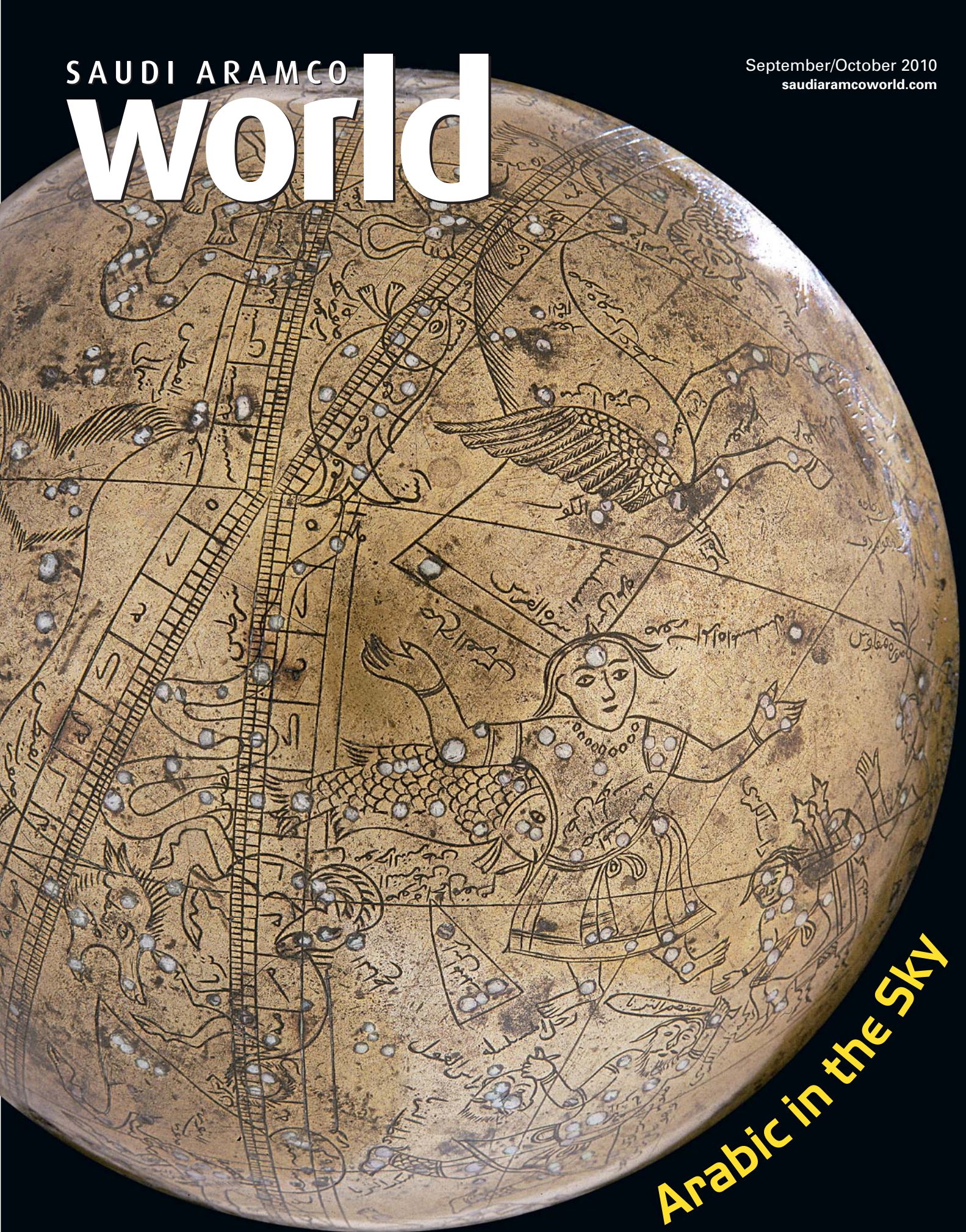


SAUDI ARAMCO

# world

September/October 2010  
saudiaramcoworld.com



Arabic in the Sky



**Cover**



This brass globe, engraved with coordinate lines and constellation figures identified in Arabic, is both a map of the stars—represented by inlaid silver dots—and a tool for astronomical calculations. It is hollow but seamless, cast in one piece, a feat modern technology

cannot duplicate. Now in the Smithsonian Institution, the globe was made in northwestern India, probably Lahore, in 1630. Photograph: Eric Long / Smithsonian

**Publisher**

Aramco Services Company  
9009 West Loop South  
Houston, Texas 77096, USA

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Chief Executive Officer**

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**Public Affairs**  
Mae S. Mozaini

**ISSN**

1530-5821

**Editor**

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**Circulation**

Edna Catchings

**Design and Production**

Herring Design

**Printed in the USA**

RR Donnelley/Wetmore

**Address editorial  
correspondence to:**

The Editor  
Saudi Aramco World  
Post Office Box 2106  
Houston, Texas  
77252-2106 USA

**Back Cover**



In San Francisco, near the site of the first Hills Bros coffee factory, a bronze statue by Spero Anargyros commemorates the "Arab" who appeared on the company's products for some 90 years. Photograph: Jonathan Friedlander.

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



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## Sisterhood of Hope

Interview by  
Nathalie Handal

Photographed by  
Alexandra Avakian  
Contact Press Images

"Strong women lead to strong nations," says Zainab Salbi, founder and CEO of Women for Women International, which since 1993 has helped women and families in eight nations recover from the traumas of war.



## 6 Caravan Leaders and Saharan Scholars: The Women of Tichit

Written by Ghislaine Lydon

Photographed by Arita Baaijens

In one of the most isolated towns in the West African nation of Mauritania, generations of women helped build family businesses with their investments in and their management of the once-great trans-Saharan caravan trade. Some also traveled with the caravans—on foot. Today, as the caravans disappear, the women of Tichit remember.



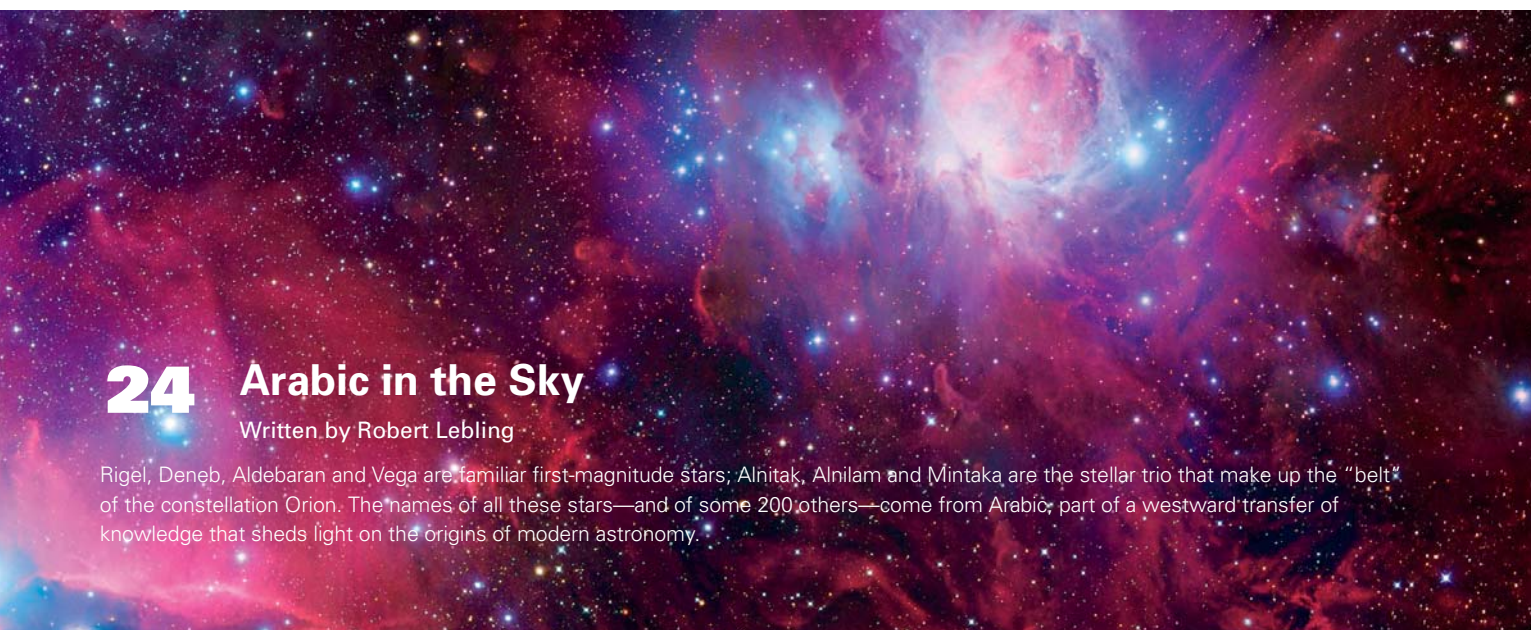




## 16 Alexandria the Crossroads

Written by Edward Lewis

The great library burned and the world-wonder lighthouse fell, and amid today's urban bustle, there are few signs of Alexandria's former importance in the Mediterranean world. Yet the past is there, for those who search it out, and in the polyglot present, Alexandria is still a cultural crossroads.



## 24 Arabic in the Sky

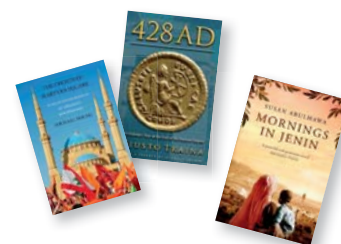
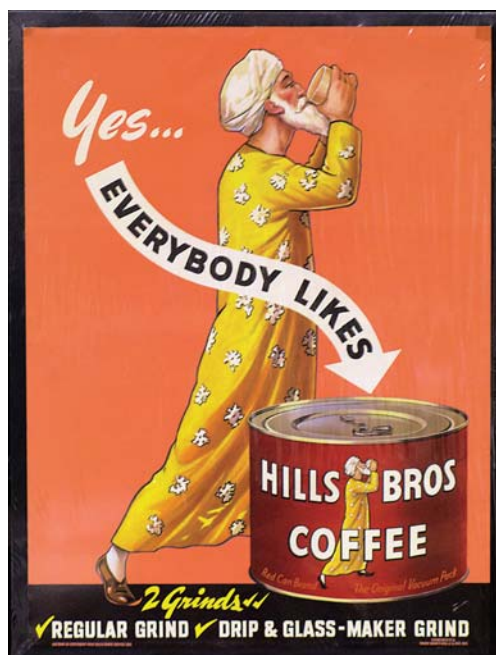
Written by Robert Lebling

Rigel, Deneb, Aldebaran and Vega are familiar first-magnitude stars; Alnitak, Alnilam and Mintaka are the stellar trio that make up the "belt" of the constellation Orion. The names of all these stars—and of some 200 others—come from Arabic, part of a westward transfer of knowledge that sheds light on the origins of modern astronomy.

## 34 America's Arabian "Cuppa Joe"

Written by Jonathan Friedlander

Although most coffee poured in the United States has always come from Latin America, us manufacturers have sold cup after cup with the help of fanciful images and names that infuse their brands with the mystique of a playfully imaginary, romanticized "Middle East."



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Written by Julie Weiss

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# Sisterhood of Hope

Interview by Nathalie Handal

Photographed by Alexandra Avakian

Contact Press Images

In eight of the world's most war-ravaged countries, Women for Women International has become a successful nonprofit organization by helping more than a quarter-million affected women and their family members rebuild their lives.

Founded in 1993 by Zainab Salbi and Amjad Atallah, Women for Women provides the education, means of self-expression and access to resources that help survivors of war regain their footing in their families and their communities. For her groundbreaking leadership, *Time* magazine named Salbi an "Innovator of the Month" in 2005, and in 2006 Women for Women became the first women's organization to receive the world's largest humanitarian prize, the Conrad N. Hilton award. Salbi herself has appeared on the "Oprah Winfrey Show" eight times; she blogs for *Marie Claire* magazine and *The Huffington Post*.

Salbi was born in Iraq to a family then connected to the dictator Saddam Hussein: Her father was Hussein's pilot. In 1990, as her family's relations with the regime deteriorated, her mother arranged for Zainab to escape Iraq through a three-month marriage of convenience in the US. In her 2005 memoir, *Between Two Worlds*, Zainab Salbi recounts her life growing up and the adult journeys that led her to found Women for Women. In 2006, she published *The Other Side of War: Women's Stories of Survival and Hope*. She holds degrees from George Mason University and the London School of Economics.

For our interview, poet and playwright Nathalie Handal spoke with Zainab at a recording studio in New York City. To listen, or to download their conversation, visit [www.saudiaramcoworld.com](http://www.saudiaramcoworld.com).

—The Editors



## Nathalie Handal :

In your memoir, *Between Two Worlds*, you write, "I created a whole new identity for myself as the founding president of a non-profit women's organization called Women for Women International, which supports women survivors of war." Has your identity changed since then?





Above: **Zainab Salbi**, cofounder and CEO of **Women for Women International**, listens near **Cerkse, Bosnia-Herzegovina**. At right is **Deborah Lloyd** of the design house **kate spade**, which helps market craftwork by **Bosnian women** in **WfWI** programs. Left: The headquarters of **Women for Women** is in **Washington, D.C.**

## *Zainab Salbi:*

My identity went through, I would say, probably three stages. Stage number one in Iraq: As I was growing up, I was always known as the pilot's daughter. My father was Saddam Hussein's pilot, and so I grew up wanting people to see who I am, but no one could see who I am. I remember in high school or in college, my classmates would sing over my earrings, you know, half joking that I would have bugs and recorders in my earrings. It was clear that I was never seen for who Zainab was. It was more who Zainab's father was.

When I came to America, I wanted to create a completely new

identity, which is: I am not going to tell anybody who I am, [I am going to] prove to myself and to those around me who I am, no longer who my associations are. So I spent my first 15 years in America establishing myself. I created Women for Women; I was living my truth. I was traveling around the world and encouraging women in war zones to break their silence and speak up and speak out, and [helping] them rebuild their lives. And that was a different identity.

It was also an incomplete identity. It almost was like I went to the opposite, the reverse, as I wanted to show who I am, but I never



showed who I am fully, because there was this background, this baggage out there, 20 years of baggage in Iraq. I was too shy and too embarrassed and, more importantly, too horrified—horrified that I would tell anybody that I knew Saddam Hussein. I literally believed that the minute I say it, people will no longer see *me*, and I still get emotional talking about it. I believed people will only see *his* face and not see what are *my* values, what I stand for, what I have accomplished, what are my dreams, what are my hopes.

It took me 10 years of working with women survivors of wars, and it was one of those women who I thought I was helping, a Congolese woman. Her name is Nabitu. She was 52 years old when I met her, and I remember that moment so well, because I had to drive for five hours from Congo to Rwanda, and I cried the whole time because I realized this woman had more courage than I did, [because I was] only showing my successful part, but not my vulnerable part. That's when I decided to not only write my memoir but really expose myself fully. This was me telling my full truth. It was me saying, "I can't help these women if I am not equal to them."

*NH.*  
*ZA.*

How has your vision changed along the way?

Back in 1993, I started the program in September with 33 women. I remember being in a bus in Croatia, [going] from one refugee camp to another and delivering aid to these 33 women. Seventeen years later, we have helped 243,000 women, impacted about a million people, [including] their children, we have sent \$79 million, and we are now working with about 65,000 women on a monthly basis, and have 10 country offices and 600 staff.

That makes me believe in the possibility of making a difference. I only started it. Really, this happened because there were 243,000 women from all over the world who chose to be part of this program. I just started an idea, and if that could happen from a refugee, or someone who had nothing in America, I really believe in the possibility of change.

We are helping people not because they are victims. "Come here if you want to stand on your feet!" I argue that refugees are the most eager to rebuild their lives because the memory of a stable life, no matter how poor or how rich they were, is very much alive.

Half of the knowledge is already there with the very people that I think I am trying to help. To give you an example, I was in Bosnia—Bosnia was the formation of Women for Women International, and the model that we do right now, so a lot of my early years were spent in Bosnia forming the program and the philosophy behind it. So I was in Bosnia, helping a woman start a chicken farm. I was asking her how many chickens do you want, the food they need, how much is a brown egg versus a white egg, and then I said, "How many eggs does a chicken give?" And she looks at me. I remember that look so vividly, because she didn't tell me, "Stupid!" but I felt it. She is like, "One egg! A chicken gives one egg!" [With] all my education, never, not once, did I remember learning that a chicken gives one egg a day. Out of all this business plan that I was trying to help her do, the most essential aspect of it was that a

chicken gives one egg a day. So I learned humility in the process. It's learning and listening, stepping back and adjusting. I want to help women *survivors* of wars, not only "victims." They *survived* that; they did not die, not spiritually, not physically. And how can we help them stand on their feet? Women thrive despite their circumstances, not



In Vogošća, Bosnia-Herzegovina, women join hands at the end of an educational course by Women for Women International that combined personal support, income-building opportunities and human rights education.

because of it, and when someone invests in them, they thrive so much more. So for me, it's simply the wisest investment. I learned humility, respect [for] their agency, respect [for] their desires to be good mothers by providing whatever they choose that the kids should have. Every single aspect of Women for Women really came from the very women I thought we were helping, but they ended up teaching me.

*NH.*  
*ZA.*

There is a global economic crisis. How is that affecting the lives of women?

In terms of the women that we serve, people are scared of it, because it impacts the whole idea of life and death, eating or not eating. Before the financial crisis, there was a food crisis. One of our biggest projects right now is about linking the food crisis with the fact that women are 70 percent of the farmers in the world, producing 66 percent of the food in the world, earning only 10 percent of the income, and owning less than two percent of the land. We cannot talk about the food crisis and the food in the world without really facing the reality, "the elephant in the room," that women are the majority of the farmers, not men. And women as farmers are disproportionately impacted by not having any rights in terms of farming policies, or owning land, or all of these things.

So marginalized people make up the majority of food producers,



and we have a shortage of food production. We can't fix that crisis without addressing the fact that women are the majority of the farmers in the world. So a lot of Women for Women's initiatives right now, from Rwanda to Sudan to Congo, and hopefully Iraq, are where we are asking governments—Afghanistan as well—to lease us land, 200 acres, 300 acres, for a long term, from 20 years to 90 years. We then find commercial buyers who are buying produce, and we want them to deal with us commercially. And then we teach women organic farming and distribute land [to] create cooperatives, where they control the land and sell produce commercially. So we are shifting women's farming techniques from just selling her bucket of tomatoes on the side of the street to actually selling commercially and thus earning double the per capita income in countries like Sudan, for example. The per capita income in southern Sudan is \$80; our women are earning \$160, sometimes up to \$200 a month.

**NH:** Your mother taught you how life should be lived. She arranged your marriage in order to get you out of Iraq, and when she lost her voice due to her illness, she wrote to you in her notebook while you were giving voice to women in the world and, eventually, writing your memoir. What did you discover in her silence?

**ZA:** I discovered that most women have their stories, and [most] women are silent about it. I discovered that my mother's silence was no different than my grandmother's, but more importantly, no different than most of the women I work with both in conflict areas but, frankly, in America as well, in Europe. In the process, I learned that resistance and resilience and courage come in small acts, not in grandiose acts. I realized, yes, there is Gandhi and there's Mandela, but there are a lot more courageous people. It's just their acts are not in big grandiose revolution-making, [but in] small acts of breaking the silence or doing something that would change their children's lives. I would say that was definitely the case with my mother and my father.

I grew up with my mother telling me that I always have to be strong, that I always have to be independent, that I should always laugh and celebrate my life, and I should never cry. And this was not a neutral tone. This was a very passionate tone. From when she saw me as a kid with my schoolmates, if I was shy, she would be upset at me. To a teenager, she would tell me, you have got to be independent and you have got to be strong. These things, it was like my mother tattooing these concepts on my brain.

**NH:** You grew up very much with both western and eastern traditions. Tell me a little bit about how your definition of culture has changed.

**ZA:** I don't believe culture is a set value. I think culture is a mobile concept that gets adjusted and adapted and molded in different ways, depending on the circumstances. I believe if you look at the concepts of cultures, in many, many ways they all have to do with systems of life, and the systems change. They change to adapt to the new circumstances.

**NH:** You quote [a *hadith*, or saying, of] the Prophet Muhammad, "Home is where you are heading." Where are you heading?

**ZA:** I am someone who has navigated two worlds. My work and my passion, when I am fully alive, is where I am in Congo with the women. I may be in a slum or in a refugee camp that is horrible, but I know this is where I am supposed to be, with them. Or with Iraqi women, or with Rwandese or Afghan women, sitting on the floor with women from different countries. I am just speaking with them, talking about their stories, and seeing how we can navigate and conspire to get them jobs, stand on their feet, stop an abusive marriage, recruit her husband and improve their relationship, send the girl to school, all of that.

And then the other extreme of my life is I come to the States or to England, or wherever I am, and I meet with the most wealthy or well-known people in the world, from the media to the philanthropic [realm] to the business community. And I belong to neither, personally. I am somewhere in the middle. I realize in the process that I live in the bridge. I belong in neither world fully, but my blessing is to know how to live in both worlds, and to be at peace in both worlds.

I am a big Rumi fan, and the poem, my favorite, says, "Out beyond the worlds of right-doings and wrongdoings, there is a field. I shall meet you there. When the soul lies down in that grass, the world is too full to talk about. Ideas, language, even the phrase 'each other' no longer makes any sense." And I fully believe that. Culture, languages, ideas [are] when you are at home, and it's irrelevant which house, which country or which land it is. When you are at peace in your heart, all of these things become irrelevant, in my opinion.

