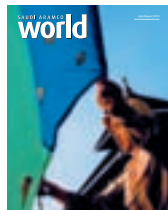


# SAUDI ARAMCO world

July/August 2010  
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**Cover**



A student at the Masjid Agung in Demak, Indonesia, rehearses for a band performance. The city was the seat of Indonesia's first Islamic kingdom, and some historians believe it was founded by a Muslim immigrant of Chinese origin. Photo by Zhuang Wubin.

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## 2 Prince of Brotherhood

Written by Louis Werner

Uniting the tribes of his native Algeria against French occupation and later a champion of universal rights, Prince Abd el-Kader was one of the most popular international heroes of the mid-19th century. Today, the small American town that carries his name sponsors a school essay contest in his honor.

## 10 Al-Andalus 2.0

Written by Joshua Fouts

Images courtesy of Joshua Fouts

What might you learn if you created a character—an avatar—and directed its every action, its speech, dress and behavior, in a “virtual community” of people from around the world? Since 2007, Second Life’s Al-Andalus Project has explored that question amid architecture and values inspired by the *convivencia*, or multi-faith “living together,” of medieval Islamic Spain.

**Back Cover**



This digital model of the famous Court of the Lions, in the Alhambra Palace in Granada, Spain, is part of the Al-Andalus Project’s

community at [www.secondlife.com](http://www.secondlife.com), the Internet’s largest user-built online “virtual world.” Screen image courtesy of Joshua Fouts.

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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## Soaping Up

Written by Eric Calderwood

Photographed by Alexandra Avakian, Contact Press Images

Mixed, dyed, dried, sliced, stamped, stacked, boxed and—maybe—sold: In Syria and Lebanon, where soap-makers have made an art of their product over centuries, three producers of olive-oil soap are adapting differently to the pressures of global competition.



# 24

## Finding a Balance

Photographed and written by  
Zhuang Wubin

In a nation of 230 million people, 700 languages and some 300 ethnicities, ethnic Chinese are one of Indonesia's historic minorities. Centuries of Dutch colonial rule favored those Chinese over other Indonesians, most of whom were Muslims, and the tensions this produced have begun to ease only in the last decade. Among the Chinese Indonesians, there is one group—a minority within a minority—that bridges this sensitive divide: the Indonesian Muslims of Chinese descent. Their stories illuminate Indonesia's quest for balance between national unity and cultural identities.



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## Movable Palaces

Written by Caroline Stone

From nomadic necessity to the opulence of royal pomp, from Central Asia to Persia, Turkey and India, tents have taken countless forms that expressed not only their inhabitants' wealth and cultural refinement, but also their technical and organizational powers—especially in the great “tent cities” of armies and royal ceremonies.



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A farming community in the American Midwest is an unlikely place to celebrate the life of an Algerian born 200 years ago, but Amir Abd el-Kader was more than an ordinary man of the North African desert.

## Prince of Brotherhood

WRITTEN BY LOUIS WERNER

During his lifetime, Abd el-Kader, tribal leader and scholar of the Qur'an, became world-famous as both a freedom-fighter and an advocate for religious tolerance and cultural openness. President Abraham Lincoln thanked him for saving lives. French priests praised him from their pulpits. British readers admired him as they read his autobiography. And Algerians today regard him as a founder of modern Algeria and a symbol of its future. This May, the people of Elkader, Iowa (population less than 1,400)—the only town in the United States named after an Arab—invoked his legacy when Algeria's ambassador to the US helped school officials honor the teenage winner of the town's high-school essay contest on the topic of religious understanding.

One might say that the beginning of this odd conjunction came on May 25, 1830, when the Ottoman governor of Algiers slapped the French consul with a flyswatter in an argument over unpaid bills. Soon after, the largest French navy since Napoleon's campaign in Egypt was setting sail for Algeria to begin France's ill-fated 130-year colonial occupation.

Abd el-Kader was at the time a 22-year-old student on a sort of Grand Tour pilgrimage to Makkah, a two-year sojourn that included visits in Cairo, Damascus and Baghdad. He traveled in the company of his father, leader of the Hashim tribe, whose



In a colored engraving, dated to the early 1840's and titled "The Red Cavalry of Abd el-Kader," a French artist's style hints at the admiration Abd el-Kader quickly earned from his foe. Opposite: By the time this portrait was made of him in 1865, Abd el-Kader had been recognized in both Muslim and Christian countries as a leader in what today we would call interfaith dialogue.

territory was centered in western Algeria near the town of Mascara. By the time Abd el-Kader returned home in 1832, the French army was marching into the Algerian interior, and, with his father's blessing, Abd el-Kader took up leadership of what became a 15-year intertribal campaign for independence. His leadership united most of Algeria's tribes into what became the beginning of the modern state. For this, his tribesmen called him *amir al-mu'minin*—literally "Prince of the Faithful."

Although Abd el-Kader's military resistance failed, he won fame for his principled tenacity, and he went on to gain worldwide respect as an interlocutor between Islam and Christianity. He also befriended westerners who similarly worked to bridge gaps between East and West, including the Arabist Wilfrid Scawen Blunt and the builder of the Suez Canal, Ferdinand de Lesseps. Like them, Abd el-Kader believed that Christians and Muslims were not fated to remain always at odds, refighting the Crusades in the modern age. His spiritual writings and correspondence with Catholics sought common understanding with other monotheisms. As he wrote in 1849, "If Christians and Muslims had paid me any attention, I would have put an end to their quarrels. They would have become brothers, inside as well as out."

Among his own people, he was just as successful in mediating tribal rivalries



between Arabs and Berbers. (He claimed descent from the Berber Bani Ifran tribe as well as from the Prophet Muhammad.) In the Levant, he became a peacemaker among Muslims, Christians and Druze. During religious riots in 1860, he helped save some 12,000 Syrian Maronite Catholics, a heroic feat that prompted President Lincoln's letter of thanks. By the time he died in Damascus in 1883, 53 years to the day after the French set sail for Algeria, even American farmers in Iowa admired his story enough to name a town for him.

Today, in a similar time of strife, the amir is not forgotten. Prince Hassan bin Talal of Jordan has written that Abd el-Kader's concept of "true *jihad*," an inner struggle to remain true to one's religion, "provides Muslims with a much-needed antidote to the toxic false jihads of today, dominated by anger, violence and politics."

The former archbishop of Algiers, Monseigneur Henri Teissier, stated that the example of Abd el-Kader's good relations with French Catholic priests "gives us an alternative response—that even amid the most violent confrontations, one must always work for peace."

Osama Abi-Mershed, who teaches North African history at Georgetown University in Washington, DC, notes that while older Algerians regard Abd el-Kader as the

## *An Unexpected Antagonist*

Among French intellectuals, Governor-General Thomas-Robert Bugeaud's bloody-handed methods against Algeria found a surprising defender: Alexis de Tocqueville, author of the two-volume classic *Democracy in America* and—under other circumstances—a champion of self-governance. After making several fact-finding trips to Algeria, he seems to have developed a personal dislike for Abd el-Kader, though the two never met. He called the amir a "puny young man ... clearly a character of the rarest and most dangerous sort, a mix of sincere and feigned enthusiasm.... He constantly hides behind the intent of religion for which he says he acts. The religious hatred that we inspire created him, it raised him, it sustains him."

political founder of their nation, younger Algerians also see him as someone who sought out commonalities with Europeans rather than differences—thus a modern man like themselves.

During the years of resistance, from 1832 until his surrender in 1847, Abd el-Kader earned a reputation for treating his French hostages well, often feeding them better than he fed his own troops, and for releasing them if food became insufficient. His willingness to negotiate exchanges for his own men captured by the French became, for him, an opportunity to engage in dialogue with Catholic clergymen. (He negotiated with clergy because the French recognized only his religious role, not his political one.)

In 1841, the bishop of Algiers, Antoine-Adolphe Dupuch, wrote to Abd el-Kader asking him to free a French prisoner: "You do not know me, but my calling is to serve God and to love all men as His children and as my brothers.... I have neither money nor gold and can offer in return only the prayers of a sincere soul." He ended with the Biblical quotation, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

The amir responded with a stroke of spiritual one-upmanship by citing another Christian precept: "You should have asked me not for the freedom of only one, but of all the Christians who are imprisoned. Further,





would you not have been twice as worthy of your mission had you asked not only for the liberation of two or three hundred Christians, but also offered to extend the same favor to an equal number of Muslims who languish in your prisons? It is written, 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.'"

Thus an exchange was arranged. Dupuch's vicar, Abbé Suchet, went behind enemy lines to carry out the exchange, and he provided the French one of their first eyewitness descriptions of the amir. "The redoubted chief was dressed as a simple sheikh," he wrote, "in an ordinary *haik*, a white burnoose, and a cord of camelhair passed round his head. At the slightest mention of religion, his eyes fall, and then are raised gravely towards heaven in the manner of one inspired." The two discussed the role of the Catholic clergy, and Abd el-Kader agreed that future French prisoners would have access to visiting priests.

But there was no time to put such moderation into action. The new governor-general of Algiers, General Thomas-Robert Bugeaud, notorious for his indiscriminate warfare against men, women and children alike, launched a ferocious campaign to crush Abd el-Kader's resistance. By 1843 Abd el-Kader was forced to seek asylum in Morocco, and in 1847 he conceded defeat to the French.

Following Abd el-Kader's surrender, the French broke their promise of exile in another Arab country and instead imprisoned him and his retinue for five years, during which he occasionally received close friends like Bishop Dupuch and Eugène Daumas, a former consul in Algeria, whose 1853 book *Horses of the Sahara* included the amir's own chapter on Arab equestrianism.

In that chapter, Abd el-Kader indulged in a favorite topic, reciting such hoary Arabic proverbs as "Horses are birds without wings," "For the horse, nothing is far away," and "He who forgets the beauty of horses for women will not prosper." It also appears that the amir's legendary stamina in the saddle prompted him unwittingly to mislead his readers, as when he said that the distance a good horse could travel in a single day was one hundred miles, equal to the journey between Mascara and Tlemcen. That was a distance that he could ride in a day, but few others.

Measuring more than a meter tall and four meters wide (51" x 173"), artist A. C. F. Decaen's "Capture of the Tribe of Abd el-Kader" shows the French sacking of his tribes' encampment in May 1843. Abd el-Kader escaped to Morocco. Lower: An undated portrait of the amir, or prince, by Jean Baptiste Ange Tissier shows him with dignity and even reverence—note the prayer beads in his right hand—qualities that are common in French depictions of Abd el-Kader.







"The Surrender of Abd el-Kader to France" is the title of this colored engraving, dated December 25, 1847. After years as a fugitive in Morocco, Abd el-Kader surrendered on December 23 of that year. Lower: "The Loyalty of 'The Other France': Arab chieftains know how to keep their oaths" is a 1907 color-lithograph cover of the French magazine *Le Petit Journal*. The importance of Abd el-Kader can be inferred from his appearance on the central background medallion.

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merciless  
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Despite their merciless military tactics, the French in these years expressed a romantic, orientalist fascination with their Algerian adversary. Painters Horace Vernet and Stanislas Chelowski captured Abd el-Kader's likenesses in war and at rest. Fictionalized accounts like *The Prisoners of Abd el-Kader, or Five Months of Captivity among the Arabs*, written in French by Ernest Alby and translated into English by the Arabist Lucie Duff Gordon, played on the usual clichés of beheadings, treachery and ravished women. The British novelist William Makepeace Thackeray's 1848 poem "Abd el-Kader at Toulon, or the Caged Hawk" followed a

Muslims, as well as *Kitab al Mawaqif*, or *The Book of Stopping Places*, an esoteric study in the tradition of the 10th-century philosopher and mystic Ibn Arabi, whom Abd el-Kader further honored by preparing a new edition of Ibn Arabi's *The Illuminations of Makkah*.

Following his release from prison in France in 1852, Abd el-Kader moved first to Bursa, Turkey, and then to Damascus, where he joined some 500 fellow Algerian exiles. There he made the acquaintance of such English women and men as Lady Jane Digby, who had married a Syrian shaykh, and British consul Richard Burton.

His fame as a Muslim whose aegis extended to people of other beliefs was cemented by his actions in May 1860 in Syria, when Druze and Maronite Christian factions disagreed over enforcement of an Ottoman law, passed under western pressure, that set Muslims and non-Muslims on equal footing before military recruiters and tax collectors. Tensions escalated, and Druze began riots in Mount Lebanon, which the Ottoman rulers of Syria did nothing to stop.

As the violence spread, threatening the lives of Maronite Christians, Abd el-Kader wrote a letter to Druze elders warning that "such proceedings are



nobler line, beginning, "No more, thou lithe and long-winged hawk, of desert life for thee / No more across the sultry sands shalt thou go swooping free."

These were also the years that Abd el-Kader began deepening his study of Islam in particular and of spirituality in general. He wrote both *Reminder for the Intelligent*, *Advice for the Indifferent*, an investigation into the common beliefs of Christians and

**After some five years' imprisonment, during which time the amir wrote about the common beliefs of Muslims and Christians, Prince Louis Napoleon announced Abd el-Kader's release on October 16, 1852. Present at the ceremony was Abd el-Kader's mother, whom artist Jean Baptiste Ange Tissier showed kissing the French prince's hand.**

unworthy of your community," but he soon realized that only a show of force would be effective. When rioting reached Damascus on July 9, Abd el-Kader rebuffed the Ottoman governor's request to disarm his men, and instead sent them into the city's Christian quarters to escort residents to his own guarded precinct. When that overflowed, he pressed the governor to open the citadel to them, with safe passage



guaranteed by his men. It is estimated that as many as 12,000 lives were thus saved.

As Mikhail Mishqa, then serving as the US consul in Damascus, remembered in his memoirs, translated into English under the title *Murder, Mayhem, Pillage and Plunder*, “this outstanding man, whose excellence was well known to the kings and inhabitants of this earth, never rested a moment in his attempts to allay the revolt. There was not a single leader of the city, ulema, or agha, warning them against revolt, of its impermissibility in the Islamic religion, except for him.”

After the riots, Abd el-Kader wrote in response to a letter of thanks from the new bishop of Algiers, “What I did for the Christians, I did because of my faith as a Muslim.... All religions brought to us by the prophets, from Adam until Muhammad, rest on two principles—praise for God and compassion for all His creatures. Outside of this, there are only unimportant differences.”

In 1876, the amir met Charles Doughty, whose book *Travels in Arabia Deserta* tells of his getting a guarantee of safe passage from the pilgrimage route’s garrisons, which were manned by Abd el-Kader’s Algerian troops.



Top: This 1867 photograph shows Abd el-Kader seated with General Patrice de Mac-Mahon, who became president of France in 1875. Lower: This engraving of Abd el-Kader is dated 1880, three years before his death.

Doughty praised Abd el-Kader as an “erudite among the erudite Moslems.” In Damascus he also met daily with Charles Henry Churchill, an older cousin of Winston, who acted as secretary for the dictation of what amounted to Abd el-Kader’s autobiography in English, published in 1867. The later biography of Abd el-Kader, *Desert Hawk*, was written in 1947 by Wilfrid Blunt, a distant relative of the Wilfrid Scawen Blunt who had been the amir’s frequent visitor in Syria.

The most recent biography is *Commander of the Faithful: The Life and Times of Emir Abd el-Kader* by John Kiser, published in 2008, and it is refocusing attention on Abd el-Kader’s role as an interfaith ambassador. As the amir himself stated in a letter to a French friend: “I have now become so tolerant that I respect all men, whatever their religion or beliefs. I dare even become the protector of dumb animals. God created men to be His servants, not the servants of other men.”

In this 150th anniversary year of the Damascus riots, the amir’s name is being praised again worldwide in venues that advocate peace and understanding. As the director-general of the United Nations



Office in Geneva recently said, “His works reflect his belief that religion did not exclude science, that science did not exclude humanism, that faith did not exclude tolerance, that pragmatism did not exclude spiritualism.”

And so Abd el-Kader’s beliefs ring true from the halls of diplomacy to the American heartland. Stephannie Fox-Dixon, who as a 17-year-old senior at Central Community School in Elkader won the town’s first essay contest, found a personal connection to her town’s namesake.

“I perceive humanity with a view that everyone has the power to strengthen his or her character,” she wrote. “As a person grows, their character develops with them. Such humanity has the power to inspire other people. Abd el-Kader had a strong sense of character, and since learning about his life, I now regard Abd el-Kader as one of the forefathers of some of the world’s greatest nationalists and humanitarians, such as Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.”

For those who champion the legacy of the amir, from Iowa to Algeria and around the world, this is high company to keep. 🌐



**American and Algerian flags hang on the wall of Sheha's Cafe in Elkader, Iowa, above artwork celebrating the sister-city relationship between Elkader, population about 1375, and Abd el-Kader's birthplace: Mascara, Algeria, population about 150,000, the capital of the province of the same name.**

dialogue.

Kiser was on stage that evening, alongside Algeria's ambassador to the US Abdallah Baali, Elkader mayor Robert Garms, other Iowa state politicians, representatives of the social-media diplomacy initiative Oneblue.org and Kathy Garms, who organized the ceremony and in 2008 visited the amir's birthplace of Mascara, Algeria to

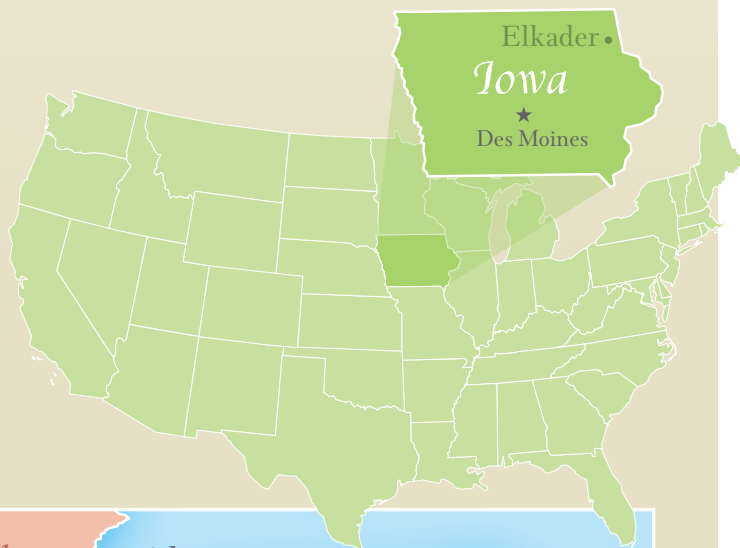
strengthen its ties with Elkader's Sister Cities Friendship Club.

