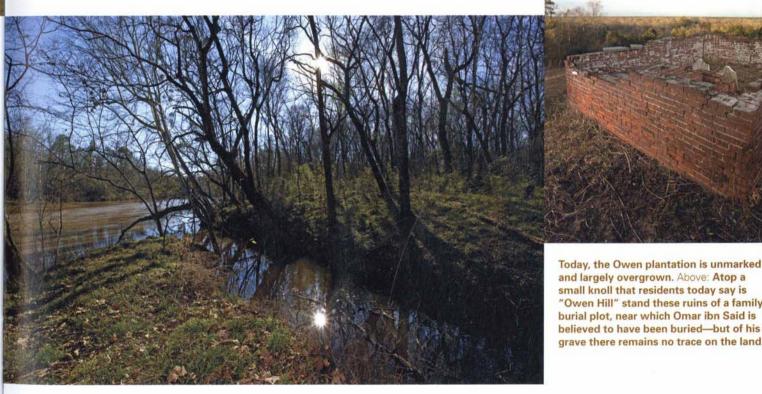
Alryves points out that Said composed his autobiography shortly after the slave rebellion led by Nat Turner. Did antebellum slave owners, asks Alryyes, look to Said's Life for reassurance that not all slaves were blood-thirsty avengers? In prefacing his autobiography with a surah from the Qur'an, was Said inspired by ex-slave David Walker, whose 1829 "Appeal" was a riveting

Muslims comprised upward of 20 percent of African slaves brought to the United States.

abolitionist document that similarly cited God's dominion over all? Or was Walker somehow inspired by ideas already in circulation thanks to Muslim slaves like Said? Such questions, Alrvves savs, may never be answered, but by raising them, Alryyes hopes to broaden understanding of the context of Said's autobiography.

Africa and America, freedom and slavery, Islam and Christianity, all coalesced in his brief 1831 manuscript. "To see his written word is just fascinating and beautiful," says Mark Lach, senior vice president at Arts and Exhibitions International, which designed the "America I AM" exhibit. "To have it right in front of you is a privilege." @

Today, the Owen plantation is unmarked





Journalist Jonathan Curiel (www. jonathancuriel.com) is the author of Al' America: Travels Through America's Arab and Islamic Roots (2008, New Press), which won an

American Book Award. As a Reuters Foundation Fellow at Oxford University, he researched Islamic history; as a Fulbright Scholar, he taught at Punjab University in Pakistan.



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African influence on blues music, J/A 06



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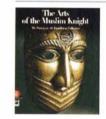
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Readers of Saudi Aramco World who want to range more widely or delve more deeply than a bimonthly magazine can do will find interesting material, most of it recently published, in this list. Without endorsing the views of any of the authors, the editors encourage varied and omnivorous reading as a path to greater understanding. The books listed here are available online, in libraries, from bookstores-we urge our readers to patronize independent bookstoresor from their respective publishers; International Standard Book Numbers (ISBN) are given to facilitate ordering. Please do not order books from Saudi Aramco World. The fulltext electronic archive of "Suggestions for Reading" from 1993 to the present can be found on the magazine's Web site at www. saudiaramcoworld.com.



Amazigh Arts in Morocco: Women Shaping Berber Identity. Cynthia J. Becker. 2006. University of Texas Press, 978 0-292-72137-1, \$25 pb. This rich study illustrates how women in an Amazigh (Berber) community of Morocco create public expressions of their identity

through such folk arts as tattooing, weaving. folk song, folk dance and wedding traditions. It challenges the stereotype that women in Islamic societies express themselves only in the private sphere, but men in the public, Focused on the community of the Ait Khabbash near the Tafilalet Oasis in southern Morocco, the book also explores how women's behavior is limited by their public forms of expression, and how the expression of identity has changed in recent decades. While "women's control over the visual symbols of Berber ethnic identity grants them power and prestige,... [it] also restricts them to specific roles in that society," the author argues. She lived in an Ait Khabbash home for years, allowing her time to deeply explore not only the traditions themselves, but the subtle cross-connections among them. -KAY HARDY CAMPBELL

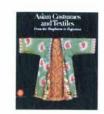


The Arts of the Muslim Knight: The Furusiyya Art Foundation Collection.

Bashir Mohamed. 2008, Skira, 978-8-876-24877-1, \$100 hb. Although the theme of this art collection is warfare. the beauty of the objects portrayed is undeniable.

Islamic arms and armor are rich in symbolism. highly decorative and steeped in cultural and historical lore. The photography in this largeformat book is often breathtaking, but the objects are also well explained in introductory chapters and informative text blocks. The Furusiyya Collection, displayed at the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris, covers a wealth of Islamic weaponry from the eighth to the 18th century, and these objects were selected for their rarity, historical interest or artistic appeal. We learn that swords from Muslim Spain are extremely rare, but this collection features one: a 14th-century Nasrid blade from Granada, inscribed with the name of Sultan Muhammad v. Few blades bear poems, but this one does: a composition by Ibn Zamrak celebrating Muhammad v's victory at Algeciras in 1369. We also learn that this sword later belonged to Emperor Charles V, and was one of five or six that he removed from the Alhambra Palace himself. The collection also contains unexpected delights, such as a number of archer's thumb rings, mostly from Mughal India and Ottoman Turkey. Made of silver, gold, brass, bone and jade, they became items of male jewelry and were often inlaid with enamel or set with gemsgood evidence for the proposition advanced in the book's introduction: that arms often speak of much more than war. -ROBERT W. LEBLING

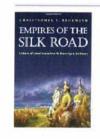
Asian Costumes and Textiles from the Bosphorus to Fujiyama: The Zaira and Marcel Mis Collection. Mary Hunt Kahlenberg, 2001, Skira, 978-8-881-18971-7, €75 hb.



This volume is a feast for the eves with its wealth of photographs, many of them close-up details of some of the most beautiful clothing ever made. The pieces range from magnificent silk and gold kaftans from Syria and velvet ikat

chapans from Central Asia to a quilted protective jacket, painted with a jumping salmon-the symbol of courage and persistence-for a fireman in 19th-century Japan. The book covers not only the better-known areas, such as the Ottoman Empire and northern India, but also much less familiar regions such as Laos or Sulu in the Philippines. It has good short introductions to each area, but no detailed information about individual items of clothing. This is a work with appeal not only to textile experts, but to anyone interested in patterns and techniques, far-flung places and their history, fashion or design. It also gives pause for thought: Many of these amazing pieces were made by ordinary people for themselves, reminding us that in the past luxurious clothing was not only the prerogative of the rich.

-CAROLINE STONE



Empires of the Silk Road: A History of Central Eurasia from the Bronze Age to the Present. Christopher I. Beckwith, 2009, Princeton UP, 978-0-691-13589-2, \$35 hb. Central Eurasia is widely known as the cultural backwater from which nomadic barbarian warriors

spilled westward, bent on violence and pillage: the vicious Scythians, Attila and his Huns, the fearsome Turks, Genghis Khan and the Mongol horde. But this carefully researched history shows us that Central Eurasia has often been a wellspring of culture, science and civilization, nourishing and strengthening great powers familiar to us: the Persian, Greco-Roman, Indian and Chinese. The "Silk Road" of the title-the historic trade routes through Central Eurasia linking China with the Middle East and Mediterranean-passed through cultured cities and prosperous realms whose names are remembered but whose accomplishments and global importance are often slighted: Khurasan, Bukhara, Ferghana, Balkh, Tashkent, Khwarizm, Lhasa,... The author reverses our usual perspective: The familiar great powers are viewed as "peripheral" states. surrounding the Central Eurasian heartland. We learn that the "barbarian" powers of this heartland were no more vicious or violent than the empires of the periphery, and that the movements of men and ideas from Central Eurasia were motivated less by a taste for combat than by a love of trade. We see that many of the leading thinkers and scientists in the Golden Age of Arab Islam, the early Abbasid period, originated in Central Eurasia: Ibn Sina (from near Bukhara), al-Ghazali (Khurasan), al-Biruni (Khwarizm) and al-Farabi (Utrar). It's a humbling lesson-that greatness sometimes springs from the most unlikely places.

