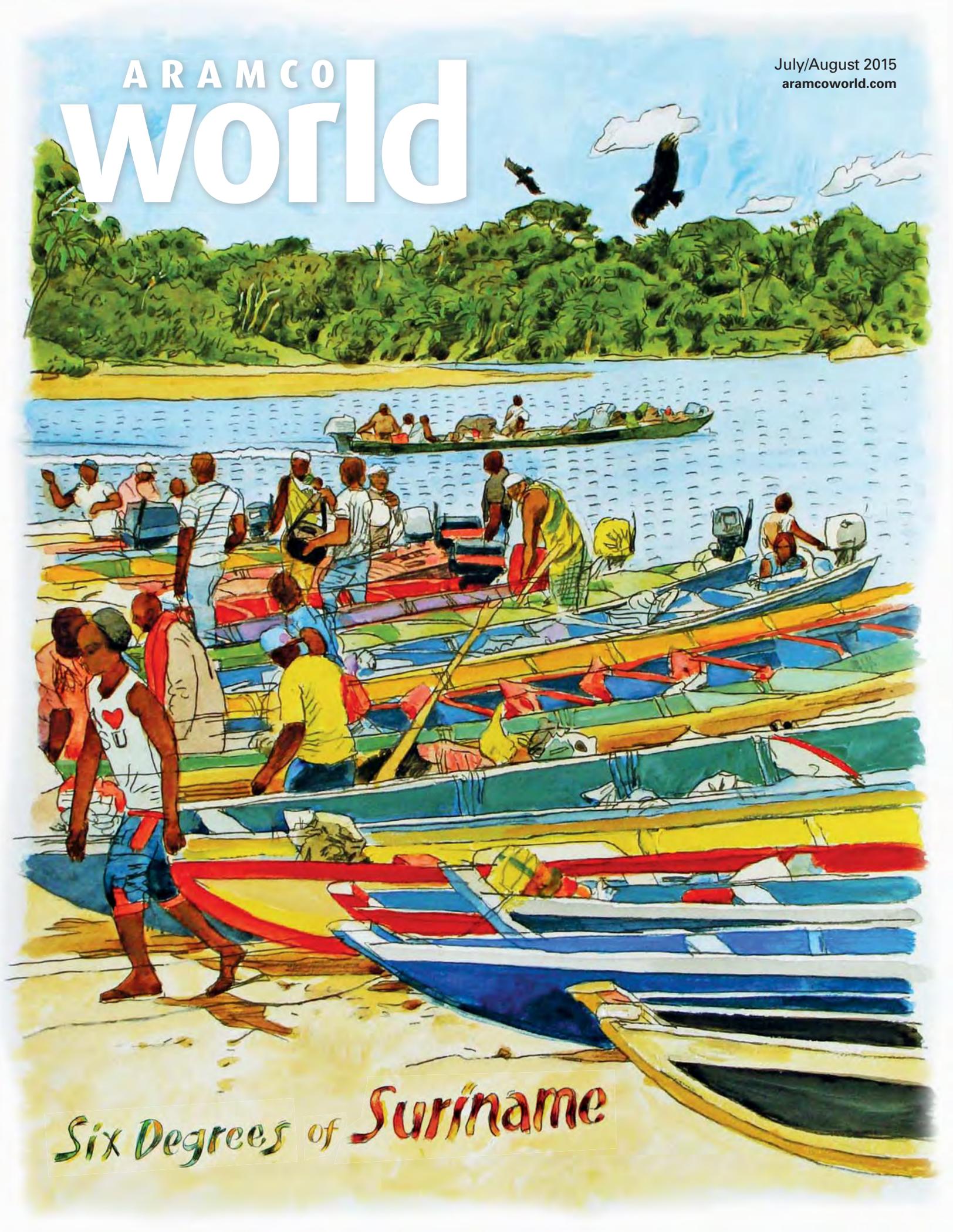
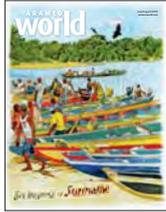


# ARAMCO World

July/August 2015  
aramcoworld.com



*Six Degrees of Suriname*



Commuter boats pack a riverbank upstream from Suriname's capital, Paramaribo, serving towns and villages where residents might be recent immigrants from almost anywhere, or descendants of slaves, colonists or indigenous tribes. Art by Norman MacDonald.

**Publisher**  
Aramco Services Company

**President**  
Basil A. Abul-Hamayel

**Director  
Public Affairs**  
Jamal K. Khudair

**Editor**  
Richard Dougherty

**Assistant Editors**  
Arthur P. Clark  
Alva Robinson

**Digital Media Editor**  
Johnny Hanson

**Circulation**  
Melissa Altman

**Administration**  
Sarah Miller

**Intern**  
Suzanne Bader

**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



Braided and pressed in the center with a bread stamp, this round of bread dough in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, is ready to be slapped by hand onto the wall of a clay oven, where it will bake to gold-crust perfection. Photo by Eric Hansen.

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 Six Degrees of Suriname

Illustrated and written  
by Norman MacDonald

Independent since 1975, Suriname began as an English and then a Dutch colony. Now among the western hemisphere's most culturally diverse countries, it also lays claim to the hemisphere's highest percentage of population identifying as Muslims: 14 percent. Our Canada-born, Amsterdam-based, award-winning illustrator-author paid a visit to sketch and listen.



## 12 Ferozkoh: Renewing the Arts of the Turquoise Mountain

Written by Lee Lawrence  
Photographs courtesy of Turquoise Mountain Institute

After 15 woodworkers, painters, calligraphers and jewelers from Afghanistan visited the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, Qatar, they produced an exhibit in which the classical inspired the modern. Now, the artists themselves are helping to inspire the renewal of a deep—and too-little-known—artistic heritage.

# 20

## Via Egnatia to Rome and Byzantium

Written by Louis Werner  
Photography and video by Matthieu Paley

Paved with stones that, according to one Roman writer, “give the appearance not simply of being laid together ... but they seem to have actually grown together,” the Via Egnatia joined East and West under empires both Roman and Ottoman. Much of its 1,100-kilometer length can still be walked and driven, from original-stone footpaths in Albania to a superhighway in Greece.

# 32

## The Fabled Flatbreads of Uzbekistan

Written and photographed by Eric Hansen

Stamped with patterns that beautify, identify and aid baking in a clay oven, the flatbreads—*non*—from the heart of Central Asia make art of one of the world’s most ancient staples.

# 40

## Travelers of Al-Andalus, Part IV: Al-Ghazal: From Constantinople to the Land of the Vikings

Written by Jesús Cano and Louis Werner  
Art by Belén Esturla

Good looks and a fleet wit gave Al-Ghazal his name, which means “gazelle,” and in later years the poet and courtier of Córdoba proved a reluctant though dutiful envoy both east and, more notably, north.

**44 Classroom Guide** Written by Julie Weiss

**46 Events & Exhibitions**



**S**URINAME IS A COUNTRY the size of Florida with a half million souls living with Guyana to the west, French Guiana east and giant Brazil south. Paramaribo, its capital, gives the impression of a peaceful coastal town back in the 1950s—until new cars and pickups bring you back to the present. Road signs are in Dutch, but driving is on the left, just as it was in the Netherlands before Napoleon invaded and switched it, but his decree never reached this Dutch colony.

Paramaribo is six degrees above the Equator. Your shadow at noon is under your feet. The city is 23 kilometers from the mouth of the Suriname River and the Atlantic Ocean, and two-thirds of the country's population live there in the city. The heart of this metropolis is commended on the UN's World Heritage List, as it "reflects the multicultural society of Suriname."

I went out to stroll through the downtown, where men and women were,

it seemed, from all over, the results of so many migrations. Asia, Africa, the Amazonian interior; Indonesian and Indian; foreign students on bicycles and Creole women in patterned dresses. The 2012 census showed just under half the country identified as Christian, 22 percent as

*Written and illustrated  
by Norman  
MacDonald*

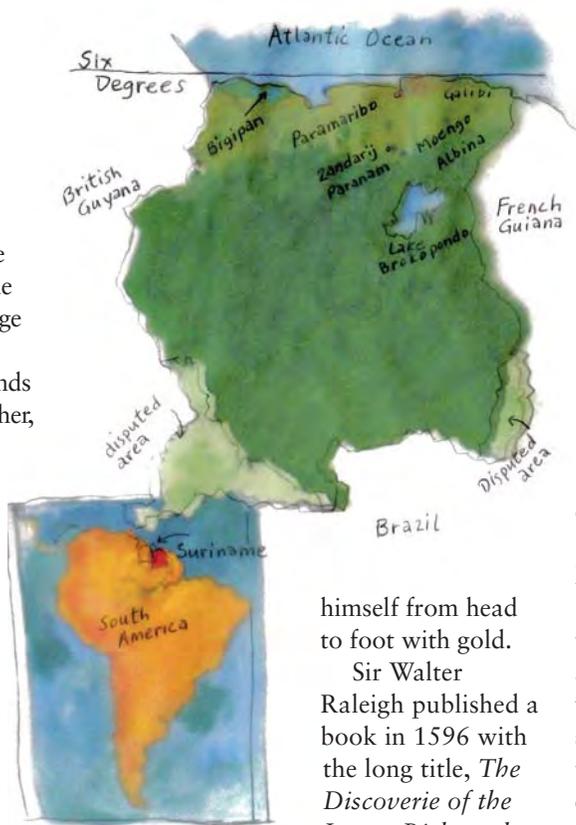
# Six Degrees

Hindu, 14 percent as Muslim and two percent as Winti (an indigenous religion), with just 200 Jews. That means this country has the highest percentage of both Muslims and Hindus in the hemisphere, kind of a living diversity model. The wooden, colonial-fusion architecture may have caught the UN's gaze, but to me people were the best sight. The street language is called Sranantongo, from the time when slaves from different backgrounds had to find ways to talk with each other, so it uses words from African languages as well as English, Dutch and Portuguese. The official language, though, is Dutch.

Travel away from Paramaribo, and it becomes a quiet country lifestyle. People sitting on their porches wave as you pass. A hundred kilometers ahead, the road ends abruptly at a river bus stop. There is a petrol station, a convenience store and boats to take you farther upriver into the mystical jungle. Evening around the oil lanterns, and the conversation goes from the coming election to the corruption scandals to the dry season that "must end soon."

As darkness falls, the conversation manoeuvres to stories of snakes and insects as big as animals that creep around in the dark. "When I was upriver the last time," one man says, "a local caught a huge snake in the dark with his bare hands. Don't know how he did it." Then the drums started. It was a funeral celebration in a nearby village, and it beat on until after dawn.

Spaniards came to what is now Guyana about 1500. Pizarro listened covetously as Indians—probably Arawaks and Caribs—told of a powerful Inca king who bathed in a holy golden lake and draped



himself from head to foot with gold.

Sir Walter Raleigh published a book in 1596 with the long title, *The Discoverie of the Large, Rich, and Bewtiful Empyre of Gviana, with a*

*relation of the great and Golden Citie of Manoa (which the Spanyards call El Dorado).* On a 17th-century map drawn by the mapmaker Willem Blaeu, Manoa appears somewhere between the Orinoco River to the north and the Amazon south. The gold rush was on, and it's mined to this day.

By the mid-1600s, the British governor of Barbados, Lord Francis Willoughby, wanted to expand his sugar plantations. He sailed into the Suriname River, made a deal with the Arawak Indians to stay, and started building a fort at the river. Behind it, natives and 3,000 slaves built sugar plantations.

In 1664 the English and Dutch declared another war on each other over

maritime trade. The Dutch told their navy to conquer all the English colonies they could. They sailed down the Suriname River, and after an hour of cannon fire, Willoughby surrendered. The war ended in 1667 with the Treaty of Breda, under which each country kept the territories it conquered: Suriname became Dutch, and the British kept New Amsterdam, which they renamed New York.

Labor at the time mostly meant slavery. As in much of South America, from the beginning in Suriname, slaves ran away into the rainforest and organized sabotage and rebellions.

Back in Paramaribo, a city of wooden houses, 400 were lost in a fire in 1821. In 1832 a group of slaves wanting to escape to the forest stole food for the journey and, to mask the theft, set a fire. They were arrested, and three of them were sentenced to death and burned alive at the spot where the fire started. Today, every school kid in Suriname can tell you they were Cojo, Mentor and Present, and they are official national heroes.

Another example of how much Suriname has changed starts with the first theater, built in 1775. No Jews or slaves were allowed inside. Then move up to January 1943, when the state announced to the world: "Every Jew who can escape Europe is welcome in Suriname." They built houses for them and waited. Jewish refugees came, settled, worked their trades and sent their children to school.

Emancipation from slavery came on July 1, 1863, but independence not until 1975; this June there will be elections.

Historian and writer Cynthia McLeod tells it this way: "Slavery was a terrible system, but it was a system. Who survived? The strongest. Who are the strongest? We are."





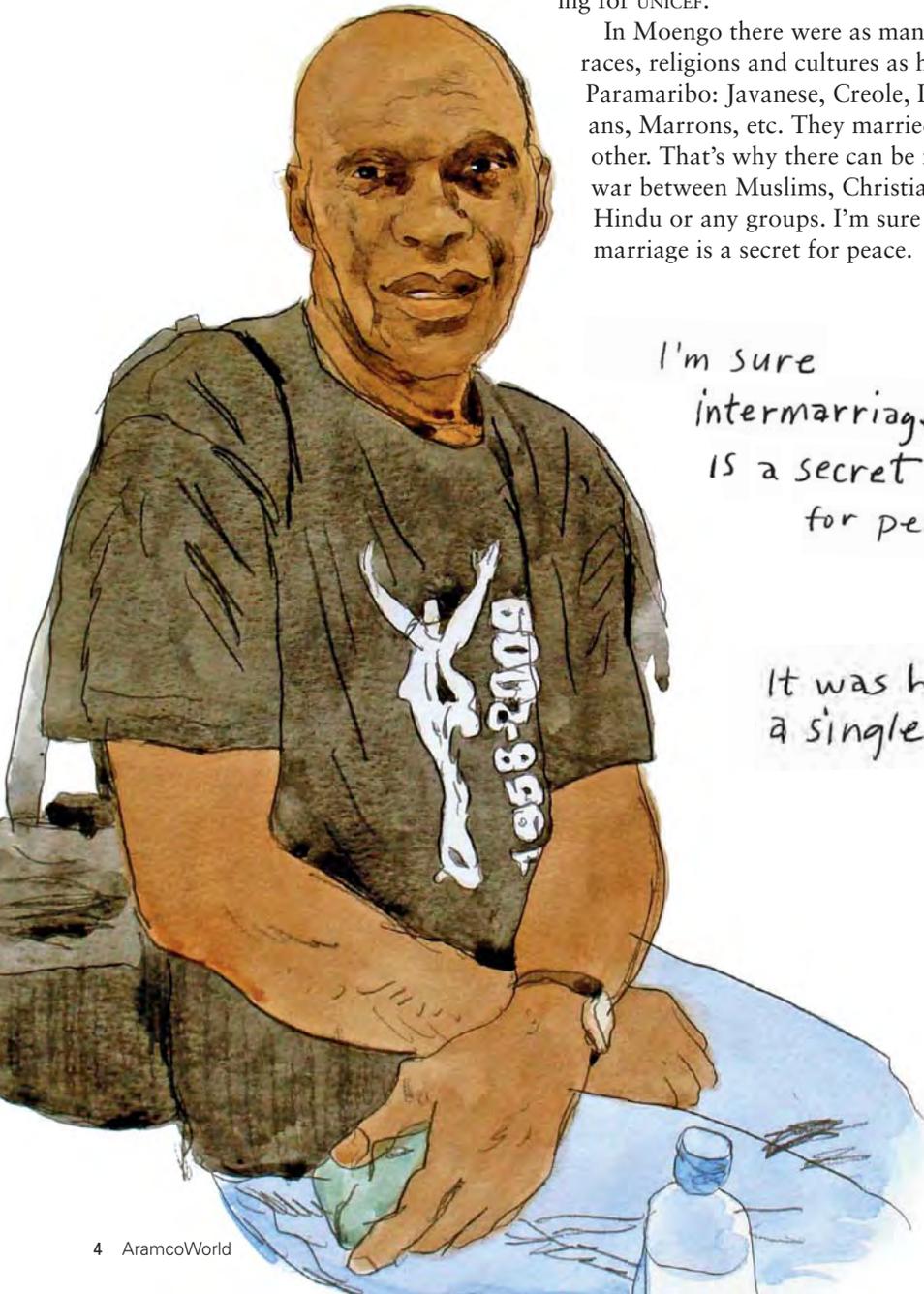
## Waldij Brammerloo

**T**wo weeks ago I went back to Moengo [in the northeast] to see where I grew up. It is one of two towns Alcoa, the American aluminum company, developed. The other town is Paramam on the Suriname River. They came for the bauxite, the ore for aluminum. The company is now a joint venture called Suralco. They built housing for the employees and their families, and free schools.

My mother worked as a nurse. My father was a welder, and they lived there for 60 years until they both got their pensions and moved to Paramaribo. I went to Holland to study and work. When I got my pension, I started working for UNICEF.

In Moengo there were as many races, religions and cultures as here in Paramaribo: Javanese, Creole, Indians, Marrons, etc. They married each other. That's why there can be no war between Muslims, Christians, Hindu or any groups. I'm sure intermarriage is a secret for peace.

*I'm sure  
intermarriage  
is a secret  
for peace.*



## George Struikelblok

### ARTIST

**I**n the beginning the colors in my paintings were very dull. In '97 I got a scholarship to study in Jamaica. I learned there you have to paint from the heart and not for others. A tourist wants to buy a picture of Suriname, and that was where I was focused.

In Jamaica I started with a theme about death. I grew up without a father. He died before I was born. Now, as a father, I've got three kids, and I am experiencing what I missed.

My mother was poor. It was hard for a single mother. I was the oldest. What I wanted I never got. I made a lot of pictures about my life and my mother while trying to imagine the future. My life is now colorful. A wife and kids, nice people around me. Bright colors reflect my life now.

I'm working now for 23 years. Finally have an atelier and am a full-time artist. I do social projects as well. Not having a father, I've concentrated on kids that live in orphanages. I wanted to show them you can create something simple about themselves. I managed to get 800 wooden blocks and worked with 12 orphanages and organized an exhibition. The kids were at the exhibition, and they sold half their painted blocks. An experience in itself for the kids. The money went to the orphanages.

Then I made a chicken run with 200 eggs that hatched about the same time.

*It was hard for  
a single mother.*



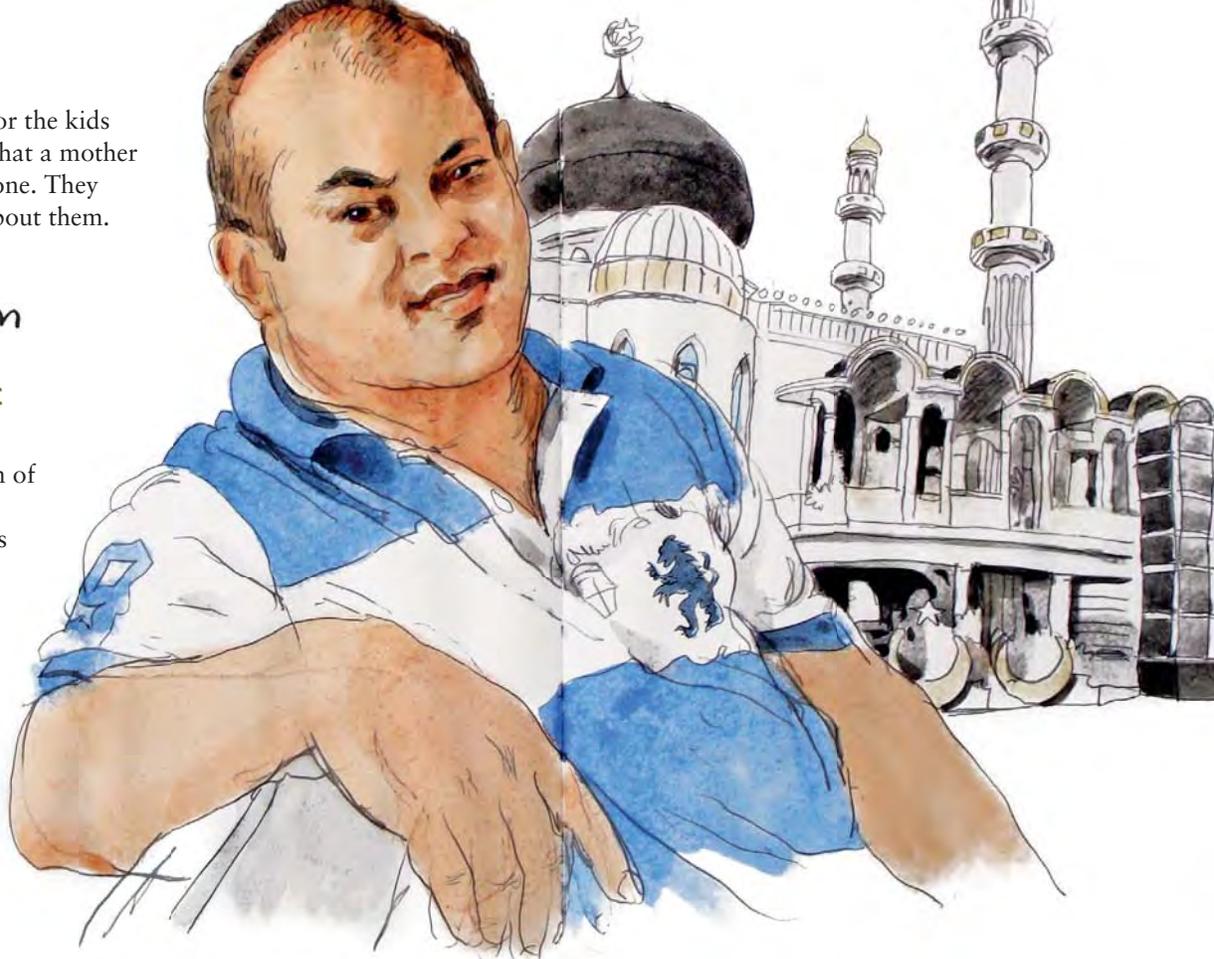
It was placed at eye level for the kids so they could understand that a mother could not look after everyone. They understood it was really about them.

