

NOVEMBER DECEMBER 2021

AramcoWorld





6 Five Centuries of Jerusalem Soup

Written by **Matthew Teller**

Photographed by **Mostafa Alkharouf**

Nearly 470 years ago, the wife of the Ottoman sultan founded this soup kitchen as an endowed religious charity. Ever since, its cooks have arrived before dawn to begin simmering soup to ladle out later to all who come looking for a warm lunch.

12 Milestones to Makkah and Madinah

Written by **Peter Harrigan**

Photographed by **Peter Sanders**

In 622 CE the Prophet Muhammad and his first followers rode some 450 kilometers from Makkah to Madinah along a segment of the caravan route that had long linked the Arabian Peninsula to North Africa and the Levant. In 2005 the discovery of an isolated monolith led to a 15-year archeological quest that has identified 55 similar and regularly spaced stones that appear to predate the ninth century CE. The discoveries are now helping locate with precision historic sites, thanks to the measure of distance between the milestones: 1,609 meters, give or take a few. Whether intact or broken; standing, fallen or partially buried, each stone is now being studied, and together they tell stories of history, faith and science.

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We distribute *AramcoWorld* online and in print 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 The milestones discovered along the 11-day caravan route between Makkah and Madinah appear to have been locally quarried and then set to stand out from their landscapes; only a few show inscriptions. Photos by Peter Sanders (7) and Abrar Alkadi (left, upper center).

BACK COVER Cinnamon, pepper, nutmeg, clove, cumin and ginger: Over the past year, our "Spice Migrations" series has looked at how six of the world's most popular spices found their ways to modern kitchens. Art by Linda Dalal Sawaya.



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Written by **Dianna Wray**
Photographs courtesy of **Art 120**

Colorfully painted trucks are everywhere in Pakistan, but in Chattanooga, Tennessee, a single truck by a renowned artist is helping an arts nonprofit jump-start international cultural appreciation in schools.

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Written by **Tom Verde**

His 19th- and 20th-century descendants became some of New York's most glittering glitterati, but when this son of a pirate arrived in the fledgling colonial outpost of New Amsterdam in 1629 and became the first Muslim to own property in the future US, conflicts with Dutch authorities nearly undid his ambitions.

34 **Spice Migrations: Ginger**

Written by **Jeff Koehler**
Art by **Linda Dalal Sawaya**

Native to lands across Southeast Asia, ginger has long been used there and across the Middle East and North Africa in savory dishes, while Europeans and Americans have more recently popularized it in sweets. In Detroit, Michigan, chef Warda Bouguettaya does both.

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FIRSTLOOK

A Lens and a Legacy

Photograph by Shaikh Amin

Written by Arthur P. Clark



As a young man in 1948, Shaikh Amin traveled from newly established Pakistan to accept a job in the storehouse of Aramco in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. He had put away part of his salary, and within a few years of joining the oil company, he saved enough money to buy a Rolleicord twin-lens reflex camera. He

enrolled in a photography course by correspondence from the US and began to pick up freelance jobs, and in 1965 he qualified for a trainee post with the company's Photo Unit. He rose quickly to become chief photographer, and even after he retired in 1985, he returned annually on special assignments for another nine years, becoming one of the most prolific photographers of one of the world's most dramatic industrial transformations: the "oil boom" decades in Saudi Arabia.

Pipelines, refineries, wells, exploration teams and the communities of people who built and formed them became his daily assignments amid the constant challenges of heat, blowing sand and other adversities. This aerial image, shot in 1993, shows one of Aramco's deep-desert road-building teams carving over and around 100-meter dunes in the eastern reaches of the Rub' al-Khali, or Empty Quarter, on the way to Shaybah, the most remote oilfield in Saudi Arabia. Whether in the air over dunes or balanced on the shoulders of fellow pilgrims while shooting for *AramcoWorld* in Makkah, Amin brought his artistic eye and unflappable optimism to every job he undertook.

He died July 17, at the age of 93, having recently received one more honor for the kinds of photos—of flowers, people and places—that he enjoyed making in his retirement. In all, he received more than 70 ribbons and medals from photo societies around the globe, and three awards from the UN.

"My original thinking was that I should be a good photographer, learning as well as doing a good job," he said. "People liked me and appreciated my work, and that's what I wanted."

—Arthur P. Clark recently retired from his position as an assistant editor of *AramcoWorld*. For many years in Dhahran, he worked closely with Shaikh Amin.

Photographs by Shaikh Amin can be found in the *AramcoWorld* image archive at <https://photoarchive.aramcoworld.com>

INSET: SAUDI ARAMCO



FLAVORS

Creamy Broccoli and Arugula Soup

Recipe by
Yasmine Elgharably
and
Sheweker Elgharably

Photograph by
Yehia El-Alaily

This soup was inspired a few years back by Gwyneth Paltrow's *It's All Good* collection of clean, good-for-you recipes.

Our version incorporates local spices that add warming, Middle Eastern flavors, and we use the broccoli stem as well as the florets to achieve a more substantial, filling soup without adding any potatoes or cream. One of the flavorings we use here is mastic, which may be unfamiliar to some. It's a gum collected from a species of tree in the cashew family that is sold as small, translucent granules often called pearls. The flavor is distinctive: resinous, almost piney and redolent of sun-baked hillsides. It's very strong, so use it sparingly.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| (Serves 4) | 1 medium head broccoli |
| 2 tablespoons olive oil | 2 pods cardamom |
| 1 large onion, diced | 2 bay leaves |
| 2 garlic cloves, minced | 2 handfuls arugula |
| 2 granules mastic | Salt and pepper |
| 1.25 liters (5–6 cups) hot water | 2 tablespoons flax seeds (optional) |

Cut the florets from the broccoli head, and then chop the stem, discarding any woody part at the base.

In a large pan, heat the olive oil and saute the onions, garlic and mastic for a few minutes until the onions are translucent.

Stir in the broccoli florets and chopped stem, then add the hot water, bay leaves and cardamom. Bring to a boil, then lower the heat, cover and simmer for about 15 minutes, until the broccoli is softened. Add the arugula and stir for a couple more minutes, then take the pan off the heat.

Remove the cardamom and bay leaves, then blend the soup to a creamy texture. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

In a dry skillet, toast the flax seeds over medium heat for a couple of minutes, shaking the pan continuously. Serve the soup hot, with a sprinkling of flax seeds on top for some crunch.

Reprinted with permission from

Bilhana: Wholefood Recipes From Egypt, Lebanon, and Morocco

Yasmine Elgharably and
Shewekar Elgharably,
2020, AUC Press,
aucpress.com

Yasmine Elgharably is a self-taught home cook with a business background and a huge passion for Middle Eastern food. She is the founder of a partner in cairocooking.com, a recipe sharing platform helping cooks across the Middle East. She is also based in Cairo. **Shewekar Elgharably** is a certified holistic health coach and culinary nutrition expert based in Cairo, Egypt. She completed the Integrative Nutrition Program and the Culinary Nutritional Program at the US-based Academy of Culinary Nutrition. Originally an established interior designer, after seeing how small food and lifestyle changes have a huge impact on health, she wanted to help people strive to live healthier and happier lives. Shewekar is also the founder of #HealthyRocks.





FIVE CENTURIES *of Jerusalem Soup*

WRITTEN BY **MATTHEW TELLER** | PHOTOGRAPHED BY **MOSTAFA ALKHAROUF**

On a gray Tuesday in December, a small knot of people bundled up against the wind gusting from the hills above Jerusalem as they waited for two narrow, metal doors to open. Set into an arch in a stone facade at the bottom of steps that lead down from a courtyard, the doors stood flanked by small, very old stone discs etched with eight-pointed star patterns, the only hint that the doorway had been once one of importance. Other than the group waiting patiently, only a faintly savory, warming aroma hinted at the simmering, stirring and seasoning taking place inside.

In a narrow street of Old Jerusalem, a sign in Arabic points the way to *Takiyah Khaski Sultan*, the charitable soup kitchen founded in 1552 by the wife of Ottoman Sultan Suleiman. **OPPOSITE, TOP** Recipients line up outside the courtyard that with the kitchen, a school and a mosque forms the fully endowed charitable complex. **OPPOSITE, LOWER** Inside, under the kitchen's vaulted dome, head cook Samir Jaber carries on a nearly 470-year-old tradition with a pot of *yakhni bazela*, or pea stew.





LEFT These pages open a deed of trust issued by Ottoman Sultan Suleiman, **BELOW RIGHT**, for the waqf, or pious foundation, that included a madrasah, or school, the soup kitchen and more. The 49-page document details the buildings, the terms of their operation and maintenance, as well as the sources of revenue that would fund its charitable services. The deed placed the waqf under the patronage of the sultan's wife, Haseki Hurrem Sultan, **BELOW LEFT**, who Europeans often called Roxolana in reference to her Slavic heritage in what is now Ukraine. **LOWER LEFT** Yusuf Natsheh, director of archeology for the Jerusalem Islamic Waqf, which oversees all of the city's Islamic endowments, grew up near the charitable complex and recalls how "as children we looked in awe at the huge cooking pot and at the high chimneys."

"I think today is molokiya," one man said, referring to the popular soup dish of spinach-like jute mallow leaves, simmered in a broth and ladled atop rice mixed with chunks of meat. His companion, aged similarly somewhere either side of 60, snuffed noncommittally and stamped his feet to fend off the chill. Like everyone in the little group, each man carried a shopping bag that held plastic tubs scrubbed clean of their original ice cream, olives, sheep's cheese or other comestible.

That morning was roughly the 170,000th time in almost 500 years that these doors would open. But they are not doors to a restaurant. They open to a high, domed hall with stainless steel counters and, behind them, hot vats of soup and stew that is given away daily to those who visit. For this is probably the oldest continuously working charitable soup kitchen in the world: Khaski Sultan Imaret.

The namesake is a key to its story and its founding patron, a woman who never herself passed through its doors. European history remembers her as Roxolana, but that was just a nickname derived from the place of her birth in around 1502: Ruthenia, known today as Ukraine. At that time the power of the Ottoman dynasty was expanding and,



the throne, he broke with royal tradition and declared Hurrem Sultan his one and formal wife. As such, she was granted the imperial title *Khaski Hurrem Sultan*, which translates roughly, "Sultan's Own Joy."

Hurrem Sultan, says Leslie Peirce, author of *Empress of the East: How a European Slave Girl Became Queen of the Ottoman Empire*, "created a whole new paradigm of a political woman." Throughout her life she exercised influence on political and diplomatic affairs. She also devoted herself to charity, establishing mosques, schools, hospitals and community institutions around the empire, especially in the capital, Istanbul, and in the holy cities of Makkah, Madinah and Jerusalem.

"My friends and I used to go get free soup from the kitchen of Khaski Sultan. I remember the funny shapes of the pots in which we got the soup. As children we looked in awe at the huge cooking pot and at the high chimneys and main dome over the kitchen."

So recalls Yusuf Natsheh from his days as a boy in the early 1960s. Natsheh grew up to become director of archeology for Jerusalem Islamic Waqf, or office of Islamic endowments. He is also a world authority on the history of the city and has written much



When the Ottomans took control over Jerusalem in the early 16th century, they added halls, stables, granaries and ovens to the palace. They seem to have established some sort of public kitchen in or beside the building even before the date Hurrem Sultan formally chartered her charitable institution as a waqf on May 24, 1552. The complex was named al-Imara al-Amira, from the Ottoman meaning a building that provides food—particularly soup—as a charity, and it became known also as Takiyah, a word also of Ottoman origin meaning public kitchen. Today almost everyone knows it simply as Khaski Sultan, after its royal patron.