So where am I heading? For the longest time, I was anxious: Where do I belong? Do I belong in Iraq or America—or Congo, which is my favorite country actually—or Afghanistan? Where, it doesn't matter. My job is to appeal for all women and men. Women's rights, and giving equality to women, is not only a women's issue. It's really good for everyone, so how do we make that field bigger? Because once you are in that field, you'll just know that the world is so beautiful. Despite its horror, it's also a beautiful place.

**NH:** In one word, how would you describe yourself today?

**ZA:** At peace.



**Nathalie Handal** ([www.nathaliehandal.com](http://www.nathaliehandal.com)) is a poet, playwright and writer. Her most recent books include *Love and Strange Horses* and a second poetry anthology, *Language for a New Century: Contemporary Poetry from the Middle East, Asia & Beyond*. She was a finalist for the 2009 Gift of Freedom award.



As a senior photographer at Contact Press Images, **Alexandra Avakian** ([www.alexandraavakian.com](http://www.alexandraavakian.com)) has photographed for leading world publications since the 1980's. Her book *Windows of the Soul: My Journeys in the Muslim World* was published in 2008 by National Geographic/Focal Point.




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



[www.saudiaramcoworld.com/201005/salbi.interview](http://www.saudiaramcoworld.com/201005/salbi.interview)





Among the seasoned  
caravanners of Tichit is  
Tahira mint Al-Khatabi,  
now in her 60's.



# CARAVAN LEADERS AND SAHARAN SCHOLARS

## THE WOMEN OF TICHIT

WRITTEN BY  
GHISLAINE LYDON

PHOTOGRAPHED BY  
ARITA BAAIJENS

Jarfuna was arriving. The whole town was alerted as soon as her caravan was spotted crossing the last dunes before the dry lakebed bordering Tichit, a once-prosperous oasis in the heart of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania. Everyone came down to greet the camel convoy with ululations, cries of excitement and praise to God for safeguarding the travelers. Such was the long-standing tradition among Saharan communities, where the departure and arrival of caravans, awaited with great anticipation, marked the high moments of the year, breaking the humdrum of everyday life.

Jarfuna, a Masna woman of slave descent, was the most celebrated female caravan leader in the town's memory. She was born at the end of the 19th century and died sometime in the 1960's. She was an entrepreneur with a reputation not only for overcoming great adversity in dealing with nature and people, but also for conducting successful commercial ventures: "Jarfuna led the caravan and she rented out her own camels," explains Shaykh Sid Ahmed Ould Baba Mine, the traditional chief of the Masna people of Tichit.

By Saharan standards, women like Jarfuna were exceptional, for Tichit is the only oasis in Mauritania—or elsewhere in the region—where women are known to have joined commercial camel convoys. Tichit women excelled in other ways as well. At one end of the social scale, women of slave origins joined caravans and engaged in trade on their own account. At the other end, women of higher status learned to read and write and traded through proxies—and some became genuine intellectuals.

Tichit lies at the foot of a long escarpment in southern Mauritania that is topped by a limestone plateau. For more than a millennium, its inhabitants thrived in a diverse and lush environment. In fact, it is here that archeologists have discovered the earliest evidence of African plant domestication outside North Africa and the Nile Valley, dating back 4000 years. Not surprisingly, scattered across the region north and east of Tichit are the stone ruins of permanent or semi-permanent dwellings of farmers, hunter-gatherers and herders—some comprising villages that had thousands of residents. These



From Tichit, a caravan laden mostly with salt sets out for Ayoun el-Atrouss, 10 days' walk distant.



communities preceded the rise, in the eighth century, of the Empire of Ghana, whose capital was located several hundred kilometers southeast of Tichit on the border with Mali.

While the history of Tichit remains debated and is largely unexplored by scholars, there is little doubt that its original inhabitants were ancestors of the Masna, a group of Soninké origin that owns majority rights over the extraction of salt from fields of *amersal*, a salty crust that forms after summertime rains on the lakebeds that surround Tichit; the salt is sold predominantly to herders as an animal-feed

supplement. Aside from the Masna, the two other dominant clans in Tichit are the Shurfa and the Awlad Billa, the latter a nomadic clan that settled here late in the 18th century. Until the beginning of the 20th century, Tichit was a commercial crossroads where caravans from far afield met to exchange regional and international goods. After the French colonial occupation finally reached the oasis in 1911, local caravans continued to supply the town's basic needs, but trans-Saharan traffic from Morocco came to an end. Today, Tichit remains one of Mauritania's remotest desert enclaves.

Tichit has a long tradition of excellence in Islamic learning and scholarship. As early as the 12th century, several Muslim scholars had settled in Tichit, among them Sharif 'Abd al-Mu'min. Today, there are some 20 large libraries in this Saharan oasis that contain manuscript collections bearing witness to the vibrant scholarly community that once flourished here—including the 800-manuscript library of the family of Limam Ould Abdel Mu'min, who heads the only museum of Tichit.

In recent years, the Fondation des Villes Anciennes, under the Mauritanian Ministry of Culture, has been working to

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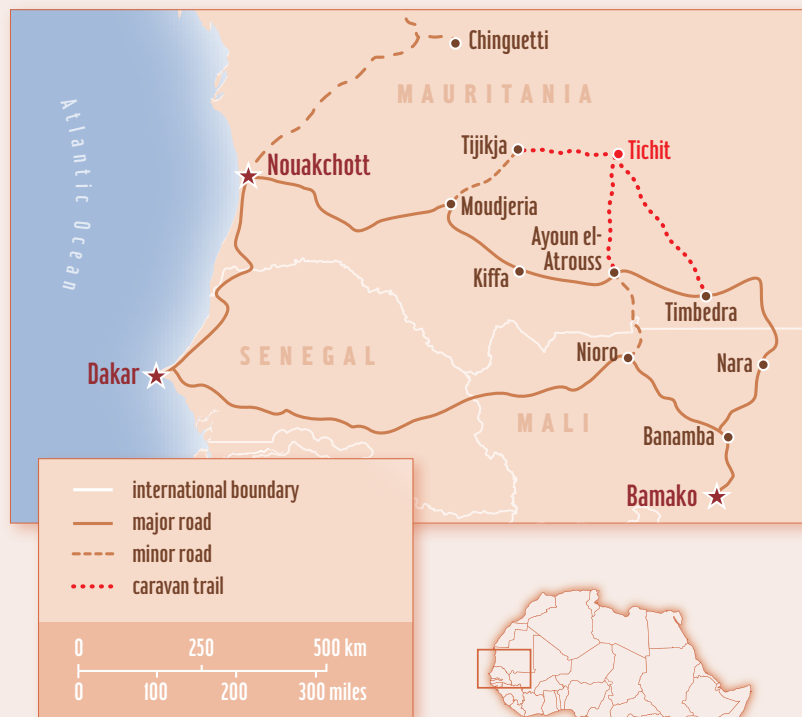
**For more than a thousand years, Tichit was a commercial crossroads. Today, it is one of Mauritania's remotest desert enclaves.**







Lying at the base of a limestone escarpment, accessible only by camels and off-road vehicles, Tichit was once so verdant that archeologists have found evidence of plant domestication going back some 4000 years.



On the ancient lakebeds near Tichit, both men and women work to break up the salty surface crust. They bag it, load it onto camels and market it to caravanners who in turn sell it to herders as an animal-feed supplement.





preserve manuscripts in Tichit and sister oasis towns. In Tichit, some families have taken matters into their own hands by creating the Club pour la Sauvegarde des Manuscrits de Tichit, which is cataloging six family-library collections. Mohamedou Ould El-Sharif Bouya, who directs the club, is a scholar and local historian, a role passed down to him by Daddah Ould Idda, the late custodian of Tichit's history. Much material assistance is needed to secure these Saharan treasures for posterity, he says.

Several Tichit women were known as

distinguished scholars, and their stories are recounted in the town's oral traditions. The mosque of Tichit, its façade decorated with the triangular niches typical of the town's stone buildings, has a special entrance for women that is notable for its beauty and size. Today women from all three of Tichit's clans still run primary schools in their homes where they teach the Qur'an and basic Arabic literacy to boys and girls.

Historically, many of Tichit's female intellectuals belonged to the Shurfa clan, which traces its lineage to the Prophet

Top: **Smoothing each fragment of shell on a granite slab and carefully hand-drilling it with up to five holes, the women of Tichit have made beads a specialty. They trade their beads throughout Mauritania and into Mali.** Above, left: **Making couscous, among the most traditional staple foods not only in Mauritania but throughout North and West Africa, is a women's culinary craft that can take up to two hours.** Above: **Yuma mint Bay weaves palm ribs and strips of leather to make a mat.** Opposite, lower: **Ornamental leatherwork adorns what will become a *usaada*, or cushion. In the past, women used the same skills to decorate the leather bindings for manuscripts that are preserved in Tichit's libraries.**



Muhammad. Like their male counterparts, they memorized the Qur'an to earn the respectful title of *hafidhat*, and some of their writings are preserved in the Club pour la Sauvegarde des Manuscrits. The earliest example is A'ishatu mint al-Faqih Abu Bakir ibn al-Amin ibn al-Sha' al-Muslimi, who lived in the 18th century. It is said that she once traded 70 camels for a single manuscript: Ibn Hajjar's collection of *hadith*, or sayings of the Prophet. Another example is Al-Hasniya mint Fadil al-Sharif, a 19th-century scholar. She married another scholar with whom she had four sons, all of whom became scholars themselves. When she died, numerous praise songs and poems were written in her honor. Several of them have been published in *Dala al-Adib*, an anthology of Saharan literature by Jamal Ould Al-Hasan. Fatima mint Shaykhna Buyahmed is the most celebrated of these learned women, partly because she lived in more recent times—from the late 19th through the mid-20th century. The daughter of a legal scholar who taught her Islamic jurisprudence, she so excelled in the study of the law that she occasionally wrote *fatwas* in the name of her father.

Jarfuna, by contrast, used her limited literacy to run her caravans, but she wasn't the only Masna woman to leave her mark as a businesswoman. Fatimatu mint Seri Niaba, for example, was a gifted 19th-century entrepreneur, as well as a learned individual. Although she did not leave any scholarly writings, Fatimatu, like many women of Tichit, earned her access to the caravan economy thanks to her literacy.

Muslim women protected their property rights by keeping a paper trail of their commercial and civil affairs. They documented credit transactions and loan

**Built to endure years of use, camel saddles were often made and decorated by women, as were riding blankets and saddlebags.**

disbursements, and they wrote to men and other women with whom they conducted trade and exchanged market information. To be sure, only privileged and exceptional women—Fatimatu among them—acquired the skills necessary to make use of contracts and correspondence. Tichit depended on caravans to bring in limited supplies of writing paper, making that commodity relatively expensive. Not everyone could afford to engage directly in the caravanning economy at this level or, alternatively, to hire scribes.



as water gourds, camel saddles, riding blankets and the leather pouches in which such goods as dates, lard and millet were transported. And they wove palm-tree fibers, grass and leather strips into the straps, bridles and quantities of cordage used to fasten down camel loads and harness caravans.

However, as Jarfuna illustrates, Tichit women also participated in the caravan

## **Caravanning families rarely traveled, alone, preferring to join forces with several other families or groups for safety and support.**

Women were involved in Tichit's scholarly and caravanning activities in other ways, too, by crafting and ornamenting the leather bindings that protected manuscripts. The women of Tichit also made and decorated with colored dyes the cushions and small leather pouches that were among their primary export products. Indeed, there is a firm foundation for the popular Mauritanian proverb, "The woman is the man's trousers" (*Limra' sirwal al-rajul*), for it conveys the

idea that a woman protects her husband and, by extension, their family.

The skilled labor of women and families was critical to the caravan economy of Tichit in both obvious and subtle ways. For one thing, women played an important role in manufacturing caravanning gear, such

trade directly. Falla mint Bubu and her husband, Khalifa Ould Al-Bashir, both now deceased, are a classic example of a 20th-century Tichit caravanning family. Almost every year, they left Tichit with their six children for three months on caravan. And Falla, a strong, warrior-like woman, often also went on caravan without her family.

Typically, caravans from Tichit headed to Banamba, Nouara, Nara or Nioro, Malian markets on the southern edge of the desert. Falla and her family always went to Banamba. Caravanning families rarely traveled alone, preferring to join other families or groups for safety and support.

Falla's children, now in their late 30's to early 50's, describe a typical journey. "It took a full month to travel from Tichit to Banamba, the convoy walking without a break from morning to evening," they recall. That regimen wasn't unusual. As Fatima mint Mbarak, another veteran caravanner, now a great-grandmother, explains, "We would go walking, walking, walking till the afternoon prayer or the evening prayer. We did not stop for lunch." The caravan traveled from one well to the next, once







going six days without replenishing its water supply, she adds.

“As soon as we stopped, we would unload the camels and start grinding the millet,” Falla’s youngest daughter explains. “[The women and girls] made couscous with goat lard and *tishdar* [jerky, the caravanner’s

staple]. The next day we warmed up the leftovers for the morning meal.”

The daily routine was so intense there was no time to play. Falla’s children recall sandstorms and strong winds, but not in detail. What they remember most vividly is the fast pace.

There was some respite for the children, however. When they got very tired, every couple of hours or so, they would climb aboard a moving camel, a move that called for great dexterity. One of Falla’s sons recalls the agony he endured after scraping his kneecaps raw on the leather sacks of salt his camel was carrying.

Caravanners usually walked alongside their loaded camels. But not the children: They had to run. The camel’s average gait is six kilometers per hour (3¾ mph), a brisk walking pace for an adult human.

Caravans maintained a constant, rigorous pace to make it to the market in time for the end of the millet harvest in January, when prices were most favorable. Upon arrival, men and women traded salt for millet. Then the men took the camels to pasture while the women sold their leather products, beads and other goods. Some learned to speak the local Bambara



**Above: Now in her 80’s and a great-grandmother, caravanner Fatima mint Mbarak recalls stories of lost camels and the frightening few days during which her daughter became lost. Left: Caravanners discuss plans for a salt caravan. Opposite: In Tichit, it is traditional for both boys and girls to become literate, mostly through education in the chapters (*surahs*) of the Qur’an.**



## Caravanners usually walked alongside their loaded camels. But not the children: They had to run.

language to barter more effectively in the marketplace; others got by with sign language (*isharaat*).

Female caravanners impressed their male counterparts, and today retired caravanning men never fail to recognize the women's contributions to their own training. "I first left on caravan as a young boy with my grandmother Ifna mint Qarba," recounts Bayba Ould Bala, who is nearly 100 years old. One of the elders of Tichit, he is among the last speakers of Azer, the region's dominant language before it was supplanted by the Arabo-Berber language of Hasaniya. Similarly, Baba Ghazzar, now deceased, discussed how he learned the tricks of the caravanning trade from the women in his Masna family.

The caravans returned to Tichit with a range of supplies, including millet—the

staple of the local diet—nuts, a variety of spices, wooden wares and cotton cloth, as well as slaves. Slaves quarried green and gray limestone and sandstone east of town for buildings. They also labored in the palm gardens, which produced one of the town's most valuable exports: dates.

Date cultivation was very labor-intensive, involving regular sand removal, desalination of leaves and replanting of palm tree shoots. A date-palm laborer could maintain a maximum of 10 trees at a time. Nowadays, date production in Tichit has lost its former glory as the oasis's population has fallen. A bad flood in 1999 led to a massive exodus westward to the town of Tijikja and to Mauritania's capital, Nouakchott. There are now fewer than 500 souls here, compared with more than 3000 before the deluge.

One of the specialties of the women of Tichit and the neighboring village of Akreijit was crafting shell beads. In the past, the shells might have been collected locally, remnants of a former era when a green and lush Sahara boasted lakes and teemed with wildlife. In more recent times, the shells have been imported from the Atlantic coast.

Women and girls would sand small pieces of shell on a granite rock for hours to produce beads with the desired round shape, each taking several hours to fashion. Then they would carefully drill four or five holes into each bead with a bow-driven piercing tool. These beads (*amjun*) were an important item of exchange, highly prized in the markets of Mauritania and Mali by women who braided them into hairdos on such special occasions as weddings. Tahira mint Al-Khatabi, a seasoned caravanner, takes more than an hour to demonstrate the art of making a single *amjuna*.

Another export, a yellowish calcium powder called *luwinkel*, was collected in the nearby hills and sold for medicinal purposes. It was used to treat heartburn and indigestion, among other things. Today, every small shop in Tichit sells *luwinkel* by the kilogram.

These stores also sell products brought in from Mali by caravan or truck via Ayoun el-Atrouss, a town some 200 kilometers (125 mi) to the south. These include a dozen different spices and special mixtures essential for cooking millet-grain couscous. Among them are *taqiya*, a mixture of herbs; *simbala*, another herbal concoction sold in cigar-shaped rolls; black pepper and "red pepper" kernels; and *tajmacht*—ground baobab-tree seeds used both to make a beverage and as a medicine. Goat butter or lard, onions, white and red beans, peanuts and dried meat are also part of this trade, which includes indigo dye and textiles produced from cotton grown and woven in Mali. Aside from foodstuffs and cloth, there are also platters made of woven grass and wooden utensils ranging from large mortars and pestles for grinding millet to receptacles for milking livestock, serving meals and drinks, and preserving dates.

Stories abound in Tichit about travelers nearly succumbing to thirst near a dry well, camels running away in the night and sandstorms wreaking havoc. Murjan mint







Izidbih, a granddaughter of the venerated caravan leader Jarfuna, was 11 or 12 years old when she was accidentally abandoned. She was busy collecting gum arabic from thorny *Acacia senegalensis* trees—a resin used for a variety of purposes, from texturing milk beverages to starching cotton clothes—when she lost track of time. Before she knew it, the caravan had packed and departed without her. Only the next day did her family realize she was missing and immediately send several camel riders to find her. Meanwhile, Murjan had spent a frightful night in the wild. The following day, she met a nomad who sheltered her in his tent. It took seven days for the riders to locate her and return her to the convoy.

Due to their menstrual cycles and fertility, caravanning posed special challenges to women. One woman explains how she was several months pregnant while on caravan late one winter season. On the return journey in the spring, the heat was so intense that she miscarried. She resolved never to join another caravan.

Fatima mint Mbarak remembers the crisis that beset several Tichit families on their return from Mali. Their camels, five teams totaling close to 80 head, strayed during the night, stranding the travelers. Since most caravanning families rented their camels

**Above: Soueid Ould Mohamed Bouyatou, left, and Limam Ould Abdel Mu'min show manuscripts from their archive, one of some 20 archives and libraries in the oasis with writings that date to as early as the 12th century. Right: With each of 57 camels bearing some 200 kilograms of salt, these caravanners from Ayoun paid the families of Tichit a total equivalent of about \$128 for their cargo. As trucks come more often to Tichit, caravans are increasingly rare.**

from wealthier Tichit residents—Jarfuna, who owned a number of camels, was an exception—their disappearance put further stress on the members of the convoy. It took two weeks for men on foot to reassemble all of the scattered camels. “Praise God,” Fatima says, “that this happened when we were staying at a well.”

On December 22, 2009 a caravan composed of five men and 57 camels arrived in Tichit. It transported a mixed load of millet, rice—a staple that has recently gained ground in the local diet—and spices from Mali. The whole town was alerted, starting with Mohamedou Ould Hamar, the “guardian of the *sabkhah*,” or saltpan—a Masna in charge of supervising the salt harvest and tax distribution. Men and women immediately set to work, on their knees, scraping the surface of the lakebed. The next morning, each camel was loaded with four sacks of *amersal* salt weighing 50 kilograms (110 lb) each. With help from the locals, it took the

five caravanners just over an hour to load the entire convoy, which immediately set off. The task was gracefully orchestrated in near-complete silence, save for the braying of the camels.

Each camel-load of salt was purchased for 600 Mauritanian *ouguiya* or MRO (the equivalent of \$2.25), which was distributed among the three main clans of Tichit. The Shurfa and Awlad Billa each received one-quarter, and the Masna pocketed the rest, according to an arrangement dating back to colonial times. On top of this, a city tax of about \$0.25 per camel-load was collected by the guardian of the saltpan.

In the 1960's, the average exchange rate, by weight, between millet and *amersal* salt was two to one. Today, profits are much narrower, according to the caravan leader Mohamed Ould al-Najim, a man in his 60's from Ayoun el-Atrouss. This is because caravans no longer travel all the way to Mali: Since 2006, a tarred road links





Ayoun to the Malian market town of Nioro. Today, caravans organized by a handful of men travel only between Tichit and either Ayoun or Timbedra, a trip that averages 10 days one way.

In Ayoun, the salt is sold at the rate of 2500 MRO per sack, or about \$9.40. Thus, gross profits were about \$35 per camel, or \$1995 for the entire caravan. (Three of the 57 camels on this particular caravan belonged to women.) These figures do not include the costs of renting the camels and outfitting the caravan, or the profits realized from the loads transported to Tichit.

Caravans have long been the lifelines of the Sahara. But today, though Tichit remains largely “landlocked,” without a highway linking it to Mauritania’s national road system, its dwindling population nonetheless relies less on caravans than on the diesel truck that regularly makes its way across the rough terrain from Tijikja, to the east, to replenish the town’s supplies

and carry out its primary exports: amersal salt and dates.


Throughout history, long-distance trade in Mauritania was a male profession. In Tichit, though, caravanning was not just a man’s world. The wealthiest women of Tichit invested in caravan journeys by contracting family members and laborers, or sending slaves; women in the lower classes

of society joined caravans themselves, for the most part accompanied by their husbands and children. Those women are remembered by all because of their leading role in planning, coordinating and directing camels, loads, supplies and family labor. This is why the story of Jarfuna, the remarkable woman caravan leader, lives on in the oral traditions of Tichit. 🌐

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Mauritania: N/D 97, J/A 03, J/A 08  
West African manuscripts: N/D 03  
dates: M/A 78, J/F 85, J/A 04  
gum arabic: M/A 05

This article is dedicated to the people of Tichit who kindly assisted with this research, including Tahira mint Al-Khatibi, Fatima mint Mbarak, the Khalifa family, Ahmad Kubran, Shaykh Sid Ahmed Ould Baba Mine, Bayba Ould Bala, Limam Ould Abdel Mu’min, Soueid Ould Mohamed Bouyatou.



