

November/December 2008

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Ghraoui
and the Chocolate Factory

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November/December 2008

Published Bimonthly
Vol. 59, No. 6



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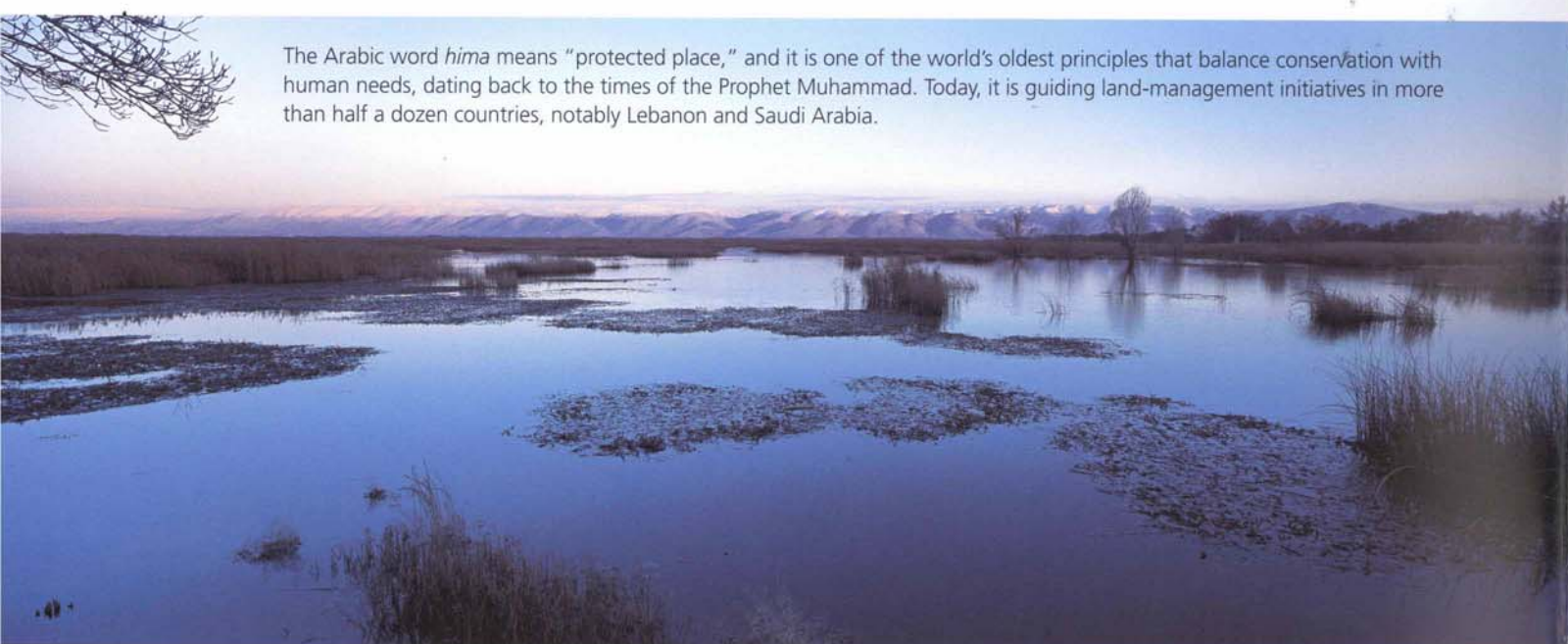
Written by Alia Yunis
Photographed by Tor Eigeland

Bassam Ghraoui knows that when most people think about fine chocolate, Syria is not among the countries that first come to mind, but he's drawing on a millennium of national confectionery heritage and a century of his family's chocolate business to change that.

10 A Tradition of Conservation

Written by Tom Verde
Photographed by Pascal Beaudenon

The Arabic word *hima* means "protected place," and it is one of the world's oldest principles that balance conservation with human needs, dating back to the times of the Prophet Muhammad. Today, it is guiding land-management initiatives in more than half a dozen countries, notably Lebanon and Saudi Arabia.



Cover:

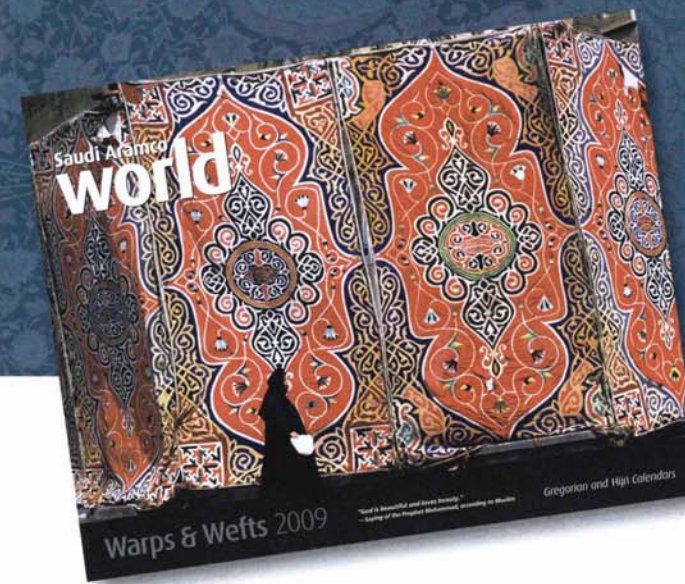


Hand-painted with colored glazes, Ghraoui chocolates reflect the expertise and aspirations of five generations of the Damascus-based family business, which has won recognition in competitions since before World War II from New York to Paris, Cairo and Beirut. Bassam Ghraoui credits the freshest Syrian ingredients and a near-fanatical attention to quality for his chocolates' international appeal. Photo by Tor Eigeland.

Back Cover:



Near Ammiq, in Lebanon's western Bekaa Valley, winter rains drain into a marsh that makes up part of the region's rich, fragile ecosystem—parts of which are now protected and managed under the principles of *hima*. Photo by Pascal Beaudenon.



17 2009 Calendar: Warps & Wefts

Article by Carol Bier

From bold tribal slit-tapestry kilims to exquisitely knotted pile carpets, fine embroideries, intricate brocades, warp-based resist-dyeing and more, the textile arts have long stood out as one of the Islamic and Arab worlds' most culturally expressive, technically advanced arts.

Flights of Fancy on Manmade Wings

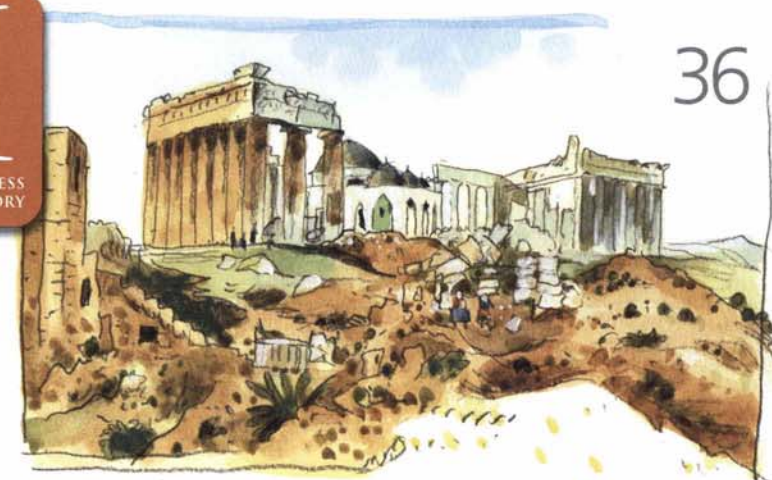
Written by David W. Tschanz

Who was the first to fly? More than 1100 years ago, on a hill near Córdoba, Spain, an inventor named Abbas Qasim ibn Firnas strapped on what may have been the world's first hang glider. His flight was brief, and the landing hurt, but the scientific quest for the sky was on.

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I, Marble Maiden

Written by Frank L. Holt
Illustrated by Norman MacDonald

I was built to crown a ruined Acropolis, to glorify Athena and overlook her namesake city, but I long outlived the grandest dreams of my builders. Amid my columns I have housed a temple, a treasury, an armory, a church and a mosque. I may not be what I once was, but I remain the Parthenon, the most imitated building in the world.

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Remembering Mahmoud Darwish

Essays by Fady Joudah and Carolyn Forché

Born in 1942 in British-Mandate Palestine, Mahmoud Darwish fled the 1948 war with his family, beginning his lifelong odyssey of exile, during which he authored more than 20 books and became one of the great literary voices of our time.



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

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ISSN
1530-5821

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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

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

Printed on recycled paper

www.aramcoservices.com



Ghraoui and the Chocolate Factory

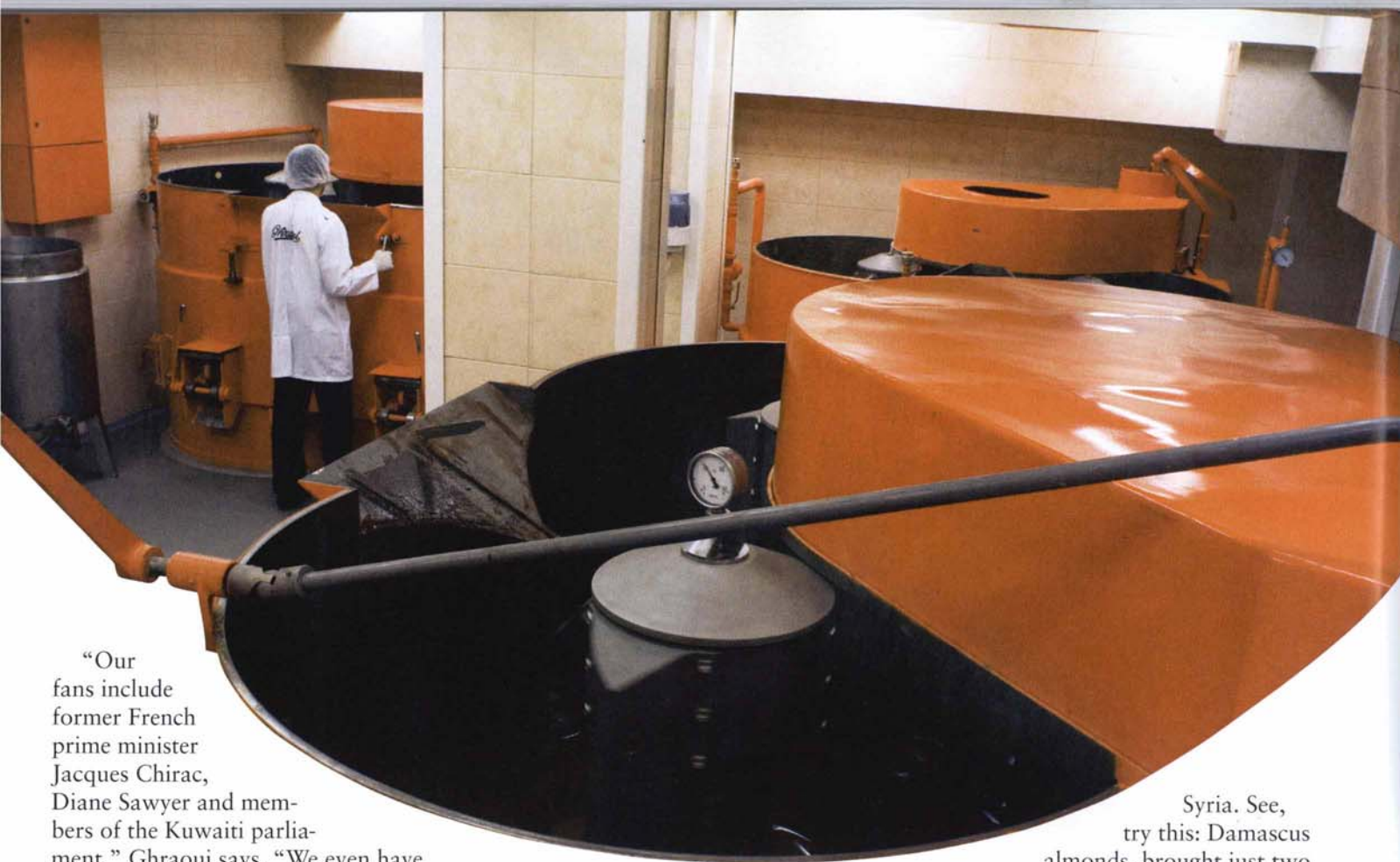
Written by Alia Yunis Photographed by Tor Eigeland

When one thinks of great chocolate, the countries that come to mind are Switzerland, Belgium and perhaps France. In Damascus, businessman and chocolate connoisseur Bassam Ghraoui is determined to add Syria to that list. As winner of the prestigious Paris 2005 Salon du Chocolat's prize for "best foreign chocolate," and with 16 retail shops and more to come, he may very well be on his way.



Above: Damascus chocolate pioneer Sadek Ghraoui stands second from left in a family photo taken in the 1920's. Right: His son Bassam today oversees production and distribution of more than 100 types of confectionery, most of which use chocolate. Opposite: Packers box chocolates and candied fruit for distribution among Ghraoui's 16 retail outlets in locations from downtown Damascus to Kuwait, Jordan and Dubai.





“Our fans include former French prime minister Jacques Chirac, Diane Sawyer and members of the Kuwaiti parliament,” Ghraoui says. “We even have a Swiss cabinet minister who orders our chocolates. And Ghraoui chocolate was selected as the best product among 150 participating companies from Syria, Lebanon and Jordan by the Japanese External Trade Organization in 2003.”

“Mr. Ghraoui was one of the first in the Middle East to present a complete range of chocolate and fruit confections of an excellent caliber, and he was able to bring them to Europe with great success,” says Sylvie Douce, the producer of the Salon du Chocolat competition. “With remarkable quality, he has created a unique alliance of fruits, nuts and chocolate.”

History may be on Ghraoui’s side as he pursues making his family name internationally synonymous with chocolate. Damascus is already known for sweets throughout the Middle East, going back to the heyday of the Silk Roads, when the city was a major trading entrepôt, welcoming caravans of up to 3000 camels. The caravans would stop to rest and replenish their supplies, including sweets and dried fruits that could last the remainder of the journey.

In addition, Ghraoui himself is the son of the first person to showcase Syria’s sweets in the West at international expositions. In fact, he is the fifth generation to head the Ghraoui Group, one of Damascus’s oldest trading and merchant companies. He is a tall, elegant and polished businessman—trained as a civil engineer—whose office is meticulously decorated with family photos and awards and whose bookshelves are filled with history texts and biographies of leaders such as Napoleon and Colin Powell. But at his state-of-the-art production center in Ghorta, a small agricultural town just outside Damascus, Ghraoui’s tailored suit is covered by one of the white factory smocks and an almost manic enthusiasm overtakes him. He becomes the kid in the candy store—only he *owns* this candy store. “This is a symphony of flavors,” he beams as he shows you around the pristine center, energetically navigating around three-meter (9’) vats of swirling dark, milk and white chocolate. “And what makes our chocolate unique—beyond its quality—is that our creations reflect

Syria. See, try this: Damascus almonds, brought just two days ago from the farmlands where they were grown.”

He pops the dark chocolate-covered almond into your hand. As you are savoring its crispness and sweetness, his frenetic energy rolls on. “Here, take this one,” he says, handing you a heart-shaped chocolate filled with hazelnut praline ganache. “It’s the one Diane Sawyer fell in love with last year, when she came to Damascus to interview President al-Assad.”

He keeps on handing out samples as he pauses to say hello to workers coating little balls of fresh pistachio paste in dark chocolate, women shelling hazelnuts, other employees carefully covering such Arab confections as *manne wa selwa* (a chewy pistachio-filled sweet flavored with mastic and cardamom) in milk chocolate, and still others dipping plump dried Damascus apricots and candied orange peels in dark chocolate. Syria—and Ghraoui in particular—has long been known for its dried fruits, but Ghraoui has minimized that product line in recent years, literally folding the dried-fruit business into his chocolate.



For centuries, Damascus was renowned for its dried and candied fruits as well as its confectionery, and fruits remain a Ghraoui specialty—though they are often filled or coated with chocolate. At the Ghorta factory, workers prepare apricots to be filled with pistachios; some will then be dipped in chocolate. Below: Workers painstakingly crack and clean walnuts. Opposite: Conching machines knead and mix chocolate to reduce its acidity and improve its flavor and mouthfeel.

do, so I still come and work a couple of hours a day.” Bilal once ran operations for Bassam Ghraoui’s father, the original



On the second floor of the factory, young women use tiny brushes to paint intricate holiday designs on chocolates, which are then boxed up with elaborate ribbons and bows, destined for a party at the American Embassy. Innovative box designs that become a topic

of conversation in themselves are a big part of the package when it comes to the appreciation of chocolate in the Middle East.

“We make about 50 varieties on any given day, but we have 120 varieties in total,” says general manager Mouhab al-Khani, who trains all of the 250 workers here for three months before they are allowed to make chocolates on their own. “We’re always developing new combinations.”

Al-Khani has worked for the Ghraoui firm for 15 years, something that gives Ghraoui almost as much pride as the chocolates themselves. “We have one employee who is the third generation of his family to work here,” he boasts. Then he stops at a table where an elderly man sits quietly shelling local walnuts. “And this is my favorite, Bilal. How long have you been working with the family?”

“Since 1948,” Bilal shrugs. “I’m retired, but I don’t know what else to

founder of Ghraoui Chocolate.

“I have the weight of history on me,” Ghraoui explains, adding that he doesn’t need to make chocolate to live. “This is a passion. I wanted to honor my father’s memory, and rebuild and expand on his dream.”

The story of Ghraoui Chocolate is also the story of modern Syria. Back in his office, Ghraoui pulls out a family album that recounts the life of his father, Sadek. A distinguished businessman whose friends included future Syrian leaders and luminaries, Sadek Ghraoui began exhibiting Syrian crafts and products, particularly jams and dried-fruit confections, at world fairs in the 1920’s, winning several international medals for his participation. In 1930, Sadek was one of the founders of Compagnie Nationale des Conservees, which was Syria’s first fruit- and vegetable-canning company, with more

“Beyond quality,” says Ghraoui, “our creations reflect Syria.”



Left: Under a manager's eye, fruits are split and laid out on trays. Lower: Whole pears are poached in sweet syrup. For centuries before refrigeration, sugar—like salt—was used as a preservative. Opposite: Trios of hazelnuts are hand-dipped in chocolate. Lower: Chocolate-covered marzipan bites are each topped with a walnut.

Jordan—and several others planned for airports in Europe and the Gulf—Ghraoui today has five shops in Syria, including one at the Damascus airport. In all of them, sleek, polished chrome-and-glass counters are staffed by attractive

than 1000 employees. The company's products became widely known through Sadek's participation in the fairs, and the fairs and expos in turn led to his discovery of chocolate. After visiting a chocolate factory in Paris, Sadek decided to make chocolates in Damascus, importing the chocolate in bulk from famed producers in France and England. But it wasn't an easy sell.

Arabs, mostly unfamiliar with chocolate, looked at the new confection with suspicion. "My father couldn't get people to try it," Ghraoui says. "So he began offering the chocolates in nice wooden boxes imported from Austria; each one came with a sterling silver

knife on top, and that got people interested."

