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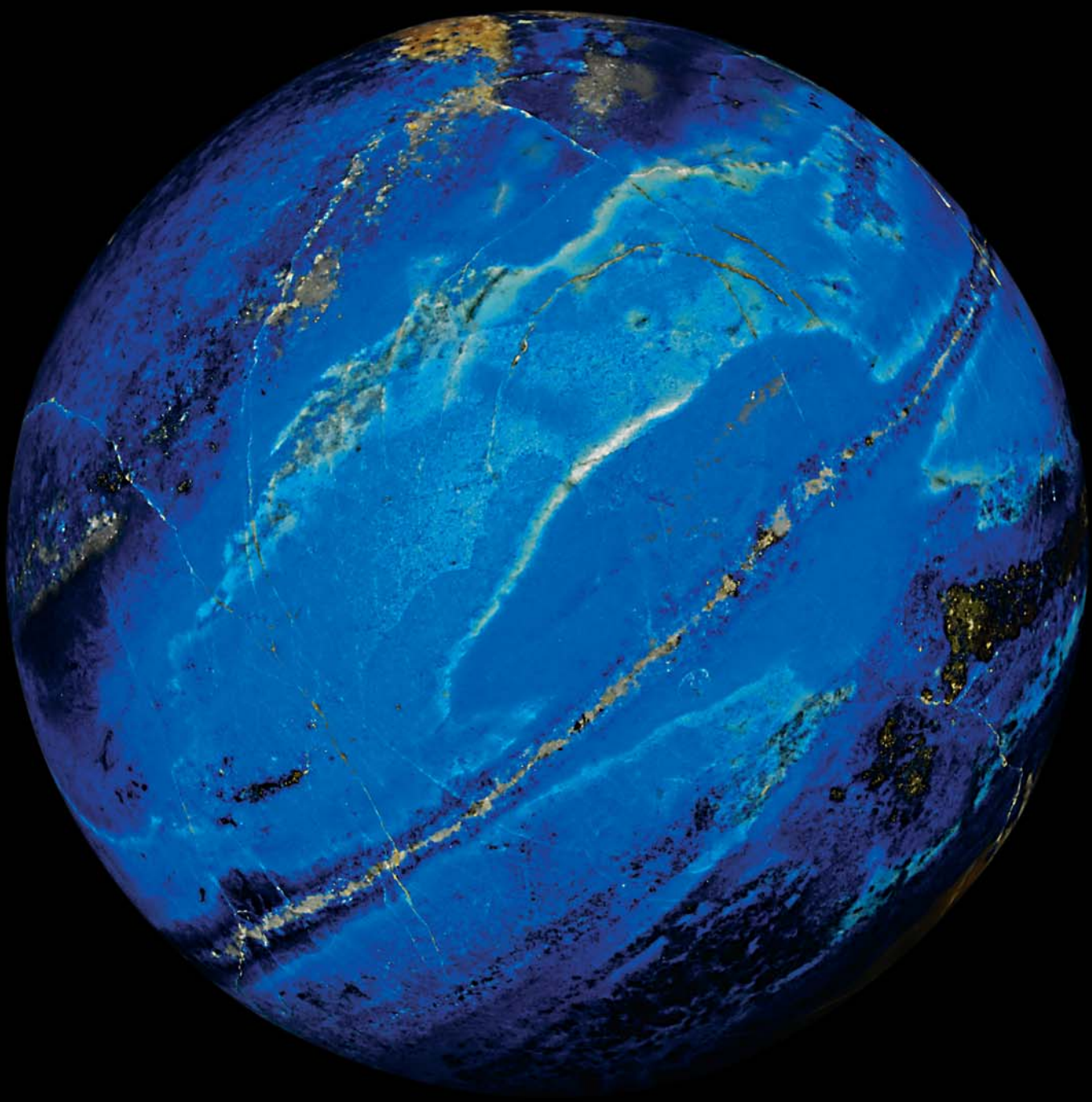

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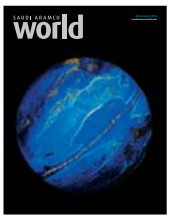

"A blue that pierced the senses" was how Sarah Searight first experienced lapis lazuli, a sight that led her to 40 years of study and collecting. This lapis sphere, shown enlarged by approximately two-thirds, is part of her collection. Photograph by Peter Sanders.

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Back Cover

Domed false minarets called *minars* rise above eaves decorated with lotus-bud corbels—architectural features typical of Bijapur's elegant cultural synthesis during the 16th and 17th centuries. Photograph by David H. Wells.

Saudi Aramco, the oil company born as an international enterprise just eighty 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.

Bijapur: Gem of the Deccan

Written by Louis Werner
Photographed by David H. Wells

On the great plateau of south-central India lies a city where, for centuries, styles from East and West blended. The exuberant architecture that resulted is one reflection of a broader cultural vitality now receiving wider recognition.

Reinventing the Wheel 12

Written and photographed by Brian Clark

Salim Nasser has good news for millions of users of arm-powered wheelchairs: Employing a simple mechanical device, he redesigned the hub so that wheels you once had to push forward are now wheels you can pull backward in order to go forward—and that means more efficient mobility and healthier muscles.

The Rålamb Mission

Written by Jonathan Stubbs
Photographs by Mats Landin / Nordiska Museet

In 1657 Claes Rålamb set out incognito through realms hostile to his native Sweden to propose an alliance to the Ottoman Empire. Though he was ostensibly rebuffed, his year in Istanbul set an enduring cooperative tone for Turkish–Swedish relations. He also commissioned a series of paintings of a royal procession that today comprise the most realistic known depiction of the court of Sultan Mehmed IV.

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The Celestial Stone

Written by Richard Covington
Photographed by Peter Sanders

Mined almost exclusively in a remote corner of northeast Afghanistan, the cerulean blues of lapis lazuli have enchanted and inspired men and women around the world for more than 7000 years. They range from Sumerian kings to Renaissance painters to 18th-century cabinet makers—and to a British historian who has devoted much of the past four decades to the brilliant stone.

24: PHILIP POUPIN / LIGHTMEDIATION

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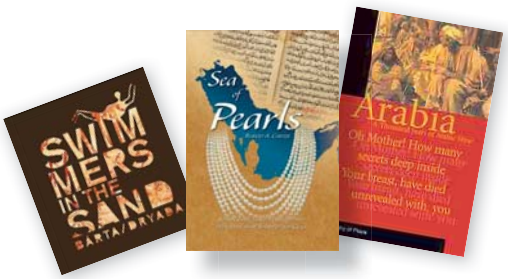
ترجمان الكنوز
INTERPRETER *of* TREASURES

Part 2: Encounters

Written by Tim Mackintosh-Smith

"All strangers are to one another kin," quotes the author in his second installment of six eclectic articles, each garnered from his encounters—literary ones—in the treasure-chest of his library of classical Arabic literature. There, the duplicitous, the cantankerous, the merciful and the wise—it turns out—are all both remarkably like us and strikingly different.



There are many good cities in the world,
But you cannot find in any other the domes of Bijapur,
Talking to the sky.

Written by LOUIS WERNER

Photographed by DAVID H. WELLS

THE CITY OF BIJAPUR LIES FAR OFF THE USUAL TOURIST ITINERARY IN SOUTH-CENTRAL INDIA—SO FAR, IN FACT, THAT IT WAS ONLY CONNECTED TO THE NATION'S STANDARD-GAUGE RAILROAD NETWORK IN THE LAST DECADE. THE SEAT OF THE ADIL SHAH DYNASTY, IT WAS CALLED VARIOUSLY THE "AGRA OF THE SOUTH" AND THE "PALMYRA OF THE DECCAN."

The city's greatest western admirer was Colonel Philip Meadows Taylor, an Englishman in the service of the ruler of nearby Hyderabad. His description of Bijapur, in the introduction to a photographic album published in 1866 by the forerunner of the Archaeological Survey of India, remains apt today: "Palaces, arches, tombs, cisterns, gateways, minarets, ... all carved from the rich basalt rock of the locality, garlanded by creepers, broken and disjointed by peepul trees, each in its turn is a gem of art and the whole a treasury."

Bijapur was one of the five sultanates of central India's Deccan Plateau that emerged, beginning in the late 15th century, from the slow breakup of the 200-year-old Bahmani Sultanate, centered in Gulbarga and Bidar. But Bijapur, which prospered in the shadow of the Mughal Empire to the north, was arguably the greatest of the five in terms of its arts and architecture. Much of Bijapur's success came because most of its shahs were long-lived, and two were related by marriage to influential Mughal emperors: Akbar the Great, who ruled from 1556 to 1605, and Aurangzeb (1659–1707).

Aurangzeb, however, was not satisfied to be a mere recipient of tribute; he put an end to Bijapur's independence. That came after a year-and-a-half siege finally broke the city's gates, ousting the last Adil Shah, 18-year-old Sikander. He died 14 years later, in 1700, still a prisoner.

Positioned between the Mughal Empire and the Hindu Vijayanagar Empire to the south, the Adil Shah rulers balanced their cultural orientation between the two, with a sprinkling of influence from the Ottoman Empire, from which they claimed a writ of sovereignty. This is reflected in the crescent finials—the signature design of Adil

Right, left and previous spread: **Bijapur's most extensive monument, the Ibrahim Rauza, shows the eclecticism of the late 16th century, a time when Muslim and Hindu styles met with exuberance in the Deccan region under the patronage of Shah Ibrahim II.**

Shahs—on many of their tombs. Other cultural flavors are present, too: Persian and, more unusually, East African, here called *habshi*, or Abyssinian. Baobab trees more than 300 years old stand witness to this link: Native to the African savannah and grown from seeds carried in by immigrants, baobabs dot the surrounding Deccani landscape of granite boulder fields and high plateaus.

Bijapur's home state of Karnataka marks the place where paddy-rice cultivation begins and wheat cultivation ends, a south-north divide mirrored, respectively, in the local staple meal of *dosas* and *chapatis*. It is also the divide between the northern Indo–Aryan language, Marathi, and the southern Dravidian language, Kannada. Here, the green building stone and decorative white marble of the north are found in mosques alongside the ubiquitous local black basalt.

Elements of an eclectic, all-embracing culture are visible elsewhere, too. One finds Hindu architectural elements on Muslim buildings. Stone-carved chain

Above: **Ornament on both this wall at the Jami Masjid, or Friday Mosque, and this newly restored plaster ceiling at the Chota Asar Mosque, refers to lotus flowers—as do the "petals" that curve outward from beneath the bulb-shaped domes at Ibrahim Rauza** left and previous spread.

links hang from vestibule ceilings, invoking temple bell pulls; Hindu throne legs are inscribed in the bases of mosque columns; and square-stepped roof brackets with lotus-bud drops support the protruding eaves of Muslim tombs.

That cultural influence flowed both ways. The Vijayanagar capital of Hampi, 200 kilometers (160 mi) to the south, displays such Islamic architectural elements as the lobed arches in its famous Lotus Pavilion and the domes of its royal elephant stables, and features the same deep stucco reliefs of flowers and tendrils that are visible in Bijapuri mosques. Even today, the Bijapur district's population is some 40 percent Muslim, compared with 13 percent nationwide, showing the strength and endurance of its Islamic legacy.

Indian art historians George Michell and the late Mark Zebrowski have called the Deccan "one of the country's most mysterious and unknown regions." Unlike what they call the "logic," "dignity" and "sobriety" of Mughal art, they find that Deccani art "revels in dream and fantasy." It's no surprise that Meadows Taylor, a colonial administrator who was one of Queen Victoria's favorite novelists, set his orientalist stories here, doing for Bijapur what Washington Irving's *Tales of the Alhambra* did for Granada in southern Spain.

"Hundreds of tales of wild romance and reality, which linger amidst the royal precincts, will, if the visitor chose to listen, be told to him by descendants of those who took part in them, with as fond and vivid a remembrance as the Moorish legends of the Alhambra are told there," he wrote in the 1866 photo album.

Above and opposite: **Gol Gumbaz is topped by one of the world's largest stone domes—a bit narrower than St. Peter's in Rome, and a bit wider than Hagia Sofia's in Istanbul. The popular walkway at its base is the "Whispering Gallery" because soft sounds can be heard on the other side, 37 meters (118 feet) away.**

Bijapur's greatest shah, Ibrahim II, reigned from 1580 until his death in 1627. One of his daughters married Akbar's son Daniyal, cementing a strong link, and Ibrahim patronized Deccani artists as did no other ruler, building on a cultural flowering already under way. In 1565, Ibrahim's predecessor, Ali I, had triumphed over the Vijayanagar Empire at the Battle of Talikota. As a result, Hindu artists flooded into Bijapur and, in the following years, the city became as much of a cultural melting pot as Akbar's Agra.

In no field was this more true than in music. Ibrahim himself wrote a 59-song cycle in Deccani Urdu, set to Hindu musical modes, known as the *Kitab-e Nauras (Book of Nauras)*. *Nauras,* meaning "nine essences" or "nine sentiments" (literally, "nine juices"), was Ibrahim's watchword: Each essence held a state of being. One of the songs calls on the Hindu goddess of music and art: "O mother Saraswati, it is through your blessings on Ibrahim that the melodies and songs in my nauras will be cherished and go on enlightening wise musicians."

Art historian Deborah Hutton, author of *Art of the Court of Bijapur,* has analyzed portraits of Ibrahim II painted from the 1590's until shortly before his death, some by the Mughal court's noted Persian painter Farrukh Beg, that are now dispersed from St. Petersburg to Prague, London, Bikaner and Tehran. They show Ibrahim from youth to old age, many times wearing the dried *rudraksha*-berry necklace of a Hindu sage and his signature conical turban. We see in them the growth

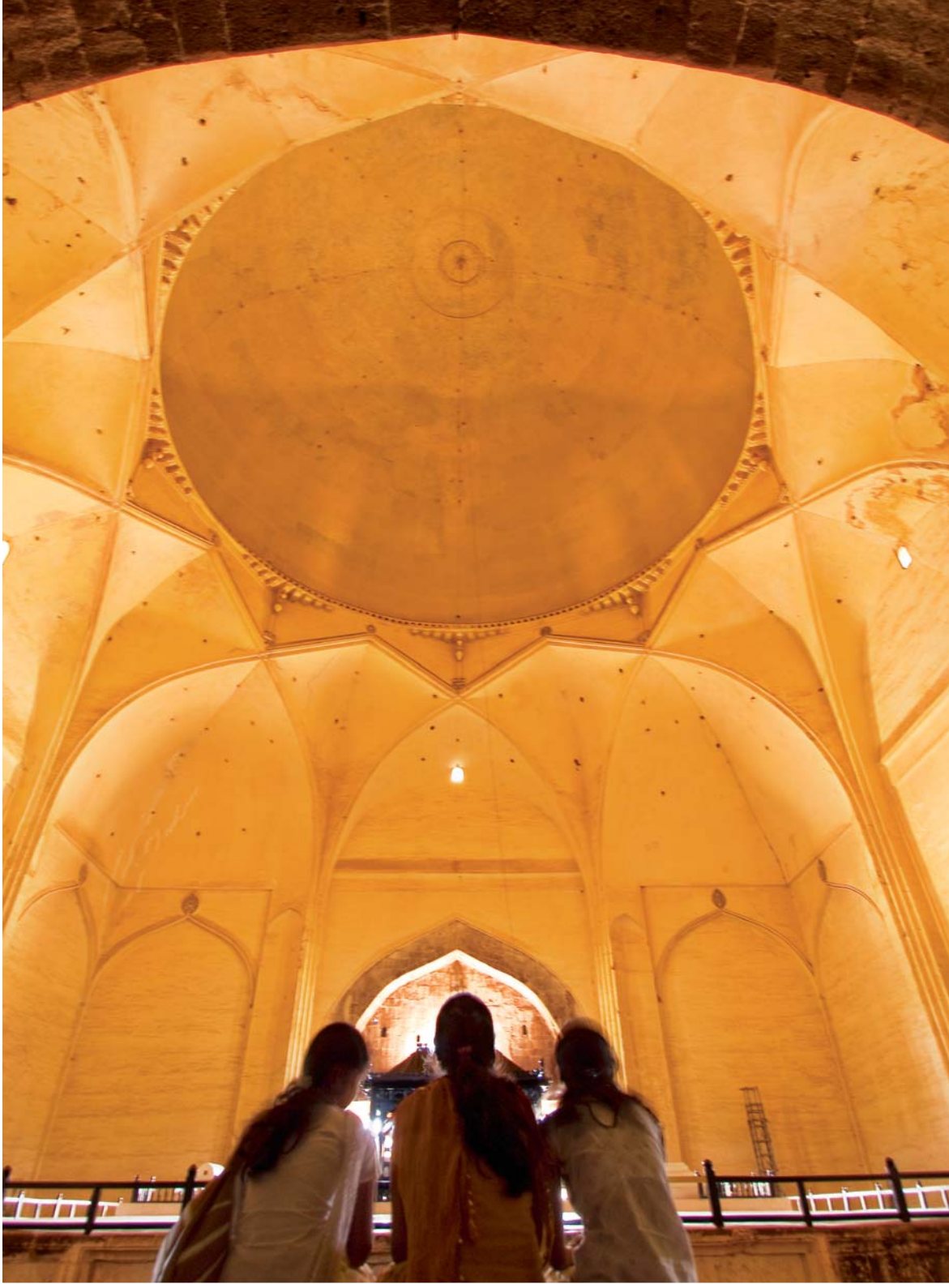
Weighing 55 tons and dating from the 17th century, the "King of the Battlefield" is claimed to be the world's largest medieval cannon. Contemporary accounts note that soldiers who fired it had to submerge themselves under water to protect themselves against its percussive blast.

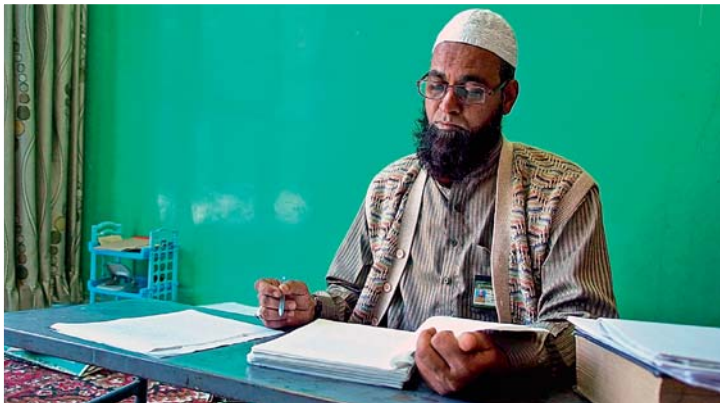
of both beard and girth, but, as Hutton notes, all the portraits are poetical rather than historical in essence. None shows him in battle or holding a royal audience at a specific time or place.

Ibrahim built Bijapur's greatest monument, the Ibrahim Rauza, a complex consisting of a tomb, mosque, water tank and raised plinth. Although constructed years before the Taj Mahal, it has been called the Deccan's Taj, perhaps because Ibrahim intended the tomb for his wife, Taj Sultana, just as Shah Jahan built the Taj Mahal for his beloved wife, Mumtaz Mahal. Unlike the Taj Mahal, with its clean lines and restrained silhouette, the Ibrahim Rauza is a riot of bulbous finials; clusters of false minarets, or *minars;* multi-esplanaded true minarets; and intricate roof brackets covered with a calligraphic decoration of Qur'anic verse, Persian poetry and pious injunctions.

Modern Bijapur is lucky to have a Rotary Club dedicated to preserving its cultural heritage. Its most active member is Ameen Hullur, a tireless interior designer who took it upon himself to recreate the stucco work on the ceiling of the Chota Asar mosque,

Below: **A vendor keeps to the shade of the walls that still fully surround the medieval city,** left. **History professor Abdul Gani Imaratwale,** right, **believes that Bijapur's historic "cultural vitality" is too often eclipsed by a romantic, orientalist "lament for lost cultures."**





At the Asar Mahal, water calms, cools and reflects the buildings that were once Mohammed Adil Shah's Hall of Justice, dating from 1646.

which the architectural historian Henry Cousens, a Scotsman, described as "remarkable for the abundance of rich ornament." Much of the decoration had fallen when the restoration project began a few years ago, but using the drawings and photographs of the designs in *Bijapur and Its Architectural Remains,* a book written by Cousens in 1916, Hullur impeccably replaced it.

Hullur's family hails from a caste of royal minters for the Adil Shahs, who made the dynasty's most famous gold coin, the *hun-i nauras,* for Ibrahim II. "The cultural harmony that prevailed under [the Adil Shahs] … should be cherished today as a symbol of togetherness," he says. After retiring from the military, Hullur's grandfather became the first English-language guide to the city's monuments.

Hullur lives just across the road from Bijapur's most imposing site, the Gol Gombaz, the tomb of Ibrahim II's son Muhammad (ruled 1627–1656); the diameter of its dome rivals that of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Cousens noted its virility, compared with the feminine qualities of the Ibrahim Rauza. Everything here is oversized, even the ear-splitting volume of its so-called "whispering gallery" under the dome, demonstrated whenever schoolchildren arrive. Its expansive lawns, however, allow families a place for more quiet reflection on its greatness, as is the case for approaching visitors, who can see the tomb for the first time from 10 kilometers (6 mi) away.

Both the Ibrahim Rauza and the Gol Gombaz lie outside the city's inner double walls, which remind the visitor that not all was peaceful

Contours and marquetry at the Asar Mahal also blend Muslim and Hindu styles.

Men gather to socialize on the quiet expanse of the ruined Gargan Mahal, or "Sky Palace," a place where British writer Meadows Taylor described—or perhaps invented—a grand royal audience attended by a "motley assemblage" of more than a dozen ethnicities and lands.

in Adil Shahi times. Meadows Taylor's novels, based largely on the *Naurasnameh,* the chronicle of Ibrahim II's court by Persian historian Muhammad Qasim Firishta, reinforce this view. Firishta recounts the unsettled times of the boy shah's regency, overseen by his aunt Chand Bibi, telling of myriad deceits and betrayals, of daring escapes over the walls with unfurled turbans and cumberbunds used as ropes, of blinding the eyes of enemies and firing their severed heads as cannonballs.

