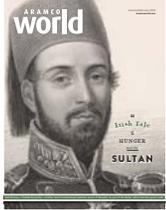


ARAMCO
World

January/February 2015
aramcoworld.com

An
Irish Tale
of
HUNGER
and the
SULTAN

Irish Distress—Turkish Sympathy.—A letter from Constantinople mentions an act of liberality on part of the Sultan, which does him great credit



Ruler of the Ottoman Empire from age 16, Sultan Abdülmedjid I keenly cultivated ties to industrializing Europe. He had to reduce his aid to hungry Ireland lest he impertinently outdo Ireland's own ruler, Queen Victoria of England. He nevertheless earned wide praise, including this news clipping from April 21, 1847. Lithograph courtesy Bridgeman Images.

Publisher

Aramco Services Company

President

Nabeel M. Amudi

Director

Public Affairs

Alma Kombargi

Editor

Richard Dougherty

Assistant Editors

Arthur P. Clark

Alva Robinson

Circulation

Edna Catchings

Administration

Sarah Miller

Print Design

and Production

Graphic Engine Design

Printed in the USA

RR Donnelley/Wetmore

Digital Design

and Production

eSiteful Corporation

Online Translations

Transperfect

Contacts

Subscriptions:

aramcoworld@aramcoservices.com

Editorial:

editor@aramcoservices.com

Mail:

AramcoWorld

Post Office Box 2106

Houston, Texas

77252-2106 USA

ISSN

1530-5821

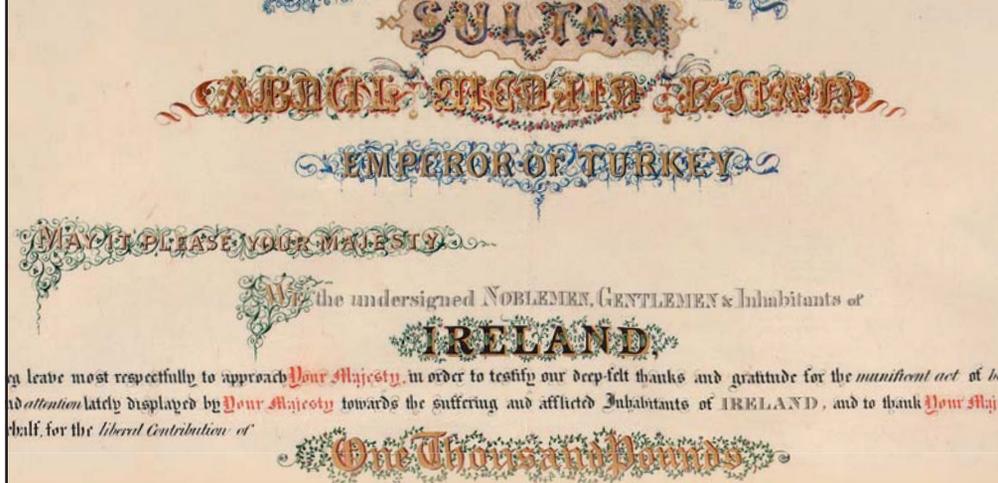
Back Cover



Inspired by the many cats in the streets of Er-Riadh, French street artist C215 adorned the Tunisian village with more than a dozen polychrome felines. Photo by Kevin Bubriski.

Welcome to the inaugural issue of *AramcoWorld*, formerly *Saudi Aramco World*. Our name has changed to reflect our global organization and readership. Our award-winning coverage awaits you inside and at www.aramcoworld.com.

Saudi Aramco and Aramco are trademarks of the Saudi Arabian Oil Company. Saudi Aramco is a leading, globally integrated energy and chemicals company. We distribute *AramcoWorld* to increase cross-cultural understanding by broadening knowledge of the histories, cultures and geography of the Arab and Muslim worlds and their global connections. In print, *AramcoWorld* is distributed six times a year, without charge, to a limited number of interested readers; online, it is archived and indexed from 1960 to the present.



2 An Irish Tale of Hunger and the Sultan

Written and photographed by Tom Verde

In 1847, the staple food of Ireland's poor—potatoes—was being ruined by blight. Among those to send aid was the 24-year-old Sultan Abdülmedjid I of Turkey. His gift—and there may, or may not, have been more than one—spawned both legend and diplomatic friendship.

12 Djerba's Museum of the Street

Written by Caroline Stone
Photography by Kevin Bubriski

As street art grows more popular worldwide as a mark of civic vitality, a French-Tunisian partnership sponsored more than 200 works by more than 100 street artists from more than 30 countries in the village of Er-Riadh at the center of the Tunisian island of Djerba.

"When people saw what was being painted on other people's walls," says one resident, they said, "We want something too!"



The Blues of Arabia

Written by Edward Fox
Photography by Hatim Oweida

The music known as “Voice of the Gulf”—*sawt al-khaleej* in Arabic—came from fishermen and pearl divers who joined tales of hardship and longing with cathartic rhythms, which today resonate from Kuwait south to Oman—especially in Bahrain, where the Ensemble Muhammad bin Faris enralls audiences weekly with modern touches on tradition.



32

Luxor's First Local Lens

Written by Maria Golia
Photographs courtesy of Ehab Gaddis

In 1907, Attiya Gaddis opened in his native Luxor its first Egyptian-owned photographic studio. Based there, he photographed more than 60 years of events and hundreds, even thousands, of people, creating a uniquely local visual record that his descendants are preserving and making available to the public.



40

Travelers of Al-Andalus, Part 1: The Travel Writer Ibn Jubayr

Written by Daniel Grammatico and Louis Werner
Art by Belén Esturla

Our six-part series begins with a two-year pilgrimage by one of the great founders of the literary genre of *rihla*, or travelogue. Over later centuries, his style was widely emulated (and plagiarized), and today the *rihla* of Ibn Jubayr uniquely illuminates a 12th-century Mediterranean world of paradoxical complexity.



44

**Classroom
Guide**

Written by Julie Weiss

46

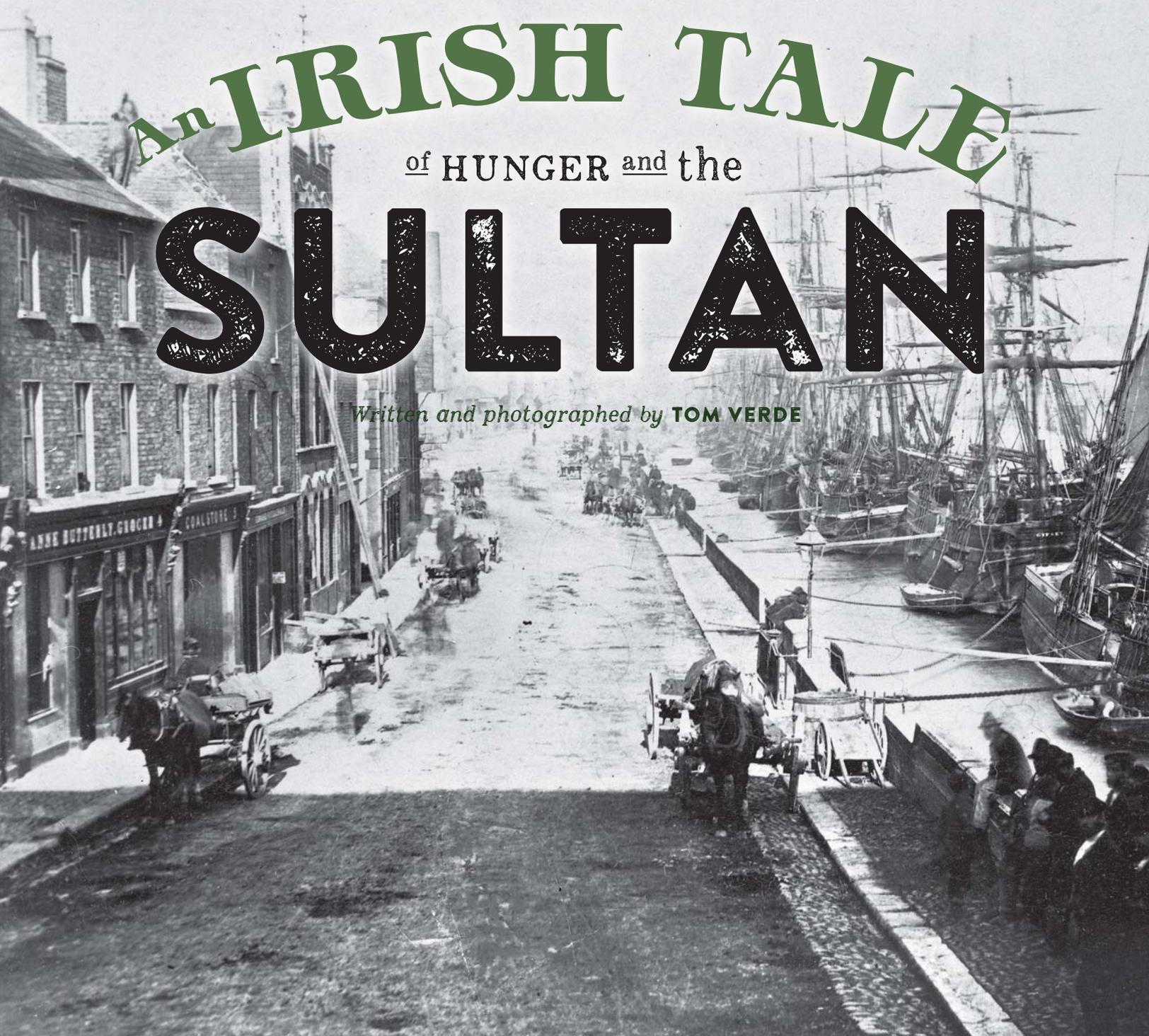
**Events &
Exhibitions**

AN IRISH TALE

of HUNGER and the

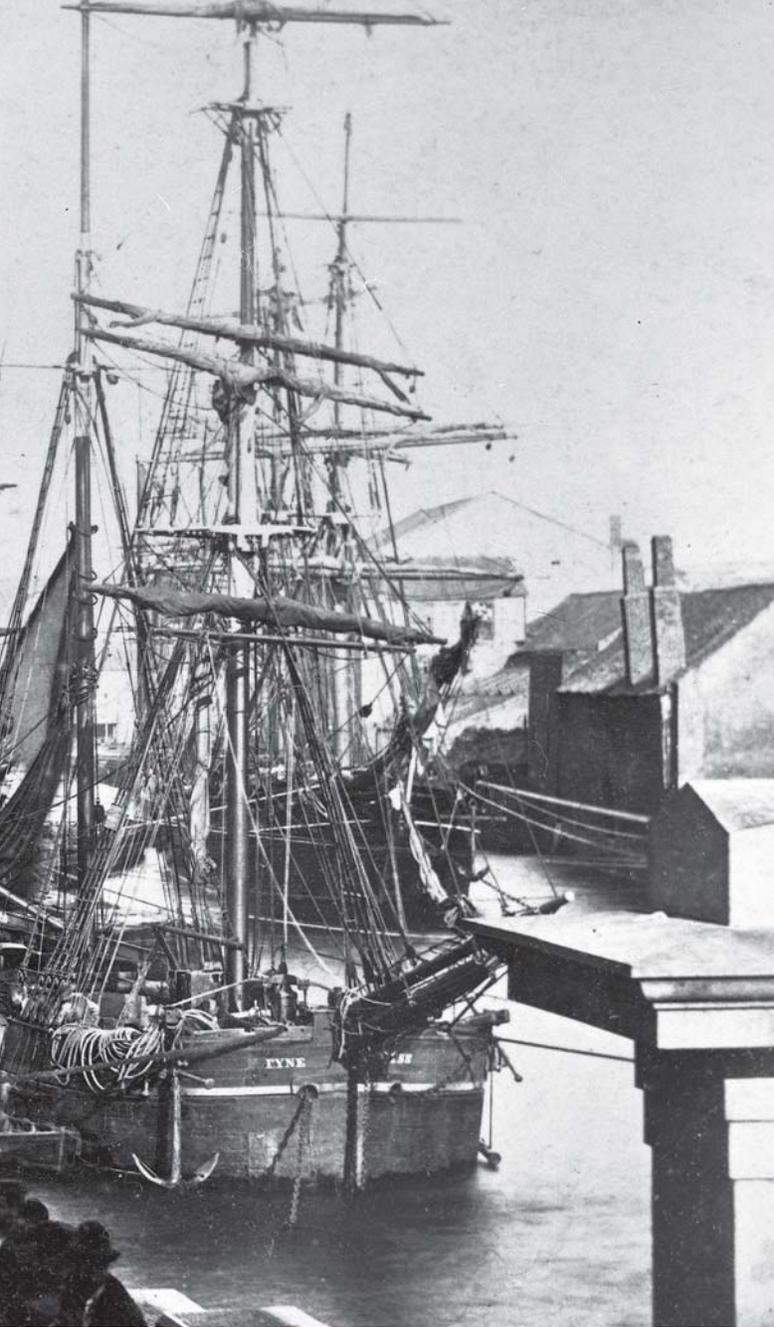
SULTAN

Written and photographed by TOM VERDE



The story goes like this: In 1847, the worst year of the Irish potato famine, an Irish physician in service to the Ottoman Sultan in Istanbul beseeched the sovereign to send aid to his starving countrymen. His pleas moved Sultan Abdülmedjid I to pledge £10,000 sterling; however, upon learning that England's Queen Victoria was sending a mere £2,000, the Sultan, out of diplomatic politesse, reduced his donation to £1,000. Nevertheless determined to give more, he secretly dispatched three ships loaded with grain to call at the port of Drogheda in County Louth, north of Dublin. In gratitude, the city of Drogheda incorporated the Turkish star and crescent into its municipal crest, a symbol that endures to this day, appearing even on the jerseys of the Drogheda United football club.

Now, like many an Irish tale, some of the story is true and some is legend, while other parts? Blarney.



Like many other foreign governments, the Ottoman court indeed sent famine aid to Ireland in 1847. And the Sultan's initial pledge was, in fact, reduced in deference to diplomacy. It is further true that many foreign nationals, including at least one Irish physician, served in both Topkapı Palace and the Sublime Porte (the administrative seat of the Ottoman government) during the reign of Abdülmedjid I between 1839 and 1861. To what extent, if at all, this son of Ireland influenced the Sultan's decision to send aid, however, is unclear. Even murkier are the details of the ships and their connections, if any, to the town's symbolic star and crescent.

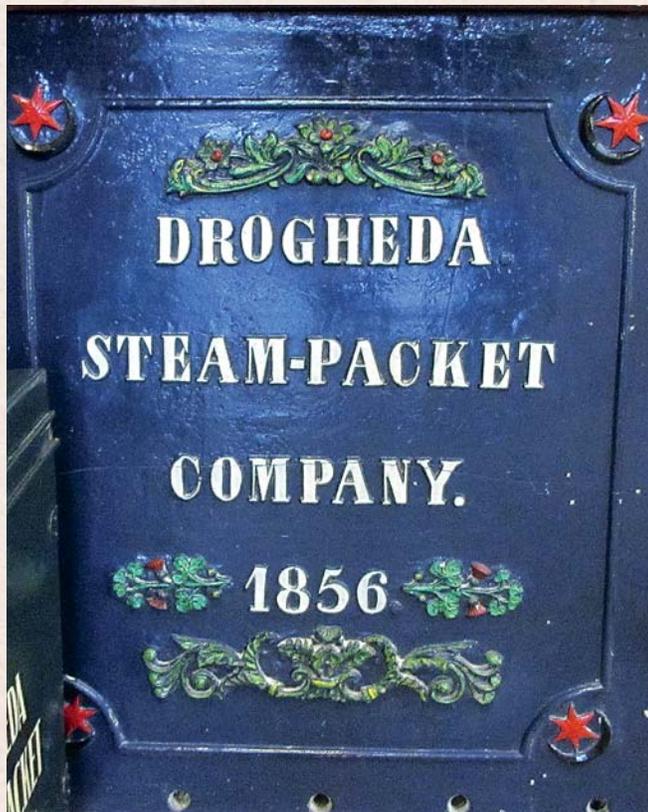
News of a "blight of unusual character" ravaging potato fields on Britain's Isle of Wight first reached the desk of University of London botanist John Lindley in August of 1845. As editor of the *Gardner's Chronicle and Horticultural Gazette*, Lindley expressed guarded concern, and he requested that his readers submit any further information about the blight. But later that month, when the catastrophe hit closer to home, leaving "hardly a sound [potato] in Covent Garden market," as Lindley observed, his tone shifted to alarm: "A fearful malady has broken out among the potato crop. On all sides we hear of the destruction.... As for cure of this distemper, there is none.... We are visited by a great calamity."

