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A Heritage Takes Wing





Lured by a falconer into an aerobatic display at the International Falconry Festival, a hybrid saker-gyrfalcon—trained but wild—hints in a photo's moment at the grace and power that imbue the sport of falconry with its own enduring allure. Photo by Rob Palmer.

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**Back Cover**



Honoring Alexander Pushkin's lyrical references to roses in "The Fountain of Bakhchisaray," visitors today often bring a rose blossom to the Fount of Tears, originally built in the 18th century as a "heavenly fountain" or *salsabil*. Photo by Sergey Maximishin.

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



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## The Palace and the Poet

Written by Sheldon Chad

Photographed by  
Sergey Maximishin

In 1821 Russia's beloved poet Alexander Pushkin visited the Islamic palace of the once-powerful Crimean khans. At this fountain where his bust now stands, he found inspiration to put a Crimean legend into verse so moving, and so popular, that it later saved the palace from Soviet bulldozers. To this day, hundreds of thousands visit each year in tribute to his tragic love story: "Each age the mournful mark reveres / And knows it as the Fount of Tears."



## 12 The Other Side of Cork

Written and photographed by Ann Chandler

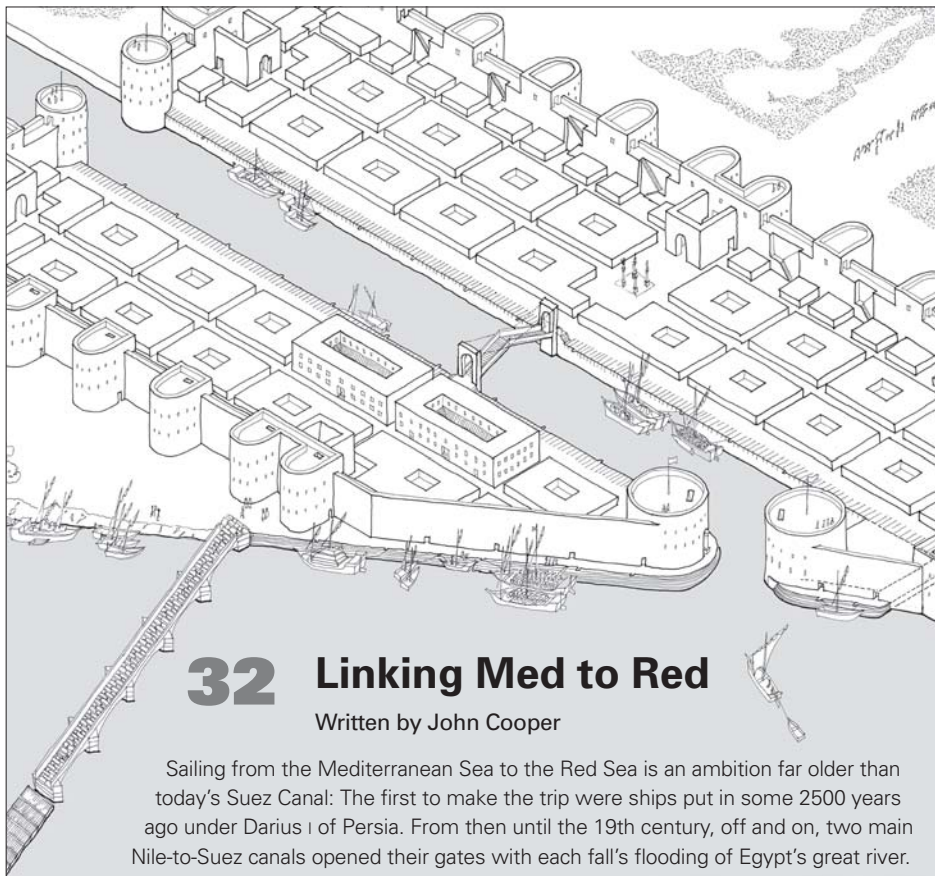
For more than 2000 years, people have hand-harvested cork from the trees that grow in only seven countries on the shores of the western Mediterranean Sea. Today cork's uses vary more than ever, going far beyond stopping bottles, and the challenge of maintaining sustainable cork forests is a regional one.



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Written by Meera Subramanian / Photographed by Tariq Dajani

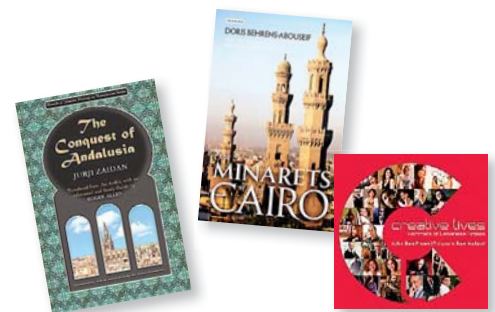
In late 2010, the United Nations recognized falconry as an Intangible Cultural Heritage, and last year, raptor devotees flocked to the International Falconry Festival to celebrate their artful sport—and indeed, their obsession.



## 32 Linking Med to Red

Written by John Cooper

Sailing from the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea is an ambition far older than today's Suez Canal: The first to make the trip were ships put in some 2500 years ago under Darius I of Persia. From then until the 19th century, off and on, two main Nile-to-Suez canals opened their gates with each fall's flooding of Egypt's great river.



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DEPARTED FROM THE NORTH AT LAST,  
HIGH MERRIMENT FOR LONG PUT BY,  
I VISITED BAKHCHISARAY,  
ITS PALACE, SLUMBERING IN THE PAST.

—ALEXANDER S. PUSHKIN, “THE FOUNTAIN OF BAKHCHISARAY”

# THE PALACE AND THE POET

WRITTEN BY SHELDON CHAD  
PHOTOGRAPHED BY SERGEY MAXIMISHIN

At the international airport in St. Petersburg, Russia, a ticket checker waves me toward the distant domestic airport for my flight to Simferopol, even though the Crimean city is in independent Ukraine. “We always considered Crimea part of mother Russia,” she explains. “We still consider it our own.”

Many books have been written about Russia’s geopolitical interest in the strategic Black Sea peninsula of Crimea, dating back to the times of Peter the Great. But it only takes one slim volume of poetry to understand Crimea’s hold on the Russian soul: Alexander Pushkin’s 1824 “The Fountain of Bakhchisaray.” It recounts a romantic legend set in the 500-year-old palace of the Crimean khans—one of only three palaces of Islamic design surviving in Europe today—and it is the source of a national love affair with the locale itself.

Pushkin is regarded as the founder of Russian literature and its greatest lyric poet. Among his works, “The Fountain of Bakhchisaray” not only was one of his most popular poems, but also served as a kind of Russian *One Thousand and One Nights*: a 3500-word verse that recreates the world of the palace’s builders, the vanished Crimean Khanate.

The tale’s allure over these 200 years springs from the story: A love between a soulful conqueror and a captive maid, doomed by a vengeful harem queen. So deeply does his poem resonate that still today, moved largely by Pushkin, some 250,000 people a year come from all over Russia to the palace, primarily to set eyes on the poem’s set-piece—the actual Fountain of Tears, which Pushkin turned into one of the most profound symbols of eternal love in all of literature.

But to today’s descendants of the 800-year-old Crimean Tatar Khanate, Bakhchisaray (pronounced *bah-chih-sah-rye*) means even more, says Yakub Appazov, director of a local museum. The palace, he



Every year, some quarter of a million visitors come to the Fountain of Tears, above. Shortly after its publication in 1824, Pushkin’s poem, left, became a literary touchstone, adapted repeatedly to stage and screen.





explains, “is the heart of the nation, and all that belongs to the nation is Bakhchisaray.” The nameplate on the palace, he adds, reads “Bakhchisaray Palace of the Crimean Khanate” not only in Ukrainian and Russian, but in Crimean Tatar as well.

Since ancient times, successive civilizations in Crimea have tended to erase the traces of their predecessors. This was nearly the fate of both fountain and palace. But they endure because the story of “The Fountain of Tears” moved not only

the Russian people, but also czars, a great empress and the First General Secretary of the Communist Party. If not for Pushkin’s poem, the palace would have been lost.

But now let’s find it.

**F**rom the 16th to the late 18th centuries, the town of Bakhchisaray, whose name means “the palace in the garden,” was the capital of the Crimean Khanate, the state that in 1438 broke away from

the Golden Horde, the alliance of Mongol and Turkish tribes whose empire reached from the Pacific to the Volga River. The Khanate, extending east from the Black Sea to the Caspian–Volga region, was a formidable power, and its line of kings descended from Genghis Khan himself. The founder of the dynasty, Menli I Giray, took the imperial title “Sovereign of Two Continents and Khan of Khans of Two Seas.” Over some 250 years, from 1532 until 1783, the palace at Bakhchisaray was the residence of 48





khans of the Giray dynasty, and the sumptuous complex lived up to its name, with gardens and a life-giving, sustaining and purifying supply of water as the focal point of its design.

But now it's been 235 years since the khans were masters at Bakhchisaray. Over these years, the palace has taken on a Russianized, "Asian Baroque" appearance—"greatly distorted compared to its initial look," admits the palace's former assistant director Oleksa Haiworonski, a devotee of Crimean Tatar history. Moreover, due to a Russian attack in 1736 that destroyed the palace's archives, the palace lacks any ethnographic information on the everyday life of the khans and other inhabitants there, as well as any documents from the period, says Haiworonski.

All of which suits Bakhchisaray better to legend and poetry than history.

*Luxuriance to this day enthralls  
Those vacant pleasures and halls...  
Where now the Khans? The Harem  
where?*

*All now was silent, all was dreary,  
All had been altered ... but not there  
Was what bestirred the spirit's query...*

Today's "Palace in the Garden" is less than one-fourth its original size. The northern gate, above, was once one of two main gates. The Fountain of Tears stood in the domed mausoleum at top left—until it was moved to the main palace just beyond the gate for Catherine I's visit in 1787. Right: This 19th-century lithograph shows the palaces' gardens for women and children.



Inside, the L-shaped Fountain Court's cement walls are barren. Its uneven floors have been smoothed by millions of steps over the centuries. It's shaded and cool, dappled with sunlight from the open door to the harem garden.

The Fountain of Tears itself is tucked into a corner, with a bust of Pushkin alongside. From its grey marble and

floral arabesques, a sequence of nine basins descends.

"Poetically described to me as *la fontaine des larmes* [the fountain of tears], I saw a broken fountain; from a rusty iron pipe water dripped drop by drop," wrote Pushkin to a friend after first seeing the fountain on his visit in 1820. But later, he saw the glint of poetic gold in the image



of the fountain as a desolate eye, weeping endlessly. From 1821 to 1823, he worked on his poem, which was published in March 1824. It became his best-selling poem. Soon afterward, in 1826, he published a shorter, reflexive verse titled “To the Palace of the Fountain of Bakhchisaray.”

Frankly, Pushkin’s prosaic, even shabby, first impression in 1820 is still accurate. American traveler Matt Brown reacted to his first sight of the fountain: “Before I walked in, I read *Lonely Planet* where it described the weeping fountain. You expect to walk into the place and see such a fabulous structure, and it was so disappointing.”

But Russians disagree: Read Pushkin’s poetic rendering, and your reaction may be like those unending lines of tourists who approach the humble-looking fountain with solemnity, open-mouthed curiosity and visible emotion. With trembling hands, a few put in place two white roses, mimicking Pushkin’s hauntingly beautiful gesture from his second poem:

*The stream of love, the stream  
alive,  
I brought to thee two roses, as  
a present.  
I like the ceaseless murmur thy,  
And lyric tears, still and  
pleasant.*

Ludmila Nosoyan is a Moscow fashion designer who tries to visit the fountain once or even twice a year. She remembers first hearing Pushkin in early childhood.



Leaders of the clans and territories united under the khan’s rule met in the “Divan Hall,” below. Its design reflects the layers of palace history: The geometric center panel of the ceiling, left, is typical of the khanate, while the floral border is Russian orientalist.



“It’s a story from the magical world that has nothing to do with the reality of the Orenburg steppe [in Siberia]. Magical people, strange and beautiful clothes—a dreamy story.”

She acknowledges, barely, that the fountain itself is so modest. “While the reality is not so striking, it still keeps that dream intact,” she says. “Here, I’m enchanted in a different time. I see the fountain, I see Zarema, Maria, and Giray. It’s an unfading love story.”

In the story Pushkin tells, the palace was home, long ago, to an “imperial lord of nations,” a khan whom Pushkin names simply Giray. In the inner court was the harem, where only Giray

was permitted entrance. There, Zarema was “the harem’s queen, love’s brightest star”—until the arrival of Maria, an “orphaned princess snatched by arms” from a castle in Poland. (“She was her greybeard father’s pride / Joy of his years’ receding tide.”) Giray secretly falls in love with the beautiful Maria, but his love is unrequited. She is shy, alone, distraught by captivity, and chaste. She desperately resists him and “in this spare lodgement set apart / From envious wives, she grieves her heart.” But that doesn’t stop envious Zarema, who steals into Maria’s room and murders her. Giray witnesses the crime, and he casts Zarema out. That night she, too, dies. Giray, grief-stricken by his losses (“Then whisper something and it seems / Tears scored his cheeks in scalding streams”) and ennobled by romantic love, gives orders to his sculptor:

*Back home the Tatar chieftain came;  
A marble fountain he erected  
To honor poor Maria’s name*



SOURCE: HTTP://ATLAS.7JUGEN.NET/HISTORICAL/CRIMEAN\_KHANATE



*Deep in a corner of the Court....  
There's writing, too; the probing  
whirls  
Of time have not erased it yet.  
Behind its curious curves and curls  
Within the stone the waters fret  
Then gush and rain in tearlike pearls,  
Undried, unsilenced evermore.  
Thus mothers mourn in grief  
unmeasured  
Sons done to death by savage war.  
This tale of woe from ancient lore  
The maidens hereabouts have  
treasured;  
Each age the mournful mark reveres,  
And knows it as The Fount of Tears.*

What people today see in the fountain, says Emil Ametov, a young palace assistant historian, are teardrops from a human eye, filling first the large basin, a “broken heart,” and then spilling over into the pairs of smaller basins, thus offering the relief that comes with tears—but then, as memories rise up again, the pool of tears refills and the heart repeats the cycle again and again in inconsolable grief and continuous love.

“A folk tale,” says Haiworonski about Pushkin’s epic poem. “Actually, we don’t know how factual this story is of Dilara Bikech, the noblewoman whom the Khan fell in love with. We know nothing about her.”

Most historians believe that the original location of the Fountain of Tears was a niche in an octagonal mausoleum built on a hill above the palace by Khan Qirim Giray in 1764. On the mausoleum was inscribed

only a woman’s name: Dilara Bikech.

Haiworonski, a Polish–Ukrainian who grew up in Bakhchisaray, finishes his third pour of tea into a small porcelain bowl, in the Crimean Tatar style. “No evidence, just speculation: Even a khan’s love could not be the basis for burying a woman in a mausoleum as if she were a saint,” he says.

“We can find much more substantial reasons for that, because we know Dilara Bikech as a donor of mosques in the town.

**The women’s quarters, or harem, were made up of four buildings; only one survives. This salon, right, was used by women and children of the ruling family. The courtyard, lower, shows post-Soviet restoration that officials hope will earn Bakhchisaray designation as a World Heritage Site of the United Nations.**







## A Brief History of the Crimean Khanate

In 1238, the grandson of Genghis Khan, Batu, led an alliance of Mongol and Turkish tribes to conquer an empire that stretched from the Pacific Ocean to the Volga River. Because of its wealth and power, this khanate came to be known as the Golden Horde. The kingdom of the Qipchak Khans, descended from one of the oldest Mongolian or Tatar races, formed a regional capital in Qirim—the name from which today's "Crimea" is derived—and the people who called themselves Qirimtatar embraced Islam in the 13th century.

After the defeat of the Golden Horde in 1441 by Tamerlane, Crimean nobles fell away from Qipchak to form the independent Crimean Khanate under Hacı I Giray, thus introducing the name of Giray into the dynasty that followed. In 1475, Hacı I Giray's son Meñli I Giray was taken prisoner by the Genoese, who sent him to Istanbul, where Sultan Mehmet II forced him to recognize Ottoman control over his Crimean Khanate.

He was then permitted to return to his throne, and in 1502, he fought the Golden Horde's last khan to defeat at the Dneiper River. His sons went on to defeat the Russians near Moscow, and they forced the Russians to pay tribute to the khanate, a submission that continued until the end of the 17th century.

It was the Cossacks who, in the late 18th century, began to push back the khanate and the Ottomans. In 1774, the Crimean Khans fell under Russian influence, and by 1783, Crimea was annexed into Russia. It was part of Russia, then part of the USSR, then part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, and was briefly autonomous. In 1992, newly independent Ukraine took possession, and today it's officially the Autonomous Republic of Crimea of Ukraine.

One of the mosques in Bakhchisaray, the so-called Green Mosque, was inscribed with her name. We know the tradition of rich women building mosques did exist in the Crimean court. So perhaps it was not the khan's love that was the reason to bury her with such a special honor. Unfortunately, for now, we do not have any documents that would help us discover who she was."

Visiting Bakhchisaray at about the same time as Pushkin, the traveler Muraviev-Apostol wrote of the mausoleum, which still stands, "Very strange that

**The palace mosque, above, now popular for weddings, "is our Crimean Tatar mosque," said Amit Refetov, a recent groom. "Even the walls can bless the new family." Lower: Built around a small central fountain, the summer house recalls Crimean roots in the tents of Central Asian nomads.**

all the people here vouch that this beauty was not a Georgian but a Polish girl, allegedly kidnapped by Qirim Giray. However much I argued with them, no matter how I assured them that the traditional story has no historical basis, and that in the second half of the eighteenth century it was not so easy for Tatars to kidnap a Pole, all my arguments were useless. They maintain as one: The beauty was Maria Potocka."

There may indeed have been a historical Maria Potocka, a Polish noblewoman who had been kidnapped on a Crimean Tatar raid and held in the khan's harem, and who ultimately became his wife. But the timing is off: The tale is first mentioned in the writings of Crimean historian Sayyid Muhammad Riza. In his account, it was Khan Fetih II Giray (ruled 1736–1737) who was given the captured maiden—and who restored her to her family in exchange for a ransom in gold. Since the fountain was built in 1764, the accepted historical wisdom is that it actually commemorates Dilara Bikech, who was likely a Georgian girl who died young, for *dilara* is a Turkish word meaning "beloved," and





*bikech* was a name usually given to concubines.

Adding to the legend, just 20 years after the fountain was erected and after the death of the “last khan” who built it, the empress of Russia, Catherine the Great, came calling at Bakhchisaray. The accounts of her visit in 1787, and her own words, show that even then the palace already had a claim on the Russian romantic imagination.

Bakhchisaray was the last stop on Catherine’s eight-month victory tour celebrating her defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the Russo–Turkish war, which had ended in 1774, and the Russian annexation of Crimea in 1783. It must have been a sight to behold: 12,000 horsemen of the Tatar cavalry, richly clothed and armed, escorted Catherine, the guard of honor and her retinue of 2300 to the palace of the former khans.

Mastermind of the visit was Prince Grigori Potemkin, Russia’s most powerful statesman and Catherine’s intimate, who had given orders for the khan’s palace to be completely restored and refurbished, with the ultimate goal of making it into his own “Russian Alhambra.”

He succeeded in impressing Catherine.

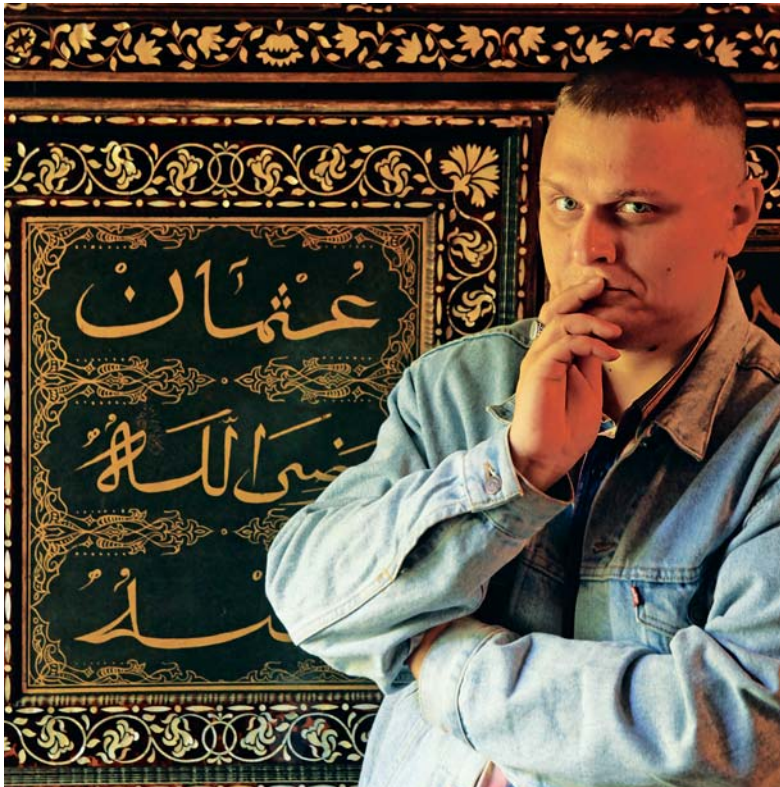


From Bakhchisaray, the empress wrote these words to Potemkin, as translated by Andreas Schönle:

*I lay one evening in the Khan’s  
summer-house,  
In the midst of Muslims and the  
Islamic faith.  
In front of this summer-house a  
mosque was built,  
Where five times a day the Imam calls  
the people.  
I thought of sleeping, but as soon as I  
closed my eyes,  
He shut his ears and roared with all  
his might...  
O, godly miracles! Who among my  
ancestors  
Slept peacefully from the hordes and  
their khans?  
But what prevents me from sleeping in  
Bakhchisaray  
Are tobacco smoke and this roar. Is  
this not the place of paradise?*

One of history’s great romantics, Catherine stayed three days in Bakhchisaray. As part of his *coup de théâtre*, Potemkin had moved the fountain that Pushkin would immortalize 37 years later from its original location in the mausoleum to its

**Left: A statue of Pushkin in Bakhchisaray. English historian and philosopher Isaiah Berlin noted Pushkin’s “unique domination ... over the entire consciousness and imagination of a vast nation.”**



**“A folk tale,” says Oleksa Haiworonski, left. We know, he says, that Dilara Bikech funded the construction of a mosque—but we don’t know who she was. And a Polish noblewoman may have languished in the palace harem—but that was decades before the legendary love story.**

**Opposite: The Pushkin restaurant, at far left, stands on a corner of Lenin Street in Bakhchisaray.**

present location, in an inner courtyard, so as to put it near the empress’s apartment, certain that she would appreciate what was then already local folklore: the tale of the khan, the harem queen and the captive maiden. One can imagine Catherine and her suite whiling away the evening

with their guests, listening for the fountain’s teardrops falling. The echoes are long in that courtyard.