-ROBERT W. LEBLING



The Fables of Kalilah and Dimnah, 'Abdallah ibn al-Mugaffa', Saleh Sa'adeh Jallad, tr. 2004, Rimal / Melisende, 978-1-901-76414-7, €20 hb. This book of instructive fables about animals, kings. courtiers and ascetics was for centuries the most widely read in the Islamic world,

second only to the Qur'an. Sparkling with timeliness and timelessness, the tales teach friendship, wisdom and politics. Originally written in Sanskrit, they were translated into Middle Persian in the sixth century of our era and then into Arabic by 'Abdallah ibn al-Muqaffa', an eighth-century Persian scholar and administrator. While several English translations exist, Jallad's version comes directly from the oldest complete Arabic text. published in Egypt in 1817. Jallad's introductory essay on Ibn al-Mugaffa' is followed by four introductions that were part of the original Arabic manuscript. The introductions illustrate how highly valued ancient knowledge was as it was transmitted to the Middle East.

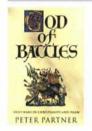
-KAY HARDY CAMPBELL



Flatweaves of Turkey. Arend Bandsma and Robin Brandt. 2003, Philip Wilson, 978-0-856 67528-7, £25, hb. Flatweaves of Turkey is a good introduction to the woven carpets of Turkey. primarily those made by

nomads and villagers. Not intended for the dealer or the specialist, it reflects the authors' passion for a world they know well and provides information about the different tribal areas. There are useful sections on the history of woven carpets, techniques, dveing and so on, as well as a good map and a brief glossary and bibliography. Each of the excellent photographs is accompanied by a short, informative text technically describing the bag, carpet or prayer rug and explaining why it is of particular interest. An additional pleasure of the book comes from the close-up details of individual motifs, which will make tapestry lovers long to reach for their needles.

-CAROLINE STONE

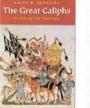


God of Battles: Holy Wars of Christianity and Islam. Peter Partner. 1998, Princeton UP, 978-0-691-00235-4, \$33.95 pb. Holy wars-conflicts fought for religious ends-come in several guises. Some are a form of jihad: in Islam, a fundamentally spiritual struggle that can be personal or

national. Some holy wars are crusades: Christian wars fought in the Middle Ages, usually with papal support, against Muslim territories or even those of heretical Christians (e.g., the Albigensians of southern France). This book is not new; nevertheless, it remains timely, as the author takes a serious historical look at the phenomenon of religious war in the West and Middle East in an effort to understand the impulse, its causes and its results. He compares different holy wars. from the ancient campaigns of the Jewish

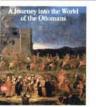
Maccabees to the medieval battles for the Holy Land and the Iberian Peninsula, to the role of religion in colonial conquests, to the modern attacks of Islamist jihadi irregulars. We learn that, through history, periods of armistice or truce have vastly predominated over periods of combat. We also learn that, as the author puts it, "There has never been a purely religious purpose in holy war": Even holy warriors like Saladin and Richard I of England sometimes had politics in mind. We also see comparisons of the rhetoric of American Samuel Huntington on the "clash of civilizations" (Islam against the "more civilized" West) and of Egyptian Islamist Sayvid Outb on the superiority of Islamic civilization over that of the West, and we realize one can be viewed as the mirror-image of the other. The author's approach is to look for familiar connections, across time and space, that help make seemingly incomprehensible actions easier to understand.

-ROBERT W. LEBLING



The Great Caliphs: The Golden Age of the 'Abbasid Empire. Amira K. Bennison. 2009, Yale UP, 978-0-300-15227-2, \$30 hb. Culture, rather than politics, is the concern of this fine introduction to a much-heralded period of Islamic history. During Abbasid times,

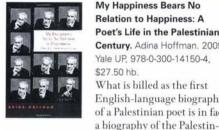
from the eighth to the 13th century, Baghdad was the center of a great civilization that encompassed the Mediterranean region and the Middle Eastone that, as the author seeks to demonstrate, is not alien to western (i.e., Greco-Roman) civilization, but is rather its logical extension. Under the Abbasids, the scientific and philosophical legacy of the Greeks and Romans was amplified and extended. Scientists and translators of every description-Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Sabian, Zoroastrianabsorbed the great works of Mediterranean thought and science and took them to the next level. In fact, Abbasid civilization experienced a "scientific renaissance" as important as the one Europe underwent centuries later. Bennison uses a wide-angle lens to encompass the full picture. She includes simultaneous cultural advances in Islamic Spain and Fatimid Egypt, for instance, since these lands were in constant interaction with Baghdad. The Abbasid world was a strikingly mobile in many ways, with pilgrims setting out from its far reaches for Makkah and Madinah traders seeking commerce in distant lands, and other travelers crossing vast stretches of desert and sea simply to learn. The famous hadith attributed to the Prophet Muhammad, "Seek knowledge, even unto China," reflects this attitude: The quest for knowledge was a key characteristic of the early Abbasid world, and politicians, scholars and scientists alike shouldered their responsibilities well. -ROBERT W. LEBLING



A Journey into the World of the Ottomans: The Art of Jean-Baptiste Vanmour (1671-1737). Olga Nefedova. 2009, Skira, 978-8-861-30796-4, \$60, hb Orientalist painter Jean-

Baptiste Vanmour may be

the subject of the book, but its value lies in the context Olga Nefedova builds around him. Her point about Vanmour is straightforward: This Flemish artist, who worked for French and other ambassadorial missions in Istanbul, set the tone for how subsequent European painters portrayed Turkey. To drive this point home, she provides an extensively illustrated survey of European representations of "the Orient," from European Renaissance paintings to contemporary works. She also surveys the subgenre of works by artists attached to European diplomatic missions in Turkey. As a result, she brings nuance to "Orientalist painting," a category that has too often been seen solely through the lens of colonial-power dynamics at the expense of recognizing the individuality of creative expression. -LEE LAWRENCE



My Happiness Bears No Relation to Happiness: A Poet's Life in the Palestinian Century, Adina Hoffman, 2009. Yale UP, 978-0-300-14150-4, \$27.50 hb. What is billed as the first English-language biography

of a Palestinian poet is in fact

ian people, writ small. Arab-Israeli shopkeeper Taha Muhammad Ali was born in 1931 in Saffuriyya, the village near Nazareth where he now lives, which was attacked and completely erased in the 1948 war, forcing Ali and his family into exile in Lebanon. Once back home in Palestine, he has written poems about loss both personal and national. That this is the exact same story of so many Palestinians, a story largely dependent on oral sources and dry-eved memory, means that it must be heard and not read. So listen to Ali: "We did not weep / when we were leaving-/ for we had neither / time nor tears, / and there was no farewell. / We did not know / at the moment of parting / that it was a parting, / so where would our weeping / have come from?" Author Hoffman has done an admirable job of assembling this life story while it can still be told in the first person. Copper Canyon Press publishes Ali's poetry in English translation in



the US.

The Night Counter. Alia Yunis. 2009, Shaye Areheart (Crown). 978-0-307-45362-4, \$24 hb. In this first novel, Alia Yunis conjures up the legendary Scheherazade in Los Angeles (she followed a GI returning home from Iraq), where the immortal storyteller's eve is caught by the purple-dyed

-LOU WERNER

hair of Fatima Abdullah, 85. Fatima has left Ibrahim, the love of her life and father of nine of her 10 children, to travel from Dearborn, Michigan, to live in Hollywood with her grandson, Amin, an aspiring actor. Scheherazade commands Fatima to entertain her with stories from her life because "when our stories end, so do our lives." For the next 992 nights, Amin hears his beloved Tayta Fatima telling her stories-to herself, he thinks. Listening, he learns about his family history in the Lebanese village of Deir Zatoun, as well as his aunts, uncles and many

cousins, including Zade, who, in the tradition of his matchmaker great-grandmother, is establishing an Internet dating service. For lagniappe, incompetent federal agents have Amin's bungalow under surveillance on a "tip" he's an al-Qaeda operative. This delightful contemporary fairy tale offers insight into Arab immigrants' assimilation into the American salad bowl and the culinary and cultural traits they hold onto. -PAT MCDONNELL TWAIR

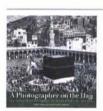


Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval "Hindu-Muslim" Encounter. Finbarr B. Flood. 2009. Princeton UP, 978-0-691-12594-7, \$45, cl.