If the English were alarmed, that was nothing compared to the panic that gripped Ireland by autumn. Seemingly unstoppable, the disease wiped out one-third of the crop that was practically the sole source of nourishment for more than 3 million of Ireland's lower classes. The cause of the blight—unknown to Lindley and his Dublin-based colleagues who desperately sought a remedy—was the



Opposite: Since the late 12th century, Drogheda, Ireland, has thrived on maritime commerce. This photo of the Boyne River docks was made in 1885, a generation after "The Great Hunger" of 1847 that lasted into the early 1850s: If indeed three Turkish ships brought food aid during that time, it is likely they would have tied up here. Left: Dedicated in 1997 in Dublin to honor the millions of Irish who variously endured, emigrated or perished, "Famine," by sculptor Rowan Gillespie, is a graphic reminder of the nation's most desperate years.

fungus *Phytophthora infestans*, which first appeared as whitish patches on the plant's withering leaves. The disease's airborne spores then spread rapidly, reducing fields of healthy tubers within hours to rotting heaps of blackened mush, the stench of which was unbearable. The following year was even worse



as the blight rampaged across the island. The loss of tens of thousands of hectares, as one shocked witness recorded, was but “the work of a night.”

The population's over-reliance on the potato compounded the crisis. A New World crop, potatoes were introduced to Ireland during the late 16th and early 17th centuries by English colonists. At first, they were considered an upper-class delicacy. By 1800, a fleshy, knobby variety known as the “lumper” potato—ideally suited to Ireland's cool, wet climate—had replaced oatmeal as a dietary staple among the poor and working class. Cheap, high-yielding and nutritious, lumper potatoes, when mixed with a little milk or buttermilk, provided enough carbohydrates, protein and minerals to sustain life, presuming enough were eaten. Thus, the average Irish male ate 45 potatoes a day; an average woman, about 36; and an average child, 15. Deeply entrenched in Ireland's economy and lifestyle, the potato was, in the words of a traditional Gaelic folk song, adoringly praised as *Grá mo chroí* (“Love of my heart”).

Despite the loss of this beloved and critical resource, Ireland was by no means bereft of food. Indeed, its farms and pastures abounded with pigs, cattle and sheep, as well as wheat, barley, oats and vegetables; its streams, rivers, lakes and coastline teemed with fish. The cruel irony was that most of this bounty was off-limits to the starving populace.

The best land in Ireland, which was then part of Great Britain, was owned by wealthy British and Anglo-Irish families, many of whom did not live in the country or, if they did, rarely strayed far enough from the urban districts of Dublin to set foot on their agricultural estates.

“Much of Ireland's ruling class came to take no more interest in the land they owned than they would in the affairs, say, of the South American mines in which they owned stock,” observed historian Tim Pat Coogan in *The Famine Plot: England's Role in Ireland's Greatest Tragedy*.

Further distancing the upper classes was the 1801 Act of Union that dissolved the Irish Parliament and placed the affairs of the country in the hands of distant London politicians. While some British Members of Parliament (MPs) were genuinely concerned for Ireland's welfare, most had little understanding of, let alone sympathy for, its people. To the most calloused, the Irish were “a class which at best wallows in pigsties,” as the *London Times* described them in January 1848.

Removed both geographically and culturally, many “absentee landlords,” as they were known, leased their properties to local wealthy farmers called “middlemen.” Like the families that hired them, the middlemen notoriously cared little for the estates they managed beyond their revenue-generating potential and, in turn, they sublet them to tenant farmers at often usurious rates. The tenant farmers, primarily in the eastern province of Leinster, further subdivided the land by leasing plots to landless laborers called “cottiers” who paid rent by working a certain number of days on the landlord's farm. In the west, in Connacht, tenant farmers themselves subleased even smaller plots, called conacre land,

Top: A decorative metal grid of the Drogheda Steam-Packet Company, founded in 1826 and by mid-century the city's dominant maritime business, is ornamented in each corner with the town's crescent-and-star ensign (that here shows a six-pointed star). That it looks so much like the crescent and star of the Turkish flag, above, led to inaccurate stories that, according to Drogheda historian Brendan Matthews, began to circulate in the 1930s linking the town's symbol with civic gratitude for Turkish aid.

to itinerant laborers, charging them twice the rate the tenant farmers paid to the middlemen.

In both systems, it was Ireland's poorest who bore on their backs the weight of the country's economy. During the years of the Napoleonic Wars, from 1803 to 1815, times were fairly good: Cut off from trade with central Europe because of the conflict, Britain turned to Ireland for foodstuffs and manufactured goods. But successive population explosions and the end of the wars left Ireland with a surplus of people and a dearth of jobs. By the 1840s, families that may have once had plenty now found themselves eking out subsistence livings by coaxing crops of potatoes from between parallel, flat-topped rows of heaped earth called "lazy beds," a farming method known in Ireland for 5,000 years, since the Bronze Age. Hunting game or fishing in lakes or streams was criminal poaching, and fishing along the coast was a seasonal operation that required a boat and tackle. When the blight struck in 1845, many people pawned or sold what fishing equipment they had to raise money for food, never dreaming that the following year would be even more disastrous.

Yet even as Ireland starved, most of the food produced on its farms continued to be exported to England, with the profits lining pockets for landowners. In the heated words of Irish revolutionary John Mitchell, who spoke more than two decades later in 1868, "God sent the blight, but the British sent the famine."

Modern historians, especially revisionists such as Coogan, sympathize with Mitchell's view, insisting that "The Great Hunger" is the more accurate term, since "famine" implies a shortage of food, which was not the case.

"There was plenty of food being produced and shipped out, but the people who grew it couldn't afford to buy any of it," says John O'Driscoll, curator of Ireland's Famine Museum at Strokestown Park in County Roscommon.

When tenants couldn't pay the rent—having spent whatever money they had and sold everything they owned to buy food—they were evicted, at the landlord's behest, by armed officials. To prevent tenants from returning, wrecking crews burned their cottages or reduced them to rubble. Witnessing such a scene, Strokestown parish priest Father Michael McDermott angrily wrote a letter to *The Evening Freeman*, published in December 1847: "I saw no necessity for the idle display of such a large force of military and police ... surrounding the poor man's cabin, setting fire to the roof while the half-starved, half-naked children were hastening away from the flames with yells of despair,

while the mother lay prostrate on the threshold writhing in agony, and the heartbroken father remained supplicating on his knees ... thus leaving the wretched outcasts no alternative but to perish in a ditch."

And perish they did. Even though the crop of 1847 was blight-free, the harvest was simply not large enough to feed the population. As recorded in Ireland's Census of 1851, deaths from starvation between 1844 and 1847 skyrocketed in most counties: from 8 to 480 in Roscommon; from 51 to 927 in Mayo; from 15 to 586 in Kerry—hence the dire epithet, "Black '47."

Some responded in anger, incited by the likes of Mitchell, and riots ensued in many of Ireland's towns and major cities as roving gangs and mobs looted homes, shops and warehouses.

Others chose emigration, scraping together what pennies they could to pay for passage to America with hopes for a better life. In 1851 alone, a quarter of a million Irish immigrants journeyed to the US and settled primarily in Boston and New York where, by 1855, a third of the population was Irish-born.

For those emigrating, the shipping hub of Liverpool, England, was typically their port for trans-Atlantic passage. Among the Irish cities offering regular steamship service to Liverpool was Drogheda, which became Ireland's second largest port of emigration, after Dublin.

"The number making their way by Liverpool through this port of Drogheda to America exceeds that of any former year,"



Drogheda's ensign has appeared variously with stars of five, six and seven points: Drogheda United Football Club, above, displays five; the almshouse of St. John, left and in detail, below, shows seven. The emblem originated in Byzantium, where the star showed eight points. English King Richard ("the Lionheart") adopted the crescent and star in 1192 upon his capture of Cyprus from Byzantine rule and bestowed it, two years later, on the port of Drogheda.



reported the *Drogheda Argus* in February 1847, a year in which as many as 70,000 people emigrated from Drogheda's docks. "Every day the town ... is crowded with cadaverous looking emigrants [and] unfortunate creatures who ... present an appearance absolutely frightful. Women and children have been seen actually contesting with cattle for pieces of raw turnips which were lying on the Steam Packet Quay."

And even as such scenes played out, export ships in ports throughout Ireland groaned under the weight of food.

"Would to God that you could stand for one five minutes in our street, and see with what a troop of miserable, squalid, starving creatures you would be instantaneously surrounded, with tears in their eyes and misery in their faces," wrote Kenmare parish priest John O'Sullivan in a letter to Charles Trevelyan, Britain's assistant secretary to Her Majesty's Treasury, in December 1847. "Whatever be the cost or expense, or on whatever party it may fall, every Christian must admit, that the people must not be suffered to starve in the midst of plenty."

Trevelyan, however, was not among the Christians who shared O'Sullivan's views, believing instead that the blight was sent by God as an opportunity for Ireland's "moral and political improvement."

Yet far to the east, there was a ruler who heeded the spirit of O'Sullivan's plea.

Sultan Abdülmedjid I was 24 years old in 1847. Having acceded to the Ottoman throne at 16, he would rule the empire, which reached from Morocco to Central Asia, until his death in 1861 at age 39. He was a calligrapher, fluent and literate in Arabic, Persian and French; a devotee of European literature; and an early audiophile of classical music and opera, the tinny, newly recorded sounds of which drifted from his tent

on imperial outings. He also shared a keen interest in the latest advancements in western science, medicine and technology. After witnessing a demonstration of Samuel Morse's new invention, the telegraph, at Istanbul's Beylerbeyi Palace in 1847, he conferred upon the inventor the *Nishan İftichar* (Order of Glory) and delighted in personally transmitting a message

between the harem and the palace's main entrance.

In addition to his enthusiasm for innovation, Abdülmedjid I became known

also for charity. Sickly as a child, he wished to spare his subjects the ravages of infectious diseases. During his official tours of the empire, for example, he would have village children vaccinated in his presence.

Politically, he was just as progressive. Determined to modernize the empire, the young Sultan set about instituting the wide-reaching *tanzimat* ("reorganization") envisioned by his father, Sultan Mahmud II. This included abolishing executions without trials, issuing the first Ottoman banknotes, laying the foundations of the first Ottoman Parliament and establishing a system of modern, secular institutions, schools and universities under one umbrella, the newly formed Ministry of Education. Hoping to dampen ethnic nationalism, he extended full citizenship and equality before the law to all Ottoman subjects, regardless of ethnicity or religion. At court, he swept aside centuries of onerous etiquette: No longer would foreign emissaries have to check their ceremonial swords at the door, be doused in rosewater, wear kaftans over their uniforms and sit lower than the Sultan—if allowed into his presence at all.

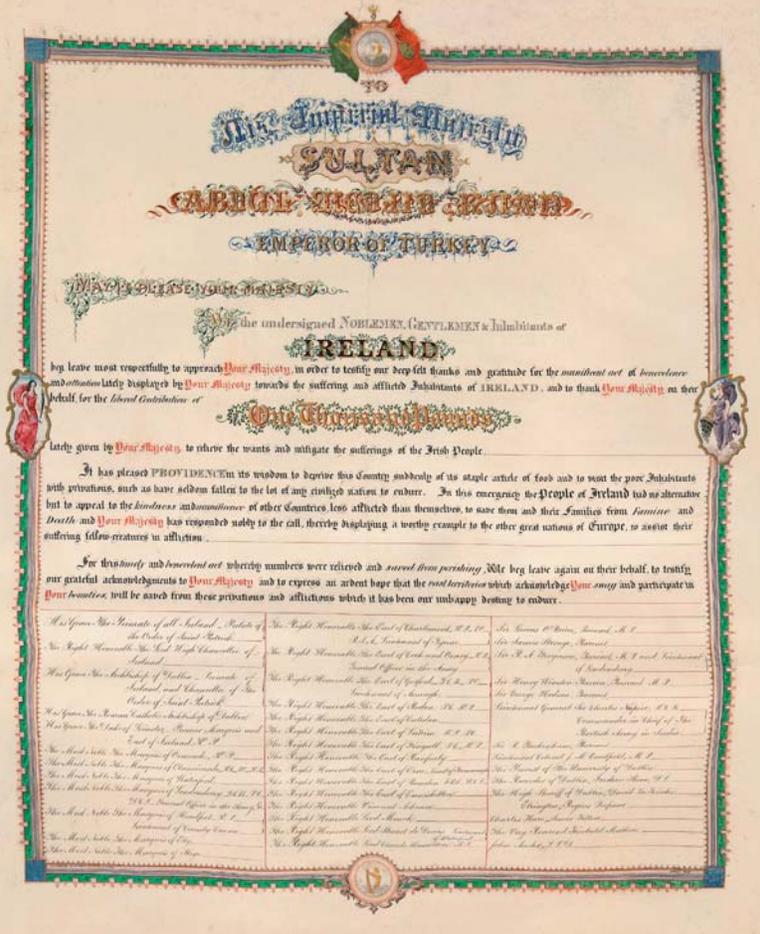
"An ambassador under the new regime stood, with sword by his side and cocked hat in hand, face-to-face with the Sultan," reported one British envoy.

Among those who enjoyed such free and familiar access to Abdülmedjid was English Ambassador Stratford Canning, son

“ ”
 He was a soft-natured, **INTELLIGENT**
 work-conscious, dignified but humble man enriched
 with **COMPASSION** **STRATFORD CANNING**
 ENGLISH AMBASSADOR

Ireland & Turkey in 1847





In addition to financial aid from Sultan Abdülmedjid I, in May and June of 1847, three Ottoman ships arrived in Drogheda. Two came from the Ottoman port of Thessalonica, laden with corn, and one came from Stettin bearing red wheat. Although it is still unclear to historians whether these ships arrived with donations or merely commercial shipments, the Irish eloquently expressed their gratitude in this ornate letter, which is now part of the Ottoman Archives in Istanbul. A copy of it is kept by the National Library of Ireland.

specialists was Julius Michael Millingen, a Dutch-English doctor who ministered to Lord Byron on his deathbed, a Viennese anatomist named Spitzer—and an Irish physician from Cork named Justin Washington McCarthy. Born the son of a barrister around 1789, McCarthy was hailed on September 8, 1841, in his hometown newspaper, the *Cork Examiner*, as “one who has long attained considerable eminence as a physician in the Turkish capital.” He trained in Edinburgh and Vienna before entering the service of the Ottoman court under Abdülmedjid’s father more than a decade earlier.

The first mention and earliest evidence of McCarthy’s connection with the story of the Sultan’s food aid to the Irish appears in the diary of Irish writer and patriot William J. O’Neill Daunt. Writing from Edinburgh on January 17, 1853, some six years after the event described, Daunt recollected that “A Mr. M’Carthy [sic] came. His father is physician to the Sultan.” In the next day’s entry, he reported, “M’Carthy (the Turk) ... told me that the Sultan had intended to give £10,000 to the famine-stricken Irish, but was deterred by the English Ambassador, Lord Cowley, as Her Majesty, who had only subscribed £1,000, would have been annoyed had a foreign sovereign given a larger sum.”

Details in Daunt’s story stand up. Queen Victoria in 1847 originally sent only £1,000 before later doubling her pledge. (For her parsimony, the Irish press rewarded her with the sobriquet “the famine queen.”)

McCarthy did have two sons, both born in Istanbul, although which son was in Edinburgh that year remains unknown. Lord Cowley was the Hon. Henry Wellesley, Ambassador Canning’s *chargé d’affaires*, who served as acting ambassador in 1847 while Canning was on leave in England. Additionally, the bit about the Sultan reducing his donation out

of deference to the British Crown appeared in print at least three years earlier, in the October 1850 issue of *The New Monthly* magazine, a London-based journal of arts and politics. Writing from Smyrna (modern Izmir), on Turkey’s Aegean coast, correspondent Mahmoud Effendi praised “young Sultan Abdul-Medjid, who, in the recent Irish famine, contributed the handsome

donation of 1,000*l.* sterling to relieve the distresses of those whom his own creed regards as infidels ... and who would have given more, much more, but that state etiquette was quoted to show the reigning sovereign of England must, in these cases, be permitted to head the list.”

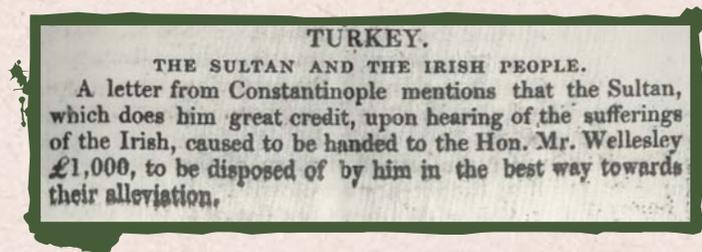
of an Irish-born London merchant. Canning admired the young Sultan’s ambitions, but as one of the longest-serving diplomats in the Ottoman court, he took the long view of their odds.

“He was a soft-natured, intelligent, work-conscious, dignified but humble man enriched with compassion,” Canning observed. “But he lacked the power and initiative to turn his wishes into reality.”

Ultimately, Abdülmedjid proved Canning wrong and might have gone on to achieve even greater reforms had he not succumbed to tuberculosis at such an early age. He was frail his entire life, and his poor health may have been why he surrounded himself with doctors—foreign doctors in particular—though according to historian Miri Shefer-Mossensohn, such indulgences were both common and fashionable.

“French, Germans, Italians. The Ottomans always had European physicians with them, [together] with their own Ottoman doctors, dating back to the 15th century,” says Shefer-Mossensohn, author of *Ottoman Medicine: Healing and Medical Institutions, 1500-1700*. The rationale, she points out, was essentially one based on probability: “The idea was, you don’t know which physician is going to make you better, so let’s have as many as we can and employ a variety of all skills.”

