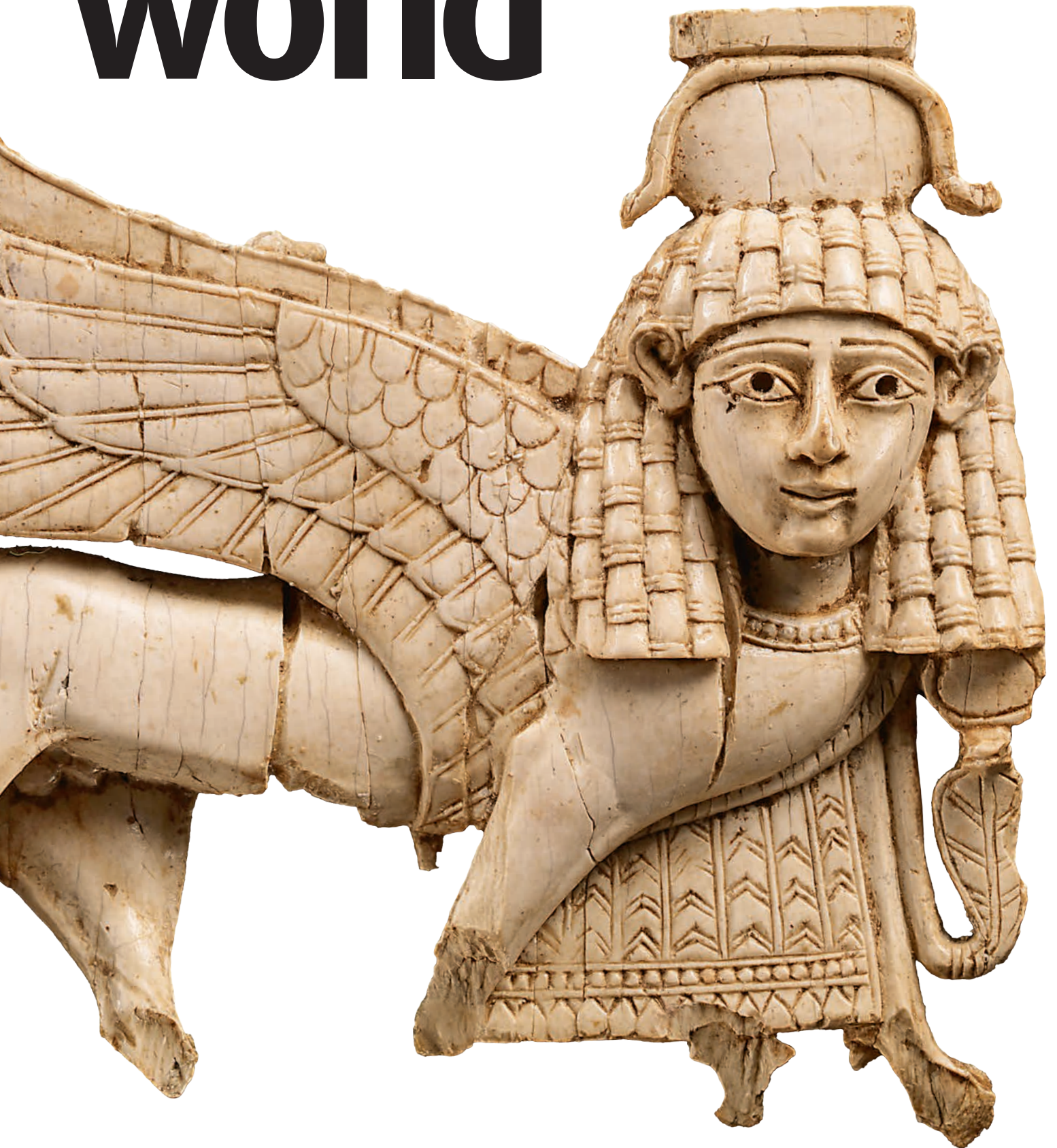


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Assyria to Iberia



From Nimrud, now in Iraq, this winged ivory sphinx crowned with a solar disc elegantly exemplifies the diffusion and adaptation of Egyptian symbols north and east during the early first millennium BCE. Photo courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Assyria to Iberia

Written by Richard Covington

It was around 600 BCE when a goldsmith migrated from Phoenicia, along the eastern Mediterranean coast, west to the metal-rich island of Sardinia, and there, he combined and reinterpreted several Egyptian symbols to make this bracelet panel. Both his move and his craft were part of the flow of trade, arts and cultures that defined much in the pre-classical Mediterranean and Near East, which this winter became the focus of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's third exhibition to explore early cross-cultural exchanges.



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Back Cover



Outside a door frame carved in a style found from the Arabian Peninsula to the Indian subcontinent, women stand in the old quarter of Bagamoyo, Tanzania, which since independence in 1964 has become known also for its art and music. Photo by Mariella Furrer.

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Sea Change Comes to Bagamoyo

Written by Amanda Leigh Lichtenstein

Photography by Mariella Furrer

Under Arab, Portuguese, German and English rule, commerce and the town's strategic location on East Africa's coast made Bagamoyo a leading port from the 1300s to the late 1800s. Now Tanzania has unveiled a 30-year plan to transform the town and environs into the largest seaport the coast has ever seen and link it, once again, to the rest of the Indian Ocean and China.



The Busbecq Letters 24

Written by Jane Waldron Grutz

Dispatched in 1554 to Istanbul by the Hapsburg archduke to defuse rivalry with the Ottoman sultan, ambassador Ogier Ghiselan de Busbecq spent seven patient years securing a treaty and, to the delight of curious Europeans, writing thoughtful letters devoted to his insider's glimpses of the most powerful empire of his time under its most powerful sultan, Suleiman "the Magnificent."



32 Dubai Melting Pot

Written by Felicia Campbell | Photography & video by Celia Peterson

Beyond the shadows of Dubai's skyscrapers lies working-class Satwa, and along its main drag Al Diyafah, a treasure-trove of restaurants serves up a hemisphere-spanning selection of Asian and Near Eastern home-cooking.

36 Travelers of Al-Andalus, Part II: Abu Hamid Al-Garnati's World of Wonders

Written by Ingrid Bejarano Escanilla and Louis Werner
Art by Belén Esturla

Over his 90-year lifetime, this chronicler of fact and unabashed fancy trekked, sailed, caravanned, studied and traded from the far Arab West to the northern- and easternmost reaches of the 12th-century Islamic world.



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Assyria



Top: Around 700 BCE, the Phoenician settlement of Spal, a predecessor of Seville, Spain, was large and established enough that its priests used this sumptuous, intricate and heavy gold necklace for rituals. Part of the four-piece Carambalo treasure, it shows the high art that Phoenicia spread throughout the Mediterranean. Right: Dated slightly earlier and resembling others from Greece and Anatolia is a bronze cauldron from Tomb 79 in Salamis, Cyprus, that features eight griffin and four siren-men protomes. Far right: Under Ashurnasirpal II, the Neo-Assyrian empire began its expansion west to the Mediterranean. This 113-centimeter (44 1/2") magnesite statue is a rare sculpture in the round from the period.

to Iberia

Written by RICHARD COVINGTON



It was the start of the Iron Age, in the first half of the first millennium BCE, and trade routes wove the Near East, North Africa and the lands of the Mediterranean into a deeply symbiotic web of cultures.

MAP: METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART; NECKLACE: BRUCE WHITE / MUSEO ARQUEOLÓGICO DE SEVILLA; CAULDRON: BRUCE WHITE / CYPRUS MUSEUM; STATUE: BRITISH MUSEUM

On Samos,

a speck of a Greek island off the Turkish coast, one of the oddest treasures on display in the Archeological Museum is a locally discovered, bronze mace-head depicting the frightful demon Pazuzu.

It came from Mesopotamia, more than 1500 kilometers to the east. In Tuscany, Italy, equally fearsome lion heads, imported from the kingdom of Urartu in what is now Armenia and eastern Turkey, ring the tops of bronze cauldrons. In the waters off southeastern Spain, a recently excavated shipwreck yielded African elephant tusks inscribed with the names of Phoenician gods. These prizes likely came from a Phoenician colony near Seville or Cádiz, some 4000 kilometers from the heartland of the Phoenicians at the eastern end of the Mediterranean. And these same seafaring merchants can be thanked for the very existence of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, which were written down from oral tradition between the eighth and the sixth centuries BCE, after the Greeks had adopted the Phoenicians' clever idea of writing by using an alphabet.

It was the start of the Iron Age, the first half of the first millennium BCE, long before "globalization" and the Internet came to define our own hyper-connected era, and trade routes had already woven the Near East, North Africa and the Mediterranean into a highly complex, deeply symbiotic web of cultures. By Homer's time, around the beginning of the millennium, there was a flourishing, intercontinental trade in exquisite gold, jewelry and ivory, exotic cult objects, intricately crafted furniture and polished silver bowls masterfully incised with elaborate scenes of heroic hunting and battle, as well as more ordinary wares.



Likely carved early in Ashurnasirpal II's 24-year rule (probably in 880 BCE), this winged figure was among the gypsum bas-relief frescoes that decorated the Northwest Palace at Nimrud, the first Neo-Assyrian location in which such frescoes are known to have been produced. The cuneiform script in the middle records the ruler's lineage and describes the city and palace. Originally, it was brightly painted.

Found as far west as Italy and east to Iran, intricately carved *Tridacna squamosa* shells made for coveted luxury cosmetic containers. This one, carved on both sides, its hinge fashioned to resemble a human head, is dated to the seventh or sixth century BCE, and it was found in Assyrian house 58 in Ashur.



The kingdoms, territories and cultures were many, but there was one major driving force behind these exchanges: the Neo-Assyrian empire. At its height in the seventh century BCE, it stretched from its capital at Nineveh in present-day Iraq to encompass Babylonia and western Iran, northern Egypt, the Levant and Anatolia. Heir to the less extensive—and less voraciously expansive—Assyrian empires of the third and second millennia BCE, it nevertheless did not project itself into the Mediterranean. To reach west, the Neo-Assyrians allied with the Phoenicians, who brought back tribute, carried on maritime commerce and searched for resources.

Fueling much exploration was the search for iron, which proved superior to bronze for tools and weapons. Phoenician sailors and traders established posts across the ancient world, including the North African coast at Carthage, the major islands of the Mediterranean and along both the southern and western coasts of Iberia (now Spain and Portugal).

Even King Midas, who was a real sovereign in seventh- or eighth-century BCE Phrygia (now Turkey), played a part in intercultural diplomacy. According to the Greek historian Herodotus, Midas was the first foreign ruler to pay homage to the prophetic oracle at the Greek sanctuary of Delphi. This journey took him across the Aegean Sea some 800 kilometers west. Although legend has it that everything Midas touched turned to gold—perhaps the story pertains to an earlier king also named Midas, but no one is quite sure—the majestic throne he bestowed on the oracle at Delphi was made of wood and ivory. A figurine that helped decorate this continent-spanning gift, 35 centimeters (9") tall and bug-eyed, with his left hand resting on a tamed lion and the right grasping a spear in a traditional “Master of Animals” stance, stood this winter among other prize objects in the

exhibition “Assyria to Iberia at the Dawn of the Classical Age” at New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art.

“We think of ourselves as living in a global age, but really you have to look far back in time to see how closely people interacted,” explained exhibition curator Joan Aruz as she

guided me around the galleries. The first millennium BCE was the first era in which the arts and goods from different cultures were transported across three continents—much of it from western Asia (the Near East) and Africa to southern Europe, she said.

“You have to understand this phase in order to appreciate what came afterwards, but most people are unaware of what was going on before the Greek classical period. They think it just emerged out of the head of Zeus, like Athena,” she added with a laugh.

Taking a broad measure of the wide-ranging debt the western classical world owes its mostly Near Eastern antecedents, the exhibition's focus lay not on individual kingdoms or states, not on life in Assyria or Phoenicia, Egypt or Judah, Elam, Urartu, Greece, Etruria or Iberia—the list goes on—but on what linked them all: artistic, cultural, economic and religious exchanges. Over the five years it took to develop the show,

Aruz and her colleagues selected and secured some 260 objects from 41 museums and institutions in 14 countries. Staging an exhibition restricted to a single civilization would have been child’s play by comparison.

Aruz and her team brought ample experience to the challenge. “Assyria to Iberia” was the third in a series of major

Assyria and Syria

The kingdoms of Assyria and the modern state of Syria are distinct territories. At its peak in the seventh century BCE, the Assyrian empire encompassed the whole of the modern nations of Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait and Bahrain, as well as the Turkish-Greek island of Cyprus, together with large swathes of Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, Sudan, Libya, Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan. Much smaller is modern Syria, established as an independent state in 1924 after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and bordered by Lebanon and the Mediterranean to the west, Turkey to the north, Iraq to the east, Jordan to the south and Israel to the southwest.

exhibits telling the stories of early arts and trade from the Indus valley in the east to the westernmost reaches of the Mediterranean. In 2003, “Art of the First Cities” examined Mesopotamian and Sumerian cultures in the third millennium BCE. “Beyond Babylon,” the second episode that followed in 2008, looked at the dominant Babylonian empire of the second millennium BCE. This latest installation encompassed the first half of the first millennium, the early Iron Age, when Assyria controlled the Near East until the Babylonians and the Medes overthrew it at the end of the seventh century BCE.

It was a war-ravaged era, but also one of tectonic cultural ferment. The period brought a deluge of Near Eastern art styles, religious and mythic symbols and imagery, as well as new techniques for fashioning gold, silver, bronze, glass, pottery and stone, surging westward, carried largely by Phoenician merchants, itinerant artisans and Greek mercenaries. The Mediterranean was awash in sculptures of snarling bronze griffins, striding sphinxes, voluptuous goddesses, fantastic bird men and triumphant kings. Many of the creature-images had apotropaic functions, that is, they were talismans, placed on wall reliefs, furniture, cauldrons and other objects to ward off evil.

Like its predecessor exhibits, much in “Assyria to Iberia” was both revisionist and expansive, a story writ large that heightened awareness of the richness of the arts and cultures of the Near East and, most of all, their pervasive influences on the esthetics of what later emerged as the western classical world. “The public at large is more focused on current events and doesn’t realize what vital centers of culture these places were,” Aruz pointed out. For example, she added, the area of Mosul, Iraq,

The Digs Go On

“Assyria to Iberia” both spurred and benefited from the raft of new and ongoing scholarship on Assyria and Phoenicia and their extensive connections with Greece, Italy and Spain. Wielding ever-better techniques, archeologists continue to unearth discoveries from the period on all three continents. Last October, a month after the exhibition opened, Aruz received word that the remains of a Phoenician ship had been located off the coast of Malta. Elsewhere, a fifth-century BCE temple is currently under excavation in Tyre in Lebanon, and digs in western Iran continue to reveal evidence of the Elamite culture conquered by Assyrians in the mid-seventh century BCE.

hotly and painfully contested in recent years, was the heartland of the Neo-Assyrian empire.

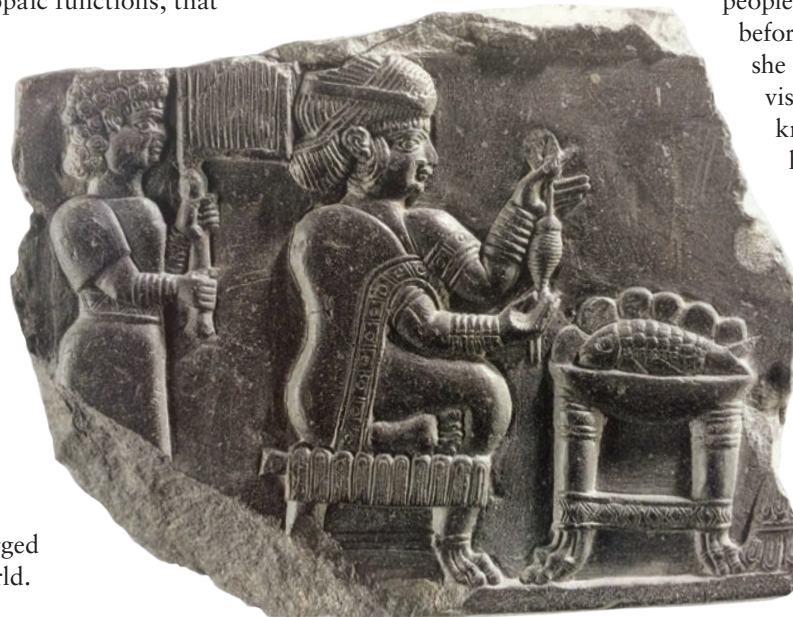
Ambitious as it was, the exhibition could not cover everything. The presentation only touched on the extensive and powerful Arabian spice routes, for instance, although intriguing scholarly tidbits surfaced during symposia in conjunction with the exhibition. Aruz herself was particularly enthused about a recent find at Megiddo in Israel, in which traces of cinnamon were identified inside Phoenician jars. “When you realize this cinnamon came from Southeast Asia, it’s just amazing to see how far these people were traveling along the spice routes,” she explained.

The exhibition also brought welcome attention to rarely viewed artifacts from lesser-known, far-flung local collections, including islands such as Samos, Rhodes and Sardinia, as well as Yerevan in Armenia and others. In addition, out-of-sight pieces in well-known institutions like the British Museum and others were brought out of storage and placed on view often for the first time in decades, if ever. Time and again during our tour, Aruz introduced an object by saying that few people, if anyone, had seen it before.

Quite a number, she said, she discovered by chance while visiting a museum to inspect a known object only to stumble, happily, across others either on display or languishing in the basement. With this exposure, these smaller museums are likely to attract more visitors and scholars, she predicted.

Occasionally, Aruz’s archeological sleuthing had more than a whiff of Indiana Jones. Unlike the cinematic tomb raider, however, Aruz wielded neither a whip nor a trained monkey, but her museum’s prestige. This secured more easily the numerous items from museums that had lent the New York institution objects for previous exhibitions, and

institutions like the British Museum and others were brought out of storage and placed on view often for the first time in decades, if ever. Time and again during our tour, Aruz introduced an object by saying that few people, if anyone, had seen it before.



Domestic tableaux are rare for the eighth and seventh centuries BCE: Most images of the time were devoted to gods, rulers and warfare. This Elamite bas-relief, carved in a bitumen compound, shows a woman seated on a chair, her feet daintily folded beneath her, proudly holding up a threaded spindle; a servant with a fly-wisk stands behind her. Its realism and simple humanity impart a glimpse into a private domain in the distant past.



An unflinching chronicle of conquest, this nearly panoramic bas-relief depicts the victory of Neo-Assyrians over the Elamites in about 653 BCE at Til Tuba, now in Iran. Inscribed only a few years after the battle on limestone panels, each taller than a person, in Nineveh's Southwest Palace, it uses more than a dozen sequential scenes, some of which are explained in cuneiform captions, to tell the story of the battle.

it opened new doors—literally, in one case. Although Granada's archeological museum has been closed for decades, she brushed this inconvenience aside and arranged to view pieces she had heard about from colleagues: alabaster jars transported to Iberia all the way from Egypt to serve as burial urns in a Phoenician cemetery. One jar even bore the jowly visage of Bes, the ancient Egyptian deity invoked to safeguard mothers, children and households.

London's British Museum presented an opposite challenge. With holdings so vastly numerous, so encyclopedic, many antiquities remain out of sight, including, it turned out, a uniquely intimate banquet relief of Assyrian king Ashurbanipal and his consort. Depicting the couple on their thrones, each raising saucer-shaped drinking cups to toast his victory over the Elamites, this gypsum-alabaster sculpture is one of the few images to show Assyrian potentates *not* bashing heads, hunting lions or casting baleful gazes upon their subjects. (Nonetheless, the severed head of the vanquished Elamite king dangles from a nearby pine tree, somewhat spoiling the moment of repose, at least to modern eyes.)

"This stone panel was shrouded in gloom," said Aruz, "but I immediately realized we had to have it."

On Samos, the otherwise unassuming antiquities collection revealed another astonishing lode. "What is amazing

here is that you walk into a place that is almost never visited and it is absolutely packed with Near Eastern artifacts," the curator observed. Virtually all of them landed on the island as votive offerings for the temple sanctuary of Hera, the Greek goddess of women and marriage (and the wife of Zeus). Phoenician merchants, Greek mercenaries in the Assyrian army, emissaries and pilgrims from around the

Near East and the Mediterranean flocked to the sanctuary, known as the Heraion, and their donations beseeched the goddess's favor.

As a result of such diffuse origins, some items on Samos are like detective mysteries waiting to be solved. A bronze equine chest plate, or frontlet, depicts four female figures and three feline heads. An inscription in Aramaic describes it as a gift to the ninth-century BCE king Hazael of Aram-Damascus. The funny thing is that an identical inscription turned up on a matching

bronze blinker, used to shield a horse's eyes, discovered some 325 kilometers across the Aegean in Eretria, north of Athens, where it had been a dedication to another Greek sanctuary, that of Apollo, god of the sun, arts and prophecy. Aruz concluded that both items probably originated in the same set.

Why a beast sacred to a Babylonian deity, and likely crafted in Babylon, ended up presented to a Greek goddess more than 1500 kilometers west remains both an enigma and a symbol of an era of cultural cross-pollinations.



From Assyria, Anatolia and Egypt to North Africa, Greece, Italy and Spain came craft items whose eastern motifs lead historians to refer to them as “Orientalizing” motifs, including this gold necklace, above, from Carthage (now in Tunisia) with its Phoenician motifs from mid-seventh to sixth century BCE, as well as a conical fragment of a Greek vessel for perfumes found in Italy, which is dated to about 700 BCE, above right. Right: From this same era, and also found in Italy, has come this gilded silver bowl, embossed and engraved with concentric friezes of “Egyptianizing motifs” that combine a variety of Near Eastern themes.