Khaski Sultan's 470-year-old charter remains partly in force. It was set up to fund the kitchen

TOP The palace sits near Jerusalem's Dome of the Rock, and its 25 rooms, courtyard and dome make it the largest nonreligious construction in the Old City. **RIGHT** Tin-plated and hammered-copper cauldrons that measure more than a meter in diameter, including these that were used in the 16th century, helped the kitchen serve soup to as many as 1,000 people per day—about the same number who are served from today's pots. **LOWER.**

on how Jerusalem's famous soup kitchen came about.

The kitchen, he explains, is housed in a palace, which was—and still is—the largest nonreligious building inside the walls of Jerusalem's Old City. It was built in the latter 14th century by another woman, but of her we know little. Her name was Lady Tunshuq al-Muzaffariya (or, due to a possible error by a copyist, Tansuq), and she may have come from southern Iran following conquests by Amir Timur, known in the West as Tamerlane. What is obvious is that she arrived with enough wealth to build a 25-room, four-staircase house that extends from a hall at ground level to a cross-vaulted mezzanine and a reception area above with a courtyard.

It stands now bounded by the narrow, steep lanes just west of the al-Aqsa Mosque compound.

Hurrem Sultan exercised political influence unprecedented for a woman in the Ottoman court in addition to her devotion to charitable institutions.





Preparing the day's soup begins at 6 a.m. under the direction of head cook Samir Jaber, **TOP LEFT**, with help from Muhannad Idrees, **TOP CENTER**, Yazan Takkesh, **OPPOSITE, TOP LEFT** (in bright blue shirt) and Nozwa Kark, whose hands appear peeling garlic, **ABOVE CENTER**. Together they prepare one meal a day: On this day, it's yakhni bazela, pea stew. Most recipes take three to four hours to prepare and require 50 to 70 kilograms of varying combinations of rice, vegetables, mutton, and beef or chicken. When the doors open, men, women and children from recipient families bring their own reusable containers. There are never leftovers, says Jaber.

with revenues gathered from properties in villages around Jerusalem and even as far away as Nablus, Gaza and Tripoli in modern Lebanon, including homes, shops, markets, windmills, water mills and soap factories, as well as taxes on land and individuals.

The charter also specified roles for 49 employees, from manager, revenue collector and pantry supervisor to a hierarchy of cooks and bakers, dishwashers, repair crews, a door-keeper, a floor sweeper and a garbage man, but most of these have not

Pandemic-driven job losses have spurred demand, and Jaber estimates more than 200 families now benefit every day.

been filled for centuries. The charter even defines precisely what food is to be cooked: a soup of onions, clarified butter, garbanzo beans and seasonal ingredients such as squash or lemon. It is to be prepared each morning with rice and each evening with burghul (cracked wheat), and it should be served at both times with an exact measure of bread.

"Soup was both a real and symbolic dish," states Amy Singer

in her 2002 book *Constructing Ottoman Beneficence: An Imperial Soup Kitchen in Jerusalem*. "It represented the most basic form of nourishment, the minimal meal of subsistence, and the food to which even the poor could aspire daily."

The years saw gradual change. By the 19th century Khaski Sultan employed many fewer staff as population patterns shifted and demand fell. From two meals a day, distribution dropped to one. Nowadays Jerusalem's Jordanian-supported Waqf department has taken over management of the kitchen, including the purchase of food and payment of salaries. With the Tunshuq Palace, Khaski Sultan now forms part of Dar al-Aytam al-Islamiyya (Islamic Orphanage), which is comprised of a vocational training center, school, mosque, workshops and affiliated institutions that together occupy a full block in the heart of the city. But the food has remained constant.

"Wheat soup is the base for everything," says Jerusalemite author Khalil Assali, explaining how Khaski Sultan's simple broth still serves as a foundation for traditional home recipes.

Natsheh writes that the people of Jerusalem "used to have soup instead of breakfast, mainly because of poverty." Some families, however, want the soup "for the distinct taste, which one couldn't get in regular home cooking. It was often sweetened with sugar, and some would add lard and nuts. A group of well-off merchants would [send out for this soup] because of its taste, and because they believed there was a blessing in eating it. Thus soup in Jerusalem was not for the poor only, but also for the rich."

From the hubbub of Khan al-Zeit, one of the Old City's main



market streets, a turn down the narrow lane named ‘Aqabat al-Takiyah, which loosely means Soup Kitchen Hill, once known as ‘Aqabat al-Sitt, The Lady’s Hill, after Lady Tunshuq offers one of the airiest street-level views in an otherwise densely enclosed historic urban core. Here, breezes drift unobstructed from the Mount of Olives, in sight due east. This was where Lady Tunshuq built, on the side of the hill facing al-Aqsa Mosque where Khaski Sultan still stands.

Samir Jaber has been one of its chefs since 2019. “Wheat soup was cooked here from the beginning until today. It’s famous. Some people like to add sugar to it at home, others like to add salt. So we cook it plain, though the wheat gives a sweetish flavor,” he says.

Jaber and four other employees now keep the kitchen going. Work begins at 6 a.m. with preparation of the day’s soup or, as it might be regarded nowadays, stew, as the choice of ingredients has improved much since 1552. One day there might be chicken and cauliflower stew with rice; the day after might see beef and beans; later in the week might come mutton, okra or molokiya.

The quantities involved indicate how important Khaski Sultan remains to Jerusalem society. Every day, Jaber says, kitchen staff cook 50 kilograms of rice. Depending on the menu, they will prepare 70 kilograms of mutton or beef, or 110 kilograms of chicken, plus matching quantities of vegetables. Employees nowadays get weekends off, but during the holy month of Ramadan the kitchen works seven days a week and, later in the Islamic calendar, offers special meals to mark the festival of Eid al-Adha.

There are never leftovers, Jaber says. He estimates that until the COVID-19 pandemic, about 135 Palestinian Arab families, both Muslim and Christian, had been receiving food from the kitchen daily. With each family averaging six or seven members, that totaled nearly 1,000 hungry mouths. This past year, as the

pandemic has spurred demand higher due to job losses among many of the city’s family breadwinners, Jaber estimates more than 200 families now benefit every day.

Outside in the chill of the December wind, noon had already approached. Among those waiting in line, Nozawa Karki, 44, had walked over from her home in Haret al-Sadiyya, a neighborhood of the Old City, carrying one carton for stew and another for rice. She had done the same for the last few months, she said, since the pandemic had stopped her husband from working. She was grateful for Khaski Sultan’s assistance during her time of need—and for the quality of its stews.

“This is like home-cooked food. It’s fresh and delicious. There’s never any need to add anything to it,” she said.

“This is an important part of Jerusalem’s history,” said Jaber, who, after opening the kitchen’s metal doors, turned to the sweetly steaming cauldrons to ladle out portions to another patron. “I am proud of our history and proud to work here.”

The author thanks Maram Summren in Jerusalem for her help in preparation of this article.



Matthew Teller is a UK-based writer, journalist, broadcaster, and documentary-maker for the BBC and other international media. He contributes regularly to *AramcoWorld*. Follow him on Twitter @matthewteller and at matthewteller.com. **Mostafa Alkharouf** is a documentary photojournalist with the Anadolu Agency based in East Jerusalem whose work, focused on daily life in Palestine, has been published globally.



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Dome of the Rock: Jan / Feb 2009; Sep / Oct 1996

M I L E S T O N E S T O M A



MAKKAH AND MADINAH

Written by PETER HARRIGAN

Photographed by PETER SANDERS

“The Arabs refer to stones as *al-khawalid al-sama'a* (‘mute immortals’) to emphasize not only their seeming permanence but also their silence.”

—HAMZA YUSUF

This is a linear tale, but it begins close to the middle. In the spring of 2005, to the side of a gravel track between rocky hills about halfway along the ancient caravan route between the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah in western Saudi Arabia, Abdullah Alkadi spotted a solitary, upright stone. About a meter tall, standing like a wind- and sand-worn sentinel, “it was clear that this was not there by chance,” he recorded afterward. “The stone had been sculpted and purposefully placed there.”

Alkadi was amid searches for historic sites that had connections to specific verses that appear in the Qur’an. He was focused particularly on those along the route of the Hijra, the migration in 622 CE of the Prophet Muhammad and his early followers from Makkah some 450 kilometers north—mostly along the caravan route—to the place where they would build the first mosque and establish the first Muslim community: Madinah. Alkadi knew that historical sources made references to milestones that helped travelers along this route, but other than boundary markers near the edges of the holy cities themselves, no such stones had yet been identified along the route, and the sources offered little in the way of description.

“Much of our work was conducted on foot,” recalls Alkadi from his home in al-Khobar, along Saudi Arabia’s east coast, where he has served as vice president of Studies, Development and Community Services at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University in

“It was clear that this was not there by chance,” says Abdullah Alkadi, who in 2005 encountered what is now catalogued as milestone 12 while conducting field research along the route of the Prophet Muhammad’s journey across the desert plateaus and through the rocky hills between Makkah and Madinah.



Weathered and leaning as if to point direction as well as mark distance, milestone 41 lies along a portion of the caravan route that was abandoned almost 1,000 years ago in favor of a path closer to the coast. This, Alkadi observes, appears to have resulted in the preservation of a greater percentage of milestones than have been found to date on other parts of the route. **LEFT** The flat basalt slab of milestone 28 is one of several with inscriptions in a style indicating they were written before the middle of the ninth century CE. Alkadi believes the Arabic words *khamsa mil* (five mil) refer to the distance to the nearest postal station, a string of which had been established by that time along the route at intervals of 12 mil called *barid*. This was a distance that allowed a camel-mounted rider to deliver and return to station in the same day.

monoliths. The effort to quarry, carry and set this basalt stone clearly spoke to the significance of the task. Was it a landmark to help travelers follow the road? Or was it, as Alkadi hoped, also a distance marker?

The discovery, he says, “triggered a 16-year, obsessive quest,” involving more than 50 trips to segments of the caravan road and innumerable hours of background research and mapping “to seek out more marker stones and establish their significance and relationship to each other.” This stone is now one of 63 milestones Alkadi has identified, and it is number 12 of the 55 recorded along the route in his book published this year in Arabic and English, *Milestones of Arabia*.

Babylonians, Egyptians and people of the Indus Valley all began to pave roads more than 6,000 years ago, but it was Romans who are first known to have used stones to measure off distances

Dammam as well as a professor at its College of Architecture and Planning. He holds a doctorate in urban and regional planning from Portland State University in Oregon, USA.

When he and his research companions found the stone, he recounts, they discovered with a bit of digging that about one-third of it lay buried, which had provided it the stability to remain standing for centuries.

Marking paths and roads with stone was practiced also along other desert caravan roads in the Arabian Peninsula. Most markers were cairns—conical piles of stones—rather than



along them. Romans also gave us the mile, from the Latin *mille passus*—1,000 paces, counting one pace each time the left foot contacted the ground. (Each pace was equivalent to five Roman feet, and thus the Imperial Roman mile measured 5,000 Roman feet.)

Arabs used a similar word: *mil*, pronounced like a homonym for “meal.” However, scholars have long been uncertain not only whether the mil’s relationship to Latin is derivative or coincidental, but also how a mil was measured and how its distance was defined.

Like Egyptians, Sumerians, Romans and others, Arabs too used the human body for standards of measure: the width of a finger, a handspan, the length of a foot or a forearm, up to the

largest unit, a full arm span. Four thousand arm spans was one way to calculate a mil, but a mil could also be counted off by steps, or by the distance an arrow would fly from a bow or, perhaps most intriguingly, by the distance the eye can distinguish a human figure on flat land.