Dr. Kassem Twair, a renowned historian and the former director of the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums of Syria, is also the son of one of Syria's first chocolate and candy traders. His father bought chocolates from many different producers, but he remembers that, when customers asked for the best, his father sold them Ghraoui chocolates. "The Arab world



didn't have much experience with chocolate until after World War I. The Germans first brought it to the area when they were working with the Ottomans, and then under British and French colonization it became more common," Twair explains, adding that chocolate production in the region, in Lebanon specifically, only began after

in Damascus. But Ghraoui was still the Syrian name that meant quality. If customers wanted a lesser quality, my father offered them another brand."

In the firm's heyday in the 1950's, Ghraoui products were sold at Fauchon and Hediard in Paris and in London at Selfridges, Harrods, Fortnum & Mason and Army & Navy Stores—the latter earning them a royal warrant. Then, in the 1960's, Syrian nationalism curtailed production, limiting that luxury business to a small six-person shop for local consumption only. Sadek died when Bassam was 14 years old, but when Syria's international trade opened up again in 1996,

Bassam decided to "recapture his father's chocolate dream" by building the Ghorta factory. Today, he has plans to expand the facility, now 4000 square meters (43,000 sq ft), by another 3000 square meters (32,300 sq ft) in the next couple of years.

In addition to outlets in Kuwait and

young men and women in uniforms that are redesigned twice a year, much as the firm's chocolate packaging—from wood boxes inlaid with mother-of-pearl mosaic to Christmas boxes in velvet and gold brocade—also changes with the seasons. Complex window displays are switched out every month. Every day, salespeople give out samples and calmly take orders, even on days when the holiday rush creates lines out the door and keeps the store open until two in the morning.

At approximately 2000 Syrian pounds a kilo (\$18/lb), the chocolates are the most expensive in the country, well over double the price charged at other elite chocolate shops in Damascus and nearly double the price at Ghraoui's only significant competitor in the Middle East—and the only non-Syrian chocolate shop in the country—the Lebanese chain Patchi, particularly known for its intricate and festive boxes. Ghraoui's prices don't sit well with everyone. "I'm fine getting my chocolate from Slik," says the owner of a boutique hotel popular with tourists, referring to a chocolate shop in an upscale area of Damascus. "Okay, be the best, but charging so much more is just not right."



World War II. "From 1945 to 1949, my father used to get a lot of his products from Beirut. With the economic separation of Lebanon and Syria, many Syrians who had worked in the industry in Beirut came back and opened their own factories

The Ghorta factory is "his father's chocolate dream."



Colored glazes, hand-painted inside a mold, will adhere to the chocolate poured into it, producing highly decorative specialty treats.

Ghraoui doesn't worry about these comments. "Low price is not our goal," he explains. "I know much of the local market doesn't have a sophisticated palate when it comes to chocolate. If we catered only to the local market, we could not expand. Export is our survival. Now, 50 percent of the business is the export market, but I expect that to go to 80 percent in the next two years. This is a luxury product, and the quality is what is important."

While chocolate may be relatively new in the 8000-year history of Damascus, its history as a luxury product goes back more than 3000 years. Archeologists in Honduras last year unearthed evidence of cacao's use as an elite product as early as 1100 BC. "What we're seeing in this early village in Honduras is a very early stage in which serving cacao at fancy occasions is one of the strategies that upwardly mobile families were using to establish themselves," says John Henderson, an anthropologist at Cornell University. "It was originally a way to accumulate prestige."

Bassam Ghraoui continues to view it that way. When he sees one of his chocolates melt rapidly in your hand, he is pleased in spite of the mess. "A low melting point is a sign of true quality chocolate," he smiles. "I don't substitute vegetable oils to make the chocolates last longer. That's what they do in America, and now, sadly, some companies in Europe are beginning to find that acceptable as well. I don't. I won't." 🌐



Alia Yunus is a screenwriter and free-lancer whose work has appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* and other publications. She won a 2005 PEN Emerging Voices fellowship, and her first novel, *The Night Counter*, will be published by Shaye Areheart Books, a division of Random House.



Tor Eigeland (www.toreigeland.com) lives near Toulouse, France. He has photographed for *Saudi Aramco World* for more than 40 years, and Damascus remains "right at the top of my list of places to revisit."

www.ghraouichocolate.com

Damascus is often called the sweets capital of the Arab world, and the competition among the city's pastry and confectionery shops is fierce. Everyone—from taxi drivers to prominent businessmen and academics—has an opinion on where to go for the best: You must go to Semiramis; you should try Faisels; no place is like Zein Barakji. "How can I tell you which one is the best?" says one hotel receptionist. "There are so many places that I could live here for the rest of my life and not try them all."

Ma'mul (nut-filled semolina cookies), baklava, sesame and pistachio candies enrobed in honey, and *kunafa* (a hot cheese pastry) are made throughout the Levant. "In Damascus so much is still made with real *samma* (ghee, or clarified butter), and they haven't picked up the western habit of using chemicals in their food and produce," theorizes a Jordanian cab driver, who shuttles passengers carrying kilos of sweets between Amman and Damascus every day. "That keeps the flavor rich."

Syria's Mediterranean climate is suitable for growing a great abundance and variety of fruits, and with its continued tradition of small family farms, Syrian agriculture is largely organic. That may help explain the robust flavor of its jams and dried fruits, which Damascus has turned into an art form. Whole baby pears, apples and even eggplants are miraculously dried down to delectable finger sweets without losing their plumpness, shape or taste.

"From the time of the Greeks and Romans, Damascus was a vital trading center between Asia and Europe," says Twair. "Not only did that give Damascenes access to the best ingredients in the world, it also made theirs a service economy. A competitive one, too. You couldn't just make sweets: You had to make better sweets than your neighbor. You had to have the best products, something that people could take with them as they continued their journey or enjoy while they stayed here. The frenetic energy of a trading city may be the reason sugar was so important. People needed the energy and warmth sweets provided."

"Nature provided Damascus with the best quality ingredients for making sweets. The fruits and the

Elegantly decorated gift boxes are a long-standing signature of Ghraoui, which hopes to soon expand its retail boutiques into Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi.

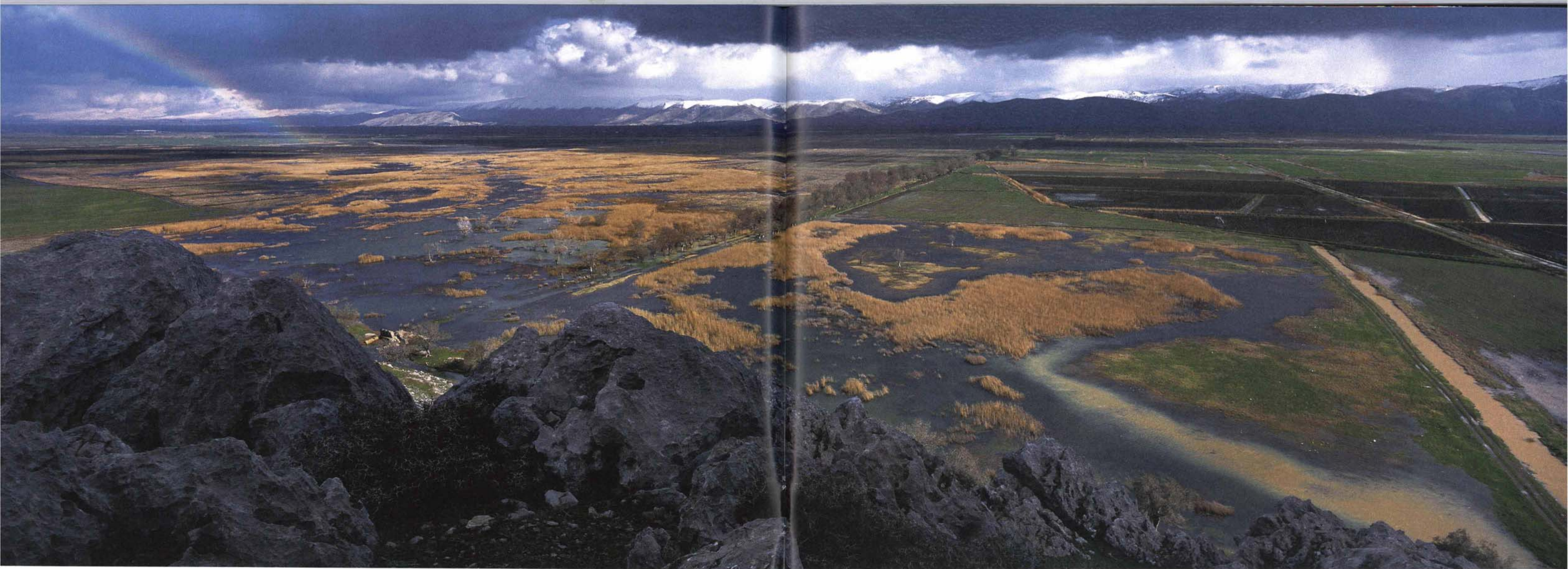


nuts here are unbeatable," says Bassam Ghraoui. But he also worries that Damascus is losing its culinary heritage. "There is a fast food invasion—there is a KFC here now! People are looking for quick things, and that hurts quality."

"But Damascenes have just as much pride in their sweets as they used to," his nephew and commercial director, Mohamed Midani, reassures him.

Twair confirms Midani's words when he says, "In Turkey they kill the flavor with too much sugar and in India with too much spice. We're in the middle. You can eat a kilo of Syrian sweets because they are a mixture of sweet and spice perfected."

Sweet Success



A Tradition of Conservation

WRITTEN BY TOM VERDE
PHOTOGRAPHED BY PASCAL BEAUDENON

Hima-based preservation of wetlands in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, similar to these near Ammiq, has helped boost populations of birds that help local farmers keep rodents and other pests in check.



Early in the seventh century, soon after Muslims established themselves in what is now the holy city of Madinah (formerly Yathrib), the Prophet Muhammad surveyed the natural resources in the region—the *wadis* (riverbeds); the rich, black volcanic soil; the high rangelands—and decreed that they be preserved and set aside as a *hima*, an Arabic term meaning “protected place.”

“Verily Abraham declared Makkah a sanctuary and I declare al-Madinah, that which lies between its two lava flows, to be a sanctuary; its trees shall not be cut and its game shall not be hunted,” he told his followers.

Considered by some to be the world's oldest conservation system, the *hima* was not unknown to the nomadic tribes of Muhammad's day. Ruthless or self-serving tribal chieftains had used *himas* for centuries for their own enrichment,

or to oppress locals by cutting them off from resources. But the socially conscious Prophet of Islam transformed the *hima* from a private enclave into a public asset in which all community members had a share and a stake, in accordance with their duty as stewards (*khalifa*) of God's natural world. “Muslims have a common share in three [things],” the Prophet declared, “grass, fire and water.”

With one eye to this Islamic past, and another to the environmental challenges of the present, some Middle Eastern conservationists and environmental planners are looking to the ancient model of the *hima* to address the modern problem of preserving threatened habitat throughout the region. Their means and objectives are essentially no different from those of the Prophet: to help rural communities protect natural areas such as woodlands, grasslands and

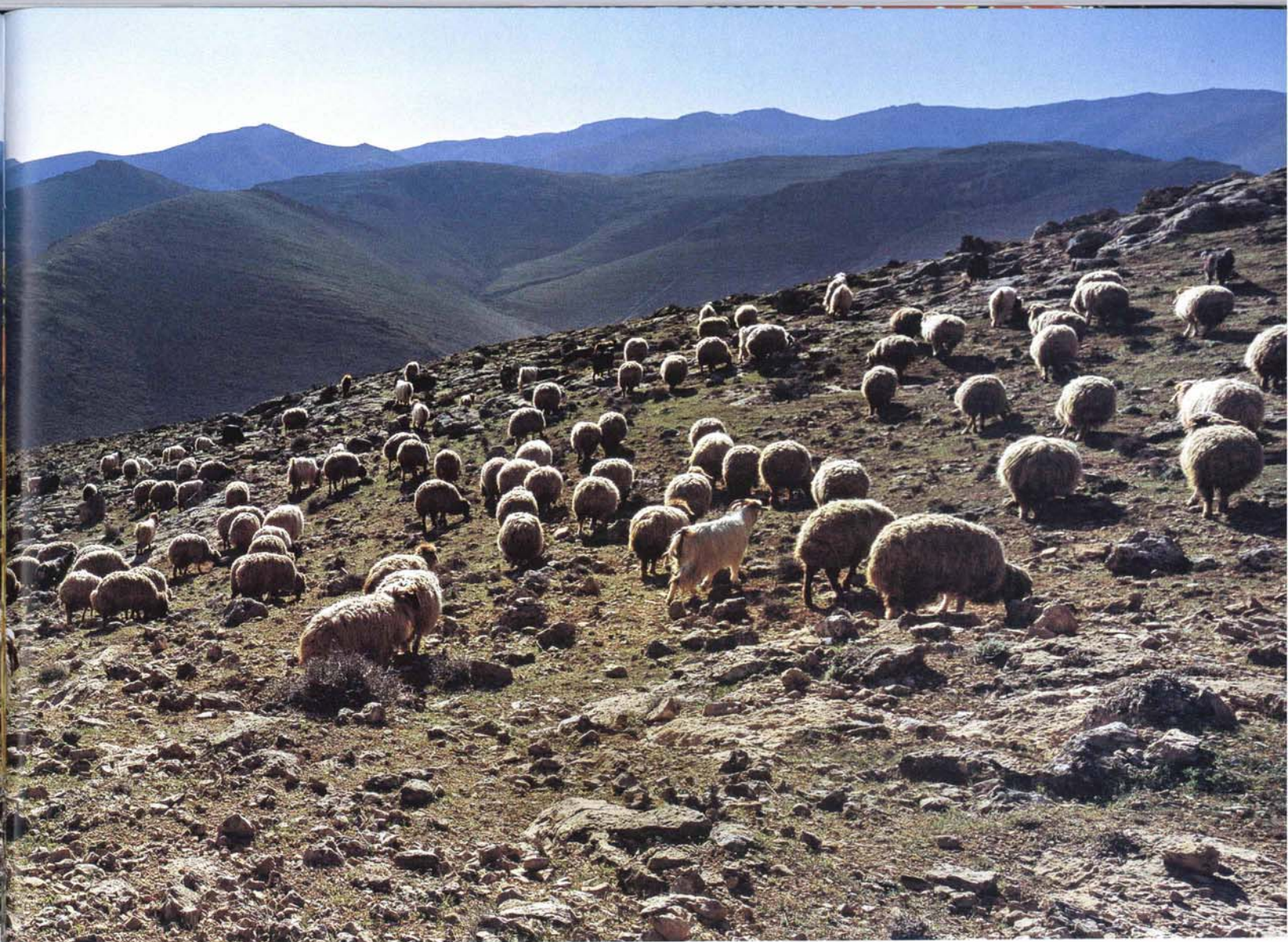
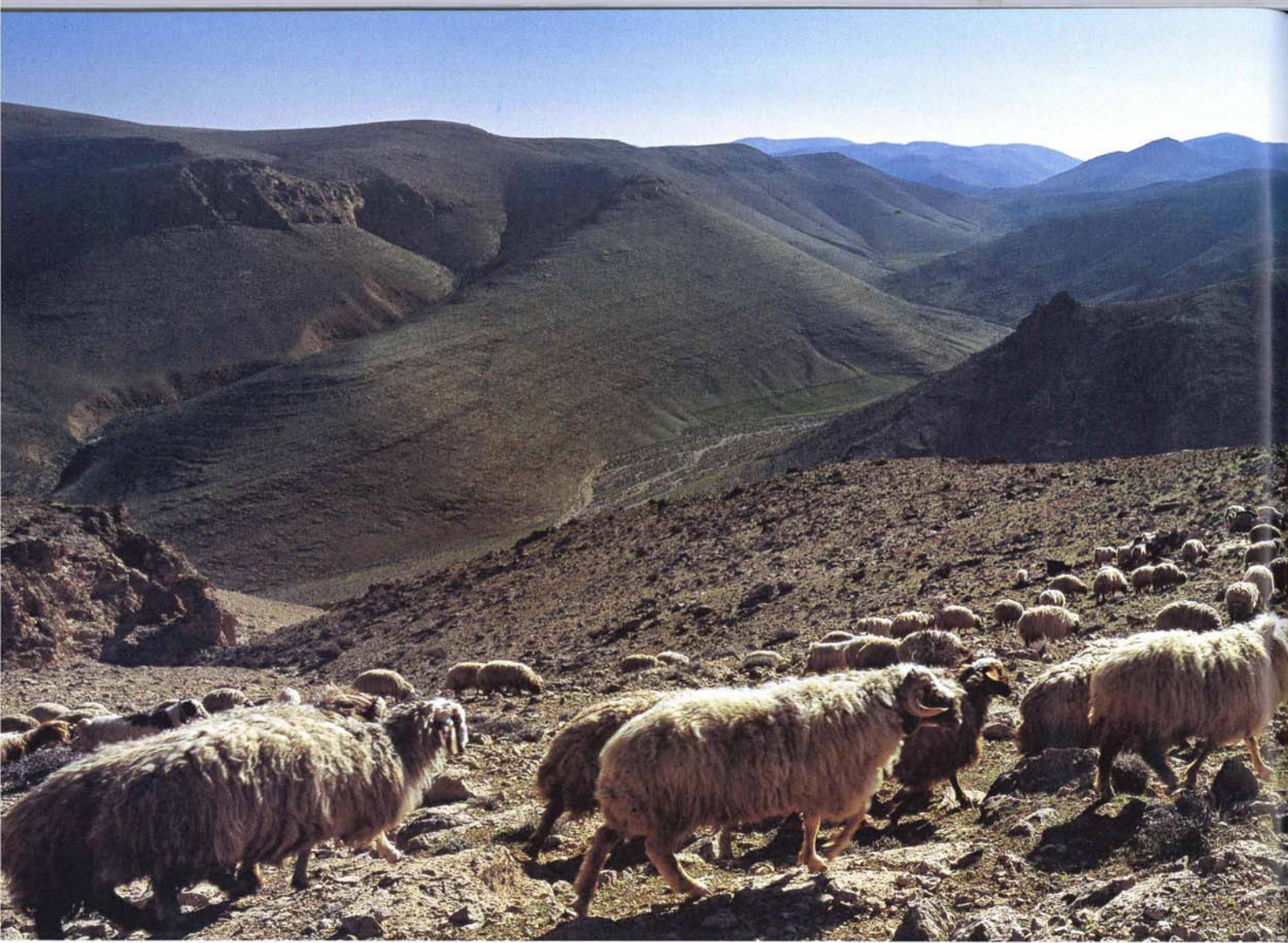
wetlands from over-exploitation, in the interest of biodiversity and their own economic well-being. Instead of cutting people off from the land, as in a formal protected area, *himas* encourage traditional uses that are compatible with or contribute to the environmental health of a site. Restricted activities in *himas*, for example, include grazing in certain areas or at certain times, as well as the indiscriminate cutting of trees and grasses. Hunting is also tightly regulated.

“The overall goal is to fuse traditional practices with recent developments in conservation science as a way to achieve sustainable development,” said Assad Serhal, director general of the Beirut-based Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL), the organization spearheading the initiative to revive *himas* in Lebanon and throughout the region. Working closely with SPNL is a host of local and international

conservation organizations, such as A Rocha Lebanon, BirdLife International and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

There were at one time thousands of *himas* across the Arabian Peninsula, owned by tribal chiefs who used them for hunting or the exclusive grazing of their personal flocks. According to the ninth-century jurist Imam Al-Shafi'i (for whom the Shafi'i school of Islamic jurisprudence is named), the boundaries of a *hima* were determined by how far away the tribal leader's dog could be heard barking from a centrally located high point of land.