One late afternoon at the palace, I met Amit Refetov and his bride, Elmaz, who had come with members of their family to the Great Khan Mosque in the palace for a blessing on their marriage. “It’s our Crimean Tatar mosque,” Refetov said. “Even the walls can bless the new family.”

Many of those walls, however, except in the oldest and best-preserved part of the palace, have long since been altered. When Pushkin came here in 1820, he told about “walking around the palace greatly irritated by the neglect in which it is decaying, and by the half-European alterations to some of the rooms.”

He could blame Potemkin, in part, who had enlisted the services of the architect Joseph de Ribas, who was not well acquainted with Islamic styles or principles, to refurbish the palace. They wanted to please the empress with beautiful mansions that catered to European and imperial expectations, so they mixed Asian and European styles—not always with success.

Further changes to the palace usually coincided with the visit of the next czar or czarina. This came to mean demolition, too: In the 1820’s alone, several buildings of the harem, the Winter Palace, a large





## Another Fountain, Another Crimean Love Story

Pushkin's romantic tale opened the door for another romance, this one between Crimean Tatars returning, in recent decades, from Soviet exile and the palace itself, which they regard as a precious icon of their culture. Sajyar Ablyayev, 55, is "brigadier" of the 12-man crew that maintains Bakhchisaray Palace. He takes me by the hand to show me that, just outside the walls, there is another fountain, built in 1747 by Khan Selim II Giray. Ablyayev tells me how the art and science of the khanate's hydraulic engineers is still a marvel today. Small ceramic pipes, boxed in an underground stone tunnel, stretch back to the spring source more than 200 meters (650') away.

As he shows me, children—some three generations removed from those who were exiled—and a few of their elders come up to greet Ablyayev warmly. Like the Fountain of Tears, this fountain too seems not much to look at at first. Ablyayev steps down and turns on the tap. Water flows out with surprising pressure, clean and pure from the source. He turns it off, and then back on. Everybody giggles and laughs and jokes in Crimean Tatar—a living language once again. It is as if this running stream is irrigating the Crimean Tatar attachment to a palace that now, 250 years later, feels very much their own. The smiles around this humble spring seem enough to gladden the heart of any Giray khan. In its own way, it is another kind of poetic justice.







Palace officials today say restoration is both a physical and cultural affair. In the palace square, left, dancers perform Crimean folk dances for tourists, and painters, below, apply colors and motifs that resemble those of the khanate era.

great filmmaker Yakov Protazanov made his first feature film in 1907, which he titled “The Bakhchisaray Fountain.”

But it was a ballet based on Pushkin’s poem that did the most to save the palace from destruction.

In 1944, during World War II, the Soviets deported Crimean Tatars en masse to territories in what is now Uzbekistan and other parts of Central Asia, in retaliation for

the collaboration of some Tatars with Nazi Germany. Forty percent of the deportees died within two years.

This ethnic cleansing was followed by a cultural one, as historical and linguistic traces of the Crimean Tatar people on the peninsula were expunged. Crimean Tatar

bath complex and other parts of the palace were destroyed. Over the decades, the palace was reduced from an area of 18 hectares to four—from 44 acres to 10.

Pushkin’s influence, however, was immediate and—architecturally, at least—favorable. While “The Fountain of Bakhchisaray” helped promote a popular, romanticized picture of the Islamic world, the changes made to the fabric of the original palace began to elicit protests from architects, artists and even czars.

Within a year after Pushkin’s visit, a parade of writers came to the palace, and some even reprised the drama. Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz is now renowned for his Crimean Sonnets, one of which speaks of Bakhchisaray, translated here by Dorothea Prall Radin:

*A vessel heun from marble stands  
untouched  
Within the hall—the harem’s  
fountain-spring;  
Seeping pearl-tears, it sobs across the  
waste,  
“Love, glory, potentate! where are  
you now?  
You claimed eternity,  
spring-water’s fleet.  
You have fled; infamy! the spring  
runs on.*

There were many others: Aleksander Griboyedov, Aleksey Tolstoy, Ivan Bunin,

Sasha Cherny, Ukraine’s Mykhailo Kotsyubynsky and dozens more. Artists came too: Russian romantic Karl Bryullov worked on a painting for 12 years, an orientalist, idyll-in-a-harem canvas titled “The Fountain of Tears.” Like Pushkin’s poem, every Russian knows it. On the screen, the





and Turkic place names of villages, towns and cities were Sovietized. Cemeteries and mosques were destroyed. The Soviets proposed to rename Bakhchisaray palace “Pushkinsk” (“Pushkin”) or “Sadovsk” (“Garden”). According to the director of the palace’s museum during those post-war years, Maria Yustara, who was in Moscow at the time, there were plans to raze the palace as well.

Fortunately, Boris Asafyev’s ballet “The Bakhchisaray Fountain” happened to have been first performed on stage some 10 years earlier, and it had toured all the major Soviet cities to great popular acclaim. Most importantly, one of its fans was none other than Soviet leader Joseph Stalin—indeed, it was his favorite ballet. Pushkin too was beyond Soviet reproach, having been claimed “entirely our own, a Soviet” in the Communist Party’s official newspaper *Pravda* on the centennial of the poet’s death in 1937.

It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that the poet Pushkin’s imagination gave not only life but also, ultimately, sanctuary to the fountain and palace, whose name remained unchanged, and whose buildings endured the Soviet era intact.

Today, the khans’ palace, with its mosques, cemeteries and other buildings, is the only major remaining monument of the Tatar visual arts of the Crimean Khanate. As Haiworonski puts it, “the palace still remembers its past, that once it was a paradise.”

But if you go, know your history. And bring your Pushkin.

*O magic shore! O visions’ balm!  
All there inspirits: peak and pine,  
The graceful valleys’ sheltering calm,  
The rose and amber of the vine,  
Cool brooks and toplar shade  
nearby... 🌐*



## The Heavenly Fountain

Inscribed in gold above the Fountain of Tears is a verse of Surah 76 of the Qur’an, which names, among the benefits the righteous will enjoy, “A spring [or fountain] there, called Salsabil.” According to exegetist Abdullah Yusuf Ali, the name literally means “seek the way.” It refers to a particular spring in heaven, and it also contains allusions to such concepts as “nectar,” “smooth” and “easy on the throat.”

The Arabic word *sabil* commonly refers to public fountains erected as pious acts to provide water for wayfarers.

The tradition of designing fountains called *salsabil* is well established in Islamic architecture, especially in Iraq and Syria, and began around the Black Sea in the 12th and 13th centuries. These were not simple fountains. Rather, a *salsabil* often involved several basins, and sometimes channels that distributed water through basins and pools. According to scholar Yasser Tabbaa, *salsabils* were notable esthetically for the “alternating stillness and movement of water, ...the temporarily solid or sculptural appearance of water ...[and] the use of water as a thin veil over stone.”

At the Fountain of Tears, water flows into the upper middle bowl, out to a pair of side bowls, then back into a center basin, and repeats this pattern three times.

At the top of the Bakhchisaray *salsabil* are eight other verses. These are secular, praising Khan Qirim Giray, who in 1764 commissioned the Persian master Omer to construct the fountain.

—The Editors thank Mohammad S. AbuMakarem for his research




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 **Alexander Pushkin: Collected Narrative and Lyrical Poetry.** Walter Arndt, ed. and trans. 1984, Ardis, 0-88233-825-0.

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# THE OTHER SIDE OF CORK

WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY  
ANN CHANDLER

The grin on Manuel Peixiubo's weathered face appears easily beneath his frosty moustache. Peixiubo is jovial and friendly, but he works fast and doesn't stop while he talks. Here on the Pipa cork farm near Coruche, 40 kilometers (25 mi) southeast of Lisbon in Portugal's sunny Alentejo region, a man's wage is only as good as his speed. At 67, Peixiubo is no amateur. His muscular arms have been swinging the traditional cork-harvesting axe since his 20's, and he can tally over 20 *arrobas* a day. One *arroba*—the term, derived from Arabic, defined the load that a donkey or mule could carry—equals 15 kilos, or 33 pounds, of cork bark. Peixiubo still busies himself with construction work in the off-season.

Lumbering behind the men, a tractor pulls a wagon laden with the freshly harvested bark. High atop the load, Gracinda Vicente balances herself while the wagon bumps through the forest. She laughs when asked her age. At 59, her skin bears the evidence of years of outdoor

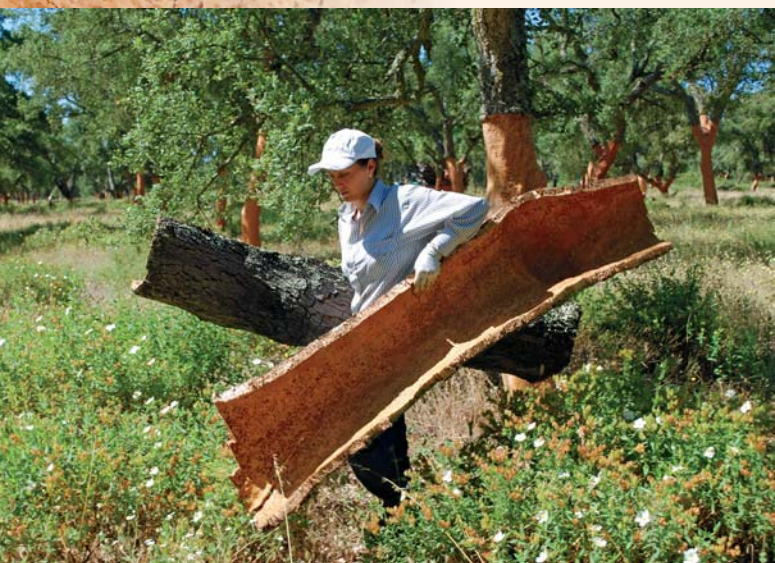
work, gathering cork slabs from where the harvesters drop them. Like Peixiubo, she began working the harvests in her 20's.

Peixiubo and Vicente are part of the approximately 6000 skilled seasonal workers in Portugal's cork industry,

which produces over 50 percent of the world's cork. The cork tree (*Quercus suber*) is an evergreen oak found in seven Mediterranean countries: Portugal, Spain, Italy, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and France. The tree thrives in areas with low rainfall, dry summers and high temperatures, its deep, extensive root system nourishing it during drought. The bark is harvested every nine to 12 years in early summer, once the tree has reached 25 years of age and a circumference of 70 centimeters (27½") at chest height. Cork trees can survive for more than 200 years: The oldest known tree was planted in Portugal in 1783. Historical records dating back to the fourth century BCE document the use of cork in shoes, beehives, fishing gear, boats and housing.

The laws that protect Portugal's 730,000 hectares (1.8 million acres) of cork trees date back to the year 1209, a prescient regulation that allowed the forests to flourish and regenerate, maintaining a healthy biodiversity that supports sport hunting as well as goat, sheep and cattle farming. One hundred percent renewable and recyclable, cork is rapidly gaining in popularity as an environmentally sustainable product that can be used to make everything from handbags, umbrellas, baseballs and car seats to expansion

joints in dams and water reservoirs, and fuel tank insulation on NASA space shuttles. Its remarkable properties that make it lightweight, impermeable to liquids and gases, abrasion







Above: In Portugal as in all seven of the Mediterranean countries where cork grows, harvesting it remains a manual, traditional skill: Too much force on the axe can jeopardize regrowth of the bark, while too little will fail to release it. A good harvester will strip the tree in just a few large pieces, opposite. The tree will then need nine to 12 years before it can be harvested again. Right: Cork harvesting is depicted on tiles in Vila Viçosa, Portugal.







resistant, elastic, compressible, fire resistant, and an excellent thermal, acoustic and vibration insulator are due to the 40 million gas-filled honeycomb cells contained in every cubic centimeter of cork.

When English scientist Robert Hooke viewed a slice of cork beneath his microscope in 1665, he named the structures he saw *cellulae*—Latin for “little rooms”—in the first recorded use of the biological term *cell*.

Harvesting cork is an acquired manual skill, the method unchanged for well over a century. Using a specially shaped axe with a sharp, flared, round-cornered blade and a flat-tipped handle for prying off the bark, workers make rapid horizontal and vertical cuts to free the bark in sections as large as possible. Each swing of the axe is carefully controlled. Too much force will damage the delicate cambium layer beneath and jeopardize the growth of new bark. Too gentle a swing and the bark will not release. When done properly, the bark pulls cleanly away from the tree with a loud crack.

Following the harvesters through the knee-high undergrowth, Conceição Santos Silva stops to point out a rabbit burrow hidden in the wild lavender, noting that rabbits provide an important food source for the numerous birds of prey, like the endangered imperial eagle, that nest in the forest. Healthy cork forests, she

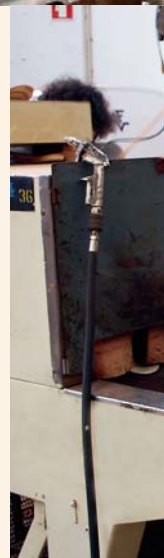
**Near Coruche, Portugal a truck delivers freshly harvested cork to a factory, where each piece is first boiled, flattened and cleaned of the outer bark.**

adds, also boast the second-highest plant diversity in the world, after tropical forests, and many of the plants have aromatic, culinary and medicinal value.

“Our soil is very sandy and subject to erosion,” she says, scooping up a handful and letting it sift through her slender fingers. “If people stop using cork, this will turn into a desert.” A busy mother of four and a seasoned forest engineer, Silva is director of the Association of Forest Producers of Coruche. She knows the cork forests like her own children.

The Pipa farm is one of many dotting the Alentejo region, which produces 72 percent of Portugal’s cork. The following day, Guilhermina Teixeira, a consultant with the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, drives me to a collection of decaying white buildings 45 kilometers (28 mi) outside Lisbon. Once a thriving company settlement, Rio Frio’s cobwebbed stables still glow with early-20th-century *azulejo* tile murals featuring images of Portugal’s famous Lusitanian horses. Rio Frio also boasts one of Portugal’s few cork plantations, its trees planted in neat rows early in the 20th century.

In the forest, a playful competition is taking place between brothers harvesting opposing rows of trees, their laughter and shouts ringing out in the hot air, interspersed with the crack of their axes. Sections of bark fall to the forest floor in rapid







succession. These workers, unlike Manuel Peixiubo, are paid a daily rate by the buyer of the cork, but a harvester still prides himself on his speed. Familiarity with cork forests like these is part of Teixeira's job, but she has a personal connection to Rio Frio. Teixeira's husband, Luis Bruno Soares, is the architect behind its planned restoration. Soon the neglected village will become a thriving ethno-tourist attraction, giving new life to the cork farm.

At the nearby Fabricor plant, his voice barely audible above the din of machinery, Nuno Marques explains how the cork slabs are boiled twice for 40 to 60 minutes to soften them, clean out impurities and enhance the size of the cells. "Every remnant from the cork processing

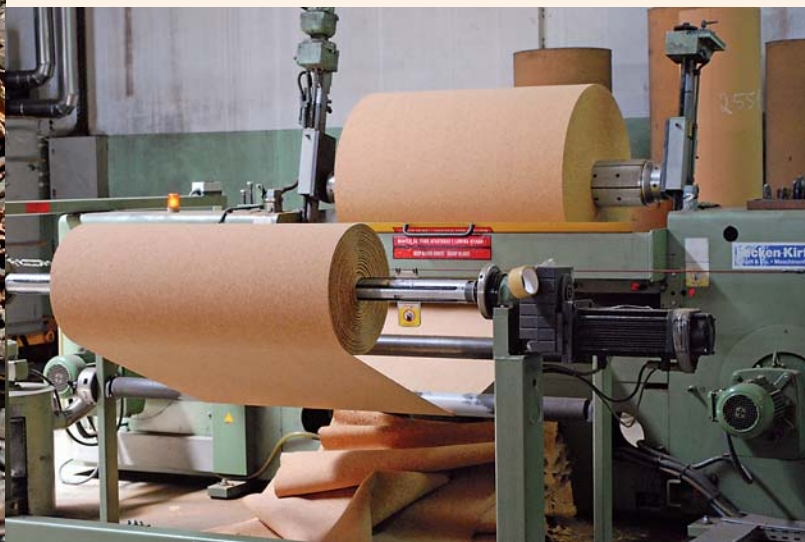
At the Granorte plant, product manager Paulo Rocha shows how granulated cork is mixed with a non-toxic adhesive and molded into tiles or into large cylinders or blocks that are sliced thin, ultimately morphing into a stunning array of decorative floor and wall coverings in a rainbow of colors and in varying shapes and patterns. Some are the result of blending the cork with recycled leather or cement products.

At 3-D Cork, a small company run by father-and-daughter team Bernardo and Sara Nunes, granules are molded into kitchenware, footwear, baseball cores, fishing equipment, tennis-racket handles and computer-tablet covers. On the production floor, a woman assembles insoles for the boots of French soldiers. "Our sales have increased by over 100 percent since we started the company five years ago," says Sara Nunes. "We run our plant 24 hours a day to keep up with demand."

Further down the road, a grinning Americo Espirito Santo, general manager of Viking, a company that produces and distributes hundreds of household and sports products made from cork, proudly dons a cork baseball cap while showing off his latest line of yoga mats.

On a quaint cobbled Lisbon street, sales at a cork specialty shop have far exceeded the owners' expectations. Inside Cork and Co., buyers from as far away as Russia and Dubai are tempted by

**Some items are cut or stamped from raw cork—such as bottle stoppers—while others are made by grinding the cork, mixing it with adhesive, and molding, rolling or pressing it into an ever-increasing number of lightweight, durable items—all quite naturally waterproof.**



is used," he says. "Nothing is wasted. Even the remaining sawdust is burned to generate heat for the boiling process." After drying, the cork is ready for processing.

A two hours' train ride north of Lisbon, the small town of Rio Meão and the surrounding area are home to 600 companies, many of which process Portuguese and imported cork destined to become household products. "This whole area is dependent upon cork production," says Joaquim Lima, general manager of the Association of Portuguese Cork Producers.

everything from handbags, briefcases, and jewelry to chairs and lampshades. Married lawyers Pedro and Christine Lucena opened the shop one year ago, starting with a cork bracelet. "We wanted to feature a good quality Portuguese product," says Pedro. The couple now has plans to expand internationally. Businesses like these form a growing part of Portugal's economy—cork production that does not end up as bottle stoppers.



Faced with the threat of desertification as a result of climate change, Portugal's cork forests are closely monitored to ensure their good health and continued replenishment through natural regeneration. One advantage is that birds, animals and humans leave enough acorns on the ground to produce seedlings by natural means.

In stark contrast, the Mamora forest near Rabat on Morocco's coastal plain—at 60,000 hectares (150,000 acres) the world's largest continuous cork forest—is not as fortunate. The sweet acorns here are highly prized by locals as food, and the forest floor is threatened by over-grazing and dense human activity. During the last half of the 20th century, the burgeoning population pushed the old system of registered grazing rights, a remnant of French rule, into disuse. Compounding the problem, some local herders agreed to graze additional animals belonging to outsiders in the

forest. Without registration and monitoring, herd sizes outgrew the forest's ability to support them and still maintain its own health. Unlike Spain and Portugal, whose cork forests are mostly privately owned, Morocco's forests are the property of the state and thus accessible for public use.

Dr. Hassan Benjelloun, a professor of soil science at Morocco's National School of Forest Engineering, accompanies me into the Mamora forest, a sandy area where cacti and *doum* (*Chamaerops humilis*)—a shrubby palm with long, pointed leaves that the locals fashion into baskets and rope—grow amongst the cork trees. Benjelloun points out some fenced off areas, an assisted regeneration project attempting to save Mamora for the future. Local pastoralists are asked to avoid these areas for at least four years, an economic blow that is softened by financial subsidies from non-governmental organizations. With the initial intensive help of water trucks, soil cultivation and guards, regeneration of the forest has a fighting chance in those areas. In other areas, eucalyptus and acacia trees, planted earlier as an economic move toward pulp and paper production, are being replaced with cork seedlings. "Eucalyptus and acacia use a lot of water," says Benjelloun. "Their roots are shallow, while cork oak has roots that go very deep." Though he worries it may be too little and too late, Benjelloun is hopeful that the regeneration project, which protects 1200 to 1400 hectares a year (3000–3500 acres), will be more than just a Band-Aid approach.

Dr. Abdellah Laouina, a tall, imposing man with a firm handshake, believes the project is an admirable effort, but won't

work on an expanded scale. "Mamora's future is very black," says Laouina, a geomorphologist in Rabat who studies the experimental and social aspects of assisted regeneration for DESIRE, an international project to combat desertification. For Mamora to survive, he says, users must have a direct interest in protecting it. He believes that a more economical approach, and one with a greater chance of long-term success, would be a contract system between the



SOURCE: EUFORGEN (2009)



**Public grazing rights in cork forests, once a generous policy, are now depriving cork trees of essential forest-floor nutrients.**





**Harvested cork awaits processing near Mamora, the world's largest continuous cork forest, left. Soil scientist Hassan Benjelloun, at center, lower, supports removal of acacia and eucalyptus trees—which “use up a lot of water”—from cork forests.**

state and the users of the forest that outlines rights and duties.

While Mamora teeters on the brink, the smaller cork forests of Morocco's Rif and Atlas Mountain regions are healthier. They manage some of their own natural regeneration, partly due to higher moisture levels, difficult access and reduced human activity—the last because the acorns are bitter and unattractive as food.

In a sweltering storage yard in the Smento Forest District, ornate cobwebs decorate shoulder-high stacks of cork from the 2010 harvest. In his office, forestry technician Djilali Said explains that the unsold cork is the result of a tax recently imposed by SEGMA, an independent financial organization set up by the forest service to provide extra funding for forest management. Morocco's 2011 harvest has also fallen victim: It's still on the trees. Ironically, Said chuckles, the lapse in production might not be good for the economy, but it benefits the forests. Discussions are under way to resolve the situation.

**PART OF THE PROBLEM IS THAT CORK IN MOROCCO IS MANAGED AS A FORESTRY RESOURCE, WHILE IN PORTUGAL AND SPAIN IT IS MANAGED AS AGRICULTURE.**



At the Center for Forestry Research in Rabat, physicist Dr. Abderrahim Famiri's research into new forms of economic growth for Morocco's cork industry may have come just in time. Morocco is home to 15 percent of the world's cork trees but produces less than five percent of the world's cork, of which 90 percent is exported. Morocco has only 13 processing plants. Famiri would like to see all that change.

He and his colleague Dr. Abdelaziz El Alami, a forestry engineer examining the stress impact of bark removal, are passionate about saving the country's cork forests. Part of the problem, they believe, is that cork in Morocco is a forestry resource, while



in Spain and Portugal it is managed as agriculture. “We have to change the way we think,” says Alami, emphasizing his words with hand gestures. “We must work hard to save the forest.”