The way we view the past tells us a lot about the way we view (and act) in the pres-

ent: Change the former and you can help change the latter. This historical study of the frontier region that encompasses present-day Afghanistan and Pakistan, and parts of Iran, Turkmenistan and India, does just that. Flood focuses on a period of "Hindu-Muslim" exchange and movement between the early eighth and early 13th centuries. He examines a wide range of objects, from coins to robes to minarets and mosques. demonstrating how their meanings shift according to use and circumstance, and how people use them to forge identities-identities that refuse to conform to our inherited categorizations of "Hindu" and "Muslim." Deploying theories of translation borrowed from linguistics, Flood revolutionizes our understanding of the past. He also clarifies our view of the present, steering us away from facile labels toward a more nuanced and realistic view of peoples and cultures.

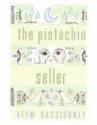
-LEE LAWRENCE



A Photographer on the Hajj: The Travels of Mohammed Ali Effendi Sa'oudi (1904-1908). Farid Kioumgi and Robert Graham 2009, American University in Cairo Press, 978-9-774-16290-1, \$34.95 hb.

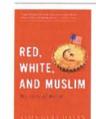
Students of the history of Makkah and the hajj know the name of Mohammed Ali Sa'oudi, if at all, only as one of the Muslim photographers whose pictures appeared in Ibrahim Rif'at's important book Mirat al-Haramain (View of the Two Sanctuaries), published in Arabic in Cairo in 1925. Gen. Rif at, who led the Egyptian hajj several times in the early 20th century, was accompanied in 1904 and 1907-1908 by this young Egyptian civil servant. Sa'oudi's original photographs and diaries came to light only recently, and, thanks to this publication-essentially a condensed version of them-he emerges as a personality in his own right. He traveled at a time when the advance of the Hijaz Railway threatened to upset the the old pattern of pilgrimage, and he is a scathing observer of Ottoman and Sharifian governance of the Hijaz, the chaos and frustrations of daily life and the neglect of pilgrims' welfare and security, not to mention the ever-present dangers of taking photographs. And it is the photographs that are the real glory of this book. Sharp and detailed, reproduced with care on high-quality

paper, they provide an exceptionally vivid picture of old Makkah and Madinah which may surprise those who are familiar only with the modern -WILLIAM FACEY



The Pistachio Seller, Reem Bassiouney. Osman Nusairi, tr. 2009. Syracuse UP. 978-0-815-60919-3, \$29.95, hb. Bassiounev brings an insider's eve to this love story set in Egypt during the last two decades of the 20th century. Wafaa, a pious young college student from

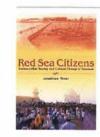
a Nile Delta town, falls in love with her wealthy cousin Ashraf, thoroughly westernized and just back from a youth spent in Britain. He hands out expensive pistachios to win friends while leading the fast life in Cairo. The pistachios are metaphors for two sides of the human condition. Wafaa describes two that fall from Ashraf's pocket on their first meeting: One is "beautiful, and its green color revealed its innocence." while the other is "pale and terrifying ... like all subversive and arrogant ideas." Bassiouney traces her characters' journeys as they mature, Ashraf abroad again, now penniless, and Wafaa making her way as a teacher. She pines for him, but establishes a life of her own. When the two finally meet again in Egypt, both have grown up-she no longer so willing to accept what she's told and he not so quick to dismiss tradition. Each understands the other, and they're now able to link up, in a pistachio-selling project and in life. The book won the Translation of Arabic Literature Award of the King Fahd Center for Middle East and Islamic Studies in 2009.



Red, White and Muslim: My Story of Belief. Asma Gull Hasan, 2009, HarperOne, 978-0-061-67375-7, \$14.99 pb. (Prev. pub. as Why I Am a Muslim: An American Odyssev. 2004, HarperCollins, 978-0-007-17533-8. \$14.99 pb.)

This heartfelt memoir offers a refreshing view into the

life of an American Muslim for whom faith is clearly a matter of choice and not of birth. Born in Chicago to Pakistani immigrants and raised in the rural community of Pueblo, Colorado, Hasan challenges the post-9/II stereotypes of Islam in her memoir. She offers a concise history of what she describes as a simple and tolerant world religion, and does not shy away from discussing her personal challenges as an American Muslim. There are striking similarities between the core values of American society and those expressed in the Qur'an, emphasizes Hasan, who believes that being a Muslim makes her a better American and being American makes her a better Muslim. The book is engaging and inspirational and underscores why this journalist, author and attorney has become known as an articulate and engaging Muslim American speaker in the US and abroad. -PINEY KESTING



Red Sea Citizens: Cosmopolitan Society and Cultural Change in Massawa. Jonathan Miran. 2009, Indiana UP, 978-0-253-22079-0, \$27.95 pb. In this early modern history of the Eritrean port of Massawa, linked inland by caravan routes to the Ethiopian highlands and

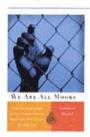
outward across the seas to Indian. Middle Eastern and European mercantile cities, Miran has taken an impressive first step toward a Braudelian treatment of the Red Sea as a place of cultural, geographic and socioeconomic cross-pollination. The author's analysis of town records of personal and commercial legal disputes in the 19th century helps to unwind the multiethnic strands-Arab, African, Egyptian, Indian and Turkish, to name only some-of business interests and blood ties that defined a syncretic Massawan identity as something meaningful to both the Massawans themselves and the visitors, sailors and caravaneers who made the town an essential port of call. -LOU WERNER



Rice Pasta Couscous: The Heart of the Mediterranean Kitchen, Jeff Koehler. 2009, Chronicle Books, 978-0-811-86297-4, \$29.95 hb. Self-described "writer, photographer, cook, traveler" Jeff Koehler is a

Seattle native glowingly transplanted to Barcelona, where he married a Catalan and is raising a family while exploring the culture of the food all around him. In his latest food guidebook (his first was about paella), Koehler may be giving instructions on rice, pasta and couscous, but his larger concern is how food imparts an ethos and a way of life. He explores dishes from countries all around the Mediterranean basin, his recipes ranging from the elementary-chicken stock or cabbage rolls-to the complex: Fez-style chicken stuffed with couscous and almonds, or upsidedown rice and eggplant casserole from Syria. Specialty ingredients are not uncommon. The book's vibrant photographs are gorgeous evocations of the region, both culinary and otherwise. although cooks may be frustrated because Koehler includes few photos of actual dishes.

-ANN WALTON SIEBER



We Are All Moors: Ending Centuries of Crusades **Against Muslims and Other** Minorities. Anouar Majid. 2009. University of Minnesota Press. 978-0-816-66079-7, \$24.95 hb. This extended essay on the cultural roots, political cross-connections and media feedback loops of European

Islamophobia and American Latinophobia finds an important antecedent in post-1492 Spain. when panic and paranoia about the "other" were as common as today. Now, writes Majid, fears of hijabs and kebabs in France and Germany mirror what Hispanic immigrants face in parts of the United States, where speaking Spanish at the neighborhood taco stand has almost become

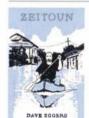
an unpatriotic act. Unfortunately, the author's optimism about the power of mestizaje, or mixing in the cultural melting pot, does not seem able to bridge the contemporary racial and religious -LOU WERNER divisions.



Whose Culture? The Promise of Museums and the Debate over Antiquities. James Cuno. ed. 2009, Princeton UP, 978-0-691-13333-1, \$24.95 hb. This book features essays by scholars who, like editor Cuno, support encyclopedic museums and advocate an internationalist approach

to ownership of ancient cultural heritage. They include Kwame Anthony Appiah of Princeton, Sir John Boardman of Oxford, British Museum Director Neil MacGregor and David Owen of Cornell, A key issue is objects-called "unprovenanced"-whose original archeological context is unknown. Many archeologists say museums should not acquire such artworks, because trade in them encourages looting, theft and illegal exports. Cuno and colleagues disagree, noting that objects like the Hellenistic Laocoön sculpture or the Rosetta Stone could never have been acquired, displayed or studied had such policies governed. Owen notes that sentiment against unprovenanced artifacts is so intense that the US, UK and Germany are campaigning to stop publication of cuneiform inscriptions that have emerged from the Iraqi war zone, sadly unprovenanced but still of potentially great value; he calls this "censorship" and "suppression of knowledge." Other topics include the Taliban's destruction of the giant Bamiyan Buddhas and the long-running dispute over Britain's removal of the Elgin Marbles from the Parthenon.