## Sjaikh Kasim

### SURINAME ISLAMIC ASSOCIATION

**A**fter the abolition of slavery, the first contract workers were Chinese from Java.

Then came workers from India. They were Hindu, Christian and Muslim. Then came the Javanese from Java, who were Muslim. We here are descendants of the first Indians. They came before the separation [of India and Pakistan] in 1947.



*Our mosque is next to the Synagogue.*

Our mosque is next to the synagogue. I visited the previous rabbi. They have a fascinating building. He came to visit us as well. We have a good relationship. They allow us to share their parking lot when we have an event, and they do the same here when they have something to celebrate. Not long ago we had a universal convention, and we invited them to come and speak.

The theme was “My Perception of Islam, the Religion of Peace.” The

rabbi said that in the eight years he has been here, neither of us had thrown stones at each other. He also examined the archives and couldn't find one negative comment about our relationship.

## Cynthia Mcleod

### AUTHOR, HISTORIAN AND DAUGHTER OF JOHAN FERRIER, THE FIRST PRESIDENT OF SURINAME

**S**uriname is a real multi-cultural country in the strictest sense. You must accept and

respect each other. If some groups are just “tolerated,” you are not multicultural because you think you are better. That's my definition.

I was invited to give a series of lectures last year at the University of Berkeley in California, and one was about Elizabeth Samson. She was a 100-percent black woman who was one of the richest people in 18th-century Suriname, the time of slavery. She wanted to marry a white man in 1764, but it was forbidden by law. She wrote a letter to the owners of Suriname, the city of Amsterdam and the West India Company. There was, however, one reason why the marriage should go ahead: This woman was rich, and if she should



marry a white man, her wealth would end up with white people.

She won. But by the time the good news arrived, her groom had passed away. However, she soon found another. In the archives of that time, no one really knew how she became so rich. Writers assumed she had been a slave woman who belonged to a white man and was his mistress, and when he died, he left her his money. It was so stated.

You know, one writes this, and the following writers copy it. When I was young, I was intrigued by this woman. I wanted to find out how Elizabeth became so rich and why she was so eager to marry a white man. I had lived in Europe before and promised myself, if I got the chance, I would research this.

Fate was on my side. My husband became an ambassador, and we were sent to Belgium. Brussels is very close to the [Dutch] National Archives in The Hague, so I went there and researched. There was so much information I started a novel about her, then decided to first make an accurate document about everything I found.

I wanted scientific recognition, so I sent my document to the University of Utrecht. The university was happy they finally had insights into the society of Suriname of that time and published it.

In the novel I was able to place her quite well in the society of her time. I know 18th-century Suriname better than that of today. I stated the truth with facts. She was 100 percent Negro, born free in Suriname, and above all an excellent businesswoman.

In those days they made quite a thing about all shades of color. In Suriname you were black or Negro only if you were 100 percent African. Every other shade had a name. Today everybody is black. Not in those days. Since blacks couldn't marry whites, it meant that only 100 percent Africans couldn't marry

whites. If you had some white blood, you could marry.

From the beginning, white men had children with black women. There were more white men than white women. The ratio was 20 to one. The women were slaves and the children had the status of the mother, thus slaves. At times they were the father's own slaves. Some white men were good fathers. Some freed the mother before the child was born, and then the child was free.

I wanted to find out how Elizabeth became so rich.

Born free, you had more rights. Sometimes the children inherited from the father. Those children were mulattos. A black and a mulatto produced a *karboeger*. A karboeger and a mulatto produced a *sambo*. A mulatto and a white produced a *mesties*. A mesties and a white produced a *casties*. A casties and a white produced a *poesties*, and that child was considered white. And so on.

By the time of emancipation in 1863, 80 percent of the free people were colored. In Suriname the mixture between black and white came on very quickly. 300,000 slaves

... in 1918 America proposed to buy Suriname

were brought to Suriname—the same number that was brought to the United States. When we got emancipation, the number of slaves in the US had grown to almost four million, but in Suriname it had dwindled down to 30,000.

The English had “coloreds” in Jamaica, Guyana and Trinidad from British-ruled India. The Dutch made an agreement with the Brits to bring Indians to work on the plantations. The British had rules for the treatment of these people. They were given a five-year contract and then a piece



of land and some money if they stayed. They kept their own culture, religion and language and were not to be treated like slaves. A British official was appointed to see that these rules were adhered to.

The rules were badly bent. A lot died. Malnutrition and lack of medical care were the main reasons. England finally refused to send workers to Suriname. In 1882 a medical school was started in Suriname. That's how our regional medical care started.

In 1942 Holland was not interested in Suriname anymore, something a lot of Surinamers don't realize. They tried to forget about us and not give a cent to Suriname. I also think they were ashamed about what happened in the time of slavery. What we did get was obligatory education from 1876. Everybody had to go to school.

It was emancipation followed by education. Former slaves forced their children to go to school and learn the language, which was forbidden in their time. The colonial government told us we were free because the king of Holland, who was so noble and good, wanted us to be free. From the moment you are free, you must never speak about slavery again. Thank God and the king of Holland. That is what they told us, and we believed we had to be thankful.

When I read in Barbara Tuchman's book *A Distant Mirror*:

*The Calamitous 14th Century* that a nation that has no access to the source of its history becomes a folk with an identity based on stereotypes, I knew this is what had happened to us. The truth was in the National Archives in The Hague. I went on researching for 12 years.

Holland considered Suriname a weight they could not bear—until bauxite was discovered in 1916. The American company Alcoa was very interested, and in 1918 America proposed to buy Suriname.

The sale didn't go through because of our educated intellectuals. It came down to a prestige question: You can't sell people anymore. However, Alcoa could do here what it wanted. They paid 10 cents for a ton of bauxite. The import duty on that ton when it reached New Orleans was 60 cents. That is why bauxite developed so well in Suriname. It was virtually free.

When World War II broke out, Alcoa was afraid they couldn't get the bauxite out. The US sent 2,000 soldiers, and we had work. They built our roads, and we

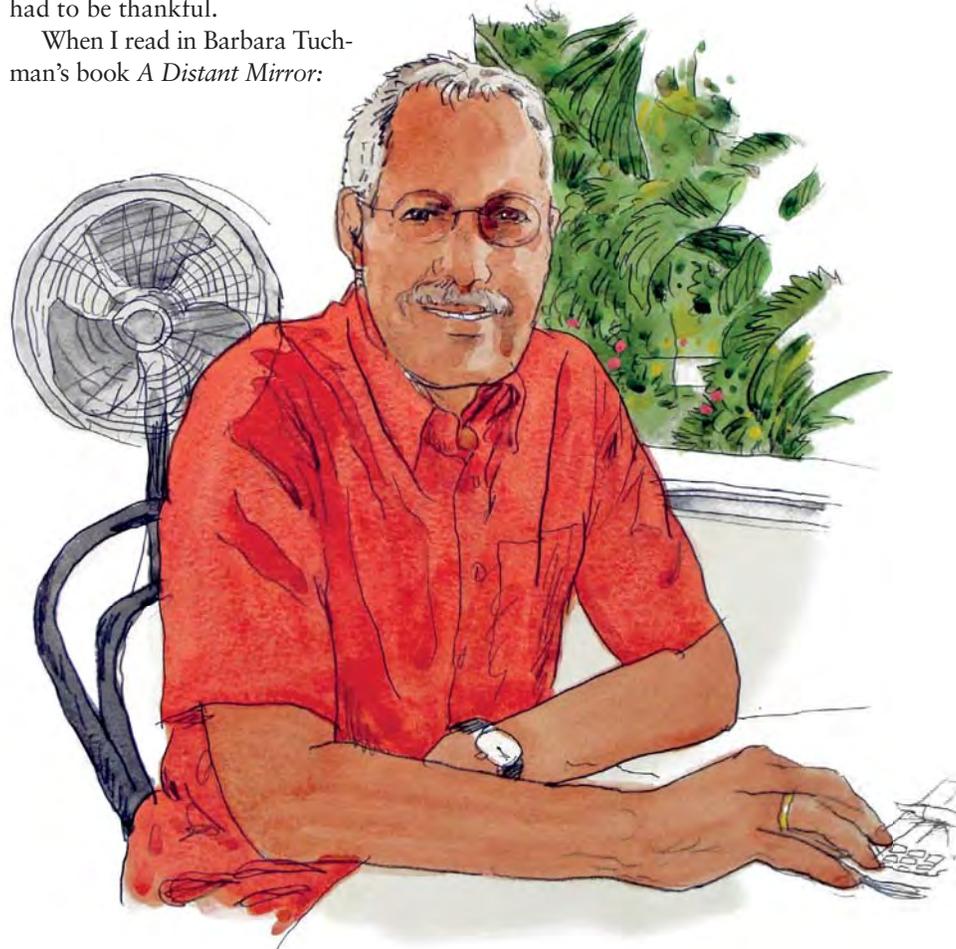
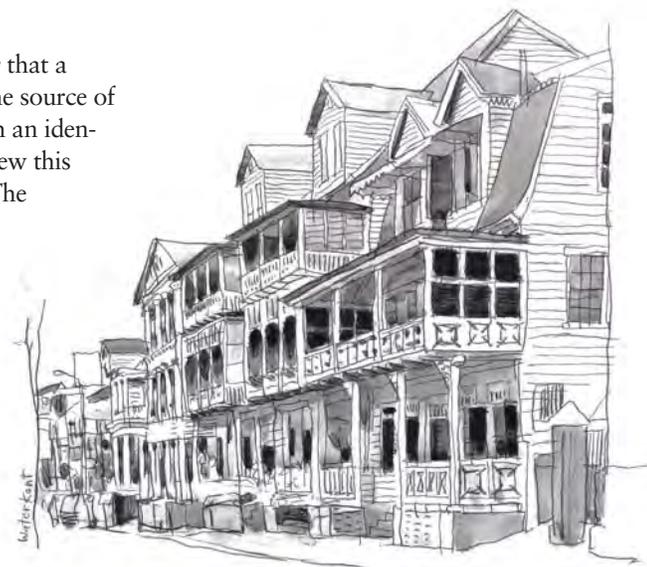
earned a lot of money. Those working on plantations moved to Paramaribo. They were Hindu, Javanese, Creole, etc. Their children were in the same schools. That is how we became an integrated country.

## Patrick Hermelijn

Suralco, which was the Suriname subsidiary of Alcoa, said they dammed the Suriname River that made Lake Brokopondo, and therefore it belongs to them. If they leave, the generators that produce hydro power are also theirs. Of the six generators, they shut down three. The result was too little energy. At a certain point, my neighbor, on another line, had electricity, and I didn't. After several hours my electricity kicked in, and hers went out. Suralco said the water level in the lake was too low.

It could be a game the government is playing with Alcoa, but [President Desiré] Bouterse is doing popular projects so his party can be elected. He has his old buddies around him, and therefore a lot of rumors about corruption swirl about. Now he is talking about building a railway from Paramaribo to the airport.

He is still a suspect for the "December Murders" in '82. Fifteen prominent members of the opposition to military rule were brought to Fort Zeelandia and executed. The time has come where this is holding back development. Others say justice must prevail. It is really sad for the families of the victims. I don't know how this can end.



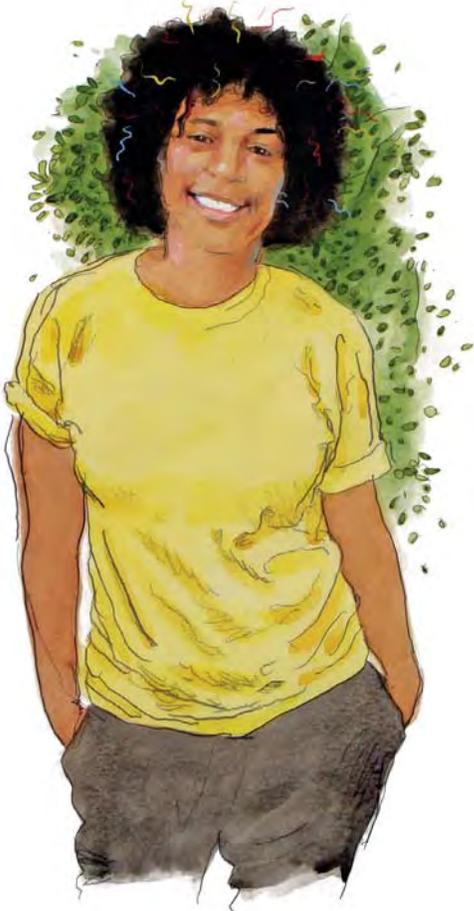
# Hennah Draaibaar

## JOURNALIST

**B**efore the military coup of February 25, 1980, we had a lively film culture. The coup included a curfew at dusk, when people would be going to watch the latest Hollywood thriller. Theaters had to close their doors.

In 2012 my husband and I started a film company, The Back Lot, to get the film industry back on its feet. The last film we helped produce was "The Old Man Who Read Love Stories," filmed in French Guiana, our neighbor, and it starred Richard Dreyfuss. Here we made "Paramaribo Capers," about the '80s, a documentary about Dutch conspiracy with the military coup. The December Murders will probably not play a role in the elections. They were so long ago. It's old hat.

At the end of Ramadan, the last prayer is held at Independence Square.



Multicultural mingling is old hat too. We marry each other. We celebrate each other's religious holidays. [The Hindu festival] *Diwali* starts tomorrow, and it's a national holiday so everyone is free. People who have Indian friends will celebrate with them. If you ask a child why he isn't going to school tomorrow, he or she will tell you it's *Diwali*.

At the end of Ramadan, the last prayer is held on the lawn at Independence Square. People come to pay respects or pray. You can say, "I'm a Muslim, and this is what I do." Bend your knees and pray what you believe. People sell food because after the prayer, everybody can eat again.

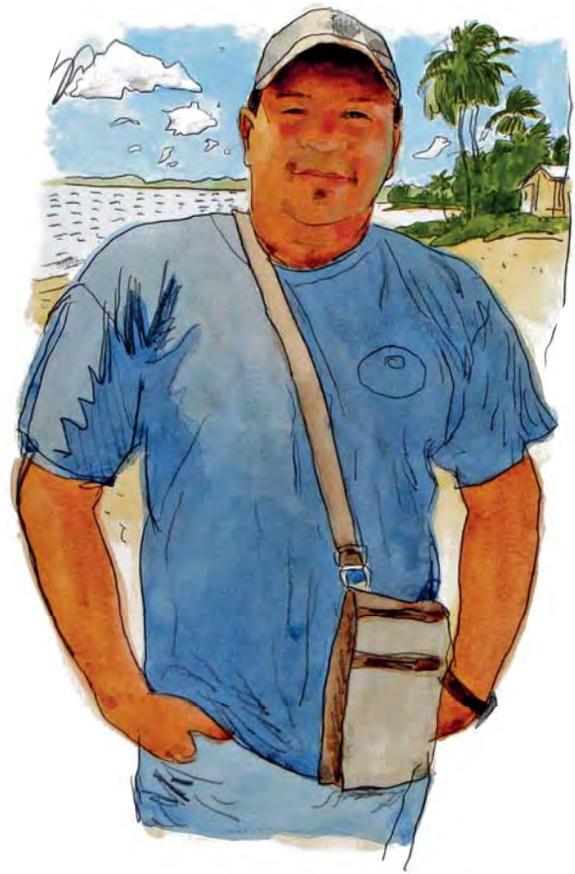
## Benito Aloema

### CARIB GUIDE

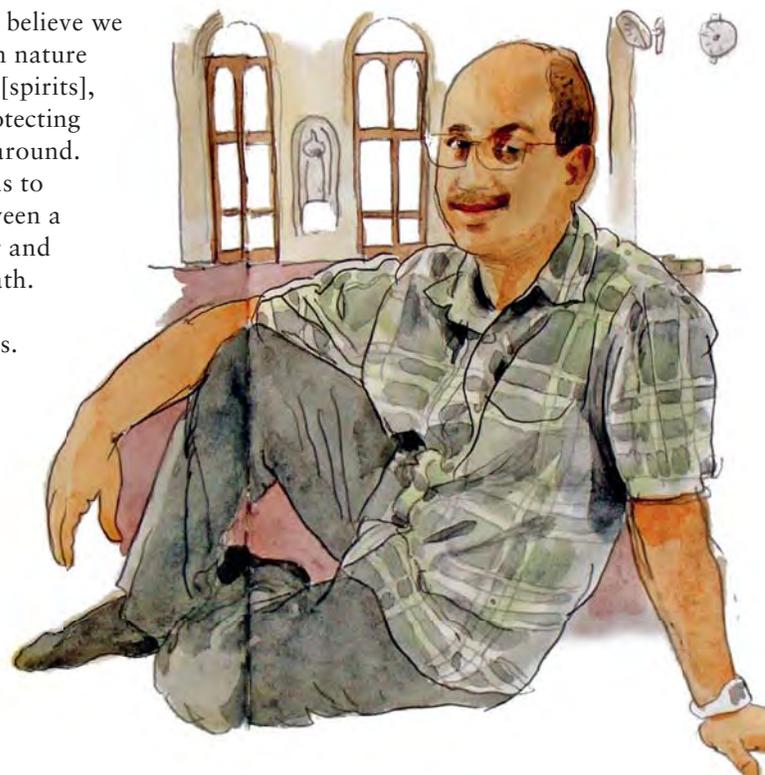
**T**here is one belief in Suriname that is no longer a taboo. *Winti* is now an accepted religion like Christianity and Islam. In the last census, it was a belief you could belong to. It is performed when there is tension, sickness or death in the family. A trance feast is organized for the family. Tom-toms begin to play traditional music, and that's when those involved become entranced.

We, from the interior, believe we have a protective soul. In nature there are different *lassie* [spirits], which have difficulty protecting us when bad *lassies* are around. That's when the *winti* has to happen. It could be between a brother and sister, father and daughter, sickness or death.

The family members talk about their problems. The elders listen, evaluate the situation and discuss a solution. The bad *lassies* are brought to light, and the performance continues until the bad spirits are vanquished and harmony and good spirits are back in the family. *Winti* can last until after dawn.



The elders listen, evaluate the situation and discuss a solution.



Food in Suriname is as diverse as the many cultures. The average recipe exists with rice combined with chicken and meat. Chicken is a safe religious choice.



Roti with papadam



The food market on the waterkant has among the normal plants some unfamiliar exotic vegetables and roots. Combine this with the spices and herbs that the Javanese, Hindus, Chinese, Europeans, etc., brought from the old country

and the tropical fruits - mangos, bananas, passion fruit, kiwis, etc., that grow in everyones garden and this is the Suriname cuisine.



? hot and spicy - have a liter of water handy or a djogo.

BB+R Brown beans and rice the national dish.



White RICE

I was born in Paramaribo. My mother was a teacher and my father an agricultural engineer. They went to the Netherlands when I was born and left me here in Suriname with my grandparents, who were Muslim and lived in Paramaribo. When it was time to join my parents, I refused to go. I was three. So I stayed with my grandparents. My father's parents were Hindu.

My father passed away when I was 14. I went to the mosque with my grandfather, grandmother, aunts and uncles. That's when we moved to Paramaribo. My grandfather was a pharmacist at a hospital. He is why I studied medicine and then went to Belgium to study further. I wasn't that keen to practice medicine and now teach physiology.

I'm married and have two children. My son is young, and my daughter is 18 and studies economics at the university. Every discipline at the school is full of women. In my physiology class when I started teaching, of the 60 students, 10 were women. Now of the 60 students, 55 are women.

I live in a neighborhood where none of my neighbors is Muslim. We live peacefully and celebrate Christmas, 'Id al-Fitr, etc. It is now Diwali, and I helped with the family lights. My two sisters

are Hindu and are married to Hindus. We celebrate each other's holidays, and when food is prepared at a party, we are sure vegetarians can eat.

The tradition is that science and religion go together.

## Robert Bipat

### PHYSIOLOGIST

In Paramaribo and surrounding suburbs, there are 17 mosques. In the whole country there is an estimated 800. The majority of people practicing Islam are from Indonesia.

Some are facing west for prayer while others face east. The rule is you have to pray toward Makkah. The early contract workers from Java continued their practice of praying to the west. Indian Muslims came here before the Javanese and were already facing east. I think tradition was at work. My father and grandfather did it this way. Why change?

# The birdmen

The songbird sport has no official name. It is a man's sport - an amiable-fanatical-social sport.

Sunday mornings they arrive around 6am with bird cages they hang on poles.

At home they listen to CDs of birdsongs prompting them to do the same. Here the birds get used to the activity and other birds,' says one owner, arms



enthusiast,' the affable fanatic on my right says.

The best performance is the bird with the most tweets in a fifteen minute time limit. This Sunday morning is competition day and by 10:00am Ramon's picolette is declared the winner.

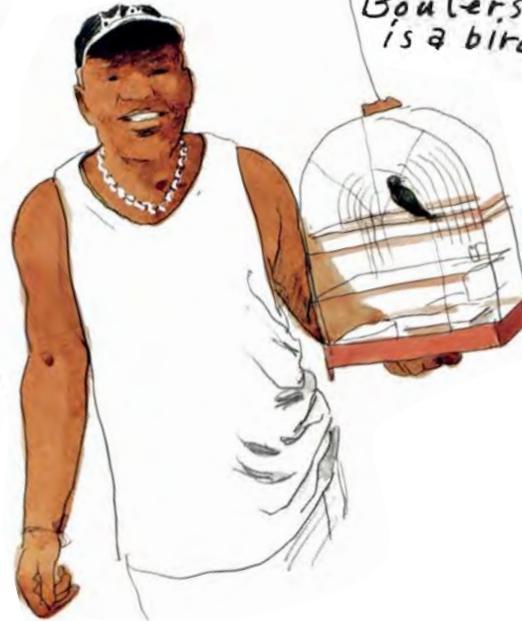


folded, while staring at the competition.