# ALEXANDRIA THE CROSSROADS

WRITTEN BY EDWARD LEWIS



The harbor that made Alexandria's maritime trade possible still offers a sweeping view of the city that, at first sight, betrays little of its illustrious history. Opposite, top: The Pharos lighthouse, which guided centuries of sailors to the harbor and was long regarded as among the Seven Wonders of the world, was destroyed some 240 years before this colored engraving was made in 1721.



Visitors to Alexandria are usually surprised by two features: the extent to which the city contributed to and shaped the Mediterranean world, and the complete lack of physical evidence that demonstrates that role.

This is, after all, the city that hosted the renowned Library of Alexandria in the last three centuries BCE and could boast such resident scholars as Euclid, Ptolemy and Eratosthenes, the city where the Pharos lighthouse, one of the ancient Seven Wonders, guided vessels from all over the known world to her prosperous port. Alexander the Great founded the city in 331 BCE. And Mark Anthony, Cleopatra, Julius Caesar and the woman mathematician Hypatia, all, for part of their lives at least, contributed to Alexandria's development into a metropolis with a backdrop of magnificent palaces, temples and public edifices decorated with luxuries from Europe, Africa and the East. Such was the Alexandria's prestige that Diodorus Siculus, in the first century BCE, described her as "the first city of the civilized world."





Yet aside from the outline of the impressive new Bibliotheca Alexandrina, successor in 2002 to the city's great library, or the 15th-century fort that guards the harbor entrance, modern Alexandria's panorama gives no clue she was once the center of commerce and culture in Egypt, let alone the Mediterranean. Fast-paced building projects and earthquakes have made archeology only a partial, often clouded, window on the city's past. As a result, great emphasis is placed on the written record, with which, fortunately, ancient Alexandria is amply blessed. Travelers, geographers and historians documented the city's topography, her array of impressive buildings, her mixed population and her political structure, giving voice to a past city that has otherwise virtually disappeared.

The Greek geographer Strabo was clearly taken with Alexandria when he visited around 20 BCE. "In short, the city ... abounds with public and sacred buildings," he wrote in his *Geography*. "Among the happy advantages of the city, the greatest is the fact that this is the only place in all Egypt which is by nature well situated with reference ... both to commerce by sea, on account of the good harbors, and to commerce by land, because the [Nile] river easily conveys and brings together everything into a place so situated—the greatest emporium in the inhabited world."

If Alexandria's ancient period is well documented, her medieval past is anything but. The year 641 CE, when the city was conquered by Muslim forces led by 'Amr ibn al-'As, is often viewed simply as the end of the Greco-Roman and Byzantine ages: a full stop at the end of an extraordinary era. Due partly to the lack of written sources and partly to her eclipse by other Egyptian cities, Alexandria's history under the flags of successive Islamic dynasties is somewhat neglected

and often dismissed as a story of decline, regression and isolation.

Islam's ascendance profoundly impacted Alexandria and port cities elsewhere in the Mediterranean. "Within 80 years of the death of [the Prophet] Mohammed," wrote Belgian medievalist Henri Pirenne in *Mohammed and Charlemagne*, "Islam extended from western Turkistan to the Atlantic Ocean. Christianity, which had embraced the entire Mediterranean coast, was confined to its northern shores. Three-quarters of the coastlands of this sea, once the focal point of Roman culture for the whole of Europe, now belonged to Islam."

The fact that Alexandria, so long Egypt's principal city, was vulnerable to attack by the Byzantine fleet, however, persuaded the reigning caliph 'Umar ibn al-Khattab to order his generals to relocate to a more protected position. Misr al-Fustat, located some 225 kilometers (140 mi) to the south, became the seat of power. Shielded by a vast and unforgiving desert and served by the Nile, it developed into Egypt's new trading center; Alexandria could only watch as the focus of power turned from the Mediterranean shore to the interior.

The result was staggering. In just a few hundred years Fustat (and later its successor city, Cairo, a few kilometers away) became the wealthiest city in the world, according to the Persian geographer al-Qazwini, who lived there. Trade was reoriented, primarily toward Asia, with commodities passing through harbors on the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. Under the Fatimid Dynasty (969–1171), Fustat's markets burst with goods from Jiddah and the Hijaz, Sana'a, Aden and Muscat, and India and China. These included spices, pearls, precious stones, silk, porcelain, teak, linen, perfumes and paper—the latter unknown in Europe at that time.

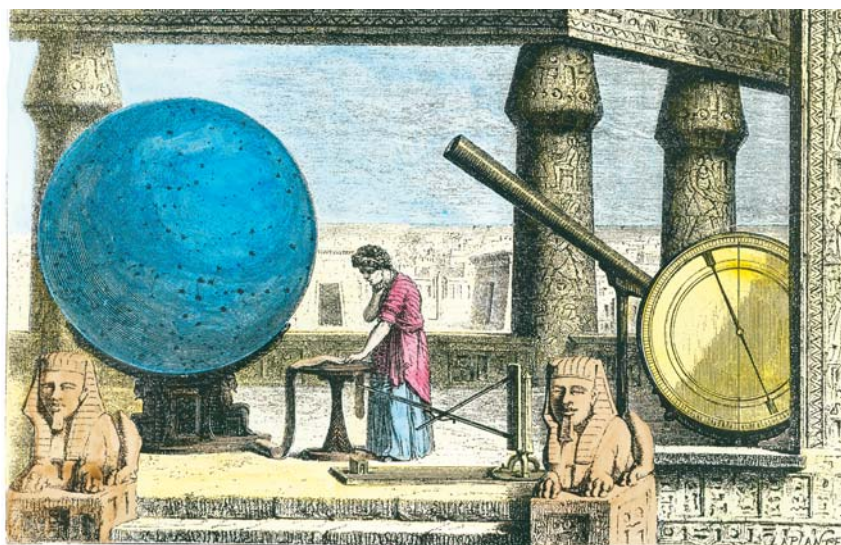
## ALEXANDRIA WAS VULNERABLE TO ATTACK BY THE BYZANTINE FLEET, SO 'UMAR IBN AL-KHATTAB RELOCATED UP THE NILE AND FOUNDED WHAT WOULD LATER BECOME CAIRO.

Lower: From Jerash, Jordan, a sixth-century mosaic shows a simplified view of Alexandria. Right: A thousand years later, a colored engraving shows a walled city with a harbor marked by the Pharos on the left and a fortress on the right.





The 2002 Bibliotheca Alexandrina, right, is the modern successor to the ancient Mediterranean's greatest center of learning, the library that burned in 48 BCE (lower right). It was already a long-lost memory by the second century CE, the time of the astronomer and geographer Claudius Ptolemaeus (known as Ptolemy), depicted below in a 19th-century French lithograph.



But in spite of the long shadow cast by Fustat and then Cairo, Alexandria did not become a backwater. The city continued to capitalize on her prime location, maintaining herself as an important Mediterranean port and providing a highly prosperous link between East and West and among Muslims, Christians and Jews. "Without the city of Alexandria, Cairo with the whole of Egypt could not survive," wrote a Venetian observer in the Middle Ages.

The limited written material available indicates that relatively little changed in Alexandria during the first few centuries of Muslim rule. The administrative system used by the preceding Byzantine government continued, with a few minor amendments, and the physical makeup of the city doesn't appear to have altered drastically. Although the Library of Alexandria, the center of Hellenistic learning, had all but disappeared by the fifth century, early Arab accounts marvel at Alexandria's wide streets, use of marble,

beautiful and intricate pillars, water cisterns, palaces, luxurious temples and harbors. The 10th-century geographer Ibn Hawkal wrote:

*One of the famous cities of the country, whose antiquities are marvellous, is Alexandria, located on a string of earth, on the Mediterranean shore. There you can see very visible antiquities and authentic monuments from its ancient inhabitants, impressive heritage of royalty and power, and that shows its domination over other countries, its greatness, its glorious superiority and they represent both a warning and an example.*

One attraction that most certainly remained long into the Islamic period was the Pharos. In spite of its age and disrepair, Alexandria's iconic landmark—already some eight centuries old when Muslim armies arrived—continued to be an object of wonder to all who saw it. In the 12th century, the Andalusian geographer



Ibn Jubayr wrote of the famous lighthouse: "Description of it falls short, the eyes fail to comprehend it and words are inadequate, so vast is the spectacle." The twin harbors that the Pharos marked ensured that Alexandria remained an important, if vulnerable, player in what was at times a politically volatile climate. Aside from the numerous internal clashes between rival Muslim dynasties, Alexandria was targeted by Crusader invasions on two occasions, most famously in 1365.

But in no way did Muslim rule inhibit commerce with Christian merchants. Indeed, trade was an important and valued activity in Muslim lands. Makkah was a trading city and the Prophet Muhammad had himself engaged in trade there in his early life. "There are no goods in the whole world which through this confluence of pilgrims are not to be found in Mecca," observed a pilgrim making the Hajj in the 12th century, according to Ibn Jubayr. Across the Mediterranean, particularly in Italy, city-states were lining up their galleys, keen to exploit Alexandria's favorable location and diverse goods. Not even Europe's religious wars could stop the pursuit of profit, and despite a paucity of documentary material from the first centuries of Islamic rule, accounts from the 10th century onward suggest that Alexandria was, and had been, anything but a closed city.

Indeed, documents show that merchants from such cities as Pisa, Genoa, Marseille and Barcelona, in addition to ports in the Levant, docked in Alexandria, bringing an exotic array of goods.

In Alexandria's harbors, a startling array of commodities would have been on display: bright silks from Spain and Sicily; pungent spices such as pepper, ginger, cinnamon and cloves from the East; slaves from southern Russia; Mediterranean coral, olive oil, timber, aromatics, perfumes and gums; and metals including iron, copper, lead and tin. Great quantities of local Egyptian produce—lemons, oranges, sugar, dates, capers and raisins—would also have been stacked on the docks to be loaded and shipped to European markets. Flax would have been piled there for export, too. Of the more unusual commodities, a powder made from ground Egyptian mummies and believed to have medicinal value was much sought after in Europe. Indeed, one English merchant shipped as much as 600 pounds of the powder back to his homeland.

Such was the extent of trade that special rest houses called *funduqs* were established to accommodate visiting traders and encourage business. While Muslim traders were free to find accommodation wherever they pleased in Alexandria, foreigners were forced to take rooms in *funduqs* designated for their country or city. Built around a central courtyard with storerooms and living quarters, these buildings or compounds provided secure locations in which to transact business and store merchandise. Some trading states were afforded privileges beyond their *funduq*; the Venetians, for example, had a church, bathhouse and bakery in Alexandria and are said to have been allowed to import cheese, among other goods,





tax free. One visitor, Benjamin of Tudela of Spain, counted no less than 28 European nations or city-states with formal representation in Alexandria in 1170, including non-Mediterranean countries such as Denmark, Ireland, Norway, Scotland and England—not to mention representatives from the East.

Far from being a stagnant, decaying city, medieval Alexandria at times gives the impression of a lively meeting point where different creeds and cultures mixed for the sake of commerce. Wrote the 12th-century clergyman and historian Guillaume of Tyre, “The produce unknown to Egypt arrives by sea to Alexandria from all regions of the world and are always in abundance.... Also, the people of the Orient and those of the Occident meet continuously in this city, which is like the great market of the two worlds.”

Nevertheless, suspicion of foreign merchants remained. The Crusades had devastated inter-religious relations. On more than

one occasion, the Pope himself had imposed a total embargo on trade with Muslims. As a result, foreign visitors to the city were kept under close observation. Arriving non-Muslims were forbidden to enter the western harbor, and some markets in the city were restricted to merchants of a specific nationality or ethnic origin.

One event during the Crusades, Reynald of Châtillon's attempt to attack Makkah from the Red Sea in the 1180's, had particular repercussions in Alexandria. Reynald's foe, Saladin, banned non-Muslim traders from entering Egypt's interior in an attempt not only to protect the holy sites in the Levant and Arabia, but also to safeguard Egypt's valuable commercial links

with the East. The result was a concentration of European traders within Alexandria's walls. One source states that no less than 3000 were jammed into the city in the early 13th century.

Alexandria's bustling trade was undoubtedly the primary reason for foreign arrivals to the city, but it was not the only one. Between

## MEDIEVAL ALEXANDRIA WAS A LIVELY MEETING POINT WHERE DIFFERENT CREEDS AND CULTURES MIXED IN THE NAME OF COMMERCE.



Above: The Pharos lighthouse remains a popular symbol beckoning visitors to the city. Left and opposite: In the 1840's, David Roberts produced lithographs of two of Alexandria's other famous monuments, "Cleopatra's Needle" and "Pompey's Pillar." The pillar was actually dedicated to the Roman emperor Diocletian, and it still stands. The obelisk was one of two that in the late 19th century were moved to New York and Paris respectively.





the seventh and 16th centuries, Alexandria was an important harbor from which to visit the region's holy sites, whether in Egypt, Makkah or Jerusalem. Accounts of pilgrims from as far away as Ireland offer intriguing insights into religious travel at that time and the extent to which Alexandria was involved.

The itinerary for a Christian pilgrim in the Middle Ages might have included several well-known churches and monasteries in and around Alexandria, as well as locations in the Nile Valley where Jesus and his family were believed to have sought refuge during their stay in Egypt. Alexandria's position as a transit point for travelers en route to Makkah and Madinah additionally ensured that she received visitors and pilgrims from North Africa and Andalusia, the most prominent of those being Ibn Battuta,

The streets of Alexandria are as accustomed to the bustle of commerce today as they were in the second to fourth centuries CE, when Strabo called it "the first city of the civilized world" and an Egyptian artist used tempera to paint this young woman's portrait on linen.







the 14th-century Moroccan traveler and chronicler, who visited the city at least twice during his extraordinary life.

The Portuguese discovery in 1498 of the sea route to India, around the Cape of Good Hope, severely damaged Alexandria's role as a trading port, diverting a huge portion of the commerce to which she had become accustomed. By this time, too, the canal that connected Alexandria to Cairo via the Nile had silted up, adding to the city's woes and forcing foreign merchants to find alternative ports.

Furthermore, sporadic outbreaks of plague in the city must have hastened their departure. Between 1347 and 1459 alone, there were no less than nine waves of plague that killed as many as 200 inhabitants per day. Although Alexandria was by no means the only Mediterranean city that suffered, the plague's impact on the city, as described by the Venetian ambassador's secretary in April 1512, was particularly hard. He recounted a city in freefall—nine-tenths

in ruins and with a decimated population. The plague's effect on trade and the local labor force combined with hemorrhaging commerce as lucrative new trade routes opened elsewhere. The city's shrinking population concentrated in a small peninsula; everything outside this core was neglected.

Yet developments across the Mediterranean ensured that Alexandria was not forgotten. By the mid-17th century, news of Egypt's pharaonic past—its temples and the other remnants of an exotic and powerful civilization—had spread throughout Europe, thanks to the rise in popularity of such classical authors as Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus and Strabo, all of whom gave vivid accounts of Egypt. Moreover, references to Egypt in the Bible and accounts by pilgrims returning from their adventures in the Holy Land added to a deep-rooted curiosity about "the land of the Pharaohs," encouraging a new type of visitor.

Soon, individuals were landing in Alexandria to study and record Egypt's intriguing wildlife or to purchase its increasingly sought-after antiquities. The royal, princely and ducal courts of Europe were keen to add to their collections of "wonders" and to be seen to be developing scientific knowledge, and they sent naturalists or antiquarians to Alexandria to acquire ancient manuscripts, coins or other antiquities. Missions set out to document Egypt's flora and fauna, which included crocodiles, hippopotami, hyenas and a large and diverse bird population.

Perhaps the greatest example of such a project was Napoleon Bonaparte's expedition of 1798–1801. One-hundred-sixty-five scholars of the Commission des Sciences et des Arts, among them astronomers, architects, geographers, zoologists and botanists, produced the *Description de l'Égypte*, a 23-volume work that brought Egypt to the outside world. However, Alexandria is pictured in only a handful of plates, depicted as a city of ruins.

Just as Alexandria owed her very existence to a foreigner—Alexander the Great—it was another foreigner, the Albanian Muhammad Ali, who was responsible for reviving her fortunes. Appointed governor of Egypt in 1805 by the Ottoman sultan, he established a dynasty that ruled until 1952. Muhammad Ali gradually distanced the country from the Ottoman Empire and laid the groundwork for a more modern and self-sufficient Egypt. Alexandria was at

the forefront of this initiative, which encouraged foreign trade and investment and included hosting communities and consuls from around the Mediterranean, concepts also embraced by Muhammad Ali's successors. Still Egypt's "second city," Alexandria once again built her future on exchange and interaction, the cornerstones of her past success.

Egypt's independence in 1952 marked the beginning of a new period in Alexandria's history. For the first time since her creation, she became a city governed by Egyptians. Though the doors that had previously been open to the Mediterranean and beyond swung shut under the administration of President Gamal Abdel Nasser, and the foreign contribution to the city's makeup and commerce decreased significantly, both rebounded to some extent under the open-door economic policies and liberalization of subsequent years.

Today, Alexander's city is dominated by high-rise concrete apartment blocks and busy, traffic-filled streets. However, those who listen carefully will hear echoes of the past in the cacophony of


**As it has for centuries, Alexandria's modern maritime economy includes tourism.**



languages spoken by passengers disembarking from cruise ships, sitting in her cafes and visiting her sites, old and new. Alexandria may never fully regain her old luster, but her role as a meeting point for a range of diverse cultures and creeds appears safe. 🌐