-ROBERT W. LEBLING



Zeitoun. Dave Eggers. 2009, McSweeny's, 978-1-934-78163-0, \$24 hb. The title of this national

best-seller comes from the name of Abdulrahman Zeitoun, a well-regarded New Orleans house painter and contractor who opted to stay behind to oversee

his rental properties when Hurricane Katrina struck in 2005. Initially, the Syrian-American phoned his wife every day in Baton Rouge, where she had taken refuge with their children, to relate his adventures rowing an aluminum kavak through flooded streets to rescue and feed stranded humans and animals. On the ninth day, however, Zeitoun vanished. Dave Eggers's riveting account of what happened to this hardworking Muslim immigrant makes it impossible to put the book down. He traveled to Syria to interview Zeitoun's relatives and searched for a further two and a half years to discover what happened to Zeitoun as he fell through the cracks of a failed system during the worst natural disaster in modern American history.

-LOU WERNER

Suggestions for Listening



Bassekou Kouyate & Ngoni Ba. I Speak Fula (Out Here)

Vieux Farka Touré. Fondo (Six Degrees)



Tinariwen. Imadiwan: Companions (World Village)

Terakaft. Akh Issudar (World Village)



The blues had a baby and they called it rock 'n' roll-so the song goes-and it seems to apply in Africa just as it did in America. The desert blues of Mali have grown into a kind of adolescence, where the abrasive, rebellious sound of rock is most appealing. That raw,

spare blues remains the cornerstone of the sound, but harder rhythms, and in some cases florid solos, show they've been absorbing plenty of vintage western rock. It's most

obvious in the sophomore releases by Vieux Farka Touré (son of Ali Farka Touré, the godfather of desert blues) and Bassekou Kouvate, a virtuoso on the ngoni lute. The sense of collective blooming is tangible as they play with confidence and fire, and push the limits of the genre. There are slower, more reflective pieces, in which their roots are always apparent, but the sparks really fly when they speed things up and cut loose. The Touareg group Tinariwen have become the biggest name in desert blues, and their stint opening for the Rolling Stones last year has influenced them on their new disc, which bristles with rough energy. They are developing their multi-guitar sound, both acoustically and electrically, in a way that mirrors the British blues boom of the 1960's-albeit refracted through a global prism-with solos that spark out over twisting strands of rough melody. Fellow Touaregs Terakaft come across first as a smaller, leaner Tinariwen, with a spare, open sound where space feels as important as music. But when they take off, it's with the roar of a sports car with a young, eager driver at the wheel.



Speed Caravan, Kalashnik Love (Real World) Fronted by 'ud virtuoso Mehdi Haddab of the electric Arab-West band DuOud, Speed Caravan offers a fiery, sophisti-

cated vision of rock, electronics and Arab music. Three amped-up traditional Arab pieces sit comfortably among the contemporary compositions, with a result that's relentlessly 21st-century and challenging. It's a disc that demands attention, packed with complex, shifting textures, but it easily repays the effort, forging a Middle Eastern progressive fusion that teases its sources together seamlessly into something new, where the computer is as vital to shaping the sound as the original instruments.



Khaled. Liberté (Wrasse) Khaled is raï's global superstar, and over two decades he's pushed the horizons of his music out from its Algerian origins into something

cosmopolitan. But here he's going back to raw raï, making the kind of sweaty, passionate music that originally propelled him to fame in the 1980's. Many of the pieces begin with "introductions" that are really vocal taksims, or extemporizations, that show his prowess, and he's never sounded better, putting all his experience and maturity into the improvisations that explode into powerful, thrilling songs. This is an edgy, reinvigorated Khaled, more eager and forceful than he's been in years, and turning in a series of relentless, emotional performances. When he does take a detour, it's not to the West, but to the even more stripped-down arena of Maghrebi gnaoua music, where he slides easily into the trance-like rhythms. By striding so magnificently into the past, Khaled has made an album that eclipses almost everything he's recorded in the last 10 years.

Chris Nickson, a journalist and broadcaster who covers world music, is the author of Solid Air: The Life of John Martyn. He lives in England.

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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

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—THE EDITORS

Curriculum Alignments

To see alignments with national standards for all articles in this issue, click "Curriculum Alianments" at www.saudiaramcoworld.com

Professional **Development Workshops** The Middle East Policy

Council, an independent, non-partisan educational organization, offers free Professional Development Workshops to help K-12 educators understand the geographical, political and human complexities of the region and to provide valuable teaching resources. MEPC will design a workshop to give your school, organization or conference innovative tools and strategies for teaching about the Middle East and Islam. For information, e-mail Barbara Petzen at bpetzen@mepc.org with your name, school or organization, phone number and subject and grade taught. MEPC has also developed a companion Web site, TeachMideast.org, with background essays, lesson plans and other educational modules.

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 ESL curricula, and produces textbook materials.

CLASS ACTIVITIES

This issue of Saudi Aramco World includes two articles about unusual books. "Sons of the Wind" describes a 1940 book, Sons of Sinbad, about the last days of commercial sail in an Arabian dhow. In that book, Australian writer Alan Villiers documented his travels with an Arab captain and crew who sailed from Aden to East Africa and back around the Arabian Peninsula. The second article, "The Life of Omar ibn Said," describes an 1864 autobiography written in Arabic by an African-American slave. In the 15-page manuscript, Omar ibn Said described his life as a Muslim in Senegal and as a slave in North Carolina.

When they were written, the two books were unusual for different reasons. Today they offer insights into two moments in the past. In the activities that follow, you will look at the books in some depth and use a variety of tools to analyze them.

Reading Strategies

Who wrote the book? Why did he write it?

A first step you can take to analyze a book is to ask, "Who wrote the book?" and "Why did the author write it?" It's challenging to try to figure out the motives of someone who lived a long time ago, and we can never actually do it. We can only make educated guesses based on evidence that we find and based on our own way of understanding the world.

Let's try to figure out Omar ibn Said's motivation. Read the article called "The Life of Omar ibn Said." (Except for the spelling of his name, Said's booklet has the same title as the article.) Think about Said's life. He was in his 30's when he was captured, put on a ship, sent to another country and sold into slavery. Given his experiences, why do you think he wrote an autobiography? As you ponder how to answer the question, think about some of the specifics about The Life of Omar ben Saeed that made it unusual, such as the fact that Said wrote it himself, rather than dictating it to someone else, and that he wrote it in Arabic. How do those characteristics of the book affect your thinking about why Said wrote the story of his life?

To answer all these questions, imagine you're Said. Write a paragraph explaining why you've decided to write your autobiography. (To get you started, read the excerpt from the actual autobiography on page 37.) Compare your paragraph with other students' paragraphs. As a class, list the different reasons you've come up with that Said might have written the story of his life.

Now turn your attention to Sons of Sinbad. Read "Sons of the Wind," and ask the same questions you asked about The Life of Omar ben Saeed: Who was Alan Villiers? Why did he write Sons of Sinbad? As you answer the questions, think about the fact that Villiers was Australian and decided to travel with Arab sailors. Why did he decide to do that? And why do you think he decided to write about his experience?

What did people think of the book when it was first published?

Another step you can take to analyze a book is to look at how people received it when it was published. To do that, you need to understand what was going on in the world at the time the book was written. Because books are written at a particular moment in time, whatever is going on in the world at that time affects how authors understand the world and themselves-and consequently affects what they write.

One way to look at both The Life of Omar ben Saeed and Sons of Sinbad is to think about power: Who had it, and who did not? In other words, who was powerful, and who was less powerful or even powerless? Literary analysts call the relationship between powerful and powerless "power relations." Apply this idea to each book and think about what was happening when it was written. Said was a slave. The power relationship is clear: He was forced to come to the United States, sold to a white man and enslaved for the rest of his life. Certainly his status as a slave affected his autobiography. Yet if he had had a cruel master, could be have written the book at all? And what about his religion? Said appeared to his contemporaries to have converted to Christianity. But the article says that people familiar with his story don't think this was true. Think again about Said's possible motivation. Let's say today's historians are right, and Said remained a Muslim, but he was willing to let white Americans think he was Christian. Why might he have done that? Are there situations in which it makes sense for someone like Said to be less than completely honest about himself?