Etymology helps here. *Mil*, explains Alkadi, comes from

TOP Alkadi measures milestone 19 at 1.6 meters. The caravan and pilgrimage route here is used today by off-roaders, who have long known about the milestone, but it was only when Alkadi connected it with the caravan-route milestone system that it became more than a mysterious local curiosity. **ABOVE** The 18th milestone, Alkadi notes, “was found in two large pieces that fit together perfectly.” He and a field team excavated the pieces, stood up the base and replaced the top.

TOP: AHMAD AL AHMARI; LOWER: ZAID AHMED; OPPOSITE, TOP: MUHAMMAD AL-FARIDY; PREVIOUS SPREAD: ABD ALFATAH TAWAKEL

the root *mayala*, which means to lean toward something and approach it. One of its plurals is *amyal*, which is the word used historically for milestones in Arabic. This might indicate that the Arab mil was—at least in its origins—derived from references to visual distance. (Today, the Arabic word for “italics” is *maa’il*.)

Historical accounts extending back to pre-Islamic times, Alkadi found, offered distances for the mil that appeared to range from around 1,500 meters to nearly 1,800 meters. With this in mind, he set out to find more milestones along the Madinah-to-Makkah route, the road Muslim pilgrims and merchants historically have called *darb al-anbiya*, the Road of the Prophets: It is believed that in addition to the Hijra of the Prophet Muhammad, Abraham, Moses and Jesus also traveled this road, whose full reach extends north all the way to Jerusalem and south down the coast into Yemen.

“My hope was that if I could locate sufficient milestones, I would be able to survey distances between them and come up with precise measurements for the mil,” says Alkadi.

He and his driver set off over the rough terrain, along the assumed route, using the odometer to approximate 1.6 kilometers,

1. The first milestone found to date lies south of Madinah along the first of the route’s seven *marahil* (sing. *marhalah*), the name given to a distance of 24 mil and equivalent to a day’s ride. 2. “Shorter and stockier,” Alkadi noted about milestone 2, whose shape is unusual among the others, most of which were quarried and hewn to thin, vertical proportions. 8. Solitary amid the flood-prone al-Qahah Valley, milestone 8 is one of only two discovered along the route’s fifth *marhalah*. 9. In the same valley, the flat dolorite slab of milestone 9, ABOVE, shows rocks piled around it in a pattern that appears to have been formed by the flows of flash floods.



9

as today 1,609 meters comprises the statute mile still in use mostly in the US and the UK. The terrain became rougher, and so they walked. They found an intact granite stone, well off what seemed to be the track yet larger than anything around it, but this one had fallen. They kept going, and they found another. With three sequential stones, Alkadi later was able to measure and compare their precise distances from each other, and thus continue searching with more precision, working in an arc at a uniform distance—or a multiple of it—from each identified milestone.

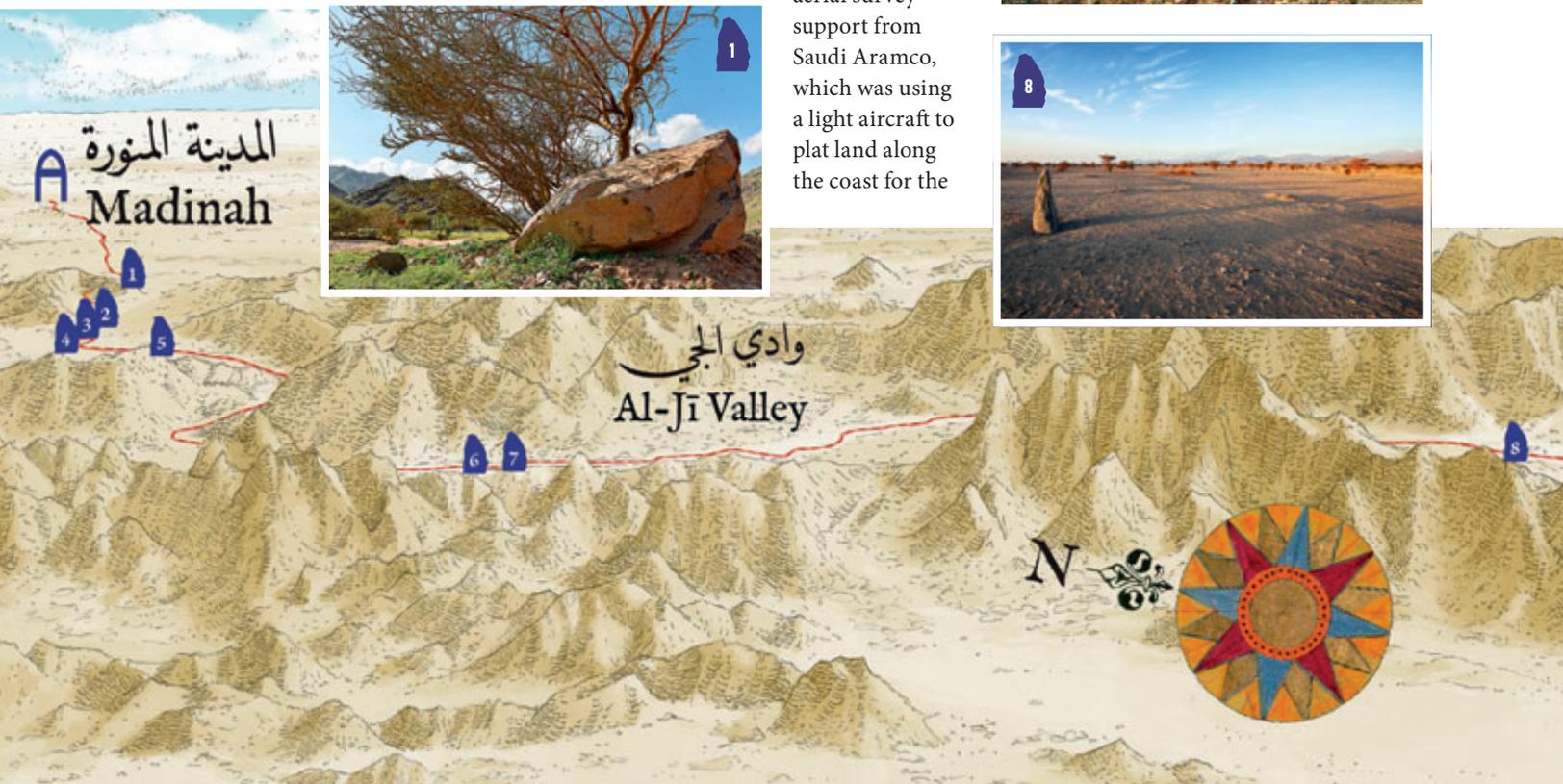
In 2008 Alkadi enlisted aerial survey support from Saudi Aramco, which was using a light aircraft to plat land along the coast for the



2



8





points at the boundaries of each holy city's *haram*, or sacred precinct, within which lie Madinah and Makkah. He surveyed, measured and photographed each stone standing, prone or part-buried; whole, split or in fragments. The distances between adjacent stones vary from today's statute mile of 1,609 meters by only a few meters. As for the 133 more milestones Alkadi expects once stood along the route but have not yet been located, he anticipates that he may yet be able to find about half of them—probably in fragments, entirely buried or both—and that the others will never be found, having disappeared due to removal, modern construction activity, flash floods or other vagaries of time, elements and human action.

construction of the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology. But even the best geological mapping technology, it turned out, could not pinpoint individual stones. The focus returned to footwork on the ground.

To date Alkadi has located 63 milestones along the 430 kilometers of the Darb al-Anbiya between its historic end

Professor Saad Al-Rashid is a leading expert on the history of desert travel and a former deputy minister for antiquities in Saudi Arabia. In 2020 he published an updated edition to *Medieval Routes to Mecca: A Study of the Darb Zubaydah Pilgrim Trail*, the road that since the ninth century linked what is now Iraq to the holy cities.

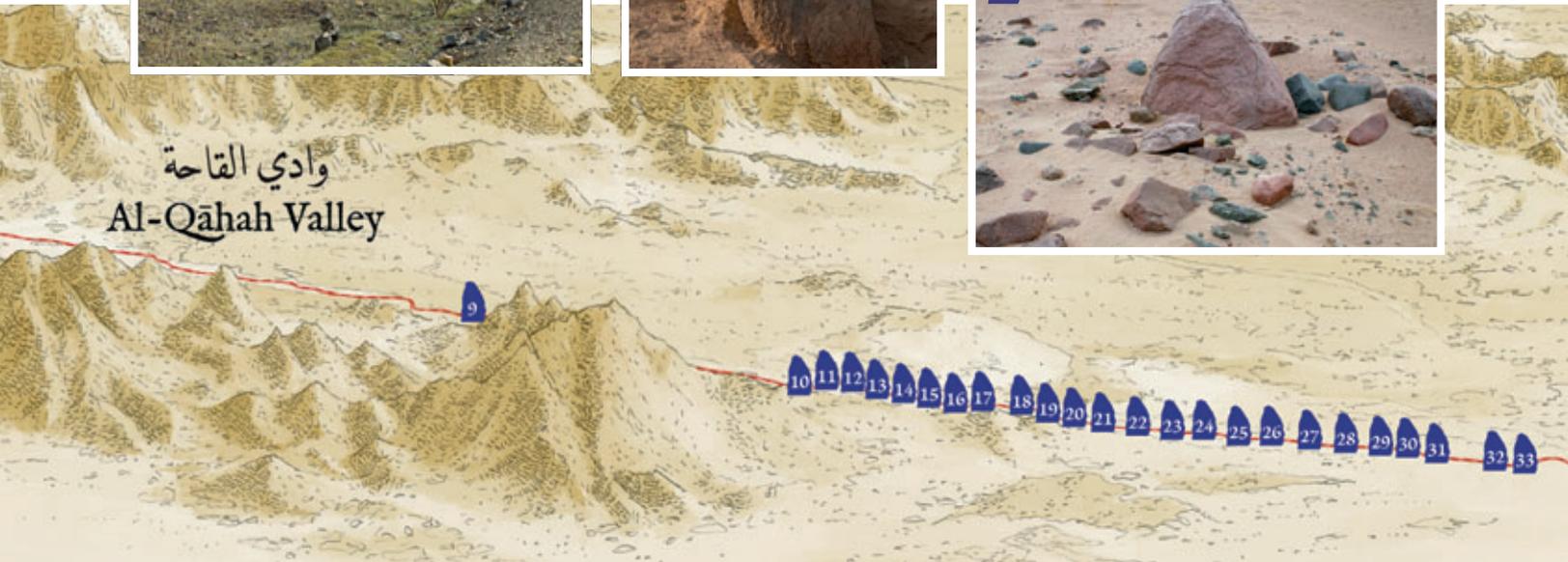
Alkadi's work, he says, "is impressive in the way he has employed modern techniques and instrumentation to follow this ancient route between Madinah and Makkah and mark out stopping points and find milestones," he says. Some of these stones, he

11. Located at the site of al-Abwa, a way station mentioned in historical accounts but of which no trace remains, milestone 11 was discovered lying flat, barely distinguishable from its surroundings. **17.** "Its weathered silhouette mimics the human form," says Alkadi of milestone 17. The Arabic root of the word *mil* carries references to the distance at which a human figure can be distinguished on a flat plain. **18.** After standing up the base and replacing the top, milestone 18 measures 1.7 meters. **19.** Another view of milestone 19 evokes the loneliness and harsh conditions of much of the historic route. **23.** Easily mistaken for a natural boulder, milestone 23 was found through distance measurement.