As Islam expanded, so did the concept of the *hima*, as rehabilitated by the Prophet. Though known by different names in different parts of the Muslim world, the *hima* remained consistent in its philosophy: to entrust the preservation of the land to local people, for the



Instead of cutting people off from the land, as formal protected areas often do, himas encourage—and, when necessary, regulate—traditional land uses. Left: “The hima has made local people recognize the value of the land and have greater respect for its biodiversity,” said Kasim Shoker, mayor of Kfar Zabad.

land. Though a handful of academics, such as Llewellyn and others, continued to study and advocate himas as an important and viable conservation model (not to mention an important cultural institution), the hima system was all but forgotten by the late 20th century. That was until SPNL, surveying the boundaries of an important migratory-bird flyway in the southern Lebanese hilltop town of Ebel es-Saqi, discovered old maps of the region drawn during the French mandate of the 1930’s.

“We noticed large areas on the maps that were designated as himas, a concept

that had slowly dissipated since Ottoman times,” said SPNL president Ramzi K. Saidi.

Inspired by the potential of a system that was already familiar and community-based, as opposed to remote and government-imposed, SPNL, in partnership with BirdLife International, worked with residents of Ebel es-Saqi and the marshland village of Kfar Zabad in Lebanon’s western Bekaa Valley to establish himas in both sites in 2004.

Working with residents, SPNL set up “site support groups” composed of local farmers, town officials and such specialists as agricultural engineers, botanists and even archeologists, whose input is sometimes required in a part of the world where the casual turn of a spade can sometimes unearth Biblical-era treasures. The groups meet regularly to discuss the status of the himas and monitor the progress of projects that

provide sanctuary for wildlife as well as economic opportunity for locals.

At Hima Ebel es-Saqi, for instance, the use of traditional shepherds’ paths as hiking trails has attracted eco-tourists, especially birders, who come to catch glimpses of the Dalmatian pelican, the pygmy cormorant and the white-tailed sea eagle, among other endangered species, migrating between Europe and Africa. This influx of tourists provides local bee-keepers and goatherds with a ready market for their products and offers bed-and-breakfast opportunities for enterprising families.

“The hima has had a very positive effect in this community,” said Kasim Shoker, mayor of Kfar Zabad. “Not only has it helped improve the economy, but it has made local people recognize the value of the land and have greater respect for its biodiversity.”

Outsiders have come to appreciate the value of himas as well. By cordoning off and protecting parcels of land, hima conservationists effectively create living laboratories where researchers can study local habitats.

“Himas can be valuable for studying the interactions between plants and human beings,” said Lebanese botanist Houssam Shaiban, on a visit to Kfar Zabad. “Because grazing is controlled and not random, we can see how this affects the regeneration of certain endemic plants.”

Himas, established in places from the Dead Sea to the rocky wadis of northern Oman and in indigenous forests of juniper, olive and jujube, can provide valuable seed banks for rehabilitating rangelands threatened by overgrazing and development. Himas can also play a role, said SPNL officials, in combating desertification

sake of the people themselves and the environment, within the framework of Islamic law (*shari’ah*).

“The Prophet Muhammad laid down guidelines that transformed the hima into one of the essential instruments of conservation in Islamic law,” said hima advocate and authority Othman Abd ar-Rahman Llewellyn, of the Saudi National Commission for Wildlife

Conservation and Development. “It is the most widespread and long-standing indigenous, traditional protected-area institution in the Middle East, and perhaps on Earth.”

But with the emergence of post-colonial modern Muslim states, with their complex bureaucracies and centralized governments, himas were engulfed by ministry-controlled swaths of public



and sand-dune encroachment. Fauna also benefit from himas, in sometimes surprising ways.

“We’ve seen the return of endangered species to areas where we’d given up hope of seeing them again—places that had become dump sites, or where there was hunting,” said SPNL’s hima site manager Dalia al-Jawhary.

By restricting hunting and allowing tall grasses to regenerate, local farmers in Hima Kfar Zabad—one of Lebanon’s few remaining wetlands—not only have created safe havens for wildlife, but are saving money and cutting back on the use of harmful agro-chemicals.

“Birds feel safe in the tall grasses and reeds,” said Sami Abu Rjayli, a local farmer and site support group coordinator for Kfar Zabad. “They also like to eat rodents. Since the birds have come back, I haven’t had to use rodenticide on any of my crops.”

Other fauna that Abu Rjayli has seen making a comeback include red fox, swamp lynx and the river, or Eurasian, otter, listed as “near-threatened” by the IUCN.

“Pesticides and human activity such as hunting typically make an area uninhabitable for otters, and this was the case at Kfar Zabad,” said al-Jawhary. “So we didn’t expect to see the otter come back, but were pleased and surprised that it did.”

And in this war-torn yet remarkably resilient country, himas have even provided safe haven for humans. During the July 2006 war in Lebanon, hundreds of refugees fled the southern parts of the country and settled in Kfar Zabad, putting a strain on resources. SPNL responded by helping displaced people find work and distributing food donated by neighboring countries and relief agencies. The initiative, said Serhal,

Criteria

To be valid under Islamic law, a hima must meet the following requirements:

1. It must be constituted by the legitimate Islamic governing authority.
2. It must be established in the way of God—that is, for purposes pertaining to the public welfare.
3. It must avoid causing undue hardship to the local people by, for example, depriving them of indispensable resources.
4. The actual benefits it brings to society must be greater than its societal costs.

No other conditions need be met.

Source: “The Bases for a Discipline of Islamic Environmental Law” by Othman Abd ar-Rahman Llewellyn, in *Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust*, Richard C. Foltz, Frederick M. Denny and Azizan Baharuddin, eds. (Harvard University Press, 2003). Llewellyn cites as his source “Al-Suyuti and other jurists.”

A pine forest in Shuf, south-central Lebanon. Right: A stone wall demarcates a boundary in Hima Azahirah in western Saudi Arabia.

helped form lasting ties between conservationists and locals.

“In times of war, governments are paralyzed, whereas people on the ground keep mobile and active,” Serhal said. “This is why conservation management should be decentralized in countries like ours.”

Thus, himas shift responsibility for the land from the in-baskets of beleaguered or indifferent bureaucrats and onto the shoulders of the local population. By doing so, “himas create a connection between the community and the land,” said al-Jawhary. “When people feel ownership of the land, they begin protecting it.”

This is not surprising, since environmentalism and Islam are entirely com-



patible, and have been so from the very beginning, say Muslim scholars. To be a Muslim, one must always have respect for nature, according to Dr. Abdul Fattah Al Bizm, grand mufti of Damascus.

“Every Muslim is called upon to protect and deal with nature in a way that will lead to its own protection, as well as to benefit from it,” said Bizm. He cited the presence of himas in northern Syria

and along the Syrian–Lebanese border, where goats are allowed to graze in accordance with hima tradition and in spite of government-imposed forestry-protection acts. He also noted that, until 1930, there was a unique, 100-hectare (250-acre) hima set aside for retired horses in downtown Damascus, in an area called al-Marj al-Akhdar (“lush green meadow”) extending from the

Umayyad Square into the Salihya district, a neighborhood now engulfed by shops, hotels and urban sprawl.

But before the sprawl and government laws, it was Islamic law, *shari'ah*, and the revelation of the Qur'an that guided Muslims in their relationship with nature.

"It is He Who hath made You (His) agents, inheritors of the Earth," reads the Qur'an (6:165), in a passage that is interpreted as referring to stewardship. Humans are also cautioned to "Do no mischief on the earth, after it hath been set in order" (7:56)—an order that is divine in nature: "And the earth We have spread out (like a carpet); set thereon mountains firm and immovable; and produced therein all kinds of things in due balance" (15:19).

In consideration of these and other such Qur'anic injunctions, Muhammad's establishment of the first Muslim hima for the use of his cavalry in the wadi of al-Naqi, near Madinah, set the precedent for all subsequent himas as institutions that are ultimately derived from God.

"There is no hima save for God and His Apostle," reads a famous *hadith* (saying), often quoted in the literature on the history and practical applicability of himas.

While strictly a secular organization, SPNL recognizes and respects the religious nature of himas and, in fact, relies on this relationship with Islam to help establish new himas or revive old ones.

"In many villages, respect for the tradition of the hima is stronger than respect for the government's environmental laws," said Serhal. "Across the Arab world, people already understand that you can't be a Muslim if you pollute the Earth and destroy habitat. What we are doing is tapping into the collective memory to help introduce a new generation to an old idea."

SPNL is now working with local fishermen, BirdLife International, IUCN and EuroNatur (European Nature Heritage Fund) to establish the first marine hima in the coastal village of Qoleileh in south Lebanon and another in the northern cedar forests of Hermel, an ancient site of historical significance at the head of the Orontes River valley.

Meanwhile, inspired by Lebanon's success, conservationists in other Muslim nations, from the Arabian Peninsula to



A marine hima was established recently near Qoleileh in south Lebanon. "What we are doing is tapping into the collective memory to help introduce a new generation to an old idea," said Assad Serhal.

sub-Saharan Africa to the Pacific Rim, are investigating the reestablishment or creation of himas in their own countries. In May of 2008, Qatar joined the effort with a donation of one million dollars to BirdLife International from Sheikha Jawaher bint Hamad bin Sahim Al-Thani, consort to the nation's heir apparent. The funding will help conserve birds and promote sustainable use of natural resources and management across the Middle East, including himas.

While the reintroduction of himas has tremendous potential in the Muslim world since they conform to Islamic law and custom, there remain modern questions that this ancient solution has yet to answer.

"There is a gulf between Muslim jurists, who tend to be more preoccupied with ritual, theological and family-type legislation, and people in conservation, who are used to working with secular laws," said Llewellyn, who raises important questions, even as he advocates the return of himas to Saudi Arabia and elsewhere. How will private land adjacent to himas be affected, especially if that land is needed for the management of the hima? Under what circumstances should compensation be made to those who claim they have been denied access to the hima's resources? Because there is no mention of coastal or marine himas in the Qur'an or the sayings of the Prophet, can they be legally established?

"I have spoken with jurists who say these issues can be worked out, but [hima advocates] need to provide them with scientific information, so that they can understand how the environment works," said Llewellyn.

Meanwhile, Serhal spends much of his time crisscrossing the Middle East, talking with local communities and ministry officials, hoping to convince them all that himas are both a viable and culturally acceptable solution to the challenges of preserving habitat and supporting local economies. His efforts have even attracted the attention of environmentalists outside the Muslim world, where the hima is unknown, but intriguing.

"We are meeting with MedWet in Greece, an NGO that is focused on preserving wetlands and coastal areas throughout the Mediterranean," said Serhal, who barely had time to touch ground between his trips to Qatar and Athens. "Their objectives and ours are the same: to preserve their environmental heritage, while providing local people with pride of ownership of the land." ☉



Free-lance journalist **Tom Verde** (writah@hotmail.com) has written for the *New York Times* and National Public Radio. He is pursuing a master's degree in Islamic studies and

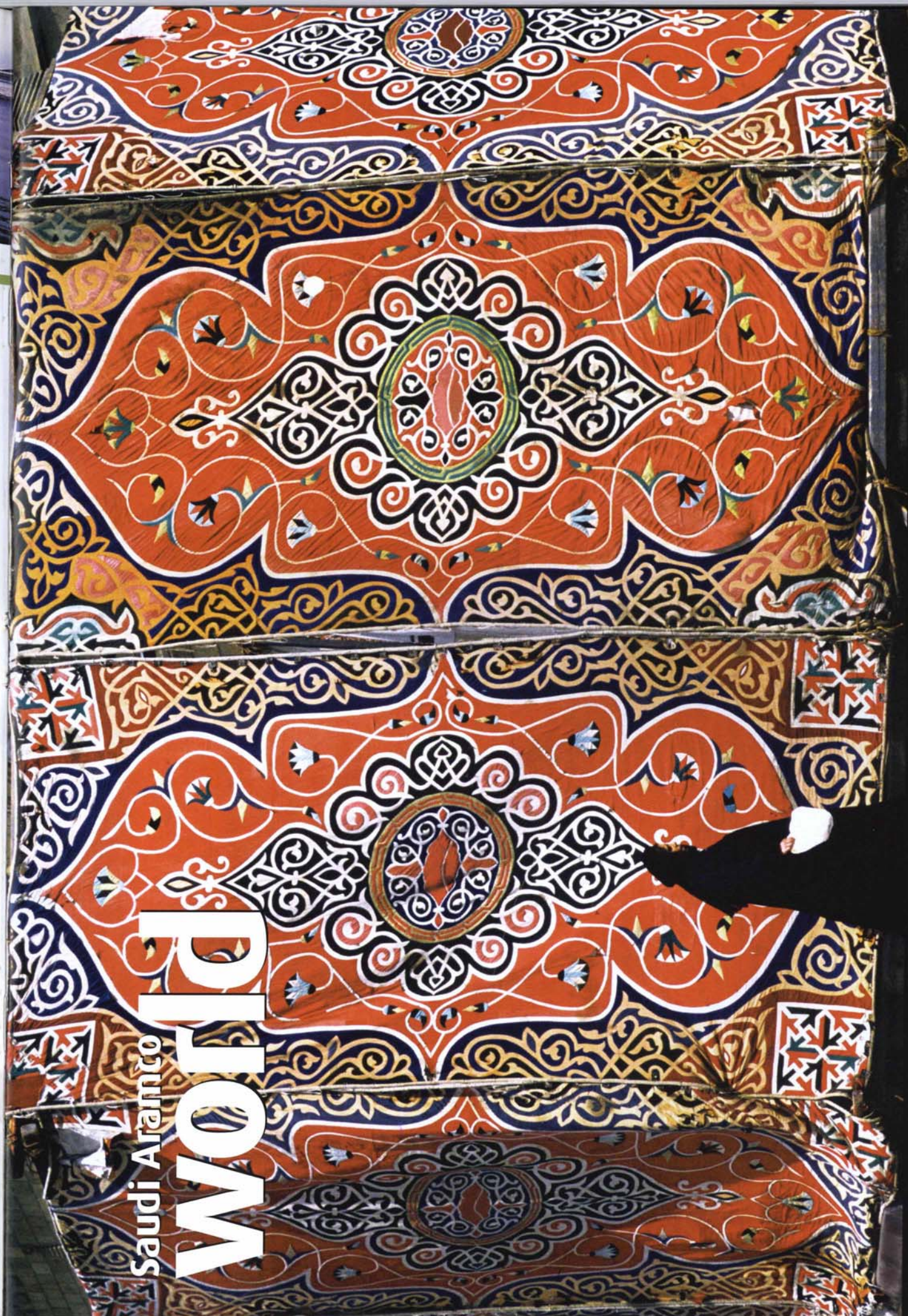
Christian-Muslim relations at Hartford Seminary in Connecticut. French-born photographer **Pascal Beaudenon** (www.pascalbeaudenon.com) has lived in Lebanon since 1994. After a career as a photojournalist, he focused on panoramic landscape photography. In 2005 he produced *L'Autre Liban (The Other Lebanon)*, a 340-page book containing 241 of his images.



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WORLD

Gregorian and Hijri Calendars

"God is beautiful and loves beauty."
—Saying of the Prophet Muhammad, according to Muslim

Warps & Wefts 2009

Warps & Wefts 2009

WRITTEN BY CAROL BIER

The interlacing of warp and weft defines a woven fabric. The weaver strings warp yarns onto a loom, a frame designed to hold the warps parallel and taut, and then introduces the wefts sequentially. The process is weaving; the result is a textile.

When we think of textiles, we most often think of garments to clothe our bodies and furnishings to supply our domestic needs. But throughout history, textiles have also played a primary role in fashion, drawing on not only color and pattern but also draping qualities and the effects of tailoring to cover (or show off) the body. As furnishings, textiles serve as covers and as hangings, to cover tables and to decorate floors. In architecture, fabric is used for tents and as wall dividers, sunshades and even fences. In traditional societies where trees and paper are scarce, textiles store and transport belongings as well as grains, flour, salt and other commodities. For animal management, textiles are tethers, saddlecloths, coverings and girth straps, as well as ropes and cords.

With such diversity in their forms and functions, textiles convey massive amounts of information about cultures and economies. Representing sophisticated understandings of materials and their physical properties, as well as technologies for their manipulation, textiles embody human ingenuity. Because they have been traded far and wide, to study textiles is to learn about the world.

Textiles created in Islamic societies before the industrial revolution represented the most advanced stages of technological development for their time. Less than a century after the Arab conquests, patterned silks woven with compound weave structures were exported beyond Islamic lands to the East and West. Although silk is first documented in China, luxury Islamic textiles subsequently influenced silk-weaving in China and Japan, and pattern-woven fragments of Islamic silks were used to wrap the relics of saints in European church treasuries. These rich textiles were produced using the technology of the drawloom, whose two separate harnesses allowed for two sets of warps, one for pattern and one for structure, and which likely contributed to the rapid commercialization of textile production and trade from the early Islamic period.

The Islamic influence on textiles endures in English terms in use today: *damask* from Damascus; *muslin* from Mosul; *ikat* from the Arabic root *agade* ("to knot or tie"); *cotton* from Arabic *al-qutun*; and *crimson* from *kermez*, an insect-based dye. *Taffeta* and *shawl* are Persian words. From India, which traded with Safavid Iran, Ottoman Turkey and an emergent Europe, we have *calico* from Calcutta and *chintz* from Chit. *Paisley* is a town in Scotland where weavers wove patterns derived from the shawls of Kashmir.

To appreciate how textiles informed early Islamic societies, consider technologies associated with the cultivation of cotton and linen, animal husbandry and the production of wool, and the human intervention in the metamorphosis of the caterpillar to produce silk. Once the yarn or thread is produced, other textile technologies come into play, from the warps and wefts of weaving to the surface design techniques of dyeing, resist-dyeing, printing and embroidery, all of which reached great heights in Islamic cultures. *Ikat* is a resist-dyeing technique, applied not to the cloth but to the yarn before it is woven; knitting and crocheting depend on single elements or sets of elements and are not woven. Appliqué and quilting rely on the manipulation of cut cloth after weaving.

In weaving at the loom, the warp must first be stretched and secured. Only then can the fixed warp yarns interlace with the sequential weft yarns. The length and placement of these yarns determines the length and width of the textile. The simplest weave structure is called *plain weave*, in which the sequence of interlacing of warp and weft is "over one, under one": Taffeta is an example of a plain weave. *Tapestry* is also a plain-weave structure, but it uses discontinuous wefts to create design. A *twill* weave exhibits a regular interlacing sequence of "over two [or three], under one," in progressive fashion. *Satin* weave has a regular interlacing sequence of "over four [or more], under one." Supplementary discontinuous wefts, sometimes called *brocading wefts*, may add any combination of color, dimension and pattern to a foundation of plain weave, twill or satin. More complex weave structures such as *satin lampas* and *velvet* result from still other sequences in the interlacing of warp and



weft, and from the introduction of supplementary or complementary warps or wefts. The most technically complex weaves are the velvets, which rely upon supplementary warps to form the pile by pulling loops into the fabric; the loops may be cut after weaving or left uncut. In Safavid Iran, velvets were especially colorful because weavers had figured out how to substitute different colors into the pile warps, but these exceptional velvets proved to be so labor-intensive that they were not economically viable.