"The Life of Omar ibn Said" identifies some specific individuals and also describes a more general audience that read Omar ibn Said's autobiography when it was published. What did these readers think of the book? Take the role of someone who read Said's book when it was published-Francis Scott Key, Frederick Douglass, Jim Owen or another slave owner, for example. What would that person have thought of the book? How might the timing of the book's publication have affected their opinions? Think again about the fact that the book was



written in Arabic. How would one of Said's readers think about that? What would it lead them to think about Said? In the role you chose, prepare a review of the book in which you answer three questions. It can be a written review, or one that you present orally for television or YouTube. Find examples of book reviews on which you can model yours. Have volunteers present their reviews. Discuss the differences among the reviews.

Now think about Alan Villiers and the context in which he wrote Sons of Sinbad. Australia, Villiers's homeland, had been a British colony. Villiers himself was a westerner traveling with and writing about easterners. At the time he was writing, the usual western attitude was that western ways of life were superior to eastern ones. How did Villiers's point of view differ from what readers in 1940 might have expected from an Australian author writing about Arab sailors?

For evidence to answer the question, consider Villiers's photographs of his experiences on the Sinbad. His photos, like his words, provide two kinds of information: First, they show readers what life was like on the ship. At the same time, they reveal Villiers's attitudes just as clearly as his words do. Consider the photo on page eight. Recall that "Sons of the Wind" says that Villiers respected his Arab crewmates in a way that was unusual for his time. How does this photograph support that idea? Here are a few questions to help you out: What are the men in the photo doing? According to the caption, what is particularly skilled about what they're

doing? What image in the photo reveals that skill? (If you knew a lot about sailing, you would know the answers to the last two questions without the caption!) Where is the photographer, relative to the people in the photograph? What effect does the angle from which he's taking the picture have on you as a viewer? Imagine Villiers taking the photo from other locations. How would the resulting photos affect your thinking about the men who are pictured?

Thinking about motivation again, what do you think motivated Villiers to write about and photograph his Arab crewmates the way he did? Why didn't he use the stereotypes that were typical in his day? Keeping the evidence in mind, take the role of Villiers, and write a paragraph in which you answer these questions.

How do people today think about the book?

Today people understand Omar ibn Said's book very differently than people did when it was first published. Some historians today would look at Said's book and ask how he, as a slave, managed to maintain a sense of his own humanity when he lived under a system that oppressed him so thoroughly. Find and underline the parts of the article that explain how historians today interpret the fact that Said's book was written in Arabic. How do they make sense of the fact that Said, who identified himself as a Christian when he wrote the book, included Qur'anic

Compare the way people in the 1800's understood Omar ibn Said's autobiography and the way people today do so. Complete the chart below to help you clarify your thinking.

How did they interpret	Said's Contemporaries	People Today
that Said wrote an autobiography?		
that he had a cordial, even friendly relation- ship with his owner?		
that he wrote in Arabic?		
that he identified himself as a Christian and included verses from the Qur'an?		

Discuss with a group: What do you think accounts for the differences in interpretations of Said's book? Think about both attitudes and available evidence. Share your answers with the class.

Remember that the authors of the articles you have read about these two books are among those who are analyzing these two historical books today. The authors of both articles say that their subjects-Said and Villiers-were ahead of their time. Jonathan Curiel says that Omar ibn Said was calling for an interfaith dialogue. William Facey says that Villiers wanted to harness the power of the wind. What evidence suggests that that's true?

Putting it All Together

To recap what you've done so far: You've addressed what motivates a writer to write a book. You've thought about the context within which he writes the book and within which readers receive it. You've compared how readers in the present respond to a book to how readers responded when it was first published. As a final activity, you're going to have a roundtable discussion in which all of these perspectives can be expressed and debated.

Divide the class into groups of six or seven. Assign each person a role. One will take the role of Omar ibn Said. Two or three people will take the roles of different people who read Said's book when it came out. One person will be a reader of today. Two people will be moderators. One person will be the scribe.

To prepare for the roundtable: Moderators will come up with questions they can ask the different people in order to get a good discussion going. The contemporary readers of Said's book (that is, those who read it when it was first published) need to decide who each of them will be and what he or she will want to say about Said and/ or the book, plus generate questions to ask Said or others. The person taking the role of Said will think about what he wants people to know about him and how he will tell them. The person who is a modern-day reader will want to prepare questions for Said and for the others in the discussion.

Moderators will facilitate the roundtable discussion. Each person will have a chance to participate. The scribe will take notes and prepare a summary for the rest of the class. After all the groups have finished, have the scribes present the key points their group discussed. As a class, discuss what conclusions you can draw about Omar ibn Said, about his book and his motivation for writing it, and about different ways that people understand books at different times.

Maharaja: The Splendor of India's Royal Courts

explores the world of the maharajas and their extraordinarily rich culture, bringing together more than 250 magnificent objects from India's royal collections, many seen in Europe for the first time. The exhibition includes three thrones, a silver gilt howdah, gem-encrusted weapons, court paintings, photographs and Indian turban jewels and other jewelry. and covers the period from the 18th century, when the great era of the maharajas began, to the end of the rai (British rule) in 1947. It will show the changing role of the maharajas in a historical and social context and look at how their patronage of the arts, both in India and Europe, resulted in splendid and



beautiful commissions designed to enhance royal status and identity. The initial display explores ideas of kingship in India and the role of the maharaja as religious leader, military and political ruler and artistic patron. The exhibition then focuses on the shifts of power and taste in the 18th and early 19th centuries. The disintegration of the Mughal Empire led to a period of political change in which rival Indian kings laid claim to territory. This period also witnessed the rapid expansion to the territorial interests of the English East India Company. The exhibition then looks at the grand imperial durbars of the rai through large-scale paintings and rare archival film footage. The final section explores the role of the modern maharajas and the increasing European influence on their lives. Kunsthalle der Hypo-Kulturstiftung, Munich, through May 24.

In this scene painted in Thanjavur in about 1797, Amar Singh, late-18th-century ruler of Tanjore, rides in procession in the larger, gilded carriage.

CURRENT March

Indian Life and Landscape by Western Artists: Paintings and Drawings from the V&A 1790-1927 shows 94 works by 20 western artists drawn from the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum that depict the architecture, landscape and people of India. Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad, India through March 28.

Connecting Communities is a multimedia exhibition that lets Arab, Latino, Southeast Asian and Eastern European immigrants tell their own stories, which often contradict common stereotypes. Photos, personal objects and texts further illuminate the immigrant experience. Arab American National Museum, Dearborn, Michigan, through March 28.

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 Tillva 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 Ai Khanum, reflects Mediterranean influence between the fourth and second centuries BC. Trade goods from a third site, at Begram, date from the first century and include ivory statues and reliefs, as well as painted glassware, vases and bronzes, 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. Canadian Museum of Civilization. Ottawa, through March 28; Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Bonn, June 11 through October 3; British Museum, London, Spring 2011

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. De Young Museum, San Francisco, through March 28.

The Light of Kairouan spans the first five centuries of the Islamic era, the pinnacle of the Kairouan civilization whose influence expanded from present-day Tunisia throughout the western Mediterranean. A sumptuous collection of richly embellished Qur'anic and jurisprudential manuscripts emphasizes the city's long pioneering role in the establishment of the Our'an's canonical text and in the refinement of Arabic writing. The exhibition also includes specimens of Kairouan ceramics that illustrate the brilliance of Ifriqiyyan art and its talent for synthesis of eastern and local styles, as well as iewelry, marble and bronze objects and archeological artifacts that refute the contention that figurative representation in art was banished from the beginning of the Islamic era. The exhibits demonstrate that Kairouan. a link between the Muslim West and East, succeeded in developing its own artistic style and its own personality. Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris, through March 31

CURRENT April

Breaking the Veils is a selection of work by 51 well-established female artists-some veiled, some notfrom Sudan, Malaysia, Turkey, Iran and Pakistan, as well as the Levant, the Gulf states and North Africa. The art, from the collection of the Royal Society of Fine Arts of Jordan, is a visually and intellectually engaging collection designed to challenge tiresome stereotypes and enliven popular and academic discourse on women and the arts in the Islamic world. Murphy Gallery, St. Catherine University, St. Paul, Minnesota, through April 1.