Kiser's Abd el-Kader Education Project has already reached out beyond Elkader. At a recent conference of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), teachers endorsed the idea of having their students write essays about the amir in the context of being Muslim in today's world. Christian and Muslim universities both in the US and abroad, as well as interfaith groups, have taken up teaching about the amir's life as an opportunity to learn respect for other reli-

gions from a Muslim point of view.

Abd el-Kader, said Kiser, is an example of a Muslim who “was strict in his practice, highly disciplined, who lived his life according to [the Qur'an], yet confounds all the stereotypes of a fundamentalist.”

The ambassador echoed Kiser. “Making our children understand the ideals extolled by the amir and the example of his life,” he said, “is to succeed in making the seeds of tolerance germinate in their minds and looking at the world around them without fear.”



**Louis Werner** (wernerworks@msn.com) is a writer and filmmaker living in New York. He is a frequent contributor to *Saudi Aramco World* and also writes for *El Legado Andalusi* and *Américas*, the magazine of the Organization of American States. He lives in New York.



**Commander of the Faithful: The Life and Times of Emir Abd el-Kader.** John W. Kiser. 2008, Monkfish Book Publishing,

978-0-9798828-3-8, \$28.95/C\$32.95 hb; [www.truejihad.com](http://www.truejihad.com).



[www.oneblue.org](http://www.oneblue.org)

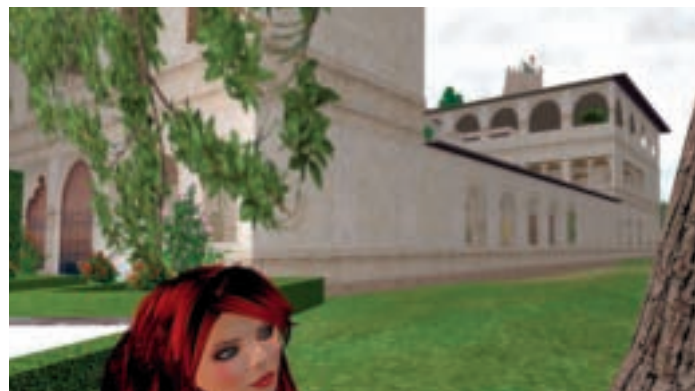
## Fame Rekindled in a Foreign Land

When the curtain came up at the historic 1903 Opera House in Elkader on the ceremony to award this year's prize for the best high school essay about the man for whom the town was named, participants were also helping to launch the nationwide Abd el-Kader Education Project, established by biographer John Kiser to promote awareness of the amir's early role in interfaith



# Al-Andalus

Down to the details of flowers in bloom and fruiting orange and lemon trees, the gardens in the virtual community of Al-Andalus, above, have been “built” to resemble those of the Generalife in Granada, Spain. The arch of red roses is one of the contributions of Al-Andalus Project co-founder “Rose Springvale,” right.







WRITTEN BY JOSHUA FOUTS  
IMAGES COURTESY OF JOSHUA FOUTS

When you hear the term “social media,” what comes to mind? Twitter? Probably. Facebook? Certainly. How about Second Life? Maybe not so much. Yet since 2003, Second Life’s immersive, user-built “virtual world” has attracted some 17 million people from all over our physical world, and it’s a potentially powerful digital tool for exploring cultural relations.

In 2008, my collaborator, Rita J. King, and I embarked on a study titled “Digital Diplomacy: Understanding Islam Through Virtual Worlds” to explore the potential value of on-line, digital environments in cultural dialogue. We spent a year researching communities across four continents in the physical world and throughout a number of on-line virtual worlds. We chose to focus on Second Life not only because it is by far the largest of the on-line virtual worlds but, most importantly, because it is created entirely by its users.

In our study, we learned that the more time that users invest in their Second Life experiences, the more they come to express high degrees of creativity and understanding of each other. In this and other ways, Second Life is more like the physical world than we had anticipated. Similarly, we learned that the commonplace distinction between a virtual experience and a physical experience is too sharply drawn: The virtual, we found, is psychologically quite real. People exchange real emotions and real ideas, experience real interactions. While this is what makes all social media tick, Second Life’s immersive qualities make it a truly new frontier for cultural relations.

In Second Life (or SL, as users call it), we found dozens of virtual communities amid the several hundred “sim” locations. Among them, one stood out for its commitment to the exploration of cultural dialogue: Its name is Al-Andalus. The community occupies a group of virtual islands, and its virtual architecture and lush gardens are designed to resemble two of the great monuments of medieval Islamic architecture, the Alhambra in Granada and the Great Mosque in Córdoba. The virtual buildings were conceived and built to evoke a historical memory of *convivencia*, the Spanish term for the harmonious “living together” of Muslims, Christians and Jews in the southern Iberian Peninsula during the Islamic caliphate there.

In the SL community called Al-Andalus, several hundred people—from Singapore, St. Petersburg, Jiddah, London, Houston, and cities and towns across more than a dozen real countries—are beginning to explore what



Viewed from the west, the walled center of Al-Andalus in Second Life contains, in the foreground, a virtual Alhambra and caliph's palace and an auditorium. Behind them is La Mezquita (the mosque) with its square minaret, and to its right are residences and the *suq*, or market. Below: The entrance of the caliph's palace. Since 2007, some 18 people have contributed virtual construction to the community.



convivencia might mean today. In real life, some of the more active Al-Andalus members are accomplished professionals; they include a Russian ballerina, a Saudi accounting student, a retired British engineer and a Houston attorney.

Al-Andalus was founded in 2007, when a group of seven SL members from the “Confederation of Democratic Sims”—an experiment in the shared ownership and governance of virtual space—met to search for common ground and try to overcome the differences among Muslims, Jews and Christians. This globally dispersed group couldn’t afford to meet in person, let alone set up a real-world social experiment in intentional community. The founders were led by two attorneys, both of whom prefer to use their SL names in that context: “Michel Manen” is a Canadian academic and “Rose Springvale” lives in Houston, Texas. In July 2007 the Al-Andalus group purchased an island in SL, and together they began construction of virtual versions of rooms of the Alhambra palace, its neighboring Generalife gardens, a grand mosque called “La Mezquita” (the Spanish word for “mosque,” originally from the Arabic *masjid*), and

dozens of apartments that they “built” in Muslim, Jewish, and Christian quarters. They added a bazaar for selling virtual goods, from home furnishings to both western and Arab attire. Part history and part fantasy, Al-Andalus is, above all, a metaphor for the future.

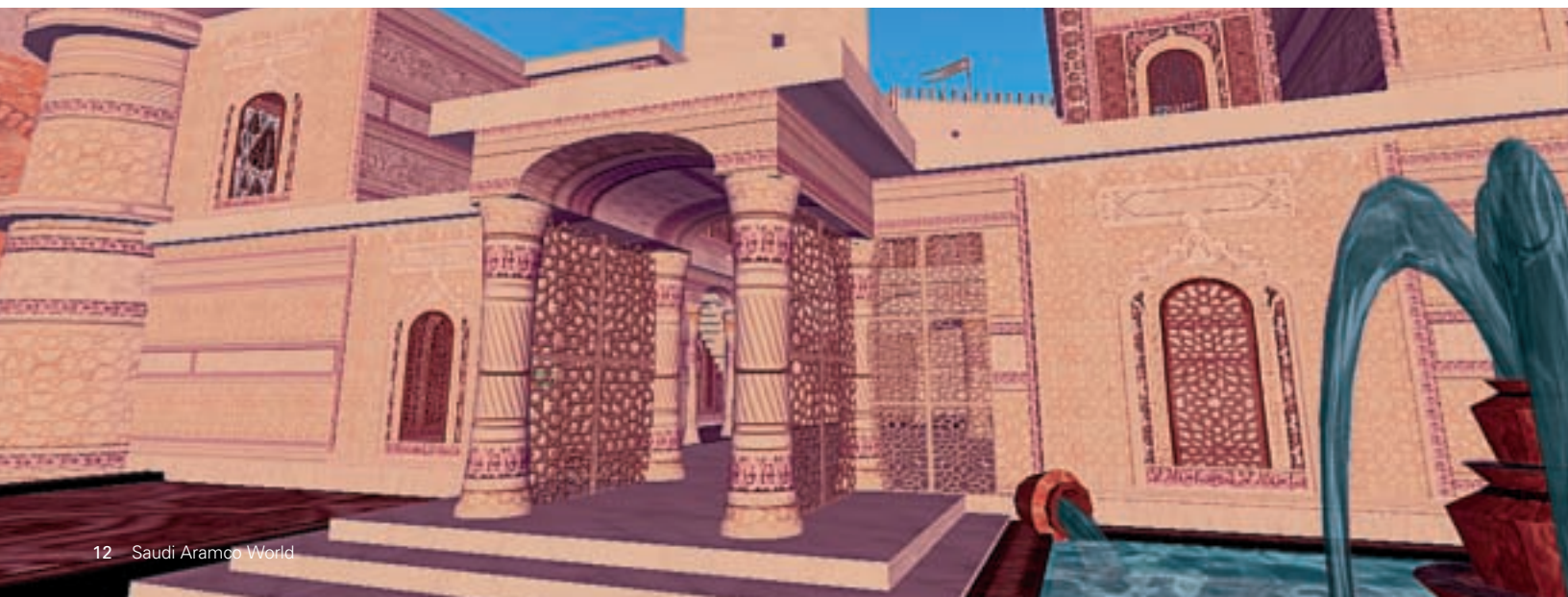
In a note that they circulated to all SL residents, the members announced their intention to build “around this virtual space a community of individuals willing to explore the modalities of interaction between different languages, nationalities, religions and cultures within a political and juridical space shaped by authentic Islamic principles. Those principles include political participation, separation of powers, justice and the rule of law. Membership in the community is open to all.”

Three years later, the community is still expanding and, like any human community, is experiencing its growing pains.

To talk about it, Rose Springvale met me in Al-Andalus’s gardens. We walked along a well-groomed gray stone path lined with towering manicured hedges, which opened onto a circular reflecting pool flanked by lemon and orange trees, blue delphiniums, purple wisteria, pink rhododendron, black-eyed susans and climbing red rose bushes trained into arches. (“My contribution to Al-Andalus,” Rose said as we walked.) She invited me to sit on a bench under a giant cypress modeled after an actual tree in the real-world Generalife in Granada.

Down the hill I could see a river and some stucco homes, but—unlike in the real Granada or Córdoba—the

**Al-Andalus is part history, part fantasy and, above all, a metaphor for a multicultural future.**







## What is Second Life?

Second Life (SL) is an on-line, 3D digital platform founded and run by San Francisco-based Linden Lab. On a computer monitor, it looks like many 3D games one might see on Microsoft's Xbox or Sony's PlayStation: graphically rich, textured, photorealistic worlds that create a feeling of immersion—"being there." The difference is that everything in SL has been created by the people who use it: every tree, every house, a subway line, a shopping mall, the sci-fi effects, whole cities and even programmable weather patterns. SL is free and accessible worldwide to anyone who registers and installs the SL software on an Internet-connected computer.

There are currently some 17 million SL users, or "residents," as they are called in SL vernacular. They interact through personalized projections of themselves called avatars. (Anyone who has seen the James Cameron film of the same name has seen a sci-fi version of the idea.) While SL offers users a selection of surnames, users choose their own first names. Residents communicate in multiple languages in real time using text or voice chat, and the text chats can be enabled to offer instantaneous (if occasionally rough) translations from major languages. Avatars range from the photo-representational to the idealized and even fantastic.

SL also has an economy based on a virtual currency called the Linden dollar. It can only be used inside SL, but it is what users need to purchase virtual land as well as virtual goods, which range from dresses, suits, shoes and so on (all sold in user-built, user-run virtual stores) to houses, other buildings, cars and yachts, each the construction of some other user. Residents purchase Linden dollars using real-world credit cards or PayPal at an exchange rate of approximately 250 Linden dollars ("L\$") to one US dollar. And though the goods are virtual and the exchange rate modest, the money is quite real: On March 7, the *Washington Post* reported that \$567 million changed hands among SL users in 2009, a 65 percent jump over 2008. In December 2009 alone, some 770,000 unique users made repeat visits to SL and moved a total of \$55 million of cash earned in SL to their real-world PayPal accounts.

Linden Lab takes a cut of all these sales, and it also sells the virtual land on which the houses, storefronts and beaches are located. There have been "land barons" who saw, early on, the potential of SL, and they bought up swaths of islands, developed them with pre-fabricated houses and rented them by the week for amounts ranging from one dollar (for a one-bedroom apartment in virtual New York) to \$10 (for a mansion on a beach).

However, not everyone engages SL at this level, and most residents aren't in it to make money. In fact, no one is required to buy or rent anything. But the appeal is in the degree of customization all this offers, the opportunity to create new identities and new communities, and then to inhabit those ideas in ways not possible in the physical world.



In a meeting hall in the village of Neufreistadt, which adjoins Al-Andalus in Second Life (SL), members of Al-Andalus join members of other communities to elect a chancellor of the Confederation of Democratic Sims, the governing body of SL's more than 60 communities. Above: Clothing for sale in the shops in the Al-Andalus suq is sold for Linden dollars in amounts equivalent to one to five US dollars—payable through PayPal to the shop's owner.





## “SL is not a substitute for RL [Real Life], but a continuation of it.”

backdrop was the ocean that lies beyond what are now actually six Al-Andalus islands. Each is fully occupied and has a waiting list of would-be residents. Each tenant pays rent ranging from L\$1100 (\$4) to L\$7000 (\$28) per week—money that covers the approximately \$250 monthly sim-maintenance charge that Rose pays to Linden Lab.

In 2008, she explained, her cofounder had to leave SL because of real-world time demands. This left Rose to oversee management of the island, which she described as “a major challenge” for someone who, in the physical world, is an attorney with an international client base, a mother of two and the wife of a CEO husband.

To guide the community’s growth, member “Micael Khandr” hosted conversations among Al-Andalus’s members. They came to an agreement to create a collaborative, representative community government without regard to religion.

In the physical world, Khandr’s name is Michael Carey, and he is a professor of organizational management at Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington. For Al-Andalus, he founded the “Convivencia Institute” to focus on promoting understanding among religions. “The earliest Muslim rulers of what was known as Al-Andalus created ... convivencia through their liberal interpretation of *dhimma*, that part of the religious law of Islam that protects the other two ‘Peoples of the Book,’ i.e., Jews and Christians,” he stated in the Institute’s mission statement. “The consequence was the creation of a

community of tolerance where the Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities of Spain became part of a larger culture that integrated elements of each tradition.”

When I first visited La Mezquita, it was midnight on a Saturday in New York City. Inside, the mosque is a visually stunning interpretation of the Córdoba original. On entering, one’s avatar is greeted with a stream of text in the chat window, the words unfurling like a scroll, making a request that visitors are free to accept or reject: “While the concept of holy places in a virtual world may stretch the imagination of some, tradition is a major part of history. There is an active Muslim community associated with the Mezquita in Al-Andalus. They have placed a basket with complimentary veils for ladies to cover their hair, and ask that all visitors to the mosque remove their shoes before entering. If you choose to honor this request, you may find your experience enhanced. However, this is strictly a personal decision and there is no requirement that you do so.”

I found about a dozen people in the midst of prayer services. (Since SL is accessible to anyone around the world, people participate when it is convenient for them, and because of this, there is an audio option in Al-Andalus that activates the *adhaan*, the Muslim call to



Meeting in one of the rooms of La Mezquita, avatars Imotali Antiesse and Yekaterina Kalchek are creations of women living, respectively, in Singapore and St. Petersburg. Above: Three avatars meet for prayer, reflection or conversation in the mosque’s prayer hall, which is modeled after the Great Mosque in Córdoba, Spain.



## Al-Andalus



very crowded, and women pray separately from men. In SL, however, she likes praying in the main hall in La Mezquita, where, she said, “I feel communication with Allah easier.” She also likes, she said, the “antique structures” of Al-Andalus’s mosque.

She was quick to point out that SL is not a substitute for “RL” (real life), but a continuation of it. While prayers in SL don’t fulfill the necessity to perform them physically, too, she said that she feels the spiritual presence of the mosque in the SL environment just as she does in the physical one. She described how much she enjoys being able to activate and listen to the call to prayer in a “place that looks so real.” Yekaterina agreed.

Imotali and Yekaterina simultaneously agreed that their SL experiences have changed their perspectives in the physical

## A Digital “Gender Bridge”?

Of Second Life’s more than 17 million registered accounts, the median user’s real-world age is 35, and fewer than 25 percent of users live in the US. Contrary to the stereotype of “computer gamers” as an overwhelmingly male crowd, SL residents are predominantly female, according to SL founder Philip Rosedale—and moreover, he says, they spend some 30 to 40 percent more time in SL than do male residents. This gender difference, he believes, is attributable to SL’s design as an open-ended social world with neither rules nor tasks, rather than as the type of structured, competitive games that tend to be popular with men.

prayer, based on the user’s time zone.)

Inside the mosque, some avatars walked while some prostrated themselves in prayer. Virtual sunlight shone through latticed windows and reflected dramatically off the long rows of columns made of virtual marble.

After prayers ended, I spoke to three avatars. Yekaterina Kalchek is the avatar of a ballerina in St. Petersburg, Russia. She was there for her morning prayer. Imotali

world. Imotali explained that “with the governance and community here, everyone is basically kind and respect one another.... Everyone wants to learn from each other.... That’s the most humble thing I see personally.... True, there might be some rudeness or harsh issues,” she added, “but everyone simply wants to try and get along well.”

Yekaterina substantiated this. “Part of the pleasure of SL is meeting people with other backgrounds and beliefs.... I pray with a lady who is Jehovah’s Witness and another lady who is from Church of England.” All three of us, she said, “share a love of God.”

And all of them, Yekaterina said, feel changed by the experience. “Because we share a love of God, and because they learn I am a normal, peace-loving woman.”

Later, I spoke again with founder Rose Springvale. “That’s the fascinating part,” she said. “The thing that attracts people to this project is a desire for understanding, communication and change. The premise is that it is much harder to drop a bomb on someone if you have looked them in the eyes and recognized them as human beings, with jobs and kids and worries of their own.” ☉

Antiesse told me she was in Singapore, where she had come to pray at lunch time.

Khalid Easterling used a digital translation device to tell me that he was the avatar of an accounting student in Jiddah, Saudi Arabia. As he spoke, his greetings appeared as double-decker text, in Arabic and English, across my screen. “i am from kingdom saudi arabia ...jiddah city.”