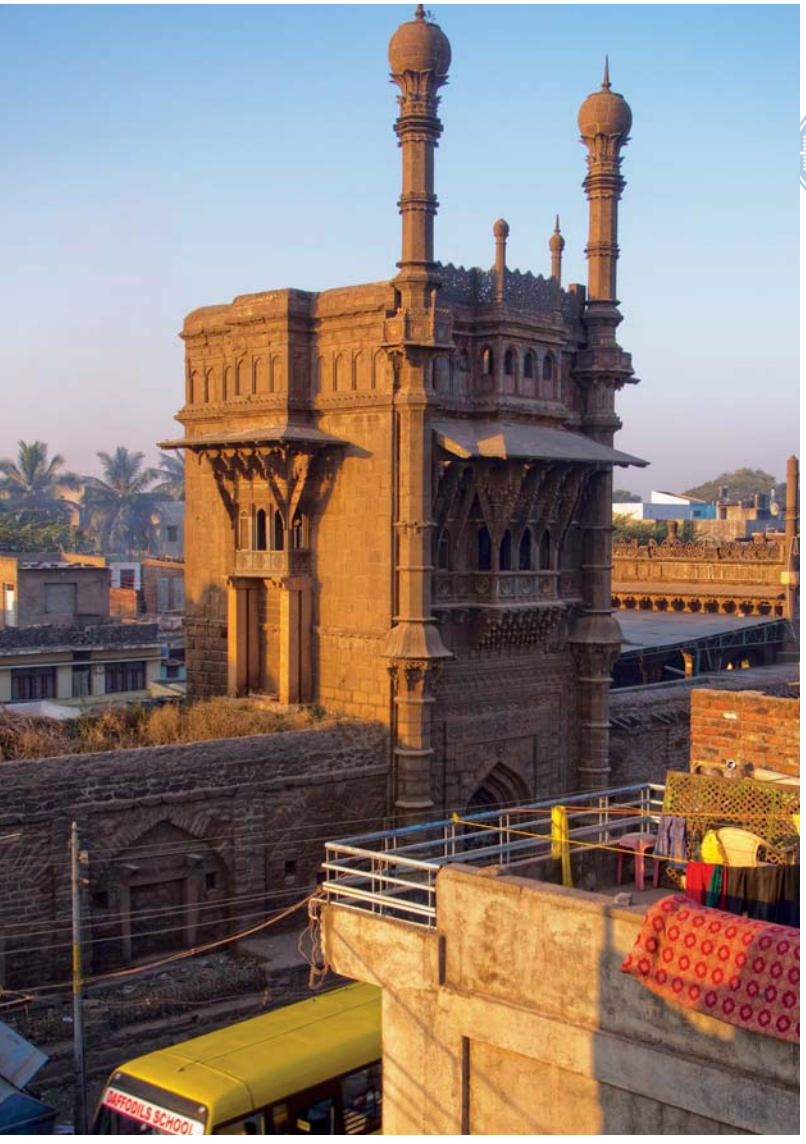
This penchant for blood can be seen today in the 50,000-kilogram (55-ton), 4.3-meter-long (14') cannon called the *Malik-e Maidan,* or "King of the Battlefield," which sits atop one of the city's outer-wall bastions. Depicted on its muzzle is a lion clenching an elephant in its teeth. Cast in Ahmadnagar and hauled 240 kilometers (150 mi) to Bijapur by 400 bullocks and 10 elephants, its blast was so loud that cannoneers had to jump into a nearby pool of water after lighting the fuse to protect their ears.

Henry Cousens, recognizing that periods of creative peace usually follow strife, perhaps summed up Bijapur's qualities best when he wrote that despite "incessant wars without its walls and constant factional brawls within ... [when] the very air reeked with blood ... there were intervals of comparative calm, when time was found for the erection of those grand piles of architectural splendour to the memory and glory of its kings and nobles."

Thus was the city orientalized by Meadows Taylor in his novel *A Noble Queen*. In a scene describing a royal audience at the citadel's Gargan Mahal, or "Sky Palace," he wrote: "It was a sight at once gorgeous and impressive in itself; the costumes and banners of the ranks of infantry, interspersed with cavalry Deccanis, Arabs, Persians, Oozbeks, Circassians, Tatars of many tribes, Georgians, Turks, and many other foreigners, with a strong division of *beydurs* [local soldiers] who were by no means the least conspicuous or remarkable of the motley assemblage."

Abdul Gani Imaratwale, a history professor at Bijapur's Anjuman College, has little time for such exotica, yet he recognizes that it is what keeps his city on the tourist map at all. Of the sometimes bitter rivalries among the densely intermarried Deccani sultanates, he says, with ironic understatement, "Feeble were their affinities of religion, race and culture." Still, he is loudly appreciative of Ibrahim II's artistic achievements.

If, to coin another comparative epithet, Bijapur was the Florence of the Deccan, then the Mihtar-i Mahal, a mosque gatehouse, is surely the equivalent of Florence's Baptistry. Just as the Baptistry doors are the city's masterwork of bronze sculpture, so this 2.25-square-meter



Grand, even extravagant, gateway to an otherwise unremarkable mosque, the Mihtar-i Mahal, to Imaratwale, epitomizes Bijapur's melting-pot style. Its interior, top, **is replete with intricately incised animals and faux timberwork.**

(24 sq ft) entryway, surmounted by slender, 20-meter (66') bulb-topped minarets, contains Bijapur's most beautiful stone carvings. Its roof struts, brackets, parapets, windows, balconies and eaves are incised with lions mounted on elephants, with flowers, geese and parrots, and some of it is carved to look like timberwork. Imaratwale points to the Mihtar-i Mahal as the epitome of his city: extreme elegance in the service even of a relatively unimportant structure.

He is proudest when leading a tour of Ibrahim's nine-gated pleasure capital called Nauraspur, three kilometers (1.8 mi) west of the city walls, which was abandoned after a particularly brutal sacking just 25 years after its founding in 1599. Here, he again invokes Ibrahim's essential word, *nauras,* in its philosophical and artistic meanings. The two-story Sagneet Mahal, a *darbar*, or hall, designed for musical presentations, is at the center of Nauraspur, which even in ruins is as imposing—and inspiring—as a great Roman theater.

As the shah wrote in his song cycle, "O Ibrahim, the world only seeks knowledge. Serve with steadfast heart and meditate upon the power of words." In tribute to his beloved pearl-inlaid sitar, he sang, "Day and night I bring to mind the sweet notes of Moti Khan ["sir pearl"], as if my ear is a balance in which I am weighing sugar."

And, in a heartrending farewell to his favorite elephant, Ibrahim continued the verse, "having been separated from Atash Khan ["sir fire"], I am feeling the anguish of burning fire.... The painter has left his painting, the bard his praising. Ibrahim, having seen all, is in a state of perplexity in their midst." As chance would have it, portraits of Ibrahim riding Atash Khan and playing Moti Khan have come down to us.

In a flutter of metaphors, the Persian poet Muhammad Zuhur ibn Zuhuri, Ibrahim's contemporary, wrote of him, "He has commanded to pick away the stones of infelicitous words from the path of discourse, and has forbidden the use of those on which the foot of understanding may stumble." In a verse that captures both the moment of Ibrahim's rule and the city that he largely built, Zuhur added: "If they made the elixir of mirth and pleasure, they would make it from the holy dust of Bijapur."

Yet the words inscribed in a fine calligraphic hand in teak, stucco and stone on the exterior of the tomb Ibrahim shares with his wife are perhaps his greatest written legacy, though they are not by him. Some of them come from Sura 3, Verse 67, of the Qur'an and speak of the prophet Abraham, the shah's namesake "…who turned away from all that is false, having surrendered himself unto God, and he was not of those who ascribe divinity to aught beside Him."

Intermingled with Qur'anic and poetic verses are praise invocations for Ibrahim's spouse. They include: "Taj Sultana commissioned this tomb such that Paradise is wonderstruck at its beauties," "Dignified like Zubeida [wife of Harun al-Rashid] and exalted like Bilqis [Queen of Sheba], she decorated the throne and crown of modesty," and "Heaven stood astounded at the height of its structure, and said, perhaps another sky has heaved its head from the earth."

The man credited with supervising the construction of the Ibrahim Rauza was the Habshi eunuch Malik Sandal, whose own simple tomb, located next to a lady's tomb—possibly that of his mother or wife—lies in a courtyard inside the city walls. The

The huge dome of Gol Gumbaz is both a symbol of Bijapur's rich past and a backdrop for the city's modern daily life.

nearby prayer hall could not be more different from the 15-bay mosque standing next to his master's mausoleum, nor from the 36-bay Jami Masjid, or Friday mosque, one of the Deccan's largest, built by Ali Adil Shah I 60 years earlier. Its richly gilded *mihrab,* or prayer niche, with trompe l'oeil paintings of books and vases, dates from some years later.

An interesting pair of tombs, the Jod Gombad, or Twin Sisters, tells the story of the Adil Shah dynasty's downfall at Aurangzeb's hands. One belongs to Khawas Muhammad Khan, the general of the penultimate shah, Ali II, and the other to his spiritual advisor, Abdul Razzaq Qadiri. Khawas Khan had gained the respect of Aurangzeb, who was then a prince charged with conquering the Deccan, when in 1657 he allowed the Mughal to escape with his life from the battlefield.

This act of mercy was considered treachery by Ali II, who had his general put to death. When Aurangzeb ascended the Mughal throne a year later and demanded harsh tributes from Bijapur prior to launching an outright conquest, he ordered that the payments first be used to construct a fitting tomb for the man who had saved his life.

Aurangzeb's other gift to the city that he conquered was an urban map, now in the Gol Gombaz museum, with highly rendered color drawings of its three walls, many gates and elevations of the main landmark buildings. Aurangzeb had always wanted to seize Bijapur; now he could hold it in his hand as a scroll.

Fifteen kilometers (9.3 mi) east of Bijapur at Kummatgi, a rural resort beside a large lake, stands a set of five two-story octagonal water pavilions (now in various states of repair) where the Adil Shahs took their leisure, enjoying mist showers from pressurized overhead tanks. The main pavilion's rest house still stands, decorated with now badly faded paintings of polo players and hunters, as well as gentlemen in European dress—perhaps ambassadors and traders from nearby Goa, which by 1510 had fallen from Adil Shahi control to the Portuguese—and which point to European and even New World cultural influence in Bijapur.

We know from letters in the Dutch East India Company archive that a painter named Cornelius Claeszoon Heda was working for Ibrahim II at Nauraspur between 1608 and 1617. Perhaps he or his Deccani students were responsible for these paintings and others like them in the Asar Mahal, a building later turned into a reliquary for hairs of the Prophet Muhammad's beard. And we know from a Mughal ambassador to Bijapur that the Portuguese introduced American tobacco there, a few years before it arrived in Agra.

One can imagine the shahs using the water pavilions as a getaway from the daily grind of ruling. But Bijapur would never have been far from their minds, and they may have liked to hear their court poets reciting verses in honor of their city. Those may have resembled the multi-couplet *ghazal* titled "Shehr-e Bijapur" ("City of Bijapur") that the modern-day poet Iqbal Asif, a retired schoolteacher, recited one recent evening at an intimate *mushaira,* or poets' gathering, in a private home:

There are many good cities in the world,
But you cannot find in any other the domes of Bijapur,
Talking to the sky.

From fortified wall to fortified wall,
Three times one inside the next,
It is a city of shimmering light.

Yes, Bijapur received injuries at the hands of time,
Yet despite all, it is a city of the highest courage.

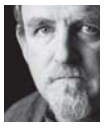
For why should not Asif love its relics,
This city of his ancestors' desire?

At the poem's end, the symbolic candle that flickered before the seat of the reciting poet was blown out. Yes, Bijapur's glories have been injured by the passage of time. But its townsmen, like Iqbal Asif, Ameen Hullur and Abdul Gani Imaratwale, will never stop loving its relics of "highest courage," buildings that still stand proudly after so many years.

David Wells's "video-graphs" of the places shown in this article add sound and space to Bijapur. Browse for them at www.saudiaramcoworld.com.

Left: **Louis Werner** (wernerworks@msn.com) is a writer who lives in New York and leads tour groups to Middle Eastern destinations.

Right: **David H. Wells** (www.davidhwells.com) is a freelance documentary photographer affiliated with Aurora Photos. He specializes in intercultural communications and the use of light and shadow in visual narrative. A frequent teacher of photography workshops, he publishes the photography forum The Wells Point at www.thewellspoint.com.



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REINVENTING the WHEEL

WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY BRIAN CLARK

THE ACCIDENT HAPPENED WHEN HE WAS 20, SAYS AERONAUTICAL ENGINEER AND INVENTOR SALIM NASSER. THE INVENTION IS HAPPENING NOW.

A native of Colombia, grandchild of Arab immigrants, Nasser, now 36, had grown up moving several times between Colombia and Texas as his family followed his father's engineering career. Nasser graduated from high school in his homeland at 18, and he entered college there.

Two years later, a drunk ran a stop sign, smashed into Nasser's car and changed his life.

"Initially, I couldn't move anything," he says during an interview in his condominium not far from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida, where he designs and analyzes launchpad equipment for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

"The diagnosis was 'quadriplegic.'" To recover and continue specialized rehabilitation, Nasser moved to Miami for better medical care than Colombia could offer and for "better quality of life and greater opportunities for the disabled.

"Within a year, I regained a bit of shoulder and arm strength, but it was a slow process," he says. "It took me a while to realize that I could go back to school."

Five years after the accident, he'd gained enough confidence to apply to Florida International University in Miami, where over the next five and a half years he earned both his bachelor's and master's degrees in mechanical engineering.

It was for a senior design-seminar project that he first proposed a hand-propulsion system for wheelchairs that allowed users to pull the hand rims of the wheels backward—as if rowing a boat—to move the chair forward. It's the opposite of the repetitive pushing required by the traditional wheelchair. He accomplished the reversal of rotary motion using planetary gears, a common feature in automatic transmissions and power tools, he explains.

In 2010, Nasser refined his concept and entered the "Create the Future" design contest, sponsored by *TechBriefs*, a NASA publication. He won.

Inquiries from curious manufacturers followed. Among them was an email from Rimas Buinevicius, an entrepreneur in Madison, Wisconsin, who said he'd once spent eight weeks in a manual wheelchair after breaking a leg and that his shoulders and arms had hurt from pushing his wheels forward.

"I knew from my own experience that there was a need for a better wheelchair wheel design," says Buinevicius, who runs Madcelerator, a company that helps early-stage firms bring ideas to market.

Nasser is "brilliant" and the planetary-gear design "looked clever and cool," he says. "Some 1.8 million folks use manual wheelchairs in the US. So there's a big market out there for these wheels."

After talking with Buinevicius, Nasser says he redesigned the wheel to reduce even further the risks of repetitive stress syndrome.

"If a typical user pushes 2000 to 3000 times a day, on average, my redesign came out to 330,050 fewer strokes a year," he says.

In June, Nasser and Buinevicius, who are now respectively chief technology officer and chief executive officer at Rowheels, together entered the annual Wisconsin Governor's Business Plan Contest—and won the grand prize.

The next steps, says Nasser, will be prototype trials by users, which the pair have arranged with the Shepherd Center, a hospital in Atlanta that specializes in research, treatment and rehabilitation of people with spinal-cord and brain injuries.

If all goes well, Nasser hopes Rowheels will roll onto the market late this year.

Brian Clark (beclark53@yahoo.com) is a Wisconsin-based freelance writer and photographer and a columnist for the Milwaukee *Journal-Sentinel* newspaper. He also writes for WisBusiness.com, an on-line business publication, and contributes to the *Los Angeles Times* and the San Diego *Union-Tribune*.

www.rowheels.com

Row. Don't push.

Though wheelchairs have become lighter, more comfortable and even specialized—especially for athletes—wheel technology hasn't changed much in a century.

Jackie Justus, a spinal-cord nursing educator at the Zablocki Veterans Administration Medical Center in Milwaukee, has spent two years working independently with an engineering team to redesign the wheelchair.

She says she was "thrilled" to learn that someone had come up with a wheel that allowed rowing rather than pushing.

"Spinal-cord patients in wheelchairs suffer a lot of muscle and joint problems," she says.

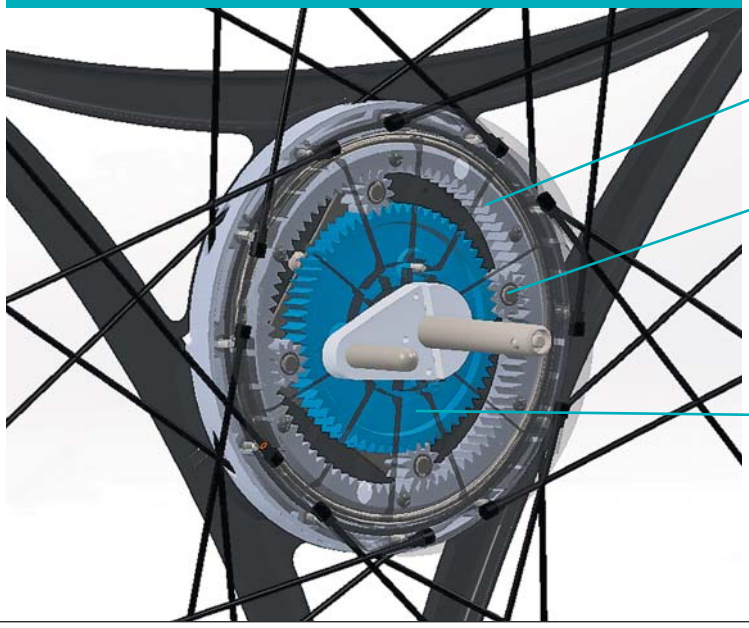
Pulling, she explains, uses bigger, stronger muscle groups—posterior deltoids, triceps, biceps and others—whereas pushing uses "little muscles in the front of the body that get micro-tears and are constantly being damaged over the years."

Rowing also improves breathing, she says. "The diaphragm regulates 75 percent of your lung capacity. When a patient in a wheelchair has to push forward thousands and thousands of times, their body gets bent over. Eventually, their posture gets curved, and they push the diaphragm up into the lungs, losing some of their capacity to breathe."

The rowing motion moves the upper body in the opposite direction, making wheelchair users sit up straight. In that position, the diaphragm works normally.

"There is a lot to be improved with wheelchairs," she says. "And having a rowing instead of a pushing motion for propulsion should be a big step forward."

How a Rowheels Wheelchair Works



Pulling from front to back this way turns the ring gear, which transfers motion to the planetary gears...

...that turn the sun gear and the axle in the opposite direction, causing the chair to roll forward.

ILLUSTRATIONS COURTESY OF ROWHEELS

The Rålamb MISSION

Written by Jonathan Stubbs

Photographs by Mats Landin / Nordiska Museet

Claes Brodersson Rålamb was born into minor Swedish nobility on May 8, 1622. His father was, for a time, governor of Finland. Rålamb returned from Turkey in 1658, held a number of important offices and was made a baron in 1674. (This portrait shows him in baronial robes.) That same year, he founded Stockholm's Auktionsverk, now the oldest auction house in the world still operating. By 1680, however, he had fallen out of favor with Charles XI, whom he had helped raise, and lost much of his wealth to fines imposed by the king. He retired to his estates, which numbered at least five, and at the time of his death in 1698, he was one of the most respected men in Sweden.

DICK NORBERG / NORBERG DESIGN (DETAIL)

The story sounds like a Hollywood action script: *The king of a growing empire assigns a trusted junior nobleman to travel undercover for months through hostile territory to the capital of a more powerful empire, where he seeks from its ruler an alliance that could shift the fortunes of the continent.* From there, it gets really complicated.

Above: **On September 24, 1657, Swedish ambassador Claes Rålamb watched the procession of the court of Sultan Mehmed IV as it passed through the streets of Istanbul on its way to Edirne, most likely for royal hunting. He took detailed notes of the event, and he later commissioned a series of 20 paintings depicting the procession. Each painting is also labeled, in Swedish, to identify the functions of the participants, who numbered far more than actually appear on the canvases. The first painting shows the governor and mayor, with their attendants.**

In fact, the growing empire was Sweden; its king, Charles X Gustav, age 35; the nobleman, Claes Brodersson Rålamb, just six months his monarch's elder. The more powerful empire was the Ottoman Empire, with Istanbul its capital. Between the empires lay realms each sought to control and influence—principally Poland, Transylvania and Austria–Hungary. The year was 1657.

At the start of the 1600's, Sweden was a regional power in the Baltic, and by mid-century it had become a major power in Europe. Controlling most Baltic trade in iron, copper, timber, tar and furs, the Swedish Empire included modern Sweden and parts of today's Norway, Finland, Latvia, Estonia, Denmark and Germany. Sweden had battled Denmark, Poland and Russia at different times during the first half of the century, winning much economic control. Its alliance with France during the Thirty Years' War brought it other strategic gains against Denmark and German states. The region's only other important state—thanks to its control of the Baltic Sea's south coast—was the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth.

In 1655, disgruntled Polish–Lithuanian nobles with ties to Sweden invited Charles X to invade. Charles did, but it did not go well. By the next year, Sweden found its resources overstretched, and its only ally, Brandenburg–Prussia's ruler Frederick III, began to waver. Sweden urgently needed another ally. Its territorial gains in Poland and, indeed, its position as a European power were at stake. Adjoining German states were not interested, and relations with Russia and Denmark were poor. That left only Transylvania, an Ottoman vassal state ruled by a prince whose ambition was already causing consternation in Istanbul.

Sweden and Transylvania had, at different times and for different reasons, fought some of the same states, and both had joined Turkey as indirect allies during the Thirty Years' War. In King Charles's opinion, this was enough to justify agreeing to an alliance.

In exchange for Transylvania's military aid, Charles promised Transylvania's leader, Prince George Rákóczi II, unspecified Polish territory, as well as the right to claim the Polish monarchy. Much of Transylvania was already Rákóczi's personal property, and the addition of parts of southern Poland, along with the crown, would have significantly increased his power.

At this time, Turkey was in a period of great instability. For years it had been battling the Venetian Republic; recently it had been losing. Peace with Persia in the east and Austria–Hungary in the west was fragile. Conflict with Russia was always a possibility. Factions in the Ottoman government fought for control of the state, and rebellions in Anatolia destabilized the empire's heartland. A stronger Transylvania along Turkey's northern border, ruled by an independent-minded monarch, would not be a good thing for the Ottomans.

In Istanbul, Grand Vizier Köprülü Mehmed Pasha took office in 1656, effectively replacing as regent the mother of the empire's nominal head, Sultan Mehmed IV, who was 15 years old at the time. As regents, neither his mother nor his grandmother had been successful, and they had been blamed for weakening Ottoman control over the empire. In accepting the appointment as grand vizier,

Below: **Third in the series appear these ranks of *azamoglani,* "from among whom the Janissaries are taken," led by a staff sergeant. Though Janissaries were professional soldiers—paid and free to marry—they were also slaves, bound for life to the sultan's service. Rålamb remarked that, though the parade lasted hours, few spectators came out to watch until the sultan passed by, near the end.**

Köprülü hoped to bring about stability and lead the country.