There are three groups of birds. A tuatwa is completely black with a white beak. A roti is smaller and a picolette is black with a brown breast.

Their owners are a cross section of the population

President Bouterse is a bird



## Maarten Alberga

### FORMER GOLD MINER



always thought working in the forest would be like a vacation, but it was a survival contest.

We worked with big machines day and night at 12-hour shifts and used 1,000 liters of diesel a day.

We start by removing the topsoil until we hit gravel. Gold is in the gravel and can't go through clay. Gravel is scooped up with a backhoe and dropped onto the big iron grille over the sluice box. As it falls through the grille onto the mats, it is sprayed with water and washed down the sluice. Gold being seven times heavier than sand, it will stay in the mats.

When we have worked a week, we beat the mats and collect the gold. Sometimes you see gold, sometimes not. That's when you add mercury. It doesn't mix with sand but will mix with gold. There are a lot of robbers about, so you can't lose time. Mercury is heated in the gold pan with a welding torch and evaporates, leaving gold.

The gold is then raw. We wash it with a magnet to get all the iron bits left by our own equipment. Then the gold is washed with powder soap. This dissolves the fat and diesel that collected. The gold is now pure.

It's also dangerous. Cicero, a gold miner I knew, owed someone money and wouldn't pay. One day he was sleeping in his hammock after a long shift. The others were working in the hole. A knife stabbed him in the chest two or three times. Dead. No witnesses. Police can only collect the

body and write a report. Not long ago there was a shootout. Sometimes there are two or three who claim they own your mining concession.

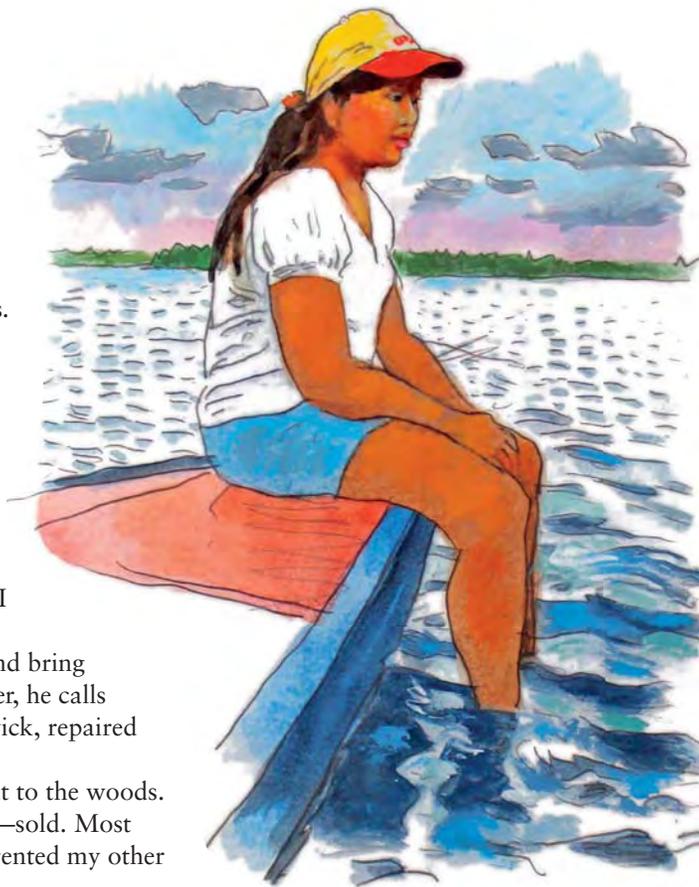
Generally, I'm quite careful and can see if something is going to happen. It's funny, but I often think the accident with my hand quite possibly saved my life. When I was in the hospital, we were robbed. Later I figured out [the robber] was an old foreman who worked for me. A Brazilian I had fired. He wasn't happy about it.

Later, they found his camp high in the hills where he had kept an eye on us. He loved to eat canned corn. The empty tins were found in the camp with a shirt we knew belonged to his friend. When the crew was ready to leave, [the robbers] placed a big log across the road. If I was there at the time, he would have killed me. He could drink my blood. Shortly after, his friend was spotted in the city spending a lot of money. I decided to let it go. Maybe it was God's plan that I only lost a couple fingers. I'm still here.

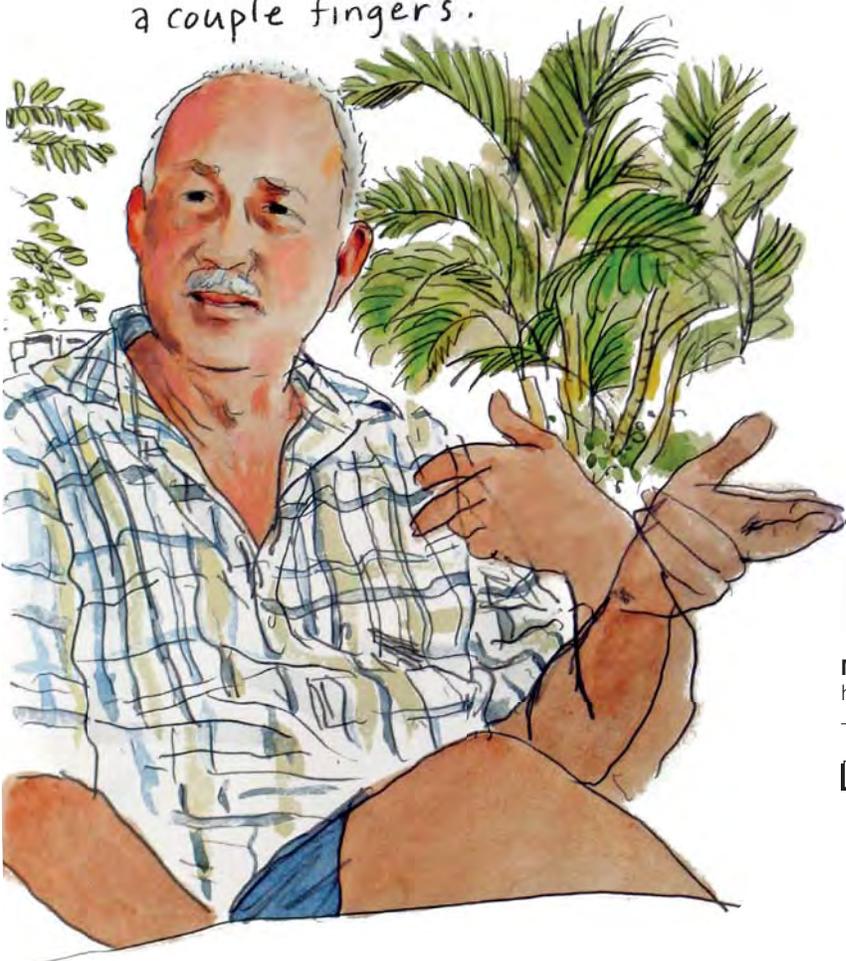
Gold mining now is big-time. I left the woods. Left everything behind except a few debts. A time went by, then a Brazilian came to see me, Bert, a former foreman who had taken advantage of me awhile back. I asked if he had solved all his problems. He replied, "Sorry. Sorry boss."

"No problem," I said. "I'll give you \$2,000 if you go into the woods and bring my machines out." That was 35 kilometers through a rainforest. Soon after, he calls and says he had it all loaded and was on his way out. He drove to Brunswick, repaired the dozer and called me again.

"There is someone here who wants to buy something from you." I went to the woods. A Brazilian bought the equipment for \$8,000. Another wanted the trailer—sold. Most gold seekers end up with old iron. I always looked after my equipment. I rented my other machines. In no time I paid my debts, but I'm still not Rockefeller.



Maybe it was God's  
plan I only lost  
a couple fingers.



## Stephanie

**M**ost Suriname families have a history of migration somewhere in their past. Like living in two worlds—the present here and the past there, new and old worlds. A question can nag at some: Is life really better here?

To find their own answer, says Stephanie, some of her family members visited Java, where her family had come from. "Stay put," they learned. "It's crowded with people and no work." So her family committed to staying in Suriname, and they started a wildlife lodge, built on stilts, on a lake at Bigipan. 🌍

In the 70s Suriname's independence from colonial Dutch rule caused some people to emigrate to the Netherlands, a country I came to also, only from Canada. The Suriname emigrants made a lasting impression on me with their irrepressible good cheer, a pleasant addition to the Dutch. This story gave me a chance to meet some of those who stayed.



**Norman MacDonald** ([www.macdonaldart.net](http://www.macdonaldart.net)) lives in Amsterdam, and he is a frequent contributor to *AramcoWorld*.

 **Related articles at**  
[www.aramcoworld.com](http://www.aramcoworld.com)  
Amsterdam: M/A 14; M/A 90  
South America: M/J 92



**Video:** Visit artist Norman MacDonald's studio:



# FEROZKOH

*Renewing the Arts*  
— of the —  
**TURQUOISE  
MOUNTAIN**

WRITTEN BY *Lee Lawrence*  
PHOTOS COURTESY OF  
*Turquoise Mountain Institute*



**AFGHANISTAN IS REGARDED AS “LITTLE MORE THAN A BATTLEFIELD BY MANY OUTSIDERS, RATHER THAN ONE OF THE MOST CULTURALLY RICH COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD.”**

—ZAHIRSHAH AMIN,  
27-year-old tile-maker

Top: Chiseling between his guidelines, a woodcarving student at the Turquoise Mountain Institute for Afghan Arts and Architecture in Kabul carves out an eight-point floral arabesque. Above: Khwaja Qamaruddin Cheshti, who holds a master's degree in Afghan literature from Kabul University, teaches calligraphy. A painting student, opposite, top, fills in a 16-point geometric composition. All draw upon Afghanistan's rich and colorful artistic heritage. Opposite, lower: This detail shows part of a large, patterned screen known as *jali*. Produced by a Turquoise Mountain team of 14 masters and students, it was inspired by a 13th-century Mughal stone *jali*, and it was featured in the "Ferozkoh" exhibitions in both Doha and London.



**IT IS DIFFICULT TO CREATE ART IN** isolation,” says master calligrapher Khwaja Qamaruddin Cheshti. The artist “needs to be surrounded by older art, and maybe he combines his skills with the inspiration he finds in older pieces.”

Cheshti is speaking through a translator from the Turquoise Mountain Institute for Afghan Arts and Architecture in Kabul, Afghanistan. A restored, 19th-century fort in the historic Murad Khane neighborhood, its alcoves topped with delicately pointed arches, it is a fitting backdrop to speak about two weeks he and more than a dozen Afghan artists and



**Eighty-six-year-old woodworking master Abdul Hedy, left, once crafted pieces for Zahir Shah, the last king of Afghanistan. Now, his students, above, tackle a project in their studio in Kabul.**

Museum in London, gave Turquoise Mountain artists a chance to move from designs for commissions and serial production to the creation of one-of-a-kind artworks. Beautifully displayed at the MIA and Leighton House, the results reached across the centuries: Gold earrings, created by 28-year-old Kabul resident Monawarshah Qodousi, appeared to float next to a similarly patterned, 16th-century velvet from the Safavid dynasty; a wooden, inlaid pilaster by a team of 11 artists rose alongside a terra-cotta merlon, or center section, from a 10th- or 11th-century Ghaznavid-era battlement; four inlaid marble floral plaques picked up on motifs in a Mughal miniature. Cheshti's own "Ninety-nine Names of God" conversed with a 15th-century Timurid wood carving.

craftspeople spent in Doha, Qatar, at the Museum of Islamic Art—or MIA—where Cheshti rediscovered this age-old truth.

Their experience crystallized in the exhibition "Ferozkoh: Tradition and Continuity in Afghan Art" that paired up contemporary Turquoise Mountain works with masterpieces from four historic Muslim dynasties with close ties to Afghanistan. This dialogue between new and old placed Afghan art on a world stage and marked a peak moment in its ongoing reinvigoration.

*Ferozkoh* is the word, in both Dari and Pashto, the major languages of Afghanistan, for "Turquoise Mountain," the cosmopolitan and now long-lost capital of central Afghanistan's 12th-century Ghorid Dynasty. In 2006, to support Afghanistan's arts and to help revitalize the old city of Kabul, British author and politician Rory Stewart established the Turquoise Mountain Trust with the support of Afghan President Hamid Karzai and Britain's Prince Charles. Since then, Turquoise Mountain has grown into the country's leading school and workshop for traditional arts, where master craftsmen and artists train students—both men and women—in woodwork, ceramics, jewelry and gem-cutting, calligraphy and miniature painting.

The "Ferozkoh" exhibition, which opened at the MIA in March 2013 and traveled that fall to the Leighton House

The exhibition in Doha featured 37 works by Turquoise Mountain students and teachers, and each work was paired with a MIA masterpiece. About half that number appeared in the London show.

The seeds of "Ferozkoh" were planted in 2006, when art historian Leslee Michelsen took a position teaching Islamic art history at the newly founded institute. "I was incredibly frustrated," says Michelsen. Taliban rule and war had destroyed much of the National Museum's art collection, and field trips to remote historic sites were both dangerous and expensive. "So even though I was, ironically, sitting in this incredibly artistically rich country," she says, "I couldn't share its riches with the students, many of whose forefathers had produced that work."

Fast forward to 2011. Michelsen, by then head of the MIA's curatorial and research department, floated the idea of a small show of works by Turquoise Mountain artists, who would be invited to the opening. From MIA director Aisha Al Khater on down, the response was so enthusiastic that when a large exhibition fell through, Michelsen hatched a bold, even risky plan: Invite Turquoise Mountain artists for a longer spell, and let the exhibition grow out of their exposure to the museum's collection.

In June 2012, 15 students and teachers from the institute traveled to Doha. “We knew we wanted them to respond to our artworks,” says Michelsen, “but we weren’t really sure what form that would take.”

One thing was clear: The museum was not interested in having artists “replicate the pieces that they saw but, rather, put a new twist, a new dynamic into it,” explains Deedee Dewar, who ran the MIA’s art-education center. Copying is valuable for skill-building, she notes, but the arts of Afghanistan would not be as varied and rich as they are had there not always been an interactive, creative process at work through the centuries.

To do this, the Turquoise Mountain artists first studied and handled the masterworks up close. They could feel the weight and thickness of an eighth-century ceramic vessel or run their fingers over the carvings on a centuries-old wood panel. While one artist examined the underside of a brass bowl, another peered through a microscope to inspect the pigments and brushwork in a miniature painting.

“Being with a work physically, we can look at it from different angles. We can examine the quality, the texture,” says Abdul Matin Malekzada, head of ceramics at Turquoise Mountain. Seeing photographs, he notes, “doesn’t even come close.”

The collection at the MIA, he says, exuded “a kind of power, a kind of energy. I was shocked seeing such old pieces so beautifully made. Today, we have better facilities, but we cannot make such beautiful pieces.”

Museum staff noticed that as the artists explored the collection, they tended to circle back to works from Afghanistan. “This makes sense completely,” Michelsen says. That gave her the idea of organizing the “Ferozkoh” exhibition around four Muslim dynasties that ruled over all or parts of Afghanistan. At first, however, she and her MIA colleagues were intent on helping the artists make a leap from admiration to inspiration.

This is where Dewar came in. Dewar, who speaks in a broad Scottish brogue, handed the visitors sketchbooks whose pages were textured, gold-leafed or roughed-up “to kind of trip them up,” she says. She even made them tear a hole in a page to see the drawing on the next poke through and thus maybe trigger an unexpected connection. At other times, they

found themselves drawing on tissue paper “to think of layering,” Dewar explains.

She also encouraged jewelers to experiment with wood, ceramists to think in terms of metal and painters to imagine clay, “to show them that there are a hundred ways to approach

a single object,” she says. And when they sketched, she told them to record their reactions—a detail that thrilled, a shape that captivated or intrigued, or a variation on composition or form they might like to try.

At first, some were unsure how to respond. This is because, as master wood carver Naser Mansori describes it, Dewar was “adding a new way of thinking.” But one day, Dewar remembers, one sketch led to another, and then another and another: The artists began to understand how ideas germinate and grow in what she calls “the organic process behind really good design.”

At the museum and on field trips to sites around Doha, the artists exposed themselves also to modern art in its many forms, and

“WE WANTED THEM TO RESPOND TO OUR ARTWORKS, BUT WE WEREN’T REALLY SURE WHAT FORM THAT WOULD TAKE.”



Left: An artisan joins thin wooden pieces into hexagons that were later joined with pentagons to build “jali balls,” lower, which hung in the Leighton House Museum’s domed Arab Room as part of the “Ferozkoh” exhibition, where they complemented a wall of tiles from Damascus.





Above: **Storai Stanizai** facets a gemstone and, bottom right, applies the finishing touches to one of her jewelry creations. Initially a student in miniature painting and calligraphy, she switched to jewelry and now often combines the two media. Top right: Master jeweler **Abdul Azim** works in the studio in Kabul.

although this might have at first seemed disconnected, by doing so they were in fact tapping into a centuries-old practice. University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign art historian Heather Grossman comments that a museum is a repository, similar to, say, the treasury of a medieval court or mosque, an ancient commercial storehouse, the burial hoard of a wealthy merchant or even a market along a lively trade route. She likens a museum experience to that of an Afghan court painter granted occasional access to his patron's library, or a potter whose brother lets him slip inside a commercial storeroom, or a wood carver or jeweler browsing through imported textiles and metalwork at a market.



  
**“BEING WITH A WORK PHYSICALLY, WE CAN LOOK AT IT FROM DIFFERENT ANGLES. WE CAN EXAMINE THE QUALITY, THE TEXTURE,” SAYS ABDUL MATIN MALEKZADA, HEAD OF CERAMICS AT TURQUOISE MOUNTAIN. SEEING PHOTOGRAPHS “DOESN'T EVEN COME CLOSE.”**

Dewar's workshops also echoed another traditional process, one that Ludovico V. Geymonat of the Max Planck Institute for Art History in Rome described in a 2012 issue of the journal *Medieval Encounters*. He argued that the draftsman of the 13th-century

*Wolfentbüttel Musterbuch*, considered the quintessential medieval book of artistic models, was not so much copying statues he saw on his travels as he was sketching *his responses to them*, thereby “exercising the hand, memory and imagination.” Once back home, Grossman explains, the draftsman would then refer not to the originals that caught his eye, but to the ideas they inspired.



uring her time at the MIA, 26-year-old Turquoise Mountain painter Fakhria Nezami followed in the draftsman's footsteps. She found herself drawn time and again to a 15th-century dish from Iran on which a peacock was profiled in cobalt-blue glaze, its tail arching over its body to echo the curve of its slender neck. More playful than resplendent, the bird looked ready to nip

a flower off a wispy tree. Nezami remembers pulling out her sketchbook and drawing the peacock not as it appeared, but in different poses and proportions.

In a similar vein, a band of clouds painted on a bowl from the same period moved painter Tamim Sahebzada and jeweler Mosawarshah Qodousi to collaborate on a large silver pendant in the shape of a cloud. Both the peacock and the clouds on the bowl, it turned out, were themselves Persian riffs on Chinese imports, and now, centuries later, Nezami, Sahebzada and Qodousi were playing off them in turn.

Meanwhile, woodworker Mansori teamed up with ceramist Malekzada. Inspired by the carved terracotta panels he had seen on a visit to the 12th-century masterpiece Minaret of Jam—believed to be one of the few surviving remnants of the historical Ferozkoh—Mansori had long wanted to try his hand carving into clay. Malekzada was galvanized by the notion of making a ceramic ball. Together, they agreed to use a rare 12th- or 13th-century necklace of hollow gold beads with patterns fashioned in granules and repoussé as their muse.

The two weeks flew by as the artists took turns consulting with MIA staff and each other. Then, back in Kabul, their real work began. In his workshop, Malekzada experimented with mixtures of clay and firing temperatures. The best combination, he discovered, was 480 degrees centigrade with a blend of clays from Logar and Parwan provinces and his native Istalif, a centuries-old ceramics center near Kabul. For his part, Mansori found that “unlike wood, a ball is like an egg—it breaks.” So he modified his tools, allowing him to carve designs into the circumference and top.

As they experimented, the men and women at Turquoise Mountain kept in touch with Michelsen. Malekzada, for example, sent photographs of an experiment with turquoise glaze. “The museum did not like it shiny—it wanted a natural look,” he says. So he made another pottery ball, this time with a neutral glaze that he left unfired. Even though this went against the tradition in which Malekzada was steeped, he agreed to leave it like this “because it’s a work of art.” And, he added, there were practical reasons: “Maybe the ball would break in a second firing. It looked good. Why take a risk?”

Michelsen also reviewed Nezami’s preliminary renderings, and she chose one in which Nezami

inverted the 15th-century dish’s composition and portrayed the peacock with a regal demeanor. In her final painting, the sky is a rich gold and the bird’s body a deep lapis; its tail fills a third of the composition, like the sumptuous train of a court dress.

“The museum would have liked nothing in the background,” Nezami says, “but I added a tree and flowers because it was a natural place for the peacock.” She also painted a mountain in



Top: After finishing her three-year course in calligraphy and miniature painting at Turquoise Mountain, Samira Kitman established *Muftah-e Honar* (“The Key of Art”) in Kabul, going on to win a commission to provide 600 hand-painted calligraphy and illumination works to the Anjum Hotel in Makkah, Saudi Arabia. Middle: Tamim Sahebzada, who took refuge in Pakistan while the Taliban controlled his home city of Kabul, now teaches calligraphy at Turquoise Mountain. Right: A ceramics student shapes clay mined from the Hindu Kush Mountains into a vase that will be for sale to the public.

the distance with a single barren tree, its starkness imbuing the scene with subtle poignancy. Nothing could be farther in tone from her 15th-century inspiration.