“How could this have happened?” she wondered aloud as we studied the reunited artifacts. One scenario, she proposed, is that Assyrians carried the valuable set of luxury fittings back from Damascus to their capital of Nimrud after defeating Hazael; from there, Greek mercenaries who had fought for the Assyrians brought them as gifts for the gods on their return to their homeland. Or, she speculated, perhaps there were sanctuary officials who traveled, working a network—“the way we look for items on eBay or the Internet”—to seek out valuable dedications for their temples.

“Both explanations may be true,” the curator suggested. “It’s just mind-boggling to speculate where these objects may have traveled.” Similarly, a 13-centimeter (5”) bronze figurine of a *mushushu*, a mythical dragon-monster, also surfaced at Samos’s Heraion. Why a beast sacred to the Babylonian deity Marduk, and likely crafted in Babylon, ended up being presented to a Greek goddess more than 1500 kilometers west remains an enigma as well as a symbol of an era of cultural cross-pollinations.

This theme of wide dispersal of similar objects ran throughout the exhibition. A pair of bronze bowls, both a bit

more than 21 centimeters (8”) in diameter and both bearing finely wrought, standing sphinxes symbolizing Assyria, posed with their paws atop the heads of defeated Asiatic enemies, appear so nearly identical they might have come out of the same Phoenician workshop. But one was unearthed on Crete, and the other at a palace in Nimrud. Perhaps both did originate in Phoenicia, or perhaps an itinerant Phoenician artisan made his way to Crete: The only thing anyone knows for sure is that they are still more evidence of a culturally interwoven world.

For the Assyrians, the bloody business of battle, conquest



Around the seventh century BCE, Phoenician craft workers near Cádiz and Seville incised and carved numerous ivory and bone objects in Near Eastern styles, including this 13-centimeter (5") plaque that shows a griffin, a hunter and a lion.

and looting were their strong suits; modesty was not. Slab-like stone plaques, many as tall or taller than a person, like the one in the exhibit picturing a hawk-headed guardian spirit that once was brightly painted, adorned Nimrud's Northwest Palace. Nearly all bore what scholars call the Standard Inscription exalting Ashurnasirpal II, "king of the world, king of Assyria ... the mighty warrior ... whose hand has conquered all lands."

One of those conquered lands was the kingdom of Urartu, north of Assyria, in what is now eastern Turkey and Armenia. Famed for their metalwork, Urartians fashioned weapons, helmets and shields embellished with lion-headed serpents and sacred trees to ward off evil in general and their Assyrian foes in particular. Bashed, bent and ripped with gaping holes from spear thrusts, one magnificent, burnished shield on display

illustrated an object lesson in defeat. "This is just a taste of what it must have been like to go to war against the Assyrians," Aruz wryly observed as we regarded the crumpled armor.

But it was the gruesome depiction of the battle of Til Tuba, in what is now southern Iran, that most forcefully drove home Assyria's take-no-prisoners battle ethos. This wall-sized, almost panoramic relief, more than two meters high and nearly five-and-a-half wide, details more than a dozen brutal scenes: In one, the Elamite king Teumann and his eldest son are beheaded in front of one another, surrounded by a fray of upended chariots and carnage; in another, Assyrians force the Elamites' Babylonian allies to their knees to grind the bones of their own ancestors in humiliation.

More tranquil scenes of daily life were not generally regarded as worth the effort of sculpture: War, hunting, invoking gods and

Showing that cross-pollination was nothing particularly new even in the late Bronze Age, this ivory game box depicting a chariot hunt dates from 1250-1100 BCE. Found on Cyprus at Enkomi, it displays Aegean, Canaanite, Egyptian and Mesopotamian motifs and styles.





“A strange combination of violence and tenderness,” said curator Joan Aruz of this ninth- or eighth-century BCE plaque of ivory, gold and semiprecious stones, shown here nearly slightly larger than life-size, from Nimrud’s Northwest Palace. Though Neo-Assyrian in origin, its style is Phoenician and its iconography draws from Egypt, where such images expressed royal authority over territory, here interpreted as Nubia due to the youth’s hairstyle.

monsters for apotropaic protection were the rule. That’s why the isolated domestic tableau showing a woman sitting on a chair, her feet daintily folded beneath her and proudly holding up a threaded spindle, seems so exceptional. Its realism and simple humanity impart a rare confidential glimpse into a private domain in the distant past. Tellingly, the bitumen relief sculpture is not Assyrian, but Elamite.

No less unusual and compelling is another ivory relief that stopped us in our tracks: It shows a Nubian boy being mauled

“The Near East in antiquity was, as it is today, a diverse and complicated milieu of distinct polities, states and empires that cannot be fully understood without focusing on the cross-currents of their interaction.”

—Thomas P. Campbell, director, Metropolitan Museum of Art

distinctly less impressive chunk of basalt. A little larger than a hand span on each side, the rather ordinary-looking stele turned out to be a unique document of dramatic historical importance. Inscribed in Aramaic, the text recounted the

by a lioness. “There’s such a strange combination of violence and tenderness, as the lioness cradles the boy’s head in her paw even as she is tearing out his throat with her teeth,” said Aruz. In spite of its grisly subject, there was an ineffable compassion toward the boy’s sacrifice, as if in it there lay some mystical meaning waiting to be decoded.

Among the largest items in the exhibit, two imposing basalt monoliths, from the Syro-Hittite site of Tell Halaf, attested to the persistence of a restoration team in Berlin that faced a mountain of nearly 30,000 archeological fragments, the remains of some 30 sculptures that shattered in a World War II firebombing. The splinters had languished in the cellars of the Pergamon Museum for nearly six decades, East German officials having judged the works as irretrievably lost.

Optimistic experts from the reunified country, however, thought otherwise. It was, essentially, a series of giant, 3-D puzzles—less complicated no doubt than putting together the split German nation, but monumental nonetheless. Beginning in 2001 and finishing nine years later, the experts reassembled more than 30 sculptures. One

scorpion-tailed bird man with a distinguished beard stood over a meter and a half tall, and he guarded the site’s Western Palace much like the better-known winged sentinels at Nineveh and the scorpion-men standing watch over the sunrise in the Mesopotamian epic of Gilgamesh.

Nearby was a dis-

conquests of the ninth-century BCE Syrian king Hazael, and among them appears a royal descendant of the House of David. This is the sole known mention of the Davidic dynasty outside the Bible, the first archeological evidence of the historical existence of King David as the founder of Judah.

Among the show's most delicate, hauntingly arresting works were *Tridacna squamosa*, or giant clam shells, as big across as a hand, incised with mind-blowingly detailed tableaux including miniature musicians, lotus buds, palm trees and—rather incredibly—men in kilts riding jauntily caparisoned horses. The hinged knob of one shell was carved to resemble the head of a woman, or perhaps the goddess Astarte, her long tresses morphing into feathers as they streamed down the shell back that undulates like waves. Another shell bore the incised head and face of a bird man at its top; swooping wings etched on the shell's exterior protectively sheltered a pair of compact sphinxes. *Tridacna* clams thrive in the warm waters of the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Gulf and the Red Sea, and their shells were imported over vast distances to be engraved in Levantine workshops. From there, they were exported across the Near East and the Mediterranean as luxury containers for cosmetics.

The most publicized of the show's curatorial coups involved, perhaps not surprisingly, gold. Aruz's acquisition for loan from Seville of the seventh-century BCE Carambolo treasure made front-page headlines in Spain. Weighing in at a stupendous 2.4 kilograms (5¼ lb), the solid gold necklace, bracelets and plaques were items worn by Phoenician priests who presided over ritual sacrifices of animals to the Phoenician deities Baal and Astarte by colonists of Spal, near what is now the modern city of Seville.

So valuable are these relics that the city's archeological museum displays replicas, and the originals are kept in the vault of the national bank. When Aruz insisted that the Metropolitan would accept only the originals, the Spanish authorities took her to the vaults and made the New York show a rare occasion when the public was allowed to view them.

Like any power, Neo-Assyrian domination did not forever endure. After bringing the Near East to heel for centuries, the

One of roughly 575 protective and symbolic creatures that adorned victorious Babylon's Ishtar Gate, built between 604 and 562 BCE after the Babylonian conquest of the Neo-Assyrians, is a *mushhushu* dragon, rendered in glazed and molded brick.



One of some 30 Syro-Hittite sculptures that took nine years to reconstruct after a World War II firebombing, this early ninth-century BCE basalt statue of a scorpion-tailed bird man once stood beside the "Scorpion Gate" of a palace at Tell Halaf in northern Syria.

once-invincible empire was fatally weakened in the mid-seventh century BCE by a civil war between jointly ruling, rival brothers. One of them, Ashurbanipal, was portrayed in the show on a stone stele bearing a basket of earth on his head to symbolize his role in rebuilding Babylon after his grandfather Sennacherib had mercilessly sacked the city some two decades earlier. To his elder brother Shamash-shuma-ukin, named by their father as the king of Babylon, the inscription pledged fond wishes: "May his days be long and may he be fully satisfied with (his) good fortune."

But after 16 years of sharing power, Shamash-shuma-ukin revolted against his brother. Ashurbanipal mounted a four-year siege of Babylon that produced a famine that drove the city's inhabitants to cannibalism. The defeated brother immolated himself in the flames of his burning palace in 648 BCE. Some 36 years later, in 612 BCE, Ashurbanipal's capital city of Nineveh was in turn sacked by vengeful Babylonians. The Neo-Assyrian empire gave way to Neo-Babylonian rulers. Not long after that, they too gave way, to Persians, who brought about yet another fall of Babylon in 539 BCE.

Some 200 years later, armies under the command of a Macedonian warrior later dubbed Alexander the Great brought an unprecedented wave of Greek conquest that swept from west to east, reversing the flow of culture and exchange, setting the world stage for the rise of western classical cultures. 🌐



In addition to contributing regularly to *AramcoWorld*, Paris-based **Richard Covington** (richardpcovington@gmail.com) has written about culture, history and science for numerous publications.



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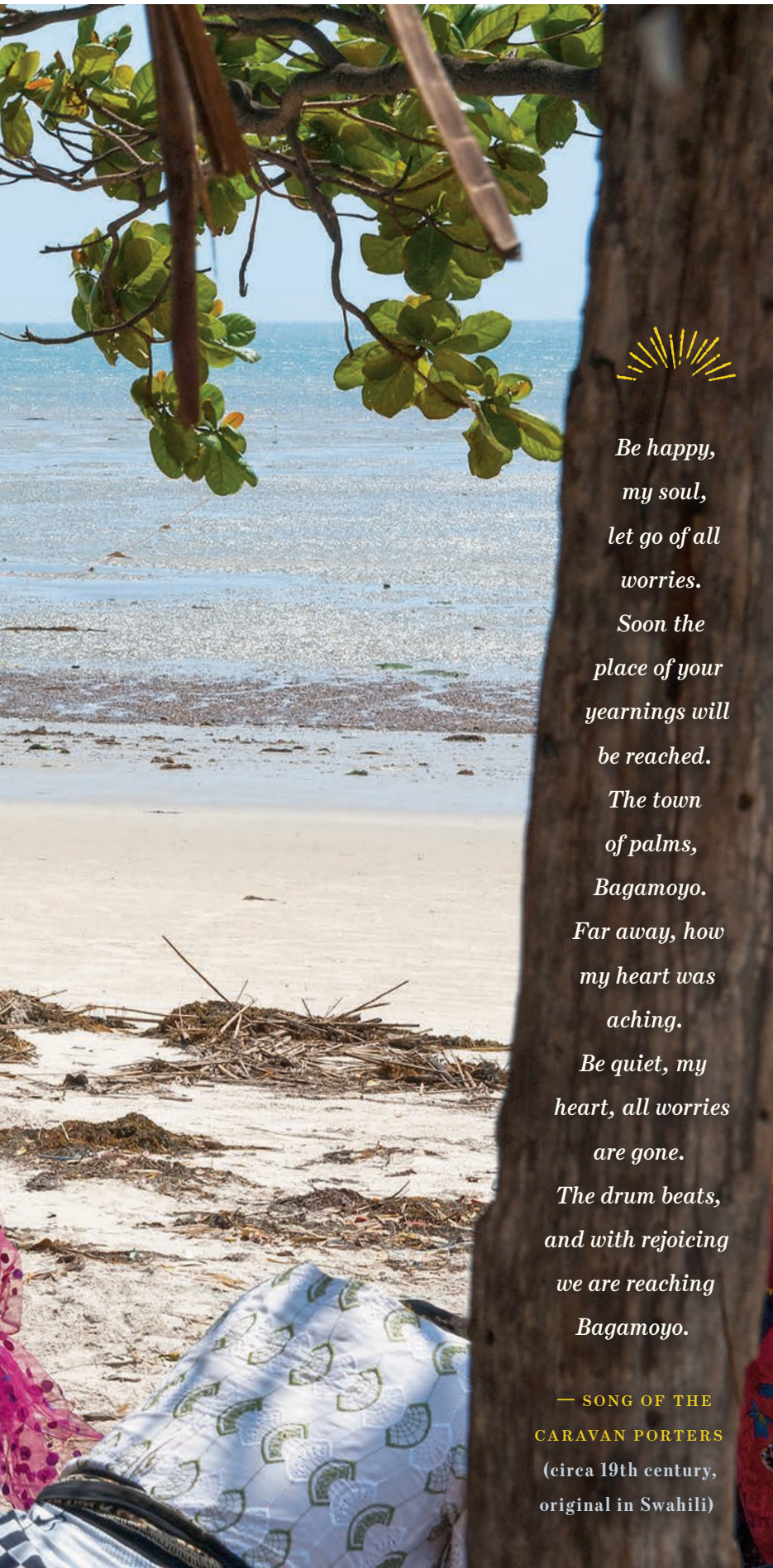
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SEA CHANGE
comes to

BAGAMOYO



*Be happy,
my soul,
let go of all
worries.*

*Soon the
place of your
yearnings will
be reached.*

*The town
of palms,
Bagamoyo.*

*Far away, how
my heart was
aching.*

*Be quiet, my
heart, all worries
are gone.*

*The drum beats,
and with rejoicing
we are reaching
Bagamoyo.*

— SONG OF THE
CARAVAN PORTERS
(circa 19th century,
original in Swahili)

Written by **AMANDA LEIGH LICHTENSTEIN**
Photography by **MARIELLA FURRER**

On the winding, palm-studded road, halfway from Dar es Salaam north to Bagamoyo, traffic comes to a standstill where crews have been working their way up from the capital, doubling the width of the old, two-lane road. Buses and cars negotiate dusty twists and turns until the road narrows and the lush green valleys open up and come in close on both sides. At Bagamoyo town, small shops and art galleries dot the roadsides; old men wearing *kanzu* and *kofia* glide by on worn bicycles while clusters of young men wearing flashy caps wait in the shade with their motorbikes. Women draped in colorful headscarves and bright dresses, others in skinny jeans and T-shirts, saunter in pairs or alone along the road carrying packages on their heads. Along Bagamoyo's scraggly, white-sand coast, the tide slips in. By nightfall it is quiet, and only an occasional bark from a dog pierces the silence.

All across the United Republic of Tanzania, as it has been known since 1964, it is general election season as President Jakaya Mrisho



Men work on a fishing boat in Bagamoyo, Tanzania, which for 600 years served as one of East Africa's leading gateways to the Indian Ocean, left. The town's tide of trade may come in yet again under mega-port development plans promoted by native-son President Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, above.



SWAHILI

Its name has come from the Arabic *sahil*, or coast, and today the Swahili language is a fusion of Arabic and Bantu that grew out of the East African coastal trade. Spoken by more than 140 million people all over East and Central Africa, “Swahili” now also refers to the shared culture of people along the Indian Ocean coast.

A few kilometers southeast of Bagamoyo lies the site of East Africa’s oldest known mosque, now-ruined Kaole, built out of coral stone by traders who arrived in 1250 CE from Shiraz (now in Iran). Their commerce first linked this coast to the Arabian Peninsula, Persia, India and China.

Kikwete’s second and final five-year term comes to a close in October. On the outskirts, opposition Chadema party supporters wave their blue, white and red flags from honking cars, as they attempt to stake a claim here in Kikwete’s birthplace, 70 kilometers north of the capital, Dar es Salaam. Indeed, most Bagamoyo residents support Kikwete as a native son and, for his part, Kikwete has focused in his final term on setting up his beloved hometown for an unprecedented future by laying plans for a “mega-port” that would compete with—and dwarf—not only the Tanzanian ports in Dar es Salaam, Tanga and Mtwara, but also the Kenyan ports of Lamu and Mombasa.

Quiet as it may seem today, Bagamoyo is no stranger to great changes. Located within the Pwani (Coastal) District of Tanzania, it’s a well-worn, old city, population estimated at 30,000, that is lined with historical architecture inspired



“We welcome development of every kind, as long as there’s a clear plan,” says Abdallah Ulimwengu of the Bagamoyo Tour Guide Association.

just visiting. It’s a good mix. We’re always busy.” To him, the development plans bring hope. “At the rate Bagamoyo is growing, Poa Poa will thrive. We’ve even built a brand new kitchen. Take a look.”

Bagamoyo is one of the oldest

towns on Tanzania’s map. Its origins predate *Periplus of the Eritrean Sea*, the guide to maritime travel among China, India, East Africa and Arabia written by an anonymous Greek seafarer in the first century CE. As far back as 600-800 CE, Bantu-speaking Zaramu, Zigua, Doe and Kwere tribes lived here, having originated in the interior of what was then referred to by explorers as Azania. Subsisting on fishing, hunting and gathering, they and their lives were disrupted in 1250 by the arrival of a cluster of families from Shiraz, Persia (now Iran). Attracted by fertile land and ample fishing, the “Shirazis” established a port and settlement a few kilometers southeast of Bagamoyo that is known to this day as Kaole.

Now ruins where flies buzz and crickets croak in murky mangroves, Kaole evokes a critical historical moment, explains Abdallah Ulimwengu, executive secretary of the Bagamoyo Tour Guide Association. He ambles over to the crumbling arches of a long-abandoned mosque, and with a distant gaze he distills Bagamoyo’s complex and spotted history.

Although Islam’s presence in East Africa officially dates back to seventh-century Ethiopia, he says, the Shirazis were

by German, Indian and Arab designs, alongside a fledgling modern commercial district. Once integral to the “Swahili coast” commercial network that stretched more than 1000 kilometers from Mogadishu in central Somalia to Kilwa in southern Tanzania, it was also the link between the African interior and the rest of the world via the island of Zanzibar, just 40 kilometers offshore.

To 34-year-old entrepreneur Felix Nyakatale, whose restaurant Poa Poa

is a four-year-old success story, Bagamoyo feels like “a ghost town on the verge of a major wake-up call.” Born and raised in northwestern Tanzania, land of Mt. Kilimanjaro, he came to the coast with a pioneer’s spirit that saw opportunity in burgeoning tourist traffic hungry for smoothies and pizzas as well as local fish, savory stews and *ugali* (hot, doughy cornmeal). Tall, lanky and handsome, Nyakatale speaks softly and confidently about his decision to open a restaurant. “There’s nothing else like this here. People come to us looking for music, for friends.”

Located on the first floor of a restored, historic two-story Swahili house where he conveniently lives on the airy top floor, Poa Poa represents business savvy, risk and social change. “Everybody’s coming here,” Nyakatale says with pride. “We have locals, regulars and expats too, tourists,

Built by Omani sultans based in Zanzibar, the old customs house was later used by Germany, which made Bagamoyo its headquarters in East Africa in 1884.



BAGAMOYO

The Swahili name Bagamoyo stems from its trade links to the interior: *Bwaga* means both “to unburden” and “to lay down”; *moyo* means “heart.” For traders and porters, reaching Bagamoyo after days or weeks was a welcome unburdening from a long journey’s worries; for captives who would be sold as slaves, it was the beginning of a heartbreaking, forced departure. The ambiguity in the name Bagamoyo (the w was dropped) allows room for both perspectives.

likely the first Muslims to come to this south-central coast. Here they constructed the region’s first mosques out of ragged coral rock, which they inscribed with rough Arabic calligraphy. Arriving with porcelain from China, jewels and housewares, Kaole merchants went on to export ivory, rhino horns, animal skins, tortoise shells, glass beads, daggers, bowls and other treasures, often to the Swahili city-state of Kilwa, 300 kilometers to the south and at the southern limit of the monsoon winds whose annual cycles powered Indian Ocean maritime trade. Minted copper coins from Kilwa, in the name of Shirazi ruler Ali ibn Al-Hassan, hint at the extent of trade along these shores. The name Kaole itself, Ulimwengu points out with a smile, comes from a Bantu expression *chite kalole mwaarabu vitandile* that means, roughly, “Let’s go see what the Arabs are doing.”

Kilwa thrived as a trade hub until the early 1500s. En route to India, Portuguese explorer Vasco de Gama arrived on the Swahili coast in early 1498, and he was followed by Francisco de Almeida, who

In town, the old slave market has become The Bagamoyo Art Market, supported by the town’s artist community around the Bagamoyo Institute of Arts and Culture, which teaches Tanzanian painting, sculpture, drama, dance and drumming.

is said to have ransacked Kilwa in 1505. Soon afterward, the Portuguese easily conquered Kaole and ushered in 150 years of notoriously unrelenting rule.

In 1698, Omani Sultan Saif bin Sultan reclaimed the coast by waging and winning the battle at Fort Jesus in Mombasa, Kenya. Soon afterward, Oman assumed power over much of the Swahili coast, including the islands of Zanzibar. To secure Kaole, the sultan commanded Persian Shomvi settlers from the northern Swahili coast and hired nomadic Baluchi mercenaries from Pakistan. Kaole stabilized, but not for long.

According to Ulimwengu, an “unruly mangrove invasion” brought on Kaole’s gradual demise. Now in his 40s, he has spent the last 15 years unraveling Bagamoyo’s past. Originally from Kigoma, Tanzania, he came to Bagamoyo after living in South Africa for many years, and he says he was immediately drawn to the stories buried here.