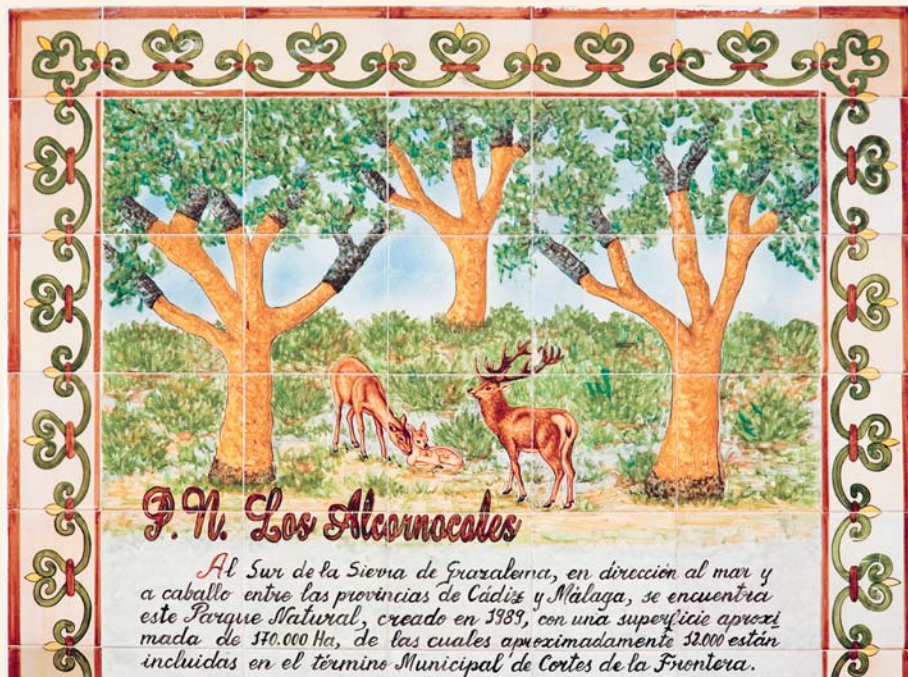
In southern Spain’s Andalucía region, disciplined rows of olive trees and endless fields of golden sunflowers blanket the fertile valley between the Sierra Morena and Sierra de Segura mountain ranges. Spain produces nearly one third of the world’s cork. Pulido Higuera, a forestry engineer, and Ana Carreño Leyva, editor of *El legado andalusi* magazine, have brought me to the Finca Viñuela estate near the village of Adamuz. We are met by 47-year-old Francisco Calero, a stocky man with dark, bushy eyebrows and a warm, piercing gaze. Calero, who harvested his first cork at 13, manages the farm he owns with his two brothers.

Together we squeeze into Calero’s truck and bounce across the vast acreage that his grandfather purchased in the 1920’s. Shifting the truck into four-wheel drive, Calero steers it into the hills, gaining altitude until he stops in a forest of cork trees. After listening carefully for the ringing of axes that will mark the location of the harvest workers he has come to collect, he takes his axe to a nearby tree, leaving its trunk naked in less than five minutes. Despite the nearly

**Near Cordova, Spain, cork farmer Francisco Calero inspects the trunk of a newly harvested tree.**







In far southern Spain, tiles describe the 23-year-old cork-oak natural area, above. Right: Near Mamora, Morocco, foresters hope these cork seedlings—and thousands like them—will be ready for their first harvest around 2037.

38-degree Celsius (100°F) temperature, the inside of the fallen bark is cool and moist to the touch, a testament to its insulating properties. Apart from his mode of transportation and the cell phone on his hip, there is little to differentiate Calero's work from his grandfather's.

Professor Miguel Angel Blanco Lopez, Calero's brother and an expert in tree diseases at the University of Córdoba, points out spots on the dark green leaves. Fungus like this, he tells me, is the biggest disease threat to the cork tree. It mainly affects the limbs, which can be pruned, he says, but if it attacks the roots, the tree may die.

Higueras, an expert in human-animal balance in the

forest, explains through our interpreter that because fire risk in the Mediterranean region is high, forests like these must be cleared of encroaching undergrowth every four to seven years to reduce the fuel available to a fire. Although cork bark is resistant to flame, the oak's foliage is not.

In his office at the University of Lisbon, Dr. Miguel Bugalho, an expert on the conservation of cork-oak woodlands with the World Wildlife Fund's Mediterranean Program, says that, in addition to

providing habitat for endangered plant and animal species, cork forests make a crucial contribution to mitigating climate change. "The cork-oak woodland is a human-managed system," says Bugalho. "It has a high degree of habitat heterogeneity, which is good for biodiversity. A well-managed system generates biodiversity, long-term carbon storage and fire prevention services, which are all important not only locally, but also globally."

It is cork's ecological qualities, versatility and sustainability that make it an attractive resource. A feature exhibit last May in New York at the Museum of Modern Art's Design Week recently placed cork's enormous potential in the international limelight, but consumer use of cork is nothing new. In Washington, D.C., the cork floors in the Library of Congress have welcomed the feet of visitors for more than 100 years, and



architect Frank Lloyd Wright chose cork when designing the famous Falling Waters home in Pennsylvania in the 1960's.

With the combined efforts of scientists and farmers, cork will still be around for youngsters like Calero's grand-nephew, Guillermo, a 7-year-old who followed us around the forest with notebook in hand, learning the ways of cork management from his great-uncle.

"We have a saying," Conceição Silva says with a smile. "When we plant the cork tree, it is not for our children. It is for our grandchildren." 🌍



**Ann Chandler** ([www.annchandler.com](http://www.annchandler.com)) is a freelance writer and author living near Vancouver, B.C. She writes about science and anthropology for international magazines and has published two novels.

**HEALTHY CORK  
FORESTS BOAST  
THE SECOND-  
HIGHEST  
DIVERSITY OF  
PLANTS IN  
THE WORLD,  
AFTER TROPICAL  
FORESTS.**




# A Heritage Takes Wing

Written by Meera Subramanian • Photographed by Tariq Dajani



A human, a bird and an open sky. What once was a matter of subsistence—or royal indulgence—has become a worldwide sport and art.





Some stories have no beginnings. But sitting around a fire in a spacious landscape with radiant stars overhead, next to a man with a gyrfalcon on his fist, I get a sense of a beginning. The bird is exquisite, otherworldly, glowing in the light of the fire. When I am offered the chance to hold it, I do not say no. We slip the thickly padded, finely embroidered cuff from his hand to mine. I stroke the bird's feathers with the backs of my fingers. Its weight is, somehow, just right: light enough not to be a burden, heavy enough to convey the substance of what rests on my wrist.

I am in the desert of the Ramah Wildlife Refuge outside Al Ain in the United Arab Emirates, close to the border of Oman. In the darkness of the dunes are foxes and owls and, if the conservation efforts are working, hares and houbara bustards. It is the first day of the International Falconry Festival, a gathering that will bring hundreds of people from dozens of nations to this sandy spot to celebrate the world's growing recognition of their artful sport—indeed, their obsession.

Late in 2010, at a meeting in Nairobi, UNESCO announced that it would inscribe falconry onto the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH). The room, filled with expectant falconers, broke out in cheers so long and loud that a recess had to be called. Abu Dhabi had spearheaded the effort that led to this announcement, submitting the application on behalf of 11 disparate nations: the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Morocco, Belgium, France, Spain, the Czech Republic, Mongolia and Korea. It was the largest and most internationally diverse application UNESCO ICH had ever received.



The traditional practice of falconry involves keeping falcons and other birds of prey and training them to hunt their quarry in cooperation with humans. Whether considered an art, a sport or a means of sustenance, this symbiotic relationship between human and wild raptor long predates the written word. There is much speculation about its precise origins, but evidence suggests falconry developed on the steppes of Central Asia or in Persia at least 4000 years ago. There appears to be a representation of a falconer holding up dead prey on an incense burner found at Tell Chuera, in northeastern Syria, that dates back to 2500 BCE.

Perhaps because of its antiquity, but also because of its broad geographical spread, the art of falconry is diverse. The term “to hawk” applies to the flying of a spectrum of raptors, birds defined by their powerful talons and beaks, which they use to hunt live prey. (See “Who’s Who Aloft” at [www.saudiaramcoworld.com](http://www.saudiaramcoworld.com).) They can be as small as the 120-gram (4 oz) American kestrel or as monumental as the golden eagle, with its wingspan of two and a half meters (nearly 8’). Arabs favor saker and peregrine falcons, as well as gyrfalcons from the Arctic. Mongolians hunt with golden eagles and the Dutch with goshawks. Harris hawks, a South American species, have recently come into fashion in Britain. Falconers hunt crows and hares, foxes and wolves, pheasants and houbara bustards. They travel on foot or horseback, by camel or by sports utility vehicle (SUV). They may bring along a hunting dog or not, and may travel alone or with a party.

But there is also universality. The accoutrements of falconry have remained virtually unchanged for centuries, if not millennia. Leather jesses that wind around the bird’s legs allow a person to tightly hold the flighty creature. A thick leather glove or a padded cuff protects the hawker’s arm. A leather hood not much larger than a golf ball slips over the bird’s head and eyes to keep it calm—a simple method learned by European Crusaders in the Middle East that replaced the crueler practice of temporarily sewing the bird’s eyelids shut. There is the falconer’s bag, slung across a shoulder: It contains a lure, something fashioned out of feathers that, when swung at the end of a short line, attracts the bird back to the fist. Some fresh meat serves the same purpose. In the last 20 years, falconers have begun using tiny telemetry units attached to the bird’s back feathers to track down wayward individuals, a luxury unavailable to those who flew birds during the last few thousand years.

Two hundred people have already shown up at the desert camp,

and hundreds more will attend the simultaneous conference and public festival at Al-Jahili Fort later in the week. All have brought their singular obsession. They have traveled great distances, from Scotland, South Africa, Japan or Peru, to be welcomed by our Emirati hosts. Except for a few Brits, however, they have had to leave their own birds at home, due to regulations, expense and quarantine requirements—but they have brought snapshots and cell phones with raptor ringtones. Some will have a chance to hold or even fly birds that are on loan from Emirati zoos, private owners and conservation centers; dozens of them sit placidly on low perches hammered into the sand in an open-sided tent that serves as a mews. A smaller tent holds six eagles, and in another is a further variety of falcons. Another 30 tents are set up for humans to sleep in, and still others are for birds and people both. For the next seven days, I will not hear side conversations about movies or family back home or idle conversations about the weather. There is nothing here but stories of falcons and hawking; bird pedigree and weight by the gram or the ounce; the hunts that went right and the ones that didn’t. A raptor, when hunting, has a sole purpose and attention. The people who fly them are not so different.

It is appropriate that we are in Al Ain. This is where the UAE’s founding father, the late Shaykh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, came of age and found his identity. It is here that the man, beloved by his countrymen, came to adore falcons. The last international falconry festival that was held in the UAE was at his behest, in 1976, and it was a call to arms to save the practice that linked the quickly modernizing young nation with its Bedouin past. Once, nomadic herdsman would trap passing falcons with camelhair nooses as the birds migrated from their breeding grounds in Central Asia to the hospitable climes of Africa. They would train the birds to hunt to supplement the meager desert diet, and also to catch the prized houbara bustard, a large, ground-dwelling bird with elaborate breeding plumage whose meat, according to folklore, has special restorative powers for men.



**At the festival’s opening ceremony, falconers from more than a dozen nations donned their own native “plumage” to represent their homeland traditions.**







**Before a rapt crowd, a dark-phase gyrfalcon takes flight from his handler's cuff. "The UNESCO designation has given us a lot more respect," says Bruce Padbury of the South African Falconers Association.**

are born wild and trapped, some legally, many not.

The movement of birds of prey is not new. They travel on their own epic migration routes, and once they were exchanged as fancy gifts between noblemen or members of grand hunting entourages. Marco Polo wrote of Kublai Khan that the Mongolian ruler "takes with him full 10,000 falconers and some 500 gyrfalcons, besides peregrines, sakers, and other hawks in great numbers." In the late 14th century, when the Ottoman sultan Beyazit captured the son of Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, he turned down an offered ransom of 200,000 gold ducats but accepted instead a dozen white gyrfalcons and a jeweled gauntlet, paid for by Carl VI of France.

The Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen, arguably the best-known falconer of all time, was the author of the classic tome *Ars Venandi cum Avibus* (*The Art of Hunting with Birds*), completed in 1241 and still in print. But much of Frederick's inspiration apparently came from other treatises already in existence, many of them from the Arab world: *Kitab Dawari Al-Tayr* (*Book of the Birds of Prey*), by al-Ghitrif ibn Qudama al-Ghassani, master of the hunt for the Umayyad caliphs, dates to 780 CE. Frederick's work was also informed by other, earlier Arab manuscripts, including those by Muhammad ibn Abdullah al-Bayzar and an Arab falconer known in the West as "Moamyn." There is a story that Frederick's passion was so all-consuming that once, besieging Palermo, he left his headquarters

After a season, the Bedouin would release their birds to resume their migratory path.

But Middle Eastern falconry, like falconry everywhere in the world, has changed. With the advent of guns, hunting with a bird became somewhat anachronistic. The sustenance part of the equation fell away, and the debate about art versus sport intensified. The big business of birds now involves great sums of money that change hands as birds are traded around the world for prices that are often comparable to those of automobiles: Some birds can be had for a modest \$1000 or so, while others might cost a hundred times that. Some are born in legal captive-breeding facilities that have the feel of small factories and that might tinker with genetic hybrids; others

**Outside the restored Al-Jahili Fort, falconry organizations set up national displays, including this traditional Central Asian yurt from Kyrgyzstan.**







Bakyt Karnakbayev (Kazakhstan)  
Golden Eagle



Sher Mohammed (Iran)  
Peregrine Falcon



Steve Duffy (USA)  
Gyrfalcon



Manuel Maier (Uruguay)  
Aplonado Falcon



Haddi El Mennouni (Morocco)  
Gyrfalcon





Yusuf Ali Al Hamadi (UAE)  
Gyrfalcon



Ali Mohammad bin Thajib Al-Hamadi (UAE)  
Gyrfalcon



Hmida Ben Fraj (Tunisia)  
Sparrowhawk



Wudi (China)  
White-Eyed Shikra



Joseph Hiebler (Austria)  
Golden Eagle



camp to go hawking. In his absence, troops from the city sallied out, attacked his camp, slaughtered his soldiers and carried off his field treasury.

Birds of prey have this sort of effect on people. I am not immune. I have watched wild birds hunt in wild places, and I have seen them stoop on prey from the top of the Empire State Building in New York City, but I have yet to witness a falcon hunt with the aid of a human. On the second morning of the festival, I sling my leg over the hump of a camel and she lifts me into the early morning fog of the desert as light breaks the horizon. The mist is filled with a cacophony of camel roars, the sounds falling somewhere between burps and bellows.

Once everyone is loaded up, we lumber off, 30 of us on camels, three on horseback, and one female gyr-peregrine hybrid, hooded, sitting in front of Saed Ateq al-Mansori on his camel. I sat next to al-Mansori at the fireside last night, talking to him with the help of

the younger Mubarak Sultan al-Mansori—no relation to the elder in spite of the shared name or the fact that the younger teased that the elder was his grandfather. Saed Ateq al-Mansori is “the boss of the Emirates’ falcons,” Mubarak had said. Indeed, the elder al-Mansori has the look one likes on a leader: an untroubled equanimity radiates from his bronzed face, lined by a life in the desert. From Madinat Zayed, in the western part of the country, he’s hunted with falcons since he was a boy. He remembers the simple life that we are reenacting as we head deeper into the desert, the illusion of a timelessly ancient hunt broken only by the towering metal fortress of barbed wire that encloses the 35-square-kilometer (8650-acre) reserve. The barrier keeps local camels out, allowing ashen green saltbush, bright emerald shrubs and even a few trees to grow impossibly in the sand. We veer into the rolling dunes, the camels riding the sands. There is not a combustion engine to be heard. Everywhere there are tracks, memories imprinted in the sand revealing the movements of lizards, snakes, hares and houbara.

After an hour there is a sudden commotion. Al-Mansori has spotted a hare and instantly slipped the hood off the falcon, who rises from the camel in pursuit. She flies low, and we see the hare—which is large, easily equal to the bird in size and likely heavier—tear in and out of sight as it drops through the dunes. We lose sight of both bird and hare, and then, in the magical mist that refuses to burn off, there suddenly appears a gazelle, leaping, bounding, bolting away as the falcon pursues it, hare forgotten. But the gazelle escapes, and the falcon lands on the peak of a dune a few hundred meters away.

Everything stops. We breathe again. Al-Mansori dismounts from his camel and calls out to the bird as he sifts through his leather hunting bag, but he seems to have forgotten his lure. The bird shows no interest in al-Mansori’s call, nor in his cuff, tossed to the sand as a makeshift incentive to return. We all dismount and



**Left: For essential protection from sharp talons, a falconer can cover hand and forearm with something as simple as a leather glove or as elaborate as this embroidered cuff. Lower: Arab falconers gather in one of the festival's tents to talk about birds.**





stretch. Five minutes go by. And then a flock of pigeons appears out of nowhere. The falcon comes back to life, unfurling its great wings, in pursuit again. First we lose sight of the pigeons. Then the falcon, too, vanishes.

Maybe she'll come back, though it's unlikely. The bird is wild once again.... Then the spell of lost centuries is broken as someone makes a cell-phone call and we go on, knowing that the satellite telemetry attached to the bird will bring us to her. Al-Mansori leads the way, singing a song.

Twenty minutes later there is news. Not only has our bird been located, but she is eating a houbara she caught! Houbara: prize of

I wanted to hear more, but Mubarak Sultan al-Mansori had leaned over to show us photos on his smartphone, and the thread of the conversation was lost in the blue glow of the screen.

A few hours after the hunt, a large pot sits over a fire behind the younger al-Mansori's tent. He adds spices to the stock: lots of pepper, *za'atar*, lemon, salt. The houbara parts roil in the boil. "Do you want to try?" My desire to know the taste, just once, trumps my general aversion to eating animals threatened with extinction. Mubarak pours a small cup. I take it to my lips and sip too quickly, scalding my tongue, but beneath the pain, I taste a luscious broth.

There is no meat in the cup. Is it really tough and stringy, as I have read? And do I think it has any powers for these young, healthy men? No, none. But the power of the hunt? Oh, yes! "It's not religious, but it's almost religious," Oscar Pack, a falconer from Culver, Oklahoma tells me back at the mews, a prairie falcon on his fist. "It's so moving, watching the bird fly free. Falconry's really specialized bird-watching. You turn it loose and watch it act like it would in nature. You want to think there's love coming from the bird, but it's all coming from us."



**Mohammed Ahmad al-Bowardi, president of the Emirates Falconers Club and deputy chairman of the UAE's Federal Environment Agency supported the UNESCO campaign. "Falconry doesn't only mean the practice of hunting, but also the entire scope of a human heritage that goes back a thousand years."**

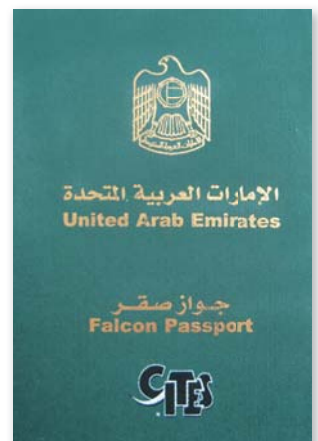
prizes for the Arabian desert hunter. Red meat to make a man's blood strong. The fact that the quarry was hatched in a captive-breeding facility and then stocked within the fenced game reserve is not mentioned. We slowly make our way deeper in, meeting with another small hunting party, led by the younger Mubarak Sultan al-Mansori, with their own falcon—and their own houbara as well.

Mubarak places the houbara carcass in the sand and lifts the falcon's hood for a brief reenactment of the kill. After her short flight, he lures her back onto his fist with more meat and slips the hood back on in one seamless movement, cinching it shut with one leather pull clasped between his finger and thumb and the other between his lips, a gesture as intimate as a kiss. He lifts the houbara up by one wingtip; it's near his chest when the other wingtip just clears the ground. The feathers are magnificent, long around the head and neck, a perfect desert camouflage of buff plumage flecked with black and tipped with a crescent of white. A metal identification ring from the breeding center encircles the tarsus.

We return to camp victorious, but this hunt is an anomaly. In the UAE, houbara are virtually extinct in the wild, and Arab falconers travel far and wide to find them, using specially equipped SUVs that long ago replaced dromedaries. "Life before was simple," Saed Ateq al-Mansori had said last night around the fire. "Now it sometimes seems like a dream. We'd like to bring it back, hunting with camels."

become of the epic oral storytelling of the *Ramayana*, or of Azerbaijani carpet weaving, or the language of the Garifuna? Although there had been discussion among falconers since the mid-1990's about seeking some sort of UNESCO recognition, the 2003 convention, which now lists more than 200 heritage traditions, opened the doors. Abu Dhabi falconers took on coordination of the listing effort, aided by British colleagues, even though Great Britain is not a UNESCO signatory. Part of their motive was a reaction to the increasing restrictions and outright bans on falconers worldwide, including in places like Kenya, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark, where falconers must cross the border to Germany to fly their birds. India allegedly has just a few individuals who are legally allowed to keep birds. New Zealand recently legalized the sport, after a 30-year effort by falconers. The limitations come from an increasing tendency away from hunting and toward conservation, away from captive animals toward wild ones, and amid concerns about species declines. The fact that falconry has often been

**In 2002, the UAE became the first nation to issue a falcon passport to ease the legal transport of birds under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Since then, Saudi Arabia has followed suit.**





seen as an elite, even aristocratic sport—remember Kublai Khan?—hasn't helped it, either.

The late Shaykh Zayed Al-Nahyan recognized this more than 30 years ago. Now carrying on the campaign is a man who was like a son to him, Mohammed Ahmad al-Bowardi, president of the Emirates Falconers Club, secretary-general of the Abu Dhabi Executive Council and deputy chairman of the UAE's Federal Environment Agency. "Falconry doesn't only mean the practice of hunting," he says at the festival, "but also the entire collection of a human heritage that goes back a thousand years."

And this is the key to the UNESCO ICH list: Ancient but present. "Falconry fits all three requirements of an intangible cultural heritage," says Katalin Bogay, president of the General Conference of UNESCO. "It is traditional, it is contemporary, and it is living. Falconry doesn't belong in a museum. It is alive." She pauses, then adds, "It's very romantic, actually, falconry as an intangible cultural heritage."

"This is a *tangible* cultural heritage," disagrees Kent Carnie, founder of the Archives of Falconry at the World Center for Birds of Prey in Boise, Idaho, at a later conference panel. For the falconers from places where falconry is limited, the issue is indeed quite tangible. What is more corporeal than the three peregrines, one booted eagle and one Bonelli's eagle that Zahid Mahmood of Pakistan keeps—though he tells me it is against the law for him to do so? "Of course we keep birds," he says. "We cannot leave our traditions. We've had 900 years of falconry on the subcontinent. I learned from my father and my grandfather. We have in our family a 200-year-old falcon hood, a beautiful piece in the Amritsar style of leatherwork." He shows me photos and laments.

"We need to save this art," echoes Sandeep Shetty of Mumbai, another clandestine falconer.