18: ZAID AHMED

وادي القاحه
Al-Qāhah Valley





adds, are all the more interesting for the Arabic inscriptions and tribal markings they carry. “We can now look forward to further research to build on Dr. Alkadi’s important studies and fieldwork.”

For example, the establishment of the distance of the mil helps historians understand more precisely not only the locations of places mentioned in historical sources, but also the measures of other units of distance. Important among these caravan routes was the *marhalah*, equivalent to 24 mil. Alkadi points to the explanation of the term written by the 13th-century Arabic lexicographer Ibn Manzur, whose *Lisan al-*

Arab (The Tongue of the Arabs) related the word *marhalah* to *rahilah*, which refers to a pack animal and alludes to when cargoes are set down for rest:

in other words, a day’s ride on camelback. Caravans were thus in most cases able to conveniently cover a *marhalah* before making camp for the night.

While such a practical standard of measurement was probably

49. The marking on this stone is called *wasm*, which refers to Bedouin tribal markings used both to brand livestock and to demarcate territory; its date is unknown. **52.** Discovered partially buried after multiple searches, milestone 52 shows a large, inscription that reads *ighfir muwaly al-din* (O Allah, forgive the protector of the faith). **ABOVE** Alkadi brushes sand and dust from milestone 52.





55: JAMAL SHAWALI; OPPOSITE, TOP: AHMAD AL AHMARI

in use in various forms in other lands for millennia, with the coming of Islam in the seventh century CE and the codification of its canonical practices that followed, marked distances like mil and derived multiples such as the *marhalah* took on religious significances, too. The *marhalah*, explains Alkadi, “was used to determine the exact minimum distance the faithful could travel on a journey in order to be able to shorten or combine prayer.

The distance would also make travelers eligible for other dispensations, including [exemption from] fasting in Ramadan.” Alkadi goes on to explain that to earn such dispensations, travelers were required to be on a journey covering at least two *marhalah* in the same direction.

Alkadi continues to describe how a half *marhalah*, or 12 mil, was used in the late seventh century CE when Mu’awiyah, the



55. The southernmost milestone discovered to date was found near the *harrat* (lava field) of Dajnan. On the stone is inscribed the word *milayn* (two mil). **ABOVE** In search of traces of more inscriptions, rubbings were made on some stones, such as milestone 9.



حرة ضجنان
Harrat Dajnān

جبل جمدان
Mount Jumdan



first caliph of the Umayyads, who were based in Damascus, organized postal courier services using a system of half-day relays. The postal half-marhalah was called *al-barid*, and the word is still in use today to refer generally to mail services. “The postal stations were set up every 12 miles [19 kilometers] along the major roads of the expanding Islamic empire,” says Alkadi. Each official courier would make his delivery to the next station and, that same day, return to his own station—a roundtrip, one-day journey of one marhalah.

Using the distance of the marhalah, the route from Madinah to Makkah was divided into 11 days of travel, with the last day being shorter by six mil.

“I was determined to locate the chain of milestones along all 11 marhalah,” says Alkadi. The first stone discovered, which turned out to be 12th among the 55 he sequenced in his book, turned out also to lie along the sixth marhalah, which yielded more stones than any other marhalah: 21. Sometime between the ninth and 11th centuries CE, he explains, this stretch of the route was abandoned in favor of a more westerly track. Thus falling into disuse, the sixth marhalah truly become a road less traveled. Additionally, its location distant from modern towns and roads helped make its milestones the best-preserved of any part of the road.

This does not mean they were easy to find. Some presented daunting challenges. Alkadi was determined to complete the

sequence from milestones 10 to 30, but in 2016 milestone 29 was proving elusive. It took six trips to the area over the next two years, and each time, though armed with new data and multiple remeasurements, Alkadi found only small stones strewn on the surface, none larger than 20 centimeters across and none in any recognizable pattern.

“We made a decision to dig around all these stones to see if we could establish one as a tip of a milestone. Ultimately, the patient surface excavations paid off with the find of a buried granite milestone which, when uncovered in 2018, measured an impressive 170 centimeters high and 60 by 45 in girth.” Once the milestone was uncovered, measured and photographed, Alkadi says, “it was carefully reburied in its resting place.”

Its neighbor, milestone 28, an “angular, flat-surfaced slab lying in sand,” was also difficult to find, but it has proven especially valuable for a two-word inscription at its tip that helped date the stone: *khamisa mil* (five mil). The reference to distance is not significant, Alkadi explains, but how it is inscribed: The letters lack the markings that came into use in the mid-ninth century CE that made each Arabic letter fully distinct. Other inscriptions on other milestones, too, use similar letter forms, and together they point to dates for the milestones not later than the first half of the ninth century.

Other stones he has found in fragments, Alkadi believes, may have been torn from their bases and smashed against other

Alkadi shows how a broken fragment of milestone 35 fits in its original position. This year he has found eight more milestones, which bring the known total to 63. More can yet be found, he believes, although many of the undiscovered stones may prove to be permanently lost either through removal or destruction beyond recognition by natural and human interventions. Some may simply lie fully buried; still others may be in fragments as yet too small to have been recognized.





Milestone 28, found in 2012 lying on the ground, became a curiosity to Alkadi and his fellow researchers when they returned to it in 2018 and found that someone—they knew not who—had returned it to its original vertical position. **LOWER** Alkadi maps out further research following publication this year of *Milestones of Arabia*, which appears on the table next to his map.

stones during flash floods. Throughout the mountains of the Hijaz—western Saudi Arabia—vast catchment areas can produce powerful torrents that rush down toward the Red Sea littoral along riverbeds that flow only in flood.

Along the last marhalah, which ends at the boundary marker of the haram of Makkah, Alkadi could not locate a single milestone. Similarly, along the first marhalah beginning at the haram boundary of Madinah, Alkadi found none until the second marhalah, where a milestone lies on the ground at the base of a tree 33 mil from the Prophet’s Mosque. This absence of discoveries at either end of the route is most likely a result of disturbances from construction and various expansions of the holy cities over many years, and recently in particular, Alkadi says. Similarly, not a single milestone has been found along the fourth marhalah, and in the ninth and 10th, he located only one on each stretch.

In 2012 photographer Peter Sanders made the first of what would become three trips to join Alkadi and his team to photograph the milestones. “These were tough field trips, and they made a deep and lasting impression,” says Sanders, who over 55 years has photographed Muslim lands and cultures around the world. From his home in northwest London, Sanders reflects that the milestones were placed “to guide pilgrims and wayfarers to

LOWER: ABDULLAH AL-BAZ; NEXT SPREAD: JAMAL SHAWALI





“Rain, wind and dust storms coupled with the humidity coming from the Red Sea less than 13 kilometers away have all weighed heavily on this milestone, contributing to its current inclined position,” writes Alkadi of milestone 39, a solitary, gracefully curved sentinel amid a stark plain traversed now only by the occasional off-road vehicle.

their rightful destination,” and that “with my senses heightened by being in the desert, and my vivid imagination, I sometimes would see bearded faces carved into some of the milestones. They became friends.”

It may not be only Sanders who imagined such things, Alkadi says. The relatively human scale and proportions of so many of the milestones likely offered a kind of anthropomorphic reassurance to travelers in lands where comforts were few and risks were plenty. “They are remarkably similar in dimension to the human form,” he says—even more from a mile or so away, at which distance they might resemble or evoke a fellow traveler. Some, such as milestone 17, even lean in ways that make them resemble a person walking, with the “weathered silhouette, viewed from either direction of travel, appearing remarkably human-like.”

After so many years of letting one thing lead him down the road to another, Alkadi says his next steps will on the one hand take him deeper, and on the other farther. He looks forward to devoting more energy to excavating promising sites in search of further milestones and undertaking surveys of the southern extension of the trade route from Yemen and the northern route up into Palestine. The milestones between Madinah and Makkah—however many are found—he hopes will “encourage and convince government, laypeople, scientists and scholars to recognize the importance of [the] milestones. I know that beyond their unique historic value they can also contribute a lot to our economy,” he says, especially “in terms of its touristic attractions and cultural legacy.”

Al-Rashid too sees opportunities to develop experiential, cultural programs along this route as well as others. “These will enable people to travel and camp along the route by foot and on camelback,” he says, and “feel the rituals of the journey. ... They will enjoy the magnificent desert and mountain scenery of the region and explore along the way. Making such trips will be educational and life-affirming experiences.”

Alkadi also wants to support the restoration of fallen and broken milestones, that they may now serve as sentinels of history, mutely immortal friends to new generations of travelers. Each one, he says, is “one more piece to the rich mosaic of the history of the Arabian Peninsula.” 🌐



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Pilgrim roads: Jan / Feb 2004



Milestones of Arabia. Abdullah H. Alkadi, (Orient East, 2021)



PAKISTANI ART TRUCKS
on a Bridge of
CULTURE

Written by **DIANNA WRAY**
Photographs courtesy of **ART 120**



TOP Jingle Trucks founder and Art 120 executive director Kate Warren, at left, stands with art instructor Sadaf Khan in front of the truck seen by students throughout the Chattanooga, Tennessee, area. Colors decorate every visible bit of the truck and include scenes that represent both Pakistan and Tennessee and help students, like those in this class at Orchard Knob Elementary School, **LEFT**, enjoy making cultural connections.

On one of the last few clear winter days in early 2020, only weeks before the global pandemic began to shutter educational institutions worldwide, a clutch of students from Orchard Knob Elementary in Chattanooga, Tennessee, approached a vibrantly painted Chevrolet truck. Bouncing on the balls of their feet, students waited in turn to climb up on a stool to better see two enormous owls emblazoned on the pickup's hood ringed by pink and magenta roses and intricate geometric designs.

Standing alongside the once-white utility truck, which she had commissioned world-famous Pakistani truck artist Haider Ali, 41, to paint the year before, Kate Warren, founder and executive director of the Chattanooga-based nonprofit Art 120 and creator of its year-old Jingle Truck Program, watched the children approach. The truck was the key to the entire program, an arts-based

outreach Warren established with a grant awarded by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. But the truck art had been created in a world that bore little outward resemblance to the one these children inhabited, one of the poorest schools in the region, set down between the Tennessee River and the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. A quiet reticence loomed: Would the kids be open to it? Warren soon learned they would, indeed.

"It's so pretty," a girl in a raspberry pink sweatshirt whispered, her large brown eyes drinking in the creature painted with such care that it seemed almost possible either birds' amber eyes might blink before the detailed feather-covered wings would flap it away from view.

"See the owls," said Sadaf Khan, the lead instructor for the program, seizing on the moment to explain how truck art works, "how they are lined with orange? You can design anything."

Watching the girl's face, Warren began to relax. The first challenge was always simply getting the kids interested in the art. Now she and Khan, a local artist who immigrated to Chattanooga from Karachi, Pakistan, more than a decade ago, could move on to the larger challenge: helping students fully connect to this art form that has flourished in the country as a means of advertisement, celebration and self-expression.

Barely out of its first year, the Jingle Trucks Program flourished using lively,

interactive, in-person approaches. Warren and Khan had no way of knowing that everything would be upended by COVID-19—and that circumstances would end up giving them the chance to reach even more children through equally creative approaches online.

The idea for Jingle Trucks, which has held roughly 20 events a year since its 2019 launch and has served more than 2,000 area students, stems from one of the darkest events in Chattanooga's recent history: the 2015 fatal shooting of five US Marines and one Naval reservist by a young naturalized US citizen born in Kuwait to Palestinian parents. The shootings sparked anti-Muslim sentiment, and while Chattanooga's mayor had already formed a civic council to address a rise in hate crimes, Warren pondered how she might help.

"I thought to myself that there was another conversation out there that we could be having about this," she said. "I started looking for ways to do that."