“Others say the growth of nearby Dundee town overshadowed Kaole as a central port, but I think it was the mangroves,” he says, pointing to the swampy marshes nearby. “There’s no way boats could pull up to a shore like this.” Over the next 200 years, Omani sultans rose and fell from power as dynasties changed, and Kaole faded out of use, forgotten.

By the early 1830s, Sultan Said bin Sultan had moved his court from Muscat, Oman, to Zanzibar’s Stone Town. When he died in 1856, his son Majid bin Sultan continued to rule Zanzibar, and from there, Majid oversaw a slave-and-ivory trade that relied on Bagamoyo as a gateway to and from the African interior. By mid-century and for some years beyond, an estimated 20,000 to 50,000 slaves (as well as great quantities of ivory, much of it carried by captives) transited annually through Bagamoyo. Although a few remained to serve Bagamoyo’s elite, the vast majority were sent first to Zanzibar, where they worked on clove or sugar plantations or served as domestics; many others were sent farther, to the Middle East and Indian subcontinent.





Appearing here as a theme in local paintings at an art shop, journeys have meant much to the history of Bagamoyo—whose poetically ambiguous name means both “to unburden” and “to lay down” your heart—gateway east across the Indian Ocean and west into and out from the continent.

By this time, the port had shifted from Kaole to what is now known as *mji mkongwe*, “old town,” where today Arab, German and Indian buildings, in varied states of decrepitude and restoration, still line the cobblestone road that runs parallel to the sea through three neighborhoods. Ulimwengu knows each crumbling building along this thoroughfare, where young men on motorbikes chat in roadside clusters, waiting for passengers.

“Most Bagamoyo youth have no idea of this history,” he says. One street over, on another sun-kissed and dusty road, Ulimwengu points to local artists who have transformed the wooden pavilion that once was the slave market into an outdoor gallery featuring painting, sculpture and wood carving. The gallery, he says, expresses a collective desire among young Bagamoyo artists to join the larger world economy, while history’s voices still seem to echo on every street corner.

By 1845, the British patrolled the Indian

Ocean. The global abolition movement had led to a ban on the Indian Ocean slave trade, and it was officially gone by 1873, when it was abolished in Zanzibar. Hundreds of former slaves and their families relocated, sought work and attempted to receive what education they could. French and British Catholic missionaries set up schools in Zanzibar in 1860 and

in Bagamoyo in 1868. The sultan and local shaykhs generally welcomed these missions in what some historians see as a mixture of strategic compromise and religious tolerance.

In 1884, Germany secured administrative rule over

Felix Nyakatale sits outside his four-year-old restaurant, Poa Poa, and he welcomes the prospect of port-related construction. “I’m confident that Bagamoyo is a city that is growing,” he says.





mainland Tanzania, then called Tanganyika, and set up its colonial capital in Bagamoyo and, from there, threatened Oman's seat of power in Zanzibar. With German rule came taxation, and with that came resistance: In 1889, Bushiri bin Saleim al Harth led an unsuccessful rebellion on Bagamoyo's shores that became known as the Bushiri War.

Although Bagamoyo had become the most important port and capital of German East Africa, the Germans decided in 1891 to shift their port south to Dar es Salaam while maintaining administrative headquarters in Bagamoyo. Some say Dar es Salaam could accommodate larger ships, but Ulimwengu suggests also that the Germans had been intimidated by Bushiri, who had come from the Pangini district north of Bagamoyo, and Dar es Salaam, being farther south, offered politically safer territory.

Under German rule, Bagamoyo residents continued to subsist on farming, fishing and dhow-building among the string of seaside villages in what is now the greater Bagamoyo district. Across the water in Zanzibar, the sultans of Oman still ruled, and the two powers entered into an agreement that extended the sultan's rule 16 kilometers inland from the Bagamoyo coast.

After Germany's defeat in World War I, Bagamoyo again faced change under British control. Street names changed. New roads and railways were built. After 43 years, in 1961, Tanganyika negotiated its independence from Britain and, in 1964, joined Zanzibar under a name that recognized both territories: "Tanzania." Its first president, Julius Nyerere, was devotedly referred to as *mwalmu* (teacher), and he traveled to Bagamoyo early in his presidency promoting self-determination and *Ujamaa*, the socialist movement that shaped Tanzania's future. Soon afterward, Bagamoyo found itself host to a training center, located on the road between Bagamoyo town and old Kaole, for soldiers of the Mozambican Liberation Front (FRELIMO), who sought the independence of Tanzania's southern neighbor Mozambique from the Portuguese rule that endured there.

Now, 51 years since Tanzania's independence,

Bagamoyo residents once more face what may prove to be a sea change, in both literal and figurative senses of the term. Last year, President Kikwete approved 16 development initiatives totaling \$800 million in partnership with President Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China. Under the 30-year framework agreement signed in March 2013, these projects promise to utterly change Bagamoyo's economy, its coastline and even its ecosystem with East Africa's largest-ever port, an international airport and an industrial park.

Because no ground has yet been broken, it can appear that Bagamoyo residents remain relatively unaware of these plans beyond the news in *The Citizen* or word of mouth. However, local leaders have been briefed, community organizers have held meetings, and some properties slated for acquisition have been assessed for compensation. According to Kikwete's office, port construction is to commence July 1.

The mega-port plans have stirred both anxiety and excitement. Kenya-based development consortium Trademark East Africa notes it will "tilt the scale in regional trade in favor of Tanzania." Yet Bagamoyo residents like Anthony George Nyanga, a middle-aged community organizer who relaxes in a plastic chair with a cold orange Fanta after his workday, confesses he's worried the port will overshadow the needs of local people. "Our youth: We need to create more jobs for them, give them more opportunities. Our education system faces terrible challenges. To succeed, you are not just carrying yourself; you carry your community." But Felix Nyakatale of Poa Poa restaurant shrugs. "I'm confident that Bagamoyo is a city that is growing," he insists. "I'm thinking about how to keep people coming through my door."

That may not prove difficult: Estimated to be nearly five kilometers long and 1½ kilometers inland, in its grandest version the Bagamoyo port will handle more than 20 million containers per year. (For comparison, Dar es Salaam currently handles 500,000 to 800,000 per year; Tanga and Mtwara less.) According to *The Guardian*, the mega-port will



Opposite, far left: A fence keeps visitors at a distance during restoration of the 1897 headquarters of the German colonial administration. Center: What is known as the Old Fort is the town's oldest surviving building, built in 1860 as a private residence and taken over and fortified in 1870 by Sultan Barghash ibn Said of Zanzibar. Two decades later, Germans were using it as a military camp; later, the British posted police in it; and today it hosts the town's Department of Antiquities. Left: With its hexagonal minaret, the mid-19th-century Gongoni Mosque is the area's oldest working mosque.

facilitate not only “China-bound shipments” from Tanzania, but also shipments of in-demand minerals mined from Zambia, Zimbabwe and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) as well as export trade from Malawi and Burundi.

With the anticipated flow of goods, services and human resources, Bagamoyo residents struggle to make sense of its scope and scale. Bagamoyo town is part of Bagamoyo district's 16 wards in the Pwani region, with a total population of just over 350,000 people. It is mainly questions that arise in her mind, says Terri Place, a soft-spoken, pensive American who has lived in Bagamoyo town for 20 years and who directs The Baobab Home, a school and orphanage. Questions about local competition, such as what happened with a recent bio-fuel project that ignited disputes among local farmers and foreign investors over

land. “Will this private partnership grant China too much autonomy?” she muses. “Will the Chinese perhaps use a portion of the coast as a

military base as they have in Pakistan?” (Although Chinese officials have adamantly denied this rumor, it lingers in residents' minds.) And mostly, she says, everyone is wondering where *exactly* will the new mega-port be built?

While steeped in uncertainties, the recently released Bagamoyo Special Economic Zone Master Plan shows the mega-port spanning about five kilometers of coastline from Mlingotini up to Mbegani, impacting at least six of the small fishing and farming villages in between. Those villages, as well as Pande, Konde and Zinga, have already been surveyed and evaluated. Rajab Rajab, a 40-year-old fisherman and long-time resident of Mlingotini, a village with just under 2,000 residents, sits on a worn wooden bench with his toes digging into the sand. He explains there's not a day that goes by when residents don't speculate about the ways their village will change. The new port, he says, seems likely to take up at least half of Mlingotini, and this will change everyone's relationship to Waso Bay, the stretch of sea between Mlingotini and Mbegani where for hundreds of years coastal residents have perfected the art of dhow-building and fishing.

This, he says, may bring opportunities, too. He partners with the Bagamoyo District Council's Sustainable Eco-Tourism for the Enhancement of Poverty Alleviation and Bio-Diversity Conservation, which wants to increase employment by “working with the tourism sector to understand marine life” through research and diving. Rajab, who greets everyone he encounters on the sandy road, takes pride in his inherited relationship to the ocean and all of its related customs and traditions. He knows that the port will require dredging to allow large ships to dock; he knows this will stir up silt from the seabed that may suffocate coral. Along with current poor practices such as fishing with explosives, as well as pollution in general, Rajab is keenly aware of how the mega-port's changes will irrevocably disrupt the relationship among people, land and sea. “Our elders have called several meetings and we discuss this matter as a community, but we are still uncertain,” he says.



Stylistic testimony to Indian Ocean trade, a wooden door carved in vegetal rosettes and arabesques shows patterns that much resemble countless others from the Arabian Peninsula to India.

A few kilometers north of Mlingotini, government surveyors have evaluated the villages of Mbegani and Pande, where Hassan Alawi, a 38-year-old fisherman, walks comfortably barefoot in the midday heat. He says his modest house and several fruit trees have been evaluated twice, once in 2011 by the Economic Processing Zone Authority and last March by the Tanzania Port Authority (TPA), under whose auspices the mega-port project now sits. Alawi and his village of approximately 700 people say the TPA told them that a

move is imminent and the compensation will be generous: at least 10 million shillings (about US\$6,000) per hectare, along with additional for the house and fruit trees. Alawi believes the change will bring work to his struggling community. He hopes “we can all move together as a village, as family.”

Also slated for relocation is Tanzania’s College for the Advancement of Fisheries, which currently stands where the bulk of the mega-port is imagined. Established in 1966, the college is now the official Tanzanian government agent for all fisheries-related education and training. Abdilahi Kamota, acting business support director, says the college is ready to move, and he is eager to see the confirmed design plans. Kamota hopes



Lead conservationist for the Bagamoyo Department of Antiquities, Benedicto Jagadi underscores the adage that people must know their history to know their future.

the port will provide work for the college’s 400 students, and he would like to see the construction of a “mega-float” outfitted with state-of-the-art fish-attracting devices, which, he maintains, would raise local competitiveness in regional and international markets. Kamota says he is “not afraid of change.” He is confident that if they have to move, it will be to “even better facilities.”

Indeed, according to the Bagamoyo Department of City Planning’s Notice Board, up to 321 residents from four villages have already been paid undisclosed relocation fees. Over heaping plates of rice and meat

stew one day at Dee’s, a popular spot in the newer part of Bagamoyo, historian Ulimwengu insists, “We welcome development of every kind, as long as there’s a clear plan.” Nonetheless, he worries about protection for heritage sites, historical buildings and diverse ecosystems. “We can’t refuse the factories and the port, because we need the work,” he explains, adding that laws—such as the 1979 Antiquities

Act—should be enforced.

Ulimwengu’s colleague, Benedicto Jagadi, lead conservationist with the Bagamoyo Department of Antiquities, situated within the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism, underscores the adage that people must know their history to know their future. Sitting in his tiny office within the Old Fort, overlooking the main road in the old town, he takes out his reference books when explaining Tanzanian law. Pointing to specific codes, Jagadi explains that the law defines any building constructed before 1860 as “historical,” as well as any building built *after* 1860

that still has historical value. Jagadi is confident that protected areas such as the Kaole ruins and the old town will therefore not be affected. Others are less convinced.

Elder and community leader Hatibu Bakari, born in Bagamoyo in 1925, remembers bygone days with his friend Mohammed Issa Mitoso, born in 1939, who lives near the Rammiyya School for Islamic Studies in the neighborhood known as “Rammiyya B.” At noon, the two sit in faded, red-velvet chairs in the small, dim living room of Bakari’s single-story, classically Swahili-style home. Outside, his wife shoos away a squawking chicken and empties a plastic tub of water into a patch of hot sunlight. Inside, Bakari and Mitoso recall what they say was a time of peace, respect and trust. Bakari remembers when everyone “left their doors open, and





South of Bagamoyo, children play in the village of Mlingotini, above, at the edge of the five-kilometer stretch of coast marked for mega-port construction. Growth in the area is already evidenced by new apartments, right. Lower: A house in Mlingotini. According to the Bagamoyo Department of City Planning's Notice Board, up to 321 residents from four villages have already been paid undisclosed relocation fees.



children still feared their parents.” Mitoso concurs. “There’s no ‘please’ around here; it’s just ‘give me now.” Mitoso attributes his nostalgia to a Bagamoyo more aligned with Swahili cultural values and traditions, including *ustarabu* (civility), *ukarimu* (hospitality), *upole* (kindness), *samehe* (forgiveness) and *subira* (patience). “Change requires a great deal of patience,” says Mitoso. “And changes happening here in Bagamoyo are happening too fast.”

Bagamoyo’s younger generation has a different

story to tell. Eager for change, many young people cite employment as the number-one struggle facing their generation. Shafee, 18, makes his living driving a *bajaj*, the affordable, three-wheeled, covered motorbike. He picks up passengers with a friendly smile even in the darkest hours, and he is always on call, just to make ends meet. He knows Bagamoyo’s bumpy, potholed, dug-up roads well, having zoomed around the sprawling town for more than a year. “I come from a very poor family,” he says, with little means to pay for school and even less opportunity or connections to find work. “Teach me English,” he says. “I need to practice





A musician himself, Abu Juma sells drums both to fellow Bagamoyo musicians and tourists. Posing with 10 of the children they care for at The Baobab Home, Terri Place and Caito Mwandu also run health groups for families and children.

so I can talk better with my passengers.” An endearing student, he keeps a notebook of English words in his back pocket. Shafee admits that he knows little about the megaport, and he simply wishes to “find my life” and make his family proud by earning a decent income.

Other young Tanzanians have migrated to Bagamoyo in recent years hoping to benefit from port and rail construction jobs, as well as new restaurants and hotels that are

anticipated to accompany a surge in business and tourism. Emma Mihayo, a planner at the Bagamoyo Office of City Planning, reports from her cramped office, at a desk piled with official papers, that hundreds of new residents, many from Dar es Salaam, Zanzibar and Tanga, often arrive with little and squat on Bagamoyo’s expansive wild forests and farmlands. She says she and her two colleagues together receive inquiries about impending relocations on a daily basis. Most eager, she says, are those living in poverty, and she adds that it’s still unclear exactly where villagers will go, and whether or not they will be able to move as whole villages or scatter depending on available lands.

Young people are also turning away from the traditional village work of fishing and farming, raising coconuts, cassava and bananas, and they prefer instead seemingly more promising options such as driving or tourism hotel, resort and restaurant work in Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar.

This worries Rajab of Mlingotini because he notices that “young people are forgetting their ancient ties to the land and sea, and this has become our culture.” Disconnected from the past and yet uncertain about the future, many young Bagamoyans appear to have limited options while they await these seemingly imminent changes.

Vitali Maembe, an activist, musician and educator in his early 30s, started the Jua (“Sun”) Arts Village to help young people find their voices and connect to tradition through the arts. In a rented house that overlooks a field, young people gather to learn and play modern as well as traditional music. After practice twice or three times a week, the loosely formed band talks about the issues facing young people today over chai and biscuits. Handwritten posters taped to the walls explain words like “democracy” and “unity.” Amid conversation, they casually practice guitar riffs and drumbeats.



Traditional fishing and farming, raising coconuts, cassava or bananas, all appeal less and less to the town’s largely young population. Rajabu Vwai, above, grew up as a fisherman and farmer in Mlingotini, but he recently signed up for training as a tour guide. Bajaj driver Shafee, 18, left, knows every road and pothole in Bagamoyo. “I come from a very poor family,” he says, adding that making his family proud by earning a decent income comes first.



Founder of the Jua (“Sun”) Arts Village that offers art, dance and music to children and youth, Vitali Maembe plays guitar and sings with his students. A respected musician, he creates a Tanzanian yet universal sound that touches Bagamoyo’s historic tensions between distant and local, tradition and change.

In this election season, Maembe, a folk guitarist and singer well known for his outspoken musical campaigns against corruption, has been approached by both the ruling and the opposition parties to promote their campaigns. Maembe has rebuffed both, stating, “I’d rather be an independent artist, singing from my heart about what I believe in.”

Working to keep girls in school and boys off the streets is one of his passions, and through festivals, workshops and person-to-person dialogues, he is a striking example of Bagamoyo’s potential to harness the youth energies that can put Bagamoyo on the map again, not only as a commercial and shipping center, but also as a center of arts and culture. He’s hoping that with the presence of Tanzania’s only performing arts college, the Bagamoyo Institute of Arts and Culture, Bagamoyo will be built no less on the pillars of traditional culture.

As youth sing their hearts out on Maembe’s porch at sundown, worn fishing dhows bob at sea, none wandering from their rusted anchors. At dawn, fishermen wearing sun-faded, oil-stained shirts and loose, rolled-up pants walk slowly along the shore. Young men also pass by, hawking snacks carried in worn plastic rice bags.

Looking far out on the horizon, it is hard to imagine how this now-quiet town may soon be catapulted into the future as a transoceanic trading hub far beyond what any Shirazi, Portuguese, German or British ruler might have ever imagined. As Bagamoyo braces for yet another period of historic change, the clockwork of the Indian Ocean’s tides lulls the collective anxiety. With Kikwete’s legacy projects in place, it seems only a matter of time before residents will join a new geopolitical matrix, and no one knows yet how many more hearts may be unburdened, or how many laid down, along this historic shore. 🌐



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The BUSBECQ LETTERS

WRITTEN BY

Jane Waldron **GRUTZ**

When Ogier Ghiselan de Busbecq was born in the Flemish town of Comines near the village of Busbecq in 1522, few would have predicted the role he would play as an intermediary between his fellow Europeans and their imperial neighbors, the Ottoman Turks. As the illegitimate son of the Count of Busbecq, a nobleman in the court of Ferdinand I, the Hapsburg archduke of Austria, his birth was not particularly propitious.

In time, however, he would earn a name for himself not only as a diplomat to the court of the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, but also as a respected writer. For an audience eager to know its geopolitical rival, military foe and occasional ally, his published correspondence provided a uniquely candid and popular “insider’s view” of the workings of the most powerful empire of the day.

At the time of Busbecq’s birth, western Europeans were



looking warily to the East. It was within living memory that in 1453 the Ottomans under Mehmed II captured the Byzantine capital of Constantinople (today’s Istanbul). One year before the boy’s birth, in 1521, Mehmed’s great-grandson Suleiman conquered Belgrade, which put the Hungarian capital of Buda (now Budapest) within his sights. Eight years after that, Ottoman forces were besieging the gates of Vienna.

The Turkish advance was halted, but their power was feared and the Hapsburg-Ottoman continental rivalry endured, both on the battlefield and through diplomacy. As in many campaigns, propaganda was a weapon. In western chronicles of the era, “the inhumanity of the Turks was emphasized above all else, and the stereotyped Turk, villainous, savage and bloodthirsty ... was firmly established in the historical traditions of the West,” wrote Sila Şenlen of Ankara University in a 2005 paper. For their part, the Turks looked upon the Latin Christians with disdain.

It was Busbecq who offered a more balanced view of the Ottomans to his fellow Europeans, based on firsthand

Above: **Ogier Ghiselan de Busbecq was 32 when he met 60-year-old Suleiman the Magnificent, and the two held their first frosty peace talks in Amasya, Turkey, in 1555. Busbecq’s long trip from Vienna allowed him to engage in his favorite pastimes: visiting classical ruins, collecting ancient coins and manuscripts and documenting all that he saw.**



Suleiman the Magnificent substantially increased the size of the Ottoman Empire during his 46-year reign, pushing to the gates of Vienna, the Hapsburg capital, in 1529. The Hapsburgs and the Ottomans jockeyed for territory in the Balkans after that, both on the battlefield and through diplomacy.

II of Spain, to Mary Tudor. His new posting promised to be far less sanguine: Ferdinand had invaded the Ottoman protectorate of Transylvania in 1551, breaking a four-year truce that had stanchd almost three decades of intermittent war between Hungary and Turkey. Suleiman was angry.

Indeed, upon hearing the news of Ferdinand's incursion, Suleiman had thrown the previous Hapsburg ambassador into jail, where he remained for two years before being allowed to return home, only to die soon afterward. It was now up to Busbecq to repair deeply frayed relations and conclude a new treaty acceptable to both Suleiman and Ferdinand. The task would prove slow and exceedingly tedious. But Busbecq was a patient man, and during the seven years he spent in Turkey (they were not consecutive years: He served from 1554-1555 and again from 1556-1562), he grew to understand and appreciate the qualities that had brought the Ottomans to the apex of their power.

When Suleiman came to the throne in 1520, his empire included Anatolia, most of Egypt, Syria and the Balkan states. By the time of his death in 1566, he had extended Ottoman control from Budapest on the Danube to Aswan on the Nile, and from the Euphrates River through North Africa almost to Gibraltar.

Suleiman also took sides in struggles within Europe: In 1536, he allied with France against the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, and Suleiman received help from the French king in his ongoing confrontation with the Hapsburg confederation. More direct help came from the legendary admiral of his fleet, Hayreddin Barbarossa, who won the critical victories at sea that secured Suleiman's control of the Mediterranean.