"What the UNESCO designation has given us is a lot more respect with regard to the authorities," says Bruce Padbury of the South African Falconers Association as we sit on the carpeted floor of a traditional goat-hair tent at the desert camp. "In the last few years, some of the conservation authorities had started to put the screws



**Used for training and regular practice, a falconer's lure is often composed of feathers bundled to resemble a smaller bird. Traditionally the trainer swings it in circles on a pole or line, inducing a chase and, at last, a catch, above. Use of a remote-control model aircraft to do this, opposite, is another way falconers are taking their sport into the 21st century.**

on a little bit. When UNESCO recognized falconry as one of our heritages, they all of a sudden saw that this was not just a little hobby—this has been going on for thousands of years."

In order for a country to be added to the ICH list, it must be a signatory to the UNESCO ICH convention and then create an inventory of its intangible cultural heritage that includes falconry. Pakistan, Austria, Hungary and a handful of other nations are in the process of applying to add falconry for their own nations. Larry Dickerson is the president of the North American Falconry Association. Although the US, like Britain, is not a signatory to the UNESCO ICH convention, he is hopeful. "Without a doubt, the UNESCO designation is the single most important thing to happen to falconry. The US will get a designation. Maybe not in my lifetime, but it will happen."

How to make that happen is part of what brought all these people here. Terry Large, membership chairman of Britain's Hawk Board, advocates getting falconers more into the public eye. "In the European countries, there are increasing limitations on what to hunt," he argues, "but in the UK, we educate people and show our birds. Otherwise, you risk it being too much of an elite thing, and then people don't understand."

I have come to the UAE curious also about women's participation in Arab falconry. I assume it doesn't exist until I sit down next to Hessa al-Falassi, a program presenter with Abu Dhabi television who is there covering the festival. In her late 20's, al-Falassi is the proud owner of a gyr-saker falcon. The elder Saed Ateq al-Mansori is sitting on my other side, and I ask him what he thinks of this young female falconer.

**Once a Bedouin falconer's delicacy, houbara bustards, like the one held here by Mubarak Sultan Al-Mansori, are now a vulnerable species. For the festival, UAE conservation authorities allowed a few to be hunted in the traditional manner inside the Ramah Wildlife Refuge.**







He smiles and says, “It’s fine that she hawks. It’s been a tradition for a long time, and it is good for a child to learn from both parents. That way, he’ll have the tradition deep inside him.”

During the festival, the International Association of Falconry approves establishment of a women’s working group. Belgian falconer Véronique Blontrock tells me that al-Bowardi personally came and congratulated her and the other women. And then he told them that his own mother was a falconer, stitching the hoods for her birds.

Nick Fox, world-renowned falconer, stitched his first falcon hood when he was seven. “It was terrible,” he tells me as we sit in the shade of the camel and horse stables during a moment of respite from his festival organizing work. A golden eagle, an eagle owl and a falcon are all sitting silently on perches, observant yet unaffected by the commotion around them. Unlike in places like Mongolia or Pakistan or the Middle East, where there are familial traditions among falconers, European and American falconers are often solo agents, picking up the interest from books or haphazard sources that today include the Internet. “I didn’t meet my first falconer until I was 19,” Fox tells me, when he stumbled upon the man at a country fair in his native England.

Fox sounds wistful when talking of the intimate connection that falconers had with their birds before telemetry and high-tech captive breeding. Through his company, International Wildlife Consultants, he works extensively with Emirati falconers, and he helped with the UNESCO application. “I’m pressing them to put in conservation areas for hunting,” he says. “I know they would only be interested in hunting houbara and hares, but by

## Falconspeak

“Half the English language derives from falconry terms!” claims falconer Alan Gates. Well, not quite, perhaps—but here are a few familiar words and phrases that have their roots in falconry.

- **Musket** is the word for a male sparrowhawk, which flies quickly from the hand. The bird was likely the inspiration for the name of the muzzle-loaded infantry gun when it was first invented, since the sparrowhawk was a fast-flying object familiar at the time.
- The **cadger** was the man who carried a wooden rack, called a **cadge**, for falcons to perch on during hunts. Often an older falconer, he’d usually stand off to the side of the action, trying to **cadge** tips by spinning good stories. Perhaps some saw him as merely an old babbler, or **codger**.
- A bird of prey is said to **mantle** when it spreads one wing and then the other over the corresponding outstretched leg, or when it shields freshly captured prey from view by spreading both wings and its tail over it, just as a cloak or veil can **mantle** a person.
- When a hawk takes a deep drink, it is called **bousing**. When a person drinks too deeply, it is called **boozing**.
- As a fool can be **hoodwinked** by a deception, slipping a hood over a falcon’s head also plunges the bird into a more literal darkness.
- The rapid dive of a falcon on its prey—a dive that has been clocked at nearly 400 kilometers an hour (250 mph)—is a **stoop**, like the bending forward of a human figure.
- When the jesses are secure, they are either **under your thumb** or **wrapped around your little finger**: Either way, the bird is fully in your control.





Gyr-peregrine



Saker hybrid



Gyr-saker

airplane pulling a lure at the end of a line. As he guides the plane, his teammate releases a gyrfalcon that, after one quick survey, races immediately after that glimmer of flashing feather in the sky. The falcon flaps its wings furiously, rising and rising to catch up to its quarry. But al-Kutbi is an artist. He toys with the falcon, allowing the bird to nearly reach it and then gunning the engine to pull it just out of reach. He cuts to an angle and the bird flies in a loop-the-loop, drawing gasps from the crowd below, all gazing up into the sky, hands shading eyes—but now there are almost more murmurings about the skill of the pilot than the falcon. No one has seen anything like this before. A plane! To train a bird! Once her talons finally sink into the lure, the gyrfalcon pulls it free from the plane and descends to earth.

As al-Kutbi flies, I speak to another team member, Abdulla Ibrahim al-Mahmoud. The idea of using a plane came up about six years ago in Dubai. “We believe in tradition,” he says, “but we also believe in technology.” He waves his hand around, taking in the six falcons sitting on perches outside their tent, but also the gleaming white SUVs parked in the sand and the plane zipping overhead. “With the plane, we can get the bird to go faster and higher, and teach it to turn very quickly. Then when we hunt, anything we find in front of us, the falcon can get.” Gyr-peregrine hybrids are the best mix, in his consideration. And the best prey? “Houbara! It’s good. A red meat. We go to Jordan, Pakistan, Russia and Turkmenistan to hunt. You follow the track of the animal you’re hunting. If you’re a good hunter, then you don’t leave a single one behind.”

default the areas would allow other species to live as well. And if they wanted to hunt, they’d have to use camels, dogs and their feet. It automatically limits things.”

The conservation ethic within falconry is complicated. While excessive hunting and taking birds from the wild to keep in captivity have caused the demise of some species, it is also falconers who helped bring others back from near extinction—notably the peregrine falcon in North America. “We’re up against conservationists who say anti-falconry things even though falconry and falcon-breeding projects have had an unmatched level of success when it comes to conservation and species protection,” Alan Gates, chair of the Campaign for Falconry UK, tells me. “All around the world there are examples of conservation projects that couldn’t have happened without falconers,” he says. “They dismiss falconers”—he waves dismissively—“but it’s everything in our brains that has helped them do so much of their conservation work.”

Yet falconry has changed over time. “Until recently, it was not a sport, but a subsistence enterprise,” says Ken Riddle, an American falconer who has worked in the Middle East for 20 years. “It was a family and social practice. Boys would start learning at five or six years old from their fathers. Now, it has evolved into a labor-intensive activity with the training of captive-bred birds. Now, it’s the sport of the chase.”

We witness this when Khalifa al-Kutbi of the Abu Dhabi Sports Club, black curls escaping from beneath his white *ghutra*, mans the control box of a radio-controlled model



Gyr-peregrine





Gyr-saker

Like so many here, al-Mahmoud learned falconry from his father. “He remembers when falconry didn’t have all the technology. The simple part is what he misses. Me, I don’t miss it, because I grew up with all this. But my parents, they can be sad about it.”

And who knows, really, how many falconers are out there, off the radar of this increasingly organized sport, practicing falconry in the old ways? Who knows how many falconers there are at all? When I asked Larry Dickerson, he makes a wild guess and says 65,000. I heard other people say that the largest number of falconers is in the Middle East. Or China. Or Pakistan. No one knows for sure.

I pose the “art versus sport” question to him, too. He sighs and composes himself before answering in his North Carolina drawl. “If you’re a dedicated falconer, it’s more than a sport. It’s a lifestyle, really,” he begins. “Think about it. You’ve really got to have a genetic imbalance to keep birds. You’re dealing with something that can hurt you if you do something wrong. Retribution can be swift and occasionally violent. You want to call it a sport, okay. You want to call it an art, okay. But it’s more than both of those things.”

There is a moment, away from the group camel rides and the campfires and the plane buzzing circles in the sky, when that something more reveals itself in the amber light. Nick Fox, desert-chapped and windswept, says he needs to fly his bird. It is a daily task that falconers cannot sidestep, a forced and embedded meditation. It’s late in the afternoon, on the edge of camp, and only a few people are watching. As he lifts the hood from the falcon’s head, everything complicated about this practice falls away: the big business of birds, the institutionalized breeding, the dearth of prey species, the campaigns against taking fledglings from wild raptor nests.

All of that vanishes as the bird lifts off his fist. And the memory of what all this festival pageantry is about returns. It is this: Something eternal is at play here. It is composed of three elements: a human, a bird of prey, and an open landscape suitable for flight.

And, oh, the flight these birds are capable of! The raptor has a singular focus on the lure that Fox is whirling round and round. It is a juvenile male bird, and his vision is locked like a missile on the movement of the lure, as his body spins, twists and circles. He is

concentrating on the lure, but we are all concentrating on him, and I wonder what the real lure is? What is the reason we’re all standing here in the sand? Falconry taps into something primordial. It allows a roller-coaster ride while standing with two feet on the ground, neck craning back and forth. It is time alternately suspended and speeded up, as the falcon hovers at the top of his pendulum arc and then tucks his wings and seizes gravity. It is the sound of the wings slicing the air when he comes within a few feet. It is flight imagined for our own earthbound species.

Fox flies the bird for ten numinous minutes, pulling the lure just out of reach over and over until he finally lets the bird catch his quarry. Then he does the bait-and-switch, lifting the bird onto the glove where he holds a fresh piece of meat, and pulling the feathered



lure out from under him. I feel as if I have just witnessed the prayers of a dedicated monk belonging to a religious order I don’t quite understand. The sun continues to sink, and though the day is over, somehow, it feels as if it has just begun. ☉



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# Linking Med to Red

WRITTEN BY JOHN COOPER



If a story recounted by Aristotle is to be believed, then it was Pharaoh Senwosret III who, in the mid-19th century BCE, first ordered construction of a canal from the Nile to the Red Sea. He did not succeed. Opposite: Some 3800 years later, French cartographers noted on this map of the Nile Delta the route of the first canal, from Bilbeis to Suez, but they left out the more recent Roman and Arab canal, which extended to Cairo.

It is the year 638 CE, the “Year of Ashes” on the Arabian Peninsula, which is beset by a terrible drought. Just six years after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah find themselves in dire peril, their citizens, and many refugees from the countryside, facing starvation. Casting around for assistance, Caliph ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab writes from Madinah to ‘Amr ibn al-‘As, his general in Egypt, urging him to send food to feed the hungry in the Hijaz, the Islamic heartland.

‘Amr had not yet completely subdued Egypt when he received the caliph’s orders, but the historical record tells us that he did not stint, sending a huge camel caravan laden with food, most likely wheat and barley, to ‘Umar. The caravan made its way from the Nile Valley across the Sinai Peninsula, then south through the Hijaz Mountains to Madinah, a journey of some 1300 kilometers (800 mi) that took a month to complete.

The caravan leader carried a response from ‘Amr to the caliph. “I have sent you camels,” he wrote. “The first is with you in Madinah; the last is just leaving me in Egypt.” In between, says the ninth-century Egyptian historian Ibn ‘Abd al-Hakam, an unbroken file of animals carried the bounty of the Nile to the Hijaz. When they reached Madinah, ‘Umar allocated one camel, with its load, to each household. Both the animals and their cargo were eaten by the hungry recipients. Other caravans came from lands to the north, and catastrophe was thus narrowly averted.

The effort had stretched caravan transport to its limits, however, and the lesson of the vulnerability of the Holy Cities, as well as the importance of the bounty of Egypt, was not lost on the caliph. ‘Umar wrote again to ‘Amr with a plan. “I wish to excavate a canal from Egypt’s Nile, so that its waters will flow to the sea,” Ibn ‘Abd al-Hakam quotes ‘Umar as saying. “That way, it will be easier to transport food to Makkah and Madinah. Consult among yourselves to settle the matter.”

‘Umar’s idea was not as extraordinary as it first sounds. In fact, it was based on the memory that such a canal had in fact existed when Egypt was under Roman rule, and that ships carrying grain from Egypt had indeed sailed to the Hijaz in the past. By the time of the Islamic conquest of Egypt, however, the canal had fallen out of use and was blocked with sand and debris.





- Persian & Ptolemaic canal
- Roman & Arab canal
- Route in common
- Suez canal (1869-present)
- passage through Bitter Lakes



‘Amr’s companions were perturbed by ‘Umar’s plan, and the leaders of Egypt’s native Copts were particularly displeased, for they doubted the project would be as commercially beneficial for them as it would be for Arabia. Ibn ‘Abd al-Hakam reports that they urged ‘Amr to impress upon ‘Umar that the project “is immoderate. It will not happen. We don’t see a way.” But ‘Umar was not to be deterred. “I shall make it a command that no ship shall sail in the [Red] sea except with food for the peoples of Makkah and Madinah,” he vowed.



It was the Persian king Darius I (“the Great”), depicted above on a gold coin issued during his reign in the fifth century BCE, who opened the first canal for which we have archeological evidence. Lower: Inscriptions on this stele, found in 1866 near Suez and now in the Louvre in Paris, testify to Darius’s achievement.

When ‘Amr realized ‘Umar was in earnest, he quickly set about the task of restoring the ancient Nile–Red Sea canal. According to Ibn ‘Abd al-Hakam, a Copt showed ‘Amr the route of the old Roman canal. In return, he and his family were exempted from the poll tax. For the most part, the Canal of the Commander of the Faithful, as it was named in honor of the caliph, followed the route cut by the Roman canal, with one major exception: It had to find a new connection to the Nile to avoid land already earmarked for the construction of Fustat, Egypt’s new Islamic capital, the predecessor of modern Cairo. The new canal mouth was located at the site of today’s Sayyida Zaynab Square in the heart of Cairo.

From its mouth on the Nile to its terminus at the Red Sea port of al-Qulzum (modern Suez), the canal coursed a remarkable 170 kilometers (105 mi). The 14th-century Mamluk historian Ibn Duqmaq tells us: “No sooner had [‘Amr] brought effort to bear than ships were moving in it as they had before.... Ships ... were arriving in the Hijaz in the seventh month [after the start of excavation].” ‘Amr himself traveled on one of those ships to make the pilgrimage to Makkah.

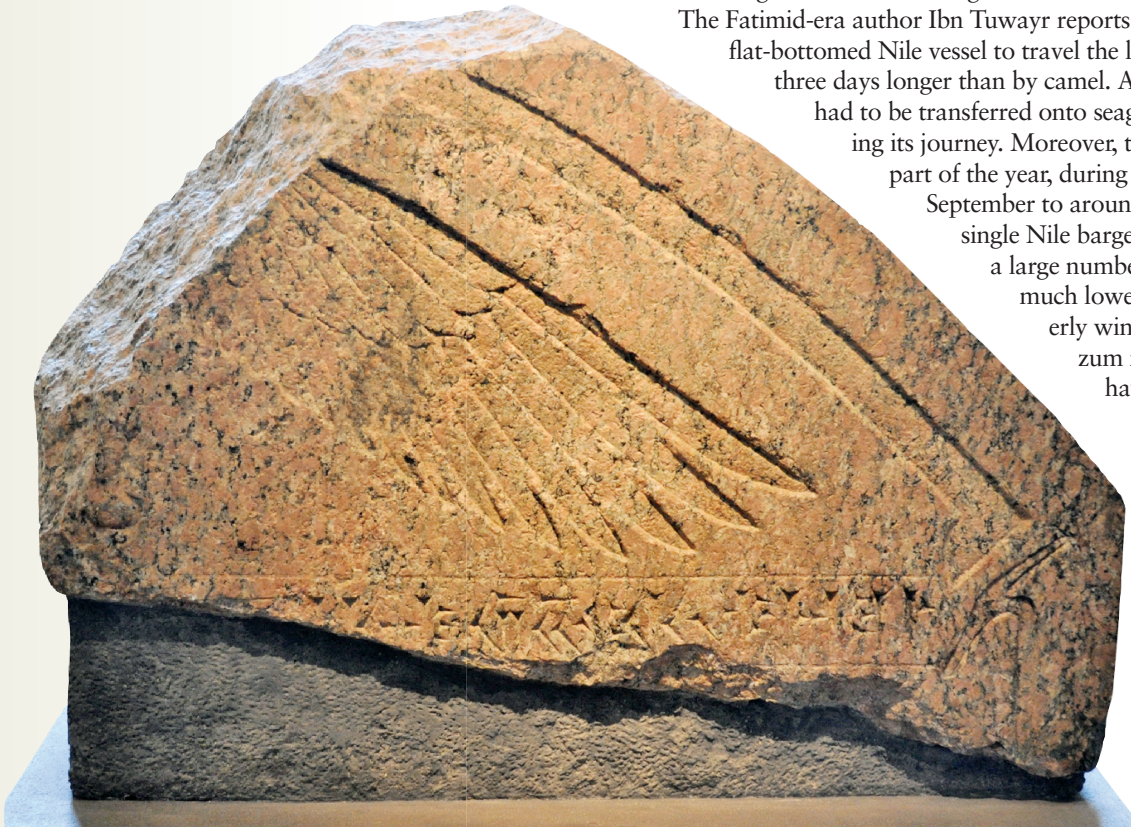
The canal took advantage of some features of the Egyptian landscape. The first section followed the eastern fringe of the low-lying Nile Delta for about 80 kilometers (50 mi), and then struck east for around 65 kilometers (40 miles) along the Wadi Tumaylat. That was a dry east-west valley that had been cut through the northern extension of the Muqattam Hills by an ancient branch of the Nile that had once emptied into the Red Sea instead of the Mediterranean. The final leg south to the sea at al-Qulzum followed the Isthmus of Suez, a tectonic depression along which the modern Suez Canal runs today.

The main advantage of the canal was not so much enhanced speed as its capacity to deliver large amounts of strategic food reserves to the granaries of Arabia.

The Fatimid-era author Ibn Tuwayr reports that it took five days for a flat-bottomed Nile vessel to travel the length of the canal—two or three days longer than by camel. And at al-Qulzum, the cargo had to be transferred onto seagoing vessels, further slowing its journey. Moreover, the canal could only be used part of the year, during the annual Nile flood from September to around February. Nevertheless, a single Nile barge or Red Sea ship could replace a large number of camels and operate at a much lower cost. And the steady northerly winds that blow from al-Qulzum in the northern Red Sea would have enabled ships to arrive at the ports of the Hijaz

in less than two weeks, safe from the predations of desert raiders.

‘Umar’s canal transformed the fortunes of the Holy Cities, bringing unprecedented food security to the residents of the Hijaz. Egypt had once been the breadbasket of Rome and Byzantium; now its rich soils could sustain the Islamic heartlands.





The scheme to supply the Hijaz with Egyptian food was not without its teething problems, however, and the villains of the piece, financial speculators, are familiar to the modern reader. To ensure fair distribution of Egyptian grain when shipments arrived at al-Jar, the port of Madinah, 'Umar issued ration certificates to the people that entitled them to a share of the supplies. Initially, the situation was desperate and people were hungry. But soon a secondary market in the certificates emerged, and prices soared. Certain traders, including one dealer named Hakim bin Hizam, were accused of profiteering. 'Umar ruled that trade in certificates for food that had not yet arrived was unethical, and Hakim was ordered to make amends by distributing his profits to the poor.

'Umar was the latest in a long line of leaders to have pursued the idea of joining the Red Sea at Suez to the Nile, either to link the Nile Valley to the eastern seas or to serve as a bridge between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean. While the notion of a Suez canal is today usually associated with the great 19th-century engineer Ferdinand de Lesseps, the Frenchman was actually heir to an ambition that goes back 2500 years, and possibly more.

When the Greek historian Herodotus visited Egypt in the mid-fifth century BCE, he saw for himself the first of the Nile-Red Sea canals for which we have clear archeological evidence: that of the Persian king Darius the Great (522–486 BCE). “This [canal] is four days’ voyage in length,” wrote Herodotus, “and it was dug wide enough for two triremes to move in it rowed abreast”—a width of at least 25 meters (82'), allowing a little for clearance.

**The main advantage of the canal was its capacity to deliver much larger cargoes than could be carried by caravans.**

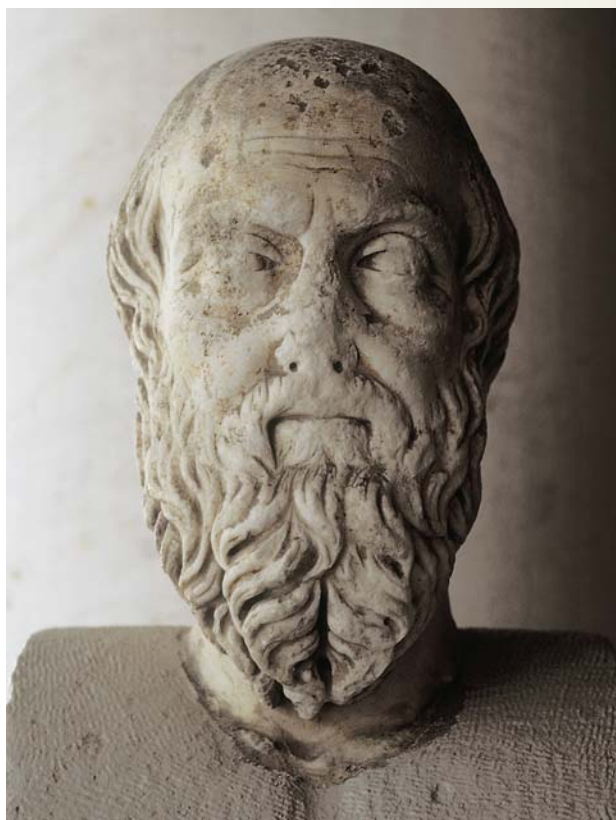
Darius himself showed no false modesty about his achievement. He dotted the route of his canal, which started near Bubastis on the easternmost branch of the Nile, with four prominent monuments inscribed in hieroglyphs, Old Persian, Elamite and Babylonian. On them he boasted: “I am a Persian; from Persia I seized Egypt; I gave orders to dig this canal from [the] Nile ... to the sea which goes from Persia. Afterward, this canal was dug as I had ordered, and ships went from Egypt through this canal to Persia.”