Yekaterina explained that she came to SL after a dancing injury confined her to bed for a number of months. “I decided to do something before I went mad with boredom.... I kinda wandered around with the vague idea of writing a story about SL and then discovered Al-Andalus as a tourist. Loved it and discovered it had a Muslim community and so I bought a house and stayed.”

Imotali signed up for SL in 2009 as an assignment for a university course on information systems in Singapore. When she discovered Al-Andalus, she stayed beyond her class assignment. Now, she says, she prays in Al-Andalus’s mosque as a form of *nawafil*, the optional prayers performed outside the prescribed daily prayer times. She does this, she said, because her mosque in Singapore is



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Al-Andalus: Compiled issue Alhambra: J/A 06, S/O 92  
convivencia: M/J 09, S/O 03



Al-Andalus wiki: <http://al-andalus.wetpaint.com/>

Map of Al-Andalus: <http://slurl.com/secondlife/Al+Andalus+Generalife/26/126/59>

## Despite the difficulty of finding your way in Aleppo's ancient *madinah*, you hardly need a map to find the soap-makers.

Colorful stalls packed high with traditional yellow and green bars—soap made from olive and laurel oil—punctuate the madinah's streets. And while many of Aleppo's traditional soap factories have either closed or moved to industrial areas on the city's outskirts, those that remain are easy to locate. Just ask any of the soap vendors for directions, or follow your nose: The overpowering smell of laurel leaves should lead you there.

A great place to start learning about Aleppan soap is the Qaymuz family's famous stall, located in the Suq al-Attarin (the perfumers' market), the madinah's main commercial thoroughfare. When I visited in January, I was greeted by Aladdin Qaymuz, the owner's son.

# SOAPING UP

Aladdin is 25 and has been working in his family's store since he was nine. "Arabs, Syrians, Aleppans and foreigners" buy his family's soap, he said, specifying that most of the latter are French or Asian, members of the large tour groups that pass through the Aleppo *suq*.

"Do you still use the soap?" I asked. "I love this soap!" Aladdin exclaimed, but then added that he uses it only to bathe and that—unlike his grandmother—he uses a mass-produced shampoo to wash his hair. "We are the new generation," he explained. "But Momma still uses only the laurel-oil soap for her hair and body."

Aladdin is not the only member of his generation whose preference for traditional Aleppan soap is on the wane. Throughout my visits to factories and stores in the soap-making capitals of the Levant, I heard the same lament: Sales of traditional soap are declining. Prices and mass marketing are the most important reasons.

It's an uphill battle for traditional soap-makers: Mass-produced soap, which contains cheaper ingredients such as palm oil, has become more affordable than the handmade olive- and laurel-oil soap used by Aleppo's older generation. Companies are able to use the money they save on cheaper ingredients to invest in more expensive ad campaigns instead. In addition, soap stores in the Levant traditionally arrange bare bars in colorful stacks and sell them by weight, a method that consumers are finding less appealing than the attractively wrapped and advertised western-style brands. Amid changing market conditions, the future of traditionally made soap, once a staple good throughout the Levant, is in doubt.

In response to this challenge, many traditional soap-makers in both Syria and Lebanon have developed a new marketing strategy: First, they have adopted the packaging practices used for western bath and beauty products. Then, they are marketing their soaps as "natural" and "organic," hoping to meet growing demand for this type of product in Europe, the US and the nearby Gulf countries. Finally, a number of traditional soap-makers are also taking to the Internet to tout their products' qualities.

The Qaymuz family's store, like the family itself, exemplifies the tensions in Aleppo's soap industry. To remain profitable, the family has had to diversify the shop's product line. Juxtaposed with stacks of olive- and laurel-oil soap are packaged European soaps and cleaning products. Indeed, I had the impression that the shop's multitiered soap display, showing all the possible shades of green and yellow, was meant to attract foreigners like myself rather than local buyers. Aladdin confessed that his Aleppan customers are purchasing more of the "modern" products and less laurel-oil soap these days. Even his regular patrons are buying around half of what they used to, he said.

Aladdin reminisced about his childhood, remembering when the store sold only laurel-oil soap: the lowest quality for washing clothes, the middle quality for hand-washing, and the

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Above: Olives from groves around Aleppo provide most of the oil essential to traditional soap-making. The best soaps tend to have high percentages of laurel oil as well. Right: A customer savors the smell of handmade soap in Mohamed Adel Qaymuz's shop. Tourists are an important market for traditional soaps.









highest quality for the body and hair. Two factors determine the overall quality of the soap: the percentage of laurel oil it contains and the length of time it has been aged.

The Qaymuz shop carries the Joubaili brand of soap, which features an eight-star rating system that reflects the percentage of laurel oil in each soap bar. Soaps with a higher percentage of laurel oil are more expensive because laurel oil is harder to acquire than olive oil, the main ingredient; they are more desirable because laurel oil gives the soap additional moisturizing and antiseptic properties. At the Qaymuz shop, one-star soap costs 250 Syrian pounds a kilo (\$2.36/lb), and the highest-quality, eight-star, variety costs 450 pounds a kilo (\$4.23/lb).

The Qaymuz family also classifies its soap by how long it has aged: from three months to eight years. Olive- and laurel-oil soap improves with time because the aging process allows it to ferment and dry. As it dries, the soap loses up to 30 percent of its moisture content, and its color changes gradually from green to golden yellow. The aged soap has a

darker and rougher surface, but, when cut open, its aroma is more complex and herbal, lingering in the nose for several seconds. The more aged soap is also better for the skin.

To understand the challenges and costs involved in producing traditional soap, you can visit the Joubaili family's factory. On a clear day last October, I tracked it down in the madinah and met the manager, Omar Joubaili. His great-grandfather had been a merchant who made his fortune in Egypt and then returned to his native Aleppo. In the late 19th century, he partnered with

Marco Pli, the Italian ambassador to Syria, to buy a *khan*, or caravansarai, in the old city and convert it into a soap factory. The Joubaili family has been one of the major soap producers of Aleppo ever since. Omar's name is actually 'Amr, but he told me that he had changed his name in English to Omar—"like Omar Sharif," he said with a laugh—because his American friends couldn't pronounce his real name. He told me that I was the first American to visit his factory, and he was thrilled to talk about soap.

When I visited, soap production had

**Top: Omar Joubaili's family's factory in Aleppo is a former caravansarai. Here, olive- and laurel-oil soaps dry and ferment. Right: As a video showing traditional soap-cutting at his father's factory plays on his desk, Mohammed Jameel Kurdi, another professional in a changing industry, talks about the modern soap-manufacturing company he's built to bring his family's products from Aleppo to the global marketplace.**







One handcrafted bar at a time, Mahmud al-Sharkass plies his trade at his family's 200-year-old soap workshop in the Khan al-Masriyyin (Egyptians' Khan) in Tripoli, Lebanon. He and his family make both bar soap—shown stacked in drying towers all around him—and “ball soap,” each ball shaped by hand, some in plain colors, and some marbled with two or more colors.

not yet begun because the two main ingredients, olive oil and laurel oil, had not yet arrived. The production cycle of traditional Levantine soap is linked to the olive harvest, which extends from September to March. The first pressing of olive oil is used for eating and cooking; the second pressing is for soap. The olive oil used for Aleppan soap comes from the groves surrounding the city, but the laurel oil comes from the mountains of southern Turkey—a few hours' drive north of Aleppo. Omar invited me to return in two weeks to watch the beginning of the soap-production season. “Once we start,” he warned, “we work around the clock.”

But when I called Omar from Damascus on the prescribed day, I could tell by his voice that he was stressed: Neither the olive oil nor the laurel oil had arrived, even though he had pre-ordered—and paid for—both. He assured me that production would start soon and asked me to postpone my trip by a few weeks. When I contacted him again in early December, he told me that the olive oil had arrived but the laurel oil had been held up at Turkish customs. When I finally returned to Aleppo in mid-December—normally well into the production cycle—Omar's laurel oil shipment still hadn't cleared Turkish customs. Omar had made numerous trips to the Turkish border to try to resolve the problem and had even brought along his brother, who had studied in Turkey and spoke Turkish, to help with the negotiations. Omar never explained the

problem to me, but I got the sense that it involved a bribe he didn't want to pay.

In the end, Omar didn't start soap production until February this year, early enough to fill his pre-orders from France but too late to match last year's production volume. He gave priority to his European orders, since foreign

While Tripoli's soap stalls aren't as prominent as those lining the main streets of Aleppo's Old City, the city boasts more soap-makers than its Syrian sister. And, unlike the relative monochrome of Aleppo's traditional soaps, those in Tripoli are a rainbow of vivid colors. This is just one of the ways in

## Tripoli soaps are a rainbow of vivid colors — one of the ways soap-makers are innovating to meet new market challenges.

contracts are more lucrative than the business he does in Aleppo's Old City, so in the end, this year's batch of Joubaili soap would make its way to the French market, but would be surprisingly harder to find in Aleppo's soap stalls. With these delays, the Joubailis only escaped financial ruin because they were cushioned by their savings—an example of the reasons why soap-making in Aleppo is increasingly a gentleman's occupation.

Soap producers in Tripoli, Lebanon face similar challenges, but have adopted an aggressive new business strategy to meet changing market conditions. Tripoli is only 85 kilometers (50 mi) north of Beirut, but it feels worlds away from Lebanon's cosmopolitan capital. Along with Aleppo and Nablus (in Palestine), it is one of the three historic centers of Levantine soap production.

which Tripoli's soap producers are adapting tradition to the modern marketplace.

Tripoli's 16th-century soap market, Khan al-Sabun, is an obligatory first stop in any soap itinerary of the Old City. The industry in Tripoli took off in the 17th and 18th centuries, when, according to the historian Antoine Abdel Nour, the Ottoman Empire, of which Tripoli was a part, established favorable financial regulations mandating the transport of ash, the essential alkaline ingredient in soap, from the desert of Homs and Hama (in present-day Syria) to Tripoli. Two-thirds of this ash shipment was allocated, by law, to the four state-run soap factories that the Ottomans set up in Tripoli. During this boom, Tripoli's Khan al-Sabun became the heart of the local soap industry. From here, Tripoline soaps traveled to points outside the Levant—and even beyond the Ottoman world. In recent years, Badr

## THE MAKING OF TRADITIONAL SOAP

All soap-making processes involve the combination of a fatty substance with an alkaline one. In the Levant, olive oil is the obvious choice, and Levantine soap-makers traditionally used the ashes of the *Salsola kali* plant as the other ingredient. That plant, called prickly saltwort or Russian thistle in English (and tumbleweed in parts of the US), grows on the Syrian–Jordanian steppe, and its ashes are rich in strongly alkaline sodium carbonate ( $\text{Na}_2\text{CO}_3$ ). Soap-makers once mixed the ashes with lime to create caustic water, the alkaline agent that transforms oil into soap. (After World War I, imported caustic soda replaced the *Salsola kali* ash.)

The oil-alkali mixture is cooked in a large vat until it saponifies—that is, turns into a muddy, yellowish paste. Workers pour this paste onto a *mafrash*, a large, flat “spreading area” of stone or concrete that has been covered with a white clay powder (*huwwara*) or soap powder or even large sheets of paper. As the paste is poured, another worker levels the soap’s surface to a depth of seven centimeters ( $2\frac{3}{4}$ ”) with a tool like a long wooden mason’s trowel, called a *mashaf*. Twenty-four hours later, the workers drag a string soaked in red dye over the partly hardened soap paste, marking it into uniform squares. Then they use wooden mallets to stamp the name of the factory and the quality of the soap into each bar.

Cutting the soap is the most impressive part of the process: Workers “skate” across the soap mass with bladed boots, following the red lines. After cutting them with their boots, they transfer the bars to a drying area, where they are arranged in picturesque “soap towers,” called *kumu’* or *tananir*. These towers allow the air to circulate among the bars so their drying continues. As the soap dries, its fat-and-alkaline mixture ferments, improving its hygienic and dermatological properties, a process that takes at least six months, though it can last for years.

The overall quality of the finished soap is determined by its composition and its age. In Aleppo, the amount of laurel oil in the soap determines its quality, since laurel oil gives the soap additional moisturizing properties and a pleasant herbal smell. In Lebanon, where laurel-oil soap is less common, traditional olive-oil soaps are classified by how long they’ve been aged.



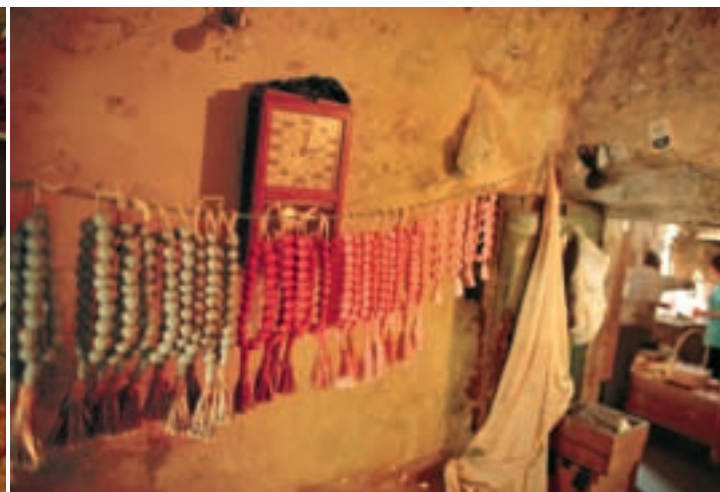
**The first step in soap-making is to mix olive oil (at times mixed with laurel oil) with caustic soda and cook the mixture in a vat. The resulting paste is then smoothed onto a flat surface such as a large tray or a floor. It is then sliced into bars or shaped into balls and dried till it is ready for sale in shops or via the Internet.**

Hassoun, the scion of one of Tripoli’s great soap families, has refurbished the khan and made it the symbolic and commercial center of his multinational soap company—itsself named Khan Al Saboun. Although the company’s main factory is now in the suburb of Abou Samra, its main offices are still in the khan.

The day I visited, Ahmad Hassoun, Badr’s oldest son and Khan Al Saboun’s general manager, was testing new facial washing solutions with Dr. Fayek Minkara, the company’s chief chemist. Minkara, a portly fellow in his 50’s, emphasized the importance of developing new products. He had lived in the UK for nine years, where he completed a master’s degree and a doctorate in biochemistry. When he returned to Lebanon, he couldn’t find an appropriate job in the academic world, so he joined Khan Al Saboun and taught himself the science of soap. Today, he is in charge of production, innovation and quality control.

Khan Al Saboun’s motto is “Tradition and Success”—and that means success in the 21st century, or, as Minkara puts it, making “a family business into a company business.” Unlike other soap-makers I met, who seemed to relish the family-sized dimension of their cottage industries, Hassoun’s company has bigger goals. Throughout our meeting, Minkara emphasized the word “worldwide.” Hassoun pointed out that Khan Al Saboun owns 10 stores in Lebanon and more than 100 outside the country, and has some 1500 franchised dealers worldwide, as well as an ever-expanding Internet presence. The Gulf states are the company’s most important foreign market, representing almost 80 percent of its total sales, but it also has major contracts in Russia, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and New Zealand.

Nothing could be farther from the Qaymuz family’s Aleppan soap stall than the Hassoun family’s flagship store in the Khan al-Sabun in Tripoli. There, the bars of soap are individually wrapped in attractive plastic packages or wooden gift boxes rather







than displayed in colorful stacks—and one or two bars sell for the price of an entire kilo of Aleppo's finest laurel-oil soap. The store has a more diverse selection of soap shapes and sizes than you'll find in other Lebanese or Syrian soap shops. And a number of perfumed soaps—scented with rosewater, jasmine, lemon, honey and anise—are on display. Despite their stylish presentation, however, the quality of many of Khan Al Saboun's products doesn't match the best of Aleppo's, for they contain palm oil while Aleppan bars are made with olive and laurel oil only.

This underscores the dilemma facing many Levantine soap-makers: Rather than "Tradition and Success," they often have to decide between tradition or success. Omar

Joubaili chooses to follow traditional practices and use traditional ingredients; in return, he must deal with declining demand and problems of supply. The Hassoun family has accepted the fact that traditions must adapt to the market. The ends justify the means, says Minkara: "This enterprise is for the Lebanese. We want them to get something out of their culture."

**M**ahmud al-Sharkass, the seventh generation of an illustrious line of Tripoline soap-makers, represents another path for the Lebanese to "get something out" of their soap culture. I first encountered Sharkass's work at the Musée du Savon (Soap Museum) in Sidon, Lebanon, just south of Beirut. This wonderful little museum, established by the Audi Foundation, is housed in a building that used to be a soap factory.

The Audi family bought the factory in the late 19th century, and it

remained one of the most important soap factories in Sidon until the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war in the mid-1970's, when the ground floor was occupied by refugees. In 1996, banker Raymond Audi transformed his family's old soap factory into a museum about the history of Levantine soap. It features a 12-minute educational video that follows the journey of a young boy through the streets of Tripoli, where he meets soap-makers, buys soap and returns home to bathe. The video includes beautiful images of Mahmud al-Sharkass at work in his factory in Tripoli, and the museum shop, called Hammam ("Bath"), carries Sharkass's signature product: shiny, multicolored, marbled soap balls.

Sharkass's store is in Tripoli's Khan al-Khayyat (Tailors' Khan), which has been beautifully restored by the Spanish government, but his workshop is in the nearby Khan al-Masriyyin (Egyptians' Khan). This khan also houses Tripoli Soaps, run by



**Above: Handmade soaps, elegantly wrapped and displayed in glass cases, make for high-end trade at Hammam ("Bath"), the shop at the Musée du Savon (Soap Museum) in Sidon, Lebanon. The museum occupies a former soap factory, and it traces the history of Levantine soap as both craft and commerce. Opposite page, from left: Whimsically made to resemble Arab pastries, specialty soaps highlight a storefront in Tripoli's Khan al-Sabun (Soap Market). At the Sharkass workshop, soap made in the form of prayer beads dries on a line. Schoolchildren on a visit to the Musée du Savon see some of Sharkass's carefully crafted soaps sculpted as grapes.**



Abdoulwahed Hassoun, a relative of Badr Hassoun.

Such a concentration of master soap-workers undoubtedly makes the Khan al-Masriyyin the best place in Tripoli—and perhaps in the whole Levant—to learn about soap. Sharkass works in cramped quarters on the khan's second floor, where his family has been making soap since 1803. He sits on a small stool set among the “drying towers” of yellow soap being aged.

