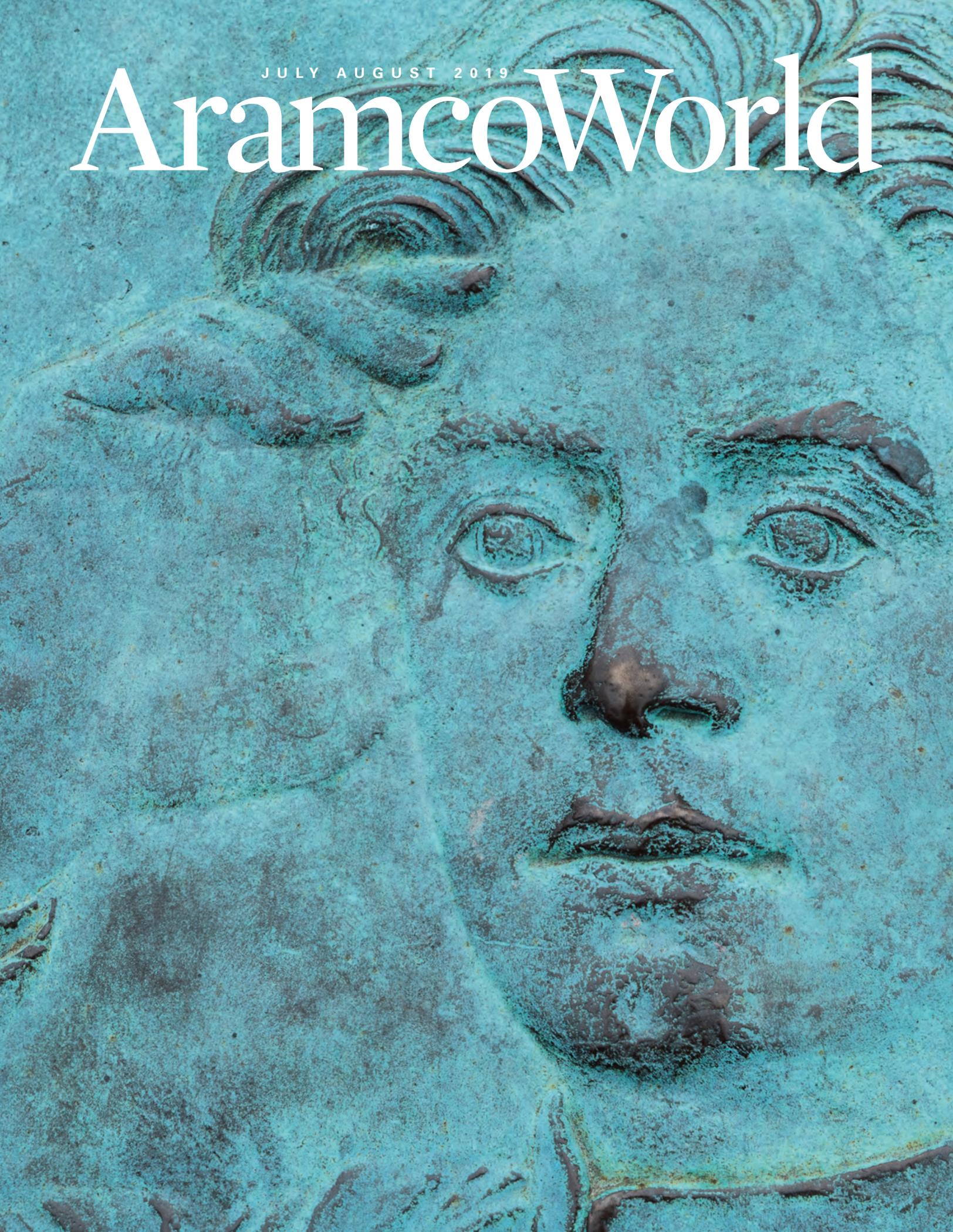
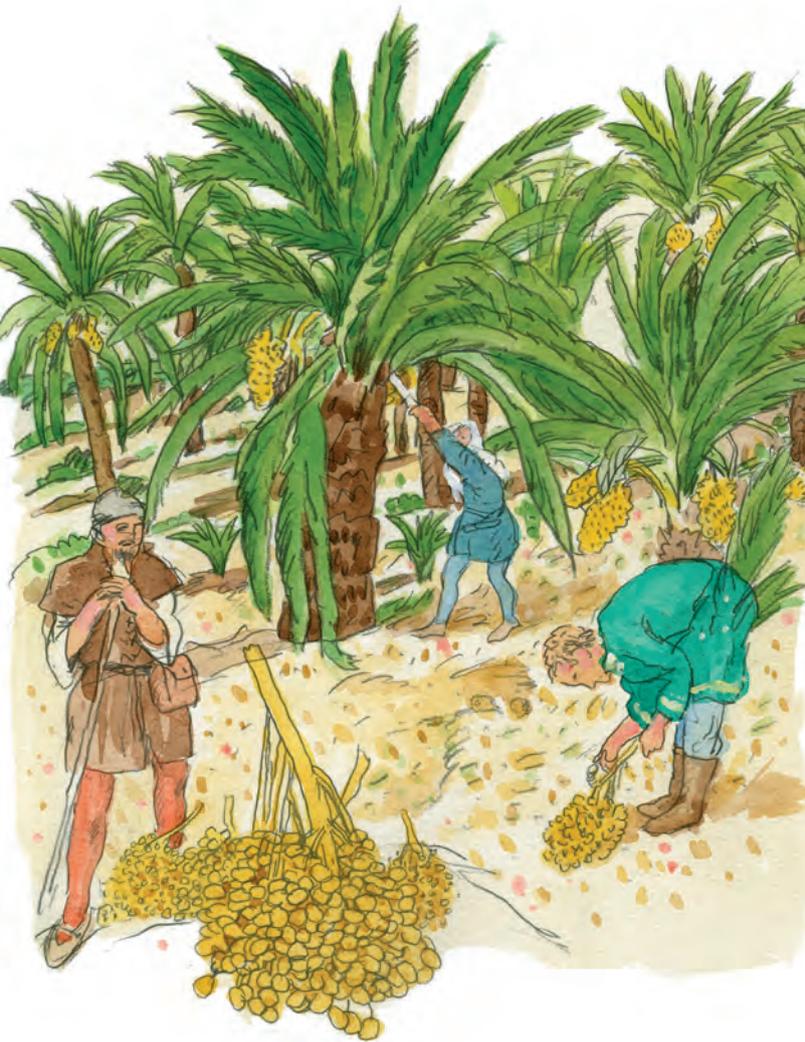


JULY AUGUST 2019

AramcoWorld





6 The Canary Islands Connection

Written by Gary Paul Nabhan
 Illustrated by Norman MacDonald

Since antiquity, foods and food cultures have migrated from the Middle East westward as far as the Canary Islands. After 1492 the Canaries became a leading port of departure to the New World, and new research shows that Canarian culinary influences flowed particularly to the dry lands that today straddle the border between Mexico and the us. Those influences led to crops and livestock that have helped produce the region's distinctive cuisine today—from albóndigas and atoles to sopapillas and zalabias.



14 Kazakhstan's Golden Son

Written by Hal Foster
 Photographed by Seitok Moldokasymov

Working patiently in his family-run lab, Krym Altynbekov has restored and re-created chariots, saddles, weapons, tools and clothing unearthed over the past four decades, including the unnamed warrior dubbed “the Golden Man,” who has become a national symbol of the Central Asian nation’s nomad history. But “gold isn’t the treasure for us,” says Altynbekov’s daughter Elina. “It’s the information we obtain about our past.”

🌐 Online CLASSROOM GUIDE 🌐 2 FIRSTLOOK 🌐 4 FLAVORS

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We distribute *AramcoWorld* in print and online to increase cross-cultural understanding by broadening knowledge of the histories, cultures and geography of the Arab and Muslim worlds and their global connections.

Front Cover: Created by his sculptor godson and erected in 1977 by “a grateful city,” a plaque in Boston depicts Lebanese American writer and artist Kahlil Gibran and commends the “greater harmony” and “strengthened universality of spirit” he fostered. Photo by Kevin Bubriski.

Back Cover: Built into the cliff beneath Amedi, the Mosul Gate is the only historic entrance to the citadel that remains intact today. Photo by George Azar.



20 Amedi: Citadel of Culture

Written by **Matthew Teller**
Photographed by **George Azar**

Perched on a table-topped, naturally defensive crag overlooking green valleys in Iraq’s rugged north, the town of Amedi is one of what were once nearly 200 historic citadels and one of the most intact. Experts at home and abroad are pitching in to meet the town’s newest challenge: preserving the history that remains and, at the same time, turning it into a much-needed economic engine.

28 The Borderless World of Kahlil Gibran

Written by **Piney Kesting**
Photographed by **Kevin Bubriski**

Arriving penniless in Boston from Lebanon, Gibran Khalil Gibran—whose name a schoolteacher misspelled “Kahlil”—grew up to become one of the early 20th century’s most inspiring writers. The story of his against-the-odds rise is one of not only pluck and talent, but also luck and mentors, whose little-known stories are shedding new light on the complex biography of a man whose poetry and prose speak today as richly as nearly a century ago.

 **38 REVIEWS**  **40 EVENTS**

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I love walking the beach in Casablanca. Earlier this year I saw a dog digging a hole into the sand. The scene grabbed my attention, and I began to take a couple of pictures. When a boy rode up on a horse behind me to watch what was happening, I quickly took three steps back, placing the horse in the left of the frame, and made this photograph. To me this photo represents Casablanca—chaotic yet organized at the same time. It is part of my series “Casablanca Not the Movie,” which I began in 2014 as a love letter to the city that has inspired me the most. The group of images show a truthful representation of Casablanca that you won’t get from Hollywood: one of diverse cultures, people, traditions and urban development.

—“Yoriyas” Yassine Alaoui Ismaili

www.yoriyas.com

 @yoriyas



FIRSTLOOK

"Casablanca Not the Movie"

*Photograph by
"Yoriyas" Yassine Alaoui Ismaili*





FLAVORS

Reem's Muhammara

Recipe by
Reem Assil

Photograph courtesy
Ricarius Photography

Muhammara is my homecoming. I discovered this addicting dip as an adult and fell in love with it when I went back to Syria in 2010.

At the time I was soul-searching in my father's homeland and started to open my eyes to all the richness of my Syrian identity, particularly through the food and hospitality. Up until then I was only exposed to my mother's Lebanese and Palestinian cooking and wasn't as well-versed in Syrian food. In every home in Syria, my family would serve multiple mezze dips with dinner, and muhammara was always a centerpiece. It has the perfect combination of tangy, nutty and spicy flavors. And it looks beautiful on a dinner spread. I began to feature it at my farmers' markets and catering, and it became an instant hit. Now it is a staple in my restaurant and represents my Syrian pride. Look for Aleppo pepper and pomegranate molasses in Middle Eastern or specialty grocery stores. Halve or double this recipe to suit your needs. Serve with your favorite bread.

(Makes 4 cups)

2½ lb (1.2 kg) red bell peppers (7 large)

2½ c (9 oz / 250 g) walnut halves

1 c (2 oz / 60 g) panko breadcrumbs

2 T pomegranate molasses

1 T lemon juice

3–4 garlic cloves

1 t cumin

1 T Aleppo pepper flakes

1 t salt

⅓ c (75 ml) extra virgin olive oil

Pomegranate seeds, walnuts or chopped parsley, to garnish (optional)

Preheat your oven to 400°F (200°C). Line a baking sheet with parchment paper and place the peppers on it. Roast until the skins are charred, about 30 minutes, turning them over once or twice. Transfer to a sealable bag, or a bowl covered with plastic wrap, and set aside until cool enough to handle. Tear them open, remove the stem and seeds and peel the skins.

Working in batches, if necessary, combine the walnuts and breadcrumbs in a food processor and process to a cornmeal-like texture. Add the roasted peppers, pomegranate molasses, lemon juice, garlic, cumin, Aleppo pepper and salt. Pulse until smooth, turning off the machine and scraping down the sides of the bowl from time to time.

With the processor running, slowly add the olive oil and blend until the oil is completely incorporated. Taste and add salt if needed.

Garnish as desired and serve chilled or at room temperature.

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The Immigrant Cookbook

Leyla Moushabeck, ed.
2018, Interlink Books,
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www.interlinkbooks.com.



Reem Assil is the chef and founder of Reem's in Oakland, California. Reem's was founded with a passion for the flavors of Arab street-corner bakeries and the vibrant communities where they're located. Growing up in a Palestinian Syrian household, Reem was surrounded by the aromas and tastes of food from her homeland and the connections they evoked of her heritage, family and community. Before dedicating herself to a culinary career, Reem worked for a decade as a community and labor organizer and now brings the warmth of community to all her events. In 2017 she graduated from La Cocina, a competitive food business incubator program focusing on immigrant women.

JUNG FITZPATRICK PHOTOGRAPHY



THE Canary Islands



Mission Figs



Prickly pear/Indian fig

CONNECTION

WRITTEN BY **Gary Paul Nabhan** | ILLUSTRATED BY **Norman MacDonald**



I'm surrounded by date palms. Around them run dry watercourses that look like ones I find not far from my home in Tucson, Arizona. The traditional architecture in town would not be out of place in Tucson, either—or almost anywhere from southern Spain to Mexico and up into the southwest us. The fruit trees and grapevines hark back even further, to traditions of my ancestors from Syria and Lebanon. Perhaps this is what a visit to the Canary Islands is really all about. Indeed, much of what is cultivated on this Spanish archipelago of seven volcanic, mostly undersea mountains can be traced back to crops that came aboard ships from as far away as Phoenicia, in the eastern Mediterranean, as far back to the eighth century BCE.

But no less striking are the echoes here of what went westward, to the areas I've known for most of my adult life in the arid New World landscapes of the "desert borderlands" of the Southwestern us and northern Mexico. This includes, on the us side, Southern California, Arizona, New Mexico, southern Colorado and West Texas; on the Mexican side, the states of Baja California, Sonora and Chihuahua; and cities from Ensenada to San Antonio.

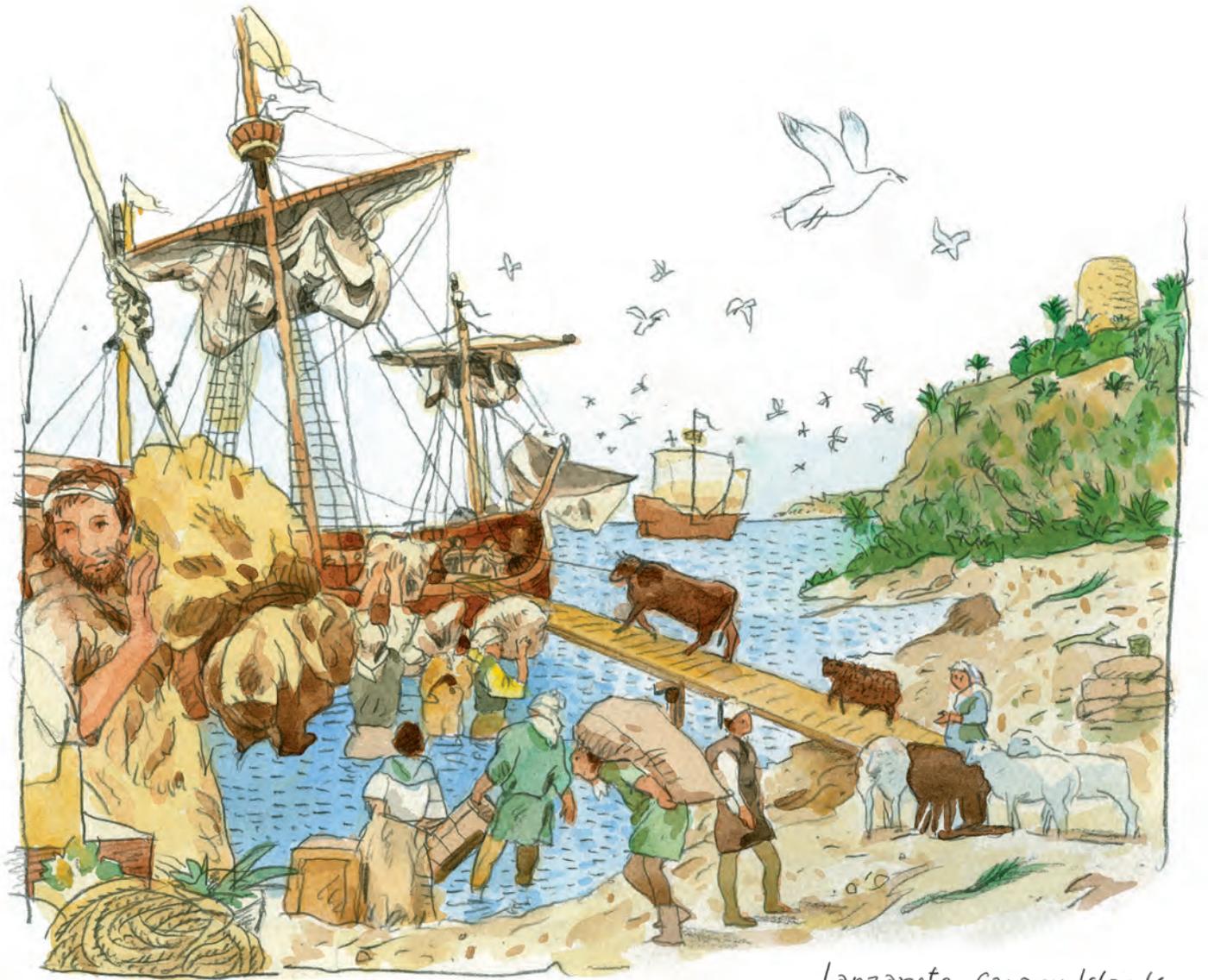
For more than a dozen years, I have been tracing agricultural and culinary influences shared among communities from the Levant to North Africa and southern Spain, to the Canary Islands, to Mexico and the vast North American desert-borderlands region. The journey makes me think of a string of beads, each distinct, but reflecting one another along a common chain.