Describing this part of the process, Michelsen says the artists “argued some points, I argued some points—the usual push and pull of an exhibition.” One team, for example, zeroed in on the pattern of interlocking stars and hexagons that decorates the dome of a building in a Safavid miniature and decided to recreate it in a wooden carved ceiling. When Michelsen first saw the carving, she declared it “beautiful, finished!”

The artists were aghast. In Afghanistan, they argued, such ceilings are never left plain. Painters should now fill in the centers with colorful flowers. Michelsen demurred; they insisted; she gave in. And, she adds, laughing, “I should have listened to them from the beginning. It turned out to be this absolutely glorious artwork.”

On visits to Kabul, Michelsen came in for another surprise. Only about half of the artists whose work she

ended up choosing for the show were ones who had taken part in the Doha visit. The idea all along was that those who went to Doha would, upon their return, “act as seeds,” she says. Indeed, it happened rapidly as artists who had participated in the Doha experience worked in teams alongside peers who had not.

But it was not always so direct: Second-year student Helai Habibi created a painting of an elephant, and her sensitivity and inventiveness won her a place in the show. Habibi had not gone to Doha, but one of her teachers, Tamim Sahebzada, had, and it is easy to see in Habibi’s work its connection to Sahebzada’s “A Group of Three Camels,” which was a result of experiments after his time at the MIA.

In his painting, Sahebzada silhouetted the animals against a gold-leaf surface that he textured by punching into it thousands of tiny dots. He painted the central camel with a lapis-based watercolor, animating its surface with barely discernible circles and arabesques. In her painting, Habibi set a single animal against a plain background and, using the finest of brushes, conveyed the tones of skin and saddle-cloth with a delicate stippling, enlivened at times by ever-so-minute circles and curls.

Michelsen worked with Habibi to identify an object that paired well with her painting for the exhibition; they agreed on a Ghaznavid bracelet that recalled the ornaments depicted on the elephant. But what Habibi was really responding to was most likely her teacher and, more specifically, his responses to objects he had seen in Doha.

Again, there is a historical precedent for this. When medieval artists came home to their workshop from foreign travels, they were themselves changed, says Grossman. They had been exposed to the arts of other cultures, and

as they reached for brush or chisel, they worked under a new and expanded “set of options,” she explains. As their work changed, keen-eyed peers noticed and, in time, their innovations inspired others who began incorporating some of these new forms and ideas “without having ever gone abroad themselves.”



**Fakhria Nezami, top left, was among the artists from Turquoise Mountain who in 2012 visited Doha’s Museum of Islamic Art. Inspired by the design of a 15th-century dish from Iran, top right, she painted “The Peacock” for the “Ferozkoh” exhibition. Left: Taqi Rezahy, from Bamiyan, displays a medallion with a *shamsa* pattern symbolizing the sun: He drew inspiration for his exhibition piece from the illuminated pages of the 17th-century Qur’an of Shah Sulayman Safavi, above.**



New home and a centerpiece for traditional arts, the Turquoise Mountain ("Ferozkoh") Institute for Afghan Arts and Architecture stands in a refurbished, 19th-century fort in Kabul's old city of Murad Khan, once famed for its bazaar and architecture but much deteriorated from years of war.

Three years after the Doha trip, participants continue to speak of an experiment they still want to try, a piece they cannot forget or a practice they have changed. Mansori today incorporates sketching exercises into his teaching, and Malekzada has responded in clay to an ancient bronze dish with Kufic script. Enchanted by the peacocks he saw in the margins of a manuscript, Sahebzada wonders what it would be like to depict them large in a mix of traditional and contemporary techniques, while Nezami keeps thinking about "the really amazing power" and the use of gold in a copy of the *Shahnameh*, the Persian national epic.

Cheshti, for his part, has expanded his teaching to include calligraphic styles

popular with Middle Eastern clients. At the same time, he is wrestling with the challenges of creating a copy of the Qur'an on silk—but not in isolation. Sahebzada is helping him treat the fabric so that it will take the ink, and works from other times and places provide the calligrapher with the seeds of inspiration and innovation.

This spirit resonates beyond the walls of Turquoise Mountain, too, as its graduates incorporate in their own workshops this new connection to heritage. It is a connection embodied by the revered 15th-century miniature painter from Herat, Kamaledin Behzad, whose commanding skills showed both a mastery of his forefathers' techniques and great originality. It was this combination, for him then as for the Ferozkoh students today, that gave enduring energy and life to the art of one of the most culturally rich countries in the world. 🌐



Based in Brooklyn, NY, **Lee Lawrence** ([www.leeadairlawrence.com](http://www.leeadairlawrence.com)) writes frequently on Islamic and Asian art for the *Wall Street Journal* and cultural affairs for *The Christian Science Monitor*.

*The author extends heartfelt thanks to Zabibullah Noori of Turquoise Mountain for invaluable help as an interpreter.*



**Link:**  
[www.turquoisemountain.org](http://www.turquoisemountain.org)



**Related articles at**  
[www.aramcoworld.com](http://www.aramcoworld.com)  
Afghan youth: J/A 07  
Reconstruction: N/D 02  
Alexander the Great: M/J 94; M/J 05



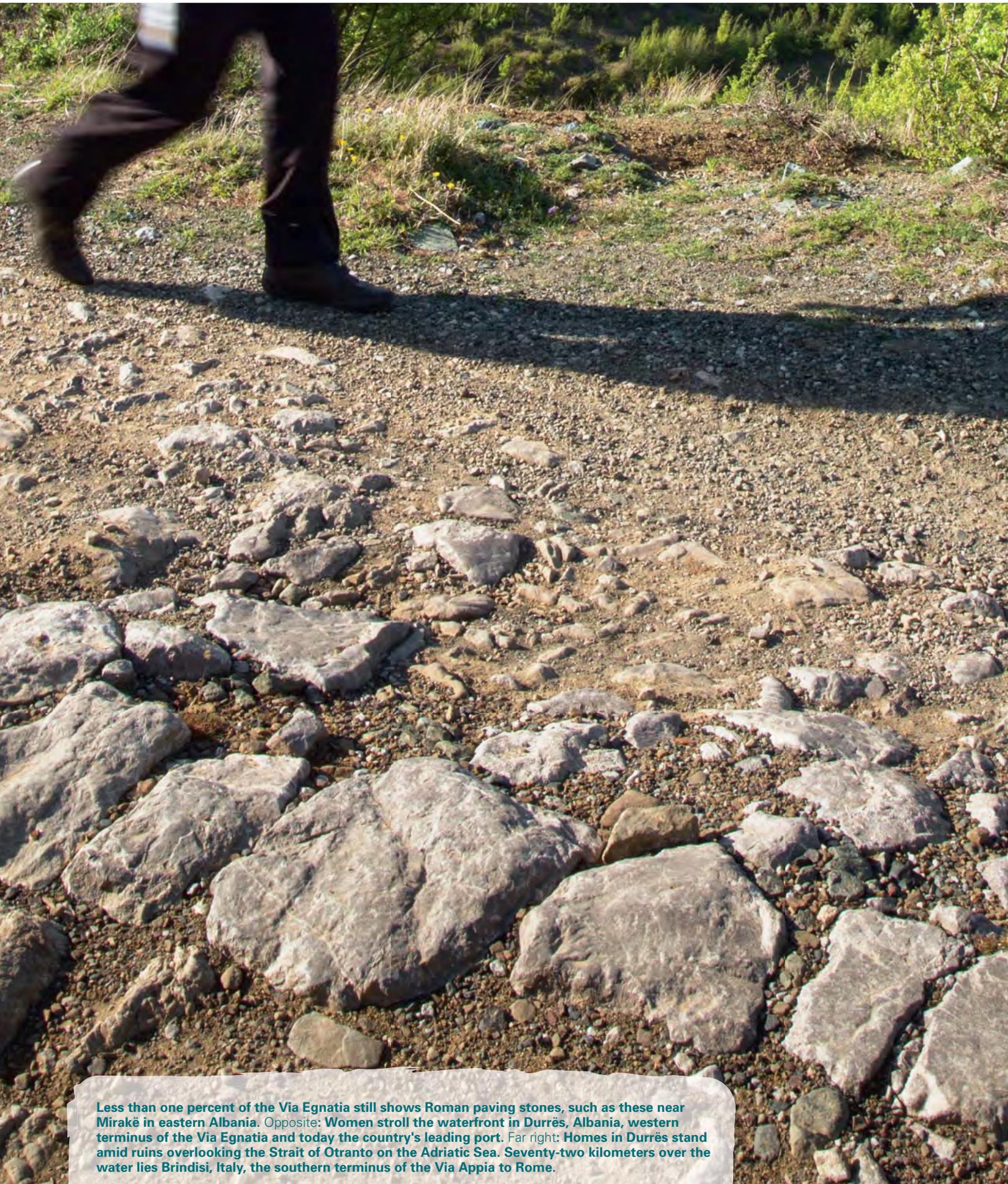
**Video:**

At the exhibition, visitors might have been forgiven for not always being sure which piece was the historical one and which the contemporary, so comparable were they in quality. "Ferozkoh" proved that its teachers, students, and graduates could create not just traditional artworks, but new, unique ones that blend respect for tradition with interpretation and creativity.

The mainstay of the institute and its graduates nevertheless remains the pursuit of commissions. It is easy to see why: Malekzada says that, for example, in the time it took him to make "Pierced Ceramic Ball" for the exhibition, "I could have made 200 bowls and plates."

Their biggest commission to date came shortly after the "Ferozkoh" exhibition when the owner of the hotel Anjum in Makkah, Saudi Arabia, ordered some 6,000 diverse pieces for about \$600,000, says Fuchsia Hart, who for the next six months oversaw the resulting work by some 30 artists as they produced ceramic panels, vessels, wood-carved architectural elements, calligraphic works and paintings. To fulfill the hotel commission, the institute subcontracted some of the work to Turquoise Mountain graduate Samira Kitman, a calligrapher whose company produced more than 600 original hand-painted calligraphy and illumination works.

Thalia Kennedy, who headed the Turquoise Mountain Institute from 2007 to 2010 and who now works for the MIA, says that after the 2012 Doha visit, "the quality of design really lifted," particularly in tiles and miniature painting. She points to another benefit, noting that "the design and production process, and [learning] how to respond to a client—which in some ways the museum was—builds artisans' business acumen." The MIA has since followed up with a couple of weeklong workshops in Kabul and a contract by which Turquoise Mountain will supply MIA's shop.



Less than one percent of the Via Egnatia still shows Roman paving stones, such as these near Mirakë in eastern Albania. Opposite: Women stroll the waterfront in Durrës, Albania, western terminus of the Via Egnatia and today the country's leading port. Far right: Homes in Durrës stand amid ruins overlooking the Strait of Otranto on the Adriatic Sea. Seventy-two kilometers over the water lies Brindisi, Italy, the southern terminus of the Via Appia to Rome.



# VIA EGNATIA

## TO ROME AND BYZANTIUM

WRITTEN BY LOUIS WERNER  
PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEO BY MATTHIEU PALEY

KM1

**The way abruptly leaves the Shkumbin River at Mirakë village,** and its first switchback comes just before the Ottoman-built crossing known in Albania as *Ura e Kamares*, or *Bridge of Niches*. It quickly gains some 300 meters over the valley floor, here subject to frequent washouts and thus the reason for its higher route, before settling onto a steady contour line heading almost due east.

*Shepherds and mule-driving woodcutters pass frequently in these mountains, and their animals' hooves clatter on smooth stones, polished and almost gleaming from long use. It is a joy to hike these best-preserved kilometers of the path, at times four meters wide and still well paved, the path that here they call *Rruga Egnatia*, which is Albanian for Egnatia Road.*



# ELBASAN, ALBANIA

The Roman bath at Ad Quintum ("At Five [miles]"), a *mutatio* change-over listed in the *Bordeaux Itinerary* as being about that far from the *mansio* stop-over Scampis that is the modern town of Elbasan, was discovered by chance by Albanian archeologists Neritan Ceka and Lllazar Papajani under a landslide in 1968. Pigment is still visible on its red walls and much of its hot water piping is intact. With terra-cotta brickwork holding up graceful archways and a barrel-vaulted nymphaeum (sanctuary with fountains) still roofed over, it is one of the few *mutatio*s in the *Itinerary* whose location is known with absolute precision.

Elbasan's old town, surrounded by high Ottoman walls built upon Byzantine and Roman foundations, was spared the indiscriminate urban renewal ordered by Albanian leader Enver Hoxha for the simple reason that his bulldozers could not fit through the four narrow gates. He did, however, turn the broad-porched Mbret (King's) Mosque, said to have been founded in the year Columbus first set foot in the Americas, into a cultural center, but its doors are open again for prayer, with the sign-posted Via Egnatia running right beside.

Edward Lear found this town "singularly picturesque, both in itself and as to its site. A high and massive wall with a deep outer moat surrounds a large quadrangle of dilapidated houses, and at the four corners are towers.... Few places can offer a greater picture of desolation than Elbasán, albeit the views from the broad ramparts extending round the town are perfectly exquisite: weeds, brambles, and luxuriant wild fig overrun and cluster about the grey heaps of ruin, and whichever way you turn, you have a middle distance of mosques and foliage, with a background of purple hills."



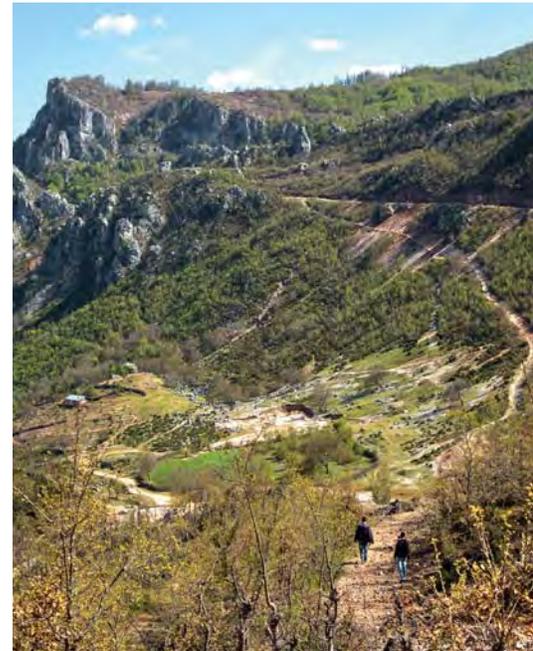
A Roman bath in Ad Quintum was discovered in 1968 under landslide debris.

Evliya Çelebi, who had visited 200 years earlier, called it "the bride of Albania in Rumelia," and noted that after its founding by Philip II of Macedon, "countless philosophers and sorcerers of olden days took up residence in this city, causing it to flourish."

Two thousand years ago, just as today, the shortest distance between Rome and the Bosphorus was a straight line, mostly over land. From Brindisi near the southeast tip of Italy's bootheel, that line crossed the Adriatic Sea's Strait of Otranto to the Albanian shore. From there it passed through the mountains of ancient Illyria, Macedonia and Thrace to arrive, more than 1,100 kilometers later, in Byzantium, as Constantinople was called before Roman Emperor Constantine gave it his name in the fourth century CE, and before it became Istanbul in 1930.

This line is traced by two of Rome's most famous roads: the Via Appia, from Rome south through Italy, and the Via Egnatia, east through the Balkans to Istanbul. If the Via Egnatia was the Roman Empire's main route east, in use long after the empire fell, it gained new life under the Ottomans—even before their 1453 conquest of Constantinople—who reversed traffic and made it one of their primary corridors west, especially during the Balkan conquests of the late 14th

Lower: A Venetian tower in Durrës testifies to the city's checkered, contested history. Right: Rugged hills around Dardhë, west of the Macedonian border, may have been in the mind of Anna Comnena, an 11th-century Byzantine princess who wrote about "those winding paths through that impassable region."





One of several dozen villages, towns and cities along the Via Egnatia is Elbasan, Albania, where a city street sign, left, reads "Rruga Egnatia," or Egnatia Road. Above: Modern construction in Elbasan goes on above archeology.

century. As a result, today many mosques, markets, charitable kitchens (*imarets*), caravansarais (*hans*) and baths (*hammams*) along the route date from this time, when in Turkish it was known as Rumeli Sol Kol, literally "Balkan Left Arm."

Geographers use the word *dromocracy* or "rule by road"—from the Greek word *dromos* (by which English gets *aerodrome* and *velodrome*)—to describe the Ottoman Empire's deep reliance on its road system. West of Constantinople, these included the Orta Kol (Middle Arm), northwest to Belgrade, and Sağ Kol (Right Arm), north to Ukraine. Mehmet the Conqueror, upon leaving Constantinople with his army toward the Balkans, was once asked where he planned to lead it. His response—"If even a hair of my beard knew this answer, I would pull it out"—indicates not only the secrecy of his mission but also the choices these roads offered.

**KM7** *The road winds past farmsteads with hay stacks in the yards and rough enclosures for sheep and goats. Mussolini's repairs during Italy's occupation of the 1940s make it difficult to discern Roman from Ottoman from Italian stone-setting, but each seems to have learned from its predecessor, and all is of solid workmanship. The steep slopes and their cascading streams, however, mean regular upkeep is required, and where there is none, the road becomes a washed-out, narrow track. The British painter and poet Edward Lear's diary entry of "frightful paths" and "formidable precipices" written during his trip this way in the summer of 1848, is not far off.*

What we know about Via Egnatia begins with Roman records that include *tabulae*, Latin for route maps; *itineraria mutationum*, or lists of stations, also called *menzilhaneler* in Turkish, where drivers could change horses; *mansiones*, or inns; and *civitates*, towns. The Ottomans, in addition to the lists of post stations, kept records of arrivals and departures of official couriers in registers known as *menzil defterler*. Both empires erected stones inscribed with the distance yet to travel among intermediate stops along the way.

One of the most complete records is in the *Bordeaux Itinerary*, written in the early fourth century by a Christian pilgrim headed to Jerusalem. It records almost 50 stations between the Adriatic and the Evros River on the modern Greek-Turkish border. Similarly, an Ottoman tax register lists 15 stages between Constantinople west to Thessaloniki, a distance of 600 kilometers, and another seven stages, covering 380 kilometers, onward to Elbasan, Albania—now a modest municipality of 125,000 along the Shkumbin River. The post-house book for Keşan, in eastern Thrace—today northwestern Turkey—records 690 official departures for the year 1703, including 131 destined for Thessaloniki but only two as far as Elbasan.

Scholars have been trying to locate the entire, precise route by linking each known *mutatio*, *mansio* and *civitas* ever since the time of the German philologist Gottlieb Lukas Friedrich Tafel, whose 1842 study of the Via Egnatia is still untranslated from its original Latin (and who never bothered to leave Germany for his research). Most recently, a guidebook published by the Netherlands-based Via Egnatia Foundation provides the best guesses available, along with tips for hiking on the best sections of its original pavement, which total less than one percent of the route today and which lie mostly in Albania.

A milestone found in 1974 outside Thessaloniki, dated to the middle of the second century BCE, shows an inscription in both Latin and Greek containing the name Gaius Egnatius, the proconsul who is thought to have built the road after the Roman conquest of Macedonia at the Battle of Pydna in 146 BCE. (Later milestones were often inscribed in honor of the reigning emperor.)

Thus it is as much history lesson as it is road trip to walk and ride by taxi, bus and car the full 1,120 kilometers of the Via Egnatia, which is more than twice the length of the Via Appia. From the Adriatic coast to Istanbul, the route passes through four modern countries—Albania, Macedonia, Greece and Turkey—and several dozen towns—some in ruins, others still thriving. The road today is considerably less busy than it was in the time of the Roman orator Cicero, who delayed his departure from Thessaloniki for Rome in order to let a multitude of travelers clear from the overcrowded mansions. Yet the quality of its construction and periodic repair is still evident, and lines written by Procopius, chronicler of the reign of the sixth-century CE Byzantine Emperor Justinian, ring true today: “The paving stones are very carefully worked so as to form a smooth and even surface, and they give the appearance

not simply of being laid together at the joints, or even of being exactly fitted, but they seem to have actually grown together.”



*Views to the north across the Shkumbin valley take in even higher mountains. Most are tree-stripped due to high local demand for firewood.*

*The road largely keeps to about 700 meters, and it soon passes through Babjë village, where the first motor vehicle can be heard as it climbs the steep flanks on a road far below. Down there is another early Ottoman bridge, named Ura e Golikut. Its unusual, ramp-like shape, with one side higher than the other, resembles the one on the cover of a popular novel by the prolific Albanian writer Ismail Kadare, The Three-Arched Bridge.*

Distances on the Via Egnatia were calculated in some cases by Roman miles, each equivalent to .93 modern English miles, or in other cases, often with the Ottomans, by hours of travel. Firmin O’Sullivan, who traveled the route in 1970 by bicycle and wrote *The Egnatian Way*, estimated that a Roman soldier could have walked the 700-Roman-mile road in 45 days at a comfortable pace or ridden a horse in half that time; a fast courier could have completed the entire trip, including the sail between Albania and Italy and the Via Appia, in three weeks. By contrast, traveling by sea, all the way around the Peloponnese in southern Greece and up or down the western coast

of Italy, would have taken, even in the best of seasons, two to three months.

Today, few names of places or features accord with those of earlier times, as might be expected in a part of the world where much linguistic, religious and imperial change has occurred since Greeks first colonized the region. It is not surprising that the Via Egnatia’s western terminus has changed its name from its original Greek of Epidamnos, a colony of Corcyra (modern Corfu), to Dyrrachium in Latin, to Dıraç in Turkish, to Durazzo in Italian and finally to the Durrës of today.

