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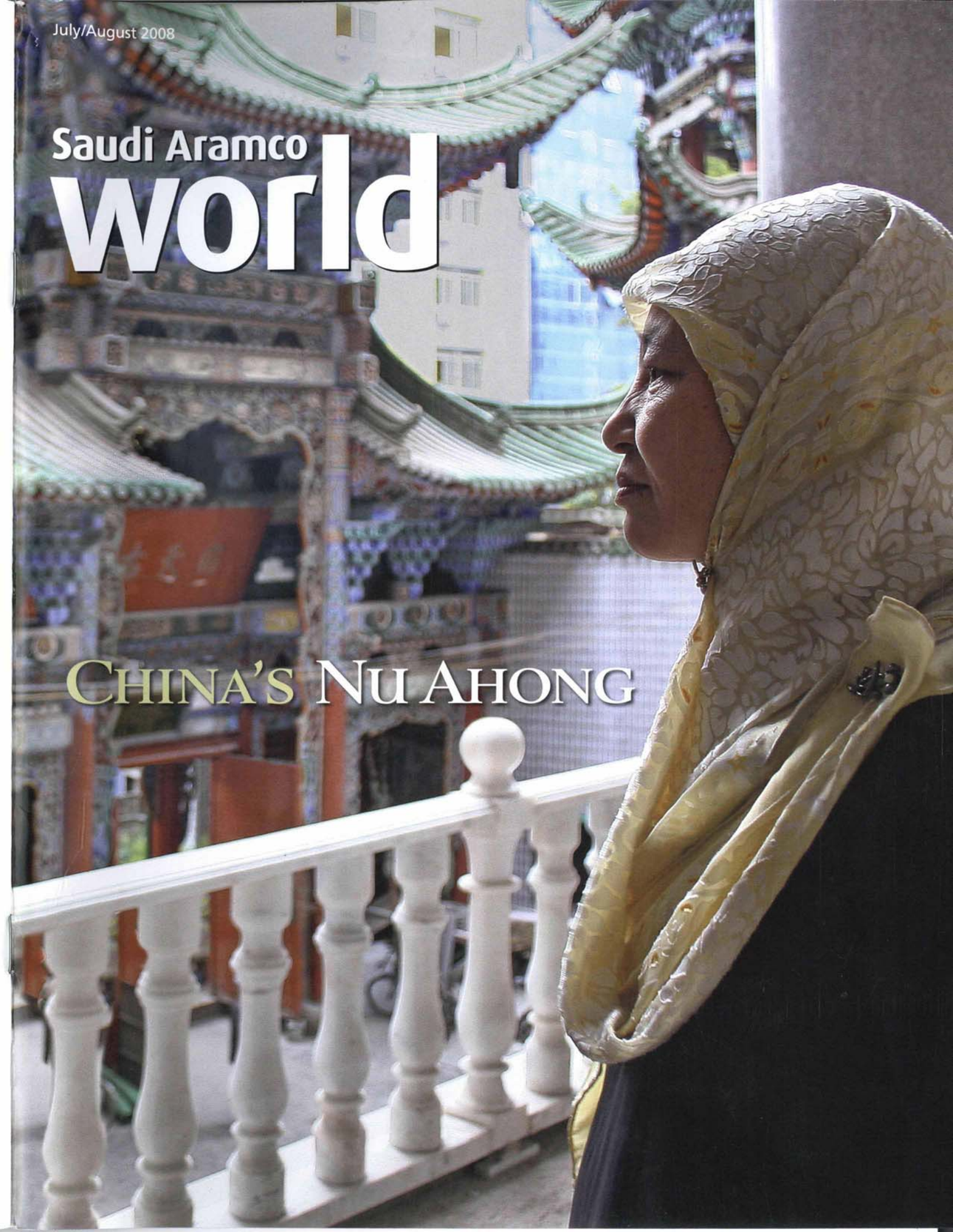

China's Nu Ahong

Saudi Aramco world

July/August 2008

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2: ARTHUR CLARK

Cover:

Although *ahong* is derived from the Persian word for "teacher," *nu ahong* Ding Shu Qin explains that, to her, it simply means "someone who works to help others." At the 600-year-old Nan Guan Mosque in Lanzhou, China, Ding presides over weddings, washes the bodies of the deceased, teaches the Qur'an and the Arabic language, and guides students and congregants in prayers. Photo by Anne Miller Darling.

Back Cover:

Honoring the 75th anniversary of the signing of the 1933 concession agreement between Saudi Arabia and the Standard Oil Company of California that led to oil exploration and the discovery of the kingdom's greatest natural resource, Saudi Arabia issued four postage stamps in May that recognize Saudi Aramco's and the country's goal: "Energy for Generations."

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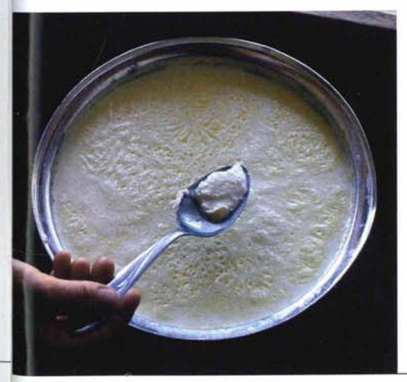

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THE KINGS & THE 1947 KIDS

WRITTEN BY ARTHUR CLARK

Two days, separated by 61 years, stand layered in one photograph, bookending the past and the present at Saudi Aramco: Two days during which ordinary Americans lined up to meet two kings of Saudi Arabia.

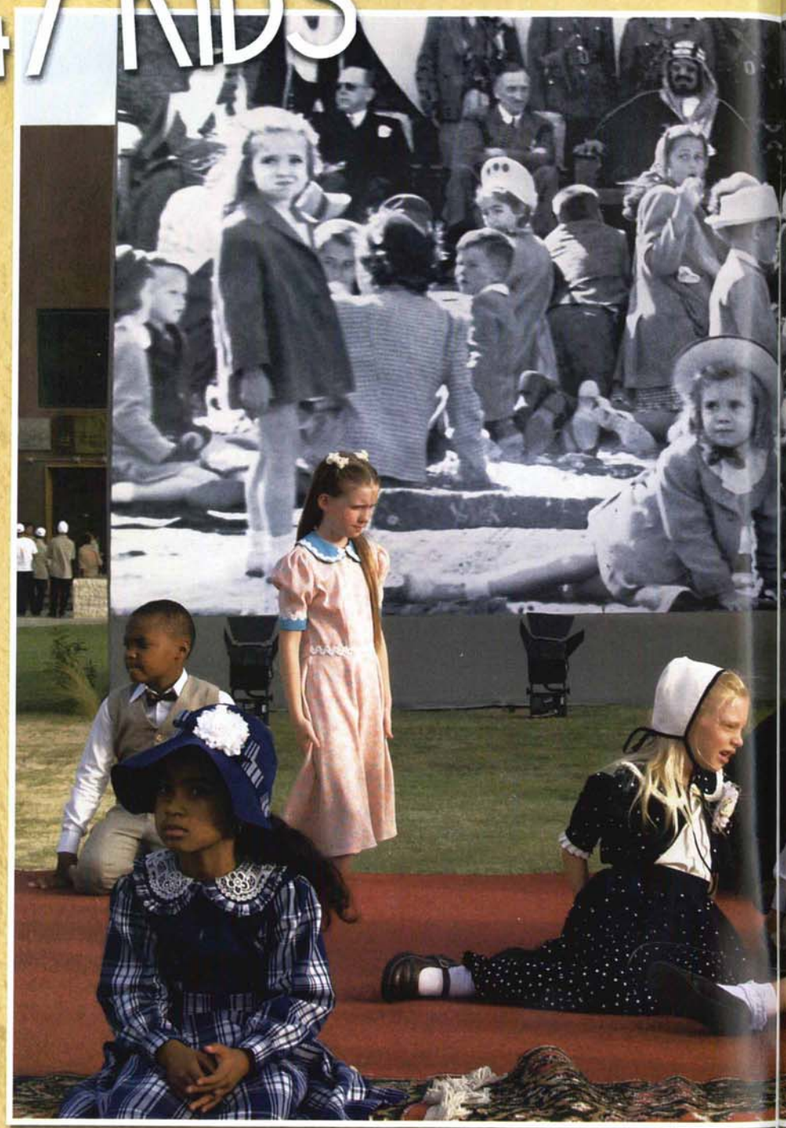
The first day was January 25, 1947. King 'Abd al-'Aziz Al Sa'ud, Saudi Arabia's founding monarch, visited the post–World War II boomtown of Dhahran, on his kingdom's east coast, to meet the children and wives of the oilmen who had recently begun to tap the country's petroleum wealth in earnest.

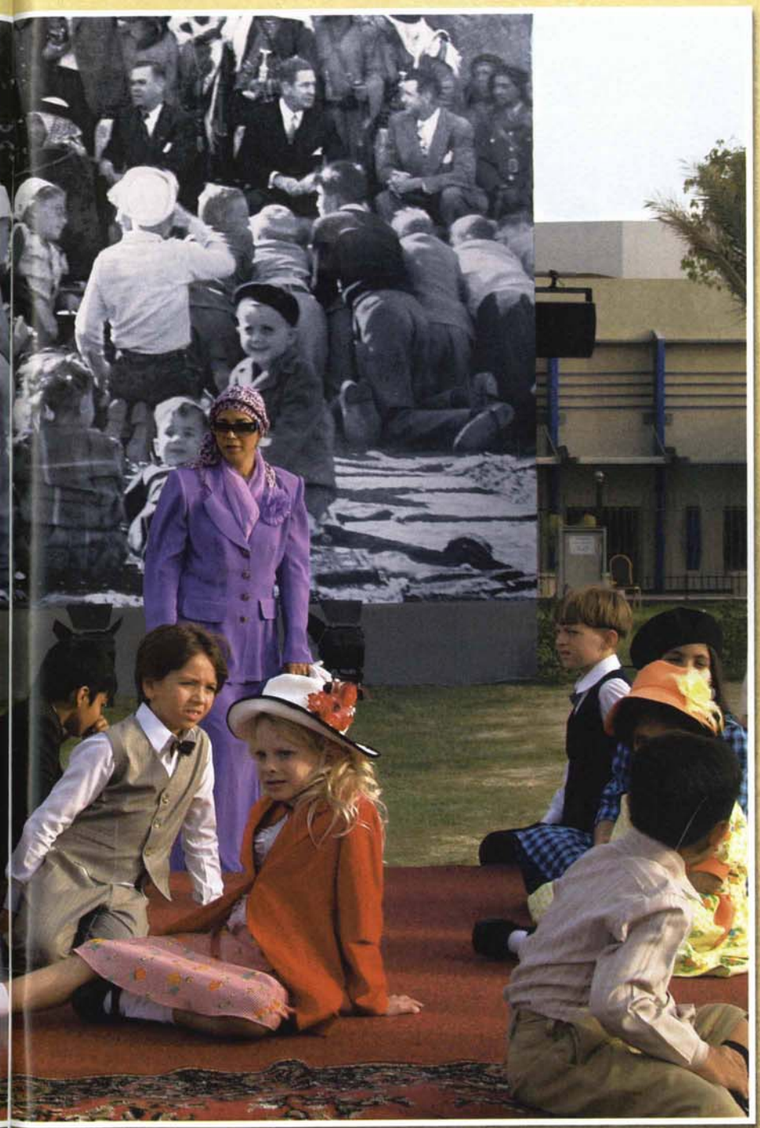
The second day was May 20 of this year, 2008. King Abdullah, 'Abd al-'Aziz's son and Saudi Arabia's sixth monarch, visited Dhahran to meet 29 of the same "1947 Kids," some now accompanied by spouses or grown children, to express his thanks for their parents' help in Aramco's early days, two generations ago.

The event was part of the company's celebration of the 75th anniversary of the day in 1933 when King 'Abd al-'Aziz's finance minister signed the agreement that kicked off oil exploration in Saudi Arabia. For the returning 1947 Kids, the generation-spanning reception opened a layer cake of memories.

"I thought King 'Abd al-'Aziz was quite scary: He was a big man with a beard and a drooping eyelid," recalled David Lunde, who was just five years old in 1947. But, he said, there was a bowl of Fig Newtons next to the king, and "I thought that anyone who liked Fig Newtons as much as I did must be a good guy." The king's hand "seemed huge when I shook it, and it was callused and hard. But he spoke very gently and smiled. I really liked him. That's one of the few hard memories I have of that time."

Lunde was among those who returned for the May 20 ceremony, held at almost exactly the same spot in Dhahran as the 1947 event. This time, however, the meeting was in the evening, after sunset—and after an earlier ceremony in which the king had laid the cornerstone of a new cultural center to be built in his father's name. There were spotlights and film crews, dancing troupes of youngsters and adults, and even children acting out the roles of the 1947 Kids—all to cap Saudi Aramco's 75th-anniversary festivities.





ABOVE: ARTHUR CLARK

RIGHT: AHMED AL-DUBAIS

The audience, too, was much larger than it had been in 1947, but the king appeared to enjoy greeting each of the visitors, much as his father had. Lunde recalled that King 'Abd al-'Aziz "was saying a lot and patting people on the head," and that King Abdullah too "was really into the whole thing."

Other 1947 Kids had similar feelings about 'Abd al-'Aziz.

"I felt kind of mesmerized because he was such a big man," recalled Mary Kennedy Brooks, who was 12 in 1947. "I had been reading *The Arabian Nights*, and I equated him with that. I thought he was a magnificent character. He took my hand, and his was so large he just enveloped it … and he just smiled."

With the passage of 61 years, she found King Abdullah "not so overwhelming as his father," Brooks noted. All the same, it was an emotional event for someone who'd lived in Saudi Arabia both as a girl and then later as the wife of an Aramco employee before finally departing 30 years ago. "I started crying when I began to say 'thank you,'" Brooks said.

Two days earlier, Saudi Aramco president and CEO Abdallah Jum'ah had emphasized the company's enduring ties to its US employees at a dinner in honor of the 1947 Kids and their families. "We appreciate what you have done, what your fathers—possibly your grandfathers—have done, and we will keep that appreciation with us forever," he said. "The success of Saudi Aramco is basically its American connection, its heritage. The American tradition, the American background, is our own, and we built on it."

Left: **Saudi Aramco schoolchildren, dressed and posed to resemble the youngsters shown with King 'Abd al-'Aziz in 1947, were part of the company's 75th-anniversary celebration in May.** Below: **Kathryn Kennedy Dewey, nine when she met King 'Al al-'Aziz in 1947, returned to Dhahran in 2008 to meet King Abdullah. To her, being "treated so honorably" during the six-day stay in Dhahran was a valued expression of the respect Saudi Aramco and Saudi Arabia feel for the work her parents did to help launch the kingdom's oil industry. "The honoring of our parents was truly overwhelming," she said.**

Arthur Clark worked for Aramco and Saudi Aramco as a writer and editor for 21 years, and also wrote nearly 50 articles for this magazine, contributing photographs for many of them. He is now editor of *Al-Ayyam al-Jamilah* and assistant editor of *Saudi Aramco World*.

MESSAGE NATION

Written by Sheldon Chad
Photographed by Michael Nelson

"I've never needed a watch in my life, but I know when it's 9:30!"
—Ould Atigh

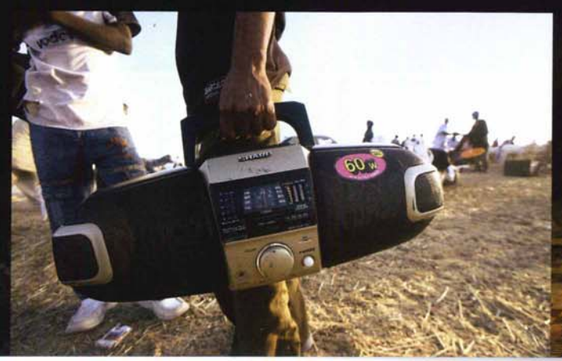
Mohamed Salem's head turns under his black *howli* turban to follow the lone car passing on this dirt road 150 kilometers (93 mi) outside Ouadane in the Mauritanian Sahara. We're shooting the breeze about the weather.

"When the rainy season comes around, I get the feeling that I should turn on the radio and expect a *balagh*, like, 'Mohamed Salem: It rained in Zuarat. Go. It will be good for the camels.'"

Any balagh (message) he receives comes to him over the radio program *Al-Balaghat* ("the messages," pronounced "ahl bah-la-**ghaat**"), broadcast nationwide in Mauritania each weeknight for the past 42 years. You'd be hard-pressed to find a Mauritanian alive who hasn't heard it, and most know it intimately.

When *Al-Balaghat* first hit the airwaves shortly after Mauritania's independence from France in 1960, the population of the sand-swept country was much as it had been for centuries: more than 95 percent nomadic. How,

Each evening, Sunday to Thursday, from the studio of Radio Mauritanie in Nouakchott, Yahya ould Taleb ould Sioli—usually just called "Yahya"—begins his broadcast "shaking hands with the Mauritanian people." Below, from left: ***Al-Balaghat*** **has helped make radio itself popular, from a herders' home in Atar to a sheep market near Nouakchott; from a hut and a tent in Tergit to a gas station in Chinguetti.**



A portrait poster of Ould Agatt, *Al-Balaghat's* first announcer, who developed the show's signature style: Spare Arabic words like telegrams, honey-dipped in the regional Hassaniyya dialect, delivered in a rapid-fire, hypnotically resonant, rhythmic plainsong that became an art form all its own.

then, its founding fathers asked, to get diverse peoples to see themselves as a nation?

The answer began to take shape in 1966, when the nation's young Radio Mauritanie started the nightly broadcast of personal messages. Sparely worded like telegrams in simple Arabic, honey-dipped in the regional Hassaniyya dialect, they were delivered in a rapid-fire, hypnotically resonant, rhythmic plainsong that quickly became an art form all its own. It was as if the traditions of desert *griots* (troubadors), who had helped centuries of nomads exchange songs, stories, poems and gossip, had stepped into the age of mass media.