Here in these islands I can smell the same flowers—orange

blossoms, rose and jasmine—in both the gardens and patios of Córdoba in Spain, and those of my uncles and aunts in Lebanon's semiarid Bekaa Valley. I can taste the same foods, literally from A to Z: meatballs spiced with parsley, onion and garlic called *albóndigas*; eggplants stuffed with fruits or ground meats called *berenjena rellenas*, swimming in creamy walnut sauce topped with pomegranate seeds; a kind of biscuit dusted with powdered sugar and laced with the bite of anise called *biscochitos*. There are *callos* of tripe sautéed with chickpeas; *empanadas* stuffed with chard or spinach; kebabs, or *asados*, marinated in spices and olive oil, strung on skewers and grilled, and fritters doused in orange syrup or honey called *zalabias*.

I can see prickly pear cacti and towering, flowering stalks of agaves such as sisal. I can taste the cactus juices, feel the texture of rich tomato pastes and revel in the heat of chili peppers





Lanzarote, Canary Islands

stuffed with cheeses. All these and more were once agricultural passengers from the Americas transplanted to the Canaries and far beyond to a world eager for novelty and nutrition. It was the eastbound leg of what is known historically as the Columbian Exchange, which began with the Spanish arrival in the West Indies more than 500 years ago.

Of the many questions that swirl around in my head, there is just one really big one: How did people of Arab ancestry—people of all faiths and geographical origins who may claim the name, in whole or in part—come to play roles in shaping what grows today in the region that includes Tucson, where I live? And how does that affect what I eat?

To deepen my search, I head for the Canaries, home of important, but not always well-known, “bridges” between Old and New Worlds. I pay a visit to noted Spanish- and Arabic-speaking agricultural ecologist Jaime Gil, and he guides me to Lanzarote, the easternmost island, which once had the largest population of people the Spanish referred to as *Moriscos*.

The austere lands of the Sonoran Highlands may have been attractive also because they likely reminded the newcomers of the semiarid lands of al-Andalus.

Like many such ethnonyms, *Morisco* meant somewhat different things over different times and places. Most frequently it meant Muslims of North African or Iberian descent who, in the wake of the Spanish bans on Islam, Judaism and Protestantism from the late 15th and well into the 17th centuries, either converted or, under duress, outwardly professed conversion to Christianity. Gil cautions me that when it comes to the agricultural and culinary links between the Middle East and the Canaries, I

could be looking at a dense web of relations over a far greater period—nearly 3,000 years.

To show the extent of the Canaries as a kind of western outpost of even the

earliest Mediterranean maritime networks, Gil points me to the work of Canarian archeologist A. José Farrujia de la Rosa, an expert in prehistory at the Universidad de La Laguna in Spain. Farrujia and his team have found sixth-century-BCE inscriptions in the Canary Islands with Libyco-Berber characters identical to those that have been found in Morocco.

Gil also explains that just as the term *Morisco* has carried

diverse meanings, so too has *Converso*, which was used to identify Sephardic Jews as well as Protestants who had to renounce or conceal their faith from Spanish authorities.

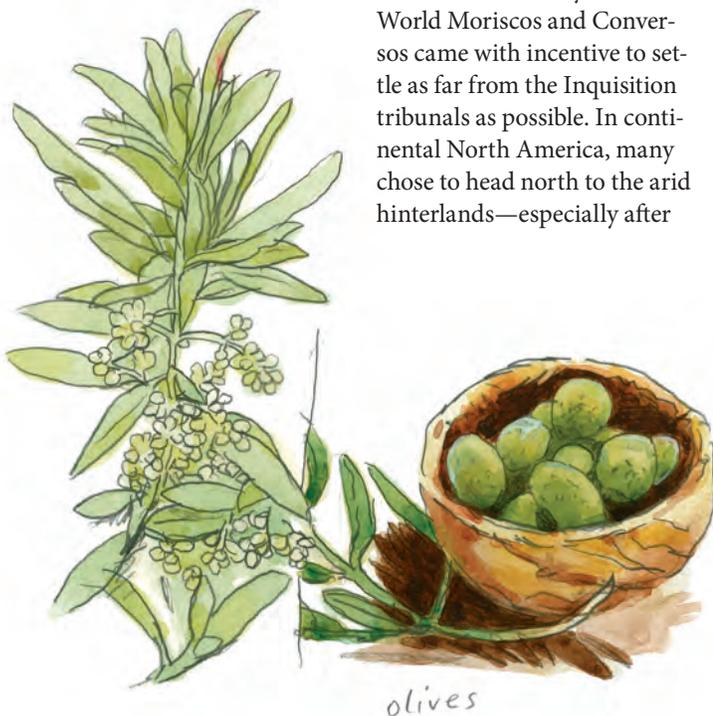
While the number of members of each faith affected by Spain's religious edicts are unknown, historians generally agree it is in the hundreds of thousands for both Moriscos and Conversos. Demographic historian Trevor Dadson and ethnohistorian Karoline Cook have explained that the numbers are difficult to assess because emigrants frequently either concealed their background in official port-of-embarkation records or avoided documentation altogether. To the Canaries, however, Dadson estimates that the ratio of Morisco to Converso emigrants—refugees—may have been as high as 10 to one.

Though ruled by Spain then as now, the Canaries for a while lay at a relatively safe remove from both the Crown and the Inquisition, Dadson says. But eventually, with the immigrants came social and economic tensions. Dadson notes that the Moriscos who had lived long in the Canaries “were anxious that the Inquisition activity directed against the Granada Moriscos did not touch them.”

Adding to the complexity, many of the Muslims who departed Spain for North Africa—and the kingdoms and principalities of Morocco in particular—found less than warm welcomes. This too stimulated migrations, both westward to the Canaries and to numerous other locations, and many people also found ways to sneak back into mainland Spain. Canarian historian Luis Alberto Anaya Hernández estimates that as much as 14 percent of the half-million Morisco refugees from the Spanish mainland later fled from Morocco.

While the Canary Islands at first offered a haven, the islands soon became overpopulated. Then the reach of the Inquisition spread, and the Crown's price for an official name-change—a symbolic ritual called “blood cleansing” that was a tantamount profession of Catholicism—became out of reach for both native-born Canarians and immigrant Moriscos. A voyage to the *terra incognita*—the West Indies and the Americas—became more attractive, despite the risks and uncertainties.

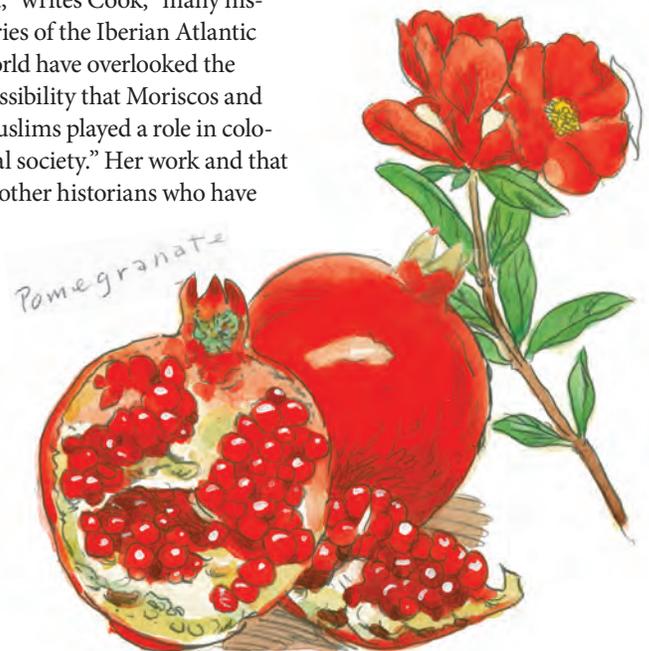
It was in this way that New World Moriscos and Conversos came with incentive to settle as far from the Inquisition tribunals as possible. In continental North America, many chose to head north to the arid hinterlands—especially after

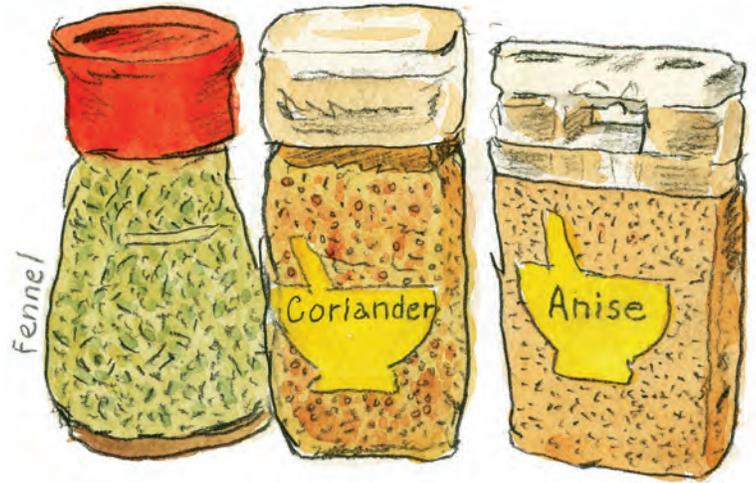


Criollo Corriente from Sonora and Chihuahua, Mexico and Arizona

the establishment in 1610 of the Inquisitional Court in Mexico City. The austere lands of the Sonoran Highlands may have also been attractive because they likely reminded the newcomers of the semiarid lands of al-Andalus, as the parts of southern Spain under Muslim rule were called. (Catholic colonists and immigrants recognized this too about the desert-borderlands region: In the 18th century, Jesuit priest Ignaz Pfeffercorn wrote of welcoming Europeans and North Africans alike to “an altogether blessed country” that he favorably compared to the landscapes of Spain.)

“Due to [formal] prohibitions on Moriscos’ and Muslims’ emigration to Spanish America,” writes Cook, “many histories of the Iberian Atlantic world have overlooked the possibility that Moriscos and Muslims played a role in colonial society.” Her work and that of other historians who have





researched primary records, including census documents and church archives from settlements, towns and cities on both sides of the Atlantic now allow us to trace the arrivals of nearly 800 Canary-born colonists—including descendants of both Muslim and Jewish families—who settled in the desert borderlands. They set up residence in places we now know well: Tucson; San Antonio; St. Augustine; and Santa Fe, New Mexico, among others.

In these remote outposts, it seems that only a few were in fact arrested by Spanish authorities and charged with blasphemy, heresy or adherence to non-Christian food taboos and forced to travel to Mexico City for interrogation. Fewer still, it appears, were brought to trial, and yet even fewer were convicted, imprisoned or executed.

Still, it comes as no surprise that settlers of Morisco or

Converso backgrounds were reluctant to identify as such. Nonetheless, there is evidence they were aware of each other, and this awareness likely contributed to continuity in the trade and production of heritage agriculture and foodstuffs—many of which they also had in common with Catholic settlers.

Records point to what scholars are coming to see as a practice by both Moriscos and Conversos to adopt new surnames that referenced animals or plants, and trees in particular. This worked as a kind of code. Research into the founding families of Tucson, Santa Fe, San Antonio and Monterrey, Nuevo León, show a surprising number of these “floral” and “faunal” names: Aguilar, Alicante, de la Garza, de León, Cabrera, Castañeda, Granada, Martinez, Manzanares, Mora, Olivo, Olivera, Palma, Robles, Romero, Rosa, Uvedo and so on. All are names that continue to abound throughout the region today as a kind of linguistic link to the agricultural and culinary heritages of crops, fruits, nuts and game that flavor the culture of this part of the Americas.

Fittingly, those who chose to adopt such surnames appear to be among those who helped introduce and adapt what number



Navajo-churro sheep colours: black, brown(s) spotted, white.



10 Culinary Travelers

What I find most intriguing (and delicious!) are traditional foods of Arab origin that have been shared and variously adopted among the *mestizo* traditions of Andalusians, Isleños, Maghrebians and residents of the North American desert borderlands.

Name in us-Mexico desert borderlands today	Description	Name in Canary Islands	Name in al-Andalus (Muslim Spain)	Name in Arabic or Berber
alfajor	almond-pureed, marzipan-like confectionery	alfajor	alajú, alfaxur	al-hasuú, alajú
albóndiga	meatballs with sauce	albóndiga en salsa	al-bóndiga	al-bunduq, al-bundiqa
cazuela, cocido	baked casserole of grains, legumes and vegetables	cazuela, puchero canarioc	berza gaditana, cocido, puchero	fatteh, moji
sopa de pan/ capirotada de la vigilia	bread pudding with fruits, nuts & cream	budín de pan sabor canario	pudín a la española, sopa de pan	jūdhāb/asyūtiyyah
mole negro, adobo, recaudo, salsa macha	chile and savory spice paste with ground nuts or oilseeds	mojo	harisa, harissa	muhamara
carne machaca	dried and jerked meat, rehydrated with greens and vegetables	carne mechuca	cecina de vaca	naqaddad, yuqaddad
menudo	tripe and garbanzo (or hominy stew)	callos	qalias, qallos	qalyas
ceviche	whitefish marinated in citrus juice or vinegar	escabeche (probable)	(e)sicbaj	sikbāj
gazpacho	bread soup with almonds, garlic and cucumber	gazpacho	gazpacho blanco, maimones	tharid, mukarrarah
buñuelo sopapilla	fritter in a honey or bitter orange sauce	zulubia, buñuelo	zlebia, zulubia	zalabia

more than 50 kinds of Old World crops and animals. Of course, some of these terms have much older origins, harkening back to millennia of interactions among the civilizations joined by the long shores of the Mediterranean. Some of the words come from Hispanicized Arabic or Berber-influenced Arabic, while other words have been adapted from other languages including Persian, Dravidian and Sanskrit.

Today we can make food-historical links, because by the time they arrived, these food crops were mostly called by names that were already in use in Iberia, and often also in the Canaries.

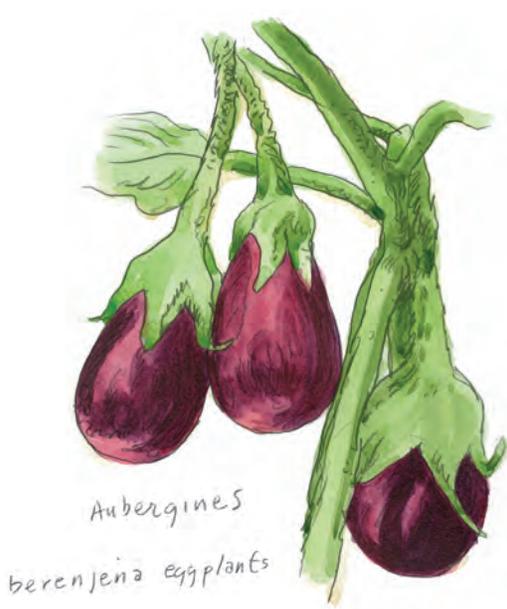
Along with Middle Eastern fruit crops like date palms—which arrived in Mexico as early as the 1530s—there came also figs, pomegranates, olives and grapes; there came spices like anise, coriander, cumin, fennel and safflower. Settlers essentially reconstructed the oases of their former homelands, using irrigation systems of *qanats* and *acequias* as models to better farm crops they knew best how to farm. They complemented these with

plantings learned from Native American tribes, most famously squashes, beans, peppers and maize.