Sharkass and his family were gracious hosts, but they never stopped working throughout my visit. Sharkass produces

about a hundred multicolored soap balls a day, some of which he sells in his store and some of which he sends to Hammam. The soap balls are labor-intensive creations, requiring two days of molding. Sharkass's son, Ahmad, and his daughters use large basins at the back of the workshop to cook olive oil and caustic soda into soap paste. Sharkass injects this paste with food coloring that he buys from pastry chefs. Then he takes a fistful of the paste and molds it in the hollow of his hand, forming a ball. He gives each ball a uniform shape and leaves them to dry overnight. The next day, he scrapes the soap balls with a polishing tool (called a *shafrah*), giving them a bright, shiny finish.

He also molds small, plates of soap on which he displays the soap balls at the front of his shop.

Sharkass, who was born into the soap-making business like Badr Hassoun and his son, showed me pictures from the 1940's of his father making soap balls in the same workshop. Likewise, Sharkass is training his son to take over the store when he retires.

In fact, I soon learned that the whole family—including his wife and daughters—works in the shop and knows how to make the colored soap balls. Nevertheless, when I asked the mother and youngest daughter for their names, they told me that I should only write down the names of the father and the son because “the shop is theirs.” Soap-making is a vocation that consumes the whole family, but the title of “soap-maker”—like most artisanal titles in the Levant—is passed down from father to son.

I was struck by the immense differences between the Sharkass and the Hassoun families, despite the similarities in their family histories. In a single generation, Badr Hassoun has turned his company, Khan Al Saboun, into a multinational corporation, while Sharkass's workshop remains very much a “family business” in scale and ethos. The Hassoun family has moved its soap



Left: **Soap stamps, each carrying its maker's branding mark, hang in front of a soap wall at the Musée du Savon.**

Below: **Flanked by soap-drying towers, students learn about Levantine soap-making at the museum.**





## WHERE TO BUY AND SEE TRADITIONAL SOAP



leppo, Syria and Tripoli, Lebanon are the best cities to visit to buy traditional soap and see traditional soap-making. Sidon, Lebanon was once a soap-making center, but most of its factories are now closed. It does, however, feature the Audi Foundation's **Soap Museum (Musée du Savon)** on Rue El Moutran, telephone +961 (0)7 75 35 99, [www.fondationaudi.org](http://www.fondationaudi.org). The museum's gift shop, **Hammam**, has a fine selection of handmade soaps and bath products from Lebanon, Palestine and Syria.

In Aleppo, the best place to see soap stalls is the Suq al-'Attarin in the Old City. I highly recommend the **Qaymuz** family's stall. If you want to see how soap is made, I recommend the **Joubaili Soap Factory**, in front of the Bimaristan Arghan, a beautiful building that served as an insane asylum from the 14th to the 20th century. You may call the factory to make an appointment: +963 21 36 38 201. The owner, Omar Joubaili, speaks English and is very friendly.



In Tripoli, the most famous place to buy soap is the Old City's soap market, the Khan al-Sabun, which houses **Khan Al Saboun**, telephone +961 (0)6 43 83 69, [www.khanalsaboun.net](http://www.khanalsaboun.net). Ahmad Hassoun, the general manager, has an office adjoining the store. A better place to see traditional soap-makers at work (and buy beautiful soap) is the Khan al-Masriyyin, which houses two soap workshops with adjoining stores. On the ground floor, you'll find **Tripoli Soap**, owned by Abdoulwahed Hassoun, telephone +961 (0)3 16 12 84. On the second floor is **Al-Sharkass Soap**, whose owner is Mahmud al-Sharkass, telephone +961 (0)6 425 857.

production out of the Old City to a large factory, while Mahmud Sharkass continues to labor in the workshop he inherited from his father. Finally, the Sharkass family has continued to work with soap on a daily basis, molding multicolored soap balls by hand. The Hassouns, in contrast, administer their soap empire from offices located symbolically in the historical soap-making khan.

The two families do, however, share a common goal: They're both looking for new markets for a traditional product. The Hassouns have a network of dealers outside Lebanon and increasingly look to make their profit in the Gulf countries and in Europe. The Sharkass family sells its wares directly from its workshop, but they also have a contract with the Audi Foundation, which is able to market their products in an upscale store—Hammam—designed to attract tourists. Thus both families have, to some extent, accepted the transformation of Levantine olive-oil soap from a staple good, bought and used by Lebanese families of all classes, to a luxury good intended for affluent customers.

While the Hassoun family has moved soap production out of public view, Mahmud al-Sharkass relies on the artistry of his craft, displayed in his workshop and in the Soap Museum video, to attract customers. The question for both families, however, remains: Will customers continue to pay more for such products, particularly when

Right: **Soaps in brightly colored wrappers light up the Sabunna soap shop in Sidon. Although that city's heyday as a soap-making center has passed, it still offers traditional soap for sale.**

they are increasingly difficult to distinguish from the mass-produced "natural" soap and beauty merchandise that is taking up more and more shelf space in the market? 🌐



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Aleppo: M/A 04, M/J 99, J/F 82

Tripoli: M/J 00, M/A 94

# FINDING A BALANCE

PHOTOGRAPHED AND WRITTEN BY ZHUANG WUBIN





Below: The historic foundation of Indonesia's relationship with China, maritime trade across the South China Sea began more than a thousand years ago and predates the arrival of Islam in either country. With trade came migration, mainly from China to the Indonesian islands. Ma Huan, the Chinese Muslim interpreter who visited Java between 1413 and 1415, reported that most of the Chinese there had come from China's southeastern coast, and that among them were Muslims "doing penance and fasting." East of Java, Chinese settlers came to the eastern tip of Madura island, where they founded a "Kampung Pacinan," a generic name that means "Chinese settlement." Today it is part of a village named Dungkek, and of Dungkek's 500 residents some 100 claim Chinese ancestry. Among these only eight families are Muslim.



Above: The face of Zheng He, admiral of China's most famous medieval maritime expeditions in the 15th century and arguably the most famous Chinese Muslim ever, is central to a mural on the wall of the mosque in Surabaya, open since 2003, that is named in his honor. The Cheng Hoo Mosque is often viewed as a symbol of the reassertion of Chinese Muslim identity within a multicultural Indonesia. The mosque's founder, Hajji Muhammad Yusuf Bambang Sujanto, is of Chinese ancestry and has been a Muslim for 30 years. He included the mural, he says, as a reminder that Islam is nothing new to Chinese. "After all," he says, "a Ming Dynasty admiral had already come to Indonesia 600 years back to make new friends and to propagate Islam." By rallying around the historical figure of Zheng He, says political scientist Leo Suryadinata, director of the Chinese Heritage Centre in Singapore, Chinese Muslims hope to show that they don't need to discard their ethnic identity when they embrace Islam.

Right: Like many Chinese Indonesians, Ivan Sasongko (in red shirt) was raised in a Confucian family. A graduate in marketing, he went to Makassar, in south Sulawesi in 1989, for his brother-in-law's coffee business. There he fell in love with a pribumi (indigenous) woman and, at her father's request, embraced Islam before they wed in 1993.

"I took two years to adjust," says Sasongko about his conversion. "I stopped eating pork immediately. But I didn't dare to pray in the mosque, because I felt that everyone was staring at me. This is a feeling shared by most Chinese converts."

At home, his wife helped him learn Muslim prayers. Nowadays, he has no hesitation to introduce himself as a Chinese Muslim. Of the regular daily prayers (*sholat*, in Indonesian, from the Arabic *salat*), he says "Anyone who does it seriously will definitely become a good man."

His own family accepted his decision, although he says that, like many non-Muslim Chinese families, they had always assumed he would marry a Chinese woman, not a pribumi. "My wife and I still join in the celebrations during Chinese New Year. For the reunion dinner, my mother will cook with coconut oil and point out the pork dishes for us to avoid," he adds. "I also visit the grave of my China-born father during *qingming* (tomb-sweeping day), and I pray for him in the Islamic way."

## IDENTITY IN INDONESIA

Pribumi and peranakan are words Indonesians use to distinguish two groups within the country's population. Pribumi refers to anyone who looks indigenous, rather than Chinese. Peranakan refers to local-born Chinese whose forefathers, somewhere in the past, had pribumi wives. (In general, Chinese women didn't leave China for Indonesia prior to the 20th century.) The peranakan children of these mixed marriages were most often brought up as Chinese, not pribumi. However, the early use of peranakan may have referred specifically to Chinese Muslims, whom colonial policy distinguished from non-Muslim Chinese. In the first half of the 20th century, the word simply meant any Indies-born Chinese—who were thus Dutch subjects—as opposed to newly arrived Chinese, who were aliens. Today, because the overwhelming majority of Chinese in Indonesia are Indonesia-born, the meaning of peranakan has blurred, and now it often means a person with Chinese blood who is culturally Indonesian.

There are no official data on the Chinese Muslim population in Indonesia today, but a recent estimate suggests that slightly more than five percent of Chinese Indonesians are Muslims. (See lower chart, page 29.) Since ethnic Chinese themselves make up less than one percent of the country's population (middle chart), Chinese Muslims are a very small minority within a very small minority. Yet, because they share both the country's 88-percent majority religion (upper chart) and a heritage that goes back more than 600 years, they are, in the words of Cheng Hoo Mosque founder Hajji Muhammad Yusuf Bambang Sujanto, "a bridge" between Indonesian pribumi and the Chinese minority.

There were Chinese Muslims living in Java, Sumatra and elsewhere when Zheng He's fleet called at Java and Palembang in 1413. A century later, in 1513, Portuguese traveler Tomé Pires visited Java and noted in his travel account that foreign Muslims tended to become Javanese and Javanese tended to become Muslims. The rulers along the coastal areas, he wrote, were "not Javanese of long standing," but rather descendents of Chinese, Persians and other immigrants.

A 17th-century chronicle from Banten led the Dutch historians H. J. de Graaf and Theodore G. Th. Pigeaud to believe that the ancestor of the rulers of Demak, Java's first Islamic kingdom, was Chinese.

It was in the 17th century that the Dutch United East India Company (*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, or VOC) began extending its influence over the Indonesian archipelago. It encouraged Chinese immigration at a time when events in China made this attractive. The

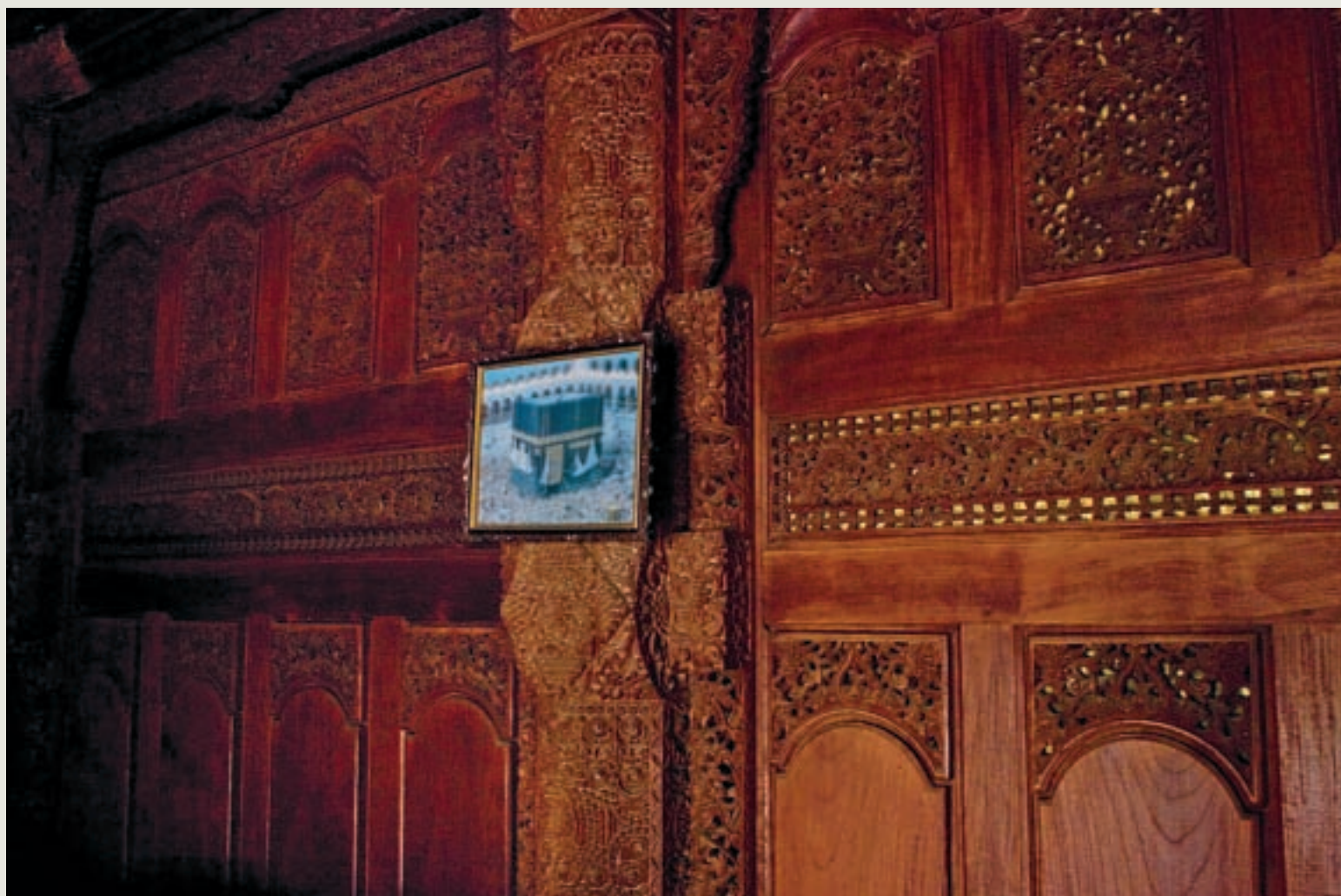
Right: Liv Febriana, who was born in 1983, takes a drink of water after returning home from school, while her father prepares to go out to work and her mother straightens up the house. Her father, Mochammad Koesnan, is a pribumi Muslim from Java who plays guitar in a rock band that performs at hotels in Surabaya, in East Java. Her mother is a Chinese who grew up Catholic and embraced Islam when she married. Even though Liv is of mixed parentage, she says her friends are mostly Javanese pribumi. When it comes to food, she sees herself as more Javanese than Chinese.

Liv recently graduated from the 10 November Institute of Technology with a degree in mathematics, and in 2009 she married a construction consultant who, like her father, is a pribumi Muslim from Java. As sociologist The Siauw Giap observed, Indonesian Chinese who convert to Islam tend to assimilate, over generations, with the majority pribumi population.











Left: In Mentok, the oldest town on the island of Bangka, the family of Abang Faizal keeps a genealogy that traces their ancestry back to Lim Tau Kian, a Ming Dynasty official who married a Chinese princess and fled to Johor in Malaysia in the late 17th or early 18th century. After converting to Islam, Lim adopted the name Ce Wan Abdulhayat. He and the princess had five sons, including one Abdul Jabar, whose daughter married Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin, ruler of Palembang in the early and mid-18th century. This was also the time that tin was discovered on Bangka, off the coast of south Sumatra and part of Badaruddin's territory. To develop the mines on Bangka, Badaruddin sent his wife's family, and they were among the founders of Mentok.

To this day, however, Lim's male descendants continue to use the Johor honorific *abang*, and the women have retained the title *yang*. Historian Mary F. Somers Heidhues points out that there are today some 1000 abangs and yangs in west Bangka alone. According to Faizal, not all of them are as forthright as Faizal's family in acknowledging their Chinese origin.

"Some of them don't think it is important to know Lim's history. Others know the connection but are unwilling to admit it. In fact, they reject the idea completely," explains Faizal, who sees himself as a pribumi with Chinese blood.

Faizal runs the popular Menumbing Restaurant near Mentok harbor, where regular ferry service maintains Bangka's connection to Palembang. He took over the restaurant when the former owner, a Chinese, gave it to him for free and even taught him the recipes. That, Faizal says, perplexed some of the local pribumi, who did not believe that one of their own could have a good relationship with a Chinese. But the former owner was, Faizal says, "aware of Lim Tau Kian and my family history. We have the same interests at heart. We hope that the people in Bangka will better themselves," says Faizal.

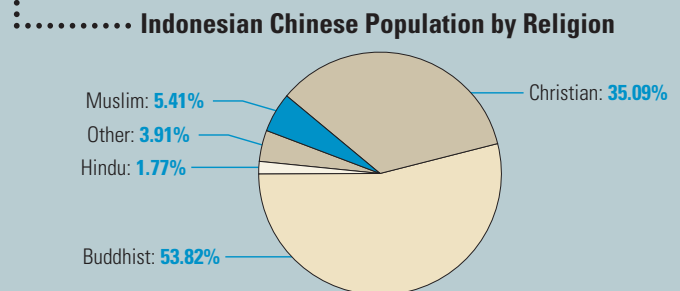
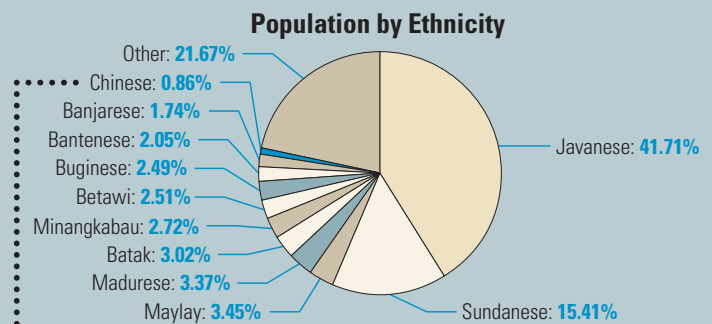
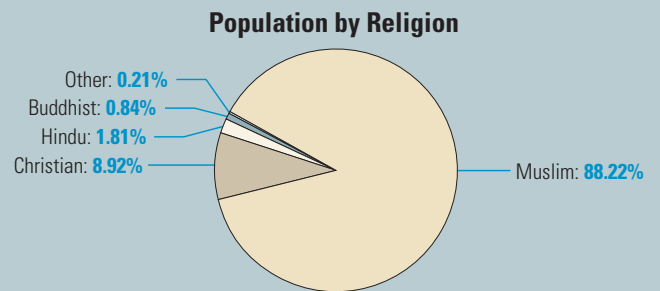
men who came were mainly traders and laborers.

In 1740, following a decline in the sugar trade, the VOC closed mills in Jakarta, and unemployed Chinese from the countryside revolted. In retaliation, the VOC massacred some 10,000 of the 15,000 Chinese resident in Jakarta in what became known as "the Chinese Murder."