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Pharos: M/A 94

Library: M/A 94

Alexander the Great: M/J 01

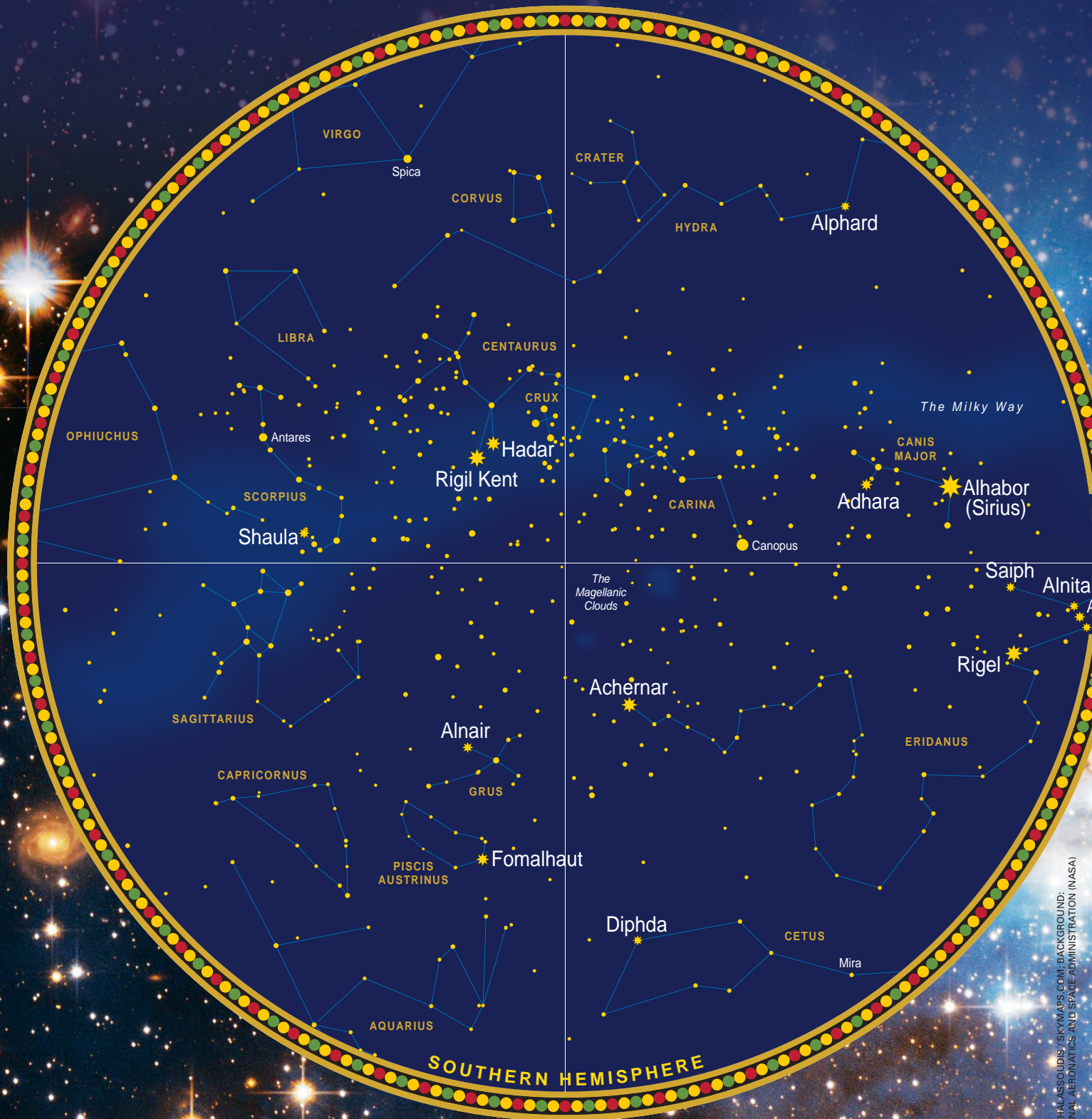
trade: M/A 08

Ibn Battuta: J/A 00



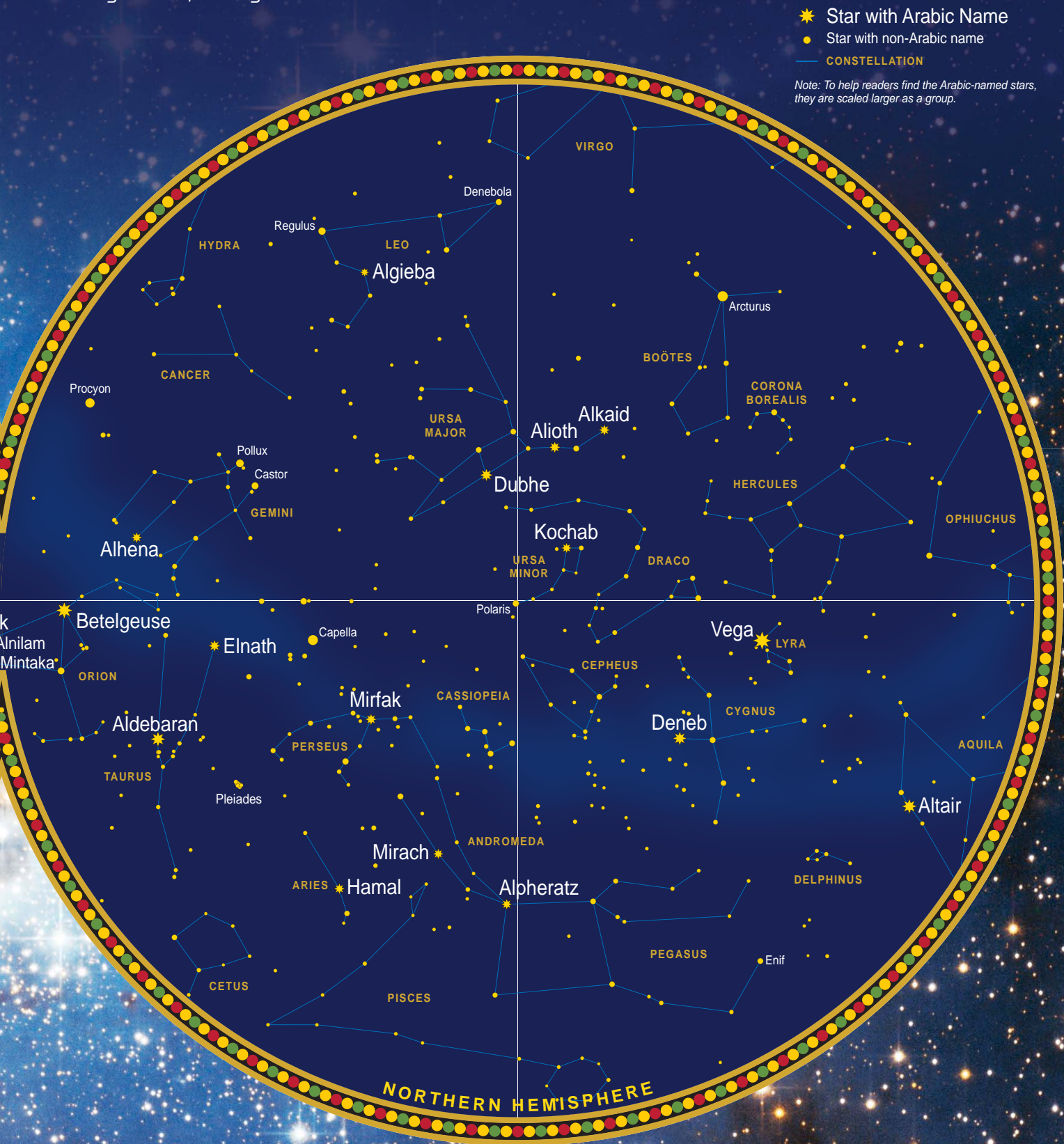
# Arabic in the Sky

Written by Robert Lebling





Scholars have identified 210 visible stars that carry Arabic names, some of which preserve older names that date back to Babylon and Sumeria. In this illustration, the 30 brightest stars with Arabic names appear as eight-pointed stars, in sizes adjusted for their relative magnitudes, or brightnesses.





**On March 3, 1995, when American astronomers Andrea Dupree and Ronald Gilliland trained the orbiting Hubble Telescope on the constellation of Orion the Hunter, they captured a historic photograph: the first-ever direct image of the *disk* of a star other than the Sun.**

**U**ntil then, star photographs had shown only points of light, but Dupree and Gilliland produced an image large enough to give the star a shape. The center of the bright orange image showed a mysterious hot spot twice the diameter of the Earth's orbit, surrounded by an ultraviolet atmosphere that emits prodigious amounts of radiation.

The star was Betelgeuse, one of the most famous of the red supergiants and the second brightest star in Orion.

*Betelgeuse* (pronounced beetle-jooz or sometimes bet-el-juice) is an odd name—but then most of the common star names sound strange to the western ear. The reason is that most of them are of Arabic origin: Aldebaran (“The Follower”), Algol (“The Ghoul”), Arrakis (“The Dancer”), Deneb (“Tail”), Fomalhaut (“The Fish’s Mouth”), Rigel (“Foot”), Thuban (“Snake”), Vega (“Plunging [Eagle]”).... The list goes on.

The derivation of *Betelgeuse* is more problematic than most, but experts today trace the name back to the Arabic *yad al-jawza*, “The Hand of the Giant”—the giant being Orion. A transcription error, confusing the initial letters *b* and *y* (in Arabic, *ba* and *ya*) because of their similar shape, dates back to the 13th century, when a star table by John of London (who lived and worked in

Paris) named the star *Bedalgeuze*. Accepting this form, European scholars like the French polymath Joseph Scaliger thought the name meant “Armpit of the Giant”

The 48 traditional star constellations—Andromeda, Hercules, Perseus and so on—have Latin names, and most of them represent Greek mythical figures.

These names were passed on to us by Ptolemy of Alexandria, the second-century Egyptian-Greek astronomer whose view of the universe was bequeathed to the medieval world. (Many of the Greek star figures were themselves borrowed from the myths of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia.) But many of the popular names of the visible stars in these constellations are nevertheless Arabic. Some came from the star pictures that early Bedouins saw in the night sky; others were Arabic translations of Ptolemy’s Greek terms. Many of these names would be immediately recognized by Arabs today; others would not.

Some of the star names are fragments of longer Arabic names—often shortened to fit on medieval astronomical measurement devices called astrolabes. Some have been distorted beyond recognition over the centuries, due to transcription and copying errors. At least 210 of the stars most easily seen with the naked eye have names derived from Arabic words, according to science historian Paul Kunitzsch of the University of Munich, an acknowledged expert on Arabic star names.

Kunitzsch has done extensive research on the transmission of Arabic star names into European usage. Of the 210 Arabic star names he identified, he finds that 52 percent come from authentic Arabic



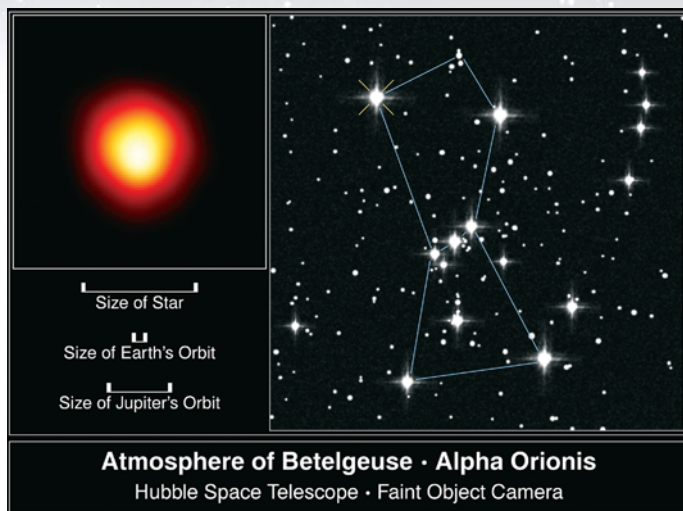
**Most of the Arabic star names we know today can be traced back to the treatises of al-Sufi, a Persian astronomer of the 10th century who wrote in Arabic. His *Book of Constellations of the Fixed Stars* built on Ptolemy's second-century *Almagest*. This plate is a 15th-century interpretation of al-Sufi's constellations of Centaurus and Leo.**

(properly, *ibt al-jawza*). But *yad al-jawza* goes back at least as far as the star charts of the Muslim astronomer al-Sufi in the 10th century and is probably much older than that.



The first wave of transmission of Arabic star names to Europe took place in the Middle Ages, from the 10th to the 13th centuries, and included about 48 names of the 210. This was the only period of direct “borrowings,” where star names were translated directly from Arabic star catalogs into corresponding European astronomical works. Most of the

The odd name of Betelgeuse, in the constellation Orion, comes from an Arabic original whose first letter was inadvertently changed by a 13th-century astronomer. Second brightest in Orion, the star that was originally named in Arabic *yad al-jawza* appears far right at the upper left, and below, in an antique-style rendition, at the end of the sleeve of the hunter's tunic.



Before Copernicus in the early 16th century, European and Muslim astronomers alike followed the cosmological model set forth by Ptolemy of Alexandria. According to Ptolemy, the Earth, at the center of the universe, was surrounded by a series of concentric translucent shells to which were attached the moon, sun, planets and fixed stars. The Arab astronomers translated Ptolemy's Greek star names into Arabic, and added some of their own that had been passed down by nomadic ancestors who used the stars and star-pictures to guide their passage through the great deserts of the Middle East.



## Billions and Billions

**O**ur universe, scientists say, contains about 100 million galaxies, or nests of stars, of which our own, the Milky Way, is one. In fact, the word *galaxy* comes from the Greek *galaxias*, meaning “milky.” The Milky Way is made up of some 50 billion stars.

The apparent brightness of a star is indicated by its “magnitude.” The brightest 20 stars are called “first magnitude.” First-magnitude stars are about 2.5 times brighter than second-magnitude stars; second-magnitude stars are about 2.5 times brighter than third-magnitude; and so on down to stars barely visible to the unaided eye, which are called “sixth magnitude.” This is an ancient system, used by the Greek astronomers Hipparchus and Ptolemy, that survives virtually unaltered to our day. The Islamic astronomer al-Sufi was particularly skilled at observing and recording stellar magnitudes using the Greek techniques.

Of all the billions of stars in the night sky, about 6000 stars from our galaxy and others—down to the sixth magnitude—are bright enough to be seen with the naked eye. Some 900 million—down to the 21st magnitude—yield enough light to be captured in photographs.

Of the visible 6000, only 1025 were named by Ptolemy in his *Mathematike Syntaxis*, better known as the *Almagest*. And of these, some 210 of the brightest and most visible stars have modern names of Arabic origin.

According to Kunitzsch and others, the Arabs also preserved star names from the Mesopotamian civilizations of the Sumerians and Babylonians.

Most of the Arabic star names we use today can be traced back to the star catalogue of the astronomer al-Sufi, known in medieval Europe as Azophi. His full name was Abu ‘l-Hussain ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Omar al-Sufi, and he is recognized today as one of the most important scientists of his age.

Born in Rayy, Persia, in the late ninth century, al-Sufi studied and wrote in Arabic. Under the patronage of the Buwayhid Dynasty, he conducted astronomical observations in his homeland and in Baghdad, capital of the realm. His mentor was Ibn al-Amid, the vizier of the Buwayhid ruler. Ibn al-Amid wrote the foreword

for one of al-Sufi’s books, a major work on the astrolabe.

Al-Sufi was a conscientious observer of the fixed stars. In his day, the definitive guidebook for study of the stars was many centuries old: the *Almagest*, compiled by Ptolemy in about 150 CE. The *Almagest* was Ptolemy’s greatest mathematical and astronomical work, and it had a major influence on Islamic and European science for more than a millennium. In 903, al-Sufi published the first-ever critical revision of Ptolemy’s star catalogue. He corrected erroneous observations and added others not recorded by the Greek master astronomer. Al-Sufi’s treatise on star cartography, or uranography, was called *The Book of Constellations of the Fixed Stars* (*Kitab Suwar al-Kawakib al-Thabita*) and became a classic of Islamic astronomy.

The book covers all 48 constellations in the Ptolemaic system. The stars of each constellation are described in detail—posi-

tions, colors and brightness, or magnitude—with criticisms of some of Ptolemy’s measurements that al-Sufi found to be in error. Al-Sufi’s work was groundbreaking science for several reasons. It provided real star observations, at a time when most astronomers relied on the ancient measurements of Ptolemy’s star catalogue.

It was also the first scientific effort to identify the old Arabic star names with astronomically located stars. Before al-Sufi, the wealth of star names had been handed down in literary or philological works, with little regard for identifying which stars they actually applied to. Al-Sufi was not 100 percent successful in his identifications, for some of the names were associated with more than one star

in a single constellation or with several stars in different celestial images. But he pinned down most of them, so that his catalogue became the primary source for Arabic star names for centuries to come. Most of the names that we use today came to us from al-Sufi’s list, either via the European-Mediterranean civilization of the Greeks or through the Arab-Islamic civilization. (The process was complicated by the fact that the Arabs translated Ptolemy’s work, including its Greek star names, into Arabic and passed it along to the Europeans, who had lost the original Greek version until the 15th century.)

The very earliest Latin sources for Arabic star names were two 12th-century instruction manuals for astrolabes:

*De mensura astrolabii* by Hermann of Reichenau and *De utilitatibus astrolabii*, attributed from earliest times to Gerbert d’Aurillac but now considered to be of uncertain authorship (with one section attributed to Hermann). Both works, probably composed in Spain, contain a handful of Arabic star names whose form has remained unchanged down to the present day, including Aldebaran, Algol, Alhabor (an alternate name for Sirius), Rigel and Vega.

Al-Sufi’s work first became known in the

West through Spain, where Christian and Muslim kingdoms coexisted and, when they were not jostling for influence or territory, cooperated. Christian king Alfonso X of Castile (known as Alfonso the Wise), a serious student of astronomy, ordered a free translation or adaptation of al-Sufi into Old Spanish, called the *Libros de las Estrellas de la Ochaua Espera* (1252–1256), and added it to his omnibus astronomy “textbook” known as the *Libros del Saber de Astronomía* (*Books of Astronomical Knowledge*). This opus also included the *Alfonsine Tables*, which furnished new data for calculating the positions of the Sun, Moon and planets in relation to the

**From the ninth to the 15th century, scientists working in the Arabic language, in a region stretching from Islamic Spain across North Africa and the Middle East to India, dominated worldwide scientific endeavor, and astronomy was one of their greatest pursuits.**



fixed stars, and revised the numbers in the *Toledan Tables* originally compiled by Andalusian astronomer al-Zarqali (called Arzachel in Europe) several centuries earlier.

In the East, meanwhile, al-Sufi's

book was regarded as canonical and was relied upon through the centuries by the great astronomers of the Islamic world, including one with a substantial impact on the West, Ulugh Beg of Samarkand (1394–1449). The nomenclature of the

later Oriental star catalogues, celestial globes and other instruments went back mostly to al-Sufi or Ulugh Beg.

"Ulugh Beg" means "the Great Prince." His real name was Muhammad Taragay. Raised in the court of his grandfather, the Mongol conqueror Timur (Tamerlane), Ulugh Beg spent much of his youth traveling throughout the Middle East, moving from one conquered city to the next. After Tamerlane's death, his son

**This celestial map or macrocosm is the opening miniature in the Turkish *Zubdat al-Tawarikh*, or *History of the World*, showing the seven heavens above the Earth, the signs of the zodiac and the 28 lunar "mansions." The model for it is essentially Ptolemaic, that is, Earth-centered, even though it was produced in 1583, four decades after Copernicus proposed the solar-system model we know today.**







Shah Rukh inherited most of his realm, known to us as the Timurid Empire, and Shah Rukh appointed his own 16-year-old son Ulugh Beg to rule over Samarkand, the old Timurid capital, while he went on to establish a new political capital for the empire in Herat, Afghanistan. Ulugh Beg ruled Samarkand and its surrounding province for 40 years. He served briefly as ruler of the overall Timurid Empire, succeeding Shah Rukh, from 1447-1449.

Ulugh Beg became not only a patron of mathematics and astronomy but also an exceptional astronomer himself. He believed that the “hard sciences” were different from theology and literature, that they transcended societal and religious boundaries and were held in common by all peoples, regardless

of faith or language. The prince collaborated with numerous leading scientists of his day and founded at Samarkand one of the largest and most important observatories in the Islamic world.

**Bayer studied popular names of stars with painstaking care, from Spanish translations of al-Sufi to Latin translations of Arabic versions of Ptolemy's original Greek.**

Supporting the observatory was a center for astronomical studies; Ulugh Beg hand-picked its scientists from among the empire's best. At its peak the observatory employed 60 to 70 working astronomers. With these impressive scientific resources, Ulugh Beg set in

motion a project to compile the *Zij-i Sultani* star catalogue (published in 1437), listing names and freshly observed positions for 994 fixed stars, a work often described as comparable to al-Sufi's. In fact, the catalogue included 27 stars from al-Sufi's

**In a 13th-century Turkish miniature, Aristotle instructs students in the use of the astrolabe, a tool for measuring astronomical altitudes. First invented in Greece, it was extensively refined by Arab astronomers.**

own work that were too far south in the heavens to be observed from Samarkand.

### The Second Wave

The second wave of Arabic-origin star names arrived in late-Renaissance Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries. During this period some 22 additional Arabic star names entered common use in Europe, both among scientists and in literature. Most of them were introduced by a German lawyer and amateur astronomer named Johann Bayer.

Bayer was born in Rain, Bavaria in 1572. He studied philosophy at Ingolstadt University and later earned a law degree at Augsburg. He worked as a lawyer in Augsburg and served as a magistrate there. Bayer also happened to be a talented and serious amateur astronomer, and in



## Arabian Bear

To see how frequently we encounter Arabic names among the visible stars, look up in the northern night sky and locate one of the most easily recognizable constellations, Ursa Major (the Great Bear)—commonly known in North America as the Big Dipper because its seven main stars resemble a bent-handled water-dipper. All of these stars, from handle to bowl, have Arabic-origin names:

**Alkaid**—from *al-qa'id*, “The Leader”

**Mizar**—from *mi'zar*, “Loincloth”; originally called Mirak, from *marāqq*, “Loins”

**Alioth**—probably mistranscribed from Aliore, derived from *al-hawar*, “White Poplar” or “White of the Eye”

**Megrez**—from *maghrāz*, “Root of the Tail”

**Phecda**—from *fakhdhā*, “Leg”

**Merak**—from *marāqq*, “Loins”

**Dubhe**—from *dubb*, “Bear”

1603, at the age of 31—just six years before Galileo introduced the first telescope to the field of astronomy—Bayer published an important astronomical work, the *Uranometria*, which has been described as the first modern star atlas, and which became the standard reference for all later atlases. Though later astronomers named new constellations and introduced new projection systems, as well as totally different artistic styles for drawings of the constellations, the Bayer influence was always present: The *Uranometria* is always the implied standard of comparison.

The Bayer atlas contains 51 star maps or charts—one for each of the 48 traditional constellations of Ptolemy, plus a chart of the recently discovered southern skies and two planispheres, or flat representations of the celestial hemispheres (northern and southern). The *Uranometria*'s star maps were engraved on copper plates by Alexander Mair and are large, over 37 centimeters (14½") across. Each has an engraved grid, so the star positions can be determined to a fraction of a degree. Bayer took these highly accurate celestial positions from the new star catalogue of Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe, which had circulated in manuscript form in the 1590's but was not printed until 1602, one year before the *Uranometria*.

An important feature of Bayer's atlas was his new system of star nomenclature.

He assigned Greek letters to the brighter stars, usually in order of magnitude. For example, the bright star in Taurus, the bull's eye, became α *Tauri* or *Alpha Tauri*. The Greek letters were recorded on the charts themselves and also in accompanying tables. Today's astronomers still use the binomial designation invented by Bayer.

For our purposes, however, the most relevant feature of the Bayer atlas is his recording of popular names for important stars, drawn from the works of Ptolemy and his successors, to assure that all known stars could be identified with those listed in the Bayer atlas. Bayer relied in large part on the first printed edition (published in Venice in 1515) of Gerard of Cremona's 1175 Latin translation of the Arabic version of Ptolemy's *Almagest*, as well as on the *Alfonsine Tables* and other parts of the astronomy “textbook” of Alfonso X, including an old-Spanish (Castilian) translation

of al-Sufi's *Book of Constellations of the Fixed Stars*. He also consulted important commentaries on these works by Joseph Scaliger and by the Dutch philosopher and theologian Hugo Grotius.

In 1665, English orientalist Thomas Hyde published the first-ever translation of Ulugh Beg's star tables for European readers, with an extensive commentary on the star names. This Latin work, published at Oxford, bore the appropriately scholarly title *Tabulae longitudinis et latitudinis stellarum fixarum ex observatione Ulugh Beighi*. As we shall see, this translation and commentary was particularly valuable during the third wave.