Recently, historians have received help from geneticists in tracing the origins of crop and livestock species. The Mission olive, a cultivar of *Olea europea*, prized in Arizona and the Californias, is closely related to both the Andalusian variety, Cañivano Negro, and its Moroccan counterpart, Picholine Marroquine. The Mission grape, *Vitis vinifera*, is closely identified with a dark red grape of the Canary Islands, Listán Prieto, which was formerly grown also on the Iberian Peninsula. The closest variety to the Mission fig, a cultivar of *Ficus carica*, is the Albacor or Coll de Dama Negra, which is still found on the southern Spanish coast and in the Canaries.

With regard to livestock, the Churra Libranza sheep of southern Spain is a likely precursor to the Navajo-Churro still valued for its two-layered wool. (The other potential source is a Churra breed from near Basque country in northwestern Spain.) The Criollo Corriente cattle (*Bos taurus*) of the borderlands comes from a blend of ancient livestock breeds





Aubergines
berenjena eggplants



almond paste cookies



Mission
grapes

that go back to North Africa, particularly Morocco, the southern Iberian Peninsula and the Canaries.

Back on the island of Tenerife in the Canaries, where I see how Listán Prieto, Listán Negro and Listán Blanco grapes, all precursors of Mission grapes, remain widely grown, Gil directs me to one of the island's historic vineyards. This one is owned by the Núñez Garcia family, and they show me their use of a very old cultivation method: Their vines grow horizontally, just above

the ground, on trunks of rope three to five meters long, not trellised upward as in most modern vineyards. This is the very same grapevine style I had encountered both in Baja California Sur, at Misión San Francisco Javier, more than 300 years after it was introduced there, as well as in the Bekaa Valley of Lebanon.

Such discoveries of shared farming and food heritages, both large and small, now also have support on a global scale through the UNESCO Cities of Gastronomy, which is part of

Talking Gastronomy

AramcoWorld spoke with chef and Latin-cuisine specialist Elizabeth Johnson, founder of the UNESCO-recognized San Antonio City of Gastronomy, and archeologist Jonathan Mabry, cofounder and president of the Tucson City of Gastronomy.

What does it mean to be a UNESCO City of Gastronomy?

Johnson: As a chef, and as somebody who is deeply interested in our history and our culture, I believe that food tells a story. I believe that what you eat tells a story about who you are and the people that you descend from. It talks about trade. It talks about wars. It talks about immigration. These are all aspects that I believe are alive in the plates of food that we eat on a daily basis. So it means that we are now expected to use food and culture as that medium for living cultural heritage to affect change in our city. It connects all the things that touch and affect food and culture with sustainability initiatives, groups of people as well as our history and of course our future.

Mabry: I'm an archeologist, and the excavations that I directed were some of the projects that demonstrated Tucson's 4,000 years of agricultural history. Our goal is to use this designation [as a City of Gastronomy] to increase recognition of our region's agricultural heritage, food traditions and culinary distinctiveness.

What does recent scholarship documenting the diversity of people who came to the borderlands region in the colonial era, especially via the Canary Islands, mean to the food histories of your cities?

Mabry: I would say that Tucson's cuisine is culturally layered. The foods that were introduced during the Spanish colonial period were transformative. The winter wheat, the cattle, the different varieties of citrus, and a whole host of other Old World plants that were introduced by the earliest missionaries and colonists complemented the native crops. So in addition to 4,000 years of native crops, we have a 300-year tradition of orchards and vineyards, and cattle ranching layered on top of that.

Johnson: One of the things that kept people here was our source of water. It basically created a breadbasket, if you will, in a semi-arid landscape. Our river was the reason that the Spanish decided to come here. It's the reason the Canary Islanders came and established the first civil form of government here.

Mabry: An interesting difference between San Antonio and Tucson is the varieties of fruit trees, the olives, the citrus, the apricots and a whole host of other varieties that were introduced to Tucson's region by those first colonists, including immigrants from the Canary Islands. Heirloom varieties of trees that we identified trace back to those trees introduced during the Spanish colonial period, including a number of varieties that Gary [Paul Nabhan] has determined came from the Canary Islands.

Johnson: Many have written about our iconic dish called chile con carne. People claim it's a fusion between [Spanish and] our native indigenous cultures, which would have prepared wild meats with *chile pequin* and made like a stew out of them with hot rocks. Also if you look at our Tex-Mex cuisine, cumin is king. So cumin is probably one of the most important parts of our seasoning profile, and it's undeniably a link to our Canary Island heritage.



San Antonio, Texas

the greater Creative Cities Network program. Out of 26 cities worldwide, three in the desert borderlands now belong to the gastronomical network—Tucson, San Antonio and Ensenada—and Santa Fe participates as a UNESCO Creative City.

These affiliations are putting contemporary chefs and food historians in closer contact both with their own histories and

with one another. Cultural-culinary creatives from Spain, Lebanon, Turkey and Iran are all engaging with North American counterparts.

And for me now, whether I am biting into a hot empanada in Tucson, savoring grapes in the Canaries or sitting down to lunch on my cousins' farms in Lebanon, I feel more connected than ever along this necklace of history strung across a hemisphere. 🌐



Gary Paul Nabhan (garynabhan.com) is a Lebanese American writer, agricultural ecologist and ethnobotanist who lives in the Mexico-us borderlands. He has been honored with a MacArthur Fellowship, the Vavilov Medal for plant exploration, and lifetime achievement awards from several professional societies. He has authored or edited more than 30 books as well as numerous scholarly and popular articles. **Norman MacDonald** (macdonaldart.net) has been a frequent contributor to *AramcoWorld* for more than 40 years. He lives in Amsterdam.



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Kazakhstan's GOLDEN SON

WRITTEN BY HAL FOSTER | PHOTOGRAPHED BY SEITEK MOLDOKASYMOV

Karym Altynbekov has been doing detective work for more than 40 years—but not to solve crimes.

The 65-year-old uses his forensic skills to preserve and reproduce archeological treasures in his homeland of Kazakhstan.

He has restored and replicated long-buried wooden chariots, gilded horse saddles of nobles, as well as the clothes, tools and ornaments of warriors and priestesses who lived as long as

2,700 years ago. One of his reproductions was the *Altyn Adam* (Golden Man), a sixth-century-BCE Saka warrior prince whose discovery in 1969 generated international headlines due to the armor of gold foil and ornamentation buried with him. Since then, the Golden Man has become Kazakhstan's most prominent national symbol after the *shangyrak*, the crown of the nomad's yurt.

The artifacts that Altynbekov preserves allow scholars to

Opposite: Krym Altynbekov points to what is left of an ancient saddle in his lab, the Scientific-Restoration Laboratory of the Island of Krym, which he founded on the outskirts of Almaty, Kazakhstan. The saddle is among thousands of fragile artifacts for which he and his team have developed relatively inexpensive techniques to preserve and reproduce. **Right:** In a burial site in West Kazakhstan, archeologists found fragments of a wooden comb buried some 2,500 years ago in the tomb of a priestess. Altynbekov's technology allowed a closer examination of the comb, which, reproduced **below**, shows carved details of two Persians in a chariot and a Saka warrior in front of a lone horse.

learn more about Kazakhstan's nomadic heritage. And the reproductions, which are major attractions at museums, provide windows into the past. His work has helped the country, independent since 1991, distinguish its own history from that of both the former Soviet Union and its Turkic neighbors in Central Asia.

All this takes place at Altynbekov's Scientific-Restoration Laboratory of the Island of Krym—a name, he explains, that is a not-so-subtle nod to the financial independence of the two-story lab, located in Kazakhstan's largest city, Almaty.

It functions as “kind of a small independent country, which conducts its own business,” Altynbekov says. It is also a family operation: The 15-person team includes Krym's twin daughters, Elina and Dana, as well as his wife, Saida. Together they have preserved thousands of artifacts large and small, mostly from Kazakhstan but also from around the world, much of it on contracts with museums and Kazakhstan's ministry of culture.

Some of the artifacts have been so badly decomposed, or in such danger of rapid deterioration when exposed to air, that Altynbekov developed new preservation techniques to save them—approaches he shares with experts from other countries.

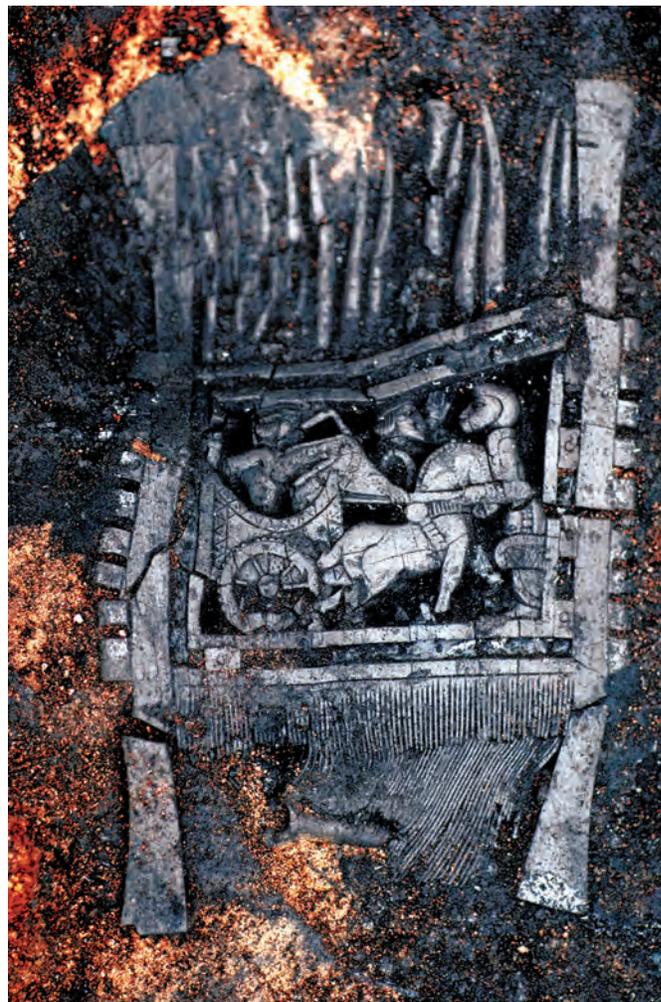
His dedication to his work and his preservation breakthroughs have earned him recognition at home and abroad, including from the Louvre in Paris and the State Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg.

Hermitage restorer Natalia Vasilyeva was so intrigued with his techniques she came to Almaty to learn them.

“Preserving the different materials found at archeological sites—wood, leather, tissue, bone—is very difficult,” Vasilyeva says. Altynbekov's team is so successful it can “recover archeological finds from the rot,” even after having been ravaged by bacteria, she says.

Viktor Novozhenov, an archeologist and historian at al-Farabi Kazakh National University in Almaty, teases that he has worked with Altynbekov “seemingly for centuries.” The family's preservation lab has been instrumental in shedding light on who Kazakhs are and where they come from, he says.

Restoration specialists face a major challenge in the preservation of wood, which can disintegrate when hit by air. So Altynbekov journeyed to Grenoble, France, to see how a preservation facility there did it. Its system of climate controls was far too expensive, Altynbekov reasoned, so—after six years of experimentation—he invented his own method. He soaks wood in alcohol and polyethylene glycol to strengthen its





Ryskali Baktygereevich, who has worked with Altynbekov and his family since the late 1980s, gently applies layers of varnish to a wooden pillow discovered in the burial grounds of Berel' Kurgan II.

structure. This preserves the wood without costing as much. Now other restoration facilities that can't afford the Grenoble approach adopt Altynbekov's.

Archeological finds with gold, jewels and other valuables may be the ones that capture the public's imagination, but as Altynbekov's daughter and protégé Elina points out, "gold isn't the treasure for us. It's the information we obtain about our past." To be sure, gold pieces provide insight into the past, but so do the wood, textiles and other materials they've found.

She and Dana, both 34, work alongside their father in the lab, while their mother, Saida, keeps the lab's records.

One reason the family loves the work is that trying to create a picture of a civilization from bits and pieces "is like doing detective work," Elina says. The payoff is in learning about "how our ancestors lived. Their artifacts show us their way of life, their myths, their

connections with other civilizations," she continues.

Typical projects, Altynbekov says, take up to six years, depending on the state of the artifacts when excavated.

The family's most recent projects have focused on preserving the belongings of two priestesses, one of whom was found in the province of Batys Qazaqstan (West Kazakhstan), bordering Russia, and the other in Shyghys Qazaqstan (East Kazakhstan), just west of Kazakhstan's border with China. As was the custom of the period, the priestesses, along with weapons, household objects and bodies of horses, had been interred in burial mounds known as kurgans.

The finery of the women's

clothes, jewelry and tools suggest they held high social positions. In addition to mediating with the gods, their roles likely included fortune telling, traditional medicine and varieties of scientific work.

The priestess of Batys Qazaqstan, whom Kazakhs refer to as *Altyn Khan-shayim* (Golden Princess), was



unearthed from the Tak-sai Kurgan complex near the Ural River, where she had laid buried for some 2,500 years. Immediately after her discovery in 2012, the Altynbekovs began work on preserving her belongings.

Archeologists found buried with her a wolf paw and a gold-dipped bracelet made of wolf teeth: Both objects together suggest the wolf served as a mythological symbol of her clan, most likely Sarmatian, a nomadic people.

But “the most interesting thing she had was a wooden comb,” says Elina. Its intricate carving offers insight into war chariots of the time and suggests interaction between her people and Persian warriors.

The carving consists of two men in a chariot—a driver and an archer—and a third warrior holding a horse. The clothes and headwear of the men in the chariot are Persian, while those of the man holding the horses are Saka—a nomadic group neighboring the Sarmatians to the east.

The Altynbekovs found the comb in pieces, with many parts missing. The family used graphics software to simulate what the missing portions would have looked like in order to create a faithful reproduction.



Elina Altynbekova works with her father, her twin sister, Dana, and their mother, Saida, to preserve her country's heritage. “Gold isn't the treasure for us,” Elina says. “It's the information we obtain about our past.”

and like her western counterpart probably dating to the fifth or fourth century BCE, she had been buried with a fern placed in her hand and other items that have led archeologists to think

she practiced traditional or mystical medicine. In the earth around her, archeologists discovered seeds of a number of plants in addition to grinding tools, all of which may have been items typical of a conjuring, healing priestess.

“This was her medical laboratory,” Elina says.

One reason the family loves the work is that trying to create a picture of a civilization from bits and pieces “is like doing detective work,” Elina says.

Altynbekov's knack for historical craftwork has prompted others “to ask that I make jewelry and other things for them,” or restore items, he says.

He proved so skilled at restoration that he enrolled as a young man at the Soviet Union's top trade school for the

Visitors to the National Museum of Kazakhstan in Nur-Sultan examine a horse saddle and pair of stirrups discovered in southwestern Kazakhstan and restored by Altynbekov and his team, who have helped Kazakhstan distinguish its culture from both its Turkic and Soviet neighbors.



work—the All-Union Scientific Research Institute for Restoration in Moscow.

One of his first projects was the high-profile Tsar's Village in Pushkin, just outside Leningrad, now Saint Petersburg. He has also helped restore historical treasures in Moscow and Yekaterinburg in Russia, and Sevastopol in Ukraine.

It was while Altynbekov was still in high school that archeologists unearthed Kazakhstan's most celebrated cultural treasure, the Golden Man, near Issyk, just outside Almaty, in 1969. Altynbekov was too young to become involved in preserving the original, which now stands in the Museum of Gold in Nur-Sultan. But he noticed later that the first reproduction of the Golden Man's golden raiment wasn't authentic.

"So in the 1990s my father decided to make his own version," says Dana.



He spent a lot of time backgrounding himself. He pored through books and archives, studied photos of the original and talked to the archeologists who took part in the discovery, she says.

When he finished the reproduction, the archeologists said that although it was not of pure gold, "my father's version was truest to the original," she says.

Altynbekov has made a number of copies since that first one. The others are in the Museum of the First President and in the Nazarbayev Center, both in Nur-Sultan, as well as in the UN headquarters in New York and other venues across the world.

One of the Altynbekovs' most heralded recent projects was the restoration of a glittering saddle found in the tomb of a noble at Berel', in eastern Kazakhstan's Altai Mountains.

To insure the best preservation effort possible, Altynbekov had the entire block of earth containing the saddle and part of

Above: A sculpture representing the *Altyn Adam* (Golden Man), a Saka warrior prince discovered in 1969, stands on top of a winged leopard to crown a column in Almaty's Independence Square. In the early 1990s, Altynbekov's lab helped reconstruct a more authentic version of the Golden Man based on the armor, headgear and weaponry, all dressed in sheets of gold and other precious metals, with which he had been buried. **Lower:** Burial mounds like this one at Issyk Kurgan just outside Almaty can be found as far west as Poland and as far east as southern Siberia.