In the aftermath, many Chinese posed as natives, and this often meant a conversion to Islam. Several historic mosques in Jakarta date from this period. The VOC tried to limit these conversions, in part because Chinese paid higher taxes than natives, but to little avail.

Chinese conversion to Islam was not limited to Jakarta, however. In fact, by the 18th century, peranakan communities had become well entrenched in most major towns across Indonesia. Australian historian Heather Sutherland's study on Makassar, for instance, shows that in the 18th century around one-third of Makassar's Chinese population were Muslims.

It was only in the 19th century, after the VOC was replaced by direct Dutch government control, that segregation became official. In 1854, the government gave Europeans the highest status; the Chinese were categorized below the Europeans, alongside Arabs and Indians, as "Foreign Orientals," and the natives (pribumi) were given the lowest status. This "divide and conquer" strategy was guided by Dutch fears that Chinese and pribumi might work together against them.

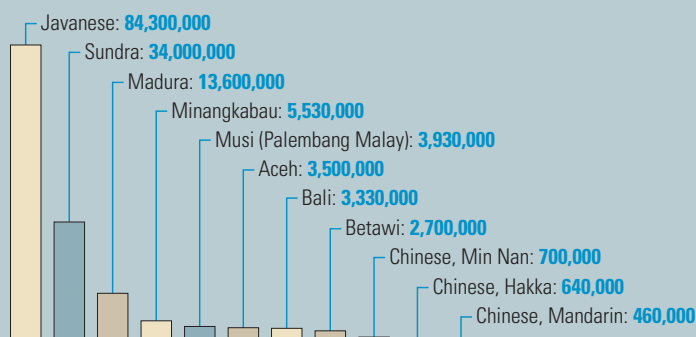


Left: The center of one of Indonesia's finest woodcarving traditions, the city of Kudus in north-central Java was founded in the 1540's by Sunan Kudus, one of the nine legendary founders of Islam in Java. The name "Kudus" comes from the Arabic *al-quds* ("the holy," which is also the Arabic name for Jerusalem). Kudus himself may have come from Egypt, and some credit him with the introduction of shadow-puppet theater—famous in Egypt since early medieval times—to Indonesia, where it became a tradition. The woodcarving for which the city is known, like that shown here on a wall in a 200-year-old house, is attributed not to Kudus himself, but rather to his Chinese teacher, Kyai Theling-sing. According to H. Sayuti Nafi, leader of the Indonesian Chinese Muslim Association in Kudus, there came a time when Thelingsing asked Sunan Kudus to teach him about Islam. Thelingsing eventually became a Muslim and went on to establish two mosques in the Kudus area. The carving he introduced blended Chinese and Islamic influences, and over time the "Kudus style" came to decorate the most prestigious homes in the region. It incorporates diverse motifs reflecting the city's major cultural influences, including dragons from China, jasmine flowers from Islam, lotus flowers from India and crowns from the Dutch.



Masjid Agung, built in 1738, is the oldest mosque in Palembang, capital of South Sumatra and a city of 1.4 million. According to local historian Djohan Hanafiah, the mosque—a fusion of local, European and Chinese architectural styles—was built with Chinese labor, and it was Chinese Indonesians who made its bricks. Anthropologist Jan Wuisman observed that the gradual arrival of Islam in Indonesia did not initially bring about a new type of “Islamic” architecture; rather, it brought an “adaptation of prevailing vernacular and Hindu–Buddhist building traditions to fit in with the ... requirements of the Islamic faith.”

## Major Languages of Indonesia



At the end of World War II, Indonesia found itself in a long and bitter revolution against the Dutch, and in 1950 it became formally independent. Sukarno, the first president, included Chinese Muslims in his cabinet as ministers of health and finance.

Coming to power in 1965, Indonesia’s second president, Suharto, strongly favored assimilation and rejected the idea that Muslim and Chinese identities could co-exist. Javanese historian Slamet Muljana’s 1968 book *History of the Fall of Hindu Kingdoms in Java and the Rise of Islamic Sultanates in Indonesia*, which advanced the idea that the Chinese were partly responsible for bringing Islam to Java, was banned, along with other accounts

Born in Indonesia to a Chinese family and raised as a Buddhist, Jhoe Lie Hing became a Muslim in 1994 after conversations with his pribumi friends about religion. At the time, he was employed in a Taiwanese-owned plastics factory. About ten years ago, he became a financial advisor in the Islamic-banking division of a life-insurance company, where, after a day of meeting clients, he performs the afternoon prayer (*sholat azhar* in Indonesian, *asr* in Arabic). Since 1997, he has also assisted in local welfare work as a member of the Indonesian Chinese Muslim Association, widely known by its Indonesian acronym, PITI.

Jhoe was in elementary school when former Indonesian president Suharto, in an effort to force Chinese assimilation, enacted the ban on all expressions of Chinese culture—including use of the Mandarin language—that was rescinded only in 2000. Nevertheless, Jhoe took private lessons and later read whatever materials he could obtain. While working in the plastics factory, he practiced Mandarin with his Taiwanese boss. He says he has got along well with pribumi all his life, and that historical problems between Chinese and pribumi will ease as more Chinese, like himself, adopt the majority religion.





At Banten Lama (“Old Banten”) in northern Java, the square minaret marks what remains of an early mosque known as Masjid Percinan (“Mosque of the Chinese Quarter”). A tomb there is dedicated to Ratu Icong Maijong, who may be related to Mas Jong, a Chinese Muslim who, historians believe, had a role in the Islamization of the region. The minaret, however, lacks Chinese architectural features or inscriptions. The historians Denys Lombard and Claudine Salmon hypothesized that it may have been built by local Muslims and only later adopted by Chinese Muslims. Urban historian Johannes Widodo noted that the first mosque of Banten, known as Pecinan Tinggi, was built between 1525 and 1552 at the location of a former Chinese settlement, but no one has yet found its exact location. Masjid Pacinan was abandoned for many years and until recently forgotten, surrounded by forest.



that attributed Chinese ancestry to some of the *wali songo*, the nine mythical saints believed to have brought Islam to Java.

As a result of these policies, according to Natalia Soebagjo, vice-chair of the Centre for Chinese Studies at the University of Indonesia, Indonesian Chinese today have few or no ties to Chinese culture or history. “They identify themselves as Indonesians, but it is often the indigenous Indonesians who remind them or point out to them that they are in fact Chinese.”

After the fall of Suharto in 1998, the situation of the Chinese Indonesians improved. Abdurrahman Wahid, the fourth president (1999–2001), “made the difference

by coming forth and claiming Chinese ancestry,” observes Ivan Sasongko—specifically descent from a Chinese Muslim from Fujian Province who served as an ambassador in east Java during the Ming Dynasty.

In 2000, Wahid also reinstated the cultural and religious rights of the Chinese. Since then, Chinese organizations and Mandarin education have been revived, Chinese New Year is a public holiday and the Chinese press has reemerged. Chinese Muslims have found in the Ming admiral Zheng He a cultural symbol, says political scientist Leo Suryadinata, who shows that there is no need to discard ethnicity when embracing Indonesia’s majority religion. 🌐

After prayers on the first morning after Ramadan, a family departs from the Masjid al-Islam Muhammad Cheng Ho Sriwijaya in Palembang. Opened in 2008, the mosque, named after the 15th-century Chinese Muslim explorer, was an ambitious project undertaken by the Palembang branch of PITI. Like the mosque in Surabaya that is also named after the explorer, it symbolizes the past decade’s resurgence of Chinese identity. One of its founders, Karim Hasan, points out that non-Muslim Chinese donated about 30 percent of the construction costs. Widodo, whose own maternal great-grandfather came from Xiamen in southern China, believes that “the founders are trying to say that it is all right to be Chinese and Muslim again.”





Above: Outside a 200-year-old house near Palembang, children in the extended family of Kiagus Mohammad Idris spend time each evening learning the Qur'an; one touches the teacher's hand to his forehead in respect. Unlike pribumi who resist suggestions that they may have Chinese ancestry, the numerous Idris family lays claim to a tale of exile not unlike that of the peranakan Suaidi family (opposite page): At the fall of the Ming Dynasty in the 17th century, says 77-year-old Kiagus Mohammad Idris, three Ming captains fled to Palembang. Two, he believes, were either Muslims before their arrival or embraced Islam shortly afterward. Although the claim is unlikely to be historically precise, and the family now regards itself as pribumi, some family members do look ethnically Chinese, and most are happy to talk about Chinese ancestors. "When the Dutch were still around, they were fearful of us because they knew we are descendents from Chinese Muslims, and that we are very strong Muslims," recalls Idris, who says he is of the family's ninth generation. When Idris was younger, he looked after the commercial interests of a South Kalimantan governor and later became a business assistant of the minister of justice during Suharto's era.

Right: Wearing the *jas koko*, the palace attire typically worn during meetings and conferences, R. P. Mukarram Judoaning is both a member of the royal family of the Sumenep regency (province) in eastern Madura and one of eight writers commissioned in 2003 by the government to chronicle local history. He says that the royal family not only maintained close relations with the many peranakan of the district, but also that—like many of its counterparts in Java—the Sumenep royal family itself has Dutch, Indian, Arab and Chinese blood. Born in 1935, he traces the family's Chinese origins to the early 19th century, when two daughters of mixed Chinese and Indonesian parentage married into the ruling family.





Below: Although details of the history of Chinese settlers in the Pasongsongan region of eastern Madura are not well documented, the area has a Muslim *peranakan* community that is at least several hundred years old—an increasing rarity when most *peranakan* communities have become *pribumi* over time.

In Kampung Peranakan, there are some 120 *peranakan* Muslim residents. All are related to the family of Ibnu Suaidi, right, and his father, K. Siradjudin, left. Suaidi explains that the family used to forbid its members to marry *pribumi*—a restriction lifted only in his generation, when Suaidi took as his bride Mulyani, a *pribumi* from central Java.

It was in the 13th century, Suaidi says, when the Mongols were attacking China, that one Keng Biang Seng fled to Sulawesi with his three brothers. Seng married a princess, became a Muslim and, after his wife died, moved to Madura, where he settled in Pasongsongan. His descendants later prospered as merchants of timber and rice.

But Suaidi's account of his family history is likely exaggerated. The family home, for example, dates only to 1847, local tombs are not more than 200 years old, and there are no known Chinese Muslim settlements in Java or Madura that predate the 15th century. Thus the family history most likely began in the early 19th century. Even though Suaidi speaks neither Mandarin nor the Hokkein that is his ancestral dialect, he speaks with pride of being a *peranakan* Muslim—something possible today only in one of the more isolated parts of Indonesia.



Dishing out the fast-breaking meal during Ramadan, Goei Bun Hui, right, manages a noodle stand outside the Masjid Lautze, the only mosque in Jakarta today that is maintained by Chinese Muslims. Of Chinese ancestry, he became a Muslim about eight years ago.

Ali Karim Oei, whose family friends set up the mosque's Hajji Karim Oei Foundation in commemoration of his father, says that since the mosque's opening in 1990, some 2000 Indonesians have embraced Islam at the mosque, and that about 1800 of them have been Chinese. When his father died in 1988, says Oei, "the racial problem between the Chinese and the pribumi was very acute." He contrasts Indonesia's Chinese with Chinese in other Southeast Asian countries: "In the Philippines, there is no racial issue because the Chinese believe in the majority religion. Likewise for Thailand," he explains. "So we started the foundation, not necessarily to convert the Indonesian Chinese, but to educate them about the fact that Islam is also our ancestors' religion."



Hajji Muhammad Yusuf Bambang Sujanto tries his hand at the Chinese flute, an instrument he picked up on his own as a young man. One of his childhood friends, Chen Zhenyi, is the founder of a Chinese orchestra—another cultural development unheard of in Indonesia until the last decade.

Sujanto is best known, however, as the mastermind behind the Cheng Hoo Foundation and the Cheng Hoo Mosque in Surabaya. In 1980 he embraced Islam and became a leader of the East Java branch of PTI, while continuing to pursue business in banking, manufacturing and real estate. He states bluntly that he did not convert just in order to assimilate and thus improve his commercial prospects; rather, it was to give his personal life moral direction—"for my own good," he says.

Nationally, Sujanto says, "the irony of the Chinese Muslims in Indonesia lies in the fact that the pribumi will never accept us as natives and the non-Muslim Chinese will never see us as Chinese—and when we're in China, we are treated as natives of Indonesia!" If this is to change, PTI can be "the bridge between the pribumi and the Indonesian Chinese."

He points out that *Komunitas*, the magazine published by the East Java branch of PTI that he heads, is the only publication in the Indonesian language that regularly reports on the social contributions of Indonesian Chinese of all religious faiths.

Growing up in Jakarta, 42-year-old Tan Mei Hwa, left, was raised by a Confucian father and a Catholic mother. At 18, after reading about Islam on her own, Tan became a Muslim and began to study in Surabaya, East Java, with a *kiai* (Islamic teacher). Her parents told her never to come home again. But Tan started explaining Islam to them, and they listened. By 1988, they had accepted her conversion, and later they, too, became Muslims.

Tan had originally wanted to become a doctor, but at the university she studied law. After practicing for two years, she found that the world of "money politics" was not for her. She spent 10 years as an office manager, and by 2000 had become a *nyai* (female teacher of Islam) and has since received invitations to speak in Indonesia and abroad.

Since 2006, she has parleyed her knowledge, as well as her gifts for conversation, emotion and humor, into a television program called the "Bu Nyai Show," which has made her a celebrity.





When he married Suwarti, his pribumi wife, in 1994, Agung Jukifli Mohamad became a Muslim. His Taiwanese Confucian father reprimanded him for his choice. But soon after, his mother, a pribumi who had been raised as a Javanese animist, became a Muslim, too.

Professionally, Mohamad teaches the Indonesian language at a high school in Tuban, Java, and although he also teaches Mandarin at a junior high school, his skills in that language are only basic. Growing up, he says, "I felt pribumi. I was not interested in learning Mandarin from my father because I'm born in Indonesia, because I live in Indonesia, because I work in Indonesia, and I will eventually die in Indonesia."

He met Suwarti, also a teacher, at an education conference. Later, they founded an Islamic kindergarten. It

had been open for a few years when some local pribumi attacked it. Though the mob was stopped by local authorities and no one was injured, the reasons for the attack have never been clear to Mohamad. Perhaps, he speculates, people were jealous of his success, as an outsider, running a kindergarten in the village. Or perhaps they were not convinced that a Chinese could provide an Islamic education. The incident upset him deeply, and although their school remains open and enrollment is high, he confesses that his household has suffered from his anger and anxiety. He credits Suwarti with calming him.

Each year at the 'Id al-Adha, the feast at the end of the Hajj, he visits his mother-in-law. This year, in the simple village room where he and Suwarti were married, remorse for his anger and his domestic violence led him to kneel and ask forgiveness from his mother-in-law.



Along the north coast of West Java, in the city of Cirebon, Yukeng started the "Foundation of God's Inspiration," with both pribumi and Chinese members, after he became a Muslim in 1983. During the late Suharto years, in the 1990's, Yukeng organized weekly talks by religious teachers who would "reiterate the desire of the Chinese to live peacefully alongside the pribumi," at a time when government policy often put the groups in conflict. In those politically volatile years, he says, some Chinese feared his actions might bring reprisals, but the opposite happened: Yukeng believes he helped play a role in preventing the 1998 anti-Chinese violence in Jakarta from spreading to Cirebon, about three hours by car from the capital. In that time, he says, leaders of the city's ethnic and religious groups gathered nightly at Yukeng's house to ensure that common sense would prevail in their city. "During the riots," he says, "people in Cirebon showed that they believed what we had said over the years. Nothing happened to the Chinese in Cirebon at that time." In fact, he points out, some Chinese from Jakarta found refuge in his city.



Writer and photographer **Zhuang Wubin** ([www.last-harbour.com](http://www.last-harbour.com)) uses documentary photography to understand Chinese communities in Southeast Asia. Resident in Singapore, he has published photographs in *The Asian Wall Street Journal*, *Post* magazine of Hong Kong, *Rhythms Monthly* of Taiwan and at [www.zonezero.com](http://www.zonezero.com).



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Initially used as simple shelters by nomadic peoples on the Central Asian steppe, tents had evolved into luxurious portable abodes by the time of Genghis Khan, the Mongol conqueror who ruled a vast region at his death in 1227. This illustration comes from a 14th-century Persian manuscript. Opposite: A splendid entryway marked by horsetail banners leads into a tent city designated "the imperial camp" in a 15th-century gouache sketch of the Islamic School.



*Written by Caroline Stone*

# Movable





*From a distance indeed this great tent would appear to be a castle.... Round and about the pavilion on the ground outside is erected a wall of cloth, as might be otherwise the wall of a town or castle, and the cloth is of many coloured silks in diverse patterns.*

— Ruy González de Clavijo

From the Middle Ages onward, European travelers, such as the Spanish envoy quoted at left, wrote admiringly of great tent cities in Muslim lands—especially in Central Asia, but also in Turkey, Egypt and later Mughal India. They were astonished at the size and organization of these cities that at times numbered thousands and even tens of thousands of tents.

The cities that amazed Europeans were not simply the black camel-hair ridge tents of the Arab world or the domed *yurts* of the nomadic Central Asian tribes. They included movable palaces, some complete with mosques, that housed traveling royalty and their vast entourages, or were set up to mark

important celebrations, such as the marriage or circumcision of members of the ruling house. And it was not just the size of these tents that caught western eyes, but their splendor and comfort, and the way they served as showcases for wonderful textiles: cloth of gold, brocade, *ikat*, embroideries, velvet, chintz and appliqué.

Across the world, nomads have used different types of shelters and tents, but some of the most varied and elaborate designs originated on the Central Asian steppe, a region that can be hot in summer, bitterly cold in winter and windy at any time. For centuries, but mainly from early medieval times onward, as diverse Turco-Mongol peoples

# Palaces



This illustration by Yahya al-Wasiti from a 13th-century edition of the *Maqamat* (*Assemblies*), a collection of Arabic poetry by al-Hariri of Basra (1054–1122), depicts a caravan stop with brightly colored tents in which travelers could rest and where they could care for their mounts.



spread out from the steppe in migrations or in conquest, they carried with them their circular dwellings, called *yurt* in Turkic or *ger* in Mongol. Even after they settled and began to build houses and palaces, they often returned to their tents for the major events of their lives: birth and death, feasting and all kinds of ritual occasions.