Yet, as successful as his military campaigns were, Suleiman's interests extended beyond conquest. Known as Suleiman *Kanuni* (Lawgiver) in his domains, he reorganized Ottoman canon law and greatly expanded the rights of the empire's non-Muslim populations, including Christians and Jews. Nor did he neglect the arts: During his reign, Ottoman architecture reached its zenith and Ottoman silk, glass and Iznik ceramics were coveted throughout Europe for their beautiful patterns and fine workmanship.

Ottoman education, though largely limited to those who would later administer the empire, was also of a high standard. The curriculum included poetry, literature, history, law and



Ferdinand I, Hapsburg archduke of Austria, dispatched Busbecq to make a peace agreement with Suleiman the Magnificent. The Hapsburgs and the Ottomans were contesting Transylvania, then on the border between East and West.

experience. As Archduke Ferdinand's envoy to Turkey from 1554 to 1562, he wrote a series of letters to his friend Nicholas Michault, who was at that time a fellow Hapsburg diplomat assigned to the Portuguese court. A keen observer of both nature and human nature, Busbecq marveled at the beauty of the Ottoman lands. He delighted in the Turks' kindness toward animals, and he greatly admired the discipline and fortitude of the common Turkish soldier. He was also sincerely impressed by the grandeur of the Ottoman court and of a bureaucracy he found staffed by men who were valued for their talent rather than their family ties.

Yet for all his admiration for the Ottoman systems of society and government, Busbecq was clear-eyed about the threat Suleiman posed to a less-than-united western Europe. "On their side are the resources of a mighty empire, strength unimpaired, experience and practice in fighting, a veteran soldiery, habituation to victory, endurance of toil, unity, order, discipline, frugality and watchfulness," he wrote. "On our side is public poverty, private luxury, impaired strength, broken spirit, lack of endurance and training.... If there is war can we doubt what the result will be?"

Busbecq was relatively new to the role of diplomat when he set out as the Hapsburg ambassador to Turkey in the autumn of 1554. His only previous assignment had been earlier that year to England, where he served as Ferdinand's representative at the wedding of Ferdinand's nephew, Philip

TOP: MELCHIOR LORCK / PRIVATE COLLECTION / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES; LOWER: JOSEF KISS AND FRIEDRICH MAYRHOFER / DE AGOSTINI PICTURE LIBRARY / A. DAGLI ORTI / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES (DETAIL); OPPOSITE: JÖRG P. ANDERS / KUPFERSTICHKABINETT, STAÄTLICHE MUSEEN / BPK / ART RESOURCE



Louis II, king of Hungary, is shown holding counsel with his nobles prior to the Battle of Mohacs in 1526. He lost the battle—and his life—to the forces of Suleiman.

letters extended well beyond the confines of his workday.

His first letter dates to September 1, 1555, shortly after he had returned to Vienna from his initial audience with the sultan, which took place in Amasya, in north-central Turkey, a city so far from the Hapsburg capital—some 1,850 kilometers—that he may have been the first European to visit that area since the Seljuk Turks conquered it late in the ninth century.

The trip began well. Barely had Busbecq crossed into Turkish territories near Gran (today's Esztergom) in Hungary than he found himself in the midst of an escort of 150 splendidly arrayed cavalymen and their officers, whom he found surprisingly gracious.

I suddenly found myself surrounded by a troop of some 150 horsemen. They formed a charming spectacle to my unaccustomed eyes, with their brightly painted shields and spears, their jeweled scimitars, their many-colored plumes, their turbans of the purest white, their garments mostly of purple or bluish green, their splendid horses and fine trappings. Their officers rode up and welcomed me with courtesy and congratulated me on my safe arrival.

—THE FIRST LETTER, SEPTEMBER 1, 1555

religion, and students were taught to read and write in Turkish, Arabic and Persian.

By contrast, western Europe was a conglomeration of often-hostile states whose anchor, the Catholic faith, had been shaken by the Reformation. Yet Europe, too, had its glories, not least the unrivaled arts of the Renaissance. The Venetian painters Bellini and Titian were well known to the Ottoman sultans, as were the Renaissance monarchs: Henry VIII of England and his daughter Elizabeth I; Francis I of France; Charles V and his son Philip II; and—especially well known to Suleiman—Charles's younger brother, Ferdinand I, himself Holy Roman Emperor from 1558 to 1564.

As in Turkey, education in Europe was reserved for the few. Busbecq was awarded a degree in advanced Latin studies at the University of Louvain in Belgium and continued scholarly pursuits in Paris, Venice, Bologna and Padua, keeping remarkably complete notes of all he saw and learned. These notes provided the foundation for the letters he wrote to Michault.

Busbecq and Michault had attended school together and, as diplomats, they understood the difficulties inherent in maintaining a pleasant and persuasive presence no matter how difficult the negotiations at hand. However, Busbecq's

Busbecq journeyed with this handsome escort to the capital at Buda, a city once renowned for its decorative palaces and glittering lifestyle, but more recently known as the home of Hungary's naïve young King Louis II, who ruled from 1516 to 1526. Perhaps overvaluing his country's defenses, Louis had neglected to renew a long-standing peace treaty with the Turks. It was a catastrophic oversight: In 1526, Suleiman all but annihilated the Hungarian army at the Battle of Mohacs, where Louis, only 20 and childless, lost his life.

By treaty, his brother-in-law, Ferdinand of

Colorfully garbed Janissaries, the special forces of the Ottomans, impressed Busbecq with their fine appearance when he viewed them on his arrival in Amasya in May 1555.



Hapsburg, should have ascended the throne. But Hungarian electors, wishing to remain independent of Hapsburg influence, selected instead John Zápolya of Transylvania to wear the crown. In 1529, Zápolya allied with Suleiman to protect himself and his realm from Ferdinand. In that, Suleiman shared an interest: The last thing he wanted was to have his archrivals, the Hapsburgs, as next-door neighbors.

All remained quiet for a decade or so, until 1540, when Zápolya died. Ferdinand then attacked and quickly captured Buda. Zápolya's widow, the queen dowager for her infant son, turned to Suleiman, who marched on the city in 1541 and easily took it, making eastern Hungary an Ottoman protectorate.

This was a state of affairs Ferdinand could not abide. Incursion after incursion followed until a series of defeats at Ottoman hands forced Ferdinand and his powerful brother, Charles V, to sign a peace treaty with Suleiman. That was

in 1547. But the prize of a united Hungary was too great a dream for Ferdinand to relinquish so easily: In 1551 he marched into Transylvania again, and it was the repercussions of this that Busbecq was sent to sort out.

That particular task lay in the future, however. In 1554, as Busbecq undertook his assignment, he meant to enjoy his journey, taking care to note all he saw and learned. He was particularly taken by the flowers, which he found in profusion in Adrianople (today's Edirne, on Turkey's border with Greece and Bulgaria). But even Adrianople was overshadowed by Constantinople, which delighted Busbecq with its wealth of ancient monuments and marvelous views of the surrounding seas and magnificent countryside.



This map of 16th-century Constantinople shows the western side of the Ottoman capital, with the Golden Horn running through the center and up the left-hand side. A small portion of the city's Asian side is shown at right. Busbecq lived in Eği Han, near the Atik Ali mosque, as circled, above.

[Constantinople] ... seems to have been created by nature for the capital of the world. It stands in Europe, but looks out over Asia, and has Egypt and Africa on its right. Although these latter are not near, yet they are linked to the city owing to ease of communication by sea. On the left lie the Black Sea and the sea of Azof, round which many nations dwell and into which many rivers flow on all sides, so that nothing useful to man is produced through the length and breadth of these countries which cannot be transported by sea to Constantinople with the utmost ease. On one side the city is washed by the Sea of Marmora; on another side a harbor is formed by a river which Strabo calls, from its shape, the Golden Horn. On the third side it is joined to the mainland, and thus resembles a peninsula or promontory running out with the sea on one side, on the other the bay formed by the sea and the above-mentioned river. From the center of Constantinople there is a charming view over the sea and the Asiatic Olympus white with eternal snow.

—THE FIRST LETTER

Had Suleiman been in residence, Busbecq's journey would have ended here. But the Sultan was negotiating a peace treaty with the Safavid ruler of Persia in Amasya, some 565 kilometers away, and he asked the diplomat to join him there. For Busbecq, the 13-day journey was filled with pleasures. Here was the chance to view the classical ruins he dearly loved, and to collect ancient coins, manuscripts and inscriptions.

It also gave him the chance to see the local sheep whose "very fat and weighty tails," he wrote, could "grow so big in some old sheep, that they are forced to lay them upon a plank, running on two little wheels, so they may draw them after them, not being otherwise able to trail them along."

We found everywhere a great abundance of ancient coins, especially of the later Emperors.... In many places the Turks use them as weights, especially for drachms and half-drachms, and call them giawr mangwi, or "infidel's money." There were also many coins of the neighbouring towns of Asia ... and also of Amasia, the goal of our journey. A coppersmith, from whom I inquired for coins, greatly aroused my wrath by telling me that, a few days before, he had a whole jarful of them and had made some bronze vessels out of them, thinking they were of no use or value. I was very much grieved at the loss of all these relics of antiquity.

—THE FIRST LETTER

Busbecq arrived in Amasya on April 7, 1555. Following the customary interview with the attendant pashas, he met the sultan, who was not pleased by what he heard. Suleiman "listened to the recital of my message," Busbecq wrote, "but, as it did not correspond with his expectations (for the demands of my master were full of dignity and independence, and, therefore, far from acceptable to one who thought that his slightest wishes ought to be obeyed), he assumed an expression of disdain, and merely answered, 'Giusel, giusel,' that is, 'well, well.' We were then dismissed to our lodging."



Sultan Suleiman personally led his armies to Transylvania, the Caspian and much of the Middle East. This portrait of him with his troops was made in 1561.

You will probably wish me to describe the impression which Soleiman made upon me. He is beginning to feel the weight of his years [at age 60], but his dignity of demeanour and his general physical appearance are worthy of the ruler of so vast an empire. He has always been frugal and temperate, and was so even in his youth, when he might have erred without incurring blame in the eyes of the Turks.... Even his bitterest critics can find nothing more serious to allege against him than his undue submission to his wife.

—THE FIRST LETTER

In Amasya, Busbecq witnessed a large gathering of the Ottoman military for the first time. Greatly impressed by the troops' discipline and colorful dress, he was more impressed still by their leaders who, he concluded, had the ability and

training to perform their duties with such skill and efficiency that “the Turks succeed in all that they attempt and are a dominating race and daily extend the bounds of their rule.”

The most remarkable body of men were several thousand Janissaries, who stood in a long line apart from the rest and so motionless that, as they were some distance from me, I was for a while doubtful whether they were living men or statues, until, being advised to follow the usual custom of saluting them, I saw them all bow their heads in answer to my salutation. On our departure from that part of the field, we saw another very pleasing sight, namely, the Sultan’s bodyguard returning home mounted on horses, which were not only very fine and tall but splendidly groomed and caparisoned.

—THE FIRST LETTER

On June 2, Busbecq and his delegation paid a farewell visit to Suleiman. He presented them with a “dispatch wrapped up in cloth of gold and sealed,” but rather than the peace treaty Busbecq hoped for, he wrote, it offered only a six-month truce with the request that “a further reply [be] brought back.”

Busbecq arrived in Vienna in August 1555, exhausted by the journey. In November, he set out again with Ferdinand’s reply, arriving to a reception far less cordial than the previous year. After learning that Ferdinand continued to assert his right to the Hungarian throne, the pashas refused to grant Busbecq an audience with the sultan, cautioning that “we should keep quiet and not arouse the sleeping lion nor hasten on the troubles which were sure to come upon us soon enough,” he wrote.

In fact, as Busbecq reported in his letter of July 14, 1556, barely had he and his staff reached their embassy than they were confined and treated “in every way almost as prisoners instead of ambassadors. This has continued now for six months, and we have no idea what the future has in store for us.”

Busbecq’s third letter is dated June 1, 1560. He noted that his colleagues had been allowed to leave Constantinople at the end of August 1557 and that he might have joined them had he wished. But he stayed on, believing that if he departed it might suggest that peace negotiations had come to an end, an impression to be avoided at all costs as it might make “a terrible war inevitable.”

In response to a query from Michault, Busbecq reported that the only time he left the embassy was when he had dispatches from Ferdinand to present to the sultan. This occurred only two or three times a year, “So I stay at home and hold communion with those old friends, my books; they are my companions and the joy of my life,” he wrote. He noted, however, that he had other companions in the form of a large menagerie that included everything from well-bred horses to a variety of weasels.

OPPOSITE: TOPKAPI PALACE / PICTURES FROM HISTORY / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES



**Suleiman’s
OTTOMAN
EMPIRE** ۞
Tributary States, 1566



I... keep wolves, bears, flat-horned stags, common deer, young mules, lynxes, ichneumons, weasels of the kinds called martens and sables; also, if you care to know, a pig, whose society, according to the grooms, is very good for the horses [besides]... numerous kinds of birds, eagles, crows, jackdaws, strange kinds of ducks, Balearic cranes and partridges. In fact my house is so full of animals that one of my friends has well compared it to Noah’s ark.

—THE THIRD LETTER, JUNE 1, 1560



European ambassadors sit, upper right, with merchants, acrobats and cavalry, in this 16th-century scene dating to the reign of Suleiman's grandson Murad II.

This quiet life soon changed, however, as Busbecq told Michault in his fourth letter, written after he had returned to Vienna in 1562.

The changes began with a distressing event. For more than 30 years Suleiman and Charles V had vied for control of the Mediterranean, a rivalry pursued by Charles's son, Philip II, when he succeeded his father to the Spanish throne in 1556. In 1559, Philip concluded a plan to take the port of Tripoli (in present-day Libya) and sent a fleet of 50 galleys with some 6,000 soldiers to the proposed staging point, the island of Djerba, off the coast of Tunisia.

But things did not go well. Barely had the Spanish captured Djerba and erected a fort than they were taken unawares by the Turks, who destroyed their galleys and cut off their water supply. Only the commanders survived, to be sent as trophies to Suleiman. On October 1, 1660, the victorious Ottoman

fleet rounded Seraglio Point below the sultan's palace and sailed into the Golden Horn. It was a sight Busbecq would never forget.

The half-starved Spanish officers were displayed on the poop deck of the brightly colored Turkish flagship while their captured galleys were "towed along, stripped of their oars and bulwarks and reduced to mere hulks, so that in this condition they might seem small, shapeless and contemptible in comparison with the Turkish vessels," Busbecq wrote.

Busbecq felt it his duty to help the prisoners as best he could. In addition to supplying them with boiled mutton, he fulfilled their requests for blankets, shoes, cloaks and even wine. A more expensive request came from those "who wished me to act as surety for their ransom," he noted. Busbecq loaned money to them all, confiding to Michault that even if he were not repaid, "I must not mind; a good action performed for a good man is never wholly lost. Most of them will certainly keep their word."

Busbecq's first objective, however, was to negotiate the long-sought peace treaty with Suleiman's grand vizier, Rustem Pasha, whom he described as a man who "wished his words to be looked upon as orders" and who "never deviated from his customary rudeness." Busbecq became particularly annoyed with Rustem Pasha when plague struck Constantinople and the vizier would not allow Busbecq and his household staff to retire to a safer place.

Then, quite unexpectedly, Rustem Pasha died of dropsy. He was replaced by Ali Pasha, whom Busbecq found to be "a delightfully intelligent person, and by no means lacking in humanity."

Ali Pasha immediately allowed Busbecq to retire to a suitable place until the plague abated. The diplomat chose the little island of Prinkipo, where he delighted in fishing, hiking and simply breathing the fresh air.

As Ali Pasha had also retired to the island, the two became friends and, once they returned to Constantinople, soon negotiated a truce, under which the current borders would stand and Ferdinand would pay a small tribute. Peace—for a time at least—had been secured.

By August 1562, Busbecq was ready to return to Vienna. As a parting gift, Ali Pasha gave him three thoroughbred horses of far higher quality than those he could have obtained on his own. In return, Busbecq gave Ali Pasha a coat of mail ample enough "to fit his tall and stout frame" and a charger sturdy enough "to carry his great weight."

Following his return to Vienna, Busbecq continued to serve as a diplomat for Ferdinand, and later for Ferdinand's son Maximilian II and grandson Rudolf II. In 1592, at the age of 71, he set out from an assignment in Paris to visit his beloved home in Busbecq. His route took him through Normandy where soldiers engaged in the region's civil war ignored Busbecq's diplomatic status and seized him. The fracas was



The Turks like to train their horses to kneel down at the word of command and allow their master to mount, and to pick up a walking stick, or cudgel, or sword in their teeth from the ground and give it to the rider on their back. When they have learnt these accomplishments, they place silver rings in their nostrils as a mark of distinction and a proof that they are properly trained. I have noticed horses who stood quite still when their master had been thrown from the saddle; others who would circle round their groom, who stood at a distance, and halt at his command; and others who, while their master was dining with me in an upper room, stood with their ears pricked listening for his voice and whinnying when they heard it.

—THE THIRD LETTER

Busbecq was fond of animals, and he kept and wrote about many, from wolves to horses to ducks. These later Turkish miniatures show a jackal, a cat and a horse.

500-year-old copy of *De Materia Medica*, the remarkable compendium of medicinal herbs by the first-century CE Greek physician Dioscorides that was the cornerstone of herbal therapeutic knowledge for centuries. Acquired by Maximilian II on Busbecq's recommendation, it remains one of the finest known examples of a late-antique scientific text.

Busbecq is also credited with introducing the lilac to the West, and some say the tulip as well. He even brought back part of his menagerie, including six she-camels, his beautiful horses and a large tame mongoose called an ichneumon. Yet, as precious as these gifts were, the name Busbecq is most closely associated with his extraordinary letters.

The first letter was published in the original Latin as *Itinera Constantinopolitanum et Amasianum (Travels to Constantinople and Amasya)* in 1581, and all four letters appeared in 1589. They went through several printings and were translated into French, German, Dutch, Spanish and English as *The Turkish Letters of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq*, which remains in print today.

For many years, they were among the most popular books in Europe. Even now, those who wish to know about the 16th-century Ottoman world turn to Busbecq to see, as he did, the impressive parades, the colorful costumes, the gaily caparisoned horses and the ubiquitous camels who “kneel in a circle with their heads close together, eating and drinking with the utmost good will out of the same manger or basin, content with the scantiest fare.”

In his time, no one described Ottoman Turkey better. 🌐

too much for the aging Busbecq, and he died 11 days later, on October 28. Busbecq was buried in the church in St. Germain, Normandy, but his heart was enclosed in a leaden casket and placed in the family tomb at Busbecq.

Busbecq left an impressive legacy. His pursuit of antiquities generated a wealth of knowledge for western Europe about classical Greece and Rome. He collected 240 classical manuscripts, which he donated to the Vienna Imperial Library (now the Austrian National Library), together with a valuable coin collection. He also discovered in Constantinople a spectacular



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Interactive timeline:



DUBAI

Melting Pot

WRITTEN BY *Felicia Campbell*

PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO BY *Celia Peterson*

Inside every gilded lily of luxury in Dubai's 21st-century garden of urban delights, from eye-candy skyscrapers to seven-stars this and that, there are, of course, people who work. Lots of them. They load and unload, carry, build, clean, repair and polish, and, no less than members of more coddled classes, they enjoy a good meal out. In Dubai's working-class neighborhoods, I discovered refreshingly hype-free eateries as diverse as their patrons, places that simmer with the same passion as the emirate's flashier haunts.

One of the oldest of these neighborhoods lies not far from where the ruling Maktoum family settled in 1833 with some 800 members of the Bani Yas tribe, west of the natural harbor known as "The Creek" and north of the Dubai World Trade Center, along a kilometer and a half of Al Diyafah Street. Officially renamed 2nd of December Street in 2011, Al Diyafah drifts along the northern edge of the Satwa neighborhood, where it is home to an unassuming treasure-trove of global cuisine.

Quiet by day, the storefronts offer discount electronics and knock-off perfumes; one-man grocery stores advertise in Tagalog, and takeout stands overflow with cheap, fried Indian snack mixes called *chivda*. Pakistani men in well-worn, tunic-length shirts and baggy trousers called *kurta shewars* tarry over

Styrofoam cups of Lipton tea sweetened with condensed milk. Down the alleyways between storefronts, laundered *kurtas* and towels flap from windows and clotheslines, their colors a contrast to the chipped plaster and cracks that run along the concrete walls of row after row of aging, rectangular houses.

A generation ago, Satwa was Dubai's first posh suburb. Beginning in 1966, Shaykh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum, who ruled Dubai from 1958 to 1990, began pouring some of the emirate's first petroleum income into infrastructure development, which included rows of identical villas in Satwa for Emirati nationals. The original inhabitants have long since moved to finer homes,

With skyscrapers as its backdrop, 2nd of December Street is better known by its former name, Al Diyafah, a kilometer and a half of restaurants and shops in Satwa, one of Dubai's most concentrated neighborhoods of foreign workers and families.



Drawing a steady stream of diners since 1976, Ravi Restaurant, left, is the oldest in Satwa. “Back then it was only a place for working people—Indian and Pakistani construction workers—but now everybody comes,” says one waiter. Lower: Conversations might be in any of Arabic, Punjabi, Urdu or other languages.

1979. It is quite likely that the men who constructed it came to Ravi for a taste of home between shifts.

After my meal, I walked out front where my server, Damodara, leaned against the concrete wall smoking a cigarette and watching the kebab man work ground meat onto flat metal skewers in front of a smoking grill. He offered me a cigarette. I leaned against the wall next to him and asked how long he’d worked at Ravi.

“I moved to Dubai from Kerala [in southwest India] in 1984 to come work at Ravi,” he answered. “Back then [Ravi] was only a place for working people—Indian and Pakistani construction workers—but now everybody comes.” After nearly 40 years, Ravi has become an institution, attracting the middle class, tourists and even the wealthy of Dubai while the laboring class moved on to cheaper shops for their daily meals.