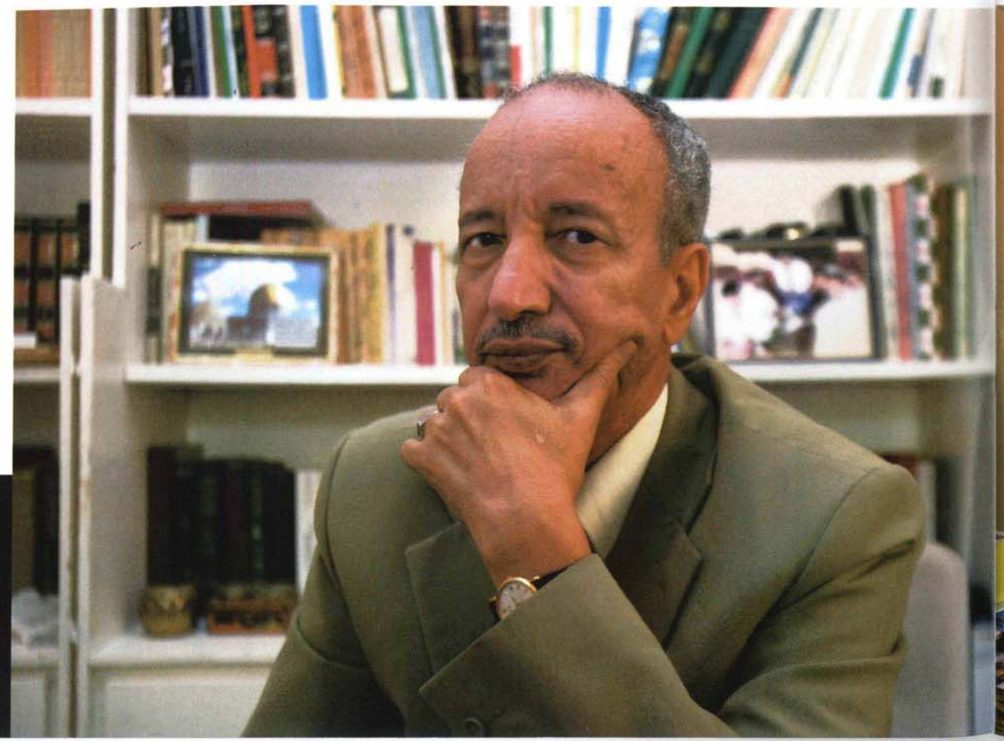
It was as if the desert griots, with their songs, stories and poems, had stepped into the age of mass media.

An instant hit, the broadcasts riveted everyone to a receiver every night, on the chance that they'd hear a message for themselves or about someone they knew. If not, it was still good food for the imagination, for Mauritanians have a unique conversational habit of stopping just short of finishing certain sentences, with the result that listeners have to pour in a little of themselves to catch the meaning—or even create it. With the genius of *Al-Balaghat*, the new nation began to be forged over the airwaves. And five nights a week, you can still hear it.

Mohamed Salem says it takes him 10 to 15 days to cover the few hundred kilometers to Zuarat's greener pastures. Dressed in his traditional sweeping *boubou*, he may look as though he's living in a desert pastoral much as his ancestors did, but then he upends your assumptions. He relies on the radio, he says, "because if you're in a place like this, you don't have cell phone coverage. You have to listen to *Al-Balaghat*." Like Mauritania itself, where even in remote areas everybody seems to juggle two or more cell phones and wide-screen televisions can be found in nomads' tents, he seems to stand with equal firmness in the 14th, 20th and 21st centuries.

In Nouakchott, the situation can be much the same. One-third of the national population of three million has migrated into the Mauritanian capital over the last 30 years, and the constant winds drift sand everywhere. You can be a welcome guest in a home right out of Paris's seventh *arrondissement*, and then a goat wanders in the door; you can step outside and realize that later in the evening, the hosts will repair to their real living quarters—the *khaimas*, or tents, set up in the courtyard.

When Mauritania was carved out of French West Africa, the prospective capital was a small fishing town. It seems ironic, then, that today, with the exception of a still-modest fishing wharf and a deepwater port, the capital's Atlantic beachfront is surreally desolate for kilometers inland. The distance is ostensibly a buffer against flooding, but it also seems to suit the disposition of a country whose face is turned firmly toward its deserts.



Former statesman Mohamed Mahmoud Weddady founded Radio Mauritanie in 1959, the year before independence, as a "voice for the nation."

The gatehouse next to the station's parking lot is now known to two generations of Mauritanians who have stepped across its cement threshold to send their *balaghat* over the airwaves.

"*Al-balaghat wa al-itissalat al-shaabiya*," says Mohamed ould Agatt. "That's the real name of the show. It means 'The People's Messages and Communications.'"

The historic program's "first family" is splayed out around a typically Mauritanian living room. Despite low sofas around the room's perimeter, everyone seems to prefer the carpets in the middle. Famously strong green tea circulates every couple of minutes. It's the home of Mohamed ould Agatt's father, the late Mohamed Lemine ould Agatt, founder of *Al-Balaghat*. (*Ould* means "son of," equivalent to the English suffix *-son* in "Williamson.")

Ould Agatt, as everybody calls Mohamed Lemine, was a giant of a man—both physically and influentially, they say—who cast his long shadow on Mauritanian culture from his perch at Radio Mauritanie. Born in the southeast, he had a classical Mauritanian education in Islamic studies, Arabic grammar and poetry before becoming a successful merchant in Nigeria and, later, the national station's first announcer.

"My father said to the [first] president, Mokhtar ould Daddah, 'There are no telephones, no telexes. There is nothing. Only this show can compensate,'" says Mohamed ould Agatt. The president warned him, he continues, that the post and telegraph offices would resent the competition, and they would sue him. "My father replied, 'Tell them that the show won't be broadcast during the day. That way it won't interfere with the post office!'" He smiles broadly.

Touttout, Ould Agatt's widow, chimes in, declaring, "He was a creator!"

Mohamed continues, explaining that *Al-Balaghat* became popular "because it rendered a service to the people." Before that, "the content of the radio programs wasn't what the people were interested in. But *Al-Balaghat* was useful. If you were going to receive money, *Al-Balaghat* told you. If your son was coming, *Al-Balaghat* told you—"

Touttout interrupts again, asserting that her son was missing the point: "Most people listened to it because they liked his sweet voice! It was like music."

On the wall in the studios of Radio Mauritanie, there is a sign that declares: *La Radio c'est avant tout la créativité*. ("Above all, radio is creativity.") Moustapha Lefnane, program director for the station, believes this is a key to understanding *Al-Balaghat*.

"There is no 'dream dimension' to a cellular phone," he asserts. "But the imaginary side of the balagh is actually a culture. [For example,] you wait for your father, who has been away for three years in France. Then you hear on the radio that he is coming back in a week. Then everybody

Mohammed Kaber ould Hamoudy serves as director general of Radio Mauritanie.

"Above all, radio is creativity," reads this banner at Radio Mauritanie.

gets ready and will be waiting for him 15 kilometers from the village, and we bring out the camel that he is going to ride. This dimension of the imaginary side, almost spiritual side, of the message reinforces human relations. Compare this to the immediacy of communication by cell phone, or by Internet, which makes people lose the imaginary aspect, the spiritual aspect of communication."

The messages reveal their full complexity only when soaked in the water of their listeners' imagination, unlocking emotion for a desert people whose culture demands self-control and restraint.

The gatehouse next to Radio Mauritanie's parking lot has been the home of *Al-Balaghat* since the early days. Over its cement threshold two generations of Mauritanians have stepped to send their balaghat.

Inside, Yahya ould Taleb ould Sioli, the current presenter of *Al-Balaghat*, is trimly bearded and dressed in a western sports jacket. He is all dignity and appreciation. There is also Abdou ould Brahifal, the friendly cashier.

Yahya, as everyone calls him, is busy with a customer. He listens and composes the message in a scribble of ink on paper. He never has to edit, he says: After 25 years, he knows the forms that will satisfy the customer and, at the same time, hit a harmonic chord that resonates in the Mauritanian soul.

When he's finished, he reads the message back to the customer, who gives his assent and then moves over to Ould Brahifal to pay the 300 *ouguiya* fee (about $1.30) and get his receipt. "It is like a beautician's shop," says the cashier. "You have to be gentle with the customer. It's very personal, very human."

This particular client, Yahya explains, bought two condolence messages, "one from him and one from his friend from the same family, for the same deceased." Yahya displays them. "The vocabulary is the same. The same here and the same here. If he has his own style, I will do it [that way], but generally everyone just gives me the names and who he wants to send it to and where. All the phrases are known," he says. "Customers know the form completely. They want it rendered exactly. It's not just style. There is an incredible tradition."

In the same way that Mauritanians, among themselves, often leave sentences for their listeners to complete, the balaghat also carry an unexpressed aspect of the message. Like compressed paper tablets that, dropped into water, expand and blossom into flowers, the messages reveal their full complexity only when soaked in the water of their listeners' imagination; simple, dry words can thus convey the wellsprings of emotion, not only for the addressee but for the listening nation. Somehow, Ould Agatt found the right combination of phrasing, musicality and rhythm that unlocked emotion for a desert people whose culture demands self-control and restraint.

Yahya, who is not sure whether he is 49 or 50 years old, exhibits no pride when he admits that, "yes, every Mauritanian knows my name," and that he, along with his predecessor *Al-Balaghat* presenters, is among the best known, best loved people in the country.

He says that, when he came to the job in 1983, "they said I wouldn't last because it's too difficult. And I want to tell you, it isn't easy. There are very difficult words. There were words that I couldn't say, that didn't exist in Arabic or Hassaniyya, that took me 17 years to learn. How to do it? Difficult! Ould Agatt was very intelligent. He was the one who invented the balagh," marvels Yahya.

Yahya reads about 20 to 30 balaghat each weeknight, from Sunday to Thursday, and about two-thirds are condolences—except at the end of the school year, when there is a flood of congratulatory messages for graduates and their families. Sometimes, he adds, there are also announcements from the police concerning lost and found objects, animals, even people. All balaghat he receives are read the same day, even if their numbers cut into subsequent programming.

Mohamed Lemine "Eddeda" Salleck, one of the most famous radio personalities in Mauritania since the 1970's, tips his hat to Yahya's talents in rendering *Al-Balaghat* as both a utilitarian personal service and a national cultural institution somewhere between poetry, music, oratory and prayer.

"Look: I am a journalist, a Hassaniyya poet and a cultural critic of Mauritanian society. I know music better than the griots, and yet I cannot successfully read *Al-Balaghat*," Eddeda singsongs with an ensorcelling grin.

Yahya shakes hands with a *balagh* sender. "Clients know the form completely," he says. The style of messages is "an incredible tradition."

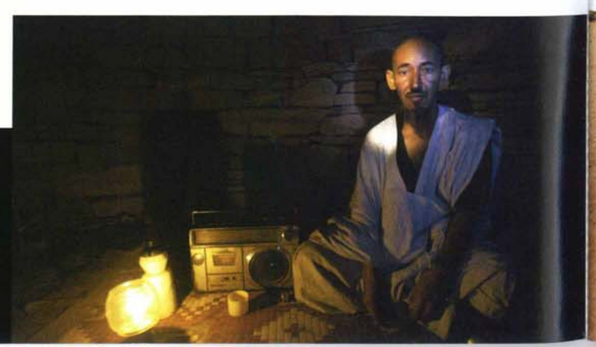
"Radio was what connected Mauritanians, taught us that there was a state, that there was a president, and there were ministers, and there was a parliament. There were shows with singers, and we took time to sit and listen to the music, but when *Al-Balaghat* came on, it was more important. The other world was for leisure, but this was something that could change your life. Everybody knew Post Office Box 200 was for *Al-Balaghat*."

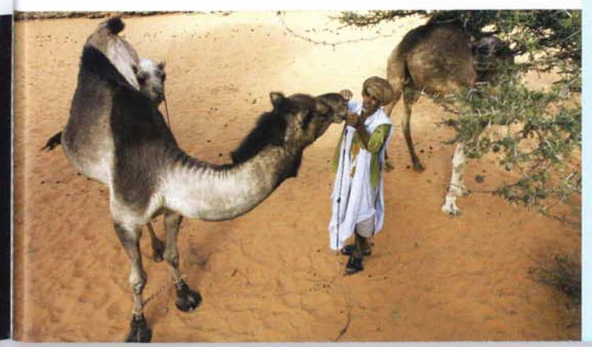
The desert oasis of Tergit, 450 kilometers (280 mi) northeast of Nouakchott, is surrounded by monumental mountains that fall down into valleys. Date palms frame the sky at every angle behind thatched huts. Out behind the descending pools of water, in a gully framed by majestic sand dunes, you'll find shepherd Hatari Ahmed, with a disposition as sweet as a date. He's with his camels, waiting for tourists when he's not shepherding them and his goats and camels between Tergit and Chinguetti.

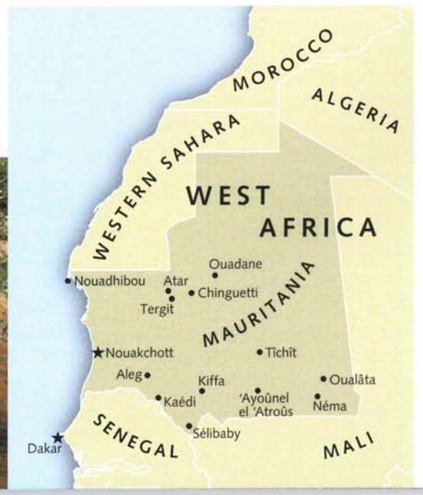
Most nights, you'll find him in an encampment of six families, each huddled around its own radio, with Yahya's incantatory voice seemingly coming from all directions.

Asked when the last time was that he himself received a balagh, Ahmed answers, "Last week. My mother died in Nouakchott." She had been sick, he explains, when he last saw her, eight months past. "I was listening: She was not expected to live long." As is proper, he sent a balagh of condolence of his own. "It's the only way to communicate with family all over the country," he says.

Ahmed doesn't know who went to the *Al-Balaghat* office to send the original announcement, but it doesn't matter. "Everybody sends everybody balaghat all the time."







Right: An evening with *Al-Balaghat* in Tergit, central Mauritania. Opposite: **The most common use of** balaghat **is to pass on condolences at the death of a friend or relative. For herder Hatari Ahmed of Tergit, *Al-Balaghat* was the way his family recently informed him of his own mother's death.**

Amadou Ba, left, has presented the Pulaar-language edition of *Al-Balaghat* for 30 years. Right: As Yayha takes to the airwaves, he works through the night's stack of handwritten messages. "Now is the time for the *balaghat*," he opens in the voice that, night after night, continues to gather the nation around the radio.

The beginnings of Radio Mauritanie itself go back to the Réseau France Outre-Mer, the French Overseas Network, which in the 1950's broadcast to the conjoined future countries of Senegal and Mauritania from a tight little modernist building by the Senegal River.

Mohamed Mahmoud Weddady, who started as an announcer at Radio Mauritanie in 1959, the year before Mauritanian independence, recalls that from Nouakchott, he used a one-kilowatt medium-wave transmitter that had been left in the country by Americans after World War II. Its signal was relayed—barely—to Senegal. "It covered the desert," says Weddady with a pause and a grin, "of Nouakchott."

At the time the future capital had only 3000 people. After independence, Mokhtar ould Daddah, the first president, wanted to establish Radio Mauritanie as "the voice of the nation," says Weddady.

Naha Saidi, Mauritania's first female radio and television journalist, picks up the history. Ould Agatt, she says, was a colleague of Weddady's who gained fame as a political critic, lampooning Mauritania's Moroccan rivals on the air. "He would use the nuances of the Arabic language to make them look ridiculous," says Saidi. So sharp was his tongue that the Moroccans demanded he be silenced. Mauritania had no choice but to bend to the will of its more powerful neighbor. Ould Agatt was transferred to local broadcasts for three years. When he came back in 1966, Weddady was his boss, and together they brought *Al-Balaghat* to the air.

Ahmed ould Hamza, the governor of Nouakchott, calls the program "a culture. The culture of the Arab Bedouin is nomadic. It's the culture of the message. It's text-messaging for the Bedouin."

Another 320 kilometers (200 mi) beyond Tergit, on the edge of the sandy wilderness of the Adrar Sahara's Erg Ourane, the once-great caravan city of Ouadane is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Climbing through the ruins that tumble down the mountainside, Med El Moktar, aged 75 or 76, is barefoot and wearing a bright blue boubou, his white goatee coming to a point. He is, he says, a teacher and former shopkeeper in Abijan, Côte d'Ivoire—and an astute world-radio listener.

"I listen to all radio stations—Canada, United States, China. I know the history of the US, Canada, Britain and Germany. I know that from the radio."

For him, *Al-Balaghat* is an international courier for balaghs to his son in Côte d'Ivoire, who listens on shortwave. He says he also received a balagh all the way from France, sent by a scholar who had visited him while writing a book on Islamic sciences. But he didn't respond. ("I didn't speak French. I didn't know her address, so I let it go.")

Farther away still, in Montreal, Canada, eight expatriate Mauritanians get together for dinner. As they might in Nouakchott, they plant themselves on the carpet around a platter of lamb. You half expect a goat to scurry in here, too. One of them abstains from eating: He's "present" via an Internet chat connection from Calgary. As they talk, reminiscences about *Al-Balaghat* come with ease.

"I love to listen to that show," says restaurateur Ould Atigh. "It makes me sleepy right away. Nine-thirty, milk the goats, pour some of the milk on *laîche* [a sticky tart] and start eating. Listen to *Al-Balaghat*, and by the time you finish, you sleep. Then in the daytime, I'd try to remember the balaghat. I'd remember the presenter had so many balaghat he couldn't breathe. I'd sit and start remembering and repeating the balaghat that happened yesterday, but I'd change them to my village. I would take the balagh and make it so it's this guy who gets married, that woman who dies," he says. "I'd imagine that one sent a bag of sugar. This one, the old man got credit and had to pay it back—things like that. Sitting there and making balaghat just like the old man from the night before. I'm telling you, I've never needed a watch in my life, but I know when it's 9:30!"

Back in Yahya's wood-paneled sound studio at Radio Mauritanie, with its computer and its control room, it's evening, almost airtime—8:30 p.m. nowadays.

"I have developed an attitude," he says. "I am happy, very happy, to do this. But after 25 years I've become habituated. I'm compelled to do this. I'm obligated to do my job. It's a simple thing."

He's sure that in 50 years, in 100 years, there will still be *Al-Balaghat—c'est pour tout le temps*—for always.

He positions the microphone, and he starts in on *Al-Balaghat*. There are no historic tapes of Ould Agatt, Mustapha Bouna or Ahmed ould Tfiel—the other announcers who preceded him—but it is hard to imagine a sweeter voice than Yahya's.

Anyway, as Yahya says, for *Al-Balaghat*, it's all really the same voice.

Yahya opens with his customary salutations to his listeners and then slides into the show. It's exactly as he says: Yahya is "shaking hands with the Mauritanian people."

"*Salaam alaykum*. (Peace upon you.) This is now the time for the communiqués."