The Egypt of Gustave Flaubert combines extracts from the 19th-century French writer's letters and travel diaries with the cool and precise photographs made by his friend and fellow traveler Maxime du Camp during their exploration of Egypt from Alexandria to Giza to Abu Simbel in 1849 and 1850. Along with these documents, the exhibition

includes some 100 archeological objects, including pharaonic portraits. tomb paintings, crocodile mummies and other items that Flaubert and du Camp encountered on their travels. Texts and photographs together constitute a typical view of Egypt through the eyes of two young Europeans. Flaubert was then a beginning writer-Madame Boyary lay eight years in the future and du Camp was skillfully using technology that was less than 10 years old. Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Leiden, The Netherlands, through April 4.

Quest for Immortality: The World of Ancient Favot offers insight into the ancient Egyptians' attitude to life and the afterlife, and the preparations they made to ensure their transition from earthly existence to immortality. With 230 artifacts spanning from 4000 BC to 950 of our era, the exhibition places tomb objects in their social religious and artistic context, demonstrating the diversity and adaptability of an art that has prevailed in both time and space. The ancient Egyptian world is often characterized by a fascinating and remarkably supple mental universe. Ancient Egyptians melded images in ways that often beggar our logic. They linked material elements with a realm inaccessible to humans, as reflected both in their daily conduct and their emphasis on the afterlife that led. to their quest for immortality. National Museum of Singapore, through April 4.

Oman focuses on the country's role as a seafaring nation and its central location on international trade routes, such as that of the Dutch East India Company (voc), presenting more than 300 outstanding items from different public and private museum collections in Oman and from international institutions. Oman is determined to preserve its cultural heritage while modernizing, and its history is illustrated by a wealth of superb, unique artifacts. The exhibition presents a picture of the country's remarkable cultural traditions. De Nieuwe Kerk. Amsterdam, through April 18.

Tutankhamun: The Golden King and the Great Pharaohs is lanother 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 iewels, 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. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, through April 18; Denver [Colorado] Art Museum, from July 10.

To Live Forever: Egyptian Treasures

CURRENT May

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 vanguished, 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. Brooklyn [New York] Museum, through May 2.

Fabled Fabrics: Ottoman Textiles in the MAK presents artful embroidery from the 16th and 17th centuries, decorative scarves or turban wraps with intricate embroidery, lavishly patterned silk fabrics and an example of 18th-century silk ceremonial clothing with subtle embroidery. Some of the fabrics for domestic-though not everyday-use, such as napkins, hand towels, sashes, cushion cases, draperies and blankets, have not been exhibited before. Not all the textiles shown originated within the Ottoman Empire: some come from European regions that the dynasty brought under its control for shorter or longer periods, including Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Serbia, Armenia and, very nearly, Austria, Museum für Angewandte Kunst, Vienna, through May 2.

Bold Abstractions: Textiles From Central Asia and Iran includes mid-19th- to mid-20th-century traditional garments, personal adornment, and domestic accessories, including brilliant Uzbek ikat-dyed robes and embroidered Turkmen mantles. Boldly conceived Kyrgyz felted tent trappings contrast in texture and technique with smallerscale Persian pile-faced animal pack bags. Silver-gilt, nielloed, and gem-inlaid ornaments were, in their original contexts, beautiful signifiers of gender, age, and clan identity. Throughout the exhibition visitors can find bold, highly stylized animal, vegetal, and cosmological symbols that allude to abundance and wellbeing. Craft and Folk Art Museum. Los Angeles, through May 9.

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, Bahman Jalali, Shariyar Tavakoli, Mehran Mohajer, Shoukoufeh Alidousti 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. Cedar Rapids [lowa] Museum of Art, through

Visions of the Cosmos: From Milky Ocean to Black Hole spans history. geography and religion to examine the ways in which different cultures view their place in the universe. Visitors will encounter eastern and western perspectives of the cosmos, along with photographs representing current astrophysical findings and a virtual trip through the universe. Rubin Museum of Art. New York, through May 10.

Indian Miniature Painting is a companion exhibition to "Beyond the Page" (at right) that displays a range of classical miniature painting from the museum's collection to connect visitors to this centuries-old artistic tradition in South Asia. The exhibition focus on "Power." "Pantheon" and "Portraiture," that is, depictions of rulers, deities and individuals. The conversation between these classical examples and the contemporary manifestations in "Beyond the Page" engender more complete understanding of the continuum between tradition and contemporary culture. Pacific Asia Museum, Pasadena, California, through May 16.

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, brickmakers, bakers and brewers. Most of the objects have never been displayed before. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, through May 16.

Gold of the Steppes: Princely Treasures From Beyond Alexander's Empire displays unique artifacts created by the Scythians and Sarmatians, horse nomads who left no written records but did leave exquisite material evidence of very highly developed cultures. More

than 200 exhibits illuminate their traditions richness and artistic talents, and display the results of the excavations of recent decades. Reiss-Engelhorn Museums, Mannheim, Germany, through May 25.

CURRENT June

The Manchester Indian: Thomas Wardle and India shows scintillating silk saris and other textiles from India, and marks the centenary of the death of Thomas Wardle. Best known for his collaboration with William Morris, Wardle also made great efforts to reinvigorate the silk industry in India. During a visit there in 1885-1886 he collected sample lengths of fabric, which are featured in the exhibition together with fabrics printed and dyed by Wardle's company in Staffordshire, and which reveal the profound influence of Indian design on British textiles of the Arts and Crafts movement. Whitworth Art Gallery, University of Manchester, UK.

Prince Eugene: General, Philosopher

and Art Lover was also the man largely

responsible for expelling Islam from Central and Eastern Europe in the late 17th and early 18th century, as well as winning the Austrian Empire its hegemony over Hungary and the Balkans He served three emperors as diplomat. counselor and soldier, fighting at various times against the Ottomans, the English and the Dutch, Spanish and French, His successes brought him generous rewards and vast booty, and he built palaces (including the venue of this exhibition); collected paintings and sculpture. books, manuscripts and prints; and patronized Leibnitz, Rousseau and de Montesquieu. This exhibition of 500 of his treasures covers his background, military career, esthetic tastes and his philosophical and natural-historical pursuits. Unteres Belvedere, Vienna, through June 6.

Childhood on the River Nile: Images of Children from Egypt displays children's clothing, shoes and toys; doll clothing: depictions of children on the ornamental trimmings of fabrics and other organic artifacts. Bode-Museum, Berlin, through June 10.

Strolling through Isfahan:

Seventeenth-Century Paintings from Safavid Iran. With its great public square, majestic avenues and noble gardens, Isfahan, the capital city of Safavid Iran in the 17th century, afforded endless opportunities for court ceremony, promenades, and people-watching. Stylish or eccentric, the Isfahanis captured the attention of writers and artists alike, providing colorful subject matter for the growing genre of single-page paintings. Sackler Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts, through

Byzantium: Splendor and Everyday Life presents more than 600 objects many fabricated from gold, silver, silk, ivory and other precious materials that made the Byzantine Empire and Constantinople the envy of the West. But the significance of the Eastern Roman Empire went far beyond its riches: There, antiquity lived on uninterrupted into the late Middle Ages. making Byzantium the bridge both between East and West and between classical antiquity and modernity

European-influence Byzantium had ties with the Near and Middle Fast and via the Silk Roads, with China. In this exhibition, computer animations and video shorts take the viewer into a foreign world that is nonetheless part of our own civilization's foundations, visiting Constantinople Ephesus Thessaloniki Bergama, Aleppo and the monastery in Sinai, casting the Byzantine Empire and its heritage in a new light. Kunst- und Austellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Bonn, through June 13.

Terracotta displays some 100 objects. including delicate Greek female figurines, architectural fragments, medieval children's toys, prehistoric animal figures and sculptures of deities from pre-Islamic Syria and Irag, Terra-cotta sculptures served different purposes in different cultures-sometimes representing gifts to the gods or fertility symbols-and thus provide information on religious practices, burial customs, clothing and household objects in the time and place they were made. The exhibition emphasizes the techniques used and the craftsmanship that went into making the objects. Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Leiden, The Netherlands, through June 13.

Beyond the Page: The Miniature as Attitude in Contemporary Art from Pakistan exhibits 50 works by 13 contemporary artists who engage the miniature as practice and concept. Roughly half of the artists trained in traditional miniature painting at the National College of Arts in Lahore, Pakistan, and assimilate new imagery and materials. The rest, though not trained in miniature painting, explore the concept of the miniature in such diverse forms as photography, textile, sculpture and installation. As these artists emigrate, travel and exhibit internationally, the "new miniature" movement has become a global phenomenon that demonstrates the vitality of contemporary Pakistani art and, more specifically, how aspects of "tradition" are essential parts of contemporary culture. Pacific Asia Museum, Pasadena, California, through June 27.