One of the 13 horses found at Berel' Kurgan II in the Altai Mountains in East Kazakhstan wears a mask reproduced by Krym and his team, a pair of horns (or antlers) and a bridle with lotus motifs, all of which provide a glimpse into the horse-dependent society of the steppe nomads some 2,500 years ago. **Right:** A reproduction of a fifth- or fourth-century-BCE Urzhar priestess, discovered in 2013 in East Kazakhstan's Urzhar River Valley, is on display in the National Museum of Kazakhstan. The fern and other items in her hands signify her social role.

the horse's remains lifted from the burial site. This approach, which he has used many times since, allowed his team to remove and preserve artifacts with the utmost care, resulting in minimal loss. It is one of his innovations that has been adopted by other preservationists.

"The first thing we did was make an X-ray and [3D] tomography analysis to see what was inside," Dana says.

As the team got to the saddle, they discovered it consisted of wood, leather and cloth that included depictions of a tiger attacking a deer and a mythological creature with horns similar to that of a mountain goat.

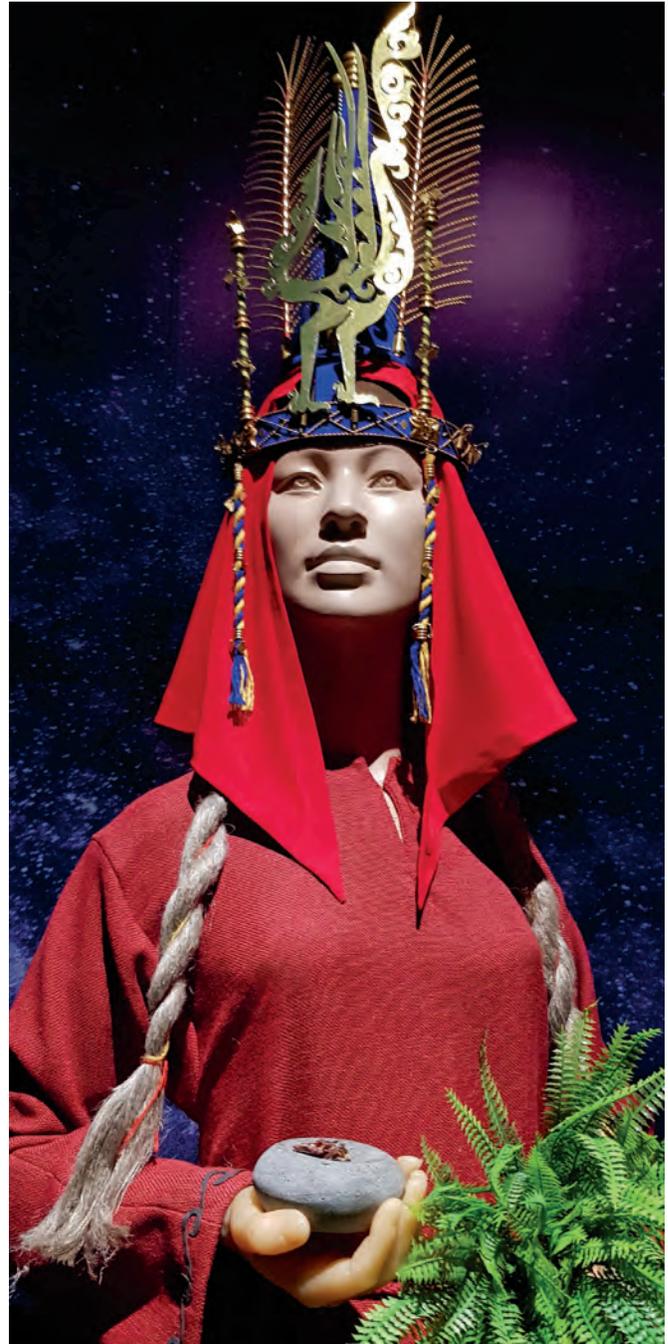
Afterward, the team began identifying and eliminating bacteria on the saddle—a process that took years. They then cleaned it, gently, meticulously. Their combination of preservation and reproduction has allowed the original saddle to be stored and displayed at room temperature.

It is a stunning artifact: The luxurious red cloth and ornamentation are unmistakable signs that it belonged to a leader.

The Altynbekovs have been so successful that many of the artifacts they've preserved or reproduced have been shown abroad.

In 2012, "Nomads and Networks," the first exhibition in the US to offer a full overview of early steppe nomadic culture, opened at New York University's Institute for the Study of the Ancient World. Other exhibitions in major cities across North America, Europe and Asia followed, and these led to collaborations and opportunities for Altynbekov to share his techniques.

While some scientists closely guard their formulae, "the Altynbekov family is always ready to share their experience and offer professional advice," says Vasilyeva, the Hermitage restorer.



One might not expect anything less from an *Altynbekov*—a name that translates loosely into English as "Honored Golden Son." 🌐



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AMEDI

CITADEL *of* CULTURE

Written by Matthew Teller | Photographed by George Azar



n the bazaar, Nuna is worried.

Nuna's shop is small. Just a few square meters, with an open front to the street. Shelves of wood and metal line the rough stone walls, some slumped at an angle, and all piled with neatly wound bolts of cloth. Spooled thread rests near at hand as Nuna Issa Nuna, a trim, twinkle-eyed figure in an ironed shirt and tweed jacket, sits in his red plastic chair against the wall. A white undershirt shows at his throat. Well-groomed white hair shows at his temples, beneath a vividly zig-zag-patterned skullcap. A sewing machine before him is threaded and ready to work. As voices

drift around us from the *Chaikhana Piramerd*, or Teahouse of the Old Men, just across the narrow street, Nuna shifts a pair of oversized tailor's scissors to one side and drops his hands into his lap.

"There was a time when all the villages around here, hundreds of them, only had this bazaar," he tells me before

embarking on a long story. He details his service as a soldier in the Iraqi army in 1949 fighting for Palestine, all the way to the awful day during war in 1961 when he had to flee the bazaar because a mob was on the rampage, setting fires. "I lost all my sewing machines," he says with a rueful smile.

Nuna returned seven years later and has been back in the bazaar ever since. But he tells me without rancor that "the taste of life has gone." The bazaar, he says, is not what it was. A new strip of shops near the town's entrance is siphoning business away. Lots of people stay down in the valley now and don't bother to come up to the town at all. What's next? Nuna isn't sure.

Amedi is changing.

To Iraqis, Amedi (which is the Kurdish name, stressed on the first syllable; its Arabic equivalent is al-Amadiya) is as familiar as Mount Rushmore or Niagara Falls might be to Americans. Located in the

Kurdistan region in the far north of Iraq, barely 15 kilometers from the border with Turkey, the town draws visitors all summer long—partly for its history but mainly for its natural beauty. Amedi sits 1,400 meters above sea level in a landscape of high mountains and rushing waterfalls. When the rest of Iraq swelters, Amedi keeps cool. People come from Baghdad, Basra and further afield to draw breath, relax and picnic beside flowing water.

If you approach, as most visitors do, on the narrow road that clings to the contours of the foothills, passing through sunlit villages of farms and family commerce, past forests and fruit orchards and the now-empty mountain palace of Iraq's boy-king Faisal II (1935–58), you're unlikely to forget your first glimpse of Amedi. Like a ship, this town of only 4,000 rides above the valley atop its own flat-topped crag—a sheer-sided mesa marooned 400 meters above a floor of green, its elliptical surface tilted toward the road as if to show off its best aspect to newcomers. At its back to the north, Amedi has the barrier of the Mateen range, which crests at 3,200 meters on the Turkish border. In front to the south, across the rumpled, 10-kilometer-wide Sopna valley, watered by runoff streams, looms the wall of the Gara mountains, almost as high.

Today it's Amedi's setting that draws visitors, who tend to pay less attention to the town itself than to the cluster of mountain resorts nearby, particularly Sulav, a thread of gaudy restaurants and snack outlets that coils between waterfalls at the foot of Amedi's mesa. But before the age of tourism, it was Amedi itself—and the appeal of its stupendous, easily defensible location—that drew attention. The first mention in the historical record comes when an Assyrian army captured the rock in the ninth century

BCE. That implies the site had already been fortified, but by whom? The Assyrians recorded the name of the place as Amadi or Amedi. To many historians, that suggests a link with the Medes, a confederation of tribes from northwestern Iran, though hard evidence is so far lacking.

The Medes eventually took—or retook—Amedi, and developed it into the second city of their empire. The Parthians were next, venturing into these mountains some 2,000 years ago from their power-base farther east in Iran. A larger city might have retained evidence of the long periods of Median and Parthian rule—but in tiny Amedi, restricted

Amedi is no museum piece: cafés, boutiques, groceries and offices crowd the main streets.

to a single square kilometer on the surface of its mesa, space has always been at a premium, and little quarter has been given to holding onto remnants of the past for their own sake.

This has implications for our own time: Building for today has always won out over the preservation of yesterday. If physical evidence of Amedi's long history is not to be lost, intervention is becoming imperative.

Amedi is no museum piece: it is alive with cafés, boutiques and offices, animated by flows of schoolchildren and mechanics, shopkeepers and students. But signs of the past are all about if you know where to look. At the southwestern edge of Amedi's mountain, carved into cliffs that gaze out over the Sopna valley, buttressing modern houses above, you can still see images of Parthian (or perhaps slightly later, but still pre-Islamic, Sasanian) soldiers, sculpted into niches in the rock. They are double life size, armed and striding in victory—but also vulnerable, unprotected from the elements and, as a consequence, heavily eroded.

To see them, you must walk out of Amedi through the Mosul Gate, a fortified portal of arched stonework at the top of the

Men gather daily for tea, cigarettes and the news of the day at Amedi's *Chaikhana Piramerd*, Teahouse of the Old Men. **Opposite:** Situated atop a mesa 1,400 meters above sea level in Iraqi Kurdistan, Amedi and its environs are popular tourist destinations both for cultural heritage and the cool summertime climate.





A man enters Amedi through its ancient Mosul Gate, the city's sole surviving historic portal, after climbing the steep and rocky footpath that leads up to the citadel from the valley.

steep, twisting footpath down to the valley. This is the only one of Amedi's ancient gates to survive, on the southwestern flank of the mesa facing toward the largest city in the area, Mosul, 90 kilometers away. Carved overhead with wolf-headed serpents, images of the sun and booted warriors, the gateway—its walls an extension of the sheer mountain cliffs—forced invaders to make two steeply ascending, 90-degree turns to enter the city. Impregnability was virtually guaranteed.

Though partly destroyed in the 1970s and poorly rebuilt with blocks inserted higgledy-piggledy and carvings mismatched, the Mosul Gate symbolizes a cultural heritage that is growing in importance. The devastating social and cultural upheavals suffered by Iraq during this century and the last have helped spur widespread recognition of the value Iraqis of all backgrounds have long placed on their own heritage. In 2014 UNESCO inscribed the fortified and restored citadel of Iraqi Kurdistan's capital, Erbil, on its World Heritage Site list. That added fuel to multinational efforts to raise the profile of cultural heritage preservation across Iraq—particularly in Iraqi Kurdistan.

One example is the British government-funded Nahrein Network, an academic support body set up in 2017 to foster cooperation between Iraqi and British researchers. It is jointly run by teams at the University of Kurdistan Hewlêr in Erbil, University College London and Britain's Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. Similarly, Washington, D.C.'s Smithsonian Institution has been working since 2015 with the Erbil-based Iraqi Institute

for the Conservation of Antiquities and Heritage to develop workshops and professional courses for local heritage experts. The institute's director, Abdullah Khorsheed Qader, Ph.D., was instrumental in the restoration of the Erbil Citadel, and he remains closely involved with heritage issues across the country.

“Cultural heritage preservation is all about awareness and

After the Mosul Gate was partly destroyed in the 1970s, its carved features—wolf-headed serpents, the Sun and booted warriors—were mismatched in reconstruction.



Mountains tower over students walking to school in Amedi. Space is at a premium in the one-square-kilometer city, making the preservation of historic sites a challenge in the face of ongoing development.

education,” he tells me in the institute’s headquarters in downtown Erbil, a day before he is due to fly to Japan to speak at a conference on global concerns for cultural heritage.

“I know that my people need to be aware of what our heritage is. That depends on economic buoyancy, which depends on political stability.”

Amedi, according to Dr. Qader, is of “incalculable” value. “We had more than 200 citadels in Kurdistan. Most were destroyed, but Amedi kept its history *in situ*.”

That history comes to us today mainly from Amedi’s “golden age,” when for nearly 500 years this small mountaintop city was capital of the Bahdinan Emirate, one of a string of semi-independent principalities that threaded the mountains between Anatolia and Iran. Founded in 1376 and ruled by a succession of Kurdish nobles who claimed descent from the Abbasid caliphs of Baghdad, the emirate persisted right through to 1843.

“Amedi was the center ruling the whole area. The political and administrative position of the city was very high. This is an important part of our history, both Kurdish and Iraqi,” says Shireen Younus Ismael, Ph.D., a professor of spatial and urban planning at the University of Duhok.

“In many cities, urban expansion meant that the citadel became part of a bigger city, as in Erbil. But Amedi has kept its original characteristics. It has been used as a fortified citadel for the inhabitants right down to today. This makes it unique. It should be preserved,” she says.

Dr. Ismael’s involvement with Amedi extends back more than a decade. From 2006 to 2009, she presented Amedi as a case study in an international program run by Dortmund University, in Germany. Her often solo lobbying of authorities at regional and national levels, and her research into Amedi’s cultural significance, led in 2011 to UNESCO’s acceptance of Amedi on Iraq’s Tentative List of World Heritage Sites, a preliminary step toward full listing.

Since 2013 the World Monuments Fund (WMF), a New York-based nonprofit that works to preserve cultural heritage sites, has run training courses at the conservation institute in Erbil. Alessandra Peruzzetto, the WMF’s Middle East program specialist, credits her organization’s involvement to Dr. Ismael. “She gave a lecture in Duhok. Then we went to Amedi, and she took us around. Everything started from there.”

Through Peruzzetto, the WMF’s London office brought in Dr. Ismael as coordinator and consultant. “Shireen’s vision for Amedi became the WMF’s vision,” says Peruzzetto.

In 2016 the WMF nominated Amedi to its World Monuments Watch list, and last year the British government’s Cultural Protection Fund awarded the WMF £100,000 (\$127,000) to support its ongoing documentation of Amedi’s heritage. The European Union has also awarded educational grants.

“We, as the Kurdistan region, have been excluded from these [cultural conservation] activities for a long time,” says Dr. Ismael, whose 2014 doctorate was the first such advanced degree in conservation ever accredited in Kurdistan. “We have no sites



registered as a historic quarter or historic city. The lists deal with heritage as individual sites. But as professional conservationists, we look at each site in context, developing different strategies to manage the site in its surroundings.”

In Amedi that often comes down to a challenge faced around the world: how to marry conservation needs with the needs of the inhabitants.

“People need space, comfortable houses, infrastructure—but they also need work. They can use the potential the city has to create job opportunities,” Dr. Ismael says.

On a chilly morning in fall, the approach to Amedi winds from the rain-damp restaurants and souvenir displays of Sulav across a saddle to the base of the city’s eastern cliff. Here the stepped footpath of old has been swept away by almost a century of successively ambitious access schemes, culminating in an immaculately engineered and illuminated highway ramp opened in 2016. Cars and pedestrians now enter Amedi at a roundabout and follow the city’s only road, a 20th-century innovation that traces a broad, well-kept 1.8-kilometer oval around the mesa’s circumference.

The sense of civic responsibility is palpable. “Amedi is a city, but what does that mean? To be a city is in your mind. You need education, trade—and you must have culture,” says Sayyid Ibrahim, a store owner.



With a population of 4,000, Amedi is alive with shops, restaurants, cafés and neighborhoods. Younis Sadallah Younis has been the town's barber since 2011. Although he keeps up with sartorial trends, he says most of his customers tend to keep to traditional cuts.

But improving access has resulted in loss, notably that of the Zibar Gate, the cross-town twin to the Mosul Gate. (Zibar is a village east of Amedi.) Photographs from 1933 show an arched entryway of stone being demolished by a work crew before the first road was laid. You can stand today where the Zibar Gate once stood, on an exposed shoulder of the mountain, the remnants of the older, steeply sloping road at your feet. Behind you, what was once the main artery into the city is now an alleyway between houses, though the old geography is still discernible: The road from the Zibar Gate led straight to the mosque—whose stone minaret is in plain sight a few meters ahead—and from there continued as the bazaar street, which cuts diagonally across town to the Mosul Gate.