The record shows that among Abdülmedjid’s personal team of



On April 21, 1847, the *London Times* praised the gift, briefly.



The Drogheda quay today, along the Boyne River, near its mouth on the Irish Sea.

Dispatched during the ominous buildup to the Crimean War (1853-56)—when Russian threats inspired an Ottoman alliance with England—Effendi’s report further speculated that “[i]f there’s an Irishman” serving under Admiral William Parker, commander of the British Mediterranean fleet, “we feel sure that the son of the Emerald Isle will, in the moment of battle, remember the Sultan’s well-timed and noble generosity; and be the enemy whom it may, Paddy in mere gratitude will then strike hard and *home!*”

While there is no evidence that McCarthy the physician personally informed the Sultan of the famine, there would have been no need. Since 1847 the devastation had been worldwide news that inspired equally global outreach.

“There was an incredible international relief effort, with contributions coming in from all across the world, from Caracas to Cape Town to Melbourne to Madras,” says Christine Kinealy, director of Ireland’s Great Hunger Institute at Quinnipiac University in Connecticut. While the British government—primarily under Trevelyan’s more sympathetic predecessor, Sir Robert Peel—was providing millions of pounds of relief in the form of various programs such as workhouses, Kinealy notes that private donations also “played a significant part” in the overall effort. Foremost among private donors were securely middle-class English and American Quakers who helped establish soup kitchens in various Irish towns and cities. Yet the most moving and impressive foreign donations, Kinealy points out, came from those who were equally as poor as the famine-stricken Irish.

“In India, there were carpet-sweepers, who were the lowest-paid workers in the country, who sent money to Ireland. In America, the Choctaw and Cherokee Indian nations also sent money,” she says.

“ ”

I would have done all in my **POWER** to relieve
 their wants ... In contributing to [their] relief, I
 only listened to the dictates of my own **HEART**
 ABDÜLMEDJID I

in the Ottoman Empire included a general collection taken up in Constantinople amounting to £450.11s. and £283 sent by the local chapter of the Conference of St. Vincent de Paul (SVP), a Catholic charity.

The BRA report included the transcript of a letter, now archived in Istanbul’s Topkapı Palace, in which a host of Irish gentry and clergy thanked Abdülmedjid I for his generosity. The text of the highly stylized document, written on vellum and decorated with shamrock-and-heather motifs, commends the Sultan for aiding “the suffering and afflicted inhabitants of Ireland,” and “displaying a worthy example to other great nations in Europe.” Flattered by the letter, Abdülmedjid I reportedly responded: “It gave me great pain when I heard of the sufferings of the Irish people. I would have done all in my power to relieve their wants.... In contributing to [their] relief, I only listened to the dictates of my own heart; but it was also my duty to show my sympathy for the sufferings of a portion

of the subjects of her Majesty the Queen of England, for I look upon England as the best and truest friend of Turkey.”

Not surprisingly, hidden in plain sight be-

tween the lines of this mutual admiration is diplomacy. The Irish letter respectfully acknowledges the “vast territories” under the Sultan’s influence while Abdülmedjid’s warm characterization of England is a thinly veiled appeal to the Crown for support at a time when Russia’s Tsar Nicholas I was threatening war against him.

The headlines of the day nevertheless praised Abdülmedjid. “Irish Distress—Turkish Sympathy” declared *The Nenagh Guardian* on April 21, 1847, while four days earlier Dublin’s *The Nation* had hailed the friendship between “The Sultan and the Irish People.” Even the cautiously conservative London *Times* that same day declared that the Sultan’s generosity

Entrusted with channeling private donations was the British Association for the Relief of Distress in Ireland and the Highlands of Scotland, which was commonly known as the British Relief Association, or BRA, and was established in January 1847. In its annual report of 1849, the organization commended “His Imperial Majesty, the Sultan, a subscriber of 1,000*l.*, whose munificent example was followed in his own and other states by many, whose sole ties with the people of Great Britain were those of sympathy, humanity and the brotherhood of mankind.” Other contributions from with-

to the Irish “does him great credit.” Picking up on the story, the English religious magazine *Church and State Gazette* on April 23 lauded Abdülmedjid as a ruler “representing multitudinous Islam populations,” for his “warm sympathy with a Christian nation.” The article went on to express hope that “such sympathies, in all the genial charities of common humanity, be cultivated and henceforth ever be maintained between the followers of the cross and the crescent!” Six years later, during the Crimean conflict, as some in England questioned the appropriateness of a Christian nation coming to the aid of a Muslim one to thwart Russian ambition, others demonstrated that those “genial charities of common humanity” were indeed not forgotten.

“There seems to be great stress laid upon the argument that the Sultan, not being a Christian ... why should we support him, &c.?” wrote Jack Robinson of Wolverhampton in a letter to the editor of the *Daily News* in November 1853. “I beg to remind some people ... how very like a Christian he behaved when the famine raged in Ireland.”

That Abdülmedjid sent £1,000 to Ireland, then, is well documented. But what of the ships loaded with grain? Here, teasing fact from fiction becomes more difficult, yet there is circumstantial evidence to suggest that his gift may have exceeded £1,000.

A July 21, 1849, article in the American news weekly *The Albion* stated that “the Sultan originally offered to send £10,000 to Ireland, *as well as some ships laden with provisions*” (emphasis added). A similar story, “Royal Etiquette and Its Consequences,” on page two of the September 29, 1849, edition of *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, reported that “whilst famine was doing its deadly work in Ireland, the Turkish Sultan, Abdul Medjid Khan, proposed to make a donation of ten thousand pounds, *and to send vessels laden with provisions*, for the relief of the starving Irish” (again, emphasis added). In the fourth volume of *Life and Times of Sir Robert Peel*, published in 1851, biographer Charles Mackay makes the same claim: that the Sultan intended to send £10,000 “besides some ship-loads of provisions.” Some years later, in 1880, Irish patriot Charles Stewart Par-

nell—no friend of the British Crown—put an even finer point on the matter: Victoria, he claimed, had the Turkish grain ships intercepted along with their cargo, valued at £6,000. Parnell further declared that Victoria sent Ireland no money at all—which does cast doubt on his whole story. His false claims were immediately rebuked by none other than Lord Randolph Churchill—father of Winston—as part of an ongoing feud between the two men that played out in the pages of the English and Australian press. More recently, Irish author Ted Greene, in his commemorative volume *Drogheda: Its Place in Ireland’s History*, published in 2006, makes the unattributed assertion that Victoria “stepped in by preventing the ships entering, first Cobh [Cork], and then Belfast harbour *but they finally succeeded to dock secretly in the small port of Drogheda and deliver the food*” (original emphasis).

From “some ships laden with provisions” to three ships “secretly” docking in Drogheda, the story has grown over the years from what may have been an unrealized gesture on Abdülmedjid’s part—to add some food to his donation of money—to a covert operation to slip shiploads of grain past British customs authorities. In either case, this particular chapter of the story raises doubts in Kinealy’s mind.

“It just doesn’t make sense. If he was asked not to give more than the Queen, and wanted to have a closer alliance with Great Britain, why would he risk sending three ships surreptitiously with the potential to offend his ally?” she contends.

But from a Turkish Muslim point of view, says Ahmet Ögreten, assistant professor of history at Kastamonu University in northern Turkey, the move made sense.

“It was a common custom among Muslims that if you said you are giving a donation, but are only permitted to give part of it, you don’t take the rest of the money back. You find a way to deliver the whole donation, one way or another,” says Ögreten, who is preparing a study on the episode. His belief that the Sultan would have made good on his original pledge out of a sense of religious duty is reflected in the Reverend Henry Christmas’s 1854 biography of Abdülmedjid. “I am compelled by my religion to observe

Today, nearly 70,000 people live in Drogheda and its environs, including many who commute to Dublin. As a historic port, it has long been infused with influences from abroad, such as fast-food grilled kebab—a staple of Turkish cuisine.



Cinema for Famine Relief

If the story of the Ottoman Sultan's aid to the Irish during the potato famine seems as if it would make a good movie, Omer Sarikaya of Istanbul-based AVN Film Production is already there. For the past two years, he has been working on "Famine," scheduled for feature release later this year. With a largely volunteer, international cast and crew from Ireland, Turkey and England, the movie is being filmed in all three locations, and it tells the story of an Irish girl who falls in love with a sailor from one of the Turkish grain ships.

"It is a very powerful story of two countries coming together during sadness, and a love affair between two people from different countries who do not speak each other's language but are able to love and communicate. We think 'Famine' will be the next 'Titanic,'" says Sarikaya with characteristic optimism. As a charity production, 85 percent of the film's proceeds will go to United Nations programs that combat hunger as well as the International Red Cross and Red Crescent.

the laws of hospitality," Christmas quoted the Sultan as saying, in response to an influx of Polish and Hungarian refugees fleeing Austrian and Russian aggression. The Protestant minister cited this, together with the story of the gift to the Irish, as examples of Abdülmedjid's "true spirit of Christianity, and there is more of it in the Mohammeden [sic] Sultan of Turkey than in any or all of the Christian princes of Europe."

Searching archives in Ireland and Istanbul, Ögreten has, at the very least, uncovered evidence that suggests the Sultan's donation was, in fact, somewhat larger than was publicly reported.

"A document in the Ottoman archives records he donated 1,000 Turkish lira, not 1,000 [British] pounds," says the professor. The document concerns a request by a man who was identified as the one who presented the Irish letter of gratitude to the Sultan, "Mosyo O'Brien"—possibly Sir ("Monsieur") Lucius O'Brien, a signatory to the letter. Whether it was a slip of the pen, or a figure lost in translation, the amount noted in the document is "1,000 Lira," which Ögreten points out would have been worth more at the time than £1,000. With an 1847 exchange rate of £1.20 to one Ottoman lira, Abdülmedjid's donation of 1,000 lira (£1,200) would, in today's currency, be close to \$160,000.

Whatever the amount, how a distant Muslim ruler became a hero in the annals of Drogheda ultimately comes down to a confluence of circumstances, including, finally, the coincidental role played by the town's crest that uses a star and crescent, according to Drogheda historian Brendan Matthews, author of the study, "Drogheda &

In 1995, William Frank, then mayor of Drogheda, recognized the Sultan's aid with this commemorative plaque over the entrance of the Drogheda Hotel, which is the same hotel that may have housed Ottoman sailors responsible for the distribution of corn and wheat.



The Turkish Ships of 1847.”

“The symbol of the Drogheda Steam Packet Company, the private company that offered regular steamship service to Liverpool out of Drogheda, was a green flag with a white, five-pointed star set above a crescent moon,” explains Matthews. The company adopted this banner, which today has become synonymous with Islamic heritage, not from the Ottomans, but from Drogheda’s town crest that has featured the star and crescent since the late 12th century.

“They were bestowed on Drogheda by Richard the Lionheart in 1194,” says Matthews. King Richard adopted the symbol in 1192 upon capturing Cyprus from its last Byzantine ruler while en route to the Holy Land during the Third Crusade. The original symbol—a merging of the crescent moon of ancient Byzantium’s patron goddess Diana with the eight-pointed star of the Virgin Mary—had been used by Byzantine rulers since the fourth century. It did not become an emblem of Islam until after the 14th century.

Meanwhile, from 1846 to 1847, commercial grain imports to Ireland more than quadrupled from 197,000 tons to 909,000 tons. Among the ports that experienced this sudden influx of foreign grain—Ottoman grain, in particular—was Drogheda. “Previous to the famine of 1847, the foreign commerce of Drogheda was ... confined to a few cargoes of Baltic and American timber,” wrote Anthony Marmion in his *Ancient and Modern History of the Maritime Ports of Ireland*, published in 1853. “Since then, however, and for the last four years in particular, there has been a considerable trade in the import of foreign wheat, but more particularly in Indian Corn from the Black Sea.”

This expansion was part of the rise in Ottoman-European commerce resulting from Abdülmedjid’s tanzimat, which established a Ministry of Trade that sought “to forge new trading linkages with the dynamic industrializing economies of western Europe,” according to historian Mark Mazower, author in 2006 of *Salonica, City of Ghosts*. Carter Vaughn Findley, in his 2010 study *Turkey, Islam, Nationalism, and Modernity*, observed that between 1840 and 1876 this trade liberalization led to an increase in the value of Ottoman exports from £4.7 million to £20 million—exports Findley noted were comprised “disproportionately of Balkan agrarian products.”

Combing period newspapers, Matthews learned that three ships from the Balkan regions docked at Drogheda in May 1847, within a month of Abdülmedjid’s publicized gift. Two of the ships, the *Porcupine* and the *Ann*, carried Indian corn from Thessalonica (Salonica), while the third, the *Alita*, brought red wheat, also known as “Turkey red wheat,” from Stettin, a Baltic seaport in what is now Poland. While Matthews does not go so far as to suggest these were the three



so-called “secret ships,” he does speculate that the coincidental convergence of grain-bearing ships from the Ottoman Empire, the star-and-crescent flag of the Drogheda Steam Packet Company and the desperation of the people thronging the docks may well have provided the legend with its seeds.

“You had these ships coming in from the Ottoman Empire with Sardinian and Egyptian and Greek sailors on board, who were well aware of the star and crescent symbol of the Ottomans. You had 70,000 starving Irish people crowding the quay in search

of work, or food, or a way to get out of the country. And then you had these local ships flying a flag with the star and crescent, which the Ottoman sailors could readily identify with,” Matthews summarizes. These circumstances, he speculates, may have led to a spontaneous humanitarian gesture on the part of the sailors who may have given some of the grain directly to the starving Irish, either out of pity or some vague sense of kinship with a port where the star and crescent flew from the masts of local ships.

“Perhaps they gave them 100 bags of food? Twenty bags of grain, to feed 100 families? Something happened that led to this story in our oral history: that in this time of crisis, we got food from the Turkish people,” Matthews says.

As the story was handed down from generation to generation, Matthews believes, it was embellished with tales of “secret” ships and the “adoption” of the “Turkish” star and crescent by grateful town officials. Such embellishments, he surmises, were likely added in the telling and the retelling—a credible by-product in a culture famed for its oral tradition that, as Julius Caesar noted in his *Gallic Wars*, favored the “employment of the memory” over the written word.

Whatever the truth, this chapter in the history of “The Great Hunger” has nonetheless been immortalized in paint and in stone, and may yet be made into a feature film—should the ambitions of Turkish producer Omer Sarikaya be fulfilled. (See sidebar, opposite.)

Yet, at its heart lies the undisputed fact of a generous gesture on the part of an Ottoman ruler toward a people to whom he owed nothing but the mercy required of him by faith and personal character. ☺



Connecticut-based freelance writer **Tom Verde** (writah@gmail.com) is a regular contributor to *AramcoWorld*.





DJERBA'S MUSEUM of

the Street

In recent years, street art has grown from an edgy, often illegal practice associated with urban decay to something almost fashionable associated with civic vitality.

One of the people responsible for this change is Mehdi Ben Cheikh, a French-Tunisian who in 2004 founded Galerie Itinerrance in Paris, which is dedicated to showing street art. His goal is to make art accessible to everyone and, in particular, do something special for Tunisia.



WRITTEN BY

Caroline Stone

PHOTOGRAPHY BY

Kevin Bubriski



Left: **Zepha (France)**; above: **eL Seed (France/Tunisia)**.



“W

hat I would like to do is talk about the Arab world in a different way, a positive way,” he says.

The result, this summer, was the Djerbahood Project, which enabled more than 100 artists from more than 30 countries—including a dozen or so from Tunisia—to paint more than 200 works on public walls in Er-Riadh, a village on the Tunisian island of Djerba. Creating works from a little cat on a postal mailbox to full-wall murals, the artists donated their time and work, and, in keeping with the ethos of street art, no money was earned out of the exhibition through merchandising. Sponsorships from numerous corporate and private donors made certain that artists could participate and that the host community was put to no expense.

Craft-preservationist Amel Messedi, owner of a gallery in the village center, explains that Ben Cheikh chose Er-Riadh because of its historic tradition of tolerance among Muslim, Christian and Jewish residents, and also because the architecture often features unadorned plastered walls painted white or light creams or yellows. In addition, there are several nearby abandoned areas, including a decommissioned prison and a former abattoir.

In the spring, after receiving permissions from the Ministry of Tourism and the mayor of Djerba, consultations with residents began. At first, there was little interest, says Amel Messedi. A handful of foreigners who own houses in Er-Riadh gave their consent to use of their walls. Other residents were assured that the



be shown sketches of what was going to go on our walls, and if there was something we really didn't like, we could have it painted out. In fact that almost never happened, and there were surprisingly few complaints.

"When people saw what was being painted on other people's walls, including mine," she continues, "they went to the organizers and said: 'We want something too!' Enthusiasm began to grow and snowball."

The walls of Dar Dhiafa now host two pieces. One is by Zepha, a French artist who, like many street artists, maintains only one name. Facing a mosque, it is among several magnificent calligraphic compositions, all in different styles, scattered about the village; Zepha's is a formal, even classic circular arrangement.