It was then she thought of Ali. Warren had worked for Watermark, one of the top art galleries in her hometown of Houston, Texas, where she had also developed ties to Houston's art car scene, which boasts the US's largest annual parade of ornately decorated vehicles. In 2011 she had brought the first art car to Chattanooga as a way of creating opportunities for connections between local artists and the rest of the town, just a year after founding the Chattanooga-based nonprofit Art 120. She

began helping local artists visit schools to help students learn to express themselves through art cars, art bikes, and more.

Warren was attending an art car show in Ohio in 2017 when she noticed a Honda sedan that had been nicknamed “The Smile Car” after two days of brushwork by Ali. His creation featured a scarlet cardinal in the center of its hood, with the word “love” emblazoned just above the grille. A pair of yellow-lidded eyes peered out from the front bumper before giving way to a riot of carefully worked red, yellow, blue, and green patterns, more animals, and lines of cherry and carnation colored roses.

“I was amazed by it,” she recalled. “It looked unlike anything I had ever seen.”

An idea for a partnership began to take shape in her mind.

“I wanted to give kids an understanding of this culture that would focus on whole different aspect of this predominantly Muslim country,” Warren said. “Most of the children growing up here won’t get a more nuanced view of the country otherwise.”

The history of Pakistani truck art—known in Urdu as *Phool Patti* and dubbed “jingle trucks” only recently by US soldiers in the region—started in the 1920s with Bedford trucks that were imported from Great Britain, when what is now modern Pakistan had been under British rule for

more than 60 years. The trucks soon became renowned, attaining popular cult status for their reliability, durability and power. The original truck featured only the cab, the chassis and the engine. The rest of it had to be added on, usually by means of wooden panels secured to each side, according to University of Karachi Professor Durriya Kazi, founder and head of the university’s visual arts program and an expert on the complex history of Pakistani truck art. It became standard to add on seven panels to the sides of the truck and a large wooden crown, called a *taj*, above the cab, with every visible part of the vehicle sporting some decoration.

In the 1940s, as the push for India’s independence from Great Britain and the movement for a postcolonial partition into two states increased, truck art continued to popularize along with the increasingly industrialized economies. It had been a natural artistic evolution, coming out of a long tradition of artists who specialized in painting shrines and palaces while others excelled at the intricate geometric patterns found in henna tattoos. Plus, there was an even older, millennia-long tradition of decorating your mode of transportation as a way of ensuring you would travel safely. “Transportation has always



Decorating modes of transport—from camel saddles to river boats—is a tradition that in Pakistan dates back centuries.

been a form of power and of superstition here,” Kazi said. “In the old days, other ways of getting around, from camel caravans to river boats, were decorated. So the tradition was already there. The bodies of the trucks were built here, and they were designed to be painted.”

Soon drivers began investing in their truck art, from local, rough-road rural delivery drivers to long-haul truckers traversing mountains deep into Afghanistan and Central Asia. They hired professionals, paying a significant portion of income to have the best artists create eye-catching creations to attract the attention of potential customers and bring the drivers luck and protection. “It grew out of Pakistan, out of the instability of the newly formed country,” Kazi explained. “When your country is very unstable and new, you don’t depend on the government or police for safety. You depend on prayers, on the fates, on luck, and that is all manifested in the truck art.”

By the 1990s when Ali was a teenager growing up in Karachi, truck painting was a viable career. His own father had been taught by pioneer truck artist Hajji Hus-sain, and Ali’s father made a good living painting politicians, animals and celebrities

LOWER Images on the truck also include, on the doors, the mockingbird, Tennessee’s state bird, and the chukar, Pakistan’s official bird; elsewhere appears Chattanooga’s Walnut Street Pedestrian Bridge, one of the world’s longest. The side mirrors show both Pakistan’s and Tennessee’s flags. **TOP** World-renowned 41-year-old truck artist Haider Ali has been painting since the age of 8. In 2002 he painted a truck for the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC.





LEFT Khan guides a young participant at Art 120's Jingle Trucks Family Fun Day on the Riverfront in August in Chattanooga, one of the program's several public events intended to help children appreciate how art from different perspectives cultivate common understandings. **RIGHT** Inspired by their encounter with the "jingle truck," each student at the Orchard Knob Elementary School who attended the March 2020 event then had the opportunity to imagine a truck with a personal design.

alongside jokes, talismans and the patterns of roses and shapes that together make the country's truck art so distinctive.

Ali still resides in Karachi, and he has become an acclaimed truck artist since learning to paint at age 8. As he learned, he worked under his father as *shagird*, or apprentice, although he quickly became a *Baraa Ustaad ji*, an experienced artist entrusted with painting images. In 2002 he painted a Bedford truck on the National Mall in Washington, DC, for the Smithsonian Institution, where it is now part of the museum's permanent collection.

When Warren approached Ali with her idea, he immediately agreed. Warren then enlisted the help of Sadaf Khan, who holds two bachelor's degrees in art from the University of Karachi and taught art before moving to the US. Khan had been volunteering with Art 120 as a welding teacher since 2015. Warren knew that with Khan she would have someone on her team who could present the truck art and put it in the context of Pakistani culture. "I was thrilled," Khan said. "I wanted to help bring the kids another view of my culture."

Warren secured a grant through the Doris Duke Foundation's Building Bridges program in 2018, which was aimed at increasing awareness of Islamic cultures throughout the US. This helped fund the program's first truck, which Ali painted with animals native to Tennessee and

"I wanted to give kids an understanding of this culture that would focus on a whole different aspect of this predominantly Muslim country."

—Kate Warren

Pakistan and scenes from Chattanooga and Pakistan such as the city's Walnut Street Pedestrian Bridge and Pakistan's iconic, sharply peaked mountain K2, the second highest in the world. The program emphasizes outreach in economically disadvantaged schools where students have less access to the arts.

"The kids had a lot of questions, not just about Pakistan, but about me. They wanted to know why I cover myself, what my family eats, if there is internet in Pakistan, if there are kings and queens," Khan said, laughing at the memory. "It was beautiful. They were so curious, and once they knew they could ask, we really got to talk. And I was learning too. We were learning about each other's cultures."

Warren says the kids have started talking about their own cultural background, and some students even shared, shyly, that their own families were

Muslim. "It has helped these kids talk about being Muslim in a way they otherwise wouldn't have access to," Khan said.

Once the pandemic halted in-person teaching, Warren and Khan joined the educational platform Nearpod, which supports Zoom and Google Meet. While in-person teaching is still better, she said, the program is now offered online and as a hybrid allowing the group to work flexibly depending on conditions. "Now we're ready for anything," Warren said, mentioning her excitement for being ready to reach deeply rural areas that previously were too distant to arrange programming.

"The main point I keep telling the classes," she said, is that "we are all connected to each other, that we can connect with each other through art, and that's part of why art is so important." 🌐



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THE

NEW YORK

WRITTEN BY

TOM VERDE

The narrow, rectangular lot pressed between 25 and 31 Bridge Street in Lower Manhattan sits empty save for a few precious parking spaces and a row of dumpsters.

A nail salon advertises services on one side, while the White Horse restaurant has bracketed the other since 1641. Across the street, on the ground floor of a steel-and-glass skyscraper, a more modern eatery offers office workers, here in the heart of New York's Financial District, business lunches to go.

But in the mid-17th century, when Anthony Jansen van Salee, one of the young city's most successful yet controversial characters, lived here in a handsome Dutch colonial townhouse, the East River, a few blocks away, could be seen from his doorstep.

Son of a career pirate and known for a hot temper and frequent run-ins with neighbors, authorities and courts, he was actually banished from the city at one point. Thus it might seem surprising that he came to own also several other lots in Manhattan as well as agricultural holdings across the East River in the part of Long Island the Dutch named Breukelen—now Brooklyn—and that he became one of early New York's most-respected citizens. Among his descendants are some of the city's wealthiest Gilded Age families, including the Vanderbilts and the Whitneys. But considering New York's historic role as a melting pot, dating to its founding in 1624 as the Dutch settlement of New Amsterdam, a figure like van Salee fit right in.

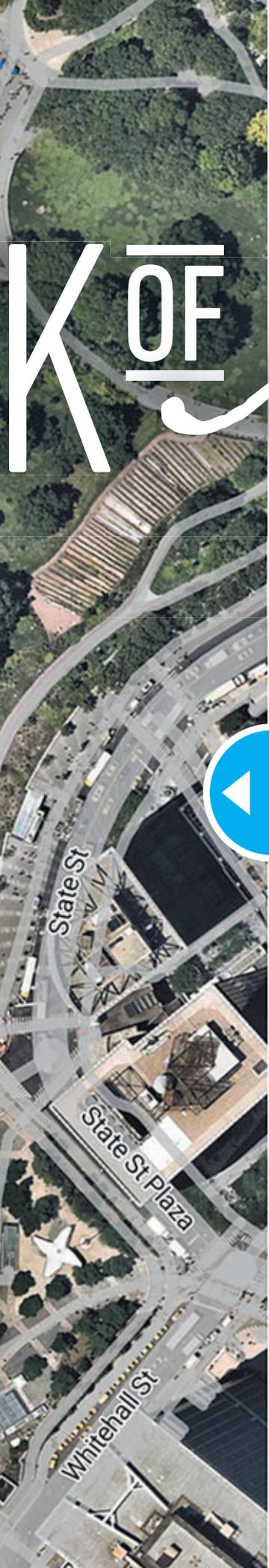
"New Amsterdam was a rather cosmopolitan place, one stop in a vast and expanding

Interactive layering shows how landfill projects have significantly enlarged the area of the southern tip of New York's Manhattan since the drawing of the 17th-century map, **RIGHT**, that depicts what is now the heart of the city's Financial District. Anthony Jansen van Salee owned a house near the middle of the north (right) side of the lower block of Bridge Street.



KOE

*Anthony Fansen
van Salee*



Atlantic world,” says Julie Golia, curator of history, social sciences and government information at the New York Public Library. “There would have been people of different races, ethnicities and religions, everything from slaves to passengers to crew on board ships to merchants.”

Van Salee checked a number of these boxes.

“He was the first person from a Muslim background that we know of who ended up settling and owning land in the territory that became the United States,” explains Kambiz GhaneaBassiri, author of *A History of Islam in America: From the New World to the New World Order* and a professor of religion and humanities at Reed College.

Van Salee’s Islamic roots lie with both parents. His father was Jan Jansen, a rogue privateer from Haarlem in the Netherlands. Originally commissioned to ambush Spanish ships whose commerce competed with the Dutch in the Mediterranean, he eventually turned to independent piracy, attacking any treasure-laden vessel he encountered and flying from his mast whichever flag suited his deception, be it the Dutch standard of the Prince of Orange or the Ottoman crescent.

“New Amsterdam was a rather cosmopolitan place, one stop in a vast and expanding Atlantic world.”

—JULIE GOLIA

military title akin to a naval captain), he joined the crew of Barbary pirate Ivan Dirkie de Veenboer, *aka* Süleyman Reis, another Dutchman who had become a Muslim. (The sincerity of such religious conversions as theirs is a fair question, says Yale University historian Alan Mikhail: “Clearly it was a form of upward mobility, given their circumstances of captivity.”)

After Süleyman Reis died around 1620, Murad Reis moved to the port of Salé, which the Dutch spelled Salee, on the Atlantic coast opposite the modern Moroccan capital, Rabat. Some 80 kilometers south of the Strait of Gibraltar, Salé proved a safe base from which to prey on approaching ships laden with goods from India and Southeast Asia.