His droning intonation carries the reverence of prayer, but at the speed of an auctioneer. Listening, somehow you feel that it is not just him, but Ould Agatt, Mustapha Bouna, Ould Tfiel too, all in that studio. In the historic continuity of the desert, he is the modern griot of the radio dial.

Atar, Chinguetti, Ouadane, Kaédi: He goes through the towns, one by one, missing neither a step nor a beat. At the end, it's "goodbye, until tomorrow."

Message sent.

MESSAGE TRANSLATIONS

Al-Balaghat is broadcast in simple Arabic for Hassaniyya and Arabic speakers, and Radio Mauritanie soon recreated the program in the nation's three other principal language groups: Wolof, Pulaar and Soninke. Called the local equivalent of *communiqué* in each language, these counterpart programs are broadcast during the noon hour in the ascending order of each minority's population: At 12:05 it's in Wolof, at 12:20 it's in Soninke, and at 12:40 it's in Pulaar.

"People are listening in the whole country," says 30-year-veteran Pulaar presenter Amadou Ba, who, at 79, is the senior announcer at Radio Mauritanie.

For these shows, the presenters don't work at the *Al-Balaghat* office, so they don't have the same contact with the customers. They're handed the communiqués to read, but there can still be deep emotional attachment. Tall and impassioned, Moussa Dirbira has broadcast in Soninke for 11 years. Especially with death notices and condolences, Dirbira says, the communiqués have a special place in his community.

"You *have* to do the communiqué," he says. When he lost his own uncle, he explains, "I spent 110,000 ouguiya, 250 euros [$470] to rent a car. A lot of money. I spent two weeks in the village. We put him in the ground, and now that I'm back, my mother says, 'You still have to make a balagh, because if you don't, it's as if you didn't do anything.' It's sacred with us."

It will go on, he says, and even with cell phones and satellite television, he thinks people are more attracted than ever to the communiqué style.

"Even though they have more ways to communicate, it doesn't matter. It has to be broadcast on the radio. When it's noon and the communiqués are broadcast, for 20 minutes everybody's focused. Even the flies don't move."

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Mauritania: N/D 97, J/A 03, N/D 03

Blooming in Cairo

Written by John Feeney Photographed by Dana Smillie

Video at www.saudiaramcoworld.com by Dana Smillie

What strange power do plants, trees and splashing water exert upon us? Have you ever noticed how, from the moment you enter a garden, and for as long as you wish to stay, you are no longer quite the same person? In the presence of trees and flowers, a sense of peace embraces you. Yet strangely, while giving refreshment to body and spirit, the trees and flowers around you are completely silent. Is this a subconscious remembrance of "a paradise lost"?

A daring "green" experiment closely linked to Cairo's past is blossoming in an unlikely spot—next to the city's ancient eastern ramparts, on the site of a vast, almost equally ancient rubbish dump. For half a millennium, residents had tossed and hauled household garbage and building debris "over the wall," creating a hilly landfill that rose as high as 40 meters (130') in the medieval heart of Cairo. Today, the site has been turned into a park modeled on the traditional Islamic garden, offering peace and quiet, and a view like no other.

The $30-million park project was spearheaded by the Aga Khan, whose family ties to Cairo date back to its founding by the Fatimids in 969. A thousand years later, in November 1984, as part of his interest in inviting local residents to contribute to the modernization of the Muslim world, the Aga Khan called a conference entitled "The Expanding Metropolis: Coping with the Urban Growth of Cairo" to address the city's rapid population growth, the decline in the quality of its housing and associated problems.

When the meeting concluded, the Aga Khan decided to give a park to the city as a substantive contribution. He had a vision of providing Cairo with

Overlooking the southern slope of Al-Azhar Park is Cairo's 11th-century Citadel, with its iconic 19th-century Mosque of Muhammad Ali.

a large, open public area with trees, flowers and running water, in the manner of a traditional Islamic garden, "which would enhance the life of local communities" and also serve as a case study for a variety of modern urban development challenges. A park, he thought, would be an ideal gift, if only enough space could be found in this teeming city of 17 million souls where, according to one report, the amount of green space per resident was only about 350 square centimeters—the area of a man's footprint.

By comparison, densely populated Miami has about 14 square meters of park per resident (150 square feet, or 400 times as much as Cairo)—and Cairo has no beaches.

A short time later, a most unlikely large, open space was suggested for the park: a 30-hectare (74-acre) desert area called al-Darassa, just outside the walls that enclosed Fatimid Cairo. A more desolate location—though occupied by a police horse stables—could hardly be imagined. Since no other land was available, the site was selected, and a bold plan was drawn up to lay out a lush green park with trees, pavilions and running water atop centuries of accumulated debris.

It was a most derelict spot, but also a most historic one. Overlooking al-Darassa to the south stood the 11th-century Citadel, built by Salah al-Din Yusuf ibn Ayyub (Saladin), whose Ayyubid dynasty supplanted the Fatimids. To the west lay the 12th-century Ayyubid city, a densely packed area of crowded tenements, domes, minarets and mosques forming one of the richest treasure houses of Islamic architecture in the world. To the east sprawled the vast 15th-century Mamluk City of the Dead, with its ornate mausolea.

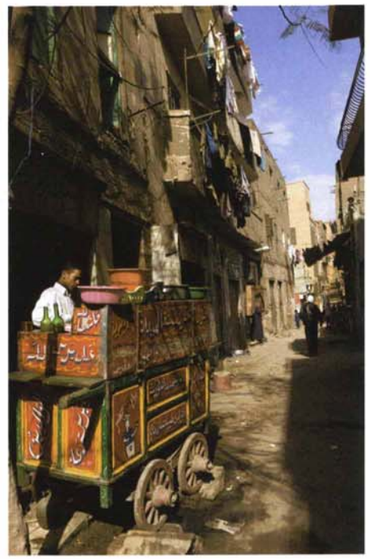
About 1500 meters (1 mi) from al-Darassa stood one of the oldest universities in the world, Al-Azhar, "the most blooming," founded by the Aga Khan's ancestors a dozen years after they began building Cairo. The new public area was named Al-Azhar Park, after the university.

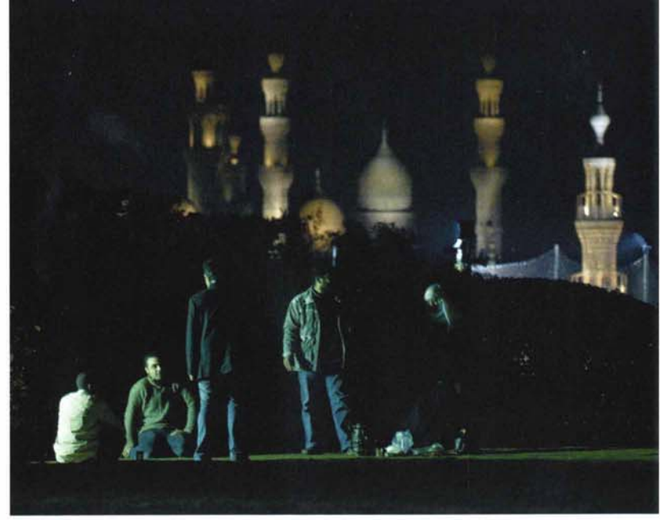
But there was a problem. While the Cairo police horses could be moved to greener pastures with relative ease, three giant water reservoirs—each 80 meters (260') in diameter and 14 meters (46') deep—were slated to be installed in al-Darassa to provide much-needed drinking water for Greater Cairo. Undaunted, the planners decided to lay out the new park over the covers of the new water reservoirs, which thus had to be completed before work on the new park could begin.

At the heart of the park are fountains that fill water channels extending nearly the full length of the park. The pillars and arches of the hilltop restaurant recall the Fatimid arcades within Al-Azhar University. In the background, the water ripples down a sloping *chadar*.

With the assistance of Sasaki Associates of Boston, developers created a new master plan before the reservoirs were completed in 1995. The park would be built on a grand scale, based on the traditional Islamic gardens of the past: There would be shaded *takhtaboush* sitting areas, Persian and Timurid elements in the park's water channels and a *bustan*, or orchard.

In 1996, the police horses were sent packing and the Cairo Governorate released the site to the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC). The project grew to include rehabilitation of the Darb al-Ahmar district immediately to the west as well as the restoration of several important monuments on the skyline of the old city: the 14th-century Um Sultan Shaaban Mosque and the Khayrbek Complex, which includes a 13th-century palace, a mosque and an Ottoman-era house. A school and 19 residences were also embraced in the project, and parallel social-development schemes involved a housing-credit plan and a microfinance program that gave local residents opportunities to restore their own houses and start small businesses. The trust had done similar projects in Hunza in Pakistan, in Samarkand and in Zanzibar, but this was its biggest and most complex undertaking ever.





Colorfully lit minarets of old Cairo make an almost theatrical backdrop for the park on a cool spring evening. Below: A street vendor serves a traditional neighborhood just outside the park.

In 1997, a team of Egyptian, French, Italian and American architects, engineers and landscape and horticultural specialists started work on the park. A fleet of earth-moving machines began the job of carting away 500 years of rubble—tens of thousands of truckloads amounting to more than 1.5 million cubic meters (1.96 million cu yd)—more than half the volume of the Great Pyramid. Then the excavators made a most unexpected discovery. On the west flank of al-Darassa, under rubbish mounds 30 meters (100') deep, they uncovered a totally buried section of the 12th-century Ayyubid wall built to protect Cairo, complete with its gates, towers, interior chambers, passageways and galleries. The AKTC called the find "one of the most important archeological discoveries of the past decades" relating to medieval Egypt. Plans were changed to incorporate the newly discovered wall into a broader project: It would be restored and used to both set off and link the new park and the old Ayyubid city.

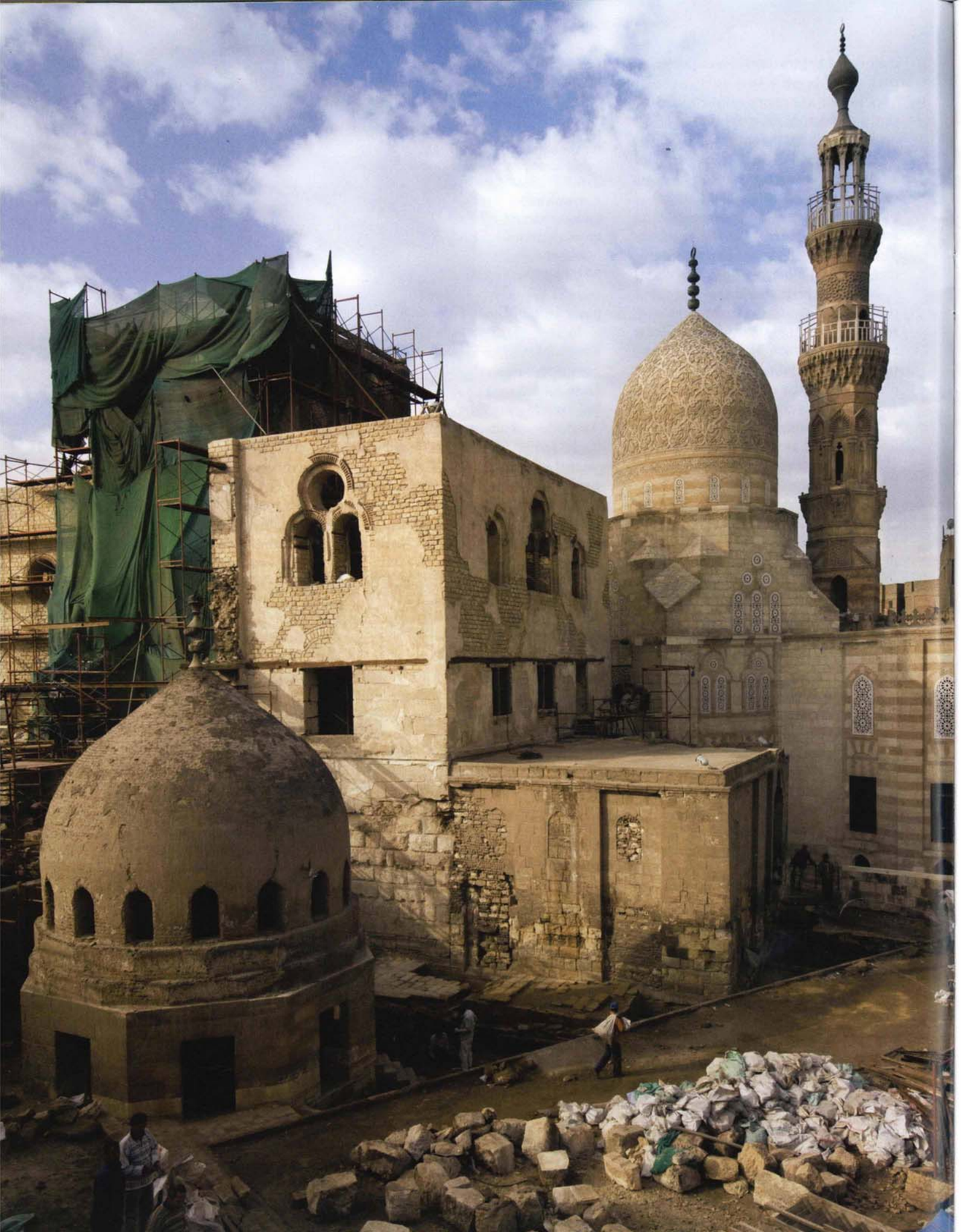
Water, of course, was a key aspect of the project. The builders of the big Mughal gardens of India which, like the new Al-Azhar Park, covered whole hillsides, had paid careful attention to this. Luckily, a large-diameter water pipeline passed nearby that carried water from the Nile to an agricultural area, and a new spur was built to the park site. Agricultural soil and sand were trucked in.

At the same time, stonecutters working in a quarry in the nearby Moqattam Hills (where the casing of the Giza Pyramids had also been quarried) began carving out the thousands of limestone blocks required to build the park's pavilions. Marble to line the waterways and fountains came from a quarry near Suez, more was brought from Carrara, Italy, and some specially colored marble came from as far away as India.

Meanwhile, horticulturalists took special steps to make the barren site bloom. Experiments to determine the best plant varieties to use in the park continued for five years at the American University in Cairo's desert agricultural research center. Special nurseries were established to propagate some two million plants, and more than 665,000 plants—trees, shrubs, grass, climbers, succulents and ground cover—were established.

By 2004, 20 years after the Aga Khan had broached the idea, Al-Azhar Park was ready to receive its first visitors. It offered what many of the thousands of Cairenes who flocked there had only dreamed of—or perhaps read about in Castilian envoy Ruy Gonzáles de Clavijo's account of his visit to Tamerlane's garden in Samarkand in 1403:

> There was a great garden with many shade trees and all kinds of fruit trees, with channels of water flowing amongst them. The garden was so large, great numbers of people enjoyed themselves in the summer, with great delight, by the fountain and under the shade of the trees.

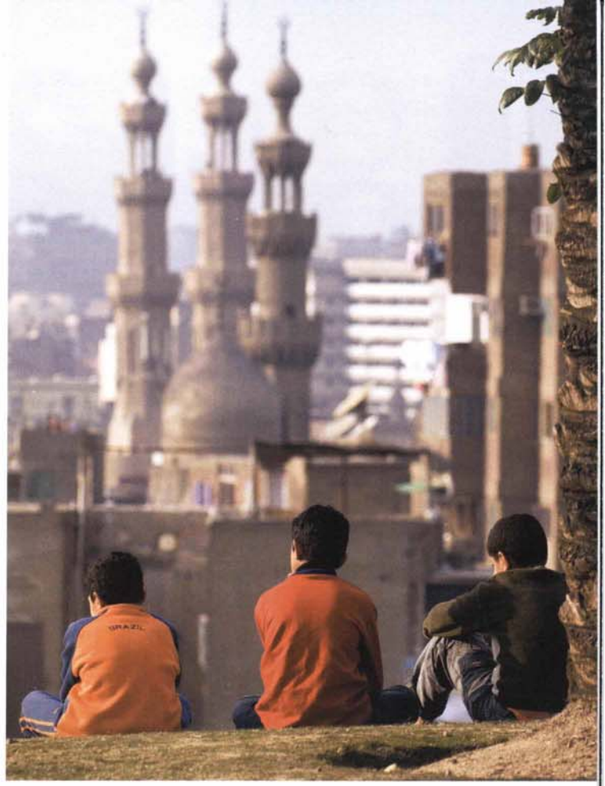


As in the Mughal gardens of India, visitors enter the park through an imposing arched pavilion where a dozen foaming jets of water shoot out of the marble-lined pavement before them. To the left of the fountains, a broad, palm-lined avenue stretches south to a startling view of the Citadel and the Muhammad Ali Mosque. Shaded resting places on both sides of the walk provide refuge from the summer sun. In the opposite direction, another stone-paved avenue leads to the green hills covering the three underground reservoirs. The top of the central one offers panoramic views of Cairo's domes and minarets. From this spot, on a clear day, one can see as far as the Pyramids of Giza, across the Nile some 15 kilometers (9 mi) to the southwest.

The park's northernmost hill is surmounted by a grove of date palms, a playground and a five-star restaurant designed by Egyptian architects to recall the Fatimid archways in nearby medieval Cairo. In the entrance court, flush with the floor, plays an eight-jet mosaic marble fountain of the traditional design used to cool the interiors of Cairo's medieval houses. From there, a narrow, marble-channeled stream flows down the center of almost the entire park. It irrigates formal Islamic gardens of plants and flowers, rests awhile in quiet pools, then murmurs off down a sloping chute, called a *chadar* in the Mughal gardens, carved to make the water ripple and glisten in the sunlight. On through the park, the water irrigates the bustan of mango and orange trees and flows down to a tranquil lake.

In keeping with the Mughal architectural concept of setting a pavilion on a water surface, the Lakeside Café appears to float. Here, as in the five-star restaurant, water flows through the interior, cooling the tree-filled courtyards. There is another takhtaboush sitting area for visitors, who can look out across the lake to sweeping views of Cairo's domes and minarets, hypnotically beautiful when silhouetted by a flaming sunset. To enhance an evening's magic, lanterns set low to the ground light the park at night.

The construction of Al-Azhar Park out of a 500-year-old rubbish mound took more than 20 years, but the dream has been fulfilled. Cairo's medieval midden now enhances the lives of Cairenes. Taking its cue from the 1000-year-old Al-Azhar University, "the most blooming," the new park is meant to flower for another thousand years, offering a place of peace and contentment to generations of Cairenes.



Looking out over nearly a millennium of architecture, the park gives Cairenes both a new vista on the most historic section of their city and, for the young, new space to play.