"It gives me great pleasure," says an elderly man who, like most residents,

Left: **Dan23 (France)**; lower: **Property owners, explains Er-Riadh craft-preservationist Amel Messedi, agreed to allow use of their walls for one year. "After that, it could be painted over—although we very much hope that the project will go on," she says.**

artists would be tactful and that the designs and colors would be appropriate to the village. The grittier designs, more typical of western street art, would be executed in the abandoned buildings on the outskirts.

Of course there were doubts. "Everyone who agreed," Amel Messedi explains, "signed a document allowing the use of their wall for a year. After that, it could be painted over—although we very much hope that the project will go on." An indication of the popularity of Djerbahood is that, apart from a little natural deterioration, the murals have very rarely been damaged or defaced.

"It was all very civilized," says Khiara Allani, owner of the charming Dar Dhiafa, a hotel created by joining several old houses. "We were told that we would





Above: **Sunra (France/Tunisia);**
right: **Zepha (France).**

preferred not to give his name to journalists. “Calligraphy was dying here in Tunisia. Who writes books by hand these days? There were still a few sign writers, I suppose. But calligraphy was always the great Arab art, and suddenly here it is again, painted all over our walls by young men! Very original, very alive, but growing from the same roots, like an old olive tree regenerating.”

The second Dar Dhiafa painting is part illustrative and part calligraphy, and as many other paintings do, it uses the local architecture for its effect. Framed within a doorway, a little girl blows a dandelion whose seeds become wishes for peace and prosperity in Arabic, and they float away across the adjoining wall. This piece is by Lebanese artist Yazan



“Calligraphy was always the great Arab art, and suddenly here it is again, painted all over our walls!”

Halawani, who also adorned a quiet corner of another street with calligraphy and a portrait commemorating the great Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish, who died in 2008 in Houston, Texas.

Other calligraphic works are freer, even dramatic, stretching for meters along the facades of buildings. Some of the most striking are by Tunisian artists, such as Inkman’s beautiful



Yazan Halawani (Lebanon).

rosette in light and dark blue, Shoof’s bold, black composition, or the French-Tunisian eL Seed (he adopted the name while studying the Spanish epic *El Cid*), whose giant compositions sometimes spring from building to building in a style he calls “caligraffiti.” In 2012 he was commissioned also to paint a Qur’anic verse on the minaret of the Jara Mosque in Gabès, on the Tunisian mainland, which is interpreted in English (by Abdullah Yusuf Ali): “Oh mankind! We created you from a single [pair] of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other.”



Mário Belém (Portugal).

Other examples come from Palestinian 3ZS and Libyan Maatoug Y, as well as an impressive calligraphic contribution from Deyaa of Saudi Arabia, who has work on display in a number of cities in his country. In fact, Saudi Arabia was represented at Djerbahood with three artists, including Maz and Az, both from the Dhad family. One of Az's murals has a complex piece of calligraphy, and in front of it is a woman holding a lotus painted by Iraqi-British artist Myneandyoures in a reference to the classical "island of the lotus eaters" of Homer's *Odyssey* that is often identified with Djerba.

"It was the best summer of my life," declares a boy of 10 or 12 years when asked what he feels about Djerbahood. It was so hot, he says, the artists painted at night, "and my father let

me stay up, so my friends and I ran around and watched them. It was really fun, and when I took cold drinks out to the man who was painting at our house, he let me do just a little bit—I'll show you."

"It was very good for them," comments a woman passing by, joining the conversation. "It opened their minds. It changed their perceptions. They came into contact with foreigners working, doing something, not just on holiday. The artists were very nice, and since many spoke Arabic or French, there was a good deal of communication. And, of course, the children learned some geography. Now they are curious to know where Peru or Puerto Rico are, or for that matter Russia or

Right: **Jaz (Argentina)**; far right: **C215 (France)**.



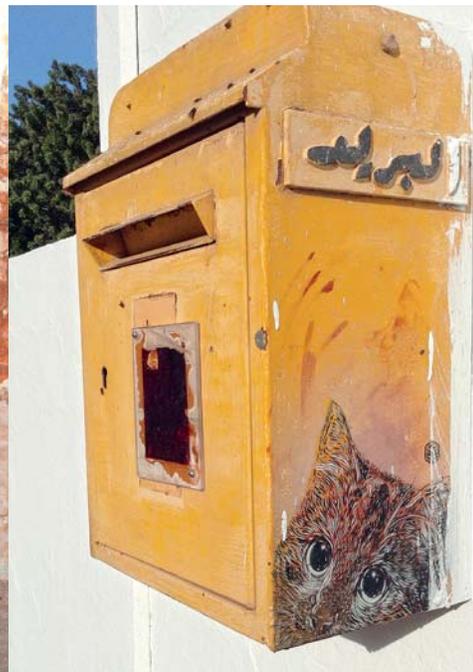
Collaboration by Az (Saudi Arabia) and Myneandyouurs (Iraq/UK).

Kenya or Japan, because they associate them with particular artists or pictures.”

When asked which paintings are their favorites, residents give answers that can be surprising. An elderly lady, sitting on her doorstep, expresses her preference for a mural showing a classic Citroen Deux-Chevaux with a little black cat looking at it. “That was the first car I ever went in,” she

says. “And that is my cat. I really like having them on a wall here.” And two very traditional women neighbors—who are exchanging bunches of herbs for dinner when I meet them—express contentment with a large (and very untraditional) mural of a cyclist on the wall of one’s home, which faces the house of the other.

Other children prove pleased—and not at all insistent—to offer their views and show off their favorite pictures. Sisters, aged eight and 10 and dressed for school, their hair in neat pigtails, take me to a series of paintings of a woman putting on the traditional, draped dress with horizontal stripes, a style now rarely worn, having been replaced by the more convenient *djellaba*. Both the costume itself and the soft earth colors of the painting look as if they could be Roman, something from





Left: M-City (Poland); right: calligraphy by eL Seed (France) and motorbike by Malakkai (Spain).

Pompeii, and, surprisingly, it is not by a Tunisian artist but by Hyuro, of Spain. Their second favorite: The man on a donkey dangling a heart in front of its nose, by Sunra of Tunisia.

Far gentler in style than most urban street art, Djerbahood's diversity aims to offer something for everyone. There are numerous pictures of traditional figures, both men and women, such as an old musician and a Bedouin herder blown by the desert wind, both by Bom.K of France. Horsemen by Jaz of Argentina are reminders of the conquests of North Africa by the Romans, the Beni Hilal and other Arabian tribes. (Jaz, on principle, uses materials at hand: Here, he pounded the local red brick into dust and made it into a paint-paste with fuel from the ever-present mopeds.)

“Gentler in style than most urban street art, Djerbahood’s diversity aims to offer something for everyone.”

There are also comic and satirical scenes, as well as fantasy creatures, such as the beautiful unicorn by Faith47 of South Africa, which guards an abandoned building at the turn of a little lane. There is also a wealth of small works, details that can be easy to miss, such as the post-box kitten by C215 of

France, who scattered painted cats all across the village—much as the real ones are a ubiquitous, endearing feature of Er-Riadh’s streets. His simple transformation of the everyday yellow letter box into something special and charming seems to exemplify the spirit of Djerbahood.

Still other paintings refer to other aspects of life in the village. For example, a motorcycle slung between two cacti at a motorbike repair shop (by Malakkai of Spain) whimsically contrasts reality and





Painting by Dan23 (France) and sign by Rodolphe Cintorno (France).

art in a town where, besides bicycles, motor scooters are the main means of transport. Other paintings become part of the architecture, as in the case of the tiles painted onto arches and facades by Add Fuel of Portugal and Logan Hicks of the USA.

“There was not supposed to be anything political,” says a shopkeeper. “We didn’t want that sort of trouble here.”

But the mere fact of a street art display in Tunisia is something of a political statement: Until very recently, creating

graffiti or public art carried a prison sentence because it was associated with political organizing and dissent. Although political satire is rarely explicit, other aphorisms and inscriptions scattered throughout some works allude to the philosophical positions of individual artists, such as Frenchman

Sean Hart, whose quips in bold white-on-blue state (in French), “Build Optimism,” “Live in the Moment,” and “Listen to the Silence.” Elliott Tupac of Peru offers “*La vida es un suspiro*” (“Life is a sigh”) in elaborate blue calligraphy over the doorway



Opposite, far left to near left: **Wissem El-Abed (Tunisia); Yazan Halawani (Lebanon); Faith47 (South Africa).**





Left and lower: **Pantonio (Portugal)**; above: **Hyuro (Portugal)**.

of a ruined and partially overgrown building on which Puerto Rican Alexis Diaz painted a large green *hamsa*, or hand, the folk-sign of luck and aversion of the “evil eye.”

Color, especially the blue-and-white so very typical of Tunisia in general and Djerba in particular, also worked as a motif to link the art to its surroundings. Artists paid tribute to their hosts when choosing to work in these colors, which complement the paintwork on many doors and window grills. Of course, there were calligraphic examples along these lines, and one in particular—a vast composition by Zepha who, unusually, uses both the Arabic and the Latin alphabets—is largely in shades of blue and black. Looking down at it, in the eclectic mix of styles that make Djerbahood so lively, is a giraffe, accompanied by a blue butterfly, by Mosko of France. And Curriot, of the USA and Mexico, takes a purely Mexican theme of stylized flowers and strange chameleon-like creatures, and he translates it into the local color idiom.

At one point, a young man studying art and media at the University of Tunis volunteers to take me to see the far less gentle, far more urban paintings on the outskirts, in the derelict prison and slaughterhouse, in abandoned houses and even in a ruined palace.



Add Fuel (Portugal).

All these spaces are transformed by the paintings, given new life and interest; conversely, the surroundings lend the paintings an extra dimension. Here, it is by and large non-Tunisian artistic territory—although there are exceptions: Wissem El-Abed’s three faces hang between a vacant wasteland and a building site. The indefatigable ROA of Belgium painted here a number of large works, often incorporating elements of architecture such as domes, which become eggs. In a collapsing building, a huge scorpion creeps up the wall while a chameleon seems to have laid two typically Djerban oil jars. There were other remarkable, surrealistic paintings by Dome of Germany, in black and white, again with strong mythological elements—and not anything most people would want to encounter when stepping outside to walk to the corner bakery.

To my question, “How do you feel about it, now that it has happened?” one of the residents replies: “You know, before it happened I was less worried about the paintings than by an invasion of outsiders, a loss of our privacy—you know what I mean? But in fact, it has not been bad. The painters came in groups, not all at once, and they behaved well. And so, on the whole, do the visitors. And I think it has been good, very good for our young people: it has

opened their eyes. Before it happened, I was afraid we would have problems—the children running round after the foreigners asking for sweets or whatever. After all, what would you feel if it were your neighborhood? No, I am very pleased at how it has gone and very proud: there are people all over the world who know about Er-Riadh.” 🌐



Caroline Stone divides her time between Cambridge and Seville. Her latest book, *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of Darkness*, translated with Paul Lunde from the medieval Arab accounts of the lands in the Far North, was published in 2011 by Penguin Classics. **Kevin Bubriski** (bubriski@sover.net) teaches documentary photography at Green Mountain College in Poultney, Vermont. His most recent book is a retrospective volume *Kevin Bubriski: Nepal 1975-2011*, published last year by Radius Books.



 djerbahood.com

 **Related articles at www.aramcoworld.com**
 Mosques in Djerba: M/A 94
 Tunisian ceramics: M/A 03

— THE —

BLUES

of Arabia

WRITTEN by EDWARD FOX
PHOTOGRAPHY by HATIM OWEIDA

If you climb into a taxi in Doha, capital of Qatar, and Arab music is on the driver's radio, the station may well be 99.0, Sawt al-Khaleej, one of the most popular and powerful radio and digital streaming broadcast networks in the region. Based in Doha, its name translates to "Voice of the Gulf"—a fitting name for a network that seeks to appeal to a broad, Arabic-speaking audience with pan-Arab popular music up and down the eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula, from Kuwait to Oman.

But if you ask someone who knows the music of the eastern Arabian Peninsula about this name, you might get a puzzled response: "Which *sawt al-khaleej* do you mean?" Today, the influence of the 12-year-old radio network, both on the dial and at www.skr.fm, is so pervasive that for many, the words have become synonymous with Arab pop. Yet it has an older and more local meaning, one that began at sea and was popularized on land, one still played throughout the region, with local styles, though one has to search a bit to hear it: It's a genre devotees refer to simply as "sawt"—as if to imply, "the *real* sawt."



The face of vocalist and drummer Mohammed Zaid reflects the poignancy of *sawt al-khaleej* during a performance of the Ensemble Muhammad bin Faris in Muharraq, Bahrain.



Beats by a *tabl bahri* (sea drum) player, left, will invite audience participation through rhythmic hand-clapping. Below: A portrait of Muhammad bin Faris gazes out into the concert hall that carries his name in Muharraq. Born into Bahrain's ruling family in the late 19th century, bin Faris followed his mentor to Bombay, where he developed his own form of sawt. Opposite: This antique 'ud, on display at the Muhammad bin Faris Music Hall, once resonated with many a sawt song.

This “real sawt” (pr. *saowt*) appeared in the late 19th century. It has a number of founding fathers, but the earliest and best known was a Kuwaiti named Abdallah al-Faraj, who died in 1903. His successors went on to develop the style at a time when commercial recording had just reached the Gulf region, and their work can still be heard today through the muffled and scratchy recordings on 78-RPM discs first made in the 1920s. Sawt is thus a 20th-century form of popular music, one spread as much by recordings as by teaching and performance.

Not only is sawt the Gulf Arabs' distinctive contribution to Arab music—able to take a place alongside traditions of the Levant and the Maghreb—it is also one that can appeal easily to western musical ears. Indeed, sawt is sometimes called “the blues of Arabia,” for these two traditions have much in common.

At its simplest, sawt is led by a singer who also plays the *'ud*, the unfretted, six-string Arab lute, and he is accompanied by at least one handheld drum, called a *mirwas*. After that, it's a social music: A performance of sawt involves audience participation. Members don't just listen; they accompany the singing and playing with intricate, powerful, rhythmic hand-clapping. Even to use the word “audience” can be misleading because in sawt, there is little distinction between audience and performer.

The singer leads the song, but everybody present takes part, clapping, singing a chorus, calling out whoops of appreciation



and even dancing. Sawt songs themselves have the flavor of American blues, conveying tales and evoking feelings of hardship, nostalgia, lost loves, homesickness and appeals to God for deliverance from sufferings. Even without understanding the lyrics, it is easy for non-Arabic listeners to recognize that this is powerfully emotive music, and anyone can relate to a strong rhythm.

Sawt connects Gulf Arab listeners to an earlier age, to when most people made hardscrabble livings as fishermen,





pearl divers and maritime traders, before the Gulf's economy was transformed by oil, when—as one sawt song puts it—“the gates of heaven were opened.” It differs from the simpler and more austere music of the Arabian interior, which in general eschews stringed instruments in favor of drumming, singing and chanting.

Today, there are two ways to hear sawt: in private or in public. Purists often say that the private setting—a gathering of friends in a home, or in a clubhouse called a *dar*—is the original and best context, but it is traditionally an all-male occasion. In such a domestic setting, an evening of sawt takes place in the *majlis*, the sitting room, where members of the group sit around the room on cushions along the walls. Refreshments are served, people look at their mobile phones, and there may be a television playing in the background, although nobody pays attention to it.

A musical evening like this often lasts well into the night. A song begins when the singer feels like singing; someone calls out for people to pay atten-





tion, and the hubbub of talk gradually subsides as the song starts. Typically, everyone knows the songs being performed: They are part of the sawt tradition.

This means that the drummers know what rhythms to play, and everyone else knows the intricate patterns of syncopated clapping that each song requires. Sawt clapping is not at all like applauding at the theater: For sawt, the palms are held flat and struck together hard, producing a sharp, precise percussive sound.

A sawt song begins with an instrumental prelude followed by a short sung phrase that is repeated. This leads to the lyrical heart of the song, usually in classical Arabic and often in lines of poetry called *qasidas*. The lyrics express some predicament of the heart in lofty, poetic language. “[T]he bough of the tree turned to gold when my beloved touched it, and bends low in her absence” is one example, from “*Ma Li Ghusn al-Dhabab*” (“What’s the Matter with the Golden Branch”), first recorded in 1932 in Basra, Iraq, by Muhammad bin Faris of Bahrain on the label His Master’s Voice. And then there will be a *tawshihah*, or chorus, in which everyone takes part.

In recent years, under the auspices of the folklore or cultural-heritage departments in Gulf countries, sawt concerts have been held also in public performance spaces in which admission is open to everyone. In Bahrain, for example, shows are held on most Thursday nights in the auditorium of the Shaikh

Ebrahim bin Mohammed Al Khalifa Center for Culture and Research, a heritage-preservation institute based in a restored villa, Bin Mater House, in Muharraq, the historic district near Manama, the capital of Bahrain.

A resident band, the Ensemble Muhammad bin Faris, performs songs from the sawt tradition. The group tours internationally, and although it can comprise up to 14 musicians, on a typical Thursday night, a smaller configuration performs—a singer and ‘ud player, a violinist and players of the *qanun* (Arab zither), electric piano, *ney* (woodwind flute) and a variety of drums.

