

JANUARY FEBRUARY 2016

AramcoWorld



The building of the Seattle / Tashkent Peace Park



4 In Fragments from Fustat, Glimpses of a Cosmopolitan Old Cairo

Written by Pamela D. Toler
Photographs courtesy of The Oriental Institute

Founded in 641 CE as Egypt's first Islamic capital, Fustat was much like the modern Cairo it helped give rise to: polyglot, multi-confessional and, in its time, prosperous.

10 The Unlikely Sisterhood of Seattle and Tashkent

Written by Piney Kesting
Photographs and video by Steve Shelton

In 1973, the US port renowned for rain and the Soviet-run capital in semi-arid Central Asia could hardly have appeared more different, but what began then as the first US-Soviet sister city pairing has blossomed into 43 years of mutual enrichment and heartfelt friendship—at first despite the Cold War, and later boosted by Seattle's economic growth and Uzbekistan's independence.

2 FIRSTLOOK Photographs by Ayesha Malik and Abduljalil Nasser

AramcoWorld

aramcoworld.com

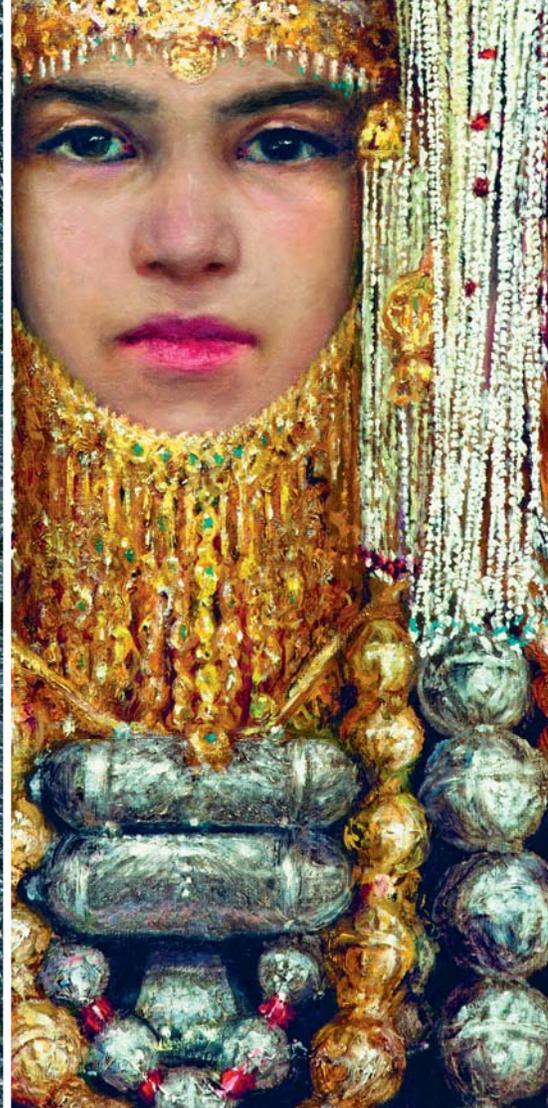
January/February 2016
Vol. 67, No. 1



We distribute *AramcoWorld* to increase cross-cultural understanding by broadening knowledge of the histories, cultures and geography of the Arab and Muslim worlds and their global connections. In print, *AramcoWorld* is distributed six times a year, without charge, to a limited number of interested readers. Online, it is archived from 1960. A free tablet/mobile app is now available.

Front Cover: Teaming up to build a lasting symbol of friendship and mutual support, volunteers from sister cities in 1988 built the Seattle-Tashkent Peace Park. At its center they constructed a tiled, globe-themed "Earth Mound." Lithograph by Marat Sadykov, courtesy STSCA.

Back Cover: Despite a childhood nickname that meant "Little Butterball," Queen Zubayda won renown in Abbasid Baghdad, first for royal fashion but later for munificent patronage that famously endowed an entire pilgrimage route from Iraq to Makkah. Art by Leonor Solans (detail).



24 Saving Sarajevo's Literary Legacy

Written by Tom Verde

Photographs and video by Boryana Katsarova

Braving sniper bullets, Mustafa Jahić and friends carried the historic volumes of the Gazi Husrev-beg Library from one hiding place to another throughout the three-year Siege of Sarajevo. Last year, the library found a new, permanent haven—close to where it was founded nearly 500 years ago.

34 Arwad, Fortress at Sea

Written by Robert W. Lebling

Photographs and video by Kinan Ibrahim

Three kilometers offshore from Tartus, Syria, lies Arwad, the sole island along the Eastern Mediterranean coast, a tiny rocky fastness with an outsize history.

42 Malika I: Khayzuran & Zubayda

Written by Tom Verde

Art by Leonor Solans

One born destitute, the other to opulence, two *malikas*, or queens in Arabic, open our six-part series on some of the most notable historic women leaders in Muslim lands.

 46 EVENTS & EXHIBITIONS

 Online CLASSROOM GUIDE

Publisher: Aramco Services Company | President: Basil A. Abul-Hamayel | Director, Public Affairs: Jamal K. Khudair | Editor: Richard Doughty | Assistant Editors: Arthur P. Clark, Alva Robinson | Digital Media Editor: Johnny Hanson | Circulation: Melissa Altman | Administration: Sarah Miller | Print Design: Graphic Engine Design Studio | Printer: RR Donnelley/Wetmore | Web Design: eSiteful Corporation | Tablet Design and Production: Herring Design | Online Translations: Transperfect

Subscriptions: subscriptions@aramcoservices.com | Editorial: editor@aramcoservices.com

Mail: *AramcoWorld*, Post Office Box 2106, Houston, Texas 77252-2106 USA

ISSN: 1530-5821

aramco



Saudi Aramco and Aramco are trademarks of the Saudi Arabian Oil Company, a leading, globally integrated energy and chemicals company.



FIRSTLOOK

Welcome to FirstLook, where you will find stories in images to captivate, inform and stimulate wonder. Find all FirstLook images amid many others posted @aramcoworld on Instagram, as well as on our Facebook page.



Youth of the Nation *Photos by Ayesha Malik and Abduljalil Nasser*

For a week in December 2009, Abduljalil and I created a studio-style “photo booth” for kids at the Saudi Aramco Oil Exhibit Eid Program in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. We not only displayed the technical side of photography, but also created a friendly space where interactions with our subjects felt purposeful, public and casual. The kids who wanted to have their photo taken sat and watched us work while waiting for their turn to spend 30 seconds to several minutes in front of the camera. Afterward, we gave everyone a small print. At times, the energy felt exponential, as the boldness of one inspired the next. The less serious the process was, the more open each kid became.

We took thousands of photos. In most cases, I did not direct at all. These kids knew how they wanted to present themselves. When I sat down and started to look thoughtfully at the results, I found myself drawn to the confidence and vulnerability that so many of these kids, who came from all over Saudi Arabia, shared so eagerly. I saw that together, the images revealed something more: partly the awkwardness of youth, and partly the reflection of a diverse society as it moves toward the future—a future full of expression.
—Ayesha Malik





In FRAGMENTS

from

FUSTAT

Glimpses of a Cosmopolitan Old

CAIRO

Written by
Pamela D. Toler

Photographs
courtesy of
The Oriental Institute



The Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago recently proved the truth of the saying that some of the world's richest archeological sites are museum basements.

Its 2015 exhibition *A Cosmopolitan City: Muslims, Christians and Jews in Old Cairo* introduced the urban world of Islamic Egypt, a world much closer to our own today yet often overlooked amid the spectacular wonders of the country's deep Pharaonic past. The show focused on the now-obscure medieval city of Fustat through artifacts of daily life and items highlighting the art and literature of the period—many of which were brought newly to light out of the Institute's own storerooms.

Fustat was the city that grew from the military base of Arab conquerors who arrived in 641 CE, just nine years after the death of Prophet Muhammad in the Arabian Peninsula. It grew to eclipse the older, nearby city named Babylon as the preeminent city at the head of the Nile Delta, and as it grew, it gradually welcomed Christian and Jewish communities as well as Muslims from across the new Islamic empire. Cairo as we know it today was founded to the north of Fustat in the late 10th century. Fustat suffered from famine and fire in the 12th century and continued to decline over the next 200 years—but its core remained a vital industrial neighborhood. Today, Fustat is called “Old Cairo,” its surviving mosques, churches and synagogues a reminder of the time when the city was the cultural capital of Egypt.

Between 1964 and 1980, archeologist George Scanlon carried out pioneering digs at Fustat for the American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE), and artifacts from his early excavations were featured in the show. Indeed, the exhibition coincided with the 50th anniversary of the 1965 dig; the Oriental Institute received a portion of its finds from the archeologist himself, who at the time had hoped the donation would inspire funding from the Institute. (It didn't.)

In addition to artifacts from Scanlon's excavations, *A Cosmopolitan City* used manuscripts from the Institute's collection and several pieces borrowed from other museums to explore the ways in which Fustat's particular mix of residents lived in an Islamic capital for about 500 years, from the seventh to the 12th century—separated by both religion and languages including Arabic, Hebrew and Old Coptic, yet connected by a shared way of life. The exhibition considered questions of tolerance, discrimination, diversity and multiculturalism—all familiar themes today—in a setting most people know little about.

"Globalization is not a new thing. Multicultural societies are not a new concept. Different communities living together created such an incredible community at Fustat," says Emily Teeter, special-exhibits coordinator at the Institute. Oriental Institute Director Gil L. Stein noted in the exhibition's catalog that Fustat

"We did not know how rich our own Islamic collection really was."

—Emily Teeter

was "a vibrant city ... [where] different communities of faith lived and worked together in urban centers that were all the richer for tolerating and valuing the diversity of their citizens."

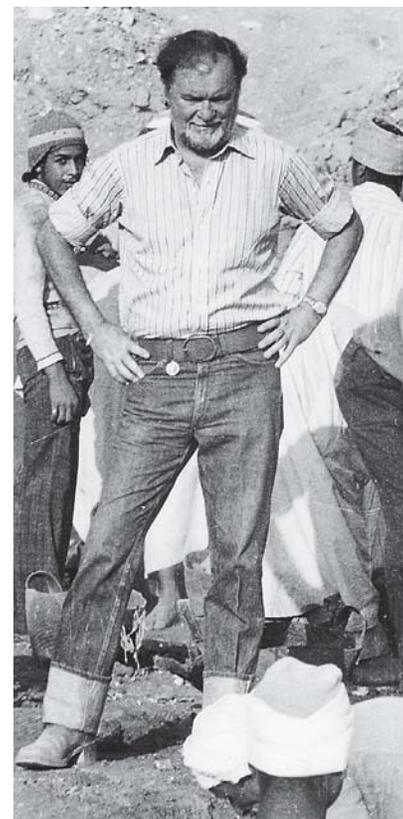
The story of the exhibition's own genesis is no less intriguing, as much of the material was on public display for the first time.

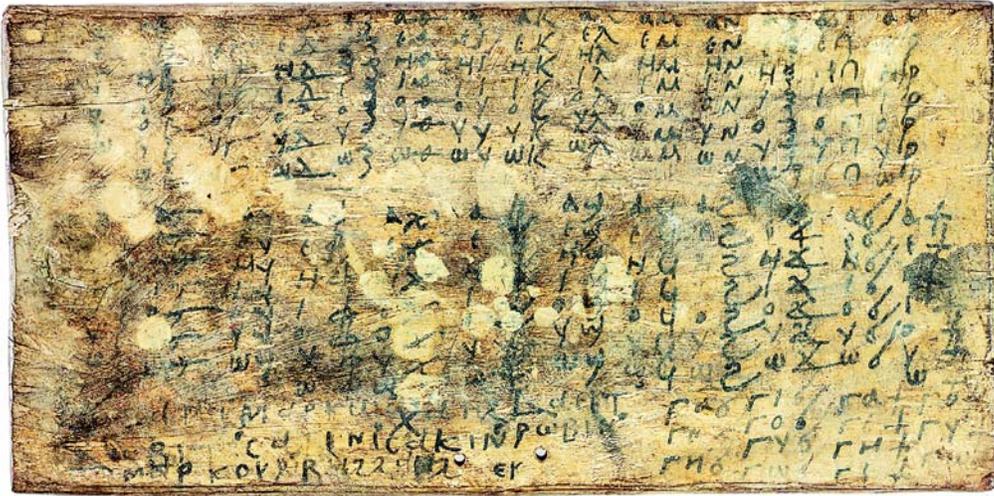
In 2011, the Institute commissioned Tasha Vorderstrasse, a research associate, to survey its Islamic collections. The Institute is famous for its ancient Middle Eastern collections from Egypt, Mesopotamia, Syro-Anatolia, Israel, Iran and Nubia, but not so much for its substantial holdings connected to the relatively upstart, 1,400-year-old Islamic era. Vorderstrasse's work, Teeter says, "turned out to be a real eye-opener for us because we did not know how rich our own Islamic collection really was."

Vorderstrasse tapped the Institute's database to identify possible Islamic items, and then she moved downstairs to open cases, boxes and drawers to see what was really there. She worked with Donald Whitcomb, associate professor of Islamic archeology at the Institute and the University of Chicago's Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, with whom she had previously studied. Both were surprised to discover just how extensive the Islamic objects were.

Scholars at the Institute had always been aware that it had received material from Scanlon's Fustat excavations,

Opposite: Either a lamp or a goblet dating back more than 1,200 years, this restored, delicately banded piece of glassware was discovered by archeologist George Scanlon, *lower right*, who excavated in Fustat from 1964 to 1980. *Left to right, below:* The small, mummy-like, pharaonic statue, or *shabti*, dates to between the 11th and fourth century BCE; the two dolls are carved from animal bone and stand about eight centimeters tall. Scanlon gave the Institute a number of artifacts from his 1965 dig, including the lamp or goblet as well as the doll at *right*.





Above: A wooden tablet with 18 lines of two-letter syllables in Coptic would have been standard classroom equipment for many children learning to write in Fustat. It dates to between the sixth and eighth century CE. **Above, right:** Fustat was partly burned in the late 12th century, and some areas were rebuilt within a wall encompassing that city and Cairo to the north; these excavated walls are believed to date to the period of Ayyubid rule, from 1171 until 1250.

though with the Institute’s ancient civilizations emphasis, no one had studied it. The ARCE had received artifacts from the Egyptian Department of Antiquities in exchange for sponsoring Scanlon’s excavations, and Scanlon himself gave other shares of objects to institutions that had supported him, primarily Princeton University and the Akron Art Museum.

In 1983, Akron transferred its Fustat ceramics and other objects to the Oriental Institute. In 1986, a few items were published in a catalog of jugs, but for the most part these items, too—mostly pottery shards, coins, metal weights, small mummy-form statues called *shabtis* and the like—remained in the basement, cataloged but unstudied.

The Fustat artifacts, for all their significance, represented only part of the material that Vorderstrasse brought to light.

She was particularly excited by a set of documents that were only described as having been purchased from a Dutch dealer who bought them in Cairo, with no further provenance. On closer examination, Institute experts believe they came from the *genizah* (repository) at the Ben Ezra Synagogue in Fustat, which contained thousands of documents, religious and secular, primarily from the 10th to the 13th century, making it one of the most



This paper-and-ink page from *1001 Nights*, acquired by the Oriental Institute in 1947, is the earliest example of the famous tales and one of the oldest existing Arabic literary manuscripts. A legal document overwritten on one side of the manuscript provides the date of 879 CE, meaning the original must have been made prior to that.



important sources of information about the social history of the Middle East and the Mediterranean in the Middle Ages. In sum, only a few of the objects Vorderstrasse discovered had been published, let alone exhibited. Neither the scholarly community nor the public was aware of their existence, let alone the stories they might tell.

When Whitcomb saw Vorderstrasse's discoveries, he urged her to propose an exhibition for the Oriental Institute's museum. He connected her with Tanya Treptow, another of his former students, who had recently received her doctorate at the

University of Chicago and had worked on other exhibitions in Chicago. It was a first step, and it would take two years to bring displays to the museum floor.

To bring alive the manuscript page from *alf layla wa layla* (1001 Nights), the curators gave it a voice—using an iPad.

The first challenge was to determine a theme, a storyline that would make the exhibit meaningful to a modern audience while remaining true to the historical contexts of the objects.

Multiculturalism was one idea. Others

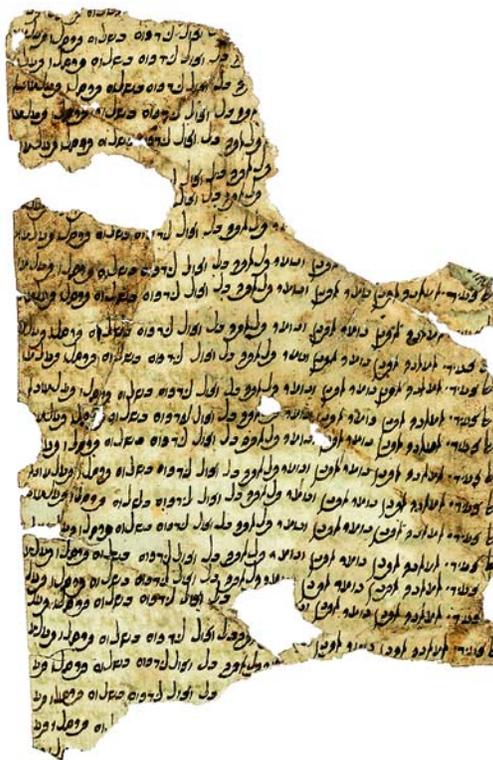
included Scanlon's excavations, which were unusual in the 1960s and '70s in that he focused on an Islamic rather than a Pharaonic site; the history of Fustat and how it evolved over centuries into a modern urban neighborhood; and daily life in medieval Egypt. At one point, they photographed the available objects and spread them all out on the floor of Vorderstrasse's apartment, grouping them to see what themes emerged using what Treptow called "a visceral rather than an academic approach."

Then they probed museum professionals and members of the public with interest in Egypt to learn what a museum audience might already know, and what questions would best hook visitors. While most in both fields felt familiar with ancient Egypt, few recognized the name "Old Cairo," and "Fustat" elicited only puzzled stares.

What got interesting, says Treptow, were the questions that followed: "Who were these communities who lived side by side in Old Cairo?" and "How did they make it work?" These led to the exhibition's overarching, ecumenically focused theme, which proved both more engaging and more

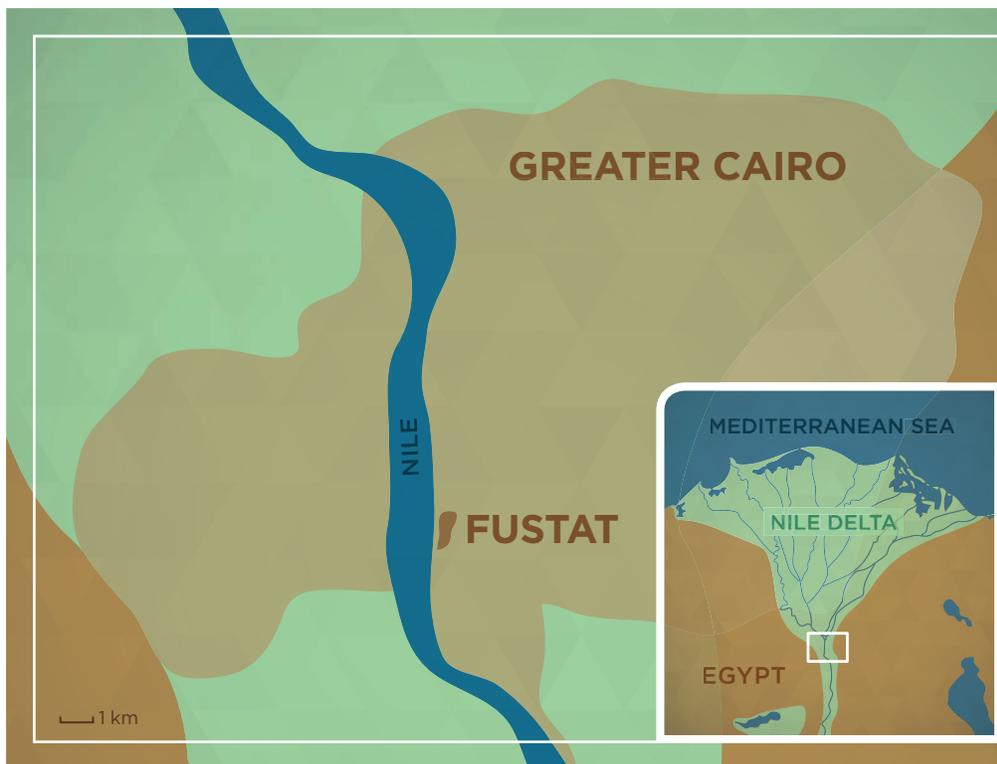


Above: This copper fals coin was minted to serve as small change during the reign of Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil (1226-1234). **Right:** Penned in Arabic script, this Hebrew writing exercise dates from between the ninth and 13th century, and it is one of many historic documents discovered from Fustat's Ben Ezra Synagogue genizah (repository).



sensitive than the broader questions with which the curators had started.