Carting away 500 years of rubble uncovered a forgotten section of Cairo's 12th-century city wall, which is now being restored as part of the park's larger urban renewal plan; similar restoration is taking place in the neighboring Darb al-Ahmar historic district, opposite.

Filmmaker, photographer, writer, chef and friend, New Zealand–born **John Feeney** contributed articles and photographs, mostly from his beloved Egypt, to *Aramco World* and *Saudi Aramco World* for some 35 years until his death in 2006.

Dana Smillie is a photographer and video journalist based in Cairo, Egypt. She is represented by Polaris Images.

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Cairo Citadel: M/A 93
Saladin: M/A 96
Ruy Gonzáles de Clavijo: M/J 06
Al-Azhar University: S/O 73

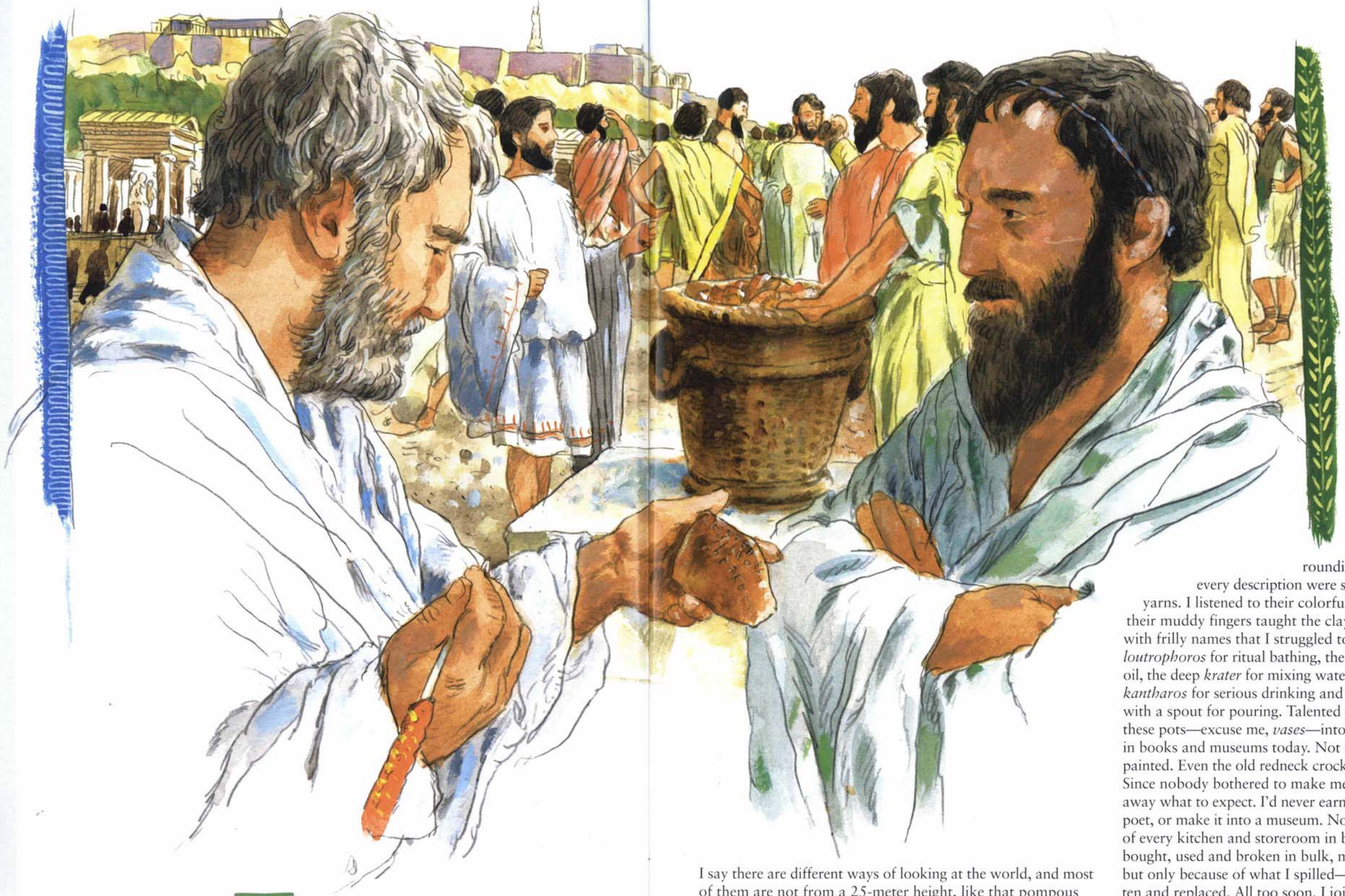
www.akdn.org/agency/aktc_hcsp_cairo.html

I WITNESS HISTORY:

GOOD RIDDANCE, I SAY

WRITTEN BY
FRANK L. HOLT

ILLUSTRATED BY
NORMAN MACDONALD



LISTEN UP, FOLKS. SOME OLD CHISELERS HAVE GIVEN YOU THE WRONG IDEA ABOUT HISTORY. JUST BECAUSE SOMETHING GETS WRITTEN ON A BIG ROCK DOES NOT MEAN THAT IT'S... WELL, ETCHED IN STONE.

I say there are different ways of looking at the world, and most of them are not from a 25-meter height, like that pompous obelisk in Rome. To hear him tell it, nothing matters but the high and mighty. Well, I never met a pharaoh or a king; I never had armies of slaves and such setting me up or knocking me down. I never went to the Circus and had a clown like Nero race around me in his chariot. So what? I may not look like much, but I did something a lot more important. Hear me out if you want to know how a scrap of everyday trash got rescued from a garbage heap to change the course of human history.

Pardon my language, but I come from what Greek folks call *hoi polloi*—the common people, the working class, the lower crust. I don't know much about anything high, whether it's society, class, brow, fashion or falutin'. It's another world up there, a place for emperors and obelisks, but not for me. I like it down here where little things make big differences. A pot means as much to the poor as pillars and palaces mean to some Caesar who thinks he's a god.

From my beginning to my end, I always kept close to the ground. I am a humble son of earth and water, a foster child of fire. Born in the potters' quarter of Athens—still called Kerameikos ("Ceramicsville") today—I grew up hard and fast. Only hours out of the kiln, I stood on a rough-hewn shelf, my mouth wide open in awe of my surroundings. Swearing craftsmen of every description were spinning their pots and their yarns. I listened to their colorful shoptalk and watched as their muddy fingers taught the clay to become fancy things with frilly names that I struggled to pronounce: the shapely *loutrophoros* for ritual bathing, the slender *lekythos* for storing oil, the deep *krater* for mixing water and wine, the big-handled *kantharos* for serious drinking and the pitcher-like *oinochoe,* with a spout for pouring. Talented painters turned many of these pots—excuse me, *vases*—into the masterpieces you see in books and museums today. Not me. I never got glazed or painted. Even the old redneck crocks had more class than me. Since nobody bothered to make me beautiful, I knew right away what to expect. I'd never earn an ode from some famous poet, or make it into a museum. No, I was the workaday ware of every kitchen and storeroom in bustling Athens, the kind bought, used and broken in bulk, mourned for a moment—but only because of what I spilled—then immediately forgotten and replaced. All too soon, I joined the sweepings of some poor man's house, a vessel wrecked on a sandy floor.

Castoffs like me had no cause to hope for second chances. I was Humpty Dumpty, you might say, without the fuss of all the king's horses and men. Shattered, I waited in the household trash for that last journey out to the bottom of some deep, dark well or a smelly garbage pile beyond the city. Until then, I had nothing to do but pass my final days in idle trash-talk with other scraps of pottery. Some bits bragged of vases they had spotted in this fine shop or that; others put on airs about the jobs they had once had—say, preparing food for a wedding

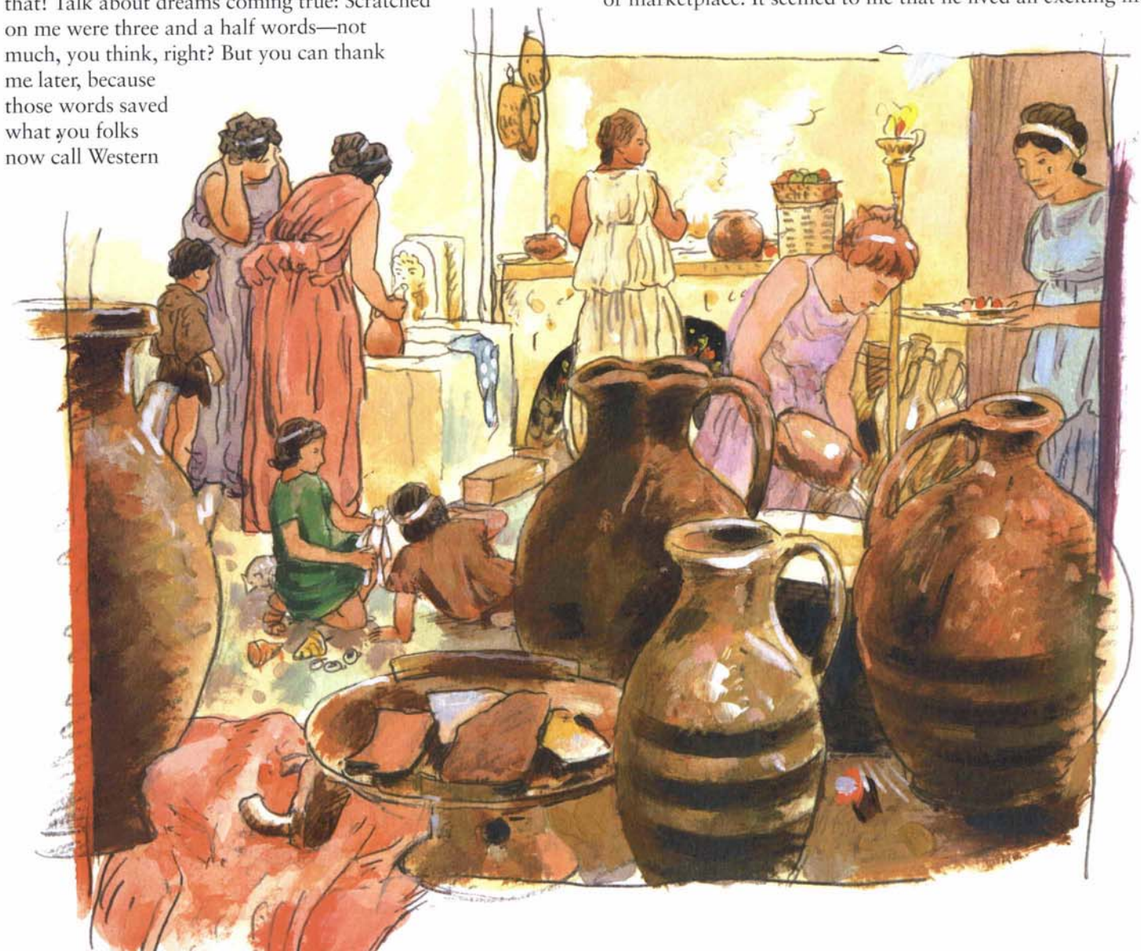
feast or funeral. Most of us, however, fantasized about one last chore before the grave. We wanted to become something called an *ostracon*, a piece of busted pot you could write on with something sharp. This was all the rage back then.

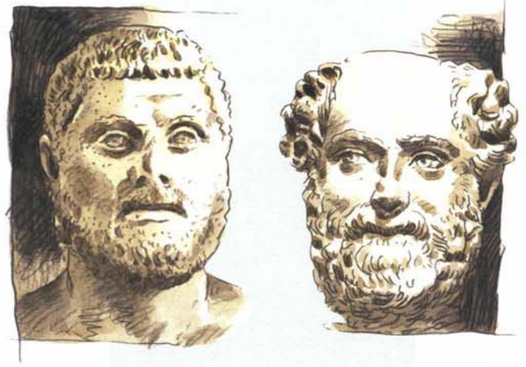
Sure, massive stone pillars may seem like the ultimate memo pad, but you need a swarm of stonecutters just to jot down a note or two. Not very practical for most people. That's why your daily life leaves a *paper* trail, not a desk drawer full of obelisks. Back in my day, even paper (in the form of imported papyrus) could be too pricey for the average Greek. In Athens, a grocery list would have cost more than the groceries! For simple folk, some other cheap, available item had to serve for the lists and tallies of everyday living. That explains why Athenians sometimes fumbled through their trash to find shards of shattered crockery like me. On us, a Greek could scratch a useful line or two, just as you might do today on the back of an old envelope.

MOST OF US FANTASIZED ABOUT ONE LAST CHORE BEFORE THE GRAVE: WE WANTED TO BECOME SOMETHING CALLED AN *OSTRACON*, A PIECE OF BUSTED POT YOU COULD WRITE ON WITH SOMETHING SHARP.

But I didn't start this squabble with an obelisk just to brag about becoming a shopping list. Give a fellow more credit than that! Talk about dreams coming true: Scratched on me were three and a half words—not much, you think, right? But you can thank me later, because those words saved what you folks now call Western Civilization. Think I'm joking? Let me finish my story.

You see, the Athenian house where I lived belonged to a citizen. That made the man somebody special, even though you couldn't pick him out in a crowd of slaves or foreign workers. All the poor pretty much dressed and talked alike. In fact, the rich often complained that in the streets of Athens you couldn't tell a free man from a slave, making it hard to know who you could shove out of your way without breaking the law. My owner didn't care a lot about appearances (maybe that's why he bought me in the first place), but he sure was proud to be a registered citizen with the right to vote. He had no education, yet he attended the peoples' *ecclesia*—the assembly—whenever he could. There he voted on everything having to do with how the government was run. Imagine that: a commoner in charge of war, strategy, finances, religion—you name it. He even helped make all the laws! His politics (they called it this because he lived in a Greek *polis*, or city-state) depended on what he heard in the great public debates, and on the gossipy news that constantly bounced around the *agora*, or marketplace. It seemed to me that he lived an exciting life





ARISTEIDES AND THEMISTOCLES HATED EACH OTHER SO MUCH THAT ATHENS WASN'T BIG ENOUGH FOR BOTH OF THEM.

where the people (not including women, foreigners or slaves) decided everything for themselves. He called it a democracy.

I remember moving into this man's trash at a very scary time—not just for me, but for the whole city. Day after day my owner came home from the ecclesia and agora with terrifying talk of a Persian invasion. Persia, I learned, was the biggest power on Earth. Its empire stretched from the edges of Greece all the way to the other side of the world where only monsters lived. The Persians were unbelievably rich, powerful and angry—at Athens in particular. They accused us of meddling in their empire, which was true enough, but my owner said it couldn't be helped on account of our duty to spread democracy. Only eight years earlier, the Athenians had beaten off a large military force sent by Persia's King Darius to punish the city. The decisive battle, fought at Marathon, was already the stuff of legend: The soldiers who won it were considered heroes, our greatest generation. But everybody knew the Persians would try again. Year after year the tension grew, until finally, in what you folks call 482 BC, we went on red alert. Darius's son Xerxes, Persia's new "king of kings," made no secret that he intended to destroy Athens once and for all.

But the news was not all bad. From my place in the jumble of cracked pottery heaped in the kitchen trash, I overheard my owner one day crowing like a rooster that he was suddenly rich. Apparently, state miners, digging on public land, had discovered a bonanza of pure silver. The find was worth a fortune. Word on the street was that every citizen should expect to receive an equal cut of the proceeds. And why not? What poor Athenian would want this silver tucked away in the state treasury instead of his very own pocket? "Easy come, easy *keep*," my excited owner agreed.

So did a famous politician named Aristeides, one of the heroes of Marathon and a leader so honest and wise that the people called him "Aristeides the Just." This fine man proposed that the city should parcel out fair shares of the silver to every citizen just as soon as the miners (all of them state slaves) could be lashed into action.

But of course, this was democratic Athens, where even a no-brainer had to be debated. For days my owner fretted around the city, worried that some fool in the ecclesia or agora would come up with some different scheme for the money. And sure enough, somebody did. The man was named Themistocles—although some called him more colorful names. This guy had the nerve to propose that, instead of keeping the money, the people should let *him* spend it on a bunch of warships. You know how expensive those things are? You should have heard my owner howl at such an idea! *Boats*? No *navy* saved Athens last time at Marathon. That was our boys in the infantry. And didn't we already have a bigger fleet than most any other city-state anyway? And if Athens really did need more ships for some reason, didn't our laws say that the wealthiest Athenians had to cover these expenses through special taxes? What kind of leader picks the pockets of the poor to spare the rich?

Obviously, most citizens made fun of Themistocles, but the man simply would not shut up. Crowds showed up at his speeches just to boo him, but all they got was an earful back. Themistocles went on and on about the many dangers faced by our seaside city, starting with the powerful island of Aegina, visible just offshore, to that armada of Xerxes's massing farther to the east. Listening to him, you'd think the sky was falling as he warned that the future of Athens depended on its navy, not on the desire of every shortsighted buffoon to buy a bunch of brand new pots with a pocketful of silver. As you can imagine, the debate got pretty heated.

At first, my owner hung all the arguments of Themistocles on a familiar hook: "Pure politics, nothing more." After all, Themistocles had never in his life missed an opportunity to oppose anything Aristeides stood for, so why should this distribution of silver be any different? Whatever one said, the other could not say the opposite fast enough. They hated each other so much that Athens, folks sighed, wasn't big enough for both of them. They attacked each other in the courts and turned the ecclesia into a continual battleground. Many citizens naturally dismissed Themistocles's witless proposal as no more than a sad outgrowth of this tiresome feud. The man of my house assured us all that the costly fleet proposed by Themistocles had only one mission: to sink the ambitions of his rival Aristeides.