With all those instruments, the sawt arrangements are very different from what you might hear in a private gathering. The heart of sawt is here—the singer accompanying himself on the ‘ud and the propulsive rhythms—but the arrangements are more elaborate, and the sound is what you might call “pan-Arab popular.” The use of western instruments and innovative rhythms, like an Arabized version of the rumba, suggest Egyptian influence.

The aim of the ensemble is to keep the sawt tradition alive by modernizing it. Most of the songs it plays would be familiar to performers in a majlis, for they draw on the same repertoire and the same tradition. That said, a performance by the Ensemble invites the question of whether or not this modernized sawt is authentic.

Here, again, a comparison with American blues is helpful: While purists might maintain that authentic blues comes only from a man in the Mississippi Delta playing an acoustic guitar and singing, others would respond that B. B. King playing electric guitar with a big band in a New York City theater is no less “authentic.” To survive and grow, traditions evolve and draw in new elements, leaving determinations of authenticity with individual listeners.

Certainly, in the Ensemble Muhammad bin Faris the old style of sawt asserts itself. Although the distinction

between “audience” and “performer” is imposed by the design of the auditorium itself, in which the



Opposite: At sawt performances, listeners take part, dancing and joining in syncopated clapping, blurring distinctions between performers and audience. Left: Melding sounds from ‘ud, violin and drums, members of the Ensemble Muhammad bin Faris help keep alive the sawt tradition of the eastern Arabian Peninsula, together with musicians playing the *qanun* (Arab zither), *ney* (woodwind flute) and electric keyboard, all of which support the Ensemble’s vocalists.

band plays on a stage and the audience is arranged in seats, the sawt spectators don't sit quietly. There are the same calls to the musicians, the same singing along and almost as much rhythmic clapping. And it's common for one or two men to leave their seats and dance in front of the musicians, as if they were at a musical evening among friends.

Bin Faris himself is still famous, not just in Bahrain but also throughout the Gulf. Next door to the auditorium is the house in which he lived—a lovely, old-fashioned Bahraini building that the Shaikh Ebrahim Center has restored and made into a small museum commemorating his life and career. It houses his instruments, his 78-RPM discs and other memorabilia.

Muharraq can be thought of as the

cradle of sawt in Bahrain. Not only was bin Faris born here, but so were many other great sawt players, including the violinist and 'ud player 'Aref Busheiri, the current leader of the Ensemble Muhammad bin Faris. Most people know Muharraq as the location of Bahrain's airport, but its origins date back 5,000 years. It was the capital of Bahrain until 1923, when the British moved government headquarters to Manama. Today it is a densely populated, urban area of no more than about four square kilometers (1.5 sq mi), yet with nearly 200,000 inhabitants. It is divided into quarters called *firjan*, and it is said that a native *Muharraqi* can tell which one a person comes from by his or her accent. It was here that in past centuries pearling merchants and the ruling family built their houses, and

The drummers of the Ensemble Muhammad bin Faris know their music by heart, just as others know the patterns of clapping that are no less a part of sawt. An instrumental prelude is followed by a song, and then a *tawshihah*, or chorus. Right: Vocalist and 'ud player Khalifa al-Jumeiri concentrates as a song begins.





Like American blues, sawt combines lyrics that often address longings and hardships with complex, cathartic rhythms—to the delight of participant-listeners of all ages.

the Shaikh Ebrahim Center has restored some 10 of them, including bin Faris's.

Muhammad bin Faris Al Khalifah, to give him his full name, was born in 1895 into the ruling family of Bahrain, grandson of Shaykh Muhammad bin Khalifah, who ruled from 1843 to 1868. As a teenager, he learned music from his brother, but later he traveled to Bombay to follow his musical mentor, 'Abd al-Rahim al-'Asiri. There, he joined a large population of expatriate Arabs, mostly Yemenis who worked as mariners or as soldiers for the British administration.

This was an unusual path for a young man of his background, and he is often described

as something of a black sheep. But his sojourn in Bombay broadened his musical horizons and allowed him to develop his own style of sawt, write his own new compositions and add to the corpus of sawt songs.

On his return to Bahrain, he was much in demand as a singer. He acquired two students who were to join him among the greats of Bahraini popular music in the 20th century: Muhammad Zuwayyid and Dhahi al-Walid. Among devotees of sawt, bin Faris and al-Walid are often discussed together because of their turbulent relationship.

Although al-Walid began as bin Faris's student, he became his teacher's colleague and, later, his competitor. They were a mismatched pair: while bin Faris belonged to the ruling family, al-Walid was the son of an East African slave. Bin Faris chafed at having to treat al-Walid as an equal, especially when al-Walid surpassed him musically. It is said that bin Faris, who died in 1947, would rehearse his songs

in secret so that al-Walid would not hear them and produce better versions.

While the founding of sawt lay with Abdallah al-Faraj in Kuwait, the style was refined and popularized by these later performers—who had the good fortune to stand at the height of

Performers like Muhammad bin Faris were at the height of their careers when the commercial recording industry took root.

their careers when the commercial recording industry took root in the Middle East.

In the 1920s and '30s, the economies of the Gulf were growing with the appearance of the oil industry, and there was money to spend on newfangled entertainment such as phonographs. European companies like London-based His Master's Voice knew that to sell phonographs in new markets like the Gulf, they needed to offer recordings people would want to play. This meant recording local artists as part of the phonograph companies' commercial strategy, and thanks

to this, we have a substantial number of recordings of the popular music of this period.

The first Gulf artist to make commercial recordings was ‘Abd al-Latif al-Kuwaiti, who in 1927 recorded 10 songs in Baghdad for the Lebanese company Baidophon (the label that also recorded the great Egyptian singer Umm Kulthum) and later for other companies. The popularity of these recordings encouraged other labels to jump into the market and record

other Gulf artists, including, in 1929 or 1930, bin Faris’s student Muhammad Zuwayyid and, in 1932, Muhammad bin Faris and Dhahi al-Walid.

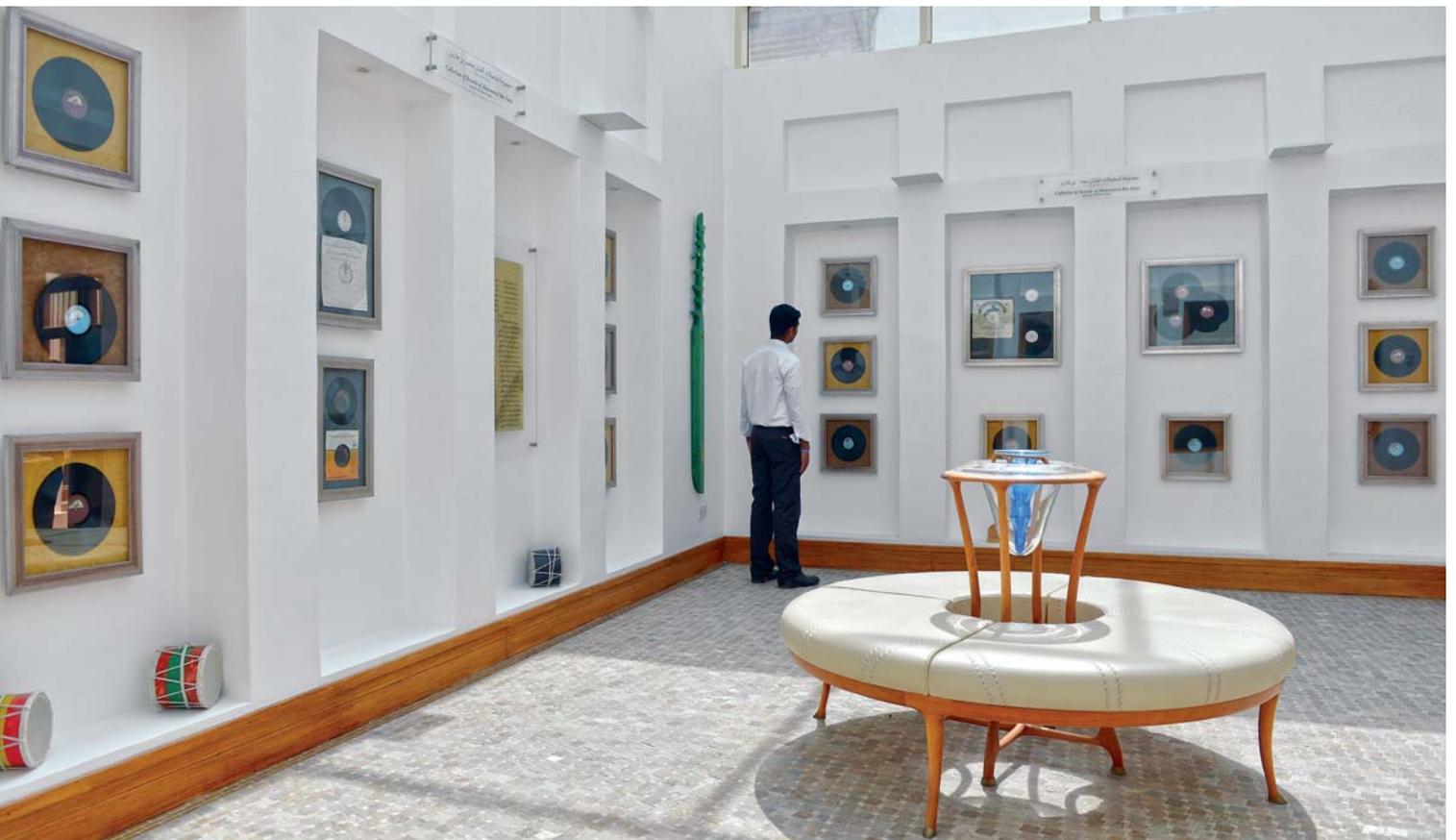
It would be misleading to discuss sawt with reference to musicians from just one or two countries. It’s part of the essence of sawt that it ignores national boundaries; it drew influences from many places and, although born in the urban salons of Kuwait, it harks back much farther.

It came of age as a music of the mariners and traders who traveled throughout the region, and it drew influences from all over the Gulf and the Indian Ocean. The music of Salim Rashid Suri of Oman is a good example.

Born around 1910 in Sur, an Omani port town that traded with Yemen, East Africa, Zanzibar, India and other ports in the western Gulf, he showed an early interest in music, but was discouraged by his family from making a career of it. Indeed, it is said that his brother threatened him



Cradle of sawt and home to some 200,000 people as well as the Muhammad bin Faris house museum, Muharraq is one of the most historic cities of Bahrain. Lower: The museum, which stands on the site of his old home, honors bin Faris’s music and recording legacy.



Portraits along a wall in the Muhammad bin Faris house museum in Muharraq show prominent Bahraini folk musicians and singers, including, from left, Ali Khalid, Yousif Fony and Muhammad Zuwayyid.



with a gun to make him renounce music. He worked as a sailor and eventually settled in Bombay, where he learned sawt from other musicians and from recordings of ‘Abd al-Latif al-Kuwaiti.

There he established a reputation as a singer, and he became popular among expatriate Arabs. In the 1930s, a local division of His Master’s Voice approached him, and he made a number of recordings. He also recorded for other labels. By this time, Suri was working as a boiler controller on steamships, and he later worked with Arab traders in Bombay as a mercantile broker and translator. After Indian independence in 1948, he settled in Bahrain, where by the 1960s he had started his own recording label, Salimphone, named, immodestly, after himself.

Salimphone made recordings by, among others, Muhammad bin Faris. The label did not survive the recording industry’s mid-century transition to 45-RPM records, and Suri returned home to Oman in 1971 and died there in 1979. In his final years, he received recognition as a great singer: He performed on Omani television, and he was appointed a consultant on cultural affairs by the country’s ruler, Sultan Qaboos bin Sa’id.

Suri was a sawt traditionalist. He wrote his own songs and he didn’t like to reinterpret the classics. “He sang it exactly like it was,” said his son, Sa’id Salim ‘Ali Suri. “He never made any changes.”

The great figures of sawt are the backbone of the tradition, and the tradition is still alive through the songs that these musicians sang and recorded, and among those who still perform sawt. But in recent decades, with the arrival of digital media and the seemingly omnipresent dominance of pan-Arab pop stars—fueled, ironically, by the Sawt al-Khaleej network—no new, great figure has emerged to take a place among the sawt masters, most of whom had died by 1980. (The last musician to join was arguably Awad Dookhi of Kuwait, who died in 1979.) And today, no one seems to be writing new sawt songs.

Many years ago, when researching popular music in Oman, I asked the proprietor of a cassette shop for

recordings of sawt. “It is music for old men,” he told me dismissively. There is some truth in this. While the Ensemble Muhammad bin Faris seeks to modernize sawt, there are many devotees who welcome such innovations but who still want to preserve the old style, as sawt was recorded in the 1930s and ’40s. As the Bahraini singer Ahmad Jumeiri told me, sawt played simply, in a private gathering, is “the real sawt.”

Wherever sawt is performed today, Gulf music echoes down the years, from the voices of pearl divers and mariners improvising aboard their boats to weekly live sessions in Muharraq. As a Bahraini enthusiast said, “If you listen to a sawt singer now, you will hear Muhammad Zuwayyid, and in Muhammad Zuwayyid you will hear Muhammad bin Faris, and in Muhammad bin Faris you will hear Abdallah al-Faraj. And in Abdallah al-Faraj you will hear the ancient way of singing. You will hear them all in a sawt singer now.” 🌐



Edward Fox (www.edwardfox.co.uk) is the author of *Palestine Twilight: The Murder of Dr. Albert Glock and the Archaeology of the Holy Land* (Harper Collins, 2001) and other books. He lives in London.

Photojournalist **Hatim Oweida** (hatim.oweida@aramco.com) covered international news from London for 22 years. He is Saudi Aramco’s chief photographer in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.



Related articles at
www.aramcoworld.com
Roots of the Blues: J/A 06



Discover the sounds of sawt:

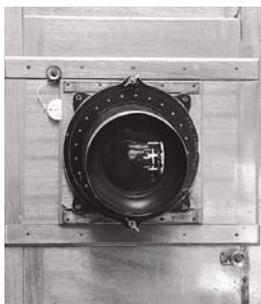
LUXOR'S FIRST LOCAL LENS

WRITTEN BY MARIA GOLIA
PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF EHAB GADDIS



Right: By the time this photo was made in 1944, Attiya Gaddis, who stands with an unidentified friend on his left, had run his studio and shop, Gaddis & Co., on the street level of Luxor's Winter Palace for 32 years. Above: In the early 1930s, Gaddis photographed the removal to Cairo of artifacts—under armed guard—from the newly discovered tomb of Tutankhamun. Opposite, inset: Built in the 1860s and purchased by Gaddis in 1906, this wooden box camera went with Gaddis to countless towns, villages and archeological sites across Egypt over more than a half-century.





ON THE STREET LEVEL of the Sofitel Winter Palace Hotel, facing the Nile River just minutes from the Luxor Temple, the elegant, old-fashioned storefront of Gaddis & Co. welcomes visitors with signs for books, jewelry, silverware and other souvenirs. Inside, guests are greeted by racks of curios, from alabaster bowls and stone replicas of ancient gods to pharaonic-style bead necklaces. Its walls, however, enshrine hundreds of books and vintage photographs in a one-of-a-kind collection picturing Luxor views, temple ruins and tourists, mostly from the early

20th century. And as if on center stage, there sits a large, wooden box camera: the tool that has lent permanence to the unfolding history of Egypt. A relic in its own right, and one with no shortage of stories to tell, it belonged to Gaddis & Co.'s founder and one of the earliest Egyptian studio photographers on record, Attiya Gaddis.



In the 1920s and '30s, Gaddis became a master of the popular "genre portrait," a style that reflected everyday life and showed people as "types" without identifying individuals, including the water carriers, opposite, and the young Nubian man with a mule, right. Both images subtly capture an ease on the part of the subjects before the camera that is often absent in comparable images by non-Egyptian photographers.

For many people over the past 150 years, the very idea of visiting Egypt began with photographs of artifacts and monuments. As the country is one of the world's most popular photographic subjects, it is of little wonder that the enduring allure of travel to Egypt—and to Upper Egypt's "Land of the Pharaohs" in particular—has been powered by an abundance of images dating back to the earliest days of photography.

In January 1839, members of the French Academy of Sciences were introduced to daguerreotypes, one-of-a-kind images fixed on highly polished, silver-plated sheets of copper. They immediately identified photography's potential for documenting the remains of ancient civilizations, and that same year the first photographers arrived in Egypt.



For several decades afterward, European photographic pioneers accumulated field experience in which they tested technical advances including shorter exposure times, easily prepared, reproducible negatives and the explosive mixture of magnesium filings and gunpowder that became known as "flash"—essential for lighting dark interiors of temples and tombs. The images these early photographers created of Egypt and its people became immensely popular, mainly in Europe and North America, where they appeared in books and on postcards and collectibles, prompting many a steamship voyage. Photographs of Egypt helped create what became mass tourism and, over time, they have helped sustain it.