“During this period of the 17th century, more and more Dutch and English were moving into the Mediterranean, and Salé, even though it is on the Atlantic coast, was very much a part of the Mediterranean world. So that route became very, very lucrative for pirates of all kinds,” says Mikhail, who is also author of *God’s Shadow: Sultan Selim, His Ottoman Empire, and the Making of the Modern World*.

While nominally subject to the rule of the Moroccan sultan, Salé operated more or less as a semiautonomous city-state whose prosperity owed much to piracy. Reis was appointed governor and commander of the fleet of “Salé Rovers.”



“Anthony van Salee’s land deed is an entry point into essential themes—race, religion, gender and law—that mark Brooklyn’s history across centuries,” says Julie Golia, left, curator for history, social sciences and government at the New York Public Library. This document, signed in 1643 by New Netherland Director General Willem Kieft, affirmed van Salee’s rights to 100 morgens—about 80 hectares—as well as other properties along the south shore of what was then called Breukelen. Under its terms, he paid a portion of his earnings to the Dutch West India Company. Examining the document with Golia are, at center, former Brooklyn Historical Society President Deborah Schwartz and, right, archivist and public historian Maggie Schreiner.

This earned him scorn in the Netherlands. “He behaved strangely, and coarsely disregarded his commission; spared none of the vessels of his own country [and] carried his prizes to Salee to sell his booty,” wrote Dutch pamphleteer Nicolaes van Wasse-naer in 1622.

Years earlier, on a voyage to southern Spain, Reis married Margarita, a woman of Muslim descent from Cartagena, a port city with a history as a Muslim stronghold. The couple had four children, among whom Anthony was the third, born in either 1607 or 1608. Before settling in Salé, the family had moved to Fez and then to Marrakesh, in Morocco.

It was from Salé that Anthony, whose Dutch surname identifies him as “Jan’s son” (Jansen) “from Salé” (van Salee), emigrated around 1625 to Amsterdam. He would have been 17 or 18 years old. Four years later he sailed for New Amsterdam, and on



When this map was drawn in 1639, the Dutch colony of New Netherland was 15 years old. The *bouwerie* (farm) belonging to “Antony du Turck”—Anthony the Turk, as the map’s key lists his name—is marked among some three dozen others at the tip of Manhattan, which is here named Eylant Manatus. It was in this same year van Salee’s conflicts boiled over into a court-ordered expulsion from Eylant Manatus across the river to Bruekelen. This map orients with north to the right, and in addition to Manhattan, it shows the Hudson and East rivers flowing south into Long Island Sound, New Jersey at its top with Staten Island and today’s Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx to the lower right.

the voyage he married Grietje Reyniers, a Dutch Christian.

Dutch colonial records do not specify van Salee’s religion, but they do often refer to him as a Turk, or Anthony the Turk. Later, his property in Brooklyn was known as “the Turk’s farm.” At the time, *Turk* was used by Europeans to refer generically to any Muslim subject of the Ottoman Empire regardless of the person’s actual ethnicity or place of origin.

“It was a cultural designation, a marker that could identify place [of origin] or religion,” says Mikhail.

While the Dutch at this time were increasingly courting commercial and diplomatic relations with the Ottomans to gain advantage in the eastern trade in spices and other luxuries, the Dutch transatlantic enterprise, the Dutch West India Company (GWC), was seeking to muscle in on the North American fur trade against French and English competition.

Anchoring that effort was New Amsterdam: part trading center, part military outpost, part breadbasket for the colony. Settlers like van Salee either leased or bought land from the company, and they established farms (*bouweries*) where they grew crops and planted orchards for the colony. Most individual homes also had gardens and areas for livestock in tightly packed plots of four hectares. The tidy properties fanned out from Fort Amsterdam at the southern tip of Manhattan, an

area now known as the Battery, to a walled palisade—now Wall Street—along streets that emulated Amsterdam, with canals (hence Canal Street in Lower Manhattan) and houses with Dutch-style stepped facades. Beyond the palisade lay larger farms of 20 to 80 hectares. Some settlers lived beyond the palisade, and others lived in town, where neighborly squabbles frequently turned nasty and litigious.

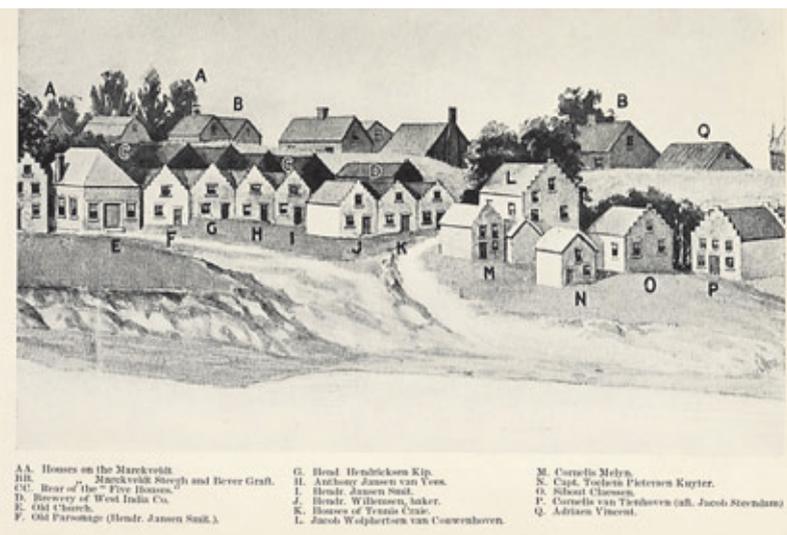
“I think what’s really notable about this very small, backwoods colony at the edge of the Atlantic world is that justice was often governed by rumor and slander,” says Golia.

Van Salee found himself at the center of more than a few legal scrapes beginning around 1638. These included accusations of stealing firewood, paying owed wages with a goat that died, fatally siccing a dog on the livestock of a neighbor and brandishing a pistol at a government official. In April of that year, a disgruntled tailor testified that van Salee was “a Turk, a rascal, and a horned beast.” The exasperated judge ruled that both parties go home and “live with each other in peace as becomes neighbors” under threat of a fine of 25 guilders (about \$360) if they failed to comply.

A number of the lawsuits van Salee faced were filed in the wake of confrontations with the Rev. Eveardus Bogardus, *domine* (pastor) of the Dutch Reformed Church, who had arrived in New

“He was the first person from a Muslim background that we know of who ended up settling and owning land in the territory that became the United States.”

—KAMBIZ GHANEABASSIRI



A.A. Houses on the Marckwilt; B.H. Breuckwilt Slough and Bever Graft; C.H. Rear of the "Five Houses"; D. Brewery of West India Co.; E. Old Church; F. Old Parsonage (Hendr. Jansen Stak.); G. Hendr. Hensbricken Kip; H. Anthony Jansen van Yves; I. Hendr. Jansen Stak.; J. Hendr. Willetzen, baker; K. Houses of Tinnen Caste; L. Jacob Wolphertzen van Coenenhoven; M. Cornelia Meien; N. Capt. Toerleis Pieterzen Kuyter; O. Sibout Claessen; P. Cornelia van Tinsheven (all Jacob Steendam); Q. Adriaen Vincent.

TOP The oldest structure in New York state is the smaller part—to the right—of what is now the Wyckoff Museum and farm in Brooklyn. The 1652 illustration **ABOVE** shows houses of similar design in newly settled Breukelen.

Amsterdam in 1633. A controversial figure himself, Bogardus had frequent disputes with the colony's Director General, whom he denounced from his pulpit with accusations of everything from mismanagement to Satanic collusion.

The first formal conflict between the pastor and van Salee took place in June 1638, and it involved a debt of 319 guilders that Bogardus claimed van Salee owed him (the origin of the debt is unclear). The accused acknowledged the debt but countered that in fact the minister owed him 74 guilders. The court ruled that Bogardus owed no more than seven guilders, and van Salee refused to accept the judgement.

"If [the] Domine will have his money at once, then I had rather lose my head than pay him in this wise, and if he insist on [having] the money, it will yet cause bloodshed," van Salee declared, as recorded by the Register of the Provincial Secretary.

What followed were months of back-and-forth slander in which Bogardus and his allies impugned not only van Salee's character but also that of his wife. Meanwhile the court, mindful of his

threat against Bogardus, decreed in October 1638 that "Anthony Jansen from Salee is hereby forbidden to carry any arms on this side of the Fresh water [about where Canal Street is now] with the exception of a knife and an axe."

Still the rancor continued. In April 1639 New Amsterdam's Fiscal (the equivalent of an attorney general) petitioned the court to banish van Salee from Manhattan "inasmuch as the good inhabitants daily experience much trouble from him and his wife." Director General Kieft acceded, yet in practically the same breath granted van Salee's request for "a tract of land containing one hundred morgens" (about 80 hectares) in Breukelen. As part of the arrangement, van Salee agreed to pay the GWC 100 guilders annually for 10 years, after which he would "pay such rent as other free people are bound to pay." It was a shrewd move on Kieft's part: He could have put the van Salees on the next boat back to the Netherlands, but by banishing them and giving them land, he kept the couple out of the way but on his books. Plus, with the stroke of a pen and a wave of goodbye, he added another sizeable plot to the colony's lands under cultivation.

For van Salee's part, the deal proved equally beneficial. The edict apparently only applied to his physical residency on Manhattan, since he continued to buy and sell property on the island, which he leased.

"So, he's making money off of his land out on the frontier, but he's also continuing to operate within the growing economy of New Amsterdam," says Golia.

She and other historians of New Netherland have debated whether, despite the colony's multicultural makeup, van Salee's race and possibly faith played roles in his banishment.

What seems most likely, Golia speculates, is that as a Muslim, it wasn't so much what van Salee said or did but what he didn't do: attend church or donate to the parish from which Reverend Bogardus took his living.

"Both Anthony and Grietje showed a defiance toward the authority system," and in New Amsterdam, says Golia, that meant the church.

Mikhail suspects that a land grab may have been another motivation for ousting van Salee, who was sitting on a good bit of what yet remains some of the priciest real estate in the Americas.

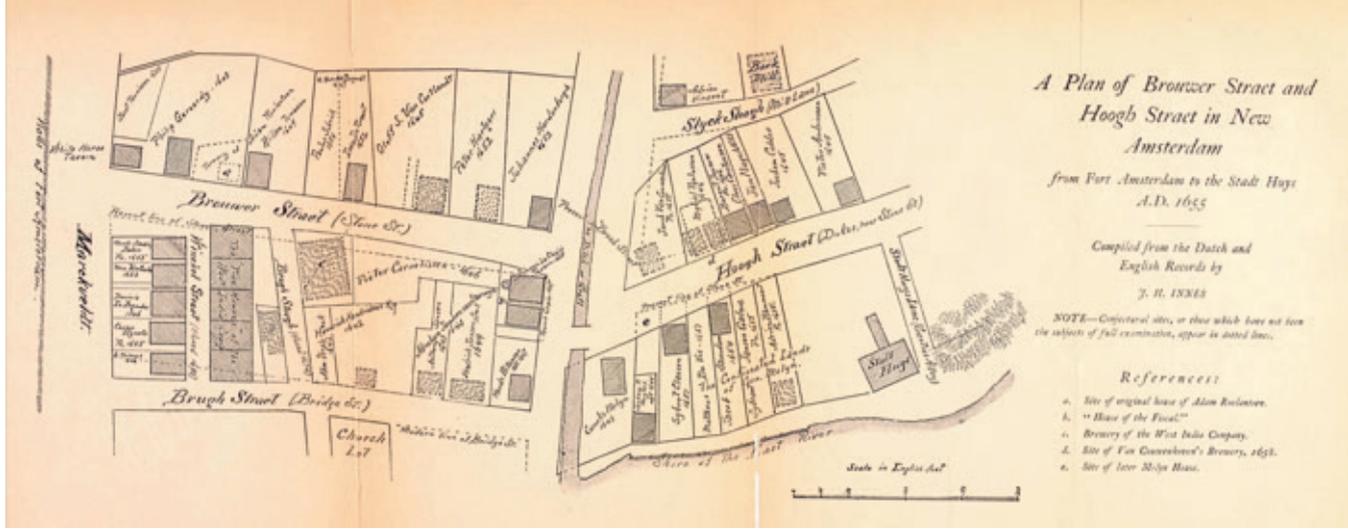
"New Netherland started off as a trading post, and it was not meant to be a permanent settlement in the first few years," Mikhail points out. "Once it became more permanent, things like land claims and property disputes became much more intense."