The beachfront in Durrës seems to belong, or perhaps aspire, more to the Italian Riviera than to the rough uplands of the Albanian

**Connecting one of the region’s oldest livelihoods with one of its newest relics, a shepherd, left, leads his flock to shelter in a concrete bunker built by Italy in World War II near the village of Babjë, east of Elbasan. Lower: This wedding reception took place in the village of Dardhë.**



## BITOLA, REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA



A café in the village of Qukës Skanderbej, between Elbasan and Ohrid, provides for passersby today much as did the many *mansios*, or inns, and *mutatios*, or horse-changing stations, of the past.

interior, but a Roman amphitheater, a Venetian tower, a Byzantine forum, an Ottoman mosque, an Italian colonial culture palace and a wall plaque commemorating a communist uprising against the fascist army of World War II all attest to Durrës's checkered history. The facelift given the city by the native-born fifth-century Emperor Anastasius seems not to have lasted: Just beyond the seaside espresso bars and *börek* bakeries, Durrës turns a bit scruffy. The 17th-century Ottoman traveler Evliya Çelebi, who was clearly underwhelmed during his visit, noted the lack of bazaars, hans, gardens and vineyards or even a bathhouse. "In brief," he wrote, "it is a noteworthy tax farm, but not a very flourishing town."

Farther inland, some things cause other surprises. Says Lorenc Bejko, a professor of archeology at Tirana University who has written on the Albanian reach of the Via Egnatia, "Despite what might look like the provincialism of our mountain culture, in fact our mountain people are as world-wise as those on the coast." When you walk on the Via Egnatia from village to village, he explains, they may well ask, "Are you headed to Istanbul?"

As Evliya wrote about the mountain people, "All the young men go about armed because—God help us—this is Albania and no nonsense about it. They swear only by their *shpatë*, their sword. Those who are not soldiers or sailors but peasants generally leave town and go to Istanbul where they serve as professional attendants in the bathhouses." Some, however, did better: At least 26 Albanians became grand viziers in the Ottoman Empire. Given Turkey's strong economy today, it is no wonder that Albanian adolescents still dream of going to the city at the end of the long road.

And so nearly still within sight of Italy, one begins to plot the journey, following what classical historian Max Carey has called Albania's best road until the 20th century, then through Macedonia and Greece, parallel in part to a new, €7-billion expressway called Odos Egnatia. Stretching about 300 kilometers, or about one-third of the Via Egnatia, it passes finally under Istanbul's Golden Gate, a three-bay triumphal

Vesna Kalpakovska is a classical epigrapher at the Bitola Museum whose work is never finished. Inscriptions are constantly turning up at the nearby archeological site of Heraclea Lyncestis, with its amphitheater, basilicas and 1,300 square meters of mosaic flooring. Her first translation of a Greek text, in an altar stone reused in the city's Ottoman clock tower, mentions one "Nikomachos, the sweetest son." As she remembers, "I was fascinated by it as a child, seeing it at head height and turned sideways, in a strange, non-Cyrillic alphabet. I wanted to know what it said, so that is what I studied."

Assistant museum director Engin Nasuh, an expert of the Macedonian portion of the Via Egnatia, explains why their work is such a challenge. "Albania's section is better known than in Macedonia," he says, "because there, the old route is still the most practical and best graded path. But in Macedonia it does not follow the valley, except when crossing mountains. We have too many plausible alternative routes, and most paving stones have been reused for building. Very little is known here."

Bitola is split by the Dragor River, and its main street, Shirok Sokak, is now a pedestrian mall faced with 19th-century neo-classical Ottoman mansions, built with money from the once-lucrative tobacco trade. So many Western European companies were based here that Bitola was called the "city of consuls." Painter Lear was favorably impressed, writing: "Either looking up or down the river, the intermixture of minarets and mosques with cypress and willow foliage forms subjects of the most exquisite beauty." Kemal Atatürk loved his years here at military school.

arch erected by Theodosius 140 years after Constantine.

The Roman poet Ovid knew this route well, and he wrote about it from his Black Sea banishment in the year eight CE with his eyes turned longingly west toward home. His route into exile was partly by sea and partly by road after landing at Tempyra, just west of the Evros River near Traianopolis (modern Loutra). Listed as a *civitas* on the Via Egnatia, it has the largest surviving Ottoman han in the Balkans, and a double-domed and still-steaming *kaplıca*, or thermal bathhouse.

As the poet wrote in Book Four of his *Black Sea Letters*, which he probably sent back to Rome along the Vias Egnatia and Appia:

It is a long road; your feet, as you go, are uneven,  
and the land lies hidden under winter snow.  
When you've crossed frozen Thrace, and the cloud-capped  
Balkan ranges,  
and the waters of the Ionian Sea,  
then, in ten days or less, without hurrying your journey,  
you'll reach the imperial city.

He was right to mention the winter snow of frozen Thrace, for the road passes Mt. Pangaeon, which at 1,956 meters is certainly high enough to trap travelers caught in a storm. An Albanian proverb states a hard truth about its unforgiving landscape: "If you start on a journey, you will also cross plains, mountains and rocks."

The route up the Shkumbin River valley in central Albania passes first the town of Peqin, identified as the mansio

**Between the mountains of Albania and Macedonia, the road skirts the placid northern shore of Lake Ohrid, whose circumference, noted the geographer al-Idrisi in the 12th century, was about three days' walking.**

Clodiana. Its Ottoman clock tower and mosque were both noted by Evliya Çelebi. Here, a spur of the Via Egnatia, running north from the now-deserted Roman town of Apollonia (one of many towns of that name all over the Roman world), joined the main branch. True to a traveler's guidebook, outside town one spots a Roman bridge as well as the first intact Roman pavers since leaving Durrës.

Fatmir Muho is a 43-year-old taxi driver living in the next town on, Elbasan. A former long-distance trucker, he knows all the region's roads, both the better and the worse. His derogatory description of some of them is not far from that of the 19th-century German scholar Tafel, who, with unintended irony, had this to say about the old trans-Balkan Roman routes: "These great roads do not seem to have rendered to civilization all the services that civilization may derive from roads today." Yet it was Anna Comnena, an 11th-century Byzantine princess, who put it best and most simply in the *Alexiad*, the chronicle of her father Emperor Alexios' reign, when she wrote about "those winding paths through that impassable region."

Muho tells of days not so long ago, under communism, when horses were driven across the Macedonian border for sale. Albanian horses, he explains, were for working, and they commanded higher prices in Macedonia, and less fit, less expensive Macedonian horses would be brought back across the





Left: A Byzantine church sits atop a promontory overlooking Lake Ohrid. Right: A balcony allows modern tourists to enjoy a waterfall in Edessa, Greece.

border for slaughter. Customs control would have not noticed if the same horses that had previously been taken across had not returned, so Albanian traders made a good living selling their own stock dear over there, buying the stock of others cheap and bringing it back—and not paying a penny of duty.

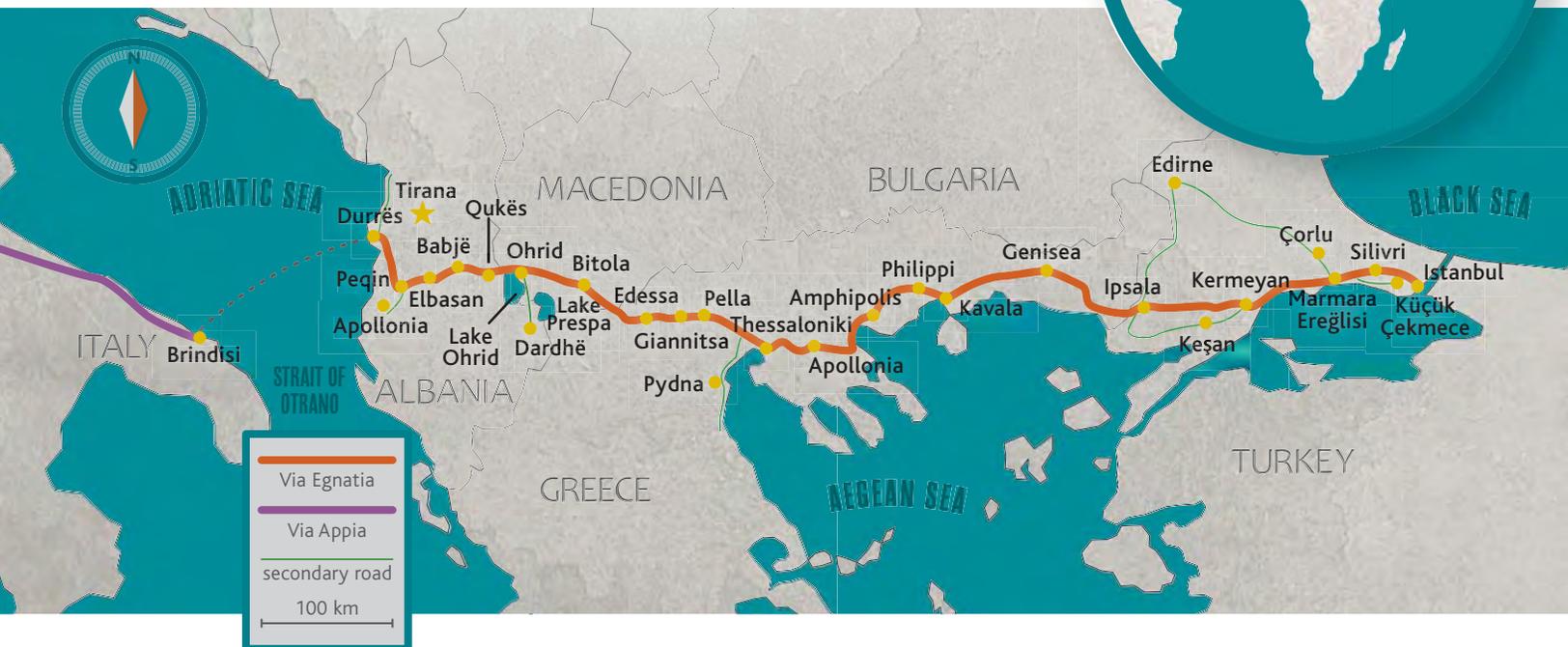
This professional chauffeur fails to mention if the horses had been driven on the left of the road, as ox carts were driven in Roman times. Some say that left-side drive in the UK is a holdover from its occupation by the Romans.

**KM 18**

*The paving stones, often like risen loaves of fresh-baked bread, reappear from time to time through more fields and meadows. The way dips and the houses thicken again into Dardhë village, where sheepfolds are protected by tough Illyrian sheepdogs, a breed of tawny-coated and black-headed guardians known in Macedonia as Šarplaninec, or the Šar Mountain dog. After a day's hike, a bed in the local school is welcome even if the dogs do bark all night under a full moon.*

The town of Ohrid is north of Dardhë, sitting beside the 700-meter-high, mountain-fringed lake of the same name, and the elevations beyond rise more than three times as high. Ohrid is the Lychnidos of the Romans, with an amphitheater and a hilltop castle, and today in summer it receives a large number of northern European sun-seekers who arrive not on the Via Egnatia, but via air.

The 12th-century Arab geographer al-Idrisi wrote of Ohrid, “The town is remarkable for the significance of its prosperity and commerce. It is built on a pleasant promontory not far from a large lake where they fish on boats. There is much cultivated land around the lake, which is to the south of the town. Its circumference is slightly more than three days.” Edward Lear’s descrip-



## EASTERN MACEDONIA AND WESTERN THRACE, GREECE

Of the several important archeological sites east of Thessaloniki, none surpass Philippi—in its day a thriving city that witnessed both the beginning of the Roman Empire and the founding of Christianity in Europe. The apostle Paul preached there, was freed from prison by a timely earthquake, addressed its people in his Letter to the Philippians, and moved west on foot to Amphipolis, Apollonia and finally Thessaloniki—all stops on the Via Egnatia.

Before that, the plain outside Philippi had been a battlefield where in the year 42 BCE the Roman Republic breathed its last, as witnessed by the defeat of Brutus and Cassius, the assassins of Julius Caesar, at the hands of Marc Antony and Octavian.

The road thus facilitated the movement both of soldiers, the original intention when Cicero called it a *via militaris*, and of ideas—an accidental byproduct of Roman road engineering. (When Suleiman the Magnificent marched a 300,000-man army through Macedonia to the Albanian coast for his invasion of Italy in 1537, the road passed what was likely its sternest military test.)

The nearby Greek port of Kavala—called Neapolis in Roman times, and the 1769 birthplace of Muhammad Ali Pasha, founder of the Khedivate in Egypt—today has a still distinctive Ottoman stamp. A 280-meter-long, 24½-meter-high aqueduct, connected to a 6½-kilometer pipeline, was built by Suleiman the Magnificent right through the city center. As a gift to his hometown, Muhammad Ali built a 4,200-square-meter *imaret*, or charitable kitchen, and a school with four courtyards that is now a luxury hotel.

Muhammad Ali's family home in Kavala, at the high point of the Panagia promontory with east to west water views and dating from the 1770s, was built in the classic Ottoman style with timber-supported overhanging balconies. His equestrian statue stands in the nearby plaza, depicting him turbaned and sheathing a scimitar. The tomb of his mother, Zeinab, rests nearby. As the known Roman sites become fewer, the Ottoman legacy seems to become stronger. The town of Genisea, called by the Turks Yenice-i

Karasu— or “newish [town] of the black water [river],” also known as the Nestos—near the city of Xanthi that perhaps corresponds to the mutatio Purdis of the *Bordeaux Itinerary*, was once famous throughout Europe for its Yenidze-brand tobacco leaf.

It is now a mere village with a large population of ethnic Turkish Muslims, who were allowed to remain in place here after the population exchange of the 1920s between Greece and Turkey in order to create a buffer from the Bulgarians. On Friday the call to prayer is intoned live from the 500-year-old Mustafa Pasha Mosque, led by 33-year-old Ibrahim Barkan, who studied at Istanbul's Eyüp seminary.

“I am a good Greek citizen,” says Ibrahim, “who happens to be a Muslim, and my family roots here are deeper than many of my ethnic Greek neighbors.” Not far from Genisea, the region's most striking Ottoman monument, the late-15th-century tomb of the religious scholar Kutuklu Baba built in an octagonal shape under a domed roof, stands alone on the starkly bare Thracian plain.

tion of the main square—“White minarets and thickly grouped planes studded over the environs”—echoes the view today, which he captured also in a watercolor set just outside the Ali Pasha mosque near a still-thriving plane tree.

From Ohrid on to Bitola, the route was known to the Ottomans as Manastir and to the Romans as Heraclea Lyncestis. It cuts through the heartland of the Vlach people, who today still speak a Latin-based language descended from Roman settlers. According to Fotini Tsimpiridou, a Greek anthropologist at the University of Macedonia in Thessaloniki and a specialist in Balkan ethnic minorities, the Vlachs are as open to outsiders as the Pomaks, Slavic Muslims in Bulgaria, are reclusive. It seems fitting that the Via Egnatia, built by their own globe-trotting forebears, should run through their home territory.

Upriver, past an Ottoman bridge that could be the twin of the more famous one in Mostar, Bosnia, one reaches the Macedonian

**Traversing northern Greece, the Via Egnatia passes through its second-largest city, Thessaloniki, where the Arch of Galerius, right, stands at the intersection of Egnatia and Dimitrios Gounari Streets.**





with no signs of it nearby, although its Ottoman monuments, including a clock tower dating from 1753, the Ilahi Mosque with its still-standing minaret—rare in this part of Greece—and hammam are still there, despite being in poor condition.

The way reemerges some six kilometers past Giannitsa at Pella, where Alexander was born, Aristotle taught and Euripides wrote the *Bacchae*, considered one of the greatest classical Greek tragedies. By the time of the Roman conquest it had been much reduced in importance, and an earthquake in the first century may have made it seem not even worth a stop-over, given that the much grander city of Thessaloniki was nearby to the east.

Pella's old museum now functions as a trinket factory supplying gift shops countrywide. Plaster copies of the Venus of Milo in all sizes bring to mind what the Roman historian Livy said about the war booty of Macedonia after its defeat

**Inscribed in Latin and Greek, this detail of a milestone found near Thessaloniki shows the name of Gaius Egnatius, the second-century Roman senator and governor of Macedonia who led the construction of the Via Egnatia in the second century BCE. Above: Farther east, in Kavala, this Ottoman-built aqueduct was commissioned by Suleiman the Magnificent in the 16th century.**

at Roman hands: “set out on exhibition, statues, paintings, rare stuff ... manufactured with great pains in the Palace of Pella.”



**KM22** *They come as a jarring incongruity: concrete anti-tank bunkers built by the communist dictator Enver Hoxha, a response to his unfounded fear of invasion from the neighboring communist army of Yugoslavia's Marshal Tito. Today, many of the bunkers have been smashed to the ground, their iron rebar picked out and loaded onto mules for recycling down in the valley. Others are used as sheep pens and hay sheds.*

Republic's border at Qafë Thanë—a mountain pass just east of Lake Ohrid and perhaps the “Pons Servilii” listed on the *The Peutinger Map*. The journey continues into the lexically confusing region of Greek Macedonia. This is the land of Alexander the Great, his father Philip II and the family's Argead dynasty. But not to be outdone by the Greeks are the Turks, who claim this region as the seat of an esteemed lineage of their own, the Evrenosoğulari, headed by Gazi Evrenos Pasha, the *ucbey*, or march lord, who conquered the Balkans in the late 14th century as general under the grandson of the Ottoman dynasty's first sultan, Osman I. Evrenos founded the city Yenice-i Vardar, “new-ish [town] of the Vardar [River],” now called Giannitsa. His tomb today has been rebuilt as a whitewashed and frilly neo-classical confection. Some biographies give the age of the man buried there to be 129 years old, but all that is certain is that he died in 1417.

This was an important stop on the Ottoman road system. Built some 1,500 years after the Via Egnatia, Yenice-i Vardar's center is some distance from the Roman-built thoroughfare,

On from Pella, Thessaloniki is Greece's second largest city. In Roman times it was the first, so crowded with urban traffic that the Via Egnatia was routed around it as a kind of beltway. But history still has a way of intruding into modern nomenclature, so naturally an *odos*, which is Greek for “road,” *Egnatia* runs east-west just four streets in from the shoreline, nearly passing under the Arch of Galerius, built by a Danube Valley peasant-turned-Roman emperor early in the fourth century. On the same street are two Ottoman monuments: the mosque of Hamza Bey, dated 1468 and now under restoration, and the locked Bey Hamami, or so-called Paradise Baths, dated 1444.

Thessaloniki is also the birthplace of the founder of the modern Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and his family home is now a museum incorporated into the Turkish consulate. Greek-Turkish relations have long been difficult, but the mixing of cuisine, architecture and language in this city somehow seems all the more apt given the Via Egnatia's role in bringing together so many people into a single place.

Anthropologist Fotini Tsimpiridou finds scholarly inspiration from her grandmother Efthalia, who relocated from Keşan, Turkey, to a village on the other side of the Evros River in the 1920s. "She was a simple woman," says the professor, "but very wise, because she always knew the truth, despite what history tried to tell her. Turkey alone was her *patriada*—she called it that from nostalgia and cultural identification, because she came from Keşan and didn't believe the officials when they gave names like Nea Kessani ["New Keşan"] to newly established villages on their side of the border."

Tsimpiridou also cites the case of influential cookbook author Nicholas Tselementes, who in those same years tried to "Hellenize" what had always been considered as interchangeably Greek and Turkish recipes for basic home dishes. In fact, he "French-ified" them more and "de-Turkified" them less by adding béchamel sauce to moussaka, for instance, and astute Greek chefs have been trying to rid it from the recipe ever since.

Moving on to the east, the Via Egnatia passes the mansio of Apollonia (not to be confused with Apollonia, Albania), where an Ottoman hammam and han stand in ruins. Then it's on to the civitas of Amphipolis, where a recently excavated tomb has excited nationalist politicians with the possibility that it belongs to an offspring or general of Alexander the Great, which they hope would give Greece yet more claim to sole Macedonian heritage.

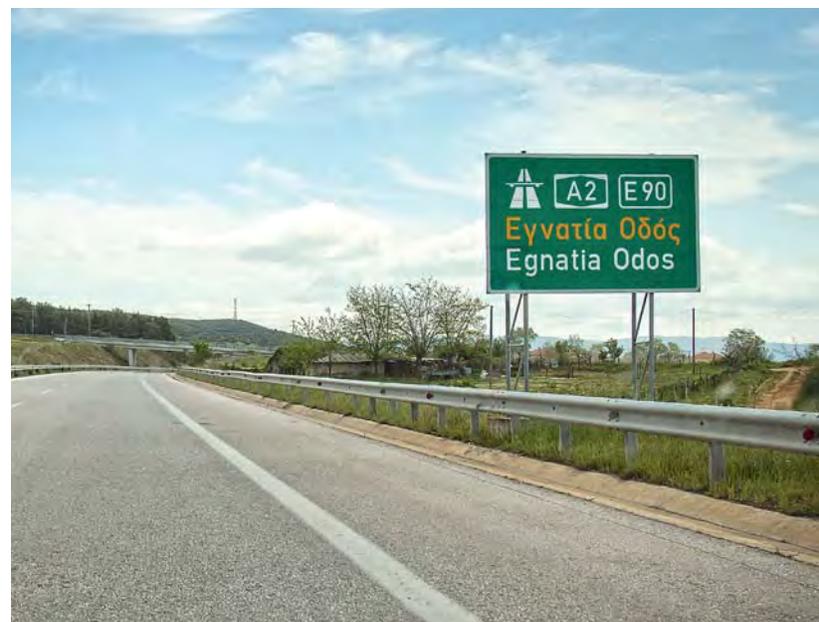
**Old and new, the Via Egnatia links not only Western and Eastern empires, but also more than two millennia of history over 1,120 kilometers, witnessed by a marker found amid the ruins of Philippi, Greece, left, and a modern sign along the expressway, right, that now traces some 300 kilometers of the old road's path in northern Greece and southern Turkey.**



*After we leave Dardhë uphill in a woodcutter's truck at dawn, the Rruga Egnatia's distinctive pavement is soon crossed and once again the eastward way is taken on foot. Shepherds, fields of maize and more haystacks piled up around a central spike lead to Qukës Skenderbej (Alexander Bey) village, after the 15th-century Albanian hero—a nobleman who served in the Ottoman army before breaking away to fight them for his nation's freedom—named in honor of Alexander the Great. The Siege, another novel by Ismail Kadare, covers his story as seen through the eyes of the Turks, and his statue commands the capital city Tirana's central square.*

Through the foothills of eastern Macedonia and western Thrace all the way to the Turkish border, the Odos Egnatia super-highway cuts like a blade. It also charges hefty tolls. It makes it easy to speed past the old stops mentioned in the *Bordeaux Itinerary*—mutatio Rumbodona, civitas Empyrum, mansio Herconstroma and the like—without being tempted by the motorway's exits. Not that it would do any good, because the exact locations of these places are still unknown. Highway construction did help to unearth some sites near the town of Asprovalta, probably the mutatio Pennana, but a nearby site at Syndeterios was covered over in 1980 by a motorcycle track.