Economics and politics helped, too: Well before Thomas Cook launched his steamer tours up the Nile in 1869, Egypt was attracting foreigners in large numbers who sought not the country's past but its highly profitable, modernizing present. Each year from 1857 to 1861, some 30,000 foreigners entered Egypt, many with the intention of setting up a business, a residence, or both. Egypt's foreign communities swelled further between 1861 and 1865 as the us Civil War stalled cotton production in the American south. This enriched Egypt, as it stepped in to boost cotton supplies to the textile industries of Europe. Egypt experienced a period of intense development as immigrants, entrepreneurs and adventurers flocked in. Historian David Landes compared it to the Alaskan gold rush when he called it "Klondike on the Nile."

Whereas photographers had previously visited Egypt for image-gathering expeditions, as of the 1860s some established permanent studios in Alexandria, Cairo, Luxor and the boomtown of Port Said, all to serve tourists and the



Gaddis's images also make up an extensive visual record of ordinary people. Beginning in the early 1920s, British rule required Egyptians to carry photographic identity cards, and Gaddis & Co. made thousands of portraits for them. To economize on materials, Gaddis often exposed parts of the same plate at different times with different subjects, as in this composite, left, which shows four students.



Gaddis & Co.'s storefront faced the Nile, and this made it easy for Gaddis to capture the river's activity. This image, from the 1920s, shows the Thomas Cook launch and steamer, *Sudan*.

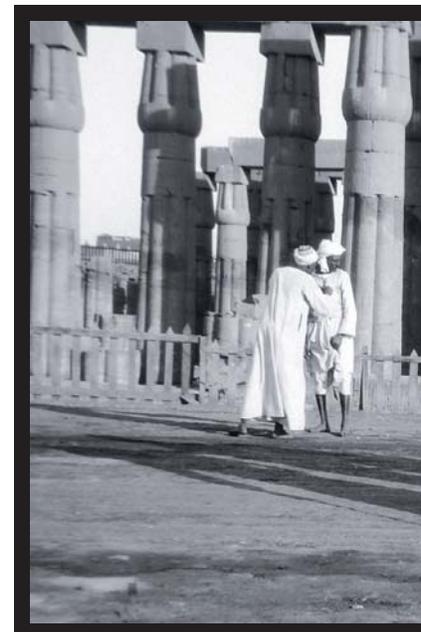
thriving international market for photographs from Egypt. As photography became more accessible, the studio photographers also filled the growing demand for portraits from the foreign community and well-to-do Egyptians.

While some historians have assumed it was Islamic objections to human figural representation in art that prevented Egyptians from becoming photographers, the real reasons were economic. Indeed, the first Egyptian photographer on record, Colonel Mohammed Sadiq Bey (1822-1902), focused his lens on those most sacred of Islamic places, producing the earliest photographic images of Madinah in 1862 and of Makkah and the pilgrimage, or *Hajj*, in 1880.

Foreigners, however, dominated the image-making trade because of the overwhelming advantages they enjoyed, including tax exemptions, lower import duties on commodities, and the access to capital to purchase photographic equipment and supplies from Europe. They also had easy access to training, unavailable to Egyptians until they began working for foreign photographers around the turn of the 20th century, apprenticing with studio photographers or helping archeologists. Al-

though we have little information about the individual careers of many of these early professionals, the thousands of surviving samples of their works suggest a trend to establish studios in provincial towns, away from foreign competition in the capital and Alexandria. One of the earliest and, to date, the best documented is the Luxor studio of Attiya Gaddis, thanks in large part to his family's continuous involvement in the business and preservation of Gaddis's images.

Born in the village of Tot near Luxor in 1889, Attiya Gaddis attended a Christian school and apprenticed as a boy to a foreign photographer. This was



probably Antonio Beato, who was the only Luxor-based photographer on record at the time. Often confused with his widely traveled photographer brother Felice, Antonio was a naturalized British citizen, probably born in Corfu in 1840, who spent the bulk of his long career in Luxor. When Beato died in 1906, his widow sold his glass-plate negatives to the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, and the young Gaddis apparently acquired one of his wooden box cameras that were manufactured in the 1860s and that used 30x40-centimeter (12x16”) glass plates: This is the one on display today in the family shop.

The year after Beato’s death, in 1907, 18-year-old Gaddis opened his studio in the Luxor Hotel. By 1912 he had partnered with Girgus Seif, and he had moved to the Winter Palace—the city’s “Grande Dame” hotel in the days of great discoveries and excavations. He expanded the studio and darkroom to include the book, jewelry and souvenir shop that operates today. Little is known about Seif: The partnership ended in 1933 when he decided to become Attiya’s competitor, but his studio did not prosper. After his death, a grandson sold his negatives to a framer who used them as recycled glass. Alongside Attiya, Seif nonetheless deserves credit as one of the first Egyptians to enter a profession that had been dominated for nearly a half-century by foreigners.

Ehab Gaddis, vice-consul for Great Britain in Luxor, remembers his grandfather as a hardworking, generous man, who until his death in 1972 presented his grandchildren on

their Friday visits to the shop with a small gift of five piasters each. “We felt rich!” says Ehab. In those days Gaddis & Co. sold expensive jewelry and antiques. “It was like a museum,” Ehab recalls, “and the clients seemed like kings and queens.” Gaddis & Co. was frequented by aristocratic guests of the Winter Palace, some of whom Attiya photographed. When Ehab was around 12, he recalls, Attiya gave him a small Kodak 127 camera. Handling its leather case, Ehab promised himself he’d become a famous photographer, just like his grandfather.

“Well, that didn’t happen,” he says with a laugh, but he did the next best thing: He preserved Attiya’s story, along with his precious collection of 2000 glass-plate negatives.

Attiya Gaddis himself was nothing if not resourceful, taking promotional photographs of the Winter Palace’s interiors and gardens as part of his studio-rental deal

with the hotel (which was, and remains, Luxor’s best commercial location) while importing Egypt-related books from Europe for sale in the shop. The lustrous wooden housing of the unwieldy box camera belies the half-century Gaddis spent hauling it around the villages and archeological sites of Egypt. Along with photographing the tombs and temples of the Valleys of the Kings and Queens and producing prints and postcards for tourists, Attiya captured everything from the Giza pyramids in the north to the Nubian tribesmen and women of Upper Egypt in the south, long

**FOREIGNERS DOMINATED EGYPT’S
EARLY PHOTOGRAPHIC TRADE
BECAUSE OF THE OVERWHELMING
ADVANTAGES THEY ENJOYED,
MOSTLY IN ACCESS TO
MATERIALS AND TRAINING.**

In Luxor, Gaddis also often photographed tourists, celebrities and royalty. Lower left: a western-clad tourist poses with local water-carriers in the Ramesseum, circa 1930s. Right: A rare snapshot of Sultanta Malak, wife of Egyptian Sultan Hussein Kamel, on a visit circa 1914-17.



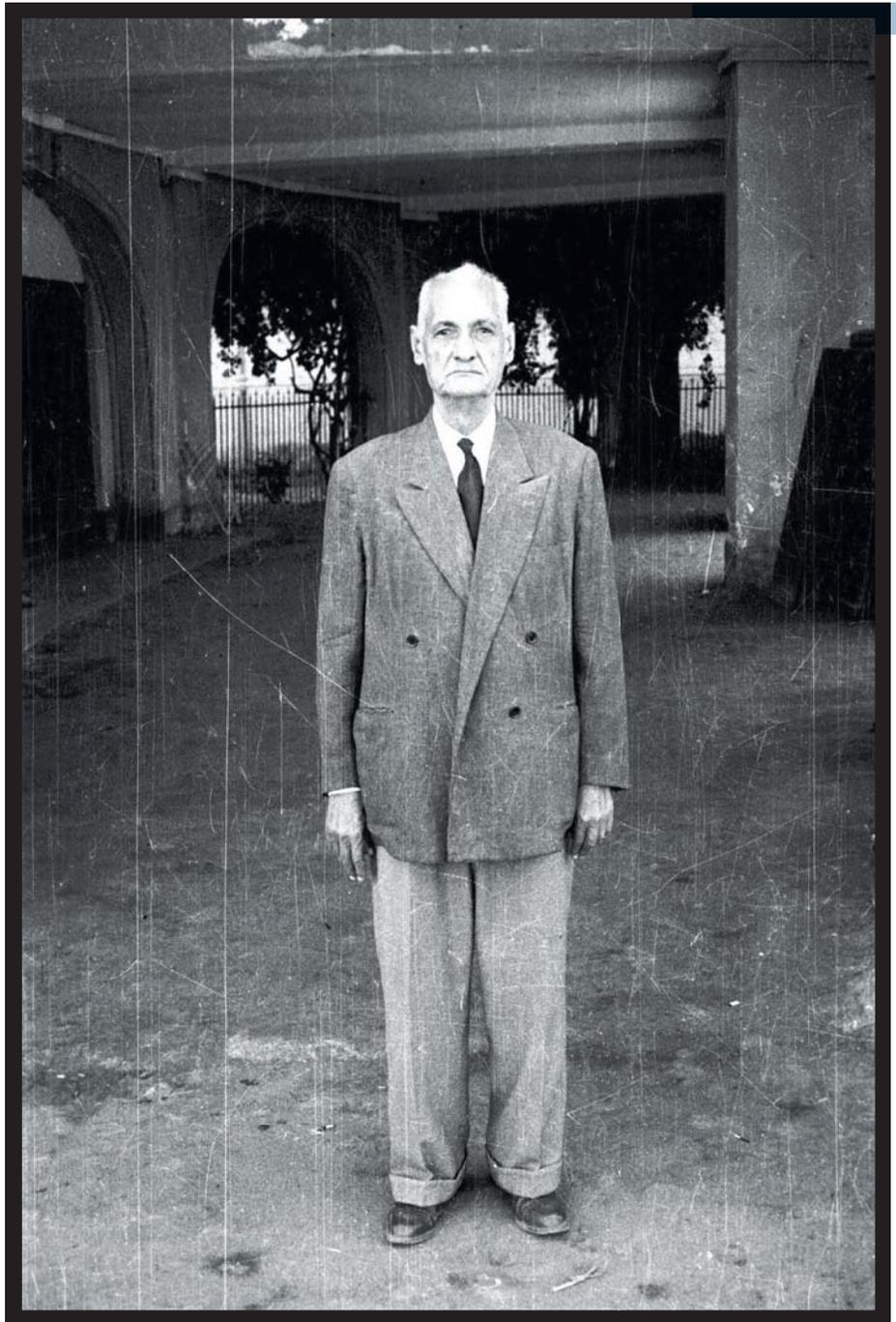


Since opening in 1907 as a simple studio and darkroom, Gaddis & Co. has expanded over the decades to include books, jewelry and souvenirs, and it employed the Gaddis family, notably Attiya's son Abdullah, above, probably photographed in 1944, and Abdullah's wife. Attiya himself, photographed at right in 1950, remained active in the business until his death in 1972.

before the reservoir of the Aswan High Dam flooded much of their homeland. He covered the visits to Luxor by members of Egypt's royal family and by foreign heads of state, including Afghani King Aman Allah and Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie.

Attiya also produced "genre photos" of ordinary Egyptians, which made up an important part of any Egyptian studio photographer's stock in trade, so popular were such images with tourists and the western market. These were portraits of unnamed "types" of local tradesmen and women: barbers, farmers, water-carriers, herders, craftsmen and street vendors; "harem women," dancing girls and "veiled women" young and old; Nubians, Bedouins and turbaned shaykhs.

The genre portraits taken in studios were obviously contrived and often woodenly posed, sometimes by people costumed to suit the role and at other times by actual people in their ordinary daily or ceremonial attire. Yet Attiya's genre portraits of his fellow Egyptians, whether made in his studio or in their villages and workplaces, remain distinctive because of the ease exhibited by his frequently smiling subjects, owing to shared language and culture. He also produced the hundreds of simple portraits of men and women of all ages and backgrounds that they used for identity cards, which Egypt's British rulers demanded beginning in the early 1920s, and which now constitute a photographic record of ordinary people.



Attiya's career unfolded in concert with the events that marked 20th-century Egypt, notably among them the worldwide sensation in 1923 of the discovery of Tutankhamen's tomb in the Valley of the Kings. The interplay of tourism, archeology and photography reached its apogee when Howard Carter opened the burial chamber. Carter had sold advance syndication rights for the excavation photographs taken by Egyptologist Harry Burton to *The Times* of London, which ensured their worldwide diffusion, and he hastened to make the site available to the expected flood of tourists. Gaddis was on hand when the contents of Tut's tomb were removed, under armed guard, from the Theban necropolis for transport to the Cairo Museum.

Although tourism briefly surged thanks to the teen pharaoh's treasures, the worldwide Great Depression of the 1930s brought Attiya's business nearly to a halt. Things improved

during World War II when Gaddis set up a temporary studio in nearby Qena to photograph the British troops garrisoned there. In the 1950s, he briefly established yet another temporary outfit near the British military base in Ismailia on the Suez Canal.

With a wife and four children to support, Attiya considered his wide-ranging activities necessary to achieve simple financial stability. From the start, he faced the same challenges as professional photographers everywhere—including a mega-competitor named George Eastman, whose introduction of the Kodak No.1 camera, launched in 1888 with the slogan “You press the button, we do the rest,” placed photography directly in the hands of the consumer. In 1900, the Kodak Brownie cost \$1 (equivalent to \$26.45 today), and many people who could afford to travel took one along. The same year that Gaddis opened his Winter Palace studio, George Eastman opened Africa’s first Kodak outlet in Cairo to answer the expected demand for film and print developing in one of the world’s most popular tourist destinations. (That storefront, at 20 Adly Street, endured until 2008.) Gaddis soon became one of Kodak’s first agents in Egypt.

As much as Kodak gained ground, demand persisted for large-format, well-executed photographic prints as well as souvenir postcards and portraits. Tourists were the *raison d’être* and most enduring clientele for Gaddis. He continued to take photographs until 1964, when his health began to fail, and he tended his shop with the help of relatives and young apprentices, selling prints and enlargements, photographic supplies, postcards, books and souvenirs until the day he died.

Ehab’s father was Attiya’s eldest son, Abdullah, and Abdullah worked as a salesperson in the shop beginning in 1940, as did his wife (Ehab’s mother) and her own father, who staffed the darkroom.

“One day,” Abdullah told the young Ehab, “your grandfather’s work will be valuable.” Ehab credits his father as the first “guardian” of the collection for having stored Attiya’s precious glass-plate negatives in a refrigerator, where they remained for 20 years before being brought in, literally, from the cold.

In 1994, a French archeologist who had seen the photographs by Gaddis and Seif that illustrated *Thebes*, a book by Jean Capart that was published in Brussels in 1926, visited and asked if there were more images. He was astonished by the contents of the refrigerator. “I realized my father was right,” admits Ehab. “These photos are part of Egypt’s history.” Slowly but surely, in the 1990s Ehab began digitizing his grandfather’s archive, and he published two books featuring Attiya’s

work: *Memories From The Past* (1999) and *Egypt’s Native Son* (2005). The digital prints and postcards from Attiya’s collection, sold exclusively at Gaddis & Co., remain a popular item among tourists and aficionados of photography and Egypt.

Although photographs of Egypt continue to captivate the world, the iconography of the distant past has lately been supplanted with the urgent present. Today, the word “Egypt” is likely to call to mind images of crowds clamoring for self-governance in 2011. Photography has played an inestimable role in both reflecting and shaping Egypt’s social realities, and there are signs that a deeper appreciation is emerging of its cultural, historic and artistic value.

Today, the family continues to run the storefront business, and Ehab Gaddis, below, at left, has digitized and conserved his grandfather’s images, many of which Ehab’s father, Abdullah, kept intact over two decades by storing them in a refrigerator. “These photos are part of Egypt’s history,” Ehab says.



Recent scholarship has drawn on period photographs to study early 20th-century subjects such as Egypt’s first nationalist movement, women in the press and the planning and architecture of the nation’s cities. Historians have begun to investigate the work of early Egyptian photographers as a window into the recent past. Attiya Gaddis’s story provides a small but crucial piece of this much larger picture, one that sheds light on the profession that influenced both the way the world sees Egypt and how Egyptians see themselves. 🌐



Maria Golia (www.mariagolia.wordpress.com) is the author of *Photography and Egypt* (Reaktion, 2010) as well as *Cairo, City of Sand* (Reaktion, 2004). Her latest book, *Meteorite*, is forthcoming this year. She lives in downtown Cairo.

 **Related articles at www.aramcoworld.com**
First photos of Makkah and Madinah: J/F 99
Rephotographing Egypt: J/A 89

TRAVELERS of AL-ANDALUS

part I

The Travel Writer Ibn Jubayr

Written by DANIEL GRAMMATICO and LOUIS WERNER

Art by BELÉN ESTURLA

According to later chroniclers, if they can be believed, the adventure of Ibn Jubayr, one of the most illustrious *rahbala*, or travelers, from Al-Andalus to destinations throughout the Mediterranean and farther east, began in the year 1183 with a repugnant challenge.