The everyday objects from Scanlon's excavations formed the heart of the exhibition because they demonstrated the similarities in the lives of Fustat's Muslim, Christian and Jewish residents, explains Treptow. For the most part, it is impossible to tell which objects came from a household of any one of those communities. Everyone frequented the same merchants. Everyone ate much the same food. Everyone wore similar clothing, though texts tell us that some distinctive items were legally mandated for Christians and Jews—a fact



TOP, CENTER: TANYA TREPTOW

that appears in the form of complaints that some among those populations were not complying. Only one piece of pottery has a religious symbol on it: A small clay flask is inscribed on its bottom with an equilateral cross, indicating it would have belonged to a Christian.

Because the special-exhibits gallery is small—not much bigger than a studio apartment—Vorderstrasse and Treptow settled on 75 display items, balanced between everyday ones from archeological sites and art-historical and intellectual ones to showcase the communities’ beliefs and differences. Among the latter were fragments from the Qur’an, the Bible and the Torah, a bowl fragment depicting the deposition of Christ and a door from a Torah shrine obtained on loan.

The two types of objects give different messages of common ground and difference. But Vorderstrasse stressed that even the art-historical objects distinctive to one group or another draw heavily on a common milieu: “If there wasn’t Hebrew [writing] on the Jewish objects, you wouldn’t know they were Jewish.”

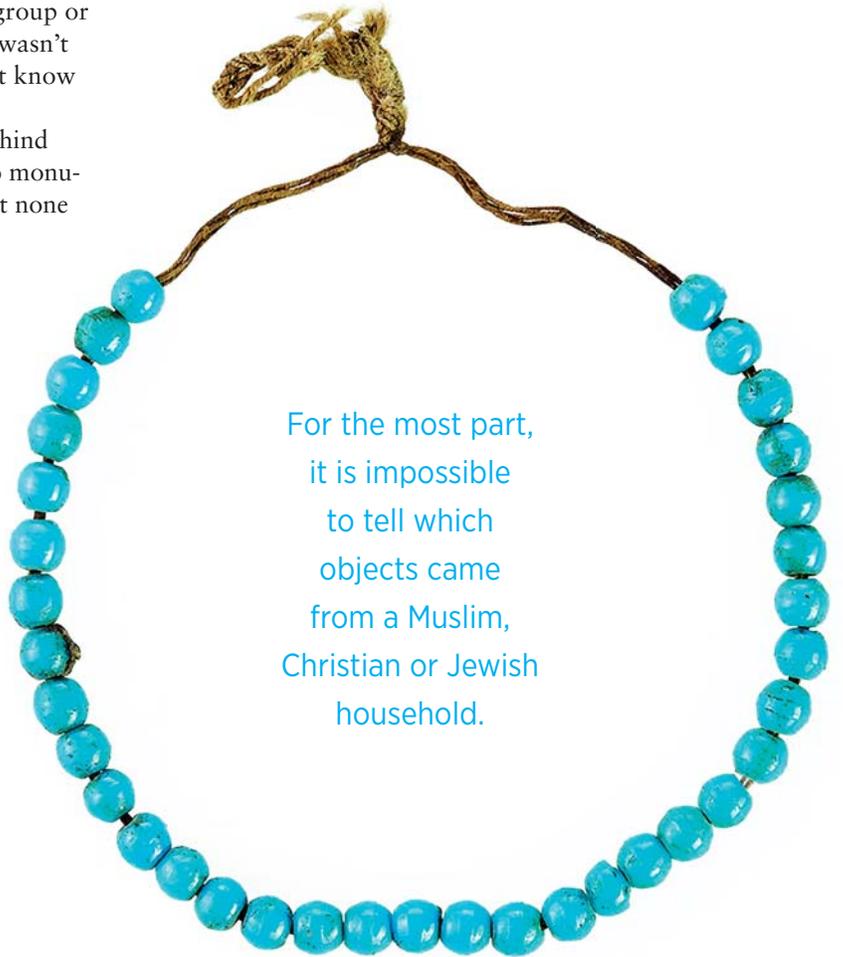
Then, how to impart a sense of lived experience behind mostly small, fragmentary artifacts? No mummies, no monumental sarcophagi, no gold. Nor many people: Almost none of the domestic artifacts from Fustat includes human representations, except for a few small, abstract dolls. How, then, to humanize the past?

For example, a manuscript page from the *alf layla wa layla* (1001 Nights) from the Institute’s collection is one of the most important objects in the exhibit. Dated to earlier than 870, it is the oldest known example of the famous tales and one of the oldest known literary manuscripts in Arabic. The calligraphy is well drawn but difficult to read. The fragment is dirty, it has holes in it, and it was overwritten in later centuries by people who used it as scrap paper.

To bring it alive, Vorderstrasse and Treptow gave it a voice. They mounted an iPad on the case that allowed visitors to click on a translation of the Arabic script. They did the same for other objects. For cases centering on everyday objects, the pair selected related written material of the period that had personal touches. One iPad for one case played varied reactions to the city recorded by two newly arrived visitors; another voiced a letter by a worried mother to her child who was on his own in the city.

Another display included music from the period, thanks to one of Vorderstrasse’s other talents: She recorded her own interpretations, played on the harp. She quickly found that of all the audio offerings, it was the *Arabian Nights* fragment that was the most popular. “That was one where the battery was always low,” Vorderstrasse says.

“The tours I led helped confirm we had hit on something important with our themes of Muslims, Christians and Jews,” says Treptow of the exhibit that ran for



For the most part, it is impossible to tell which objects came from a Muslim, Christian or Jewish household.



From top: A small white stone mold for a metal bird figurine that measures 5.5 centimeters tall, a necklace beaded with turquoise glass and a sandstone candlestick carved in the shape of an elephant, 16.6 centimeters tall, all demonstrate the decorative arts of Fustat. All come from Scanlon’s 1965 dig.



From top: Fustat became a center of Mediterranean and Indian Ocean trade. Although there were certain religious proscriptions, Fustat's residents by and large had a shared cuisine, some of which was surely served on this glazed bowl. A fragment of a richly decorated fritware bowl has an equestrian design; it may have been displayed on a wall. A brightly dyed band of woolen tapestry, 31 centimeters long and dating between the eighth and 10th century, shows a profusion of human, animal and floral decoration.



both deep and broad, she says. For example, she adds, the staff asked for her opinion about a manuscript of the Hebrew Bible written in Hebrew using Arabic letters with Arabic commentary—an unpublished document with untapped potential.

Enlisting scholars this way is the first step to stimulating interest and securing funding to conserve previously underutilized objects, she points out. This, in turn, can bring in more scholars interested in the Institute's Islamic collections.

Teeter is counting on just such a scholarly domino effect. Vorderstrasse's research did far more than update records, Teeter explains, adding that she "re-unearthed" an important part of the collection.

"People think, 'They don't have this kind of stuff. They have Mesopotamian stuff, ancient Egyptian stuff,'" Teeter says of the Institute's collections. "If anyone had bothered to type Fustat into the database, they would have found it. This is going to make that collection active again, and our other Islamic collections as well. We have more than just Fustat." 🌐



seven months; it included a lecture series and a live program for adults and families celebrating the history and culture of Old Cairo through music, hands-on activities and poetry.

"We had textual artifacts from the Bible, the Qur'an and the Torah. Being able to show all three of those documents in a respectful way sparked conversations that had a lot of depth—not just about their artistic significance, but more about the patterns of life of those objects."

Among scholars, *A Cosmopolitan City* and its accompanying catalog was a "little jewel of an exhibit" that worked as "a nerve node to bring scholars into conversation with each other," says Marina Rustow, professor of Near Eastern studies and history at Princeton University, who participated in the show's lecture series. The catalog brought in new voices offering perspectives on the period that were



Pamela Toler holds a Ph.D. in history from the University of Chicago. She is the author of *Heroines of Mercy Street: The Real Nurses of the Civil War*, scheduled for release in January in conjunction with the PBS series *Mercy Street*.



Related articles at www.aramcoworld.com.

Medieval Cairo: J/F 05



A free PDF of the catalog for *A Cosmopolitan City: Muslims, Christians and Jews in Old Cairo* is available: <http://oi.uchicago.edu>

The UNLIKELY SISTERHOOD *of*

SEATTLE

and

TASHKENT



Written by **PINEY KESTING** | Photographs & video by **STEVE SHELTON**

The bright red sign for the Seattle Café is hard to miss on Bratislava Ko'chasi,

a busy, leafy boulevard that runs through the center of Tashkent, capital of the Central Asian country of Uzbekistan. Bold letters spell out the name in Uzbek, English and Russian, hinting that this popular restaurant serves more than just tasty Uzbek cuisine. It also offers a glimpse into a 43-year-old friendship between two cities whose differences are as great as the 10,100 kilometers and 13 time zones that separate them.

The shaded patio in front of the café overlooks the Seattle-Tashkent Peace Park, built in 1988 and now known as Babur Park. Although only about a city block in size, the park is a symbolic heart of the two cities' relationship. Central Asian pines grow alongside apricot, mulberry and wild plum trees fed by water trickling through narrow irrigation canals lined with square ceramic tiles, each hand-decorated 27 years ago mostly by schoolchildren in Seattle. Ten thousand of them trace the canals, ring tree encasements and decorate the park's fountain. Many of the tiles are now cracked and their colors are fading, but their heartfelt messages of peace, cooperation and friendship remain vibrant.

"It's really important for our two countries to have a park like this," comments café owner Javon Nazarov, who has safeguarded photos and the history of the park since its inception. "When the American volunteers came to help build the park, we realized that they believe the same thing we do—that peace is the most important thing in life."

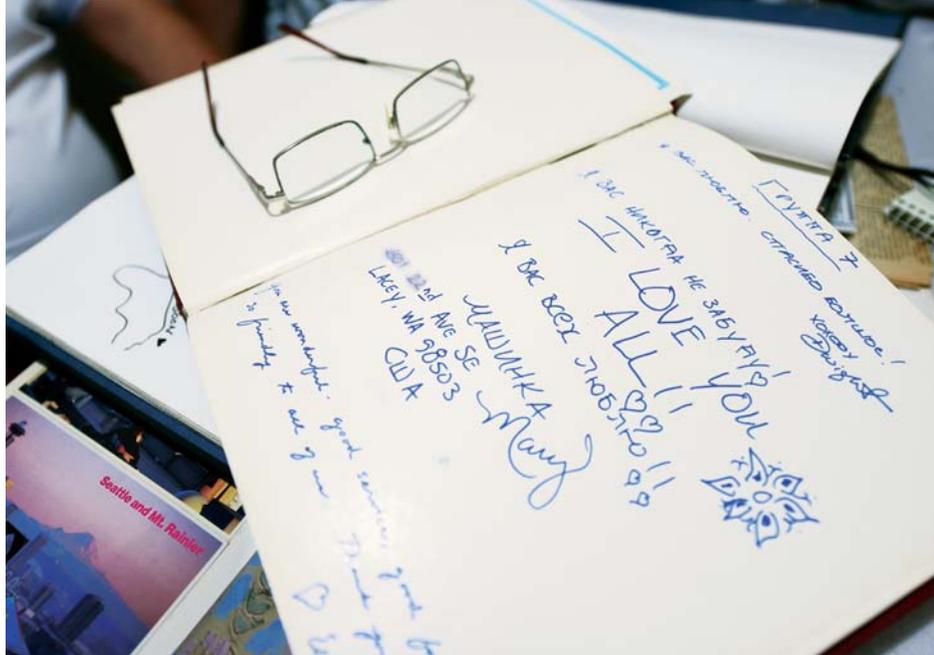
How Seattle, Washington, established a sister city relationship with then-Soviet Tashkent during the Cold War is a story that begins in 1971, 17 years before the park was built. It is a story of serendipity, courage, extraordinary citizen diplomacy and a bit of political intrigue.

In August 1971, Alaska Airlines invited mayors from three of the larger Soviet cities—Tashkent, Irkutsk and Sochi—to visit its headquarters in Seattle as part of its quest to open new routes into the Soviet Union. "They asked me if I would come and join the mayors for dinner at the top of the Space Needle," recalls Wes Uhlman, who was then mayor of Seattle. "I sat next to Mayor Husnitdin Asamov of Tashkent, who didn't speak any English, but I spoke a little Russian, and we talked about continuing our relationship," he says.

When President Richard Nixon announced in March 1972 that he would take his first official trip to Moscow in May, Uhlman sent Asamov a letter formally suggesting Seattle and Tashkent establish the first us-Soviet sister city relationship. Although Nixon's visit represented a culmination of détente, the thaw in Cold War us-Soviet relations that had begun in 1969, "tensions were still very high between our two countries," notes Uhlman.

He remembers also the incredulity of Seattle City Council members when he approached them with the idea. "They asked me, where in the world is Uzbekistan, and why should we get involved?" Uhlman recalls explaining how important it was to tone down angry rhetoric between the superpowers and says the council was persuaded that a sister city relationship might contribute toward that. It wasn't a hard sell, recalls Uhlman. "Our city has always been progressive." In October 1972, Tashkent's new mayor, Vahid Kazimov, agreed to Uhlman's suggestion. "It will be a great honor for us to establish permanent friendly and business contacts with the city of Seattle," wrote Kazimov.

Uhlman soon discovered that city council skepticism was not the only official obstacle. "Our State Department discouraged these kinds of relationships because of all the tensions occurring on a macro level," says Uhlman, whose request to form the



A painter, *opposite*, freshens up the proudly prominent red sign proclaiming the Seattle Café, a restored granary that opened as a café in 1985, 12 years after Seattle and Tashkent became the first us-Soviet sister city pair. Situated across from the Seattle-Tashkent Peace Park, the café and its owner, Javon Nazarov, *right*, preserve both heart and history from more than 43 years of visitors, volunteers and delegations in scrapbooks, *above*.

sister city was quickly denied. He turned to a good friend, Washington Senator Warren Magnuson, who was serving as Chairman of the Senate Appropriations

Committee that oversaw the State Department's budget. Magnuson was well known for his progressive politics, and according to Uhlman, the senator called Secretary of State William Rogers into his office, and "within a week we received our letter of approval," he recalls, laughing.

Creating the first us-Soviet sister city bond was courageous, asserts Seattleite Gary Furlong, currently the us Honorary Consul General of Uzbekistan to the Western United States and a former president of the Seattle-Tashkent Sister City Association (STSCA). "I think it was inspiring, and for Seattle, it was really an opening to the world in a unique way. It was a positive and very high profile example," he emphasizes.

Dan Peterson, president of the STSCA since 2006, agrees. "It took a lot of courage then for someone in a city in the United States, even in a progressive city like Seattle, to form a partnership with a Soviet city," says Peterson. "Some of us grew up during the Cold War era, and we were told this is not a good thing. And what did we discover? That they are people just like the rest of us."

To Peterson, it was not surprising Seattle became the first us city to do this. "Seattle citizens pride themselves on being forward-looking, peace-loving and well educated about world issues," he notes. One of the most troubling and motivating issues at the time, and later into the 1980s, was the threat of





With Cold War tensions high in the early 1970s, “it took a lot of courage then for someone in a city in the United States, even in a progressive city like Seattle, to form a partnership with a Soviet city,” says Dan Peterson, who served as president of the Seattle-Tashkent Sister City Association (STSCA) from 2006 to 2016. The relationship was “a good way to bring two countries closer, the better to work for peace.”

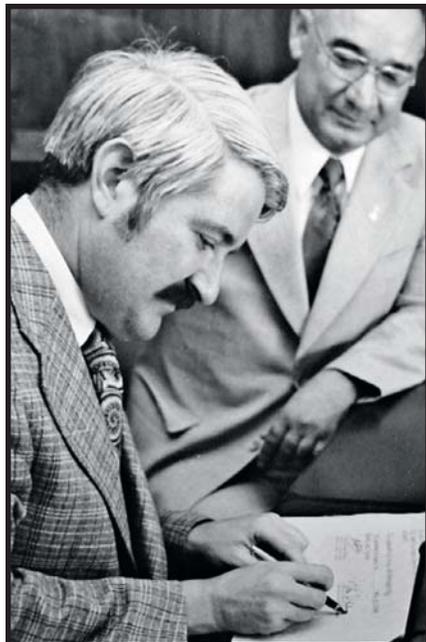
nuclear warfare between the superpowers, and to Seattleites, a partnership with Tashkent was a good way to bring two countries closer, the better to work for peace.

At the same time Uhlman was drafting his March letter to Mayor Asamov, Ilse Cirtautas, Ph.D., a prominent Turkologist in the Department of Eastern Languages and Civilization at the University of Washington in Seattle, was arriving in Tashkent for a previously arranged research trip. Renowned for her expertise in the Uzbek language and culture, Cirtautas came to work with colleagues at the Uzbek Academy of Science as well as at the Institute of Uzbek Language and Literature. (See sidebar, p. 16.)

Her colleagues in Tashkent, however, had something else in mind, too. They invited her to a meeting of the O’zbekistan Do’sklik Jamiyati (Uzbekistan’s Friendship Society) where “they asked me to help them establish a sister city—or ‘brother city’ relationship as it is called in Uzbek—between Tashkent and the place I come from,” recalls Cirtautas.

“They didn’t even know where I came from at that point!”

She replied with concern about the distance between the two cities as well as the vast cultural differences. When none of that seemed to matter, it became clear



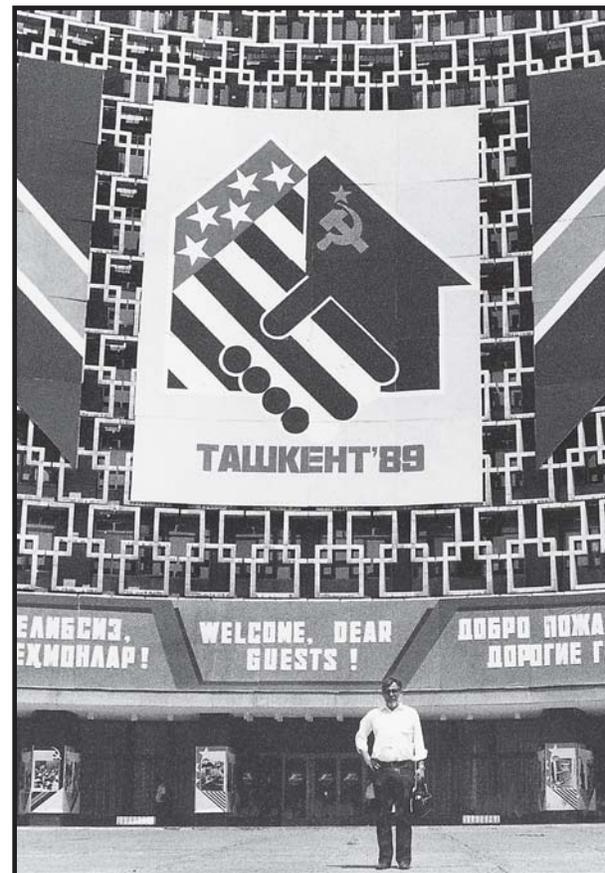
Left: At a ceremony in Seattle in 1973, Seattle Mayor Wes Uhlman put his signature on a sister city memorandum after Tashkent Mayor Vahid Kazimov, who looks on. *Right:* In 1989, the Hotel Uzbekistan in Tashkent welcomed a Seattle delegation in three languages: Uzbek, English and Russian.

that her colleagues might be looking to plant seeds for an independent future. “They clearly wanted to have a place in the West where they could send their educated people whom they trusted with a view toward independence. They weren’t happy under the colonial rule of the Russians,” asserts Cirtautas.

Neither Cirtautas nor her colleagues in Tashkent were aware that Mayors Uhlman and Kazimov were already discussing sister city relations. After learning in October that Tashkent had agreed, Cirtautas met with Uhlman to brief him about Uzbekistan. “I assured him that the native population is Uzbek, not Russian, and that they are wonderful, smiling people!” Perplexed by how quickly Moscow also approved the relationship, Cirtautas later discovered the simple answer when Kazimov told her the Soviets wanted commercial access to Seattle-based Boeing Company.