It was onto this political chessboard that King Charles X inserted Claes Rålamb (pronounced "row-lahm"), a man well prepared for his role as ambassador. After graduation from Sweden's Uppsala University, he'd studied at Leiden University in the Netherlands, honing his language skills, traveling and learning European politics. In 1645, in his early 20's, he participated in negotiations that ended Denmark's involvement in the Thirty Years' War. In his later 20's and early 30's, he concentrated on his estates, started a family and wrote the first draft of a lifelong work on law. When Charles X was crowned Sweden's king in 1654, he recruited Rålamb to service, and by May 1656 Rålamb was acting as civil governor of the Polish city of Posen (today's Poznań). It was then Charles summoned him to his headquarters in Frauenburg, Prussia, and there Rålamb learned of his mission to Turkey.

BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY (2)

Left: **Crowned in 1654, Charles X Gustav moved quickly to expand Swedish power in a drive to control the lands around the Baltic Sea.**

Rålamb was to persuade the grand vizier, and thus the Ottoman sultan, to approve an alliance between Sweden and Transylvania. The two countries had in fact already allied earlier in 1656, but Transylvania's contemplated invasion of Poland had to be approved by the Turks to be legitimate. Rålamb was also to ask that Turkey's Cossack and Tatar vassals stop fighting in support of the Polish king. Sten Westerberg, whose biography of Rålamb was published late last year, commented that "in return Rålamb was authorized to offer absolutely nothing." Worse, Rålamb was ordered *not* to seek a direct alliance between Sweden and Turkey. "He was, in effect, given impossible instructions," Westerberg observed.

So, was there more going on? Charles's offer of the Polish throne to Rákóczi seems contradictory, for the Polish nobles had invited Charles to the throne because he belonged to a branch of the family that already ruled Poland. Perhaps Charles used Rákóczi's ambition to get desperately needed reinforcements, thinking that he could later rescind the promise without serious consequences.

In Istanbul, ambassadors from all the major European and Asian countries watched the Rålamb mission, news of which had leaked out, to see if these two powerful countries, each with growing vulnerabilities, would seek strength through collaboration.

The conquest of Poland–Lithuania aside, even an indirect alliance between Sweden and Turkey could strengthen the position of each in its region and as European powers. It could also potentially clear the way to a later direct alliance that could prevent conflict if the two ever came to share a border, for the Ottoman Empire had been slowly advancing into Eastern Europe.

In anticipation of Turkish approval of his actions, Rákóczi's Transylvanian troops had entered Poland in December 1656. Although it is unlikely that Rákóczi was secretly encouraged by Sweden or Turkey to invade without explicit permission, Rákóczi in fact advanced Grand Vizier Köprülü's interests by doing so: Deposing Rákóczi later for failure to get prior approval would give Köprülü the opportunity to install a more compliant ruler, should he wish to do so.

We know much of this because Rålamb left a detailed record of his mission. An annotated copy of his personal diary, his report to King Charles X and other papers are now stored at the Kungliga Biblioteket, Sweden's national library, and formerly secret diplomatic letters and documents are in the national archives outside Stockholm. Perhaps most interesting of all, there is a pictorial record: 20 large paintings that tell us something about Ottoman Turkey at the time. Commissioned by Rålamb and now at Stockholm's Nordiska Museet (Nordic Museum), they depict a procession of the sultan's court that took place on his reaching majority in 1657. Rålamb wrote about the procession, which likely took place in September, in his report to Charles: "He is then by their law obliged to repair to Adrianople [now Edirne], the ancient seat of the empire, and to undertake some expedition." (For the figurehead sultan, that expedition was most likely the annual royal hunting expedition.)

Left: **Mehmed IV became sultan of the Ottoman Empire in 1648 at the age of six, and he turned 17 during Rålamb's visit to Istanbul. He remained on the throne for another 30 years, until 1687.**

Above: **The fragmentary inscription translates "the learned are called ..." They followed, on other canvases, captains of the guard, footmen, generals, heralds, squires, 20 pairs of water carriers and more. The edges of this painting show both original canvas stretcher marks and evidence of trimming. It is not known who painted the series, nor when, nor where. To art historians, the Rålamb series is both a unique depiction of the Ottoman court and a mystery: There are no signatures, no dates nor indications of where the paintings were produced. While the figures show stylistic affinity to Turkish and other Islamic miniatures, they are more individualized than is common for artists of that tradition; the townscape is entirely fanciful, unrelated to any known buildings of Istanbul and often appearing European.**

Rålamb's journey had begun some seven months earlier, on February 22, 1657. He opened his report to Charles by writing that he had been waiting in Stetin (Szczecin, in today's Poland) for further instructions, as well as an answer to his request for a diplomatic passport that could assure safe passage through unfriendly German, Austrian and Hungarian territory. Rålamb ended his opening sentence with the words, "I was obliged to tarry at Stetin for these and other reasons best known to your majesty." The diplomatic passport, however, was mysteriously delayed, likely because he planned to travel through countries that both Sweden and Turkey had fought against during the Thirty Years' War; that Austria, Hungary and parts of Germany favored Poland against Sweden was also a factor.

The rulers of Austria, Hungary and Germany did not know why Rålamb was being sent to Turkey, but they could guess that private communication between the two potential allies would not be in their interest. Prince Rákóczi had approached other countries besides Sweden about an alliance, so it was also possible that Austria, Hungary and Germany suspected that something was afoot that was directed against them and involved Transylvania. As a result, Rålamb went on to say, he would travel "incognito," as word was already circulating that he was being sent to Turkey on a diplomatic mission, and that it would be in Sweden's rivals' interests for him not to arrive.

To throw off pursuit, Rålamb gave out word of conflicting departure dates and false route plans. His caution was evident when writing about approaching Dresden, Germany; he said, "Yet I would not venture to pass through that place, by reason of the strict inquiry made there," and instead went around the

city. Rålamb wrote that highwaymen and soldiers who "robbed the travelers in the country" were a hazard, and noted that "both sorts appear'd to us, but being four coaches together from Praag, and all well armed, they had not the courage to come near us."

Nonetheless, Rålamb found that word of an ambassador from Sweden traveling in disguise had spread widely, and even going around Dresden did not throw off the chase. Constantly on guard, he was ready to change his route to avoid trouble. When passing through an area in modern Slovakia, he took a particularly rugged mountain route that he described as "a passage so terrible to look upon, that it made my hair stand on end." Later, in Polish territory, he encountered a postmaster "who was sly enough to ask questions, viz. whether we were envoys, or if the Swedish envoys that were expected would soon come." The postmaster delayed them for hours, but Rålamb eventually persuaded him that he was a merchant. Further on, five cavalrymen started following them. When the travelers took refuge in a wayside inn, the cavalrymen stayed outside all night long, threatening to break in. Irate residents of the inn drove them off the next morning.

What was Rålamb referring to when he wrote to Charles X that he waited at Stetin for both practical reasons and "other reasons best known to your majesty"?

On reaching Ottoman territory at Silistria, Rålamb immediately had to prove his diplomatic skills. The local governor, wrote Rålamb, was "at first pretty rough, but seeing that I returned proper answers to all his objections, he began to soften." Rålamb understood how to read culture and psychology well enough to respond in a manner that established a more hospitable relationship. He wrote that the governor had commented to his staff: "'No wonder we hear the Swedes so much talked of for soldiers, look upon this young man here, how boldly he speaks;' afterwards he began to be good humour'd with me, and asked, why I did not let my beard grow?"

Rålamb reached Constantinople on May 14, 1657. His first audience with Grand Vizier Köprülü Mehmed Pasha took place three days later, and on May 19 he met Köprülü together with the sultan. By then, Rákóczi and his forces had been fighting in

Below: **Three riders (the inscription says there were actually six; Rålamb's account says there were eight) carry the "unkiaraltetuiu"—the horse-tail standards of the sultan—followed by "monks of all kinds of orders," the stablemaster and a camel bearing a "small chapel in which the Qur'an is placed," used by the sultan for prayer during travel. In the background, the wall, domes and minarets were likely painted by an artist who had never actually seen them, whereas the costumes and descriptions of the parade are regarded as essentially accurate.**

Poland for nearly four months, but the Ottomans knew that the Swedish and Transylvanian forces did not control the majority of Poland–Lithuania, and that both sides still had intact armies. And although Russia had declared war against Sweden in July 1656 and might have taken action, its plans were not clear. Thus Rålamb was unable to negotiate Ottoman approval of the Swedish–Transylvanian alliance during these two audiences.

Rålamb continued his lobbying on May 20, when protocol dictated that he next visit the *mufti,* or chief judge of Islamic law. The mufti, however, refused to see him, sending word that "he was but lately come into office" and that "he would inform himself of the affair, and afterward send me word." Rålamb goes on to remark, "the main point was, he knew I was not come stocked with presents; and therefore the honor of receiving your majesty's letter and compliment was of no account to him." This and later contacts made it evident that, Rålamb's lack of the customary diplomatic gifts aside, there were Ottoman officials who were simply not supportive of an alliance between Sweden and Turkey.

On May 21, Rålamb was informed he could have another audience with the vizier. They met the next day, in a more informal setting, with the vizier pointing out that Turkey had an existing alliance with Poland, and that "it would be wrong ... to abandon that old friendship for the new one with your majesty." Rålamb recounts that "I thereupon remonstrated to him, that the friendship offered by your majesty was not new, but had begun in the time of king Gustavus, was continued by queen Christina." The discussion went on until the vizier gave "a promise, that your majesty's desires should be complied with in every respect," and the vizier promised to immediately draw up documents. Rålamb believed that he was close to success.

Then, on May 27, the picture changed abruptly. Rålamb was informed by a messenger from the vizier that another Swedish embassy was expected, and that any Turkish decision would be postponed pending the arrival of that second embassy. Unbeknownst to Rålamb, King Charles had dispatched a second ambassador when he became concerned that Rålamb's mission had been waylaid before reaching Turkey.

Rålamb became worried. The vizier was soon leaving to lead a military campaign against the Venetian Republic, and Rålamb knew that no action would be taken until he returned. That could be months. He asked for another audience, but received no reply.

At this point, Rålamb's report departs from his story to describe, for more than 20 pages, the state of Ottoman Turkey and its history since 1634, when Sweden had last sent an ambassador. This narrative is interesting and insightful, and particularly notable for the absence of judgmental or derogatory comments, which show that Rålamb was able to think about another culture without seeing differences as flaws. Biographer Westerberg observed that what was "most striking was that he was open-minded." Westerberg elaborated that Rålamb's sense of humor, ingenuity and self-deprecating style added to his essentially positive outlook, and these traits made him even more open to new information. These

Below: **Mounted on a white horse, preceded by footmen, the chief of the hunt and bowmen, Sultan Mehmed IV appears much older than his actual age: 17. Vizier Köprülü does not appear in the procession.**

qualities were critical assets, as Ottoman Turkey was a multi-cultural empire, with laws and customs that had evolved over time in their own context, and outsiders could—and often did—easily misinterpret the polyglot social world of the Ottoman capital.

Rålamb, however, concisely summarized what he learned about Islam, much of which came from Ali Ufki, a Pole who had embraced Islam and become a court musician. Rålamb's use of neutral wording in his report thus helped his king learn about the Ottoman Empire and appreciate its religion. His lengthy summary of Turkey ended with the words, "Thus much may suffice for an account of the present state of Turky, and its relation to the neighbouring powers; I think it my duty next to resume my report of the negotiation I was entrusted with at that court."

He then turned to describing his contacts and negotiations since the end of May. With the vizier away fighting the Venetians, the next highest official was the *kaimakam,* who over the following months was sometimes critical and sometimes supportive of Rålamb's efforts. Then in early August came word that Prince Rákóczi and his forces had lost a major battle in Poland and were in retreat. The kaimakam ordered the Transylvanian ambassadors in Istanbul imprisoned, and for the next three weeks, Rålamb was unable to make contact with anyone in power. He feared the same fate as the Transylvanians—"indeed we expected no less at every moment." In his report, he began to distance Sweden from Rákóczi with the observation that the prince had brought this reverse upon himself.

The next six months were a period of uncertainty. A new kaimakam was appointed. Rålamb remarked that this official's goal was to "force money from us"—a bribe. When the vizier returned, Rålamb was eventually granted an audience, but by then it was February 20, 1658, almost exactly a year after he had set out. For the audience, he and his party traveled to Edirne, after which they were expected to depart for Sweden. In the months since May 1657, much had happened: Rákóczi was no longer the undisputed ruler of Transylvania, and Turkish forces had invaded that much-weakened country. On another front, a Swedish war with Denmark had begun in August 1657; that left Charles no longer interested in Poland, let alone alliance with Transylvania.

In his reports to Charles X, Rålamb concisely summarized what he had learned and seen in neutral wording that helped Charles learn about the Ottoman Empire, and appreciate its religion, without the filter of judgmental stereotypes.

AFTER JOHAN CALLMER'S 1962 MAP

Above: **After the sultan came eunuchs "who number 100," some 200 falconers wearing their distinctive headgear, and the *mehterhane* or military band. This painting, too, appears to be trimmed—perhaps to fit with the rest of the series in a particular room. Rålamb never wrote about the paintings, which his descendants gave to Sweden's Nordiska Museet (Nordic Museum) on permanent loan in 1937.**

During the February 20 audience, the grand vizier stressed to Rålamb that Prince Rákóczi had failed to seek approval in advance, and that he had thus rebelled against Turkey. Rålamb countered by explaining that Sweden had been acting as Turkey's friend by sending him to Istanbul to discuss the matter, and that Sweden had not encouraged Rákóczi's insubordination. Although the vizier orally agreed with Rålamb, he declined to rewrite his official letter to Charles rejecting cooperation between Turkey and Sweden. Nonetheless, he asked Rålamb to relay positive, if unwritten, assurances that could leave the door open for future cooperation.

The return trip was easy: A diplomatic passport, arranged by the Ottomans, made it possible for the party to enter Austria–Hungary–Germany uneventfully, and to travel openly as diplomats. Rålamb reached the Swedish port city of Gothenburg in late May 1658.

There, he met with King Charles at least twice. Westerberg wrote that Rålamb and the king conversed for four hours "in private concerning the Turkish journey and other matters." Soon afterward, Rålamb took a role in a resumed campaign against Denmark, which he held until the king's death a year and a half later in 1660. Crown Prince Charles XI was only five years old when he succeeded his father as king; over the years that followed, Rålamb played an important role in his upbringing, and indeed in the governance of Sweden during the regency.

Was Claes Rålamb's mission to Istanbul a success or a failure? If we look only at whether or not he successfully negotiated with Ottoman Turkey for a formal alliance between Sweden and Transylvania, it was an obvious failure. Despite his 15-month effort, Rålamb came back empty-handed.

If we look more closely, however, there are indications that his mission was such a success that he was rewarded with further assignments and the enduring confidence of the king. And then there are the paintings: Were they a commemoration of a mission whose goals were never fully written down?

In 2004 the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul put together a joint Turkish–Swedish team to study the paintings. Institute director Karin Ådahl, who also edited the publication of the team's research in the 2006 book *The Sultan's Procession*, noted that the paintings are unique for their time. "Iconographically nothing relates to Rålamb's paintings in style, and no other diplomat in the period ordered anything of the kind," she observed. That uniqueness indicates that their purpose was something more than to record a procession. "I believe he intended to present them to the King," said Westerberg. But, he added, why would Rålamb present paintings—especially a monumental series of paintings—associated with a failure? And why would the king spend four hours meeting privately with an ambassador who had failed? Another tip-off that there may have been more going on is Rålamb's cryptic comment, in the opening sentence of his report to Charles, regarding "other reasons best known to your majesty." No less cryptic was the vizier's request, recorded by Rålamb, to convey to Charles a spoken message that went far beyond what the vizier wrote in his official letter.

Left: **At the center top of Rålamb's coat of arms, between two helmets of armor, is an Ottoman turban with an aigrette. The prominence of the symbol hints at the significance of his mission.**

Indeed, if we look at events around the time of the mission, it is evident that Sweden got what it wanted: more troops from Transylvania for its invasion of Poland. Turkey too achieved its goal: direct rule over Transylvania. A second benefit for both Sweden and Turkey was that, throughout the roughly two years during and around Rålamb's embassy, potential enemies took no aggressive action against either realm, likely out of concern that an attack on one might bring a response from the other. In other words, Rålamb's prolonged mission might have projected an appearance of more Swedish–Turkish cooperation than actually existed, and that, for both Swedish and Turkish interests, is an additional reason why the Rålamb mission should be considered a resounding success.

THE Accidental Mission OF CHARLES XII

Claes Rålamb was not the only Swede of his era to spend time in Ottoman Turkey. In 1709, King Charles XII lost two battles with Russia, and he and some 1000 of his men retreated to safety in lands under Ottoman control. They were allowed to settle by the river Dniester in a province that, ironically, included some former Transylvanian territory. For the next five years, Charles XII communicated with and ruled his country from there. In 1714 he returned to Sweden and spent four years attempting to reestablish his empire, but success eluded him, and he was killed in battle in Norway. Afterward, Turkish officials and merchants persuaded the Ottoman sultan to approach Sweden over the debts incurred while Charles XII and his forces lived in Ottoman territory, and it is during this time that each nation established its first permanent embassy in the other's capital. In Sweden, this spurred interest in Turkish culture, evident in the art and design of that time—a trend that harked back to the cultural interests of Claes Rålamb.

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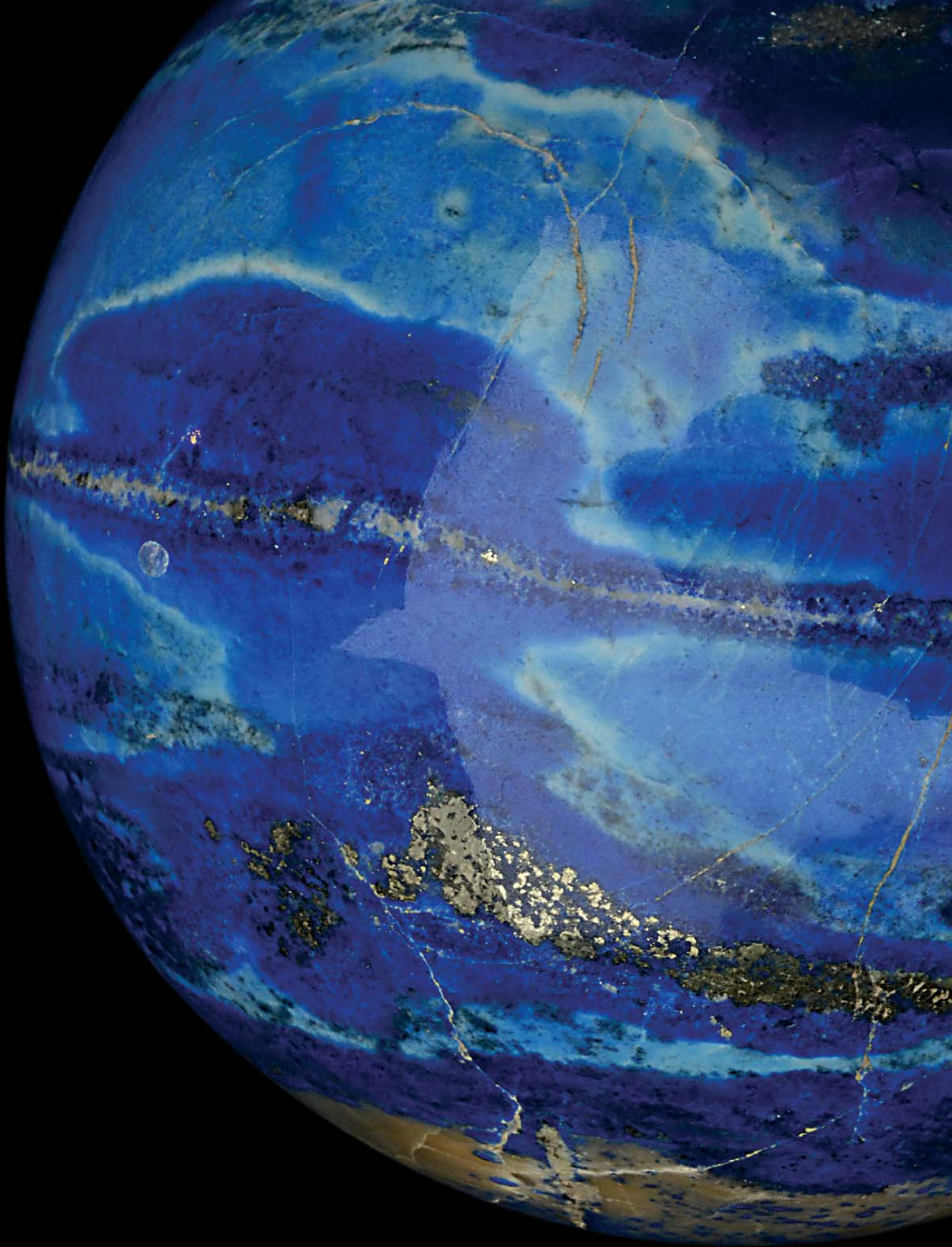
Claes Rålamb: marktspelare i storhetstidens Sverige [A Major Player in Sweden's Golden Age]. Sten Westerberg. 2012, Atlantis, 978-91-7353-594-6. 210 KR, hb. (In Swedish)
The Sultan's Procession: The Swedish embassy to Sultan Mehmed IV in 1657–1658 and the Rålamb paintings. Karin Ådahl, ed. 2007, I. B. Tauris, 978-918688418-5, $100 hb.

KARL-HENRIK STIERNSPETZ



The CELESTIAL *Stone*

Written by RICHARD COVINGTON
Photographed by PETER SANDERS

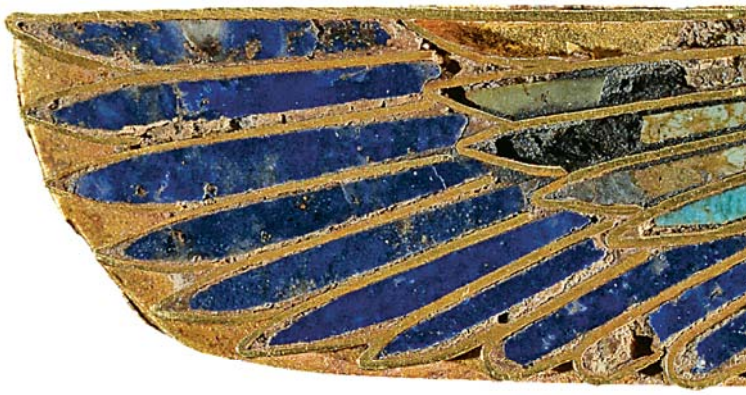
The gem cutter bends over a whirring stone wheel, methodically shaving blue chips off a lump of lapis lazuli to shape a miniature heart. Maybe the piece will become a link in a necklace, maybe part of a pendant or perhaps one of a pair of earrings. It depends on the cutter's inspiration: Khalil Mogbil is an artist first, a jeweler second.