To name him in full, Abu al-Husayn Muhammad ibn Ahmad Ibn Jubayr al-Kinani served as secretary in the palace of Granada's governor, Abu Said Osman, son of the first Almohad caliph, Abd al-Mu'min. As the story goes, at one point while dictating a letter, the prince coerced him to drink seven cups of

wine, forbidden to Muslims. In exchange, the prince granted him seven cups of gold dinars. To seek expiation of his sin—and perhaps to make a hasty exit from the court—this otherwise most pious Muslim scholar set out to fulfill one of the five pillars of Islam by making the long pilgrimage to Makkah.

No matter Ibn Jubayr's true motive, his two-year journey made a considerable impact on literary history. His account of his travels and tribulations in the East—which makes no mention of the wine incident—served as the foundational work of a new genre of writing, the *rihla*, or the creative travelogue: a mix of personal narrative, description, opinion and anecdote. In following centuries, countless people emulated and even plagiarized him.

What could have moved so many people from Al-Andalus and the North African Maghreb to undertake dangerous journeys to faraway lands, particularly those people as well heeled and comfortably accommodated as Ibn Jubayr, who had received the traditional education of the sedentary elite of Al-Andalus, trained in both religious science and *belles lettres*?

Faith, to answer the question most simply. "For Muslims, pilgrimage rituals are something of the sublime," Ibn Jubayr wrote, thus setting a religious context for all the places and monuments he saw during his nine-month stay in Makkah and along his roundabout travels there and back. As an additional incentive, such a journey granted the esteemed title of *haji* to whoever completed the pilgrimage. In the case of his being from the Arab West, he gained additional status by obtaining an *ijaza*, or religious teaching license, at the feet of scholars from the Arab East.



Ibn Jubayr, however, had an even more personal incentive: finding his family origins. Born in Valencia but descended from the great Arab lineage of Kinana, from the region of Makkah, in some ways he was going home. Still another reason may have been of a literary nature: He was fascinated by the desert world and by the romance of travel by caravan, thanks largely to the potent imagery in the Arabic poetry he learned as a boy.

Ibn Jubayr was 38 years old when he left Granada on February 15, 1183. He moved first to Ceuta in North Africa to embark for Alexandria aboard a Genoan boat. His first act upon reaching Cairo was to stand before tombs of the Prophet Muhammad's followers. Next, he went up the Nile by boat to the town of Qus (near modern Qena), from where he mounted a camel to ride to the Red Sea port of 'Aydhab, near the modern Egypt-Sudan border, and from there sailed across the Red Sea to Jiddah. In August he arrived at Makkah.

For his return journey, he joined a pilgrim caravan that stopped in Madinah. In circular, even backward fashion, he crossed the deserts of Hijaz and Najd in the direction of Baghdad, heading east and north. There, in the Abbasid capital, he praised "the natural goodness of its air and waters," but he complained about the vanity of its people.

"Strangers they despise," he wrote, "and they show scorn and disdain to their inferiors, while the stories of the news of other men they belittle ... it is as if they are persuaded that God has no lands nor people save theirs."

He returned through the fertile lands of Mesopotamia, through Mosul and west toward Syria, via Aleppo. The city of Damascus, where he remained two months, dazzled him: "Paradise of the Orient," he called it. He then took the road to the Mediterranean port of Saint John d'Acre ('Akka), still occupied by a Crusader army, intending next to travel into western lands.

But this leg turned dangerous. Unfavorable winds left him shipwrecked in the Strait of Messina in Sicily, fallen into Christian hands a century earlier. There he remained for nearly four months, living under the hospitality of the Arabic-speaking King William II (known as "William the Good"), whom Ibn Jubayr came to admire for bringing non-Christians into his court. "He has much confidence in Muslims," he wrote, "relying on them for his affairs ... in them shines the splendor of his realm."



When the winds again turned, he set out for home, and he disembarked back in Al-Andalus, at the port of Cartagena. He arrived at his house in Granada in April 1185. There, he set about to write down his story.

Once home, he surely enjoyed increased authority as a returned scholar and pilgrim, yet what he did next is not recorded. Four years later he returned to the Arab East, although his rihla of his first sojourn makes no reference to these later two years of travel. When he was 72 years old, he undertook his last trip, passing through Makkah, Jerusalem and Egypt, where he died in Alexandria on September 29, 1217. The rihla and two poems are all he left behind.

Ibn Jubayr's epic story constitutes one of the most valuable testimonies about the eastern Mediterranean world in the late 12th century, which had recently been turned upside down by Crusaders in Syria and Palestine as well as by the Norman invasion of Sicily and the fall of the Fatimids in Egypt to the rising Salah al-Din Yusuf ibn Ayyub, or Saladin.

With a writing style concise if at times pompous, with alternating citations of Qur'anic verses, brief, fervent prayers and lines of poetry, Ibn Jubayr offered suggestive images of the lands he traversed, drawing the landscapes, cities, villages and markets with an astonishing attention to detail.

His exhaustive descriptions of mosques, tombs and other monuments are still of great help to archeologists and art historians today.

His journey also makes modern readers wonder about the climate of fear along the maritime and land routes of his day. He wrote, for instance, of a traveler's defenselessness in the face of pirates and covetous customs officers, corrupt traders and confidence men from all corners of the world, as well as Kurdish, Arab and Beja tribesmen always at the ready to assault and rob pilgrim caravans.

He praised the thriving Christian communities in Islamic lands and the similar Muslim communities in Christian lands.

Ibn Jubayr's rihla helps modern readers understand the complexity of the direct encounter between the two worlds of East and West—Islam and Christianity—that until then had been seeing each other more slantwise from across the sea, glimpsed from the corner of the eye.

He explained how these two civilizations first quarreled, then learned to accept one another and finally lived warily together, all within a single lifetime. The second Crusade, after all, was launched in 1145, the year of Ibn Jubayr's birth. Although he offered pro forma insults of other monotheisms, as was expected for his time, as well as denunciations of the various schisms within his own religion, he made his story accessible to all, for instance by providing both Islamic and Christian dates for the various legs of his trip.

Ibn Jubayr would be pleased to know that his manuscript was first edited and published by a westerner, and that the earliest known copy is in a library in the West, at Leiden University in the Netherlands, and it has since been translated into Russian, Persian, Urdu, Italian, French, English, Spanish and Catalan—the latter two languages of his Iberian homeland.

Christians and Muslims, he observed, were meeting both on the fields of battle and in processions for marriages. "One of the astonishing things that is talked of is that though the fires

of discord burn between the two parties, Muslim and Christian, two armies of them may meet and dispose themselves in battle array, and yet Muslim and Christian travelers will come and go between them without interference.... The soldiers engage themselves in their war, while the people are at peace." Likewise, at a Christian wedding in Tyre, he noted how "the Muslims and other Christian onlookers formed two ranks along the route, and gazed on bride and groom without reproof."

He was appreciative similarly of the European ships that carried Muslim pilgrims to their own holy places without interference, fearing bad weather more than militant unbelievers. Throughout, he praised the thriving Christian communities in Islamic lands and the similar Muslim communities in Christian lands.

Observing the favorable situation of some Muslim peasants working for Christian farmers, he lamented that "the Muslim community bewails the injustice of a landlord of its own faith, and applauds the conduct of its opponent and enemy, the Frankish landlord, and is accustomed to justice from him. He who despairs of this state must turn to God."

In Tyre, he recounted how a Muslim army from North Africa had attacked a Christian stronghold that had previously honored a truce with its Levantine Arab neighbors, and had thus unnecessarily upset their peaceful relations. Since then,



Muslims from western lands—but not their eastern coreligionists—were obliged to pay a tax as redress for such heedless trouble-making. Even though Ibn Jubayr himself had to pay the tax, his cultural circumspection allowed him to see both sides of the matter. “In the payment of this tax,” he wrote, “the Maghrebis are pleasingly reminded of their vexing of the enemy, and thus the payment of it is lightened and its harshness made tolerable.”

He explained the religious quandary he felt about this encounter between competing monotheisms, relating the religious fervor of his time in a personal voice when writing of his own pilgrimage to the land of many religions’ prophets, saints, preachers and ascetics.

Remember that Ibn Jubayr was educated under the Almohad dynasty, whose mission was to reform and revive Islam. Educated in the Maliki school of law, one of the four orthodox juridical systems, he nonetheless did not ignore or outrightly condemn even the most heterodox manifestations of his faith.

Zaydis, Qarmatians and other *rafiḍi*—rejectors, as he called them—all attracted his curious gaze. In fact, given his Almohadite demands for correct religious behavior, he seemed to indulge even the most casual Muslims as long as they were hospitable toward pilgrims such as himself. Of the Saru Bedouin of Yemen, he wrote, “the religious laws do not direct them in their affairs, and you will find among them no devotional practices beyond that of good intention.” For him, that was sufficient—and the pleasant fact that they were eloquent in their Arabic.

One might wonder which readers Ibn Jubayr had in mind when writing his *rihla*. He was certainly self-effacing—never once writing in the first person—and he left much room for self-doubt and contradiction, and more often than not he addressed his own idle curiosities over matters of state.

Compare this with the opening lines of the *Travels* by Marco Polo, the foundational travelogue of western literature written barely 100 years later: “Emperors, kings, dukes, marquises, counts, knights, and all persons wishing to know ... the kingdoms, provinces, and all the regions of the East, read this book.” What Marco Polo wanted to teach others of high estate, Ibn Jubayr was ready to set to the margin.

At other times, Ibn Jubayr seems almost chagrined by his own people’s state of affairs. The Abbasid caliph Al-Nasir, ruling during Ibn Jubayr’s Baghdad visit, died 35 years before the area was laid waste by the Mongol invasion in 1258. Ibn Jubayr had little positive to say about the city or its sovereign other than it still had a faint glow from its golden age under Harun al-Rashid four centuries earlier: “Most of its traces have gone, leaving only a famous name.”

His focus instead was on a new and rising multicultural capital, Sicily’s Palermo, full of “wealth,” “splendor” and “elegance”—words he had rarely if ever used in the Arab



Ibn Jubayr’s *rihla* helps modern readers understand the complexity of the encounter between the cultures of East and West, Islam and Christianity.

East—and of “well-set piazzas” and “towering palaces” like “pearls encircling a woman’s full throat.”

It is telling that Ibn Jubayr, despite acute homesickness when abroad, was unable to remain in Al-Andalus after his return. Perhaps it was because the Arab West at this time was facing the loss of much of its Iberian territory to Christian armies, beginning with the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa, known to the Arabs as the Battle of Uqab, in 1212, just five years before his death.

And perhaps just as likely, he saw in Saladin’s strong hand the promise that once again Jerusalem, Damascus and Cairo could be something like Palermo, “having all that you could wish of beauty, real or apparent, and all the means of subsistence, mature and fresh,” where peace, not war, prevailed. ☪

Daniel Grammatico (dgrammatico@tmdigital.es) is a historian and writer in Granada, Spain. **Louis Werner** (wernerworks@msn.com) is a writer and filmmaker living in New York City. **Belén Esturla** (esturlaruiz@gmail.com) is an artist and illustrator in Granada, Spain.

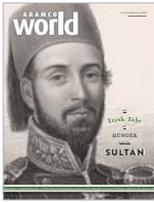
Related articles at www.aramcoworld.com

- Ibn Battuta: M/J 00
- Ibn Jubayr in Alexandria: M/A 94
- Muslims in Sicily: N/D 78

For Further Reading

The Travels of Ibn Jubayr. J.C. Broadhurst. 2008, APH Publishing Corp., ISBN 978-8187570554.

“Travelers of Al-Andalus” is a six-part series selected and adapted from the 41-part series “El Viajero Histórico,” an idea and production by Ana Carreño Leyva in *El Legado Andalusi: Una Nueva Sociedad Mediterránea*, the magazine of the Andalusian public foundation El Legado Andalusi, based in Granada, Spain, from 1990 through 2010. The original of this article, by Daniel Grammatico, appeared in issue number 2, titled “Las peregrinaciones de Ibn Yubair.” (www.legadoandalusi.com)



This edition of *AramcoWorld* has some particularly fascinating photographs of artwork, so a larger-than-usual portion of this Classroom Guide focuses on visual analysis. Beyond that, students will explore conflict and cooperation in two articles—one about Ottoman assistance to the Irish during “The Great Hunger”; the other about the 12th century travels of Ibn Jubayr. In a 15-minute activity, students examine the way a writer poses, and then goes about answering, a question for readers.

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

Curriculum Alignments

To see alignments with us national standards for all articles in this issue, click “Curriculum Alignments” at www.aramcoworld.com.

Julie Weiss is an education consultant based in Eliot, Maine. She holds a Ph.D. in American studies. Her company, Unlimited Horizons, develops social studies, media literacy, and English as a Second Language curricula, and produces textbook materials.

CLASS ACTIVITIES

Conflict and Cooperation

At a time when there is a great deal of conflict in the world, it can be inspiring to see how people in the past found ways to live with conflict. How were they able to cooperate with people who might have been perceived as opponents? Two articles in this edition address this question, and they offer insight into how conflict and cooperation sometimes coexist. (Each article is addressed separately in the activities that follow. That way, it will be easy to focus on one of them if that’s all you have time to do. Should you have time for both, forge ahead—but the activities for each article can stand alone.)

1. *An Irish Tale of Hunger and the Sultan*

To make the most of your time with your classmates, read the article at home and come to class prepared to work with its content.

The first part of the article describes the situation in Ireland from 1845 to 1847. Review that segment of the article, thinking about the instances of conflict it describes. Remember, conflict doesn’t necessarily mean actual fighting. Answer these questions to help you see the conflict: Who owned the farms in Ireland? Who worked on the farms? Irish farms were producing a great deal of food during “The Great Hunger.” Why weren’t the poor among the Irish people eating it? Who was getting the food? Who was making money from the food? Write a sentence that summarizes the situation in Ireland, pointing out the clash of interests of the different groups.

That’s the conflict part of the story. Now turn your attention to the cooperation part—and the next part of the article. List words that the article uses to describe Sultan Aldülmedjid I. Discuss with a partner how these personality traits might contribute to his willingness to assist the Irish people. Looking at the list of words, think of anyone you know, or any prominent person, past or present, who you think had or has those traits. Has that person behaved like Aldülmedjid in terms of generosity and cooperation? If not, why do you think the traits did not show in the same way in him or her as they did in the Sultan?

Other factors can be at play when two parties cooperate. Perhaps cooperation is more than just the expression of being a compassionate person. Perhaps such a person has something to gain by cooperating with someone else. The article

uses the word *diplomacy* to describe the content of letters between members of the Irish gentry and the Sultan. What did the Irish have to gain through their relationship with the Sultan? What did the Sultan have to gain by helping them? As a class, discuss these questions: Would you like to believe that the Sultan helped the Irish solely because it was the humane thing to do? Do you think differently about him knowing that one of the reasons he aided the Irish was because it was in the best interests of his own country to do so? If so, why? If not, why not? Finally, make a visual image that shows the complex relationships among the groups described in the article. Make sure your visual includes both conflict and cooperation.

2. *The Travel Writer Ibn Jubayr*

“The Travel Writer Ibn Jubayr” also tells a story of conflict and cooperation. Read the article, highlighting sections about conflict in one color, and sections about cooperation in a different color. When you review the parts that you’ve highlighted, what do you notice about conflict and cooperation? What groups are involved in the conflict the article describes? Why were they in conflict? How do the conflict and cooperation coexist? Make a visual image that shows the complex



relationship between the two groups and include both conflict and cooperation. If you also made a visual image representing conflict and cooperation among the groups discussed in “An Irish Tale of Hunger and the Sultan,” look at both visuals side by side. What generalizations, if any, can you make about conflict and cooperation based on these two articles?



IF YOU ONLY HAVE 15 MINUTES...

After the first paragraph of “An Irish Tale of Hunger and the Sultan,” author Tom Verde raises a tantalizing question: How much of the story he has just told is true, and how much is “blarney”? Read the article. How has Verde answered the question? Go back through what you’ve read, and see how he has uncovered the answer. Make a diagram that shows the route(s) he took to make his case. What sources did he consult? Whose perspectives did he trust? Whose did he question? How did he determine which elements of the initial story were true? How did he determine that other elements were most likely not true? After you’ve made your diagram, rewrite the first paragraph of the article so that it tells the story that the author has determined is actually true.

VISUAL ANALYSIS

Usually when you look at a painting, it’s on a canvas; often it’s in a frame, hanging on a wall. The street artists who participated in the Djerbahood Project, however, painted their art on buildings. Of course, a painter could make the exact same painting on the wall as he or she could make on canvas; but somehow artists don’t seem to do that. The fact that artists are painting on a wall affects not just how they paint, but also what they paint. You can see some striking examples of this in the photos of street art that accompany the article “Djerba’s Museum of the Street.”

How does painting on a building affect a work of art?

To begin this visual analysis, pair up with another student and consider the image on the bottom right of page 15. (You can read about the image on the same page.) You will notice that part of it is painted in a doorway. How do you think this placement

affects the painting? To answer the question, imagine the exact same painting on a canvas—no doorway. Describe what such a painting would look like. Compare how you feel when you see the painting in the doorway and how you feel seeing it without a doorway. Would the effects be the same? With your partner, role play an interview in which one of you takes the role of the painter and the other conducts the interview. See if you can imagine what the painter was thinking about when designing the painting to be part of a doorway.