Among the other scholars who contributed Arabic star names to the European corpus during the second wave were three noteworthy Germans:

**Jakob von Christmann** (1554–1613) was an orientalist who developed an interest in astronomy and in 1590

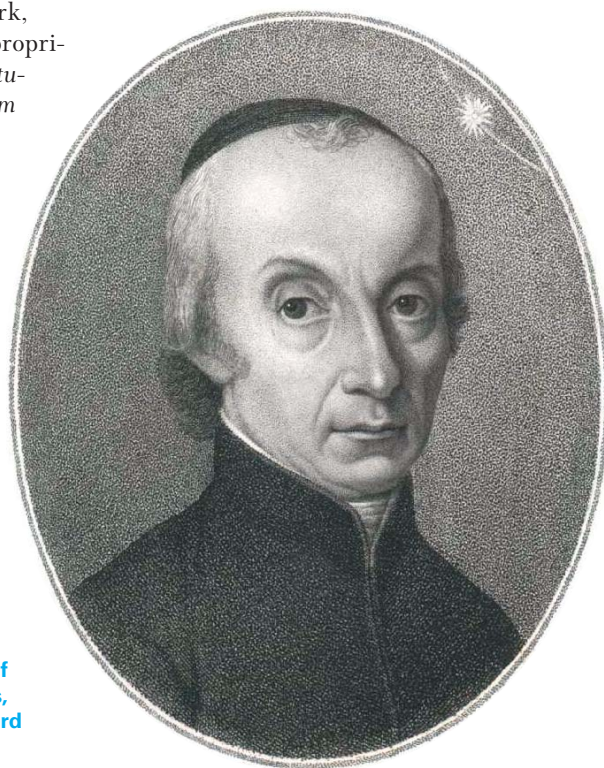
published a Latin translation of the writings of al-Farghani (called Alfraganus in Europe), a prominent ninth-century Abbasid astronomer who worked at the famed Baghdad center of learning, Bayt al-Hikma.

**Wilhelm Schickard** (1592–1635), mathematician, astronomer and orientalist, invented a mechanical calculating machine that could add, subtract, multiply and divide—a device sadly lost in the chaos of the Thirty Years' War and forgotten for three centuries.

**Philippus Caesius** (Philipp von Zesen) (1619–1689), poet and author, wrote a work in Latin in 1662 about the constellations and the legends attached to them, in the light of contemporary astronomy.

## The Third Wave

The third wave of Arabic star names came to Europe in the early 19th century. As in the second wave, western astronomers took what became modern star names not from the original Arabic sources, such as al-Sufi or Ulugh Beg, but from translations of these sources—that is, from European renderings of the Arabic star nomenclature. Some 140, or two-thirds, of the Arabic-origin names entered the European star charts during this period, 94 of them from a single star catalogue published in 1803 by the Italian astronomer Giuseppe Piazzi (1746–1826).



**In the late 1700's, Giuseppe Piazzi of Palermo cataloged 6784 star names, producing what became the standard reference work of the 19th century.**



## The Summer Triangle

Three stars with Arabic names dominate the late-summer sky toward the east in the northern hemisphere: Vega, Deneb and Altair. Each is part of a separate constellation, but due to their brightness, they appear linked together as the “Summer Triangle.”

Blue-white **Vega** in the constellation Lyra (the Lyre of Orpheus) takes its name not from Spanish but from the Arabic word for “plunging” (*waqiʿ*) as applied to an eagle swooping down. The ancient Egyptians—as well as the people of ancient India—also viewed this constellation as an eagle. Vega is Lyra’s only bright star. Relatively close to Earth, some 25 light-years away, it is also one of the very brightest stars in the sky.

**Deneb** (Arabic for “Tail”) is the tail of the swan, Cygnus, and the brightest star in that constellation. Deneb has had other Arabic-origin names, most of them linked to the posterior of a fowl. Johann Bayer called the star *Arrioph*, from *al-ridf*, “The Hindmost.” Deneb is a blue-white supergiant, some 60,000 times more luminous than the Sun, but because it is very distant, it appears as the 19th-brightest star in the night sky. Deneb’s exact distance from Earth is uncertain, but the most likely estimates place it at about 1500 light-years away.

**Altair** (“The Flier”) is the brightest star in Aquila, the Eagle, and the 12th-brightest in the sky. It is a “dwarf” star, just under 17 light-years from Earth, and one of the closest stars visible to the naked eye. Its name is short for *al-nasr al-taʿir*, “the flying eagle,” a term applied by early Arabs to the three main stars of the constellation. There were instances when the brightest star alone (Alpha Aquilae) was given the name of the entire group, for example, on astrolabes, and the ancient Sumerians and Babylonians also called this very luminous star the “eagle star.” In modern movie lore, Altair is the solar system of *The Forbidden Planet*, a classic 1956 science-fiction film inspired by Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*.



**As in other fields of learning, Muslim Spain played an important role in the transmission of astronomical knowledge to Europe. This 1986 Spanish stamp honored the astronomer and instrument-maker known as al-Zarqali.**

Piazzi, a native of Lombardy, is perhaps best known today for his discovery of the first “asteroid,” Ceres, in 1801. (Ceres, with a diameter of about 950 kilometers [590 mi], is now considered a dwarf planet.) Piazzi, a Catholic priest, taught higher mathematics and then astronomy at the University of Palermo. Prince Caramanico, viceroy of Sicily, commissioned him to build an observatory there. In preparation, Piazzi spent from 1787 to 1789 in France and England, studying practical techniques under world-class astronomers and acquiring instruments for the Palermo Observatory. The most famous of these acquisitions was a unique 150-centimeter (5') circular-scale altazimuth telescope built by the renowned instrument-maker Jesse Ramsden of London. Piazzi used this telescope in compiling his famous star catalogue, containing 6784 stars (7464 entries in the revised 1814 edition), recorded with an accuracy never before possible.

For star names, Piazzi’s Palermo catalogue relied heavily on Hyde’s 1665 translation of the Ulugh Beg star list. (Despite its age, Hyde’s work had remarkable staying power,

being reprinted, with corrections, at Oxford in 1767 by Gregory Sharpe and in London in 1843 by Francis Baily, among others, up to the modern era.)

“Piazzi fashioned his new names from Hyde’s transcriptions of the names used by Ulugh Beg in the table text as well as names and endings brought forward in the commentary from all other sources,” Kunitzsch said in his 1959 classic *Arabisches Sternnamen in Europa* (*Arabic Star*

*Names in Europe*). “In general he does not follow Hyde’s orthography very exactly. Many simplifications are introduced.”

Piazzi also occasionally relied on German astronomer Johann Bode’s star atlas *Uranographie* (1801) for some of his star-name forms, Kunitzsch found. Whatever their sources, Piazzi’s star names enjoyed

wide circulation. His catalogue was regarded as a standard reference work of the 19th century and was of great value to European and North American astronomers well into the 20th century.

Several other western scholars played significant roles during the third wave. Ludwig Ideler (1766–1846), a prominent Prussian chronologist and astronomer, made some noteworthy contributions to the understanding of Arabic star names. In 1809, he published a major work on the origin and meaning of star names that incorporated his own translation of the astronomical section of Zakariya’ al-Qazwini’s popular 13th-century cosmography, *Ajaʿib al-Makhlūqat* (*The Wonders of Creation*), supplemented with notes from classical and other sources.

Ideler was the first western scholar to divide Arabic star names into two groups: truly Arabic names and those which the Arabs fashioned by translating Ptolemy’s Greek descriptions of stars’ positions in the constellations. Ideler’s book was used as a basic reference source in the West for over 150 years. Sadly, as Kunitzsch and other modern experts note, Ideler did not have access to al-Sufi’s book on the fixed stars, and his work is riddled with errors due to his use of unreliable and chiefly secondary Arabic sources.

Richard Hinckley Allen (1838–1908), an American churchman, teacher and naturalist from Buffalo, New York, was





**Working in the Galata Observatory founded near Istanbul in the late 16th century by the Turkish astronomer Takyuddin, astronomers had access to the best reference works and technology of the era.**

another important figure in the third wave, known more for his passion than for his accuracy. He became interested in the history of star names after coming across a reference to a star with a strange name: Hamal (“The Ram” in Arabic), also known as Alpha Arietis, the first star in the constellation Ares. His interest developed into a hobby and then into a lifelong avocation. As was said at a memorial service after his death, “Like a prophet of the night, when the light of the day had vanished, he would name star after star, ... speaking of their relations to one another, and of the meaning of their names, as if he were more at home among their glories than most men would be with the persons and things of their daily environment.”

Allen compiled a comprehensive work on star-name lore, published in 1899 as *Star-Names and Their Meanings* (later reprinted as *Star-Names: Their Lore and Meaning*), which drew much of its material from Ideler and thus repeated many of that scholar’s errors. But Allen also helped popularize the names we have encountered that passed from Ptolemy and al-Sufi to Ulugh Beg and Bayer and Piazzzi, as well as along other routes. Allen’s book was if anything more

influential than Ideler’s on the popular understanding of star names, particularly those of Arabic origin, and is still often quoted today. Some of Allen’s variants on these names have ended up in modern reference works, including the *American Nautical Almanac* and *Webster’s International Dictionary*. At the same time, most of Allen’s predecessors—the European and Arabic-speaking astronomers, cosmographers, philologists and others that he cites extensively in his book—remain shrouded in obscurity and in many cases have been virtually forgotten.

These, then, were the waves of knowledge that brought the Arabic-origin star names to the West:

**The First Wave** of medieval times, with the greatest number of Arabic star names, including the Ptolemaic corpus (150 CE), moving from al-Sufi (964 CE) to the astronomical compendium of Spain’s King Alfonso X.

**The Second Wave** of the late Renaissance, with most of the star names moving from the first printed edition of the works of Alfonso X (1483) and from the first printed edition of Ptolemy’s *Almagest* (Gerard’s 1175 Latin translation from Arabic, published in 1515) to Bayer’s *Uranometria* (1603).


**The Third Wave** of the 19th century, with most of the star names transmitted from al-Sufi to Ulugh Beg’s star list to Hyde’s translation (1665) to Piazzzi’s Palermo star catalogue (1803).

In part because of this complicated transmission process, the Arabic star

names in use today are neither uniform nor consistent but rather, according to Kunitzsch, “a conglomeration of heterogeneous words fashioned at different times and in different ways.” Direct borrowings happened only during the Middle Ages. The word formations of the second and third waves are indirect borrowings—cases in which astronomers have taken terms from translations that appear in the European literature. But regardless of the nature of the borrowing, the process continued for almost a millennium, with new influxes of Arabic star names entering the literature of the West from time to time through the centuries. This process resembles, in a way, the periodic pulsations of brightness of the star Algol in Perseus, sometimes referred to as “The Winking Demon”—a star that, as you know by now, was named for us by the Arabs. 🌍



**Robert W. Lebling** is a writer and communication specialist based in Dhahran and a longtime contributor to *Saudi Aramco World*. His latest book is *Legends of the Fire Spirits: Jinn and Genies from Arabia to Zanzibar* (I.B.Tauris, 2010).

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astrolabe: J/F 92, J/F 04, M/J 07

Arabic science: M/J 07

Ulugh Beg: M/A 91

Bayt al-Hikma: M/J 82, M/A 87



Today, one out of every four cups of coffee in the world is poured in the United States. While much of coffee's success has ridden on its appeal to palate and mind, it has also been among America's most-advertised consumer products since the 19th century. In that advertising, images and words associated with an imaginary Middle East (often "Arabia") have imbued coffee with more than a touch of exoticism and romance—even though most coffee sold in the US has always come from the Caribbean and Latin America.

Consider, for example, the figure of the white-bearded "Arab" that adorned the most popular brand in the country, Hills Bros, whose canisters lined the coffee shelf in nearly every American grocery in the early part of the 20th century: Standing in a flowing, full-length robe, wearing a turban more Indian than Arabian and "Aladdin" slippers with upcurled toes, "the Hills Bros Arab" strides into a deep swallow from an oversized mug that he holds in both hands. For a period of 50 years, he personified American coffee.

Originating in Ethiopia and Yemen, coffee had become a popular drink in Ottoman Turkey and parts of Europe by the second half of the 17th century, and was being grown extensively from Arabia to India and Java. In the mid-18th century, it began to emerge as an important cash crop throughout the New World regions where growers found the Arabica bean thrived, especially in the highlands of Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala and Mexico.

In the United States, the growing thirst for coffee roughly paralleled the nation's westward expansion and the changes that came with industrialization, immigration, and the rise of mass media and



# AMERICA'S ARABIAN "CUPPA JOE"

Written by Jonathan Friedlander  
Images courtesy of Jonathan Friedlander

consumer society. By the second half of the 19th century, widely available, inexpensive coffee had become a staple in the growing numbers of urban homes and the diminishing numbers of farm families alike. By the turn of the 20th century, the expanding coffee industry began to brew up marketing incentives to further stimulate sales, and to develop arrays of gadgets and merchandise designed to enhance the experience of coffee-making and coffee-drinking: special storage cans, grinders, percolators and sets of mugs and cups to fit any occasion.

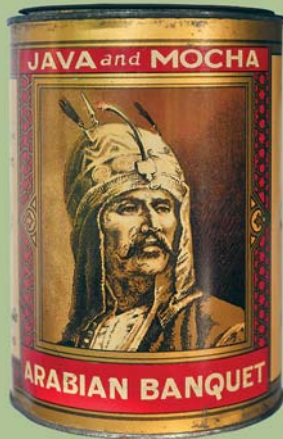
These, like coffee itself, were promoted through advertising. This put coffee on the radio, on billboards and street signs, in magazines and, after World War II, on television. To appeal to the largest number of people, advertisers pitched their product to the "average American," and their success showed in the drink's colloquial nickname: "a cuppa joe," a tag that marked coffee as

something that was as "all-American" as "the average Joe."

Buttressing this business of coffee were the merchants and companies trading and transporting beans north from Central and South America. Their endeavors were supported by reliable maritime shipping and airtight (later vacuum-packed) metal-canister technology. In the economic ferment of the time, hundreds of companies flourished, and several family-owned establishments rose to the top.

Arbuckle Bros. emerged as one of the earliest companies to establish a brand name that earned coast-to-coast popularity. In Pittsburgh, John and Charles Arbuckle in 1865 patented a method of preserving the taste and aroma of roasted coffee beans by coating them with a glaze of egg white and sugar. Their coffee was then packaged mechanically and sealed in airtight bags that sported the bright yellow and red colors of Arbuckle's lead brand, Ariosa. As a marketing incentive, each Ariosa bag also contained (and still contains) a peppermint stick. In the 1890's, Arbuckle coffee packages began offering coupons redeemable for "all manner of notions

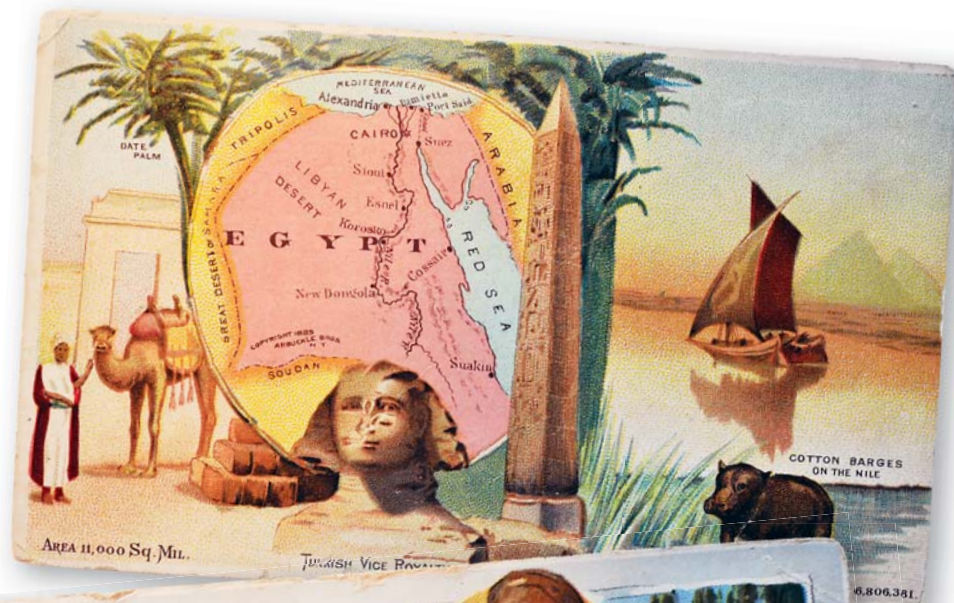






provides basic information about the scene, also in a manner reflective of the era. (For example: “Turkey—Area: 63,800 square miles; Population: 4,490,000; Government: Absolute Despotism” and “Cairo: The streets are highly picturesque with gaily dressed traders, dragomans, mountebanks, dogs, donkeys and snake-charmers.”)

True to this popular, orientalist view of the Middle East in general and of Arabs in particular (who were often not distinguished from Turks, Persians or other groups), it was not unusual to see ancient Assyria and ancient Judea mixed among the modern nations, a consequence of the casual blurring of ancient and modern that made up a “timeless” view of the Middle East that can still be found today.



This page and opposite, top: **Beginning in the 1890's, Arbuckle Bros. began to entice buyers by including in its packages of coffee peppermint sticks, discount coupons and hundreds of trading cards. Three sets of geographical cards included 21 that depicted Arab and Middle Eastern lands.**

including handkerchiefs, razors, scissors and wedding rings,” as well as several series of trading cards that depicted countries and peoples of the world, state maps, famous paintings, flowers, animals, children and religious scenes. Arbuckle’s became especially popular in the West, where it became known as “Cowboy Coffee”—a term the company still uses in its advertising today.

In three of Arbuckle’s 50-card series—“National Geographical,” “Views from a Trip Around the World” and “Sports and Pastimes of All Nations”—there appeared 21 cards themed to Middle Eastern countries and cities. The front of each card shows a color-lithograph scene, rendered according to the tastes of the time, and the back





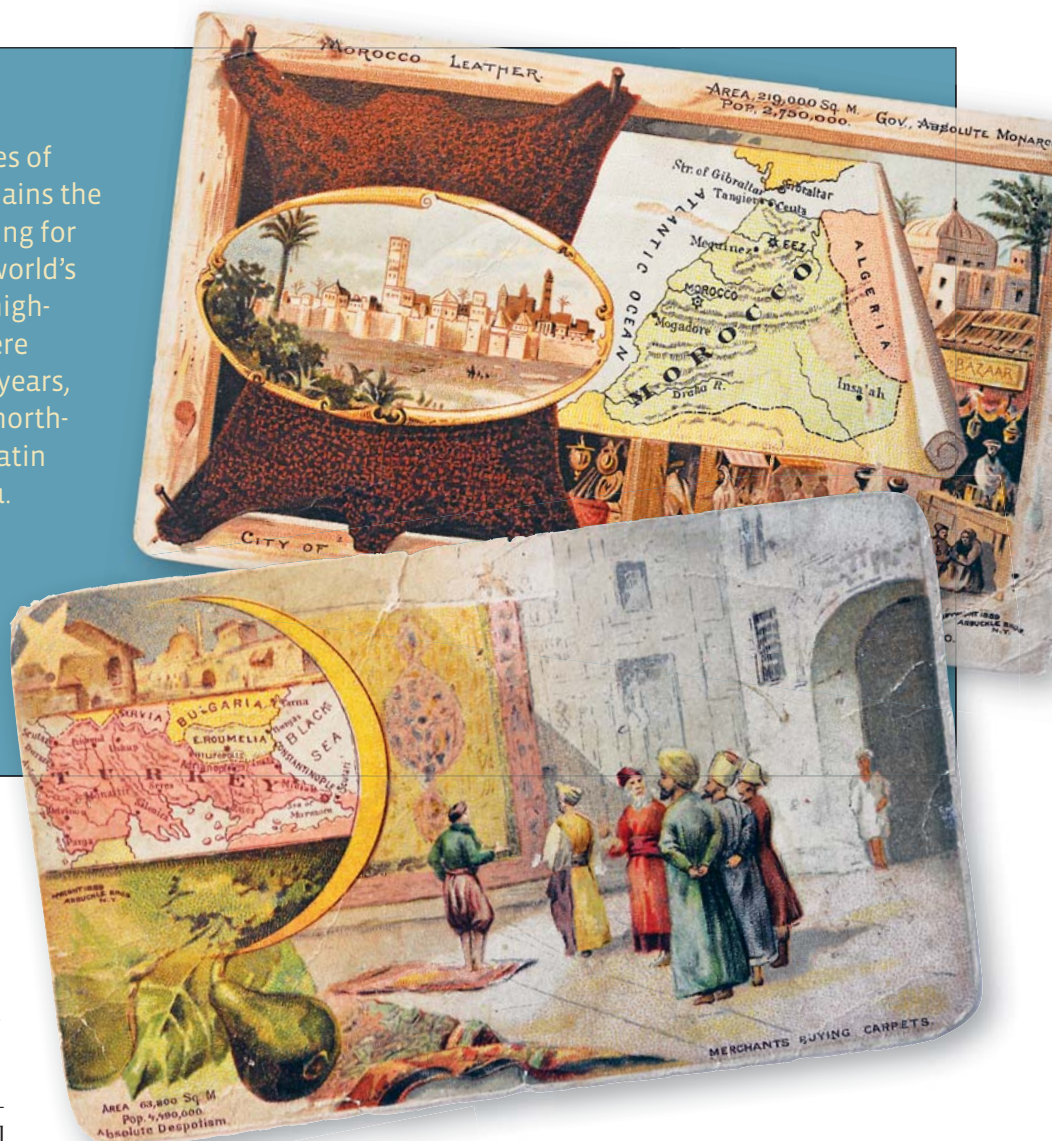
## WHAT IS ARABICA?

*Coffea arabica* was the first species of coffee to be cultivated, and it remains the most popular one today, accounting for more than three-quarters of the world's coffee production. Native to the highlands of Ethiopia and Yemen, where cultivation goes back about 1000 years, it is now grown from Yemen and north-eastern Africa to the Caribbean, Latin America, India and Southeast Asia. The remaining 25 percent of the world's coffee is *Coffea canephora*, also known as "robusta" due to its higher caffeine content and its stronger, often more bitter, taste.