"This is my artist's cave," he declares, pausing at his wheel and gesturing expansively around the small workshop in Idar-Oberstein, in the Rhineland region of western Germany, which also happens to be Europe's gem capital. "Isn't it a mess?" he laughs.

That it is: Shallow plastic buckets of rough stones litter the floor, and partially cut gems lie strewn across tables alongside motorized saws. Unfinished sculptures teeter on shelves. Powdery stone dust coats everything. Stepping gingerly over what looks like a large flower pot—it's actually a tumbling machine for smoothing coarse stones—the 55-year-old craftsman fishes a squarish nugget of unpolished lapis from a pile of rocks.

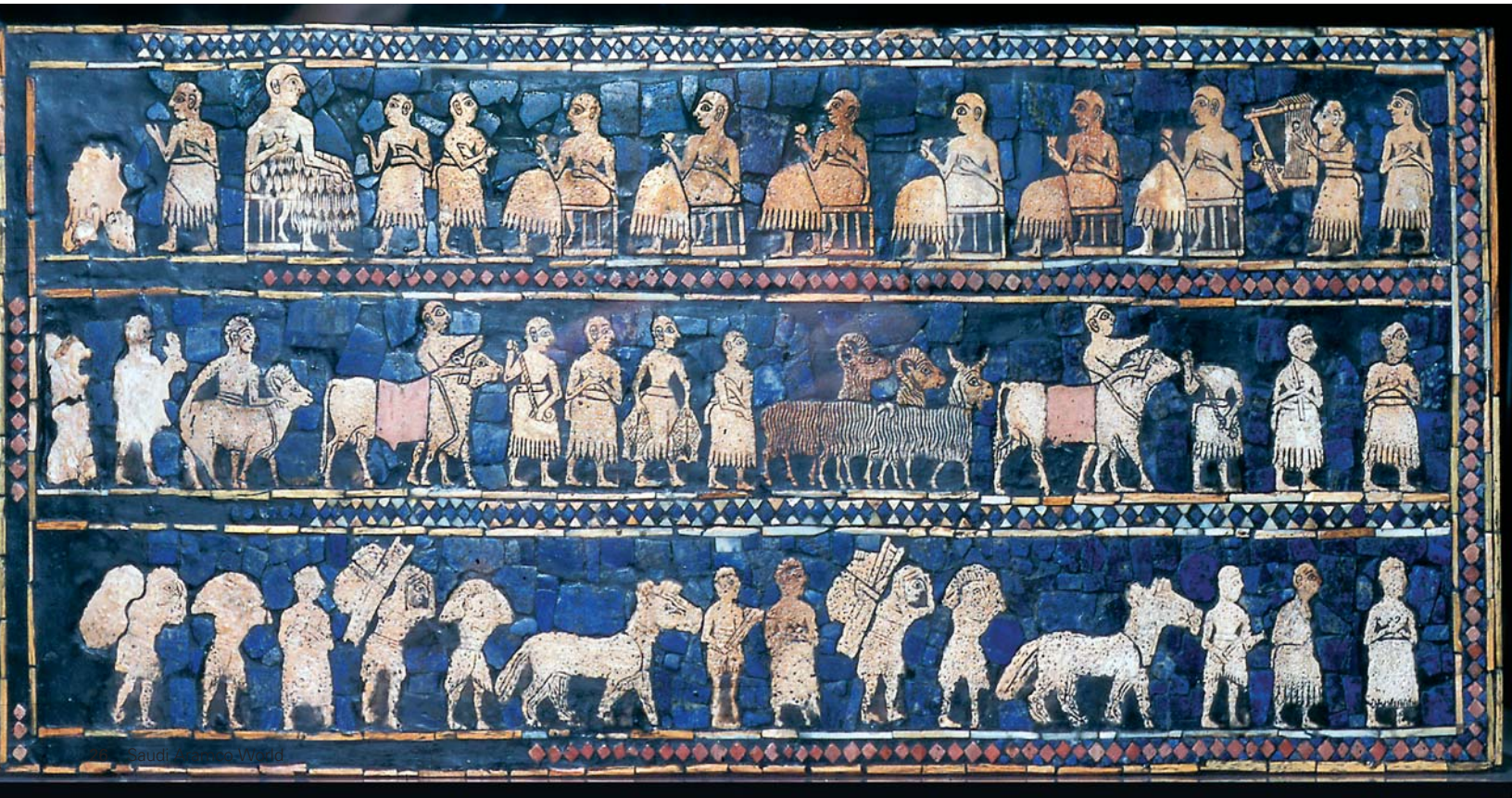
"That's my trademark—the rough stone, where you can still see the texture," he explains. "I don't like polished stones, and besides, they're too much work," he grins. Since his necklaces sell for more than €1000 ($1350), it's clear his unpolished style is favored by more than a few.

Mogbil is a former refugee from Soviet-occupied Afghanistan who learned his métier in Idar-Oberstein from his Afghan wife's father and brother. Far from the land of his birth, he is

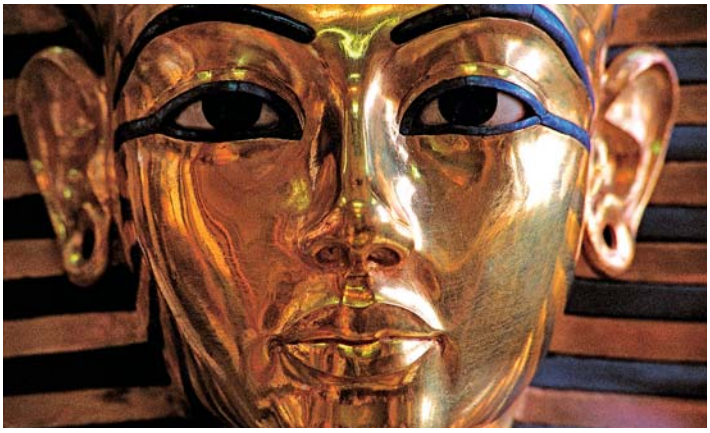


Mined from the dark earth, lapis lazuli gives rise to transcendent inspirations.

Lower: **In 2600 BCE, Sumerian artisans cut lapis lazuli brought along trade routes from what is now Afghanistan to produce the background and decorative border of the Standard of Ur, whose inlaid figures were cut from shell.** Previous spread: **Dominated by lazurite (from the Persian for "sky-blue") and swirled with intrusions of calcite, sodalite and glittering pyrite, an 11-centimeter lapis lazuli orb in the Searight Collection, fashioned by artisan Arshad Khan, takes on a planetary appearance.**



Lapis was prized in Egypt, where it was inlaid into the wings of this amuletic bird, shown above approximately three times its actual size. It dates to the fourth century CE, but lapis had been used some 1700 years earlier in the funeral mask and many of the other treasures of Tutankhamun, below left.



TOP: CHRISTIAN LARRIEU / BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY; CENTER: HEMIS / ALAMY; LOWER: DICK DOUGHTY / SAWDIA; RIGHT: SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION / NATIONAL MUSEUM, RIYADH; OPPOSITE: CAIRO MUSEUM / BIBLELANDPICTURES.COM / ALAMY

perpetuating one of humanity's most ancient craft traditions: Stonecutters have been fabricating lapis lazuli for more than seven millennia. Lapis ornaments dating from about 5500 BCE have been uncovered at Neolithic graves in Mehrgarh, in the Baluchistan province of southern Pakistan. An oval pendant carved around 3300 BCE was unearthed in Egypt at Naqada.

Sumerian kings, banqueting guests and musicians appear on the inlaid lapis lazuli background of a magnificent box known as the Standard of Ur, which was part of a Mesopotamian treasure trove dating from 2500 BCE. In literature, the Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh* speaks of a chariot of gold and lapis lazuli.

Some of the most sublimely crafted jewelry found in the tomb of Tutankhamun is adorned with scarab beetles made of lapis. Cleopatra wore eye shadow compounded from powdered lapis. The first-century Roman historian Pliny the Elder described the gemstone, with its flecks of iron pyrite ("fool's gold"), as "a fragment of the starry vault of heaven."

He wasn't alone in his metaphor. Lapis has enhanced religious art from third-century Buddhist caves to 14th-century Russian Orthodox icons, Roman Catholic and Byzantine churches and Muslim manuscripts. Caliphs, authors and ladies of court wear lapis-hued robes in 13th-century manuscripts from Baghdad and Mosul. Lapis skies illumine painted heavens in churches from Istanbul and Venice to Bulgaria, Macedonia and Catalonia.

Renaissance masters like Giovanni Bellini, Titian and Albrecht Dürer insisted clients supply costly lapis pigment to produce the deep blue

Right: **This simple cloaked figurine, found on Tarut Island in eastern Saudi Arabia, was carved from lapis sometime during the third millennium BCE.** Left: **To European master painters, Mughal miniaturists and illuminators of manuscripts, lapis paint was an important ingredient.**

Left: **Meticulously shaped fragments of lapis and other semiprecious stones, some smaller than the white part of a fingernail, are minutely composed to depict birds flitting among sprays of flowers and ribbons on the Badminton Cabinet. Standing four meters—nearly 13 feet—tall, it was produced in Florence over six years in the 18th century by some 30 artisans.**

color considered suitable as background for images of the Virgin Mary, saints, celestial beings and popes. A principal reason for the Louvre's restoration last year of Leonardo da Vinci's *The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* was to bring out the original brilliance of Mary's robe, tinted with lapis.

The blue jewel also links the craftsmen of Florence to the Mughal emperors of India. In the 16th century, a number of Italian artisans who had been trained in workshops founded by a Medici duke to produce inlays of *pietra dura* ("hard stone") fashioned plaques of lapis and other gems for Shah Jahan's Peacock Throne and for Queen Mumtaz's tomb, the Taj Mahal.

In many lands and times, it was common for rulers and wealthy individuals to be buried with lapis mementoes as gifts for deities in the afterlife. Lapis was also valued for healing powers: Mogbil himself wears one of his own rough square beads around his neck, and he insists it helps lower his blood pressure. With its color the shade of a clear, even idealized cerulean sky, lapis has been regarded almost universally as the ultimate celestial stone, mined from dark earth to give rise to transcendent inspirations.

Astonishingly, nearly all the world's lapis lazuli comes from just one place: The blue-veined mountains enclosing the Kokcha River valley in the far northeastern province of Badakhshan, Afghanistan. Since antiquity, and throughout the period of the trans-Asian Silk Roads, the lapis mines were only accessible by camel, donkey and mule caravans. Even today, the precious rock continues to be transported out of the valley on pack mules and ponies, then by truck to Kabul, Peshawar and Karachi or overland into China. (Small amounts of lapis are mined in Siberia, Chile and Zambia, but the quality is generally inferior.)

Formed in the same tectonic thrust that pushed up the mountains of the Hindu Kush, lapis lazuli is a composite mineral, dominated by lazurite and mottled with traces of calcite, sodalite and pyrite. *Lapis* is the Latin word for stone, and *lazuli* is derived from *lazhuward* or *lajuvard,* Persian for sky-blue or azure.

Categorized as a semiprecious stone, lapis is considerably less valuable than precious gems such as diamonds, emeralds, sapphires or rubies. Low-quality raw lapis sells for as little as $5 a kilogram ($2.25/lb), but the purest lapis, which takes on a uniform, medium-blue color—one neither too dark nor too light, and without pyrite flecking—may bring upward of €10,000 per kilogram ($6150/lb), according to gem dealer Thomas Mohr of Idar-Oberstein. Mohr, whose family has been in the business for three generations, is occasionally commissioned to engrave the highest-grade lapis for intricate, one-of-a-kind fantasias that sell for tens of thousands of dollars.

The limpid blue stone is so highly prized by some that there are Hong Kong dealers who artificially dye low-grade lapis to hide streaks of impurities of gray and white calcite. Other buyers, of course, actually prefer calcite streaks because they give the impression of clouds or sea foam, while speckles of sparkling pyrite make for gold-on-blue color contrasts that fascinate the eye.

The discovery of lapis in archeological digs remote from its source has opened up new fields of inquiry about early trade routes. For example, a tiny lapis figure of a man wrapped in a cloak, five centimeters high (2"), was found in 1966 on Tarut Island off the coast of

EMOTIONQUEST / ALAMY; TOP: INTERFOTO / ALAMY; OPPOSITE: BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY

Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province. (It is now in the National Museum in Riyadh.) It may have been carved there or, more likely, across the water in Iran, at Jiroft, in the third millennium BCE. As early as 2400 BCE, lapis was shipped from docks at Lothal, in India's Gujarat state, across the Arabian Sea to Oman, Bahrain and Mesopotamia, according to historians Stephen Gosch and Peter Stearns in their 2007 book *Premodern Travel in World History*.

Whether it was by caravan along the Silk Roads to Egypt, Mesopotamia or Europe, by ship to Constantinople, Venice and Genoa, or today by air freight from Kabul to Idar-Oberstein to supply Mogbil, Mohr and other gem dealers, the geography of the lapis trade is a window into the history of artistic, commercial and political exchanges throughout Asia, Europe and North Africa.

Both Mohr's grandfathers were jewelers, and in the 1920's both traveled to Afghanistan to obtain raw stone. Even then, Idar-Oberstein, which had been an agate-mining center since at least the 16th century, prided itself as "the gem capital of Europe," a title it still claims. The main streets are lined with stately homes, boutiques and modern office buildings catering to the jewelry trade. Visitors flock to the town of 30,000 inhabitants to explore the old agate mines and watch gems being polished on a traditional waterwheel, and they gape bedazzled at minerals, gems and ornaments from around the world in a pair of impressive museums.

Since the local agate was mined out by the end of the 19th century, the gem dealers and cutters were forced to branch out, first bringing in agate from South America and later adding other stones to their repertoires, including lapis. In the 1980's, Afghan refugee jewelers like Mogbil escaped the Soviet invasion to Idar-Oberstein, where they set up workshops and supplied themselves with lapis with the help of relatives, friends and dealers back home. Eventually, craftsmen and dealers came also from Peshawar and elsewhere in Pakistan.

Right: **In Bavaria, King Ludwig II commissioned this ring of lapis, gold and diamonds for presentation to a duke.**

Unlike his grandfathers, who journeyed for weeks on trains, boats and mules to reach lapis dealers in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Mohr has his suppliers come to him. If he is running low, he calls up Afghan or Pakistani middlemen who maintain warehouses of the raw stone near Stuttgart, 150 kilometers (90 mi) to the southeast, and they negotiate prices and terms. "If I need less than 20 kilos [44 lbs] of medium-grade lapis—€400 to €1000 a kilo [$250–$610/lb]—I can have it within two days," he says. Larger quantities or better-quality pieces take longer, but "if they don't have what I want in their warehouses, they generally contact a relative or associate in Kabul or Peshawar and have him send it by air freight or deliver it in person," Mohr explains.

Originally, Khalil Mogbil tried purchasing lapis in person at markets in Kabul and Peshawar, but he gave up because the dealers couldn't be bothered to ship amounts less than 20 kilos. Instead, Mogbil, whose one-man operation uses less lapis than Mohr's 10-person family business, often acquires raw lumps at gem and mineral shows in Germany and France.

I first read about Mogbil, Mohr and Idar-Oberstein in a book titled *Lapis Lazuli: In Pursuit of a Celestial Stone*, written in 2010 by Sarah Searight, a London author and journalist who became so absorbed by lapis that she wrote a personal adventure tale of her peripatetic, 40-year exploration of the art, commerce and history of lapis. The search led her into markets, churches, monasteries, workshops, archeological sites, museums, libraries and archives across Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Russia, Central Asia, India and China.

Braced against an icy February wind, I sought

Left: **Majestically crafted to give the impression it was carved from a single piece of lapis, the Badakhshan Vase towers 178 centimeters (nearly six feet) above visitors to the Hermitage in St. Petersburg.**

out Searight at her home in the manicured south London suburb of Clapham. On the walls of her living room were paintings and textiles acquired over many seasons of traveling the Middle East, the Gulf countries and elsewhere, initially as a journalist for the *International Herald Tribune*, *The Economist* and other publications, and later as a lecturer and cultural travel guide. An Oxford history graduate, she earned a master's degree in Islamic art at the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies in the early 1990's to deepen her appreciation of Middle Eastern culture.

"Then what do you do before you forget it all?" she asks me over tea and cookies. Her solution was to lecture about Islamic art across the UK and to lead tours in Egypt, Syria, Turkey and Central Asia. Since the groups invariably visited traditional markets, she always kept an eye out for lapis "to keep myself amused," she says. She had no intention of publishing, she adds, until the Paris opening in 2006 of a touring exhibition of Afghan treasures.

"That's when I said to myself: 'All right, come on, get on with it and put together a book on lapis,'" she recalls with a wry smile.

Her long-standing fascination with lapis harks back to middle school, when she admired a poem by Robert Browning that dramatized a dying bishop's last wish to be buried with a dazzling lump of lapis.

Some time later, when she asked an uncle who was a diplomat in India and Pakistan to bring her back a sample, he obliged. In her book, she recounts the vivid recollection of unwrapping a parcel of "grubby newspaper, out of which tumbled a small piece of rock as startlingly blue, I eventually came to find out for myself,

These pages: **For some 7000 years, in one of Afghanistan's most remote regions, miners have hacked and blasted lapis from mines tunneled into the vertiginous rock of Badakhshan.** Right: **A miner named Ehsan carries a 100-kilogram (220-lb) lapis stone down to a village an hour away.** Lower, from left: **Both the Afghan government and international artisanal organizations recently began efforts to improve conditions for miners in an almost entirely unregulated industry. Sorting and grading lapis in the village of Ma'dan, Hamidullah and others like him bag the stones and load them onto trucks for transport to larger wholesalers, many in Peshawar, but others also in China.**

PHILIP POUPIN / LIGHTMEDIATION (5)

as a starlit night sky or a sun-scorched day sky in the Hindu Kush." It was, she wrote "a blue that pierced the senses."

In 1973, Searight reached Afghanistan, accompanied by her husband and two small children. Venturing into Kabul's bustling main bazaar on one glacially cold evening in February, she recalls bargaining for a triangular chunk of lapis, streaked with calcite clouds, from a dealer named Abdul Majid. It was the first of decades of haggling sessions in far-flung locales, from desert shops in Mali to street stalls in Oxford, always for lapis. She wears that initial prize on a silver chain still today.

Across the Khyber Pass in the Pakistani border city of Peshawar, lapis dealers showed her raw blocks by the ton, piled in warehouses, as well as finished jewelry on display in their shops. "That big piece there came from Peshawar," she says, nodding toward an iridescent orb, perched on its own stand on a table of hammered brass. The "big piece" is as broad as a hand, its oceanic blue expanses striated with milky calcite and flecked with sparkling pyrite. It looks like a planet. She invites me to pick it up, and I instinctively strengthen my grip: It must weigh four or five kilos (9-11 lbs).

Although I've never haggled for lapis like Searight, some of her infectious enthusiasm for the stone has rubbed off. My own gem hunts, however, turned out to be tamer stuff, confined mainly to excursions to Vienna's Liechtenstein Museum and London's Victoria & Albert.

In the garden palace museum of the Liechtenstein family, surrounded by masterworks by Rubens, Rembrandt and van Dyck, stands the most expensive piece of furniture ever sold. The Badminton Cabinet fetched £19 million ($36.7 million) at auction in London in 2004. Created in the 18th century by Florentine *pietra dura* artisans of the Grand Ducal Workshops founded in 1588, it displays some of the most elaborate designs ever devised in lapis, amethyst quartz, red and green jasper and other semi-precious gems. The unbelievably painstaking technique involves piecing together veneer slivers only a few millimeters thick into a

pattern or picture, and doing it so precisely that the joins between one piece of stone and another are invisible.

The cabinet towers four meters (12' 8") high and 2.4 meters (7' 8") wide. I marvel not only at the intricate workmanship, but also at how completely over-the-top the piece is. What sort of individual would commission such a bauble? It turns out it was ordered in 1726 by a 19-year-old English aristocrat, Henry Somerset, Duke of Beaufort and resident at Badminton House, Gloucestershire, who was in Florence for all of seven days on his European grand tour.

Contriving ornate confections with lapis and other gems had become the rage in 18th-century and early 19th-century Europe. Making my way to the Victoria & Albert Museum to view the Gilbert collection—a glittering hoard of bibelots and furniture donated in 1996 by British real-estate developer Sir Arthur Gilbert—I came across an extraordinary snuff box and a necklace, both with shell and coral patterns inlaid in lapis backdrops meant to represent the sea. Nearby stood another ebony cabinet from Florence's Grand Ducal Workshops, dated to between 1700 and 1705: Although half the size of the Badminton Cabinet, it was every bit as finely designed and executed, with lapis ribbons that thread behind a necklace of chalcedony pearls and flowers of pink agate and blue lapis.

Although *pietra dura* objects were also manufactured in Rome, Venice, Milan and elsewhere in Italy, Florence was the undisputed center of the craft, no doubt thanks to the Medicis' affection for opulent decoration, and lapis lazuli was often a star attraction. As Searight points out, lapis was a spectacular status symbol and an unmistakable sign of great wealth.

Some of the most famous, superbly bombastic examples are ensconced in the Medicis' Pitti Palace. A 16th-century urn, hewn from a single hunk of lapis, stands 40 centimeters (16") high; a more delicate, shell-shaped cup was carved by itinerant masters of the Miseroni family, who later worked for the Hapsburg court in both Prague and Madrid. The Medicis also ensured that their favored painters, like Fra Filippo Lippi and Fra Angelico, were supplied with enough lapis to make precious pigment for their art.

How, then, did such quantities of lapis arrive in Florence in the

This page and opposite: **Journalist, scholar and lapis collector Sarah Searight's 40-year investigation of the history, art and commerce of lapis has taken her to dozens of countries—and their jeweler's markets, where she has collected both modern and neotraditional styles.**

15th to the 18th centuries? Searight speculates that most came overland from Venice and Livorno, after delivery to these ports by ship from Constantinople and Alexandria. She cites records of Turkish prisoners chopping up blocks of lapis on the Livorno quayside to make the chunks easier to transport the 80 kilometers (50 mi) east to Florence. "No doubt, apothecaries in Venice and elsewhere supplied lapis for pigments," she explains. "But the whole question of the lapis trade to Italy and indeed to the rest of Europe needs much more research," she adds.