Weave structure is but one way to classify textiles. Looms offer another. A *horizontal ground loom* was favored by nomadic pastoralists. This type of loom is generally no wider than a woman's arm span, and is secured into the ground with stakes that can be removed for transport. A tripod support above the loom creates a *shed* through which the weft is passed; this enables the manipulation of alternate warp yarns. A wider version of the horizontal ground loom may be worked by several women at once for weaving either *kilims* or *pile rugs*. A *vertical loom*, with elements similar to those of the horizontal ground loom, is common in village homes and city workshops throughout the Middle East and Central Asia. A variation of this loom type has a *rolling beam*, which allows for weaving on a warp that is longer than the vertical loom is tall; this type of loom is particularly useful in commercial establishments. A more complicated type of loom is the *drawloom*, which is best suited to weaving intricate patterns and complex fabric structures such as *lampas* and *velvet*. Draw harnesses and treadles, operated by a drawboy, enable the weaver to manipulate warp yarns to bring wefts to the surface as necessary, creating complicated designs and patterns. Many textiles of the early Islamic period required drawloom technology to achieve the complexity of their weave structures and patterns, and the drawloom is the antecedent of the mechanized looms of the industrial age. ☉

Carol Bier was curator of Eastern Hemisphere Collections at the Textile Museum in Washington, D.C., from 1984 to 2001. She remains a Research Associate there. She served as President of the Textile Society of America from 2006 to 2008.



Cover: Interlocking medallion and arabesque patterns are writ large in the appliqué wall panels of a ceremonial tent in Cairo. Such a tent might shelter a large wedding, a community *iftar* meal or an institutional celebration. Drawing from the design history of both architecture and carpets, each uniquely patterned panel is cartooned, cut and hand-stitched to create a monumental textile. Photo: Caroline Penn / Impact Photos / Alamy. Above: The *Album of Kashmiri Trades* depicted mid-19th-century "shawl-weavers." Photo: British Library / Bridgeman Art Library.

Patterns of Moon, Patterns of Sun

WRITTEN BY PAUL LUNDE

The *hijri* calendar

In AD 638, six years after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, Islam's second caliph 'Umar recognized the necessity of a calendar to govern the affairs of the Muslims. This was first of all a practical matter. Correspondence with military and civilian officials in the newly conquered lands had to be dated. But Persia used a different calendar from Syria, where the caliphate was based; Egypt used yet another. Each of these calendars had a different starting point, or epoch. The Sasanids, the ruling dynasty of Persia, used June 16, AD 632, the date of the accession of the last Sasanid monarch, Yazdagird III. Syria, which until the Muslim conquest was part of the Byzantine Empire, used a form of the Roman "Julian" calendar, with an epoch of October 1, 312 BC. Egypt used the Coptic calendar, with an epoch of August 29, AD 284. Although all were solar, and hence geared to the seasons and containing 365 days, each also had a different system for periodically adding days to compensate for the fact that the true length of the solar year is not 365 but 365.2422 days.

In pre-Islamic Arabia, various other systems of measuring time had been used. In South Arabia, some calendars apparently were lunar, while others were lunisolar, using months based on the phases of the moon but intercalating days outside the lunar cycle to synchronize the calendar with the seasons. On the eve of Islam, the Himyarites appear to have used a calendar based on the Julian form, but with an epoch of 110 BC. In central Arabia, the course of the year was charted by the position of the stars relative to the horizon at sunset or sunrise, dividing the ecliptic into 28 equal parts corresponding to the location of the moon on each successive night of the month. The names of the months in that calendar have continued in the Islamic calendar to this day and would seem to indicate that, before Islam, some sort of lunisolar calendar was in use, though it is not known to have had an epoch other than memorable local events.

There were two other reasons 'Umar rejected existing solar calendars. The Qur'an, in Chapter 10, Verse 5, states that time should be reckoned by the moon. Not only that, calendars used by the Persians, Syrians and Egyptians were identified with other religions and cultures. He therefore decided to create a calendar specifically for the Muslim community. It would be lunar, and it would have 12 months, each with 29 or 30 days.

This gives the lunar year 354 days, 11 days fewer than the solar year. 'Umar chose as the epoch for the new Muslim calendar the *hijrah*, the emigration of the Prophet Muhammad and 70 Muslims from Makkah to Madinah, where Muslims first attained religious and political autonomy. The *hijrah* thus occurred on 1 Muharram 1 according to the Islamic calendar, which was named "*hijri*" after its epoch. (This date corresponds to July 16, AD 622 on the Gregorian calendar.) Today in the West, it is customary, when writing *hijri* dates, to use the abbreviation AH, which stands for the Latin *anno hegirae*, "year of the *hijrah*."

Because the Islamic lunar calendar is 11 days shorter than the solar, it is therefore not synchronized to the seasons. Its festivals, which fall on the same days of the same lunar months each year, make the round of the seasons every 33 solar years. This 11-day difference between the lunar and the solar year accounts for the difficulty of converting dates from one system to the other.

The Gregorian calendar

The early calendar of the Roman Empire was lunisolar, containing 355 days divided into 12 months beginning on January 1. To keep it more or less in accord with the actual solar year, a month was added every two years. The system for doing so was complex, and cumulative errors gradually misaligned it with the seasons. By 46 BC, it was some three months out of alignment, and Julius Caesar oversaw its reform. Consulting Greek astronomers in Alexandria, he created a solar calendar in which one day was added to

It is he who made the sun to be a shining glory, and the moon to be a light (of beauty), and measured out stages for her, that ye might know the number of years and the count (of time).
—The Qur'an, Chapter 10 ("Yunus") Verse 5

February every fourth year, effectively compensating for the solar year's length of 365.2422 days. This Julian calendar was used throughout Europe until AD 1582.

In the Middle Ages, the Christian liturgical calendar was grafted onto the Julian one, and the computation of lunar festivals like Easter, which falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox, exercised some of the best minds in Christendom. The use of the epoch AD 1 dates from the sixth century, but did not become common until the 10th. Because the zero had not yet reached the West from Islamic lands, a year was lost between 1 BC and AD 1.

The Julian year was nonetheless 11 minutes and 14 seconds too long. By the early 16th century, due to the accumulated error, the spring equinox was falling on March 11 rather than where it should, on March 21. Copernicus, Christophorus Clavius and the physician Aloysius Lilius provided the calculations, and in 1582 Pope Gregory XIII ordered that Thursday, October 4, 1582 would be followed by Friday, October 15, 1582. Most Catholic countries accepted the new "Gregorian" calendar, but it was not adopted in England and the Americas until the 18th century. Its use is now almost universal worldwide. The Gregorian year is nonetheless 25.96 seconds ahead of the solar year, which by the year 4909 will add up to an extra day.

Historian Paul Lunde (paullunde@hotmail.com) specializes in Islamic history and literature. His most recent book is *From the Meadows of Gold* in the Penguin Classics "Great Journeys" series.

Converting Dates

The following equations convert roughly from Gregorian to *hijri* and vice versa. However, the results can be slightly misleading: They tell you only the year in which the other calendar's year begins. For example, though the equation tells you that 2009 "equals" AH 1430, in fact 2009 includes the first days of 1431.

$$\text{Gregorian year} = [(32 \times \text{Hijri year}) \div 33] + 622$$

$$\text{Hijri year} = [(\text{Gregorian year} - 622) \times 33] \div 32$$

Alternatively, there are more precise calculators available on the Internet: Try www.rabiah.com/convert/ and www.ori.unizh.ch/hegira.html.



Saudi Aramco
world 2009

One of the world's greatest masterpiece pile carpets—some experts call it the greatest of all—is the “Ardabil carpet,” woven in the 16th century in Safavid Iran and measuring 10.5 by 5.3 meters (34½' x 17½'). This detail shows its 16-point central medallion surrounded by floral arabesques, designs formed by more than 50 *sehna* knots (see drawing at right) per square centimeter (300 per sq in), in 10 colors of wool, set on warps and wefts of silk—an estimated 28 million knots. Photo: V&A Images.



JANUARY
MUHARRAM – SAFAR 1430

Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
					1 4	2 5
3 6	4 7	5 8	6 9	7 10	8 11	9 12
10 13	11 14	12 15	13 16	14 17	15 18	16 19
17 20	18 21	19 22	20 23	21 24	22 25	23 26
24 27	25 28	26 29	27 1	28 2	29 3	30 4
31 5						

FEBRUARY
SAFAR – RABI' I 1430

Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	1 6	2 7	3 8	4 9	5 10	6 11
7 12	8 13	9 14	10 15	11 16	12 17	13 18
14 19	15 20	16 21	17 22	18 23	19 24	20 25
21 26	22 27	23 28	24 29	25 30	26 1	27 2
28 3						



Saudi Aramco
world 2009

Often woven on ground looms using multiple wefts in a variety of slit-tapestry techniques (see drawing), tribal patterns of Anatolian *kilims* are known for their bold colors and graphic designs. This detail shows the full width of a kilim measuring 1.5 by 4.1 meters (5'1" x 13'6") and woven in the late 19th century in Malatya, in south-central Turkey. Photo: Marla Mallett (www.marlamallett.com).



MARCH

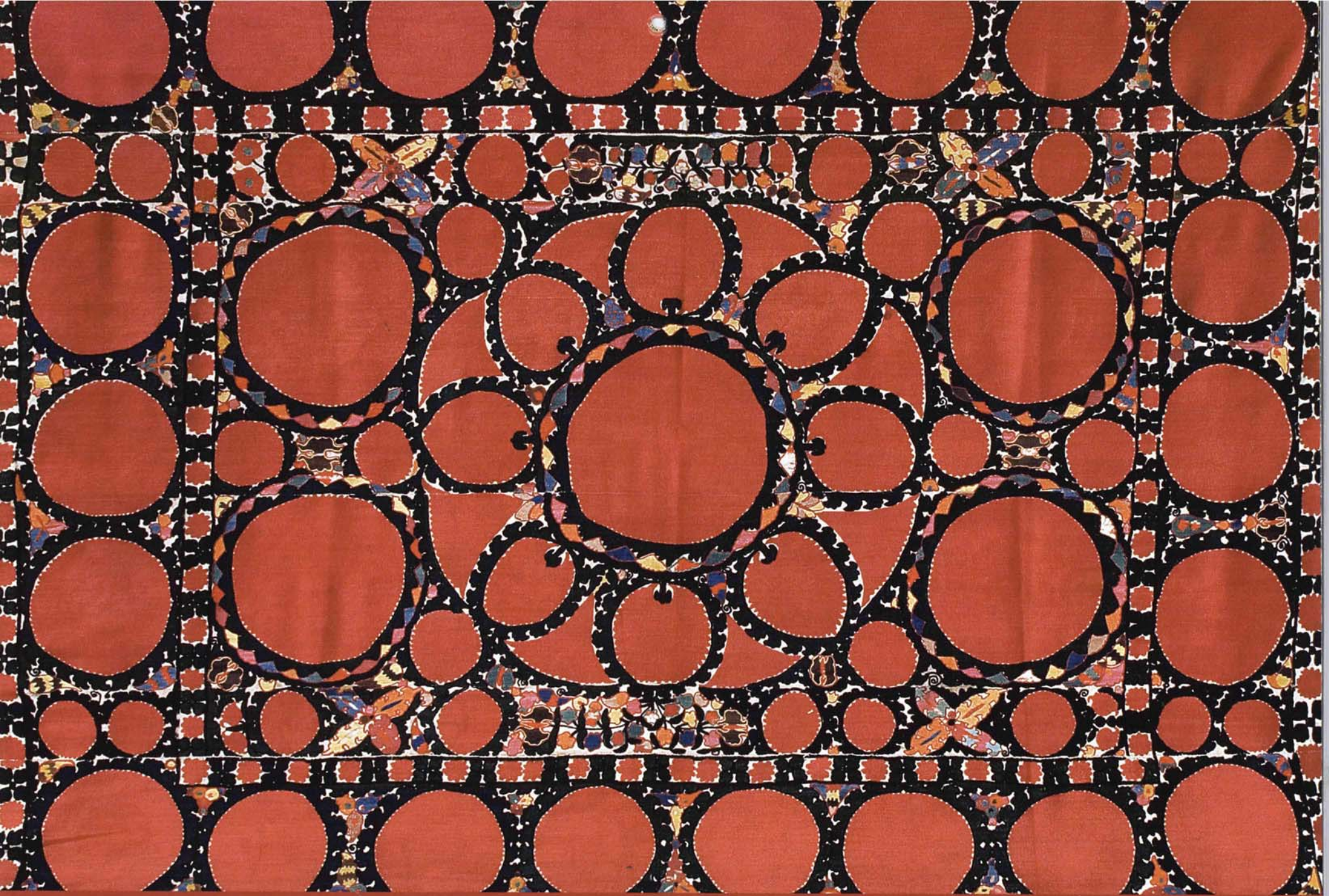
RABI' I – RABI' II 1430

Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	1 4	2 5	3 6	4 7	5 8	6 9
7 10	8 11	9 12	10 13	11 14	12 15	13 16
14 17	15 18	16 19	17 20	18 21	19 22	20 23
21 24	22 25	23 26	24 27	25 28	26 29	27 30
28 1	29 2	30 3	31 4			

APRIL

RABI' II – JUMADA I 1430

Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
				1 5	2 6	3 7
4 8	5 9	6 10	7 11	8 12	9 13	10 14
11 15	12 16	13 17	14 18	15 19	16 20	17 21
18 22	19 23	20 24	21 25	22 26	23 27	24 28
	Easter					
25 29	26 1	27 2	28 3	29 4	30 5	



Saudi Aramco
world 2009

Suzani is a needlework tradition that reached its highest expression among urban peoples of Central Asia. It uses a technique also used by nomadic people of the region, but the design repertory is quite different. Executed with a needle on a base fabric of cotton or linen, this especially vibrant *suzani* from 19th-century Uzbekistan shows a design based on the *palak* roundel, associated with the ancient symbolism of sun and moon. Photo: Vanni / Art Resource.

MAY

JUMADA I – JUMADA II 1430

Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
						1 6
2 7	3 8	4 9	5 10	6 11	7 12	8 13
9 14	10 15	11 16	12 17	13 18	14 19	15 20
16 21	17 22	18 23	19 24	20 25	21 26	22 27
23 28	24 29	25 1	26 2	27 3	28 4	29 5
30 6	31 7					

JUNE

JUMADA II – RAJAB 1430

Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
		1 8	2 9	3 10	4 11	5 12
6 13	7 14	8 15	9 16	10 17	11 18	12 19
13 20	14 21	15 22	16 23	17 24	18 25	19 26
20 27	21 28	22 29	23 30	24 1	25 2	26 3
27 4	28 5	29 6	30 7			



Saudi Aramco
world 2009

Slight irregularities in dye absorption and loom setup soften the color edges of an *ikat* pattern, produced using a technique based on resist-dyeing the warps prior to stretching them on the loom. Here, ikat silk warps are strung on a loom in Kashgar, western China. The word *ikat* comes from the Arabic *agade* ("to knot or tie"), and each color requires a separate set of bindings on the bundled warp yarns that resist other dyes. Photo: Keren Su / Getty Images.

JULY

RAJAB – SHA'ABAN 1430

Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
				1 8	2 9	3 10
4 11	5 12	6 13	7 14	8 15	9 16	10 17
11 18	12 19	13 20	14 21	15 22	16 23	17 24
18 25	19 26	20 27	21 28	22 29	23 1	24 2
25 3	26 4	27 5	28 6	29 7	30 8	31 9

AUGUST

SHA'ABAN – RAMADAN 1430

Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1 10	2 11	3 12	4 13	5 14	6 15	7 16
8 17	9 18	10 19	11 20	12 21	13 22	14 23
15 24	16 25	17 26	18 27	19 28	20 29	21 30
22 1	23 2	24 3	25 4	26 5	27 6	28 7
29 8	30 9	31 10				



Saudi Aramco
world 2009

Kashmir shawls are typically large; this one, from the late 19th century, measures two meters square (6'6" sq). Its pattern is almost liquid in appearance; the designs are produced using a "double-interlocked" tapestry technique (see drawing) in which weft yarns of adjacent colors wrap around each other. The lozenge-like motifs are called *boteh*; they became popular in the West as "paisley" after they were imitated by weavers in Paisley, Scotland. Photo: Mrs. Jeffrey Patterson / Textile Museum.



SEPTEMBER

RAMADAN — SHAWWAL 1430

Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
			1 11	2 12	3 13	4 14
5 15	6 16	7 17	8 18	9 19	10 20	11 21
12 22	13 23	14 24	15 25	16 26	17 27	18 28
19 29	20 1	21 2	22 3	23 4	24 5	25 6
<small>'Id al-Fitr</small>						
26 7	27 8	28 9	29 10	30 11		

OCTOBER

SHAWWAL — DHU AL-QA'DAH 1430

Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
					1 12	2 13
3 14	4 15	5 16	6 17	7 18	8 19	9 20
10 21	11 22	12 23	13 24	14 25	15 26	16 27
17 28	18 29	19 30	20 1	21 2	22 3	23 4
24 5	25 6	26 7	27 8	28 9	29 10	30 11
31 12						



Saudi Aramco
world 2009

Working in the second half of the 16th century, a highly skilled Ottoman weaver combined silk warps and wefts with additional metal-wrapped wefts to create compound weaves in which complicated repeat patterns were integral with the weave structure. In this undulating vegetal pattern, twill and satin weaves achieve different effects: By passing over only two or three warps, the twill interlacing permitted the rendition of detail; by passing over four or more warps, the satin interlacing (see drawing) smoothed the overall texture. Photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art / Art Resource.