On January 23, 1973, the Seattle City Council passed its resolution adopting Tashkent as a sister city. In June of that year, Seattle Deputy Mayor

John Chambers and Hugh Smith, a prominent businessman active in the Seattle Chamber of Commerce and chairman of the new STSCA, signed the formal joint communiqué with Mayor Kazimov in Tashkent. With the strokes of two pens, two cities were united whose histories, cultures,



In April 1983, Mayor Kazimov and Tashkent officials hosted a delegation from Target Seattle, one of a number of people-to-people diplomacy efforts supported by the STSCA.

religions, geographies and even climates could not have been more different. What both cities did have in common was a faith in the value of people-to-people diplomacy and a mutual longing for peaceful coexistence.

During the early years of the relationship, it was all about getting to know each other. Uhlman took the first Seattle dele-

gation to Tashkent in April 1974; in June Kazimov reciprocated with a delegation of government officials and academics, and they participated in the dedication of Tashkent Park near downtown Seattle. Later that year, Cirtautas established relations between Tashkent State University and the University of Washington, one of many academic connections she would facilitate over the years.

Uhlman recalls that during those first visits, Soviet Uzbekistan was a closed society. “There was very little personal exposure to the rest of the world in Tashkent at that time,” he comments, adding that he believes that the new relationship helped Uzbeks do exactly what they intended it to do: open up a reevaluation of their relationship to the world.

During the détente years of the ’70s, Furlong notes that “it was all about increasing understanding on our side, and for Tashkent, we were their main point of contact with the Western world.... Moscow opened the door to the West a tiny crack and the Uzbeks were brilliant at continuing to pry that crack open. The Uzbek side wanted to keep this going and worked very hard to make sure this continued,” he says, referring to Uzbek support for reciprocal delegations in the mid-1970s as well as their ability to maintain contact between the two cities even in the midst of recurrent political tensions.

The STSCA faced challenges during those years, too. Local Baltic and Slavic communities objected that contact with Tashkent endorsed Russification and suppression of non-Russian populations. When mounting global tensions in the mid-to-late ’70s made cross-cultural exchanges difficult, Seattleites countered by increasing local educational programs about Central Asia. Following the 1978 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, they resisted pressure from the federal government to follow in the footsteps of other US sister cities to sever all ties with Soviet counterparts, citing the sister city founding principles laid down in 1956 by US President Dwight D. Eisenhower. (See sidebar, *right*.) Mayor Charles Royer supported



“One Individual, One Community at a Time”

On September 11, 1956, US President Dwight D. Eisenhower launched Sister Cities International at the first White House conference on citizen diplomacy. His vision was a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that could “promote peace through mutual respect, understanding and cooperation—one individual, one community at a time.” Citizen diplomacy, he said, would encourage an appreciation of different cultures, build cross-cultural relationships and reduce the chances of new global conflicts.

The popularity and growth of Sister Cities International led to its reorganization in 1967 as an independent, non-governmental organization funded by private donations and corporate sponsorships. Every president since Eisenhower has served as its honorary chairman.

Today, Sister Cities International focuses on arts and culture, youth and education, business and trade, and community development and technical exchange. Its ever-growing network links tens of thousands of volunteer “citizen diplomats” in approximately 545 US cities and towns with more than 2,100 partnerships in 145 countries on six continents.

them. “The mayor said, ‘We are not going to do that. We think this relationship matters,’” recalls Furlong, underlining the magnitude of this challenge. “We did not end that relationship. We’ve been there, we stuck with them, and they remember that.”

In 1985, Tashkent Mayor Shukurulla Mirsayidov tested Glasnost reforms

of then-new Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev by sending Seattle the largest Soviet sister city delegation to ever visit the us.

“When Glasnost happened and Mayor Mirsayidov came to Seattle, we realized that this was the moment so many of us had been waiting decades for. It was time to dig in, full speed ahead,” exclaims Rosanne Royer, who co-chaired the STSCA from 1978 to 1990. “We were the favorites then to connect with as far as sister cities go, and our exchanges started flying like crazy. Given the time differences between Seattle and Tashkent, we were up day and night, and people were calling us right and left,” recalls Royer, who was married to the mayor at that time. “It totally ate up all our time but delivered great rewards because we had fabulous people running every one of those exchanges.”

“What was fascinating about the Seattle-Tashkent Sister City Association is that the pre-independence years were amazing in terms of the breadth of exchanges,” comments Fred Lundahl, a current board member and retired diplomat whose last assignment was at the US embassy in Tashkent from 1997 to 2001.

“This was a time of incredibly fun and robust relationships because both cities wanted to showcase their best sides. It showed the Seattle community that there were people just like us in Uzbekistan.”

Speaking with friends back in Tashkent who were involved in sister city programs during the early years, Lundahl notes that they expressed the same sentiment. “The human element,” he emphasizes, “has always been the key to this sister city relationship.”

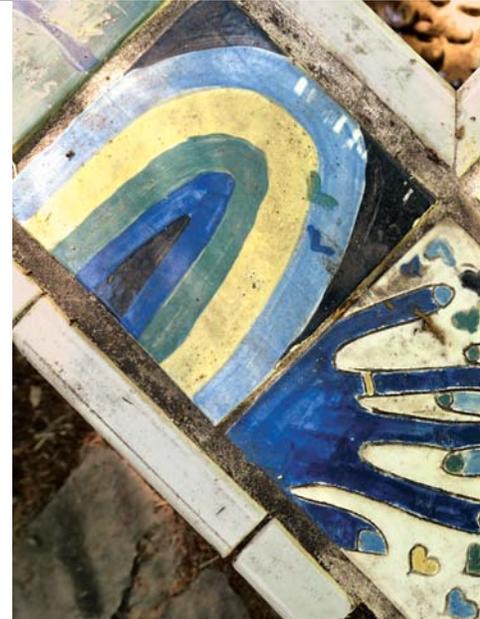
Mirsayidov’s 1985 visit and the hopeful tone of Glasnost unleashed conferences, cultural programs, exchanges and delegations, all in the years leading up to Uzbekistan’s independence in September 1991. It was a time of extraordinary “person-to-person citizen diplomacy” and cross-cultural education.

“There are literally thousands of people in Seattle who participated in these exchanges over the years in one way or another,” says Paul Natkin, a Seattle-based artist and certified Russian-language interpreter. Four decades later, Paul and many Seattle participants remember their experiences as if it were yesterday.

Natkin worked on several artist exchanges and exhibits. “Orchestrating these exchanges can be very hard,” he notes, “when you have systems and histories and structures that are so different. But learning to work with that



The spirit of friendship reached a peak in the summer of 1988, when more than 200 volunteers from Washington state and the Tashkent region joined to build the Seattle-Tashkent Peace Park, dedicated on September 12 that year. The centerpiece was a fountain and pool ringed by tiles, *above and right*, each one individually hand-painted in Seattle and carried to Tashkent. Many were made by students, such as those at the Orca-Day Elementary School, *lower*, who were joined in their effort by visiting Tashkent sculptor Yakov Shapiro and Tashkent city architect Leon Adamov.



is part of what makes the experience so important and valuable.” His involvement with the sister city, he adds, led to a lasting friendship with renowned Tashkent artist Marat Sadykov and his family.

Jay Sasnett, now a retired middle school geography teacher, participated in three middle and high school student and teacher trips to Tashkent from 1985 to 1988, and he oversaw additional

sister city education exchanges with help from his wife, Susan, also a teacher. “It is one of the things I am most proud of,” emphasizes Sasnett. “These trips and the work we did to prepare

for them transformed the lives of several hundred middle and high school youths and teachers in Seattle.”

Sasnett vividly recalls his excitement during the first trip, and he remembers how each of the four Tashkent schools they visited with 10 students, all in sixth to eighth grade, rolled out the welcome mat. “It was such an inspiring trip,” he notes. Growing interest attracted more students, teachers and schools to the subsequent STSCA trips. “It was a time when the Cold War had reached its peak, and Seattle was a hotbed of citizen diplomacy,” notes Sasnett.

that’s how powerful an experience it was for them.” There were tears too from adults when it was time to leave Tashkent, adds Natkin, who participated in this trip.



In 1974, a joint delegation led by Uhlman and Kazimov, *above*, visited Spokane Expo '74, where contact with native North American peoples, traditions and history proved especially meaningful among Uzbek visitors. Although tiles made in 1988, *left*, showed Soviet and us flags, the flag of Uzbekistan, independent since 1991, appears, *above right*, with the us flag outside Seattle’s annual STSCA-sponsored Navr’oz celebration, where, *below*, a traditional dancer performs.

“We had trouble processing why this was happening to us,” he recalls. “We thought about how far away we lived, and how we were all trying to connect with each other, and the possibility we would never see each other again. It was hard to fathom.”

“It was a heady time then in Seattle,” recalls Frith Maier. “There were so many different exchanges that happened through the sister city initiative.” Now a 53-year-old serial entrepreneur, Maier was a recent college graduate when she proposed a mountaineering exchange to the STSCA in 1987. Fluent in Russian and passionate about climbing, Maier was delighted when her proposal was accepted. She assembled a group of Washington climbers, and in August 1987 they flew to Tashkent, met their counterparts and tackled mountains in a part of the Pamir range where no foreigners had ever climbed before.

“What made the Seattle-Tashkent mountaineering exchange extraordinary is that we were able to go out into the mountains, sit around a campfire and talk freely,” Maier explains. “We

“We wanted to let the Soviets know who we were.”

The last 1988 exchange involved 86 students and teachers from 10 different Seattle schools. On that trip, students lived with Uzbek families and went to school with their new friends for a week of complete immersion into a new and very different Muslim culture. The effects were overwhelming. “On the way home, the kids were crying, some of them even sobbing on the plane,” recalls Sasnett. “These kids’ lives were clearly changed,



TOP LEFT AND OPPOSITE, TOP: COURTESY OF STSCA; OPPOSITE, LOWER: JIM BATES/SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER/COURTESY OF STSCA

were dealing with physical challenges and climbing high ascents in mountains where you need to rely on each other. That brings communication to a level where you drop all preconceived notions and have meaningful discussions.”

Maier’s second and final exchange in 1988 brought Tashkent alpinists to Seattle, where their climbs took them through small towns in the Cascade Mountains east of Seattle. She recalls how moving it was when the Russian and Uzbek climbers experienced a Fourth of July picnic in the small town of Leavenworth. “They thought it was so much fun, and in these small towns there was less exposure to the perception of the Soviet Union as our enemy. In their eyes, the climbers were just real people. This is what excites me about citizen diplomacy,” Maier emphasizes. “It makes it easy to get beyond the labels and just connect with people on a human level.”

While the STSCA was organizing exchanges, at the University of Washington, Cirtautas was cementing relationships among Uzbek academics, poets and writers in Tashkent and her university in Seattle. As the first appointed member of the STSCA in 1973, Cirtautas was critical to bringing it the university’s backing. “Having institutional support really helps sustain an organization like ours, and the University of Washington as well as the Jackson School of International Studies have been strong supporters for a long time,” comments Peterson.

During the mid-to-late ’80s, Cirtautas facilitated student and faculty exchanges between the University of Washington and Tashkent State University (now the National University of Uzbekistan), and she organized symposia on Central Asian studies. In 1989, the creation of the Central Asian Languages and Culture Summer Programs gave her the opportunity to invite Uzbek poets and writers to Seattle.

The visits of poets Abdulla Oripov and Erkin Vohidov spurred student interest in the Uzbek language and culture, says Cirtautas. It also made students aware of the struggles within Soviet-occupied Uzbekistan on the eve of its independence. As members of the “Generation of the 1960s,” the poets appealed for the revival of their Uzbek language, history and culture through poems that focused on topics such as “My Country” and “My Language.”



Leading Uzbek literary figures like Muhammad Ali Akhmedov, chairman of the Writers’ Union of Uzbekistan, began visiting Seattle’s University of Washington in the late 1980s, awakening interest in the Uzbek language and cementing ties with faculty and students.

Summer translation workshops also gave students the chance to work alongside Uzbekistan’s nationally revered writer

Muhammad Ali Akhmedov from 1992 until 2005. “I was really surprised that students were interested in learning Uzbek,” comments Akhmedov, now chairman of the Writers’ Union of Uzbekistan. “During the Soviet times, even Russians who lived in Uzbekistan weren’t interested in learning Uzbek. They said they didn’t need it.” He recalls happily how interested the students were in his Uzbek culture. “I really liked the idea that I could do something for these students so they could learn about the richness of our language and our culture.”

Ilse xonim*

(*pr. *khan*-im: Uzbek honorific for a highly educated and respected woman)

When University of Washington Professor Ilse Cirtautas took her first trip to Tashkent in May 1972, she surprised the young man who met her at the Tashkent Airport by greeting him in fluent Uzbek. “He thought I was a native Uzbek returning home, because it was very unusual then for a foreigner to speak Uzbek,” says Cirtautas as she recalls how for the rest of her visit, she was treated like a fellow Uzbek.

After meeting Uzbek linguists in Europe earlier that year at an annual conference on Altaic languages, Cirtautas had arranged that first trip, and 43 years later she still bristles when she recalls what happened en route during the required layover in Moscow. Russian officials there told her she could travel to Kazakhstan or Kyrgyzstan but not to Uzbekistan, and they spoke disparagingly of Uzbeks. “Moscow never wanted to study the Turkic languages and people,” explains Cirtautas, who was appalled. “I told myself, ‘If the Russians hate the Uzbeks, I will love them.’”

Cirtautas first found her love of the languages and cultures of the region while pursuing her doctorate in Turkology at the University of Hamburg in her native Germany, and in 1959 she moved to the us. In 1968, the renowned Turkic and Altaic language expert Nicholas Poppe invited Cirtautas to leave her position at Indiana University and join him at the Department of Near East Languages and Civilization at the University of Washington in Seattle.

It was a fortuitous move. Academic book exchange agreements had been initiated by Poppe in the early 1960s between the University of Washington and major libraries in Central Asia, particularly Tashkent, and this gave Cirtautas introductions to fellow scholars in Uzbekistan. She immersed herself in the culture, history and language, and after 1972, she began to travel annually to Tashkent for conferences and research. Uzbek artists, scholars and authors such as Muhammad Ali Akhmedov, his nation’s most revered writer and current chairman of the Writers’ Union of Uzbekistan, were invited to participate in the annual



Far left: Participants in the first teacher exchanges to Seattle between 2004 and 2006, Fatima Tashpulatova, Zukhra Miliyeva and Zukhra Salikhodjaeva came from Tashkent School 17, where a former administrator, *left*, holds a Seattle souvenir as a reminder of the relationships that grew among teachers in the sister cities. In addition to bringing home lesson plans from Seattle they still use, “we also shared our teaching methods,” explains Tashpulatova, “and we told them everything about our traditions, customs and habits.”

Over the four decades, more than 100 projects and exchanges (see sidebar, p. 18) underscore how the sister city relationship stimulated both sides. Nothing, however, left as tangible a footprint in Tashkent as Babur Park. “The park is the most visible reminder of our city in the middle of Tashkent,” emphasizes Peterson. Royer agrees. “When it comes to something in terms of a tangible expression of Seattle really caring about our connection with Tashkent,

there just isn’t anything that can even compare with the peace park. You decide to become a volunteer to build a park because you think it’s a great idea, and all of a sudden you realize you are learning about Central Asia, a part of the world you never knew about, and you are learning about the Uzbek people.”

The park project originated with Ploughshares, a Seattle-based organization founded by former Peace Corps volunteers who

Central Asian Languages and Culture Summer Programs that she created at the University of Washington in 1989.

“If Uzbekistan has one best friend abroad, it is Professor Ilse Cirtautas,” comments Akhmedov. “And if we have two best friends, she is clearly number

one. She is our most famous foreigner,” he exclaims. “If you ask people on the street today in Tashkent if they know her, five out of ten among the older generation would say yes.”

Recognized as a leading Turkologist and one of the first to study and teach

Turkic languages in the United States, Cirtautas was the first appointed member of the STSCA’s inaugural committee. Now well into her 80s, she has remained an active board member for the last 43 years.

“I hope what I have done and continue to do is to help the Uzbeks preserve their culture,” asserts Cirtautas, whose own family heritage is Lithuanian. “I am so grateful to the Uzbeks and other Central Asian people,” she explains, noting that her own personal development owes much to the generosity, hospitality and cultural tolerance she learned from Uzbek colleagues and friends. “They have a remarkable culture, and we can learn so much from them.”

Ilse Cirtautas, University of Washington professor emeritus and founder of its Central Asian Studies Program, has led the development of the academic side of the Seattle-Tashkent sister city relationship from its earliest days, sponsoring dozens of exchanges and programs. A founding member of the STSCA, she serves as its vice president.





Major Exchange Programs

Among the more than 100 exchange programs, highlights include alpinists; art, music, photography and cinematography exchanges; a United Nations heritage ceramic artist; a chef exchange; dance, puppet theater and children's theater exchanges; dentists and physicians as well as paired hospital exchanges; middle and high school student and teacher exchanges; trade and business exchanges; university department exchanges; orphanage support; book and computer deliveries cargoed on Boeing delivery flights; visits by Uzbek poets and writers; and even a zoo exchange.

The sister city was one of Uzbekistan's early initiatives to reach out beyond its Soviet orbit, and Tashkent's lively street life today is in part one of the fruits of its many such efforts, which included more than 100 exchanges in dozens of fields both between 1974 and independence in 1991 and today, where the emphasis is more on technical and administrative exchanges. "Moscow opened the door to the West a tiny crack, and the Uzbeks were brilliant at continuing to pry that crack open," notes us diplomat Gary Furlong.

were looking for ways to defuse Cold War tensions. Aware of Seattle's ties to Tashkent, Ploughshares shifted the location for a peace park from Moscow to Tashkent after they received wholehearted support from then-Mayor Mirsayidov. "As we say in the Orient," commented Mirsayidov to a local publication at that time, "people who plant trees together will never be enemies. But we want more than that. We want to be friends forever."

Fred Noland, co-founder of Ploughshares, took a leave of absence from his law firm to oversee the project. Architects and landscapers donated their expertise, Seattle sculptor Richard Beyer gifted a six-meter-tall sculpture to the park, and the "10,000 Tiles for Tashkent" project involved thousands of schoolchildren and adults, as well as Seattle's mayor and Washington state's governor, who all painted tiles that would be laid in the park. "These projects gained so much visibility

in Seattle that we were getting volunteers all the time," recalls Noland. "It was a rare and wonderful example of how one project can catch people's imagination."

In the summer of 1988, 175 volunteers from Seattle and 10 other states toiled in blistering heat side by side with several hundred Tashkent workers to build the park. Margaret Hopstein, a Russian born in Tashkent, was already a professor and head of the Department of Western Languages at the Literature Institute when the mayor's office asked her to be a translator for the Americans. "My life was dedicated to that project in the summer of 1988. It was fascinating to me that a group of people from another continent would come to work in the heat and do manual labor for the sake of a potential friendship!"

Hopstein befriended one of the volunteers, Seattle software engineer Bruce Haley, and he remembers how rewarding it was to be in Tashkent not as a tourist

but as someone who was working on a project intended to strengthen ties between two countries. “It allowed me to have a much deeper connection with the people there,” emphasizes Haley, who remained friends with Hopstein after she and her family immigrated to the US in 1990.

“The Seattleites’ energy inspired many Tashkenters,” asserts Hopstein. “As a human effort, it changed scores and scores of lives in Tashkent for the better, and I also think it changed lives in Seattle.” She recalls how local workers brought their children to meet and play games with the Americans and how teachers would stop by, excited to have their first words in English with a native speaker. “These simple acts were so human and attracted many Tashkenters who came to the park and opened their hearts,” says Hopstein. She emphasizes that the warmth of the American volunteers made such an impression that some of the peace park interpreters “later immigrated to Seattle and now have children who are American citizens.”

Nazarov was managing the Seattle Café when the first park volunteers arrived. He had helped renovate the building, once a historic granary dating back to the mid-1800s, which was then given its name in 1985 by Mayor Mirsayidov. “The volunteers did

their jobs and I fed them. We became friends.” Sitting at a table in the café’s patio overlooking the park one afternoon, he slowly leafs through albums full of pictures, newspaper clippings, postcards and handwritten notes he has collected since that summer, smiling when he comes across faces he still clearly remembers.