When you're waiting out your last days in a trash pile, you follow a drama like this very closely, just hoping to be around long enough to see how it finally ends. I thought I had this one all figured out, but, boy, was I wrong. You see, one afternoon my owner came home not so sure about the witlessness of Themistocles's idea. Some people, even the poor ones like my owner, were starting to change their minds. Day by day they found it more difficult to ignore Themistocles, who sounded less and less preposterous, while Aristeides started to seem more like a cheap panderer. What if it was true after all that Athens could not defend itself with the ships it already

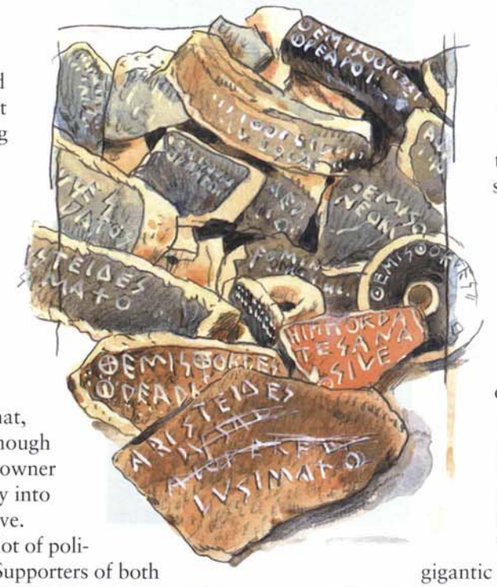
I REMEMBER MOVING INTO THIS MAN'S TRASH AT A VERY SCARY TIME, NOT JUST FOR ME, BUT FOR THE WHOLE CITY.

had? How could even the rich possibly cough up enough money to build hundreds more right away? Look at the big picture, my owner finally said. Face up to the patriotic duty of every good man to put aside self-interest and give up his share of the mining revenues for military defense. Yes, here with me lived an uneducated man who could nonetheless actually think *for* himself, and not just about himself. Somehow, in all the fire and smoke of Athenian politics, this commoner had settled on the notion of the greater good at the expense of personal gain. He wanted a free country more than free cash. I never felt prouder to be in his house.

I was not there for long. A showdown came between the new supporters of Themistocles and the remaining followers of Aristeides. Something had to be done fast, so all of us broken pots got together, and we decided the fate of the silver, the city and, as it turns out, of Western Civilization, too. It happened when my owner fished me from the garbage and used me to write down his vote in a special kind of election named (in my honor) an *ostracism*. This was an election you wouldn't want to win, because if you did, you were given 10 days to get lost. Every year, the Athenians could do this. In the winter, they met in the ecclesia and voted whether to ostracize anyone or not. If they decided to go ahead with it, they got together in the spring to choose a "winner." On that occasion, every registered citizen (like my owner) showed up at the agora with a piece of pottery. There, each voter scratched onto his ostracon the name of any one person he wanted gone, and then he pitched this ballot into a pile to be counted. If at least 6000 people voted, then the guy who got his name written down the most had to leave Athens for a decade. The person ostracized did not lose his property or his citizenship. This wasn't exile—more like a decade-long time-out. After that he could return to the city and pick up where he left off, no hard feelings.

MY OWNER USED ME TO WRITE DOWN HIS VOTE IN A SPECIAL KIND OF ELECTION NAMED (IN MY HONOR) AN OSTRACISM. THIS WAS AN ELECTION YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO WIN.

Okay, folks, I know this sounds pretty much like mob justice. Nobody's name was off limits, and the fellow ostracized had no right to defend himself or appeal. But, truthfully, don't you wish you could occasionally vote to send someone away—a president, senator, judge, teacher, talk-show host, movie star, noisy neighbor, nosy relative...? Your choice, your reasons. The Athenians knew the system could be abused (and I hear it later was), but they felt a lot safer if they could defend their new democracy against dangerous individuals. An annoying neighbor was not going to rack up enough votes to get ostracized, but a guy who tried to take over the city just might get the boot. Good riddance, I say. Or some stubborn leader who refused to compromise might have to leave. Good riddance to him, too. That's exactly what I went to the agora to do—to tell either Themistocles or Aristeides that, sure enough, Athens was not big enough for both of them. I left it up to my owner to decide which name I would carry into the voting box, and then to my grave.



As you can imagine, there was a lot of politicking going on at the last minute. Supporters of both sides worked the crowd, and I worried that my owner might suddenly change his mind again. He was clearly nervous, too, because he cradled me to my grave with trembling hands: He could barely read or write. Trying to hide this fact, he did his best to scratch the right letters on his ballot. All crooked but correct, he etched along my upper edge the letters A-R-I-S-T-E-I-D-E-S. This first part he managed okay, probably because he practiced it from the very day he decided to support the naval proposal of Themistocles. But then his memory failed. What should have come next was the name of Aristeides's father, Lysimachus, to make sure people knew exactly who he meant. My owner sweated through the first four letters and quit. Completely stumped, he gave up on that word and tried something else—the name of the district in Athens where Aristeides's family was from, Alopekethen. He worked at this for a while, ending up with A-L-O-P-E-K-E-E-I. Sensing a problem, he tried to change the last E to something different but never could decide how to fix it. He needed help.

My owner did not struggle alone, of course. Plenty of hoi polloi found it hard, if not impossible, to write down even a simple thing like a name. That doesn't make them dumb, just uneducated, and nobody should look down on them for it. I'm proud to say that Aristeides didn't, even though in the end he got enough of their votes to "win" the ostracism. Fact is, he even helped one illiterate citizen write out a vote against him! The story goes that the poor voter didn't recognize Aristeides when he asked him how to spell the name. Aristeides showed the guy without letting on who he was, then out of curiosity asked why he disliked Aristeides so much. "Never met him," admitted the voter, "but I'm sick and tired of people calling him 'The Just' all the time."

Something similar happened to my owner and me. I don't know who it was (surely not Aristeides again), but a fellow voter helped straighten us out. He looked at what had been done to me and shook his head. He grabbed me and roughly crossed out everything but the first word, Aristeides. Then, smooth and sure, he scratched down the father's name, Lysimachus, straight across my lower edge, and walked away.

I was done, tattooed with the three and a half words that tell the story of my incredible life. With a proud man's determination and a stranger's help, I made a difference. I counted in the historic vote that ostracized Aristeides the Just. This broke the deadlock over the silver. Themistocles got to stick around and supervise the building of the fleet, and those very warships really did save Athens and its democracy a few years later, defeating the invading armada of Xerxes. Otherwise, Western Civilization as you know it would never have existed. Without little old me, even that gigantic obelisk in Rome wouldn't be the same. Help his highness do the math: No cheap pot, no pottery scrap; no scrap, no ostracon; no ostracon, no ostracism; no ostracism, no money for ships; no ships, no victory; no victory, no Athens; no Athens—well, no telling what sort of "Modern Ones" he'd be talking to.

Of course, I missed seeing most of the good I did. After I got rid of Aristeides, government workers buried me and a bunch of other ballots near the agora. Some of us had voted for Aristeides or Themistocles, and some for various other fellows. We had no idea, at the time, about the great sea battle, or that years later Themistocles would be ostracized, too. No, we didn't see daylight again for 2500 years. Archeologists finally dug us up and recognized right away who we were. I got a special new name: P5976. I got my picture put in books, and, by golly—talk about luck!—I ended up in a museum (the Agora Museum) after all. If only my swanky-vase cousins could see me now, the grubby poor kid from the Kerameikos who changed the world.

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Norman MacDonald (www.macdonaldart.net) is a Canadian free-lance artist, living in Amsterdam, who specializes in history and portraiture. He painted salukis in *Saudi Aramco World*'s May/June 2008 issue; these are his first portraits of potsherds.

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Autobiography of a Coin: S/O 97
"That pompous obelisk in Rome": S/O 07

China's Nu Ahong

Written by Anne Miller Darling and Dru C. Gladney
Photographed by Anne Miller Darling

"Muslims and non-Muslims have clearly clashed in Chinese history, but they have just as often intermarried, converted each other, and lived intermingled, peaceful lives.... Studies have tended to describe the 'Muslims of China' as speaking with one voice, as if there was one 'Islam in China' and a unified Muslim identity, despite there being officially ten nationalities comprising mainly Muslims, and there being tremendous differences of Islamic and political opinion within each of those nationalities."

—*Dru Gladney,* Dislocating China

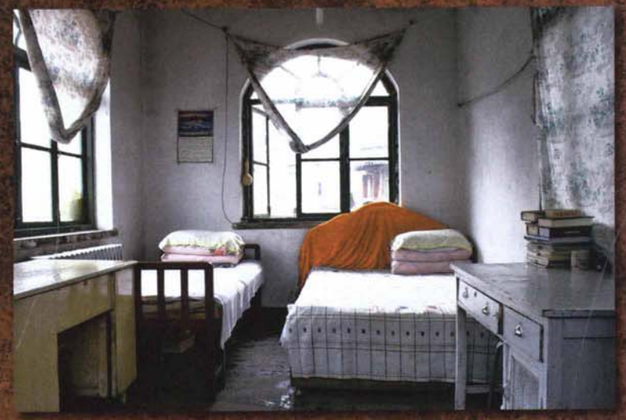
Previous spread: **In Lanzhou, capital city of Gansu province, near the geographical center of China, the prayer room at Lu Lan Nu Si (Lu Lan Women's Mosque) can accommodate 100 or more worshipers.**

Right: **From the third floor of Lu Lan Nu Si, the minarets of Lu Lan Nan Si (Lu Lan Men's Mosque) can be seen a few blocks away. Lu Lan Nu Si is one of a minority of women's mosques and Islamic religious institutions that is financially independent, supported by donations from local businesspeople and the women who come to the mosque.**

Lower: **Ding Gui Zhi, 69, is the *nu ahong* (female religious leader) at Lu Lan Nu Si. Daughter of parents who were both ahong, she became a certified religious leader herself later in life, after raising five children alone following the death of her husband 25 years ago. She works and lives at the mosque.**

Opposite, center: **Ding teaches three full-time students (*hailifan*), who share this room at the mosque. There is a spacious classroom on the building's roof. Hailifan are variously motivated: Some aspire to deeper personal religious knowledge and others aspire to become ahong themselves.**

Opposite, lower: **During Ramadan, each fast-breaking evening meal brings some 80 women and children to Lu Lan Nu Si, where meals are cooked by Xiao Wang's Mama—Little Wang's Mother. She earns about 300 yuan ($42) for the month's work. All women are welcome to come to the mosque to eat, which does not charge for the meal. Like Muslims worldwide, Hui do not eat pork.**



Nearly half of China's estimated 21 million Muslims belong to the Hui, a group that is one of China's 56 officially recognized ethnic minorities. Most Hui live in the country's northern and western provinces, but others live in cities and communities almost nationwide, and they have traditionally been known as farmers, shopkeepers and craftsmen.

Among the Hui are women employed as *ahong* (*imam*s, or Muslim religious leaders), which means that they are spiritual guides for the women (*nu*) in their community. Some *nu ahong* (female religious leaders) serve in mosques that are entirely separate from men's mosques, but most use rooms that are part of men's mosques. Some live at the mosque or in an affiliated Muslim school, and some are paid salaries, while a smaller number volunteer. Anthropologist Maria Jaschok estimates there are roughly one-seventh as many women's prayer halls and mosques as men's, but varying definitions of "women's mosque" and the lack of statistical data make greater precision impossible.

In addition to presiding over *nu si* (women's mosques), a nu ahong's duties may include ritual guidance at marriages and funerals, preaching, resolving political and social disputes, and offering moral guidance and counseling. But perhaps her most important work is that of educator. In my interviews with the nu ahong, they told me that Islam values women as the first teachers of children, and therefore women must be educated as well as good role models. There are many schools for Hui women and girls, and many of them are attached to mosques, run and financed by the Hui people themselves.

The precise role of the nu ahong varies greatly from mosque to mosque, school to school and region to region, depending on the needs of her community. Some help women with literacy; others teach the Qur'an; still others give girls from disadvantaged backgrounds a basic education that enables them to teach themselves or even go on to a university. This aspect of Hui society has been instrumental in keeping Islam alive in China.

Today more than ever, education is a girl's route out of poverty. In the past, the high illiteracy rate among women in China meant that most Muslim females too had to stay at home, as they had no opportunities to receive education or join in a broader social life. But things have changed: Now young people are flocking to learn Arabic, partly for religious reasons, but also partly in hopes of landing a job as a private-sector translator, scholar or ahong. Although the newest positions as translators or interpreters in the blossoming Mideast–China trade can earn salaries of 3000 to 10,000 yuan (about $400 to $1400), the position of ahong is still one that offers a measure of security and high community status.

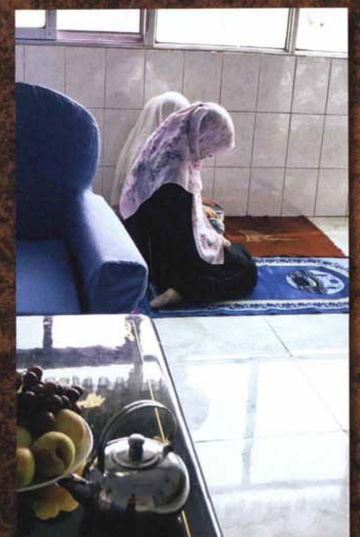
—Anne Miller Darling

As the photos on these pages richly illustrate, China's Hui Muslim women inhabit religious communities, homes and social spheres shaped not only by Islam but also by China's Confucian culture and its Communist secular state. The photographs indicate how they have come up with unique strategies to help themselves flourish in these circumstances.

Although in China women's participation in public prayer is generally rare, women's more general participation in Hui Muslim religious life is strong. For example, my surveys indicate that during Ramadan, women comprise more than half of the Muslims who fast. Further evidence are the subjects of these photos: the widespread presence of trained women *ahong* (from the Persian *akhund*, "teacher") and the existence of "women's mosques" (*nu si*). Though the authority of *nu ahong* does not extend beyond the sphere of women and children (including young boys), it is nevertheless significant that Muslim women in China have such organized authority, training and separate facilities.

Usually, women's prayer halls are adjacent to a main mosque, as in Lanzhou in the province of Gansu, or Najiahu near Wuzhong in the province of Ningxia, where many of these photos were taken—communities where I lived in the mid-1980's and which I have visited regularly since. In many of the mosques in Gansu, women pray in a curtained section or outlying room of the main prayer hall. Less frequently, but not uncommonly, scholars Maria Jaschok and Shui Jingjun have noted, entirely independent women's mosques exist in northern, central and western China. The existence of a system of extensive women's Islamic educational training and of active women's organizations suggests that these practices have long histories in China, though they remain little known both in the country and outside.

Because they wear head scarves known as *gai tou* that cover the hair and sometimes the neck, run shops that sell Islamic goods, participate in public markets and serve in religious and educational roles, Hui women have carved out for themselves a measure of space



Left: **Yan Minglan, 35, is the nu ahong at the Central Mosque in Wuzhong, in Ningxia province. The apartment where she lives with her husband and two children, aged 11 and 7, is within walking distance of the mosque, where she teaches Arabic, the Qur'an and Qur'an recitation to local women. Cooking for her husband, her children and their frequent guests, she buys fresh vegetables and *halal* meat (meat slaughtered in accordance with Muslim dietary rules) at the local market on Sunday mornings.**

Lower left: **Yan's husband, Tian, is an ahong for the men at the Central Mosque. In public, most Hui women cover their hair with scarves called *gai tou*, and Hui men usually cover their heads with a round, brimless white cap called *bai mao zi*—though a colorful, embroidered one may be used on special occasions. More than any other item of clothing, it is this cap that visually distinguishes Hui men from the non-Muslim majority Han Chinese.**

Opposite: **Yan says she leads a simple life: "I do the same things every day. I teach in the morning and look after my family the rest of the time. My life might seem boring to some, but I am very happy with it." In the evening, if there are no guests expected, she enjoys walking with her children to join friends in the square at the center of town, where they browse in such shops as this bookstore.**

Left: **Yan and one of her daughters pray, kneeling barefoot on rugs on the tile floor of her apartment.**

in the public sphere. For them, a lifestyle that is *qing zhen* ("pure and true," equivalent to the Arabic *halal*) is expressed by maintaining Muslim schools, homes and families, and by marrying within the community. It is rare for a Hui woman to marry a non-Muslim man, though the reverse is not true: It is not unusual for a male Hui to take a non-Muslim wife who is willing to embrace Islam, and to raise their children together as Muslims. In fact, this is one of the main ways Islam has spread in China over the past 1300 years, from its roots among Arab, Persian, Turkish and Mongolian traders.

In order to preserve *qing zhen*, these Hui women, often isolated in Han-majority areas, developed extensive social and marriage networks that connected them with Hui communities throughout northern—even all of—China. This is why trade centers such as Lanzhou, or even local market communities such as Wuzhong, are key places where Hui women network with other Hui communities.

This photo essay also tells us something about the social world of the Hui. In some ways theirs is much smaller than the fast-paced society of their majority Han neighbors, in that Hui still interact less beyond the confines of their villages, shops or urban districts, and many still prefer to stay within their smallest communities. At the same time, this essay reveals that China's Muslim women are also well-connected to the larger Muslim world through trade, travel and even the pilgrimage to Makkah. The Hui women in Lanzhou and Wuzhong interact with other Hui Muslims often from hundreds of kilometers away. These are the networks that preserve, express and create dynamic futures for both the ethnic and the religious dimensions of their multi-faceted, complex lives.

—Dru C. Gladney

Left: **At Xi Hu Da Si, the Great Mosque, in Lanzhou, men and women use a common entrance, but, once inside, there is a large prayer room for men and a smaller one for women that also has an adjacent room for overflow.**

Opposite, lower: **Zhang Chun Xiu is the nu ahong at the Great Mosque in Lanzhou. She also runs the nine-year-old Chinese–Arabic women's school, or *Zhonga Nuxiao*, a day school for 250 pupils, aged six to 70, that offers a four-year diploma course leading to higher education, including training as an ahong. The curriculum includes literacy in Chinese, mathematics, the Qur'an and *hadith* (Muslim traditions of what the Prophet Muhammad said and did). The school also arranges for guest lectures on women's-health issues. To become an ahong, says Zhang, "a woman doesn't have to take a certificate course. It could be through private study, or perhaps study at home if the girls' parents were ahong."**

Lower left: **Thanks to a recent donation from a local businessman, pupils at the Xi Hu Zhonga Nuxiao try on robes and scarves in preparation for a performance celebrating *Laylat al-Qadr* ("Night of Power"), celebrated in much of the Muslim world as the night on which God began the revelation of the Qur'an to the Prophet Muhammad.**

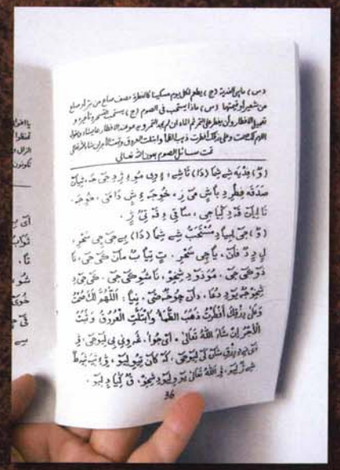
Left: **Throughout the day preceding Laylat al-Qadr, families visit relatives and celebrate before going to the mosque to hear recitations from the Qur'an and watch the students' performance. Later, the women eat together and then pray through the night.**

Right: **Ding Shu Qin is the nu ahong at Lanzhou's 600-year old Nan Guan Mosque. At home she speaks with her daughter, Ma Zhong Xia, 30, who is visiting from Malaysia, where she studies English.**

Lower left: **Ding presides over weddings, washes the bodies of the dead before burial, and teaches Arabic, the Qur'an and Muslim prayers. She became the nu ahong at the mosque in 2002, and her work is largely voluntary. "My husband earns good money with the business he runs," she says. "He is happy for me to choose my own way of life. Islam respects women and values their contribution, and I am free to do meaningful work outside the home if I want to, such as teaching at the mosque."**

Lower right: **In her literacy classes, Ding uses a book called *xiao jing* ("little classic"), which teaches the pronunciation of Chinese words using Arabic script. A xiao jing book such as this one costs about two yuan (30 cents) in local shops.**

Opposite: **"The real meaning of *ahong* is 'someone who works to help others,'" says Ding. She describes the kind of emotional support she offers with a short story: Not long ago, a woman whose young son had died used to sit crying in the street. Ding encouraged her each day to come to the mosque. At first, the woman sat at the back of the classroom; now she is learning Arabic and praying with the other women. Ding has about 60 students of all ages. This wall display, made by Ding's students, shows the 99 Names of God.**



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Dru C. Gladney is president of the Pacific Basin Institute and professor of anthropology at Pomona College in Claremont, California. He is the author of *Dislocating China: Muslims, Minorities, and Other Subaltern Subjects* (2004, University of Chicago) and editor of *Making Majorities: Composing the Nation in Japan, China, Korea, Malaysia, Fiji, Turkey, and the U.S.* (1998, Stanford University).