Turn your attention to a painting that’s on a flat wall, like the painting on page 16. Again, imagine the painting on a canvas. How does it being on the wall make it different than it would be on canvas—if at all? To answer the question, look at the grate at the top of the wall, and the tree to the left of the painting. Do you think the grate and the tree are part of the painting? Do you think they’re like a frame around a canvas painting? How do you think the presence of the grate and the tree affected the artist’s work?

How does a photographer photograph paintings?

Now let’s add another layer to your visual analysis. Artists painted on walls in Tunisia, and you’ve examined some of their work. But actually, you’ve examined a photographer’s representation of their work. You’ll notice that most of the photos that accompany the article include features that are not part of the paintings themselves. The photo of the doorway painting has a man walking into the frame from the right. The photo of the blue moped on page 16 includes a real bicycle and a cart. Look at the top-left photo on page 14: Describe the painting that’s in the photograph. Then describe the three children in front of the painting. Why do you think the photographer included the children in the photo? Why not just take a picture of the painting by itself? You can ask the same question of the other two photographs you’ve analyzed.

Explore this question by trying it yourself. Use a camera if you have one. (A smartphone camera will work.) Choose a painting that you like. If you live near an art museum, get a copy of one there (such as a poster-size version of it). If not, but you have access to the Internet, choose a painting from a museum’s online collection and print it. Or choose a painting that’s reproduced in a book and photocopy it or scan and print it. Then put your copy of the painting in a context, such as on a wall, and take a picture of it there. Finally, take a third photo that includes the painting on the wall, and something else. You can use the photos from “Djerba’s Museum of the Streets” to give you ideas. Look at the three images side by side—the painting, a photo of the painting on a wall, and a photo of the painting on a wall with something else in the frame. How do they differ? Which do you like best? Why? Post your photos in the classroom. Look at your classmates’ work along with your own. As a class, discuss the different types of photograph.





Almagul Menlibayeva, a native of Kazakhstan, blends the regional traditions of Central Asia with a critique of official identity politics in work like “My Silk Road to You” (2011).

La Vie Est Une Légende E.Cité—Almaty/Kazakhstan:

Despite a complex political situation, Kazakhstan has never ceased to nurture intense artistic activity. This project aims to show the diversity and relevance of 10 Kazakh artists’ present-day work through sculpture, photography, video and installations. The works, not previously exhibited in France, bring together in a single room common themes of Kazakhstan’s history, including Saïd Atabekov’s “Shroud of Genghis Khan” and Yerbossyn Meldibekov’s “Distorted Busts of Lenin,” and popular culture, including “The Bazaar,” recreated by Elena and Viktor Vorobyev and “The Extraordinary Textiles,” in Almagul Menlibayeva’s photographs, **above**. Musée d’Art Moderne et Contemporain, **Strasbourg**, through March 8.

Current **January**

Into India: *South Asian Paintings from the San Diego Museum of Art* uses miniatures to explore art produced by Persian, Central Asian and European leaders and merchants who settled in India from the 12th to 19th centuries. The exhibition presents more than a hundred illuminations of Buddhist, Jain and Hindu manuscripts that illustrate sacred Indian texts, books of Persian poetry and albums documenting the life of the glittering Mughal court or the indigenous flora and fauna, revealing the remarkable ability of Indian artists to adapt their styles to satisfy the taste of the foreigners who dominated India while maintaining a specifically Indian quality. Musée national des beaux-arts du **Quebec**, through January 18.

Roads of Arabia: *Archaeology and History of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia* is an eye-opening look at the largely unknown ancient past of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, drawing on recently discovered archeological material never before seen in the us. “Roads of Arabia” features objects excavated from several sites throughout the Arabian Peninsula, tracing the impact of ancient trade routes and pilgrimage roads stretching from Yemen in the south to Iraq, Syria and Mediterranean cultures in the north. Elegant alabaster bowls and fragile glassware, heavy gold earrings and Hellenistic bronze statues testify to a lively mercantile and cultural interchange among distant civilizations. Asian Art Museum, **San Francisco**, through January 18.

The Future of Fashion Is Now takes the visitor on a trip around the most innovative fashion from all over the world, with works by such designers as Hussein Chalayan (Cyprus), Viktor&Rolf (the Netherlands) and Rejina Pyo (Korea). The exhibition examines the critical stance that young fashion designers worldwide are adopting with regard to “the fashion system” and the role of clothes in contemporary society. Designers with non-western backgrounds and from countries bordering Europe, where until recently there was little or no tradition of fashion, are actively seeking to transform the fashion system. The exhibition is the sequel to the

successful show “The Art of Fashion” staged in Rotterdam in 2009. Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, **Rotterdam**, through January 18.

The Garden of Ideas: *Contemporary Art from Pakistan*. Created for pleasure, spiritual reflection and esthetic contemplation, gardens have held many meanings. Beyond their beauty, they represent the human impulse to organize, contain and collect the natural world. Without cultivation, a garden would cease to exist. Similarly, without cultivation of the mind and the soul, it is believed a society cannot progress. “To dwell is to garden,” wrote the German philosopher Martin Heidegger, reminding us of the central role of culture as part of our existence. The exhibit brings together the work of six internationally acclaimed Pakistani artists whose creations play with, question and interrogate the timeless theme of the garden. Several pieces have been made in direct response to works in the Aga Khan Museum’s collection and to the museum’s own reinterpretation of an Islamic garden (*chahar bagh*) as designed by Vladimir Djurovic. Aga Khan Museum, **Toronto**, through January 18.

Medieval Morocco: *An Empire from Africa to Spain*. From the 11th to the 15th centuries, a succession of dynasties—Almoravid, Almohad and Marinid—fashioned a political and civilizational space centered on Morocco

and stretching to al-Andalus. Their conquests took them from the southern edge of the Sahara (northern fringe of Mauritania) to the northern reaches of Algeria and Tunisia. This empire’s influence, unifying for the first time the western Islamic world, was felt as far as the Near East. Musée du Louvre, **Paris**, through January 19.

The Everyday—The Luxurious—The Protective: *Jewelry in Ancient Egypt* presents selected pieces of jewelry, pectorals and amulets, as well as scarabs, from various periods in Egyptian history. The exhibition provides an overview of each of the different types of jewelry, explains their production and features excellent examples of silverwork. Spread over several separate vitrines, the display explains the importance of jewelry in everyday life, as luxury objects and as protective amulets. Many of the exhibits from Berlin’s Ägyptisches Museum collection have never gone on public display before. Neues Museum, **Berlin**, through January 25.

Imran Qureshi: *Deutsche Bank’s “Artist of the Year”* comprises miniature paintings and site-specific installations. The exhibition is Qureshi’s first major presentation in the uk. Born in 1972 in Pakistan, Qureshi studied in Lahore at the National College of Arts with a major in miniature painting—a traditional discipline he teaches there today. Considered one of the most important contemporary artists

on the subcontinent, he credits in his work a unique synthesis of the genre's motifs and techniques with current issues and the formal language of contemporary abstract painting. Ikon Gallery, **Birmingham, UK**, through January 25.

Treasures from India: *Jewels from the Al-Thani Collection* includes some 60 jeweled objects from the private collection formed by Sheikh Hamad bin Abdullah Al-Thani, offering a glimpse into the evolving styles of the jeweled arts in India from the Mughal period until the present day, with emphasis on later exchanges with the West. Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York**, through January 15.

Current February
Illusions & Mirrors. As part of this year's edition of *La Biennale de Montréal*, with the future as its theme, the museum will host the latest film by well-known Iranian-born American artist and filmmaker Shirin Neshat. Entitled *Illusions & Mirrors* and shot in 2013, it stars the actress Natalie Portman. This presentation at the MMFA will be its North American premiere. **Montréal** Museum of Fine Arts, through February 1.

Francesco Clemente: *Inspired by India* examines the Indian influences in Clemente's work and how they relate to the ancient traditions and practices of various regions of India. In contrast to leading conceptual artists' practices of the 1970s, Clemente focused on representation, narrative and the figure, and explored traditional, artisanal materials and modes of working. The exhibition includes some 20 works, including paintings from the past 30 years and four new, larger-than-life sculptures. Rubin Museum of Art, **New York**, through February 2.

Objects in Painting, Souvenir of Morocco, in Connection with Medieval Morocco: *An Empire from Africa to Spain*, compares and contrasts paintings and drawings by Eugène Delacroix with objects that the artist brought back from his trip to North Africa in 1832. The exhibition provides insight into the realist and fantastical aspect of Delacroix's Orientalist works. While his travels to Morocco provided an opportunity for the awe-struck young man to make hundreds of sketches and watercolors from first-hand observations, he would return to these Oriental subjects until his death in 1863. His memories of Morocco mingled with an imaginary and sensitive vision nurtured by the literature and music of his time. Musée du Louvre, **Paris**, through February 2.

The Landscapes of India: *Miniature Painting from the Mughal Era* reveals the scope of landscape tradition in Indian painting. At the same time, the miniatures in this display represent a cross section of northern and central Indian schools of painting from the 16th through the 19th centuries. While abstract imagery—particularly with regard to nature and landscape—was visible in Rajput schools of painting into the 19th century, the European influence on Mughal painting reveals an unmistakable naturalism, thereby affecting the Rajput schools in turn. Museum für Asiatische Kunst, **Berlin**, through February 8.

Local Not Local: *Arabic and Iranian Typography Made in California.* Typography, typeface and font debates may seem like a recent phenomenon, but they have always been part of any good design discussion. This is true for English and the Roman alphabet, as well as Arabic and its alphabet. The 10 artists shown here come from diverse Middle Eastern backgrounds, but all live in California and use the Arabic alphabet in their designs. Their work is tied to their personal ancestral heritage, as well as their own modern style. These pieces include client-driven as well as independent works. Arab American National Museum, **Dearborn, Michigan**, through February 15.

Cairo to Constantinople: *Early Photographs of the Middle East* documents the Prince of Wales's (later King Edward VII) 1862 educational tour of the Middle East through the work of British photographer Francis Bedford, the first photographer to join a royal tour, and explores the cultural and political significance Victorian Britain attached to the region. The display includes archeological material brought back by the prince, including an Egyptian papyrus inscribed with the Amduat, a memorial text that describes the journey through the Underworld of Re, the Egyptian sun god. The Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace, **London**, through February 22.

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. Photographic records were made at several key moments in its recent history: before and during the façade's dismantling; after the structure was hit by a bomb 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.

Grand Parade: *A Unique Art Installation by Jompet Kuswidananto.* The Indonesian artist 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 to this day. 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 greatest 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.

Poetry and Exile in Works by Abdallah Benanteur, Ipek Duben, Mireille Kassar, 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 Kassar 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 was accompanied not only by historians and poets but also by 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 brought 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.

Current April
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 over 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.

Helen Zughai'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 Zughai's father, Elia, still tells of his life in Lebanon and Damascus in tales of family, community, adventure and morality. These rich stories inspired her 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 interest coincides with an interest in histories of mobility generated by contemporary discourses. 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.

Current May
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**

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 2500 years earlier. Through a selection of unearthened 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 day. 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 traditions 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.

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

Copyright © 2015 by Aramco Services Company. Volume 66, Number 1. Periodicals postage paid at Houston, Texas and at additional mailing offices.

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



A horn pendant, capped with silver on each end by a craftsman of Sierra Leone's Vai people, bears inscriptions in both Vai and Arabic.

19th centuries, and woven and dyed textiles. The exhibition emphasizes the cultural context of these artworks, identifying artists or workshops whenever possible. This reveals the deeply personal and scholarly connections forged by Siegmann during his decades of research on the arts and cultures of this region. MIA, through February 8.

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.

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. Asian Art Museum of **San Francisco**, through July 15; Walters Art Museum, **Baltimore**, Fall through Spring 2016.

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

Coming **January**

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 Jahana, their beloved sister, assuage Aurangzeb's resolve to seize the Peacock Throne and purge the empire? National Theatre, **London**, January 20 through April 4.

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 Hamam, 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 and exploring 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, January 28 through May 4.

Davod Azad, based in Tehran, is a vocalist, composer, multi-instrumentalist and master of the *tar* and *setar*, two instruments fundamental to the Persian music repertoire. He is admired for his distinctive singing style, which integrates classical and modern spiritual elements, as well as for his stunning improvisations. He has performed in Sufi gatherings around the world over the past 30 years; his compositions to the poems of Rumi have been known for their healing and uplifting effect. Asia Society of **New York**, January 31.

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

between 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, January 31 and ongoing.

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. **Montréal** Museum of Fine Arts, January 31 through May 31.

Coming **February**
Egypt and the Lost Kingdom of Punt: *Hatshepsut's Royal Contacts*. In the 15th century BCE, the pharaoh Hatshepsut sent one of the most famous of the ancient country's expeditions to what was considered a magical place—the land of Punt. Scenes in Hatshepsut's mortuary temple recount the journey and boast of riches that she acquired, such as incense trees, baboons and ebony, giving a whole new meaning to "vacation souvenirs." Talk by Pat Remler, Egyptologist. **Houston** Museum of Natural Science, February 3.

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**, February 5 through April 26.

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**, February 9 through March 23.

Cleopatra: *An Archaeological Perspective on Egypt's Last Pharaoh*. Cleopatra, the last pharaoh of Egypt, may be the most famous female ruler in all of history. But her Roman enemies made her notorious for all the wrong reasons: her political ambitions, her sumptuous lifestyle, and above all her love affairs with Julius Caesar and Mark Antony. Yet if we look past the long-standing stereotypes of popular culture, from Plutarch and Shakespeare to Elizabeth Taylor and Hollywood, the

archeological evidence paints a very different picture. This illustrated lecture provides a tour of the Egypt that Cleopatra inherited from her Ptolemaic ancestors, views her self-chosen portraits on coins and temple walls and takes in her extraordinary achievements as goddess, priestess, queen, civil administrator, scholar, lover and, above all, mother. The lecture follows Cleopatra from the Nile to the Tiber, and from desert shrines to the streets and palaces of her capital at Alexandria, now sunken beneath the waters of Alexandria harbor. Archeological discoveries create a truer picture of Cleopatra than the many literary and dramatic fantasies that have distorted the memory of this great leader. Lecture by John Hale, archeologist. Doris Duke Theatre, **Honolulu** Museum of Art, February 12.

Coming **March**
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**, March 1 through March 1, 2016.

Sharjah Biennial 12: *The Past, the Present, the Possible* began to take shape in a private conversation between Danh Vo and curator Eun-je Joo in early 2013. They discussed

the relevance of contemporary art; the potential of 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 approximately 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 Art Foundation, **Sharjah, UAE**, March 5 through June 5.

Coming **May**
Inci Eviner. The Drawing Center presents a selection of videos by Turkish artist Inci 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 wide variety of drawing traditions, including engravings, ceramic tile designs and architectural plans. The Drawing Center, **New York**, May 29 through June 28.

PERMANENT / INDEFINITE
Europe Imagines the East brings attention to *chinoiserie*, an enchanting decorative motif depicting imaginary and whimsical interpretations of life in Asia, through four tapestries from the museum's collection. The motifs of *chinoiserie*, an 18th-century European concept, typically reflect exotic figures clothed in flowing robes and elaborate

headresses, situated in fantastical landscape settings. A blend of factual travel accounts, atlases, myth and fantasy, the scenes in these pieces capture the enthrallment of Europeans with visions of the Near and Far East, offering a wealth of iconographic images to study and explore. **Seattle** Art Museum.

East-West/West-East is a newly unveiled sculpture by Richard Serra, placed in a desert area. It consists of four steel plates, varying from 14.7 to 16.7 meters tall, that the artist says symbolize the connections between Qatar's two regions. Sixty kilometers from **Doha**.

Welten der Muslime (Muslim Worlds) takes a look at various 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 various topics, for instance 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).

AramcoWorld is published bimonthly in print and digital editions. Two-year (12-issue), renewable subscriptions to the print edition are available without charge to a limited number of readers worldwide who are interested in Arab and Islamic cultures and connections. (The magazine carried the name *Aramco World* from its founding in 1949 until 2000, when it was renamed *Saudi Aramco World*; this year it has been renamed *AramcoWorld*.)

To subscribe to the print edition go to www.aramcoworld.com and click "FREE subscription." You may also fax a signed and dated request to +1-713-432-5536, or subscribe by postal mail using either the card bound into the magazine or your own signed and dated request sent to *AramcoWorld*, Box 469008, Escondido, California 92046-9008, USA. If requesting a **multiple-copy subscription** for a class, specify the number of copies desired and the duration of the class. For residents of Saudi Arabia, all requests for subscriptions must be sent by postal mail to Public Relations, Saudi Aramco, Box 5000, Dhahran 31311, Saudi Arabia.

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

Back issues, from 1960 onward, can be read in full online and downloaded from www.aramcoworld.com. Printed copies are available for issues less than five years old, as long as supplies last. Request them by e-mail to saworld@aramcoservices.com, by fax to +1-713-432-5536 or by postal mail to Special Requests, *AramcoWorld*, Box 2106, Houston, Texas 77252-2106, USA. Bulk copies of issues less than five years old will be provided when available, without charge, for use in classrooms, workshops, study tours, lectures or other non-profit educational events.

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

Permissions:

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

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

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