NOVEMBER

DHU AL-QA'DAH — DHU AL-HIJJAH 1430

Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	1 13	2 14	3 15	4 16	5 17	6 18
7 19	8 20	9 21	10 22	11 23	12 24	13 25
14 26	15 27	16 28	17 29	18 1	19 2	20 3
21 4	22 5	23 6	24 7	25 8	26 9	27 10
28 11	29 12	30 13	*Id al-Adha			

DECEMBER

DHU AL-HIJJAH 1430 — MUHARRAM 1431

Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
			1 14	2 15	3 16	4 17
5 18	6 19	7 20	8 21	9 22	10 23	11 24
12 25	13 26	14 27	15 28	16 29	17 30	18 1
19 2	20 3	21 4	22 5	23 6	24 7	25 8
26 9	27 10	28 11	29 12	30 13	31 14	Christmas

Flights of Fancy on Manmade Wings

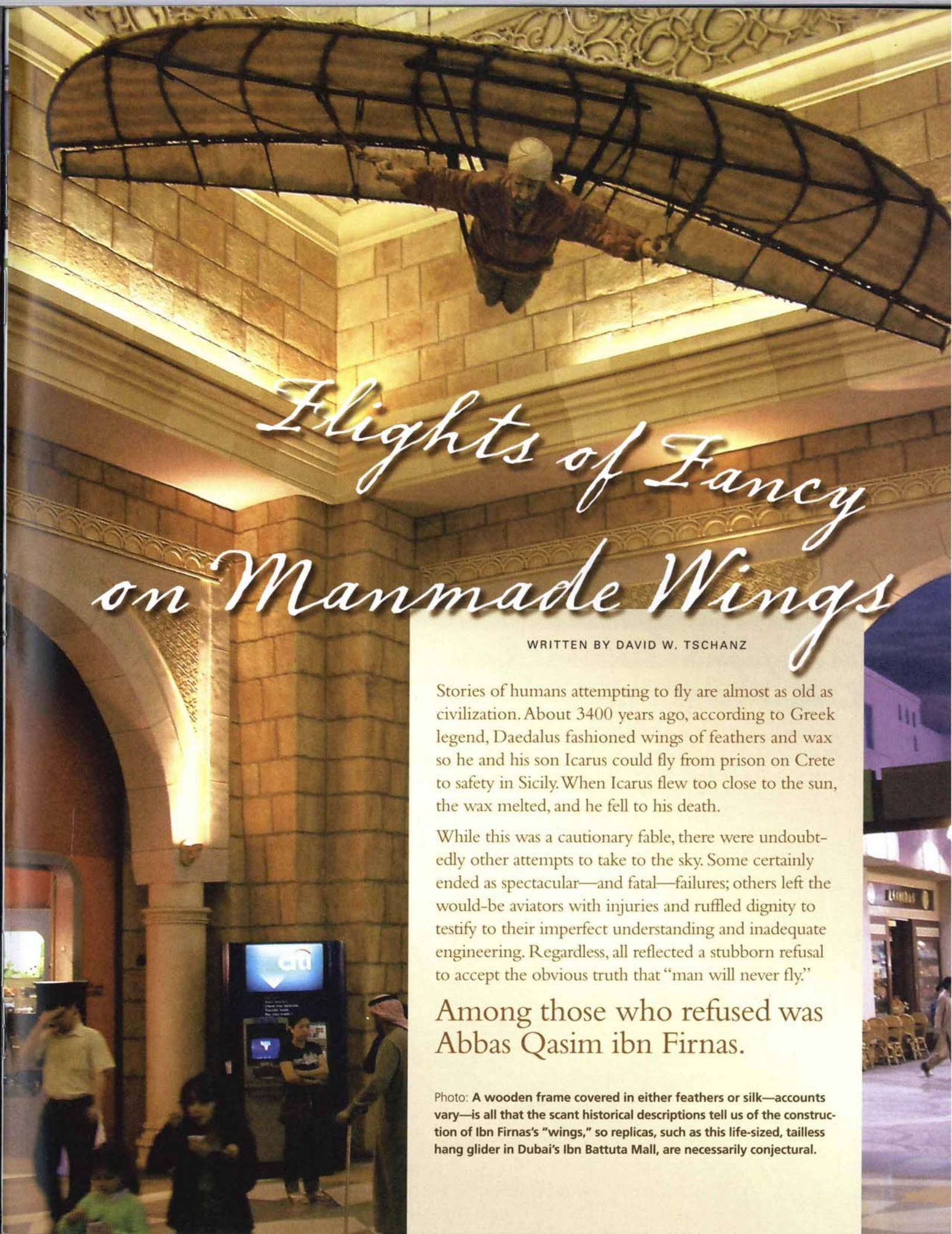
WRITTEN BY DAVID W. TSCHANZ

Stories of humans attempting to fly are almost as old as civilization. About 3400 years ago, according to Greek legend, Daedalus fashioned wings of feathers and wax so he and his son Icarus could fly from prison on Crete to safety in Sicily. When Icarus flew too close to the sun, the wax melted, and he fell to his death.

While this was a cautionary fable, there were undoubtedly other attempts to take to the sky. Some certainly ended as spectacular—and fatal—failures; others left the would-be aviators with injuries and ruffled dignity to testify to their imperfect understanding and inadequate engineering. Regardless, all reflected a stubborn refusal to accept the obvious truth that “man will never fly.”

Among those who refused was Abbas Qasim ibn Firnas.

Photo: A wooden frame covered in either feathers or silk—accounts vary—is all that the scant historical descriptions tell us of the construction of Ibn Firnas's “wings,” so replicas, such as this life-sized, tailless hang glider in Dubai's Ibn Battuta Mall, are necessarily conjectural.



1949



1952



1986



1992



2008

In November 1949, the Arabian American Oil Company (Aramco) launched an interoffice newsletter named *Aramco World*. Over the next two decades, as the number of Americans working with Saudi colleagues in Dhahran grew into the tens of thousands, *Aramco World* grew into a bimonthly educational magazine whose historical, geographical and cultural articles helped the American employees and their families appreciate an unfamiliar land.

The magazine is now published by Aramco Services Company in Houston, Texas on behalf of Saudi Aramco, which succeeded Aramco in 1988 as the national oil company of Saudi Arabia. In 2000, *Aramco World* changed its name to *Saudi Aramco World* to reflect this relationship.

Today, *Saudi Aramco World's* orientation is still toward education, the fostering of cooperation and the building of mutual appreciation between East and West, but for the last four decades the magazine has been aimed primarily at readers outside the company, worldwide, as well as at internal readers. Its articles have spanned the Arab and Muslim worlds, past and present, with special attention to their connections with the cultures of the West.

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One of the earliest scholars to come out of Córdoba in Muslim Spain (al-Andalus), he was an eclectic thinker with a range of knowledge and interests. Born in Korah Takrna near Ronda in about 810, Ibn Firnas studied chemistry, physics and astronomy. He originally came to Córdoba to teach music, at the time regarded as a branch of mathematical theory. His accomplishments included the development of ways to cut rock crystal, which allowed al-Andalus to cease sending the mineral to Egypt for fabrication. He is also credited with inventing a water clock and a weather simulation room complete with stars, clouds, thunder and lightning. (Just how he did this without electricity is still a mystery.)

The citizens of Córdoba—Ibn Firnas possibly among them—had seen at least one earlier attempt to fly: In 852, another inventor, Armen Firman, had constructed a voluminous cloak with the intent of using its expansive “wings” to glide back to earth. Jumping from a tower in Córdoba, Firman survived with only minor injuries because his outfit caught enough air in its folds to break his fall. While he failed to glide, let alone



In Malmesbury Abbey, in Wiltshire, England, a stained-glass window commemorates the flight of Eilmer in about 1010.

fly, he had invented a primitive version of the parachute.

About 875, Ibn Firnas, who was by then 65 years old, built a flying apparatus by placing feathers on a wooden frame that he could attach to his shoulders and outstretched arms. His is the first documented record of a primitive glider.

Thanks to the 17th-century Moroccan scholar al-Maqqari, two accounts of Ibn Firnas’s flight survive. One states, “Having constructed the final version of his glider, to celebrate its success, he invited the people of Córdoba to come and witness his flight. People watched from a nearby mountain as he flew some distance, but then the glider

plummeted to the ground, causing him to injure his back.”

The second account says that he jumped from a wall, flapped up higher than his starting point, turned, and then landed hard back on the wall, claiming afterward that he had not noticed how birds use their tails to land, and that he

Ibn Firnas is hardly known in the West, but he is a popular historical figure in the Arab world.



had omitted to put a tail on his flying apparatus.

Given that he did not attempt to fly again, the first and less successful version of his flight appears most plausible, especially as his death at age 78 appears to have resulted from an ongoing struggle with a back injury.

Word of Ibn Firnas’s flight, despite its failure, spread beyond al-Andalus. What now becomes interesting is that other stories follow, and they build on one another. By his own admission, Ibn Firnas’s failure was to overlook the importance of a tail. By 885, a new story was being told by the Vikings. Their hero, Wayland (or Welund, or Volund), fashioned feathered wings to escape an island prison, much as Daedalus and Icarus did. When Wayland’s brother Egil tested the wings, he crashed, but this time it was because he’d failed to launch himself into a stiff wind.

An event in 1010 that involved Eilmer, an Anglo-Saxon monk of Malmesbury Abbey, was related in the 12th century by the English historian (and fellow monk) William of Malmesbury:

Eilmer... was a man learned for those times... and in his youth had hazarded a deed of remarkable boldness. He had by some means, I scarcely know what, fastened wings to his hands and feet so that, mistaking fable for truth, he might fly like Daedalus, and, collecting the breeze on the summit of a tower, he flew for more than the distance of a furlong [206 m; 660']. But, agitated by the violence of the wind and the swirling of air, as well as by awareness of his rashness, he fell, broke his legs, and was lame ever after. He himself used to say that the cause of his failure was forgetting to put a tail on the back part.

The story of Eilmer echoes that of Ibn Firnas, but it may point to something else that was learned. Firnas failed because he hadn’t given himself a tail with elevators to control stalling or to use to land “like a bird.” Egil didn’t launch into the wind. Eilmer failed because his glider, while appearing to have enough lift to carry him a longer distance than the others (even accounting for great exaggeration), didn’t have a rudder to provide lateral stability.

Still other flight attempts followed. In 1250, Roger Bacon tried (and failed) to invent the balloon. Leonardo da Vinci’s



Accounts of Ahmet Çelebi’s 1638 flight assert he glided from the top of the Galata Tower, visible here on the far bank of the Golden Horn, some three kilometers across the Bosphorus.

effort ended with a crash from the bridge in Florence on January 3, 1496 and led to his discovery that the cross-sectional shape of the wing was crucial to a bird’s ability to remain airborne—an insight that led later to the discovery of the airfoil. In 1638, the Turkish engineer Ahmet Çelebi jumped from the highest point in Istanbul, the 62-meter-high (205') Galata tower, and—if the account is to be believed—glided some three kilometers (2 mi) across the Bosphorus to collect a reward of 1000 gold dinars from Sultan Murad IV. (This ratio of height to distance far exceeds that of the best modern gliders.)

The final chapters in this tale of cumulative experience, of course, took place in 1890, when Clément Ader and his *Eole* first achieved a powered

flight of 50 meters (160') near Paris—and crashed—and in 1903, on a blustery December day on an American beach, when Wilbur and Orville Wright achieved sustained, controlled flight, fulfilling the dreams that began in Córdoba more than a millennium ago.

Today, although the name of Ibn Firnas is hardly known in the West, he remains a popular historical figure in the Arab world. In Qatar, the Doha International Airport’s computerized systems management program is named “Firnas.” In Baghdad, a statue of Ibn Firnas stands on the road to the Baghdad International Airport, and a smaller airport in northern Baghdad is named after him. The legacy he would perhaps appreciate most, however, is that his name has been given to a crater on the far side of the moon—the farthest humans have yet explored. 🌐



David W. Tschanz (desertwriter1121@yahoo.com) has degrees in history and epidemiology and works for Saudi Aramco Medical Services in Dhahran. He writes primarily about history, medicine and technology, and is currently at work on his ninth book.

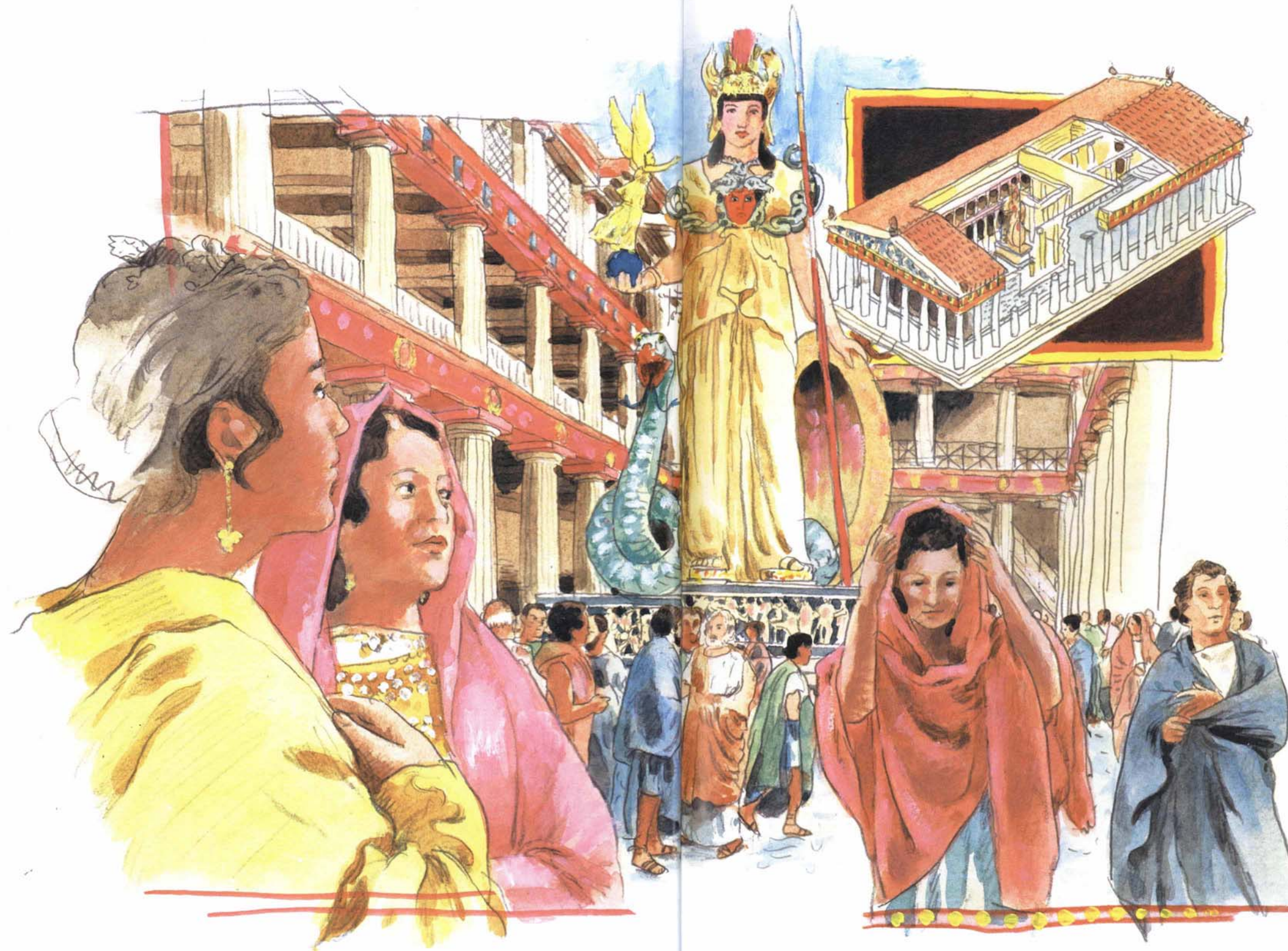
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Arabic Science: M/J 07

Ibn Firnas: J/F 64

PREVIOUS SPREAD: DICK DOUGHTY / SAWDIA; OPPOSITE, TOP: ADRIAN PINGSTONE / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS; LOWER: CHRISTOPH BANGERT / LAIF / POLARIS; RIGHT: TOR EIGELAND / SAWDIA

I

WITNESS
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WRITTEN BY FRANK L. HOLT

ILLUSTRATED BY NORMAN MACDONALD

DO NOT LOOK UPON ME AS YOU WOULD SOME WEARY OLD WOMAN AND WONDER HOW LOVELY I MIGHT ONCE HAVE BEEN. A LADY'S LIFE DOES NOT END AT THE AGE OF TWENTY-FOUR CENTURIES, AND I HAVE BEAUTY ENOUGH FOR THE MILLENNIA TO COME.

I have watched the sun rise over the Aegean world nearly 900,000 times, and I shall never tire of the joy. Rosy-fingered dawn creases the darkness and, with a firm handhold on the sky, pulls up the day from behind the hills to set my city aglow. Here and there, a silly young rooster thinks the sun has risen just to hear him crow, but I know the light has come to see me. It plays among my mighty columns and seeks out the museums of weathered art still hidden among my clothes.

Hour by hour, sunshine shoves against shadow and makes my features move: Prancing horses come to life amid the figures of men and mythological monsters embroidered in stone about me. What the night had chilled becomes warm and alive, and my marble dazzles the Aegean day like no other monument ever made. Granted, I am not all that I once was, but what age has stolen, the sun still remembers, and I forgive. Perhaps a lady should never say so, but nothing ever built by human hands impresses me more than ... me. I am the temple of Athena, mistress of the Acropolis—the incomparable Parthenon.

You, the Children of Now, can appreciate my storied birth among the Children of Then. They were angry and afraid as they gathered here at what you might call the “ground zero of the Greek Golden Age,” sorting through piles of ash and rubble in the aftermath of the Persian attack that had torched the city and toppled even its religious monuments high on this Acropolis. Tradition tells us that the Greeks swore an oath never to rebuild what had been wrecked on sacred ground, vowing instead to leave the site empty as a silent memorial for generations to come. When their grief abated, however, they abandoned their oath, and they healed the wounded spot with a monument worthy of their resilient civilization—and so I was born.

I am what you might call an octastyle peripteral Doric temple with a hexastyle double-prostyle cella housing a chryselephantine statue. That's architectural shorthand for a plain-style Greek temple with eight columns at each end and 17 down each side, enclosing two walled chambers with six columns in front of each and more colonnades inside, all surrounded by sculptural decoration and sheltering a gigantic cult statue fashioned of ivory and gold. No Greek temple ever dressed itself more elaborately in sculpture than I. Massive figures embellished my pediments: the story of Athena's birth portrayed at the east end, and the struggle for Attica between Athena and her uncle Poseidon on the west.

Above my architrave on all four sides, a series of 92 sculptured panels, or metopes, presented in high relief a miscellany of mythical battles involving Amazons, centaurs, gods and giants. Most famous of all (but for all the wrong reasons, thanks to Lord Elgin), a continuous low-relief frieze wrapped 160 meters (520') around me, tucked high up in the shadows between my colonnades. This marvel depicted a grand religious procession animated by more than 200 cavalrymen, musicians,

offering-bearers, deities, sacrificial animals and suppliants of both sexes and all ages. These figures probably represent the Panathenaic Procession that honored Athena every year.

The most incredible of my sculptures stood 13 meters (42') from floor to ceiling inside my main room, or cella. Glistening in gold and ivory, this statue of Athena showed that she was no demure little deity, but rather a woman of war-like mien. The master sculptor Pheidias decked her out in a triple-crested helmet and armed her with a towering spear and a sturdy shield. She wore a dazzling robe and had a monstrous snake curled at her feet. I still recall the gasps of visitors when they crossed the threshold and saw her looming ahead. Imagine their shock to see Athena so large that she held in her outstretched palm a figure of the winged goddess Nike ("Victory") that itself stood much taller than a man.

Crown of the Acropolis, everything about me was meant to glorify Athena and her namesake city. I am the largest Doric temple ever completed by the Greeks, and the only one built entirely of marble. I may not look massive, but I am a big girl. Just three of my 46 exterior columns weigh more than that entire Egyptian obelisk in the Piazza del Popolo of Rome. Pound for pound, my exquisitely proportioned body could absorb 88 such

IN 1687 A VENETIAN VOLLEY EXPLODED THE TURKISH MAGAZINE. SOME OF MY RUBBLE WAS SALVAGED TO REBUILD THE MOSQUE.

obelisks with stone to spare. He is tall, stark and handsome, but he is no match for my subtle curves and fashionable accessories. (See "Beauty Secrets of the Parthenon," page 41.) Among history's honor roll of engineering wonders, I carry my weight quite well.

Art imitates not only life, but also legend. The Greeks liked to believe that Athena was miraculously born full-grown from the head of her father, Zeus. Ironically, I came into the world with similar dispatch. Annual construction records, written in stone for public scrutiny, allow you Children of Now to reconstruct just how—and how fast—I was built by the Children of Then. Given the intricacy of the project; the diversity of the craftsmen; the tonnage of marble to be chiseled, hauled and hoisted; the necessary bureaucratic oversight; and the working conditions on the cramped heights of the Acropolis, it might seem a miracle that I was ever completed at all, much less so immaculately. But even to the ancients, the most amazing part of the whole process was its speed. I grew from ground to grandame in just 15 years, between 447 and 433 BC. You Children of Now fancy the phrase, "quick as a New York minute," but even in your modern Manhattan the Cathedral of St. John the Divine is only two-thirds finished after 116

years. In that length of time, I had already experienced adulthood long enough to see my city rise from its ashes to enjoy world power, fall horribly at the hands of the grim-faced Spartans, rise again with a new democracy and succumb once more when the kings of Macedonia came this way.