Damodara pointed inside toward the owner, Abdul Hameed, who sat atop his regular perch behind the register. “Abdul moved to Dubai from Lahore, Pakistan, in 1976 and opened Ravi. His son was born here and grew up here.”

I asked Damodara why he had stayed for over three decades. He paused, taking a long drag. Then he shrugged.

“Here, I have a life and, after so many years, I find myself comfortable,” he said, flicking his cigarette and hurrying back inside to the tables of men who looked up from their plates to call out in Urdu for more bread.

As my eyes followed him into the restaurant, they stopped at the doorway where a young man, no more than 18 or 19 years old, dressed in a blue laborer’s jumpsuit, stood awkwardly just outside. Abdul Hameed looked up and warmly waved him in while calling to the servers in Punjabi. Shortly, Damodara ran over with a takeaway bag as Abdul Hameed ignored the boy’s attempt to pay. The laborer put his hand to his chest and nodded gratefully before disappearing into the Satwa night.

I departed Ravi, making my way across 2nd of December Street’s grassy, manicured median to find Pars Iranian Bakery and Kitchen behind a fenced-in basketball court where groups of Filipino teenagers played. Outside, under the restaurant’s bright sign, I watched a slight man with a shock of white hair and a soft, grandfatherly face deftly rub a wooden paddle with water, sprinkle it with sesame seeds and slap on wet dough that he jabbed repeatedly with his fingers until the long board was covered and the dough was dimpled enough to prevent it from puffing. He stuck the paddle into the oven, flipped it and spread the dough over the hot rocks.

At that point, the manager walked over and introduced himself as Mohammed Abdul Ali. He then he pointed to the old man. “I started with Hamid Aziz 10 years ago. Before that I worked in hotels back home in Egypt, but I was ready for a change.”

From him I learned how four Persian business partners opened the restaurant in 1989. Since then, the place has garnered a citywide reputation for exquisite rosewater profiteroles, generous Iranian mixed grill and the authentic Iranian bread Aziz spent his evenings baking.

and now the aging Satwa villas are rented out to foreign laborers.

It is at night that Al Diyafah comes alive with expatriates and workers from around the world—but especially from across Asia—who flocked to Dubai over the

last four decades, some alone, some with their families. Now a city of more than two million, Dubai claims the fifth-largest non-native population in the world—some 90 percent of its residents. Nowhere is this reflected more clearly than in the restaurants and their patrons along Al Diyafah, where 30- and 40-year-old establishments are among the oldest in town.

To explore Al Diyafah, I made a three-evening culinary sojourn, during which I ate my way from South and Southeast Asia to the Near East, all in the few hundred meters between the Satwa roundabout and the Union House at Jumeirah Road (where, incidentally, the formation of the United Arab Emirates was finalized in 1971). Throughout, I was surprised again and again to find that, unlike many of Dubai’s fleetingly transient residents, many employees of these restaurants had chosen to stay for years—some for decades—and often regarded Dubai as home.

My first stop, Ravi Restaurant, was tucked back from the main road on the southeast side of the Satwa roundabout. Founded in the mid-’70s, it is the oldest restaurant on the strip. In the barebones dining room, at a long communal table, I savored warm *naan* (bread), which I used to scoop up *tadkha dhal* fry, which consisted of creamy yellow lentils refried in *ghee* (clarified butter) and redolent of cumin and hot chilies. Next up was a plate of chicken *karahi* bathed in an oily *masala* (spice blend) that tasted floral—whole cardamom and black peppercorns bursting against the sweet background of meltingly soft onions and tomatoes. Finally, I turned my attention to a platter of fresh-charred kebabs whose caramelized crusts gave way to tender, fatty ground lamb loaded with onions and cilantro.

Ravi opened its doors amid the first wave of South Asian migration, three years before the completion of the 39-story World Trade Center at the far end of the street, which was the first and tallest skyscraper in the city when it was topped out in



Left: **Al Mallah is popular along the 2nd of December Street for shawarma and other Lebanese specialties.** Center: **Hamid Aziz swings a flatbread out of the oven just as he has done for more than 35 years, both at home in Iran and, for the last decade, at Pars Iranian Bakery and Kitchen, where a pair of diners, right, enjoy dinner under an Emirati official portrait.**

“One of the owners knew Hamid back in Shiraz, where he baked bread for over 35 years, and 10 years ago, they convinced him to come bake here,” Abdul Ali explained. The quiet, almost somber air about the grand Persian eatery was reflected in Aziz’s dignified, singular focus.

Abdul Ali broke into a river of Farsi, and Aziz’s raspy laugh rippled through the sultry night air. Surprised, I asked him where he, an Egyptian, learned Farsi. He grinned. “Here! I started talking to Hamid and the owners. How else can you really make new connections?”

Aziz grabbed a metal hook and flipped the thin bread with a swift yank, tossing the long, flat loaf onto the stainless steel table in front of us to cool. Abdul Ali disappeared into the main building. He returned with a plate of herbs and cheese, and Aziz motioned for me to eat.

I tore off a piece of the chewy bread, smeared it with cheese, folded it over a handful of purslane and mint, and took a bite. The combination of toasty sesame seeds, bitter herbs, salty cheese and warm bread could be, I worried, downright addictive.

I asked Abdul Ali what was next for him and Aziz. He smiled and ran a hand over his short-cut black hair. “Well, I don’t know about Hamid, but I only

planned to stay here for two years, five years maximum, but here I am. I’m happy and I don’t have any plans to go.”

The next evening, I walked from Union House toward the Satwa roundabout, stopping at the intersection of Al Diyafah and 6b Street under the manic green-and-white lightshow of Al Mallah restaurant. Nearly every sidewalk table was full. Young Lebanese men heckled each other cheerfully in the open kitchen overlooking the dining area as they cooked round after round of crisp *manoushe*, circular Lebanese flatbreads garnished with any number of toppings from simple olive oil to spiced mincemeat. The employees’ green shirts were embroidered with Phoenician boats and the Arabic letters for *Al-Mallah*—seafarer or navigator in Arabic.

Opened 28 years ago, Al Mallah has been managed by 78-year-old Abu Faisal for the last 22. “Sit, sit, please,” Abu Faisal said to me as his smile sent an explosion of creases from the sides of his eyes. “What do you like? Some *hummus*? *Babaghanoush*? *Tabouleh*? *Manoushe*? *Shawarma*?” Without waiting for my answer, he leaned and grabbed a passing server, murmured into his ear and sent him off with a firm slap on the back.

Moments later, a platter of fresh vegetables was almost as firmly slapped down on our table, along with bowls of *fatoush* salad, hummus, babaghanoush, falafel and a tray piled high with manoushe topped with olive oil and *za’atar*, a Levantine blend of thyme, sumac, sesame seeds and salt.

“I love to eat good things, and I love to feed people good things. That’s why I became a chef at the age of 12,” Abu Faisal confessed, winking as he sat down to join me. We began to eat, passing the salads, dragging vegetables through the tahini-rich hummus and smoky babaghanoush, and cutting wedges of the oily flatbread. I licked some *za’atar* from my fingers and asked Abu Faisal if he missed his homeland.

“I left Beirut at age 55 to come teach the staff here traditional Lebanese cooking. My wife, my nine adult children, my grandchildren, all still live there, and I visit them every month or so,” he said, pausing to scan the packed picnic tables before continuing. “Here, life doesn’t stop. Everyone is busy. But you keep what you earn, no taxes. And there is security, no one checking my ID card, no fears, and people are respectful. Here, I can live my life.



Dubai, it gave me everything. This is my home now.”

He took a sip of his tea and got up, sauntering into the kitchen to check on the grill chefs before walking back outside to join the bread bakers’ banter, wagging his finger at them and grinning. Of his staff of 40, he said, 15 are Lebanese, and the rest hail from others parts of the Middle East and South Asia.

As the lights of the Al Mallah sign flashed and danced, a joyful roar emanated from the tables. A smiling Pakistani family passed plates of kebabs, a group of Emirati men picked at their platter of roast chicken, and a Filipino couple sat whispering to each other over a heaping plate of shawarma and

competition flashed on the two flat-screen TVs. Some of the customers watched intently while others murmured over plates of fried rice and deep bowls of steaming soup. The buzz was punctuated by eruptions of laughter from a table of Filipino boys in baseball hats sporting tattoos on their biceps.

Michael Pangilinan, the young manager in his mid-20s, walked over with a sizzling platter of stuffed squid and a steaming bowl of his most popular dish, *bulalo*, a simple beef broth soup. Two women joined us, bringing platters of chicken adobo and fried rice.

“This is Sarah Gonzales and Mildred Pangilinan. They both started working here this year,” Pangilinan said, dishing food onto our plates. “I graduated from hospitality school and moved to Dubai four and a half years ago to manage another branch of Tipanan. Then I open this branch.”

I took a sip of the bulalo. It was like a gentle hug in a bowl: The brightness of cilantro balanced the richness of the marrow-infused broth. I could see why it was the most popular item on offer.

“It’s like I get to bring the Philippines to Dubai, for Filipinos and for other people too. Like my regular there,” he continued, pointing at a stocky Indian man eating with a middle-aged Filipino woman. “He’s tried everything on the menu and loves everything just the way we make it, but I can adapt the food to suit any taste my customers have—

more spicy, less spicy, whatever. It’s all a fusion anyways. The rice is Chinese from pre-Hispanic times, and there are a lot of Spanish-style dishes left over from 300 years of colonization—all with our own Filipino twist, of course!”

Gonzales got up to start her shift and hugged him. “This guy—he is a good boss,” she said. “This place is my family here.”

I asked Pangilinan if he had plans to move back home.

He laughed. “Dubai is a jungle and we are like tigers, competing,” he said. “I came here for opportunities, and I found them. Life is happening here.” 🌐



Above: An attendant arranges a Palestinian-Jordanian dessert sampler at 23-year-old Firas Sweets, while not far away at Filipino franchise Tipanan, right, customers savor cuisine that combines influences from South Asia, China and colonial Spain.

hummus. All the while, men in Al Mallah polo shirts rushed among the tables and couriered takeaway orders to idling cars along 2nd of December Street.

Abu Faisal returned, smiling and shaking his head. “They call me *abu*, ‘daddy,’ not boss!” he chuckled. “Yes, I have a good life here.”

I said goodnight to Abu Faisal and set off to find some dessert. Ambling northwest to the next block, I stopped in front of the plate glass window of Firas Sweets, a 23-year-old Palestinian-Jordanian dessert shop. From there, I watched a young Egyptian man cut thick squares of *na’awa*, cheese topped with syrup-soaked semolina cake, for an elderly Arab woman. As an Indian couple and a glamorous, *abaya*-clad woman entered the shop, I inhaled the aromas of sugar and rosewater that drifted out. I followed behind them and ordered a slice of *knafe*, a specialty of the Palestinian city of Nablus. I found a table facing the large window and enjoyed not only the savory-sweet dessert of soft white cheese topped with sugary, crisp-fried vermicelli, but also the parade of Satwa residents and visitors passing by.

On my last night, I ended up just west of the roundabout amid a cheerful hum in a Filipino franchise diner called Tipanan, one of the newest restaurants on the strip. It opened in 2012, supported since by the growing Filipino community in the area.

I nibbled on the so-called *khaep mu*, traditional Filipino pork cracklings adapted here for the Muslim host country by swapping crisp-fried chicken skin for the pork rind. I dipped the crunchy bits in tart, rose-colored vinegar—a perfect foil for the greasy, salty snack. Above me, a Tagalog singing



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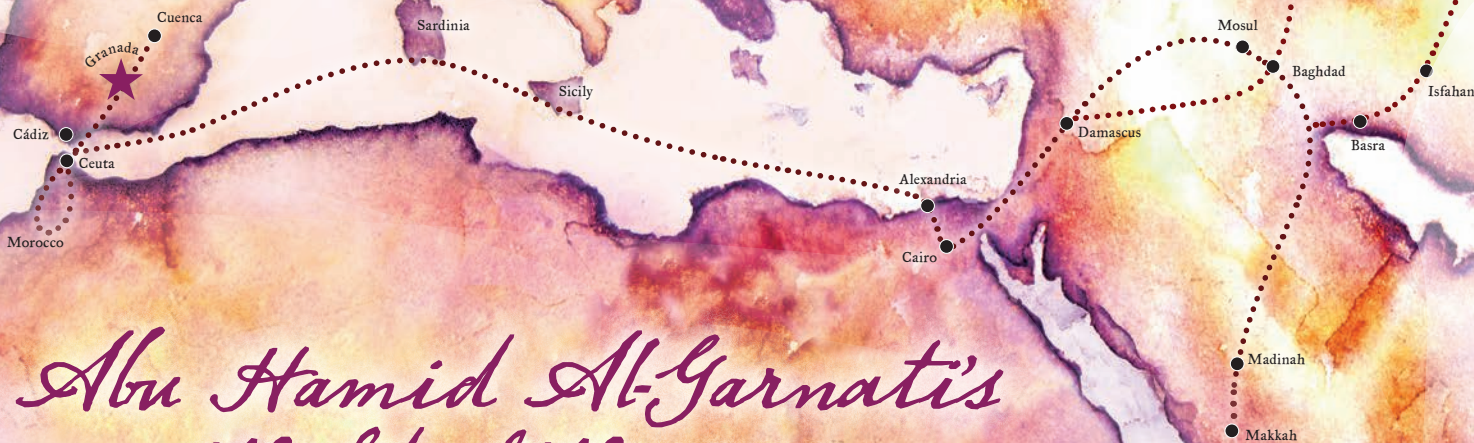
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TRAVELERS of AL-ANDALUS

part II



Abu Hamid Al-Garnati's World of Wonders

Written by INGRID BEJARANO ESCANILLA and LOUIS WERNER

Art by BELÉN ESTURLA

Muhammad ibn Abd al-Rahman ibn Suleiman ibn Rabi al-Qaysi, known more conveniently to posterity as Abu Hamid Al-Garnati and so named after his hometown of Granada (“Garnata”), sailed, caravanned, traded and trekked from the Arab West to the northern- and eastern-most reaches of the Islamic world and beyond. Born in the year 1080 under the last of the Zirid kings, he was a merchant and a scholar who, in a 90-year lifetime, wrote on a variety of subjects in two works following the literary tradition called *kutub al-‘aja’ib* in Arabic, or “books of wonder”—a genre that he helped to define.

As one might expect from the name, a “book of wonders” is not only what one sees and hears on one’s travels, but also what one could not have possibly seen because it did not then nor did it ever exist. At the same time, these “wonders”—of legendary places, mythical people and wholly imagined events—make for good reading. Fusing the world of the impossible with the world of the merely strange-but-true, the style might best be filed under the words of one of his prologues: “Marvels are found in the most remote part of the sky and the earth. Our Lord has ordered us to contemplate the wonders of the world.”


His best-known book, *al-Mu‘rib ‘an ba’d ‘aja’ib al-Maghreb*, (*Praise of Some of the Wonders of North Africa*), actually covers all of the lands he visited, and it seems only to skim the surface of an oeuvre rivaling the most outlandish of all the Ripley’s “Believe It or Not” stories ever told. His recent translator into Spanish, César Dubler, found it comprised of “casual data about the extraordinary.”

Travel began early in Al-Garnati’s life, and not by choice. When he was 10, his family probably fled Granada at the approach of the Almoravid king Yusuf ibn Tashfin. They took refuge near Cuenca, which at the time belonged to the Christian king of Castile Alfonso VI. Although it was not uncommon for such territorial switching in times of peril, it may have set the boy on his lifelong journey of expecting the unexpected—as in the year 1108 when, at the Battle of Uclés, the Almoravids conquered his land of refuge, and he had to flee a second time.

He was one to look for what lurked under the surface of the factual, the visible. For instance, Chapter 1 of his second book described the “world and its inhabitants—men and *jinn*s”; Chapter 2, “its wonders and monuments”; Chapter 3, its “seas and fantastic animals”; and Chapter 4, “its caves, tombs, and ossuaries—with the purpose of inviting contemplation, to escape hell and enter heaven.”

When verbally mapping his home country, he began his tour at the Cave of the Seven Sleepers, a legend shared by both Christians and Muslims. He located it just outside Granada, not at its traditional location near Ephesus in Turkey; nearby he also found a magic olive tree that budded, flowered and matured its fruit in a single day.

Also beside Granada, he claimed to have found the walled “City of Copper,” whose ramparts were such that if a daring man managed to climb them, he would be overcome by fits of hysterical laughter and plunge inside never to be heard from again. Authors of the Arab East said that the city was located at the world’s outer limits, and they attributed



its building to Alexander the Great, who was often conflated with King Solomon in other “books of wonders.”

According to Al-Garnati, it was Solomon’s followers who also built the Iberian cities of Toledo and Zaragoza. Al-Garnati described a magnificent bridge from the first city rising to the sky “like a rainbow,” and of the second, he wrote of its magical powers held by talismans placed in the city gates to prevent scorpions from entering. The city of Sintra, he said, was famous for its apples, and whoever ate of them would receive the power to discern the possible from the impossible.

Although it is likely that during the early stages of what became his lifelong trip to the East he remained for a time in Morocco, it is unknown if he reached the Saharan trade city of Sijilmasa at that country’s edge of the desert, where some of the world’s strangest things really are seen. (For a taste of this still today, visit the day-and-night funfair in Marrakech’s Djema’a al-Fna.)

At the Strait of Gibraltar, in the city of Ceuta, he paused his journey to relate the legendary stories of the Roc, the huge bird of prey depicted in *A Thousand and One Nights* and in other magical accounts of the East, as well as the Sole, a flat fish that looks like it is sliced down the middle from tip to tail and often called the “sole of Moses” after the Biblical story that in the parting of the Red Sea, the fish too was parted and thus became two live halves.

Al-Garnati here also related the story of the “Idol of Cádiz,” also reputedly built by Alexander, which was a huge statue, not

unlike the Colossus of Rhodes, whose right hand reached into the Atlantic in order to push back the waves and other dangers.

In the year 1115, when he was 34, Al-Garnati reached Alexandria via Sardinia and Sicily. Of this latter land, he wrote: And in the Green Sea [the Mediterranean] there is a group of islands, where one of them is very big and is called Sicily. It has cities, fortresses and manors; it is one of the richest of God’s countries. By the sea, there is a huge mountain. It is the mountain of fire. From its summit, a blue smoke pours out during the day and by night a fire burns that illuminates as far as ten *parasangs* [about 6 km].

This reference to Mt. Etna described it fairly accurately.

He later mentioned Alexandria’s famous and entirely real lighthouse, and he gave its measurements. After describing and sketching its architecture, he added the detail of its enormous mirror for reflecting the fire so that those arriving by sea could see it at a distance of even several days offshore. Next, he described “Solomon’s Audience Chamber,” a room famous for the beauty of its columns, particularly one magical one that tilted to follow the sun across the sky like a sunflower.

According to Al-Garnati, visitors put pebbles under this column’s base, which remained suspended in the air, and then were ground to dust as the column rotated its position. (Legends of magically moving columns were common:

Marco Polo spoke of such a column in the church of Saint John the Baptist in Samarkand, and today Jordanian tour guides at the Temple of Artemis in Jerash point out a column that is said to have had a similar property.)

In Cairo Al-Garnati studied with the city's leading scholars of *hadith*, and he mused over the same questions that have puzzled visitors since the time of Herodotus: Who built the pyramids? Why does the Nile flood? What kind of animal is the crocodile—fish or snake?

sea's northern shore in the Volga River estuary and an important commercial crossroads upstream as far as Kazan, now in Russia. It was during the journey up the sea's western coast that he visited the city of Derbent at the eastern end of the Caucasus range whose Persian etymology means "locked gate" and is known to the Arabs as Bab al-Abwab, or Gate of Gates.

In *Tuhfat al-albab wa nukhbat al-'aja'ib* (*Gift of Secrets and Selection of Wonders*), the second of his two complete works, he described one of the wonders of the Caucasus:

That he embellished what he saw and related clearly false and impossible tales in the same breath as perfunctory lists of his itinerary's stages should not count against him.

In the year 1124, Al-Garnati reached Baghdad via Damascus, quite probably seeing the ruins of Baalbek and Palmyra (then called Tadmur) en route. In Baghdad he was hosted by a scholar and vizier who later became minister under the Abbasid caliphs al-Muqtafi and al-Mustanjid.

Leaving Baghdad after some seven years of residence, Al-Garnati moved to the Persian city of Abhar, just south of the Caspian Sea, and later he reached Saysin, a village near the

Near Derbent, he wrote, was a mighty mountain, and at its foot two villages inhabited by a tribe of weapon-makers. When a kinsman died, he was told, they separated the body's bones from its flesh. If the person was a man, they fed the flesh to crows, and if a woman, they fed it to vultures. In both cases, they put the remaining bones in "bags of gilded Byzantine brocade," wrote the deceased's name on it and left it hanging in their home. "This is a wonder indeed," he ended.



Al-Garnati next followed the Volga upstream to the land of “Bulgar” (far north and east of modern Bulgaria) where he found it so cold that in winter the ground was too frozen to allow for burials. Ever a businessman, he told how Bulgar traders obtained beaver skins, and in exchange they obtained Azeri sword blades that in turn they traded for sable pelts—a shrewd upgrade of animal fur via beaten steel. But mostly he marveled over the beaver dam, a structure he called “miraculous.”

Fifteen years later, around 1150, now aged 70, he arrived in the land of Basgird, modern Hungary. His descriptions here were surprisingly brief, yet they remain important given the paucity of information known about this region at the time. Still, he found space to mention no fewer than 78 of its cities and towns.