The minaret itself is one of Amedi's most prominent landmarks, 31 meters high and built around 450 years ago during the Bahdinan Emirate. Beside

“*We, as the Kurdistan region, have been excluded from these [cultural conservation] activities for a long time,*”

—Shireen Younus Ismael, Ph.D.

the Zibar Gate, and once bonded to it by stonework, stood the former political and administrative center of the city known as Emirate House. A two-story gubernatorial palace, it fell into ruin as Amedi's power waned in the 19th century. In the 1950s a school was built over the ruins, and more remnants were swept away in the 1970s—both political acts of cultural erasure by the Baghdad government of the time. All that survives, wedged between modern walls, is a single arch of stone, the old palace gate, carved overhead with an eagle and two snakes (or, some say, two dragons).

“You see the same creatures on gates in Baghdad, in Sinjar [west of Mosul], in Aleppo [in Syria],” says Dr. Qader. “The Kurds were connected. Amedi wasn't remote. It was all the same culture.”

But buildings are only part of Amedi's story. At least as important is the city's intangible heritage—and, specifically, its reputation for coexistence. Here, as in other cities across Kurdistan, people of different religions lived, worked, played and prayed side by side.

Today, Muslims are in a majority, but around a third of the district's population identifies as Christian: Amedi's 30-odd

Christian families still live and worship in what is known as the Christian quarter on the west side of town. For Shavin Ismael, librarian at the Amedi campus of the University of Duhok, this is a source of pride.

“You can't tell whether



a family is Christian or Muslim. Last month there was a Christian funeral, and three quarters of the mourners were Muslim,” she tells me.

Nearby, and behind the mosque’s towering minaret, extends a cluster of alleyways that long formed Amedi’s Jewish quarter. Jews have lived in Kurdistan perhaps since the time of Nebuchadnezzar, 2,600 years ago, and for centuries Amedi was a leading center of Jewish population. In the 12th and 13th centuries, the community supported two synagogues. Among the fig- and pomegranate-shaded lanes behind the mosque, it’s still possible to visit the tomb of Hazana, dedicated to a part-forgotten Jewish holy man of antiquity and now almost swamped by undergrowth. Kamiran Islam, in his 70s, lives in a house directly across from the tomb.

“I remember very well every Friday night the Jews came to pray here. I was a little boy. They asked us to light candles and gave us a coin or two,” he tells me.

Virtually all of Kurdistan’s Jews left *en masse* to Israel in the early 1950s. Controversy persists as to whether they left voluntarily or were forced out, but people in Amedi freely acknowledge that their departure tore a hole in the social fabric that has never been repaired. Many offer a positive communal memory of intermingling.

Amedi’s cultural mix “is lovely. It’s one of the points that attracted me to study the city,” Dr. Shireen Ismael says. But if no action is taken, she adds, “Amedi will lose its value and significance because the changes are so fast. Heritage is nonrenewable. When you’ve lost it, it’s gone.”

Those changes are social, including economic stagnation that has driven younger generations away, and also physical. Heritage properties survive, but new construction abounds, some of it unregulated.

New residential neighborhoods have been built beside Sulav to cope with overflow, but as Wan Ibrahim, a postgraduate architect whose family lists seven

“*Cultural heritage preservation is all about awareness and education.*”

—Abdullah Khorsheed Qader, Ph.D.



Part of Amedi’s cultural heritage lies in its food. In the city’s bazaar, jars of the sesame-seed paste tahini, for sale outside a shop, are a local specialty.

generations of residence in Amedi, points out, many houses function only as summer-vacation properties, their owners absent most of the year. According to Dr. Ismael’s statistics, of every 10 visitors to the area, nine stay in or near Sulav and never even once venture up the hill to engage firsthand with Amedi’s distinctive history. And dominating the hillside above Sulav, construction of a \$1.3-million hotel promises to tip the scales even further.

All this intensifies a sense of urgency. Peruzzetto of the WMF talks of a strengthening desire





Winding around the citadel's mesa in an immaculately graded and illuminated oval, a new road from the valley up into Amedi opened in 2016.

among municipal and regional authorities as well as townspeople for action. Ismail Mustafa Rasheed, governor of Amedi district, talks of “strategies of movement” already under way to address conservation. Dr. Ismael and her colleagues are working with the WMF to identify specific clusters of surviving heritage houses and parts of the bazaar, analyzing materials, designs and typologies of windows, doors and archways. They are bringing in local architects to sketch possible reconstructions.



“*Protecting our heritage is very important. But we need new buildings, new hotels and restaurants.*”

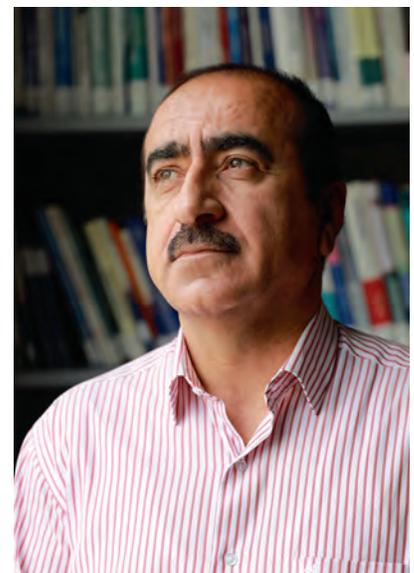
—Khalid Khalil Ahmad

There are proposals to continue excavation at the Qubahan School, a part-ruined complex below Amedi's

cliffs that was, for several centuries during the Bahdinan Emirate era, one of Kurdistan's leading scientific universities, linked with al-Azhar University in Cairo, and attracting students from around the Muslim world.

“*We don't want Amedi to become a museum. We grew up there. It's our city. How can we leave it?*”

—Shavin Ismael



There are, similarly, efforts to identify and encourage artisans in crafts, terracotta and the sesame-seed paste tahini, which is an Amedi speciality, in hopes they can help redirect the town's economy toward new, heritage-oriented markets.

For Najat Shaban Abdulla, elected last year to represent Amedi in the Kurdistan parliament, the trend of vacationing in Sulav while ignoring Amedi is a “disaster.”

“Cultural heritage is part of the economy now. All the focus is on Amedi. I ran on a platform of reducing unemployment.

Amid power lines and newer buildings, Amedi's landmark minaret stands 31 meters tall. It was erected in the 16th century during the Bahdinan Emirate.

Linking that with heritage conservation can create jobs for Amedi," she says.

Asking around in town produces mixed opinions. Khalid Khayat, a bank executive, welcomes the new energy. "Protecting our heritage is very important. But we need new buildings, new hotels and restaurants."

Shavin Ismael, the university librarian, is "very sad" that Amedi has lost its visual appeal to modern buildings, but she adds, "We don't want Amedi to become a museum. We grew up there. It's our city. How can we leave it?"

Yet college lecturer Halkawt Rajab Basso, the fourth generation of his family to live in Amedi, says he is ready to leave if that's what's needed to make space for restoration of the city's surviving architectural heritage.

But he may not have to.

Peruzzetto points to the experience of the Jordanian capital, Amman, where older, semiabandoned urban townhouses have been restored gradually as new generations realize the appeal of living or working in a heritage building. The WMF is talking to developers in Amedi about how to encourage traditional building techniques in ways that would both enhance existing heritage and encourage adaptive reuse of buildings.

Another idea transplants the Italian concept of an *albergo diffuso*, or "scattered hotel," in which abandoned mountain villages are transformed into vacation hubs that offer individual restored properties for lodging or tourism services.

While tourism could rise with such restorations, that is not the ultimate goal, she says. Nor is gentrification.

"The idea is to try and generate a sustainable income in Amedi that is not disruptive of the heritage and existing ambience of the town," she says. "Protection is the first objective."

Standing at sunset on the edge of Amedi's cliffs, with sawtooth

Two young men look over the scenic Sopna valley from a vantage point just inside the Mosul Gate.



mountains looming behind and mist clinging in the ravines all around, among the hundred generations who've stood on the same spot, the idea of protecting Amedi at this crucial turning point seems the least we can do. 🌍

The author thanks Laween Mhamad, Miran Dizayee and Birgit Ammann for their help in preparation of this article and offers gratitude in memoriam for the hospitality and conversation of tailor Nuna Issa Nuna (1931–2019).



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Photojournalist and filmmaker **George Azar** is author of *Palestine: A Photographic Journey* (University of California, 1991), coauthor of *Palestine: A Guide* (Interlink, 2005) and director of the films *Beirut Photographer* (2012) and *Gaza Fixer* (2007). He lives in Beirut.



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The
BORDERLESS
WORLDS
of
KAHILIL
GIBRAN

Written by Piney Kesting

Photographed by Kevin Bubriski

I believe in you, and I believe in your destiny.

I believe that you are contributors to this new civilization.

I believe that you have inherited from your forefathers an ancient dream, a song, a prophecy, which you can proudly lay as a gift of gratitude upon the lap of America.

I believe that you can say to the founders of this great nation:

‘Here I am, a youth, a young tree whose roots were plucked from the hills of Lebanon, yet I am deeply rooted here, and I would be fruitful.’

—*Kahlil Gibran*, excerpt from “To Young Americans of Syrian Origin,” 1926

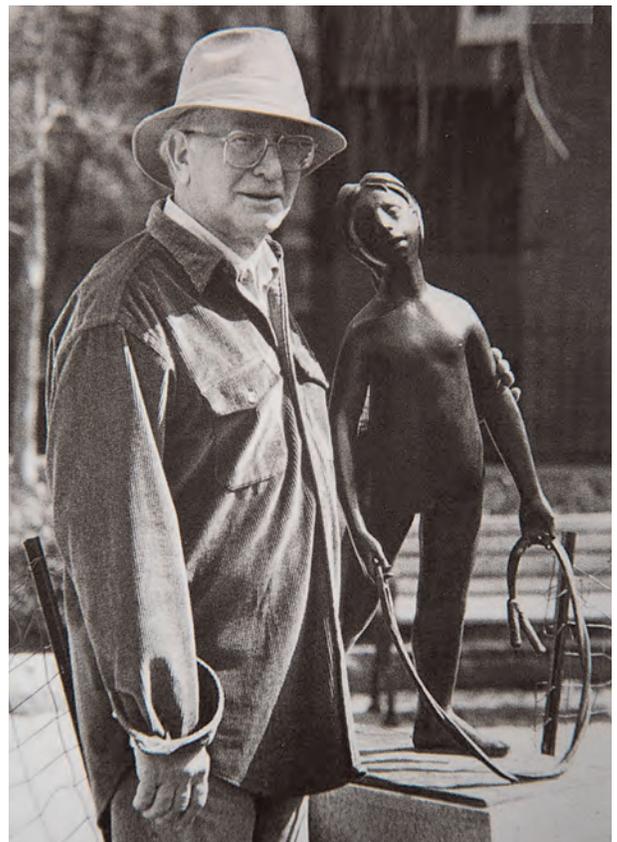




In 1895 the future author of this poem was a 12-year-old boy. With his mother and three siblings, he had recently emigrated from Lebanon to Boston, where they settled with relatives in the South Cove tenements. Left behind in their hometown of Bsharri was his father, whose conviction for embezzlement had thrust his already impoverished family into penury. They arrived with next to nothing. Yet Gibran Khalil Gibran brought with him something precious—an uncommon talent for drawing.

Against all odds, the young immigrant caught the attention of Florence Pierce, an art teacher at Denison House, an experimental settlement house designed to better the lives of immigrant and urban poor families. Impressed by his drawings, Pierce introduced him to well-connected mentors who nurtured and embraced him. These early connections, coupled with his exceptional talent as an artist and later as a writer, would lead him away from the tenements.

Jean Gibran poses in her Boston apartment alongside a bust of writer and artist Kahlil Gibran sculpted and cast by her late husband, sculptor Kahlil George Gibran, **lower**, who was a godson and namesake of Kahlil Gibran. The couple's research into Gibran's life story has led to three editions of biographies.





This portrait of 15-year-old Kahlil Gibran, left, was made in 1898 by one of his mentors, photographer and publisher Fred Holland Day. Lower: Gibran recalled his family's heritage in a painting of cedar trees in Bsharri, Lebanon.

“Kahlil Gibran was to some 60 million persons whose tongue is Arabic the genius of the age,” read the *New York Herald Tribune*. “But he was a man whose fame and influence spread far beyond the Near East.”

The world mourned the loss of its quiet, reflective, charismatic writer, whose spirituality and wisdom not only uplifted a generation emerging from the trauma of World War I, but have resonated ever since.

Searching for “The Real Story”

Jean and Kahlil set out in 1970 to reveal the many layers in the life of the young immigrant who emerged from Boston tenements to become an internationally acclaimed writer and artist. “I remember exactly when it began,” recalls Jean. “We were driving home from Provincetown, Massachusetts, when Kahlil said, ‘Let’s do something about Gibran,’ and he asked me if I wanted to help him.” This started a mission that occupied the couple for decades.

Kahlil George Gibran, who was born in 1922 and grew up to become a well-known sculptor, passed away in 2008. He was named by his godfather, a second cousin whom he referred to throughout his childhood as “Uncle Kahlil.” He and his family also lived in the same tenements where his godfather had grown up, and he, too, spent time at Denison House, where the elder Gibran’s artistic talent was first noticed in 1896. Memories of the godfather who had encouraged his own interest in art as a child kindled a lifelong desire to understand who Gibran was.

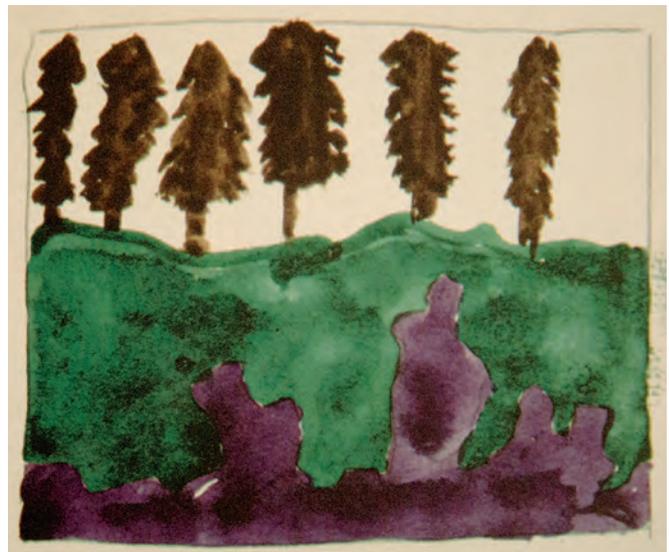
“We searched and searched for the real story,” explains Jean. She says that one of the main reasons her husband wanted to research Gibran’s life was because of the vast social difference between the tenements in the South End of Boston and the wealthy environment of the Back Bay, just a few streets away. “I remember my husband wondering how Gibran was able to

By the time he was an adult, Gibran was renowned among the literary and artistic circles of Boston’s Back Bay, and later of Paris and New York.

Jean Gibran and her late husband, Kahlil George Gibran, Gibran’s godson, were the first to document the multidimensional story of his life. Gibran’s experiences, observes Jean, across identities of nationality, class and language, along with his universally humanitarian point of view, are as relevant as ever—perhaps even more today. Nearly 90 years after Gibran’s passing, new biographies are out. Two museums in particular honor him, and his best-known book, *The Prophet*, has been translated into more than 100 languages. Still in print, it is one of the best-selling books of all time.

These developments would have surprised New York publisher Alfred A. Knopf, who released the book in September 1923. Gibran’s first two—*The Madman* and *The Forerunner*—had sold only modestly. Yet in its first month, *The Prophet*, a slender volume of 26 prose poems, sold an astonishing 1,300 copies. The *Chicago Evening Post* lauded it as “a little bible” for those “ready to see the truth.”

“My entire being is in *The Prophet*,” wrote 40-year-old Gibran. “Everything I have ever done before was only a prelude to this.” By the time the book came out, Gibran had become a prolific writer in Arabic and English. He was president of the New York-based Arab émigré writers group, The Pen League (see sidebar, p. 35), and an accomplished illustrator and artist. The acclaim *The Prophet* received, however, catapulted him onto the global stage. His passing at age 48 on April 10, 1931, in New York made front-page news around the world.



hurdle that difference so quickly, how he did it,” she adds.

Gibran’s surviving sibling at the time—his sister Marianna—contributed to the pair’s search. They began with letters in Marianna’s possession from Mary Haskell, the author’s most important benefactor. They also looked into a photograph that hung in Marianna’s home of the elder Gibran at age 15 by photographer and publisher Fred Holland Day, as well as correspondence between the two.

According to Jean, her husband uncovered other photographs Day shot of the elder Gibran’s family in an early-20th-century photography magazine buried in the stacks of the Boston Public Library. Marianna Gibran, who remembered Day, said he often arrived in a carriage to visit the family.