Florida chiropractor Brian Smith, a direct descendant of van Salee, agrees. In 2013 Smith wrote a biography of his ancestor for fellow descendants. In his own review of Dutch colonial court records, Smith concluded that many of the lawsuits coincided with unsuccessful attempts to buy out van Salee's land on Manhattan.

"All of a sudden there were all these slander charges: nine in a month. When I analyzed the lawsuits, I said, 'Wait a minute, it's everybody else filing lawsuits against them. They're not filing lawsuits.' Of all the lawsuits I found, they filed one-third of them, but two-thirds of them were against them, the majority of which they won, which means they were in the right," Smith says.

What is more certain is that van Salee

In 1674, two years before his death, van Salee was listed among "the 1,000," a tax list of the wealthiest residents of what was by then called New York.



This 1902 map of van Salee's neighborhood along Brugh (Bridge) Street in Manhattan, where he returned in the 1640s and later lived out the rest of his days, lists the residence of "Anthony Jansen's" across the street from the "Church Lot." Today, **RIGHT**, the site is a small parking lot.

made the best of his exile. Reputed to have been tall and strong, he put his back into turning profits from the "Turk's farm." Today, nothing of it remains, and yet the Wyckoff House Museum, in nearby East Flatbush, home to some of the last remaining undeveloped farmland in Brooklyn, recalls it and other early Dutch agricultural homesteads. Dating to 1652, the original portion of its low-slung, clapboard-and-shingle farmhouse is New York City's oldest standing structure. Garden manager Zachary Tan Strein says the historic property offers a glimpse of what van Salee's homestead might have looked like.

"There would have been a lot of marsh and woodland to clear, but early settlers managed to grow pumpkins, tobacco, salt hay and flint corn, which they got in trade with the local Lenape Indians," says Strein, who tends the site's 15-by-15-meter garden that features heirloom crops representative of van Salee's era.

In addition to expanding his family to include four daughters, van Salee also added yet more land to his holdings, ultimately becoming one of the largest landowners on Long Island. This began to shift his reputation, and as the late New York State historian Victor Hugo Paltsits noted, van Salee actually became one to whom disputing parties turned for advice, "esteemed for his knowledge of the old boundaries of land on Long Island."

It was not long until he was back in Manhattan in person, presumably with a wink and a nod from the authorities, living in the Bridge Street house he had purchased a few years earlier. Appropriately enough, given the neighborhood's future as a center of world commerce, van Salee made a profitable living there, too, as a merchant and moneylender.

In 1660 van Salee sold his land in Brooklyn, and in 1664 the Dutch surrendered New Amsterdam to the British without a fight. After Grietje died in 1669, van Salee remarried and lived seven more years on Bridge Street. Two years before his death, he was listed among "the 1,000," a tax list of the wealthiest residents of what was then called New York. All four of his daughters married into leading families, and today, in addition to direct lines to the Vanderbilts and the Whitneys, van Salee's descendants include US presidents Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt; actor Humphrey Bogart; Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, and CNN news anchor Anderson Cooper.

But the significance of van Salee's legacy extends even further.



"He was representative of the larger connections that made up the Atlantic world, and Muslims were very much a part of that makeup," he says. "Figures like Anthony van Salee are reminders of a history that we don't really remember of the United States, that there were all sorts of connections to Europe and the rest of the world that went through Muslim-majority societies." 🌐



Tom Verde (tomverde.pressfolios.com) is a senior contributor to *AramcoWorld*.



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Little Syria, New York: Nov / Dec 2012
Salé, Morocco: Jan / Feb 2012



Written by **JEFF KOEHLER**

Art by **LINDA DALAL SAWAYA**

When Warda Bouguettaya, chef and owner of Warda Pâtisserie in Detroit, Michigan, was growing up on the Mediterranean coast of Algeria, her mother would prepare a handful of favorite dishes: harira, a hearty, vegetable-laden soup; m’hammar bel batata, a slow-cooked lamb stew with potatoes; and tajine hlou, a sweet dish of prunes and dried apricots stewed in an aromatic syrup that was served toward the end of the meal.

Bouguettaya turned to this comforting trio when she moved to Detroit in 2004 after graduating from university. Interested in cuisine but not yet an expert, Bouguettaya recalls learning that key to all three was ground ginger. “Ginger is one of the backbones of Algerian cooking,” she says.

Sharp, penetrating and fiery with a sweet aftertaste, ginger—

whether fresh or dried—mixes well into almost any food. It is rare, though, that one form can be substituted for the other in a recipe.

But in 2010 at the Ann Arbor Farmer’s Market, ginger just wasn’t a spice Bouguettaya naturally reached for when she started making and selling her own traditional Algerian pastries, such as date-filled makrouts and crescent-shaped “gazelle horns”



that use almond paste scented with orange blossom. While in North America and Europe dried and ground ginger is common in sweets like gingerbread, cakes, biscuits and cookies, to the Algerian palate, ginger was exclusively reserved for savory dishes, with tajine hlou a lone, fruit-based exception.

It was two years later, when her husband’s employer relocated the couple to Shanghai, that for the first time Bouguettaya came face to face with great heaps of fresh ginger, *jiāng* in Mandarin, in the markets. There she found that China has long consumed ginger in countless ways.

One of the first written Chinese records on ginger is connected with the sixth-century-BCE philosopher Confucius, who noted in his *Analects* that he “was never without ginger when he ate,” says Mathieu Torck, a postdoctoral research fellow at Katholieke Universiteit (KU) Leuven in Belgium. Similarly, he points out that *Master Lü’s Spring and Autumn Annals*, written around 249 BCE by Chinese statesman Lü Buwei and universally accepted by Chinese historians, contains references to ginger as a prized ingredient used by the 16th-century-BCE Master Chef Yi Yin of the Shang Dynasty.

As a plant, ginger is a perennial shrub, and it looks like short bamboo. But unlike bamboo, it isn’t the shoots that are of greatest interest. It’s ginger’s underground stem—properly called the rhizome and commonly referred to as the root. This gives ginger (*Zingiber officinale*) its name in most languages. “The earliest source is the Sanskrit word *singabera*, meaning ‘horny shape,’” says Torck, “which looks a bit like antlers.”

Ginger, he explains, does not propagate by seed. Rather, the root must be split and planted. It has several tropical areas of origin: southern China, Southeast Asia and India. From all of these regions it has been gradually carried and transplanted around the world.

“The Arabs played an important role in spreading ginger throughout the Indian Ocean,” he says, noting that the name *zanjabil* was used in Arabic. Later, Europeans carried ginger farther, notably to the West African coast and the Caribbean.

While it grows in many tropical places today, India is the world’s largest producer, harvesting some 1.8 million metric tons a year, about a third of the global total, and other large producers include Nigeria, China, Indonesia and Nepal. In the state of Kerala and along India’s west coast, planting takes place in early May with the premonsoon showers, while in Assam and the northeast, it is slightly earlier, in April. Harvesting ginger that will be sold fresh begins about six months after planting, and rhizomes that will be dried and sent for grinding are dug up at about 8 months of age, when they have reached full maturity.

Historically, like many other spices, ginger



Masala Chai

Indian spiced tea—properly called *masala chai*—can include any number of spices, though ginger, cardamom pods, cloves, black peppercorns and a piece of cinnamon stick are the most common. This version highlights the ginger flavor, and it is adapted from the author’s 2015 *Darjeeling: A History of the World’s Greatest Tea*.

(Serves 4)

4 cardamom pods	1 piece fresh ginger, 2½ centimeters / 1 inch, grated or chopped
2 cloves	
4 whole black peppercorns	3 tablespoons sugar, or more to taste
1 small piece cinnamon stick or cinnamon bark	2 tablespoons loose, strong black tea leaves, preferably Indian, or 2 tea bags
2 cups whole milk	
2 cups water	

In a mortar, crush the cardamom, cloves, peppercorns and cinnamon stick.

In a heavy-bottomed saucepan, add the milk and water, the crushed spices, and the ginger. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to low and allow the foam to subside. Stir in the sugar and tea and simmer for 3 to 5 minutes depending on desired strength for tea, stirring from time to time and watching that it does not boil over.

Strain into 4 tea glasses and serve very hot.

has been appreciated for its medicinal values. For that, Carlos González Balderas, a researcher at KU Leuven, refers to the first-century-CE Greek physician Dioscorides' five-volume encyclopedia *De Materia Medica*. Writing between 50 and 70 CE, Dioscorides characterized the taste and smell of ginger's root as well as "what parts to use—the stems and root—and advice on administering," González Balderas adds. "Warming and digestive," Dioscorides prescribed, ginger roots "soften the intestines gently, and are good for the stomach." When "mixed with antidotes ... in a general way it resembles pepper in its strength."

For centuries, Dioscorides served as the authoritative source in the West. "The first translation into Spanish was in the 15th century," says González Balderas. "And then the Spanish pharmacopeia followed it as a standard reference. From it they learned to use ginger," he says, adding that the Spanish used the spice during their periods of Atlantic and Pacific colonization.

González Balderas discovered references to ginger in 18th-century shipboard *boticas* (pharmacies) of galleons while collaborating with Torck on research into trans-Pacific trade from the mid-16th to the early 19th century. "It was prescribed for stomach problems and to relieve body pains. It was made into an infusion, and you had to drink the tea three or four times a day for the stomach," he says. For aches and pains, a ginger ointment was prepared and spread topically.

The idea wasn't new. For centuries, sailors in Asian waters may have kept ginger on board, Torck says. Ibn Battuta, the 14th-century Moroccan traveler and scholar, observed this about Chinese junks: "The sailors have their children living on board ship, and they cultivate green stuffs, vegetables and ginger in wooden tanks." Considering the salty air and the preciousness of both space and fresh water, the value of the ginger must have been extremely high. He also recounted that before setting sail on one of his voyages in the region, ginger was among the provisions he was given, which included "two elephant loads of rice, two buffalo cows, ten sheep, four pounds of julep (a syrupy paste with rose water) and four martabans, which are big (glazed, ceramic) vessels filled with ginger, pepper, citrus fruit (lemons) and mangoes, all salted with what is used in preparing for sea voyages." Here ginger served something of a double purpose, Torck says, serving as both a condiment and a modest source of the vitamin C that prevented scurvy.

For chefs, ginger has offered countless flavoring possibilities—as Bouguettaya learned during what became three years in China.

On its Shanghai campus, she enrolled at the noted French cooking school Institut Paul Bocuse, where she ultimately focused on pastry. While the training shaped her career, she credits her experiences in China and her travels around Southeast Asia as deeply formative in developing her taste.

When she returned to Detroit in 2015, she resumed selling pastries at the farmers' market. But Asia had opened her palate, and she wanted to move beyond traditional Algerian items. She drew on her experiences in China as well as those in the US, France and North Africa to make what she now calls "pastries without borders." One of her first signature dishes was a rhubarb tart—with ginger.