Here, he seemed to take on a role of a religious missionary more than a collector of tall tales, and he worked hard to serve a large Muslim population descended from North Africans—*maghrebis* he called them—who had settled in the area years ago. But some modern scholars suspect that this is not so much wonder or fact but merely a manuscript copyist’s mistake—perhaps Al-Garnati’s own—because elsewhere he wrote about a certain Turkic people living nearby whom he called “Magharebi.”

Whoever they were, he taught them proper Arabic prayer, because he found them suffering from a “deep ignorance.” It seems that his work was successful, because at the end of his stay he was able to write, “Today amongst them, the Friday sermon is preached in more than ten thousand places, since their territory is very wide.”

In Hungary, it appears that Al-Garnati finally put down some family roots when his eldest son, Hamid, married a local woman and remained there in the service of the Christian king of Hungary, Geza II. King Geza battled the Byzantine empire in alliance with Roger II of Sicily, who, like Geza, brought into his court many prominent Muslim scholars such as Al-Garnati’s contemporary, the geographer Muhammad al-Idrisi, whose famous world atlas *The Book of Roger* and travelogue *The Book of Pleasant Journeys to Faraway Lands* inspired countless later generations of traveling confabulists.

In 1153 Al-Garnati returned to Saisyin, where his own wife and other sons had remained. But no place, it seemed, could keep him forever: Soon again he crossed the Caspian to the land of Khwarezm, an oasis in the Amu Darya river delta south of the Aral Sea, where he had visited before and made friends.

He left Khwarezm on a pilgrimage to Makkah the following year, probably via Merv, Isfahan and Basra. In 1155, he returned again to Baghdad, where finally he sat down to put his mental notes in order after long years of traveling and collecting stories. He dedicated his first book to his Abbasid patron.

But still he had miles to go and pages to turn before he unlaced his shoes and put away his pen. In 1162 he arrived in Mosul to write his second book, which he finished in three years. The first word of the title, *tuhfa*, is most appropriate, as



it stems from the same root as the Arabic word for museum, *mathaf*, a place to store wondrous things. Al-Garnati died in Damascus in 1169 at nearly 90 years old, but his scant historical record does not state whether he had settled down there or was, as usual, just passing through.

The value of Al-Garnati’s writing lies less in his “wonders” than in his witness of some far, cold, out-of-the-way Muslim lands rarely visited by others in his day. Despite an apparent simplicity of manner, his descriptions have a pleasant style displaying keen erudition. Observations are adorned with both objective fact and impossible legend. The reason behind his journeying was not, as far as is known, political duress or economic necessity, but rather the mere love of adventure.

That he embellished what he saw and related clearly false and impossible tales in the same breath as perfunctory lists of his itinerary’s stages should not count against him. He was writing about *‘aja’ib*—wonders—after all. Because of this, he became one of Arabic literature’s greatest authors of medieval cosmography, a world view that maintains that truth is found not in the literalist eye of a human beholder, but in the fuller and ultimately unknowable creations of God. ☪

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This edition of the Classroom Guide is a bit different from most. Rather than being organized by theme, it is divided into discrete lessons, each of which focuses on one article. The lessons begin with an introduction followed by a statement of goals—what students should be able to do by the time they finish—and step-by-step instructions for the activity. We hope that this format will make it easier to use *AramcoWorld* in your classroom. (Please let us know what you think so that we can continue to improve the Classroom Guide.)

FOR STUDENTS

We hope this 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 *AramcoWorld*, by teachers at any level, whether working in a classroom or through home study.

—THE EDITORS

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CLASS ACTIVITIES

Developing an Ancient City: "Sea Change Comes to Bagamoyo"

Places change. You've probably read about such changes in history books, and maybe you've seen them in your own community. Cities grow in places that were once farmland. Highways cut through long-established neighborhoods. Old buildings are torn down to make way for more modern ones. Look at the verbs in those sentences: cities *grow*, highways *cut*, buildings *are torn down*. Someone makes those

things happen, but who? It can be difficult to tell, which makes it all the more important to find out. There is a lot to be learned by answering questions such as: Who makes places change? How do they do it? Who benefits—and who suffers—when places change?

The article "Sea Change Comes to Bagamoyo" shows how changes are coming to an 800-year-old city—particularly in the form of a large new seaport. You'll find that it's a complex process that involves a lot of people who have different—and sometimes conflicting—wants and needs. In this lesson, you'll look closely at what and who is involved in transforming this city in Tanzania.

In this lesson, you will:

- recognize that different people have different points of view about change
- articulate those points of view
- negotiate differences among groups
- evaluate which groups are most likely to benefit from the proposed changes

Start by reading the article. (If class time is short, you can read it for homework.) As you read, use your comprehension skills—note-taking, underlining and/or making notes in the margins—to improve your understanding. Be sure you've got a good grasp of the content so that you're prepared to work with it. For these activities, focus on the part of the article that starts on page 18 with "Now" and ends at the end of the article on page 23.

Go through this section of the article, either by yourself or with another student. On a sheet of paper, make a three-column chart. In the first column, list the different people the writer interviews. In the middle column, write what group each person is part of or represents. In the third column, write that person's perspective on the changes coming to Bagamoyo. Here is one example:

WHO	REPRESENTING WHOM?	POINT OF VIEW
Felix Nyakatale (34 years old)	Restaurateur; represents businesses	welcomes change; it's good for business

As you fill in your chart, think about how writer Amanda Leigh Lichtenstein chose to describe each of the people she quoted. What details about them did she include? Based on what you've read, why do you think they are important details? When you're finished, compare your chart with that of another pair. Revise your chart if necessary, checking with the article to get any clarification you need.

VISUAL ANALYSIS

Much of what you read, in print or online, is illustrated, and most of that illustration is through photographs. But what is the best way to illustrate something that happened long ago, before the advent of photography? Choose one of the articles in this edition of *AramcoWorld* that is illustrated with visual material other than photographs. Make a list of the different types of visuals. Which adds the most to your understanding of the article's content? What is it about that type of visual that is so helpful?





IF YOU ONLY HAVE 15 MINUTES...

Now divide the class into groups, with each group representing one of the people on your chart. (Depending on your class's size, you might have one or two teammates, or maybe you'll be working solo.) With your group, write a short statement of your position about the development of Bagamoyo's "mega-port." Then look over the others in the chart. Who is most likely to share your point of view? What makes you think so? To see similarities visually, color-code your chart, using one color to identify a specific point of view, and another color to identify a different one.

Find a team that you think could be your ally. Explain to them what your position on development is, and tell them why you think you could work with them. Have that team respond. Are your perspectives similar enough to merit an alliance? Or are there differences that are too important for you to become one team? Use the color coding to help you evaluate whether or not someone would be interested in working with you.

When you've finished, sit down with your enlarged group and write what your group wants regarding the development of the port in Bagamoyo, and what you do *not* want. Have each group present this information. Have a discussion among the groups. What, if anything, can you agree about? Do the "wants" and "don't wants" conflict?

Look at these final comparisons. As a class, answer these questions: Given that change is fairly certain to come, who do you think is most likely to benefit from the redevelopment of Bagamoyo? Why do you think so? Who do you think is most likely to suffer? Why?

The Art of Diplomacy: "The Busbecq Letters"



The news sometimes has stories of heads of state holding "high-level meetings," often showing leaders shaking hands or standing side by side. But, photo ops aside, what exactly did they say in those meetings? We don't usually know. An article in this *AramcoWorld* uses historical

documents to see what went on during "high-level meetings" more than 400 years ago. Ogier Ghiselan de Busbecq's letters offer an insider's view of how a diplomatic solution was reached between two nations who were at war, on and off, for many years. In this lesson, you will take a close-up look at the process of reaching an accord. In this lesson, you will:

- see the two competing empires as Busbecq saw them, and explain why he continued to mediate between them
- chart the process by which Busbecq was finally able to broker a peace treaty
- identify, based on the experience of Busbecq, some qualities and skills that are useful for diplomats
- create a job description for a diplomat

Start by reading "The Busbecq Letters." (You can read it in class or at home.) According to the article, because Busbecq, who was born in part of what is now Belgium, spent a great deal of time in Turkey, he was able to provide his fellow Europeans with a more realistic view of the Turks than they got otherwise. Like any good diplomat, he was able to see and admire aspects of the society his country was opposing. And like any good diplomat, he was able to see his own society with a critical eye. Find the parts of the article that describe what Busbecq admired about the Turks, and what European society was like.

Make a two-column chart. Label the first column "Ottoman Empire" and the second "Hapsburg Empire." In each column, write what Busbecq says about each of the two societies. When you're done, look at the two lists. Which of the two empires did Busbecq think would win a military confrontation? How do you think his answer to that question affected his commitment to working out a peace deal?

A good diplomat must also be familiar with the situation into which he or she is

stepping. The situation Busbecq faced was complicated by the recurring strife that had gone on for decades. (If you aren't familiar with that chapter of history, get more help by going to the online edition's timeline at www.aramcoworld.com.)

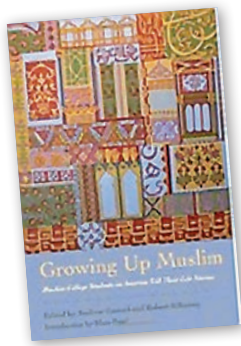
Now imagine that you are Busbecq, and you are meeting for the first time with Sultan Suleiman in Amasya in April 1555. What was the situation? (Check your timeline.) With a partner, act out what happened at the meeting. Fill in any gaps with what you imagine the two men said. Above the timeline, fill in what happened in the negotiations from April 1555 until August 1557. Then add what transpired between that time and the time Busbecq left Turkey in 1562. What is most striking to you about the process? In the end, how was an accord finally reached? What does that suggest to you about diplomacy?

Busbecq was a successful diplomat: He brokered a peace treaty between two warring empires. You've read about how he did that. Now step back from his experience and think about the skills he used, and the qualities he possessed, in order to succeed. Write a job description for a diplomat, using Busbecq's success to guide you. Your job description should take the following format:

- A statement of what the employer is looking for. Complete this prompt: "Seeking a diplomat who will:"
- A list of qualities that the individual should have. Complete this prompt: "The successful candidate will have the following qualities:"
- A list of skills the successful candidate will have. Complete this prompt: "The successful candidate will be able to:"

Looking at the job description, would you apply for a job as a diplomat? Why or why not?

(Note: For each exercise above, there is a completed chart at www.aramcoworld.com.)



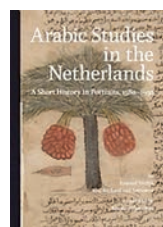
Readers of *AramcoWorld* who want to range more widely or delve more deeply than a bimonthly magazine can do will find interesting material, most of it recently published, in this list. Without endorsing the views of any of the authors, the editors encourage varied and omnivorous reading as a path to greater understanding. The books listed here are available online, in libraries, from bookstores—we urge our readers to patronize independent bookstores—or from their respective publishers; International Standard Book Numbers (ISBN) are given to facilitate ordering. Please do not order books from *AramcoWorld*. The full-text electronic archive of “Suggestions for Reading” from 1993 to the present can be found at www.aramcoworld.com.

“I was born into a Muslim family from Somalia, an arid country in East Africa with more camels than people. Somalis are historically nomadic, known for their poetry and proverbs, but in more recent years they came to be known as refugees.... Someday, God willing, I hope to go back to Mogadishu ... and hopefully clarify the image of where I came from. But I know I will never fit in Somalia ... I’ll stick out like a foreigner.”

Growing Up Muslim: Muslim College Students in America Tell Their Life Stories. Andrew Garrod and Robert Kilkenny, eds. 2014, Cornell UP, 978-0-80147-195-1, \$22.95 pb.

This book focuses on the struggles of 14 Dartmouth College students of the Muslim faith to understand and practice their religious and cultural traditions in an American context. The editors worked for a number of years with the students—eight men and six women who are immigrants or children of immigrants—who expressed themselves in autobiographical essays. They began their personal searches within families with mostly conservative roots in Africa, the Middle East or Southwest Asia, and most sought a balance between spiritual values and ritualized customs. Sharing the trials of other US teenagers as they strove for independence and self-esteem, their efforts were sometimes complicated by anti-Muslim sentiment after 9/11. In addition, some of the women had to weigh education and careers against pressures for early or arranged marriages. The essays suggest that amid the diversity of American faiths and cultures, many of the students came to see their own faith as simply a different path toward similar destinations—most importantly the blessings of a loving and supportive community. The book is timely in light of the recent tragic events in Paris, and it suggests there may be major differences between the capabilities of host and immigrant to blend and bind in Europe and the US.

—WILLIAM TRACY



Arabic Studies in the Netherlands: A Short History in Portraits, 1580-1950. Arnoud Vrolijk and Richard van Leeuwen. 2014, Brill, 978-9-00426-486-1, \$63 hb.

This book is part of the University of Leiden’s recent celebration of 400 years of Arabic studies in the Netherlands—a wide-ranging cultural program supported in part by Saudi Aramco. Odd as it might seem, Arabic is the only living language to have been taught in Dutch universities for a period of more than four centuries. Latin was the original language of Dutch scholars; ancient Greek and Biblical Hebrew were also taught from earliest times. Dutch and other modern tongues were introduced in the early 19th century. Arabic studies were originally meant to support research into Hebrew and the Bible, but in time this scholarship became much wider ranging and was recognized as among the best in Europe. This book features a series of informative portraits of the academic luminaries in Arabic studies, from early pioneers like Franciscus Raphelengius

and Josephus Justus Scaliger to Leiden’s first professor of Arabic, Thomas Erpenius, to later legends like al-Andalus scholar Reinhart Dozy, Makkah pilgrim Snouck Hurgronje, and Arent Jan Wensinck, editor-in-chief of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* from 1924 to 1939. The work is lavishly illustrated with museum treasures including rare Arabic manuscript pages, stunning engravings and pages from the earliest printed Arabic works.

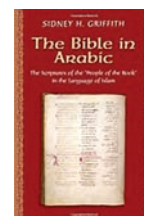
—ROBERT W. LEBLING



Art & Energy: How Culture Changes. Barry Lord. 2014, AAM Press, 978-1-93325-391-6, \$34.95 pb.

This unusual book explores the evolution of human energy sources over the centuries and how the accompanying societal and cultural changes were expressed in art. The transition from one dominant form of energy to another is an opportunity for great cultural change and creativity, writes Lord, a noted museum planner. He traces energy use from the introduction of fire around 1.5 million years ago to the 21st-century development of renewable, sustainable power sources. Between these two poles, he explores the introduction of agriculture, the development of forced human labor or slavery, the introduction of coal energy and steam power, the 20th-century shift to an oil-and-gas-based economy and the push toward nuclear power begun during the Cold War. With well-chosen illustrations, the author sets forth the varied cultural conditions that produced some of the world’s great art, from hunter-gatherer times until today. He notes how hydrocarbon-energy production has driven the development of art centers in the Arabian Gulf area, notably the United Arab Emirates’ Saadiyat Island featuring the Louvre and the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, as well as Saudi Arabia’s King Abdulaziz Center for World Cultures, under construction in Dhahran.

—ROBERT W. LEBLING



The Bible in Arabic: The Scriptures of the “People of the Book” in the Language of Islam.

Sidney H. Griffith. 2013, Princeton UP, 978-0-69115-082-6, \$29.95 hb. While the “study of the Bible in Arabic is in its infancy,” scholar Sidney H. Griffith writes, Arabic-language

Christian texts date back to the earliest centuries of Islam. Though long overlooked, these texts should come as no surprise. Even as Greek scientific, mathematical and philosophical

works were being translated into Arabic during the Abbasid period (750-1050 CE), so too were Christianity's and Judaism's holy texts being rendered into what became the lingua franca of the medieval Islamic world: Arabic. The earliest translations were by Jews and Christians both in response to Qur'anic versions of Biblical narratives and as an effort to preserve their holy texts in an increasingly Islamic milieu. Muslim scholars, meanwhile, translated Judeo-Christian scripture into Arabic, finding in earlier revelation echoes of the Prophet Muhammad's mission and highlighting his status as the last in a long chain of prophetic messengers. This is a long overdue contribution from a noted scholar of Christian-Muslim relations.

—TOM VERDE



Desert Road Archaeology in Ancient Egypt and Beyond.

Frank Förster and Heiko Riemer, eds. 2013, Heinrich-Barth-Institut, 978-3-92768-841-4, €78 hb.

From earliest times, humans followed natural passages such as animal trails, and

many grew into heavily trafficked routes. This volume contains 23 prolifically illustrated essays on the ancient roads crossing the Sahara Desert and the Arabian and Sinai peninsulas. Research suggests that in the Neolithic wet periods from the ninth to the fifth millennium BCE, routes originated in settled regions located in what is now hyper-arid territory in Egypt. With increasing aridity and the coalescence of population along the Nile, and with the rise of the dynastic period around 3150 BCE, an extensive network of roads developed in the Nile Valley that reached into the African interior, the Red Sea coast and farther afield. One essay focuses on a road to the Arabian Peninsula built during the reign of the 12th-century BCE pharaoh Ramses III to connect with the incense route from the south—all the more interesting in light of the find in 2010 of two Egyptian cartouches near Tayma, Saudi Arabia, a key northern trading post. This book, coupled with ongoing research by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), will do much to help understand and link ancient world heritage sites.

—PETER HARRIGAN



Discovering Cyrus: The Persian Conqueror Astride the Ancient World.

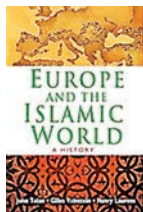
Reza Zarghamee. 2013, Mage Publishers, 978-1-93382-338-6, \$85 hb.

Westerners know ancient Persia mostly through the eyes of its enemies, the Greeks. For that reason, our view of the

Persians is largely colored by that relationship: We generally see them as militaristic, imperial, cruel and exotic—like the caricatured emperor Xerxes in the movie *The 300*. This book is about Xerxes's grandfather, Cyrus the Great, whom even the Greeks acknowledged as an exceptional leader. Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* (*Education of Cyrus*) cites the progressive, humanitarian statecraft of Cyrus, portraying him as an ideal prince. This Greek work was quite popular in 18th-century Britain and America, and copies survived in

Thomas Jefferson's library. Zarghamee goes far beyond the *Cyropaedia*, tracking down just about everything known about Cyrus and shaping it into a well-written narrative of his life. Cyrus's military achievements were indisputable: He built a standing army out of the Persian tribes and conquered foes including the Babylonians, creating the Achaemenid Persian empire. But he was more than a general. Cyrus showed great tolerance of other peoples and faiths. He allowed the exiled Jews of Babylon to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their temple. His life is worth studying, as Zarghamee ably shows.

—ROBERT W. LEBLING



Europe and the Islamic World: A History.

John Tolan, Gilles Veinstein and Henry Laurens. 2013, Princeton UP, 978-0-69114-705-5, \$39.50 hb.

Three accomplished western historians seek to demonstrate that Islam and the West are part of an

essentially similar culture, and that there has never been a "clash of civilizations" (an influential and controversial theory propounded in 1993 by Samuel Huntington). They lean toward Richard Bulliet's theory of the "Islam-Christian civilization," drawing on the religious, cultural and intellectual heritage of the ancient Mediterranean and the Middle East and fostered by centuries of migration and trade. They do not posit a grand theory, instead concentrating on, for example, dealings between the Genoese and Tunisians, the Catalans and Maghrebis, and the cultural capitals of Constantinople and Alexandria. Tolan focuses on the medieval period, Veinstein on the 15th-18th centuries and Laurens on the contemporary era: All show the Mediterranean and the Middle East in near-constant states of cross-fertilization. The classical Greeks learned science and art from ancient Babylon and Egypt. A millennium and a half later, the Abbasid empire, based in Mesopotamia, translated Greek classics into Arabic and reabsorbed their knowledge into the Middle East. The authors demonstrate that the ebb and flow of human knowledge, culture and social relationships is tidal and, ultimately, relentless.

—ROBERT W. LEBLING



The Hajj: Collected Essays.

Venetia Porter and Liana Saif, eds. 2013, British Museum, 978-0-86159-193-0, £49.26/\$74.25 pb.

This volume provides in-depth information on a number of aspects of the Hajj, the subject of a major exhibition at the

British Museum in 2012. The 29 essays touch on many of the geographical areas involved in the pilgrimage to Makkah, from sub-Saharan Africa to the lands along the Trans-Siberian Railway, among a wide range of topics. The first section explains the Hajj for those unfamiliar with it and contains chapters on the early Hajj, while the next part discusses the archeology of the traditional land and sea routes. The third part deals with travelers,

especially the colonial impact on the Hajj, and includes an interesting article describing the western converts who performed it. This is followed by essays on various esthetic aspects—notably textiles, where there is a very informative article on the *kiswa*, the calligraphic textile draping the Ka'bah. The final two contributions cover the organization of the Hajj from the UK today and the rising popularity of modern souvenirs. The book is particularly valuable as a work of reference, or for the specialist, with excellent illustrations and good maps.

—CAROLINE STONE



Hajj the Holy Journey: The Hajj Route through Postcards/Kutsal Yolculuk Hac: Kartpostallarla Hac Yolu.

Murat Kargılı; Ömer Çolakoğlu, Nafiz Akşehirlioğlu, trans. 2014, Denizler Kitabevi, 978-9-94426-449-5, 150TRY/\$67 hb.

This book offers a vivid, multidimensional window on the Hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Makkah whose roots go back to the Prophet Abraham, through the medium of nearly 300 historic postcards dating from the 1870s to the 1950s. Kargılı is an independent scholar. His work documents in English and Turkish the Hajj's spiritual, cultural, socioeconomic and political aspects as he takes the reader on a visual journey through annotated postcards that collectively reveal the pilgrimage's impact on the diverse range of communities from which the participants originate, highlighting the routes they took to Makkah and the holy sites they visited. Despite the ever-evolving methods of travel—by land, sea and air—affecting the duration and the difficulty of the journey, these postcards remind us of pilgrims' will to answer the most precious invitation of their lives, portraying a very human need to preserve and share a memory.