The name first used for lapis pigment is still used today for the richest blue: ultramarine, which comes from the Italian *oltramarino*, meaning "[from] overseas." In 1508, artist Albrecht Dürer penned a furious letter from his home in Nuremberg complaining about the extortionate cost of ultramarine—100 florins for less half a kilo (1 lb) of paint. According to British art historian Victoria Finlay in her 2004 book, *Color: A Natural History of the Palette,* such paint produced from Afghan lapis today, using Renaissance techniques, would price out at roughly the same exorbitant level, equivalent to some $8000 a kilo, or $228 an ounce. The German master, like other European artists, blended lapis pigment with linseed oil or eggwhite to whip up what Finlay calls "an exotic blue mayonnaise." But from 1828, demand for pigment made from lapis plunged nearly to zero with the discovery of synthetic ultramarine by French chemist Jean-Baptiste Guimet and his German colleague Christian Gmelin.

Nowadays, only a few die-hard icon painters and amateur experimenters like Finlay and Searight bother to pound lapis into pigment. According to both, it's an exasperating, time-consuming task, a terrible grind that requires a great deal of rock to yield a paltry amount of paint.

One of the world's oldest concentrations of lapis paintings is in the Kizil caves, 80 kilometers (50 mi) or so from the Silk Road trading town of Kucha in China's Xinjiang Province. Beginning as early as the third century, upward of 5000 Buddhist monks, occupying a thousand caves in the cliffs above the Muzat River, vibrantly depicted parables, called the Jataka tales, which trace the life of the Buddha. Teacher-disciples known as *bodhisattvas,* dancers and winged musicians are all portrayed in brilliant lapis hues. Some 200 paintings are well preserved, but many others have been defaced. (More than two dozen murals were ripped out in the early 20th century by German archeologist Albert von Le Coq, and they now rest in Berlin's Museum of Asian Art.)

Searight recalls that the overall effect of beholding these remote grottoes is spectacular. When she first visited them in the 1990's, neither lapis jewelry nor raw stone was available in the markets near the caves or at Kucha. But on a more recent excursion a few years ago, she says, she noticed an abundance of both lapis stones and jewelry. "It must be due to the new lapis trade into China, particularly to Hong Kong," she says.

Searight was amazed at reports she heard about the numbers of Chinese buyers making the arduous and risky trek to Badakhshan. From there, they truck the raw blocks overland into China or south to Karachi; other shipments go down the Indus River to Karachi, where they are loaded onto container ships bound for Hong Kong, the gem capital of the world. Although the bulk stone is cut in low-cost factories in Shenzen and further north in Wuzhou, Mohr explains, operations are moving deeper inland to where labor and materials are even cheaper. Mohr, like Mogbil and other dealers in Idar-Oberstein, has carved out a high-end niche, and he is not, at the moment, concerned about competition from China, where the focus is on cheaper lapis goods.

"In fact, it's a positive development," reasons Mohr. "The demand for lapis is higher because Chinese producers have kept the price low. If production were limited to Germany, the price would be too high, and demand would drop," he points out. "Overall, the production in the Far East is making the stone more popular."

Despite Mohr's optimism that Idar-Oberstein's trade will continue to thrive, outsourcing at least part of the manufacturing process to Asia remains a necessity there, too. Every week, via air freight, Mohr sends thousands of gems, including lapis, to be cut and faceted at factories in Sri Lanka, where wages are a fraction of those in Germany. Most of the large companies in Idar-Oberstein similarly outsource cutting and faceting, he says, usually to Sri Lanka, Thailand or China. "We have to do this to survive," he acknowledges.

On the supply end, no one I spoke with was afraid that the Badakhshan mines would run out of lapis—or that politics would interfere unduly with trade. "Whoever is in charge of the government, they'll keep the mines open for the revenue," Mohr maintains.

But in Badakhshan, conditions have barely improved in

generations, according to Finlay, who in 2001 hitched rides on a United Nations plane and a battered Soviet Army jeep, rode donkeys and hiked to the mines. Climbing the steep trails from the village of Sar-e-sang, where the poorly paid miners live in mud houses, to inspect some of the 23 mines, Finlay explored shafts that were dug 250 meters (800') horizontally into the mountainside. She learned that, although miners blast chunks out of the jagged blue veins with dynamite, few wore hard hats or masks. Accidents and bronchitis were chronic hazards. The nearest clinic was a bumpy, two-hour drive away in Eskazer, and it was there that Finlay met a "smiling, almost saintly man" she identifies in her books as "Dr. Khalid," who told her he certified two or three deaths a year and treated about five miners every month who had been injured by explosives, falling rocks and tumbles off the dangerously steep trails. He also said he saw some 50 cases of bronchitis a month. "They are working without masks," Khalid tells Finlay in her book. "Of course their lungs are damaged."

Over the past couple of years, however, Afghanistan's mining ministry has launched some initiatives to ensure the miners' safety and promote the Afghan gem industry. These efforts have been assisted by Sophia Swire, a British development consultant living in Kabul, who recently founded a gem-cutting school in the Afghan capital. London designer Pippa Small is also working with such Kabul jewelers as Javid Noori, a 36-year-old artisan with the Kabul-based Turquoise Mountain Foundation, to create and market lapis necklaces, pendants, cufflinks and other items. In March last year, Sima Vaziry, an Iranian exile married to an Afghan, joined Swire and others to promote Afghan gem production and the lapis trade at Precious Afghanistan, a benefit evening of fashion, dance and exhibitions held in London for the non-governmental development organization AfghanAid.

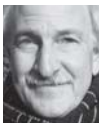
Despite these moves to transform Afghanistan's wealth of lapis (as well as emeralds, rubies, tourmalines, aquamarines and other jewels) into fairer and more profitable enterprises, the industry remains rife with smuggling and corruption. Although the country exports some $50 million a year in all types of uncut stones, the vast bulk of these gems are smuggled across borders, according to mining ministry reports, thus generating little tax revenue. To a disproportionate extent, Afghanistan's loss is Pakistan's gain: While Pakistan's burgeoning gem industry employs at least 40,000 people and produces $350 million in exports, Afghanistan has a mere 5000 part-time miners working seasonal jobs; fewer than 500 artisans earn a living manufacturing jewelry.

Afghan mining minister Wahidullah Shahrani told *The Financial Times* in 2011 that he plans to introduce reforms, including slashing taxation and export tariffs to reduce the incentive for smuggling, providing miners with safer explosives and granting them official leases. "They're very keen that the government should recognize their ownership," he explained. With the country aiming to exploit deposits of iron, copper, lithium and other largely untapped mineral resources—estimated to be worth a staggering $3 trillion—the lapis industry could become a model, though a comparatively small one, for cleaning up a troubled export business.

Selling Afghan-made lapis over the latest version of the Silk Roads, the Internet—as Turquoise Mountain and Pippa Small do on their Web sites—may be a brave boost to the industry at the source of the world's best lapis. It is also the most recent chapter in the 7000-year-old pursuit of a stone whose color "pierces the senses," as Searight put it: the celestial stone.

Sarah Searight holds Arshad Khan's orb, which appears also on pages 24-25 and on the cover. Her fascination with lapis, she says, began in her early teens with a poem by Robert Browning and a lifetime fascination with "a blue that pierced the senses." Right, **Khalil Mogbil was among the Afghan jewelers who fled the Soviet occupation of the 1980's and settled in Idar-Oberstein, Germany.**

ABOVE RIGHT: COURTESY OF SARAH SEARIGHT



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Lapis Lazuli: In Pursuit of the Celestial Stone. Sarah Searight. 2010, East & West Publishing, 978-1-907318-03-0, £18.95 pb.

PART 2:

ENCOUNTERS

WRITTEN BY TIM MACKINTOSH-SMITH
TITLE CALLIGRAPHY BY SORAYA SYED

This is the second of the author's six collections of eclectic, occasionally irreverent, excerpts from the vast treasure-house of Arabic literature. In each, he samples and comments thematically, seeking that which is insightful, prescient or poignant, as well as the curious, mischievous or wisely satirical. Like the original authors, his goal, and ours, is to entertain, educate and enlighten.

—The Editors

"ALL STRANGERS ARE TO ONE ANOTHER KIN," wrote the sixth-century poet Imru' al-Qays in one of the oldest surviving pieces of literature written in Arabic. It predates by a century or so the revelations of the oldest Arabic book—the Qur'an—which also celebrates meetings beyond our own boundaries: God, it tells us, made mankind into nations and tribes "so that you may come to know one another."

From the Arabic shelves of my library, here are a few encounters beyond the borders of the familiar. The first comes from a description of Constantinople, quoted by the geographer Ibn Rustah. His informant, Harun ibn Yahya, had been captured by the Byzantines and taken to their capital. During his account of the imperial palace, Harun recalled a personal memory of Christmas dinner with the Christian emperor:

Ibn Rustah compiled his book around 900 CE. As well as geography, the seventh volume (from which the extract comes) contains some interesting odds and ends, such as a list of "The First Person To ..." For instance, the first person to make soap was none other than Solomon.

The reliability of Harun's account has been questioned. To me this scene, and the details that follow it – a description of an organ and its music, the gift to each captive of the precise sum of two dinars plus three dirhams – lend it the ring of truth.

> The emperor came to the hall and sat in the place of honor, at the table of gold, this being the feast-day of the Messiah's birth. He commanded that the Muslim prisoners-of-war be brought in, and they were seated at the other tables ... on which was a huge variety of dishes both hot and cold. Then the emperor's herald proclaimed, "By the life of the head of the emperor, in these dishes there is not a trace of the flesh of swine!" And the platters on which the prisoners' food was served were of gold and silver.

During the early Islamic centuries, the Arabs encountered further-flung peoples through both conflict and commerce. Moving forward in time only a few years from Harun's Constantinople but south some 6500 kilometers (4000 mi), the coast of what is today Mozambique is the setting for a tale recorded by the 10th-century sea captain Buzurg ibn Shahriyar. The story calls for a certain suspension of disbelief, but it bears witness to how mobile the Arab–Islamic world had become, and also to how the Arabs themselves could look into the mirror of other peoples, even if it reflected unflatteringly on themselves.

Captain Buzurg heard the story from a fellow dhow-skipper, who in the year 923 had set sail on a trading voyage from Oman, in the southeast Arabian Peninsula, to Zanzibar, along the African coast. A storm, however, blew his ship far south of its destination. Eventually the skipper spied land:

"Zanj" was the contemporary Arabic term for the black inhabitants of the East African coast, here in the region of Sufalah (now in Mozambique). The area was little known to the Arabs, for it lay beyond the range that could be visited in a single monsoon sailing season.

With their ablutions and prayers, the crew were performing, while still alive, the washing of the corpse and funerary prayers that precede an Islamic burial.

> When I made out the place, I realized we had arrived at the land of the Zanj, who eat people, and that by making landfall here our doom was sealed. So we performed our ablutions, repented to Almighty God of our sins, and prayed the prayers for the dead over each other.

Then canoes came out and encircled us, and forced us to enter the anchorage, where we dropped anchors. We went ashore with the natives and they carried us off to their king.

To the mariners' amazement, far from making a meal of them, the king ("a handsome young man") made them welcome. In return, at the end of their stay, the skipper invited the ruler aboard his vessel—and then proceeded to kidnap him, ship him home to Oman and sell him in the slave-market.

A few years later, the same mariners, their consciences apparently untroubled, set out on another voyage to Zanzibar, and they ran into another storm ... and they were blown again to that same land. In even greater terror than before, they were taken to the ruler. What happened next is almost too strange to be fiction:

Al-Harawi "all but covered the Earth in his wanderings," wrote the biographer Ibn Khallikan. Once, he endured the traveling writer's worst nightmare: Straying into a battle, he lost his notebooks. They ended up in the hands of none other than the English king Richard the Lionheart, who invited their owner over to pick them up. Al-Harawi never took up the offer. What a missed encounter that was!

For – lo and behold! – there was that very same king, sitting on his couch as if we had only just left him. When we saw him, we fell prostrate to the ground. All our powers deserted us, and we were unable to rise. The king said, "My friends! It's you again, without a doubt!" Not one of us could speak; we quivered with fear. But he said, "You may lift up your heads, for I guarantee your safety and that of your possessions." ... Then, when he saw that his promise had restored our spirits, he said, "You treacherous men! I treated you as I did, and look at the way you paid me back!" We replied, "O king, forgive us, we beseech you." And he said, "I have already forgiven you ... For it is you who set me on the path of true religion."

The rare Arabic word translated here as "canoe," dunij, is derived from Indian languages and is an etymological cousin of the English "dinghy." Regarding anchors, I recently stumbled (literally) on the stone shaft of a very old dhow anchor among the shoreline mangroves on the Tanzanian island of Kilwa Kisiwani – Zanj territory. As far as I can tell, it belonged to a 10th-century anchor from the Arabian Gulf – Captain Buzurg territory, and date!

The king had traveled a long path: from the slave-market in Oman to a master in Baghdad; from first acquaintance with Islamic observances to the awakening of a deep faith; from the Makkah pilgrimage, via Egypt and an epic journey south, to freedom and home, where he had arrived not long before to find his throne still empty and waiting, and his people open to the good news of Islam that he brought with him. "Let the Muslims know," he concluded,

"that they should come to our land, and that we, too, have become brethren to them, and fellow-Muslims. But as for accompanying you to your ship again – absolutely no way!"

To return to conflict, and in particular the centuries of intermittent war known as the Crusades, it is remarkable how human contact persisted across the apparent divide. Here is an instance, from a guidebook to international places of pilgrimage compiled by al-Harawi.

Visiting al-Khalil (Hebron), Palestine, in 1174, al-Harawi was told that, nearly 60 years earlier, the ground had subsided at the cave in which the prophets Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were said to be buried. The entrance to their tomb had been exposed: Inside, three corpses were found, "their shrouds in tatters." The Crusader king of Jerusalem ordered that the shrouds be renewed, the damage repaired and the cave sealed. Following up the story, al-Harawi says that

In Arabic Abraham is often called "al-Khalil," or "the Friend" – i.e., of God. The town at the site of his burial takes its Arabic name from this epithet.

The knight Berne, who was a resident of Bayt Lahm and well known among the Franks for his manly qualities and advanced age, informed me that he had entered this cave with his father and had seen Ibrahim al-Khalil, Ishaq and Ya'qub, and that their heads had been uncovered. I asked him, "How old were you at the time?" and he said, "Thirteen."...

The author of this book says: If this information is true, then I have seen someone who has himself seen Ibrahim, Ishaq and Ya'qub, peace be upon them – and seen them, moreover, not in a dream but when fully awake!

"Berne" is a guess at the Frankish name the Arabic represents.

Bayt Lahm is the Arabic name of Bethlehem.

"Franks," here firanj, was the usual Arabic name for western Europeans.

It is a sad irony that al-Khalil/Hebron, the site of a Muslim traveler's encounter with a Christian knight and, through him, with those long-dead prophets of the three great monotheistic faiths, has in more recent times been almost a byword for political division.

An older contemporary of al-Harawi, the Syrian aristocrat Usamah Ibn Munqidh, formed close friendships with individual Franks. In one case, though, the friendship became almost too close for comfort:

Perhaps the knight should be "reverend" rather than "revered" if he belonged to one of the religious orders of knighthood like the Hospitallers and Templars.

Fulk the Younger of Anjou, king of Jerusalem 1131–43.

> There was in the army of King Fulk, son of Fulk, a revered Frankish knight who had arrived from their land intending to go on pilgrimage and then return home. A close and affectionate friendship arose between us; he would address me as "my brother," and we enjoyed each other's company. When he eventually decided to set sail for home, he said to me, "My brother, I am going to my homeland, and my wish is that you will send with me your son" – my son being with me at the time, and fourteen years of age – "to come to my country to see our knights, and to learn reason and chivalry. He would then come back as a man of reason."
>
> These words of his that rang in my ears were not, however, such as would come from the head of a man of reason. For even if my son were to be taken captive in battle, no worse fate could befall him as a captive than precisely that – to be taken away to the land of the Franks. So I replied, "By your life, this is exactly what I was hoping myself, except that something prevented me from mentioning it. You see, the boy's grandmother loves him so much that she won't even let him go out with me unless she has extracted a solemn promise from me that I'll bring him safely back to her." The knight said, "And is your mother alive?" I said, "Yes." And he said, "Then do not disobey her."

I'd be tempted to compare him to the supremely tetchy English traveler Smollett, who earned the nickname "Smell fungus," if Smollett weren't so much milder.

All the encounters so far have ended happily. Here, for variety, is the late 13th-century traveler al-'Abdari, who made the angry encounter into an art form. His journey to Makkah begins in 1289 on a sour note ("In this age of ours, the harvest of virtuous men is blighted") and rises to a crescendo of cantankerousness in Cairo. Among its inhabitants, he tells us in rhymed prose,

> The generous man is meaner than a firefly with its light, / the brave more timid than a locust in a fright, / the learned man more foolish than a moth with a candle, / the eminent lowlier than a bug in a puddle, / the sedate more fickle than a gnat in a muddle. / Their handsome men look freshly risen from the grave, / their healthy men look far too sick to save, / their eloquent man's more tongue-tied than a callow lad, / their high and mighty man's more abject than a scrounging cad ...

We shouldn't be too hard on al-'Abdari. In overcrowded, stressful Cairo he suffered the trauma of losing his mule: It was swept away before his eyes by the press of passing humanity, and never seen again.

The Alexander of legend was, among many other things, a marine innovator: In another tale, he is said to have commissioned a type of diving-bell. His historical self did in fact order voyages of exploration, but (as far as we know) only in the Red Sea and Arabian Gulf.

And so on for five pages. Whatever its other merits or demerits, the Arabic is highly picturesque.

Finally, two encounters that are neither positive nor negative but, so to speak, reflexive. The first belongs to the corpus of legends that, over the course of many centuries and cultures, attached themselves to the life of Alexander the Great. Fictional it may be, as the narrator himself admits. But it shows how the idea of a New World haunted medieval minds centuries before Columbus. Perhaps, too, it invites us all to be open to encounters, even if we have to go that bit further than we thought.

Alexander, the story goes, having conquered the known world, decided to investigate the Encompassing Ocean: the great unexplored body of water that surrounded the Afro-Eurasian landmass. He fitted out a number of ships, "all but unsinkable in design," and ordered them to sail for a year on different fixed bearings. They were then to turn for home and report back to him. At the end of the year,

The early 14th-century Syrian polymath Muhammad ibn Abi Talib al-Ansari.

> None of the crews had seen anything but the surface of the water and the gigantic creatures which emerge from it ... So they returned the way they had come – all except for one ship. The crew of this last vessel said to each other, "Let us sail on for another month. Who knows, we may come across something to whiten our faces before the king. We can always cut down on food and drink during the return journey."
>
> They had continued on their course for less than the month when, there before them, appeared another vessel, with people on board! The two ships drew alongside each other. However, neither crew could understand the language

"To whiten one's face" often has the sense of "to show one's honest intentions." In this context it also has an element of face-saving.

of the other. So Alexander's people handed over a woman they had with them to the other crew; in return they were given a man, whom they took back to Alexander. This man they gave in marriage to another woman on board their ship.

The demands of married life meant that by the time they got home, the woman had picked up enough of her husband's tongue to solve the mystery of the alien ship.

Another version of the tale, by al-Qazwini, milks the suspense: We have to wait for the woman to give birth to a child who grows up bilingual.

They said to her, "Ask your husband where he came from."

"From the other side of the ocean," he told them.

"For what purpose?" they asked him.

"Our king sent us," he said, "to discover what this side is like."

Then they said, "Are there on your side kings and kingdoms?"

He said, "There are. And they are larger in extent and greater in power than this one."

They said, "And we had not realized that there was anything there but water."

As to the truth of this story, God is the most knowing.

As was usual with non-religious writings by the Jews of Arab lands, Habshush recorded his account of the trip in his local Arabic dialect written in Hebrew characters.

The other mirror-image meeting takes place on more solid ground – Wadi al-Jawf, near the southwestern fringe of Arabia's Empty Quarter. In 1870 Hayim Habshush, who belonged to a prominent Jewish Yemeni family, accompanied a French scholar there on an antiquity-hunting trip. One day, hot, dusty and extremely disheveled from a morning scrambling about the pre-Islamic city of Ma'in, Habshush decided to have a siesta in a ruined temple. He was awoken by a noise:

There, leaning over me, was a man as tall as the ruin. His mouth gaped and made strange stuttering sounds, his arms were stretched out wide, his eyes stared wildly, and his body was all atremble. When I realized that what I was seeing wasn't just a nightmare, I was utterly terrified and I said to myself, "The devils have come for me!"

As one might when confronted with a devil, Habshush drew his dagger and poured curses on the apparition's father:

Having myself taken shelter in a nearby temple, in which the floor-level had risen with the millennia of debris, I think this is the implication of Habshush's phrase – literally, "like the ruin." It could, though, refer to the apparition's own "ruinous" state.

This gave him such a fright that his strength gave out and he collapsed on the ground. Then he said in a thin, timid voice, "I'm a good person ... I'm not a devil!" Hearing this, I knew he was in shock, so I spoke to him as gently as I could until, gradually, his spirits were restored. I then said to him, "What scared you out of your wits like that and made you fall over?" He said, "When I saw you in such a terrible mess, I thought you were a demon, because demons are always in a mess too and they always live in ruins." I said, "But whatever made you come to a place where demons live?" He said, "I came looking for treasure, hoping God might grant me something for my daily bread." And I said to him, "And I came looking for treasure too."

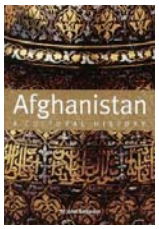
Even the best efforts at translation often entail some loss. However, the pleasing sound of the original Arabic title of this series, Tarjuman al-Kunuz, makes up for some of the literary shortfall when it becomes the syntactically accurate but less euphonious English "Interpreter of Treasures." Tarjuman is the root of the English word "dragoman," which refers to an interpreter serving in an official capacity. The full title echoes Ibn al-'Arabi's early-13th-century collection of poems, Tarjuman al-Ashwaq (Interpreter of Desires).

Tim Mackintosh-Smith (tim@mackintosh-smith.com) recently appeared in *Newsweek*'s list of the top dozen travel writers of the last 100 years. Following his award-winning trilogy of travels in the footsteps of Ibn Battutah, he is working on a history, a thriller set in 14th-century Spain and the translation from Arabic of an early collection of travelers' accounts from around the Indian Ocean.