This ceremonial use of the tent reached as far east as China, where there was considerable influence from the steppe, especially along the western border. Paintings show that an 11th-century Song empress gave birth in a special delivery tent, surrounded by 48 smaller ones. Among people who were originally nomadic, the custom of giving birth in a tent survived, particularly in Siberia, into the 20th century, possibly in part because of an awareness that a place never before occupied reduced the risk of infections.

Early accounts of *yurts* or *gers*—circular, with a collapsible willow frame covered in felt and a domed roof, sometimes also called “trellis tents”—come from Chinese descriptions and paintings that date to the ninth

century. However, it is around the late 12th and early 13th centuries, during the time of Genghis Khan, whose rule extended from northern China to the Volga River in Russia and south to Persia, that travelers and envoys began to describe the luxury of the ruler’s tent. Chinese author Hei-Ta Shih Luëh, writing about 1237, tells us that “[i]t is secured with more than a thousand ropes. It has one door. The threshold and doorposts are completely faced with gold. For this reason it is named ‘golden.’”

A couple of years later, the Persian historian Ata Malik Juvaini described the opulent tent his father, the *sahib-divan*, or finance minister, of Khurasan, provided for the Mongol court: “My father provided another great tent of marvellous artifice and

wondrous coloring with everything in keeping in the way of gold and silver vessels. He pitched this tent and feasted in it for days on end.”

Already by this date, a number of different types of tents were in use among the Turco-Mongol peoples, apparently as a matter of personal taste and wealth. Min-

iaures illustrating the famous *Maqamat* (*Assemblies*) of al-Hariri—for example, in a manuscript written in Baghdad around 1240, now in St. Petersburg—show trellis tents, bell tents—circular with a central pole—and ridge tents all pitched side by side at caravan halts outside Damascus and else-

where, and at the pilgrims’ camp at Makkah.

These tents are elaborately decorated, perhaps reflecting the imagination of the artist, but more likely recording what they actually looked like. Some have designs similar to those still found today on *suzanis*, the richly embroidered textiles from Central Asia; another is decorated with a band of calligraphy reflecting the architecture of the

*Chinese paintings show that an 11th-century Sung empress gave birth in a special ceremonial tent that was surrounded by 48 smaller ones.*





A classic yurt—a tent with a wooden lattice frame and felt walls, its roof and walls held in place by braided ropes and woven straps—is the venue of a concert on the steppe depicted in *Eighteen Songs of a Nomad Flute: The Story of Lady Wen-Chi*, a 14th-century tale of a Chinese woman kidnapped by Huns and held in their camps for years.

the Abbasid caliphate) converted to Islam. From roughly the 14th century, their conquests took the traditional tent in two directions: to Turkey and to India.

In Turkey, tents became a vital part of the Ottoman Empire. They held a special place on ceremonial occasions, in part due to the Ottomans' own nomadic past, and they were also a critical item of equipment in a highly militarized society. The Ottoman army even had a department to deal with them, and the sultan's own tents were stored in Istanbul at a depot near the Ibrahim Pasha Palace on the great hippodrome.

Around the time of the Turkish conquest of Constantinople in 1453, 38 men were employed in pitching the royal tents, and by the end of the 17th century, that number had risen to 2000.

Examples of Ottoman tents have been preserved in the Topkapı Palace and Istanbul Military Museums, but some of the finest are in treasuries and museums around Europe, where they were acquired either as battle trophies or as gifts proffered by one sovereign to another. (It is not difficult to tell which are which: Campaign tents tend to show much wear, while gift tents are relatively pristine.)

period, and yet another appears to be appliquéd. These decorative traditions were carried from east to west across the steppe. Until recently, they were still found on tents in Tibet, and they are still used on the ceremonial tents of North Africa and Egypt.

These beautiful structures did not stand in isolation: They were often part of cities of more than 20,000 tents, with the ruler and his wives housed in what were indeed tent palaces. Ruy Gonzáles de Clavijo, the Spanish ambassador to the court of the Mongol emperor Timur in Samarkand in 1404, described the royal tents in such detail that

it would be easy to reconstruct one. (See sidebar, page 43.) By his time, the simple yurt-type tent had been extended into the ceremonial marquee, with its entryway enclosure held up by poles. These marquees could be vast: The 14th-century Moroccan traveler Ibn Battuta mentions one large enough to contain a *minbar*, or pulpit, and accommodate several hundred men at prayer.

The people of the steppe who had come into contact—and initially conflict—with settled Muslims (including most infamously the 1257 sack of Baghdad that brought down

## The Cost of Tents

Cost is another way of understanding the elegance of royal tents. The *Risale-i Fekeliyye* (*Book of Public Finance*) compiled in about 1363 by al-Mazandarani, lists a few interesting statistics, all priced in the dinars of the day. For comparison, a good camel sold for about 430 dinars.

~ Mosque and minbar with furnishings	7000
~ Trellis (yurt-type) tent for 100 men	5000
~ Marquee-type tent (extra large)	7500
~ Ornamented silk awning	1500
~ Small kitchen tent	188
~ Stable tent	500
~ Luxury privy	1000

Source: *Felt Tents and Pavilions*. Peter A. Andrews. 1999, Melisende, 1-90-1764-05-2, £90 (2 vol) hb.



Mongols cook beside their finely decorated tents in this illustration from *Jami' al-Tawarikh* (*Universal History*) by the Persian physician Rashid al-Din (1247–1318). The tents, with their central opening, still bear some similarity to yurts. This painting dates to around 1430.



Repeating rosettes, arches and images of hanging lamps decorate the interior of this 17th-century Ottoman tent. Real lamps would have been hung from the ridgepole. The tent was doubtless meant for an aristocrat or high-ranking administrator.

In 1683, the Polish king Jan III Sobieski routed the Turkish army that was besieging Vienna. Among the spoils listed by a London newsheet were “sixty thousand tents and two millions of money in the Grand Vizier’s tent.” While the precise number of tents is probably a journalistic exaggeration, the Ottoman camp was indeed abandoned, and Sobieski, writing to his wife a few days after his victory, mentions the great quantities of tents acquired. Many of the tents in European collections today were among those captured at the Siege of Vienna.

A good deal is known about these tents. Some were made in government workshops. Others appear to have been commissioned in Aleppo and other parts of the Ottoman Empire. Evliya Çelebi, in his wonderful description of the Guild Processions at Istanbul in the late 17th century, says a little about the tent-makers: “Their patron was Nassir ben Abdullah Mekki, the tent maker... [who had] made the Prophet’s tent... They erect fine tents on litters ... [while] some are busy setting up awnings and mosquito nets.” He also mentions that the tent-rope makers prepared beautifully colored cords, and there existed also a mosquito net-makers’ guild.

As in other matters at court, there was a strict hierarchy of tents, with the most splendid decoration, and the color red, reserved for the sultan and the highest military ranks. Bearing in mind the harsh climate of much of the Ottoman territory, camping tents (as opposed to ceremonial tents) were generally made in two layers, the outer composed of heavy, weatherproof material, often with very little decoration, while the inner, which is generally what has survived, could be extremely elaborate.



One of the most common decorative techniques was appliqué. Cut-out layers of material, which might include gilded leather, were stitched together in designs that generally imitated architectural motifs: arches, columns, oil lamps, sun rosettes, flower vases or the tree of life—all motifs in the classic Islamic repertoire.

The Ottoman tents now in the Royal Armory in Madrid are excellent examples of this. One, probably dating to the mid-17th century, shows signs of a number of years’ use and careful repairs before it was captured, possibly at Vienna. Highly prized, it appears to have been passed around the European nobility as a ceremonial gift until it was given in 1881 by the Prince of Pescara in Italy

to Alfonso XII. The tent is believed to have belonged to a high, but not top-ranking, official, and it would have weighed some 500 to 600 kilograms (around 1100 to 1300 lbs), which would have required three camels to carry.

Other fine tents, several from the same period, have been preserved—not surprisingly—in Hungary and Austria, countries bordering on the former Ottoman Empire, and as far away as Sweden. The largest collection is at Wawel Royal Castle in Krakow, Poland. One particularly lovely example, dating from the early 17th century, but also believed to have come from the siege of 1683, is oval, two-masted and wonderfully decorated in predominantly blue and gold. Another is mainly red with bold arcade and medallion decoration in stronger colors: green, yellow and blue.

Giving tents as gifts was nothing new: As far back as 802, Harun al-Rashid, the fifth Abbasid caliph of Baghdad, is recorded sending one to Charlemagne of France, along with the more famous elephant.



**This brilliant silk panel highlights an 18th-century Ottoman summer tent now in the Topkapı Palace Museum in Istanbul.**





## Cairo, Metropolis of the Tent

Cairo remains famous to this day for ceremonial tents (*suradiqat*). The city that predated Cairo, however, was called Al-Fustat, which means "large tent" or "encampment." According to tradition, when the general 'Amr ibn al-'As was conquering Egypt in 641, a bird laid her egg on the tent where he was sleeping the night before one of his decisive battles. He ordered that no one should touch either the tent or the bird, and on his return, victorious, he had his men set up their tents around his, thus creating *misr al-fustat*—the encampment of the tent, or the metropolis of the tent. The name was shortened to Al-Fustat, and it endured until the founding of Al-Qahira ("the victorious"), i.e., Cairo, in 1069.

Source: *Art and Architecture from Islamic Cairo*, Richard Yeomans. 2006, Ithaca/Garnet Press, 1-85964-154-7, £29.95



**An appliqué doorway of a tent used for celebrations and special events, stitched in Cairo in the early 20th century, features a variety of patterns and colors combined with Arabic inscriptions expressing greetings from the host to his guests.**

One of the most spectacular surviving gift tents, preserved in the Hermitage in St. Petersburg, was presented in 1893 to Tsar Alexander III by the Emir of Bukhara. The tent and its surrounding curtain walls are literally a patchwork of the most sumptuous textiles in favor in Central Asia during the 19th century. Magnificent examples of ikat, specially dyed silk

weavings, alternate with appliqué and embroidery, some of it in couched gold and silver thread. The windows are elaborate geometric cutouts edged with gold—a far cry from the woven reed screens that would have originally served that purpose. The inner roof has similar panels of different textiles, while the outer roofs and awnings are boldly striped in red, yellow, black and white. The brilliance of the colors and the splendid workmanship make the St. Petersburg tent one of the most remarkable still in existence.

**This ornate Ottoman tent, from the late 17th century, is among the hundred thousand said to have been left behind by the departing Turks when they lifted the siege of Vienna in 1683. It is displayed at Wawel Royal Castle in Krakow, Poland.**



The Hermitage in St. Petersburg has an earlier tent, which had seen a good deal of use before someone in the Russian army acquired it in the early 19th century. Because of its coloring, it is believed originally to have belonged to a middle-ranking officer. Even so, the decoration is exquisite, and though the tent is somewhat worn and far less eye-catching than the emir's gift tent, it remains a more elegant production.

The Central Asian tents reached India with various waves of conquerors, culminating with Babur (1483–1530), who laid the foundation of the Mughal Empire. The yurt-type tent with its heavy outer layer largely vanished in the warmer climate and was supplanted by the marquee. In keeping with the general luxury of the Mughal court, the most splendid fabrics were often used. The poet Abu al-Fazl, for example, mentions many-colored materials from China, Anatolia and Europe.

Numerous descriptions of the tents by local chroniclers and foreign visitors make it clear that, as in Central Asia, they were often pitched in a garden or a place where some particularly beautiful scenery could be enjoyed. The accounts also show that tents were sometimes preferred even when a splendid palace was available. Indeed, many of the buildings in the royal city of Fatehpur Sikri in Rajasthan have rings in the great courtyards which are believed to have served as tie-downs for tent ropes. This was partly personal preference and partly a political



A printed, painted and dyed cotton tent-hanging from the Mughal Dynasty almost brings nature inside. It dates to the early 18th century.



statement emphasizing the rulers' connection to a military and nomadic past stretching back to Timur and Genghis Khan. In the Arab world, of course, tents evoke memories of the tribes and the early days of Islam. Even today, the Libyan leader Muammar al-Ghadafi makes a statement by his use of tents in public and private contexts—most recently in 2009 in suburban New York.

Babur's daughter, Gulbadan Begum, had this to say about tents: "The covering of the pavilions and of the large audience tent was, inside, European brocade, and outside Portuguese cloth. The tent poles were gilded; that was very ornamental.... [My lady] had prepared a tent-lining ... of Gujrati cloth of gold." She also describes six *shamianas*, or

ceremonial tents, of gold brocaded broadcloth, each of a different color, set up to welcome her at Agra on a visit to her father during his last years.

According to Sir Thomas Roe, the English ambassador to the Mughal court from 1615 to 1618, the emperor's tents "walled in, about halfe an English mile in compasse in the forme of a fort." On a different occasion, Roe mentions the walls or screens made of panels of *pintadoes*—hand-painted chintz—or of red embroidered cloth at a time when the color red was still reserved for the ruler.

Indeed, the Mughal Empire in India raised the art of the tent to new levels of splendor: Timur's 12-pole tent described by Clavijo was far surpassed by Humayun's

Zodiac Tent, in which the 12 signs were worked in precious stones, and by Akbar's vast and carefully planned tent-palace. The window of the tent of Nur Jehan, favorite wife of Jahangir, the fourth Mughal emperor, was screened with a gold medallion set with pearls and gems and golden bars or chains. (On the other hand, Roe mentions that in more ordinary tents, woven reed was still being used for windows, and he makes note of ladies breaking away the cane mesh in order to see better.)

When Nadir Shah seized power from the Mughals in India in 1738–1739, he inspected the treasury at Delhi and reportedly said: "It is by no means an act of wisdom to leave the property of the world unused." Among other things, he ordered for himself a great tent made of the finest violet-colored satin decorated with flowers and beasts made of gold and precious stones. The tent poles and fittings were of pure gold, and the curtains that divided off the private quarters were worked with a pair of beautiful angels. The tent could be taken apart and packed in special boxes carried by several elephants—but some parts were so heavy with gold that even the elephants had trouble carrying them. The tent was, it seemed, intended to complement Shah Jehan's Peacock Throne, another of Nadir Shah's spoils.

This fascination with tents extended to Europe, where rulers, including Louis XIV of France, had tents copied in Ottoman or Mughal styles. The British in

India adopted them for ceremonial occasions, and in 1876 a vast *shamiana*—red of course—was commissioned for Queen Victoria's coronation as Empress of India. And today, *shamianas*, often of chintz or appliqué, are still regularly used in India for weddings and similar occasions.

The history of tents and tent cities does not, however, end in the 19th century. Today, the largest tent city of all time is in modern use annually at Mina, just outside Makkah. There, Saudi Arabia shelters about two million pilgrims who come each year to perform the Hajj, or pilgrimage. The orderly rows of some 40,000 custom-designed white tents offer a level of comfort available in the past



## Clavijo's Description of Timur's Tents

Ruy Gonzáles de Clavijo was the Spanish ambassador to the court of the Mongol emperor Timur in Samarkand from 1403 to 1406. His description of Timur's tents is corroborated by the miniature paintings of the period.

“Nearby this awning where we were seated stood a very large high pavilion, in fact a very huge tent, and it was four-square in shape. In height it was the measure of three long lances such as used by a horse soldier, and the side was a hundred paces from angle to angle, it being as said four-cornered. The ceiling of the pavilion was made circular to form a dome, and the poles supporting it were twelve in number each as thick round as is the chest of a man breast high....

The inner walls of the pavilion are lined with crimson tapestry very beautifully woven in patterns of diverse designs, further it is hung with silk stuffs of many colours, in places worked over with embroidery of gold thread. The ceiling of the pavilion is its mark of greatest beauty for at the four corners are figured four eagles sitting with their wings closed. The exterior walls of the pavilion are made of a silk cloth woven in bands of white and black and yellow that to us appeared made of silk sarsenet. Outside at each corner there is set a very tall staff capped with an apple of burnished copper above which is a crescent.... From a distance indeed this great tent would appear to be a castle, it is so immensely broad and high. It is a wonder to behold, and magnificent beyond description....



**The Mongol ruler Timur (1336–1405) is shown receiving a delegation under his tent canopy in this painting from a *Zafer Nameh (Book of Victory)* from 1600. Courtiers behind Timur hold a horsetail banner and a quiver of arrows; dancers and servants are in the foreground.**

Round and about the pavilion on the ground outside is erected a wall of cloth, as might be otherwise the wall of a town or castle, and the cloth is of many coloured silks in diverse patterns.... This forms the great Enclosure

surrounding and shutting in the pavilion. It is known by the name of the Sarápardeh, and within its circuit stand many other tents and awnings pitched diversely and at intervals. Among the rest we noted here a very lofty circular tent of another kind, for this is not stayed with ropes, the wall being supported by poles of the size and thickness of our lances, which are wrought into the canvas wall, as might be to form a netting cross-wise. Above those of the side walls rise other long poles which hold up the upper part of the tent forming the domed ceiling.... Then in a row there were four tents that were connected together by a passageway going from one to the other, by which one could pass as might be through a corridor, and this corridor was covered in above by a ceiling....

In this wall, the Enclosure, there were opened at intervals window frames with shutters, but these window openings could not be passed through from without by any one, for each was guarded by a netting of thin silk tape.... High up, in the ceiling of the cupola of the tent we are now describing, is seen the figure of an eagle in silver gilt, it is of a great size and its wings are open.”

Source: *Embassy to Tamerlane 1403–1406*. Ruy Gonzáles de Clavijo. Guy le Strange, trans., Caroline Stone, intr. Travellers in the Wider Levant series. 2009, Hardinge Simpole, 978-1-84382-198-4, \$35 pb.

**A neatly arrayed city of 40,000 tents is provided by Saudi authorities each year for Muslims making the pilgrimage to Makkah. It recalls—and exceeds in size—the tent cities that amazed western visitors to Muslim lands in the Middle Ages.**

only to a privileged few. The design and positioning of the tents is a matter of great complexity, since space is limited, ritual schedules are tight and the numbers of people to be accommodated vast: The tent city of the Hajj represents an achievement that surpasses even those that so amazed travelers in centuries past. 🌐



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**Shamiana: The Mughal Tent.** Shireen Akbar. 1999, Victoria & Albert Museum, 978-1-851773-077, \$22.50 pb.



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Ibn Battuta: J/A 00  
sack of Baghdad: J/A 07  
Charlemagne's elephant: M/A 77  
Fatehpur Sikri: J/A 87  
tent city at Mina: M/J 02





## 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 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@mepec.org](mailto:bpetzen@mepec.org) with your name, school or organization, phone number, and subject and grade taught. MEPC has also developed a companion website, [TeachMiddleEast.org](http://TeachMiddleEast.org), with background essays and lesson plans.