The trail of clues took the pair to Day’s former home in Norwood, Massachusetts, which now houses the Norwood Historical Society. This brought more unexpected treasures, including correspondence from Jessie Fremont Beale, a social worker at the Children’s Aid Society, asking Day to help an artistically talented “little Assyrian boy Kahlil G. ... [whose] future will certainly be that of a street fakir if something is not done for him at once.” This note, and correspondence from poet and dramatist Josephine Preston Peabody, allowed them to gain a fuller understanding of the people who had shaped Gibran’s life from the age of 13 and contributed to his success.

One clue led to another. The pair combed through Haskell’s 47 diaries archived at the University of North Carolina, along with the 615 letters she and Gibran exchanged over 27 years. They located Day’s papers at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. Additional correspondence and papers from Peabody and Haskell were found at Harvard University’s Houghton Library and at Wellesley College. And that was just the beginning.

What they discovered, after a national trek, was that fateful encounters and influential mentors nurtured the elder Gibran’s uncommon talent and artistic vision throughout his life. This helped account for much of how he bridged cultures and languages, and how he thrived as both a writer and an artist. “Gibran had a very complex life, and he was a complex person,” explains Jean. She and her husband realized that



to accurately assess his life, they would have to research the milieu in which he lived.

In 1974 the husband-and-wife team published *Kahlil Gibran: His Life and World*. An updated edition of the same title came out in 1991. The biography uncovered the people who had helped shape Gibran’s artistic life. “We were the first to point to Fred Holland Day, Josephine Preston Peabody and Mary Haskell, all enormous influences,” says Jean. She also emphasizes that the story “is by necessity that of his contemporaries, most of whom have since been relegated to the footnotes of history.”

“Gibran’s American journey shaped his life and literature in profound ways,” comments Lebanese author and poet Henri Zoghaib. The biography “proved to be an invaluable key to unlocking many of the mysteries revolving around this towering literary figure whose life is a masterpiece in itself.”

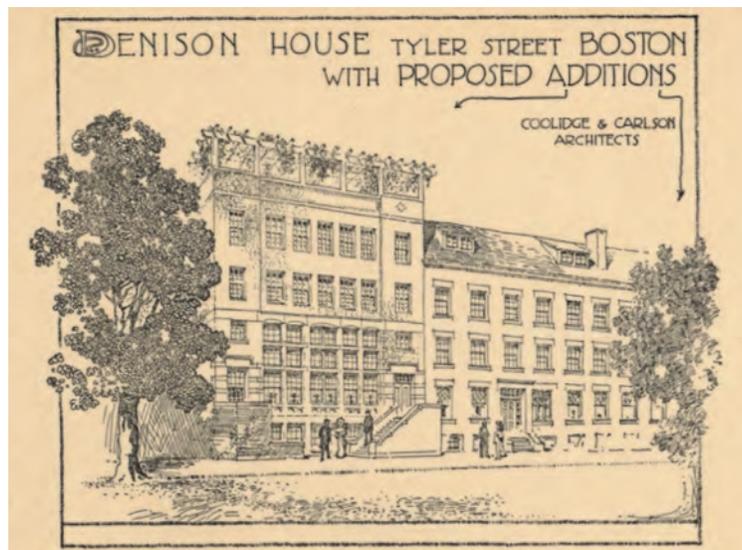
Growing Up Gibran

The journey began in June of 1895 when 12-year-old Gibran, his mother, Kamila, and his siblings Boutros, Sultana and Marianna arrived in Boston. There they joined other primarily Christian immigrants from the Ottoman province of Greater Syria who began arriving in the US in large numbers in the 1870s.

His landing in Boston turned out to be serendipitous. Known as the “Athens of America,” Boston had a thriving intellectual and artistic community. Prominent Bostonians embraced Transcendentalism,

Gibran and his family spent time in Denison House, left, a charitable “settlement house” in Boston for recently arrived immigrants. It was there that art teacher Florence Pierce took note of his talent for drawing.

Above: The Tyler Street site of Denison House today.



“SHE-ANGEL”

Mary Elizabeth Haskell

“The she-angel I found in Boston is ushering me towards a splendid future and paving a path of intellectual and financial success for me,” wrote 25-year-old Kahlil Gibran to Ameen Ghorayeb in February 1908. “God willing, this is the beginning of a new chapter in the story of my life.”

The meeting between Gibran and Mary Elizabeth Haskell, headmistress of a private girls’ school in Boston on May 10, 1904, began a 27-year relationship that changed the course of his life.

Born in Columbia, South Carolina, Haskell moved to New England to attend Wellesley College outside of Boston. Ten years older than Gibran, the independent Haskell became his most important patron, confidant and advisor. (She later declined his marriage proposal because of their age difference.)

It was Haskell’s financial support that sustained Gibran as he

moved from Boston to Paris and later to New York. “You have given me my life in a literal sense,” wrote Gibran in 1914. “It was not just the money but the way you gave it, the love you gave it with and the faith.... I wonder sometimes whether ever in history one soul has done for another what you have done for me.”

When Gibran decided in 1918 to begin writing in English, Haskell faithfully edited his manuscripts, continuing long after her move to Savannah, Georgia, in 1923 and her subsequent marriage to Jacob Florence Minis in 1926.

“Do you notice how full these things are of what we have said in talking together, sometime years ago,” noted Gibran as they reviewed drafts for *The Prophet*. After Haskell received her copy of *The Prophet* in October 1923, she wrote immediately to Gibran. “This book will be held as one of the treasures of the English language. And in the darkness ... we will open it to find ourselves again.... Generations will not exhaust it, but instead generation after generation will find in the book what they would fain be.”

Prior to her death in 1964, Haskell bequeathed her collection of Gibran paintings and drawings to Telfair Museums in Savannah. She donated all of her journals and correspondence with Gibran to the University of North Carolina. It was her preservation of these documents that years later opened the door to Gibran’s multidimensional worlds.



a movement that rejected materialism, supported women’s rights and believed in the sanctity within nature—all themes reflected in Gibran’s future literary and artistic works. They were also exploring the traditions of non-Christian, “Eastern” cultures.

Gibran’s artistic drawings soon led him to Day, whom Beale had contacted in the fall of 1896. She had learned of Gibran’s talent from Pierce, his art teacher at Denison House. “Miss Pierce feels he was capable of some day earning his living in a better way than by selling matches or newspapers on the street,” wrote Beale to Day, “if some one would only help him to get an artistic education.”

Day accepted the challenge. Under his tutelage, Gibran learned the arts, classical literature and poetry. Gibran acquired Day’s appreciation of Belgian symbolist writer Maurice Maeterlinck’s works, whose belief in the “oneness of the individual with the absolute” resonated with Gibran throughout his life. As an apprentice at Day’s publishing house, Copeland & Day, Gibran learned the craft of bookbinding. Before he turned 16, Gibran had sold cover designs to New York publishers. Years later he acknowledged Day’s role: “You, dear Brother, who first opened the eyes of my childhood to light, will give wings to my manhood.”

Day introduced Gibran to Boston artists such as Lilla Cabot Perry, a poet and painter who had studied with Monet and Pissarro. According to Jean, once Gibran gained access to the elite world of the Back Bay, he demonstrated “a lifelong ability to negotiate American intellectual and artistic circles, due to his charisma, innate talent, modesty and will to succeed.”

“Being an Arab immigrant in the new world served to shape his distinct identity,” writes author Paul-Gordon Chandler in his 2017 book, *In Search of a Prophet*. “[This] identity would later enable him to artistically and spiritually bridge the worlds of the East and West.”

The Road to *The Prophet*

Josephine Preston Peabody was a 24-year-old poet when she met Gibran at an exhibit of Day’s photography in March 1898. Though he was only 15, she praised the spirituality in Gibran’s drawings and later described him as a mystic and prophet. His work, she wrote with prescience, would “shake up the world.” (Years later she



Jean Gibran walks past the mural, “The Muses of Inspiration Hail the Spirit, the Harbinger of Light,” by Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, in the Boston Public Library near Copley Square, where Kahlil Gibran spent time studying and writing.

wrote a poem about his childhood in Bsharri and titled it “The Prophet.” Biographers have speculated that this may have inspired Gibran’s own title a quarter century later.)

In 1902 after two years studying in Beirut at the Madrasa al-Hikmah, Gibran returned to Boston, where he rekindled his friendship with Peabody. She included him in her Sunday salons frequented by artists and intellectuals, and she arranged for his debut as an artist in May 1903 at Wellesley College near Boston.

The following spring, Peabody invited an acquaintance, Mary Haskell, to attend an exhibit of Gibran’s drawings at Day’s studio. Headmistress of a private girls’ school in Boston, her arrival on the last day of the exhibit changed Gibran’s life.

“The cross-cultural connection between Kahlil Gibran and Mary Haskell marked one of the 20th century’s most important creative partnerships,” comments Tania Sammons, a writer and curator who is working on a biography of Haskell. “*The Prophet* is one of the most important literary works of the 20th century because of its wide-reaching appeal. While popularity in and of itself does not make a work important, the use of the work makes a difference,” she continues. “People go to *The Prophet* in times of need for solace and reflection, as

well as for guidance and celebration. I can’t think of a comparable 20th-century work, and I don’t believe it would have existed without Mary Haskell and their relationship.” While Day and Peabody were essential mentors to Gibran during his formative years, it was Haskell who loyally supported Gibran emotionally and financially for the rest of his life. (See sidebar, p. 32.)

Haskell’s school soon became Gibran’s refuge when he lost, in devastatingly swift succession, his beloved mother, brother and youngest sister. He and his younger sister Marianna, a seamstress who would devote herself to her older brother for the rest of her life, struggled to regain their footing.

“I live here and only here,” he wrote to Haskell. “At other times I am not living.” Yet despite this most difficult time, Gibran’s reputation as a writer was growing. Syrian Lebanese newspapers in New York began to publish his works.

An Emerging Voice

In 1905 the newspaper *Al Mohajer* (*The Emigrant*) published Gibran’s first book in Arabic, *Nubthah fi Fan al-Musiqa* (*On Music*) and launched his column “*Dam’ah wa Ibtisamah*” (Tears and Mirth), which soon drew a large following. The 1908 publications of his second and third books, *Ara’is al-Muruj* (*Spirit Brides*) and *Al-Arwah al-Mutamarrida* (*Rebellious Spirits*), greatly enhanced his visibility in the Arab American immigrant community as well as abroad in the Arab world.

Gibran’s early writings, often embraced in the West, also caught critics’ eyes in Lebanon. In *Rebellious Spirits*, wrote editor Ameen Ghorayeb, “The writer combines knowledge of Lebanon with work in the us and the thought of a philosopher.” Gibran was emerging as a voice for social reform.

Between 1908 and 1910, Haskell encouraged and funded Gibran’s trip to study art in Paris, France. Gibran enrolled

GIBRAN AND THE LANDSCAPES OF ARAB THOUGHT

On March 27 The Kahlil Gibran Chair for Values and Peace at the University of Maryland hosted *Reshaping the Landscapes of Arab Thought*, an academic conference subtitled *The Legacies of Kahlil Gibran, Ameen Rihani and Mikhail Naimy*. It examined works of Lebanese American authors Gibran, Rihani and Naimy.

May Rihani, director of the chair, called Gibran and Rihani “rebels of the Arab literary renaissance. They were the first two voices from the Arab world that defined Arab American literature and redefined the notion of identity by focusing on multiculturalism.”

Naimy, the youngest of the three, joined them in 1916. Colleagues and close friends, the three authored the most significant books to emerge out of the *mahjar* literary movement: *The Prophet* by Gibran, *The Book of Mirdad* by Naimy and *The Book of Khalid* by Rihani, the first Arab American novel, which Gibran illustrated. Paul Salem, president of The Middle East Institute in Washington, D.C., pointed out that together they “re-imagined the Arabic language.”

Throughout the day, nine prominent scholars from the US, Canada and the UK discussed the writers and addressed their shared multicultural vision that contributed to the fabrics of both their native and adopted cultures.

University of Pennsylvania Professor Emeritus Roger Allen highlighted the role each played in crafting the short story narrative in 20th-century Arabic

literature, which he asserted “is the beneficiary of their creativity and initiative.” Elizabeth Saylor of Middlebury College in Vermont explained how the trio were especially important in “pushing the conversation in [gender politics] by producing romantic and social realist fiction in Arabic that dealt with taboo topics.” University of Washington Professor Terri DeYoung discussed the images of democracy in Rihani’s 1910 poem “Crossing Brooklyn Bridge” and referred to him as the poet for the immigrant voice.

“It has been a successful symposium in bringing a more unified view of these three writers,” said Geoffrey Nash of the University of London, one of the nine panelists. “There was an emphasis on their continuing relevance.”

In preparation, Rihani and her staff had identified 75 professors and researchers around the world, all of whom teach about the writers. “Our research is still a work in progress, but this is proof that there is a present and growing interest in these writers,” she noted.

Gibran, Rihani and Naimy, noted Todd Fine, a doctoral candidate at the Graduate Center of the University of New York and a Rihani scholar, “were searching for a new basis of spirituality after the chaos of World War I.... Many of the issues these writers confronted in their works—the status of immigrants, gender equality and political oppression remain unresolved.” Their thinking, he added, is “almost as timely now as it was before.”

in the Académie Julian in Paris, where he met and mingled with luminaries such as Auguste Rodin, Claude Debussy and William Butler Yeats. Paintings by Eugène Carrière inspired him for the artist’s fascination with nature and the “mysterious haze that hung over his paintings.” For the rest of Gibran’s life, nature and mist become prevalent themes. In Paris he decided to start his “Temple of the Arts” series, in which he drew portraits of leading figures of modern art and culture, a project he continued for the rest of his life.

Encounters with Syrian dissident émigrés in Paris awakened Gibran’s interest in the political situation in Greater Syria, which was under the control of the Ottoman Empire. His article “*Ila Suriyeen*” (“To Syrians”), published in the newspaper of Najib Diab, *Mirat al-Gharb (Mirror of the West)*, expressed his frustrations with attempts to overthrow the Ottoman regime in his homeland.

In 1910 a chance meeting in Paris with Lebanese writer Ameen Rihani led to another critical friendship. Gibran and Rihani shared a common background. Both were raised as Maronite Christians in Mount Lebanon, both shared a love of their homeland, and both came of age as immigrants in the US. Gibran would

At age 15 Gibran met poet Josephine Preston Peabody, who wrote with prescience that he would “shake up the world.” She later introduced Gibran to Mary Haskell, who would become his most enduring muse, benefactor and editor.





The Pen League, from left: founder Nasib Arida, Kahlil Gibran, cofounder Abdul Massih Haddad, poet Mikhail Naimy.

consider the older writer *mu'allimi* (my teacher), and Rihani encouraged him to move to New York, where he could be closer to his fellow Arab émigré writers.

“The immigrant experience elevated and expanded their consciousness,” explains May Rihani, director of The Kahlil Gibran Chair for Values and Peace at the University of Maryland and niece of Ameen Rihani. “They were ready to embrace different cultures and different religions and had a vision of a shared humanity.”

Gibran wanted to live near Rihani so he could become more involved with fellow émigré writers and publishers in the Lower Manhattan neighborhood known as “Little Syria.” In 1911 Haskell financed his move, and he settled into his permanent studio, which he named *al-Sawma'ah* (The Hermitage), at 51 West 10th Street in Greenwich Village.

The Cosmopolite

New York expanded Gibran’s horizons further. By the time he arrived, his work was already well-known among his contemporaries, but his background was not. He chose to conceal his early life as an impoverished immigrant.

“His identity among his friends in New York was based less on his personal history as an immigrant adolescent,” writes Jean. “Instead, perceptions of him sprang from his arrival as a Levantine newcomer with an unknown past, cosmopolite, fluent in Arabic, English and French, artistically precocious and intent on building a future.”

Gibran flourished as both a writer and artist. He and fellow *mahjar* (immigrant) writers were at the forefront of linguistic innovations in Arabic, efforts later underscored by the founding of The Pen League in 1920.

“Gibran in particular was one of the pioneers in the development and introduction of the short story into the Arabic tradition,” says University of Pennsylvania Professor Emeritus Roger Allen.