—ELIF M. GOKÇİDEM



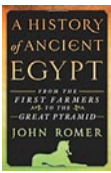
Half Past Ten in the Afternoon: An Englishman's Journey from Aneiza to Makkah.

James Budd. 2014, Arabian Publishing, 978-0-95767-633-6, \$36 hb.

The title of this engaging memoir suggests the unfamiliar culture in which

the author found himself when he began five years of teaching English in a remote town in north-central Saudi Arabia in the mid-1960s. Aneiza (also 'Unayzah) had no electricity or running water in its mud houses and was linked to Riyadh and Buraydah only by a desert track. Most of Budd's detailed and insightful narrative recounts his interactions with secondary-school colleagues, students and their male relatives in a slowly changing social and economic environment. In English and, frequently, in Arabic he recreates the events and context of the time. Eventually, Budd made a disappointing transfer to Riyadh, and later he left the country. He also recounts his embrace of Islam and, in evocative detail, his pilgrimage to Makkah. In the final chapter, he warmly describes his return after 46 years to Unayzah and an enthusiastic welcome from old students and friends—all less changed than the physical and economic environment there.

—COLBERT HELD



A History of Ancient Egypt: From the First Farmers to the Great Pyramid. John Romer. 2012, Thomas Dunne Books, 978-1-25003-011-5, \$29.99 hb. **1177 BC: The Year Civilization Collapsed.** Eric H. Cline.



2014, Princeton UP, 978-0-69114-089-6, \$29.95 hb.

It is startling to realize that when the oldest Giza pyramid was completed some 5,000 years ago, Egyptian civilization was already more than 25 centuries old. Put another way, we are today as chronologically far removed from the founding of Rome in 753 BCE as were Egypt's first-century BCE Roman conquerors from the establishment of the first Pharaonic dynasty, which itself emerged from a culture that was already 2,000 years old. The antiquity of Egyptian civilization as well as the lasting impact of decisive events during its long history are the subjects of these two fresh surveys. Romer's work—the first of two planned volumes—takes readers back to the first Egyptian farmers who settled in the Faiyum Oasis in the northern lower Nile around 5000 BCE. Within 1,500 years, he writes, their descendants “were building pyramids for pharaoh.” The steady development of Egyptian culture from settled farmers to herding pot-makers, copper-smelters and traders, to tomb-builders, hieroglyph-makers, mathematicians, engineers and imperial rulers unfolds in this narrative, which ends with the building of the Great Pyramid of Khufu in the third century BCE. While Romer takes the broad view, Cline zeroes in on 1177 BCE, when the mysterious “Sea People” launched their unsuccessful invasion of Egypt as a critical moment in not only Egypt's history but also that of neighboring Bronze Age civilizations including Minoan, Mycenaean, Troy and Babylon. A volume in Princeton's “Turning Points in Ancient History” series, Cline's study credits these civilizations' sudden decline to circumstances beyond the “convenient scapegoat” of marauding Sea Peoples to consider earthquakes, drought, revolts and trade disruptions. The result was a “Perfect Storm” of Calamities that brought the Bronze Age to a cataclysmic end, opening the way for civilizations to “begin completely anew in areas from Greece to the Levant and beyond.”

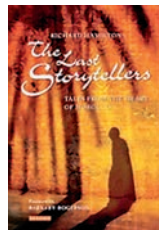
—TOM VERDE

A History of the World in 12 Maps. Jerry Brotton. 2012, Viking, 978-0-67002-339-4, \$40 hb. Seven continents. Seven seas. Five ages of man over 2,000 years. Jerry Brotton sums it all up by yoking cartography with historical themes such as faith, empire, nation and tolerance from the second century CE in a dozen era-defining maps. Some are no surprise: those based upon Ptolemy's *Geography*, c. 150; Al-Idrisi's 1154 map of the known Christian-Islamic world; and Mercator's 1569 projection that rendered the spherical world in a single, flat, contiguous image—a transformative boon to navigation and, ultimately, the standard decor for grade-school classrooms everywhere. Others may be less familiar, such as the Cassini family's 1793 nation-defining map of France, or a forehead-slappingly obvious: Google



Earth. While a universally accepted global map remains beyond our reach for a variety of political and technical reasons, Brotton concludes that without maps, “we can never know the world.”

—TOM VERDE

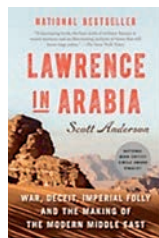


The Last Storytellers: Tales from the Heart of Morocco. Richard Hamilton. 2013,

I.B. Tauris, 978-1-78076-534-1, £19.99/\$31.74 hb; £12.99 pb.

This is a charming book with a double claim on our attention. First, it provides a fresh and lively collection of traditional folk tales from Morocco, many of which are part of the international repertoire: rags to riches, the rescued princess, magic, monsters and lessons in morality. The second and perhaps more important aspect of the book is that, in the words of Mohammed VI, the king of Morocco, it “brilliantly illustrates an ancient oral tradition” that is part of the cultural heritage of the Mediterranean world. Sadly, that tradition is dying as Morocco's storytellers, or *hlaykia*, pass away. Hamilton, although himself not an Arabist, has made a heroic rescue effort. His introduction traces the history of the *hlaykia* and describes his efforts to track down the last, mostly very elderly, survivors in Marrakesh, where they were once an intrinsic part of the famous square, Djemaa al-Fna. In his foreword, publisher Barnaby Rogerson quotes a proverb, “When an old storyteller dies, a whole library burns.” *The Last Storytellers* ensures the survival of at least a few important volumes.

—CAROLINE STONE



Lawrence in Arabia: War, Deceit, Imperial Folly and the Making of the Modern Middle East. Scott Anderson. 2013,

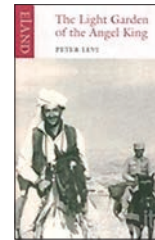
Doubleday, 978-0-385-53292-1, \$28.95 hb.

War correspondent Scott Anderson's *Lawrence in Arabia* is anything but a light read. Based on research from

more than 20 government archives and private collections, his book casts unexpected new light on T.E. Lawrence's remarkable transition from young Oxford scholar and archeologist to legendary leader of the Arab revolt against the Turks in World War I. Anderson documents the intertwined roles of three key players during the war—Standard Oil employee and US intelligence agent William Yale, German spy master Curt Pruefer and Zionist Aaron Aaronson—who, along with Lawrence, did no less to influence the making of the modern Middle East. Lawrence, whom Winston Churchill called “one of the greatest beings alive in our time,” struggled to curb the colonial ambitions of Britain and France and maintain his promises to Arab allies

of an independent state in former Ottoman lands. But he lost that battle with the signing of the 1919 Paris peace accords, which Yale described as “the prologue of the 20th-century tragedy.” Anderson's exposure of secret European plots, as well as the hidden objectives of the Zionist movement in the early 1900s, challenges readers to reconsider the roots of the modern Middle East.

—PINEY KESTING

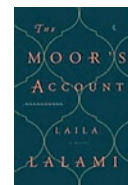


The Light Garden of the Angel King. Peter Levi. 2013, Eland,

978-1-90601-155-0, £12.99 pb.

In 1970 Peter Levi, a classicist and a Jesuit priest inspired by the excavations at Ay Khanoum in far-northeastern Afghanistan, decided to visit the country to search for surviving traces of Greek civilization brought by Alexander the Great 2,300 years before. His companion was a not-yet-famous travel writer, Bruce Chatwin. First published in 1972, this book documents their journey, which took place in one of the rare moments of calm and optimism that Afghanistan has known. It is a moving and poetic evocation of the country before the Russian invasion and the Taliban. Afghanistan was a wild country, but the difficulties of access were lack of roads, not war. The book is about places rather than people, and above all about the architectural and archeological evidence for Afghanistan's historic position as a cultural crossroad. It is not surprising that it has become a classic among travel writing in the region. The beautiful title comes from the inscription on the tomb of the 16th-century Mughal emperor Babur in the mosque of Shah Jahan in Kabul: “This highway of archangels, this theatre of heaven, the light garden of the God-forgiven angel king.”

—CAROLINE STONE



The Moor's Account. Laila Lalami. 2014, Pantheon, 978-0-30791-166-7,

\$26.95 hb.

Moroccan novelist Lalami has written a fictionalized, first-person account by Mustafa ibn Muhammad ibn Abdussalam al-Zamori, the historically documented Moorish attendant slave of a Spanish nobleman aboard an expedition to Florida in 1528 that after eight years had only four survivors. The sole factual record of the ill-fated journey through what would become the southwestern US and northern Mexico was set down by Cabeza de Vaca, one of the surviving Spaniards, and he largely wrote the other three out of his story. This historical novel tells that same tale from the perspective of a dark-skinned Muslim from Morocco, one of the first in the New World, who—as Lalami would have it—saw Native Americans very differently than did his Spanish masters who, not 40 years earlier, had forced

“Throughout most of recorded history, the overwhelming majority of maps put the culture that produced them at their center.... Even today's online mapping is partly driven by the user's desire to locate him- or herself on the digital map, by tying in their home address before anywhere else, and zooming into see that location.”

the Moors' departure en masse from Iberia. Her reimagining of what might have really happened in the explorers' quest to survive turns some things from the single historical account upside down: al-Zamori became a leader, not a mere slave or attendant; he became the Spaniards' equal and, in Indian eyes, he was neither an "African" nor a "Moor," but a linguist and doctor. Cabeza de Vaca's narrative ended with a few sideways words about him: "The fourth [survivor] is called Estebanico; he is a black Moor, a native of Azamor [Morocco]." Lalami's book puts him squarely in the story's middle, with fidelity to fact and a keenly realistic historical imagination, that makes the New World new, yet again.

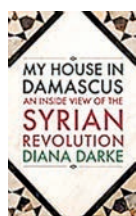
—LOUIS WERNER



Music and Traditions of the Arabian Peninsula: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar. Lisa Urkevich. 2015, Routledge, 978-0-41588-872-1, \$59.95 pb. The rich and varied music and folk-dance traditions of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar are little known

outside the eastern peninsular region itself. This pioneering and detailed guidebook to those arts is appropriate for both general readers and specialists. It covers the song and dance traditions of Bedouin tribes and villagers, the sophisticated music of the cities, and the songs of seafarers and pearl divers. Included are several accounts of women's wedding traditions, as well as a CD with 31 excellent audio examples. The culmination of many years of research, the work also clarifies the often-confusing regional terms for rhythms, instruments, music genres and dance forms. Urkevich is a professor at the American University of Kuwait who lived earlier in Saudi Arabia. For anyone seeking a greater understanding of the traditional folk arts of the Arabian Peninsula, including those performed annually at the Saudi Jandriyah festival, this will also be a useful guide to visitors.

—KAY HARDY CAMPBELL



My House in Damascus: An Inside View of the Syrian Revolution.

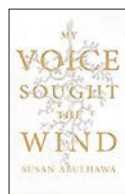
Diana Darke. 2014, Haus Publishing, 978-1-90832-364-4, £14.99/\$24.95.

The appalling conflict in Syria over the past few years has mostly been made known to us through the increasingly rare breed of journalists who access the

country and occasional blogs by Syrians. *My House in Damascus* is therefore an important testimonial to what the civil war—and the issues that spawned it—have felt like for ordinary people. The author, an Oxford Arabist with more than 30 years' experience in the region and a master's degree in Islamic art, fell in love with the idea of buying and rehabilitating one of the beautiful traditional houses in the old city of Damascus around 2005—a time of increasing prosperity and apparent stability. She weaves together the story of the house with those of the many people she met and friends she made in the course of its restoration. She provides historical and political background to shed light on the complexities of Syria, and the causes of what is happening today. *My House in Damascus* is not an academic analysis—the author's passion for Syria and its people, and her heartbreak at what is

happening to them, is too strong for that. Rather, it is a story told from the inside, very different from the perspective of a temporary observer.

—CAROLINE STONE

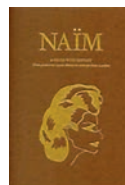


My Voice Sought the Wind. Susan Abulhawa. 2013, Just World Books, 978-1-93598-232-6, \$18 pb.

In her introduction, the Palestinian author and poet recalls how her first writings as a child were poems in Arabic.

However, she writes, "long after my exile brought me to foreignness in English, I woke up one day and understood that Arabic had been stolen from my tongue." But, this book shows, clearly not from her heart. Abulhawa's first collection of poetry is an evocative, haunting and often painful expression of lost memories, longings and proud resistance. "This nectar of tragedy is ours to consume, ours to bury and bring back to life," she says in a poem entitled *The Gift of Olive Oil*. Written over the course of five years, the poems selected for this slender volume demonstrate the same honesty, raw emotions and penetrating insight that distinguished her best-selling first novel, *Mornings in Jenin*, published in 2010. Abulhawa offers a compelling and intimate glimpse into the lives and longings of the Palestinian diaspora.

—PINEY KESTING

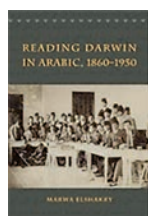


Naim: A Brush With

History. Carole Corm. Naim Abboud, illus. 2013, Darya Press, 927-6-00995-3-978, \$62 hb. After Lebanon gained its independence from France in 1943, Beirut enjoyed several decades as the

eastern Mediterranean's most cosmopolitan city. This coffee-table book about the work of Lebanese hairstylist Naïm Abboud offers some unexpected insights into 60 years of community and cultural history from the unique perspective of a talented artist. Here are stories of entertainers, business families, fashionable hotels and shops—not the picture of a chaotic, fragmented Middle East that the western public has now grown accustomed to seeing on TV screens. Abboud started as an apprentice hairdresser in 1955, at age 15. After studying in Paris, he opened shops in prestigious Beirut hotels and Lebanese mountain resorts, Kuwait, Cairo and later in Europe, serving prosperous Arab tourists. Today, among the social elite in Lebanon and the broader Middle East, he has the name-recognition of Dior or Cardin. The book's brief text is illustrated with pages of photographs of elegant, glamorous women and Naïm's own colorful sketches.

—WILLIAM TRACY



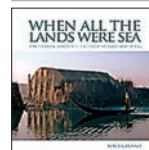
Reading Darwin in Arabic, 1860-1950. Marwa Elshakry. 2013,

University of Chicago Press, 978-0-22600-130-2, \$45.00 hb.

Western Christianity's battle with Darwinism, enjoined even before *On the Origins of Species* went to press in 1859, is well known and well

documented. But what of the reaction in Muslim lands? Could Islam and Darwinism find common

ground? Even as Christian apologists combed scripture for Biblical refutations of Darwin, Islamic scholars as high up the intellectual ladder as Egypt's grand mufti, Muhammad 'Abduh, "had little difficulty reconciling modern principles of evolution with revelation," Elshakry observes in this thorough study of the question of the compatibility of Darwin's ideas with Islamic thinking. While 'Abduh and others were certainly criticized in their communities for their beliefs, their advocacy of Darwinian thought, Elshakry explains, was in line with the medieval Islamic world's rational, scientific inquiries into the nature of the universe—inquiries "necessary for the formation of an educated society." —TOM VERDE



When All the Lands Were Sea: A Photographic Journey into the Lives of the Marsh Arabs of Iraq. Tor Eigeland. 2015, Interlink, 978-1-56656-982-8, \$30 hb.

During the 1990s, the Iraqi government drained the marshes between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, destroying the millennia-old heritage and homeland of its residents, the Marsh Arabs. Decades before, in 1967, photojournalist Tor Eigeland visited and recorded their way of life. This book is that precious record and it stands as a valuable complement to the scarce books on these people, including explorer Wilfrid Thesiger's classic *The Marsh Arabs* and Edward Ochsenschlager's ethnoarchaeological study *Iraq's Marsh Arabs in the Garden of Eden*. Eigeland entertains with his adventures and captures the atmosphere with his prose, but his photographs are this volume's strength. Most are candid; where they're posed, the people's warmth and character shines. He records all aspects of their lives such as building with reeds, cooking, fishing, hunting and playing. This book suits home coffee tables as well as the bookshelves of anyone interested in the human history of Iraq.

—GRAHAM CHANDLER



333 Saints: A Life of Scholarship in

Timbuktu. Alexandra Huddleston. 2013, Kyoudai Press, 978-0-98604-370-3, \$50 hb.

In the mid-16th century, Timbuktu established its reputation as a center of Islamic

learning, hosting more than 150 schools for science, literature and religious studies. Large collections of books and manuscripts existed, some gathered into central collections, but even more carefully tended by local families intent on preserving this heritage. American photographer Alexandra Huddleston, supported by a Fulbright fellowship, spent 10 months in Timbuktu in 2006-2007 photographing contemporary life and documenting scholarly and religious culture. This book features 36 of her best images, with commentaries. The fact that a young American woman could be accepted into the local culture and allowed to make these photographs is striking evidence of the openness, tolerance and moderation that has long characterized Islam in West Africa, despite the more recent actions of a small, militant minority.

—CHARLES O. CECIL



Above: **Artist El Hadji Sy** walks through one of his own works at the Shave workshop, Somerset, UK, 1995. Right: **Portrait du Président**, acrylic and tar on butcher's paper, 190 x 200 cm, 2012.



El Hadji Sy: *Painting, Performance, Politics*. In 1985, the Weltkulturen Museum in Frankfurt commissioned the artist and curator El Hadji Sy (born 1954 in Dakar, Senegal) to assemble a new group of works of contemporary art from his homeland, to initiate a long-term relationship between the two cities. Thirty years later, as part of a programmatic investigation into its collection, the museum presents a retrospective of Sy's career as a painter and cultural activist. The exhibition combines Sy's installations and paintings—sometimes executed with his bare feet or produced on such unusual surfaces as industrial rice sacking or synthetic kite silk—with his selection of ethnographic objects and artworks by colleagues from Senegal. It includes loans from international private collections in addition to works from the museum's own collections. As a founder of the collective Laboratoire AGIT'ART, and a curator of numerous artist-led workshops and studio spaces in Dakar, Sy is known for an interdisciplinary practice that continues to break new ground. Weltkulturen Museum, **Frankfurt**, through October 18.

Current **March**

Mshatta in Focus: *The Jordanian Desert Palace in Historical Photographs*. The richly decorated façade of the early Islamic desert palace of Mshatta was presented as a gift from the Ottoman sultan to the German emperor in 1903, when it was transported from the Jordanian desert to Berlin, where it now forms the centerpiece of the Museum für Islamische Kunst's collection, on show in the Pergamonmuseum. Its accession history began with a series of photographs of the façade, which circulated among European archeologists and art historians around the turn of the century and eventually landed in the hands of Kaiser Wilhelm II. The façade was photographed at several key moments in its recent history: before and during its dismantling, after the bombing of the structure during World War II and during its subsequent restoration in the 1950s. Pergamonmuseum, **Berlin**, through March 15.

The Lost Dhow: *A Discovery from the Maritime Silk Route*. In 1998 an Arab ship carrying goods from China was discovered at the bottom of the Indian Ocean off Belitung Island, Indonesia. Dating from the ninth century (China's Tang dynasty), the Belitung shipwreck is the earliest Arab vessel of this period to be found with a complete cargo, including silver ingots, bronze mirrors, spice-filled jars, intricately worked vessels of silver and gold, and thousands of ceramic bowls, ewers and other vessels. Uncovering its mysterious origins reveals the interconnections between two great powers, the Tang and Abbasid empires. The exhibition provides the earliest evidence

of a maritime silk route—and speaks to the vibrant exchange of ideas and technologies between peoples that occurred centuries before the Portuguese entered the region in the late 15th century. Aga Khan Museum, **Toronto**, through March 15.

Maps of Persia 1477-1925: *A Graphical Journey through the History of Iran* presents a selection of urban plans, topographic maps and sea charts from "Dr. Cyrus Ala'i's Map Collection of Persia," more than 250 maps that were given to the Centre for Iranian Studies at the School of African and Oriental Studies (SOAS) in 2013. The collection includes important printed general maps of Persia and specialist items from Ptolemaic editions at the end of the 15th century up until the end of the Qajar dynasty in 1925. Brunei Gallery, SOAS, University of **London**, through March 21.

Grand Parade: *A Unique Art Installation by Jompjet Kuswidananto*. The Indonesian artist Jompjet Kuswidananto makes a unique presentation of his

famous groups of parade figures. Rather than being retrospective of individual works, it serves as a new art installation, conceived as a dynamic whole. The assembly of life-size mechanical figures within the installation is modelled on the groups found in the Indonesian public domain during festive, ceremonial or political parades—with each figure wearing a costume, carrying a musical instrument and coming into action through movement of hands, clapping and instrument playing. Tropenmuseum, **Amsterdam**, through March 22.

Nasta'liq: *The Genius of Persian Calligraphy* is the first exhibition to focus on the calligraphic script developed in 14th-century Iran that remains one of the most expressive forms of esthetic refinement in Persian culture. More than 20 works ranging from 1400 to 1600, the height of *nasta'liq's* development, tell the story of the script's transformation from a simple conveyer of the written word into an artistic form on its own. The narrative thread emphasizes the achievements of four of the great-

est master calligraphers, whose manuscripts and individual folios were and still are appreciated not only for their content, but also for their technical virtuosity and visual quality. Sackler Gallery, **Washington, D.C.**, through March 22.

Southeast Asia: 800 CE–Present enables students to explore the arts and material culture of Burma, Thailand, Vietnam and Laos and the island nations of Indonesia, Philippines and Malaysia, all part of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which represents a broad and complex sweep of landscapes, cultures and religions. Temple architecture, sculpture, painting and manuscripts highlight the distinctive regional characteristics of religious practice and belief. Victoria and Albert Museum, **London**, through March 23.