Soraya Syed (www.artofthepen.com) is a calligrapher and graphic designer in London.

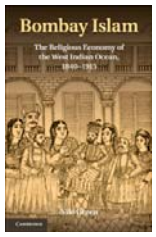
Suggestions for Reading

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



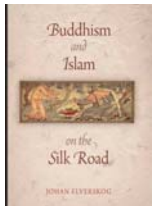
Afghanistan: A Cultural History. St. John Simpson. 2012, Interlink, 978-1-56656-854-8, $19.95 pb.

Afghanistan has headlined news stories for decades, but few people understand what's behind them: a history fed by foreign cultural influences dating back millennia. St. John Simpson, assistant keeper of the British Museum's ancient Iran and Arabia collections, goes a long way toward filling that gap. His cultural survey uses both historical and archeological evidence to define prehistory and the main periods that influenced the makeup of today's country. It encompasses the Achaemenids, Greeks, Huns, Turkmen, medieval Islamic dynasties, Mongols, Mughals and Pashtuns, and it shows clearly that culture—languages, faiths, customs—has driven Afghanistan's turbulent and bloody history. Indeed, Afghans today still bond with most of these outside cultural influences. Spectacular finds are described and illustrated lavishly, packing lots into a compact book that will appeal to anyone who wants to better appreciate the current situation there. —GRAHAM CHANDLER



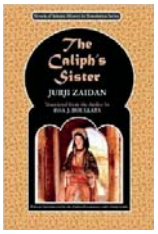
Bombay Islam: The Religious Economy of the West Indian Ocean, 1840–1915. Nile Green. 2011, Cambridge, 978-0-521-76924-2, $90 hb.

This specialized book will appeal to readers with a taste for the "hyphenated" histories—socio-religious, cultural-economic, pan–third world and the like—that have reshaped the discipline since the publication 60 years ago of Fernand Braudel's landmark study of the Mediterranean basin. *Bombay Islam* examines not Islam in Bombay but rather how Indian Islam passed through this rapidly industrializing, global city and succeeded in planting its religious forms in African and West Asian ports, carried there by traders and immigrant workers. As the author notes, "Muslim Bombay was to maritime itineraries in the second half of the 19th century what Dubai would become to aeroplane journeys in the second half of the twentieth." And just as Dubai now acts as a global model for the urban retail trade, Bombay once acted as the regional model for urban practices of Islam. —LOU WERNER

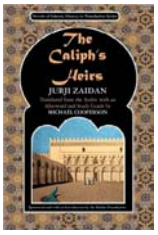


Buddhism and Islam on the Silk Road. Johan Elverskog. 2010, Pennsylvania, 978-0-81224-237-9, $69.95 hb.

This impressively researched, thoughtful book shatters a number of stereotypes of both faiths and demonstrates how these world religions have cooperated much more than generally assumed, largely in the context of the Silk Road. In the early Abbasid caliphate, under the Barmakid viziers, Islamic intellectuals consciously turned away from the western Greek tradition and toward the East and India, where Buddhism was born. By the early ninth century, however, the Barmakid family was disgraced and Islam's "India age" ended. Over hundreds of years of separation after that, Buddhist and Muslim perceptions of each other were colored by fantasy and misunderstanding. In the 13th century, the Mongol conquests of Central Asia and Mesopotamia brought the religions back into contact. The author challenges the view that the Buddhist tradition was always peaceful and the Muslim tradition always militant. He highlights cultural and other similarities between the faiths—arguing, for example, that both emerged from urban, cosmopolitan elites—in the hope of showing the value of future Buddhist–Islamic cultural interaction. —ROBERT W. LEBLING

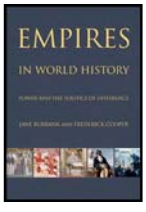


The Caliph's Sister. Jurji Zaidan. Issa Boullata, tr. 2010, Zaidan Foundation, 978-0-98484-351-0, $24.95 pb.



The Caliph's Heirs. Jurji Zaidan. Michael Cooperson, tr. 2011, Zaidan Foundation, 978-0-98484-352-7, $24.95 pb.

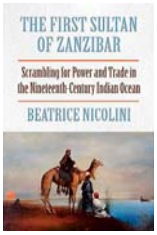
Historical novels set in the distant past are often a challenge for readers with no compelling interest in long-ago times. These two middle books of a biographical quartet, written in Arabic one century ago and describing an Arab age 12 centuries back, populated by a hundred briefly sketched characters with unfamiliar Arabic names, might have posed an even higher hurdle for English readers if the place they describe were not very much in today's headlines. The city of Baghdad—immediately before and after the death of Abbasid caliph Harun al-Rashid, during whose reign the more familiar *One Thousand and One Nights* unfolded—cannot help but pique the interest of a western audience, given what has transpired there over the last decade. The political intrigue is fast and furious in both novels. The first is fueled by a brother–sister–best-friend love triangle and such quasi-factual figures as Harun's court executioner, vizier and poet, and the second by the fierce rivalry of his two sons, which unfolds in 73 lightning-fast chapters. As noted in the quartet's introduction, just as Sir Walter Scott breathed a second life into the 12th-century story of *Ivanhoe* for his 19th-century readers, so too Jurji Zaidan gives vibrant life to an equally legendary figure three centuries older. —LOU WERNER



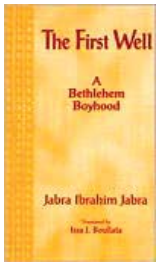
Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference. Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper. 2010, Princeton, 978-0-691-12708-8, $49.95 hb.

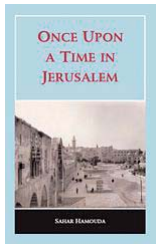
This work examines empires over time and space, offering a fresh and insightful look at world history. Burbank and Cooper devote attention to how empires attempt to govern differing ethnicities and nations, either by assimilation and equalization or by preserving and protecting differences. They do not see empires as leading inevitably to nation-states—the old Roman Empire, for example, became two "Romes," and the long-lived Byzantine Empire

developed out of the eastern one—or as necessarily immobile: The nomadic Mongols built a vast political system in Eurasia, which transformed many lands and contributed to later Ottoman, Russian, Chinese and Mughal governing systems. The authors also explore how empires interact and vie with each other, militarily and in trade. The Holy Roman Empire of Charles V, for example, sought to impose social and religious uniformity on the populations it controlled, building a state-monopoly economy, but the Ottoman Empire of Süleyman the Magnificent protected the religious and ethnic communities of the former Byzantine realm, and promoted a decentralized imperial economy of multiple trade networks. —ROBERT W. LEBLING



The First Sultan of Zanzibar: Scrambling for Power and Trade in the Nineteenth-Century Indian Ocean. Beatrice Nicolini. 2012, Markus Wiener, 978-1-55876-544-3, $24.95 pb. This very readable account of the Sultanate of Oman's first contacts with, and later annexation of, Zanzibar, valuable both for its clove trade and its sheer beauty, is a welcome addition to what heretofore has been a highly specialized literature. Nicolini helpfully puts the sultanate's historical sea links connecting East Africa, the Arabian Peninsula and the Baluchi coast just across the Arabian Sea into the context of French and British competition for the Indian subcontinent, which only added to the complexity of the Omani ruler's ethnic and military balancing acts. The mixing of peoples—Asian traders and mercenaries, Arabs fleeing the torrid shores of southern Arabia, African spice workers and local grandees—and how they combined to make East African Swahili culture into a strong polity important enough to be respected by European imperialists is at heart this book's subject. —LOU WERNER

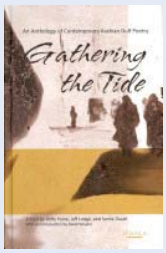




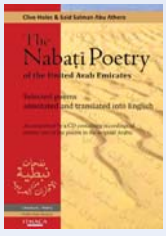
The First Well: A Bethlehem Boyhood. Jabra Ibrahim Jabra. 2012, Hesperus Press, 978-1-84391-371-9, £8 pb.

Once Upon a Time in Jerusalem. Samar Hamouda. 2010, Garnet Publishing, 978-1-85964-233-7, £14.99 hb.

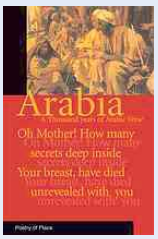
These memoirs of families living in Palestine during the early to mid-1900's reveal the intricate mosaic of its rich cultural, historic and religious heritage. In *The First Well*, Jabra Ibrahim Jabra writes of memories that "run in my heart with a sweetness I could not explain, with a beauty that grew in time." Yet it was not an easy life. Born in 1920 in Bethlehem, the renowned author, poet and translator grew up in an impoverished Christian family, knowing that his father owned only the clothes on his back and the songs and tales he shared with his children. Jabra's memoir covers only the first 13 years of his life, but his ability to recall the smallest details paints a vibrant picture of Bethlehem and Jerusalem during the early 1900's. *Once Upon a Time in Jerusalem* is narrated by the author and her mother, Hind al Fitiani. When Saladin entered Jerusalem in 1187, the al Fitianis were one of the families that each inhabited a home (*dar*) within the 10 gates of the wall surrounding the Haram al Sharif, or Dome of the Rock—one of the most important religious sites. More than seven centuries later, the last patriarch of the al Fitianis and his family, including Hind, still lived in "Dar al Fitiani." Hamouda's book is a fascinating social documentary of pre-1948 Jerusalem. "My mother's tales about her house in Old Jerusalem have always been an integral part of my life," writes Hamouda. "Though I am separated by borders and barbed wire from that land which her soul still inhabits, I have grown to know and love it because I see it through her eyes. Palestine lives in every corner of our house and minds." —PINEY KESTING



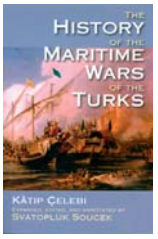
Gathering the Tide: An Anthology of Contemporary Arabian Gulf Poetry. Jeff Lodge, Patty Paine and Samia Touati, eds. 2011, Ithaca Press, 978-0-86372-375-9, $34.95 pb. This ambitious anthology delivers on its promise to give English-language readers high-quality translations of notable living poets from the Gulf countries. The book features the work of 48 of them. Few are "career poets"; most are accomplished professionals, academics, even heads of state. This makes their explorations of their inner and outer worlds more intriguing, for the past, present and future collide differently in every poet's work. Some write free verse. Some prefer a surrealist style. Others follow more traditional forms. Many write in English as well as Arabic. For the translations, the three editors worked with 49 translators, some well-known poets themselves, who polished the poems line by line until they gleamed. The result is a rare combination of robust quantity and superior quality. This volume will be invaluable to general readers curious about the region's literary culture and to students of modern Arabic literature in translation.



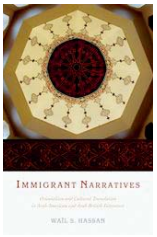
The Nabati Poetry of the United Arab Emirates: Selected Poems, Annotated and Translated into English. Said Salman Abu Athera and Clive Holes, eds. 2011, Ithaca Press, 978-0-86372-378-0, $74.95 hb. Nabati poetry is a popular oral tradition in many countries of the eastern Arab world. Meant to be recited, the verses must scan and rhyme as well as hold an audience with their wit. Descended from oral poetry of the Bedouin, nabati verse is still very popular and is recited in a formal version of spoken dialect. This volume presents the work of 25 Emirati poets in translation as well as in the original Arabic. Some wrestle with modern issues, while others echo old poetic themes, but the translations by Clive Holes are the most engaging element of this book. Like the Arabic originals, all the translations scan and rhyme. Holes took a loose-translation approach and his work goes an extra distance, conveying the wit and humor of the originals. Most impressive is his translation of "Each Night of the Week, Fine Lines Did I Speak," by the late Jum'a bin 'Adil al-Rumaythi. Holes creates clever internal rhymes in his translation, a hallmark of the original. An accompanying CD features recitations of 22 poems. For Arabic speakers, reading along in Arabic to the CD highlights the charms of dialect pronunciation as well as the art of recitation. General readers interested in the culture of the UAE, as well as students of Arabic and Arab culture, will find many facets of culture and language to enjoy in this prize-winning work.



Voices of Arabia: A Collection of the Poetry of Place. T.J. Gorton, tr. 2009, Eland Publishing, 978-1-90601-120-8, $16.95 pb. This pocket-sized volume of translated classical Arabic poetry is part of a 15-volume series exploring poetry around the world, meant to accompany the publisher's travel guides. T. J. Gorton, who studied Arabic at Oxford and lived in the Arab world for many years, selected excerpts from the works of 25 celebrated Arab poets who lived before 1000 CE. He chose verses from the world of the Bedouin and the glittering cities of the Arab East that would appeal to western readers. They feature strong emotions, vivid incidents, daring acts and memorable characters. Each is introduced with the poet's story and the poem's context. Many of Gorton's fine translations are metered, echoing a feel of the originals. General readers interested in the greats of classical Arabic poetry will enjoy this accessible anthology. *Voices of Arabia* is a companion to Gorton's previously published volume in this series that focused on Moorish poetry of al-Andalus. —KAY HARDY CAMPBELL

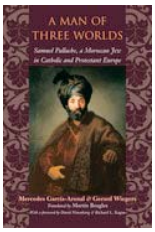


The History of the Maritime Wars of the Turks. Kâtip Çelebi. Svatopluk Soucek, ed. 2012, Markus Wiener, 978-1-55876-548-1, $88.95 hb, $24.95 pb. A more correct translation of the title of this fascinating account of Ottoman naval battles and campaigns, written in the 17th century by a court intellectual, should begin as *A Gift to the Great Ones*—wording that better captures the writer's triumphalist tone as a proud Turk witnessing great imperial success. The almost 200-year-old English translation of the text is somewhat dated and incomplete, but the editor has included new chapter summaries, portraits of famous admirals and commanders, and useful illustrations of maps, warships and coastal forts. A highlight is the description of the Battle of Lepanto, at which Miguel de Cervantes lost the use of his left arm. Thanks to Kâtip Çelebi, we know how the fighting looked from the Turkish side, and how close the world came to never reading *Don Quixote*. —LOU WERNER



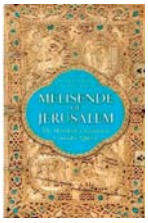
Immigrant Narratives: Orientalism and Cultural Translation in Arab American and Arab British Literature. Wail S. Hassan. 2011, Oxford, 978-0-19979-206-1, $65 hb.

This sharp-eyed analysis of literature written in English by Arab writers in the US and UK avoids being trapped in theory, mostly by concentrating on the biographies and books of the writers themselves: the Lebanese–American mystics Ameen Rihani and Kahlil Gibran; proud autobiographers of their immigrant identities Abraham Rihbany, George Haddad, Salom Rizk and George Hamid; and later writers who wrestle with more complicated Arab self-images in the West, such as political memoirist Fawaz Turki and feminist Anglo–Arab novelists Ahdaf Soueif and Leila Aboulela, both deserving of wider readership. Hovering above all of them is Edward Said, as both theorist and practitioner, whom Hassan invokes most usefully for Said's memoir *Out of Place*, which unfortunately had to be defended after his death from politically motivated attacks on its veracity. —LOU WERNER



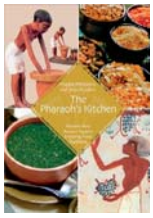
A Man of Three Worlds: Samuel Pallache, A Moroccan Jew in Catholic and Protestant Europe. Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard Wiegers. Martin Beagles, tr. 2010, Johns Hopkins, 978-0-80188-623-2, $27 pb.

This transnational story, told on two continents, of a stateless Fez-born merchant who died in The Hague after a long career of adventure and intrigue could only have been written by co-authors of different countries—in this case, a Spaniard and a Dutchman—commanding between them no less than six research languages. The three worlds of the title—Islam, Judaism and Christianity—should more properly divide into four, since the mutual antagonism of Protestant Holland and England and Catholic Spain flared into the Thirty Years' War just two years after Pallache's death in 1616. Seldom has one man's life, featuring repeated crossings of both the Strait of Gibraltar and the English Channel as if they were inconsequential barriers to travel rather than boundaries between worlds, embodied such a macrocosm of history and culture. —LOU WERNER



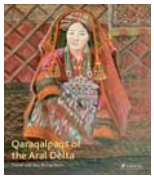
Melisende of Jerusalem: The World of a Forgotten Crusader Queen. Margaret Tranovich. 2011, East & West, 978-1-90731-806-1, £14.95/$24.95 pb.

Melisende, "the forgotten queen," ruled the Kingdom of Jerusalem for 30 tumultuous years. She inherited the throne with her husband on the death of her father, Baldwin II, in 1131 and then shared rule with her son, Baldwin III, after her spouse died in 1143. Art historian Margaret Tranovich has done well fitting together the few facts we have about this remarkable woman, using her knowledge of the period to fill in the gaps. She examines the pivotal and turbulent era ushered in by the First Crusade (1096–1099) and encompassing the Second Crusade (1145–1149), interweaving details that illustrate Jerusalem's role as a crossroads of Byzantine, Islamic and European artistic traditions. The images of contemporary relics and buildings are well chosen and stunning. Tranovich presents Melisende as one of the great female role models in history. This book is a testimony to her spirit, determination and wisdom. —CHARLES BAKER



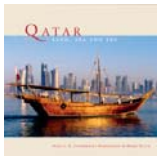
The Pharaoh's Kitchen: Recipes from Ancient Egypt's Enduring Food Traditions. Magda Mehdawy and Amr Hussein. 2010, American University in Cairo, 9-789-77416-310-4, $24.95 pb.

Food historians as well as adventurous cooks are bound to appreciate this tasty testimony to ancient Egyptian cuisine. As its title suggests, this painstakingly researched volume provides a fascinating glimpse into the kitchens of Pharaonic times. Magda Mehdawy, who holds a degree in archeology from the University of Alexandria, and Amr Hussein, a graduate in archeology from Cairo University, have gone to great lengths to recreate dishes gleaned from hieroglyphs and descriptions in ancient tombs and manuscripts, and adapt them for the contemporary table. Detailed appendices even include sections on "Food and Language" and "Food and Hieroglyphs." If dishes such as Crocodile Date Loaf or Pickled Palm-Tree Pith fail to entice you into the kitchen, you can still treasure this unusual cookbook as an excellent reference on the gastronomy of ancient Egypt. —KITTY MORSE



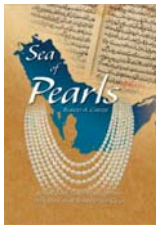
Qaraqalpaqs of the Aral Delta. David and Sue Richardson. 2012, Prestel, 978-3-79134-738-7, $160 hb.

The Aral region of Central Asia is mostly thought of in terms of the ecological disaster of the Aral Sea, so this beautiful, well-researched book on one of the area's least familiar peoples is particularly welcome. The Qaraqalpaqs, a Turkic-speaking minority inhabiting the westernmost province of Uzbekistan, were essentially nomadic until the 1920's and '30's. The book's first section deals with their origins and history, using information gathered from interviews with the elderly and contributing to the only oral history of the region available in English. The three subsequent sections—Weaving and Textiles, Costume and Jewellery, and Dwellings and Furnishings—explore the Qaraqalpaqs' rich craft traditions. The photographs throughout, both contemporary and dating back to the earlier part of the 20th century, are excellent. In addition, the authors provide a vast amount of technical and sociological information; the chapter on the yurt, its construction, decoration and importance, is particularly fascinating. This book is a major contribution to our knowledge of the region. Besides its esthetic value, it will be particularly important to anyone interested in Central Asia, the world of the nomad, and especially textiles, costume and embroidery. —CAROLINE STONE



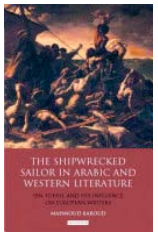
Qatar: Sand, Sea and Sky. Diana C. K. Untermeyer. Henry Dallal, photog. 2011, Bright Sky, 978-1-93647-404-2, $64.95 hb.

This richly illustrated tome is a tribute to the "spirit of Qatar [and] the warmth of its people." Untermeyer, whose husband was US ambassador to Qatar from 2004 to 2007, and Dallal, who was born in Iran and now lives in London, share an obvious enchantment with their subjects: the people, culture and rapid transformation of this recently prosperous country. Double-page spreads of text (with all-too-brief captions) alternate with eight-page sections of spectacular photographs by Dallal on virtually every aspect of the people and land, from sand dunes to sword dances to skyscrapers. Untermeyer writes concisely and informatively of Qatari social customs such as weddings and the *majlis* (a formal or informal gathering), *suqs*, seafaring, oil and gas, meteoric development, Al Jazeera, horse and camel racing, higher education, the spectacular Museum of Modern Art, the increasing role of women and Qatar's expanding role in international affairs. She closes with a useful timeline of Qatari history and development. —COLBERT HELD



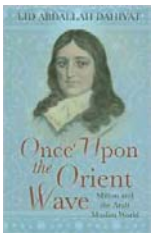
Sea of Pearls. Robert Carter. 2012, Arabian Publishing, 978-0-95710-600-0, $190 hb.

A comprehensive book on pearls has been long overdue, but *Sea of Pearls* was well worth the wait. It is always difficult to claim that a book is the definitive work on its subject, but in this case it is probably true. The volume is beautifully produced, boasting a remarkable range of illustrations from calligraphy pages of the Qur'an showing the many references to pearls, to a wealth of old photographs of the Gulf's pearl divers, their *dhow*s and their equipment that bring a vanished world back to life. There are also excellent maps, old and new. The text equals the richness of the images, providing an abundance of information ranging from historic sources to details of the music played on the pearling ships, as well as an excellent analysis of the pearl trade and its economic and social importance as the major source of employment in the region before oil. *Sea of Pearls* is not only an admirably researched history of the pearl industry, but an important sociological study of a way of life, central to the Gulf, that persisted relatively unchanged for millennia until recent decades. —CAROLINE STONE



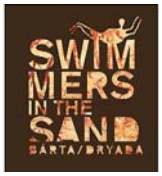
The Shipwrecked Sailor in Arabic and Western Literature: Ibn Tufayl and His Influence on European Writers. Mahmoud Baroud. 2012, Taurus, 978-1-84885-552-6, £59.50 hb.

Once Upon the Orient Wave: Milton and the Arab Muslim World. Eid Abdallah Dahiyat. 2012, Hesperus, 978-1-84391-361-0, £12 hb.



Islam and the English Enlightenment 1670–1840. Humberto Garcia. 2012, Johns Hopkins, 978-1-4214-0353-3, $70 hb.