Apart from demonstrating Persian imperial power to his Egyptian subjects, Darius’s canal was also about booty: exporting the wondrous, and often heavy, products of the Nile to Persia. Indeed, the famous statue of Darius himself that was discovered by archeologists in 1972 at Susa—carved in an Egyptian style out of grey-wacke sandstone quarried in Egypt’s Eastern Desert—must have been shipped to Persia via the canal.

There may have been even earlier attempts to cut a canal to the Red Sea. The Greek philosopher Aristotle recounts a story that a pharaoh called Sesostris—probably Senwosret III (1845–1837 BCE)—contemplated digging one, but gave up for fear that the sea would flood Egypt. And Herodotus himself says that a pharaoh named Neccho, probably the 26th-Dynasty ruler Neccho II, started work on a canal some 12 centuries later, but halted when a soothsayer advised him to turn his attentions to war in the Levant instead. According to Herodotus, 120,000 people died in the excavation attempt.

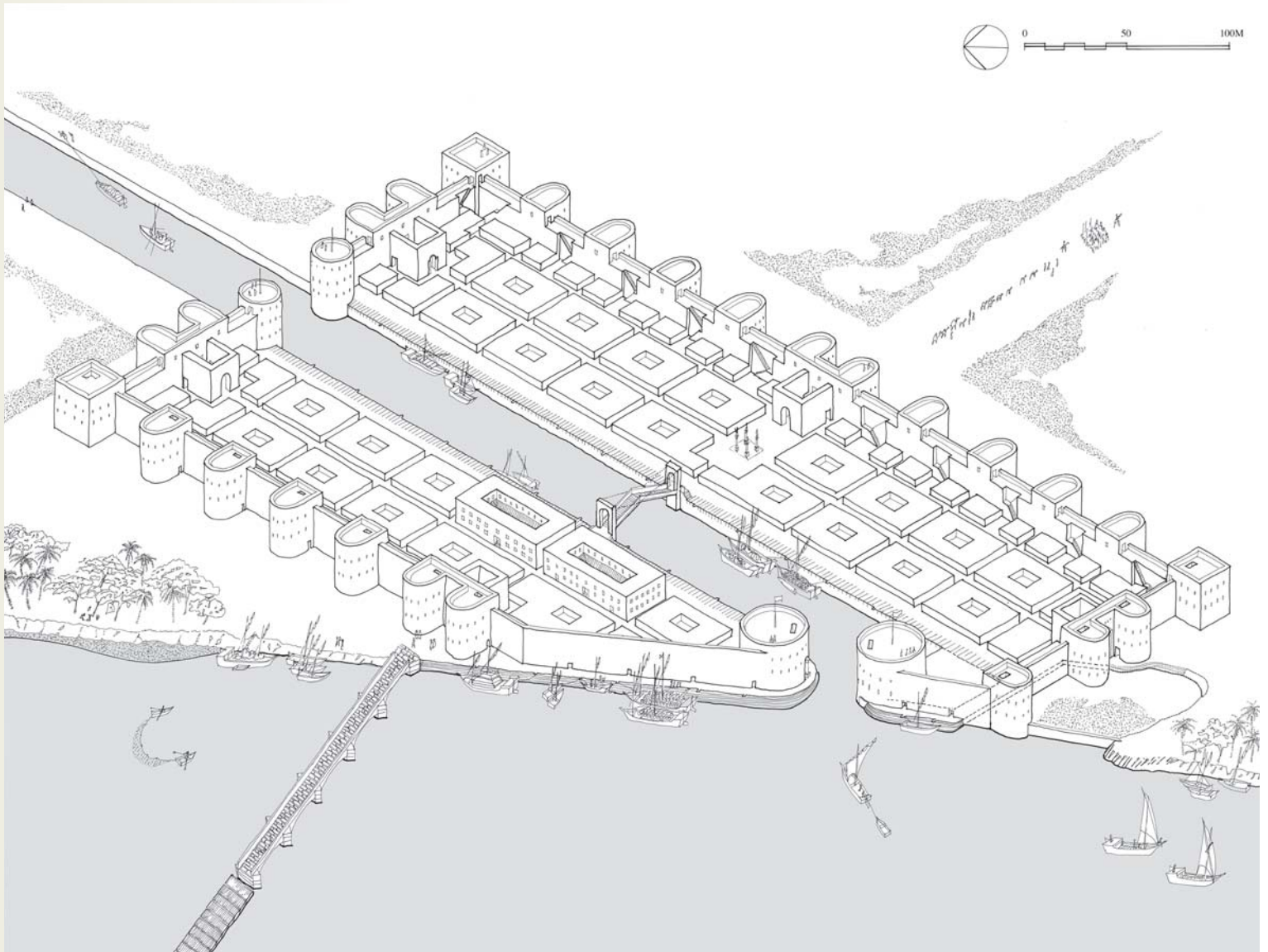
We do not know for certain that the Persian canal ever truly fell out of use, but Ptolemy II Philadelphus, who reigned from 283 to 246 BCE, claims credit for having excavated a new one. In fact, several ancient Greek authors, their anti-Persian prejudices showing, falsely claim that Ptolemy II was the first to succeed in cutting a canal to the sea, and that Darius before him had failed.

If Darius’s canal was about transporting imperial loot out of Egypt, then the Ptolemaic canal reversed that direction. Under the dynasty established by the successor of Alexander the Great, Egypt was no longer the vassal of a foreign power, but the seat of an empire in its own right. Ptolemy faced competition abroad, from the Seleucids who had inherited the eastern territories of Alexander’s empire. They had access to war elephants from India, and to match them in the imperial arms race, the Ptolemies needed elephants of

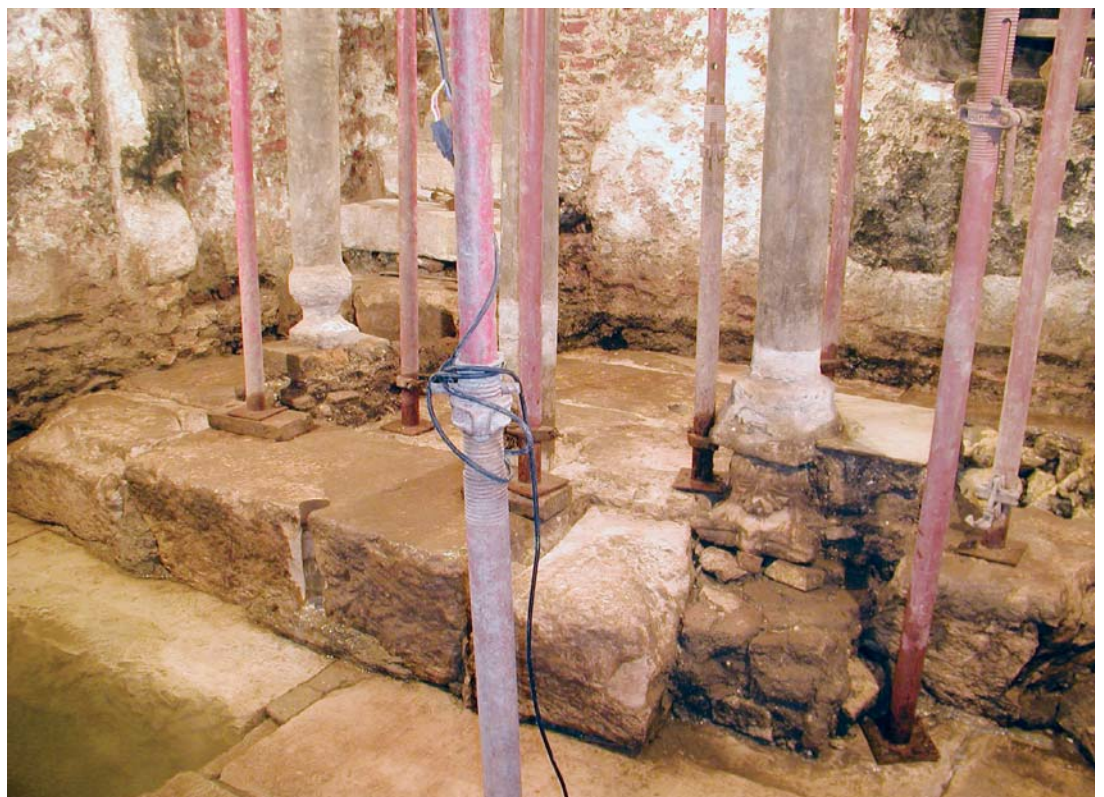


**Greek historian Herodotus wrote the first eyewitness account of a Nile-to-Red-Sea canal: “Four days’ voyage in length,” its width likely exceeded 25 meters, for he noted it was “dug wide enough for two triremes to move in it rowed abreast.”**





The Roman canal opened to the Nile at a port known as Babylon. Near this site, depicted above, some 500 years later, the first Islamic capital in Egypt was founded, and 300 years after that, the city of Cairo. Since Roman days, the Nile has moved west by nearly a kilometer, and Cairo's Metro rail line runs nearly along the old embankment. Right: Once part of a quay, these recently excavated steps are among the few remaining traces of the canal.





their own. The solution lay in an expedition south along the African coast of the Red Sea to what today are Sudan and Eritrea.

A hieroglyphic stone uncovered by Swiss archeologist Édouard Naville at Tell al-Maskhuta in Wadi Tumaylat in the late 19th century boasts of Ptolemy's excavation of the canal. It tells how the pharaoh sent one of his generals on an expedition via his newly excavated canal to establish a colony: "He made there fields and cultivated them with plows and cattle. He caught elephants in great number for the king, and he brought them as marvels for the king on his vessels on the sea. He brought them also on the Eastern Canal; no such thing had ever been done by any of the kings of the whole earth."

But it was the first-century Roman emperor Trajan whose canal-digging efforts left the greatest legacy for 'Umar to exploit in his seventh-century relief of the Holy Cities. Earlier canals had departed from the Nile along its easternmost branch. By Trajan's time, however, that branch was beginning to dwindle, so his engineers came up with the idea of extending the new canal south, upstream, beyond the head of the Delta, to the fort of Babylon in today's Old Cairo. Probably more than any other act, this decision determined the location of Egypt's capital today.

The emperor Diocletian (reigned 284–305 CE) added new fortifications to the fort and the canal mouth in the late third and early fourth centuries CE, and it was there, 350 years later, that Egypt's Byzantine rulers made their last stand against 'Amr's army. It was outside the walls of the fort that the besieging 'Amr pitched his tent, and it was around his tent that the new Islamic capital of Fustat was founded. And three centuries later, it was nearby, along the Trajanic canal's east bank, that the Fatimids would lay out their fabulous new city of Cairo in 969 CE.

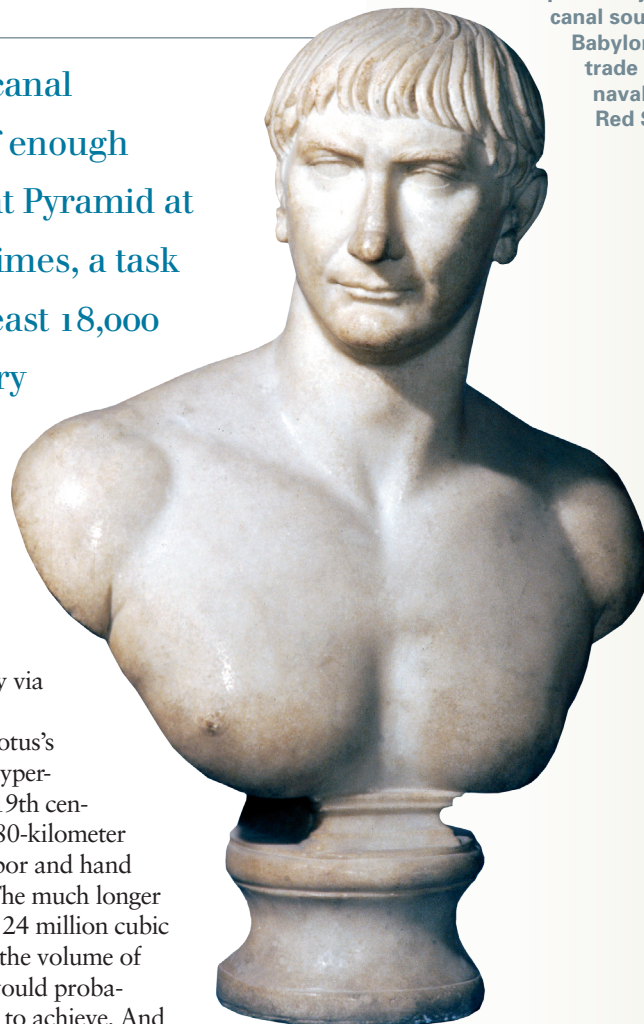
Trajan's canal looked east to naval dominance of the Red Sea, to links with the newly conquered province of Arabia Petrea, to the mines and quarries of Egypt's Eastern Desert, to the important incense-producing lands of Arabia Felix and to the growing trade in luxury goods with India and East Africa. But the canal also served a more regional trade. The large number of late-Roman Egyptian amphorae that archeologists have found at Aqaba, at modern Jordan's southern tip, suggest that Egyptian wine might have been one of the canal's exports. From the writings of Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam, it appears that Egyptian grain was also being traded in the Hijaz, implicitly via a canal, in the period before Islam.

Building the canal, in any era, was no mean feat. Herodotus's claim that Neccho's attempt cost 120,000 lives smacks of hyperbole, but it may be based on a kernel of truth. In the early 19th century, when the Egyptian ruler Muhammad Ali built a new 80-kilometer (50-mi) canal from Cairo to Alexandria, using conscript labor and hand tools, reports said that 20,000 people died in the process. The much longer Red Sea canal probably required the removal of more than 24 million cubic meters of earth (31.5 million cubic yards), almost 10 times the volume of the Great Pyramid of Cheops at Giza. From scratch, that would probably have taken 18,000 people working every day for a year to achieve. And



Above: **We do not know whether or not Darius's canal ever fell out of use, but in the third century BCE, Egyptian ruler Ptolemy II Philadelphus claimed credit for excavating a new one, and he named its Red Sea port after his queen, Arsinoe II, who appears next to him on this gold eight-drachma coin.** Lower: **In the early second century CE, Roman emperor Trajan extended the canal south to the Nile at Babylon, both to boost trade and to project naval power into the Red Sea.**

**The 170-kilometer canal required removal of enough earth to fill the Great Pyramid at Giza more than 10 times, a task that would take at least 18,000 people working every day for a year.**





The canal was open only a few months each year. Only when the Nile flood rose high enough, as measured on the Nilometer, below, was the signal given to open the canal. This occasioned annual festivities, as an engraver depicted, lower, in this plate published in the *Description de l’Egypte*.



with silt carried by the river and sand blown in from the desert, maintaining the canal as a working waterway would have been a never-ending process. In that respect, ‘Amr’s re-excavation of the Roman canal would have been relatively easier to do, since it was largely a case of clearing out the course of the defunct Roman canal. ‘Amr’s route diverged from the Roman one only in making a new connection to the river that avoided Fustat.

The fact that the Nile–Red Sea canal operated seasonally also made maintenance of the waterway easier. From about January to August, the water level of the Nile was too low to fill the canal, rendering it idle. During this time, workers could have labored to keep it clear.

When the Nile began to rise in June, the entrance of the canal, like those of others throughout Egypt, would have been blocked by a temporary earth dam. Medieval historians tell us that it was only when the Nile reached 16 cubits (about 8.3 meters, or nearly 28') on the scale of the great Nilometer on Roda Island in Cairo that the signal to break the dam was given. That event was surrounded by great festivities, since the 16-cubit mark meant not only that the canal would flow again, but also that the annual flood was considered “complete”: Egypt would be irrigated, famine averted, and authorities would be able to levy the full land tax at harvest time.

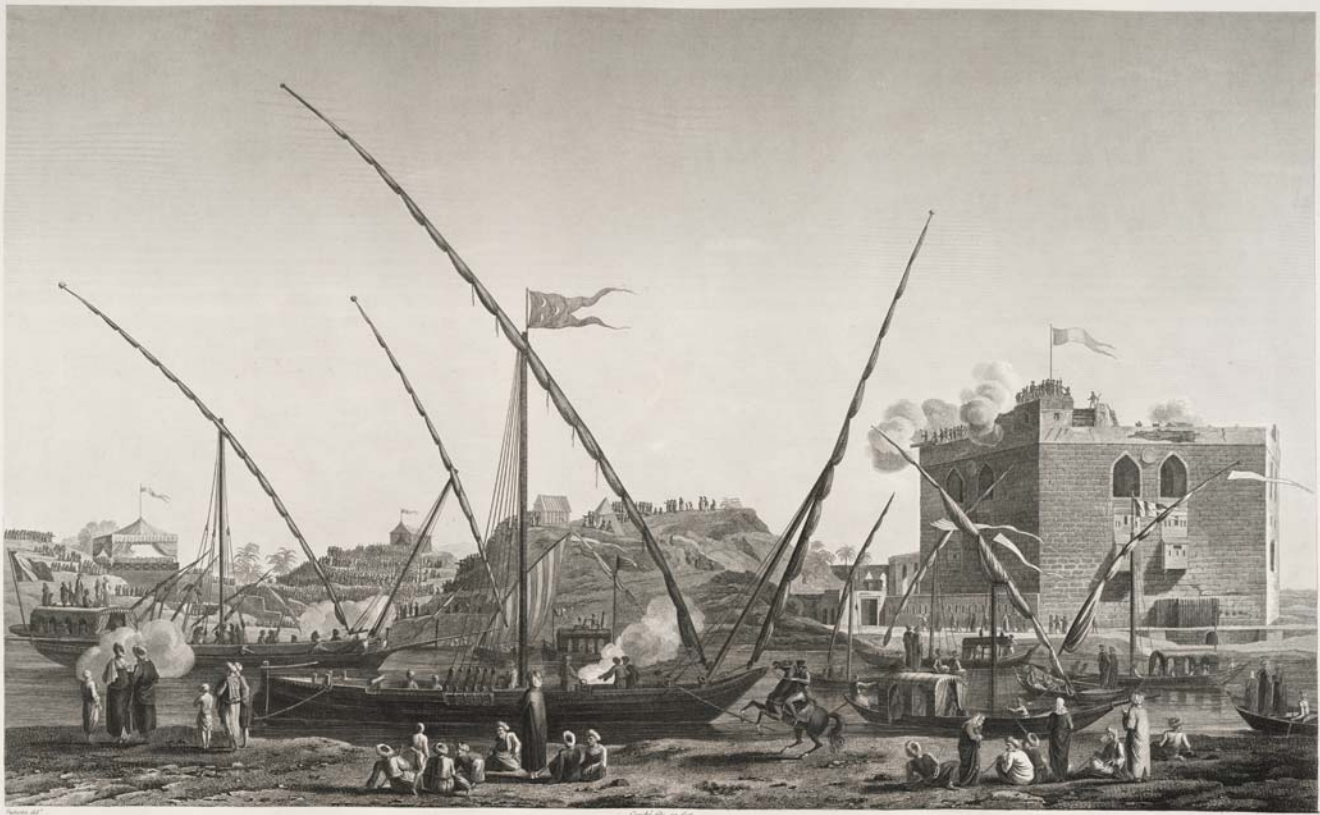
What became of Caliph ‘Umar’s canal? It operated for about 114 years, carrying agricultural produce to Arabia, until, in 754 and 755 CE, there was an uprising in Madinah against the new Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad. The caliph, al-Mansur, ordered the canal blocked to cut the supply of food to the Holy Cities and choke off the rebellion—an

The last stretch of the canal to have water in it was in Cairo, and it was filled in and paved in 1898 to combat cholera.

E.M. Vol.I.

ENVIRONS DU KAIRE.

Pl. 19.



VUE DE LA PRISE D'EAU DU CANAL DU KAIRE, ET DE LA FÊTE QU'ON CÉLÈBRE ANNUELLEMENT A L'OUVERTURE DE LA DIGUE.



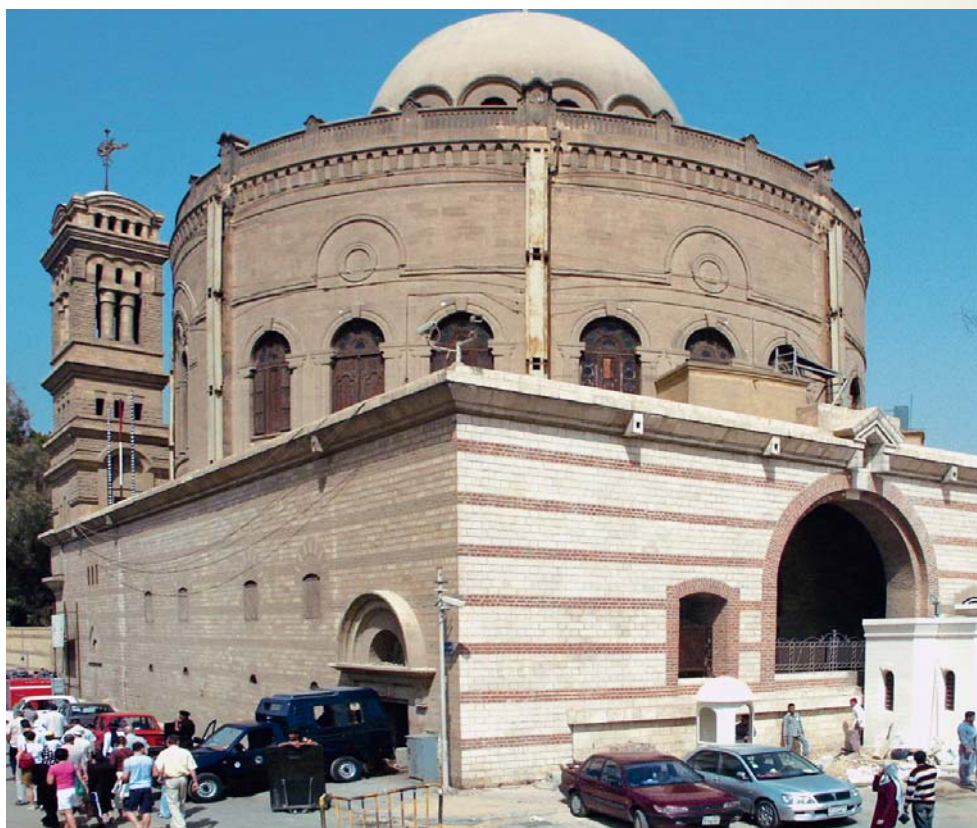
exact reversal of 'Umar's motivation for reopening it in the first place. The Canal of the Commander of the Faithful continued to flow through Cairo and as far as the central Wadi Tumaylat—about half its original length—throughout the medieval period, becoming known as the Cairo Canal.

On seeing the vestiges of the canal in 1776, the Franco-Hungarian officer Baron de Tott reckoned that it could be restored with only a little excavation work. Maps from the early 19th century still showed its course running all the way to Suez. Early in the 20th century, the French archeologist Claude Bourdon found extensive remains of the ancient canal mouth and its associated harbor in the sea lagoon at Suez, and more recent work by Peter Sheehan, who directed archeological work in Old Cairo by the American Research Center in Egypt, has pinpointed the entrance of the Roman canal under the modern buildings and streets there.