By the late 19th century, Chicago had grown into a national hub of industry, commerce, and the ship and rail transport systems that distributed coffee nationwide. It was around this time that the marketing of coffee using Middle Eastern brand names and images peaked. Family-owned companies like Continental Coffee thrived in Chicago, supported by local manufacturers of vacuum-sealed metal cans

such as General Can Company, which also produced red-and-white canisters for the Rust-Parker Company's brand, Omar. Competitor American Can Company produced vividly decorated containers for Baghdad Coffee. To the east in Toledo, Ohio, the Blodgett-Beckley Co. brought to market Arabian Banquet, which boasted, on a canister displaying an "Arab warrior," that "We guarantee the absolute genuineness and purity" of the blend.

But it was in San Francisco in 1878 that Austin and Reuben Hills purchased the Arabian Coffee & Spice Company, and they made Hills Bros into one of the longest-lasting purveyors of coffee in America. Integral to the company's success was the "Arab gentleman" image that became its brand up through the 1950's.



One of 50 views from a trip around the world.

### GRIND YOUR COFFEE AT HOME.

It will pay you well to keep a small coffee-mill in your kitchen and grind your coffee just as you use it, one mess at a time. Coffee should not be ground until the coffee-pot is ready to receive it. Coffee will lose more of its strength and aroma in one hour after being ground than in six months before being ground. So long as **ARIOSA** remains in the whole berry, our glazing, composed of choice eggs and pure confectioners' sugar, closes the pores of the coffee, and thereby are retained all the original strength and aroma.

### ARIOSA COFFEE

has during 25 years set the standard for all other roasted coffees. So true is this that other manufacturers, in recommending their goods, have known no higher praise than to say, "It's just as good as Arbuckles'."

**ARBUCKLE BROS.**  
NEW YORK CITY.

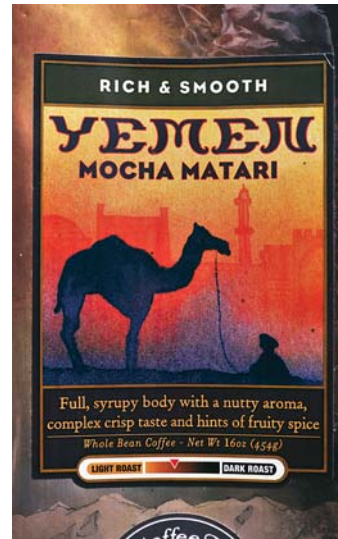
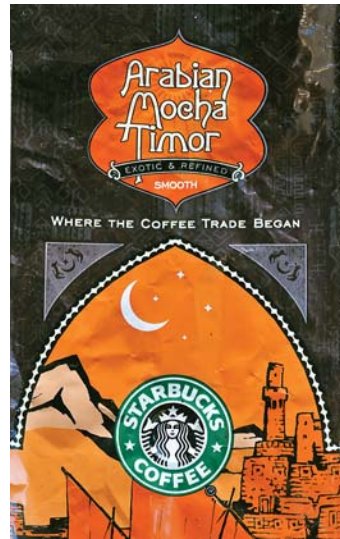
**MOROCCO.**  
The empire, although leaving some interesting relics of its former grandeur, is now in a state of deplorable decay. Its government an oriental despotism of the worst type, and its general condition being as to merit the reproach of being the "China of the West." Yet there are some faint signs of a recognition of European influence, toward the engraving of the practices of modern civilization. The natural features of the country are eminent-ly favorable thereto.

The city of Morocco, founded in 1002, one of the royal capitals of the sultanate, lies in a spacious plain, about 15 miles from the northern part of the Atlas, at a height variously estimated from 1,400 to over 1,600 feet. Ranking during the early ages as one of the most flourishing cities of Islam, it has sunk to a wretched state of degradation, the luxury of its situation, the exceptional beauty of its situation, the luxuriant gardens and groves which it is surrounded and interspersed, and the magnificent outlook towards the mountains, dated as to allow entrance to foot-passengers and even horsemen, in various places. Although bricks of a good quality are manufactured, they are not used for buildings, being pounded clay - being the only material employed. With the exception of the tower of Kutubia, mosque and a certain archway, which was brought in from Spain, there is not a piece of building in the city. The tower of Kutubia alone is a worthy memorial of the constructive genius of the early Moors. The whole of the city is occupied by a vast cistern excavated by Maunier. The extreme north of the city possesses property of Shil Bel Abina. In the extreme north of the city, 250,000 pounds, and said to be 200,000, is now estimated at only 50,000.

By the late 19th century, the marketing of coffee using Middle Eastern brand names and images peaked.

Left: The back of each Arbuckle's card described both the product and the orientalist scenes on the front of the card.





So iconic did he become that, today, the company has commemorated him with a bronze statue at the entrance of its old factory. The plaque on the statue's base states: "In 1900, when Hills Bros originated the process for vacuum-packing coffee, this trademark appeared on the first Hills Bros coffee can. It has lived on through all the years as a lasting symbol of coffee quality."

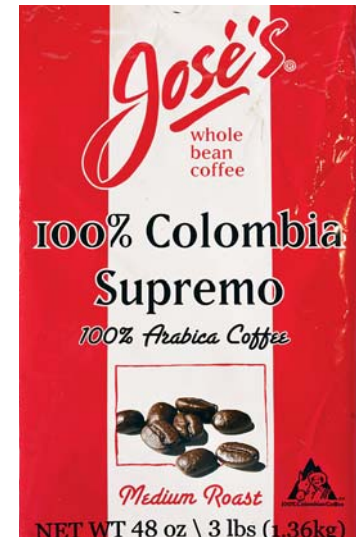
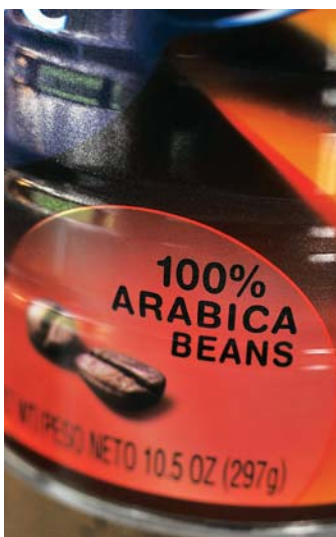
Not far behind, MJB coffee, whose 1904 brick factory still stands not far from Hills Bros', adopted the legendary Aladdin himself as a trademark. However, he did not last as long as Hills Bros' gentleman.

In Los Angeles, Coffee Products of America, Ltd. launched the brand Ben Hur, sold in a red can decorated with images of the chariots familiar to Americans who had read the enormously popular

**Turbaned "Arabs" may be gone, but fiery reds and earthy browns still characterize coffee branding, which still often romanticizes the Middle East and—more factually—highlights "Arabica" for quality.**

Lew Wallace novel or who had seen the silent-screen classic films of 1907 and 1925.

Considering the tonnage of coffee that was coming to the United States from Latin America and the abundance of orientalist images concocted by American businesses to sell their products—Palmolive, for example, used images of "ancient Egyptian beauties" to sell its soaps and lotions—it is not surprising that in 1919, when the Atlantic and Pacific Company (A&P) branded its nationwide coffee "Bokar"—a name that combined the Colombian cities of Bogota and Cartagena—it, too, looked to the allure of the Middle East for its brand imagery: a camel caravan in silhouette. Similarly, America's first decaffeinated coffee, Sanka, employed a Hills Bros–like image of a bearded (and of course turbaned) "Arab" graciously pouring coffee from a





curved-spout pot. This long-standing trademark appeared from the 1920's through the 1950's on the bright orange Sanka Coffee label. Today, although the "Arab" is gone, the color orange has come to be associated generically with decaffeinated coffee.

As a chapter in the history of both coffee and America, these Middle Eastern representations did their job: They sold coffee—lots of it. Crafted by illustrators and graphic designers who drew from the pages of popular imagination, the images struck romantic chords in America's rapidly urbanizing, increasingly pragmatic population, and the brands were part of the broader, more widespread fashion of "Arab," "Middle Eastern" and "Egyptian" images that appeared everywhere, from the illustrated bestseller *1001 Nights* to the 1893 Chicago Columbian Exposition's "authentic" Middle Eastern cultures and rituals—among them a coffee ceremony. Theaters showed movies like "The Sheik" and "The Mummy"; the musical "Desert Song" was a hit, as was the 1924 George Gershwin tune "Night Time in Araby." Associated with all were illustrated film posters and colorful sheet-music covers. Pulp fiction magazines (*Argosy*, *Fantastic Adventures* and *Oriental Tales* were three) portrayed the Middle East as a land of exotica, adventure and intrigue.

This all began to change after World War II, when corporate food conglomerates such as Procter & Gamble, Sara Lee and Kraft Industries began to buy up the family-owned coffee distributors and rebrand them with streamlined, "modern" looks. Largely gone were the turbaned "Arabs"—although the camel caravan has held on to this day as an occasional motif.

According to the National Coffee Association, today one in five American adults, and one in two young adults, drinks coffee daily. Advertising and marketing still play their role in today's increasingly dominant "coffeehouse culture," led since the 1980's by Starbucks, which opened its first Seattle café in 1971. Even though "the Starbucks factor" may appear to be turning America's diner-based, proudly egalitarian "cuppa joe" into a thing of the past, a closer look at Starbucks and its competitors shows that while appeals to elitism can drive up prices—and, presumably, profit margins—exoticism and Arabian origins are still useful marketing tools.

"Exotic and refined" is how Starbucks begins to describe the coffee in its packages of Arabian Mocha Timor, a blend first released in 1996. It goes on to promise "a delicate balance between the spicy and berry notes of Arabian Mocha Sanani and the smooth, clean finish of East Timor." This blend was sold in packages bearing the same fiery, earthy colors that have enticed consumers to coffee for more than a century—reds and browns. Similarly, bags of Starbucks' Arabian Mocha Sanani (cultivated around Sana'a, the capital

of Yemen) advise that the crop was grown at an elevation of 1600 meters (5200') on smallholder farms, and sun-dried. Not to be outdone, The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf, established in 1963, sells Yemen Mocha Matari ("full, syrupy body with a nutty aroma, complex crisp taste and hints of fruit, spice...and chocolate"). Among the silver and black packages from the gourmet chain Dean & DeLuca is the Sahara Blend that "honors the ritual of coffee that still flourishes in cities along the ancient spice routes." And on the same shelf stand bags of Mocha Java Blend, which is "impeccably balanced with sweet layers of chocolate, apricot and tobacco," embodying "coffee's most storied and delicious traditions."

Today words, not images, lure would-be drinkers with exotic, romanticized motifs that are as timeless as the imaginings of American orientalism. And while, these days, marketing focuses on the drinker's personal experience, promoting a kind of armchair-tourism gastronomy, or an "exoticism of one's own senses," yet many brands—among them such remaining pillars of the "cuppa joe" tradition as Yuban, Maxwell House and Nescafé—label their products "100% Arabica" to serve notice to the buyer that the product will have a dependably smooth taste, one whose pleasures

hark back to coffee's heavily storied origins.

Whether it's an old-timer's "cuppa joe" served by an imagined stereotype wearing a robe, or instead a double grande latté frapuccino made from the hour's brew of Yemen Mocha Matari, the American coffee industry continues to harness Middle Eastern representations to help Americans buy and enjoy one of the most popular drinks in history. 🌍



In 1990, Hills Bros adopted a new "taster" figure designed to evoke its turn-of-the-century American founders.



**Jonathan Friedlander** (friedlander.jonathan@gmail.com) is a photographer, author and collector of Middle Eastern Americana. Formerly assistant director of the Center for Near Eastern Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles, he is affiliated with the Department of Special Collections at the university's Young Research Library. His trove of Middle Eastern Americana can be accessed via the Online Archive of California at [www.oac.cdlib.org](http://www.oac.cdlib.org).



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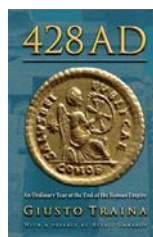
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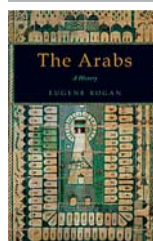
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**428 AD: An Ordinary Year at the End of the Roman Empire.** Giusto Traina. 2009, Princeton UP, 978-0-691-13669-1, \$24.95 hb. This brief volume, short on military action and long on diplomacy, religion and politics, offers a year’s tour of the Roman Empire and its eastern neighbors—Armenia, Sassanid Persia and Bactria. Among notable portrayals are young Emperor Theodosius II and the powerful women of his family; Saint Simeon the Stylite atop his pillar near Aleppo; and in Hippo in North Africa, an aged Saint Augustine cataloging a perplexing array of heresies as his days in the City of Man neared an end. These people are intriguing, but even more so are the monk Hypatius, ecclesiastical enemy of the ill-fated bishop Nestorius; and Aetius, a politically ambitious general with a genius for self-promotion as a counterinsurgency expert. It’s easy to imagine Aetius with PowerPoint instead of papyrus. Regarding the lands of today’s Muslim world, this is a fascinating panorama of a moment in “late antiquity.” —JOSEPH P. DUGGAN



**The Arabs: A History.** Eugene Rogan. 2009, Basic Books, 978-0-46507-100-5, \$35 hb. Histories of the Arabs are seldom described as “refreshing,” but this one is. The author, an Oxford historian, uses Arabic sources to give his material unexpected perspectives. His book focuses on

the last 500 years of Arab history, from the Ottoman conquest to the present time, and his narrative techniques put us front and center on the stage of history. We share the horror of the aging Mamluk sultan Qansuh in 1516 as he watches his army of sword-wielding knights disintegrate before modern Ottoman troops—“gunpowder infantry,” armed with muskets—ushering in new technology and a new era. Four centuries later, as we witness Cairo street demonstrations and army plotting drive Egypt toward the 1952 revolution, our experience is enriched by the reminiscences of Nawal El Saadawi, celebrated physician and feminist intellectual. Rogan views the Arab experience over the last half millennium as “playing by other people’s rules”—Ottomans, Europeans, Cold War superpowers or Americans alone—and hopes that the Arabs may be able to break the “cycle of subordination.” But he concedes this would require the leading powers to pursue balanced conflict resolution and the Arab countries to move on in the direction of broad-based reform and government accountability. —ROBERT LEBLING



**Bedouin Weaving of Saudi Arabia and its Neighbours.** Joy Totah Hilden. 2010, Arabian Publishing, 978-0-95588-940-0, \$120 hb. In traditional Arabian Bedouin society, women wove and built their families’ goat-hair tents, using wool from their own herds. Hilden lived in Saudi Arabia from

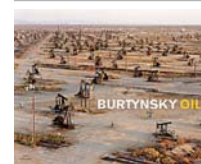
1982 till 1994, learning everything she could about Bedouin weavers and their art; as a weaver and weaving instructor herself, she knew what she needed to learn and sought this knowledge in every region of Saudi Arabia. She stayed in touch with her favorite weavers, noting how their art changed with time and with their families’ integration into the modern economy. While the traditional craft is hardly practiced today, Hilden notes that many cultural institutes in the region are trying to preserve it. Her discussion of Bedouin life as seen through the weaver’s eyes reveals the gentle harmony they kept with the desert environment. The thorough information about the weavings photographed in the book will help collectors and archivists, and the book is also a precise and accurate guide for those who would like to make their own Bedouin weavings. It includes specific directions on weaving patterns and spinning and weaving techniques, and information on natural dyes. —KAY HARDY CAMBELL



**Civilizations of Ancient Iraq.** Benjamin R. Foster and Karen Polinger Foster. 2009, Princeton UP, 978-0-691-13722-3, \$26.95 hb.

The first towns and cities, states and empires developed in the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Writing

was invented here, and poetry. Astronomy, mathematics and law all trace their beginnings to the region, which also witnessed significant innovations in art and architecture. With so many civilizations rising and falling—Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Persian, Seleucid, Parthian and Sassanian, among others—writing a one-volume history of ancient Iraq is a daunting task. Fortunately, the Fosters, both associated with Near East studies at Yale, are up to the task. Their grand survey of cultural and political history from the earliest settlements to the Arab conquest of the seventh century is engaging and direct, and enlivened by passages from Babylonian and Assyrian literature that illuminate everyday life. Of special interest is the epilogue, which covers the rediscovery of Iraq’s treasures by Europeans in the 19th century and the subsequent waves of looting, the archaeological exploration, the rise of indigenous Iraqi expertise, and the calamitous damage wrought by sanctions and war to research, archives and the sites themselves. —KYLE PAKKA



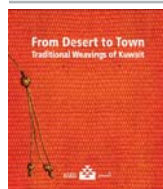
**Edward Burtynsky: Oil.** 2009, Steidl Photography International, 978-3-86521-943-5, \$134 hb. Perhaps the world’s foremost industrial landscape photographer,

Edward Burtynsky has produced large-format photographic studies of such unlikely subjects as quarries, mine tailings and railroad cuts. Oil represents his decade-long project to photograph the production, distribution and use of the world’s most important energy resource. Through his lens, oil fields in California and Baku become landscapes charged with portent and eerie beauty. Burtynsky’s magisterial compositions are clinical and unflinching, yet rich in ambiguity, inviting debate on the ultimate meaning of his



subjects. What is beyond debate is his aesthetic achievement. His photographs transform subjects few other artists dare to consider—pipelines snaking through a Canadian forest, the New Jersey Turnpike—into compelling art.

—KYLE PAKKA

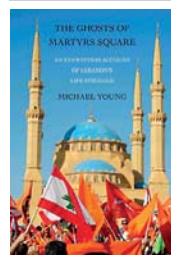


**From Desert to Town: Traditional Weavings of Kuwait.**

John Gillow. 2009, Al-Sadu Weaving Cooperative, 978-99906-972-1-6, 12kd hb. With the change to a modern way of life in Kuwait beginning in the 1950's, the

weaving skills there, both nomad and urban, seemed likely to disappear. Fortunately, in the 1970's, Shaykha Altaf Al-Sabah recognized the danger and set up Al-Sadu House, where weaving techniques could be taught and examples collected. *From Desert to Town* records this textile tradition with numerous color photographs of both old and modern examples—including remarkable rugs woven with calligraphic inscriptions. John Gillow, an international textile expert and author of numerous standard works, gives a fascinating outline of the world that produced these materials and the techniques involved. The book also provides interesting sidelights on the social history of Kuwait, including reminiscences of retired weavers. Each photograph has an informative description of the object's function, and there is a useful glossary of the names of patterns and other terms.

—CAROLINE STONE

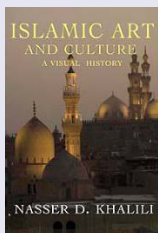


**The Ghosts of Martyrs Square: An Eyewitness Account of Lebanon's Life Struggle.**

Michael Young. 2010, Simon & Schuster, 978-1-41659-862-6, \$26 hb. Lebanese journalist Michael Young uses the era after the February 2005 assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri to understand

the dynamics that define and drive Lebanese society and the state. His core narrative about the events in and around Martyrs Square, especially the Independence Intifada in the first four months after the assassination, merges neatly with his analysis of Beirut and what it tells us about Lebanese of all religions and ethnicities. He explores also how countries throughout the Middle East and the world engage and compete in Lebanon, where we see the ideological struggle between western liberal consumerism and Mideast-anchored Arabism and Islamism carried out. Young's central theme is that Lebanon's "paradoxical liberalism" emerges from those spaces of freedom that open up within the constantly renegotiated balance among the country's sectarian groups. This balance was severely tested in 2005–2009 with the assassination, the Syrian withdrawal and the subsequent assertion of power by Hizbullah, he says, and believes the outcome of the current ideological struggle remains unclear. His sharp and nuanced analysis of what makes Lebanon work also sheds light on how politics, governance, identity and power intersect throughout the Middle East.

—RAMI G. KHOURI



**Islamic Art and Culture: A Visual History.** Nasser D. Khalili. 2005, Overlook, 978-1-58567-839-6, \$65 hb

**The Glory of the Sultans: Islamic Architecture in India.** Yves Porter and Gérard Degeorge. 2009, Flammarion, 978-2-08030-110-9, \$95 hb

**Masterpieces of Islamic Art: The Decorated Page from the 8th to the 17th Century.** Oleg Grabar. 2009, Prestel, 978-3-79134-379-2, \$75 hb.

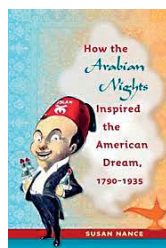
These glossy survey books show that the study of Islamic art has come of age. Khalili's is the most general, covering all aspects of Islamic art from the seventh century to relatively modern times. It opens with a map of major sites, a list of major dynasties and an illustrated timeline of major events, but most of the book is devoted to 13 types of art, ranging from calligraphy and Qur'an manuscripts to carpets and coins. Almost all of the objects illustrated are in the author's extensive collection, published in a companion series, though curiously they're not identified as such. The book concludes with a short survey of buildings and a page of modern flags, keyed to a rotating wheel with factoids about Islamic countries and masterpieces of Islamic art. If you could have only one book to learn about Islamic art, this might well be it.

The other two volumes, by contrast, concentrate on a specific medium in a specific region: Porter and Degeorge on architecture in India, and Grabar on book painting, mainly—though not exclusively—in Iran. Though they, too, survey their subjects, their more limited scope allows for more detail. Some readers may recognize many of the buildings and paintings in these two volumes, for they include the most famous masterpieces of Islamic art, whether the Taj Mahal or the "Court of Gayumars" in the copy of the *Book of Kings* made for the Safavid shah Tahmasp. But the luscious photographic details, ranging

from inlays and tiles to vignettes and portraits, allow readers to sit back and savor the meticulous craftsmanship and glorious color that are hallmarks of Islamic art.

Porter and Degeorge's book follows the traditional chronological format. Lengthy essays by Porter, a French professor of Islamic art who specializes in eastern Islamic lands, on the buildings produced in the various sultanates and under the individual Mughal emperors are supplemented with photographs by Degeorge, an architect and professional photographer who concentrates on Islamic architecture. Grabar's book is more innovative in organization. A big-picture book about little pictures, it opens with a brief ramble through the thousand years of image-making before turning to longer sections on different texts that are illustrated (epic and lyric poetry, albums, etc.) and different subjects portrayed (prince and court, nomad and urban, etc.). As the author, the granddaddy of Islamic art historians, notes in his introduction, the book is intended not as a history but as an "invitation to reverie" that encourages readers to pause and reflect. The book and its many illustrations should also put to rest any misconception that figural painting was not part and parcel of Islamic art. Together, these weighty tomes show that Islamic art has many stories to tell and that many readers will profit by hearing them.