The story is familiar: A solitary man on a desert isle learns to survive by his wits and his mastery of the island's resources. Finally, he encounters a native from a neighboring island who becomes his servant and pupil, and they form their own insular society. Such was the medieval Arab philosopher Ibn Tufayl's tale of *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*, written some six centuries before Daniel Defoe looked to it—and more contemporary accounts of real-life castaways—for inspiration when writing *Robinson Crusoe*. Ibn Tufayl's allegorical novel describes a child, Hayy, coming to know the world through self-taught discovery of scientific truths, ergo the Divine. This rational approach to understanding the universe resonated with major European Enlightenment thinkers, writers and poets, as all three of these books demonstrate. Baroud's work focuses on Ibn Tufayl's impact on Europe's intelligentsia. His "themes of isolation and how human reason can ascend from contemplation of the Inferior to knowledge of the Superior," Baroud claims, were two favorites of the time, and he concludes that *Robinson Crusoe* "breathes the spirit" of Ibn Tufayl's novel. Dahiyat explains that 17th-century English exploration of, and trade with, the East established "a burgeoning Muslim community in Elizabethan London, and a thriving English community in Turkish lands." This exchange was mercantile and intellectual, so that by 1635 Cambridge and Oxford had established chairs of Arabic, and their respective libraries—where Milton spent time as a student—began to amass collections of Arabic texts. He summarizes Milton's "interest in knowing the wisdom and culture of other people" by quoting *Paradise Regained*: "With the Gentiles much thou must converse,.../ Without their learning how wilt thou with them, / Or they with thee hold conversation meet?" The "influence of Islam," with its tradition of "Ijtihad (independent judgment in theological questions)," Dahiyat writes, contributed "to the emancipation of the human mind from intellectual shackles"—particularly those of the Catholic church. Garcia looks to Islamic republicanism and egalitarianism as significant influences in this era in Europe, when Enlightenment and secularism became increasingly synonymous, and on Milton and almost every other major literary and philosophical figure. They found common ground, Garcia states, in Islam's political philosophies, which "provided ... a convenient ideological framework with which to make sense of national crises as they arose, supplementing a deficient and ailing Christian monarchy in England (and Europe) with rival prophetic stories about the just republics founded by Noah, Abraham, and Moses." The Enlightenment was neither solely "Judeo-Christian" nor the "exclusive property of Western Europe," he argues. It was "a shared yet too-often forgotten heritage in which cross-cultural exchange between the early modern Christian West and the Muslim world" was neither unimaginable nor "predominantly hostile"—a common theme of all three fascinating titles. —TOM VERDE

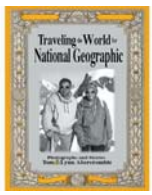


Swimmers in the Sand: On the Neolithic Origins of Ancient Egyptian Mythology and Symbolism. Miroslav Barta. 2010, Dryada, 978-8-08702-526-0, $89.00 hb.

Examining rock art in Egypt's Western Desert, Barta argues that the iconography, motifs and mythology of Neolithic artists in this little-known region provided the cultural foundations for early Nile Valley settlers. The title refers to the Cave of Swimmers, discovered in 1933 in the remote Gilf Kebir plateau where recently more caves with petroglyphs have been found and are under study. Barta, a professor at the Czech Institute of Egyptology at Charles University in Prague, writes that "the creators of the caves' decoration were the intellectual precursors of ancient Egyptians," with desertification at the end of the wet period eight millennia ago resulting in migration eastward, settlement and the genesis of Egypt's Nile Valley civilization. The book's numerous, beautifully reproduced photographs of petroglyphs alongside images from dynastic Egyptian monuments reveal the remarkable cultural contribution that Neolithic people made to the birth of one of the greatest civilizations the world has known. —PETER HARRIGAN

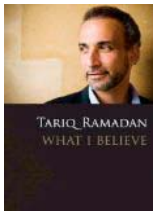
Tablet and Pen: Literary Landscapes from the Modern Middle East. Reza Aslan, ed. 2011, Norton, 978-0-39306-585-5, $21.95 pb.

In *Tablet and Pen*, Reza Aslan has collected a wide variety of 20th-century literature from the Middle East. The anthology includes diverse genres—poems, short stories, essays, memoirs and novels—by writers from the region that spans North Africa, Iran, Turkey and Pakistan. What holds these texts together is that all were written by Middle Easterners rather than by the westerners whose views of the Middle East have, for far too long, defined the region to the rest of the world. The book's three chronological sections are further divided by the different areas that comprise the Middle East. For each section, Aslan provides historical context that will help readers who are new to these authors to understand the importance of their literary works. The individual pieces in *Tablet and Pen* are often beautiful and moving; taken together, the collection offers a strong sense of the Middle East as its own writers know it. —JULIE WEISS



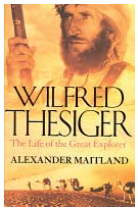
Traveling the World for National Geographic: Photographs and Stories by Tom & Lynn Abercrombie. Thomas J. and Lynn B. Abercrombie. 2011, Birch Landing Press, 978-0-98310-850-4, $60 hb.

Tom Abercrombie and his wife Lynn describe places as far apart as the Middle East, the South Pole and Japan in this magnificent picture-story portfolio encompassing four decades of work—from the mid-1950's to the '90's—around the globe. The longest chapter, The Arab Empire, covers territory from Morocco to Saudi Arabia and beyond. Tom, now deceased, was a photographer and a writer for *National Geographic*, and Lynn, an accomplished freelance photographer. She and her daughter Mari crafted this book, which presents top-of-the-line travel photojournalism that required plenty of guts as well as skill. As a photojournalist myself, operating during the same decades and often in the same places as the Abercrombies, I find that what's here remains unsurpassed, regardless of the fine multi-megapixels cameras appearing every day. You can't measure soul in pixels! —TOR EIGELAND



What I Believe. Tariq Ramadan. 2009, Oxford, 978-0-19538-785-8, $12.95 pb.

Ramadan, a professor of Islamic studies at Oxford University, is known for his progressive approach to Islam, both as a scholar and as a practicing Muslim. Admired by many and reviled by some, Ramadan desires, in this short book, to rebut what he sees as distortions and unfair critiques of his theories and views. He advocates a modern approach to interpretation, updating historical methodologies, but he takes pains to point out that this does not mean he disregards the classical. His views on the Israel–Palestine conflict and the treatment of Muslim women are refreshingly free of acrimony. Ramadan's core belief is that one can be both a citizen of the West and a Muslim. Many will appreciate this quick summary of his views, which—despite criticism—are surprisingly free of bitterness or hurt. —ASMA HASAN

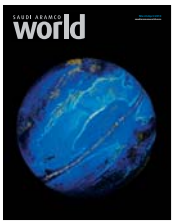


Wilfred Thesiger: The Life of the Great Explorer. Alexander Maitland. 2011, Overlook, 978-1-59020-163-3, $37.95 hb.

For his satires, Evelyn Waugh used as unwitting models real-life British aristocrats in the Foreign and Colonial services, including His Majesty's feckless minister in Addis Ababa and his son, Wilfred Thesiger. The son seems to have spent many of his 93 years seeking to avenge the satirist's portrait of his family. Maitland's book is crammed with details of the everyday lives of Thesiger and, apparently, everyone who was ever close to him. He informs us that the dauntless explorer and author of *Arabian Sands* (describing his crossings of the waterless Rub' al-Khali in the 1940's) was a person of extremes: a daredevil traveler and a mama's boy; the epitome of clubbable London who in the bush became a sadistic destroyer of endangered animals; a self-righteous anti-Nazi who carried out medical experiments on humans of supposedly inferior genealogy; and a racist imperialist who adopted as a sort of hobby, like stamp-collecting but more outdoorsy, the "preservation" of this or that tribe or folkway. —JOSEPH P. DUGGAN

Classroom Guide

WRITTEN BY JULIE WEISS



FOR STUDENTS

We hope this two-page guide will help sharpen your reading skills and deepen your understanding of this issue's articles.

FOR TEACHERS

We encourage reproduction and adaptation of these ideas, freely and without further permission from *Saudi Aramco World*, by teachers at any level, whether working in a classroom or through home study.

—THE EDITORS

Curriculum Alignments

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

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

CLASS ACTIVITIES

This Classroom Guide is divided into two sets of activities. The first set, based on "Bijapur: Gem of the Deccan," has students exploring what constitutes evidence that can be used to tell a story about a place and the people who lived there. The second set, based on "The Rålamb Mission," has students practicing the kinds of reading comprehension skills identified in the Common Core Standards. And if you're in a hurry, there's a 15-minute activity about metaphors, based on "The Celestial Stone."

Theme: Evidence

When you read history textbooks, you're reading stories that someone has written about the past. But what do the writers use to figure out what the story will be? They gather things to use as evidence. Evidence can take many forms, as you'll see when you read "Bijapur."

Location as Evidence

Start thinking about Bijapur by studying the map on page 5. Search for it on-line, too. With a small group, talk about what you notice about where Bijapur is located. Then do a little more research to find out more about Bijapur's location: For example, what are the physical characteristics of the place, such as the landforms and climate? What about the people who have lived there at different times? See if you can find a historical map that shows Bijapur and its surroundings during the time period that the article considers—the late 1400's to mid-1600's. Based on what you've found, what would you predict about Bijapur and its people? In other words, think about Bijapur's location as a piece of evidence that may reveal something to you about the place and the people who lived there in the past.

Then read the first two pages of Louis Werner's article. What does Werner say about Bijapur's location? What does he suggest that the location tells you about the city, its people and its past? Write one or two sentences about what you might be able to learn about Bijapur from its location. (Hint: Bijapur exists at a boundary.) What is on either side of the boundary? Think about places you know about that are on boundaries. How is a city, for example, affected when it is located on a boundary? If you need a prompt, look at an example from the United States: El Paso, Texas.

Time Period as Context

Just as there are physical boundaries, you can think about drawing boundaries around time periods, too. Like physical boundaries, these kinds of boundaries mark the edges of an era—a chunk of time that for some reason you will look at as one piece. In this article, on what time period does Werner focus? Why does it start and end when it does? For the purposes of thinking about evidence, why is it important to know the historical boundaries within which you will gather evidence?

Visual Art and Music as Evidence

Now that you're situated in time and space, let's get back to evidence. Continue reading the article. Underline the main points that Werner makes about music and art during the reigns of Ali I and Ibrahim II. Reread what you've underlined, and answer these questions with your group: What does Werner use the music and art as evidence of? How do the music and art support the major point that he is making about Bijapur?

Buildings and Monuments as Evidence

Now turn your attention to Bijapur's buildings and monuments. The article addresses four aspects of the buildings and monuments that provide evidence about Bijapur's past:

1. the material that the buildings and monuments are made of,
2. the decorative touches,
3. the design of the buildings and their settings, and
4. the location of the buildings and monuments relative to other parts of the city.

Using these four topics as a guide, read about the buildings and monuments. As you did with art, underline the main points about them. (You might want to use a different color.) If it's helpful to clarify your understanding, make four headings—one for each of the four aspects—and list examples under each heading.

Once again, the historical context is an important part of understanding the buildings and monuments. What does the article

say about when different structures were built? What stories does it recount about the reasons for building them? Why is it useful to know this information?

In Conclusion…

One way to put together what you have learned is to reflect on it before you move on to something else. Write a paragraph that summarizes what you have learned about context and evidence in these activities. Then pause and think about how this learning can apply to your own life. Try looking at a building or monument in your town or city, for example, as a piece of evidence. What does it tell you about your community? About its past? About its people and what they value? Or you might use a work or art or music and answer the same questions. Write your analysis (it can be as brief as a paragraph) and present it to the class. See if other students have analyzed objects and/or artwork and come to similar conclusions about where you live. As a class, discuss this question: If we were to write a magazine article about our town or city, what would we say about it, and what evidence would we use to support our conclusion?

If you only have 15 minutes…

Use "The Celestial Stone" as a stepping-stone (pun intended) to think about metaphors. Read the article and identify the two major types of metaphors that people have used when describing lapis lazuli. According to the article—and by looking at the pictures that accompany it—why do these metaphors come up over and over again? What is it about lapis that inspires them? Then try it yourself: Choose an object or a color that you will describe. Using the lapis metaphors as a model, what metaphor(s) can you use to help describe it? Yours should create a deep and emotionally stirring description of whatever it is you are describing.

Theme: Reading for Understanding

When you read the first paragraph of "The Rålamb Mission," you can see that it promises to be intriguing—and complicated. Reading complicated texts can be rewarding—if you read mysteries, you know that complication is all part of what makes it interesting. It can also be, well, confusing. How can you keep track of all that interesting stuff? That's what you'll be doing in these activities—trying out different ways to keep track of an article that's well worth the trouble!

Start by reading the whole article once. Use whatever reading strategies you usually use to help you keep track of what you're reading. For example, if you usually underline important parts, do that. If you usually take notes, do that. If you don't usually do anything, do nothing. When you're done, turn to the person sitting next to you, and have each person take a turn telling the other what you remember from the article.

How did it go?

Right. Now let's see how you can add to that.

Getting Oriented: Time and Space

As you did with the article about Bijapur, start by figuring out when and where the article takes place. Make a timeline. Start when the first action in the article took place and end when the story ends. Then go through the article and fill in the various happenings that the article describes. This will help you have a sense of the order in which things happened, which is essential if you're going to understand the intrigue. Then, when you've got the timing down, use the map on page 21 to get situated in space. Plot on the map as many of the activities on your timeline as you can.

Getting Oriented: Who's Who

Another aspect of understanding the story fully is to know who the players are. In this case, the players are both individuals and countries. Go through the article and highlight or list the significant cast members in this real-life drama. Now, how are you going to keep straight who's allied with whom, who seeks alliances with whom, and who's fighting—or going to fight—whom? Here are a couple of suggestions:

- Some people keep it straight by making a graphic organizer. They create a visual image that represents how the players are connected to each other. Try doing that, working with a partner, if you want. After you've created the visual, talk with your partner or write down the reasons why the different players were aligned the way they were.
- Other people learn by doing. Try that, too. For that, you'll need a larger group, where a person (or people) represent each of the key players. Arrange them in the room in a way that shows the connections among them. You might want to put tape on the floor to mark territories, and have people use string or yarn to show the connections among them.
- How else might someone organize their thinking to follow this story? If you've got another idea, try it out with the class.

Drawing Conclusions

Finally, think about how the story concludes: Author Jonathan Stubbs suggests that although Claes Rålamb's mission looks, on the surface, like a failure, some evidence suggests that it actually succeeded. Thinking about evidence—as you did with the first set of activities—what evidence points toward success? Discuss whether or not you are persuaded.

Now bring it back to your own experience. Have you ever done something that looked like a failure at first glance, but on deeper reflection actually marked a success? Here's an example. Suppose you wrote a paper that got a low grade. (This is completely hypothetical, of course.) That certainly looks less than successful at first. But suppose that in that paper, you figured out something you really wanted to understand, and that has changed the way you think about something. In other words, you got something very important out of doing the paper, regardless of the grade you received. Maybe you would call the paper a success. Now think of your own example. Write about it in a journal entry that you need not share with anyone. It's just a chance to reflect on the meaning of success.

"You could almost say that the Cyrus Cylinder is a history of the Middle East in one object, creating a link to a past that we all share and to a key moment in history that has shaped the world around us," says Neil MacGregor, director of the British Museum, where the cylinder resides. "Objects are uniquely able to speak across time and space, and this object must be shared as widely as possible."

The Cyrus Cylinder and Ancient Persia: *A New Beginning*

focuses on a document sometimes referred to as the first "bill of rights," a football-sized, barrel-shaped clay object, less than nine inches long and covered in Babylonian cuneiform, that dates to the Persian king Cyrus the Great's conquest of Babylon in the sixth century BCE. Almost 2600 years later, its remarkable legacy continues to shape contemporary political debates, cultural rhetoric and philosophy. The text on the cylinder announces Cyrus's intention to allow freedom of worship to his new subjects. His legacy as a leader inspired rulers for millennia, from Alexander the Great to Thomas Jefferson, and the cylinder itself was used as a symbol of religious freedom and the hope for peace in the Middle East. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, **Washington, D.C.,** March 9 through April 28; Museum of Fine Arts, **Houston,** May 3 through June 14; Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York,** June 20 through August 4; Asian Art Museum, **San Francisco,** August 9 through September 22; Getty Museum, **Los Angeles,** October 2 through December 2.

Current **March**

The Sultan's Garden: *The Blossoming of Ottoman Art* chronicles how stylized tulips, carnations, hyacinths, honeysuckle, roses and rosebuds came to embellish nearly all media produced by the Ottoman court beginning in the mid-16th century. These instantly recognizable elements became the brand of an empire that spanned seven centuries and, at its height, three continents, and was synonymous with its power. Incredibly, this revolution in style can be traced to one man, Kara Memi, working in the royal design workshop of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent (r. 1520–1566). His nature-inspired blossoms, exquisitely painted and colored, immediately gained popularity across a broad range of media, carrying connotations of Ottoman court patronage, luxury and high taste. The floral style, reinforced by the 18th-century Tulip Period, continues to embody Turkish culture: Turkey's tourism bureau today markets the nation with a tulip logo. The exhibition unveils the story of this artist's influence and traces the continuing impact of Ottoman floral style through the textile arts—some of the most luxurious and technically complex productions of the empire. Textile Museum, **Washington, D.C.,** through March 10.

Heritage of Art Diplomacy: *Memoirs of an Ambassador* displays four 17th-century paintings commissioned by the Habsburg ambassador to Constantinople after his term there, as well as 12 gouache works from an Austrian collection that were the original inspiration for them. The exhibition also provides an in-depth look at the restoration of the paintings by the museum. Museum of Islamic Art, **Doha, Qatar,** through March 18.

World Eco Fiber & Textile (WEFT) Art explores the three-dimensionality of textile art through installations and sculptural constructions, exhibiting contemporary textile artists from more than 35 countries who are taking fiber sculpture into new areas. The exhibition gives an insight into these current trends, showing how textile art can be considered as fine art. Exhibits include woven leather, hand-painted silk, CAD double ikat, silk Pua Kumbu warp ikat, Kalaga embroidery, nettle weaving, tapestry weaves, batik painting on ikat, hand block printing, bark cloth paintings, natural-dye hand-woven kilims, felt tapestries, appliqué hemp patchwork, suzani with Bokhara couched embroidery, pineapple-fiber weavings and more. Brunei Gallery, SOAS, **London,** through March 23.

The Abu Dhabi Festival, in its tenth annual edition, presents a calendar of classical music, theater and performing arts, jazz, ballet and visual art. Performers appearing include Plácido Domingo, the Mariinsky Ballet, Joshua Bell, the Czech Philharmonic, Gilberto Gil, and Bryn Terfel and Bechara El Khoury. Emirates Palace Auditorium, **Abu Dhabi,** through March 31.

Current **April**

Huma Bhabha: *Unnatural Histories* presents the Pakistani–American artist's grotesque, neo-primitive found-object sculptures and photo-based drawings, which often feature bodies that appear dissected or dismembered but which can also be viewed as homages to human life reclaimed, if barely, from post-apocalyptic rubble. Using materials like Styrofoam, animal bones and clay, Bhabha creates figures that—though they feel unstable and ephemeral—nevertheless recall classical figurative traditions across a range of cultures and historical periods, MoMA PS1, **Long Island City,** New York, through April 1.

Light from the Middle East: *New Photography* features 30 photographers from 30 different countries offering creative and thought-provoking responses to the major social and political issues that have affected the Middle East over the past 20 years. The exhibition covers a wide range of techniques and subject matter, from photojournalism to staged and digitally manipulated imagery,

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presenting multiple viewpoints of a region where collisions between personal, social, religious and political life can be emotive and complex. Victoria and Albert Museum, **London,** through April 7.

Walid Raad: *Preface to the First Edition* is the first result of a three-year collaboration between the Lebanese-born New York artist and the Louvre. Raad presents a visual and narrative reflection on the future of the "universal museum," a concept developed in the late 18th century. Shadows, reflections, interstices and optical mystery highlight the poetic nature of his work. Musée du Louvre, **Paris,** through April 8.

Nadim Karam: *Shooting the Cloud* comprises a series of new paintings by the acclaimed Lebanese artist and architect, rich in color and presenting a playful, almost satirical, perception of love and war. These will be shown alongside editions of his iconic steel sculptural works. Ayyam Gallery, **London,** through April 9.

Thukral and Tagra: *A Solo Exhibition* in fact presents a duo: The Indian artists have been working collaboratively since 2004. Their inspiration begins with the reality of old values mixed with their idea of modern time in the culture of Punjab. Art Plural Gallery, **Singapore,** through April 13.

Amarna 2012: *100 Years of Nefertiti,* an extensive special exhibition on the Amarna period, allows Nefertiti's time to be understood within its cultural-historical context. All aspects of this fascinating period are illuminated and explained—not only the period's theology and art, but also everyday life in the city, ancient Akhetaton. Founded by the monotheist Pharaoh Akhenaton (Amenhotep IV) to establish a new capital with places of worship for his own "religion of light," the city was built within three years and populated in the year 1343 BCE. At the beginning of the 20th century, extremely successful excavations took place there under the direction of Ludwig Borchardt, and the finds were shared between Cairo and Berlin. The exhibition illuminates the context of the discovery of the bust of Nefertiti in the workshop of the Egyptian sculptor Thutmose, along with numerous related objects, including even the pigments and tools used by the sculptors. Along with the exhibition's main focus on archeology, it also critically examines the history of the depiction of the bust of Nefertiti both as an archeological object and as a widely marketed ideal of beauty. Visitors can experience the Amarna period as a social, cultural-historical and religious phenomenon. Neues Museum, **Berlin,** through April 13.

Maliheh Afnan: *Speak Memory.* In these paintings, calligraphic elements emerge from deep earth-colored surfaces that have been built up layer by layer like palimpsests. Afnan writes her paintings. Her inspiration flows from her Middle Eastern roots, her deep attachment to the tradition of calligraphy and her knowledge of the ancient languages of the region. Her lines appear in single formations, in clusters or in ordered configurations, in a script seemingly written by time itself. The signs, gestures, and repetitive movements of micro-calligraphic marks contain great expressive energy. Each line, each mark, has a value, a meaning within the total image. Composed in fluent rhythms, Afnan's scriptural structures seem to illuminate unspoken poems. "Script, in its essence, is abstract," the artist says. "I don't turn it into an abstract, it *is* abstract. Written in the Persian or Arab language, calligraphy has been a very highly developed art form... But this writing had always to be readable. I was never interested in the literal meaning of the text." Rose Issa Projects, **London,** through April 18.