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## CLASS ACTIVITIES

### Theme: *Understanding*

Two articles in this month's magazine focus on efforts to improve understanding among people of different religions: "Prince of Brotherhood" and "Al-Andalus 2.0." In the following activities, you will explore that theme, first as it relates to the articles, and then as it relates to your own community.

### What different methods can improve understanding among people of different religions?

Before you look at specific methods to enhance understanding among people, think about the context in which such efforts take place. Start with "Prince of Brotherhood." When and where did Abd el-Kader live? What was the political situation? What religion was el-Kader? With what other religions did he come into contact? Then think about the context of "Al-Andalus 2.0." Where was the original Al-Andalus? What was *convivencia* and when did it exist? Why did Second Life members name their community Al-Andalus? Keep your answers in mind as you think about how to improve understanding among people.

Working with another student, make a T-chart. Label one column "Abd el-Kader." In that column, list the different things that he did to enhance understanding and improve relations between Muslims and Christians, and between Algerians and Europeans. Label the other column "Al-Andalus." In it, list the different ways that the Second Life community and its residents try to enhance understanding and improve relations among people of different religions and nationalities.

Look over your chart. With your partner, discuss the different approaches that each article describes. Have one of you take the role of Abd el-Kader, while the other takes the role of a member of SL's online Al-Andalus. When you consider the strategies that your character used, which do you think were most effective? Why do you think so? Which do you think the other person might be able to use in his or her setting as another tool for enhancing understanding? With your partner, role-play a conversation. Tell him or her about one or more strategies that you have found useful for improving relations among people of different religions. Explain how you think that strategy might help in his/her situation. Remember that you want to be enthusiastic and persuasive. You may also have to suspend disbelief if, for example, you are from Second Life and are suggesting that a 19th-century man use a social networking site!

### How can you improve understanding among different groups at your school?

Form a group of four or five students. Think about different groups at your school. On what characteristics are the groups based? For example, at some schools, cliques form based on the kinds of activities the students are involved in: athletes hang out with other athletes, while arts-oriented students hang out together, and so on. At other schools, cliques form based on race, ethnicity or national identity. Still other divisions might be based on gender.

Once you've identified the groups at your school, discuss with your group what tensions you see between them. What do you think members of each group don't understand about the members of the other group? For example, locally born students might not understand where immigrant students came from and what it's been like for them to adjust to life in a new place, while immigrant students might not understand some local customs, like why people are very reserved. List the areas where you think a lack of understanding exists.

What can you do about the lack of understanding? With your group, brainstorm different strategies you could use to help the people you've identified understand each other better. Include the strategies you've read about in the articles if you think they'd be helpful in your school. Once you've got a list of strategies, discuss with your group the pros and cons of each one. Then choose one or two strategies that you'd like to try out at your school. Write up your plan, being sure to include the following: 1) Identify the groups you want to work with and explain why there is a need for improved understanding between them. 2) Describe a strategy you want to use with those groups. Explain why you think the strategy will work, and explain how you plan to deal with any difficulties that you can envision coming up. 3) Describe the outcome you hope to achieve. What will it look like? How will you know you've achieved it?

Hand in your proposal. Revise it based on feedback from your teacher, and if you get the go-ahead, try it out. If you do, be sure to have guidance and oversight from your teacher, since these activities can be difficult, and tensions might rise before they ease.

### Theme: *Technology*

### How can technology create or change communities?

Read "Al-Andalus 2.0" if you haven't already read it. Find the paragraph on



page 12 that quotes the Second Life community's intentions in starting Al-Andalus. The paragraph uses some pretty formal language. Translate it into the kind of everyday language you could use to tell someone else about why some residents of Second Life decided to form Al-Andalus. Then discuss with a partner how well you think the community's founders have met their goals so far. Use information from the article as the basis for your conversation.

Now step back and think more broadly about virtual communities. How do you think the virtual Al-Andalus compares with the actual Al-Andalus that existed until the late 15th century. Make a Venn diagram to help you clarify similarities and differences. Think, too, about your own experiences with actual and virtual communities, and make some notes in a journal entry. In what ways are they similar? In what ways do they differ? Do you prefer one over the other? If so, why? Do they fulfill different purposes? If so, what are they?

Write a page that answers these questions: Do you think Al-Andalus in Second Life is a community? Why or why not? What benefits might the virtual Al-Andalus have over the actual historical Al-Andalus? What benefits might the original Al-Andalus have over the virtual version?

#### How can the Internet change businesses?

Just as the Internet has changed the way we think about community, it has also changed the way business happens. Read "Soaping Up," using reading strategies to help you fully understand the article.

The article explains that the soap business is changing. Find the part of the article that explains the change and circle it. Hint: The change has to do with who buys the soap and to whom soap-makers market their products. What problems are soap-makers facing? What has caused the problems?

The Hassoun family has faced the changes and decided to market their

soaps online. Visit their website: [www.khanalsaboun.net](http://www.khanalsaboun.net). From what you see on the site, what can you deduce about the people the Hassouns want to persuade to buy their soap? What evidence suggests that conclusion?

To get a better sense of the traditional clientele versus the Internet-era clientele, make two sets of sales materials. Make one for local residents who might want to buy your family's homemade soap. You can either make your ad on paper or as a TV ad, but keep in mind that you're selling locally. Make the other a website that is aiming for a distant market. Remember that it's not just the medium that's different. It's the people who will be seeing the ad, and the people you want to persuade to buy your product who are also different.

When the ads are finished, show them in class. What have you learned about marketing on the Internet versus marketing to a more local audience? Write a short process paper explaining the differences.

## READING STRATEGIES

### Pre-Reading

Pre-reading can help you get more from what you read. Having an idea about the subject or theme of a magazine article gives you a head start on understanding it. It gets you involved in your reading—even before you begin. One pre-reading strategy involves looking at photographs as previews that give you hints about what an article is going to be about. Look at the photograph on page 17 to see what you can figure out about the article—but don't read the article, "Soaping Up," yet. If you work with a partner, you can answer these questions orally; if you work alone, write down the answers as you go. Start by describing the photo. Who is in it? What do you notice about them? What are they doing? Where are they? How can you tell? Starting in the lower part of frame and moving up, describe the objects that are in the photo. What objects do you see? What do they all have in common? How are they different from each other? What do the differences make you think about?

When you put all your answers together, what do you think will be the topic of the article? What do you think will be its theme? When you read "Soaping Up," see if you're right.

### Reading for Understanding

Later you will explore the theme of how people grow to understand one another

better. But before you can do that, you need to be sure you're understanding what you read! Turn to "Prince of Brotherhood." Before you start reading, get an overall sense of what the article is going to be about by reading the headline and the call-out quotes, looking at the pictures and reading the captions. Write down any questions you have, based on what you see.

Once you start reading the article, underline the important points and any information you want to be sure to remember. You might also want to make some notes, either in the margins or in your notebook. When you finish reading the article, write a short (one-paragraph) summary that includes the article's theme



and key points. Compare your summary with another student's to be sure you have both identified the most important parts of the article. Follow the same procedure with "Al-Andalus 2.0." When you're done, you'll be ready to explore the theme *Understanding*, using the two articles as your case studies.



## Embroidery From the Arab World,

the Netherlands' first exhibition on the subject, looks at various styles of embroidery and the ways this versatile textile technique is used to decorate men and women's clothing—as well as homes, public buildings and animal trappings—in a wide variety of forms, colors and designs. On display are more than 60 examples in silk, linen or wool from Egypt, Morocco, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Yemen and eastern Mediterranean countries, and the role of the French embroidery company DMC, which has influenced especially Mediterranean Arab embroidery for more than 100 years, is highlighted. The oldest embroideries on display are two fragments of children's tunics from fifth-century Coptic Egypt. More recent items include an early 20th-century dress and velvet jacket from Bethlehem; a late 20th-century men's cloak from the Moroccan High Atlas; Bedouin dresses from the northern Sinai; indigo dresses from Yemen and wedding dresses from Morocco, the Siwa Oasis and Saudi Arabia. TRC Gallery, **Leiden, The Netherlands**, through August 22.

**Detail of a dress for a newly married woman, sewn in the Siwa Oasis in Egypt in the 1970's and decorated with buttons and cowrie shells.**



### CURRENT July

**Kantha:** *The Embroidered Quilts of Bengal.* Stitching *kanthas* was an art practiced by women across Bengal, a region today comprising the nation of Bangladesh and the state of West Bengal, India. Lovingly created from the remnants of worn garments, *kanthas* are embroidered with motifs and tales drawn from a rich local repertoire and used especially in the celebration of births, weddings and other family occasions. The exhibition presents some 40 examples created during the 19th century and the first half of the 20th, when this vibrant domestic art flourished, and encompasses works by rural and urban Hindu and Muslim women. While all share a collective Bengali culture, the amazing variety of motifs, patterns, color combinations and designs of the *kanthas* demonstrates the imagination and creativity of their makers. **Philadelphia Museum of Art**, through July 25.

**A Story of Islamic Embroidery in Nomadic and Urban Traditions** brings together more than 200 rare textiles from across the Middle East, from Pakistan to Morocco, and including a wealth of embroideries from Central Asia. With their variety of motifs and colors, these works testify to the role of women in creating an artistic tradition of significance and beauty. Gallery One, Emirates Palace, **Abu Dhabi**, through July 28.

**Arabia**, an IMAX 3-D film shot at more than 20 locations across Saudi Arabia, provides a vivid portrait of the history, culture and religion of the Arabian Peninsula. The movie mixes scenes of modern-day life in the kingdom with images of its natural and built heritage, and looks into the future through the eyes of young Saudis. Actress Helen Mirren narrates, but the film's real voice is Hamzah Jamjoon, a Jiddawi film student at Chicago's DePaul University. He sets out with a film crew to explore his Arabian identity, diving in the Red Sea, flying over dune and oasis towns, riding camels with the Bedouin and exploring Madain Salih, the 2000-year-old Nabataean town famous for its huge sandstone tombs. Viewers also join three million Muslims making the pilgrimage to Makkah with another Saudi, Ni'mah Ismail Nawwab. A photographic companion book, *Arabia: In Search of the Golden Ages*, is available. Fernbank Museum of Natural History, **Atlanta**, through July 29; Auto & Technik Museum, **Sinsheim, Germany**, August through January; Museum of Nature and Science, **Denver**, through August 22; Science Museum of **[Richmond] Virginia**, through September 1; The Tech, **San Jose, California** and **Detroit [Michigan]** Science Center, through September 6; Science Museum of **[St. Paul] Minnesota**, through October 24; **Texas State History Museum, Austin** and Science Spectrum, **Lubbock, Texas**, through October 30; Museum of Science, **Boston**, Science Center of **[Des Moines] Iowa**, and Papatote Museo del Niño, **Mexico City**, through December 30; Museum of Discovery and Science, **Ft. Lauderdale, Florida**, through January 30, 2011; Marbles Kids Museum, **Raleigh, North Carolina**, through February 28, 2011; **Louisville [Missouri]** Science Museum, through December 30; Scientific Center, **Salimiya, Kuwait**, through July 23, 2011.

### CURRENT August

**Arts of Bengal:** *Wives, Mothers, Goddesses* presents domestic artifacts made by and for Bengali women during the 19th and 20th centuries, including intricate embroidered quilts called *kanthas*, vibrant ritual paintings and fish-shaped caskets and other implements created in a resin-thread technique. These objects provide a rare view into women's everyday lives and thoughts. Other arts, such as elaborate painted narrative scrolls and souvenir paintings from Kalighat near Calcutta, illustrate women's many roles, both domestic and divine. (A companion exhibition, **Arts of Bengal: Village, Town, Temple**, open from March 13 through July, also showcases works from the Museum's extensive holdings of Bengali vernacular arts.) **Philadelphia Museum of Art**, through August.

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

**Arts of Bengal: Town, Temple, Mosque** explores the rich texture of the sacred and the mundane from the 18th to the mid-20th century in Bengal's cities and towns, which have long functioned as hubs of commerce, religious activity and the arts where professional painters, potters, weavers and sculptors

catered to diverse audiences. In the early to mid-20th century, Bengal's towns, temples, and mosques continued to serve as potent sources of inspiration for artist-intellectuals seeking to create a modern esthetic. **Philadelphia Museum of Art**, through August.

**Light of the Sufis:** *The Mystical Arts of Islam* explores a historic branch of Islam whose followers seek mystical union with God and focuses on Sufi ideas and practices that found expression through the arts of the Islamic world, beginning with light, which symbolizes both God and enlightenment. The show includes furnishings used for mosque lighting; illustrated, illuminated and laser-etched manuscripts of poetry; and contemporary works inspired by Sufi principles and practices. Museum of Fine Arts **Houston**, through August 8.

**Free Me From My Chains** presents a large-scale work in neon in which Algerian artist Zoulikha Bouabdellah spells *hubb* ("love") in a simple animation as three intertwined lights flash on and off. She also presents works that refer to Middle East culture in the person of Egyptian singer Umm Kulthum. Gallery Isabelle van den Eynde, **Dubai**, through August 15.

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



**Very Postmortem:** *Mummies and Medicine* explores the modern scientific examination of mummies that has provided new insights into Egyptians' living conditions and brought us closer to understanding who they were. The exhibition marks the return of Irethorrou, the Museums' mummy out on loan since 1944. CT-scans done at Stanford University Medical School shed light on Irethorrou's physical attributes and the cause of his death, and make possible a three-dimensional "fly through" of the mummy and a forensic reconstruction of his head. Palace of the Legion of Honor, **San Francisco**, through August 15.

**Document:** *Iranian-Americans in Los Angeles*. Four documentary photographers—Farhad Parsa, Arash Saedinia, Parisa Taghizadeh and Ramin Talaei—focus their lenses on second-generation Iranian-Americans of Los Angeles over a four-month period, October 2009–January 2010. The results consider the everyday lives of the subjects, as well as the photographers' experiences of the process of documentation and how it informed their understandings of their own hyphenated Iranian identities. Fowler Museum at UCLA, **Los Angeles**, through August 22.

**Bharat Ratna!** *Jewels of Modern Indian Art* presents a selection of outstanding works by some of India's most celebrated modern painters, focusing on a generation that emerged following India's independence in 1947. The exhibition's divergent works highlight the dialogue between the traditional and modern, the indigenous and foreign and the sacred and secular as Indian artists sought an independent identity. Museum of Fine Arts, **Boston**, through August 22.

**Secrets of the Silk Road** features more than 150 objects relating to the people and cultures of the Silk Road during its early period. The exhibition's "secret" is that many of the exhibits predate the known Silk Road by almost 2000 years and reflect a much more global population than previously realized. Exhibits include a travel permit from the year 732; a deed for a female slave; an impeccably preserved female mummy with European features dating from between 3100 and 700 BCE; the stylish boots of a Silk Road traveler from between 206 BCE and 420 CE and exquisite jewelry from the same time period. Such finds along the Silk Road have helped historians better understand the settlement of ancient East Central Asia and have opened a window to understanding the very early exchange of important technologies, life-improving inventions and ideas and customs. **Houston** Museum of Natural Science, August 27 through January 2.

**Pioneers to the Past:** *American Archaeologists in the Middle East, 1919–1920* highlights James Henry Breasted's travels through Egypt, Mesopotamia, Syria and Palestine, exhibiting travel ephemera, documents and archival photos, narrated by quotations from diaries. The exhibition raises questions about whose history would be written, the role of America in the Middle East and the relationship of the past to the present—all still debated today. Catalog. Oriental Institute Museum, **Chicago**, through August 31.

**CURRENT September**  
**"Kindly Cable Me at the Earliest Moment":** *James Henry Breasted's Role in Building the Egyptian Collection* features letters and cables between Art Institute President Charles L. Hutchinson and his friend James Henry Breasted, founder of the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago, who was acting as a purchasing agent for the Art Institute during a trip to Egypt. The correspondence complements the Oriental Institute's exhibition **Pioneers to the Past**, above. Art Institute of **Chicago**, through September 1.

**Chaotic Metamorphosis** features a site-specific project by Canan Dağdelen, a snapshot of the Turkish contemporary art scene and the dynamic culture of the city from the perspective of a young curator. The exhibition title refers both to the transformation of the art environment of Turkey and to the rapid development of Istanbul. As an assemblage of artworks of diverse media, it reflects the effect of these simultaneous, ongoing transfigurations on artistic production of the day. Proje4L / Elgiz Museum of Contemporary Art, **Istanbul**, through September 4.

**Courtly and Urban Batik From Java** presents refined designs that range from a skirt-cloth for a sultan to an elegant silk scarf that might have been worn by an itinerant entertainer. Others were produced on Java's cosmopolitan north coast as Islamic banners for the Sumatran market or as altar cloths for Java's Chinese community. The fabrics contrast sharply with the rustic batiks displayed in **Nini Towok's Spinning Wheel**, below. Fowler Museum at UCLA, **Los Angeles**, through September 5.

**Tutankhamun's Funeral** explores the materials and rituals associated with the burial of the renowned pharaoh and includes some 60 objects, including lids, bowls, linen sheets, jars and bandages that were used at the pharaoh's mummification and the rites associated with his burial. Featured objects also consist of a sculpted head of the youthful Tutankhamun and several facsimile paintings depicting funerary rituals. Archival photographs from the early 20th century by Harry Burton, the Museum's expedition photographer, provide an evocative background. Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York**, through September 6.

**Meroë: Empire on the Nile** highlights the majesty of an ancient civilization and its intermingling of African, Egyptian and Greco-Roman influences. Located 200 kilometers north of present-day Khartoum, Meroë was the capital of a great empire on the Nile, famed for the pyramids of the kings and queens who dominated the region between 270 BCE and 350 CE. Comprising 200 works, the exhibition's main themes are everyday life, trades, social systems, the kings and their insignia of power, the role of the queens and religious practices fusing the gods Amun, from Egypt, and Dionysus, from Greece, with the people of Meroë's own vision of the afterlife. Musée du Louvre, Paris, through September 6.

**Witness** is a solo exhibition of new works by internationally acclaimed Palestinian–British artist Mona Hatoum, which address notions of displacement,

uncertainty and conflict through the use of familiar domestic objects transformed into foreign and sometimes threatening sculptures. **Beirut** Art Center, through September 9.