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Muslim trade with China: J/A 05
Mosque in Beijing: J/A 02
Western China (Kashgar): N/D 01
Islam in China: N/D 91
Muslims in China: M/A 85

Further Reading

Between Mecca and Beijing: Modernization and Consumption Among Urban Chinese Muslims. Maris Boyd Gillette. 2000, Stanford UP, 0-8047-4685-0, $23.95 pb.

The History of Women's Mosques in Chinese Islam: A Mosque of Their Own. Maria Jaschok and Shui Jingjun. 2000, RoutledgeCurzon, 0-7007-1302-6, $140 hb.

OF YOGURT & YÖRÜKS

WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY ERIC HANSEN

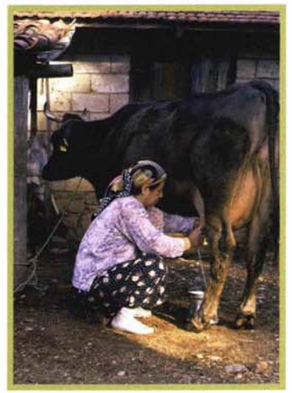
One bitterly cold morning in mid-November of 1972, I left the open-air bus terminal of Erzurum, in eastern Turkey, in search of warmth. In a nearby small restaurant, huge cauldrons of thick, steaming soup were bubbling away over smoky wood fires.

Breakfast was being served at rough wooden tables filled with neighborhood workers. As I soon discovered, the soup was an eastern Anatolian specialty called *yoğurt çorbası* (pronounced yo-**oort chor**-ba-sih). *Çorba*, derived from the Persian word *shurba*, is the Turkish word for soup.

I had never before considered yogurt as a possible ingredient for hot soup: For me, yogurt

had always been something to eat fresh on cereal, or blended with cracked ice into a cold drink with fresh fruit and honey. But at the first taste of that flavorful, warming soup, fragrant with the aromas of chicken stock and cilantro, I realized that yogurt was far more versatile than I had ever imagined. To this day, yoğurt çorbası remains one of my staple dishes for the cold winter months.

Previous spread: **Top row: fresh goat's-milk yogurt cheese, *labne, kashk*. Bottom row: cow's-milk yogurt, *çökelek, kaymak*.**



Over the years I learned how to make yogurt and how to prepare it in a wide variety of different ways, but I knew virtually nothing about where yogurt originally came from, how it's made, or what distinguishes traditional "live" yogurt from the mass-produced, store-bought products of the same name.

Consulting various Eastern Mediterranean cookbooks, especially *Classical Turkish Cooking* by Ayla Algar, *A Book of Middle Eastern Food* by Claudia Roden and Alan Davidson's encyclopedic *Oxford Companion to Food*, I began to unravel and explore the history and myths associated with traditional yogurt.

Live yogurt is a fermented dairy product made by mixing a starter culture with warm milk and then letting it sit, undisturbed, in a warm place until it becomes firm. The smooth, soft curd of live yogurt, with its partially separated whey, has a slightly acid, nutty flavor and a creamy texture unlike any other fermented dairy food.

But how does it happen? At milk temperatures between 32 and 43 degrees Celsius (90–110° F), the ideal one-to-one ratio of bacterial strains of *Streptococcus thermo-philus* and *Lacto-bacillus bulgaricus* breaks down part of the milk sugars to produce one to 1½ percent of lactic acid. Coagulation takes place when the milk proteins configure themselves into a lattice to which minerals, sugars and fats, naturally found in milk, attach themselves. The lactic acid and other by-products of the fermentation—including carbon dioxide, acetic acid, acetaldehyde and dacetyl—all contribute to the characteristic flavor, texture and taste of yogurt.

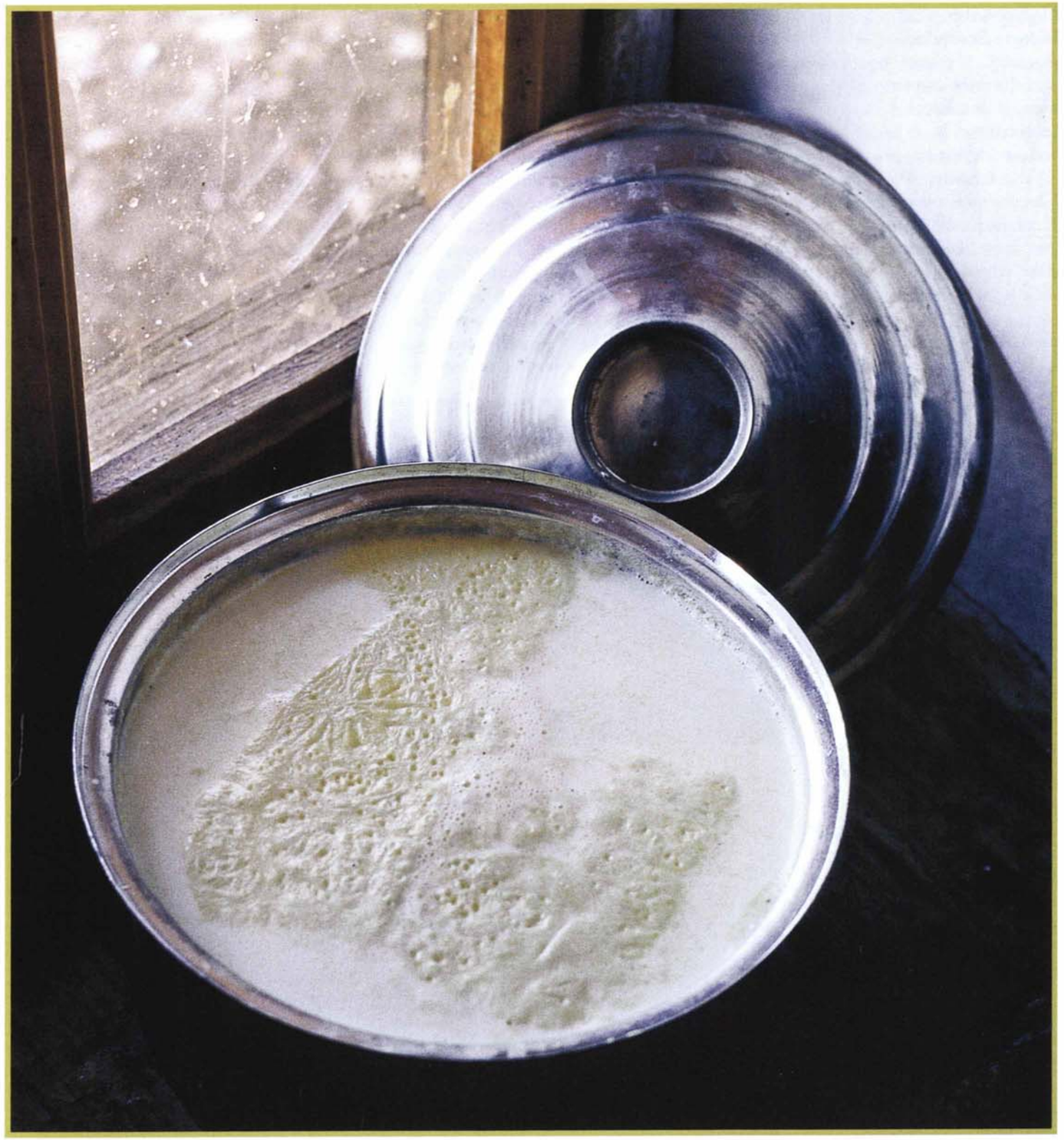
> SOMETIME AROUND 5000 BC, NOMADIC PASTORALISTS LIVING IN CENTRAL ASIA DISCOVERED GOAT'S-MILK YOGURT AND THE TECHNIQUE OF MAKING IT ON PURPOSE FROM A STARTER CULTURE.

In contrast, today's supermarket shelves are filled with an astonishing variety of mass-produced yogurt products that often have little in common with live, full-fat yogurt. They are, generally speaking, low- or non-fat, artificially colored and flavored, overly sweetened, pasteurized (so the beneficial bacteria are killed), pre-mixed with fruit, and combined with pectin, gums and even cellulose fiber to provide a desirable texture. The excellent texture of traditional live whole-milk yogurt is due to its high percentage of milk solids, rather than artificial stabilizers. The majority of commercial yogurts do not have the texture or the culinary versatility of true yogurt.

The first yogurt was most likely created by chance. The two benign bacterial strains *(L. bulgaricus* and *S. thermophilus)* are often found in milk and also in the gourds or animal-skin bags used thousands of years ago to carry liquids. When they happened to come into contact with milk, they caused it to ferment and solidify into a clabbered mass that humans realized was tasty and lasted longer than fresh milk. When this first happened, though, is subject to extensive and ongoing debate. Curdled milk, as a food, is mentioned in the Bible (Job 10:10). The Canadian Dairy Association has recently suggested a date as early as 10,000 BC for the discovery of yogurt, based on the approximate date that cattle were first domesticated in what is now Libya. Curdled or soured milk would have been known at that time, but was it yogurt?

It is more generally accepted by food historians that sometime around 5000 BC, nomadic pastoralists living in Central Asia discovered goat's-milk yogurt and the technique of making it on purpose from a starter culture. This was an extremely important nutritional event, because in hot climates, long before the development of modern refrigeration or the invention of pasteurization, milk went bad within hours or days. Freshly made cultured

Below: **Warm cow's milk "inoculated" with the starter culture—the beginning of the yogurt-making process.** Opposite, from top: **Sulfer Kazık milking the family cow in preparation for making yogurt, straining the fresh milk and heating it in a tinned copper pot.**



yogurt contains up to a billion live cells per milliliter of *L. bulgaricus* and *S. thermophilus*, and this huge concentration discourages the growth of other, possibly disease-causing, bacteria at the same time that fermentation helps preserve the milk and improves its digestibility by breaking down the lactose. For millennia, making yogurt was the only known method of safely preserving milk without drying it.

The definitive *Cheese and Fermented Milk Foods* by Frank V. Kosikowski confirms that yogurt most likely originated in Central Asia, where nomadic herdsmen, the milk from their animals, high temperatures and the bacteria es-sential for milk coagulation all coexisted.

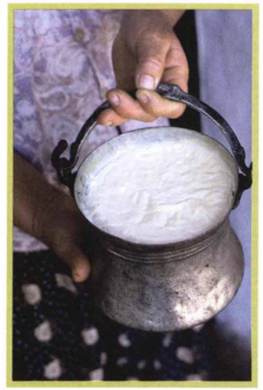
From Central Asia, the use of yogurt moved south to Persia. From there it traveled west to Anatolia and the Balkan Peninsula, and east to what is now Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. Genghis Khan and his Mongol and Turkmen horsemen, who subsisted largely on mare's-milk yogurt, fresh horse blood and a slightly alcoholic fermented-milk product called *kımız* (kumiss), helped introduce yogurt throughout their empire. I have never tasted fresh horse's blood, but I have recently sampled a commercial version of kumiss from Mongolia, and I can state with confidence that yogurt remains the greatest gastronomic contribution of the Mongols and other nomadic pastoralists of Central Asia to our modern cuisine. Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Israel, Turkey, Iraq and Iran continue to be traditional yogurt-producing areas today, and yogurt made from goat's and sheep's milk remains an essential ingredient in these countries' cuisines.

Both ancient and contemporary accounts mention the numerous health benefits attributed to yogurt. It has been used as a sunburn cream, a smallpox preventive, a cure for intestinal disease, to relieve anxiety, treat arthritis and impotence, cure skin diseases, alleviate insomnia and, more recently, as a way to significantly lower cholesterol levels and promote long life. The possible connection between yogurt and human longevity first attracted western interest when in 1913 the Russian biologist Ilya Mechnikof, director of the Pasteur Institute in Paris, noticed that yogurt-eating Bulgars often lived to an impressive old age.

YOGURT REMAINS THE GREATEST GASTRONOMIC CONTRIBUTION OF THE NOMADIC PASTORALISTS OF CENTRAL ASIA.

Of all the Central Asian peoples, it was the Turks who adopted yogurt most widely and put it to the most varied culinary uses. The 11th-century books *Diwan Lughat al-Turk (Collection of Turkic Words)* by Mahmud Kashgari, a linguistic work, and *Kutadgu Bilig (The Knowledge That Brings Happiness)* by Yusuf Khass Hajib, a "mirror for princes," both make numerous mentions of the word *yoğurt* and give detailed descriptions of yogurt's various uses by nomadic pastoralists. Yogurt continued to gain wider acceptance and, by the 17th century, Istanbul had more than 500 yogurt shops, all doing business under government regulation. By the time I tasted that first spoonful of yoğurt çorbası in 1972, yogurt had already been a well-established ingredient in Turkish cuisine for nearly a thousand years.

Yogurt, also spelled "yoghurt" or "yoghourt," is known by many different names. It is called *katyk* or *madzoon* in Armenia; *dahi* in India; *zabadi* in Egypt, Sudan and Yemen; *mast* in Iran; *leben raib* in Saudi Arabia; *laban* in Iraq and Lebanon; and *roba* in the Sudan. Yogurt is made from many different types of milk, such as sheep, goat, horse, camel, water buffalo and yak. The most unusual-sounding yogurt I came across in my reading was made from donkey's milk.



Throughout traditional yogurt-making countries, sheep's and buffalo's milk are the most highly prized because of their butterfat content, typically around five to seven percent, compared to the 1½ to 3½ percent of cow's milk. One telltale sign of high butterfat content is the characteristic wrinkled, yellowish cream "crust" on open pots of yogurt commonly sold in the local markets of the Middle East.

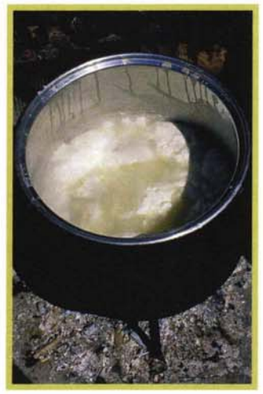
In order to watch the traditional yogurt-making process and discuss its various uses, I visited Turkey and met Engin Atkın, a Turkish food scholar, radio personality and co-author (with Mirsini Lambraki) of *Two Nations at the Same Table,* a comparative gastronomical study of Greek and Turkish cultures. Engin was taught the art of Turkish cuisine by her grandmother, and her recipes have appeared in *Food and Wine, Saveur* and *Bon Appétit*. She proved to be an excellent source of information.

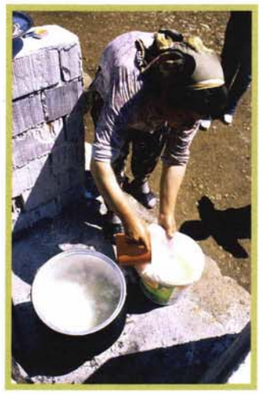
From Engin's childhood in Istanbul, one of her earliest memories was the sound of door-to-door yogurt vendors calling out, *"Yoğurtçu!... Yoğurtçu!"* as they carried flat pans of creamy yogurt down the streets. Engin Atkın still lives in Istanbul, but during the spring and summer months she runs a traditional Turkish cooking school in a restored Ottoman-era country estate. The residence and school are surrounded by vegetable gardens and fruit orchards in the village of Ula, inland from Bodrum on Turkey's southwest coast. In the mountains just behind Ula are groups of Yörüks, nomadic and semi-nomadic pastoralists whose traditional way of life still revolves around seasonal migrations to and from high mountain pastures with their herds of goats and sheep. Engin has established close friendships with many of the Yörük families, and she uses their milk, yogurt and fresh and dried cheeses at her cooking school.

The Yörük, an Oğuz Turkic people, are the earliest Turkic inhabitants of

Below: **Fresh yogurt butter.** Opposite, top row: **A pot of fresh cow's-milk yogurt with its characteristic wrinkled top layer of kaymak; Sulfer Kazık pouring day-old yogurt into a traditional wooden hand churn, or *kovan*; Sulfer Kazık and Sulta Yalçin churn butter in the kovan.** Lower row, from left: **Yogurt butter being removed from the kovan; fresh butter being gently kneaded to separate out the buttermilk, or *ayran*, before shaping the butter.**

Anatolia, thought to have originated when Turkmen tribes migrated into Anatolia from the north and mixed with indigenous Anatolian peoples. Their name comes from the Turkish verb *yürümek*, "to walk," and they still migrate within well-defined areas, respecting the grazing and water rights





of other Yörük families and settled villagers alike.

Shortly after dawn on a crisp sunny day in early spring, Engin and I picked up her friend and culinary mentor, 80-year-old Sulta Yalçin (pronounced yahl-**chin**). We drove into the hills behind Ula to the home of the Yörük family of Emine and Hulise Kazık. The Kazıks and the other Yörük families we visited in the next several days are semi-nomadic. They sell butter, yogurt and fresh yogurt cheese for a living. By the time we arrived, they had been up since first light, finishing their chores and preparing for our visit.