Little Syria, New York: *An Immigrant Community's Life and Legacy* documents the rich history of New York's first Arab–American community. From the late 19th century through the mid-20th century, an area of Manhattan's Lower West Side was the home of a vibrant and productive community of Arab–Americans. Dubbed the "heart of New York's Arab world" by *The New York Times,* the Washington Street neighborhood was where many participants in the first wave of Arab immigration to the United States got their start. Their experiences, all but lost to living memory, parallel those of other immigrant groups of the Great Migration period. Arab American National Museum, **Dearborn, Michigan,** through April 21; 3LD Art + Technology Center, **New York,** May 4–26; Immigration History Research Center, Andersen Library, University of **Minnesota, Minneapolis,** Fall.

Prix Pictet: *Power.* One of the major awards in photography today, the Prix Pictet considers social and environmental challenges, and its present cycle focuses on the concept of power, which can lead to disaster and despair, or can generate hope and renewal. The exhibition displays the struggle between humans and nature, social power conflicts and the dichotomies of power in the modern world. Award finalists' work is on display. **Istanbul** Modern, through April 23.

The Thousand and One Nights, one of the masterpieces of world literature, is also an exceptionally strong cultural link between East and West, and this exhibition of some 300 works of art brings visitors as close as possible to the personality of Sheherazade. Beginning with the tales' Indo–Persian origins and carrying them through their manifestation as ninth-century Arab tales, the exhibition includes some of the oldest known manuscripts, culminating in their translation into European languages, of which the first was French. Other exhibits demonstrate that all the arts—theater, fashion, music, film, painting, opera, photography and literature—have embraced these tales as rich sources of materials, and their characters—Harun al-Rashid, Shahriyar, Aladdin, Sindbad and Sheherazade herself—live on in modern-day forms, from graphic novels to the Internet. Institut du Monde Arabe, **Paris,** through April 28.

Love and Devotion: *From Persia and Beyond* celebrates the beauty of Persian manuscripts and the stories of human and divine love they tell, featuring more than 60 rare Persian, Mughal Indian and Ottoman Turkish illustrated manuscripts from the 13th to the 18th century, as well as related editions of European literature, travel books and maps. These works come from one of the richest periods in the history of the book and shed light on the artistic and literary culture of Persia, showcasing classic Persian tales and revealing the extent to which Persian language and culture influenced neighboring empires, as well as parallels in the work of European writers dating back to Shakespeare, Chaucer and Dante. Bodleian Libraries, **Oxford** [UK], through April 28.

The Antikythera Shipwreck: *The Ship, the Treasures, the Mechanism* presents the objects recovered in 1900–1901 and 1976 from the legendary shipwreck off the islet of Antikythera, the focus of the first major underwater archeological expedition. The wreck dates from 60 to 50 BCE, though items in its cargo go back to the fourth century BCE. The luxury glassware, the statue of Hermes and other items shed light on trade in the eastern Mediterranean and the taste of the rising Roman elite near the end of the Hellenistic Era and Rome's democratic period. Most exciting, however, is the so-called Antikythera Mechanism, a device that comprised at least 30 gearwheels as well as dials, scales, axles and pointers. It is the earliest preserved portable astronomical calculator, and displayed the positions of the Sun, the Moon and most probably the five planets known in antiquity. Used to predict solar and lunar eclipses, it showed an accurate multi-year calendar and displayed the dates of the recurring Pan-Hellenic games that took place at Nemea, at Isthmia, at Delphi, at Dodona and at Olympia. National Archaeological Museum, **Athens,** through April 28.

Radical Terrain: *Modernist Art From India* is the last exhibition of three that examine art from post-Independence India. It highlights the diverse explorations of landscape, showing how landscape painting was a means for artists to come to terms with the vastness of India as a new nation. Also featured is new work by international contemporary artists working in landscape. Rubin Museum of Art, **New York,** through April 29.

Disappearing Heritage of Sudan, 1820–1956: *Photographic and Filmic Exploration in Sudan* documents the remnants of the colonial experience in Sudan from the Ottoman, Egyptian and British periods. This photographic and video project by Frederique Cifuentes explores the mechanics of empire, highlighting colonial architecture, design and construction—official buildings, private residences, cinema houses, railways, irrigation canals and bridges—and the impact they had on Sudanese society before and after independence in 1956. It also helps us understand the ways in which people appropriated and used the buildings after the end of the colonial period. Oriental Museum, **Durham [UK]** University, through April 30; University of **Khartoum, Sudan,** June through December 2013.

Current **May**

Modernity? *Perspectives From France and Turkey* explores the effects of modernity on contemporary art. Works in the exhibition focus on the dynamics of modern life, considered critically and as an endless opportunity for research by visual artists, reminding us how the remnants of modernity, which constantly reappear in various guises, have seeped into our lives in today's directionless world. Featuring artists from Turkey and France—the country that was the role model for Turkey's own modernization—the exhibition opens the question how modernity's remains can transform the present and the future. **Istanbul** Modern, through May 16.

Beauty and Belief: *Crossing Bridges With the Arts of Islamic Culture* aims to bridge differences and inspire insight through beauty, and address the question, "What makes Islamic art Islamic?" Tunisian-born project director Sabiha Al Khemir has assembled more than 250 works from 40 lenders in the US and nine other countries, including unique manuscripts from the Royal Library in Morocco. The exhibition represents a journey through Islamic culture from the seventh century onward, combining historical and geographic background with successive sections on calligraphy, figurative imagery and pattern, but it makes a point of touching on the present day, also including works by contemporary artists. **Newark [New Jersey]** Museum, through May 19; **Portland [Oregon]** Art Museum, June 15 through September 8.

Threshold to the Sacred: *The Ark Door of Cairo's Ben Ezra Synagogue* focuses on a work of exceptional historical importance: an intricately decorated and inscribed wood panel believed to come from the Ben Ezra Synagogue of Old Cairo (Fustat), which has captured public imagination for more than a century. Walters Art Museum, **Baltimore,** through May 26.

Beyond the Chador: *Dress From the Mountains and Deserts of Iran* offers the surprise of diversity, bright colors and a multitude of shapes that contradict the perception of Iranian clothing as being dull and uniform. The country's complex geography, climate and human history are reflected in a wide diversity of cultures and traditions. Although rapidly vanishing in some area, many aspects of these traditions can still be found in Iranian regional dress, especially that worn by women. Most of the outfits in the exhibition date from the late 19th and 20th centuries and were collected between 1998 and 2003. Textile Research Centre, **Leiden,** The Netherlands, through May 30.

Current **June**

In Harmony: *The Norma Jean Calderwood Collection of Islamic Art* showcases some 150 works ranging in date from the first millennium BCE to the mid-20th century, including luxury glazed ceramics from the early Islamic era and illustrated manuscripts of medieval epic poems, including the Shahnama. The exhibition is organized chronologically, beginning with earthenware from the 9th and 10th centuries, and closing with lacquerware from the 19th and early 20th centuries. Interspersed are several thematic clusters, as well as groupings of folios from four illustrated manuscripts that Mrs. Calderwood endeavored to reassemble when they were dispersed on the art market. The exhibition marks the first time the museum is offering augmented reality technology: After downloading an app, visitors can point their device at one of six designated objects in the gallery, and additional content will appear. Content may include photomicrographs from the object's conservation treatment, comparative images in other collections or video showing the recreation of a vessel's construction. Sackler Museum, **Cambridge, Massachusetts,** through June 1.

Beyond the Surface: *Scientific Approaches to Islamic Metalwork* examines key examples of Islamic and pre-Islamic metalwork from the fourth through 14th centuries to investigate the ways that craftsmen adapted the technological and stylistic legacies of Roman, Byzantine and Sasanian precursors. Photomicrographs and x-radiographs illuminate the composition of the exhibits, two major manufacturing technologies (casting and sheet metalworking) and techniques of decoration. Sackler Museum, **Cambridge, Massachusetts,** through June 1.

The Sahmat Collective: *Art and Activism in India since 1989* introduces the vital work of Sahmat, a Delhi-based collective. Animated by the urgent belief that art can propel change and that culture can reach across boundaries, Sahmat has offered a platform for an expansive group of artists and collaborators to present works of art that defend freedom of expression and battle intolerance within India's often divisive political landscape. Smart Museum of Art, **Chicago,** through June 9.

Images of the Afterlife brings two Egyptian mummies from the museum's collections face-to-face with the public. Recent CT scans and the latest 3-D imaging have revealed the mummies' secrets and enabled an artist to create realistic sculptures portraying how these two individuals looked in life, thousands of years ago. No longer merely mummies #30007 and #11517, they are now recognizable as a woman in her 40's and a teenaged boy named Minirdis. Field Museum, **Chicago,** through June 9.

Eye Level in Iraq: *Photographs by Kael Alford and Thorne Anderson* presents photographs by two American-trained photojournalists who documented the impact and aftermath of the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. They made the photographs during a two-year span that began in the months leading up to the allied invasion in spring 2003 and covers the emergence of the armed militias that challenged the allied forces and later the new central Iraqi government. Alford and Anderson photographed outside the confines of the military's embedded-journalist program in an attempt to get closer to the daily realities of Iraqi citizens and to learn how the war, and the seismic political and cultural shifts that accompanied it, affected ordinary people. A decade after Baghdad fell, Kael Alford said, "I consider these photographs invitations to the viewer to learn more, to explore the relationships between public-policy objectives and their real-world execution, and to consider the legacies of human grief, anger, mistrust and dismay that surely follow violent conflict. I hope that these images will also open a window on the grace of Iraq and perhaps help to give a few of these memories a place to rest." De Young Museum, **San Francisco,** through June 16.

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Unveiling Femininity in Indian Painting and Photography considers

the depiction of women in Indian court paintings and photographs from the 17th to the 19th century. Women are often depicted as archetypes from Indian literature and poetry—the devoted heroine awaiting the return of her lover, or the *ragini,* a personification of classical musical modes. Other paintings offer a rare view into the *zenana*, where court ladies lived in seclusion, showing them unveiled and enjoying music, poetry, dance and food. The allure of Indian femininity—and of the "exotic other"—continued into the colonial period, when photographic portraits were made of dancers or courtesans. **Los Angeles** County Art Museum, through July 28.

This idealized portrait of the Mughal empress Nur Jahan (1577–1645) was painted in watercolor and gold nearly a hundred years after her death, and shows her bejeweled and serene, an epitome of elegant femininity.

Tradition and Continuity: *Woven and Decorated Textiles of the Malay Peninsula* showcases more than 50 objects that delineate the beauty and importance of traditional Malay textiles and costume. A section of contemporary textile masterpieces will also be on display, and a special section of the exhibition shows how the traditional textiles' esthetics have inspired designers at the Prince's School of Traditional Design in London. Islamic Arts Museum **Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur,** through June 30.

Current **July**

Living Shrines of Uyghur China: *Photographs by Lisa Ross* presents images of the vibrant manmade shrines that dot the breathtaking natural landscape of rural Uighur China. Twenty-three large images and two short videos offer a rare look into a region on the verge of modernization, capturing much of the cultural blending that is indicative at once of the region's historic diversity and the impending modernization that threatens its holy sites. Rubin Museum of Art, **New York,** through July 8.

Resplendent Dress From Southeastern Europe: *A History in Layers* presents 57 beautiful 19th- to 20th-century women's clothing ensembles from Macedonia, Croatia, Albania, Montenegro and neighboring countries—all formerly parts of the Ottoman Empire—and more than 100 additional individual items such as vests, aprons and jewelry. These colorful and intensively worked garments were often adorned with embroidery, lace, metal threads, coins, sequins, beads and—most important—fringe, which has been a marker of virginity in women's dress for more than 20,000 years. By 1900, a southeast European village woman's clothing and its historically accreted layers could be read at a glance, informing the viewer of her marital status, religion, wealth, textile skills and more—all part of her suitability as a bride. Fowler Museum at UCLA, **Los Angeles,** through July 14.

New Blue and White. From East Asia through the Persian and Arab lands and finally to Europe and the Americas, blue and white porcelain was a cultural marker of certain times and places, and is now one of the most recognized types of ceramic production worldwide. Today's artists refer to those markers and continue the story, creating works that speak to contemporary ideas and issues, and working not only in ceramics but in glass, fiber and furniture. Museum of Fine Arts, **Boston,** through July 14.

Darling Hair: *Frivolity and Trophies* uses the hairdo and hair undone to explore intimacy, social signaling and self-definition. Hair is socially significant in almost every culture, whether hidden or displayed, often linked with intimacy, decency and sexuality, sometimes symbolizing masculine strength, sometimes femininity. Highly constructed, shaved off, colored, covered with ashes or clay, hair can have ceremonial functions and can express individuality or group adherence. The exhibition begins with rivalry among blond, dark or red hair and among straight, curly and frizzy, drawing on a wide range of classical paintings, sculptures and photographs; it continues through the notion of hair as a human raw material, and closes with hair as a symbol of loss, of the passing of time, and of illness and death. Musée du Quai Branly, **Paris,** through July 14.

A Cheque Stencil Une Revolution is titled after a quotation from Yasser Arafat, referring to the power of carbon paper as a duplication technology that was central to the abilities of political groups of earlier generations to disseminate information and opinions. Moroccan-born artist Latifah Echakhch pays homage to the uprisings of the '60's and '70's, but her work also rings with melancholy as it links abstract art with politics. Hammer Gallery, UCLA, L**os Angeles,** through July 18.

Cairo to Constantinople: *Early Photographs of the Middle East*. In 1862, the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII) was sent on a four-month educational tour of the Middle East, accompanied by the British photographer Francis Bedford. This exhibition documents his journey through the work of Bedford, the first photographer to travel on a royal tour. It explores the cultural and political significance Victorian Britain attached to the region, which was then as complex and contested as it remains today. The tour took the Prince to Egypt, Palestine and the Holy Land, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey and Greece. He met rulers, politicians and other notable figures, and traveled in part on horseback, camping in tents. On the royal party's return to England, Francis Bedford's work was displayed in what was described as "the most important photographic exhibition that has hitherto been placed before the public." Queen's Gallery, Palace of Holyroodhouse, **Edinburgh,** through July 21.

Alia Syed: *Eating Grass* comprises five overlapping narratives, filmed in Karachi, Lahore and London, each representing different emotional states experienced throughout the day that correspond to the five daily prayers of Islam. The film captures the ebb and flow of urban dwellers as they move between bustling streets and quiet interior spaces. A soundtrack that includes Syed's prose, in English and Urdu, adds a further narrative dimension. **Los Angeles** County Museum of Art, through July 28.

Current **August**

Objects From the Kharga Oasis, where the museum excavated for 30 years, includes late Roman and Byzantine textiles, ceramics and grave goods from an intact tomb. Kharga and the neighboring

LACMA

Dakhla Oasis have yielded evidence of human habitation in the Middle Paleolithic (300,000 to 30,000 years ago) and close contacts with the Nile Valley as far back as the Old Kingdom (2649–2150 BCE). Vital to Egypt's trading network, the oasis towns were access points for Saharan and sub-Saharan trade, as well as producing numerous crops and manufactured goods—ceramics and glassware—for export to the Nile Valley. Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York,** through August 4.

Trading Style: *An International Fashion Dialogue* presents the results of the cross-fertilization of more than 500 historical ethnographic objects, photographs and films from the museum's collection with such modern-day fashion labels as Buki Akib (Nigeria), A Kind of Guise (Germany), CassettePlaya (UK) and P.A.M./Parks and Mini (Australia). Working in the museum, each designer investigated ethnographic artifacts and then created new prototype garments inspired by them. Weltkulturen Museum, **Frankfurt/Main,** through August 31.

Coming **March**

Life and Death in Pompeii and Herculaneum. The two cities on the Bay of Naples, in southern Italy, were buried in just 24 hours by a catastrophic volcanic eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 CE. This event ended the life of the cities but also preserved them until their rediscovery by archeologists nearly 1700 years later. Herculaneum was a small seaside town, Pompeii the industrial hub of the region. Work continues at both sites, and recently uncovered artifacts include such treasures as finely sculpted marble reliefs and intricately carved ivory panels. The exhibition gives visitors a taste of the cities' daily life, from the commerce of the bustling street to the domesticity of the family home, and explores the lives of individuals in Roman society—businessmen, powerful women, freed slaves and children. Thus a beautiful wall painting from Pompeii shows the baker Terentius Neo and his wife holding writing materials to show they are literate and cultured and posed to suggest they are equal partners. Other evocative items include six pieces of carbonized wooden furniture, among them a linen chest and a baby's crib that still rocks on its curved runners. British Museum, **London,** March 28 through September 29.

Coming **April**

Making the Invisible Visible: *Conservation and Islamic Art.* Conservators and conservation scholars made many exciting and interesting discoveries as they and the curators re-examined the museum's collection of Islamic art in preparation for the reopening of the new galleries in November 2011. This exhibition traces their investigative journey with a range of works of art, providing new perspectives for appreciating this extraordinary collection. Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York,** April 2 through August 4.

The Philippines: *Archipelago of Exchange.* The Philippines archipelago includes more than 7000 islands extending over nearly 7000 kilometers; its geographical and historical situation has resulted in extensive and varied artistic expression of a dual nature: One artistic vision is turned toward the mountains, the other toward the sea, and they are linked by the concept of exchange—symbolic or commercial—that creates relationships between donors and recipients, whether they are individuals or groups, real or divine. The exhibition includes more than 300 works of art. Musée du Quai Branly, **Paris,** April 9 through July 24.

Birth of a Museum displays recent acquisitions intended for display at the forthcoming Louvre Abu Dhabi Museum on Saadiyat Island, ranging from antiquities to paintings to historic photographs, including the oldest photograph known of a veiled woman, a daguerreotype by Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey. Musée du Louvre, **Paris,** April.

Imran Qureshi will inaugurate a new exhibition space in Berlin with a major solo show. The artist, one of the most important figures on the Pakistani art scene, teaches at the National College of Art in Lahore. In his paintings and installations, he combines the centuries-old Islamic art form of miniature painting with conceptual approaches and elements of contemporary abstract painting. Deutsche Bank Kunsthalle, **Berlin,** April.

Coming **June**

Sky Spotting Stop is a temporary site-specific installation that shades the courtyard of the museum while floating gently on the hidden waters of the Bosporus and projecting its host space upon the city. Thanks to this ephemeral, lively addition, part of the museum's Young Architects Program, the courtyard will become part of the skyline. On the ground, a changing landscape, made of mobile recycled elements, transforms the courtyard into a new stop in the city for special events aimed at young people, for sitting, resting, gathering, playing or "sky-spotting." **Istanbul** Modern, June 1 through September.

Coming **August**

Count Your Blessings exhibits more than 70 sets of long and short strings of prayer beads from various Asian cultures, many with flourishes, counters, attachments or tassels. Some are made of precious or semiprecious stones, others of seeds, carved wood, ivory or bone. Collectively, they reveal sophisticated and complex arrangements and structures based on symbolic meanings. Rubin Museum of Art, **New York,** August 2 through March 24.

PERMANENT / INDEFINITE

Greenbox Museum of Contemporary Art From Saudi Arabia is a small private collection exhibiting works by artists living and working in Saudi Arabia, including Ahmed Mater, Abdulnasser Gharem, Maha Malluh, Reem Al Faisal, Lulwah Al-Homoud and Ayman Yossri Daydban. Open Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays, Sunday afternoons and by appointment. Admission €5. Phone 420-92-69 before visiting. Korte Leidsedwarsstraat 12, **Amsterdam.**

Feast Your Eyes: *A Taste for Luxury in Ancient Iran* displays luxury metalwork dating from the first millennium BCE, beginning with the rule of the Achaemenid kings (550–330 BCE), to the early Islamic period, exploring the meaning behind these objects' overarching artistic and technical characteristics. Highly sophisticated Iranian metalwork, especially in gold and silver, was created in an area extending from the Mediterranean to present-day Afghanistan. Favored with an abundance of natural resources, the region became known for works ranging in shape from deep bowls and footed plates to elaborate drinking vessels ending in animal forms, largely associated with court ceremonies and rituals. Others objects, decorated with such royal imagery as hunting or enthronement scenes, were probably intended as gifts to foreign and local dignitaries. Sackler Gallery, **Washington, D.C.**

The New Islamic Art Galleries of the Louvre provide a permanent home for the museum's renowned collection of Islamic art, considered the greatest outside the Islamic world. Over 2500 objects, many never on public display before, are shown in rooms totaling 3000 square meters (32,000 sq ft). The galleries present the entire cultural breadth of the Islamic world, from Spain to India, spanning the seventh to the 19th centuries; their $127-million renovation was financed by the French state, supplemented by donations from a Saudi prince, the King of Morocco, the Emir of Kuwait and the Sultan of Oman. Musée du Louvre, **Paris,** from September 22.

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 eight weeks in advance for possible inclusion in this listing. Some listings have been kindly provided to us by *Canvas,* the art and culture magazine for the Middle East and the Arab world.

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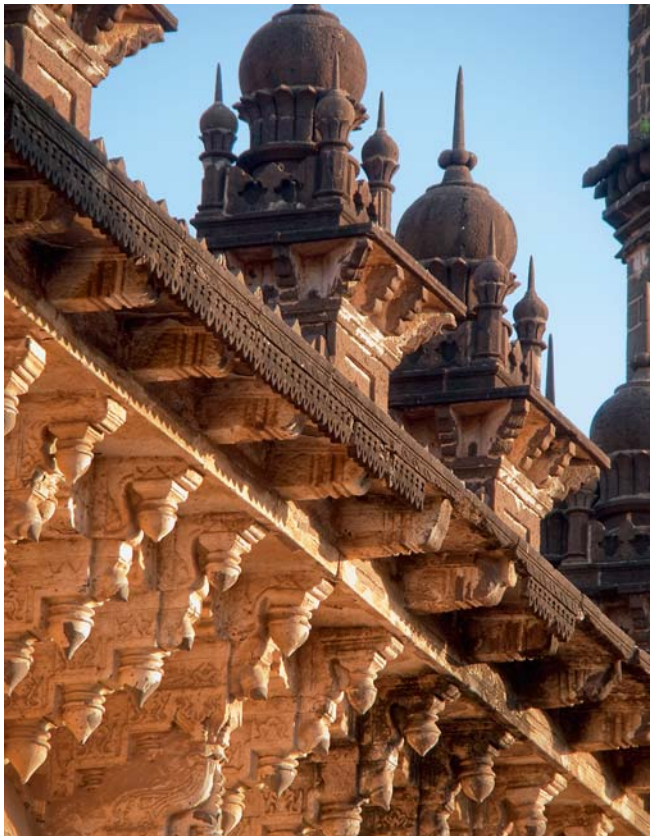

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