“This park has played a big role in my life,” explains Nazarov, who bought the café in 1994. “Over the past 27 years, I have met many people from the Seattle city administration and from the sister city association, but no one knows the true history of the park, so they ask me. I am the only one who knows the story from day one.” Nazarov turns to a page in the album and points to the words written by Rosanne Royer when the park was dedicated in September 1988: “If we have become a better city in the last 15 years, it is in part because we have learned a great deal from our friends in Tashkent.”

Roots of the sisterhood lay also in air travel: In the ‘70s, Alaska Airlines sought regular routes into the Soviet Union, and the Soviets, notes Cirtautas, wanted commercial access to Seattle-based Boeing Company—a desire that came to fruition mainly after independence, when Uzbek Airways acquired an all-Boeing fleet. The first 767, delivered in 2004, Cirtautas recalls, arrived loaded with books and other donations. *Below:* Since Silk Road times, Tashkent has thrived as a commercial hub for both industries and crafts, including textiles, here still woven by hand in the historic Yodgorlik factory in Margilan City, southeast of Tashkent.





Now renamed Bobur Bo'gi (Babur Park), the Seattle-Tashkent Peace Park occupies about two blocks of land, providing a shady oasis for art students, *above*. "The park is the most visible reminder of our city in the middle of Tashkent," says Peterson. *Right*: The tiled "Earth Mound" connects irrigation channels that water the park's fruit trees, *lower center*, protected by square pools decorated with the handmade tiles from Seattle. *Center*: Ilhom Miliyev is a long-standing member of the Seattle association in Tashkent and a 2002 Hubert Humphrey Fellow. "My involvement has really changed my life and made it more meaningful," he explains. "I am helping to strengthen relations between Tashkent and Seattle and improve friendships between American and Uzbek citizens." He drops by the park regularly to check on its upkeep.

When Uzbekistan became independent in December 1991, Tashkent turned to its trusted friends in Seattle for advice. Exchange programs continued, but the emphasis shifted toward practical concerns: business development, social

services, health care, public administration internships and teacher exchanges. The long-hoped-

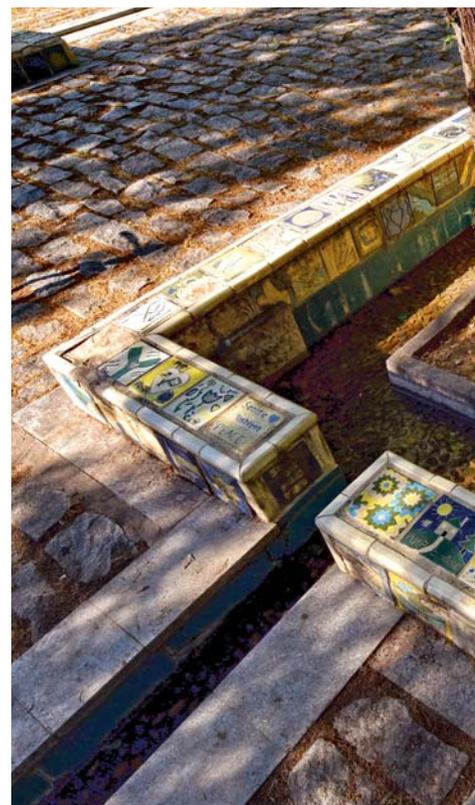
for connection with Boeing bore fruit, too, when in 2004 the first Boeing 767-33 was delivered to Uzbekistan Airways—filled with scholarly books for a new University of Washington Research Center as well as donations of clothing and toys for Tashkent orphanages.

Three Uzbek teachers from School 17, Fatima Tashpulatova, Zuhra Miliyeva and Zuhra Salikhodjaeva, participated in the first Tashkent teacher exchanges to Seattle between 2004 and 2006. They brought home lesson plans from their Seattle colleagues that they still use in their English-language classrooms today. "We also shared our teaching methods with the teachers and students in the Seattle schools we visited, and we told them everything about our traditions, customs and habits," explains Tashpulatova. Her

colleagues agree with her when she notes that "we brought the best back from America to Tashkent, and we think the same will happen with American teachers when they come here and visit our schools."

Business delegations from Tashkent in 2008 and 2013 met with Seattle's Trade Development Alliance, as well as with city officials responsible for issues ranging from water and waste management to recycling. Tashkent Deputy Mayor Ikrombek Berdibekov and Firuza Khodjaeva, deputy head of protocol at the Hokimiyat (city hall), led the 2013 delegation and recall the impressions of their stay in Seattle, from city landscaping to architectural styles to the development of emerging businesses. "We looked at everything, met with businesses and city officials, and brought back the best ideas that we thought could be implemented in Tashkent," explains Berdibekov.

"We can see that the activity between our sister





cities is really developing during the years after independence,” says Khodjaeva, who has been the STCSA’s counterpart in Tashkent since 1998. “I would say that there is a difference in relations before and after independence,” she adds, noting that some of the earlier delegations and exchanges seemed more formal under the watchful eyes of the Soviets.

Khodjaeva emphasizes that sister city relations have become more important than ever today for both Tashkent as a city and for the Uzbek national government. “We have many sister cities now, but Seattle is one of the best among them because we communicate more with each other.” Grateful for the warm reception her delegation received in 2013, Khodjaeva admits that she feels like Seattle has become her second hometown.

Tashkent resident Ilhom Miliyev shares her affection for Seattle. After meeting Peterson and other members of the Seattle association in Tashkent, he became the sister city’s staunchest citizen advocate, and its only continuous local volunteer for the past 11 years. “I was also really impressed by so much of what I saw in the us,” says Miliyev, who spent one year in America as the recipient of a coveted Hubert Humphrey Fellowship in 2002. “As an Uzbek citizen, I wanted to bring back what I learned to Tashkent and promote friendship ties between our two countries, especially now that we are an independent nation.”

Miliyev describes the sister city association as a unique way for him to get involved in a civic activity. “My involvement has really changed my life and made it more meaningful,” he explains. “I am helping to strengthen relations between Tashkent and Seattle and improve friendships between American and Uzbek citizens.”

During the week, he often stops by Babur Park to check on its upkeep and to see if any tiles need repair. Miliyev recalls that the fate of the park was in peril after 1991 when the newly independent Uzbek government began to purge the city of all sites, parks and monuments that were reminders of the Soviet era. Plans to rebuild the park were thankfully scrapped, and Miliyev believes the importance of the Seattle-Tashkent relationship played a role in that decision.



A couple chats in the park framed by the sculpture donated in 1988 by Seattle artist Richard Beyer.



Miliyev's sense of loyalty and civic responsibility encapsulates much about the hospitality-intensive Uzbek culture that has so deeply motivated Seattle volunteers to maintain and strengthen the bridge between their cities over 43 years. Even through challenging political times, "people were eager to be involved because they had developed a love of the region," says Joanne Young, a former Seattle-Tashkent Sister City Association president. "There is a lot of affection, a lot of heart, and there is something very compelling about Uzbekistan and the people who live there."

"What sustains these partnerships is the individual commitment of the people," comments US Ambassador to Uzbekistan Pamela Spratlen. "I've been impressed as I've gotten to know the people from Seattle who have given tremendous amounts of their personal time and energy, and the same is true when it comes to Tashkent. Some people are doing this out of their heart. I think that's a testament to what people can do working together because they just want to do it. This sister city is extremely important to me personally," adds the ambassador, who also has family ties to Seattle. "I very much intend to continue the current programs and try to build new ones."

In addition to the embassy's support, Peterson credits the Seattle City Council, the Tashkent mayor's office, Cirtautas and the University of Washington, and of course the countless volunteers for helping the STSCA to remain active. As a result, "our work has led to footprints in Seattle," notes Peterson. "We have a Tashkent Park, which is now being renovated and upgraded. Uzbekistan Airways is an all-Boeing fleet, and when their planes are produced in Seattle, they are

a visible reminder for the workers about a far-off land. Lastly, sister city events such as Navr'oz [spring festival] and our annual picnic promote the Uzbek culture in Seattle"—as does Seattle's growing Uzbek community itself.

Many Tashkenters like Hopstein, Fazliddin Shamsiev and Dilbar Akhmedova came to Seattle as a result of the sister city relationship. At approximately 300 people, it may not be the largest Uzbek community in the US, according to Peterson, but it is tight-knit and active. Akhmedova says it is important

not only for introducing Seattleites to her country, but also for helping Uzbeks who are growing up in the US to learn about their unique culture of origin. "We want to help the young Uzbeks feel successful and integrate into our society," says Peterson. "They are the future for maintaining the sister city relationship."

Today, neither city looks much like it did in 1973.

Seattle boomed on computers while Tashkent thrived on independence; metropolitan populations now run 3.6 and 2.6 million, respectively. Tashkent Deputy Mayor Berdibekov points proudly to his country's now-diversified industrial and agrarian infrastructure, to its independence and also to the success of his city's 43-year friendship with Seattle. "Even in Soviet times in 1973, it was a great event to establish this relationship, and it has been wonderful for our city," notes the deputy mayor. He

adds that future plans with Seattle include sending a delegation of women entrepreneurs from Tashkent to Seattle, internships for Uzbek English teachers and organizing a trade exhibit of Uzbek products.

Uzbekistan's multi-ethnic culture is reflected in the faces on



From old to young and comprising some 300 people, the Uzbek community that has grown in Seattle since the '70s is, in part, another result of the sister city exchanges. Each spring the STSCA helps sponsor a community celebration of Navr'oz, a leading holiday in Uzbekistan. Dilbar Akhmedova, one of Seattle's sister city migrants, says it is important not only for introducing Seattleites to her country, but also for helping Uzbeks who are growing up in the US to learn about their own unique culture of origin.

every street corner in Tashkent, a reminder of the many cultures that passed through the city when it was an important stop along the Silk Road. More than 100 ethnic groups co-exist in Uzbekistan, including Tajiks, Kazaks, Karakalpaks, Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, Tatars, Turkmens, Ukrainians and Koreans, to name only a few, making Uzbekistan almost as much of a melting pot as America.

The worn but still-gracious facades of 19th-century and Russian-influenced buildings are overshadowed by modern new construction such as the Amir Timur Museum and the Palace of Forums, Tashkent’s International Congress Hall. Bustling neighborhood bazaars with more than 3,000 vendors offer beautifully displayed rows of exotic spices, Tashkent’s famous melons, fruits and vegetables, meats, nuts and seeds as well as carefully arranged stack after stack of the famous Uzbek bread, *non*.

Independent after centuries of domination, Tashkent has reclaimed and celebrates its history, language and Muslim heritage. “The government paid a great deal of attention to restoring our heritage after the collapse of the Soviet Union,”

Sharing 43 years of memories on a walk in Seattle’s Tashkent Park, former mayor Uhlman and professor Cirtautas look forward to the STSCA’s future. “We can learn so much,” says Cirtautas, from Uzbekistan’s “remarkable culture.”



Since the '70s, Seattle has kept Tashkent Park on a hill above downtown, where a few dozen of the “10,000 Tiles for Tashkent” were also used. This year it is being renovated—a reminder that the 43-year-old sisterhood is alive and well.

comments Miliyev, whose own ethnic background is both Uzbek and Tajik. “We have restored most of the historic buildings and recovered the names of Uzbek poets and scientists. I am really proud to be an Uzbek.”

In the evenings, Tashkent’s sidewalk restaurants overflow and families stroll throughout the city. Children play beside the big fountain or dance with street performers in the open square across from the elegant Lotte City Hotel. Along Bratislava Ko’chasi, patrons wander into the Seattle Café and stop for tea. If they are lucky, owner Nazarov will pull out his albums and take them back in time to 1988, when the long distance between Tashkent and Seattle was bridged through friendship. 🌐



A frequent contributor to *AramcoWorld*, **Piney Kesting** is a Boston-based writer who specializes in the Middle East. She wishes to thank her Uzbek colleague and friend Ilhom Miliyev for his gracious assistance in Tashkent that made this article possible. Seattle-based multimedia journalist **Steve Shelton** (stevesheltonimages.com) has covered stories in the us, Middle East, Balkans, Central America and Sudan for a wide variety of news publications as well as nonprofits and commercial clients.



 seattle-tashkent.org

 **Related articles at www.aramcoworld.com**
Tashkent: J/F 08
Culture in Uzbekistan: N/D 15, J/A 15, J/F 03



Video:

Saving
SARAJEVO'S
Literary Legacy

Written by TOM VERDE
Photographs & video by BORYANA KATSAROVA



IN THE AUTUMN OF THE YEAR 1521, SAZI HUSREV-BEG, THE NEWLY APPOINTED GOVERNOR OF THE OTTOMAN PROVINCE OF BOSNIA, RODE AT THE HEAD OF A DETACHMENT, FRESH FROM ISTANBUL, BOUND FOR THE PROVINCIAL TOWN OF SARAJEVO, ON THE BANKS OF THE MILJACKA RIVER.

The appointment was a gift to the 41-year-old general from his cousin, Sultan Suleiman I (“the Magnificent”), who regarded Husrev-beg (Hoos-rev-bey; the suffix *beg* is an honorific, akin to the English “Sir”) as one of his most trusted military officers and diplomats.

The new governor likely entered Sarajevo across a stone bridge over the Miljacka, just east of the Careva Džamija or Sultan’s Mosque, among the first structures built by his predecessor and Sarajevo’s founder, Isa-Beg Ishaković (ih-sha-ko-vich). Creaking along behind, packed among his wagonloads of possessions, were Husrev-beg’s many books and manuscripts, some of which he ultimately bequeathed to posterity. In time, his bequest would grow into the largest library of Islamic manuscripts and documents in the Balkans, the most extensive collection of Ottoman manuscripts outside of Turkey and one of the largest libraries of its kind in all of Europe.

Nearly five centuries later, in 1992, the latest in the line of scholars to whom Husrev-beg had entrusted his legacy, Mustafa Jahić, then director of the library, warily approached the southern end of the landmark bridge together with a handful of colleagues. Clutching boxes filled with the library’s precious collection literally and figuratively close to their hearts, they calculated their chances of making it across the river alive. In the buildings and hills around them, Serb snipers waited to train crosshairs on anyone drifting into the exposed thoroughfares that became known during the 1992-1995 Siege of Sarajevo as “sniper alleys.” If they made it today, they would do it again. And again, over the next three years, throughout the besieged city.

Jahić and his colleagues were willing to take those risks to preserve part of the surviving cultural heritage of their city and newly declared country. Established in March 1992 following the breakup of multi-ethnic Yugoslavia, Bosnia-Herzegovina had turned almost immediately into a battlefield. In Sarajevo, both Muslim Bosniak and Catholic Croatian populations found themselves targets of Orthodox Serb nationalists supported by neighboring Serbia. In addition to claiming the lives of nearly 14,000 in Sarajevo alone—5,400 of whom were civilians—the Serb militia also systematically attacked Bosnia’s cultural identity: by August 1992, two of Sarajevo’s top libraries, the National Library and the Oriental Institute, had been reduced to cinders.

Jahić was determined to save Gazi Husrev-beg’s legacy from the same fate. With the help of others who shared his devotion to the library and commitment to Bosnia’s intellectual history, the dedicated librarian led the spiriting of the collection from one hidden location to another throughout the war until, in 2014, it ultimately came to rest in a brand-new and secure building just steps away from the site of the original library established by Gazi Husrev-beg.

This is their story: Of one man who regarded books and knowledge as essential legacies and of another who risked his life to preserve them both.

The year Gazi Husrev-beg took up his governor’s residence, Sarajevo was classified in Ottoman records as a *kasaba*, meaning it was bigger than a village but smaller than a *šehar*, or city. Founded by Ishaković around 1462, it lay within the boundaries of the medieval Bosnian kingdom of Vrhbosna, conquered by the Ottomans a decade earlier. Though well sheltered by surrounding mountains and well watered by the Miljacka, at the same time the city was potentially vulnerable to aggressors who could scale those selfsame mountains encircling the valley town. Still, its strategic location, within marching distance of “the empire’s shifting boundaries with Venice and the Hapsburg Monarchy,” as historian Robert J. Donia observed, made it an increasingly important commercial, administrative and military center for Ottoman expansion into “Rumelia”—the Balkans.

The city was named after the *saraj* (sar-eye), or royal court, Ishaković erected on the south side of the river near



Opposite: Mustafa Jahić, the former Gazi Husrev-beg Library director, led the campaign to save the library during the Siege of Sarajevo, secretly moving thousands of books and manuscripts to a series of safe havens from 1992 to 1995. Here, he contemplates that odyssey at one of those sites, the subterranean shooting range of the city’s old fire department barracks.
Left: Sarajevans walk north across the Emperor’s Bridge, the same route Jahić and his team took under the guns of snipers. The Sultan’s Mosque, the library’s home from 1935 until 1992, stands in the background.

a large *ovaši* (oh-vah-shee), or field, and hence *Sarajevo*, a Slavic contraction of *Sarajovaši*. The founder also built a fortification on a rocky outcrop to the east, the city's natural gateway where the Miljacka chisels its way through the mountains. Crumbling remains of this stone fortress, together with later Ottoman-era defenses, still dot the city's forested highlands like broken teeth.

It was Gazi Husrev-beg who would, over 20 years, help grow Sarajevo into a *šeher*. It was a job the middle-aged diplomat-general was bred for. Born in Seres, Greece, in 1480, Husrev-beg was the son of the local Ottoman governor, the Bosnian-born Ferhad-bey, and a Turkish mother, Sultana Selçuka, daughter of Sultan Beyazid II. His mother's royal connection made him first cousin to Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent. During his tenure as governor of the *eyalet* (province) of Bosnia—which comprised territory roughly equivalent to today's Bosnia and Herzegovina—Sarajevo grew into the empire's third largest European city after Salonica and Edirne. The era has been called Sarajevo's "Golden Age."

By way of transforming the provincial capital into an "expression of Ottoman civilization," as Donia put it, Husrev-beg used the Empire's basic blueprint for growth: Divide it into residential neighborhoods, called *mahalas*, with a house of worship at the center of each. Prior to Husrev-beg's arrival, Sarajevo had only three Muslim mahalas; under his administration, that number increased to 50. By the early 17th century, there were nearly a hundred, together with a small number of Christian and Jewish mahalas in the decidedly interfaith city.

The heart of Sarajevo's commercial and cultural activity was the *Baščaršija* (bahsh-char-see-yah), or marketplace, just north

of the river. Both Ishaković and Husrev-beg built *bezistans* (covered bazaars) here, and to this day it remains the city's most popular pedestrian thoroughfare. Retaining much of its Ottoman-era flavor, the *Baščaršija* offers browsers everything from Bosnian soccer jerseys to Persian carpets, as well as post-siege novelties such as ballpoint pens fashioned from spent bullet cartridges harvested from the streets. At five city blocks long, Gazi Husrev-beg's *bezistan* is the largest of all.

In Ottoman times, traveling merchants stayed in *hans*,

which were also called *karavan-saraj* (caravanserai). Essentially business hotels, they featured central courtyards for unloading and stabling pack animals and rooms above where the merchants enjoyed free meals and lodging for a maximum of three days. Many hans survive today as restaurants,

including the colorful Morica Han—built by Husrev-beg. In the han's tree-shaded courtyard, tourists now sip tea or milky, beige-colored Bosnian coffee and chat with the easygoing rug and ceramics merchants operating out of the historic structure's converted stables.

Most of the city's cultural, economic and religious institutions—its mahalas, mosques and hans—were supported by charitable endowments known as *vakuf*, which is a Bosnian adaptation of the Arabic *waqf*. Vakufs were endowed by wealthy patrons, many of whom were high-ranking military officers like Husrev-beg who amassed fortunes (some might say loot) after years of campaigning. Of all of Bosnia's vakuf, Husrev-beg's was the wealthiest and most extensive. In addition to mahalas, hans and bezistans, the governor endowed a *hammam* (bathhouse), a *imaret* (soup kitchen), a *haniqah* (a Sufi study center) and a *madrasa* (school) that he named Seljuklia, after his mother.

(Because its roof was made of lead—*kuršum* in Turkish—it became known locally as Kuršumlja, and it remains the oldest surviving madrasa in Bosnia and Herzegovina.)

At the center of it all, Husrev-beg erected a mosque

“THAT WHICH IS WRITTEN DOWN ENDURES, THAT WHICH IS REMEMBERED DISAPPEARS.”