I remember all of this very well for, in many cases, I collected timely little keepsakes, just as you might on a smaller scale assemble a scrapbook or memory-box. Shields and weapons from famous battles hung on my walls or lay stored away in the treasure chamber at my western end. This particular compartment was called the Parthenon ("Maiden's Bedroom"), and by this name I became generally known. There the jewelry of Alexander the Great's Asian wife Roxane competed for shelf space with piles of precious coins from distant cities, victory wreaths from generals, furniture from foreign palaces, and artwork from nearly everywhere. A staff of priestly accountants kept inventories of these mementos and offerings, which included so many luxurious objects that I occasionally lent the Athenians money or other valuables during times of financial crisis. If you had the contents of Fort Knox and the Smithsonian stashed in your basement, you would have some inkling of what I accumulated over the years.

Of course, any lady as lovely and wealthy as I must guard against the attentions of unworthy men. When I was 144 years old, a dissolute Macedonian tyrant named Demetrius Poliorcetes ("the City-Sacker") beguiled the Athenians and settled himself among my treasures, living there in a fashion that defiled the goddess I was meant to dignify. A few years later, his rival Lachares did worse: To pay off his mercenaries, he stole from the statue of Athena the golden robe given her by Pheidias. Then came the Romans, whose nutty emperor Nero drilled into my eastern architrave a cluster of deep holes, which held in place the metal letters of a pompous inscription advertising his imagined virtues. It is one thing to put messages on a blimp or a city bus, quite another to screw a billboard onto the Parthenon. The embarrassing words are now gone, but the wound remains on my face.

Yet that pain cannot compare with the anguish caused by a fire set by invaders when I was about 700 years old. The flames devoured my treasures, destroyed my 350-ton roof and disfigured my body from skin to skeleton. I thank the Romans that repairs were made, though not to the standards of my original construction. Grafts and transplants from nearby buildings served my healers as makeshift remedies. In this way, I recovered enough to remain functional as Athena's most famous temple.

Back in the days when medieval was modern, I served the shrunken community of Athens as best I could. Sadly, the city had faded far into the background of the Byzantine Empire, Rome's successor in the East. I resumed my hobby of collecting mementos, though the fashion of the day brought me more skulls and finger-bones of various saints than captured shields of Persian warriors. Churchgoers, from the poorest artisan to the proudest archbishop, left little messages carved into my columns and walls, a graffiti chronicle that historians now treasure. In this unusual archive can be traced the ebb and flow of my middle-aged life, when I frequently passed through the hands of rival families, some Catholic and others Orthodox. I echoed with not only changing liturgies, but languages as well: Latin, Greek, French and Spanish, depending upon whose wedding or funeral I observed.

As an ecumenical center of worship, I had devoted half my life to paganism and half to Christian sects when, at the age of 1900, I found another faith: Islam. Under the patronage of Sultan Mehmed II, conqueror of Constantinople, I became a mosque, and for centuries a slender minaret soared above my marble. During the 17th century, the Turkish traveler Evliya Çelebi published one of the most poetic appraisals ever made of my enduring beauty. He concluded with a fervent prayer that I, "a work less of human hands than of Heaven itself, should remain standing for all time." It was a lovely sentiment, but just a few years later, I was all but annihilated in the worst moment of my life.

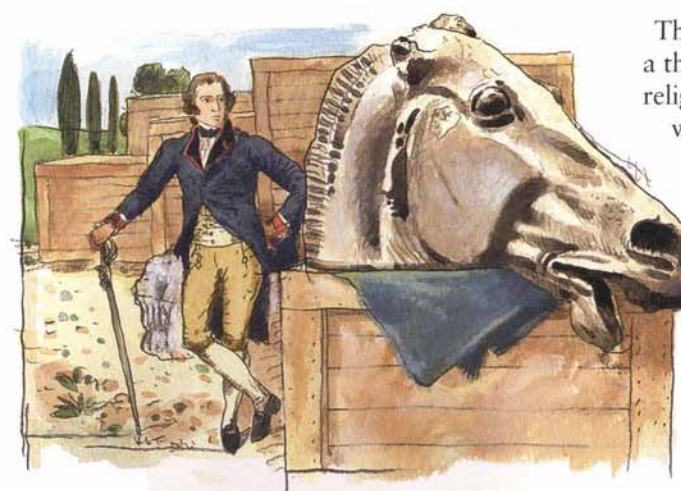
The trauma occurred on the evening of September 26, 1687. A well-armed band of Venetian invaders surrounded the Acropolis, intent on capturing these historic heights from the Turks. I had been watching scraps like this for 2100 years, but lately with more trepidation: Swords and spears

That career ended before I turned a thousand years old. The signs of religious change were evident everywhere in the Greco-Roman world,

and as readily as pagans became Christians, their temples became churches.

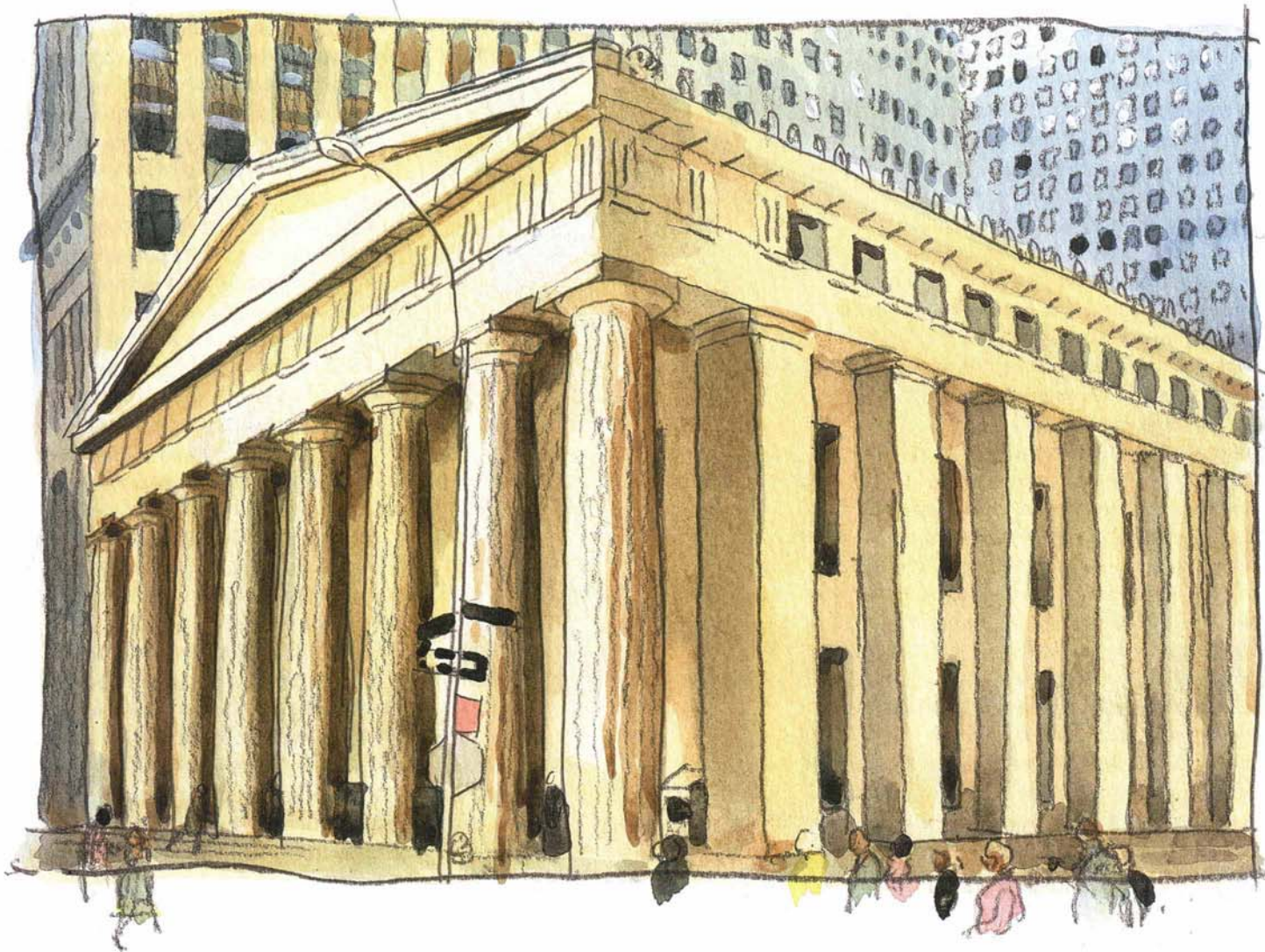
So I bid farewell to the virgin Athena and embraced the Virgin Mary; baptistry replaced treasury; congregants filled my main cella for the first time. (The interiors of pagan temples were not used for assembly.)

An apse closed off my eastern doorway, and much of my sculpture was painfully removed or scraped down into innocuous stumps. Fortunately, my long Panathenaic frieze proved less odious to Christians than the Amazons, centaurs and such on my metopes, so Athena's procession survived my transformation from Parthenon into Our Lady of Athens cathedral.



IN 1801 LORD ELGIN'S AGENTS REMOVED 15 METOPES, 17 LARGE FIGURES AND MORE THAN 75 METERS OF PANATHENAIC FRIEZE.





had given way to cannon. I winced as the Venetians trained their sights on me. As the Turks huddled for safety inside me, more than 700 cannonballs found their mark against my marble. But not only people sheltered here: So did their stores of gunpowder—until a Venetian volley crashed through my roof and exploded the Turkish magazine. There was nothing I could do. Three hundred souls perished, and to this day I have not recovered from the shock. My roofing and interior rooms vanished in the maelstrom, as did many of my columns. Only a shell of me remained amid the marble debris.

Some of the bomb-rubble was salvaged to rebuild the mosque, which can be plainly seen in the earliest surviving photographs taken of me. The rest lay in heaps that invited tourists and townspeople to help themselves. With some bitterness, I must say that a few takers went too far, most infamously the seventh earl of Elgin. As Great Britain's ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Lord Elgin seized upon every opportunity to ship back home a personal harvest of plundered Greek antiquities. In 1801, his agents began their assault on Athens armed

I BECAME A FASHION MODEL AT THE MATURE AGE OF 2300, AS NEW BUILDINGS TRIED TO CAPTURE MY CLASSIC GOOD LOOKS.

with an official Turkish *firman* that permitted them to ... well, who really knows? The document may have authorized the collection of some exploded sculptural fragments yet scattered at my feet, or perhaps it gave license to gather certain inscriptions: In any event, Elgin interpreted the grant to include anything he wanted on the ground or still on me. For months his team tore at my flesh, removing 15 metopes, 17 large figures from my pediments and more than 75 meters (240') of the Panathenaic frieze. Many contemporaries deplored this outrage, including Lord Byron, whose poetry vilified Elgin. Vital parts of me went to Britain nonetheless, and there they remain, still at the center of argument and acrimony. Some say Elgin rescued what the Turks—or air pollution—would otherwise have completely destroyed; others coined

the French term *elginisme* along the same lines as the English word “vandalism,” which originally described what the Vandal invaders did to Rome. Flayed to adorn Elgin's countryhouse, I am hardly a neutral party in this dispute. True, my marbles (please do not ask me to call them Elgin's) now reside in the stately British Museum, but that is only because the cash-strapped lord

BEAUTY SECRETS OF THE PARTHENON

Good looks like mine do not come easy ... or cheap. My body was mined, ton by precious ton, from the finest marble of Mt. Pentelicon. Every one of many thousands of monumental pieces, no two the same, was custom-quarried to fit into its singular place, often with tolerances of less than 1/20 of a millimeter (two thousandths of an inch). Many of my surviving joints are so precise that they cannot be examined except under strong magnification. Each nine-ton Doric capital took workers two full months to cut from the quarry, and days more to transport the hilly 10 miles from Pentelicon to the building site. Besides masons and sculptors, my beauty depended on the talents of many trades, including some you might easily overlook: rope-makers, riggers, road-builders, sledgers, scaffolding carpenters, gilders, painters, muleteers, water-fetchers and so forth. Some were freemen, others slaves, but all labored side-by-side and drew decent salaries from the public payroll. Look at me carefully: Can you tell where the sculpting done by a slave ends and that of his master begins? I did not think so—my beauty is classic, my artistry classless.

Those in charge of my upbringing (the famous Pheidias, Ictinus and Callicrates) took great pains that I grew properly. Even now, I look gorgeously straight and symmetrical only because I am not. My columns seem to taper gracefully from the bottom up, but they appear so only because they actually swell two centimeters (3/4") in the middle; the Greeks called this trick *entasis*. Those same columns lean inward or else they would not appear perpendicular at all: If extended upward, they would converge some 5000 meters (16,250') above me. My corner columns are more closely spaced and have to be thicker in order to look like all the others. The platform on which I rise bulges upward in the middle on all four sides so that it seems to be perfectly flat. If erected without these subtle adjustments, I would look a mess, with sagging waist and feeble limbs, giving me the graceless posture of a Surinam toad. My ingenious designers understood these optical challenges and how, very precisely, to compensate for the many failings of the human eye. My visual perfection is what you might today call a “virtual reality.”



eventually sold them. To whom do they rightfully belong? Britain? Greece? Humanity? No, they belong to me! I have no doubt they will return someday, and that I shall weep to see them as though I had been given back all my youth and half my beauty.

Of course, it is only fair to say that I have been mugged and mutilated by others as well. Through one means or another, parts of me have ended up in Paris, Rome, Munich, Palermo, Strasbourg, Vienna, Washington, Copenhagen, Heidelberg and other places far from the Acropolis. I'm thankful that I have been more or less protected, over the past 175 years, by a most attentive cadre of guardians who call themselves archeologists. They have pored over my broken and buried pieces, attempting wherever possible to puzzle me back together. Such efforts have awakened the world once more to my place at the forefront of art and engineering. Architects have studied my refinements and declared me the most important, the *most perfect* building ever created. At their insistence, I became a fashion model at the mature age of 2300. Children of Now can scarcely visit a modern city and not see an homage to me: banks, museums, mansions and courthouses all trying desperately to capture my classic good looks. There is even a full-scale concrete replica—complete with a copy of Pheidias's gigantic statue of Athena—in Nashville, Tennessee.

Meanwhile, I keep my joyful vigil over the Athens of my birth. Worshipers of a new kind through the Acropolis, but some things never change. The Children of Now, like the Children of Then, still puff up the steep pathway and pause reverently before me, raising a salute to shield their eyes against the greatest of my admirers—the Aegean sun. ☉



Frank L. Holt (fholt@uh.edu) is a professor of history at the University of Houston and most recently author of *Into the Land of Bones: Alexander the Great in Afghanistan* (2005) and *Alexander the Great and the Mystery of the Elephant Medallions* (2003), both published by the University of California Press.



Norman MacDonald (www.macdonaldart.net) is a Canadian free-lance artist, living in Amsterdam, who specializes in history and portraiture. This is the fourth article he has illustrated in the “I Witness History” series.

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Tall, stark and handsome obelisk: S/O 07
Autobiography of a coin: S/O 97

REMEMBERING MAHMOUD DARWISH

WRITTEN BY FADY JOUDAH

My relationship with Mahmoud Darwish

began when I was seven years old, in Libya, memorizing his poems for small change my father or uncle would hand me after a correct recitation. Later, when I returned to the United States for college, I pulled out of the deep well in my mind the poetry that had introduced me to the lyric world. Stunned by Darwish's absence in English translation, I was determined that one day I would help establish him for who he was: Not just the "national poet of Palestine," or even an "Arab poet," but a world poet—a universal, timeless voice. In 2004, I phoned him to tell him about my plans for translation. I remember what he said: "Translation is anyone's right." Our relationship continued that way, by telephone, until I met him in the last week of his life for a long, beautiful afternoon in Houston. Despite his fame, he was a shy, even transparent man, like one of the almond blossoms that bloom in March, the month of his birth in the Galilee he loved so much.

His life paralleled that of the post-World War II Palestinian collective: Displacement, dispossession, liberation, occupation, despair and hope were the themes he lived. His mother's coffee, which he longed for in his famous poem *To My Mother*, written from an Israeli jail while he was in his 20's, became the metaphorical coffee of thousands. Similarly, his ruined hometown, forever present and absent, has become the hometown of millions of refugees, exiles and displaced people around the world. Whenever he wrote his most personal feelings, they echoed in the plural.

He realized that Palestine was a metaphor for a larger state of exile which transcends boundaries, ethnicities and histories. In his later years he developed this sensibility to encompass the specificity of dialogue between the Self (the "I") and its Others, but, unlike many "nationalist" poets, Darwish never shied from including Others—especially Jews and Israelis—in love and in dialogue, in reproach and in truthfulness.

Mahmoud Darwish was as particularly Galilean as he was a citizen of this Earth. He was one of the rare, timeless voices that spoke and sang for the better traits of humanity. He always aimed at countering the dark, wherever it might be, whichever name it might bear. By eulogizing life, he immortalized his own. 🌐

Fady Joudah is a Palestinian-American physician with field experience with Doctors Without Borders in 2002 and 2005. His poetry collection, *The Earth in the Attic*, won the Yale Series of Younger Poets competition in 2007. In 2008, his translation of Mahmoud Darwish's *The Butterfly's Burden* was short-listed for PEN's award for poetry in translation, and won the Saif Ghobash Banipal prize for Arabic translation by the Society of Authors in the UK. He lives in Houston.

WE ARE HERE NEAR THERE

We are here near there, thirty doors to a tent.

We are here between pebbles and shadows,
a place for a sound, a place for freedom or
any place that has rolled off a mare or scattered
out of a calling or a bell.

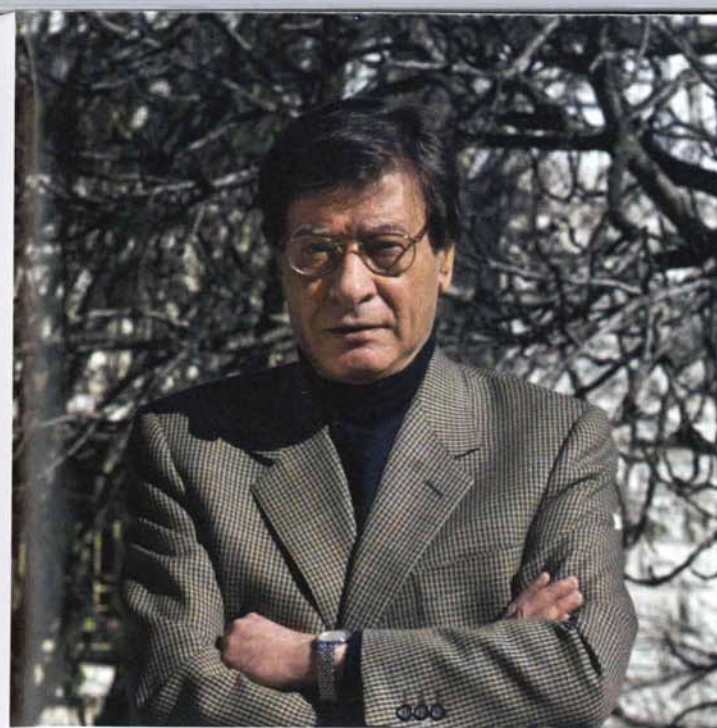
We are here, soon we will puncture this siege,
soon we will liberate a cloud and depart in
ourselves. We are here near there, thirty
doors to a wind, thirty has-beens.