Although it had remained visible for millennia, the last 150 years have not been so kind to what is left of the ancient Suez canal: Its traces have been almost entirely obliterated by agricultural and urban development. At Suez, where 90 years ago Bourdon had been able to map the concrete wharves and jetties of the ancient Roman and Islamic harbor, urban expansion, land reclamation, unregulated dumping and excavation for fish farms have heavily encroached upon the archeological remains.

The last surviving stretch of the canal with water in it, the portion running through Cairo, was filled in and paved in 1898 to combat cholera. If you go to Cairo today, you will be hard pressed to find any explicit evidence that the canal ever existed. Yet its route through the city is marked by the broad Port Said Street, which cuts the metropolis in two. The belvederes and ornate balconies of the few remaining Ottoman mosques and houses on the street, which today give views of the city's unending traffic snarl, would once have looked out over scenes of summer pleasure boats plying the canal's waters.

For another relic of the canal, head for the unprepossessing Fumm al-Khalig Square on the modern Nile Corniche beside Roda Island. Its name, which means "Canal Mouth Square," marks the final mouth of the Islamic-era canal. It is this unremarkable corner of Cairo that bears last witness to the waterway that once linked Egypt to Arabia, and that gave succor to the Holy Cities in the earliest years of the Islamic state. 🌐



The uniquely circular St. George's Church in Cairo is built on the foundation of one of the two Roman towers that flanked the entrance to the canal.



**John Cooper** (J.P.Cooper@exeter.ac.uk) is a research fellow on the MARES Project, focusing on the peoples of the Red Sea and the Gulf, at the University of Exeter's Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies. He has visited and done research around al-Qulzum, the Red Sea port of the seventh-century Suez canal.



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'Amr ibn al-'As: J/F 05

Suez Canal: M/J 85, S/O 77, S/O 75

Nilometer: M/J 06, S/O 85



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**Abundance from the Desert: Classical Arabic Poetry.** Raymond Farrin. 2011, Syracuse UP, 978-0-81563-222-1, \$24.95 hb. In recent centuries, some literary critics have denounced classical Arabic poetry as monotonous and lacking in structural cohesiveness. In this book, Raymond Farrin

brilliantly disproves such claims. He presents 13 of the greatest poets and genres of classical Arabic poetry from 500 to 1250 CE. The author introduces each major poetic genre and the life of the poet being featured, putting the verses into context. After presenting each poem, he charts its structure, demonstrating that each poem has a center, with symmetry at the beginning and end. Arab history unfolds before the reader as he or she moves through the poems. This book requires no background in Arabic, and it will give both general readers and specialists a deeper appreciation of the Arabs’ enormous poetic legacy.

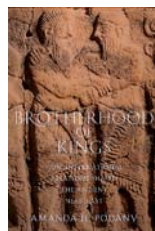
—KAY HARDY CAMPBELL



**Aleppo Observed: Ottoman Syria Through the Eyes of Two Scottish Doctors, Alexander and Patrick Russell.** Maurits H. van den Boogert. 2010, Oxford UP, 978-0-19958-856-5, \$250 hb. This remarkable publication, coffee-table sized and richly illustrated with maps, portraits, and facsimile pages

of text and prints taken from early European travelogues about the Near East, presents the life and work of two Arabic-speaking and Arabic-manuscript-collecting brothers resident in Aleppo’s small British mercantile community during the mid-18th century. Their own 1756 work, entitled *The Natural History of Aleppo*, was based on the first scientifically informed western observations of the city’s flora, fauna, social customs and medical practices. Perhaps their most interesting chapters, as critically reviewed by Maurits van den Boogert, concern the stereotypical European obsession with the harem, as always invisible to male eyes, which stands in ill-informed contrast to the more accurate first-person account written by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu about Istanbul at roughly the same time.

—LOU WERNER

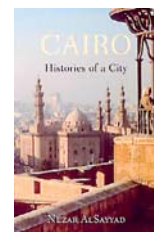


**Brotherhood of Kings: How International Relations Shaped the Ancient Near East.** Amanda H. Podany. 2010, Oxford UP, 978-0-19531-398-7, \$34.95 hb. Amanda H. Podany has produced a knowledgeable, readable, even delightful study of a broad swath of the ancient world (2300-1300 BCE), which

includes Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia and Persia. She carefully draws on decades of work by many scholars for a book that is full of real people—how they dressed and acted. What is new and fascinating here is the tracing of a slowly expanding system by which kings consciously attempted, albeit not always successfully, to decrease war and destruction by diplomatic exchange, which had a variety of registers, including trade in precious goods for an elite lifestyle, diplomats, women for marriage and circulation of images of deities. The language of these exchanges tied the kings into a common

“family,” envisioned as a group of brothers, partly fictive and partly actual.

—STEWART GORDON

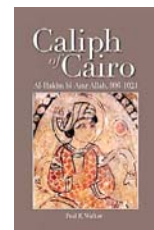


**Cairo: Histories of a City.** Nezar AlSayyad. 2011, Harvard UP, 978-0-674-04786-0, \$29.95 hb.

This highly readable, idiosyncratic history of Cairo uses some of the city’s key landmarks—from a small sphinx in ancient Memphis to a revolving modern restaurant atop the Cairo Tower, from

Bab Zuwayla in the medieval city to Sadat’s tomb in the new suburb of Madinat al-Nasr—as route finders in a word map depicting a great urban pageant. Such an interweaving of places and times highlights the disjunctures between past and present, as punctuated at 12 symbolic turning points, one per illustrative chapter, over the city’s 5000 years. Nezar AlSayyad is an architect, so such a concrete approach to the built environment, one that finds significant yet often subconscious meaning in a canal filled in, a wall taken down or a government office block erected, makes perfect sense when in fact what is being depicted is less an urban plan than a capital city’s intellectual and social development.

—LOU WERNER



**Caliph of Cairo: Al Hakim bi-Amr Allah, 996-1021.** Paul E. Walker. 2009, American University in Cairo Press, 978-9-77416-328-9, \$29.95 hb.

Al Hakim is one of Islam’s most notorious rulers, exalted by some but abhorred by others for his inexplicably cruel and random decisions, deci-

sions for which he would inevitably make amends. This book at times reads like a page-turning novel as the author attempts to tell us Hakim’s story, relying heavily on the accounts of Al-Maqrizi, the medieval Islamic historian. At other times, it is bogged down by repeated explanations of events. *Caliph of Cairo* is an interesting read that, unfortunately, ends up leaving us with more questions than answers about Al Hakim and his motives.

—ALIA YUNIS



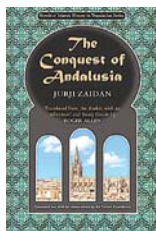
**The Conference of the Birds.**

Peter Sis. 2011, Penguin Press, 978-1-59420-306-0, \$27.95 hb. Peter Sis, an award-winning children’s-book illustrator, has created a masterpiece of visual music in his first work for adults. An adaptation of the eponymous epic poem

*Mantiq al-Tayr*, written in 12th-century Persia by Farid al-Din Attar, it portrays the perilous journey by all the birds of the world to find their king, a legendary bird called the Simurgh, who will free them from their troubles. Only 30 birds reach the realm of the Simurgh (a word meaning “30 birds” in Persian), where they realize that they themselves are the object of their search. The story unfolds on high-quality, textured pages that give the feeling of an original artwork. Sis’s insightfully abridged and brilliantly illustrated work captures the essence of the original poem and enriches it with dreamlike landscapes and intricate patterns that invite readers to embark on their own journeys of contemplative perseverance.

—ELIF M. GÖKÇİÇDEM





### The Conquest of Andalusia.

Jurji Zaidan, Roger Allen, trans. 2011, Zaidan Foundation, 978-0-615-49959-8, \$24.95 pb.

Jurji Zaidan (1861–1914) was a Lebanese writer of the Arab *nahda*, or cultural renaissance, of the late 19th century, whose 22 popular novels narrating stories of Arab pride and

triumph were aimed at a growing audience for this heretofore western literary form. This work, the first in a translation project to put Zaidan's oeuvre into English, blends a fictional love story with the historically accurate account of the Muslim invasion of Spain in the year 711, which began what is broadly considered a golden age of Arab civilization. While the writing style, plot and dialogue might seem dated or contrived to readers today, the story's vigor is nonetheless brought to life by the estimable Arabic literary scholar Roger Allen, who also provides an afterword and study guide. Paired with British-Pakistani author Tariq Ali's novel *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree*, about the fall of Granada in 1492, Zaidan's book acts as the front bookend to a historical period usually read from a purely Islamophobic point of view.

—LOU WERNER



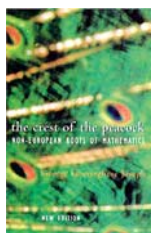
### Creative Lives: Portraits of Lebanese Artists.

Sierra Prasada and Roger Moukartzel. 2009, Turning Point, 978-9-95301-584-2, \$35 hb.

The image of Lebanon as an ongoing war zone with cities still dotted by

bullet-scarred buildings is well known to the world. Yet there is another face of Lebanon—one that survived and flourished within this stark landscape. Journalist Sierra Prasada and photographer Roger Moukartzel portray 31 resident Lebanese artists, architects, musicians, sculptors, innovators and entrepreneurs who represent the vibrant artistic and cultural renaissance of postwar Lebanon. Alissar Caracalla, choreographer for her family's famed Caracalla Dance Theatre; filmmaker Nadine Labaki, who co-wrote, directed and starred in the film *Caramel*; fashion designer Zuhair Murad; interior designer Nabil Dada; and sculptors Anachar Basbous and Hussein Madi are among those interviewed. Although each story is unique, all illustrate the tenacious and creative spirit that is fueling Lebanon's artistic awakening.

—PINEY KESTING



### The Crest of the Peacock: Non-European Roots of Mathematics.

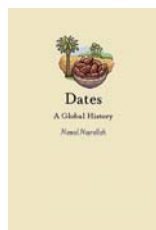
George Gheverghese Joseph. 2011, Princeton UP, 978-0-69113-526-7, \$29.95 pb or el.

When *The Crest of the Peacock* was first published in 1991, it presented a refreshing approach to the study of the history of mathematics. The

third edition is much enlarged and acknowledges more recent works, such as *The Mathematics of Egypt, Mesopotamia, China, India, and Islam: A Source Book*, edited by Victor Katz (2007), *Islamic Science and the Making of the European Renaissance* by George Saliba (2007), and Joseph's own study, *The Passage to Infinity: Medieval Indian Mathematics from Kerala and Its Impact* (2009). This edition reiterates the revised paradigm that

admits the significant contributions of Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Indian and Islamic mathematics, the last treated as a “prelude to modern mathematics.” The preface to the new edition makes explicit the western biases and deep orientalist roots in the construction of an exclusionist vision that treats mathematics as a phenomenon of European exceptionalism. This book is a cogent argument against that perception.

—CAROL BIER

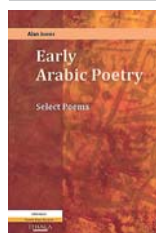


**Dates: A Global History.** Nawal Nasrallah. 2011, Reaktion Books, 978-1-86189-796-1, £9.99 hb, \$15.95 pb.

Like the date—small, but sweet and nutrition-rich—*Dates: A Global History* packs the story of this versatile and important fruit and its parent palm into a compact yet

comprehensive volume. Nawal Nasrallah, whose knowledge of the date's significance in Middle Eastern culture developed while she was growing up in Iraq, manages to cover just about everything a date aficionado would ever want to know about the fruit, ranging from the date's depiction in ancient documents to the biology of the palm and date-production methods used today around the world. Her book, which concludes with a variety of recipes, is a tasty offering for date-lovers, botanists, biologists and historians alike. Date shake or omelet, anyone?

—CAITLIN CLARK

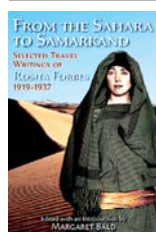


**Early Arabic Poetry.** Alan Jones. 2011, Ithaca Press, 978-0-86372-387-2, £49.99 hb.

The author, former professor of Arabic at Oxford University, presents 15 highly prized poems of early Arabic poetry from the sixth and seventh centuries CE. This golden age produced magnificent odes,

laments and panegyrics that have inspired Arab poets ever since. Studying these poems in Arabic on one's own is difficult. The vocabulary and grammar are challenging, and the poems' Bedouin setting, as well as historical and geographic references in the verses, requires expert guidance. This book offers that assistance. In addition to introducing each poem and describing each poet's life, Jones shares his lifetime of study generously, guiding the reader through every line of poetry. As he states in the introduction, each line of these poems is a cameo, a miniature painting of a long-vanished world that continues to echo in Arabic literature. Though this work is aimed at academics and students of Arabic, general readers intrigued with early Arabian culture will find in its detailed analysis clear glimpses of the legendary world of the pre-Islamic Bedouin with its brave warriors, outlaws and star-crossed lovers.

—KAY HARDY CAMPBELL



**From the Sahara to Samarkand: Selected Travel Writings of Rosita Forbes, 1919–1937.**

Rosita Forbes. Margaret Bald, ed. 2011, Axios Press, 978-1-60419-030-4, \$15 pb.

Rosita Forbes is a name most modern readers will not recognize. In the 1920's and 1930's, however, she was one of the world's most popular travel writers, venturing to

remote destinations in the Middle and Far East, often in disguise, often in search of legendary places rarely visited by westerners. She was a daring and colorful personality, known to royalty yet willing to ride mules, camels and broken-down jalopies to reach her destinations. Forbes penned 30 books, all now out of print. This book holds 32 of her travel stories describing fascinating places she visited, many of which have been forever altered by modernity. In addition, Forbes provided invaluable descriptions of women she met. She also noted, but barely complained about, insect scourges, bad weather, treacherous guides and poor housing conditions. Her stories retain many archaic place names, so readers will need to consult geographic references, adding to the charm of exploring this collection.

—KAY HARDY CAMPBELL

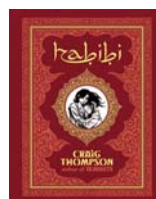


### Go East, Young Man: Imagining the American West as the Orient.

Richard V. Francaviglia. 2011, Utah State UP, 978-0-87421-809-1, \$36.95 hb, \$30, el. Historical geographer Richard Francaviglia builds a case for looking beyond orientalism in this publication. His detailed study showcases the American

West, where Middle Eastern motifs are seen in the physical landscape, ranging from Camelback Mountain in Arizona to Pyramid Lake in Nevada; in the built environment, notably the Moorish architectural styles found in Santa Fe, New Mexico; in popular culture and advertisement, from Hollywood films to fruit-box labels depicting desert shaykhs and biblical figures; and much more. Dividing his handsomely illustrated book into two parts that frame the Frontier West and the Modern West as “the Orient,” Francaviglia shows Middle Eastern themes resonating in the lore of the region in surprisingly subtle and nuanced ways. The multiple meanings and constructions of the Orient found here, as with other Middle Eastern representations in the American context, require further research and refined interpretation along the lines of this valuable work.

—JONATHAN FRIEDLANDER



**Habibi.** Craig Thompson. 2011, Pantheon Books, 978-0-37542-414-4, \$35.00, hb.

*Habibi* is a lush graphic novel that makes conscious use of a stereotypical Arabian Nights-style tale of love between two escaped slaves. Thompson places these characters in a

fantastical mélange of worlds that mixes East and West, first and third, city and desert, ancient and modern. He also weaves in the stories of the Abrahamic faiths: Adam and Eve, Solomon and Sheba, and Abraham's near-sacrifice of his son. The graphic elements of the book tell their own story, revealing mysteries and wonders of Arabic calligraphy, and weaving the main plot with the power and beauty of the written word. This is an adult book, with nudity and adult content as frank as the tales of the Arabian Nights. Yet each page is a wonder-filled canvas.

—KAY HARDY CAMPBELL

### History in the Arab Skies: Aviation's Impact on the Middle East.

Gerald Butt. 2011, Rimal Publications, 978-9-96361-073-0, €17.00 pb. This book by veteran BBC journalist and Middle East observer Gerald Butt chronicles flight's

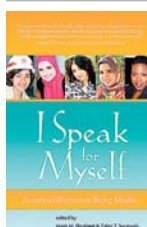




contribution to the dramatic emergence of the region as a vital area in the world's political and economic systems. He perceptively views Arab aviation history through the lens of "missed opportunities," addressing issues that inhibited indigenous technological innovation during Arab aviation's

first century. However, he gives scant treatment to aviation's critical role in the birth of Saudi Arabia's oil industry and incorrectly states that drilling on the Dammam Dome (site of the kingdom's first commercial oil discovery in 1938) began in the summer of 1934; in fact, it started in April 1935 at the end of the California Arabian Standard Oil Company's second exploration season and the final segment of the survey conducted with its Fairchild 71 aircraft. Other factual inaccuracies cast something of a shadow over the book's ambitious panorama, which nevertheless delivers a good read and is an excellent springboard to deeper understanding of this complex subject.

—MICHAEL W. GEROW



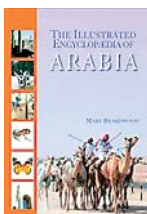
**I Speak for Myself: American Women on Being Muslim.**

Maria M. Ebrahimji and Zahra T. Suratwala, eds. 2011, White Cloud Press, 978-1-93595-200-8, \$16.95 pb.

This collection of essays by 40 diverse Muslim women born and raised in America provides an intimate glimpse

into their lives as they deal with issues of identity, spirituality and integration. They reveal their personal struggles to understand their faith, balance Islam and western values, wear or not wear the *hijab*, deal with traditional views held by family and community, pursue certain professions, and handle issues of marriage and divorce. What ties the stories together and makes this book so compelling is the honesty with which the contributors share their fears, joys, vulnerabilities, doubts and dreams. These are real women sharing real stories with candor and sincerity. By so doing, they allow us, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, to identify with experiences that are unique yet universal, ordinary yet inspiring.

—SALMA HASAN ALI



**The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Arabia.** Mary Beardwood. 2008, Stacey International, 978-1-90529-994-2, \$35 hb.

Educator and author Mary Beardwood illuminates subjects ranging from Bronze Age archeology to avant-garde architecture in a fun-to-read

volume that explores almost every facet of life in the Arabian Peninsula. Although designed for schoolchildren, the volume is bound to whet the interest of adults as well as it explores four principal topics: "The Past," "Traditional Life," "Flora and Fauna" and "Modern Arabia." Each of the book's double-page entries is filled with fascinating facts and factoids. An entry on Islamic architecture, for example, notes that escalators can now whisk 15,000 people an hour to the rooftop prayer areas at the Grand Mosque at Makkah, while a section on flora and fauna introduces the reader to the delightful desert jerboa, as well as the far-more-scary scorpion. The concluding section chronicles

the development of oil and its profound impact on the region. Amply illustrated with colorful drawings, diagrams and photographs, this is an encyclopedia that children will treasure, and adults will refer to again and again. —JANE WALDRON GRUTZ



**Indigo: Egyptian Mummies to Blue Jeans.** Jenny Balfour-Paul.

2011, British Museum Publishing, 978-0-71415-096-3, £19.99 pb. Jenny Balfour-Paul has made a lifelong study of indigo since realizing that its traditional use was in decline in Yemen in the 1980's, and it is a

great pleasure to have the definitive work on the subject once again available. Her original *Indigo in the Arab World* has been updated with new material and a new concluding chapter. The book covers every aspect of indigo—from the esthetics of indigo cloth around the world to dyeing techniques, the botanical and agricultural aspects, its place in folklore and herbal medicine, and the indigo trade and its economic and social importance. As the author stresses, natural dyes, far from being of antiquarian interest, are increasingly relevant because, unlike their chemical substitutes, they are nontoxic and, in the case of indigo, the plant improves the soil. Like the early editions of *Indigo*, this book is beautifully produced with wonderful illustrations. The historic and modern photographs, reproductions from works of art, as well as images of indigo-dyed textiles from across the world make the book a delight even for those without a specialist interest.

—CAROLINE STONE



**The Koran: A Very Short Introduction.** Michael Cook. 2007, Oxford UP, 978-0-19285-344-8, \$11.95 pb.

This little book is the latest in the Oxford University Press's series "Very Short Introductions." Cook, a professor of Near Eastern Studies at

Princeton University, is clearly well versed in the Qur'an and has some distinct theories on it. He has a clear-eyed view of the text, firmly describing the Qur'an as an intimate scripture between Allah and Muslims, not a guide to Islamic dogma. Cook neither heralds the Qur'an nor downplays it. He makes no effort to place verses in historical context, as many commentators already do, but strives to place the Qur'an in a modern perspective. For instance, Cook ponders the potential for an electronic Qur'an considering Muslims' treatment of the physical Qur'an as sacred. As an introduction to the Qur'an, this book is certainly a high-level one, focusing less on the content of the Qur'an than the evolution and actual practices associated with it. For the Qur'an buff, it is a satisfying morsel on the topic.

—ASMA HASAN



**Living in Historic Cairo: Past and Present in an Islamic City.** Farhad Daftary, Elizabeth Fernea, and Azim Nanji.

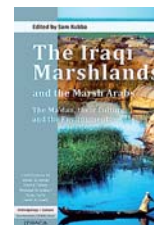
2010, University of Washington Press, 978-1-89859-228-0, \$60 hb.

The Darb al-Ahmar neighborhood of Cairo is a dense

warren of historic buildings interwoven with modern dwellings and commercial businesses, all squeezed against a section of the city's Fatimid-era walls and the base of the Citadel. *Living in*

*Historic Cairo* documents urban-renewal projects carried out in the area by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture. More than the simple renovation of buildings, the projects also sought to revive the social and economic life of the ancient neighborhood. The book is divided into two parts, past and present, with the former featuring essays on topics ranging from an 11th-century traveler's account and the function of various guilds, to music and pottery making. The second part focuses on the projects, with an insider's look at the conservation process, particularly the transformation of a vast medieval rubbish heap into al-Azhar Park, a renowned urban green space.

—KYLE PAKKA



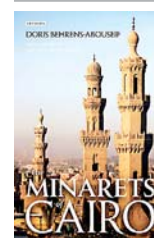
**The Iraqi Marshlands and the Marsh Arabs.** Sam Kubba, ed.

2011, Ithaca Press, 978-0-86372-333-9, £60 hb.

This book is written with great sympathy for its subjects: the Ma'adan people, or Marsh Arabs, and their homeland, the sprawling wetlands that surrounded the confluence of the

Tigris and Euphrates rivers in southern Iraq. Kubba writes clearly and in great detail about the way of life and the 5000-year history of the Ma'adan. Even visitors who have lived and worked in the region will undoubtedly make new discoveries in these pages. The marshlands of the Ma'adan were nothing less than the cradle of civilization. These vast expanses of water both protected and isolated the Ma'adan, preserving a unique lifestyle dating back to the Sumerians. Their civilization, along with the ecosystem that supported it, was nearly wiped out when Saddam Hussein drained the marshes in the 1980's and 1990's. Kubba addresses the motivation for this destruction and tells of brave attempts at restoration. Even partial success will be a great achievement.