The Via Egnatia was originally built only to the mansio Cypselia, modern Ipsala, on the Turkish side of the Evros River. Because the way was informally connected with other, older roads



# ISTANBUL, TURKEY

The Via Egnatia entered Constantinople through the southernmost gate in the old walls, the Porta Aurea, or Golden Gate, so named for the gold leaf that covered its wooden closures and by which newly crowned or victorious emperors entered the city. A now-vanished overhead inscription read, in honor of its builder Theodosius I: "He who builds this gate of gold brings back the Golden Age."

As described by Robert de Clari, the chronicler of the Fourth Crusade, the emperor would "enter this gate and be borne on his chariot with great joy and rejoicing to his palace." Today, such an arrival is no longer possible—the gate's central arch, once free-standing and only later incor-

porated in the walls, was bricked up in following years, although its flanking smaller one is still open.

The road could be said to end definitively at Istanbul's Milion, a fourth-century domed and four-sided archway near the Hagia Sofia. This served as the marker from which all Byzantium's road distances were measured.



**In the east, the road ended—or began, westward—in Istanbul, where the road passed through the city's walls, above, at a place called Porta Aurea, or Golden Gate. The section of wall above is in the area of Yedikule, Turkish for seven towers.**

that were later upgraded by the Romans, we only know without precise dating that it was later extended to Byzantium through the dense network of new roads, some going straight along the Sea of Marmara's coast, past Tekirdağ and Silivri, others running north through the city of Hadrianopolis (modern Edirne), to connect with the Belgrade road, or Orta Kol. In most cases, only the names are known of the stations between Cypsela and Istanbul. At the town of Marmara Ereğlisi, just 97 kilometers from Istanbul, inscriptions on four milestones all begin with the same simple salutation: "Good Luck," as if to subtly warn travelers from the west to be wary of the big city's temptations and hazards, of which there were as many then as today.

**KM34** *From Qukës Skenderbej, the route gradually descends back to the valley floor. Here the pavement's vestiges disappear amid the detritus of communism's industrial waste, closed factories and dreary housing blocks. The best way to continue from here forward, after this Albanian mountain trek through the most remote and intact section of the Via Egnatia, is by vehicle, to the Republic of Macedonia's border and farther along finally to Istanbul, where so many young shepherds and woodcutters have always wished to go. 🌐*



**Louis Werner** (wernerworks@msn.com) is a writer and filmmaker living in New York. Photojournalist **Matthieu Paley** (www.paleyphoto.com) specializes in documenting the mountain cultures and lands of Central Asia and Turkey, where he lives.



**Related articles at [www.aramcoworld.com](http://www.aramcoworld.com)**

Balkans J/A 13  
Alexander the Great M/J 01  
Albania J/A 92  
Ottoman Greece J/A 76



**Via Egnatia video:**



# The FABLED FLATBREADS of Uzbekistan

Written and  
photographed by  
ERIC HANSEN



RESPECT FOR *non* IS RESPECT FOR COUNTRY.  
—Uzbek proverb

**T**he sun was coming up as I followed the scent of wood smoke and freshly baked bread that drifted down a chilly dirt lane in an aging neighborhood on the outskirts of Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan.

Working my way against rush-hour traffic of bicycle-mounted bread-delivery men and bundled-up children carrying home stacks of steaming bread in plastic bags, I turned into an unmarked open gateway in a mud-plastered wall. In the courtyard I found fifth-generation baker Raushanbek Ismailov with his entire upper body inside the opening of his

315-degree centigrade tandoor oven. He soon reappeared, and then deftly continued to place rounds of dough onto a handheld cushion, leaned back into the oven and slapped each round onto the white-hot walls. Minutes later, he was pulling out dozens of fragrant, golden, crusty loaves called *non* (pr. *nahn*), which he arranged on an old metal bedframe to cool.

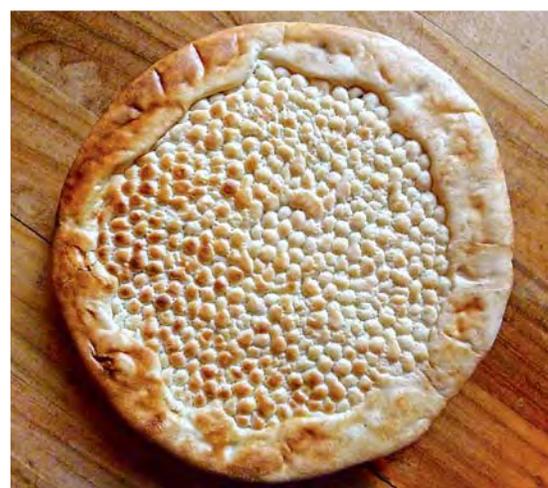
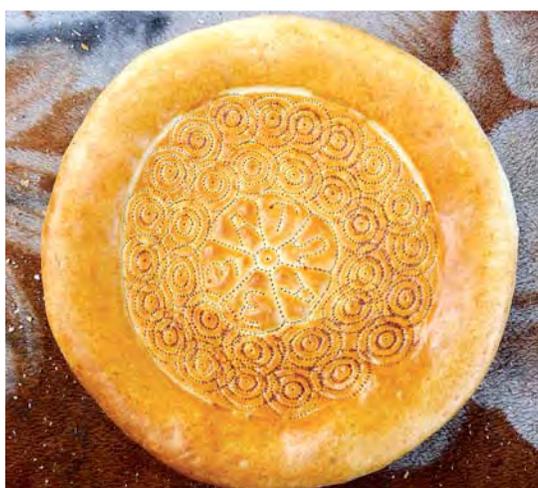
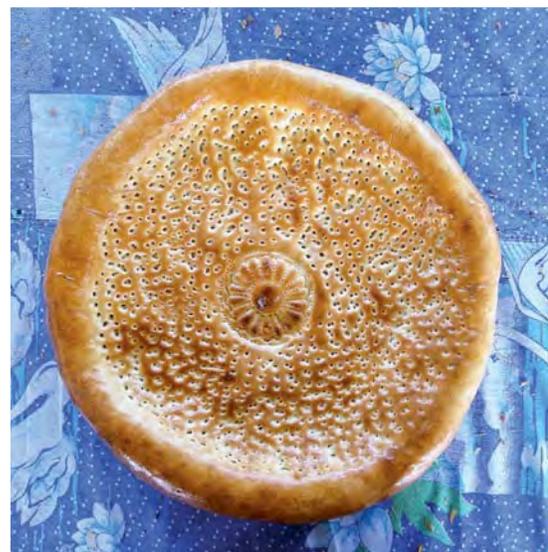
The word “non” comes from Persian, where it is sometimes transliterated “na’an” or just “naan.” Throughout the region, the word refers to a variety of wheat-flour, leavened flatbreads with the slightly smoky sourdough tastes and textures that are the result of being cooked in large clay (tandoor) ovens.

Locally, Raushanbek is a *nonvoy*—a bread baker. He specializes in the Tashkent style of *non*, which is just one of the classic examples of the varied, tandoor-baked breads of Uzbekistan. Pausing for a moment to greet me, Raushanbek



smiled, handed me a hot loaf and went back to his baking. I took a bite. It was warm, crisp, chewy perfection, with an open, airy crumb and just the right amount of char and flavor. The texture, subtle taste of roasted grain and slightly smoky aroma immediately reminded me of my first Central Asian tandoor-baked bread in Herat, Afghanistan, in 1973. Now, after 42 years, I was in neighboring Uzbekistan, visiting bread bazaars, interviewing bakers, sampling bread and talking to everyday customers about the significance of bread in Uzbek culinary and cultural traditions.

Clockwise from top, opposite: Baker's assistant Gauhjaroy Kiyikiboyeva displays a tray of Tashkent-style *non*, stamped, oiled and ready for the tandoor oven. Raushanbek Ismailov is a *nonvoy*—a bread baker; here, he braids a decorative, Tashkent-style *non*. In Bukhara, Erkin nonvoy keeps an eye on loaves baking along the walls of his tandoor oven. At the Ulugbek non bazaar in Samarkand, bread vendors pile their tables with *non* and festive *patyr* bread.





Top row: Bukhara-style; Tashkent-style with nigella and sesame seeds; festive Tashkent-style; Urgench-style from Khorezm Province (2); Tashkent-style. Second row: Tashkent-style; Samarkand-style with nigella seeds; Samarkand engagement bread, Siab bazaar; Bukhara-style, Kritiy bazaar; Tashkent-style, Chorsu bazaar (2). Third row: Two Samarkand patyrs, flaky with shreds of onion; Bukhara-style, Kritiy bazaar; colorful Samarkand engagement bread with nigella and sesame seeds; Samarkand patyr; Tashkent-style, Ulugbek bazaar. Fourth row: Tashkent-style, by Raushanbek Ismailov; Samarkand, Siab bazaar; Khiva-style, Khorezm Province; Bukhara-style by Erkin nonvoy; Bukhara-style, Kritiy bazaar.



From left: Bread saleswoman Salomat displays non stamped with the storybook names Tahir and Zuhra at her stall in Urgench. Bukhara-style non in the Kritiy bazaar of Bukhara. Two photos of vendors each show Tashkent-style non in the Chigatay Darvoza bazaar. Two photos show Bukhara-style non in the Kritiy bazaar.

I wanted to discover why Uzbek non is widely considered to be the very best of Central Asian tandoor breads.

For the next two hours, Raushanbek nonvoy and his assistant Gauhjaroy Kiyikiboyeva demonstrated their bread-baking process. It started with an old cast-iron bathtub full of bubbling *xamir* (pr. *khamer*)—a sourdough prepared the night before. They weighed out handfuls of dough, rolled it flat, applied the traditional perforated designs with metal bread stamps called *chekich*, and then followed this with a pattern of spoke-like indentations. Then they brushed the flattened dough with oil that would give it a golden color, sprinkled it with sesame seeds and finally coated it with powdered milk mixed with water for taste. On an average day, Raushanbek says, he bakes some 50 large loaves and about 425 smaller loaves.

Compared with non baked in other parts of Uzbekistan, Tashkent-style non is lighter, softer, more chewy and less dense. It is at its peak of perfection for only a few hours. Uzbeks

prefer non hot from the baker, and this is why all bakeries employ a fleet of bicycle delivery men and boys who service the cafés, street stalls, markets, private homes and restaurants starting around five o'clock each morning.

**w**heat and barley were first domesticated in the Fertile Crescent around 10,000 years ago, but not until leavened bread was discovered in pharaonic Egypt, most likely by accident, did bread as we know it today become an essential part of the daily diet for much of the world.

Several theories surround the discovery of leavened bread. Ground or milled cereals mixed with water and left out in warm conditions attract airborne yeast spores that occur everywhere. A second possibility is that *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, a strain of wild yeast found in the Nile River, could have been added to wheat or barley flour and thus started the process of fermentation. This is not unlike Pliny the Elder's first-century CE note that foam taken from beer can be

added to water and flour to produce "a lighter kind of bread." However the process started, Uzbek-style non is old enough to have been mentioned in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (tales of the ruler of the Sumerian Kingdom of Uruk) that dates from 2700 BCE, and cuneiform writings from that time include Sumerian poems and myths about the invention of bread, along with recipes.

Non is found in many shapes and sizes, and with different flavors, throughout Iran, Turkic Central Asia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, northern India and China's western Xinjiang Province. Uzbek non is easily recognized by its round shape, shallow depression in the middle, soft chewy texture, distinct flavors, golden crust, and frequently intricate decorative patterns. Uzbek non, as I discovered, varies in taste, size and appearance from province to province, city to city, town to town.

Like coffee, tea or dates, sharing bread has been elemental to the region's hospitality traditions

**LIKE COFFEE, TEA OR DATES, SHARING BREAD HAS BEEN ELEMENTAL TO THE REGION'S HOSPITALITY TRADITIONS FOR MILLENNIA.**





for millennia. (Similarly, in Christian traditions as well as in other cultures, “breaking bread” is an ancient gesture of friendship, respect and hospitality.) Here, it goes further still: Uzbek non is put beneath the head of a newborn child, in hopes that it will give the baby a long life. Non is also placed between the legs of a toddler just learning to walk, to wish the child a blessed journey through life. Non in Uzbekistan is rarely, if ever, cut with a knife at home or in traditional social settings: Rather, it is broken into pieces by hand. It is considered disrespectful to place a loaf of bread face-down, and even more so to allow crumbs to fall on the ground.

Uzbek tradition appears to take the God-given sacredness of bread seriously: For example, when a piece of bread does fall to the ground, tradition calls for it to be picked up and placed on top of a wall or in the crook of a tree for the birds while saying “*aysh Allah*” (“God’s bread”). The Spanish use a similar phrase in the same situation: *Es pan de Dios*, and the saying dates from the time of the Muslim presence in the Iberian Peninsula.

One rainy day in Tashkent, I walked to Chigatay Darvoza non bazaar, the local outdoor bread market. Women were standing under huge umbrellas with their loaves of bread safely tucked up and protected in colorful blankets placed in old baby buggies. No sooner did the rain stop than they set out the loaves for display. Despite the wet, blustery weather, everyone was keen to be photographed, proudly holding one of her finest loaves.

Across the street from Chorsu bazaar, the huge central market of Tashkent, I visited a row of shops specializing in bakery supplies. There I met Bakhrom, a seventh-generation *chekich ustasi* or bread stamp master. Decorative *chekich* patterns mark the center of each loaf, and they not only give the non from each bakery a distinctive look, but they also compress the center of the bread so that only the unstamped outer rim will rise. In addition, radial, spoke-like patterns on the perimeter of Tashkent-style non comes from a tool called *bosma* (“press”), which is commonly made out of repurposed spokes from a bicycle wheel.



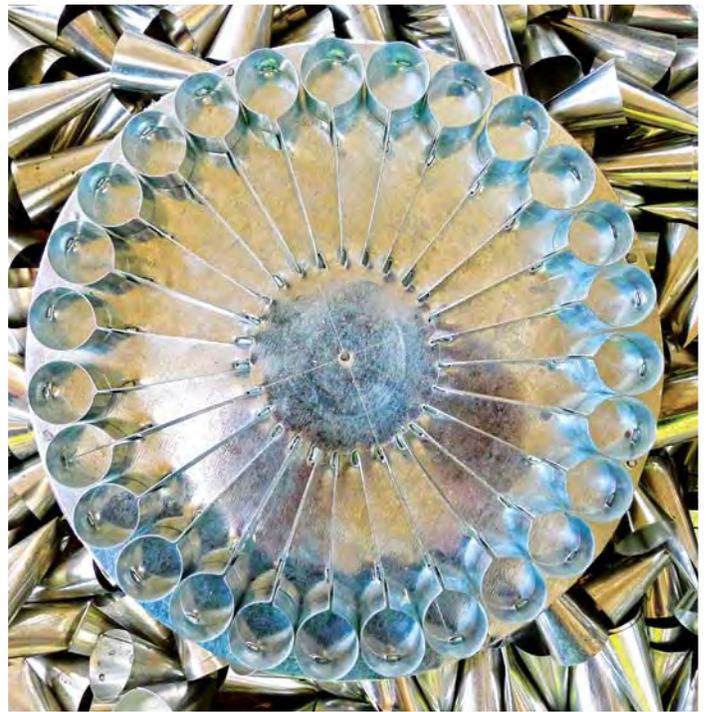
Timor, a deliveryman in Bukhara, holds non that he will carry to customers by bicycle.

Travelling southeast from Tashkent by road, I arrived in Samarkand, where my friend Zafar Jahongirov walked me to the non section of the Siab bazaar. He explained the importance of non in engagement parties and wedding ceremonies.

Engagement bread is easily identified in the public markets by its bright pink and yellow colors. This bread is

always bought in pairs because even numbers are considered good luck. At the engagement party, the two families break the bread, share it out and eat it to formalize the engagement and to celebrate the two families coming together. Later, on the day of their wedding, the bride and groom take bites from two plain round loaves of non placed face to face. The loaves with the two bites missing are then set aside until the next morning, when they finish the non at their first breakfast together as husband and wife.

Jahongirov also told me that similarly, before an Uzbek son leaves home for military service or to work or study abroad,



At the Chorsu bazaar in Tashkent, the tools used to decorate non are works of art in themselves. *Chekich* (bread stamps), top left, often are made of nails arranged in patterns. They prevent the center of a loaf from rising too high, and the holes they create allow steam to escape. Bakers often use the patterns as signatures. A large *bosma* ("press") bread stamp, above, uses a Tashkent-style pattern. Left: More assorted instruments for bakers.

festive bread made by folding multiple layers of dough with rendered mutton fat or butter and shreds of onion and herbs. The patyr dough is rolled into a cylinder, cut to size and then rolled out again before baking. This process creates a wide, flat, slightly flaky bread similar to puff pastry or a very large Indian *paratha*. As a testament to the excellence of the Ulugbek patyr, the passengers of long-distance taxis were already lined up at 6:00 a.m. buying dozens of loaves to share with friends and family hundreds of kilometers away.

**M**y next stop on the non trail was Bukhara, one of the most fabled Silk Road cities of Uzbekistan, which was also the birthplace and former home of the famous Persian scholar and philosopher Ibn Sina (called Avicenna in the West). Ibn Sina claimed that "one having eaten in the morning a slice of *obi non* with raisins, fried peas or Circassian walnuts will not be thinking about food for a long time."

This statement proved true: In the back-street bakery of Raim nonvoy, his assistants kept offering me hot Bukhara non with a multitude of toppings, including fried eggs, cheese, yoghurt, honey and jams until I could hardly walk. When I asked Raim why his bread was so much more expensive than at other bakeries, he said, "Because my bread tastes so much better than the others!" Bukhara non falls somewhere in density between the Tashkent and Samarkand styles, and it is sprinkled with blackened nigella seeds.

While setting up a loaf of non to photograph, I started to brush aside some crumbs. An assistant leapt forward to catch

he will take a bite from the edge of two loaves of non placed face to face; the family then dries the bread in the sun and hangs it near the ceiling until the son returns.

Near the Siab non bazaar, Izzat nonvoy was in the middle of baking when I dropped in to see him at work. He specializes in the Samarkand style of non, which has a darker crust, and it is heavier, larger and more filling than the Tashkent varieties. The texture is dense, and the finished loaf is coated with a light sheen of oil. Samarkand non freezes well, and it is frequently taken overseas as a gift from home. Once thawed, sprayed with a little water and microwaved, the loaf, Jahongirov said, tastes as if it was freshly baked.

At the famous Ulugbek non bazaar, near Samarkand's historic 15th-century observatory, the vendors specialize in *patyr*, a



Above: Tashkent-style non dough is stamped with chekich and bosma patterns, and it is ready for the oven. Right: A delivery boy sets off in Samarkand using a bicycle fitted with a customized rack and bags.



them before they hit the floor. “Please, do not do that. Bread is sacred,” he reminded me.

That afternoon, I fell into conversation with Amir, the hotel receptionist. He told me a story about bread and Bukhara weddings: Uzbek weddings are often huge, and the average meal requires 300 to 400 loaves of non. Following the wedding reception, the oldest and wisest woman, the one with the longest marriage and the most life experiences, holds two rounds of non on the head of the bride. She walks her around the reception room while the bride says goodbye to her old life with her family. All the women and her parents kiss her and say goodbye. The old woman holds the bread, reads to her from the Qur’an, talks to her, wipes away her tears, reassures her that everything will be all right, and then she leads her to the room where her husband is waiting for their first night.

The following day, I drove northwest across the Kyzylkum Desert, arriving in Urgench, the capital of Khorezm Province. The non of Khorezm is flatter, more cracker-like in texture, with chekich stamp marks covering most of the non, leaving a thin edge like pizza dough. Here, names from Uzbek folklore and literature are commonly used for decoration and to identify the different bakers. At the stall run by Salomat, a smiling, effusive woman of middle age, she explained the meaning of the names Tahir and Zuhra on her bread. They are, she said, a kind of

Throughout Uzbekistan, non is never cut with a knife: It is torn by hand, lending a special meaning to the ancient tradition of “breaking bread” with family, neighbors or strangers.



Uzbek Romeo and Juliet, protagonists of an epic tale of star-crossed lovers, well known to the everyday bread buyers of Urgench. It is about fate, destiny, hope, sacred love, tragedy and God’s will. Not, I thought, the sort of life lessons or literary reference that might ever be found on the plastic packaging of pre-sliced Western breads.

Back in Tashkent at the end of my journey, I was sipping green tea at a café when I noticed a car moving slowly down the street. A small child was standing up on a rear seat holding a small crust of non. The window was partially open, and as the car passed, the child accidentally dropped the crust onto the road. From a nearby group of women, one immediately walked over, picked up the non, blew on it, kissed it lightly, uttered some words and placed the non on a tree branch, for the birds. 🌍



Random House author and photo-journalist **Eric Hansen** (ekhansen1@gmail.com) is a frequent contributor to *AramcoWorld*. He lives in California’s Central Valley.