We teach you to see us, know us, hear us,
touch our blood in peace. We teach you our
salaam. We may or may not love the road
to Damascus, Mecca, or Kairouan.

We are here in us. A sky for August, a sea for
May, a freedom for a horse, and we ask of
the sea that it haul out the blue circles
around the smoke.

We are here near there, thirty shapes and
thirty shadows to a star.

—Mahmoud Darwish (Fady Joudah, trans.)



Mahmoud Darwish, 1942–2008, photographed in Ramallah, 2006.

Further Reading

Mahmoud Darwish, *Exile's Poet*. Hala Khamis Nassar and Najat Rahman, eds. 2008, Olive Branch Press, 978-1-56656-664-3, \$25 pb.

***The Butterfly's Burden*.** Mahmoud Darwish. Fady Joudah, trans. 2007, Copper Canyon Press, 978-1-55659-241-6, \$20 pb.

***Unfortunately, It Was Paradise*.** Mahmoud Darwish. Munir Akash and Carolyn Forché, trans. and eds., with Sinan Antoon and Amira El-Zein. 2003, University of California Press, 978-0-520-23754-4, \$19.95 pb.

www.mahmouddarwish.com

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WRITTEN BY CAROLYN FORCHÉ

On a winter night in Beirut 22 years ago, a physician working among Palestinians in southern Lebanon whispered to me that I had arrived too late, that the poets had left Beirut the year before, Mahmoud Darwish among them. In the darkness of a blackout, he spoke of how unsettling it was for the people to know that the poets were no longer there, most especially Darwish, whose work was beloved by millions in the Arab world and beyond, whose lyrics were sung by heart, set to the music of their ancient *'ud*, whose poetry readings filled stadiums. Having survived a life of imprisonment, house arrest and exile, he wrote of love, survival and our common humanity. Now Mahmoud Darwish is no longer among us, this poet who made of his language a homeland, who dwelled in exilic being—this solitary, private man who became the voice of a people, and who, in a language of fig trees, olives and flute music, exile and longing, rebuilt in poetry the 417 invisible villages of Palestine, such as Al-Birweh—which he was forced to flee as a boy—the village to which his empty, symbolic coffin was carried to be set among the stones of what may have once been his house, near a prickly pear bush, in a dry wind. At that same moment in Ramallah, tens of thousands attended his state funeral and laid him to rest on a hillside with Jerusalem visible in the distance. Those who carried the second coffin to Al-Birweh knew that their poet had to be buried twice, once for his presence and once for his absence.

Almost 20 years after Beirut, I came to know Mahmoud Darwish as one of his collaborative translators and then as his friend, and would come to understand why the people of that besieged city were so bereft at his loss. No other poet of his time gave voice to an entire people, no other poet was so beloved, and yet he also cleaved to his art, and carried within himself the solitude it demanded. He seemed to know and accept his destiny, and desired only to finish the work under his pen. A year before his death, we were together at Struga in Macedonia, the oldest poetry festival in the world, and as he stood on a bridge over the River Drim, he read his poems to the thousands who crowded its banks and drew their flotilla of boats as close as they could to him beneath the bridge. During the festival, the sky flowered with fireworks in his honor, torches were lit, songs sung, and he was presented with the Golden Wreath Award, one of the highest honors given to a poet. A few days later, we were taken by boat across a spring-fed pool near Lake Ohrid. There was no sound but that of the oar rising and falling. Mahmoud was pensive as he leaned over to touch the water, while telling me very quietly that his heart was giving way. I didn't understand at the time that he was saying goodbye, and now I must say goodbye to him, who realized his wish to be a candle in the darkness of the times in which he lived, and by whose poetry, memory and light we must now find our way. 🌐

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For students: We hope this two-page guide will help sharpen your reading skills and deepen your understanding of this issue's articles.
For teachers: We encourage reproduction and adaptation of these ideas, freely and without further permission from *Saudi Aramco World*, by teachers at any level, whether working in a classroom or through home study.

—THE EDITORS

Class Activities

This issue's Classroom Guide is organized around one theme: A Sense of Place. The Visual Analysis portion also focuses on that theme.

Theme: A Sense of Place

Geography is the study of space in the same way that history is the study of time. In geography, space refers to the physical world—to locations, distances and directions. Place is a little bit different. Place is how we humans give meaning to physical space. For example, a peninsula is a space. It exists as a physical reality. We might name that peninsula the "Arabian Peninsula." When we do that, we relate the physical space to our human-made realities that are political, cultural and economic. As geographers have said, "Place... is space endowed with physical and human meaning."

You live in a physical location, like a continent, or an island, or amid a range of mountains. That is the space you inhabit. But when you say you live in a specific country on that continent, or a specific region in that country, you're overlaying political boundaries and other human ideas onto that space. In short, you are then defining a place.

Place is an important part of who we are. We are citizens of a country, residents of a region, participants in cultures that occupy specific locations in space. (And sometimes people disagree over what those locations are!) In the following activities, you will explore what a sense of place is, and how and why it is important.

Your Important Places

Think about the definition of place that you just read. Then think about how it relates to your own life. What places are important to you? For example, do you feel a sense of patriotism about your country? If so, then your country is an important place for you. Do you feel you have things in common with your neighbors? If so, your neighborhood is an important place for you. What about your home—the building where you live? A mountain where you hike, or a lake where you swim? These are some examples. Think of your own places. List as many of them as you can. Write a journal entry explaining why these places matter to you. Which of them do you think are central to your identity—your sense of who you are? Which ones feel important, but may not be central to your identity?

Objects Reflect Places and Tell Stories

Read "Ghraoui and the Chocolate Factory." As you read, underline the parts of the article that address the importance of place when it comes to Ghraoui Chocolate. Then write a response to one of the following prompts: "Our creations reflect Syria" (a quote from Bassam Ghraoui) or "The story of Ghraoui Chocolate is also the story of modern Syria." If you respond to the first quote, answer the

question, "What does it mean for an object to 'reflect' a place?" To get you started, think about "reflection": Mirrors reflect images—but that is usually only part of the thing being reflected. You reflect on your parents. A project you did reflects on how much research you did. That said, how do Ghraoui's creations "reflect Syria"? If you respond to the second quote, answer the question, "How do objects tell stories?"

What objects reflect you? Team up with another student. Interview him or her as if you were a reporter for a magazine like *Saudi Aramco World*. Ask your partner about an object that reflects or tells a story about him or her. What is that object? What does it reveal? What story does it tell? Write up the results of your interview as if you were writing a magazine article. Show the write-up to your partner to get feedback on its accuracy. Prepare a presentation about your partner. Include what you have written, as well as a photograph, drawing or model of the object. Display the presentations around the classroom. After people have viewed each others' presentations, have a class discussion about what you have learned about how objects reflect people.

Protected Places

Places exist at specific times, so adding a time element to your study of place creates a more vivid, complex sense of a place. A *hima* is a protected place. It was defined in Muslim sacred texts that are centuries old. Today that ancient idea is being revisited as a way to protect places. To find out about himas, read "A Tradition of Conservation." Based on what you read, make a graphic organizer that shows a) what himas were originally protected for; and b) what they are protected for now.

Then turn your attention to the question of what protection means, again adding time to the puzzle. There are different ways to think about protecting places. 100 years ago in the United States, two different perspectives dominated the discussion about protecting places. John Muir, founder of the Sierra Club, advocated preservation. In his view, the government should protect wilderness from any kind of human development. He believed that nature should remain untouched so that people could enjoy its spiritual qualities and beauty. Gifford Pinchot had a different point of view. He believed in conservation—that is, using some resources but also preserving some wilderness. He believed in using resources wisely—not exploiting them ruthlessly, but not leaving them untouched either. Which perspective seems most like the *hima*? In a *hima*, does protection mean leaving the area untouched? Does it mean not using any of the resources in the area?

Make a Venn diagram that compares three approaches to conservation: Muir's preservation, Pinchot's conservation and the *hima*'s

Class Activities (cont.)

approach. Complete the diagram to show what the three approaches have in common and how they differ.

Poetry Explores Place

Mahmoud Darwish was a world-famous Arab poet born in Palestine and a voice for people in exile. Darwish lived much of his life away from his homeland, and many of his poems speak of his attachment to a place where he, for many years, could not live.

Read Mahmoud Darwish's poem "We Are Here Near There." Use the activities below to help you understand the poem. Then take your understanding to a deeper level and think about what Darwish was saying about his sense of place.

1. Have a volunteer read the poem aloud. What are your first impressions of the poem? Do you like it? Why or why not? What do you think it means? What makes you think so? Answer these questions, either in a class discussion or in a journal entry. After you analyze the poem more closely, you can return to your initial responses and see if they have changed.
2. Using a highlighter, mark all the places in the poem that refer to "thirty"—such as "thirty doors to a tent." Look at what you have marked, and list the "thirty" references on a sheet of paper. With a small group, discuss what you notice about

the list. What pattern or progression do you see in the images Darwish used? Keep your answer in mind as you continue analyzing the poem.

3. Using a different color, mark the places in the poem that refer to freedom or liberation. Why do you think Darwish has mentioned freedom and liberation in the poem? What do the references add to what he is saying?
4. In a third color, mark the passages that say "here near there" and other phrases that include "here." As you did before, list the phrases. With your group, discuss the pattern or progression you see. What do the images Darwish uses with "here near there" suggest about where "we" are?

Once you have completed the steps above, put them all together. Discuss: Where are "we," according to Darwish? What place are we near? Are we at home? Where is that home? What images does Darwish use to answer that question? Then step back and think about place more broadly, and the activities you have completed already on that theme. Answer the following question: In "We Are Here Near There," what relationship does Mahmoud Darwish say exists between "us" and place? You may write your answer as an essay, a story or a poem. Or, if you prefer, you might use visual images to show your understanding of Darwish's sense of place.

Analyzing Visual Images

Photographs are excellent formats for showing places. Look back at the definition of place at the start of this Classroom Guide. Then look at the photo on pages 12 and 13. How would you describe the place shown in the photo? Some things to keep in mind as you write your description: What is the physical space like? What are the boundaries of the place in the photo? To what use is the space being put? How does that use define the space as a place? Consider the mountains in the background of the photograph. What does their inclusion add to your sense of the place? Suppose the photographer had chosen to crop (edit) the photo so that you could only see the land with the sheep, and not the mountains. Put your hand or a piece of paper over the mountains. Does excluding the mountains change your sense of the place? If so, how? If not, why not? Then reread the article. How, if at all, does the text of the article change your understanding of the place? If time permits, choose one of the other two photo spreads that accompany "A Tradition of Conservation." Answer the questions from those above that are applicable. What other questions occur to you about the place in the photo?

Finally, try it yourself. Refer back to one of the places you said was important to you. Photograph that place. Do your best to make your photo reflect for viewers what the place means to you. Trade photos with another student. Answer the questions above about your partner's photo, then share your answers with the photographer. Discuss what you see in each other's images.



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Edge of Arabia: Contemporary Art From Saudi Arabia features 17 Saudi contemporary artists, male and female, whose work explores the complex and diverse identities of 21st-century life in the Middle East. The issues addressed are as much personal and domestic as they are global. The artists have chosen not to focus on negative perceptions of the Middle East or on artistic and intellectual clichés associated with the region; instead they present a contemporary world view that is as unpredictable as it is beautiful. The exhibition sheds new light on the largely unknown contemporary art culture of Saudi Arabia. Artists represented include Ahmed Mater Al Ziad Aseeri, Shadia and Raja Alem, Mahdi Al Jeraibi, Yosef Jafa, Lulwah Al Homoud, Ayman Yossri Daydban, Reem Al Faisal, Ali Al Ruzaiza, Sameer Al Daham, Manal Al Dowayan, Abdulaziz Ashour, Nuha Al Sharief, Mohammed Farea Ali, Abdunasser Gharem, Maha Malluh and Faisal Samra (Bahrain). Brunei Gallery, SOAS, London, through December 13.

"Dream (incomplete)" by Ali Al Ruzaiza; oil wash and pencil on canvas.

Azerbaijan: 5000 Years of History and Culture in the Caucasus. Ethnological Museum, Berlin (Dahlem), through November 16.

Persian Visions: Contemporary Photography From Iran presents more than 60 images that provide a revealing view of Iranian life and experience. The 20 artists featured are among Iran's most celebrated and include Esmail Abbasi (references to Persian literature), Bahman Jalali, Shariyar Tavakoli (family histories), Mehran Mohajer, Shoukoufeh Alidousti (self-portraits and family photographs) and Ebrahim Kahdem-Bayatvin. Some have lived abroad and returned to view their homeland from a changed perspective. Anti-exotic and specific, these images make up the first survey of contemporary Iranian photography to be presented in the United States. Missoula [Montana] Art Museum, through November 22.

Latifa Echakhch creates sculptures and installations that explore the visual and architectural codes of identity. The Moroccan-born artist makes allusions to Islamic geometric patterns and minimalism, colorfield painting, radical politics and the bureaucracy of residency visas, examining how even the most banal objects can be infused with cultural assumptions. Tate Modern, London, through November 23.

The Human Dichotomy. Tazeen Qayyum, Attiya Shaukat, Aisha Hussain and Rehana Mangi have assimilated their surroundings and experiences to explore the confounding dichotomies that make humanity so intriguing and provide an avenue for contemplation of human nature, underlying worth, emotion and fragility. Aicon Gallery, Palo Alto, California, through November 29.

Beyond Words: Contemporary Calligraphy From the Middle East presents a diversity of works that transcend the strict rules of traditional calligraphy and explore the medium's scope for development of personal ideas. Artists included in the exhibition are Rafa Al Nasiri, Yusef Ahmed, Ali Hassan, Mohamed Kano, Khaled Al Saai, Hassan Massoudy and Farhad Moshiri. Galerie Kashya Hildebrand, Zurich, through December 6.

The Veil: Visible and Invisible Spaces shows the work of 29 artists, including videographers, filmmakers and new-media artists as well as painters, sculptors, performance and installation artists. Each considers and revises the veil in its many manifestations and interpretations, and puts veils and veiling into context. The exhibit intends to engage received wisdom—particularly current clichés and stereotypes about Islamic practices—and to reflect on the great ubiquity, importance and profundity of the veil throughout human history and imagination. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, through December 12; Alexy von Schlippe Gallery of Art,

University of Connecticut at Avery Point, January 23 through February 22; Indiana University East Art Galleries, Richmond, Indiana, March 30 through April 30.

A People's Migration: The Bakhtiari Kuch is a photographic essay by Caroline Mawer depicting an Iranian nomad family on their semiannual *kuch* (migration) on foot, with their flocks and families, over 3000-meter mountains in southwestern Iran. This ancient way of life is now vanishing fast. Mawer is a Persian-speaking British photographer and adventurer who accompanied one extended family. Brunei Gallery, SOAS, London, through December 13.

Catastrophe! The Looting and Destruction of Iraq's Past deals with both the looting of the Iraq National Museum in Baghdad and the ongoing looting of archeological sites that poses an even greater threat to the cultural heritage of Iraq and the world. Archeological finds and photographs of looted sites and damaged artifacts illustrate such themes as the importance of archeology to history and identity; looting and damage to archeological sites; past combat damage and current construction damage; loss of archeological context; the routes looted artifacts take from Iraq to art markets; progress of recovery efforts at the Iraq Museum; and what can be done. Oriental Institute Museum, Chicago, through December 31.

Treasures: Antiquities, Eastern Art, Coins and Casts presents more than 200 of the most significant objects in the Ashmolean's world-renowned collections. The exhibition provides visitors with a rare opportunity to discover the historic crossing of time and culture in this portrayal of artistic achievement and the development of civilization in Europe, the Near East and the Far East. The treasures represent more than 30 cultures dating from Paleolithic times to the present day, and are presented in nine sections reflecting basic aspects of human activity and interest throughout history. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, UK, through December 31.

Art and Empire: Treasures from Assyria in the British Museum From the ninth to the seventh centuries BC, the Assyrians emerged as the dominant power in the Near East, controlling all of present-day Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Israel and Egypt, as well as large parts of Turkey and Iran. This exhibition includes the most powerful and moving of the art of the Assyrians. Military dress and equipment, horse trappings and harnesses illustrate life in the army. Carved ivories, furniture fittings and metal vessels showcase the luxurious lifestyle enjoyed by the king and his court. An array of three-dimensional objects—figures of deities, clay tablets, clay seals and sealings—address the administration of the empire, trade, legal and social issues, and interrelationships between religion,

magic and medicine. Exorcisms, omen texts, mathematical texts and literary compositions from the royal library enshrine the wisdom of ancient Mesopotamia, the cradle of western civilization. Museum of Fine Arts Boston, through January 4.

Palestine 1948: Remembering a Past Homeland presents the recollection of the *nakba*, "the catastrophe" that followed the establishment of Israel in 1948, from a Palestinian perspective. The exhibition comprises four sections, connected by the central theme of memory and loss. Historical photos by Khalil Raad (1854–1957) give a sense of everyday life in Palestine in the 1920's. In recently filmed video interviews, Palestinian refugees of 1948 tell their personal stories of war, escape and exile. American photographer Alan Gignoux shows photos of Palestinian refugees in combination with contemporary pictures of the precise locations they left in 1948. The video art of Palestinian Jumana Emil Abboud, a resident of Jerusalem, expresses the longing for a homeland and raised the possibility or impossibility of return. Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam, through January 4.

The Horse examines the long, powerful relationship between horses and humans and shows how horses have changed warfare, trade, transportation, agriculture, sports and many other facets of culture. Exhibits include fossils and artifacts from around the world and from 50 million years ago to the present. Among the institutions cooperating in creating the exhibition is the Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage, and the roles of the horse in Arab culture—and of Arab horses in equine culture—are part of the exhibition. American Museum of Natural History, New York, through January 4.

Bedazzled: 5000 Years of Jewelry features some of the museum's greatest masterpieces, as well as many treasures on view for the first time, among more than 200 pieces on display. Besides a special section devoted to rings, highlights include a bright blue faience amulet featuring the lion-headed goddess Sekhmet from fifth century BC Egypt, showing the remarkable development of multicolored glass production. Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, Maryland, through January 4.

Garden and Cosmos: The Royal Paintings of Jodhpur. Newly discovered paintings from the royal collection of Jodhpur form the core of this groundbreaking exhibition of 61 paintings from the desert palace at Nagaur, along with a silk-embroidered tent. These startling images, 120 centimeters in width, are unprecedented in Indian art and reveal the emergence of a uniquely sensuous garden aesthetic in the 18th century. Ten 17th-century Jodhpur paintings borrowed from museum collections in India, Europe and the US reveal the idiom from which the innovations of later Jodhpur painting emerged. Sackler Gallery, Washington, D.C., through January 4; Seattle Art Museum, January 29 through April 26.

To Live Forever: Egyptian Treasures from the Brooklyn Museum uses some 120

pieces of jewelry, statues, coffins and vessels dating from 3600 BC to the year 400 of our era 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. To survive in the next world, Egyptians would purchase, trade or even reuse a variety of protective objects. The exhibition 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. Catalog by curator Edward Bleiberg, \$39.95. Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, Florida, through January 11; Columbus [Ohio] Museum of Art, February 13 through June 7.