Mula-Mustafa Ševki Bašeskija

Ljetopis o Sarajevu 1746-1804 (Chronicle of Sarajevo)



Left: Beautifully bound books with embossed leather covers, dating back several centuries, are numerous within the Gazi Husrev-beg Library's 25,000-volume collection. At its heart are books that Gazi Husrev-beg brought when he arrived in Sarajevo as governor of Bosnia (today's Bosnia and Herzegovina) in 1521. Above: Lejla Gazić, former director of Sarajevo's Oriental Institute, watched helplessly as its books burned after Serbian nationalists firebombed the Institute the night of May 16, 1992. She still struggles to understand why they attacked the library.

that now bears his name. Elegant with its slender minaret, multi-domed roofline and clock tower, it is the largest historical mosque in Bosnia and Herzegovina, reputed to be the finest example of Ottoman Islamic architecture in the Balkans. Rising from the heart of the Baščaršija, it stands as a symbol of the city and a focal point for Sarajevo's—and indeed all of the country's—Muslim community, which comprises some 40 percent of the country's population today. (Orthodox Christians follow at 31 percent; Catholics at 15 percent.)

Thus it was that under Husrev-beg's governorship, Sarajevo became an urban reflection of the governor's belief in the enduring virtue of vakuf.

“Good deeds drive away evil, and one of the most worthy of good deeds is the act of charity, and the most worthy act of charity is one which lasts forever,” Husrev-beg declared in his vakuf's endowment charter, preserved in the archives of the modern Gazi Husrev-beg Library.

With these principles in mind, in 1537 Husrev-beg also decreed in the charter of the school that “whatever money remains from the costs of construction be used to purchase good books to be used in the said madrasa, that they be used by those who will read them and that transcriptions be made from them by those who are involved in study.”

Books purchased under these terms, along with manuscripts Husrev-beg donated, comprised the library at its founding, and it grew quickly. Amid its increasingly notable collection were well-known works on philosophy, logic, philology, history, geography, Oriental languages, belles-lettres, medicine, veterinary sciences, mathematics, astronomy and more. Some were donated (including entire private libraries); many more were transcribed, per Husrev-beg's directive, by copyists working in the whitewashed cells of the madrasa and haniqah. Meanwhile, just a few meters away, in Mudželiti (moo-zhel-ee-tee) or Bookbinders Street, what began in the 1530s as a clutch of small bindery shops blossomed into a full-blown bookseller's bazaar, reflecting Sarajevo's growth as one of the Ottoman empire's most prolific literary and intellectual centers.

“In these religious complexes, rarely was it only just a mosque. It was usually a number of buildings, and some of them, from the very beginning, had an educational purpose,”



To the east of the new Gazi Husrev-beg Library, which opened in 2014, lies the library's first home, in the 16th-century mosque-and-madrasa complex built by Husrev-beg. The hills surrounding the city, which held snipers during the Siege of Sarajevo, are today a postcard backdrop to Sarajevo's old city.

observed Ahmed Zildžić, a scholar at the Bosniac Institute, a research center for the study of Bosnia and Herzegovina's cultural past headquartered in the beautifully restored and repurposed Gazi Husrev-beg hammam. “So there was either a side-library or a little *maktab* (office), which is like a [Christian] Sunday school, that introduced literacy to Slavic converts to Islam who then started to acquire literacy in Oriental languages,” he said.

Taking full advantage of the *Pax Ottomana's* far-flung resources, some of these promising young scholars fanned out across the empire to study in its famed centers of scholarship: Istanbul, Damascus, Beirut, Cairo, Baghdad, Makkah, Madinah and more. Returning to Bosnia, they brought with them still more books and manuscripts, in Arabic, Ottoman Turkish and Persian, all of which enriched the country's literary heritage and its libraries including Gazi Husrev-beg's. Books and manuscripts were also acquired through trade or were brought back by individuals completing the *Hajj*, or pilgrimage to Makkah. Many times, these imported works were translated into Bosnian, while local scholars also began producing more of their own uniquely Bosnian Islamic scholarship: treatises and commentaries on Arabic philology, Islamic law, the Qur'an, etc., composed in their native language. And as this corpus grew, so too did Sarajevo's reputation as a repository

SOJOURN *to* SAFETY

LIBRARY ON THE MOVE

- 1 Gazi Husrev-beg Madrasa (1537)
- 2 Gazi Husrev-beg Mosque (1863)
- 3 The Sultan's Mosque (Careva Mosque) (1935-1992)
- 4 Gazi Husrev-beg Madrasa (1992)
- 5 New Madrasa (1992)
- 6 Fire Department (1993)
- 7 National Theater (1993)
- 8 Girls Madrasa (1994)
- 9 New Madrasa (1995)
- 10 Girls Madrasa (1995)
- 11 Gazi Husrev-beg Library (2015)

IMPORTANT SITES

- A The Latin Bridge
- B The Emperor's Bridge
- C Town Hall (former National Library)
- D Site of Franz Ferdinand assassination (1914)
- E Baščaršija



for Bosniak culture and “one of the most significant cultural and scholarly centers of Rumelia,” said Zildžić.

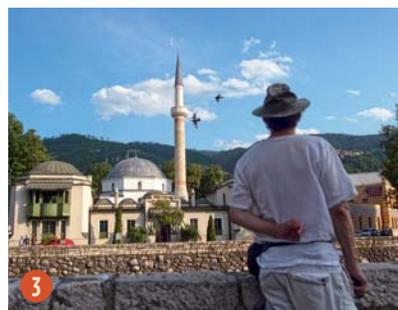
Certainly, 1992 was not the first time these literary treasures came under threat. Punching his way into Bosnia in 1697, Hapsburg prince Eugene of Savoy vowed to “destroy everything with fire and sword,” including Sarajevo, unless it surrendered. True to his word, as he recorded in his military diary, “[w]e let the city and the whole surrounding area go up in flames.” These “Austrian infidels,” as one anonymous Sarajevan reported, seemed especially bent on destroying the city’s Islamic institutions: “[T]hey burned books and mosques, ravaged *mibrabs* [prayer niches in mosques] and the beautiful Šeher-Sarajevo, from one end to the other.”

In the late 19th century, a citywide fire razed many buildings, and this literally cleared the way for German architects to remake Sarajevo in the image of the Austro-Hungarian Empire

during its roughly 33-year rule that began in 1885 under Emperor Franz Joseph I. (One stylistic exception to this early modernism was the city’s Moorish Revival town hall, completed in 1894, which later became the National Library.)

More famous than burning books during this era was the assassination, on June 28, 1914, at the foot of the Latin Bridge just a few meters west of the Emperor’s Bridge, of Austria’s Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Sophie, Duchess of Hohenberg. The incident ignited the First World War, which ironically largely spared Sarajevo, though the city fared less well in World War II, when it suffered both German and Allied bombing.

Meanwhile, through it all, the Gazi Husrev-beg Library continued to grow, to the extent that it had to move to expand, twice prior to the Second World War. The first move was in 1863, across the street to a purposefully built room at the base of the Gazi Husrev-beg mosque’s minaret. By 1935,





To ferry books from one "library safe house" to another during the siege, Jahić and his companions frequently used banana boxes, then as now a common method of storing and transporting books in Sarajevo's open-air book market.

Among its 25,000 books are the oldest printed works (from the mid-18th century) by some of the most prolific Bosnian authors writing in Oriental languages as well as the oldest in the Bosnian language, together with several of the earliest books produced by Hungarian-born Ibrahim Muteferrika, who in his lifetime from 1674 to 1745 became the first Muslim to operate a printing press using moveable Arabic type. The library's periodical collection includes Bosnia's oldest newspapers as well as nearly all Muslim newspapers and journals, current and historic, published in Bosnia, including a nearly complete set of *Bosna*, the eyalet's official news-

paper from 1866-1878. In addition, there are some 5,000 Ottoman *firmans* (royal decrees) and *berats* (charters); local sharia court registers known as *sijjils*; *defters* (tax records); as well as photographs, leaflets and posters.

the library outgrew this space, too, and was relocated across the river to a room in the basement of the mufti of Sarajevo's office, next to the Sultan's Mosque. Eventually, the mufti—the city's foremost Islamic scholar—vacated the whole office building to accommodate the growing collection.

By the early 1990s, the Gazi Husrev-beg Library had become one of the most valuable in the Balkans, with some 10,000 manuscripts in Arabic, Persian, Ottoman Turkish and Bosnian Slavic written in Arabic script, known as *arebica* or *aljamiado*. Its oldest and most precious manuscript remains a copy of al-Ghazali's *Ihya'ulum al-din* (*The Revival of Religious Sciences*), produced during the author's lifetime in 1105. Another treasure is the *Tufhat al-abrar* (*The Gift to the Noble*), a didactic poem by the 15th-century classical Persian writer Nur al-Din 'Abd al-Rahman, penned in exceptionally beautiful calligraphy in Makkah in 1575. Also significant are the library's decoratively bound copies of the Qur'an, which served as templates for copyists. Many of these beautifully produced volumes, encased within embossed leather covers, featured richly illuminated pages with calligraphy and border decorations in azure, gold and brick-red ink.

Adding to these invaluable resources, prior to the Bosnian War, were the collections of the National Library and the University Library of Bosnia Herzegovina, just up the river in the former city hall, and the nearby Oriental Institute, founded in 1950. Together these two institutions housed some two million volumes, 300,000 original documents and 5,263 codices (bound manuscript collections). Along with the Gazi Husrev-beg Library, this entire, precious cache, the body if not the soul of Bosnia's cultural and intellectual heritage, lay concentrated inside a few square kilometers of the city, open to attack. Keenly aware of this vulnerability, Jahić preemptively moved the Gazi Husrev-beg collection from the mufti's offices back across the river to its original home, the Kuršumlija, where he thought the books would be safer.

6





Above: Tourist souvenirs brighten a window in a *bezistan* (bazaar) shop in the Baščaršija, Sarajevo's commercial and cultural center. *Right:* Sarajevo remains a city of bibliophiles. Here, residents and visitors browse at a Ramadan book fair.



His decision was prescient. On the night of May 16, 1992, the attack came, within blocks of the Sultan's Mosque.

The firebombing of the Oriental Institute that night was the opening salvo of a war not only against people, but also against their very thoughts, ideas and cultural identity. Seeking to create a unified, monoethnic state from the rubble of post-Communist Yugoslavia, Serbian nationalists were determined to wipe out Bosnia and Herzegovina's Bosniak and Croat culture.

The three-year Siege of Sarajevo was to become the longest siege of a capital city in the history of modern warfare. Taking up positions in its surrounding mountains, Serbs firebombed Sarajevo night and day. During lulls in the bombing, snipers watched and waited to pick off pedestrians who emerged from the chaos, desperate for food, water and fuel. Signs reading *Pazite, Snajper!* ("Beware, Sniper!") were plastered about like wallpaper. So willfully focused on the eradication of culture was the Serb aggression that philosophy professors at the university were identified as prime assassination targets. So, too, were their writings and those of their cultural predecessors. "The Siege of Sarajevo," observed Bosnian scholar András J. Riedlmayer a decade after the conflict, "resulted in what may be the largest single incident of deliberate book-burning in modern history."

On the morning of May 17, as the Oriental Institute still smoldered, former director Lejla Gazič rushed to the scene, hoping to salvage what she could, but firefighters blocked her. Not only was the building unstable, but it remained a target, as Serbs were shooting at the firefighters. Recalling that terrible day, Gazič still struggles to fathom the event.

"People kill people in wars, I understand this," she said. "But if you kill books, that is something you cannot imagine. Books are a common heritage for everybody, everywhere. How can somebody kill the books?"

THE BOOKS LOST DURING THE SIEGE FILLED 440 KILOMETERS OF SHELF SPACE—"THE LARGEST SINGLE INCIDENT OF DELIBERATE BOOK-BURNING IN MODERN HISTORY."

Yet the unimaginable got even worse. Three months later, Gazič and her fellow Sarajevans again watched in horror as, an hour after nightfall on August 25, Serb forces immolated the National Library with a barrage of phosphorus bombs. As they had during the destruction of the Oriental Institute, Serb fighters in the hills "peppered the area around the library with machine-gun fire, trying to prevent firemen from fighting the blaze," according to Associated Press reporter John Pomfret, who was on the scene. Nevertheless braving the sniper fire, librarians and citizen volunteers formed a human chain, passing what books they could gather out of the burning building. But when the heat exploded the structure's slender Moorish columns and the roof came crashing in, it was too late: The library's invaluable collection was gone.

"The sun was obscured by the smoke of books, and all over the city sheets of burned paper, fragile pages of grey ashes, floated down like a dirty black snow," one librarian later recalled. "Catching a page, you could feel its heat, and for a moment read a fragment of text in a strange kind of black and grey negative, until, as the heat dissipated, the page melted to dust in your hand."

Asked by Pomfret why he was risking his life against such odds, fire brigade chief Kenan Slinič—"sweaty, soot-covered and two yards from the blaze"—said, "Because I was born here, and they are burning a part of me."

Jahić understood this intense devotion. Thirty-eight years old at the start of the war, he had been on the job as director of the Gazi Husrev-beg Library for five years when the siege began. Throughout the ordeal, he dutifully made his way back and forth every weekday between the two loves of



Strollers throng Sarači Street, a pedestrian thoroughfare in the Baščaršija that runs east-west through hundreds of years of the city's history. The new Gazi Husrev-beg Library, and its original location at the Kursumlija, are nearby.

his life: his wife and children, and the library. It was a perilous commute. His house stood a mere 500 meters from Serb lines, and his family was forced to hide in the basement for most of the day. To minimize the risk of sniper fire along his seven-kilometer journey each way, he snaked through graveyards, crouching for cover behind the broad, flat headstones of the Christian sections, which provided better cover than the slender Muslim headstones.

Committed to his job and to maintaining as normal a life as he could under the circumstances, Jahić kept the library collection available to scholars as long as possible. Yet he knew that the Serbs knew where it was, which is what prompted him to move the collection in the first place. After the destruction of the Oriental Institute and the National Library, he knew he had to keep the collection on the move, if it was to be spared the same fate.

“I knew that the Serbs’ agenda was to completely destroy the cultural heritage of Bosnia,” said Jahić. “So in order for the enemy not to know the location of the library, I contacted friends and other librarians and had them help me physically move the collection from one location to another throughout the war.”

From 1992 to 1994, Jahić and his faithful, dedicated colleagues—including a volunteer from the library’s cleaning staff and a night watchman—moved the collection a total of eight times, changing locations every five to six months. For the duration of the conflict, Jahić placed the most valuable items, such as the al-Ghazali and other rare manuscripts, in the vault of the Privredna bank near the center of town. But the bulk of the collection he and his colleagues carried by hand, from place to place, usually in cardboard banana boxes, like college students moving in and out of a dorm.

The first hiding place was the library’s original home, the Kursumlija. This was followed by a move next door, to the

larger, “new” madrasa, built during the Austro-Hungarian period. It was moving the books to these locations, back across the river over the Emperor’s Bridge, that was one of the most dangerous, said Jahić.

“This bridge was open to snipers up there in Trebević,” he said, glancing up at the rocky highland from the middle of the bridge.

Next, an influx of refugees from the surrounding area requiring shelter in the madrasa compelled Jahić to move the collection again, to the dank bowels of the old fire department barracks where it languished for several months in a disused, subterranean firing range—hardly an ideal setting for rare books. Still, Jahić knew he had to use whatever resources he could to stay one step ahead of the Serbian militia. Two more moves followed in 1993: to the dressing rooms of the National Theater, and then to the classrooms of a girl’s madrasa not far from the fire department barracks. All the while, Jahić was thinking even further ahead of his enemy’s intentions.

While the library seemed to be relatively safe for the time, he realized that it could yet go up in flames at any moment. So to ensure its intellectual if not physical contents, he began microfilming the entire collection. While this might sound like a daunting project even during the best of times, Jahić had to cope with infrequent electricity, no running water for film processing, no real proper equipment nor knowledge of how it worked once he got it—all the while under enemy fire. A lesser librarian might have faltered or never started. But Jahić, energetic and resourceful, fully grasped what was at stake and, like many an insurgent before him, resorted to the underground.

“We arranged to have microfilm equipment smuggled in through the tunnel,” said Jahić, referring to the 700-meter, hand-dug tunnel beneath the Sarajevo airport. During the war, this narrow passageway, just one meter by one meter, running

To hear him describe it, architect Kenan Šahovič had never faced quite so daunting a challenge in his career. Not only was he charged with designing a new home for a unique, extensive and in some cases fragile collection, but he had to create it within the confines of an architecturally diverse, historic section of Sarajevo. His solution: use glass to enable library patrons to feel like they never actually entered the building at all.

“The ambience of the surrounding streets is very old, very historic,” said Šahovič. “My idea was to have people in the library reading books be inspired by these surroundings. I wanted them to feel like they still were outside in this historic space, even though they were inside a very modern building.”

To accomplish this, Šahovič’s design called for a massive wall of treated, reflective glass on the east

façade, facing the original site of the library, the 16th-century Kuršumlija. Outside, the glass reflects the old madrasa and its surrounding buildings; inside, it offers views of those same buildings, and both experiences highlight the relationship between old and new. In a nod to the historic bezistans, Šahovič incorporated a row of shopfronts opposite the library’s front entrance.

“I think [Husrev-beg] would be happy,” said Šahovič, “because I have designed a building that looks to the future, and that is what he did when he endowed his library and his vakuf.”

The new Gazi Husrev-beg Library blends modernism with the classical, inviting visitors both to savor its holdings and to find inspiration in its historic surroundings. Three stories of glass and marble with room for 500,000 books, reading areas for students, researchers and the public, and conservation facilities, it was funded by the government of Qatar.



from a private garage to the suburb of Dobrinja, proved a lifeline that channeled food and supplies to Sarajevo’s 400,000 besieged citizens, and provided the only safe escape route out of the city.

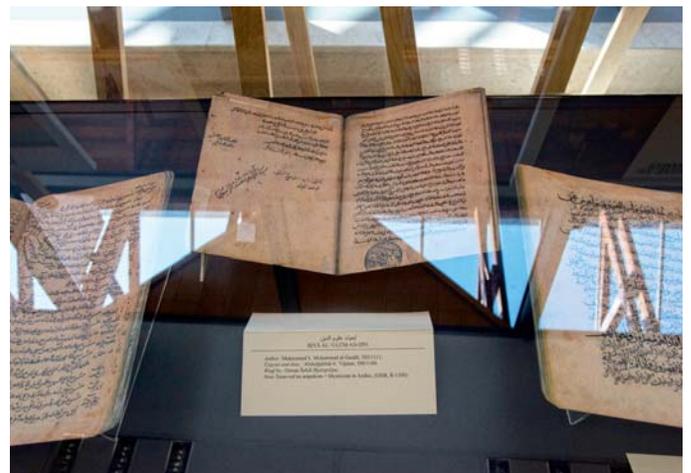
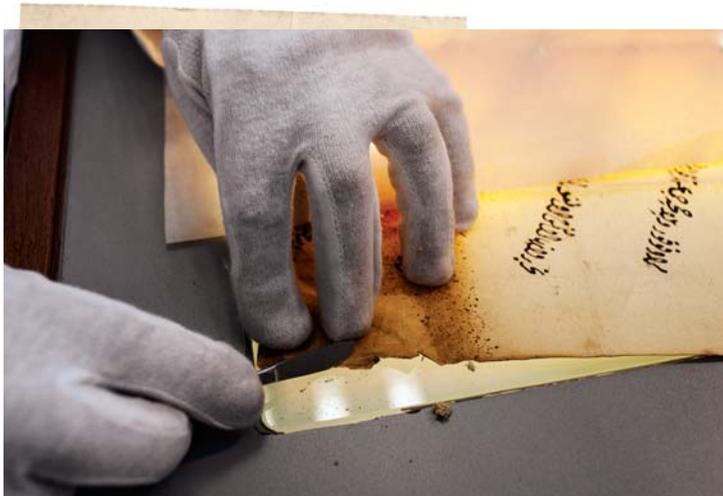
With the help of a local microfilm technician and his hired crew, Jahić commenced photographing as best he could. In spite of all odds, the team managed to microfilm 2,000 manuscripts during the war.

“It was a problem because there were frequent blackouts and no electricity, so we used car batteries to supply power whenever the electricity went out,” Jahić recalled. The water they required they drew from the Miljacka. All the while, such resources were dwindling.

“Food, water and wood. These were the three most important things during the siege,” said Jahić, recalling that luxuries like the library’s wooden bookshelves were among the first items to be seized by people for kindling during the crisis, followed by the trees in every park in the city, transforming them into vast, empty fields of stumps.