Related articles at [www.aramcoworld.com](http://www.aramcoworld.com)  
 Bukhara tilework S/O 09  
 Tashkent J/F 08  
 Flatbread S/O 95  
 Samarkand J/A 84

# TRAVELERS of AL-ANDALUS

part IV

Seville  
Córdoba

Constantinople

Baghdad

## Al-Ghazal: From Constantinople to the Land of the Vikings

Written by JESÚS CANO and LOUIS WERNER

Art by BELÉN ESTURLA

The story, according to Córdoba-born historian Ibn Hayyan, is that when the *amir* of Al-Andalus, ‘Abd al-Rahman II, assigned his court poet and trusted ambassador to a mission to the Byzantine capital of Constantinople, the poet tried his best to refuse.

Independent, insubordinate, even impudent: Such moments were almost trademarks of Yahya ibn Hakam al-Ghazal, whose surname meant “the gazelle,” a name given for his extraordinary good looks and fleet wit. He was known for satirical verse and sharp epigrams that not infrequently landed him in trouble. Yet it was precisely this kind of trouble that precipitated his travels, which later included also the farthest and earliest Arab journey to the Norsemen, or Vikings, a journey that, if true, outshines even the more famous (and better documented) voyage a century later of Ahmad Ibn Fadlan up the Volga River.

Because Al-Ghazal himself is not known to have ever put his own pen to parchment—at least to any that survives today—we rely on Arab chroniclers of following centuries. Although some eminent Western historians of Al-Andalus, including the Frenchman Evariste Lévi-Provençal and the Spaniard Ambrosio Huici Miranda, are skeptical of their accuracy, modern historians of the Vikings take the truth of

Al-Ghazal’s story as a given. Ibn Hayyan wrote his 10-volume history of Al-Andalus in the 11th century, fully 200 years after Al-Ghazal lived, and it is the most complete record we have of his biography and *diwan*, or suite, of poems, many written and, often, composed orally and recited on the spot, thanks to his lightning wit. Thus we know that although he tried to beg off the assignment to Constantinople, protesting that he was too old and the journey too dangerous, Al-Ghazal eventually acceded, begrudgingly:

Some say that Al-Ghazal is so clever  
That after due consideration, he was the one selected.  
Yet that was not the reason. Rather it is that I was  
The easiest one to be rid of.  
So yes I will go, but those who cause me harm  
Stand before the whims of fortune;  
I only wish it to be God’s plan that I return  
Whether they like it or not.

Al-Ghazal was born in Jaén, on the Iberian Peninsula, around 770 CE. This was during the reign of ‘Abd al-Rahman I, who had fled for his life from the Umayyad court

“He was able to play the knowing fool when speaking, and he was funny.”

in Damascus. Not much is known about Al-Ghazal's early years, but his family must have been socially prominent, because as a young man, he was free to move to Córdoba, and there, he began flirting with power.

To put it that way is apt because, besides his handsome looks that helped him engage in conversations with women, Ibn Hayyan also wrote that "together with his education, he had varied and abundant wisdom; he was able to play the knowing fool when speaking, and he was funny, intense and always at ease in his expression."

It is perhaps to Al-Ghazal's fortune that he was still too young to practice his satire during the reign of 'Abd al-Rahman's successor, Hisham I, who is known to have cut out the eyes and snipped off the ears of a poet who rubbed him the wrong way. Nevertheless, all that we know of Al-Ghazal tells us that once he opened his mouth, he sometimes could not close it in time.

In 832, by then well positioned in Córdoba and in his early 50s, al-Ghazal wrote a scathing verse about the popular Persian poet and musician Abul Hasan Ali ibn Nafi, known also as Ziryab, who had been invited to court by 'Abd al-Rahman II expressly to educate the amir's own court poets in the arts of the Arab East, which were much admired. For this Al-Ghazal was sent briefly into exile—ironically to Iraq, seat of power of the rival Abbasids, which also happened to place him near the feet of none other than Abu Nuwas, the greatest Arab poet of all time.

Perhaps Al-Ghazal never fully recovered from this misstep, because even though he returned from Baghdad a better poet, he was unable to turn down the ambassadorship to Constantinople. But he tried his best, as Ibn Hayyan recorded his verses beseeching 'Abd al-Rahman II to reconsider:

What they give me for being absent, I will consider,  
Although being too much, is miserable.  
I see death stealing life from the most elusive deer  
And, like birds, catching them despite their flight.

He left for Constantinople in 834 as a guest of the Byzantine emissary who had come to Córdoba to forge an alliance against the Abbasids. But en route, Al-Ghazal apparently did not care for the Greek's hospitality, which he found meager, nor his provisions, which he found light, as he complained in an epigram: "I would like to know how much it

would have cost you to do me the smallest of favors, in case you had chosen to do even one."

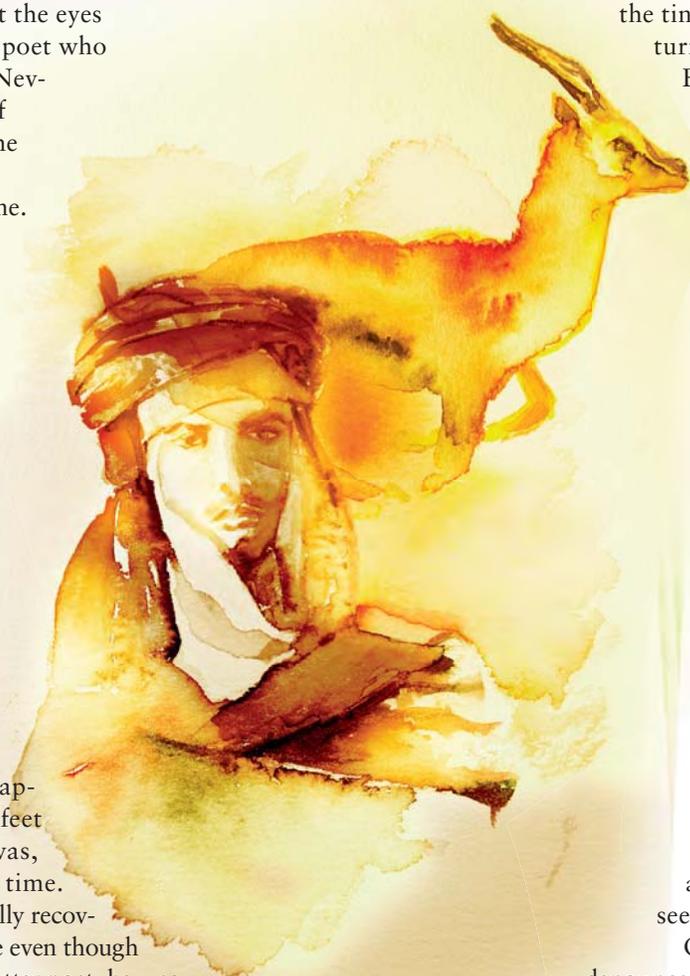
Once in Constantinople, Al-Ghazal put loyalty first, but wit was not far behind. Ibn Hayyan wrote that when the time came for Al-Ghazal's audience with Emperor Theophilus, the emperor laid a trick to disconcert his Arab visitor: a doorway so low that nobody could pass through without kneeling, an act which, however inadvertent or forced, would express submission to the emperor. But Al-Ghazal's

wit got the better of the moment when he turned backward and propelled himself through the tiny door rump first. Once inside, he turned and stood properly to greet Emperor Theophilus with due respect. It seemed that everyone, Theophilus included, was impressed, and the meeting went well.

Theophilus and his wife, Empress Theodora, seemed captivated by the manners of this experienced courtier. According to Ibn Hayyan, the first time the poet saw Theodora "wearing jewels and dressed like a rising sun," he was so impressed that he could not lower his eyes. When Theophilus expressed his annoyance, Al-Ghazal replied, "I am so dazzled by the beauty of this queen and her extraordinary form that I am unaware of the reason you have called me here—and this is fair, for I have never seen a more beautiful image."

Once back in Al-Andalus, he was denounced—unfairly—by the vizier. It concerned a trifling matter of jewelry he was given abroad and allegedly illegal grain sales he made at home. Unfair or not, he again faced the displeasure of his amir. Al-Ghazal took aim at the vizier and all court hypocrites with a barbed poem:

A judge asked for my opinion  
About a man who seemed fair  
And thus was to be appointed governor.  
"What do you think he will do then?"  
And I responded:  
What do bumblebees do to bees?  
They break into their hives, eat their honey  
And leave the left-overs to the flies!



Still, it seemed to the amir that Al-Ghazal's diplomacy overseas was as good as his sharp tongue at home was bad. This was why he asked the poet to lead yet another embassy: this time to the land of the Norsemen who had lately been raiding the coasts of Al-Andalus. We get this only from later, less reliable Arab sources, including a 12th-century biographical encyclopedia of the lives of Arab poets collected by the Valencia-born Ibn Dihya al-Kalbi.

The first Western scholar to vouch for the story was W.E.D. Allen, a diplomat-socialite and expert in the South Caucasus who briefly dabbled in British fascism. Allen's evocatively titled *The Poet and the Spae-Wife* (*spae-wife* is an Old English cognate

*Ibn Dihya may have either filled in a real journey's story with plagiarized details or made it up outright.*

of an Old Norse word for "prophetess") accepts Ibn Dihya's account of Al-Ghazal's journey mostly on circumstantial evidence.

Other scholars, however, claim it tracks disturbingly close to Ibn Hayyan's account of the trip to Constantinople, and thus Ibn Dihya may have either filled in a real journey's story with plagiarized details or made it all up outright.

Undisputed is that Norsemen attacked throughout the Mediterranean in these years. Vikings had raided several cities of Al-Andalus, including Seville, just downstream from Córdoba. After one unsuccessful attack that resulted in the burning of their ships and the death of their captain, a Viking embassy in November 844 came to sue for peace.



'Abd al-Rahman II decided to send a return legation to the Viking camp. It was this mission that was headed by Al-Ghazal, since, according to Ibn Dihya, he had "a sharp mind, and a quick inventiveness; he was savvy at replying, he was brave, had perseverance, and knew how to cross all doors."

The account begins just as Ibn Hayyan's story of the Constantinople embassy begins: a storm delayed Al-Ghazal upon setting out in the company of a foreign ambassador. Then he arrived at the Viking camp "on an island or peninsula" that scholars of Norse history have identified as possibly Denmark's Jutland Peninsula, but more likely it was Ireland. Although some Vikings had recently become Christians, Ibn Dihya described them as pagan devotees of fire cults, using for them the name *Al-Majus*, or Magians, the same given to fire-worshipping Zoroastrians and the word from which English gets *magician*.

In what may be the clearest of Ibn Dihya's alleged plagiarisms, Al-Ghazal told his hosts he would not kneel before any sovereign but his own, and yet, as in Constantinople, the door to the Viking throne room was of low clearance, so that this time he scooted in feet first, sitting, so that the soles of his shoes approached closest to the king. If true, it was another quick-thinking but plausibly deniable gesture to gain the upper hand; if false, it was merely a cut-and-paste of the Constantinople account to a more exotic locale.

Having delivered 'Abd al-Rahman's letter and trunks of luxurious gifts, he is said to have again exercised arts of seduction on his host's royal consort, in this case the Queen Nud. Ibn Dihya recounted the poet's version of the encounter: "I swear that she had certain charm, but I won her favor by talking to her in a way so that I got more than I wanted." He goes on to say that Al-Ghazal's Arab companions had to intervene to silence the poet, lest the indiscretion go too far.

Despite the similarities, one reason to think Ibn Dihya's version was at least based on a now-lost contemporaneous account is that some of Al-Ghazal's poems here are not found in other chronicles, and they read as if they were written specifically for the moment at hand. At one point the Viking queen suggests that her guest darken his white hair with dye so as to look younger. His answer could not have been more sharply put:

Do not disregard the shine of white hair!  
It is the flower of understanding and intelligence  
I have now what you've longed for from your  
own youth,  
Good manners and education.

He returned to Córdoba after an absence of 20 months, in the summer of 846, when he was more than 70 years old. While some authors say he reached 94, the most accurate source may be one of his own verses, written not long before he died:

I have lived thirty years and some more,  
Plus thirty-two.  
The first third part of them flirting



The second part living in sin,  
And the third part deep in an abyss  
Where my pity and faith are lacking.

But how finally might one settle the question whether Al-Ghazal headed one or two ambassadorships—the one to Constantinople, and the other, possibly, to Ireland? There may be a hint in a bite of Spain's tastiest variety of fig. It's called the *doñegal*, and it is said to have been introduced to Al-Andalus by Al-Ghazal—from Constantinople. But why use that name? "Donegal" is an Old Irish word meaning "fort of the foreigners." What, we might wonder today, would the Gazelle say about that? ☹

**Jesús Cano** is a writer living in Spain. **Louis Werner** (wernerworks@msn.com) is a writer and filmmaker living in New York. **Belén Esturla** (esturlarui@gmail.com) is an artist and illustrator in Granada, Spain.

"Travelers of Al-Andalus" is a six-part series selected and adapted from the original 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. This article appeared in issue number 20, titled "Al Ghazal: De Bizancio al País de los Vikingos." ([www.legadoandalusi.com](http://www.legadoandalusi.com))



In this edition of the Classroom Guide, we continue with our new format using discrete lessons, each focused on one article. The lessons begin with an introduction, then a statement of goals—what students should be able to do by the time they finish—followed by step-by-step instructions for the activity. We hope this format will make it easier to use *AramcoWorld* in your classroom.

#### FOR STUDENTS

We hope this two-page guide will help sharpen your reading skills and deepen your understanding of this issue's articles.

#### FOR TEACHERS

We encourage reproduction and adaptation of these ideas, freely and without further permission from *AramcoWorld*, by teachers at any level, whether working in a classroom or through home study.

—THE EDITORS

**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

### “Ferozkoh: Renewing the Arts of the Turquoise Mountain”

Where does creativity come from? What inspires people to create things, be they works of art, foods to eat or inventions that change how something is done? And once people have been inspired, how do they go about making whatever it is they're making? “Ferozkoh: Renewing the Arts of the Turquoise Mountain” presents a fascinating example of the creative process. Read the article. When you have completed these activities, you will be able to:

- describe the process by which Turquoise Mountain artists created pieces for the “Ferozkoh” exhibit
- try part of a process described in the article to create a work of art
- present your artwork and an analysis of it, including what influenced your creation

#### Chart the Process

Once you have read the article (in class or for homework), focus your attention on the process in which the Turquoise Mountain artists participated to create the objects for the exhibition. Working with a group (after all, the process the artists used was all about interaction), go through the article and identify the steps the artists went through to create their pieces. List the steps, or mark up your copy of the article. Number each step, and underline the important parts about it. Then, with your group, create a graphic of some kind that shows the creative process in which these artists engaged. Write a title for your graphic.

#### Discuss

The article begins with an assertion: “For an artist it is difficult to create art in isolation.” Discuss with whom the artists interacted during their creative process. How did the interaction affect their work? Some people believe that creativity is

a solitary process. Debate this, using the article, your prior knowledge and your own experience for information.

#### Try It

It's not likely that you can easily get up close—let alone handle—any art masterpieces, so you can't quite do what the Turquoise Mountain teachers did. But you can do a version of it: Choose an object that you find beautiful or interesting, one that moves you in some way. It can be anything from a rock you see in a garden to a piece of jewelry to a painting to a coffee cup. Sketch the object the way the artists described in the article sketched their object. In other words, sketch your reaction to the object rather than the object itself. Proceed from there. Create something that your chosen object has inspired you to make.

When you have made your creation, think about how it relates to the object you started with. Write something that explains your artwork, including how it evolved from the original object. Include in your writing a response to “For an artist, it is difficult to create art in isolation.” How did interacting with the original object and with your classmates affect your creation?

As a class, exhibit your work. Display each work of art with the object that inspired it and with the artist's statement about the art. Invite others to visit your exhibit, and provide them with an opportunity to respond to what they see, since interacting with the audience is another instance of interaction—one that may very well affect the next thing you create.

#### Visual Analysis

The staff at *AramcoWorld* chooses photographs to accompany the articles in the magazine. Look at the photos that accompany “Ferozkoh: Renewing the Arts of the Turquoise Mountain.” What do you notice about the photos? What do they have in common with each other? What do you notice about what the photos do not show? (Hint: Do an Internet search about

## VISUAL ANALYSIS

Look at the photos on pages 34-35. Discuss these questions with a partner: Why do you think photographer Eric Hansen took photos of the *non* from this angle? What does it enable you to see? Why do you think the editors at *AramcoWorld* chose to display two entire pages of photos of non lined up like Instagram shots? What does this layout enable you to see?

Now look at the photos on pages 36-37. With your partner, write some notes about how these photos are different from those on pages 34-35. What do they add to your understanding of the article's content? Which photos—those in the first spread or those in the second—do you find more interesting? What makes them interesting to you?

the exhibit and look at the photos you find online.) Why do you think the folks at *AramcoWorld* chose the types of photos they did? What do you think they are trying to emphasize?

### Follow-up

You can download the catalogue that accompanied “Ferozkoh: Tradition and Continuity in Afghan Art” at <http://www.mia.org.qa/en/library/inspired-by-books/ferozkoh-catalogue>.

### “The Fabled Flatbreads of Uzbekistan”: A Study of Tradition

At its most basic, bread is food—fuel for human bodies, much the way that gasoline is fuel for cars. But as this article explains, there is much more to bread than that. In



### IF YOU ONLY HAVE 15 MINUTES...

“Six Degrees of Suriname” reports that the small South American country is one of the most multicultural societies in the Americas. Why? If time is short, read only the handwritten parts of the article to learn about different examples of multiculturalism in Suriname and to find out what different people say has made multiculturalism possible there. Make a list of what you learn. If you have more time, read the entire article and add to your list. How is Suriname both similar to and different from where you live? Write a journal entry with your thoughts.

this lesson, you will have a chance to think about bread the way an anthropologist might, in terms of its cultural significance. By the time you finish these activities, you will be able to:

- describe what bread means and the traditions associated with bread in Uzbek culture
- write about the traditions associated with bread in your culture
- assess the value of studying traditions
- evaluate the visual images that accompany the article

### Examine the Traditions

Read “Fabled Flatbreads of Uzbekistan.” Then make a list of different traditions mentioned in the article that involve bread. (An example of one of these traditions is having an elder hold two loaves of bread over a bride’s head.) Choose one of the traditions that you find particularly interesting. Write an analysis of that tradition, using these questions as your guide. What is the tradition? Why do you think bread, as opposed to some other food or object, is used in it? What does the tradition mean? What is the bread a symbol for?

### Try It

Think of yourself as a photojournalist (or anthropologist) putting together an article and photos about bread, as Eric Hansen has done. Start by identifying the type of bread that is most important in your culture—however you define that culture. It might be regional. For example, in the American South, people often enjoy biscuits, while in Ethiopia people eat *injera*. Or you might define your culture by your religion or with a particular holiday. Once you’ve chosen your bread, brainstorm some of the traditions that include it. (You can use “Fabled Flatbreads” to get you thinking.) See if you can come up

with two or three traditions. When you’ve listed them, organize your notes and thoughts, and write an article similar to “Fabled Flatbreads.”

How will you illustrate your article? What kind of photographs will convey to your readers whatever it is you want them to know about your bread? Again, use the article as a guide. Will you take pictures of the bread itself? If so, how will you make the pictures visually interesting? Will you take pictures of people who make the bread? Or people engaged in some typical activity that involves the bread? Or the setting in which the bread is made or sold? You might want to take different kinds of photos and see which ones you like best, both visually and in terms of what they communicate.

Present your article and photos. If you have access to a program that allows you to lay out the text and photos the way a magazine like *AramcoWorld* does, use it. If not, present your article and photos whatever way you want—such as a poster with typed text, or something that looks like the written text and visual images on page 10 that are part of “Six Degrees of Suriname.” Have your class display everyone’s work.

### Step Back and Evaluate

Now you’ve read about traditions that involve bread, and you’ve analyzed and reported on traditions involving bread in your own culture. Anthropologists do this sort of analysis all the time. Now that you’ve done it too, did you find it valuable? What, if anything, has your study of bread revealed to you or to others about your culture? Is there another way that someone could learn the same thing or something similar? If so, what would it be? If not, what makes the study of bread unique? Discuss the question with your classmates.

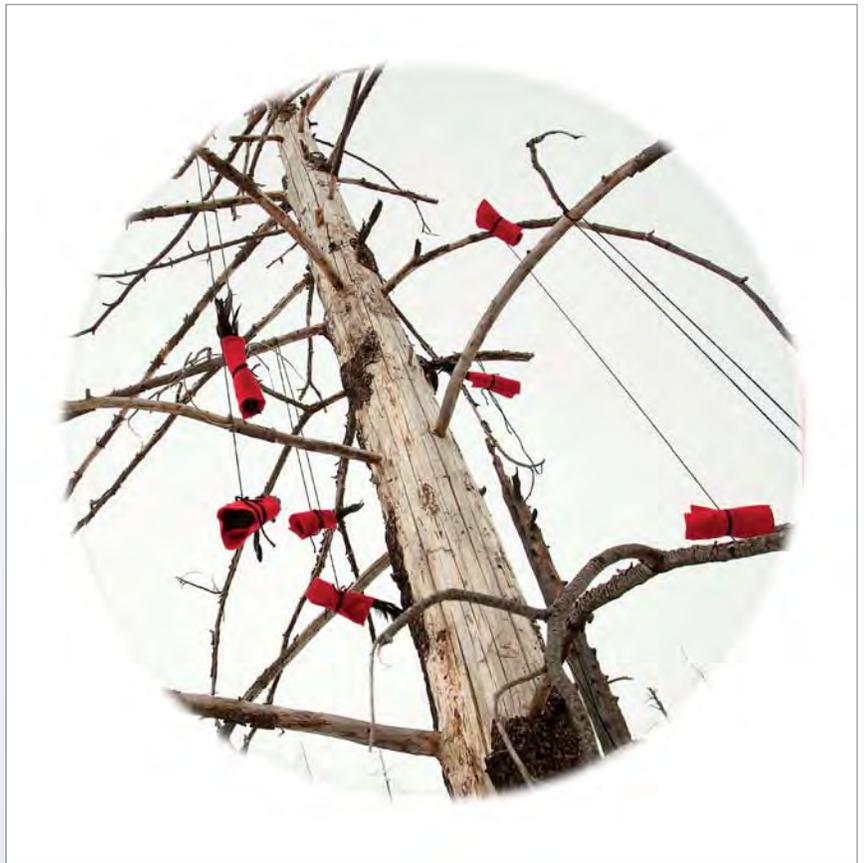
### Make Connections

How is a *nonvoy*, or bread baker, similar to and different from the artists depicted in “Ferozkoh: Renewing the Arts of the Turquoise Mountain”? Make a Venn diagram that compares and contrasts the *nonvoy* and the artist.