Tactics of Invisibility Contemporary Artistic Positions From Turkey displays 20 works-installation, performance, painting and photography-by 16 artists working in Turkey and foreign countries, beginning with some who came to prominence in the 1960's, continuing with such newly established artists as Kutlug Ataman, and ending with Nasan Tur, Nilbar Güreş and other emerging figures. The exhibition will also trave to Berlin (Tanas) and Istanbul (Arter). Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Vienna, through June 30.

CURRENT July

Arts of Bengal: Wives, Mothers, Goddesses presents domestic artifacts made by and for Bengali women during the 19th and 20th centuries, including intricate embroidered guilts called kanthas, vibrant ritual paintings and fishshaped caskets and other implements created in a resin-thread technique. Drawn from a common pool of motifs and ideas that reflect the unique environment of the region, these creations provide a rare view into women's everyday lives and thoughts. Other arts, such as elaborate painted narrative scrolls and souvenir paintings from Kalighat near Calcutta, illustrate

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women's many roles, both domestic and divine. (A companion exhibition. Arts of Bengal: Village, Town, Temple, open from March 13 through July, also showcases works from the Museum's extensive holdings of Bengali vernacular arts.) Philadelphia Museum of Art, through July.

Kantha: The Embroidered Quilts of Bengal, Stitching kanthas was an art practiced by women across Bengal, a region today comprising the nation of Bangladesh and the state of West Bengal, India. Lovingly created from the remnants of worn garments, kanthas are embroidered with motifs and tales drawn from a rich local repertoire and used especially in the celebration of births, weddings and other family occasions. The exhibition presents some 40 examples created during the 19th century and the first half of the 20th, when this vibrant domestic art flourished. and encompasses works by women of diverse backgrounds-rural and urban, Hindu and Muslim. While all share a collective Bengali culture, the amazing variety of motifs, patterns, color combinations and designs of the kanthas demonstrates the imagination and creativity of their makers. Philadelphia Museum of Art, through July.

CURRENT August

The Silk Road: Ancient Pathway to the Modern World allows the visitor to "travel" from Xi'an, China's Tang Dynasty capital, to Turfan, a bustling pasis: Samarkand, home of prosperous merchants; and Baghdad, a meeting place for scholars, scientists and philosophers, in the period between 600 and 1200, with dioramas and interactive displays from each city. For centuries, the Silk Road was a vast and busy network connecting Asia and the Mediterranean where people met, transported goods and conducted trade, and in the process shared culture, religion and technology. Feathers, furs, spices, silks and other trade goods: live, working silkworms: a cutaway replica of part of a dhow; a working model of a water clock; sounds and smells; and video clips of papermaking and glassblowing are among the exhibits. Live Silk Road music on Sunday afternoons American Museum of Natural History, New York, through August 15.

Very Postmortem: Mummies and Medicine explores the modern scientific examination of mummies that has provided new insights into Egyptians' living conditions and brought us closer to understanding who they were. The

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POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Saudi Aramco World Box 2106 Houston, Texas 77252-2106 exhibition marks the return of Irethorrou. the Fine Arts Museums' mummy out on loan since 1944. CT-scans done at Stanford University Medical School shed light on Irethorrou's physical attributes and the cause of his death, and make possible a three-dimensional "fly through" of the mummy and a forensic reconstruction of his head. The exhibition also includes a variety of ancient artifacts that date from approximately 664-525 BC, the Late Period of the 26th Saite Dynasty. Fine Arts Museums Legion of Honor San Francisco through August 15.

Bharat Ratnal Jewels of Modern Indian Art presents a selection of outstanding works by some of India's most celebrated modern painters, focusing on a generation that emerged following India's independence in 1947. Luminaries such as Francis Newton Souza, Magbool Fida Husain and Saved Haider Raza formed an influential artistic avant-garde at this transitional moment: their paintings are a synthesis of visual traditions, embracing both western modernism and a heritage colored by Indian art, myths and classical traditions. The exhibition's divergent works highlight the dialogue between the traditional and modern, the indigenous and foreign and the sacred and secular as Indian artists sought an independent identity. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, through August 22.

Pioneers to the Past: American Archaeologists in the Middle East 1919-1920 highlights James Henry Breasted's travels through Egypt. Mesopotamia, Syria and Palestine, exhibiting travel ephemera, documents and archival photos, narrated by quotations from diaries. Breasted's goal was to purchase artifacts for his new Oriental Institute Museum and to scout sites for future excavation, but he found himself in the unstable political situation after World War I, when local peoples. under colonial domination, were struggling for independence. The exhibition raises questions about whose history would be written, the role of America in the Middle East and the relationship of the past to the present-all issues still debated today. Catalog. Oriental Institute Museum, Chicago, through August 31.

CURRENT September and Later The Two Qalams: Islamic Arts of Pen and Brush. In Arabic, the word galam originally meant the calligrapher's reed pen. Calligraphers were and are esteemed in Islam because their pens write the sacred words of the Qur'an. The attitude toward painters, however, has not always been so positive since their brushes could depict-thus create—human and animal figures, thereby challenging the sole creative authority of God. Persian poets of the 16th century countered this negative perception by describing the painter's brush as a second galam, equivalent to that of the calligrapher's pen. The two galams came together in the vibrant bookmaking workshops of the Islamic courts of Persia and India where calligraphers and painters collaborated to produce a wealth of illustrated manuscripts and elaborate albums filled with specimens of beautiful writing and painting. As seen in the 16th-through 19th-century album pages in the exhibition, the arts of pen and brush often merged with exquisite results. Philadelphia Museum of Art. through September.

Arts of Bengal: Town, Temple,

Mosque explores the rich texture of the "sacred" and the "mundane" from the 18th to the mid-20th century in Bengal's cities and towns, which have long functioned as hubs of commerce, religious activity and the arts, where professional painters, potters, weavers. and sculptors catered to diverse audiences. Under British colonial rule, the products of artists in Kolkata (Calcutta). Murshidabad, Dhaka and Patna included sumptuously decorated silverware, silk saris brocaded with images of urban pleasures, colorful paintings of religious processions, and even detailed botanical studies made for European patrons. The façades of temples and mosques were often decorated with intricately molded terracotta bricks, and many enshrined sacred images in the temples were beautifully carved and garbed. Some also provided venues for artists to sell souvenir paintings of deities and even scenes satirizing the dissipations of city life. In the early to mid-20th century, Bengal's towns, temples, and mosques continued to serve as potent sources of inspiration for such artistintellectuals as Jamini Rov. Mukul Dev and Nandalal Bose, who sought to create a modern esthetic. Philadelphia Museum of Art, through September.

Mind the Dig! How Does Archeology Work? An interactive exhibition. Reiss-Engelhorn Museums, Mannheim, Germany, through September 19.

Mummified allows vsitors to experience at computer stations the "virtual autopsy" of the museum's mummy, undertaken to learn more about the age, possible illness, and cause of death of the person within the beautifully painted outer wrappings. The exhibition also features some 20 ancient Egyptian objects depicting images of mummified people, animals, and deities, and discusses the "mummimania" of the 17th to 20th century. Closed Mondays and Tuesdays. Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, through November 8.

COMING March

Poetry and Prayer: Illuminated Manuscripts from the Islamic World presents masterpieces of Islamic manuscript illumination from the ninth to the 19th century created in famed artistic centers in today's Iraq. Iran. Turkey, Egypt and the Indian subcontinent. Characterized by the effects of gold, lapis lazuli and esthetically powerful design, Islamic manuscript illumination enhances the viewer's engagement with the book. The exhibition aims to broaden the perspective on Islamic illumination by considering both religious and non-religious works and to explore the ways in which illumination punctuates various parts of the book, navigating the reader through the pages. Valters Art Museum, Baltimore, March 20 through June 13.