Relocating the books themselves was also risky and not only because of snipers. On one occasion, while scuttling through the bombed-out streets with their banana boxes filled with books, Jahić and his crew encountered a pack of young men. The gang accosted them, thinking they were hoarding a load of bananas, an exotic luxury at a time when

Left: A conservator works on restoring a document in the library’s book-preservation lab, part of the expanded, nine-million-dollar library complex that rose, phoenix-like, after the siege, to open last year. Right: Display cases include this facsimile of the library’s oldest manuscript, Al-Ghazali’s *The Revival of Religious Sciences*, produced during the author’s lifetime in 1105.



such basics as bread were at a premium.

“But when they looked into the boxes and saw that they were just books, they threw them to the ground and went on their way,” Jahić recalled.

Certainly neither Jahić nor his crew had signed up for confrontations with street gangs. But like the firefighters waging their losing battles against burning buildings, they viewed what they were doing as not only their patriotic duty, but their obligation to humanity.

“Of course it was worth risking my life for,” said library night watchman Abbas Lutumba Husein later to the producers of the 2012 BBC documentary “The Love of Books: A Sarajevo Story.” An immigrant born in Congo, where he grew up amid violence and conflict, Husein said his life had been transformed by reading the Qur’an. During his night shifts at the library, he took comfort in reading its books, sensing the presence of their authors and feeling at peace among them. The library, he said plainly, “saved my life.” He would have preferred, he concluded, “to die together with the books than to live without them.”

When the siege ended in 1995, the library was back at the girl’s madrasa, and Jahić continued to work on digitizing, microfilming and cataloguing its entire content to preserve it and minimize the threat of its destruction ever again. The cataloguing was completed in 2013 and published with the support of the London-based al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation. Now, the most important items in library’s collection are completely digitized.

In the early 1990s, discussions had already begun about the creation of a new building to house the library’s continually growing collection, but had to be postponed because of the war. Eventually, an architect was commissioned (see sidebar, *opposite*), and in 2014 the new Gazi Husrev-beg Library opened, thanks to a major donation from the government of Qatar. The glittering, three-story glass-and-marble structure, opposite the site of the original library, holds storage for 500,000 volumes, reading rooms, a conservation room and a 200-seat auditorium with WiFi-connected headsets in every seat for simultaneous translation of up to three different lan-



A family prepares to break the Ramadan fast with a picnic at Sarajevo’s old Yellow Fortress, north of the Miljacka River, while other city residents take in a tranquil sunset panorama.

guages. In the basement, there is also a museum dedicated to Bosnia’s history of literacy.

Yet at the heart of the high-tech structure are the books, all of them, which Jahić, now a resident scholar, regards almost as dearly as his own children.

“During the war, I was trying to save both my family and the library,” he said. “In the process, I came to love the books very much. It is difficult for me to speak about them now without great emotion.” ☺



Tom Verde (tomverde.pressfolios.com) is a freelance writer from Connecticut and a regular contributor to *AramcoWorld*. **Boryana Katsarova** (www.boryana-katsarova.com) is a freelance photojournalist represented by the Paris-based Cosmos Photo Agency. She lives in Sofia, Bulgaria.



Related articles at www.aramcoworld.com.

Bosnian soccer: M/J 14
Mostar bridge: S/O 98
Bosnian refugees: J/F 97



Bosnia and the Destruction of Cultural Heritage. Helen Walasek, et al.
2015, Ashgate Publishing, 978-1-4094-3704-8.



Video: “Glimpses of Sarajevo”





ARWAD

FORTRESS *at* SEA

Written by ROBERT W. LEBLING

Photographs and video by KINAN IBRAHIM

"[The] King of Arwad ... dwelt in the wide sea ... [and] fixed his dwelling like a fish in immeasurable waters."

—*Ashurbanipal*, KING OF ASSYRIA

Along the entire eastern coast of the Mediterranean, there is only one inhabited island: Arwad. Not much more than a dot of rock off the coast of Tartus, Syria, it once dominated a goodly stretch of that coast, ruling the mainland like an offshore castle. War galleys of Arwad fought on the side of the Egyptians, the Assyrians and even the Persians when the tide turned for Greece in the early fifth century BCE. More than a millennium and a half later, the island became the last bastion in the entire Levant for the crusading Knights Templar before their final, dramatic expulsion. Though Arwad today is a quieter place, the remains of its massive stone fortifications have many a tale to tell.



Remnants of ramparts that once circled all but Arwad's harbor side, these few weathered blocks likely date back at least as far as the Seleucid era that followed Alexander the Great. *Previous spread:* Raked by a southwest breeze off the coast of Syria, Arwad's twin harbors are easy to spot, as are its two largest historic fortifications: the rectangular Citadel and, near the harbor, the smaller, square Ayyubid castle.

In the 1970s, when Syria was at peace, a small group of journalists drove up the coast from Beirut through Tripoli and across the Syrian border. It was a carefree weekend jaunt on a crystal-clear, sunny day. We stopped for a cold seafood lunch at a beach hotel, then headed north to the coastal city of Tartus, where we negotiated passage with a fisherman. He ferried us in his wooden boat that jounced us through the chop as salt spray invigorated our faces. Far above, seagulls swooped, tracking our progress across the channel that for millennia had served as a great natural moat, at times protecting and at times isolating the island that was small enough to appear to float on the sea. About three kilometers west of the port, we reached our destination, a warren of narrow streets and seaside restaurants crowned with a massive fortress: Arwad.

It was not unlike other small Mediterranean port towns. Its population ranged between 5,000 and 10,000 depending on the season, all living atop 20 hectares of rock. Fishing, boatbuilding and tourism kept everyone going, as it has for much of the last century, although recently all three have declined with the war on the mainland.

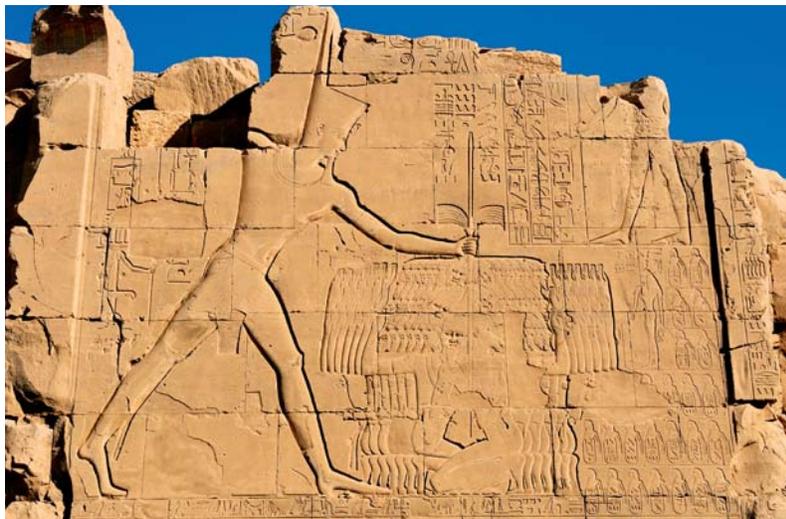
The Greek geographer and historian Strabo wrote that the island he called *Arados* was founded by exiles from the Phoenician city-state of Sidon. (Arwad's Phoenician residents are thought to have called their island city *Aynook*.) Arwad also appears as *Arvad*, and its people *Arvadites*, at least twice in the Old Testament, where they are noted among the

tribes of Canaan. After Alexander the Great conquered the Eastern Mediterranean in the fourth century BCE, coins minted by the islanders bore the Greek legend "Arados."

Physically, Arwad is a low, barren slab of rock, bereft of arable soil, natural springs or any other water resource, some 800 meters from northwest to southeast and about 500 meters wide. Always densely settled, its multi-story buildings gave rise to its sobriquet, "five-story city," and its inhabitants in Strabo's Roman-ruled times (when the island was called *Aradus*) lived in "houses of many stories," the geographer tells us.

Near the center of the island protrudes the Citadel of Arwad, a rectangular fortress raised sometime in the 13th century but now largely Ottoman, though it retains Mamluk and Crusader features. Two thousand years before its first stones were laid, on this site stood the palace of the Phoenician kings. On the eastern side, facing the mainland, a smaller, square Ayyubid Arab castle, dating from the late 12th century, overlooks the two natural harbor areas that, side by side, once hosted naval fleets, but now are filled with fishing boats, yachts and the ferries that ply to and from the mainland.

The island was once insulated also by a massive outer city wall made of gargantuan stone blocks. As historian Lawrence



Bereft of resources, it was Arwad's strategic position along the Levantine coast that made it attractive to the powerful. In Karnak, Egypt, on the seventh pylon at the Temple of Amun-Ra, hieroglyphics from the early 15th century BCE chronicle Pharaoh Thutmose III's victories during his fifth campaign against the northern Syrian city-states, which included the island of Arwad.



Under Ottoman rule when this aquatint was produced in 1810, Arwad's 12th-century Ayyubid castle lay largely abandoned, though commerce continued from the shore and harbor, visible in the background.

Conrad describes it, in Byzantine times “the great walls surrounding the island on all but the harbor side were at least 10 meters high in places and were built of tremendous blocks up to six meters long and two meters high.” The walls, according to Conrad, dated at least to the Seleucid era that followed Alexander the Great, and probably even to the Phoenician era before. Much of this protective structure was razed after the Arab takeover in 650 CE; other parts of the walls were brought down after the Mamluk expulsion of the crusading Knights Templar in the autumn of 1302. Only a few segments of the great wall survive, and they tower dramatically near the water's edge, relics of a seemingly impossible feat of engineering.

Yet we know that Phoenician architects and masons routinely worked with incredibly great blocks of stone. In their earliest monumental structures along the Eastern Mediterranean, foundations of buildings were hewn straight from native rock, squared off and smoothed, followed by courses of detached blocks whose dimensions often exceeded several meters and sometimes reached five meters or even more—as with the wall of Arwad.

Arwad's lack of water presented the island's most serious challenge to habitation. Strabo recounts that Phoenicians collected rainwater and channeled it into cisterns, and that they shipped containers of fresh water from the mainland. Perhaps the most resourceful solution came from the fortuitous discovery—probably by sponge and coral divers—of an undersea freshwater spring, not far from the island in the channel between Arwad and the mainland. This spring, says Strabo, was exploited as a last resort when war or other crises interrupted water supplies from the mainland:

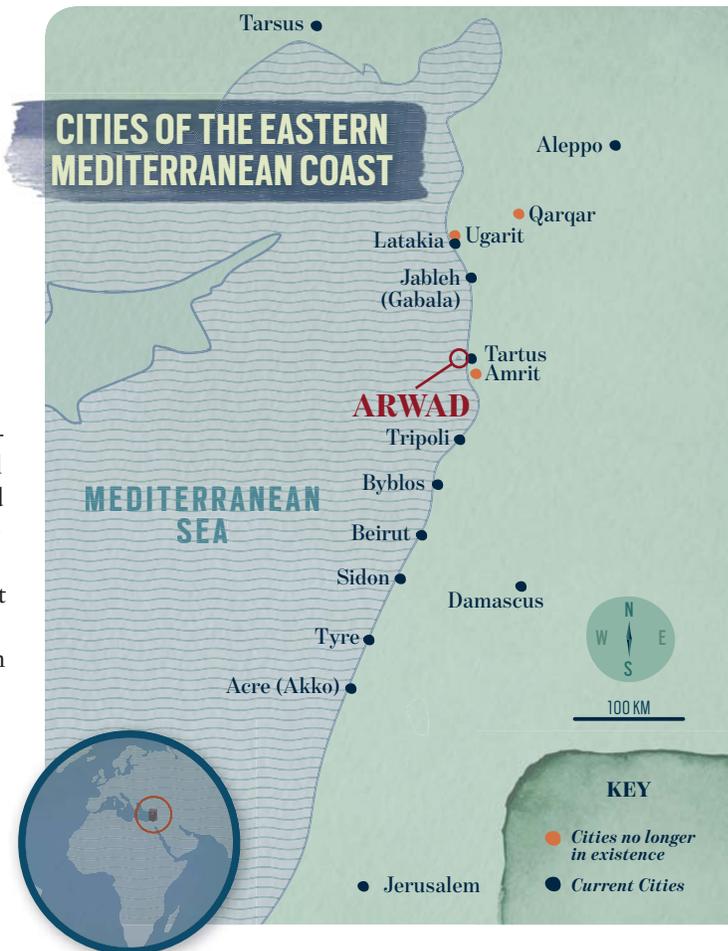
... into this spring the people let down from the water-fetching boat an inverted, wide-mouthed funnel made of lead, the upper part of which contracts into a stem with a moderate-sized hole through it; and round this stem they fasten a leathern tube (unless I should call it bellows), which receives the water that is forced up from the spring

through the funnel. Now the first water that is forced up is sea-water, but the boatmen wait for the flow of pure and potable water and catch all that is needed in vessels prepared for the purpose and carry it to the city.

Arwad first appears in recorded history in the 15th century BCE, when the naval fleet of Egyptian Pharaoh Thutmose III took control of the island. Egypt's greatest conqueror, Thutmose followed an expansionist agenda that was aided by keen tactics and advanced weapons. He subdued Arwad (then “Arvad”) in 1472 BCE, during his fifth campaign into northern Syria. On the walls of the Temple of Amun-Ra at Karnak, the pharaoh listed the conquest in a hieroglyphic account of the campaign that remains legible today.

But Egyptian rule did not last long, and by the 14th century BCE, the post-Thutmose Canaanite mini-kingdom of Arwad was an important seaport and trade center along the route between

Egypt to the south and the Amorite port of Ugarit up the coast, near Syria's modern border with Turkey. This was an era of conflicts among small kingdoms, and the clay tablets known as the Amarna Letters recording Egypt's dealings with nearby powers contain at least five references to “men of Arwad” as naval mercenaries whose ships had blockaded ports across





Tooled in bronze around 853 BCE, this small relief panel is one of many chronicling the battles of Assyrian King Shalmaneser III against coastal city-states. Although it may literally depict Tyre, which was an island a few hundred meters offshore until Alexander the Great's successors built a causeway to the mainland, the ferrying of goods and soldiers from a fortified island to the coast is applicable no less to Arwad, whose ruler took part that year in a coalition rebellion against Assyrian domination.

the western Levant, including Sumuru (Simirra), Byblos and Tyre, according to Jordi Vidal, a historian at the Autonomous University of Barcelona. Like other scholars, he believes Arwad most likely furnished mercenary warriors and warships to whoever could afford them.

A couple of centuries later, the 12th century BCE was a time of chaos and unrest as the region dealt with migrating invaders of still-unknown origin called the “Sea Peoples.” Major powers, including the Mycenaeans and the Hittites, suffered collapse. Out of the ashes and turmoil emerged new powers, including the coastal Canaanites known to the Greeks as “Phoenicians”—skilled sailors and canny merchants so named for their trade in *phoinix*, the Tyrian royal purple dye coveted by fashion-conscious elites throughout the Mediterranean whose secret source was murex sea snails. The Phoenicians organized into independent city-states, built confederations and used their seafaring skills to dominate trade all the way to the western reaches of the Mediterranean, to Morocco and Iberia. (It was from these people that the world’s first alphabet emerged in about 1000 BCE, soon spreading to the Greeks and, eventually, the Romans.)

Among the Phoenicians, their four leading city-states were Tyre, Sidon, Byblos and Arwad. Historian Philip Hitti calls the quartet “a brilliant cluster whose names glitter through the pages of the *Iliad* and the Bible.” Two of these were built on islands: Arwad and Tyre, which the Greeks first connected to the mainland by a causeway (today, it is fully filled in). Of the four, Arwad was the northernmost, and it was the only one oriented culturally and economically toward northern Syria.

Details are sparse on how Phoenician culture first flowered in the 12th and 11th centuries BCE. We do know from the Amarna Letters that in this period Assyrian King Tiglathpileser I visited Arwad and boarded at least one of its

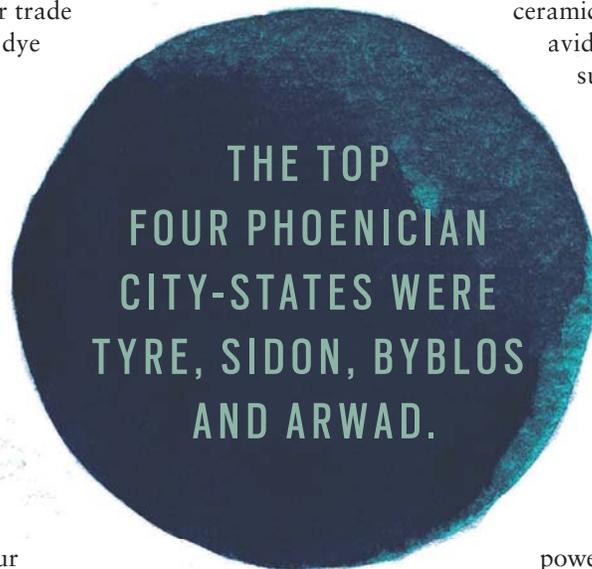
ships. He accepted tribute from the city-states of Byblos and Sidon—and presumably from Arwad as well.

Up to the 11th century, Egypt, too, remained influential in the Levant. But around 1000 BCE Egyptian power waned with the invasions by the Sea Peoples and the ensuing disruption of Late Bronze Age cultures. Trade throughout the region fell off.

A new geopolitical order emerged. Flourishing Phoenician settlements came into their own after centuries in the shadow of hegemon Egypt, Ugarit and Assyria. Where the Levantine coast had previously relied on imported Aegean goods and wares, now Phoenician cities began to reverse the flow and export to the Greeks and others such products as ceramics, cedar wood, blown glass and the avidly sought purple textile dye, as well as such valuable services as boatbuilding, navigation and construction of monumental buildings.

During this time, Arwad exerted control over mainland settlements opposite the island. The closest colony was known as Antarados (“Opposite Arados”), from which comes the modern name Tartus. Arwad also founded, controlled and eventually absorbed the Phoenician coastal city of Amrit (Marathos to Greeks), some six kilometers south of Tartus. Arwad and two other Phoenician powers, Sidon and Tyre, in a kind of joint venture, founded yet another colony some 50 kilometers south of Arwad, at a place they named “Tripolis,” or “Three Cities” in reference to the founders, and today this is Tripoli, Lebanon. Greek geographer Scylax describes Tripolis as literally three cities in one, noting that the colonists from the parent cities each kept a separate walled quarter. Strabo indicates that Arwad’s overall dominion extended from the northern Syrian city of Gabala (modern Jableh, near Latakia) south to the Eleutheros River, now al-Nahr al-Kabir (“the Great River”), which separates Syria from Lebanon.

Ever since the 13th century BCE and up through the ninth century BCE, the city-states often maintained varying degrees



of autonomy by paying tribute (taxes) to the Assyrians, the regional superpower. Although records show Phoenician tribute to Ashurnasirpal II in about 876 BCE, Arwad soon balked, and in 853 BCE the island joined 10 other kingdoms in rebellion against Assyria. Arwad's King Mattan-Baal sent 200 soldiers to northern Syria to engage in the Battle of Qarqar in which the 11 rebel coalition forces set themselves against the army of Assyrian King Shalmaneser III. In surviving inscriptions found in present-day eastern Turkey, notably on the Kurkh Monolith of Shalmaneser, the Assyrians claim victory, but the actual outcome is less clear-cut: All 11 rebel rulers, including Arwad's Mattan-Baal, held onto their thrones.

In the late seventh century BCE, Assyria's regional power collapsed forever. Egypt made a brief effort to reassert control over the Levant, but it was the Babylonians who became overlords of the Phoenician coast.

In the sixth century BCE, an unnamed king of Arwad appears in the official records as a regular at the court of Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon. In those days, carpenters from Arwad and Byblos were known for their skills in woodworking and boatbuilding, and they had found employment in the Babylonian capital.

In 539 BCE, Cyrus the Great, king of Achaemenid Persia, conquered the Phoenician city-states, and Arwad became a vassal. In 480 BCE, warships from Arwad joined the ill-fated Persian fleet in battle against the Greeks and their allies at

Salamis, which decisively thwarted Persian aspirations for further Greek conquest. Maharbaal, one of only two kings of Arwad whose names are known for certain during the Persian period, is assumed to have taken personal command of his kingdom's ships during the fight.

It was about a century and a half after the Battle of Salamis that a Macedonian conqueror named Alexander swept through Asia Minor and dealt Persia another defeat at Issus in southern Anatolia, in November 333 BCE. Alexander continued southward to subdue the Phoenician city-states and take command of their fleets before he turned east into Asia. When he arrived on the mainland near Arwad, it went like this, according to Arrian, a prominent Greek historian of the first century BCE:

[He] met on his way Straton, the son of Gerostratos, king of the Aradians, and associates of Arados.... When he met Alexander, Straton crowned him with a golden crown and gave him the island of Arados, Marathos, the town located on the mainland in front of Arados, large and rich, Sigon [sic], the city of Mariamme and all their territory.