Witness at a Crossroads: *Photographer Marc Riboud in Asia* chronicles the French photographer's journeys across Asia during the mid-1950s and 1960s, a period of great cultural and political transition in the region. More than 100 arresting black-and-white photographs offer glimpses into everyday life in Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal, China and Japan, illuminating tensions between tradition and postwar modernity. From a camel market in Rajasthan to music-hall dancers in Tokyo to an extraordinary meeting by the Dalai Lama, Zhou Enlai, Indira Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, Riboud's photographs capture moments of humanity, humor and intimacy. Also on display are correspondence between Riboud and his mentor Henri Cartier-Bresson, press cards, contact sheets, maps and personal items such as the photographer's passport and camera. The Rubin Museum of Art, **New York**, through March 23.

Poetry and Exile: *Works by Abdallah Benanteur, Ipek Duben, Mireille Kassir, Mona Saudi and Canan Tolon*, drawn from recent acquisitions of works by artists of the Middle East and North Africa by the British Museum, explores the effects of exile through the eyes of five artists. There are many forms of exile expressed here. For Canan Tolon, it is exile from her home in Istanbul as a result of contracting polio as a child, the story of which she evokes in "Futur Imparfait." Ipek Duben's book *Refugee*, with its delicate gauze pages, belies the terror and helplessness of people forced to flee their homeland. Mona Saudi and Abdallah Benanteur combine the powerful verses of Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish with drawings, while Mireille Kassir conjures a story of exile from her own family history and the Persian poem "The Conference of the Birds." The British Museum, **London**, through March 29.

Emperor Charles v Captures Tunis: Documenting a Campaign. In June 1535 Emperor Charles v set sail from Sardinia at the head of a fleet of 400 ships carrying more than 30,000 soldiers to reconquer the Kingdom of Tunis from the Ottomans. To document the campaign and his hoped-for victory, he brought with him not only historians and poets but also his court painter, Jan Cornelisz Vermeyen. In 1543 the Flemish artist was commissioned to paint the cartoons for 12 monumental tapestries celebrating the campaign from the countless drawings and sketches he had carried

back from North Africa. These unique cartoons are the focus of this exhibition, highlighting different aspects of the dramatic events of 1535. Kunsthistorisches Museum, **Vienna**, through March 31.

The Rainbow Behind the Black: 100 Years of Saudi Arabian Dress and Accessories. Brunei Gallery, School of African and Oriental Studies, University of **London**, through March 31.

Current April

Dara. It is 1659 in Mughal India. The imperial court is a place of opulence and excess. Two brothers, whose mother's death inspired the Taj Mahal, are heirs to this Muslim empire. Now they fight ferociously for succession. Dara, the crown prince, has the love of the people—and of his emperor father—but younger brother Aurangzeb holds a different vision for India's future. Islam inspires poetry in Dara, puritanical rigor in Aurangzeb. Can Jahanara, their beloved sister, assuage Aurangzeb's resolve to seize the Peacock Throne and purge the empire? National Theatre, **London**, through April 4.

Egypt's Mysterious Book of the Faiyum is an exquisitely illustrated papyrus from Greco-Roman Egypt, one of the most intriguing ancient representations of a place ever found. The papyrus depicts the Faiyum Oasis, located west of the Nile, as a center of prosperity and ritual. For the first time in more than 150 years, major sections owned by the Walters Art Museum and the Morgan Library & Museum, separated since the manuscript was divided and sold in the 19th century, have been reunited. Egyptian jewelry, papyri, statues, reliefs and ritual objects illuminate the religious context that gave rise to this enigmatic text, which celebrates the crocodile god, Sobek, and his special relationship with the Faiyum. Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen, **Mannheim, Germany**, through April 15.

Ancient Lives, New Discoveries introduces eight people from ancient Egypt and Sudan whose bodies have been preserved, either naturally or by deliberate embalming. Using the latest technology, the exhibition unlocks hidden secrets to build up a picture of their lives in the Nile Valley over a remarkable 4,000 years—from prehistoric Egypt to Christian Sudan. From a priest's daughter to a temple singer, a middle-aged man to a young child, a temple doorkeeper to a woman with a Christian tattoo, the exhibit explores how they lived and what happened to them after they died. Using interactive technology, new information is revealed about each mummy, from its state of health to how it was embalmed and preserved, unraveling the mysteries of mummification and providing a unique insight into each of these lives. The British Museum, **London**, through April 19.

Helen Zughaib's Stories My Father Told Me. The art of storytelling has a vibrant history in Arab and Arab American culture. Passed down from one generation to the next, family stories help preserve the past and maintain cultural traditions. Artist Helen Zughaib's father, Elia, tells of his life in Lebanon and Damascus in tales of family, community, adventure and morality. These rich stories inspired Zughaib in 2003 to illustrate and, in effect, copy them down

on canvas. United for the first time, these 23 paintings represent personal accounts, as well as folktales retold. Arab American National Museum, **Dearborn, Michigan**, through April 19.

Points of Contact: New Approaches to Islamic Art. Over the past decades, the study of Islamic material culture has been marked by increased scholarly attention to transcultural dimensions of art, architecture and archeology. This coincides with an interest in histories of mobility generated by contemporary discourse. It has taken a variety of forms, from attention to the modalities and effects of circulation—the result of diplomatic exchange and gifting, long-distance trade, or looting and reuse, for example—to research on media and regions that lie on the margins of the Islamic world, or outside the traditional boundaries of the canon. "Points of Contact" is a lecture series that introduces some of the exciting new scholarship generated by these developments. Institute of Fine Arts, **New York University**, through April 23.

Sophie Calle: For the Last and First Time consists of two recent projects by one of today's leading French artists. "The Last Image" (2010), a series of photographs accompanied by texts, and "Voi la mer" (2011), a series of digital films, take an incisive, poetic look at the particular reality of the mental images of blind people in Istanbul and at the discovery of beauty and the sublime. Musée d'art contemporain de **Montréal**, through April 26.

Current May

She Who Tells a Story: Women Photographers from Iran and the Arab World introduces the pioneering work of 12 leading women photographers: Jananne Al-Ani, Boushra Almutawakel, Gohar Dashti, Rana El Nemr, Lalla Essaydi, Shadi Ghadirian, Tanya Habjouqa, Rula Halawani, Nermine Hammam, Rania Matar, Shirin Neshat and Newsha Tavakolian. They have tackled the very notion of representation with passion and power, questioning tradition and challenging perceptions of Middle Eastern identity. Their provocative work ranges from fine art to photojournalism and provides insights into political and social issues, including questions of personal identity. They explore the complex political and social landscapes of their home regions in images of great sophistication, expressiveness and beauty. Cantor Arts Center at **Stanford [California]** University, through May 4.

Bazm and Razm: Feast and Fight in Persian Art. For centuries, Persian kingship was epitomized by two complementary pursuits: *bazm* (feast) and *razm* (fight). The ruler's success as both a reveler and hunter/warrior distinguished him as a worthy and legitimate sovereign. The pairing of *bazm* and *razm* as the ultimate royal activities is an ancient concept with roots in pre-Islamic Iran. It is a recurring theme in the *Shahnama* (*Book of Kings*)—the Persian national epic—as well as other poetic and historic texts. This exhibition features some three dozen works of art in various media, created between the 15th century and the present day. Works from the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Department of Islamic Art that illustrate the linked nature of *bazm* and *razm* are displayed alongside correspond-

ing works—primarily Persian—from the departments of Asian Art, Arms and Armor, and Musical Instruments. The exhibition charts the gradual shift in meaning and usage of this pairing as it emerged from a strictly royal, or princely, context and became more widespread. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York**, through May 31.

Connecting Continents: Indian Ocean Trade and Exchange is a small display featuring objects that show the long and complex history of Indian Ocean trade and exchange from ancient times. For thousands of years, the Indian Ocean has been a space through which people, objects and ideas have circulated. The monsoon winds enabled merchants to travel among Africa, the Middle East and Asia, exchanging valuable commodities such as textiles, spices and ceramics. From early coastal trade between the great ancient civilizations of the Indus Valley and Mesopotamia through to the heyday of European East India companies until now, the Indian Ocean has remained a dynamic economic maritime zone. This display presents objects from across different sections of the British Museum's collection, including a 19th-century boat from Indonesia, created entirely from cloves, and a Roman necklace made from sapphires and garnets, to tell this fascinating history of global interaction. The British Museum, **London**, through May 31.

Marvels and Mirages of Orientalism: Benjamin-Constant in His Time is the first major exhibition on Orientalism to be presented in Canada. Through this unusual retrospective, visitors will discover the dazzling color palette of an acclaimed painter of the Belle Époque, Jean Joseph Benjamin-Constant, who was influenced by his trips to Moorish Spain and the Morocco of the *cherifas*. His huge, spectacular canvasses conjure up fantasies of a dreamlike Orient, viewed through the prism of folklore, ethnographic pretext and pure imagination. **Montreal Museum of Fine Arts**, through May 31.

The Traveler's Eye: Scenes of Asia features more than 100 works created over the past five centuries, providing glimpses of travels across Asia, from pilgrimages and research trips to expeditions for trade and tourism. The exhibition juxtaposes East Asian scrolls, Japanese woodblock prints and contemporary photography with maps, archeological drawings and souvenirs, concluding with three vignettes on western travelers who recorded and remembered Asia during the last century: German archeologist Ernst Herzfeld in Central Asia, American collector and museum-founder Charles Lang Freer in China, and the many travelers worldwide who shared memories with mass-produced, hand-colored postcards. Sackler Gallery, **Washington, D.C.**, through May 31.

Current June

Sharjah Biennial 12: The Past, the Present, the Possible began to take shape in a private conversation between Danh Vo and curator Eugie Joo in early 2013. They discussed the relevance of contemporary art; the potential or artistic positions to imagine something beyond current states of social and political confinement; and the need for artists to play active roles in imagining the possible.

"SB12" showcases more than 50 artists and cultural practitioners from around 25 countries who participate in the process of imagining Sharjah through education, culture, religion, heritage and science by introducing ideas of the possible through art and work. **Sharjah** [UAE] Art Foundation, through June 5.

Unearthing Arabia: *The Archaeological Adventures of Wendell Phillips.* Wendell Phillips headed the largest archeological expedition to South Arabia (present-day Yemen) from 1949-1951. Accompanied by leading scholars, scientists and technicians, he was on a quest to uncover two ancient cities—Tamna, the capital of the once-prosperous Qataban kingdom, and Marib, the reputed home of the legendary Queen of Sheba—that had flourished along the fabled incense road some 2,500 years earlier. Through a selection of unearthed objects as well as film and photography shot by the exhibition team, the collection highlights Phillips's key finds, recreates his adventures and conveys the thrill of discovery on the last great archeological frontier. Sackler Gallery, **Washington, D.C.**, through June 7.

Beyond the Beat: *Drums of the World* explores the immeasurable cultural and historical significance of drums around the world through the presentation of dozens of drums of all shapes, sizes, materials and uses from Asia, Oceania, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, Latin America and the us. The collection is accompanied by dozens of videos, photographs and multimedia content selected from sources around the globe. The unique exhibition also highlights themes ranging from varieties of drum construction and performance techniques to differing concepts of rhythm in Asia, Africa and the Americas, as well as the role of drums in rituals, military events and even systems of nonverbal communication. Musical Instrument Museum, **Phoenix**, through June 21.

Current July and later

India: *Jewels That Enchanted the World* examines the legacy of 500 years of Indian jewelry, from the 17th century to the present. More than 300 pieces of jewelry and jeweled objects are brought together for the first time to showcase the beauty of Indian craftsmanship, the magnificence of gemstone setting and the refinement of Indian taste. Assembled from more than 30 museums, institutions and private collections, the exhibition is the most comprehensive ever staged on the subject. Its first section focuses on the jewelry tradi-

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Marvelous Creatures:

Animal Fables in Islamic Art focuses on the real and mythical animals that appear in the legends, tales and fables of the Islamic world.

Divided into quadrants of earth, air, fire and water, these marvelous creatures introduce timeless stories such as the well-known and beloved classics *Shahnameh* and *1001 Nights*. Animals feature in the artistic production of diverse cultures from far-flung times and places that are nonetheless connected by their shared celebration of traditional fables and the messages, knowledge and lessons found in these stories. The exhibition offers interactive experiences, and the majority of artworks presented are on display for the first time. A wide range of programs for adults, schools and families accompanies the exhibition. The Museum of Islamic Art, **Doha, Qatar**, through July 11.

Polychrome underglaze painted dish with hare motif from Iznik, Turkey, 16th century.



tions of South India: monumental pieces crafted from gold, worked in relief and decorated with gemstone flowers and birds. The second is devoted to the jeweled splendor of the courts of the Mughals, who came as conquerors, ruled as emperors and, as connoisseurs, patronized artists, architects, enamellers and jewelers. A further section is devoted to the symbiosis between India and European jewelry houses and the cross-cultural influences that resulted in the 19th and early 20th centuries. It concludes with the work of two of India's leading present-day jewelry houses, The Gem Palace and Bhagat. Catalog in English and Russian. State Museums of **Moscow**, through July 27.

Beyond Bollywood: *Indian Americans Shape the Nation* elaborates on the history and contemporary experiences of Indian Americans as they have grown to be one of the more diverse and well-recognized communities in the us. Photographs, artifacts, videos and interactives trace their arrival and labor participation in the early 1900s, their achievements within various economic industries and their many contributions in building the nation. The exhibition also reveals how they have kept and shared their culture, and organized to meet the needs of the under-served. Asian Pacific American Center, **Washington, D.C.**, through August 16.

Chief S. O. Alonge: *Photographer to the Royal Court of Benin, Nigeria* showcases the photographs of Chief Solomon Osagie Alonge (1911-1994), one of Nigeria's premier photographers and the first official photographer to the

Royal Courts of Benin. Alonge's historic photographs document the rituals, pageantry and regalia of the court for more than a half century and provide rare insight into the early history and practice of studio photography in West Africa. National Museum of African Art, **Washington, D.C.**, through September 13.

Woven Luxuries: *Indian, Persian and Turkish Textiles from the Indicator Collection.* Used for furnishings—as carpets, spreads, bolsters, hangings, clothing—and exchanged as diplomatic gifts, silk velvets have been preeminent luxury textiles in many parts of the Islamic world and Europe, especially from the 15th century onwards. The 11 textiles in this exhibition, selected from a private New York collection, provide a glimpse into the richness and diversity of Iranian, Indian and Turkish silk velvets. Spanning three distinct cultural areas with their own design sensibilities and tastes, this group of textiles showcases different techniques of velvet production and suggests their varied uses. Of special note are the two complete 17th-century carpets from India and Iran, each measuring nearly 1.83 by 1.22 meters (72 x 48") and retaining not only their design elements but also their vibrant colors. These, along with nine other substantial textile fragments, show the cultural exchange between the Mughal, Safavid and Ottoman empires—and their shifting political, religious and economic ties. Asian Art Museum, **San Francisco**, through November 1.

Abdelkader Benchamma: *Representation of Dark Matter.* Abdelkader Benchamma creates an astrological vortex

in his strikingly graphic, site-specific drawing, rendered in intensely black lines against a wall's white surface. The work depicts the solar system's complexity and its nearly imperceptible dark matter. The physically expansive image resembles scientific illustrations of the Big Bang and alludes to explosive cosmic forces. The installation gives form to that which is infinitely large and perpetually transforming. The Drawing Center, **New York**, through March 1, 2016.

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

Coming March
Art Dubai 2015: *The Ninth Edition.* The leading international art fair in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia is a gathering place for collectors, artists and art professionals from across the region and beyond. Besides the gallery halls, comprising Contemporary, Modern and Market, the fair's extensive not-for-profit program includes artists' and curators' residencies; site-specific works and

commissioned performances; an exhibition of works by winners of the annual The Abraaj Group Art Prize; and the critically acclaimed Global Art Forum. Madinat Jumeirah, **Dubai**, March 18 through March 21.

New Rituals, New Religion? *Death's Dominion during the Copper Age of the Southern Levant.* Dynamic and continuously renegotiated, religion is often expressed through ritual performance. In the archeological record, ritual paraphernalia, iconography and sacred-built or natural space provide evidence for understanding the human need to materialize the ethereal nature of religious belief. During the late prehistoric periods in the southern Levant, an increase in ritual practice suggests a dramatic change during a time of demographic expansion and economic intensification. At the same time, elaborate new rituals surround death and disposal of the human body. In this lecture by Yorke M. Rowan, rituals surrounding death, secondary burial and the iconography of burial equipment during the Chalcolithic period (c. 4500-3600 BCE) offer insights into a period of high ritual intensification. TBA, **Albany, New York**, March 20; **Scarsdale Library, New York**, March 22.

Images of Women in 19th-Century Iran demonstrates the centrality of women in the artistic expression of 19th-century Iran and how it continues to inspire contemporary artists. The most popular representations of the Qajar era have been of male sovereigns, whose life-size portraits exaggerate masculinity to depict power. Yet this era also saw a period of artistic modernization in Iran, particularly in paintings and photography, in which depictions of women became essential elements of the scenes. Showcasing women at the court, and in private, alongside images of female musicians and aristocratic women, this exhibition explores rarely told narratives of the Qajar artistic tradition. Museum of Islamic Arts, **Doha, Qatar**, March 25 through January 30, 2016.

Coming **April**
One God – Abraham's Descendants on the Nile: *Jews, Christians and Muslims in Egypt from the Ancient World to the Middle Ages.* The longest tradition of coexistence between peoples of the Jewish, Christian and Islamic faiths is in Egypt. Seen for the first time from this unifying angle, the exhibition takes a closer look at the many facets of religious life and the day-to-day coexistence of the three faith communities in the country from the time of the Romans all the way up to the end of the reign of the Fatimids in the 12th century. The exhibition starts in the city of Alexandria—the political, cultural and theological capital founded in 331 BCE by Alexander the Great. The Egyptian Christians emerged and splintered from the Alexandrian Jewish community, with Christianity eventually becoming the dominant state religion until the arrival of the Arabs in 641. In the following centuries, Muslim rulers developed their own cultural and artistic identity, formed from the long-standing Greco-Roman tradition. Bode-Museum, **Berlin**, April 2 through September 13.

Sultans of Deccan India, 1500-1700: *Opulence and Fantasy.* The Deccan plateau of south-central India was home to a succession of highly cultured Muslim kingdoms with a rich artistic heritage. Under their patronage in the 16th and 17th centuries, foreign influences—notably from Iran, Turkey, eastern Africa and Europe—combined with ancient and prevailing Indian traditions to create a distinctive Indo-Islamic art and culture. This exhibition will bring together some 165 of the finest works from major international, private and royal collections. Featuring many remarkable loans from India, the exhibition—which is the most comprehensive museum presentation on this subject to date—will explore the unmistakable character of classical Deccani art in various media: poetic lyricism in painting, lively creations in metalwork and a distinguished tradition of textile production. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York**, April 20 through July 26.

Coming **May**
İnci Eviner. The Drawing Center presents a selection of videos by Turkish artist İnci Eviner, whose work forges a relationship between new-media techniques and traditional Turkish art practices. The repetitive, hypnotically shifting scenes depicted in the artist's videos address contemporary feminism at the crossroads of the East and West ("the face of the middle-class woman," as she puts it), while exploring broader historical narratives and notions of the body and performance. Eviner's complex scenes employ a variety of drawing traditions, including engravings, ceramic-tile designs and architectural plans. The Drawing Center, **New York**, May 29 through June 28.

Coming **September and later**
Egypt's Sunken Secrets will display 293 artifacts from different Egyptian museums: 18 from the Egyptian Museum in Tahrir Square, 22 from the Graeco-Roman Museum, 31 from the Alexandria National Museum, 15 from the Bibliotheca Alexandrina Museum and 207 from the Sunken Monuments Department. Institut du monde arabe, **Paris**, September 7 through January 2016; Martin-Gropius-Bau exhibition hall, **Berlin**, April 15 through August 2016; **London**, November 15, 2016, through March 2017.

Pearls on a String: Art and Biography in the Islamic World presents the arts of Islamic cultures from the point of view of authors and artists from historical Muslim societies, offering an alternative to impersonal presentations of Islamic art. Instead, the exhibition focuses on specific people and relationships among cultural tastemakers threaded together "as pearls on a string," a Persian metaphor for human connectedness—especially among painters, calligraphers, poets and their patrons. The exhibition highlights the exceptional art of the Islamic manuscript and underscores the book's unique ability to relate narratives about specific people. Through a series of vignettes, the visitor is introduced to the art inextricably linked to the men and women who shaped the Islamic past and contribute to its future. Walters Art Museum, **Baltimore**, November 8 through January 31.

PERMANENT / INDEFINITE
Islamic Art Now: Contemporary Art of the Middle East. In recent years, the parameters of Islamic art have expanded to include works by artists from or with roots in the Middle East. Drawing inspiration from their own

cultural traditions, these artists use techniques, and incorporate imagery and ideas from earlier periods. The **Los Angeles** County Museum of Art (LACMA) has recently begun to acquire such work within the context of its holdings of Islamic art, understanding that the ultimate success and relevance of this collection lies in building creative links among the past, present and future. Islamic Art Now marks the first major installation of LACMA's collection of contemporary art of the Middle East. The first of a two-part program, this exhibition features approximately 25 works by artists from Iran and the Arab world. LACMA, ongoing.

Welten der Muslime (Muslim Worlds) takes a look at topics that continue to play an important role in the way Muslims perceive themselves and others. Architectural structures such as the richly decorated wall of a guest house from Afghanistan serve as the living embodiment of topics such as the gender-specific use of space and the convention, now hotly debated, whereby women are consigned to the private sphere and men to the public. The complex diversity of the Islamic religion and the phenomena of everyday religious practice are illustrated through a range of objects from various Muslim sources. Ethnologisches Museum, **Berlin**.

Information is correct at press time, but please reconfirm dates and times before traveling. Most listings have further information available online and at aramcoworld.com. Readers are welcome to submit information for possible inclusion. Some listings appear courtesy of *Canvas* magazine (www.canvasonline.com).

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