**To Live Forever:** *Egyptian Treasures from the Brooklyn Museum* uses some 120 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. Exhibits include the vividly painted coffin of a mayor of Thebes, mummies, stone statues, gold jewelry, amulets and canopic jars. Philbrook Museum of Art, **Tulsa, Oklahoma**, through September 12; **San Antonio [Texas]** Museum of Art, opens October 15.

**Hope! From Giacometti to Murakami** features 50 works by 50 international artists displayed in four sections—Genesis, Exodus, Apocalypse and Grace—showing that an alternative perception of contemporary art is possible: Hope! Works by major western artists, including Richard Serra, Alighiero Boetti, Damien Hirst, Ed Ruscha, François Morellet, Lucio Fontana and Sigmar Polke, will converse with those by both famous and recently distinguished Middle Eastern creators, such as Shirazeh Houshiary, Rokni Haerizadeh, Reza Aramesh, Farideh Lashai, Reza Derakshani, Mona Hatoum and Farhad Moshiri. Palais des Arts, **Dinard, France**, through September 12.

**A Voyage Through Cavafy's Alexandria:** *Watercolors by Anna Boghiguan* invites visitors to revisit the poems of Alexandria-based Greek poet Constantine Cavafy (1863–1933) and to travel to the enchanted landscape of Alexandria—a lyrical trip that is also explosive and dark, that takes the past into the present, washes Alexander in the waters of the Ganges and conceals the Giants and the Cyclops in the urban landscape. Benaki Museum of Islamic Art, **Athens**, through September 19.

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

**Roads to 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 a wealth of unsuspected treasures to light: temples, palaces adorned with frescoes, monumental sculpture, silver dishes and precious jewelry left in tombs. The exhibition provides both chronological and geographical information about the discoveries made during recent excavations and emphasizes the important role played by this region, in antiquity, as a trading center. Over 300 works—sculptures, ceramics, jewelry, frescoes—are on display, dating from antiquity to the beginning of the modern period; the majority have never before been exhibited. Musée du Louvre, **Paris**, through September 27.

**CURRENT October**  
**Muraqqa': Imperial Mughal Albums** from the *Chester Beatty Library* focuses on a group of six albums (*muraqqa' s*) compiled in India between about 1600 and 1658 for the Mughal emperors

Jahangir and Shah Jahan (builder of the Taj Mahal). Each album folio originally consisted of a painting on one side and a panel of calligraphy on the other, all set within beautifully illuminated borders. Many of the paintings are exquisitely rendered portraits of emperors, princes and courtiers—all dressed in the finest textiles and jewels—but there are also images of court life, and of Sufis, saints and animals. This exhibition has been on tour in the US for the past year and will now return to the Library, which holds one of the finest collections of Indian Mughal paintings in existence. Catalogue. Chester Beatty Library, **Dublin**, through October 3.

**Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul** explores the cultural heritage of ancient Afghanistan from the Bronze Age (2500 BCE) through the rise of trade along the Silk Roads in the first century CE. Among the nearly 230 works on view, all from the National Museum of Afghanistan in Kabul, are artifacts as old as 4000 years, as well as gold objects from the famed Bactrian Hoard, a 2000-year-old treasure of Bactrian grave goods excavated at Tillya Tepe in 1978. Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle, **Bonn**, through October 3; British Museum, **London**, Spring 2011.

**Hussein Chalayan: From Fashion And Back** provides insight into the uniquely interdisciplinary approach that has made UK-based British/Turkish-Cypriot fashion designer Hussein Chalayan world-renowned, presenting fashion collections, films and installations from 1994 through 2009. **Istanbul** Museum of Modern Art, through October 10.

**Tarjama/Translation: Contemporary Art From The Middle East And Its Diasporas** features the works of Khaled Hafez, Akram Zaatari, Lara Baladi, Wael Shawky, Farhad Moshiri, Khalil Rabah and Khaled Ramadan, among others, as they explore cultural and artistic translations from the interpretation of history to the relationship between languages, images, and texts. Johnson Museum Of Art, **Ithaca, New York**, through October 17.

**The Turks in Vienna: The History of a Jewish Community.** In Spain, the fateful year 1492 saw the end of 800 years of Muslim rule, the departure of Columbus for the New World and the expulsion of the Jews. After the Ottoman–Habsburg peace treaties in the first half of the 18th century, Sephardic Jews established a community in Vienna. They linked East and West, Asia and Europe not only as merchants and dealers importing wool and cotton, silk and tobacco, sugar and spices to the West, but also culturally, setting up the first print shop in Constantinople and making Arab philosophy and medicine available to the western world. Jewish Museum **Vienna**, through October 31.

**CURRENT November**  
**Mysterious Tomb 63: The Latest Discovery in the Valley of the Kings:** *Art and Archaeology of Susan Osgood* displays 100 works on paper with objects from museum collections, linking the artist's two worlds. The archeological works include drawings and photographs of the coffins in KV 63, the first new tomb to be discovered in the Valley of the Kings since 1922, and drawings of Medinet Habu's Small Temple and of



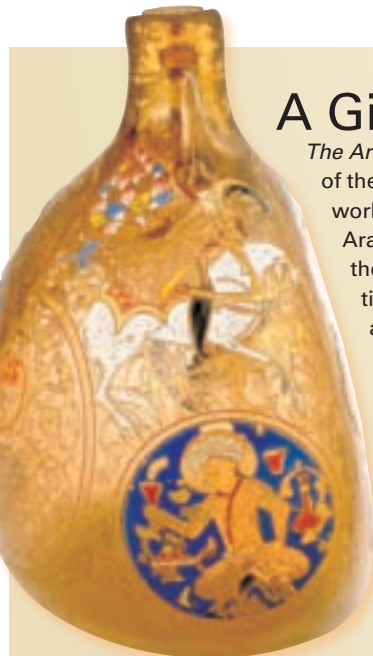
a Thutmosis III sculpture fragment. The contemporary art includes travel sketch-books and four series of paintings and prints inspired by Osgood's 30 years working and traveling in Egypt. Kestner Museum, **Hannover, Germany**, through November 7.

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

**Philip Taaffe, Christine Streuli, Timo Nasser** explore patterns, colours and geometries in a group exhibition. American artist Philip Taaffe's works on paper examine the artistic technique of repetition and change; Swiss artist Christine Streuli's intricate canvases draw on the history of rhythmic patterns in textiles; German-Iranian artist Timo Nasser's detailed drawings and sculptures evoke ancient Persian mathematics and their relationship to mystical design and architecture. Sfeir-Semler Gallery, **Beirut, Lebanon**, through November 13.

#### CURRENT **December**

**Traces of the Calligrapher:** *Islamic Calligraphy in Practice, c. 1600–1900* and **Writing the Word of God:** *Calligraphy and the Qur'an* celebrate the rich religious and artistic tradition of calligraphy, or "beautiful writing," the most esteemed of the Islamic visual arts. The works of calligraphy—from practice alphabets to elaborately finished manuscripts—serve as traces of individuals, belief systems and cultures and create a rich material legacy that fuses esthetics and piety. Some 150 objects and works convey the elegance of the esteemed art form and reveal the skills of the many artisans—calligraphers, paper makers, gold beaters, illuminators, bookbinders, and metalworkers, to name a few—involved in the creation of the tools, the calligraphies, and the manuscript folios. **Traces of the Calligrapher** maps the practice of the calligrapher from the 17th through the 19th centuries through examples of calligraphy and through the tools of the trade. The objects in the exhibition include reed pens, penknives and *maktas* (used to hold the pen while it is cut) in addition to inkwells, scissors, burnishers,



**This 23-centimeter enameled and gilded glass bottle from Mamluk Syria was probably made for sale to a pilgrim to Makka, who might bring back water from the Zamzam well. The horsemen depicted on it wear the feathered hats made popular by the Mongols of Iran and thigh-high leather boots with garters.**

storage boxes, and writing tables. **Writing the Word of God** is devoted to key developments of the Islamic scripts of distinct cultural areas. A selection of approximately 20 folios from now-dispersed copies of the Qur'an from various regions will illustrate the rich variety and system of scripts. Carlos Museum, Emory University, **Atlanta**, through December 5.

#### CURRENT **January and later**

**Painting the Modern in India** features seven renowned painters who came of age at the height of the movement to free India from British rule. To liberate themselves from a position at the margins of an art world shaped by the colonial establishment, they organized path-breaking 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 underappreciated component of 20th-century art history. Peabody Essex Museum, **Salem, Massachusetts**, through January 1.

**Cleopatra: The Search for the Last Queen of Egypt.** The world of Cleopatra, lost to the sea and sand for nearly 2000 years, resurfaces in this new exhibition displaying some 250 artifacts associated with the queen. After an introductory film, visitors are transported to the ruins of ancient Alexandria, where Franck Goddio leads an underwater excavation to recover artifacts from Cleopatra's empire. They continue to the city of Canopus, also now submerged, which was both a religious center and a decadent playground, and Heracleion, where every new pharaoh, including Cleopatra, was crowned. Visitors then journey into the ancient city of Alexandria, where Cleopatra's palace once stood, and see the only known example of what

## A Gift From the Desert:

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

scientists believe to be Cleopatra's own handwriting on a papyrus document. At the temple complex at Taposiris Magna, about 30 miles west of Alexandria, Zahi Hawass is leading a search for the tomb of Cleopatra and Marc Antony. The exhibition's final gallery is devoted to images of Cleopatra through the years in art and popular culture. Franklin Institute, **Philadelphia**, through January 2.

**Tutankhamun: The Golden King and the Great Pharaohs** is [another] extensive exhibition of more than 140 treasures from the tomb of the celebrated pharaoh and other sites. Providing context and additional information are 75 objects from other tombs in the Valley of the Kings, including objects related to Khefren (Cheops), Hatshepsut and Psusennes I. **Denver [Colorado]** Art Museum, through January 9.

**Romantic Interludes: Women in Firdaws's Shahnama** marks the poem's 1000th anniversary by displaying paintings that illuminate the stories of a number of resourceful and colorful female characters. The *Shahnama*, often called the "national epic" of Iran, was completed around the year 1010 by the Persian poet Abu'l Qasim Firdaws. A vast and complex poem, it opens with the creation of the world and concludes with the Muslim conquest of Iran in the mid-seventh century, thus comprising myth, legend, and history. Its 45,000 lines are filled with a rich panoply of characters—kings, queens, princes, princesses, heroes, lovers, warriors, villains and magical creatures. Museum of Fine Arts **Boston**, through January 16.

#### COMING **July**

**Arthur Pope and a New Survey of Persian Art** features ceramics, tilework, textiles, paintings, glasswork and lacquerware from the Institute's historically important collection of Persian art,

developed under the guidance of Arthur Upham Pope (1881–1969). It also examines Pope's legacy by tracing the development of Persian art collections in Chicago during the early 20th century and his influence on the understanding and appreciation of traditional Persian art across the globe. Art Institute of **Chicago**, July 17 through October 3.

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

#### COMING **August**

**Nini Towok's Spinning Wheel: Cloth and the Cycle of Life in Kerek, Java** explores the multiple meanings of the beautiful rustic textiles from Kerek, the last place in Java where batik is still produced on handwoven cotton cloth and where a full range of hand-woven textiles still supports a remarkable system of interrelated beliefs and practices. Fine examples of these rarely seen cloths illustrate the various techniques, patterns and color combinations, and the exhibition concludes with a series of 17 outfits, each specific to a particular individual according to sex, age, social status, occupation and place of residence. Fowler Museum at **UCLA, Los Angeles**, August 1 to December 5.

#### COMING **September**

**Desert Jewels: North African Jewellery and Photography** from the Xavier Guérard-Hermès Collection combines

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previously unexhibited North African jewelry and late 19th- and early 20th-century photographs. Jewelry designers and -makers used silver, coral, amber, coins and semiprecious stones to create wedding necklaces, hair ornaments, bracelets, rings, earrings, and fibulae, which show the common elements of North African societies as well as local variations in materials and motifs. North African jewelry came to the attention of western collectors only in the 19th century. **Philadelphia** Museum of Art, September 4 through December 5.

**Memories Revisited:** *Paintings by Ahmed Alkhari*. Jerusalem Fund Gallery, **Washington, D.C.**, September 17 through October 8.

**The World of Khubilai Khan:** *Chinese Art in the Yuan Dynasty* highlights new art forms and styles that arose in China as a result of the nation's unification under Khubilai Khan's Yuan Dynasty and the influx of craftsmen it attracted from all over the vast Mongol empire—with reverberations reaching as far as Italian art of the 14th century. This exhibition covers the period from 1215, the year of Khubilai's birth, to 1368, the year of the fall of the dynasty, and features paintings, sculpture, gold and silver, textiles, ceramics, lacquer, and other religious and secular decorative arts. Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York**, September 28 through January 2.

**COMING October**  
**Mind and Matter:** *The Amazing Story of the Archimedes Palimpsest* is about the history of how knowledge has been and is being recorded—a history full of triumphs and disasters, from the invention of movable type to the destruction of great libraries, and a story the Archimedes Palimpsest uniquely exemplifies. From the birth of its texts in the cradle of western civilization to their obliteration on April 14, 1229, in Jerusalem and their astonishing recovery in Baltimore 700 years later, the Archimedes Palimpsest is an iconic example of the epic and perilous journey that every record makes. Walters Art Museum, **Baltimore**, October 1 through January 1.

**Molten Color:** *Glassmaking in Antiquity* features more than 180 ancient glass objects, including works from Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Greek world and the Roman Empire. The exhibition spans the entire period of ancient glass production, from its origins in Mesopotamia in about 2500 BCE to Byzantine and Islamic glass of the eleventh century, and includes a variety of ancient glassmaking techniques, such as casting, core-forming, mosaic, inflation, mold blowing, cameo carving, incising, and cutting, all still used today. Getty Villa, **Malibu, California**, from October 8.

**Egyptian Magic** displays amulets, scarabs, magical images and writing, magic knives and wands, pictures of deities and spells on papyrus to outline the magical world of the ancient Egyptians. Magic, inextricably connected with their religion, was an everyday matter to the Egyptians. Priests performed intricate temple rituals for the protection of the whole land and people. Magic was present 24 hours a

day, on every street corner, and Egyptian magical practices influenced many other cultures. Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, **Leiden, Netherlands** October 16 through March 13.

**The Aura of Alif:** *The Art of Writing in Islam* presents the contextual and symbolic intentions of writing in religion, magic and poetry. Ranging from the early period of Islam to the 21st century, the exhibition presents beautiful works from the art of the ruling elite to folk art and everyday esthetics, written on surfaces including not only parchment, papyrus and paper but also ceramics, metal, stone, wood, leather and textiles, and demonstrates that writing is the key to understanding differing Muslim cultures. Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde, **Munich**, October 22 through February 20.

**COMING November**  
**Haremhab, The General Who Became King** examines the well-known statue "Haremhab as a Scribe," focusing on the historical and art-historical significance of the statue and of its subject: a royal scribe, and general of the army under Tutankhamun, who eventually became king. Metropolitan Museum of Art **New York**, from November 10.

**Heroes and Kings of the Shahnama** shows folios of the famous text from each of the Library's 25 copies, produced in Iran and India between the 14th and 19th centuries. The *Shahnama*, or *Book of Kings*, is the Iranian national epic, relating the glorious, often gory, feats of the heroes and kings of pre-Islamic Iran. Compiled in written form in the 11th century by the poet Firdawsi, these tales have been popular both inside and beyond Iran for more than a millennium. While many tell of dragons and *divs*, others—such as stories of Alexander the Great—are historical. The exhibition celebrates the 1000th anniversary of Firdawsi's completion of the text in the year 1010.

Fully illustrated catalogue. Chester Beatty Library, **Dublin**, November 19 through March 20.

**Fakes, Forgeries and Mysteries** highlights mistakes and discoveries regarding the attribution, authenticity and value of works in the museum's collection, and includes some 50 paintings, sculptures, photographs, prints, drawings and decorative arts from—or thought to be from—European, African, American, Asian, Islamic and ancient Near Eastern cultures. The exhibition displays works whose attribution has changed, known forgeries and ongoing "mysteries." **Detroit** Institute of Arts, November 21 through April 10.

**Ivory From Ceylon:** *Art, Luxury and Diplomacy in the Renaissance* features fine 16th-century ivory carvings from Sri Lanka commissioned for the Portuguese court. These objects bridge Asia and Europe, illustrating the high quality of Sinhalese craftsmanship and symbolizing Luso-Sinhalese relations at the height of the Portuguese maritime empire. As exotic showpieces, the ivory caskets, combs and fans represent the reach and power of the Lisbon court and qualify as some of the most important "cabinet of wonders" pieces collected by Portuguese and other European rulers in the Renaissance. They are compared with later 16th- and 17th-century Sinhalese writing desks, caskets, mortars and powder horns and an oratory/shrine, along with rare examples of Sinhalese rock crystal, hardstones and jewelry. Rietberg Museum, **Zurich, Switzerland**, November 28 through March 13.

**COMING December**  
**Captured Hearts:** *The Lure of Courtly Lucknow*. A cosmopolitan Indo-Islamic-European capital, Lucknow was the 18th- and 19th-century cultural successor of the resplendent Mughal Empire. It fostered some of the most vibrant artistic expression of its day in a variety of media, and represented a rare

intersection of eastern and western artistic traditions. The exhibition features album paintings, historical and religious manuscripts, textiles, period photographs, metalwork, glassware and jewelry that offer proof of a rich and dynamic culture. **Los Angeles** County Museum of Art, December 12 through March 6.

**COMING January and later**  
**Orientalism in Europe:** *From Delacroix to Kandinsky* includes some 150 paintings and sculptures that reveal western artists' multifaceted approach to the Islamic Orient, Northern Africa and the Near East. Beginning with Napoleon's military campaign in Egypt (1798–1799), which unleashed "Egyptomania" throughout Europe, the exhibition continues to early 20th-century modernism. Masterpieces by Ingres, Delacroix, Gérôme, Renoir, Klee, Kandinsky, Sargent and Matisse present orientalism as a significant theme across styles, artistic convictions and national borders, and also address orientalism's social, political, ethnic and religious aspects. Kunsthalle der Hypo-Kulturstiftung, **Munich**, January 28 through May 1.

**PERMANENT**  
**The Saudi Aramco Exhibit** relates the heritage of Arab-Islamic scientists and scholars of the past to the technology of today's petroleum exploration, production and transportation, set against the background of the natural history of Saudi Arabia. **Dhahran, Saudi Arabia**.

*Information is correct at press time, but please reconfirm dates and times before traveling. Most institutions listed have further information available at their Web sites. Readers are welcome to submit information, eight weeks beforehand, 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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