—SHEILA S. BLAIR AND JONATHAN M. BLOOM



**How the Arabian Nights Inspired the American Dream, 1790-1935.** Susan Nance. 2009, University of North Carolina Press, 978-0-8078-3274-5, \$49.95, hb.

Professor Susan Nance espouses a remarkable thesis: She argues that the tales of *The Arabian Nights*, upon translation into English and publication in the us, changed American ideas about success and fortune. For instance, the concept of leisure and lounges in the tales justified a new type of lifestyle goal for successful Americans. The Syrian peddler's cart of the 1890's, holding wares for all areas of the home, was a harbinger of the classic American department store. Arabs, or actors pretending to be Arabs, performed extravagant circus acts; one—the pyramid of humans—visually expressed the strength of the individual Arab at the base, holding the weight of numerous men above him. *How the Arabian Nights Inspired the American Dream* surprises with its persuasiveness and originality.

—ASMA HASAN

**The Kingdom: Saudi Arabia and the Challenge of the 21st Century.** Joshua Craze and Mark Huband,



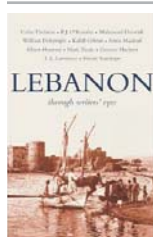
eds. 2009, Columbia UP, 978-0-231-15434-5, \$50 hb.

What stands out in this collection of commentaries and articles, published initially in a Web forum and written mostly by Saudis, is the diversity and complexity of Saudi society. It is appropriate that the Internet was the arena for these discussions, since it was the explosion of communication technologies that made Saudis profoundly aware of the significance of their own diversity, and of the fact that the future of the country depends on its ability to accommodate diversity, both internally and in the global context. One article quotes King Abdullah as articulating this necessity: "We cannot remain rigid while the surrounding world is changing." Most of us are familiar with the conservative faction in the kingdom that flatly rejects the message of change, but that faction is only one end of a spectrum of opinion, and most of the various viewpoints are represented here. Some articles voice frustration with the government's "incremental, moderate" approach to reform. Some seek to disentangle the purest principles of Islam from ancient custom and habit. Others demonstrate that life is indeed changing in Saudi Arabia. For the western reader,



this collection offers a rare and welcome glimpse of the ongoing debate inside the kingdom—Saudis talking to Saudis about the direction and destiny of their country.

—ROBERT LEBLING

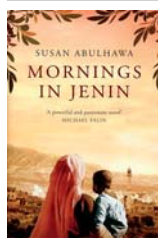


#### Lebanon Through Writers' Eyes.

T. J. Gorton and A. Féghali Gorton, eds. 2009, Eland, 978-1-90601-127-7, £12.99 pb.

The editors of this anthology, a husband-and-wife team with a scholarly bent, have assembled texts from some 75 authors spanning more than 3000 years. Readers who have experienced Lebanon's natural beauty or personally tasted its stew of cultural diversity will find much to please them in this collection, despite its academic framework. Although there are excerpts penned by such familiar names as Homer, Ibn Battuta, Flaubert, Twain, Stanhope, Lawrence and Gibran among the essays, readers merely curious about a romantic, perhaps exotic Lebanon they know slightly, or imagine, may find many of the texts a tough slog. The extracts are grouped in four sections: chronologically from antiquity to medieval times; western travelers of the 14th through 20th centuries; works by religious, political and literary writers; and poetry and fiction revolving around the periods in which the land has been wracked by war, enough to depress even Lebanon's most ardent admirers.

—WILLIAM TRACY

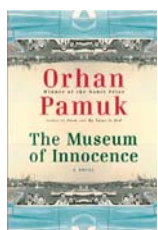


#### Mornings in Jenin.

Susan Abulhawa. 2010, Bloomsbury, 978-1-60819-046-1, \$15 pb. Susan Abulhawa's debut novel is the beautifully written story of the Abulheja family, whose peaceful life in the Palestinian village of Ein Hod ends suddenly in 1948. Overnight, Israeli soldiers

forcibly evict the inhabitants, who are relocated to the Jenin refugee camp. Along the way, an Israeli soldier takes a baby—Ismael Abulheja—from his mother and raises him as “David.” The Abulheja family's struggle to overcome their loss, to survive as refugees through 60 years of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and to build a sense of belonging out of the rubble of the past is narrated by Amal, the daughter born and raised in Jenin. Readers travel with Amal from Jenin to Jerusalem, from Sabra and Shatila in Lebanon to the US. Amal's story is compelling and painfully honest, and it reveals the human face behind an ongoing political conflict. She is the voice of hope and humanity preserved despite unimaginable loss.

—PINEY KESTING

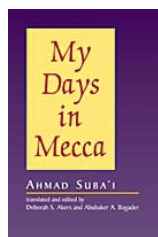


#### The Museum of Innocence.

Orhan Pamuk. 2009, Knopf, 978-0-307-26676-7, \$28.95 hb. The Turkish Nobel Prize-winner's latest book is a riveting read for those who delight in detail—a story about obsessive love for a woman and a city. Füsun, the beauty who mesmerizes the narrator,

is the foreground; Istanbul, Pamuk's birthplace, is the background. But as in figure-ground reversal, the squinting reader can flip-focus between Füsun's “long limbs, fine bones” and *joie de vivre*, and Istanbul's varied neighborhoods: Nişantaşı, Çukurcuma, Beyoğlu.... Pamuk makes clear that suspense is not his goal when he warns that “a love story that ends happily scarcely deserves more than a few sentences.” Rather, he wishes to enthrall the reader into bearing witness to the past, preserving and exhibiting what was lost: both his soulmate and his mid-century Istanbul. In Pamuk's museum, every object has multiple resonances, and what time and foolish acts have destroyed is resurrected in moments of poignant contemplation by the author/narrator and the reader. Memory and melancholy, bitter and sweet, are the warp and weft of this rich tapestry.

—NADINE MICHÈLE PAYN



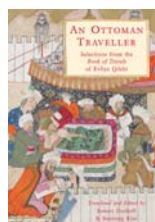
#### My Days in Mecca.

Ahmad Suba'i. Lynne Rienner, 978-1-93504-911-1, \$29.95 hb.

Ahmad Suba'i's autobiography is an often amusing memoir of one of Saudi Arabia's earliest modern historians. Suba'i captures the vibrant history of Makkah, as well as the traditional life

of a young Arab growing up at the turn of the century, and offers a rarely seen glimpse into the *kuttab*—the traditional school for Qur'anic recitation where Suba'i studied, and struggled, as a young boy. In the early 1900's, Makkah experiences a wave of modernization, and the *kuttab* system, which Suba'i viewed as backward and reactionary, is supplanted by a new educational curriculum that includes math and science. The author and his friends are among the first generation of Saudis to receive a modern education. Many, including Suba'i, became teachers and played a key role in shaping the consciousness of the next generation of Saudi Arabian students and literary figures.

—PINEY KESTING



#### An Ottoman Traveller: Selections from the Book of Travels of Evliya Çelebi.

Robert Dankoff and Sooyong Kim, tr. and ed. 2010, Eland, 978-1-906-01144-4, £25 hb.

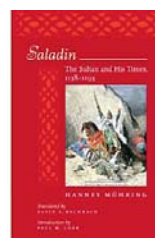
This partial translation of the *Seyahatname*, the great 17th-century Turkish travelogue of journeys within the Otto-

man Empire and beyond to Russia, Persia and Vienna by Topkapı Palace insider Evliya Çelebi, does honor to its breadth and depth as a mirror to its most interesting author and the government that he served. His 10-volume encyclopedic masterpiece of geography, folklore, and personal adventure has long lingered in the penumbra of untranslated non-western travel classics. This detailed account of its own world as well as of the West and westerners shines a bright light on the Ottoman Empire at its apex.

—LOU WERNER

#### Saladin: The Sultan and His Times, 1138–1193.

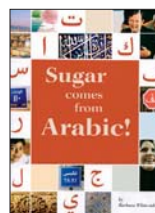
Hannes Mohring. David S. Bachrach, tr. 2008, John Hopkins UP. 978-0-80188-991-2, \$45 hb; 978-0-80188-992-9, \$20 pb.



This biography paints a vivid portrait of Saladin, the Muslim leader with a larger-than-life personality who reconquered Crusader kingdoms in the Middle East and took control of Jerusalem in 1187. The translator is faithful to the original German text, which offers readers an

insightful view of a man who was born in Tikrit (present-day Iraq) and rose to fame in Cairo. The presentation is balanced, including both historical and legendary material. It is lively, yet well-paced, offering an engrossing read both for the general public and for students learning about the history of the Middle East. Paul M. Cobb's introduction depicts Saladin in his cultural, geographical and political context. Anyone who reads this book will understand why Saladin continues to capture the imagination and interest of people in the 21st century.

—CHARLES BAKER



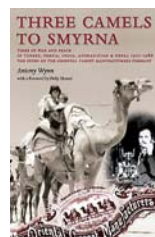
#### Sugar Comes From Arabic: A Beginner's Guide to Arabic Letters and Words.

Barbara Whitesides. 2009, Interlink, 978-1-56656-757-2, \$20 spiral-bound.

This engaging introduction to the Arabic alphabet and script was written by the granddaughter of James

Henry Breasted, the Egyptologist who helped read the seals on Tutankhamun's tomb. Whitesides teaches the reader how to write the letters of common English and Arabic names in Arabic script. Her method is to reduce an English word down to its consonants, without most vowels, to reverse the sequence of those letters, and then to write them in Arabic script. By book's end, readers should be able to write their names in Arabic. While it's impossible to learn the sounds of some Arabic letters, such as *dad* and *ayn*, without hearing them spoken, one can certainly learn to read and recognize them as written letters, and Whitesides's descriptions of the sounds are easily accessible. Throughout the book, she explores English words whose roots come from Arabic, such as *jar*, *genie*, *lemon*, *lute*, *algebra*, *gypsum* and *soap*. In demystifying Arabic script, Whitesides also brings Arab culture into focus.

—KAY HARDY CAMPBELL



#### Three Camels to Smyrna.

Antony Wynn. 2008, Hali Publications, 978-1-898113-67-6, \$75 hb.

There was a brief time at the turn of the 20th century when every tastefully decorated home in England required at least one hand-woven oriental carpet. This

charming history of one link in the supply chain connecting Turkish nomadic tents and Iranian mud huts to London front parlors puts the spotlight on the British-owned Oriental Carpet Manufacturers Company, or OCM, and the deriding-do of its intrepid commercial agents, some British, others Levantine. Based in Smyrna, today's Izmir, OCM sent its buyers of old carpets as far as India in search of the quality and price



demanding by picky English consumers, while its supervisors of new production were charged with supplying tribal weavers with designs and dyes that would appeal to modern tastes. Photographs of tent and workshop carpet-making, vintage advertising brochures and OCM carpets laid in fine English drawing rooms illustrate the text.

—LOU WERNER

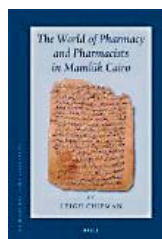


**The Troubadour's Song: The Capture and Ransom of Richard the Lionheart.** David Boyle. 2005, Walker, 0-8027-1459-5, \$26 hb.

David Boyle retraces Richard the Lionheart's long journey as a warrior in the Third Crusade (1189–1192) and as a fugitive trying to make his

way home to England after battling and treating with the Muslim leader Saladin. In doing so, he recreates an era when Islamic learning was being absorbed by new European universities even while Christian and Muslim armies faced each other on the battlefield. Boyle describes the shrewdness of the two leaders, shows how Richard left himself open to imprisonment in Europe for failing to capture Jerusalem, among other offenses, and tells the tale of Richard's faithful minstrel Blondel discovering him in a tower when Richard answered his song. Boyle's fascination with the troubadour consciousness (which serves as a metaphor for the period) is obvious in this well-written nonfiction title that reads like a novel.

—CHARLES BAKER



**The World of Pharmacy and Pharmacists in Mamluk Cairo.** Leigh Chipman. Sir Henry Wellcome Asian Series, Vol. 8. 2010, Brill, 978-9-0047-606-5, \$154 hb.

This book offers a glimpse of a segment of medieval Arab society rarely seen—the dispensers of medicines and other

health treatments. In 1260, a Jewish druggist in Mamluk Egypt named Abu 'l-Muna al-Kuhin al-Attar wrote *Minhaj al-Dukkan* (*Managing the Store*), a first-of-its-kind manual of knowledge on how to run a pharmacy. Previously, books on drugs had been written on the Greek model by Arab physicians—Muslim, Christian and Jewish—for use primarily in hospitals. By the 13th century, drug-stores were becoming commonplace in Cairo; they also sold spices (which frequently had medical properties) and perfumes (which often had health benefits). In fact, the Mamluk-era word for pharmacist was *'attar*, or perfumer. Chipman analyzes al-Kuhin's writings and the literature of the period, finding that pharmacists saw themselves as hardworking, God-fearing tradesmen, dedicated to the betterment of human health, while contemporary literature often portrayed them as scoundrels out to cheat the public by selling them overpriced medications of dubious efficacy. The reality, as now, was probably midway between the two perceptions.

—ROBERT LEBLING

## Books for Children

**The Clever Sheikh of the Butana and Other Stories:** Sudanese Folk Tales. Ali Lutfi Abdallah. Kate Harris, ed. 1999, Interlink, 1-56656-312-7, \$15, pb. This collection of Sudanese folk tales, as compelling and imaginative as *The 1001 Arabian Nights*, will entrance readers. The stories bring the culture and customs of Sudan to life. Ali Lutfi Abdallah heard these tales—featuring talking animals, buried treasure, evil spirits called Rhooles, beautiful maidens and brave, handsome young men who carry out heroic deeds to save themselves and their families from often gruesome ends—when he was growing up in a town on the White Nile. Each tale offers a “lesson” at the end that will encourage even the youngest readers to keep turning the pages. Western readers will have fun discovering the parallels between these stories and folktales they already know.

—CAITLIN CLARK

**Elvis the Camel.** Barbara Devine. Patricia Al Fakhri, ill. 2001, Stacy International, 1-900988-39-9, \$14.95 hb.

This rockin'-and-rollin' tale of a baby camel that is hit by a truck in the UAE and nursed back to health by an expatriate family and a local camel healer will remind readers that people from different cultures can work together to achieve wonderful things. Based on real events, the book is suitable for very young readers, but will surely be enjoyed by their parents and older siblings. The text is spiced with Arabic words, and there is an Arabic mini-glossary at the back. Patricia Al Fakhri's beautiful, sensitive watercolors vividly evoke Elvis's environment, and her often hilarious illustrations of camel expressions should have children and adults clamoring to see one of these noble, funny-looking “ships of the desert” in real life.

—CAITLIN CLARK

**Extraordinary Women from the Muslim World.**

Natalie Maydell and Sep Riahi. 2008, Global Content Ventures. 978-0-97999-010-6, \$16.95 hb.

The vividly told stories of 13 Muslim heroines (and Heba Amin's exquisite portraits) make this a classic book for readers age 10 to 12-plus, as well as non-Muslim adults, who had no book to turn to in search of women who made history in Islamic societies. Now they do. The mini-biographies begin with Khadija bint Khuwaylid and Aisha bint Abi Bakr, wives of the Prophet Muhammad, and close with Iran's Nobel Peace Prize-winner, human-rights activist Shirin Ebadi. The seventh-century poet Al Khansa, the devout Rabi'a al-Adawiyya of eighth-century Iraq and Yemen's legendary Queen Arwa bint Ahmed al-Sulayhiyya are discussed; so are the careers of Turkish aviator Sabiha Gökçen and Egypt's Umm Kulthum, who entranced the Arab world with her singing. An Arabic translation of this prizewinning book has been released by Dar El Shorouk, Cairo.

—PAT MCDONNELL TWAIR

The review of *Zeitoun* in the March/April 2010 “Suggestions for Reading” was incorrectly credited. The reviewer was Pat McDonnell Twair.

**The Pearl Diver.** Julia Johnson. Patricia Al Fakhri, ill. 2003, Stacy International, 978-1-900-98858-2, £9.95, \$15.95 hb.

Pearl diving is unfamiliar and exotic to most youngsters. It won't be so mysterious after reading *The Pearl Diver*, which combines factual details of a nearly vanished profession, including Arabic pearl-diving terms, with a vivid story about a young diver named Saeed. The six-year-old embarks for the Arabian Gulf pearl banks for the five-month pearling season on the boat on which his father is employed. He is nervous about being away from home for the first time, but determined to become as adept at diving as his father. He quickly learns that pearling requires intense cooperation among the members of the boat crew and the divers. Although it can be exciting, it is a difficult life that is fraught with dangers. Patricia Al Fakhri's beautiful and fluid illustrations boldly capture the colors of the pearlers and their environment.

—CAITLIN CLARK

**Pocket Timeline of Islamic Civilizations.** Nicholas Badcott. 2009, Interlink Books, 978-1-566-56758-9, \$13.95 hb.

Sometimes even astute scholars of the Arab world (as well as students just beginning to learn about it) can use a pocket-sized book that highlights key points in Islamic history. Nicholas Badcott's little volume does just that. A rich selection of photographs of important Islamic places and lovely artifacts enhance the text. Most of the pictures come from the British Museum, where the author is Arab-world education officer. The book also features a fold-out timeline of Islamic civilizations that would be particularly valuable for students visiting museums or for travelers about to embark on trips to Muslim lands. This easy-to-read compendium also includes a “Further Reading” section and websites for readers who want to learn more.

—CAITLIN CLARK

**Saluki: Hound of the Bedouin.** Julia Johnson. Susan Keeble, ill. 2008, Stacey International, 978-1-905299-00-3, \$16.95 pb.

To the Bedouin, the saluki is known as the Noble One—an elegant hunting hound celebrated for speed, sagacity and remarkable courage. No one understands this better than a small boy named Hamad, who anxiously awaits the birth of the saluki puppy that his father promised will be his. The puppy is Sougha (the Gifted One) who, under the careful guidance of Hamad and his grandfather, soon begins to follow the timeworn path from delightful puppy to disciplined saluki. No one doubts Sougha's potential as a swift and sagacious hunter, but it is only when she boldly attacks a deadly viper that she proves herself worthy of her distinguished heritage. Filled with humor and adventure, *Saluki: Hound of the Bedouin* will prove a delight for six- to 11-year-olds, and a treasure for anyone who wishes to gain new insights into the hardships and joys of Bedouin life.



Then think about a time when you helped someone. Did doing so help you stand on your own feet—even in a small way?

### Theme: *Stereotypes*

"America's Arabian 'Cuppa Joe'" provides a look at the way that stereotypical images and ideas about people from the Middle East have been used as a lure to sell coffee. Read the article, and use the activities that follow to explore the stereotypes and why they had the power to attract consumers.

#### What are stereotypes? Why do advertisers use them?

Define the term "stereotype." To start, think about ads you have seen recently. What stereotypes do they use? For example, have you seen ads that show women who seem to be concerned most about how they look? Or ads that show men with bulging muscles? Find an example—from a magazine, YouTube, TV or elsewhere. Share it with the class. Then do the following:

- Describe in as much detail as you can how

the person or group is represented in the ad.

- Tell what about it makes the representation a stereotype, and what about it might differ from what you consider a stereotype.
- Explain why you think this advertiser chose to use this stereotype in this way. What is it about the stereotype that might encourage someone to buy the product?

Now turn your attention to the stereotypes of Arabs and the Middle East that adorned coffee and coffee products in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Read "America's Arabian 'Cuppa Joe.'" As you do, highlight the descriptions of the Arab characters that appeared on coffee cans. Look closely at the images that accompany the article. List the characteristics of the stereotypes that were popular at the time. Then repeat the three exercises above, this time focusing on the images you've seen and read about in "America's Arabian 'Cuppa Joe.'" As a class, discuss your answers.

Notice as you read that the article gives some hints about why these images became popular when they did. Find those

parts of the article, and supplement them with your own knowledge of American history to address this question: What was going on in the late 19th and early 20th centuries that made these images of Arabs appealing to Americans?

#### How might advertising sell products without using stereotypes?

Stereotypes seem to appeal to consumers. If they didn't, advertisers wouldn't use them. But are they necessary to sell things? To conclude your work on this theme, choose any product that you like, and try to make an advertisement for it that doesn't use any stereotypes. (Keep in mind that, as "America's Arabian 'Cuppa Joe'" says, stereotypes can be expressed in words as well as images.) You can make your ad for any medium—print, the Internet, TV, radio. But whatever form your ad takes, remember that it has to appeal to people, to convince them that your product is worth buying. Share your ads with the class. How successful were you?

## VISUAL ANALYSIS

If you got all your information from the world of advertising, you might believe that all women were young, thin, smooth-skinned and dressed in style. "Caravan Leaders and Saharan Scholars" includes some photographs of women who don't fit that stereotype at all, and whose faces reveal the beauty of a far different life.

Start with the portrait of Tahira mint Al-Khatibi on pages 6 and 7. What do you notice about her face? What do her features suggest to you—about her age, where she might live, what her life might be like? How do her clothes contribute to your sense of her? And her expression?

Now consider the image as a photograph. What effects do the color and lighting have on your sense of her? Why do you think the photographer chose to show her in reddish light? She could, after all, have shown her in any light she wanted to. Yet she chose this for the photograph, and the magazine's editors liked it enough to chose it to print large. To help you think about the answer, imagine different kinds of lighting, and imagine that her face is not half in shadow. What effects might different coloring and light have on your sense of the woman?