Ayşe Erkmen: Weggefärten (Fellow Travelers) is a comprehensive solo exhibition of the Turkish conceptual artist's works. First forging a path (Weg) from the building's outside to its interior, she links the various spaces leading to the actual exhibition site on the first floor of the east wing. Along with sculptures and a large installation dovetailing with earlier works, the exhibition includes her film oeuvre. Hamburger Bahnhof, Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin, through January 11.

The Lure of the East: British Orientalist Painting, 1830–1925 shows more than 110 images of bazaars, baths and domestic interiors in the Near and Middle East by such artists as Joshua Reynolds, J. F. Lewis, W. H. Hunt, David Wilkie, John Singer Sargent, William Holman Hunt, J. M. W. Turner, Roger Fenton, Andrew Geddes and Edward Lear. It is the first exhibition to survey British painters' representations of the Middle East from the 17th to the early 20th century; their responses to the people, cities and landscapes of the region; the cross-pollination of British and Islamic artistic traditions; and the use of "the Orient" as an exotic backdrop. Catalog. Pera Museum, Istanbul, through January 11.

Homer: The Myth of Troy in Poetry and Art presents the historical Homer and the extraordinary influence of his epics, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, whose first appearance in written form marked the transition from the preservation of literature in human memory to its storage in ever newer extracorporeal forms. To show how the epics were received, the exhibition juxtaposes objects from antiquity with later works of art from the Renaissance to modern times: Odysseus's wanderings, the Trojan horse and the characteristics of the gods of antiquity are still common artistic references today. A highlight of the exhibition is the eighth-century "Nestor's Cup," whose three-line inscription is one of the earliest references to *The Iliad*. Reiss-Engelhorn Museums, Mannheim, Germany, through January 18.

Evet: I Do! German and Turkish Wedding Culture and Fashion from 1800 to Today juxtaposes the customs and clothing associated with what is, for most people, still a very important occasion, when a simple "I do!" changes lives. Special clothing for bride and groom emphasizes the importance of the transition. Exhibits from Turkish and German museums, from the 19th century to contemporary designers' products, help answer such questions as "Why are bridal gowns traditionally white? What happens on the henna night? What—and why—is a shivaree?" Museum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte, Dortmund, Germany, through January 25.

The Photographs of Lalla Essaydi looks at the Moroccan-born artist's iconic depictions of family members in traditional attire and covered in calligraphic writing. The words break the expected silence, speaking of Essaydi's thoughts and experiences, caught between past and present. Frist Center for the Visual Arts, Nashville, Tennessee, through January 25.

Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul explores the cultural heritage of ancient Afghanistan from the Bronze Age (2500 BC) through the rise of trade along the Silk Roads in the first century of our era. 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 and long thought to have been stolen or destroyed, but rediscovered in 2003. The earliest objects in the exhibition, from Tepe Fullol in northern Afghanistan, are fragmentary gold vases dated between 2500 and 2200 BC. A second group, from the former Greek city Ai Khanum in a region conquered by Alexander the Great, reflects Mediterranean influence between the fourth and second centuries BC, and includes Corinthian capitals; bronze, ivory and stone sculptures representing Greek gods; and images of Central Asian figures carved in Hellenistic style. Trade goods from a third site, at Begram, date from the first century and include ivory statues and elaborately carved Indian ivory reliefs, as well as vases, bronzes and painted glassware, many imported from Roman, Indian, Chinese and East Asian markets. The Tillya Tepe group consists of some 100 first-century gold objects, including an exquisite crown and necklaces, belts, rings and headdresses, most inset with semiprecious stones. Many of the Bactrian objects reflect the distinctive local blend of Greek, Roman, Indian and Chinese motifs. Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, through January 25; Museum of Fine Art Houston, opens February 22.

Battleground: War Rugs from Afghanistan presents 118 carpets that tell the story of a world turned upside down. Beginning soon after the USSR invaded Afghanistan in 1979, Afghan rug weavers bore witness to disaster by weaving unprecedented images of

battle and weaponry into their rugs; Kalashnikovs replaced flowers, jet fighters replaced birds. War rugs continued to be produced through three decades of international and civil war. Textile Museum of Canada, Toronto, through January 27.

Hearst the Collector. William Randolph Hearst (1860–1951), one of the most influential forces in the history of American journalism and a populist multimillionaire who crusaded against political corruption, may have single-handedly accounted for 25 percent of the world's art market during the 1920's and 1930's. This exhibition of approximately 170 works—including a mosque lamp, from 14th-century Syria or Egypt, and lusterware from Islamic Spain—provides a better understanding of Hearst by exploring what he owned and why and by reassembling and contextualizing the best of what he collected. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, through February 1.

Akhenaten and Nefertiti: Sun and Shadows of the Pharaohs examines in detail the connections among power, art and religion during the reign of Pharaoh Akhenaten and his wife Nefertiti. In the 14th century BC, Akhenaten proclaimed the existence of a single god, of whom the sun was the tangible manifestation, and threw off Egypt's millennia-old polytheistic traditions. To promote their belief and display their new faith, Akhenaten and Nefertiti discarded the ancient artistic and literary canons and founded a city, Tell el-Amarna, conceived to serve the one god. But both proponents and adversaries of the new belief succumbed to intolerance, and all memories of the episode were erased by the couple's successors on the throne. The exhibition also shows how archeologists, using both artistic masterpieces and day-to-day objects, are able to discover the aspirations and accomplishments of the most original of all the reigns of ancient Egypt. Musée d'art et d'histoire, Geneva, through February 1.

Miquel Barceló: The African Work presents works on paper, large- and small-scale paintings, sculptures, ceramics and sketchbooks derived from the Majorca-born artist's long association with West Africa, where he has had a home, in the Dogon area of Mali, since the early 1990's. The 90 works on exhibit show that Barceló's interest in the region is not a search for the exotic; instead he depicts the daily life of its inhabitants in portraits, domestic scenes, landscapes and still lifes. Centro de Arte Contemporáneo de Málaga, Spain, through February 15.

Timbuktu to Tibet: Rugs and Textiles of the Hajji Babas is organized not by country of origin but by function and means of production of the 70 non-western textiles on display, exploring their cultural contexts and functions and presenting the stories of the people who made them. The exhibition illuminates the central role of textiles in cultures worldwide and also chronicles how western understanding and appreciation of such pieces have changed over the course of the 20th

Events & Exhibitions

Continued from previous page

century. All the objects exhibited are from the collections of members of the Hajji Baba Club, the oldest society of rug and textile collectors in the US. Textile Museum, **Washington, D.C.**, through March 8.

Shared Beauty: Eastern Rugs and Western Beaded Purses. Beaded purses were extremely popular in the 1920's, and a wide variety of patterns was depicted on them, including flowers, landscapes and other motifs. Some of the most fashionable designs were copied from Persian, Turkish, Caucasian, Turkmen and Indian carpets and textiles, and this exhibition explores the juxtaposition of bags and rugs and, more generally, the influences of eastern art on western art and fashion. **Indianapolis [Indiana]** Museum of Art, through March 8.

Five Centuries of Indonesian Textiles: Selections from the Mary Hunt Kahlenberg Collection highlights Indonesia's rich and diverse textile traditions with more than 90 works dating from the early 15th through the 20th century, including extremely rare pieces radiocarbon dated to as early as 1403. The cultural origins and influences of the varied ethnic, linguistic and religious groups inhabiting the many islands of Indonesia show a dazzling array of abstract, figurative and geometric design motifs. **Los Angeles** County Museum of Art, through March 15.

Babylon: Myth and Reality. For 2000 years the myth of Babylon has haunted the European imagination. The Tower of Babel and the Hanging Gardens, Belshazzar's Feast and the Fall of Babylon have inspired artists, writers, poets, philosophers and film makers. Over the past 200 years, archaeologists have slowly pieced together the "real" Babylon—an imperial capital, a great center of science, art and commerce. And since 2003, our attention has been drawn to new threats to the archeology of Mesopotamia, or modern-day Iraq. Drawing on the combined holdings of the British Museum London, the Musée du Louvre and the Réunion des musées nationaux, Paris, and the Vorderasiatisches Museum Berlin, the exhibition explores the continuing dialogue between the Babylon of our

imagination and the historic evidence for one of the great cities of antiquity at the moment of its climax and eclipse. **British Museum, London**, through March 15.

Byzantium 330-1453 highlights the splendors of the Byzantine Empire, exhibiting around 300 objects including icons, detached wall paintings, micro-mosaics, ivories, enamels and gold and silver metalwork. Some of the works have never been displayed before. The exhibition begins with the foundation of Constantinople in 330 by the Roman emperor Constantine the Great and concludes with the capture of the city by the Ottoman forces of Mehmet II in 1453. Along the way it explores the origins of Byzantium; the rise of Constantinople; the threat of iconoclasm, when emperors banned Christian figurative art; the post-iconoclast revival; the remarkable crescendo in the Middle Ages and the close connections between Byzantine and early Renaissance art in Italy in the 13th and early 14th centuries. **Royal Academy of Arts, London**, through March 22.

Bonaparte and Egypt charts Napoleon's expedition to Egypt from the invasion through to the changed Egyptian identity after the French withdrawal, and also explores the birth of Egyptology, as the newly "discovered" culture swept the world and led to the rise of orientalism, a fascination with ancient Egypt and massive importation of Egyptian artifacts to Europe. **Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris**, through March 29.

Utopian Visions brings together four Arab female artists living and working in various locations around the globe. They explore the idea of a perfect world, each with her own unique vision and style, and drawing on disparate sources of inspiration, from nature to poetry to spiritual belief. Works by Rima Al-Awar (North Carolina and Toronto), Rana Chalabi (Cairo), Roula Ayoub (Beirut) and Emma Zghal (Tunis and New York) will be on display. **Arab American National Museum, Dearborn, Michigan**, through March 29.

The Essential Art of African Textiles: Design without End illustrates the diverse classical textile genres created by artists in West Africa, displaying some of their earliest-documented and finest works. Textiles have constituted an important form of esthetic expression throughout Africa's history and across its cultural landscape, and have been a focal point of the continental trading networks that carried material culture and technological innovations among regional centers and linked Africa to the outside world. Exhibits include items from the Metropolitan's own holdings along with some 20 works that had entered the British Museum's collection by the early 20th century, as well as works by seven living artists. **Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York**, through March 29.

Generations Under the Arabian Sun commemorates Saudi Aramco's 75th anniversary and includes more than 500 historical pictures of company

and community life. Grouped by decades, the 25 to 50 pictures per group are complemented by dioramas showing special events or developments in the company's past. ① hereskc@aramco.com or +966-3-872-0458. **Saudi Aramco Community Heritage Gallery, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia**, through April 1.

Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs includes 130 works from the Egyptian National Museum, among them a selection of 50 spectacular objects excavated from the tomb of Tutankhamun, including one of the canopic coffinettes, inlaid with gold and precious stones, that contained his mummified internal organs. An additional 70 pieces in the exhibition derive from the tombs of royalty and high officials of the 18th Dynasty, primarily from the Valley of the Kings. These additional works place the unique finds from the tomb of Tutankhamun into context and illustrate the wealth and development of Egyptian burial practice during the New Kingdom. The exhibition is more than twice the size of the 1979 "King Tut" exhibition and is on an "enroute tour" of US museums. Tickets: +1-877-888-8587. **Dallas [Texas]** Museum of Art, through May 17.

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. Boisfeuillet Jones **Atlanta [Georgia]** Civic Center, through May 22.

"And So to Bed": Indian Bed Curtains From a Stately English Home. During the later part of the 17th century, Indian calico or chintz became a fashionable fabric to use in the decoration of bedrooms and small cabinets or dressing rooms. Unfortunately, little evidence of the massive number of textiles imported from India to Europe during this period has survived. Among the rare survivals are two sets of hangings—one of Indian embroidered cotton and the other of hand-painted Indian chintz—that hung in the bedroom of a member of the Ashburnham family. Using these curtains as a starting point, the exhibition explores the influence of the "Indies" on interior decoration of private spaces in 17th-century British architecture, the design and production of the curtains, and the textile trade between Europe and the East. **Museum of Fine Arts Boston**, through June 21.

Shrunken Treasures: Miniaturization in Books and Art highlights more than 30 small-scale manuscripts and rare books, ranging from Books of Hours and copies of the Qur'an to almanacs

and books of poetry, and explores the many reasons for miniaturizing art, from the need for portability, through the desire to concentrate supernatural powers, to the ambition to make boundary-stretching works of art. **Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, Maryland**, through October 2009.

Wonderful Things: The Harry Burton Photographs and the Discovery of the Tomb of Tutankhamun complements the second Tutankhamun exhibition above. The tomb, one of the most famous archeological finds of all time, was one of the first large-scale excavations to be thoroughly documented through photography. The clearance of the tomb took 10 years, and in that time, photographer Harry Burton took more than 1400 large-format black-and-white images. The exhibition consists of 50 of Burton's photographs with explanatory labels, wall panels that discuss the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun and the role of the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute in its interpretation, the early use of photography in archeology, the photographic career of Harry Burton, and how the photographs fueled the public relations campaign of the excavators and spawned the myth of the curse of Tutankhamun. **Carlos Museum, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia**, opens November 15 through May 25.

Beyond Babylon: Art, Trade, and Diplomacy in the Second Millennium BC focuses on the extraordinary art created as a result of a sophisticated network that linked kings, diplomats, merchants and others in the Near East during the second millennium BC. Approximately 350 objects from royal palaces, temples and tombs—as well as from a unique shipwreck—provide an overview of artistic exchange and international connections throughout the period. From Syria, Mesopotamia and Egypt in the south to Thrace, Anatolia and the Caucasus in the north, and from regions as far west as mainland Greece all the way east to Iran, the great royal houses forged intense international relationships through the exchange of traded raw materials and goods as well as letters and diplomatic gifts. This movement of precious materials, luxury goods and people resulted in a transformation of the visual arts throughout a vast territory. Many of these works have either only recently been excavated or have never been shown abroad. **Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York**, November 18 through March 15.

"Jihad Jones and the Kalashnikov Babes," a play by Yusef El Guindi, is a comedy in which an Arab-American actor considers the price of a leap to stardom: having to play the stereotypical role of a machine-gun toting terrorist. **The New L.A.T.C., Los Angeles**, November 21 through December 14.

Beyond Boundaries: Islamic Art Across Cultures is the long-awaited opening exhibition of Qatar's new Museum of Islamic Art. Part of the museum's collection was exhibited at the Louvre in 2006 under the title "From Cordoba to Samarra," and featured metalwork, ceramics, jewelry, carpets, calligraphy, textiles and carved ivory.

Recently, the museum bought the Nuhad Es-Sahid collection of Islamic metalwork and 40 Mughal and Persian miniature paintings from the collection of Stuart Carey Welch. **Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar**, November 22.

World Ceramics: Masterpieces From the V&A charts the history of international ceramics from 3000 BC to the present, showing 116 works. **Khan As'ad Basha, Damascus, Syria**, opens November 24; **Pera Museum, Istanbul**, April through July.

Death, Burial and the Transition to the Afterlife in Arabia and Adjacent Regions, a conference sponsored by the Society for Arabian Studies, includes more than 50 presentations and posters on the topic and two workshops on "Bronze Age Burial Traditions in Arabia" and "Death and Burial in the Islamic World." Pre-registration: www.societyforarabianstudies.org/dbconf08.shtml. ① +44-115-846-7355. **Stevenson Lecture Theatre, British Museum, London**, November 27-29.

Islamic Fabrics in the Collection of the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire uses a small, high-quality textile collection to explore the socio-political history of Islamic Egypt. Exceptional items on exhibit include a very fine Mamluk tunic and, from the same period, a baby tunic made from small salvaged scraps of embroidered linen. Often fragmentary, such textiles nonetheless provide essential information on the clothing, living conditions and funeral rites of Islamic Egypt. **Musée d'art et d'histoire, Geneva**, December 4 through April 1.

Sunken Treasures of Egypt presents a spectacular collection of some 500 artifacts recovered from the seabed off the coast of Alexandria and in Aboukir Bay. Lost from view for more than 1000 years, they were brought to light by an ongoing series of expeditions first launched in 1992. Thanks to these excavations, important parts of a lost world have resurfaced, among them the ancient city of Thonis-Heracleion, the eastern reaches of Canopus, the sunken part of the Great Port of Alexandria and the city's legendary royal quarter. The finds shed new light on the history of those cities and of Egypt as a whole over a period of almost 1500 years, from the last pharaonic dynasties to the dawn of the Islamic era. **Venaria Reale, Torino, Italy**, opens January.

Salkehatchie: Sacred Space. Christopher Kuhl documents and recreates the sense of sacredness that attaches itself to specific geographical areas, from the *snags* and cemeteries of Tangiers to the shimmering mosques of Sharjah and the isolated mountain villages of Oman, as well as in the southern American landscape. **Atlanta-Fulton Public Library System, Sandy Springs Branch, Atlanta, Georgia**, January 1-31.

In Praise of Shadows explores the traditional art form of shadow plays and their influence on the world of contemporary art, bringing together key works by eight contemporary

artists from seven different countries and two master filmmakers. At the heart of the exhibition is the shadow theater tradition of Turkey and Greece, and its character Karagöz (Karaghiozis in Greece), an ever-hungry trickster who lives through hundreds of adventures and misadventures with a varied set of supporting characters. Karagöz dates back to the 16th-century in Turkey and the 19th in Greece, but his stories are still performed today by puppeteers who have adapted his adventures for today's public. The more than 250 items on display range from free-standing models of theaters to drawings, collages and wall installations; they also include a significant number of rare figures and silhouettes, films, photographs, texts, and manuscripts pertaining to shadow theater, and early silhouette and stop-motion movies. Film programs and lectures and live performances by Turkish and Greek shadow players are scheduled. **Istanbul Museum of Modern Art**, January 23 through May 6.

Arabesque: Arts of the Arab World brings together 500 performers from all 22 Arab nations in the largest presentation ever of Arab arts in the United States. The festival includes a weeklong series of Arab films; a three-week immersion course on various regions of the Arab world; a commissioned work, titled "Dancing on the Sands of Time," that unites Arab and American performers; and more. **Kennedy Center, Washington, D.C.**, February 25 through March 15.

"What Do the Women Say?" is an evening of poetry, plays and art in celebration of Middle Eastern women and

women internationally. **La Peña Cultural Center, Berkeley, California**, March 14.

Excavating Egypt: Great Discoveries from the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology offers a view into the lives of both royal and average Egyptians, showing more than 200 ancient objects and works of art from the earliest periods of Egyptian history to the late Roman period. The exhibition also tells the story of archeologist William Matthew Flinders Petrie (1853-1942), one of archeology's greatest pioneers, and captures the adventurous spirit of the early days of Egyptian archeology. The exhibits include one of the world's oldest garments, a rare beaded-net dress from the Pyramid Age, ca. 2400 BC; a fragment of a history book from 2400 BC; the earliest examples of metalwork in Egypt; the earliest examples of glass—so rare the Egyptians classed it with precious gems; the oldest "blueprint," written

on papyrus; and the oldest known royal monument, from the reign of the legendary Scorpion King about 3100 BC. **University of Kentucky Art Museum, Lexington**, March 14 through June 14.

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 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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Publication Title		Issue Date	Frequency
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1. Total Number of Copies (Net Press Run)		10,000	
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