In 1911 Gibran illustrated Rihani’s *The Book of Khalid*, the first

AL-RABITAH AL-QALAMIYAH

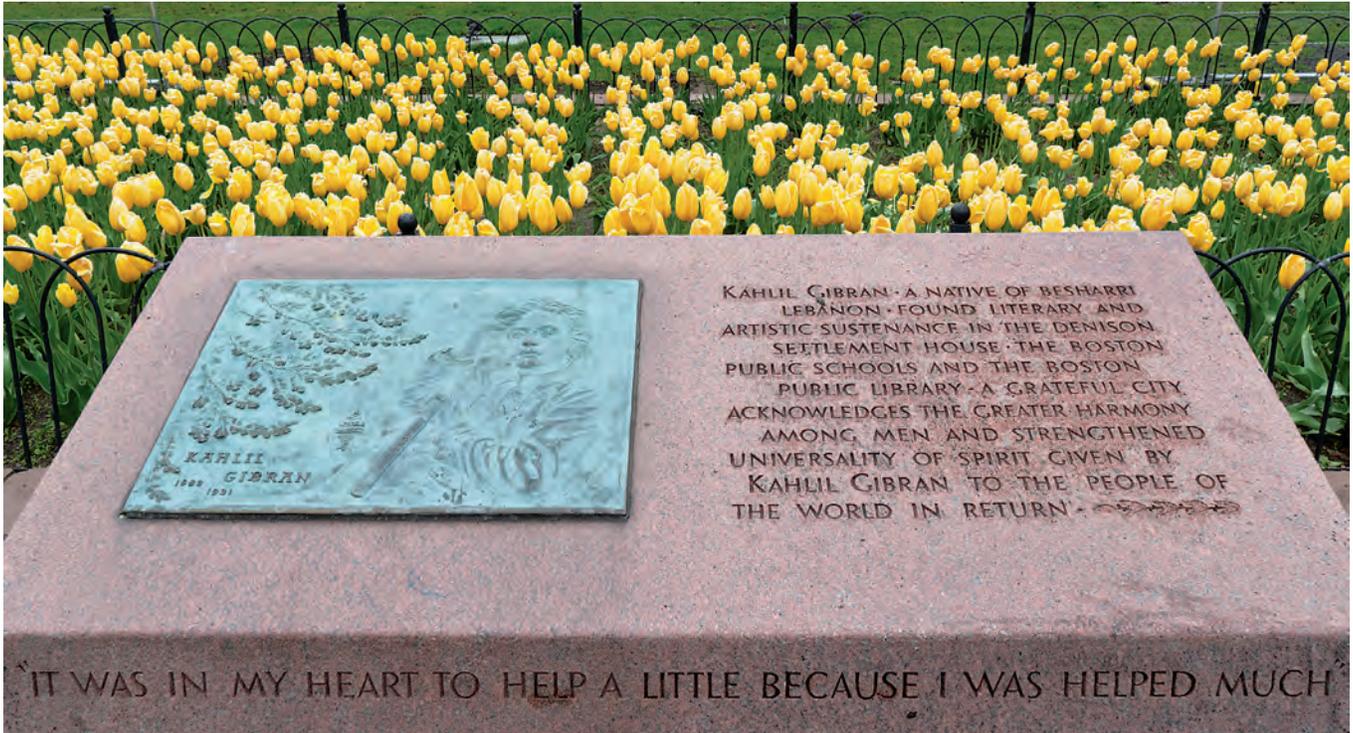
(The Pen League)

In the early 1900s, the proliferation of Syrian Lebanese newspapers, journals and magazines in New York reflected the diversity of the growing Arab immigrant community. These publications also served as incubators for literary works by Gibran and his fellow writers, all members of the *mahjar* literary movement. *Al-Funun* editor Nasib Arida and his colleague Abd al-Massih Haddad, editor of *As-Sayeh* [The traveler], suggested forming a union in order to protect the rights of the *mahjar* writers and to advance Arabic language in literature.

Ilyas Ata Allah became the first writer in May 1916 to sign his work “*Udu fi al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyah*” (“member of the Pen League”) in an edition of *As-Sayeh*. Two months later, other leading émigré writers, including Gibran, Ameen Rihani, William Catzeflis, Nadra Haddad, Amin Mushriq, Arida and Abd al-Massih Haddad followed suit, establishing the first informal union of Arab immigrant writers.

They formalized the union in April 1920 with Gibran as president, Mikhael Naimy as secretary and Catzeflis as treasurer. “The tendency to keep our language and literature within the narrow bounds of aping the ancients in form and substance is a most pernicious tendency,” Naimy wrote in its bylaws. The challenge, he added, “is to lift Arabic literature from the quagmire of stagnation and imitation and to infuse new life in its veins so as to make it an active force in the building up of the Arab nations and to promote a new generation of Arab writers.”

Members of the Pen League produced some of the most creative literary works of the early 1900s. These in turn made significant contributions to the larger *Nahda*—the “awakening” of Arabic letters and culture. The organization was short lived, however, and it dissolved after Gibran’s death in 1931 and Naimy’s return to Lebanon the following year.



Designed and created by Kahlil George Gibran, a bronze plaque of Gibran holding a copy of *The Prophet*—one of the best-selling books of all time—was set atop inscribed granite in 1977 at the edge of Boston’s Copley Square, where it memorializes the writer and artist’s legacy of humanitarianism and generosity.

Arab American novel published in the US. The literary journal *Al-Funun (The Arts)* dedicated its inaugural issue in 1913 to Gibran, acknowledging his growing prominence. And in 1914 the first New York exhibit of his drawings was held at Montross Gallery on Fifth Avenue.

Gibran broke new ground when one of his short stories in English appeared in the first issue of *The Seven Arts*, a literary magazine founded by James Oppenheim in 1916. Haskell considered it one of Gibran’s greatest accomplishments to be the first Arab writer included among influential Western authors such as Robert Frost, D. H. Lawrence and Eugene O’Neill. By 1918 he was writing the majority of his work in English, with Haskell assisting from afar as his faithful editor. At that time he and Rihani were the only two mahjar writers known to publish in both English and Arabic. The gap between the tenements of his youth in Boston and the status he enjoyed as a mature writer and artist in New York grew with each succeeding year.

A Universal Message

As his writing flourished in the 1920s, Gibran became a source of pride for the Lebanese American community, which waited eagerly for his articles in the Arab press. In 1926 Andrew

Ghareeb, a 28-year-old Lebanese immigrant acquainted with a number of mahjar editors and writers, became the first person to translate Gibran’s Arabic articles into English for *The Springfield Sunday Union and Republican*, a leading New England newspaper.

“My father liked Gibran’s style and the beauty of his work,” says Edmund Ghareeb, a renowned Lebanese American scholar and expert in the mahjar press. “He was also very interested in his ideas about the need to fight against discrimination, intolerance and bigotry. That’s why he wanted to translate his

works for the English-speaking world.”

The elder Ghareeb was a young man when Congress passed the Immigration Act of 1924 (the

Johnson-Reed Quota Act), which escalated anti-Syrian sentiment and severely curbed immigration from the Near East. “He felt Gibran was not only speaking to the people of Lebanon but that he had a universal message,” Ghareeb says of his father.

Others point out that Gibran’s legacy continues.

“Gibran was the voice of the oppressed and the marginalized,” says May Fawaz-Huber, a former Lebanese journalist. “He is still deeply ingrained in Lebanese history, cultural heritage and collective memory, and he keeps me connected to my homeland.” She adds that many Lebanese still introduce themselves to

**I CAME TO SAY A WORD AND I SHALL UTTER IT....
I CAME TO BE FOR ALL AND IN ALL.**

—Kahlil Gibran, *The Syrian World*, April 26, 1926

strangers by saying, “I come from the land of Kahlil Gibran.”

Lebanese actress and director Nadine Labaki agrees. “To this day there is no one who more poetically illustrates for Lebanese the importance of coexistence ... than Kahlil Gibran.”

By the late 1920s, Gibran’s large extended family would gather for long evening celebrations whenever he returned to Boston to visit his sister Marianna. Yet he remained secretive with his New York friends about that part of his life. Until his passing, none of them knew about Haskell, his most significant benefactor, friend and editor—not even his secretary and companion for the last five years of his life, Barbara Young.

In contrast to his family’s humble world in Boston, Gibran’s New York colleagues, friends and patrons were an astonishing array of leading creative, social and political influencers. He was admired and befriended by prominent Arab American and western publishers and editors. He became a favorite of Mary Houry, a successful Lebanese American businesswoman who included him in her coveted Manhattan literary gatherings. Corinne Roosevelt Robinson, the sister of early-20th-century US President Theodore Roosevelt, would invite him to read from his works at her New York home. And wealthy New York socialite and arts patron Julia Ellsworth Ford frequently included him in her salons where he mingled with the likes of Yeats, poet Ezra Pound, dancer Isadora Duncan and actor Charlie Chaplin. His two worlds—Boston and New York—rarely overlapped.

Celebrating a Life in Letters

On January 5, 1929, hundreds of guests gathered at The Hotel McAlpin in New York to honor Gibran at a dinner organized by The Pen League. Celebrating Gibran’s 25 years as a major contributor to literature, Philip K. Hitti of Princeton University said, “Our hero of tonight ... has become the father of a new school of thought all his own. While others use empty words ... Gibran unfailingly produces gems of thought and is always natural and sublime.”

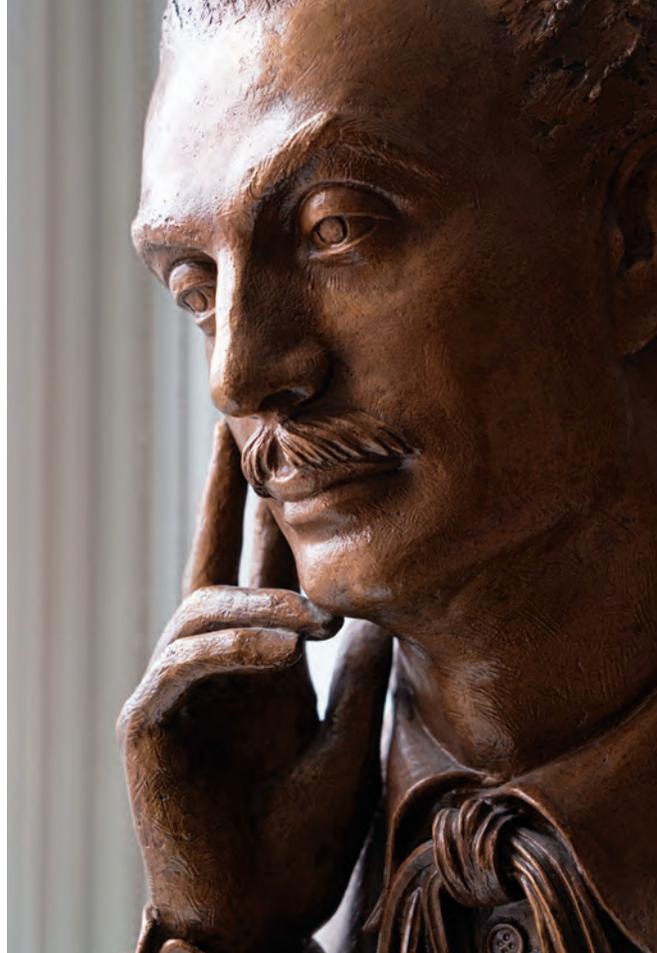
The dinner was held at the pinnacle of the ailing writer’s career. He died two years later at 48 from cirrhosis of the liver and tuberculosis.

Today, Gibran’s legacy seems larger and stronger than ever.

In Bsharri the Gibran Museum, which also houses his tomb, attracts more than 50,000 visitors a year from around the world. In Mexico City, Mexico, where Rev. Anthony Bashir, a Syrian Orthodox priest, was the first to translate *The Prophet* into Arabic in the late 1920s, the Museo Soumaya houses the largest Gibran collection in the world, which it acquired in 2007 from Jean and Kahlil Gibran.

As an integral part of the Fundación Carlos Slim, the museum incorporates Gibran’s literature, art and philosophy into both displays and outreach programs to schools. Cultural Director of the Museo Soumaya Alfonso Miranda explains that by highlighting Gibran’s work, the museum recognizes the contributions immigrants make to their adopted countries. “Gibran teaches us that we all live in one world,” adds Miranda, emphasizing that this message is as relevant today as it was in Gibran’s time.

Publisher Michel Moushabeck of Interlink Publishing also



Although only 48 years old at his death in 1931, Gibran’s legacy today grows not only through continuing book sales, but also museum exhibits, academic conferences and a 2017 expanded edition of Jean and Kahlil George Gibran’s biography.

views Gibran as especially relevant today. His 2017 publication *Kahlil Gibran: Beyond Borders* is an expanded version of Jean and Kahlil Gibran’s 1991 biography. “It’s a new book published at a time when its immigrant story and message are needed more than ever before,” says Moushabeck.

Jean credits Moushabeck for encouraging her to write *Beyond Borders*. “There was still an enormous amount of new material that I was excited about,” she says. “Rediscovering his story in the light of the present brings Gibran as a person more clearly in focus,” writes Jean. “An artist in exile, a pioneer and peer among his emigrant compatriots, Kahlil Gibran became a faithful citizen artist without borders.”



Piney Kesting is a Boston-based freelance writer and consultant who specializes in the Middle East. **Kevin Bubriski** (bubriski@sover.net) is a documentary photographer whose most recent book is *Legacy in Stone: Syria Before War* (2019), published by powerHouse Books. Other recent books include *Mustang in Black and White* (Vajra Books, 2018) and *Kailash Yatra: A Long Walk to Mt. Kailash through Humla* (Penguin Random House India, 2018). Follow him on Instagram @kevinbubriski.



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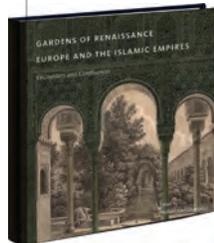
“A people without cultural heritage is lost and cut off from its identity, just as artifacts without their culture are merely stones.”

Legacy in Stone: Syria Before War

Kevin Bubriski. Amr Al-Azm, intro. 2019, powerHouse Books, 978-1-57687-889-7, \$50 hb.

Today, many only know Syria as a geopolitical disaster and humanitarian crisis depicted in traditional media. Through his book of photography, Kevin Bubriski presents a poignant look into a time before years of civil turmoil took their toll on the land and its people. Shot in 2003, a hundred black-and-white photos—offered with brief written context—capture the dignity and prominence of several of Syria’s oldest and most captivating cities, including Aleppo, Palmyra and the Dead Cities (abandoned Roman- and Byzantine-era settlements in northern Syria). The collection preserves, at least visually, Syria’s heritage, and becomes an essential archive for enthusiasts of the region. This is especially important to those who wonder if others can ever experience the Syria they knew—a place that was bustling, hospitable and simple. In one haunting picture, a young woman with furrowed brows and flowing hair clutches an object in her sun-scorched hand. Her face, garments and jewelry hint at an untold story, leaving the reader wanting to know more. That is the enigmatic beauty of this book.

—JUDY SULTAN



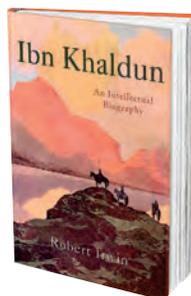
Gardens of Renaissance Europe and the Islamic Empires: Encounters and Confluences

Mohammad Gharipour, ed. 2017, Penn State UP, 978-0-27107-779-6, \$94.95 hb.

While establishing diplomatic relations and trading goods during the Renaissance, the Ottoman East and European West discovered they also shared a passion for gardens and garden design. European narratives of travel to the major Islamic empires of the day—Ottoman Turkey, Safavid Persia and Mughal India—include descriptions, drawings and sketches of cities and their gardens. These added “to the reciprocal flow of ideas and concepts in terms of architectural and garden design,” including the “exchanges of gardeners” and “horticultural or irrigation techniques.” Vivid descriptions

of Ottoman gardens, for example, led to the French court’s replacement of Italian gardeners with Ottoman specialists after 1495. The “gardens of Mughal emperors served as models” for the Lisbon gardens of Portuguese envoys to Goa and became “symbols of wealth and status.” In the cultural rivalry between Rome and Istanbul, “villa gardens constituted a stage for outdoing each other.” This collection of scholarly, yet readable, well-illustrated essays closely examines how Islamic and European garden traditions interacted and influenced one another.

—TOM VERDE



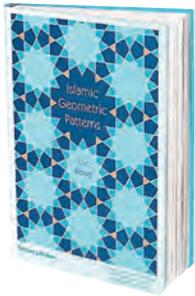
Ibn Khaldun: An Intellectual Biography

Robert Irwin. 2018, Princeton UP, 978-0-69117-466-2, \$29.95, hb.

This is not so much a traditional biography as an exploration of one

of the greatest minds in the history of thought. There are sections on Ibn Khaldun’s education, travels and government postings in North Africa, Egypt and Spain in the 14th and early 15th century. And we learn of shoulder-rubbing with contemporary historians like Fez’s Ibn al-Khatib, “the single most influential person in Ibn Khaldun’s life,” or Egypt’s al-Maqrizi, who praised his colleague’s groundbreaking analysis of history—the *Muqaddimah*—as “the cream of knowledge,” composed in a style “more brilliant than a well-arranged pearl.” This study examines Ibn Khaldun’s manifold interests and curiosities (among them nomads, law, astrology and economics), and methodology, particularly “cause and effect,” and “how things work” when they are similar or dissimilar—an unusual approach for a historian of his day. The reflections of modern admirers, from Arnold Toynbee to Mark Zuckerberg, add scaffolding to Irwin’s pursuit of the “sheer depth” of Ibn Khaldun’s thinking.