Meroë: Empire on the Nile highlights the majesty of an ancient civilization and its intermingling of African, Egyptian and Greco-Roman influences. Located in Sudan, 200 kilometers north of present-day Khartoum, Meroë was the capital of a great empire on the Nile, famed for the pyramids of the kings and gueens who dominated the

region between 270 BC and AD 350. Comprising 200 works of art, the exhibition's main themes are everyday life. trades, social systems, the kings and their insignia of power, the role of the queens and religious practices fusing the gods Amun, from Egypt, and Dionysus, from Greece, with the people of Meroë's own vision of the afterlife. The discovery of the ruins of the Meroë pyramids by Frédéric Cailliaud in 1821, and finds from the archeological explorations begun by the Louvre in 2007, are also emphasized. Musée du Louvre Paris from March 26 through September 6.

Constructing Miniatures: A Painter's Perspective. In conjunction with the installation "Strolling through Isfahan: Seventeenth-Century Paintings from Safavid Iran" (p.47), Maliha Noorani presents a gallery talk to demonstrate traditional techniques and materials used in the practice of Persian miniature painting. Noorani holds a BFA in Indian and Islamic miniature painting from the National College of Arts, Lahore, 11:00 a.m. Sackler Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts. March 27.

Secrets of the Silk Road features more

than 150 priceless objects relating to

the people and cultures of the Silk Road during its early period. The exhibition's "secret" is that many of the exhibits predate the known Silk Road era by almost 2000 years, and reflect a much more global population than was previously realized. The legendary trade route linked Xian, then the capital of China, in the East, to such Mediterranean cities as Rome and Baghdad. Exhibits include a travel permit from AD 732; a deed for a female slave; an impeccably preserved female mummy with European features dating from between 3100 and 700 BC; the stylish boots of a Silk Road traveler from between 206 BC and AD 420; and exquisite iewelry from the same time period. Such finds have helped historians better understand the settlement of ancient East Central Asia and have opened a window to understanding the very early exchange of important technologies, life-improving inventions and ideas and customs. Bowers Museum. Santa Ana, California, March 27 through July 25; Houston Museum of Natural Science, August 28 through January 2, 2011.

COMING April

Convergence: New Art From Lebanon focuses on art in the aftermath of Lebanon's tumultuous civil war between 1975 and 1990, showing how pressing contemporary issues of Lebanese society have found expression. The exhibition is presented in three sections-"Territory." "Space" and "The Body"—and includes nearly 50 paintings. sculptures, mixed-media installations photographs, digital animations films, and architectural projects by 31 artists, most of them based in Beirut. American University Museum, Washington D.C., April 6 through May 16.

Current Archeological Research: Lecture Presentations: "Excavations in the Lower City of Nishapur (Iran), Rocco Rante. Musée du Louvre, Paris,

The Seventh International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East, the major international

forum for Near Eastern archeology, will be hosted jointly by the British Museum and University College London. ICAANE is held every two years in a different country and attracts 600 to 700 participants each year. 1 www.7icaane.org or admin@7icaane.org. London, April 12-16.

Terence Gilbert: Paintings of the Middle East includes some 30 paintings by this versatile artist: oil paintings and watercolors of landscapes, genre scenes and wildlife. Mathaf Gallery, London, April 14-30.

International Conference on Urban Heritage in Islamic Countries brings together government and non-governmental organizations, international bodies, academic institutions, individual specialists, municipalities, corporations and craftsmen with an interest in architectural heritage and preservation to assess the current state of urban and architectural heritage in Islamic countries, to identify a framework for future development, to develop strategies for cooperation and joint projects, to exchange administrative and technical expertise and to create employment opportunities for craftsmen and artists in the renovation, restoration and decoration of heritage buildings. ① www. islamicurbanheritage.org.sa. Riyadh Intercontinental Hotel, April 18-23.

COMING May

How Pearl Fishing Shaped the Societies of the Gulf, From the Neolithic to the 20th Century is the topic of a lecture by Dr. Rob Carter of Oxford Brookes University, Khalili Lecture Theatre, soas, London, May 26.

A Gift from the Desert: The Art, History and Culture of the Arabian Horse explores the impact of the horse on civilizations of the ancient Near East and the Islamic world and highlights the beauty and romance of the Arabian breed. Arabian horses are the thread that runs through the exhibition, as they relate to many aspects of the arts and culture of the civilizations that treasured them, as well as the important role of the ancient Near East, Egypt and Arabia in equestrian history. The nearly 400 objects on display, from 27 museums and private lenders, include a petroglyph (rock carving) and petroglyph depictions; a Sabean stela showing camels and riders: illuminated copies of the Qur'an: a Mamluk gilded glass pilgrim flask; a 2000-year-old golden bridle found in the UAE; second-century frescoes from the "lost city" of Fao in Saudi Arabia's Empty Quarter: objects related to Islamic mathematics, astronomy and navigation; glass, ceramic and metalwork from the early Islamic dynasties through the Ottoman Empire: Orientalist art and lithographs depicting horses; and Islamic arms and armor, International Museum of the Horse, Lexington, Kentucky, May 29 through October 15.

COMING June

Muraqqa': Imperial Mughal Albums from the Chester Beatty Library focuses on a group of six albums (muragga's) compiled in India between about 1600 and 1658 for the Mughal emperors Jahangir and Shah Jahan (builder of the Taj Mahal). Each album folio originally consisted of a painting on one side and a panel of calligraphy on the other. all set within beautifully illuminated

borders. Many of the paintings are exquisitely rendered portraits of emperors princes and courtiers-all dressed in the finest textiles and jewels-but there are also images of court life, and of Sufis, saints and animals. This exhibition has been on tour in the us for the past year and will now return to the Library, which holds one of the finest collections of Indian Muchal paintings in existence. Catalogue. Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, June through October.

To Live Forever: Eavotian 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 deceasedand 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. Philbrook Museum of Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma, June 6 through September 12.

Document: Iranian-Americans in Los Angeles. Four documentary photographers-Farhad Parsa, Arash Saedinia, Parisa Taghizadeh and Ramin Talaeifocus their lenses on second-generation Iranian-Americans of Los Angeles over a four-month period. October 2009-January 2010. The results consider the everyday lives of the subjects, as well as the photographers' experiences of the process of documentation and how

it informed their understandings of their own hyphenated Iranian identities. Fowler Museum at UCLA, Los Angeles, June 6 through August 22.

Roads to Arabia: Archaeological

Treasures from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The study of archeological remains only really began in Saudi Arabia in the 1970s, yet brought a wealth of unsuspected treasures to light: temples, palaces adorned with frescoes, monumental sculpture, silver dishes and precious lewelry left in tombs. The exhibition provides both chronological and geographical information about the discoveries made during recent excavations and emphasizes the important role played by this region, in antiquity, as a trading centre. Over 300 works-sculptures ceramics jewelry, frescoes—are on display, dating from antiquity to the beginning of the modern period; the majority have never before been exhibited. They reveal an original and dynamic civilization, which, in spite of the extreme natural conditions, took advantage of the country's geographical position, at the crossroads of trade routes linking the lands along the shoreline of the Indian Ocean and Africa with Egypt, Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean world. Musée du Louvre, Paris, from July 12 through September 27.

India Under the Grand Moguls includes more than 400 pieces of jewelry from the Mughal epoch, lent by the Al-Sabah family, which constitute the core of one of the great Islamic art collections of the late 20th century. The 13 sections of the exhibition not only display those amazing and in some cases unique works but also inform the viewer about materials and techniques. Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur. July 28 through mid-December.

COMING September and later Desert Jewels: North African Jewelry

COMING July

Treasures of the World: Jewellery of

and Photography from the Xavier Guerrand-Hermes Collection presents never-before-exhibited pieces of stunning iewelry from Algeria, Libva, Morocco, Egypt, and Tunisia and late-19th- and early-20th-century photographs by some of the period's most prominent photographers. The exhibition includes ornate wedding necklaces, bracelets, hair ornaments, rings, earrings and fibulae (used to keep veils in place) crafted from combinations of silver. coral, amber, coins and semiprecious stones, and demonstrates both the common threads that run through North African societies and local variations in materials and motifs. The most important photographers of the day, including the Scotsman George Washington Wilson, the Neurdine brothers from France, and the Turkish photographer Pascal Sabah, visited the region and photographed landscapes, architecture, markets, and people adorned in their jewels. Philadelphia

PERMANENT

November 5.

Molten Color: Glassmaking in Antiquity features more than 180 ancient glass objects, Getty Villa, Malibu, California

Museum of Art, September 4 through

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 Fast and the Arab world.

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