In other words, on behalf of his father King Gerostratos of Arwad, Straton surrendered the realm. After Gerostratos, Arwad's monarchy lapsed.

With Phoenician power and dependence on the sailors of the island gone, Arwad began to slip from the larger stage of history for more than a thousand years. Its fishermen, however, continued to work their nets, bringing home boatloads of fresh seafood for generations of local markets. From their vantage point across from the mainland, the small population of Arwad became spectators to history's tides. When the Greek Seleucids ruled Syria after the death of Alexander, Arados sided with them; when the Romans succeeded the Greeks in Egypt and Asia Minor, Arwad accepted their rule, too.

Fishing and boatbuilding have been practiced on Arwad since Phoenician times; in the sixth century BCE, woodworkers from Arwad were employed in the royal court in Babylon, now in Iraq. Though Arwad exports fish to the mainland, both its seaside restaurants and its population of up to 10,000 in the summer rely on ferries to import nearly everything else. Its economy today is depressed by the war in Syria, and it has accepted several hundred mainland refugees.



But they were not exactly submissive all the time, particularly when it came to paying tribute. Fourth-century CE historian St. Jerome reports: “Curtius Salassus [a tax farmer and officer of Mark Antony] was burnt alive along with four cohorts on the island of Aradus, because he had collected tribute too harshly.” This took place between 44 and 41 BCE, restive years due to the assassination of Julius Caesar and the ensuing power struggle of Octavian, Lepidus and Mark Antony whose effects rippled even into Asia Minor. By and large, Arwad remained peaceful under Roman rule. Strabo notes that although the doughty sailors of Arwad were invited by the Cilicians to join in unspecified “piratical” ventures, “they would not even once take part with them in a business of that kind.”

Later apocrypha maintain that Paul of Tarsus, apostle of Jesus of Nazareth, visited Arwad during his journey through Asia Minor to Rome, but Arwad does not appear in further chronicles until Rome had been replaced by Byzantium as a coastal power and it, in turn, was supplanted by Muslim Arabs. Around 650 CE, the naval fleet of the Arab governor of Syria, Mu'awiya ibn Abi Sufyan, who later founded the Umayyad dynasty, conquered Arwad.



Literally depicting their attachment to the Eastern Mediterranean, Crusaders mortared this relief plaque of a lion chained to a palm tree onto the wall alongside the gate to Arwad's citadel.

The *Syriac Chronicle of 1234*, a primary reference source for scholars of the Crusades, describes the Arab siege, made brief by the island's lack of local food and water. After initial resistance, Arwad surrendered under Arab terms that allowed the Christian population to

resettle either in mainland Syria or any other country. When the last citizen had departed, the governor ordered the walls razed and the city torched. Mu'awiya was determined that Arwad would never again operate as a Greek naval base so close to the mainland. Arwad remained a “no man's land” for nearly 500 years.

At the end of the 11th century CE, encouraged by the Pope in Rome, Latin Christian “Crusader” armies set out from Western Europe, and in 1099 they captured Jerusalem. They held the city and its surrounding territory as the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem for 88 years. Key components of the kingdom's military power were the military-religious orders, particularly the Knights Templar, whose ostensible mission was to protect Christian pilgrims, and the Knights Hospitaller, or Knights of St. John, who ran hospitals and clinics in the Levant.

In 1187, Salah al-Din Yusef ibn Ayyub, known in the West as Saladin, commanded an Ayyubid army to defeat the Crusaders at Hattin on the western coast of the Sea of Galilee and take Jerusalem back under Muslim rule. The Crusaders retreated northwest to the port city of Acre (now Akko). The following year, Saladin's army recaptured Tartus, opposite Arwad. Although the Templar headquarters there withdrew across the waters to Cyprus, a small number of Templars managed to hold onto the castle keep, which they continued to use as a base for the next 100 years.

The Crusaders continued, however, to lose strategic holdings. In May 1291, the Mamluks under Sultan Al-Malik al-Ashraf Salah al-Din Khalil ibn Qalawun recaptured Acre. Frankish King Henry II responded by relocating with his nobles and fighters, including many Templars, to Cyprus. On August 4, Mamluk forces seized the Templars' castle keep at Tartus. Ten days later, all that remained to the Crusaders south of the Syrian Gates in Turkey was the small Templar presence on Arwad.

In the year 1300, Henry II, now king of Cyprus, was plotting a return to the Syrian mainland using what remained of the forces of the Knights Templar, the Knights Hospitaller



Left: Now conserved as a historic site, Arwad's Citadel saw its last major military event in 1302, when its garrison of more than 1,000 men serving the Knights Templar was defeated by Mamluk troops who arrived in 16 ships dispatched from Alexandria, Egypt.

Above: children play in front of a vaulted passageway that echoes the island's past.



Arwad's dense settlement gave early rise to its sobriquet, "five-story city," and inhabitants even in Strabo's Roman-ruled times lived in "houses of many stories," the geographer tells us. Across the water that has both isolated and protected Arwad for more than three millennia lies the city of Tartus.

and an order of German warrior monks, the Teutonic Knights. Arwad would be his bridgehead for an attack on Tartus, which he devised in secret alliance with Ghazan, Mongol khan of Persia, who planned to attack Mamluk Tartus from the east. Ghazan, for his part, envisioned this as the first stage of a wider alliance with the Franks against the Mamluks throughout Syria and Egypt.

In November, some 600 Crusader troops ferried from Cyprus to Arwad. From there, led by Templar grand master Jacques de Molay and the king's brother Amaury of Lusignan, the knights launched raid after raid on Mamluk Tartus, praying all the while for the promised arrival of the Mongols. Weather, it turned out, delayed their hoped-for allies, and Ghazan, sensing a plan gone awry, canceled his attack. The Crusaders withdrew again to Cyprus, leaving only a tiny garrison on Arwad.

A year later, after vigorous appeals for support from De Molay, Pope Boniface VIII officially bestowed Arwad Island on the Knights Templar. The Mamluks remained an ever-present threat to this last, now officially Frankish bastion, so its fortifications were bolstered, and Arwad received a permanent garrison of 120 knights and sergeants, 500 mercenary Syrian bowmen, and 400 squires and other non-fighting servants, all under the command of Templar marshal Barthélemy de Quincy. This was a sizable force: fully half the strength of the garrison that had held sway over Jerusalem.

In September 1302, the Mamluks attacked Arwad. On orders from their sultan, Al-Nasir Muhammad, Mamluk commanders dispatched 16 war galleys from Alexandria, landing their troops at two locations on their target island. The Templar garrison, defending from the Citadel and the fortress in the harbor, fought back, but they were besieged, and food and water quickly ran short. The Mamluks agreed to give the Templars safe conduct and let them seek refuge in any Christian country that would take them.

The surrender terms were a ruse. When the Templars emerged from their fortifications, the Mamluk forces attacked. Templar leader Barthélemy de Quincy was killed, and the remaining defenders were taken prisoner. Medieval Cypriot chronicles report that the Syrian bowmen were beheaded, the servants and other non-fighters were enslaved, and the surviving Templar knights, said to number in the dozens, were hauled off to prison in Cairo's Citadel. Only a few, after years of negotiations, were ever freed.

Six hundred years passed. After World War I, the tiny island of fishermen and boat builders became subject to the French mandate over Syria. The dungeons of its old fortress were still usable enough to imprison Arab nationalists, as the captives' still-visible graffiti attests.

Most recently, it was in June 2013 that three motor launches made the 20-minute sea crossing from Tartus to deliver relief supplies from the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) for 119 of the island's poorest families and 60 refugee families who had fled from the Syrian revolution and ensuing warfare, mainly from Homs and Aleppo.

The UNHCR staff reported that the economy on the tiny island had deteriorated. Fisheries were suffering because fewer mainland families were coming to Arwad's restaurants, fewer customers were buying seafood, and there were growing concerns among fishermen about their own safety on the water.

But the Syrian government had not given up on Arwad. In 2014, Syria's tourism minister Bishr Riyad Yazigi and then-culture minister Lubana Mshaweh presided over the laying of a cornerstone on Arwad for a four-star hotel resort complex. Amid the ministers' pledges to the islanders for archeological conservation and support for handicraft traditions on the one hand, and the tears of war flowing on the mainland, the next chapter of Arwad's long history remains, rather like the tiny island itself, at sea. 🌐



Robert W. Lebling (lebling@yahoo.com) is a writer, editor and communication specialist who lives and works in Saudi Arabia. He is author of *Legends of the Fire Spirits: Jinn and Genies from Arabia to Zanzibar* (I.B. Tauris, 2010 & 2014), and he is co-author, with Donna Pepperdine, of *Natural Remedies of Arabia* (Stacey International, 2006). He is a regular contributor to *AramcoWorld*. **Kinan Ibrahim** (kinaneb@gmail.com) is a photographer and information technology professional living in Tartus, Syria.



Related articles at www.aramcoworld.com

Alexander: M/J 01
First Millennium: M/A 15
Murex: J/A 06
Saladin: M/A 96
Thutmose: S/O 07
Tripoli: M/J 00



Video:



From Indonesia to Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan to Nigeria, Senegal to Turkey, it is not particularly rare in our own times for women in Muslim-majority countries to be appointed and elected to high offices—including heads of state. Nor has it ever been.

Stretching back more than 14 centuries to the advent of Islam, women have held positions among many ruling elites, from *malikas*, or queens, to powerful advisors. Some ascended to rule in their own right; others rose as regents for incapacitated husbands or male successors yet too young for a throne. Some proved insightful administrators, courageous military commanders or both; others differed little from equally flawed male potentates who sowed the seeds of their own downfalls.

This six-part series presents some of the most notable historical female leaders of Muslim dynasties, empires and caliphates.

WE BEGIN IN BAGHDAD.

Right: The historian al-Masudi writes that on state occasions Zubayda “could scarcely walk under the weight of her jewelry and dresses.” She endowed more charitable works for pilgrims to Makkah and Madinah than any ruler of her era.



The story of Khayzuran is one of rags to riches, captivity to sovereignty. Born in the southwestern part of the Arabian Peninsula around the middle of the eighth century, a bit more than 100 years after the death of Prophet Muhammad, she was kidnapped by slave traders while still a child. Sometime between 758 and 765, she was sold in Makkah to none other than the founder of Baghdad, Abbasid Caliph al-Mansur, who gave her to his son and successor, al-Mahdi.

She bore al-Mahdi a daughter and two sons, both of whom became caliphs—one the renowned Harun al-Rashid. By the time of her death in 789, her annual income had reached 160 million dirhams, which was roughly half of the entire state revenue, according to the 10th-century historian al-Masudi. Her personal wealth made her “undoubtedly, next to [her son Caliph Harun al-Rashid], the richest person in the Moslem world of her day,” observes historian Nabia Abbott, whose *Two Queens of Baghdad: Mother and Wife of Harun al-Rashid* is a seminal work in Middle Eastern women’s studies.

Khayzuran’s path to political power, like that of many women in the long era predating today’s nation-states, was via the royal *haram*, or women’s quarters. A favorite of al-Mahdi, she enjoyed a level of trust that rivaled, and may have exceeded, that of Rita, al-Mahdi’s first wife and cousin whose origins could not have differed more from Khayzuran’s: Rita was a royal, the daughter of Abu Abbas Abdullah, founder of the Abbasid empire.

A brief statement in al-Tabari’s monumental, ninth-century *History of the Prophets and Kings* shows al-Mahdi’s regard for his first lady of the *haram*: “In this year [775] al-Mahdi manumitted his slave girl ... al-Khayzuran and married her.” At a time when caliphs were expected to marry fellow members of the aristocracy, elevating Khayzuran to queen was “a bold break with convention,” modern historian Hugh Kennedy has observed.

And not unsurprisingly, the medieval Arab chronicles indicate that this led to court intrigue: The high-born ladies of the Abbasid court sneered at Khayzuran’s presence, yet she is said to have deflected their snobbery with cordial grace. Though history provides no evidence of direct tension between Rita and Khayzuran, the fact that the latter’s sons—Musa al-Hadi and Harun al-Rashid—were named as heirs to the caliphate while the former’s were never even considered indicates Rita’s “tacit recognition of the futility of challenging” Khayzuran, Abbot speculates.

Described as “slender and graceful as a reed,” according to Abbott (*khayzuran* is Arabic for “reed”), she hardly relied on beauty alone for her success. She was

intelligent, freely quoted poetry and studied the Qur’an, *hadith* (sayings of Prophet Muhammad) and law at the feet of leading scholars.

She is also said to have enjoyed practical jokes and shared al-Mahdi’s sense of humor, such as privately mocking Caliph al-Mansur’s flashes of temper. Yet when it came to governing, she was all business: “At the opening of [her first son al-Hadi’s] caliphate, al-Khayzuran used to exercise her authority over him in all his affairs without consulting him at all ... assuming sole control over matters of ordaining and forbidding, just as she had done previously with his father,” al-Tabari remarks on al-Hadi’s accession upon al-Mahdi’s death in 785.

The new caliph chafed at his mother’s dominance. Perhaps it was because al-Hadi didn’t live up to Khayzuran’s expectations, or perhaps he resented her long-standing preference for his younger brother, Harun al-Rashid. The discord did not last long: Al-Hadi died the following year. (Rumors circulated that Khayzuran had

him poisoned, but there is no authoritative account.) Harun al-Rashid became caliph of an empire from Morocco to Persia and ushered in the zenith of the Abbasid era. When his mother died in 789, the caliph displayed the depths of his grief and devotion by helping to shoulder her bier, barefoot, through the mud.

The histories do not detail Khayzuran’s political achievements, but coins were struck in her name, palaces were named for her, and the cemetery in which subsequent Abbasid rulers were laid to rest also carried her name, all testifying not only to status but also to a civic largesse.

Notably, she passed on this sense of civic duty to Amat al-Aziz, known to history by the unflattering if sonorous name Zubayda.

Zubayda was both Khayzuran’s niece and, after Zubayda’s marriage to Harun al-Rashid, her daughter-in-law. It was her grandfather, al-Mansur, who no doubt intended affection in nicknaming her Zubayda (which means “Little Butter Ball”) “on account of her plumpness” as a child, according to 13th-century biographer Ibn Khalikhan.

As an adult, the chronicler goes on to say, her “charity was ample, her conduct virtuous.” He adds that in her chambers, a hundred slave girls tasked with memorizing the Qur’an recited one-tenth of it daily, “so that her palace resounded with a continual humming like that of bees.”

Born into the lap of the extreme luxury of the Abbasid Empire at its zenith, Zubayda quickly

*The story of
Khayzuran is one
of rags to riches,
but Zubayda was
born into nearly
limitless luxury.*



This included the construction of an aqueduct from the spring of Hunayn, 95 kilometers to the east, as well as the famed “Spring of Zubayda” on the plain of Arafat, one of the ritual locations on the Hajj. When her engineers cautioned her about the expense, she replied that she was determined to carry out the work “were every stroke of a pickax to cost a dinar,” according to Ibn Khalikhan.

Beyond Makkah, she financed one of the greatest public-works projects of the era: construction of a 1,500-kilometer *darb* (road) from Kufa, south of Baghdad, all the way to Makkah, complete with water stations at regular intervals and hilltop fire beacons to guide travelers at night. Her contemporary historian al-Azraqi declares that “people of Makkah and the pilgrims owe their very life to [Zubayda] next to God,” and pilgrim cries of “God bless Zubayda” echoed for generations along the route that is still called Darb Zubayda. (It fell into disuse when pilgrims opted for rail, auto and air travel over camel caravans.)

In a personally painful decision,

in 813 Zubayda put the interests of the state ahead of her own flesh and blood by ultimately endorsing her stepson al-Ma'mun's accession to caliph when her own son, Caliph al-Amin, became intolerably corrupt. Her instincts were on the mark, and the cultured al-Ma'mun proved to be a just and erudite ruler who founded Baghdad's famed think tank, *bayt al-hikma* (house of wisdom), which became a center for the translation into Arabic of Greek, Roman and other classical texts that not only informed the Abbasid intellectual milieu, but also later became foundations of the European Renaissance.

Zubayda died in 831, yet her reputation as a woman of influence lived on in both history and literature. Her husband, Harun al-Rashid, became the protagonist caliph in the European collection of *alf layla wa layla* (*1001 Nights*), and it was Zubayda who became the real-life basis for the very fictional Scheherazade. ☹

developed extravagant tastes. According to al-Zubayr's 11th-century *Book of Gifts and Rarities*—a sort of “Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous” of its day—the cost of her wedding, “the likes of which had never ... been seen in [Islamic] times,” ran to 50 million dinars. (For comparison, the annual cost of living for an average family in Baghdad was about 240 dinars.) The event featured a waistcoat encrusted with rubies and pearls “whose value could not be assessed” for the bride; guests received gifts of gold dinars in silver bowls and silver dinars in golden bowls.

A trendsetter of high style, Zubayda was “the first to introduce the fashion for slippers embroidered with precious stones and for candles made of ambergris—fashions which spread to the public,” according to al-Masudi. On state occasions, it was said, she “could scarcely walk under the weight of her jewelry and dresses,” and she had to be propped up by servants.

Yet she spent no less lavishly on public works, to her enduring renown. She made at least five pilgrimages to Makkah, as it was on her fifth, in 805, that she was distressed to see that drought had devastated the populace and reduced the sacred well of Zamzam to a mere trickle. She ordered that the well be deepened, and she spent nearly 2 million dinars improving the water supply of Makkah and the surrounding province.

Tom Verde (tomverde.pressfolios.com) is a freelance writer from Connecticut and a regular contributor to *AramcoWorld*. **Leonor Solans** is an artist living in Granada, Spain. Art direction for the “Malikas” series: Ana Carreño Leyva; calligraphy: Soraya Syed; logo graphics: Mukhtar Sanders (www.inspiraldesign.com).



Related articles at www.aramcoworld.com.

Darb Zubayda: M/A 11, J/F 04

Abbasid science: M/J 07



EVENTS & EXHIBITIONS

For an expanded list of selected events and exhibitions, go to aramcoworld.com

CURRENT

CURRENT JANUARY

Orientalist Glass Art: *Masterpieces from the Museum of J&L Lobmeyr, Vienna* features nearly 90 items of glass art made over some 200 years by Austria's foremost glass manufacturers. Part of the private collection of the Lobmeyr family, a number of the artifacts on display have not been shown since the 19th century. Included are pieces inspired by the Islamic art traditions of Mamluk Egypt and Syria, Nasrid Spain, Ottoman Turkey and Mughal India, culminating in the presentation of a chandelier designed for the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah. **Sharjah** Museum of Islamic Civilization, **UAE**, through January 16.

Luxury in the Golden Age. With 170 objects from China, Japan, India and Batavia, this exhibition tells the story of the excitement created by the Asian treasures that were shipped to Holland during the Golden Age. Lacquer works, ivory, silver, silk, ebony, jewelry and enormous quantities of porcelain poured into Amsterdam to enrich the interiors of the increasingly prosperous Dutch bourgeoisie. *Luxury in the Golden Age* also presents many 17th-century paintings: still lifes and portraits of citizens who had themselves been painted among their newly acquired items of luxury. **Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam**, through January 17.

2050: A Brief History of the Future uses more than 70 contemporary works, from paintings and sculptures to photos, videos, installations and digital art, to question the future up to 2050. The exhibition addresses major societal themes such as over-consumption, global conflicts, scarcity of natural resources, social and economic inequality and the mutation of the human being. However, these complex topics are challenged by positive and constructive visions, sometimes even humor. Belgian and international artists invite viewers to rethink the future based on a subjective reading of the past and translated by artistic creations from previous millennia, inspired by Jacques Attali's book *A Brief History of the Future*. The Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, **Brussels**, through January 24.

Ancient Egypt Transformed: *The Middle Kingdom.* The reunification of ancient Egypt achieved by Nebhepetre Mentuhotep II—the first pharaoh of the Middle Kingdom—was followed

by a great cultural flowering that lasted nearly 400 years. During the Middle Kingdom (mid-Dynasty 11-Dynasty 13, around 2030-1650 BCE), artistic, cultural, religious and political traditions first conceived and instituted during the Old Kingdom were revived and reimagined. This transformational era is represented through 230 objects and groups in this major international exhibition. Fashioned with great subtlety and sensitivity, and ranging in size from monumental stone sculptures to delicate examples of jewelry, the works of art are drawn from the museum's preeminent collection and 37 others in North America and Europe. Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York**, through January 24.