—TOM VERDE

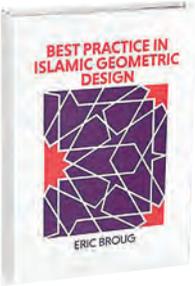


Islamic Geometric Patterns
(revised edition)

Eric Broug. 2019, Thames & Hudson, 978-0-50029-468-0, \$21.95 pb.

Best Practice in Islamic Geometric Design: A Manual for Creative Professionals

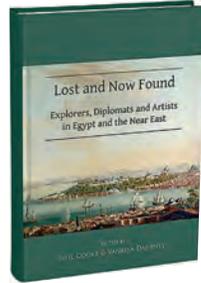
Eric Broug. 2019, e-book, \$8.99.



These titles, by the head of the UK-based School of Islamic Geometric Design, support the

goals of preserving and reinvigorating the art of Islamic design. In *Islamic Geometric Patterns*, Eric Broug teaches how to create designs that appear on more than 20 different edifices, from the Grand Mosque of Cordoba in Spain to monuments in India and Pakistan. The book is a practicum for designers interested in expanding their repertoire and a storehouse of information for new generations of practitioners. Notably, the book's straightforward instructions are equally accessible to people with no design or architectural-drafting experience. The only required tools are a compass (a pattern always starts with a circle) and a ruler (the pattern is always conceived by dividing the circle into equal parts, then connecting points with straight lines). Creating motifs and tessellating them into patterns also help train the eye to recognize recurring shapes and the underlying grid. *Best Practice in Islamic Geometric Design* sets out six principles for successful compositions. They include rules governing the disposition of lines and ensuring symmetry; scaling compositions to fit a predetermined area; embellishing designs, typically with color or curvilinear elements like calligraphy; engaging viewers by juxtaposing different patterns; favoring traditional, familiar shapes; and innovation. Broug argues that there is plenty of scope within these principles to innovate and that once these rules are internalized designers can successfully break them.

—LEE LAWRENCE



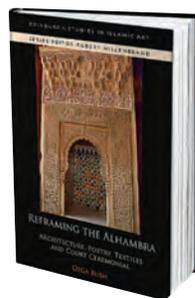
Lost and Now Found: Explorers, Diplomats and Artists in Egypt and the Near East

Neil Cooke and Vanessa Daubney, eds. 2017, Archaeo-

press Publishing Ltd, 978-1-78491-627-5, £38 pb.

The title refers to a treasure trove of forgotten travelers' tales recovered in recent years by the Association for the Study of Travel in Egypt and the Near East. This volume features 18 compelling stories discovered in neglected manuscripts and other documents after assiduous research. The tales help solve mysteries about Western contacts with the East in previous centuries, adding insights into the Near and Middle East that are often missing from conventional histories. One account tells about the discovery in 2013 of a forgotten 440-page diary from the Karl Lepsius expedition to Egypt in the 18th century—a document "hiding in plain sight" in an Australian museum. The diarist, a 19-year-old German artist, drew hieroglyphics, murals and monuments for lithographs during the three-year expedition. His recollections add new life to a fascinating archeological adventure.

—ROBERT W. LEBLING



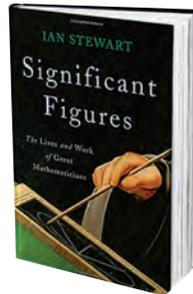
Reframing the Alhambra: Architecture, Poetry, Textiles and Court Ceremonial

Olga Bush. 2018, Edinburgh up, 978-1-47441-650-4, \$150 hb.

This volume offers an intriguing interdisciplinary look at the Alhambra, the last Muslim bastion in al-Andalus, built in Granada from the 12th to the 15th century. Although the palace complex has been studied extensively, the author, a visiting scholar of Islamic art and architecture at Vassar College, "reframes" it by addressing not only its famous architecture, but also the poetry carved in its walls, and the textile designs and court ceremonials of the period. She then shows how these media interrelate scientifically, artistically

and transcendently. Most significantly, she explores the application of fractal theory—the replication of a geometric structure where each part is identical to the whole—in the Alhambra, filling out her treatment of a structure that, ultimately, reflects both spirituality and state power.

—ANA CARREÑO LEYVA



Significant Figures: The Lives and Work of Great Mathematicians

Ian Stewart. 2017, Basic Books, 978-0-46509-613-8, \$16.99 hb.

This book will fascinate readers with

even a passing interest in mathematics. Among the "top 25" mathematical pioneers profiled, Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi (c. 780–c. 850) will stand out. "[W]hat is easiest and most useful in arithmetic" for resolving legal, commercial and engineering difficulties, al-Khwarizmi pondered in his landmark *al-Kitab al-mukhtasar fi hisab al-jabr wa-l-muqabala* (*The Compendious Book on Calculation by Completion and Balancing*), written around 830. His answer, identified in the title, was *al-jabr*, "completion," later Anglicized to "algebra," a method he devised to find unknown quantities in what are now familiar, x-and-y equations. And while he was at it, he "almost singlehandedly" introduced medieval Europe to "Hindu numerals"—including the hitherto unknown zero—which ultimately led to "Algorithmi" or algorithms, a term derived from his Westernized name (Algorithmi).

—TOM VERDE



Where Three Worlds Met: Sicily in the Early Medieval Mediterranean

Sarah Davis-Secord. 2017, Cornell up, 978-1-5017-0464-2, \$59.95 hb.

Sicily lies in the middle of the Mediterranean, off the toe of Italy. Its most prominent physical feature is Mount Etna, whose eruptions have produced the rich soil that make Sicily a breadbasket for the region. Sicily's role in history

remains elusive, in part because of its paradoxical nature as a central island and as a boundary zone between cultures. Conquered many times over the centuries, it boasts a rich cultural and ethnic legacy to augment its agricultural bounty. The author's primary interest is to probe the island's role as a trade and travel nexus of the medieval Mediterranean. She illuminates both the intrinsic importance of Sicily and also the roles it played in larger transformations of the Mediterranean Basin. The book focuses on travel records and medieval historians' details on trans-Mediterranean communication—commercial, diplomatic, military and cultural. Three periods of rule are highlighted: by Byzantium (sixth–ninth century); by Islamic North Africa (ninth–11th century); and by the Latin Normans (11th–12th century), when Muslim-Christian trade experienced its greatest flourishing in the Mediterranean.

—ROBERT W. LEBLING



Jedba: Spiritual Music from Morocco

Abdesselam Damoussi and Nour Eddine.

2019 Arc Music, B07KH8794X, \$18.99 cd.

Musician/producers Abdesselam Damoussi and Nour Eddine have recorded and accompanied musicians from various parts of Morocco in this captivating album, crafted in Eddine's 15th-century home-turned-studio in Marrakech. Some tracks work around found elements—an impromptu jam session in the Marrakech *madinah*, an old beggar's prayer, a chance encounter with a local imam. Others are more deliberate, such as Yemdeh Selem's electrifying vocal from the Moroccan Sahara, accompanied by blazing electric guitar in a richly altered tuning. Still others feature fluttering *ilala* flutes, keening double-reed *gaitas*, the Berber *rebab* and rolling, tripping frame-drum rhythms and voices that soar, chant and ululate, forming and informing this mesmerizing collection.

—BANNING EYRE



EVENTS

Highlights from
aramcoworld.com

CURRENT / JULY

Tutankamón: *La tumba, el oro y la maldición* (Tutankhamun: The tomb, the gold and the curse) is a majestic exhibition of more than 200 items that recreate the pharaoh's tomb and its treasures. Among them are gold-plated objects, five-meter-long wooden sarcophagi and a copy of the outer granite sarcophagus, as well as small Ushabtî statues, figures of the time that were placed in tombs, as reconstructed by Italian artists and craftsmen. The exhibition presents an era of Egyptian splendor, enabling visitors to discover the process of embalming and be part of the exploration team that embarked on one of the most important discoveries of the 20th century, through dioramas and audiovisuals surrounding the story and the legend of the pharaoh of the XVIII Dynasty. Centro Cultural Paso del Norte-Sala de Usos Múltiples, **Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico**, through July 29.

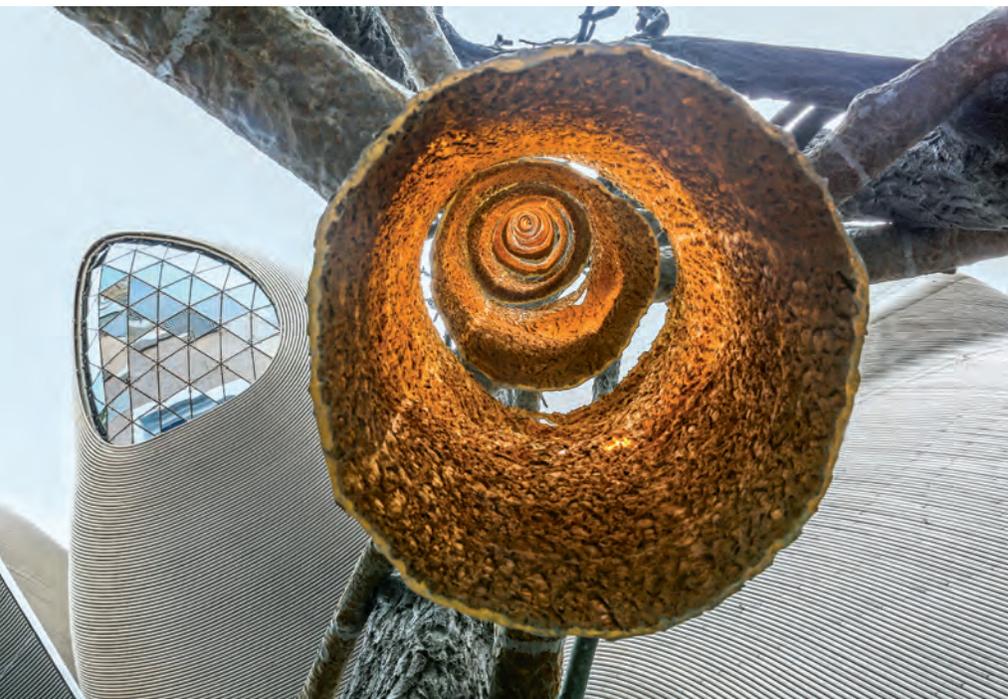
CURRENT / AUGUST

Hayv Kahraman: *Superfluous Bodies*, by Iraqi-born, Los Angeles-based artist Hayv Kahraman, explores themes of identity, memory, gender and exile across paintings and sculptures that present and re-present the "colonized" female figure. In the exhibition she weaves, tears, patches and reworks materials to create exquisite artworks that nod to a breadth of artistic traditions found in Europe and Asia, creating a dialog between ideas of "East" and "West" while questioning concepts of agency and corporeality. "Superfluous Bodies" runs concurrently with a sister exhibition of new work by Kahraman entitled *To the Land of WaqWaq*, inspired by—and also on display at—the Shangri La Museum of Islamic Art, Culture and Design. **Honolulu Museum of Art**, through August 4.

M. F. Husain: *Art and the Nation*. One of the founding members of the Bombay Progressive Artists' Group, M. F. Husain created the mural-sized

painting "Lightning" for the public rally of then-Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's Congress Party in 1975 in Bombay (Mumbai), the same year that a state of emergency was imposed across India. The 12 massive panels of "Lightning" are littered with visual references to India and the 1970s, and though absent visually, to Indira Gandhi. Ironically, by the 1970s Husain's alignments with the political leader resulted in the loss of support of some members of the intelligentsia and artistic community. In the following decades the rise of the Hindu right closed off the artistic strategies that made "Lightning" possible for Husain, ultimately leading to his exile from India. Asia Society, **New York**, through August 4.

The Moon: A Voyage through Time. Since the dawn of civilization the moon has captivated cultures. To mark the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 lunar landing, this exhibition explores man's enduring fascination with this enchanting orb



Sorgente di Luce (Source of Light)

In a plaza below ground level, Italian artist Giuseppe Penone has set three organically lifelike trees of cast bronze supported by a larger fourth one made of telescoping sections and illuminated within. Together they appear to levitate and tower nearly 30 meters, with their "trunks" and "branches" symbolizing the growth of human creativity. The site-specific commissioned work—Penone's largest ever—also symbolically complements the nearby historic Well No. 7, known as "The Prosperity Well," where in 1938 oil was first struck in commercial quantities. "It illustrates life springing forth from the ground and reaching majestically

toward the sky, a poetic allusion to how Saudi society has grown and flourished as a result of the discovery ... of a wealth of natural energy contained in the telluric depths of the earth," says the King Abdulaziz Cultural Center for World Culture (Ithra) in **Dhahran, Saudi Arabia**, where the installation is permanent.



looks at the role it has played in faith, science and the arts across the Muslim world and beyond. Interactive devices, displays and installations invite visitors to observe and imagine the moon in new ways. Spanning pre-Islamic times to the present day, and delving into the arts, literature and music, the exhibition brings together important miniature paintings, scientific instruments, Islamic manuscripts and contemporary works of art to illustrate the wonder at the moon that is shared among cultures. Aga Khan Museum, **Toronto**, through August 18.

CURRENT / JANUARY

Longing for Mecca offers a unique insight into the Hajj, Islam's most important pilgrimage. Millions of people travel to Makkah each year, including thousands of Dutch. It is one of the world's biggest religious, spiritual and cultural phenomena. What attracts these pilgrims? What impressions and experiences move them on the road, when they reach their destination and when they come back? For centuries the pilgrimage to Makkah has inspired many artists and rulers to create spectacular works of art. More than 300 appealing pieces from important collections of Islamic art are brought together. The curated pieces, from China and Indonesia to Turkey and Morocco, span a wide range of time, from the 10th

century to the present day. Tropen Museum, **Amsterdam**, through January 12.

COMING / SEPTEMBER

Egyptian Mummies: Exploring Ancient Lives, a North American premiere, reconstructs the lives of six individuals who lived along the Nile from about 900 BCE to 180 CE. Noninvasive techniques have enabled researchers to build a profile of each individual, painting a picture of who they were. Age, beliefs and the diseases from which they suffered—each mummy has a story to tell. Digital visualizations present new discoveries that, when viewed alongside more than 200 objects from the British Museum's renowned Egyptian collection, provide unique insights into how people lived and died in Egypt of this era. The exhibition explores themes such as mummification, health, food and diet, priesthood, music, adornment and childhood in ancient Egypt. **Montreal** Museum of Fine Arts, September 14 through February 2.

Caravans of Gold, Fragments in Time: Art, Culture and Exchange across Medieval Saharan Africa journeys along the Sahara Desert's trade routes during a time when West African gold directly impacted and connected peoples and cultures, arts and beliefs across continents. This exhibition reveals

the shared history of West Africa, North Africa, the Middle East and Europe from the 8th to 16th century through more than 250 artworks, many shown in North America for the first time. The exhibition also draws on recent archeological discoveries, showcasing fragments excavated in major African trading centers, displayed alongside stunning works of art that invite visitors to imagine the fragments as they once were, to reconsider treasures from the Western canon and to see the past and present in a new light. Aga Khan Museum, **Toronto**, September 21 through February 23.

COMING / OCTOBER

Wandering Spirit: African Wax Prints. The success of wax prints derived from a traditional technique of wax-resist (batik) dying, in which a pattern is made on both sides of cotton fabric with warm liquid wax applied by a *tjanting* (a small brass cup with a sprout) is driven by many factors, such as culture, taste and the desires of African consumers. Clothing in Africa serves an important means of communication, sending secret messages and retelling local proverbs. Clothing also depicts a person's social status and position, political convictions, ambition, marital status, ethnicity, age, sex and group affiliations. The names and stories associated with the fabrics differ from country to

country and region to region. One fabric may have different names in different countries, depending on the symbolism that the consumer can read in the fabric. Though not originally African, these textiles have become ingrained in African culture and society, and loved and identified by Africans as their own. Stauth Memorial Museum, **Montezuma, Kansas**, October 22 through November 30.

PERMANENT

Trans-Cultural Relations, Global Biographies—Islamic Art? Selected artifacts on display in the Museum für Islamische Kunst at the Pergamonmuseum illustrate how various objects have migrated across continents and how, on closer inspection, shared visual motifs, forms and craft techniques reveal a network of references to other cultures, which one might not necessarily associate with "Islamic art" today. The display questions the notions of rigidly defined cultural boundaries that are often currently posited. Pergamonmuseum, **Berlin**.

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