Immediately after our arrival, the Kazıks rounded up their sheep and goats and their cow and milked them. A fire was kindled, and before long they had a pot of steaming hot fresh cow's milk. Once it had cooled to the proper temperature, a yogurt starter (*yoğurt mayası*, "yogurt yeast") from the previous batch was stirred into the milk. The pot was wrapped in a blanket and placed by the hearth to set, or "strike," *çalmak*, as the Turks say. As the live yogurt cultures in the pot began to incubate, Engin, Sulta Yalçin and the Kazık women talked about various uses of yogurt in other parts of the Middle East.

In Iran, people drain the whey from sheep's-milk yogurt and then dry it into spherical balls of chalk-white hard cheese known as *kashk*, a high-protein food with an indefinite shelf life, ideal for nomadic herdsmen. Kashk is typically used to add flavor to soups and other dishes. Iranians also produce a beverage called *doogh*, which is a dilute, spiced yogurt drink that's usually carbonated when sold in bottles.

> IN RICHNESS AND CONSISTENCY, *KAYMAK* IS VERY SIMILAR TO DEVONSHIRE CLOTTED CREAM, BUT THE VERY BEST KAYMAK COMES FROM SHEEP'S MILK.

Kurut, popular in Afghanistan, is another dried-yogurt product, similar to kashk. Like industrial powdered milk, the pebble-sized balls of kurut are reconstituted by mixing with water and are then used either as a drink or as an ingredient in sauces and soups. According to *The Oxford Companion to Food*, the word *kurut* is derived from the Turkish *kurumak*, "to dry."

In Lebanon, yogurt is sometimes strained through a cloth to remove all the whey, then hand-rolled into small balls the size of ping-pong balls, known as *labne*. The labne are air-dried for several days until somewhat firm and can then be stored in containers of olive oil for a year or more without spoiling. The texture and consistency of labne is similar to American cream cheese; it is most frequently used as a spread on pita or rustic multi-grain mountain breads.

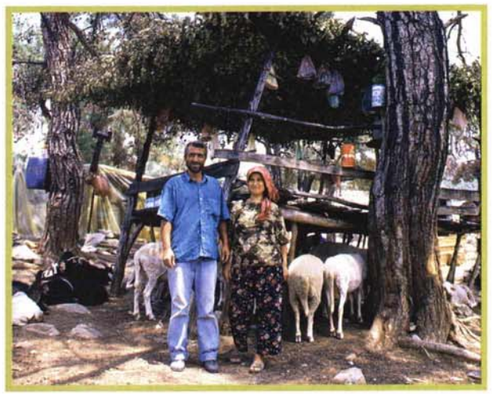
Torba yoğurdu means "sack yogurt" in Turkish, the *torba* referring to the sack through which the whey is drained for a few hours. Also known as *süzme* ("strained"), it has a consistency similar to sour cream and is also used on bread, as well as in yoğurt çorbası and other soups.

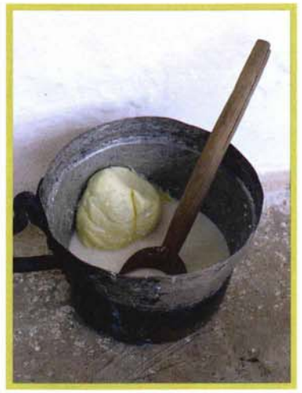
Engin also told me about *kaymak*, the thick layer of cream atop high-quality Turkish yogurt. In richness and consistency, kaymak is very similar to the famous Devonshire clotted cream of England, but according to Engin the very best kaymak comes from sheep's milk. It is made by heating the milk very slowly, allowing it to thicken while most of the cream rises to the surface, then gently stirring in the yogurt starter culture. Once set and chilled, the kaymak layer is gently rolled off the top of the yogurt and served with baklava or other syrupy desserts. Kaymak is often used as a filling for the sweet the Turks call *künefe* and the Arabs *qata'if*.

Over the next two days we also made butter from yogurt, a drink called ayran, various soups and sauces, and several fresh and dried cheeses, all from yogurt. Butter came first. The Kazıks now use an electric churn, but Sulta Yalçin had brought along a churn made from a hollowed-out tree stump, and she used this family heirloom,

Below: **Crumbly, salty çökelek, mixed with a little *za'tar* spice.** Opposite, far left and left center: **Emine and Hulise Kazık with a grandchild and a pail of fresh goat's milk. Emine and Hulise strain the goat's milk; it will be set with rennet to make *teleme* cheese.** Opposite, center right and right: **Ayran left over from butter-making being boiled up in preparation for making çökelek, a salty, dry yogurt cheese often used to fill *börek*. Sulfer Kazık straining the ayran, now salted, to make çökelek.**

Top row, left to right: A Yörük couple, Ari and Hüriye Bilge, in the hills near Bodrum. Yörüks migrate to and from well-defined mountain pasturelands that "belong" to their group; they are thus technically "transhumants" rather than nomads or semi-nomads. Sulfer and Mustafa Kazik. Fresh buttermilk (ayran) separated from the kneaded butter. Below: A frosty glass of ayran made from yogurt, water and salt.





called a *kovan*, to demonstrate the traditional technique. The kovan itself had been made by drilling a hole down the center of the meter-long stump and enlarging it with a smoldering fire until a cylindrical tube of the required wall thickness was achieved.

Cow's-milk yogurt from the previous day was poured into the kovan and churned with a long-handled perforated wooden plunger for about 45 minutes. At this point, the butterfat had come together in small globules that were a rich yellow color. The side of the kovan was tapped with the shaft of the plunger to bring the rest of the coagulated butter particles to the surface. Then the butter was scooped out with a wooden spoon and pressed by hand to remove all of the leftover liquid.

Ayran (aye-**rahnn**), the liquid which remained in the churn, is what we know as buttermilk, thick and full of milk solids. Sulta Yalçin explained that if the yogurt is allowed to sit for three to four days before churning, the butter will be better, but the ayran will be thinner and less rich.

Ayran is also the name of a popular and refreshing yogurt drink; Emine Kazık made some by taking a pitcher of fresh buttermilk from the churn and mixing it with three-quarters of a pitcher of cool water. She added what looked like several teaspoons of salt and a tablespoon or more of fresh crushed mint, beat the ingredients together in a large bowl and poured the resulting frothy drink into glasses. It had a rich, fresh milk flavor.

In Turkey, ayran is frequently made at home, but it is also served in restaurants and cafés and is available from street vendors in the larger cities. In India and Pakistan, a drink called *lassi* is made from yogurt and water. It is often blended with sugar and fresh fruit, such as mango, but the salted version of lassi is very similar in taste, texture and flavor to ayran. According to Engin and Sulta Yalçin, the large quantity of calcium in ayran makes one feel contented, tired and sleepy. Ayran is typically drunk after eating fish; and kebabs should always be accompanied by ayran.

With the rest of the ayran left in the churn, Emine showed us one other way to use this yogurt by-product. Rekindling the wood fire, she brought the ayran to a boil and then added a generous handful of salt. Small stiff curds, the size of cottage-cheese curds, formed and floated to the surface. She took the pot off the fire to cool slightly before pouring the watery liquid and curd into a cotton sack. The sack was hung from a tree branch for two hours to drain and then a large flat stone was placed on it to extract the last bit of moisture. The resulting salty cheese, quite dry and crumbly, is called *çökelek* (pronounced **chirk**-eh-lek), and tastes similar to a very dry feta cheese. Thanks to the salt content, it will last 15 days fresh or up to a month in a refrigerator. Çökelek is added to a variety of Turkish dishes for flavor and texture, especially in the filling for *börek*, which—at least in the countryside—is a stuffed, folded, thin flatbread that looks something like a folded thin-crust pizza. (A city börek is made of strips of paper-thin *yufka* dough stuffed, folded flagwise into triangles and deep-fried.)

> ON THE TABLE WAS A SOFT GOAT'S-MILK YOGURT CHEESE SEASONED WITH WILD THYME, ROASTED SESAME SEEDS AND SUMAC AND COVERED WITH OLIVE OIL.

During a break in these demonstrations, I asked Engin and Sulta Yalçin about the yoğurt çorbası that I had eaten in Erzurum more than 35 years earlier. They confirmed that it is one of the regional specialties of Erzurum, duplicated but rarely improved upon in other parts of the country. There is something unique about the yogurt in Erzurum which accounts for the flavor, they said. The traditional recipe calls for hulled wheat and fresh cilantro to be added to the chicken stock, flour, eggs and yogurt cream, but rice and dried mint are frequently substituted for the first two ingredients.

On our last day with the Kazık family, they laid out lunch on a rough wooden table shaded by a grape arbor. The table was covered with the fruits of their labors, including a sampler of yogurt dishes. There was freshly baked *pide* (pita) bread, sweet unsalted butter from yogurt, sliced tomatoes from the garden, fresh sheep's-milk yogurt, a yogurt sauce mixed with minced green onions, chili and paprika; a fresh, fruity olive oil; a beet salad with slivered green peppers, pine nuts and dill mixed with yogurt; glasses filled with frothy ayran; a pilav; crisp cucumber slices; black olives; skewers of succulent and spicy lamb kebabs; *cacık* (**ja**-jick), a cold soup of cucumbers, ayran, garlic, dill and, in this case, ground walnuts; and a soft goat's-milk yogurt cheese seasoned with wild thyme, roasted sesame seeds and sumac and covered with olive oil. For dessert we drizzled wild bee honey over kaymak.

After lunch, we had a final glass of tea, thanked our hosts once again and drove back to Engin's summer house in Ula for a nap. Earlier in the day, Engin and I had made plans to take Sulta Yalçin to the weekly open-air market in Ula for a plate of her favorite künefe. But after such a sumptuous and satisfying meal, we agreed that the visit to the pastry-sellers of Ula, or further sampling of yogurt in any of its various forms, would have to wait for another day.

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Related articles from past issues can be found on our Web site, www.saudiaramcoworld.com. Click on "indexes," then on the cover of the issue indicated below.

Turkish food: S/O 05, M/A 88, N/D 75

ClassroomGuide

WRITTEN BY JULIE WEISS

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 two themes: ***Garbage*** *and* ***Mass Media.*** *(And no, they're not synonymous!)*

Theme: Garbage

We all generate it, and we all get rid of it. In this issue you'll get to do something a little bit different with garbage: Think about it. You'll read about garbage from the past, and then you'll think about today's garbage in light of what you've learned.

What did people in the past do with their garbage? What do people do with their garbage today?
Read "Blooming in Cairo." Highlight the parts that talk about Cairo's medieval "rubbish mounds." Discuss these questions with a partner: What does the presence of rubbish mounds tell you about what Cairenes did with their garbage? Where are the mounds located relative to the city? What did the excavation make clear about the significance of that location over the years?

Now turn your thoughts to the present. Think about today's garbage—which, in an increasingly eco-conscious world, is actually a rather hot topic. Highly industrialized, high-consumption countries generate tremendous amounts of garbage. On the small side, there's all that elaborate packaging—plastic containers, boxes, shrink wrapping. On the big side, there are computer monitors, refrigerators, cars, trucks, old factory parts, etc. How do common garbage disposal practices in cities today differ from those used in medieval Cairo?

Do a little scouting around in your home and neighborhood. What kinds of things get thrown away? Do people throw away things you think are still usable, such as empty yogurt containers that you might use to store leftovers? Do they discard old computers? Do you know if these trash items might still be usable?

Do some research about your local government. As a class, list as many specific ways as you can that your community disposes of various kinds of garbage. Then, with a partner, choose one of those procedures and find out two things: First, are you personally satisfied with the procedure? Why is it done that way? Second, what kinds of leftovers or other effects might that disposal method have in 100 years? In 500 years? 1000? Make a pamphlet or a page for a Web site that describes your part of the local garbage disposal procedures, and, if you think it can be done better, include recommendations.

Now read "Good Riddance, I Say," an article in the "I Witness History" series that's told in the first person—from the point of view of a piece of trash! With your "garbage" partner, discuss what the ancient Greeks did with their trash. The shard in the article reports that people often wrote on broken pottery, in the same way that people today write on the backs of envelopes. Do you ever do that—write on the back of something that has already served its purpose and is on its way to becoming garbage? Make a list of as many things as you and your partner can think of that you reuse in this way.

What does garbage reveal about the people who discarded it?
Both articles tell stories about the discovery of garbage from hundreds and even thousands of years ago. Imagine if someone 500 years from now were to find the garbage from your home or school. With a group or as a class, make a list of the kinds of things they would be likely to find. (You might take a peek into the trash bin if you're having trouble thinking about what might be in there.) Then pretend you're a historian or archeologist in the year 2508, and that a new discovery has been made "dating back to the early 21st century." It's up to you to figure out what the society was like that generated this most fascinating garbage. Choose one piece of trash, and write a brief essay in the style of "Good Riddance, I Say" in which you let that piece of trash tell its story so that your 26th-century readers can better understand the world that piece of trash came from. (Hint: Choose anything! A soft drink can, a foam coffee cup, a car engine.... Anything can do.) As an additional challenge, try to tie your piece of trash in with a recent current event.

What good, if any, can come from trash?
What good came from the discovery of ancient Greek rubbish and the medieval Egyptian garbage dump? What about today's garbage? What good can come from it? To start you thinking, some fabrics are made out of recycled plastic. Find other examples of usable products that are made from trash. Report to the class on what you discover.

Theme: The Mass Media

"Message Nation" looks at the role that radio has played in Mauritania for the past 52 years. Read the article. Then use the following activities to help you think about mass media more broadly.

How can the mass media shape group identities?
"Message Nation" explains that a radio show, *Al-Balaghat*, helped a diverse group of people form a new, unified nation. Write a paragraph summarizing how *Al-Balaghat* contributed to that identity formation.

To put *Al-Balaghat*'s contribution in perspective—and to think about the significance of the mass media—turn your attention to countries that began in a time before there were mass media. In the 1700's, for example, when the United States formed, there were local newspapers, but there were no nationwide mass media as we know them today. Long-distance communication was slow and difficult. How do you think the people living in geographically distant states formed a sense of themselves as Americans? Before you discuss the question as a class, do some background reading in a textbook and/or on-line so that you can have an informed conversation.

Think about the media forms you participate in—do they include TV, movies, Web sites, newspapers, magazines, radio stations? Which ones? How does your participation in each one help you form a sense of identity either *with* other people—family, friends—or perhaps *distinct from* them (such as something you like but no one else you know does)? For example, if there is a movie that "everyone" has seen and quotes lines from, how does that make you feel part of a group? How do you feel if you haven't seen it? Keep a log for one day of all the media you use, see or hear. The next day, compare your log with some friends' logs. Do you watch/use the same media? What's different? Now, compare your experience with the article's description of Mauritanians' experience with *Al-Balaghat*. Write a paragraph that could be the beginning of an article about you and your friends' use of media in a way that imitates the start and style of "Message Nation."

How might the mass media affect countries' unified identities today?
The Internet is today like radio was in the first part of the 20th century: the most modern media technology. And, like radio before it, it is changing how people live and how they think about who they are—their identities. Early mass media sought mass audiences. Many movies, for example, aim to be "blockbusters," which need huge audiences to cover their huge production costs. That means that filmmakers try to pull in the largest possible audience with movies that appeal to huge numbers of people. How do you think this need for a mass audience might affect the content of this type of movie? Discuss an example with another student.

Then think about how different that is from the Internet, where even if something might be of interest to only a very small number of people, the cost of putting it out on the Internet is minimal, and so it's available. How might this new Internet model affect groups' identities?

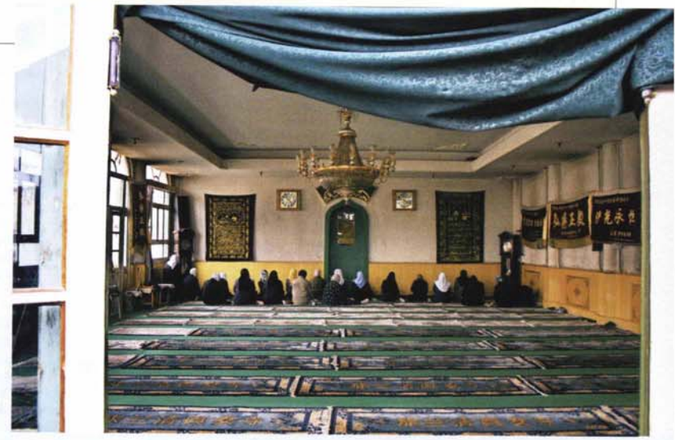
How might it affect a country? If the Internet becomes more widely available in Mauritania, do you think *Al-Balaghat* will continue to be as important as it has been for decades? What about cell phones and text messaging? Even though it seems obvious that *Al-Balaghat* might not fare so well when it is competing with them as a way to communicate, the article says that *Al-Balaghat* is not suffering much as they become more common. What do think there might be about the program that keeps people from thinking that a cell phone might substitute for it? Write an email to Yahya ould Taleb ould Sioli, the current *Al-Balaghat* presenter, with your answer.

How do the mass media promote or inhibit human relationships?
Find the part of "Message Nation" in which Moustapha Lefnane is quoted as saying that *Al-Balaghat* "reinforces human relations," while cell phones and the Internet do not. Does his assertion surprise you? Team up with a partner. Have one person take the role of Lefnane while the other person takes the role of someone with a prophone perspective. Have a dialogue in which you each explain your point of view as clearly and thoroughly as you can. Discuss the issue back and forth. Try to understand the other point of view as well as your own. After your dialogue, make a two-column chart. In each column, list the supporting arguments for one of the viewpoints you discussed. When you look at the two columns side by side, which point of view persuades you? What new questions do you both have that the article might not answer? Write a persuasive essay taking one point of view, the other, or a combination of the two.

Analyzing Visual Images

Inside and Outside

Photographs can be taken indoors or outdoors, but a sense of "inside" and "outside" is a different thing, a point of view. Read the text of "China's *Nu Ahong*," and look at the photographs. Then look specifically at the opening photo spread on pages 24 and 25. An indoor space fills most of the photo frame, and yet it is taken from outside that space, looking in. How would you describe the space you see? What impression do you get of the women in the photo? What leads you to that impression? Now think about the photographer. Where was she when she took the picture? How can you tell? Hint: What frames the picture on the left and the right? Why do you think the photographer and the editors left that door frame in, rather than cropping it out? What effect does it have on you as a viewer? How, if at all, does it change your sense of the women in the photo? With what topics in the written text does the image connect? How?



Then, contrast this photograph with the top photo on pages 26 and 27. Notice that it is filled with an outdoor space. Where was the photographer standing when she took this picture? What effect does it have on you? How does it differ from the first photo you analyzed? How is it similar?