How Islamic Art Came to Berlin:

The Museum Director and Collector Friedrich Sarre. This year the Berlin Museum of Islamic Art celebrates the 150th birthday of Friedrich Sarre, the first director of the museum and one of the most important founding fathers of the field of Islamic studies. His major acquisitions such as the famous Aleppo room and the bequest of his own collection form the core of the museum holdings until today and are responsible for the museum's worldwide reputation. Focusing on Sarre as a museum expert and collector in the context of the time, the exhibit comprises his historical travel photographs, acquisitions and donations, including his collection of Islamic paintings and calligraphy. Pergamonmuseum, **Berlin**, through January 24.

Arts of Islamic Lands:

Selections from the al-Sabah Collection, Kuwait. This newly expanded installation more than triples the display to some 250 works that present an impressive and comprehensive spectrum of Islamic art. Objects from North Africa, the Middle East, Turkey, India, the Iberian Peninsula and Central Asia from the eighth to 18th centuries demonstrate the development of techniques, craftsmanship and esthetics in Islamic visual culture. Among the highlights are a 16th-century Ottoman prayer carpet; a glass mosque lamp from 14th-century Cairo; an extraordinary earthenware bowl from ninth-century Iraq that transcends its humble function; early gold jewelry from Afghanistan and Syria; and opulent Mughal jewelry crafted in the refined *kundan* technique. Museum of Fine Arts, **Houston**, through January 30.

Images of Women in 19th-Century

Iran demonstrates the centrality of women in the artistic expression of Iran and how they continue to inspire contemporary artists. The most popular representations of the Qajar era (1794-1925) have been of male sovereigns, whose life-size portraits exaggerate masculinity to depict power. Yet this era also saw a period of artistic modernization in Iran, particularly in paintings and photography in which depictions of women became essential elements of the scenes. Showcasing women at the court and in private, alongside images of female musicians and aristocratic women, this exhibition explores rarely told narratives of the Qajar artistic tradition. Museum of Islamic Art, **Doha, Qatar**, through January 30.

Europalia Arts Festival:

Turkey. Turkey is the invited country for the 25th Europalia Arts Festival, which will feature a rich and extensive program of events, including two major exhibitions hosted by the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels: *Anatolia: Home of Eternity and Imagine Istanbul*, which explore the various transformations of this constantly evolving capital city. Various locations, **Brussels**, through January 31.

Pearls on a String:

Art and Biography in the Islamic World presents the arts of Islamic cultures from the points of view of authors and artists from historical Muslim societies. The exhibition focuses on specific people and relationships among cultural tastemakers threaded together "as pearls on a string," a Persian metaphor for human connectedness—especially among painters, calligraphers, poets and their patrons. It highlights the exceptional art of the Islamic manuscript and underscores the book's unique ability to relate narratives about individuals. A series of vignettes introduces the visitor to the art inextricably linked to the men and women who shaped the Islamic past and contribute to its future. Walters Art Museum, **Baltimore**, through January 31. Opens as **Pearls on a String: Artists, Patrons and Poets at the Great Islamic Courts**, Asian Art Museum, **San Francisco**, February 6 through May 8.

Shoes: *Pleasure and Pain* looks at the extremes of footwear from around the globe, presenting around 200 pairs of shoes ranging from a sandal decorated in pure gold leaf originating from ancient Egypt to the most elaborate designs by contemporary makers. V&A, **London**, through January 31.



WALID RAAD

The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) presents the first comprehensive US survey of the Lebanese-American artist Walid Raad, whose work in the last 25 years investigates the ways in which we represent, remember and make sense of history. The exhibition brings together more than 20 bodies of work across various media—including photography, video, sculpture and performance—identifying Raad as a pivotal figure in contemporary art. Dedicated to exploring the veracity of archives and photographic documents in the public realm, the role of memory and narrative within discourses of conflict, and the construction of histories of art in the Arab world, Raad’s work is informed by his upbringing in Lebanon during the 1975-1990 civil war, and by the socioeconomic and military policies that have shaped the Middle East in the past few decades. The exhibition focuses on two of the artist’s long-term projects: *The Atlas Group* (1989–2004) and *Scratching on things I could disavow* (2007–ongoing). MoMA, New York, through January 31.



From the series *Scratching on things I could disavow*: “Walkthrough” by Walid Raad. 2015.

reach its limit, and where? And afterward, what tokens will we be left with: a hesitant embrace, a scar, a burst of light? Our stories weave in and out of these visions. With the rise of factories, investors and development, the landscape

radically in terms of both style and social significance in a range of cultural and historical contexts. Neues Museum, Berlin, through February 28.

Sandow Birk: *American Quran*. For more than 20 years, southern California painter Sandow Birk (b. 1962) has developed a specialty of applying the vision and scope of history painting to the examination of issues that possess contemporary relevance. In this series, Birk hand-transcribes and illustrates every verse of the holy book of Islam. Inspired by an intensive travel in the Islamic regions of the world and informed by extensive research in collections of Islamic art and manuscripts, Birk’s undertaking emerges from his conviction that the Qur’an remains a text that was originally intended as a universal message to all humankind. His challenge has been to illustrate it in a manner that would emphasize how the Qur’an might be more meaningful to Western audiences. More than 300 individual gouache paintings are presented, with each containing text rendered in script based on Los Angeles graffiti. Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, California, through February.

CURRENT MARCH

Egyptian Magic is a fascinating journey into the world of magic in ancient Egypt. Learn how, in a secret world where the gods and the dead are intrinsically linked to mankind, magic can influence destinies. The exhibition presents pieces from the largest collections in the world. Pro-

CURRENT FEBRUARY

Reimagining the Illusion: *Parastou Forouhar*. Parastou Forouhar left her native Iran to study in Offenbach, Germany, due to the withdrawal of freedoms that she enjoyed in the years following the Iranian revolution. Forouhar’s work examines the power structures within authoritarian political systems, with particular attention to how they block oppositional discourse from entering the public sphere. Through her work, she processes very real experiences of loss, pain and state-sanctioned violence through animations, wallpapers, flipbooks and drawings. Pi Artworks, London, through February 6.

Egypt: *Faith after the Pharaohs* begins in 30 CE, when Egypt became a province of the Roman Empire after the death of Cleopatra and Mark Antony, and continues until 1171 CE, when the rule of the Fatimid dynasty came to an end. The remarkable objects in the exhibition have been uniquely preserved in Egypt’s arid climate and many have never been on display before. Their survival provides unparalleled access to the

lives of individuals and communities, and they tell a rich and complex story of influences, long periods of peaceful coexistence and intermittent tension and violence among Jews, Christians and Muslims. The British Museum, London, through February 7.

Creative Dissent: *Arts of the Arab World Uprisings* is an immersive, multimedia exhibition capturing the creative vitality of the continually evolving uprisings commonly referred to as the Arab Spring. Freedom of speech merges with artistic expression to capture the anger, elation, frustration and hope of these revolutions through call-and-response chants, graffiti, video, blog postings, cartoons, music, photography, posters and even puppetry. Arab American National Museum, Dearborn, Michigan, through February 9.

Transitions: *A New Photography from Bangladesh* teeters on moments of change, brought by forces that both reach in and push out. Memories checker our thoughts; we wonder what decisions will be carved into the borders that frame our histories and futures. What hangs in the balance, what will

of Bangladesh is changing. The spotlight has been turned on, and the people are trying to figure out what it means. This exhibition features nine Bangladeshi photographers whose works reflect shifting economies and changing lands, aiming to collect and exhibit photography not only as art, but also as ideas about Bangladesh. The photos on display navigate the stories of the country’s people, landscapes and position in the world. Most importantly, the works provide viewers with perspectives of artists who are connected to the places they are capturing. The Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York, through February 14.

Beards: *Between Nature and Razor*. Whether goatees, full beards or moustaches, humans have been depicting beards of all shapes and sizes throughout 5,000 years of visual culture. Beards have been worn to convey qualities such as wisdom, power and social, religious or political allegiance in a wide range of cultural contexts: from ancient Egypt, the ancient Near East and Old Europe to the classical civilizations of the Mediterranean—right through to present-day Europe. This exhibition examines the way beards have changed



EVENTS & EXHIBITIONS

duced in collaboration with Stichting Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, with the contribution of the Louvre Museum. Musée de la civilisation, **Quebec City**, through March 3.

Ed-Dur ... Glimpse into Civilization: *Collections from Umm Al Quwain Museum* is an outcome of a collaboration between the Sharjah Museums Department, represented by the Sharjah Archaeology Museum, and the Umm Al Quwain Antiquities and Heritage Department about an important period in a history of two contemporary locations: Maliha and Ed-Dur. The exhibit traces the inland areas' archeological relationship with the coastal areas, which continued for centuries and established the region's important role in building human civilization and cemented its status as the fundamental crossroads for communications and as a commercial mediator between East and West since 3000 BCE. **Sharjah** Archaeology Museum, **UAE**, through March 26.

Abbas Kiarostami: *Doors without Keys*. Prepare yourself for a journey through memory and imagination

with this remarkable installation by an acclaimed Iranian photographer, poet and filmmaker. Walls and doors are both boundaries and barriers. Yet doors offer hope of entry or escape—hope for connection, for finding another world, for finding freedom. Photographed over two decades in Iran, Italy, France and Morocco, the weathered doors of this world premiere have been witnesses to the many lives lived behind, through and before them. Presented at life size on canvas, they are works of art that transcend their origins of time and place. This is the first solo artist exhibition at the Aga Khan Museum, **Toronto**, through March 27.

Bejeweled Treasures: *The Al Thani Collection*. Spectacular objects drawn from a single private collection explore the broad themes of tradition and modernity in Indian jewelry. Highlights include Mughal jades, a rare jeweled-gold finial from the throne of Tipu Sultan (r. 1782-1799) and pieces that reveal the dramatic changes that took place in Indian jewelry design during the early 20th century. The exhibition examines the influence that India had on avant-garde European jewelry made by Cartier

and other leading houses and concludes with contemporary pieces made by JAR and Bhagat. Part of the India Festival at the v&a, **London**, through March 28.

CURRENT MAY

Life and Sole: *Footwear from the Islamic World* is a display of footwear and related objects that reveals some of the past and present beliefs, customs, pastimes and traditions across the Islamic world. Around 25 pairs of shoes, slippers, sandals, clogs and boots from North Africa, the Middle East, Turkey, Central Asia and South Asia are being shown together for the first time. Dating from 1800 onwards, they demonstrate the important role footwear has always played in the social and cultural life of people living in these regions. Together, these shoes express identities, beliefs, traditions and lifestyles of people from around the Islamic world. They represent the significance of footwear in Islamic social and cultural life and the impact of international trade and politics on footwear fashions. The British Museum, **London**, through May 15.

Showing Off: *Identity and Display in Asian Costume*. Fashion is

a form of language. What we wear broadcasts critical information about us and serves as a visible indicator of social rank, profession, ethnicity or status. This exhibition of Asian textiles and other works from the collection of the Cantor Arts Center (CAC) demonstrates how costume and objects of personal adornment have functioned as a method of identification and display from the late 18th century until today. Ranging from Qing court costumes to Indonesian textiles, the selection on view spotlights visual symbols while showcasing rarely displayed garments. CAC, **Stanford University, California**, through May 23.

Old Patterns, New Order: *Socialist Realism in Central Asia*. Under Soviet rule, artists across Central Asia created images that embraced modernity and idealized the past. This exhibition examines the socialist-realist art movement in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and other areas of Central Asia, pairing 20th-century paintings with examples of the traditional textiles they depict. The show is organized in partnership with George Washington University's Central Asian program. The George Washington University Museum, **Washington, D.C.**, through May 29.



MAKING AFRICA sheds new light on Africa through the work of 120 contemporary artists and designers who illustrate how design accompanies and drives political, economic, social, cultural and technological change on the continent. The exhibition focuses on a new generation of African entrepreneurs, thinkers and designers—"digital natives" who offer the world a new perspective on their continent. Their works are tangible responses to the question of what 21st-century design can and should achieve, establishing connections between the digital revolution and our analogue existence, radically rethinking materials, concentrating on society rather than the market and making bold statements about the future. Guggenheim Museum **Bilbao, Spain**, through February 21.

"Mame," 2014. From the series The Studio of Vanities by Omar Victor Diop. Pigment inkjet printing on Harman by Hahnemüle paper, 93 x 93 cm.



CURRENT JULY AND LATER

Senses of Time: *Video and Film-based Works of Africa* features five African artists exploring how time is experienced—and produced—by the body. Bodies climb, dance and dissolve in six works of art. Characters repeat, resist or reverse any expectation that time must move relentlessly forward. *Senses of Time* invites viewers to contemplate tensions between ritual and technological time, and personal and political time, through pacing, sequencing, looping, layering and mirroring. **Los Angeles** County Museum of Art, through January 2, 2017.

Gold and the Gods: *Jewels of Ancient Nubia* draws upon the world-class collection of jewelry from ancient Nubia (located in what is now Sudan), accumulated by the museum that holds the most comprehensive collection outside Khartoum. The exhibit focuses on excavated ornaments from an early 20th-century expedition by the Museum of Fine Arts (MFA), Boston and Harvard University. Dating from 1700 BCE to 300 CE, they include both uniquely Nubian works and foreign imports prized for their materials, craftsmanship, symbolism and rarity. **MFA, Boston**, through May 14, 2017.

COMING

COMING JANUARY

Sand In My Eyes: *Sudanese Moments* by Enikö Nagy. Photographer and

author Enikö Nagy has spent several years collecting everyday moments—in photography and spoken word—from more than 45 tribes and ethnic groups across 30,000 kilometers of Sudan in some of the hardest-to-access regions of the world to produce the English-Arabic bilingual poetic picture book *Sand in My Eyes: Sudanese Moments*, from which this exhibition is drawn. Presenting very different images to those one might expect from Sudan, this exhibition is taken from the over 26,000 photos and 2,500 pieces of oral proverbs, legends, myths, poetry and songs Enikö has collected. Reclaiming the narrative about Sudan, the epic journey provides an intimate look into a people and the human experience. The Brunei Gallery, **London**, January 15 through March 19.

Suspended Accounts: *Young Artist of the Year Award 2014 (YAYA14)*. For the first time in the UK, The Mosaic Rooms present a selection of work from the A.M. Qattan Foundations YAYA14. The biennial award—organized by the foundation’s Culture and Arts Programme in the Occupied West Bank city of Ramallah—is open to young artists under age 30 of Palestinian descent anywhere in the world. The show will include work by Bashar Khalaf and Noor Abu Arafah, who won the first and second prizes, respectively. Works by them and others examine the theme of “Archives Lived and Shared.” Mosaic Rooms, **London**, January 15 through February 27.

do it **دو إيت**. Co-curated by Sharjah Art Foundation Director Hoor Al Qasimi and Serpentine Gallery Co-director Hans Ulrich Obrist, this exhibition is a new iteration of the ongoing *do it* publication and exhibition project originally founded and curated by Obrist in 1993. The exhibition is interactive featuring artwork instructions by artists from 10 countries, some of which have been previously created and others that visitors can use to create artworks of their own. Everyone is invited to join in the workshops, activities and performances. Bait Al Shamsi, **Sharjah, UAE**, January 23 through April 23.

Islamic Art Now, Part 2. In recent years, the parameters of Islamic art have expanded to include contemporary works by artists from, or with roots in, the Middle East. Drawing inspiration from their own cultural traditions, these artists use techniques and incorporate imagery and ideas from earlier periods. As the second of a two-part program, this exhibition features 29 works by artists from Iran, the Arab World and Azerbaijan. **Los Angeles** Museum of Modern Art, opening January 24.

COMING FEBRUARY

Maria Hassabi: *PLASTIC* is a commissioned performance and exhibition that the artist describes as a live installation that explores the tension between stillness and sustained movement. Occupying the staircase leading from

the ground floor into the museum’s Marron Atrium, the atrium itself and the staircase between the fourth- and fifth-floor Painting and Sculpture Galleries, *PLASTIC* features dancers moving at a glacial pace in an extended choreographed loop, oscillating between motion and stillness. Through the use of prolonged duration, *PLASTIC* explores the blurred lines between still image, sculptural object and video loop, and it creates an iconic tableau of a body simultaneously resting, falling and in a state of transition. **MoMA, New York**, February 21 through March 20.

COMING MARCH

Art Dubai is an international fair with its roots in the Middle East and South Asia. Known as a particularly global and innovative event, Art Dubai features three gallery programs—Contemporary, Modern and Marker—offering audiences the opportunity to discover the work of more than 500 artists through histories and geographies. **Dubai, UAE**, March 16-19.

Please reconfirm dates and times before traveling. Most listings have further information available online and at aramcoworld.com. Readers are welcome to submit information for possible inclusion.

See more upcoming events at aramcoworld.com

AramcoWorld is published bimonthly in print, web and tablet/mobile editions. Two-year (12-issue), renewable subscriptions to the print edition are available without charge to a limited number of readers worldwide. Tablet/mobile editions are available using the AramcoWorld app, free via Apple or Google app stores.



To subscribe to the print edition: For fastest service, go to www.aramcoworld.com and click “FREE subscription.” You may also fax a signed and dated request to +1-713-432-5536, or subscribe by postal mail using either the card bound into the magazine or your own signed and dated request sent to *AramcoWorld*, Box 469008, Escondido, California 92046-9008, USA.

If requesting a **multiple-copy subscription** for a class, specify the number of copies desired and the duration of the class.

For **residents of Saudi Arabia**, all requests for subscriptions must be sent by postal mail to Public Relations, Saudi Aramco, Box 5000, Dhahran 31311, Saudi Arabia.

Change of address: For fastest service, go to www.aramcoworld.com and click “Change of Address.” You may also fax or mail to the addresses above. Be sure to include your subscriber code, or an address label from a recent issue, or your complete old address.

Back issues, from 1960 onward, can be read in full online and downloaded from www.aramcoworld.com. Printed copies are available for issues less than five years old, as long as supplies last. Request them by e-mail to

saworld@aramcoservices.com, by fax to +1-713-432-5536, or by postal mail to Special Requests, *AramcoWorld*, Box 2106, Houston, Texas 77252-2106, USA. Bulk copies of issues less than five years old will be provided when available, without charge, for use in classrooms, workshops, study tours, lectures or other non-profit educational events.

Article Proposals: We welcome freelance proposals that follow our Guidelines for Contributors. These are online, under “About Us.”

Permissions:

Texts of articles may be reprinted without specific permission provided that the text be neither edited nor abridged, that the magazine and author be credited, and that a copy of the reprinted article, or a link to it, is provided to the editors.

Photographs and illustrations: Much of our photo archive is available at www.photoarchive.saudiaramcoworld.com. Image licensing for approved uses is royalty-free.

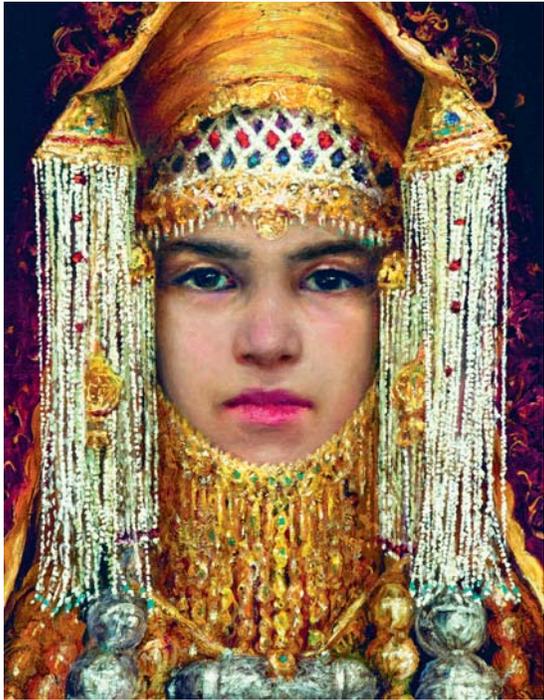
No junk, ever: Contact us with confidence. You will receive no unsolicited marketing email or postal mail as a result of your subscription or inquiry.

AramcoWorld (ISSN 1530-5821) is published bimonthly by the Aramco Services Company, 9009 West Loop South, Houston, Texas 77096-1799, USA.

Copyright © 2016 by Aramco Services Company. Volume 67, Number 1. Periodicals postage paid at Houston, Texas and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to AramcoWorld, Box 2106, Houston, Texas 77252-2106.

AramcoWorld



aramcoworld.com