Finally, is this image stereotypical? How does it differ from images you might see in different magazines? Why do you think that the editors of *Saudi Aramco World* decided

to include this photograph, and to use it at the beginning of the article?

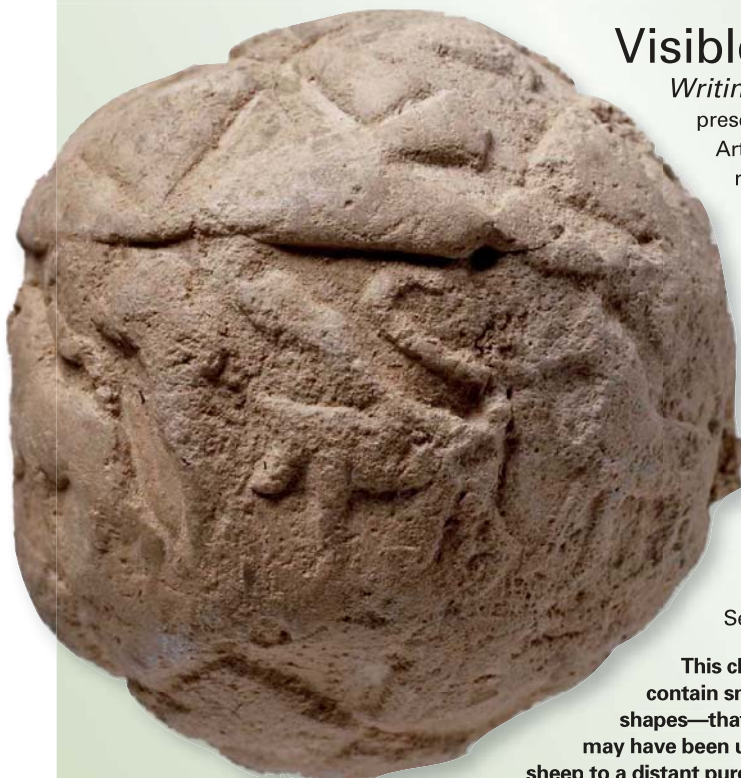
For another example, look at the group of women at the top of page 10. Write a one-paragraph description of this photograph. Consider the people you see: Who do they seem to be? How are they dressed? What are they doing? Consider, too, the effect that the photo has on you as a viewer. What feelings does it evoke? What in the photo causes those feelings?

Getting back to stereotypes, how does the depiction of the women in this photograph contradict the stereotypical ways that women are frequently shown

in magazines? Again, why do you think these photos are included? Add to your description of the photograph another paragraph in which you answer this question: What is the value of showing these women in ways that defy stereotypes?







## Visible Language: *Inventions of Writing in the Ancient Middle East and Beyond*

presents the newest research on the invention of writing.

Artifacts, some never before exhibited in the United States, reveal the origins of writing in Mesopotamia and Egypt as well as the other two independent writing systems of China and Meso-America. Among the objects are examples of the earliest pictographic tablets from Uruk (Iraq) and bone tags with the earliest Egyptian hieroglyphs. The exhibit addresses how the cuneiform writing of Sumer was adapted to write many other languages, the invention of the alphabet in the Sinai, and the variety of scripts used to write ancient Egyptian. It also explores how technology is being used to study early writing systems, with CT-scanning of token balls to study the tokens sealed within, digital removal of clay envelopes from clay tablets to reveal the text inside and the use of PMT photography to create high definition images. Catalog. Oriental Institute Museum, **Chicago**, September 28 through March 6.

This clay "envelope," marked with a personal cylinder seal, may contain small clay objects—spheres, tapering cylinders and other shapes—that each apparently represented a quantity of something. It may have been used as a bill of lading: A merchant who sent a herd of 25 sheep to a distant purchaser could send with them an envelope containing two "10-sheep" tokens and one "five-sheep" token. The purchaser could break it open and verify that the number of sheep delivered was the number actually sent.

### CURRENT September

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

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

**Arts of Bengal:** *Town, Temple, Mosque* explores the rich texture of the sacred and the mundane from the 18th to the mid-20th century in Bengal's cities and towns, which have long functioned as hubs of commerce, religious activity and the arts where professional painters, potters, weavers and sculptors catered to diverse audiences. Under British colonial rule, artists in Kolkata (Calcutta), Murshidabad, Dhaka and Patna produced sumptuously decorated silverware, silk saris brocaded with images of urban pleasures, colorful paintings of religious processions and even detailed botanical studies made for European patrons. The façades of temples and mosques were often decorated with intricately molded terra-cotta bricks, and many images in the temples

were beautifully carved and garbed. In the early to mid-20th century, Bengal's towns, temples and mosques continued to serve as potent sources of inspiration for artist-intellectuals seeking to create a modern esthetic. **Philadelphia** Museum of Art, through September 19.

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

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

**Roads to Arabia:** *Archaeological Treasures from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*. The study of archeological remains only really began in Saudi Arabia in the 1970's, yet brought a wealth of unsuspected treasures to light: temples, palaces adorned with frescoes, monumental sculpture, silver dishes and precious jewelry left in tombs. The exhibition provides both chronological and geographical information about the discoveries made during recent excavations and emphasizes the important role played by this region, in antiquity, as a trading center. Over 300 works—sculptures, ceramics, jewelry, frescoes—are on display, dating from antiquity to the beginning of

the modern period; the majority have never before been exhibited. Musée du Louvre, **Paris**, through September 27.

### Current October

**Arthur Pope and a New Survey of Persian Art** features ceramics, tilework, textiles, paintings, glasswork and lacquerware from the Institute's historically important collection of Persian art, developed under the guidance of Arthur Upham Pope (1881–1969). It also examines Pope's legacy by tracing the development of Persian art collections in Chicago during the early 20th century and his influence on the understanding and appreciation of traditional Persian art across the globe. Art Institute of **Chicago**, through October 3.

**Muraqqa': Imperial Mughal Albums from the Chester Beatty Library** focuses on a group of six albums (*muraqqa's*) compiled in India between about 1600 and 1658 for the Mughal emperors Jahangir and Shah Jahan (builder of the Taj Mahal). Each album folio originally consisted of a painting on one side and a panel of calligraphy on the other, all set within beautifully illuminated borders. Many of the paintings are exquisitely rendered portraits of emperors, princes and courtiers—all dressed in the finest textiles and jewels—but there are also images of court life, and of Sufis, saints and animals. This exhibition has been on tour in the us for the past year and will now return to the Library, which holds one of the finest collections of Indian Mughal paintings in existence. Catalogue. Chester Beatty Library, **Dublin**, through October 3.

**Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul** explores



the cultural heritage of ancient Afghanistan from the Bronze Age (2500 BCE) through the rise of trade along the Silk Roads in the first century CE. Among the nearly 230 works on view, all from the National Museum of Afghanistan in Kabul, are artifacts as old as 4000 years, as well as gold objects from the famed Bactrian Hoard, a 2000-year-old treasure of Bactrian grave goods excavated at Tillya Tepe in 1978. The earliest objects in the exhibition, from Tepe Fullol in northern Afghanistan, are fragmentary gold vases dated between 2500 and 2200 BCE. A second group, from the former Greek city Ai Khanum, reflects Mediterranean influence between the fourth and second centuries BCE. Trade goods from a third site, at Begram, date from the first century CE and include ivory statues and reliefs and goods imported from Roman, Indian, Chinese and East Asian markets. The Tillya Tepe group of first-century gold objects includes an exquisite crown and necklaces, belts, rings and headaddresses. Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle, **Bonn**, through October 3; British Museum, **London**, Spring 2011.

**Hussein Chalayan:** *1994–2010* provides insight into the uniquely interdisciplinary approach that has made UK-based British/Turkish-Cypriot fashion designer Hussein Chalayan world-renowned, presenting fashion collections, films and installations from 1994 through 2009. **Istanbul** Museum of Modern Art, through October 10.

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

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

**Three Takes on Dress.** Dress is about what people wear to say who they are, what they are doing and why. The

exhibition presents three totally different snapshots of dress from India, Jordan and Turkey. It features a Bedouin dress from Jordan that is three meters long and nearly 2.5 meters wide, sleeve end to sleeve end; fine 19th- and 20th-century examples of *badla* metal-thread embroidery from India, Iran and Egypt; and, from Turkey, a late 19th-century circumcision outfit worn on this milestone event in a boy's life. TRC Gallery, **Leiden, Netherlands**, through October 20.

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

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

**Current November**  
**Mysterious Tomb 63: The Latest Discovery in the Valley of the Kings:** *Art and Archaeology of Susan Osgood* displays 100 works on paper with objects from museum collections, linking the artist's two worlds. The archaeological works include drawings and photographs of the coffins in KV 63,

the first new tomb to be discovered in the Valley of the Kings since 1922, and drawings of Medinet Habu's Small Temple and of a Thutmose III sculpture fragment. The contemporary art includes travel sketchbooks and four series of paintings and prints inspired by Osgood's 30 years working and traveling in Egypt. Kestner Museum, **Hannover, Germany**, through November 7.

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

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

**Current December**  
**The Qur'an in its 1400th Year** displays for the first time a selection of 50 calligraphic copies and partial copies of the Qur'an from the museum's 250,000-page "Damascus Documents" collection, including the oldest known copies of parts of the holy book, dating from the year 875, and others written on antelope hide. The collection was brought to Istanbul when the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus burned down at the end of the 19th century. Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art, **Istanbul**, through December 1.

**Desert Jewels:** *North African Jewellery and Photography from the Xavier Guerrand-Hermès Collection* combines previously unexhibited North African jewelry and late 19th- and early 20th-century photographs. Jewelry designers and -makers used silver, coral, amber, coins and semiprecious stones to create wedding necklaces, hair ornaments, bracelets, rings, earrings and fibulae, which show the common elements of North African societies as well as local variations in materials and motifs. North African jewelry came to the attention of western collectors only in the 19th century, and important photographers of the day visited the region and photographed landscapes, architecture, markets and people adorned in their jewels. **Philadelphia** Museum of Art, through December 5.

**Weavers' Stories From Island Southeast Asia** lets weavers and batik artists speak for themselves in videos recorded at eight sites in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and East Timor. A panoply of human

emotions and experiences—determination, longing, dream inspiration, theft, war and more—emerges from the stories of these remarkable women. The videos are accompanied by textiles created by each of the featured artisans. Fowler Museum at UCLA, **Los Angeles**, through December 5.

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

**Traces of the Calligrapher:** *Islamic Calligraphy in Practice, c. 1600–1900* and **Writing the Word of God:** *Calligraphy and the Qur'an* celebrate the rich religious and artistic tradition of calligraphy, or "beautiful writing," the most esteemed of the Islamic visual arts. The works of calligraphy—from practice alphabets to elaborately finished manuscripts—serve as traces of individuals, belief systems and cultures, and the costly and exotic materials lavished on writing instruments document the international trade of the period, from 1600 to 1900, and create a rich material legacy that fuses esthetics and piety. Some 150 objects and works convey the elegance of the esteemed art form and reveal the skills of the many artisans—calligraphers, paper makers, gold beaters, illuminators, bookbinders and metalworkers, to name a few—involved in the creation of the tools, the calligraphies and the manuscript folios. **Traces of the Calligrapher** maps the practice of the calligrapher from the 17th through the 19th centuries through examples of calligraphy and through the tools of the trade. The objects in the exhibition come from Iran, Turkey and India and include reed pens, penknives and *maktas* (used to hold the pen while it is cut) in addition to inkwells, scissors, burnishers, storage boxes and writing tables. **Writing the Word of God** is devoted to key developments of the Islamic scripts of distinct cultural areas, spanning from Spain and North Africa to greater Iran and from the seventh to the 15th centuries. A selection of approximately 20 folios from now-dispersed copies of the Qur'an from various regions will illustrate the rich variety and system of scripts. Carlos Museum, Emory University, **Atlanta**, through December 5.

**Treasures of the World:** *Jewellery of India Under the Grand Moguls* includes pieces that exemplify the artistic sophistication and technical finesse of Indian craftsmen in the age of the Mughals, especially during the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. The Indian Subcontinent, rich in gems, is home



to the most highly developed range of the jeweled arts of any nation on earth. Some of the most remarkable pieces on view here belonged to a succession of Mughal emperors; all demonstrate the mastery of the Indian jewelry artists, whose materials typically were gold, rubies, emeralds, diamonds and pearls. The objects on display are from the personal collection of Sheikh Nasser and Sheikha Hussah al-Sabah of Kuwait, the most significant collectors of Indian jeweled arts presently active. Islamic Arts Museum **Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur**, through December 30.

#### Current **January**

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

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

**Cleopatra: The Search for the Last Queen of Egypt.** The world of Cleopatra, lost to the sea and sand for nearly

2000 years, resurfaces in this new exhibition displaying some 250 artifacts associated with the queen. After an introductory film, visitors are transported to the ruins of ancient Alexandria, where Franck Goddio leads an underwater excavation to recover artifacts from Cleopatra's empire. They continue to the city of Canopus, also now submerged, which was both a religious center and a decadent playground, and Heracleion, where every new pharaoh, including Cleopatra, was crowned. Visitors then journey into the ancient city of Alexandria, where Cleopatra's palace once stood, and see the only known example of what scientists believe to be Cleopatra's own handwriting on a papyrus document. At the temple complex at Taposiris Magna, about 30 miles west of Alexandria, Zahi Hawass is leading a search for the tomb of Cleopatra and Marc Antony. The exhibition's final gallery is devoted to images of Cleopatra through the years in art and popular culture. Franklin Institute, **Philadelphia**, through January 2.

**To Dye For: A World Saturated in Color** features more than 50 textiles and costumes from Africa, Asia and the Americas, showcasing objects from diverse cultures and historical periods, including a tie-dyed mantle from the Wari-Nasca culture of pre-Hispanic Peru (500–900 CE), a paste-resist Mongolian felt rug from the 15th to 17th century and a group of stitch-resist dyed 20th-century kerchiefs from the Dida people of the Ivory Coast. These historical pieces are contrasted with artworks from contemporary Bay Area artists. The exhibition highlights such recent acquisitions as a pair of ikat-woven, early-20th-century women's skirts from the Iban people of Sarawak and two exquisite hand-painted and mordant-dyed Indian trade cloths used as heirloom cloths by the Toraja peoples of Sulawesi, Indonesia. De Young Museum, **San Francisco**, through January 9.

**Tutankhamun: The Golden King and the Great Pharaohs** is [another] extensive exhibition of more than 140 treasures from the tomb of the celebrated pharaoh and other sites. It includes his golden sandals, created specifically for the afterlife and found on his feet when his mummy was unwrapped; one of the gold canopic coffinettes, inlaid with jewels, that contained his mummified internal organs; and a three-meter figure depicting Tutankhamun as a young man, which originally may have stood at his mortuary temple. Providing context and additional information are 75 objects from other tombs in the Valley of the Kings, including objects related to Khafren (Cheops), Hatshepsut and Psusennes I. **Denver [Colorado]** Art Museum, through January 9.

**Epic of the Persian Kings: The Art of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh** explores the monumental artistic legacy of one of the world's greatest literary epics: the 1000 year-old Persian *Book of Kings*, or *Shahnameh*. Completed by the poet Ferdowsi in the year 1010, this vast narrative poem recounting the "Iranian version" of the history of the world is an icon of Persian culture, inspiring some of the world's most exquisite manuscripts. To mark the passing of

a millennium since its completion, the exhibition brings together nearly 100 paintings from these lavishly illustrated manuscripts spanning 800 years. The *Shahnameh* is Iran's national epic; a vast narrative that mixes royal history with the mythical and supernatural, from the creation of the world and the first men through to the fall of the Persian Empire to the Arabs in the seventh century. Twice as long as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* put together, and only finished after 35 years, it is the longest poem ever written by a single author. Fitzwilliam Museum, **Cambridge (uk)**, through January 9.

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

#### Coming **September**

**The Dhow: Mastery of the Monsoon** includes models, photographs and videos of the graceful wooden ships that plied the Indian Ocean and the waters of East Africa, Arabia, Iran and India for centuries. Dhows carried people—passengers, slaves, pilgrims—and cargoes ranging from timber and goats to pepper, gold and incense, and were used in fishing and pearl-diving. Also on display are actual examples of the smaller Indian Ocean boats, a pearl-trader's chest, pearly paraphernalia and dhow-building equipment. Opening event September 16, 6:30 p.m. LAIS Building, University of **Exeter (uk)**, September 16 through December 17.

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

**Poetic Inspirations** is the first show in Britain by leading Arab sculptor Mona Saudi. On display are sculptures in stone and works on paper, the latter inspired by the Syrian poet Adonis, Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish and French poet Saint-John Perse. ① www.mosaicrooms.org. Mosaic Rooms, **London**, September 22 through October 24.

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

secular decorative arts. Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York**, September 28 through January 2.

#### Coming **October**

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

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

**To Live Forever: Egyptian Treasures from the Brooklyn Museum** uses some 120 pieces of jewelry, statues, coffins and vessels dating from 3600 BCE to 400 CE to illustrate the range of strategies and preparations that the ancient Egyptians developed to defeat death and to achieve success in the afterlife. The exhibition explores the belief that death was an enemy that could be vanquished, a primary cultural tenet of ancient Egyptian civilization, and explains the process of mummification, the economics and rituals of memorials, the contents of the tomb, the funeral accessories—differentiated by the class of the deceased—and the idealized afterlife. Exhibits include the vividly painted coffin of a mayor of Thebes, mummies, stone statues, gold jewelry, amulets and canopic jars. **San Antonio [Texas]** Museum of Art, October 16 through January 9.

**Egyptian Magic** displays amulets, scarabs, magical images and writing, magic knives and wands, pictures of deities and spells on papyrus to outline the magical world of the ancient Egyptians. Magic, inextricably connected with their religion, was an everyday matter to the Egyptians, who believed they could influence anything with magic. They attempted to gain the gods' favor by making sacrifices or wearing good-luck charms to steer the little things of daily life in the right direction. Priests performed intricate temple rituals for the protection of the whole land and people. Magic was present 24 hours a day, on every street corner, and Egyptian magical practices influenced many other cultures. Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, **Leiden, Netherlands**, October 16 through March 13.

SAUDI ARAMCO WORLD  
(ISSN 1530-5821)  
is published bimonthly by  
Aramco Services Company  
9009 West Loop South,  
Houston, Texas 77096-1799, USA

Copyright © 2010 by Aramco  
Services Company. Volume 61,  
Number 5. Periodicals postage  
paid at Houston, Texas and  
at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER:  
Send address changes to  
Saudi Aramco World  
Box 2106  
Houston, Texas 77252-2106



**Vanishing Traditions** is an ethnographic collection of minority Chinese costumes and adornment. Warren Design Museum, University of California, Davis, October 17 through December 5.

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

**The First Moroccan Film Festival** presents a dozen films, many of them us premieres, that highlight themes running deep in contemporary Moroccan society: the conflict between tradition and modernity, the rising power of women, and the allure that European and American culture hold for Moroccan youth. moroccanfilmfestival@highatlasfoundation.org. New York, October 29 and 30.

Coming **November**  
**Haremhab, The General Who Became King** focuses on the famous life-sized statue that shows Haremhab as a scribe and thus an administrator and wise man. The exhibition examines the historical and art-historical significance of the statue and of its subject: a royal scribe, general of the army under Tutankhamun, who eventually became king himself, reigning between ca. 1323 and 1309 BCE. The last king of Dynasty 18, Haremhab instituted laws that secured the rights of civilians and curbed the power of the army. The display will feature some 40 additional objects in various media—wall reliefs, works on papyrus, statuettes and garment fragments. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, from November 10.

**Heroes and Kings of the Shahnama** shows folios of the famous text from each of the Library's 25 copies, produced in Iran and India between the 14th and 19th centuries. The *Shahnama*, or *Book of Kings*, is the Iranian national epic, relating the glorious, often gory, feats of the heroes and kings of pre-Islamic Iran. Compiled in written form in the 11th century by the poet Firdawsi, these tales have been popular both inside and beyond Iran for more than a millennium. While many tell of dragons and *divs*, others, such as stories of Alexander the Great, derive from recorded history. The exhibition celebrates the 1000th anniversary of Firdawsi's completion of the text in the year 1010. Fully illustrated catalogue. Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, November 19 through March 20.

**Fakes, Forgeries and Mysteries** highlights mistakes and discoveries regarding the attribution, authenticity and value of works in the museum's collection, and includes some 50 paintings, sculptures, photographs, prints, drawings and decorative arts from—

thought to be from—European, African, American, Asian, Islamic and ancient Near Eastern cultures. The exhibition displays works whose attribution has changed, known forgeries and ongoing "mysteries." Detroit Institute of Arts, November 21 through April 10.

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

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

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

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

Coming **March**  
**Jean-Léon Gérôme,** the first major retrospective in 30 years to focus on the work of the 19th-century French orientalist painter and sculptor, displays a carefully selected group of some 70 works that cast new light on Gérôme's oeuvre on the basis of research undertaken in recent decades. The exhibition will consider Gérôme's theatrical concept of

history and mythological painting (his preferred genres), his use of a realistic idiom and the interest in detail evident in his orientalist works (based on highly detailed sketches made during his numerous trips, as well as on photographs), and his use of polychrome in his sculptures. The exhibition will also look at the artist's use of illusionism and *trompe l'oeil*, revealing the links between his paintings and new media of that time such as photography. It will also be shown at the Musée d'Orsay, Paris, and the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid, March 1 through May 22.

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

Information is correct at press time, but please reconfirm dates and times before traveling. Most institutions listed have further information available at their Web sites. Readers are welcome to submit information eight weeks in advance for possible inclusion in this listing. Some listings have been kindly provided to us by *Canvas*, the art and culture magazine for the Middle East and the Arab world.

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