Finally, look at the top photo on pages 28 and 29, which includes both interior and exterior spaces. What message might the photographer be trying to convey by including both in the same image? How does this affect your understanding of the woman in the photo?

Write a reflective journal entry that explains the themes you see expressed in the three photographs. Support your explanations with evidence from the photographs themselves and information you learn from reading the captions and the article.

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Events&Exhibitions

Muraqqa': Imperial Mughal Albums From the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin. Among the most remarkable of Mughal paintings and calligraphies are those commissioned by the Emperors Jahangir (1605–1627) and Shah Jahan (1627–1658) for display in lavish imperial albums. A window into the world-views of the emperors, these exquisite images depict the rulers, the imperial family in relaxed private settings, Sufi teachers and mystics, allies and courtiers and natural-history subjects. Many folios are full-page paintings with superb figural borders; others are collages of European, Persian, and Mughal works collected by the emperors. Produced by the atelier's leading artists, they reveal the conceptual and artistic sophistication of the arts of the book at their apex in the early 17th century. The exhibition brings together 86 masterpieces—many not previously exhibited in the United States—from the renowned Dublin collection. Catalog $45. Sackler Gallery, **Washington, D.C.**, through August 3.

Painted in 1630 or 1631, early in the reign of the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan, this miniature from the Chester Beatty Library's Minto Album shows Shah Jahan's renowned predecessors, Akbar and Jahangir, in easy conversation with him. Since both earlier rulers were dead by 1630, the painting may have been intended to link the young emperor to his glorious forebears for political reasons.

Gülsün Karamustafa: Bosphorus 1954 reflects a noteworthy moment in Istanbul's history. In that very cold winter, ice floes from the Black Sea accumulated in the Bosporus Strait, creating a popular curiosity. Karamustafa shows one video work and several photographs about this unprecedented event, but his metaphorical message is that Istanbul cannot be assigned to any specific region of the world, and the resulting tensions contribute much to the city's vitality. Kunstmuseum **Bonn, Germany,** through August 3.

A View of a Foreign Culture: Melchior Lorck in Turkey. Danish artist Melchior Lorck traveled to Constantinople during the reign of Sultan Suleiman II as part of a peace mission from Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand I. Melchior was to document Ottoman culture, then almost unknown in the West. Lorck's 128 woodcuts were published posthumously in 1626, and this exhibition brings together some 120 of them, alongside drawings and prints. Museum for Kunst, **Copenhagen, Denmark**, through August 3.

Mitra Tabrizian: This is That Place brings together more than 17 large-scale works focusing on such themes as the rise of corporate culture, ageism, nomadism, migrancy and the idea of homeland. The Iranian-British photographer combines documentary techniques with those of film to create elaborate, meticulously staged photographic tableaux. Tate Britain, **London**, through August 10.

Exquisite Beauty: Islamic Jades provides an overview of the artistic traditions behind ancient Chinese vessels, and also covers the expansion and influence of jade throughout the Islamic world. The Kunlun Mountains in eastern Central Asia are the most significant source of nephrite jade, supplying not only Chinese artisans with raw materials, but also those in the Timurid, Mughal and Ottoman Empires—and in Eastern Europe as well. National Palace Museum, **Taipei**, through August 15.

Allure of the East: Orientalism in New York, 1850–1930. Through paintings, prints, photographs and books as well as silver, lighting and metalwork, the exhibition (a prelude to "Woven Splendor," below) explores New Yorkers' fascination with the "Orient." By the 1860's, New Yorkers were incorporating facets of Eastern design, as well as imported exotic objects, in domestic interiors influenced by Islamic art. Photographs of New York interiors reveal the opulent luxury of these interiors; decorative arts inspired by the East are also exhibited, including Islamic-style silver by Tiffany & Co. and Moorish-style chandeliers and lighting. **New-York** Historical Society, through August 17.

Woven Splendor From Timbuktu to Tibet: Exotic Rugs and Textiles From New York Collectors chronicles the 75-year history of the Hajji Baba Club, the nation's oldest and most prestigious rug collecting club, while examining the history of the Oriental rug in New York. Some 75 objects are exhibited, including rugs, costumes and other Middle Eastern and Central Asian textiles, as well as photographs depicting Oriental rugs in collectors' homes in the early 20th century and revealing how such objects were originally made available through galleries and World's Fairs. The exhibition explores how rugs were produced and used in their countries of origin, as well as how Americans initially understood these objects. **New-York** Historical Society, through August 17.

Resisting Color: Textiles Tied and Dyed features 18 resist-dyed *ikat* and *plangi* textiles ranging in date from the late 19th to the mid-20th century and originating in Argentina, Chile, Ecuador and Guatemala; Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon and Algeria; Indonesia, Laos and China; and Uzbekistan. Most of the exhibits were originally used as ceremonial clothing. **Dallas** Museum of Art, through August 24.

Persian Visions: Contemporary Photography From Iran presents more than 80 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. Mulvane Art Museum, **Topeka, Kansas**, through August 24.

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. Additional 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. O2, **London**, through August 30.

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 £25. Tate Britain, **London**, through August 31; Pera Museum, **Istanbul**, October 2008 through January 2009.

The Profane and the Divine: Arts of Antiquity. Jewels of the Musée Barbier-Mueller presents more than 250 pieces from this famous collection of ancient art. Highlights include pieces from ancient Egypt, the Bronze Age Aegean and continental Greece; Roman, Etruscan and Mesopotamian objects; works from Uruk and Sumer; ancient Persian bronze pieces; and works dating back to the third millennium BC from Bactria. Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, **Geneva**, through August 31.

Living Under the Crescent Moon: Domestic Culture in the Arab World demonstrates the diversity of domestic lifestyles between Morocco, Syria and the Arabian Peninsula, from the nomadic tents of the Tuareg or Bedouins to Moroccan casbahs, from the grand courtyard houses of Marrakech, Damascus or Cairo to buildings by such 20th-century architects as Hassan Fathy, Elie Mouyal or Abdelwahed El-Wakil. Numerous models and reconstructed room environments provide an opportunity to physically experience various building types, while domestic objects such as ceramics, textiles, tools and architectural elements offer impressions of everyday customs. The exhibition makes it possible for the visitor to compare his or her own living situation with life in the Arab world. Vitra Design Museum, **Weil am Rhein, Germany**, through August 31.

Fragmentation and Unity: The Art of Sari Khoury features more than two dozen abstract works by the internationally known artist and educator, who left Jerusalem at 17, in the 1950's, to forge a new life in the American Midwest. Khoury, who died in 1997, was a prolific writer and speaker; his words share gallery space with his artworks. Arab American National Museum, **Dearborn, Michigan**, through August 31.

Lost Kingdoms of the Nile: Nubian Treasures from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston provides unprecedented insight into ancient Nubia, the extraordinary African civilization often overshadowed by ancient Egypt. Presenting some of the most significant archeological treasures ever found in Africa, the exhibition includes more than 250 objects in gold, silver, bronze, ivory, stone and ceramic ranging in date from 7000 BC to modern times. The exhibition highlights include a golden diadem, here reconstructed in its entirety for the first time; finely crafted ceramics; *shawabti* figurines, buried to work for the dead; and inscriptions. Carlos Museum, Emory University, **Atlanta, Georgia**, through August 31.

Farouk Hosny: The Energy of Abstraction includes approximately 20 large-format paintings in which the Egyptian artist —since 1987 also his country's minister of culture—transforms the signs of his native country into restless, calligraphic gestures using vivid colors evocative of the Egyptian landscape. Now one of Egypt's most prominent contemporary artists, Hosny began painting as a young man, initially concentrating on landscapes and seascapes. He graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Alexandria in 1964. Museum of Fine Arts, **Houston**, through September 1.

Picasso Abu Dhabi: Masterpieces From the Musée National Picasso, Paris presents works from all periods and styles of Picasso's career as one of the 20th century's most important artists. The 183 works on display, including paintings, sculptures and works on paper, range from Picasso's Blue Period "Self-Portrait" (1901) through "Portrait of the Young Painter" (1972), made only months before his death. Emirates Palace, **Abu Dhabi**, through September 4.

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. National Gallery of Art, **Washington, D.C.**, through September 7; Asian Art Museum of **San Francisco**, October 24 through January 25.

Nahnou: Together Now uses prints, photography, film and timelines to reveal individual and artistic encounters between the UK, Syria and Jordan. Part of a two-year exchange program involving artists, curators, teachers and young people, the exhibition includes individual prints, quotes and observations, poetry, interviews and film. Led by British artists Faisal Abdu'Allah and Maria Zeb Benjamin, filmmaker Trevor Mathison and Tate curators, other artists include Reem Al-Khatib from Syria and Samah Hijawi from Jordan. Tate Britain, **London**, through September 7.

Humanitas: Images of India presents the product of a five-year photographic adventure: portraits of the ordinary people of India—especially Gujarat—as they go about their lives. With these images, Angeleno photographer Fredric Roberts hopes to convey the power of his subjects' relationships with God, their land, their neighbors and their families, and reveal their own sense of self-possession and self-worth despite their material poverty. Museum of Photographic Arts, **San Diego, California**, through September 7.

For Tent and Trade: Masterpieces of Turkmen Weaving includes some 40 rugs and tent trappings from the museum's world-class collection, all woven from the white, long-staple, highly hydroscopic wool of adaptable, fat-tailed Saryja sheep, endemic to Central Asia. In spite of the fact that most of the weaving is done on simple horizontal looms staked to the ground, the work of Turkmen weavers, of which extant examples date back to the fourth century BC, is very skillful, well designed and highly patterned. Also on view are five striking mantles masterfully embroidered and worn by women of three different Turkmen tribes. de Young Museum, **San Francisco**, through September 7.

In Palaces and Tents: The Islamic World From China to Europe describes Muslim contacts with neighboring cultures through more than 300 objects, divided into three chronological sections and one political one, dealing with Russia, that includes a magnificent Bukharan tent. State Hermitage Museum, **St. Petersburg**, Russia, through September 7.

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. Catalog by curator Edward Bleiberg, $39.95. **Indianapolis [Indiana]** Museum of Art, through September 7.

Impressed by Light: Photographs From Paper Negatives, 1840–1860 is the first exhibition to highlight British photographs made from paper negatives and features approximately 120 works by such leading artists as Roger Fenton, Linnaeus Tripe and B. B. Turner, as well as many now unfamiliar practitioners. The exhibition follows the progress of the movement from the invention of the process by William Henry Fox Talbot in 1839 to the Great Exhibition of 1851, where the esthetic possibilities of the calotype were amply illustrated, to its flowering in the years immediately thereafter. Musée d'Orsay, **Paris**, through September 7.

Land of the Pharaohs is an exhibition of popular Egyptian objects chronicling everyday life in ancient Egypt, including farming, personal adornment, religion and beliefs. The display also features Roman-period Egyptian objects on loan from the British Museum. Segedunum Roman Fort, Baths & Museum, **Wallsend (near Newcastle), UK**, through September 8.

Contemporary Arab Art shows work by Suad Al-Attar, Sabhan Adam, Fouad Bellamine, Dia Azzawi, Mahi Binebine and Rafik El-Kamel, juxtaposing various stylistic techniques and the intersecting influences of heritage and homeland. Le Violon Bleu, **London**, through September 10.

From the Land of the Labyrinth: Minoan Crete, 3000–1100 BC presents more than 280 artifacts and works of art that bring to life the story of Crete's luminous Minoan culture, the first palatial civilization to establish itself on European soil. It illuminates Minoan daily life during the second and third millennia BC, including social structure, communications, trade, bureaucratic organization, religion, and technology. In 11 thematic sections, the exhibition maps chronologically the Minoans' great achievements, showing gold jewelry, clay tablets and other objects inscribed in Linear A (still undeciphered), ceremonial vessels, votive figures, double axes, murals, seal-stones and a boar-tusk helmet. Onassis Cultural Center, **New York**, through September 13.

Be(com)ing Dutch answers such awkward questions as "What does 'being Dutch' or 'becoming Dutch' mean in the 21st century? What is Dutchness, anyway, and how do the Dutch want to be seen by themselves and others?" Not only in the museum but also in the city of Eindhoven, works by 37 artists explore these complicated notions. Middle Eastern artists taking part include Abdellatif Benfaidoul, Ahmet Öğüt, Mounira Al-Solh, Rana Hamadeh and Oğuz Tatari. Van Abbemuseum, **Eindhoven, Netherlands**, through September 14.

A Youth Orchestra of Palestine: Photographs by Peter Dammann documents the establishment of the West–Eastern Divan Orchestra by the Barenboim–Said Foundation. Dammann's images show a close relationship with the musicians and pupils, resulting in 60 black-and-white photographs taken during nine trips over the past four years. Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, **Hamburg, Germany**, through September 21.

The Arts of Kashmir demonstrates the cultural riches of the region, with its Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic art dating from the fourth to the 20th century. The exhibition includes some 135 objects: carpets and embroidery, calligraphy, furniture, paintings, papier-mâché and sculpture. **Cincinnati [Ohio]** Art Museum, through September 21.

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. Antiguo Matadero de Legazpi, **Madrid**, through September 28.

Events&Exhibitions

Continued from previous page

The Greeks presents more than 180 artifacts that shed light on the imprint left by the Greeks on world civilizations and cultures. The exhibition is divided into sections that cover prehistory and antiquity, the Byzantine period, the Greeks in the Ottoman Empire and the creation of today's modern Greek state. Exhibits, from the Benaki Museum in Athens, include sculptures, ceramics, jewelry, textiles, paintings, metalwork, icons, toys, figurines, lamps and wooden chests. Canadian Museum of Civilization, **Gatineau, Quebec**, through September 28.

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. Museum für Völkerkunde, **Vienna**, through September 28; Carlos Museum, Emory University, **Atlanta, Georgia**, opening November 15.

Magic in Ancient Egypt: Image, Word, and Reality explores how the Egyptians, known throughout the ancient world for their expertise in magic, addressed the unknown forces of the universe. Ancient Egyptians did not distinguish between religion and magic, and believed that the manipulation of written words, images and ritual could influence the world through a divinely created force known as Heqa, personified as the eldest son of the solar creator Atum. The exhibition also examines connections between magic and medicine and the use of magic after death. **Brooklyn [New York]** Museum, through September 28.

Babylon: Myth and Truth explores the myth of Babel and the facts of Babylon: two worlds in one exhibition. The first section, Truth, exposes the roots of our western culture by looking at the archeological remains of Babylon, revealing what lies behind the legends. This section centers on the Ishtar Gate and the Processional Way of Babylon, one of the ancient Seven Wonders. Over 800 objects are exhibited, among them statues, reliefs, votive offerings, architectural fragments and documents, from the British Museum, the Louvre and the Réunion des Musées Nationaux, and the Municipal Museums of Berlin. The second section, Myth, views Babylon as a metaphor for civilization's dark side: repression, terror, violence, hubris and madness. In European art and culture, the myth of Babel is closely related to mankind's primal fears. This story is not a historical one, but illuminates a civilization that needs the myth of Babel in order to understand itself. Pergamonmuseum, **Berlin**, through October 5; British Museum, **London** (with about 100 objects), opens November 13.

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<<< Current/October

Perspectives: Y. Z. Kami presents two monumental portraits from the Tehran-born artist's current series depicting individuals in meditation. In a third work, he uses collage and verses by Jelaluddin Rumi to create a spiral of calligraphy. Sackler Gallery, **Washington, D.C.**, through October 13.

Ghada Amer: Love Has No End, the first US survey of the renowned artist's work, features some 50 pieces from every aspect of Amer's career as a painter, sculptor, illustrator, performer, garden designer and installation artist. These include such iconic works as *Barbie Loves Ken, Ken Loves Barbie* (1995/2002) as well as numerous works devoted to world politics, including some of her more recent antiwar pieces. **Brooklyn [New York]** Museum, through October 19.

<<< Current/November

Um Kulthum: "The Fourth Pyramid" marks the 30th anniversary of the death of the great singer also called "The Lady," "The Voice of the Arabs" and "The Star of the East." The exhibition includes photographs, audio and film clips, documents and costumes in each of four sections: "The Egyptian," about Um Kulthum as a person; "The Talent," about her abilities as a singer and interpreter; "The Engagement," about her relations with her usually adoring public; and "The Heritage." Institut du Monde Arabe, **Paris**, through November 2.

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 his exploration of ancient Egyptian civilization, 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. Lowe Art Museum, University of Miami, **Coral Gables, Florida**, through November 2.

<<< Current/December

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.

<<< Current/January

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 raises the possibility or impossibility of return. Tropenmuseum, **Amsterdam**, through January 4.

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.

<<< Current/March and Later

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 popular 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 between bags and rugs and, more generally, the influences of eastern on western art and fashion. **Indianapolis [Indiana]** Museum of Art, through March 8.

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. ⓘ bereskcp@aramco.com or +966-3-872-0458. Saudi Aramco Community Heritage Gallery, **Dhahran**, Saudi Arabia, through April 1.

<<< Coming/July

Faces of Ancient Arabia is drawn primarily from a recent gift of more than 70 works of Yemeni alabaster sculpture dating from the third century BC to the third century of our era, and focuses on the importance and splendor of the kingdoms of Southern Arabia—the land of the Queen of Sheba—which prospered through trade in incense and other precious goods with Egypt, the Near East and the Roman Empire. The exhibition examines these kingdoms' artistic sophistication and visual splendor. Works by contemporary Yemeni artist Fuad al-Futaih and modern photographs of present-day Yemen are also on display. ⓘ 410-547-9000 or info@thewalters.org. Walters Art Museum, **Baltimore, Maryland**, July 20 through September 7.

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**, July 25 through October 2009.

<<< Coming/August

***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**, August 17 through January 25.

Azerbaijan: 5000 Years of History and Culture in the Caucasus. Ethnological Museum, **Berlin (Dahlem)**, August 27 through November 16.

<<< Coming/September

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**, September 13 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**, September 14 through January 18.

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 entered the British Museum's collection by the early 20th century, but also include works by seven living artists. Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York**, September 30 through March 29.

Art & 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. It was the largest empire known until that time. 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**, September 21 through January 4.

<<< Coming/October

Teaching About the Arab World and Islam is the theme of full-day teacher workshops conducted by Arab World and Islamic Resources and School Services (AWAIR) of Berkeley, California. ⓘ www.awaironline.org. Sites and dates currently scheduled include **Jackson, Mississippi**, October 4; **Oxford, Mississippi**, October 17.

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.**, October 11 through January 4.

<<< Coming/November

Wonderful Things: The Harry Burton Photographs and the Discovery of the Tomb of Tutankhamun. 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 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.

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.

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 Samarqand," 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.

<<< Permanent

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

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