## Ten: The Exhibition

is the Arab American National Museum's celebration of its 10th anniversary, in which it presents the work of 10 exemplary Arab American artists. Their diverse range of works explores concepts of representation, identity and migration. Many of these challenges are universal among immigrants, but contain aspects unique to the Arab American community. The exhibition is guest curated by art historian, writer and gallery art director Maymanah Farhat. Arab American National Museum, **Dearborn, MI**, through October 4.

**Samar Alshaibi, *Thowra IV*, 2011, 40.6 x 50.8 cm.**



### Current July

**Hip-Hop, du Bronx aux rues arabes**, under the artistic direction of rapper Akhenaton and dedicated to the hip-hop movement, celebrates 40 years of the genre as a universal culture, multifaceted and often misunderstood. Much like the Western genre of music, Arab hip-hop, initially an underground phenomenon, has expanded and developed through social networks and the Web, echoing a growing desire for dignity, freedom and a better future. Responding to recent events in the Arab world, hip-hop has moved beyond simply being a mode of expression into a role that heightens awareness. The exhibition traces the history of this culture from its genesis in the us in the 1970s through its re-appropriation in France in the 1980s to its development in the Arab Spring. Nearly a hundred works from American, French and Arab artists embodying hip-hop's many forms—music, writing, graffiti, dance, fashion, photography and cinema—alongside archival documents, are showcased on a single stage. Institute du Monde Arabe, **Paris**, through July 26.

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

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

### Current August

**The Divine Comedy: Heaven, Purgatory, and Hell Revisited by Contemporary African Artists**, curated by the internationally acclaimed writer and art critic Simon Njami, is a dramatic multimedia exhibition that reveals the ongoing global relevance of Dante Alighieri's 14th-century epic as part of a shared intellectual heritage. Including original commissions and renowned works of art by approximately 40 of the most dynamic contemporary artists from 19 African nations and the diaspora, this visually stunning exhibition is the first to take advantage of the African Art Museum's pavilion and stairwells, as well as the galleries on the first and third floors. *The Divine Comedy* explores themes of paradise, purgatory and hell with video, photography, printmaking, painting, sculpture, fiber arts and mixed-media installation while probing diverse issues of politics, heritage, history, identity, faith and the continued power of art to express the unspoken and intangible. African Art Museum, **Washington, D.C.**, through August 2.

### Die Boote des Pharo und andere Bilder: Scheich Ramadan Abu Suelem.

From the collections of Ursula Schernig come the colored sketches of Bedouin shaykh Abu Ramadan Suelem (1924-1998). Schernig worked for many years at a gallery in Cairo, where she helped expand the local art scene during the 1980s and '90s. During that time, she met the self-taught shaykh Abu Ramadan Suelem, a leader of the Suelem clan, whose members survived by selling their orchid harvests and training their horses for horse dancing. His color drawings show great patience and meticulousness, bringing alive the Qur'an and the treasury of stories of Bedouin everyday life during Suelem's lifetime. Kunst galerie **Fürth, Germany**, through August 9.

**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 in 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.

### Current September

**A Cosmopolitan City: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Old Cairo** explores how Cairo's communities lived together and melded their traditions to create an ever-growing, multicultural society during the seventh to 12th centuries. Although the city was

governed by Muslim Arabs, its neighborhoods were populated by people from a patchwork of religious and ethnic communities, including native Egyptians and many immigrants. The exhibit puts a special focus on the three main religious communities—Muslims, Christians and Jews—whose members helped shape Old Cairo's neighborhoods, markets and public places. Each of Old Cairo's communities is brought to life through the 75 objects, many of which have never before been on display, including richly illuminated Qur'ans, Coptic and Hebrew manuscripts, ceramics, textiles, jewelry and architectural fragments. Other objects, such as game pieces and dolls, vividly remind the visitor of life in Cairo more than 1,000 years ago. Many of the artifacts in the exhibit were excavated at Fustat by the American archeologist George Scanlon between 1964 and 1972. The exhibit also highlights several important works on loan from the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, including an 11th-century carved door from the cabinet that held the Torah in the Ben Ezra Synagogue and a lusterware bowl decorated with a scene of a bird. The Oriental Institute, University of **Chicago**, through September 13.

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

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

**The Hidden Qualities of Quantities** shows three new projects by Dana Awartani, intertwined by explorations of ritual as gestures within which geometric and organic forms sit at the center of a set of performed sequences are acted out on paper and canvas. Awartani works with coding and geometric forms that include pre-Islamic talismanic designs and systems. Athr Gallery, **Jiddah**, through September 15.

**Shirin Neshat:** *Facing History* presents an array of Neshat's most compelling works in film and photographs, illuminating the points at which cultural and political events have impacted her art. Included are the "Women of Allah" photographs that catapulted the Iranian artist to international acclaim in the 1990s; lyrical video installations that immerse the viewer in imagery and sound; and two monumental series of photographs, *The Book of Kings* (2012) and *Our House Is on Fire* (2013), created in the wake of the Green Movement and the Arab Spring. Commenting on freedom and loss, Neshat's deeply humanistic art is at once personal, political and allegorical. Hirshhorn Museum & Sculpture Garden, **Washington, D.C.**, through September 20.

**Cleopatra and the Queens of Egypt** takes the queens of ancient Egypt, the most famous of whom is Cleopatra, as its theme. These queens not only supported reigning pharaohs as mothers, wives and daughters, but also played significant roles in politics and religion. Their magnificence is conveyed through masterpieces of ancient Egypt from a number of renowned museums around the world. **Tokyo** National Museum, through September 23; The National Museum of Art, **Osaka**, October 10 through December 27.

**Time of Others.** How does the word "other" divide us? How does the way one person looks at another shape their image of him or her? Inspired by such questions, this exhibition presents works by 20 primarily younger artists from the Asia-Pacific region, including artists Saleh Husein and Basir Mahmood. The National Museum of Art, **Osaka**, through September 23.

**Traces of the Future** is based on artworks that combine social observations with an involvement in issues that constitute the major challenges of tomorrow's society. The exhibition is a celebration of Moroccan contemporary art with visionary overtones, setting a reference system for the works and the public, as they share the same socio-cultural, political and critical background. The artists represented in the exhibit tackle familiar themes, navigating between imaginary worlds and everyday realities. They deal with challenges to physical and mental barriers, including stories of migration experiences, unveil many of the contradictions of our time. As such, the expression "Traces of the Future" is a figure of speech or an effect by which contradictory terms are used in conjunction. The **Marrakech** Museum for Photography and Visual Arts, through September 30.

Current **October**  
**Aatifi—News from Afghanistan:** *Painting, Works on Paper, and Video.* Mysterious shapes and lines—this was how Aatifi first perceived letters as a child. Since then, the artist has worked closely with Islamic calligraphy, engaging with the form and essence of Arabic characters. Aatifi learned the most important styles of the classical art of calligraphy in Kandahar, Afghanistan, the city of his birth. Even as a student of calligraphy, he began to modify the characters. Over the years, he has refined and reduced elements of Islamic

calligraphy, developing a unique visual language that is both independent of text and universally understandable. Responding to scriptural traditions, he synthesizes elements of classical style and the rich quality of light and color found in the Middle East with modern art. He selects characters purely for their esthetic and compositional aspects, and then fragments, rotates and layers the lines and shapes to convey power and dynamism, depth and space. Pergamonmuseum, **Berlin**, through October 18.

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

**An Egyptian Puzzle:** *Restoring the Coffin Lid of But-har-chonsu.* More than 2000 years after it was discovered in a rock-cut tomb in the Theban necropolis in Upper Egypt, the lid of the outer sarcophagus of the priestess But-har-chonsu from around 1000 BC forms the center of a small exhibition organized by the Near-Eastern and Ancient Egyptian Collection of the Kunsthistorisches Museum. In collaboration with the Institute of Conservation-Restoration at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, the coffin lid was comprehensively restored in 2011-2014. Wrongly reassembled pieces were identified, removed and correctly assembled, and a large number of previously "homeless" fragments were identified and incorporated. The exhibition documents this fascinating procedure and offers insights into the painstaking work of the conservators. Kunsthistorisches Museum, **Vienna**, through October 26.

**Occident and Crescent Moon:** *The Ottoman Orient in Renaissance Art* looks at depictions of the Ottomans in Renaissance Art between 1540 and 1600. The exhibit explores permanent collections to discover the many ways in which Renaissance artists responded to subject matter, motifs and stylistic influences from the Ottoman Empire, and the different evaluations of this great power expressed in these artworks. A selection of around 40 paintings, medals, *objets d'art* and suits of armor reflect relations and exchanges between Central and Eastern Europe and the Islamic Orient, which were marked both by drawn-out wars and the West's infatuation with all things

oriental. Kunsthistorisches Museum, **Vienna**, through October 26.

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

**Egypt's Emergence into History** takes a close look at the history of cultural creation in early Egypt. The display traces the rise of emerging cultures from the dawn of history up to 2700 BCE, illustrated in some 240 artifacts. Over the course of 500,000 years, a slow seismic shift took place in the culture of the Nile Valley: The culture transitioned from nomadic to sedentary in a process that culminated around 3100 BCE with the formation of one of the world's first centralized states. The exhibition focuses on the artisanal and technological developments in early Egypt, including the mastery of a wide range of different materials such as stone, bone, ivory, clay and metal. It also illustrates the emergence of a distinctive art style and a logoconsonant script (based on a combination of pictographic signs and phonetic elements) that had a profound impact on the cultural development of the subsequent period of the Old Kingdom. Neues Museum, **Berlin**, through November 16.

Current **December**  
**The Royal Hunt:** *Courtly Pursuits in Indian Art.* Expressions of imperial authority are universally embodied in royal imagery of the hunt, with rulers pursuing prey serving as metaphors for power and martial prowess. The theme is celebrated throughout the history of Indian painting and became ubiquitous in later Rajput paintings of the late 19th century. The exhibition features works from the Department of Asian Art, with loans from the Department of Islamic Art, the Department of Arms and Armor and New York collections. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York**, through December 13.

Current **January and later**  
**Arts of the Islamic World.** The arts of the Islamic world flourished in a vast area extending from Morocco and Spain to the islands of Southeast Asia. Although distinct in their cultural, artistic, ethnic and linguistic identities, the

peoples of this region have shared one predominant faith: Islam. The works on display represent the three principal media for artistic expression in the Muslim world: architecture (religious and secular), the arts of the book (calligraphy, illustration, illumination and bookbinding) and the arts of the object (ceramics, metalwork, glass, woodwork, textiles and ivory). The works date from the ninth to the 17th centuries. On view are brass bowls and candlesticks, folios from the Qur'an, earthenware and ceramics, and paintings representing the traditions of Iran, Iraq, Syria, Egypt and other parts of North Africa, Turkey, Afghanistan and Uzbekistan. Freer Gallery of Art, **Washington, D.C.**, through January 3.

**Silk Road Luxuries from China.** Long before Marco Polo sparked European interest in Asia, the Silk Road connected Mediterranean ports in the West to centers of production and trade in China and beyond. For more than 2,000 years this vast network of caravan trails has linked oasis settlements across the Central Asian desert, and many of those ancient overland routes are still in use today. The Silk Road enabled the long-distance exchange of luxury goods—colorful silks, silver and gold objects, delicate glass and even the legendary peaches of Samarkand—as well as the sharing of ideas, customs and religious beliefs. The impact of foreign imports on the arts of China reached exceptional heights during the Tang dynasty (618–907 CE), when craftsmen explored new materials, forms and decorative patterns introduced from the West. The flourishing young empire, supported by effective government administration and strong armies, expanded into Central Asia, and its capital Chang'an (modern Xi'an) became the largest city in the world. Its cosmopolitan society sought fresh ideas and expensive goods from afar. Traders and artisans from the ancient kingdom of Sogdiana, located in southern Uzbekistan and western Tajikistan, were especially active in this exchange, and their ancient Iranian language was the primary basis of trade for centuries. Communities of Sogdian traders extended from Anatolia to India and Sri Lanka and on to East Asia. Their interaction with China remained strong until 755, when a Sogdian led an unsuccessful rebellion against the emperor. By the time of the Mongol invasion in the 13th century, the Sogdians had disappeared. Freer Gallery of Art, **Washington, D.C.**, through January 3.

*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 4. Periodicals postage  
paid at Houston, Texas and at  
additional mailing offices.

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

## Light Show

explores the experiential and phenomenal aspects of light by bringing together sculptures and installations that use light to shape space in different ways. The exhibition showcases artworks created from the 1960s to the present day, including immersive environments, freestanding light sculptures and projections. From atmospheric installations to intangible sculptures that one may move around—and even through—visitors can experience light in all its spatial and sensory forms. Individual artworks explore aspects of light, such as color, duration, intensity and projection, as well as perceptual phenomena. They also use light to address architecture, science and film using a variety of lighting technologies. **Sharjah Art Foundation, UAE, September 19 only.**

**Arts of Islamic Lands: Selections from the al-Sabah Collection, Kuwait.** This newly expanded installation more than triples the display to some 250 works that present an impressive and comprehensive spectrum of Islamic art. Objects made in North Africa, the Middle East, Turkey, India, the Iberian Peninsula and Central Asia from the eighth to the 18th centuries demonstrate the development of techniques, craftsmanship and esthetics in Islamic visual culture. Among the highlights are a 16th-century Ottoman prayer carpet; a glass mosque lamp from 14th-century Cairo; an extraordinary earthenware bowl from ninth-century Iraq that transcends its humble function; early gold jewelry from Afghanistan and Syria; and opulent Mughal jewelry crafted in the refined *kundan* technique, including a brilliant bird pendant fabricated in late 16th-century India from gold, rubies, emeralds, diamonds and rock crystals. Museum of Fine Arts, **Houston**, through January 30.

**Images of Women in 19th-Century Iran** demonstrates the centrality of women in the artistic expression of 19th-century Iran and how they continue to inspire contemporary artists. The most popular representations of the Qajar era (1794–1925) have been of male sovereigns, whose life-size portraits exaggerate masculinity to depict power. Yet this era also saw a period of artistic modernization in Iran, particularly in paintings and photography in which depictions of women became essential elements of the scenes. Showcasing women at the court and in private, alongside images of female musicians and aristocratic women, this exhibition explores rarely told narratives of the Qajar artistic tradition. Museum of Islamic Art, **Doha, Qatar**, through January 30.



**Anthony McCall, *You and I Horizontal*, 2005, installation view.**

**Shoes: *Pleasure and Pain*** looks at the extremes of footwear from around the globe, presenting around 200 pairs of shoes ranging from a sandal decorated in pure gold leaf from ancient Egypt to the most elaborate designs by contemporary makers. Victoria & Albert Museum, **London**, through January 31.

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

**Egyptian Magic** is a fascinating journey into the world of magic in ancient Egypt. Learn how, in a secret world where the gods and the dead are intrinsically linked to mankind, magic can influence destinies. The exhibition presents pieces from the largest collections in the world. Produced in close collaboration with Stichting Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, with contributions from the Louvre Museum. Musée de la civilisation, **Quebec City**, through March 3.

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

foreign imports prized for their materials, craftsmanship, symbolism and rarity. MFA, **Boston**, through May 14, 2017.

Coming **August**  
**School of Islamic Geometric Design—London Workshop.** Eric Broug teaches how craftsmen in the Islamic world have been creating beautiful and complex geometric compositions, demonstrating techniques and design rules that have been used for centuries. Using dozens of photos and illustrations of Islamic art and architecture, Broug enables participants to develop a profound understanding of how patterns have been made and utilized. School of Islamic Geometric Design, **London**, August 15.

Coming **September**  
**First Look: *Collecting Contemporary at The Asian*** is an exhibition of contemporary highlights from the museum's collection, including painting, drawing, photography, baskets, ceramics and video—infusing traditional themes, media and cultural history with the urgency of present-day ideas. It features artists from Asia and the US. Yako Hodo abstracts the traditional art of basket weaving, while Yang Yongliang's "The Night of Perpetual Day" and Xu Bing's "The Character of Characters" push Chinese ink painting into new media. Their stunning videos appear beside early innovators of Chinese ink, connecting fresh ideas to their formal roots. The exhibit also features Bay Area favorites like Hung Liu and Zheng Chongbin and several exciting debuts, including Ahmed Mater's "Illumination Waqf" (2013)—a diptych print in the form of an Islamic manuscript with decorated borders. Asian Art Museum, **San Francisco**, September 4 through October 11.

**Egypt's Sunken Secrets** displays 293 artifacts from different Egyptian

museums: 18 from the Egyptian Museum in Tahrir Square, 22 from the Graeco-Roman Museum, 31 from the Alexandria National Museum, 15 from the Bibliotheca Alexandrina Museum and 207 from the Sunken Monuments Department. Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris, September 7 through January; Martin-Gropius-Bau exhibition hall, Berlin, April 15 through August 2016; London, November 15, 2016, through March 2017.

**ReOrient Festival 2015** turns San Francisco into a hub for innovative, spirited and thought-provoking theater from and about the Middle East. With short plays by playwrights from Iraq, Iran, Egypt, England and the us, this ReOrient promises to be a one-of-a-kind exploration of this region and its theater, stories and artists. Z Below, San Francisco, September 10 through October 4.

**Making Place:** *The Architecture of David Adjaye*. With more than 50 projects across the world, Tanzanian-born David Adjaye is rapidly emerging as a major international figure in architecture and design. Rather than advancing a signature architectural style, Adjaye's structures address local concerns and conditions through both a historical understanding of context and a global understanding of modernism. This mid-career survey—the first devoted to Adjaye—offers an in-depth overview of the architect's distinct approach and visual language through a dynamic installation design conceived by Adjaye Associates. Capturing a significant moment in Adjaye's career, this exhibition spans projects from furniture and housing to public buildings and master plans and features drawings, sketches, models and building mockups. In addition, a specially commissioned film featuring interviews with Adjaye's collaborators, including an international roster of artists, the exhibition curators and other influential figures in the art world, helps bring the projects alive and makes clear the important role that Adjaye plays in contemporary architecture today. The Art Institute of Chicago, September 19 through January 3.

**In the City**, an absorbing graphic-design and sound-art exhibition, provides a rare glimpse into four Arab Cities. The show, a first of its kind in London, showcases a series of commissioned and pre-existing works from an eclectic lineup of established and emerging Arab designers, illustrators, video and sound artists. It transports the audience through four enigmatic, but often overlooked Arab cities—Alexandria, Algiers, Baghdad and Nablus—by recapturing and re-imagining elements of those cities. The collection explores each city's panorama through its streets, landmarks, people, signage and sounds through individual rooms that contain elements borrowed from the city it represents, forming a variety of installations that invite interaction between the audience and the work. P21 Gallery, London, September 26 through December 15.

Coming **October**  
**The Fabric of India.** The highlight of the India Festival at the Victoria and Albert Museum (v&a), this will be the first major exhibition to explore the dynamic and multifaceted world of handmade textiles from India. It will include a spectacular

18th-century tent belonging to Tipu Sultan, a stunning range of historic costume, highly prized textiles made for international trade and cutting-edge fashion by celebrated Indian designers. Showcasing the best of the v&a's world-renowned collection together with masterpieces from international partners, the exhibition will feature over 200 objects ranging from the third to the 21st centuries. Objects on display for the first time will be shown alongside renowned masterworks and the latest in Indian contemporary design. The skills and variety evident in this rich tradition will surprise and inform even those with prior knowledge of the subject. v&a, London, October 3 through January 10.

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

**Première Biennale des photographes du monde arabe.** The European

House of Photography and the Institut du Monde Arabe unite to launch a new artistic project, presenting a series of exhibitions in various locations along a pedestrian route between both places. Spread over 700 square meters, the exhibit showcases the works of 30 photographic artists from the Arab world. Also participating are Western artists who have intently focused on a region or issue within the vast territory. The richness and diversity of points of views of these artists are on display, drawing from the tradition of documentary that serves more than just immediate reporting. Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris, November 10 through January 17.

**Hrozný and Hittite:** *The First Hundred Years* is a conference honoring the centennial of Bedřich Hrozný's epochal identification of Hittite as an Indo-European language. It brings together specialists in cuneiform philology, Anatolian and Indo-European comparative linguistics, as well as Ancient Near Eastern history, archeology and religion to survey the latest scholarship in the field and evaluate the prospects for Hittology in its second century. Charles University, Prague, November 12 through November 14.

**Bejeweled Treasures:** *The Al Thani Collection.* Spectacular objects, drawn from a single private collection, explore the broad themes of tradition and modernity in Indian jewelry. Highlights include Mughal jades, a rare jeweled-gold finial from the throne of Tipu Sultan (r. 1782-1799) and pieces that reveal the dramatic changes that took place in Indian jewelry design during the early 20th century. The exhibition examines the influence that India had on

avant-garde European jewelry made by Cartier and other leading houses and concludes with contemporary pieces made by JAR and Bhagat, which are inspired by a creative fusion of Mughal motifs and Art Deco "Indian" designs. Part of the v&a's India Festival. London, November 21 through March 28.

**PERMANENT / INDEFINITE**  
**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.

**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 headdresses, 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.

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](http://aramcoworld.com). Readers are welcome to submit information for possible inclusion. Some listings appear courtesy of *Canvas* magazine ([www.canvasonline.com](http://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.

**To subscribe to the print edition**, go to [www.aramcoworld.com](http://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](http://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](http://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](mailto: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](http://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.

@aramcoworld