—TOR EIGELAND



**The Minarets of Cairo.** Doris Behrens-Abouseif.

2010, The American University in Cairo Press, 978-9-77416-426-2, \$59.95 hb.

The first flowering of a distinctive Cairene minaret style emerged with the Fatimids (909–1171) and reached its pinnacle under the Mamluks (1250–1517) before the Otto-

man occupation stamped its own architectural vernacular on the city. The ancient skyline of Cairo, still visible amidst the towers and apartment blocks of the modern one, is spiked with minarets from the ninth through the 19th centuries that gave rise to the city's sobriquet as "The City of 1000 Minarets." *The Minarets of Cairo* is a lavishly illustrated chronological survey of the city's historic minarets, including vanished ones that exist only in artworks and photos. Early chapters provide context and background, and are enlivened with colorful anecdotes, such as the man who walked a tightrope strung between the north minaret of the mosque of Sultan Hassan and the Ashrafiyya Palace in 1426.

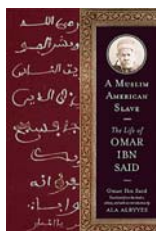
—KYLE PAKKA

**A Muslim American Slave: The Life of Omar ibn Said.** Ala Alryyes, trans. and ed.

2011, University of Wisconsin Press, 978-0-29924-954-0, \$19.95 pb.

In 1831, Omar ibn Said wrote his life story on 15 small pieces of paper—a simple accounting that seemed to placate his Christian overseers, who wanted to believe that the North Carolina slave

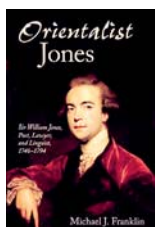




had renounced Islam for America's dominant faith. The manuscript was written in Arabic, which meant it had to be translated into what Said called "the Christian language" of his captors. As Yale scholar Ala Alryyes demonstrates in this important new study, Said embedded

his memoir with road maps to his intimate views on Islam's place in the world and in his own soul. Analyzing the text anew, Alryyes concludes that Said never relinquished the religion he had studied for more than two decades in his West African homeland. *A Muslim American Slave* contains more details and context about Said than any previous book, with essays by such contributing scholars as Sylviane Diouf, who details the intra-Muslim wars in West Africa that helped lead to Said's enslavement. This book liberates Said's autobiography, giving it a fresh perspective that makes more sense of the complicated times in which Said lived.

—JONATHAN CUIRIEL

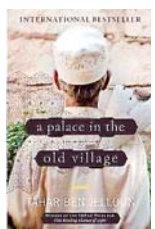


**Orientalist Jones: Sir William Jones, Poet, Lawyer, and Linguist, 1746–1794.** Michael J. Franklin. 2011, Oxford UP, 978-0-19953-200-1, \$65 hb.

William Jones was the foremost European embodiment of what was once a term of the highest respect. Orientalists, in pre-Edward Said days, before

the need to disclose one's relationship to global power brokers, were scholars and linguists. This was a time when the knowledge of Middle Eastern and Asian languages was seen less as Colonial Office intelligence gathering than as a gentleman's isolated pursuit. This biography pays due tribute to Jones's keen erudition in all matters Eastern—as indeed have previous biographies, with such similar titles as *Oriental Jones* and *Asiatic Jones*—but also recognizes a softer romantic side. This vein of the Englishman is expressed in poems to his wife and his translation of a Sanskrit pastoral drama, as well as his interests in Welsh folklore and progressive politics, for which the author dubs him "Druid Jones" and "Republican Jones."

—LOU WERNER



**A Palace in the Old Village.**

Tahar Ben Jelloun. Linda Coverdale, trans. 2011, Penguin Books, 978-0-14311-847-3, \$15 pb.

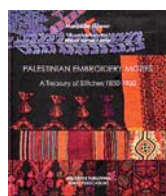
A Moroccan immigrant to France longing to go back to his village upon retirement may not seem to be such an original concept for a novel, but under the nuanced and fluid writing

of Ben Jelloun, it becomes a unique and intimate portrayal of death. This 176-page novel is easily read in one sitting as we follow Mohammed through memories of his life as an invisible member of both his society and his family, a man at peace when reading the Qur'an, but not at peace with his fellow Muslims, Arabs and Africans in the ghetto-like Paris suburb where he lives.

—ALIA YUNIS

**Palestinian Embroidery Motifs: A Treasury of**

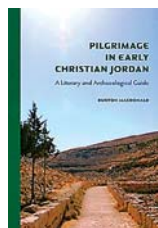
**Stitches 1850–1950.** Margaret Skinner, with Widad Kamel Kawar. 2007, Melisende Publishing/Rimal Publications, 978-1-901764-47-5, €22 pb.



*Palestinian Embroidery Motifs* is the perfect companion to Widad Kamel Kawar's *Threads of Identity*, published in 2006. It identifies, in Arabic and English, the numerous motifs used in the rich variety of Palestinian embroidery styles, so

that a particular dress or embroidery panel can be "read." This not only helps locate a piece's place of origin, but greatly adds to the pleasure and interest of each work, with the realization that one is looking at "four eggs in a pan," "chick-peas and raisins," "walls of Jerusalem," or even "leech" and "graves." Cumulatively, it gives a powerful sense of the visual world of the women who created these treasures. As well as numerous photographs of both whole robes and details, many of the motifs are very clearly drawn so that they can easily be copied in cross-stitch, petit point, weaving, or drawn or painted decoration. The book includes a useful introduction and short bibliography, and would be invaluable for anyone interested in textiles and more generally the culture of the region, as well as embroiderers and craftsmen. It is very fortunate that the authors provided the means to identify and locate motifs before the tradition vanishes.

—CAROLINE STONE



**Pilgrimage in Early Christian Jordan: A Literary and Archaeological Guide.** Burton MacDonald. 2010, Oxbow Books, 978-0-9774094-9-5,

\$29.95 pb.

Near Petra and the Dead Sea, visitors can follow the footsteps of Moses, Aaron, John the Baptist and Jesus,

and of pilgrims through the centuries. Archeologist and religious-studies scholar MacDonald offers an excellent new guide to the history and current condition of Jordan's numerous Christian pilgrimage sites. At Bethany-Beyond-the-Jordan, recent excavations have recovered remains of early Christian basilicas and pilgrim hostels at this traditional site of Jesus's baptism. During the past few years, both Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI have visited Bethany to affirm its religious significance. From Petra, one may hike to the peak of Jebel Harun (Aaron's Mountain), where a mosque, remains of a Byzantine Christian monastery and artifacts of Jewish pilgrimages attest to its importance as the tomb of Moses's brother. For these and other sites on the east bank of the Jordan, MacDonald provides concise and refreshingly jargon-free references to the writings of ancient and medieval travelers and historians as well as contemporary archeologists.

—JOSEPH P. DUGGAN



**Stranger Magic: Charmed States and the Arabian Nights.**

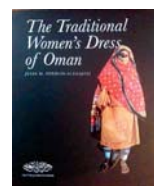
Marina Warner. 2012, Harvard UP, 978-0-67405-530-8, \$35 hb.

"Why the attraction? And how did the book take such a hold?" Such queries are the guideposts of this fascinating treatise on one of the world's greatest works of literature.

The magical qualities of the tales of flying carpets, genies and the like from *The One Thousand and One Nights* (or *The Arabian Nights*) stimulated creativity and imagination, and inspired readers

to transcend the conventions of reality and enter the realm of the fantastic, concludes scholar and mythographer Marina Warner. From the Age of Enlightenment, which saw *The Arabian Nights* spread across Europe, and even into the works of Voltaire, Goethe, Mozart and Freud, the tales spun by Scheherazade migrated to America, where they found fertile ground, generating a splendid cultural and intellectual outpouring. Indeed, the magical appeal of the stories has made *The Arabian Nights* a commodity that continues to enchant academics, entrepreneurs and consumers at large.

—JONATHAN FRIEDLANDER



**The Traditional Women's Dress of Oman.** Julia M. Stehlin-Alzadjali. 2010, Muscat Press

and Publishing House/Centre for Omani Dress, 978-9-94815-665-9, \$48 hb.

This is a complete guide to the modern costumes of Oman—

which are "traditional" in the sense they are not western-inspired. Well organized by region, the book provides numerous photographs of Omani women's clothing and examples from the collection of the Centre for Omani Dress in Muscat, as well as sketches showing how each item is worn and giving it its local name. Not surprisingly, given Oman's mercantile and seafaring history, the dresses display a wide range of textiles. Often several materials are combined in one costume with exuberant effect. As the author laments, hand weaving and embroidery have almost vanished, and what survives is showy rather than fine. There is one charming tribute to Salem, a *batheeya* ("fringe") weaver, which incidentally explains all too clearly why handicrafts have died out. More material like this would have been interesting. However, the book has no pretensions to researching social history. Rather, it is a very useful catalog of contemporary Omani dress that will be of considerable interest in the future.

—CAROLINE STONE



**A World I Loved: The Story of an Arab Woman.** Wadad Makdisi Cortas. 2009, Nation

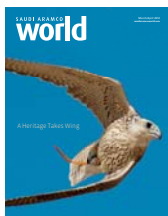
Books, 978-1-56858-429-4, \$14.95 pb and el.

"This is my story, the story of an Arab woman. It is the story of a lost world," writes Wadad Makdisi Cortas on the first page of her memoir. Born

in Beirut in 1909 when present-day Lebanon was under Ottoman rule, Makdisi Cortas poignantly describes her idyllic childhood city by the sea. Her independent and impassioned life unfolds as her country struggles through years of increasing political upheaval and decades of civil war. "War has crowded the memories of my youth and old age and every stage in between," she laments. One of the first Lebanese women to study at the American University of Beirut in the late 1920's, she spent more than 40 years inspiring generations of young women as headmistress of Al-Ahliyah School for Girls in Beirut. The first edition of her book, published in Arabic in the late 1960's, became a popular textbook in Lebanon. Shortly before her death in 1979, Makdisi Cortas wrote an updated English version and entrusted it to her son-in-law, the renowned scholar Edward Said. The English edition was published in 2009, the centenary of her birth.

—PINEY KESTING





## 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.saudiaramco-world.com](http://www.saudiaramco-world.com).

## Professional Development Workshops

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

**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

Several articles in this issue of *Saudi Aramco World* look at resources—both natural and cultural. In the activities that follow, you will have a chance to think about why people care for and protect such resources, and how they do so. You will also explore why they sometimes fail to take care of resources, and what might happen as a result of their neglect.

### Theme: Caring for Natural Resources

#### What makes a natural resource valuable?

Natural resources are materials that exist in nature that people can use. Count off by threes, and sit in a section of the room with the people who have the same number you have. Assign each group one of the following natural resources: water, oil, forests. Your group will be answering the question: What makes this natural resource valuable? Write down your answers, then share them with the rest of the class. What factors did more than one group identify? Based on these factors, complete this prompt: Natural resources are valuable because \_\_\_\_\_.

Now look specifically at a natural resource that is highlighted in this month's *Saudi Aramco World*. Read "The Other Side of Cork." Continue working with your group (but all three groups will work on the same thing for the next activities). Write down, as you did with your group's assigned resource, what makes cork a valuable resource.

The article tells two different stories about cork. In Portugal, cork has been carefully protected so that cork trees—and cork-related businesses—are thriving. In Morocco, on the other hand, cork has been used with less care. Now Moroccans are trying to revive cork forests—and increase cork production.

#### How has Portugal cared for its cork forests?

Start with Portugal. With your group, go through the article and highlight all the different ways in which people there have protected and cared for the cork forests. Keep in mind that some of the efforts involve protecting the forests from natural threats, while others involve protecting them from human threats. When you're done, make a list based on what you've highlighted. Title the list "Caring for Cork Trees in Portugal."

#### Why have cork forests been cared for in Portugal?

The article says that Portuguese laws have protected cork production since 1209. That's 800 years! Why do you think Portuguese people have protected the cork forests for so long? What motivated them? After all, wouldn't it have been easier, and made them more money more quickly, if they had just

harvested as much cork as they wanted as soon as it was ready?

What about the other path they might have chosen? What might have tempted them *not* to protect the forests? To help you think about that, imagine planting your own cork tree and having to wait 25 years before you can get any cork from it. That's a long time. Twenty-five years ago, it was 1987—before you were born. What was going on then? Ask a parent or another adult. What were they doing in 1987? What are some things that exist now that did not exist 25 years ago? For example, did the adults you're talking to have their own computers in 1987? Did they have mobile phones? Share with the class some of the things that did not exist 25 years ago that are part of everyday life now. Now think about planting your cork tree in 2012. It will be 2037 when your tree has matured enough for you to harvest cork. How old will you be? When you think about how different life is now than it was in 1987, what can you imagine about life in 2037? Given how long it takes for a cork tree to produce harvestable cork, would you plant the trees, as Conceição Silva says, for your grandchildren? What would motivate you to plant them, knowing that there won't be a short-term payoff? What might make you decide not to bother?

Now think again about Portugal. Why do you think they didn't give in to the temptation to use the forests without regulation? Whose responsibility has it been in Portugal to care for the cork forests? What do you think has made this particular group of people committed to caring for the forests?

#### How has Morocco cared for its cork forests? Why?

Now answer the same questions about Morocco. How have cork forests been cared for—or not been cared for? What do you think has motivated people to use the Moroccan cork forests the way they have? Who has been responsible for the Moroccan cork forests? Why has this group been less successful in caring for the forests than the protectors in Portugal?

#### How can you explain the different approaches to caring for the cork forests?

"The Other Side of Cork" reports that "cork in Morocco is a forestry resource, while in Spain and Portugal it is managed as agriculture." What's the difference? If you don't know, find out. How do people regard "forestry resources"? How do they think about "agriculture"? Why would thinking of cork one way or the other lead people to treat cork trees differently? Do you think cork is better



thought of as an agricultural or a forestry resource? Why?

### How are Moroccans trying to revive cork forests?

Of course, in an ideal world, no one would ever over-use a natural resource to the point where its survival might be in question. But this isn't an ideal world, and sometimes people don't think too far ahead when it comes to caring for resources. Then what? In Morocco, some people are trying to revive the cork forests. Reread the part of the article that explains how. With your group, evaluate how likely you think it is that they will succeed. Why do you think so?

Now that you've seen how cork forests have and have not been cared for, choose a natural resource that you think needs to be cared for (e.g., a local river, a nearby mountain, the air in your city) and write a letter explaining how to care for the natural resource and why it's best to care for it before it is in danger. Use what you have learned about cork forests in Spain and Morocco to provide evidence to support your point of view.

### Theme: Caring for Cultural Resources

Now that you've thought about how people both sustain and revive natural resources, turn your attention to something that can be a little harder to grasp: culture. For just as people care for natural resources, they also care for cultural resources. Look back at the definition of natural resources. Based on that definition, write a definition for the term "cultural resources." You might want to find out more about what culture means. You might also want to find out how other people have defined the term "cultural resources." Then meet with your group and share your definitions with each other. Come to an agreement about a definition for the term so that you will have common ground for the rest of the activities.

Read "The Palace and the Poet." What are the cultural resources that this article describes? What makes them cultural resources? Answer the following questions to compare the care of these cultural resources to the care of cork trees, a natural resource. Who has taken care of the cultural resources described in "The Palace and the Poet"? Why have they done so? Do you think it has been worthwhile to take care of these cultural resources—as people in Portugal have taken care of the cork forests? Why or why not? Do you think it is as important to take care of cultural resources as it is to take care of natural resources? Working with a partner, have one person answer yes and the other answer no. Gather your best arguments to support your

point of view, then debate the question with your partner. But rather than seeing who can win the debate, see if you can reach an agreement on how to answer the question. Share your pair's point of view to the class, along with the process by which you arrived at it.

### Theme: Caring for Cultural Heritage

"A Heritage Takes Wing" reports that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has put falconry on its Intangible Cultural Heritage list. Look at the UNESCO website to learn more about "intangible cultural heritage." What does the term refer to? What are its four characteristics? How is a cultural heritage similar to a cultural resource? How is it

different? Make a Venn diagram to help you make the comparison visually.

Read "A Heritage Takes Wing." How does falconry match these four characteristics of intangible cultural heritage? Now think about the questions you asked about caring for natural and cultural resources, and ask those questions about cultural heritage. What does it mean to take care of something as intangible as falconry? Think about how people have cared for cork trees—a natural resource—and palaces and fountains—historical resources. Are any of the same strategies involved in caring for an item on UNESCO's ICH list? Ask the same questions: Who is responsible for taking care of an ICH? How do they do so? Why would they want to? Why wouldn't they want to?

## VISUAL ANALYSIS

Analyzing visual images can help you think about the similarities and differences between caring for an intangible cultural heritage and caring for a natural resource. For this activity, look at the three photos on this page. How does the photo affect your thinking about whether or not it is valuable to care for a cork forest? How does the photo affect your thinking about the value of protecting falconry? How does the photo affect your thinking about the value of protecting historical artifacts?

As a final activity, step back and think about the value of photographs themselves, first as evidence, and then also as part of persuasive arguments. Create a one-page document to persuade someone that it is valuable to protect one of the resources or the heritage you have looked at. Use photographs as well as words to make your case. Display people's pages in the classroom. Discuss what makes for a convincing case for protection.





## David Roberts' Romantic Journey to the Orient (1842):

*Lithographs of the Holy Land and Egypt* commemorates both the 200th anniversary of the western "discovery" of Petra and the first publication, 170 years ago, of David Roberts' drawings of scenes from there, as well as from Egypt, Sinai, Lebanon and Palestine (especially Jerusalem). Roberts' drawings, masterfully reproduced by lithography in large folio format, are unsurpassed in beauty, while faithfully documenting the historic sites as they were in the mid-19th century. About 100 prints are on display, most of them hand-colored. In this first European exhibition, justice is also done to the eminent Belgian lithographer Louis Haghe, hitherto overshadowed by Roberts. Offenbach, near Frankfurt, is known as the cradle of lithography. Museum der Stadtgeschichte, Offenbach, Germany, April 15 through May 13.



"Interior Court of St. Catherine's Monastery in Sinai"

### Current March

#### Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship in Islamic Art 2012-2015.

Amherst College and Hampshire College invite applications for a three-year postdoctoral fellowship in Islamic art and architecture starting July 1, 2012. This fellowship supports exceptionally promising young scholars for three years of half-time teaching and half-time research. The colleges seek candidates with any sub-specialty who are also able to teach a broad survey of Islamic art and architecture. ① Imbeckett@amherst.edu or www.amherst.edu/academiclife/dean\_faculty/employment. Review of applications will begin on March 15 and continue until the position is filled.

**Dignity for Palestine** is an exhibition of photographs by Sandra Chen Weinstein, "artfully framed, with a disarming intimacy, that reveal a vibrant, complicated community, one we rarely see in the American press." Arab American Cultural & Community Center, **Houston**, March 15 through April 29.

**Histories of Now:** *Six Artists from Cairo* brings together work by some of the most inspiring and influential video and new-media artists working in Egypt today, including a multi-channel video installation by the late Ahmed Basyony. Presenting works by Mohamed Abla, Hala Elkoussy, Shady El-Noshokaty, Sabah Naim, Moataz Nasr and Basyony, the show is an intimate investigation of the complex social framework and collective formal engagements currently being explored by Egyptian artists. School of the Museum of Fine Arts, **Boston**, through March 17.

**Zaha Hadid:** *Form in Motion* emphasizes the continuous nature of the Pritzker Architecture Prize-winning architect's work, reinventing the balance between objects and space. For this exhibition—the first in the us to feature her product designs—Hadid has created a sculptural environment for a selection of furniture, decorative art, jewelry and footwear she has designed in recent years. Sleekly curving sofas, tables and lounge chairs—made of materials ranging from wood, steel and aluminum to polyurethane—represent the new and unusual biomorphic forms the Iraqi-born British architect has introduced into the language of design. Among the highlights are a collection of crystal-encrusted necklaces and bracelets; spiraling, strappy shoes made for Lacoste and Melissa; and the three-wheeled Z-car, a prototype created of high-density foam that echoes her sculptural forms. **Philadelphia** Museum of Art, through March 25.

**East...West** features paintings by acclaimed Egyptian artist Taha Hussein that refer to German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's special relationship to the East, represented in his book *West-östlicher Diwan*, which reflects the political transformations of the 19th century. Al Masar Gallery, **Cairo**, through March 29.

**Meetings in Marrakech:** *The Paintings of Hassan El Glaoui and Winston Churchill* tells the story of two painters. Churchill, an accomplished amateur painter, first visited Marrakech in 1935 and developed a lasting affection for the city, producing many paintings of its buildings and people. Through his visits he befriended the pasha of Marrakech and persuaded him to permit his son, Hassan El Glaoui, to pursue his passion for painting. El Glaoui became the first Moroccan artist to establish an international reputation, and today his work is among the most sought-after contemporary North African art. This exhibition demonstrates that for Churchill too Morocco provided a profound inspiration, and a common sensibility and appreciation for the country is communicated in the work of both artists. Leighton House Museum, **London**, through March 31.

### Current April

**The Epic and the Exotic:** *19th-Century Academic Realism From the Dahesh Museum of Art* introduces visitors to the richness of academic art, exhibiting 35 works that reflect the diversity of 19th-century themes and styles, and demonstrate the best of the academic tradition, with its idealized forms, exacting detail and noble subjects inspired by history or travel to exotic lands. Weisman Museum of Art, Pepperdine University, **Malibu, California**, through April 1.

**Currents:** *Latifa Echakhch* is a sculptural installation that places continuing themes presented in the museum's Schiller Collection in a current cultural context. The Schiller Collection of American Social Commentary Art, 1930–70, is one of the most important collections of its kind in the country. Moroccan-born artist Latifa Echakhch uses works of American art in the collection as a springboard for confronting issues that continue to face America

today. Presenting vintage lithographic stones along with icons of the American West, the artist provides a poetic and complex view of an eroding cultural divide. **Columbus [Ohio]** Museum of Art, through April 1.

**Relief:** *Tunisia One Year Later* celebrates the first anniversary of the Tunisian revolution with work by some 20 Tunisian and international artists who question the meaning and place of the citizen during such a period of upheaval. The artists work in various media, including painting, sculpture, video and photography, examining issues of identity, politics and philosophy, all of which have been overturned and re-examined as a result of the war. Institut du Monde Arabe, **Paris**, through April 1.

**Lines of Control:** *Partition as a Productive Space* investigates the historic upheaval of the 1947 partition of India that gave rise to the nations of Pakistan and, later, Bangladesh. The exhibition also addresses physical and psychological borders, trauma and the reconfiguration of memory in other partitioned areas: North and South Korea, Sudan and South Sudan, Israel and Palestine, Ireland and Northern Ireland, Armenia and its Diaspora, and areas of indigenous sovereignty in the us. More than 40 videos, prints, photographs, paintings, sculptures and installations by international artists delve into the past and explore the present to expose the seductive simplicity of drawing lines as a substitute for learning how to live with each other. Johnson Museum of Art, **Ithaca, New York**, through April 1.

**Thoughts on the Spring** presents new works by Palestinian artist Helen Zughaib. Expanding on her signature technique in gouache on paper, the artist reflects on the Arab Spring through a variety of paintings and collages.



Jerusalem Fund Gallery, **Washington, D.C.**, through April 9.

**Roads of Arabia:** *Archaeological Treasures From the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.* The study of archeological remains only really began in Saudi Arabia in the 1970's, yet brought—and is still bringing—a wealth of unsuspected treasures to light: temples, palaces adorned with frescoes, monumental sculpture, silver dishes and precious jewelry left in tombs. The exhibition, organized as a series of points along trade and pilgrimage routes, focuses on the region's rich history as a major center of commercial and cultural exchange, provides both chronological and geographical information about the discoveries made during recent excavations, and emphasizes the important role played by this region as a trading center during the past 6000 years. More than 300 works—sculptures, ceramics, jewelry, frescoes—are on display, dating from antiquity to the beginning of the modern period, the majority never before exhibited. Pergamon Museum, **Berlin**, through April 9.

**Haji:** *Journey to the Heart of Islam* is the first major exhibition dedicated to the pilgrimage to Makkah, central to the Muslim faith. It examines the significance of the Hajj as one of the five "pillars of Islam," exploring its importance for Muslims and looking at how this spiritual and physical journey has evolved through history. The exhibition examines three key strands: the pilgrim's journey, with an emphasis on the major routes used from Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East; the Hajj today, its associated rituals and what the experience means to the pilgrim; and the origins and importance of Makkah, the destination of the Hajj. Exhibits—which include material from collections in Saudi Arabia and from the Khalili Family Trust, as well as from major public and private collections in the UK and around the world—document the long and perilous journey associated with the pilgrimage, gifts offered to the sanctuary as acts of devotion and souvenirs that are brought back from the Hajj. The Hajj continues to inspire a wide range of personal, literary and artistic responses, many of which are explored throughout the exhibition, which also examines the social and political significance of the pilgrimage in relation to global trade and the transmission of ideas. British Museum, **London**, through April 15.

**Tutankhamun:** *The Golden King and the Great Pharaohs* features more than 100 artworks, most of which have never been shown in the United States before this tour. These spectacular treasures—more than half of which come from the tomb of King Tutankhamun—include the golden sandals found on the boy king's mummy; a gold coffinettes that held his stomach; golden statues of the gods; and King Tut's rings, ear ornaments and gold collar. Also showcased are objects associated with the most important rulers of the 30 dynasties that reigned in Egypt over a 2000-year span. The exhibition explores the splendor of the pharaohs, their function in both the earthly and divine worlds, and what "kingship" meant to the Egyptian people. Museum of Fine Arts **Houston**, through April 15; Pacific Science Center, **Seattle**, May 24 through January 6, 2013.

**How Soon is Now:** *A Tribute to Dreamers* includes mixed-media installations, objects and videos that have resulted from Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige's ongoing research on the photograph and moving image. At the exhibition's crux is their most recent project, *Lebanese Rocket Society*, an exploration of an Armenian-Lebanese space program in the late 1960's that successfully launched the region's first rocket. The project ponders the apparent absence of this program from collective memory, shedding light on our perceptions of the past and present, and our ability to imagine the future. **Beirut Exhibition Center**, through April 20.

**Women, Windows and the Word:** *Diverging Perspectives on Islamic Art* concentrates on three intertwining themes: the role of Muslim women as creators and subjects of art, western views of the Islamic world, and the importance of decoration and the written word. Thirty-one works of art provide visitors opportunities to challenge stereotypes. For example, several were produced by Muslim women who defined such images as the veil not as instruments of control over women, but as key manifestations of female identity in the contemporary Muslim world. Lowe Art Museum, University of Miami, **Coral Gables, Florida**, through April 22.

**Ancient Egypt—Art and Magic:** *Treasures from the Fondation Gandur pour l'art* brings to life one of the world's greatest civilizations. The exhibition of 100 stellar works features mummy cases, tomb and temple reliefs, papyrus fragments, alabaster vessels and precious stones. The show spotlights the spiritual qualities of the works, as well as their technical mastery. Museum of Fine Arts, **St. Petersburg, Florida**, through April 29.

**Re-Cycle:** *Strategies for Architecture, City and Planet* is devoted to the architecture of the third millennium and its most innovative practitioners. On show are more than 80 works, including drawings, models and architectural, planning and landscape-design projects placed in dialogue with the works of artists, designers and videomakers. Maxxi, **Rome**, through April 29.

**Art Morocco** presents the work of Moroccan masters Mohammed Melehi, Ahmed Cherkaoui and Jilali Gharbaoui, pioneers of modern abstract painting in their country. Their pieces demonstrate how, following Morocco's independence in 1956, artists created an esthetic dialogue between their own culture and the impact of colonialism on North African artistic culture. The three artists' work formally adheres to modern western artistic techniques but simultaneously refers to traditional Moroccan arts and crafts, signs and symbols. Meem Gallery, **Dubai**, through April 30.

**Current May**  
**La La La Human Steps**, a selection of works from the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, focuses on human relations, humanity and our struggle to cope with life as human beings, organized in sections titled "Encounters in History," "Personal Encounters" and "Public Encounters." **Istanbul Modern**, through May 6.

**Karanis Revealed:** *Discovering the Past and Present of a Michigan Excavation in Egypt* is a two-phase exhibition exploring the story of Karanis, a village southwest of Cairo that was inhabited during Egypt's Greco-Roman period and excavated by the University of Michigan in the 1920's and 1930's. Part II follows changes that came with the Roman occupation of Egypt and, later, with Christianity. The displays include collections of Roman glass, tax rolls on papyrus and the leather breastplate of a Roman soldier. Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, **Ann Arbor, Michigan**: Part II, through May 6.

**From Medina to the Jordanian Border:** *Photographs by Ursula Schulz-Dornburg* presents landscape images from unpopulated parts of the Hijaz region of Saudi Arabia, depicting its barren landscapes, crossed by trails and unpaved roads that are the remains of pilgrim and caravan routes, and by remnants of the Hijaz Railway, built by Germans and Ottomans in the first decade of the 20th century. The exhibition supplements **Roads of Arabia**, above. Pergamonmuseum, **Berlin**, through May 6.

**Mother India:** *Transactions in the Construction of Pain* is a five-screen multimedia work by influential Indian artist Nalini Malani, whose works focus on issues of identity, gender, migration and political violence. "Mother India" features images from the time of Partition: women, flags, Gandhi, refugees carrying their possessions on their heads and destroyed landscapes. Art Gallery Road, **Sydney, Australia**, through May 20.

**Cai Guo-Qiang:** *Saraab* includes more than 50 works by one of the most influential international contemporary artists in his first solo exhibition in the Middle East. *Saraab* ("mirage") illuminates the long-standing but little-known relationship between China and the Arab world dating back to the ancient maritime Silk Roads. Featuring the artist's characteristic use of symbols and stories about local history and transnational movements, the exhibition explores the historic and contemporary iconography of the Arabian Gulf and its seafaring culture, as well as the Islamic history of Quanzhou. Works on view also address the ambiguity of Qatar and China's relationship, as well as Cai's own creative development. Quanzhou was a significant maritime port on the ancient Silk Roads and a trade hub for silk, porcelain, tea and spices. The city also hosted some of the earliest Muslim missionaries, now buried in the city's Holy Mausoleum. Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, **Doha, Qatar**, through May 26.

**Current June**  
**Conscious and Unconscious** presents some 30 works from all periods of Louise Bourgeois's career, including sculptures, installations, drawings and fabric works from 1947 to 2009. The exhibition also complements and contextualizes the installation of Bourgeois's monumental 1999 sculpture *Maman*, unveiled last December at the Qatar National Convention Center in Doha. The late American artist, one of the most influential and groundbreaking artists of the 20th century, conceived the nine-meter bronze spider as an ode to her mother. Katara Art Center, **Doha, Qatar**, through June 1.

**Painting the Modern in India** features seven renowned painters who came of age during the height of the movement to free India from British rule. To move from the margins of an art world shaped by the colonial establishment, they organized groundbreaking associations and pioneered new approaches to painting, repositioning their own art practices internationally and in relation to the 5000-year history of art in India. These artists created hybrid styles that are an essential component of the broad sweep of art in the 20th century. Peabody Essex Museum, **Salem, Massachusetts**, through June 1.

**After Yesterday:** *From the Photography Collection of Istanbul Modern* presents a selection from the collection begun the day the museum was founded. Bringing together modern and contemporary examples from Turkish photography, the show displays 179 prints that outline the technical and conceptual development of Turkish photography from the Ottoman era to our day. Among the 153 participating artists are Cengiz Akduman, Burcu Aksoy, Aziz Albek, Ersin Alok, Orhan Cem and Ahmet Elhan. A further 66 works by 213 artists are on display in digital format. **Istanbul Modern**, through June 3.

**To Live Forever:** *Egyptian Treasures From the Brooklyn Museum* uses some 100 pieces of jewelry, statues, coffins and vessels dating from 3600 BCE to 400 CE to illustrate the range of strategies and preparations that the ancient Egyptians developed to defeat death and to achieve success in the afterlife. The exhibition explores the belief that death was an enemy that could be vanquished, a primary cultural tenet of ancient Egyptian civilization, and explains the process of mummification, the economics and rituals of memorials, the contents of the tomb, the funeral accessories—differentiated by the class of the deceased—and the idealized afterlife. Joslyn Art Museum, **Omaha, Nebraska**, through June 3.

**Heroes:** *A New Look at African Art* challenges conventional perceptions of African art. Bringing together more than 100 masterpieces, it considers eight landmark sculptural traditions from West and Central Africa created between the 12th and early 20th centuries in terms of the individual persons who lie at the origins of the representations. Using materials ranging from humble clay, ubiquitous wood and precious ivory to costly metal alloys, sculptors captured evocative, idealized and enduring likenesses of their individual patrons. Analysis of each of these works considers the historical circumstances and cultural values that inform them; the sculptures are among the only concrete surviving links to generations of leaders who shaped Africa's past. Catalog. Museum Rietberg, **Zurich**, through June 3.

**Istanbul Modern:** *Rotterdam* presents a selection of works by 14 contemporary Turkish artists who worked during various periods from the 1970's to the present. In "New Citizen Hİ-Hİ," İnci Eviner combines a mural contrasting traditional European wallpaper with Ottoman tiles and which incorporates three videos about traditional sign language. Sarkis contributes a 10-part stained glass series that features



figures from "The Lord of the Rings." Hale Tenger's video "Beirut" is a loop showing the front of a hotel. Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, **Rotterdam**, through June 10.

**Murakami:** *Ego* displays some of renowned Japanese artist Takashi Murakami's most celebrated series, including *Kaikai Kiki Lots of Faces* and *Pom Me*, revealed in their entirety for the first time. Murakami has also conceived a 100-metre-long painting, which wraps around the exhibition space, as well as a circus tent housing his digital animation and films. Al Riwaq Art Space, **Doha, Qatar**, through June 24.

#### Current July

**Love and Devotion:** *From Persia and Beyond* features 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. State Library of Victoria, **Melbourne, Australia**, through July 1; thereafter Bodleian Libraries, **Oxford, England**.

**Byzantium and Islam:** *Age of Transition*. The Eastern Mediterranean, from Syria across North Africa, comprised the wealthy southern provinces of the Byzantine Empire at the start of the seventh century. By that century's end, the region was central to the emerging Islamic world. This exhibition displays the complex character of the region and its exceptional art and culture during the era of transition. Images of authority, religion and especially commerce show the dialogue between established Byzantine and evolving Islamic styles and culture, and the exhibition also addresses iconoclasm as it emerged during that period among the Christian, Jewish and Islamic communities of the region. Catalog. Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York**, through July 8.

**Patriots & Peacemakers:** *Arab Americans in Service to Our Country* tells true stories of heroism and self-sacrifice that affirm the important role Arab-Americans have played in the United States throughout its history, contributing

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## Raeda Saadeh:

*True Tales, Fairy Tales* is a series of photographs by the Palestinian photographer, performance and installation artist based on familiar children's fairy tales. Saadeh sets her scenes in eerily deserted cities in Palestine, designing the costumes and, Cindy Sherman-like, playing the characters she photographs. The resulting artworks reflect an evaluation of her self and her surroundings, conveying both submission and revolt. Saadeh is concerned with issues that "occupy" her spirit and the realities of daily life, political and personal. The images convey the atmosphere of living with curfews, under occupation, surrounded by destroyed Palestinian houses. Poignant or witty, they portray the Palestinian experience in the most visually striking way. Rose Issa Projects, **London**, through April 7.

"Little Red Riding Hood," 2010, C print, from an edition of five, 122 x 91.5 centimeters (48 x 36")

greatly to society and fighting and dying in every war since the Revolution. The exhibition highlights service in the armed forces, the diplomatic service and the Peace Corps. Personal narratives tell of Arab-American men and women of different national and religious backgrounds. Arab American National Museum, **Dearborn, Michigan**, through July 12.

#### Current September

**Picturing the Past:** *Imaging and Imagining the Ancient Middle East*. The West's perception of the ancient Middle East has been formed by countless engravings, paintings, architectural reconstructions, facsimiles, models, photographs and computer-aided reconstructions of monuments and sites. This collection of 40 examples of art depicting ancient sites examines how preconceptions, the perceived audience and artistic conventions have informed us about the ancient Middle East and how some of the more imaginative reconstructions have obscured our understanding of the past. Catalog. Oriental Institute, University of **Chicago**, through September 2.

**Genghis Khan:** *The Exhibition* tells the story of the Mongol warlord who conquered half the known world. Under his rule, the empire grew to be the size of Africa—four times the size of the Roman Empire at its largest. But Genghis is also revered as an innovative leader and statesman who brought unity, stability and religious tolerance to most of Asia and parts of Europe. Highlights of the exhibition include jewelry, ornaments and musical instruments, weapons such as battle axes, scimitars, lances and long- and crossbows, and such other military essentials as steel stirrups and silk underwear. Field Museum, **Chicago**, through September 3.

**Gems of Rajput Painting** features the museum's superb collection of paintings made for the princes of Rajasthan and the Punjab hills (known as

"Rajputs"). The kingdoms of these art-loving princes shared a common elite culture, though, by the early 1700's, each court had developed its own distinct painting style. The exhibition represents four of Rajput painting's central themes: heroic narratives, women and romance, Krishna and Hindu devotion, and courtly life. Museum of Fine Arts, **Boston**, through September 3.

**Pergamon:** *Panorama of the Ancient Metropolis* displays a wide variety of sculptures, mosaics, coins, ceramics and metal devices—along with a monumental 360° panorama—to present a vivid picture of life in the glittering ancient city, home of the famous Great Altar, with its depiction of the gods' battle against the giants. Most of the 450 exhibits, presented in their original architectural and functional contexts, have never been displayed before. Paintings, historical photographs and archival documents provide insight into the history of the discovery and research of the site. Pergamonmuseum, **Berlin**, through September 30.

#### Coming March

**Gifts of the Sultan:** *The Arts of Giving at the Islamic Courts* is a pan-Islamic exhibition spanning the eighth through 19th centuries and including more than 240 works of art from three continents: carpets, costumes and textiles, jewelry and other objects of precious metals, miniature paintings and other arts of the book, mosque furnishings and arms and armor. It introduces viewers to Islamic art and culture with objects of undisputed quality and appeal, viewed through the universal lens of gift giving—a practice that proliferated at the great Islamic courts not only for diplomatic and political purposes but also as expressions of piety, often associated with the construction or enhancement of religious monuments. Museum of Islamic Art, **Doha, Qatar**, March 18 through June 2.

**Blue Ornament** is a two-person exhibition of the works of New York-based

Kamrooz Aram and Seher Shah. The pieces explore the conflicted relationship between the decorative tradition of ornament and western modernism, revealing the evolution of both styles throughout history. Green Art Gallery, **Dubai**, March 19 through June 5.

**The Throne.** Syrian artist Othman Moussa's still life paintings draw inspiration from 17th-century Dutch realism and include subdued satire and political commentary. Ayyam Gallery, **Dubai**, March 19 through June 24.

**The Third Line** gallery showcases works by Amir H. Fallah, Hayv Kahraman and Laleh Khorramian at the Art Dubai Art Fair. Fallah presents works from his new painted collages, which marry materials in ways that lead the viewer to wonder if there is any difference between new and used, fact and fiction, beauty and ugliness. Kahraman tackles the deconstruction of space, delving into the separation of borders and the creation of boundaries, which occur both in exterior or physical space and in the internal body space. Presenting mono-prints and drawings in a variety of media including oil, crayon, collage and pen and ink, Khorramian's works describe the end result of art rather than the process itself. Art **Dubai**, Madinat Jumeirah Arena, March 21–24.

**Written Images:** *Contemporary Calligraphy from the Middle East* offers a non-political, non-religious view of the Islamic world. For the numerous participating artists—including Yusef Ahmad, Lulwah Al-Homoud, Khaled Al-Saa'i, Chaouki Chamoun, Muhammad Hnsai, Golnaz Fathi, Hakim Ghazali, Ali Hassan, Rachid Koraichi, Nja Mahdaoui, Hassan Massoudy, Ahmed Mater, Ahmad Moualla and Ahmed Moustafa—writing is more than the legible word; they use it as a pictorial, formal element, referencing a multitude of issues, religious, social, political and personal. Sundaram Tagore Gallery, **Hong Kong**, March 22 through April 29.



**H. Madi** presents recent sculptures by the Lebanese draftsman, painter and sculptor that are made of cut and folded steel sheets and depict women, couples and bulls. This new series incorporates Madi's first use of bold colors and shows the artist's subtle sense of humor. Aida Cherfan Fine Art Gallery, **Beirut**, March 23 through April 21.

**Revolution and Revolt: Understanding the Forms and Causes of Change** is the theme of the annual conference of the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies. The unprecedented uprisings in the Middle East over the past year have been compared with a wide variety of past revolts, from the French Revolution to the fall of the Berlin Wall. This conference focuses on the local and regional sources and forces that have fueled the uprisings, and presenters will reflect on what the events may mean for the study of the region. Middle East Centre at the **London School of Economics**, March 26–28.

Coming **April**  
**World History Institute for Teachers: Asia as the Crossroads of World History, 600-1800** is intended for high-school teachers who are new to teaching world history or have been teaching world history for some time, or who are looking for ways to better incorporate Asia into their world history courses. Keynote speakers: Pamela Crossley, Dartmouth College, and Xinru Liu, College of New Jersey. Registration by April 1, late registration through May 31. **Gettysburg [Pennsylvania] College**, July 8–13, 2012.

**Looking at History through a Variety of Lenses** is the theme of the 19th EUROCLIO annual conference and professional training and development course, sponsored by the European Association of History Educators and the History Teachers' Association of Turkey.  
① [www.euroclio.eu](http://www.euroclio.eu). Hotel Kervansaray Lara, **Antalya, Turkey**, April 1–7.

**The Dawn of Egyptian Art** brings together some 175 objects gathered from the Metropolitan and 12 other museums to illustrate the origins and early development of ancient Egyptian art. During the Predynastic and Early Dynastic Periods (ca. 4000–2650 BCE), people living in the Nile Valley began recording their beliefs in paintings, sculptures and reliefs made for their shrines and tombs. These works of art capture the evolving worldview of these early Egyptians. Images of people, animals and landscapes, some of which give rise to hieroglyphs, include forms and iconography that remained in use throughout the art of Pharaonic Egypt. Catalog. Metropolitan Museum, **New York**, April 10 through August 5.

**A Girl in Her Room** is an exhibition of intimate photographic portraits of teenage girls in their most personal spaces. Lebanese artist Rania Matar portrays the chasm between childhood and adulthood and the young women who bridge it, sometimes as rebels and other times as young ladies nonetheless aware of their newfound sexuality. Galerie Janine Rubeiz, **Beirut**, April 11–28.

**New Works in White** showcases collage paintings by Palestinian-American

artist Manal Deeb that tackle topics of identity and memory drawn from Palestinian history. By incorporating words from the Qu'ran, Deeb aims to capture the wisdom and power of Islam and communicate its spiritual energy. The artist also uses textured surfaces to convey memory's persistence and perseverance. Jerusalem Fund Gallery, **Washington, D.C.**, April 20 through May 11.

Coming **May**  
**The Horse: Ancient Arabia to the Modern World** traces the animal's story across thousands of years of human history, displaying exhibits that range from newly excavated Saudi rock carvings—which may move the date and place of first domestication thousands of miles south and thousands of years back—to a miniature Persian gold chariot with four horses, made around 2500 years ago, to Victorian London's dung dilemma. Because a skilled archer on horseback was the most dangerous weapon in any war before the development of artillery, the exhibition also includes two complete sets of Islamic and western horse armor. The wild horse was domesticated at least 5000 years ago, initially for meat and later for transport, transforming how far a man could travel and how much he could carry. The exhibition traces the evolution of the elegant, swift Arabian horses, whose distinctive arched necks and tails can be seen in Assyrian sculptures, Egyptian wall paintings and ancient Greek vases. British Museum, **London**, May 24 through September 30.

**Expressions of Diversity: An Introduction to Muslim Cultures** is a two-week summer program intended to deepen

understanding of the diversity and traditions of Muslim societies. Designed for those without a formal background in Muslim history or Islamic studies, the program will cover a wide range of topics, including pluralism, law, modernity and gender. It is hosted by Simon Fraser University at its **Vancouver (BC, Canada)** campus, in partnership with the Aga Khan University (London). Program dates are July 9 through July 20; registration deadline is May 30.  
① [www.ccsmsc.sfu.ca/summer/2012](http://www.ccsmsc.sfu.ca/summer/2012).

Coming **June**  
**Paradise Imagined: The Garden in the Islamic and Christian World** explores the art of gardens and the cross-fertilization of garden imagery between East and West. Gardens have functioned as spaces of invention, imagination and mythmaking, as well as places of repose and recreation, for different cultures across time. Using the pages of some 22 illustrated herbals, poetry and epic and sacred texts from the museum's collections, the exhibition focuses on the transmission, exchange and assimilation of garden imagery and metaphors between the Islamic and Christian worlds in the late medieval and early modern eras. The show addresses the image of the garden as an expression of love, power, philosophy, spirituality and knowledge, evoked through word and image. Walters Art Museum, **Baltimore**, June 30 through September 23.

Coming **July**  
**Gods on Swings and Dancers in Trance: Bronze Art from Tribal India** displays extraordinarily powerful stylized bronzes from Bastar, a region in central India that is home to a majority

of tribal people. The artworks show mighty gods, processions and possessed dancers that are the products of a living, complex but little-known culture. Museum Rietberg, **Zurich**, July 20 through November 4.

Coming **September**  
**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, the development of this design identity can be attributed to a single artist, Kara Memi, working in the royal arts workshop of Istanbul. 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.**, September 21 through March 10.

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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