"The acidity of rhubarb, the tartness of it, with the zingyness of fresh ginger," she says, "now seemed an obvious and perfect pairing." Another is her take on the classic French strawberry *Fraisier* cake, which uses ginger-infused syrup.

Her creations drew such a dedicated following that she opened *Warda Pâtisserie* in an artist-run space in the heart of Detroit's historic Eastern Market district. (Fittingly, the building was a former spice-processing warehouse.) Her sweet and savory delicacies, with ginger among her many and often original ingredients, have earned her city-wide accolades. The online food site *The Eater* named *Warda Pâtisserie* Detroit's 2019 bakery of the year. In 2020 the *Detroit Free Press*, the city's largest newspaper, hailed her "Chef of the Year." In June *Warda Pâtisserie*

moved to its own building in Midtown Detroit, where even the pandemic hasn't thwarted success. One bite of her rhubarb tart or *Fraisier* cake makes it clear why. 🍷



One of Bouguettaya's first signature dishes was a rhubarb tart—with ginger.



Jeff Koehler is a James Beard and two-time IACP award-winning author based in Barcelona. His books include *Where the Wild Coffee Grows* (Bloomsbury, 2017), a *New York Times* Book Review "Editor's Choice," and *Darjeeling: A History of the World's Greatest Tea* (Bloomsbury, 2015), a *Guardian* paperback of the week. His writing has appeared in *The Washington Post*, NPR, *Saveur*, *Food & Wine*, *Times Literary Supplement*, *South China Morning Post* and many other publications. Follow him on Instagram @jeff_koehler. **Linda Dalal Sawaya** (lindasawaya.com; @lindasawayaART) is a Lebanese American artist, illustrator, ceramicist, writer, teacher, gardener and cook in Portland, Oregon. Her 1997 cover story, "Memories of a Lebanese Garden," highlighted her illustrated cookbook tribute to her mother, *Alice's Kitchen: Traditional Lebanese Cooking*. She exhibits regularly throughout the US and is listed in the *Encyclopedia of Arab American Artists*.





REVIEWS

Without endorsing the views of authors, the editors encourage reading as a path to greater understanding.

“A book of stories told by people whose voices have rarely been heard: semi-nomads and farmers ... recorded in the early 1970s, just before the unfortunate country was swept up by the cycle of disasters that continued well into the 21st century.”

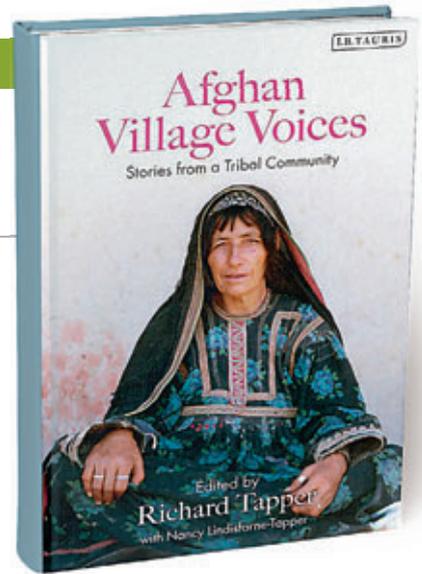
—RICHARD TAPPER

Afghan Village Voices: Stories From a Tribal Community

Richard Tapper ed., with Nancy Lindisfarne-Tapper. I.B. Tauris, 2020.

Much has been written on Afghanistan, but few books have recorded Afghan voices. Highly informative about their way of life, preoccupations and attitudes, *Afghan Village Voices* is a page-turner, as the narrators—men and women—speak of their families and feuds, of economic problems and nomad adventures, interspersing with their favorite folktales. The Tappers from 1971 to 1972 stayed among the Piruzai, a subtribe of Durrani Pashtuns, at Sar-e-Pol, in Northern Afghanistan. Shortly thereafter the country descended into a half century of war, extreme insecurity and chaos. Beautifully and very sensitively presented, the book allows the narrators to take precedence throughout. Maps and charts, as well as a glossary, bibliography and photos ground readers to the identity of the Piruzai, their land and heritage. Chapters on political context and subsequent developments add further insight making this a book of great interest to academics, anthropologists and historians that is also a fascinating—and moving—read.

—CAROLINE STONE



20 Years of the Caine Prize for African Writing

The Caine Prize Committee. Interlink Books, 2020.

The Caine Prize honors African writers for exemplary short stories written in English. This anthology comprises every winning story since 2000, the year the prize was created, to 2019. Winners, coming from different regions of Africa, reflect the continent’s diverse literary culture. Themes range from overcoming the trauma of immigration to grappling with the destruction of postcolonial life, to reminiscing on sweet and sour childhood memories. Stories pace from slow and steady narratives about specific moments to all-encompassing character development over numerous years and settings. The Caine Prize is a prestigious honor. So, it’s fitting the winners’ stories are memorialized in print, with each painting an exquisite picture of the author’s culture, identity and life journey. Personally, “The Museum,” “Miracle,” and “Waiting” loom large. The Caine Prize anthology is a great choice for those who want to read nonfiction but who are reluctant to commit to a long novel.

—MARINA ALI



1177 B.C.: The Year Civilization Collapsed

Eric H. Cline. Princeton UP, 2021.

Revised during a pivotal time in history—2020—to account for new textual and scientific discoveries, this enlightening novel tells the story of the collapse of the Late Bronze Age (1700–1100 BCE). Cline, a professor of classics and anthropology, guides the reader through the undoing of a major Mediterranean civilization, expounding upon the cross-cultural connections between Egypt and other important kingdoms, such as Babylonia and Assyria. Cline paints a picture of a flourishing society on the brink of collapse, piecing together historic archeological discoveries into a comprehensive and accessible narrative. Diving with us into a world of gods and pharaohs, Cline proposes that relevant parallels exist between the Late Bronze Age and the 21st Century. For those interested in the dissolution of an age, Cline unravels evidence to speculate on what caused the collapse of the Late Bronze Age with all the data, information, and history pointing at one year: 1177 BCE.

—HANNAH STERENBERG



The Wandering Palestinian: A Memoir

Anan Ameri. BHC Press, 2020.

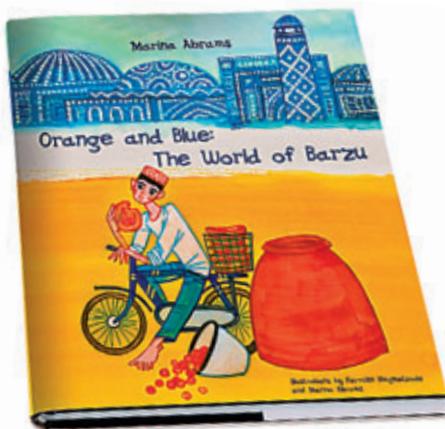
A founding director of the Arab American National Museum in Dearborn, Michigan, Anan Ameri picks up her second memoir, covering 31 years, beginning from her 1974 travels from Beirut. She was 29 years old traveling to Detroit to marry a Lebanese American man she’s just met. “It was love at first sight—the kind of love ... that sweeps you off your feet,” she recounts. Ameri, the daughter of Palestinian refugees who raised her to be an independent, modern woman, suddenly finds herself isolated by language and culture barriers in a country she never wanted to visit. “I lost my independence, and I lost my identity,” she writes. It’s in Ameri’s struggles to adjust—to her traditionally minded husband and the US—that the book truly comes alive. With humor and hard-earned wisdom, Ameri conveys how being an outsider in a strange land ultimately led her to true fulfillment.

—DIANNA WRAY



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AUTHOR'S CORNER



How a Story of Bread Became a Sharing of Culture: A Conversation With Marina Abrams

by TOM VERDE

In this colorful, educational children's book, Marina Abrams summons her childhood memories along the Kazakhstan-China border, all brought to life and imagination by Tajik illustrator Farrukh Negmatzade. Although Abrams places young Barzu in the mountains of Tajikistan, the setting could be any *kishlak* (Tajik for *village*) in Central Asia, a region comprising that country and Kazakhstan, as well as Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Bicycling from kishlak to neighboring kishlak, Barzu visits friends and relatives who share stories of local culture such as harvesting apricots, (the orange in her book's title), the generational craft of making clay ovens, called *tanoor* in Tajik, and the region's distinctive "bread of wonder," called *non* in both Tajik and Uzbek, that remains edible for up to three years. Abrams, who now lives in the US, says she wrote *Orange and Blue* to share such stories of childhood and heritage with her own school-aged children, both born and raised in the US.



Marina Abrams

I wanted my children to know about the region. Here in the United States, I found very few books about Central Asia for children. This is actually a problem for many immigrant families from the Central Asian diaspora. It is very hard to preserve your cultural heritage when you are away from the region itself. So, I started coming up with stories five or six years ago that I told to my son, which he loved. The first one I came up with was about bread of wonder that then became the heart of the book.

Orange and Blue: The World of Barzu

Marina Abrams. Farrukh Negmatzade and Marina Abrams, ils. Barzu World, 2018.

The culture and heritage of the region seems to thrive in the story without it pinpointing an area within the region, so can you tell us where Barzu's world is? I didn't want to give very specific names to places. I wanted people from all five



republics to feel attached to this story. Barzu could probably live in Tajikistan or Uzbekistan, right on the border. The (book's) City of Blue Domes is a composite of Bukhara, Samarkand, Khujand, Khiva (except for Khujand in Tajikistan, all are cities within Uzbekistan). But when we talk about the bread of wonder, this is from Samarkand.

Tell us about your focus on bread-making and the apricot harvest.

This is daily life, and these are the first things you miss when you are outside the region. The bread culture is so rich, so ancient, and every single aspect or stage of everybody's life is reflected in that culture: special breads for weddings, funerals, even when children are being born. Each non is a signature of that city or that region. Bread and tanours (the traditional ovens) are strongly associated with mothers and grandmothers, and family connections.

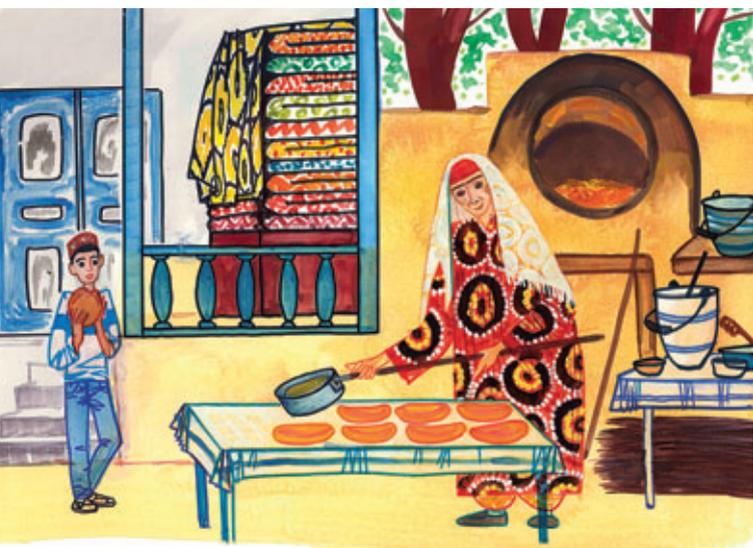
It's those connections that bring my attention to a couple of illustrations.

The first shows Barzu holding a loaf of bread and a woman laying out bread from the oven. What is happening there?

Barzu's grandmother is taking out (from the *tanoor*) freshly baked bread. This is a traditional house in either Uzbekistan or Tajikistan or Kazakhstan. You see the oven and a veranda with a pile of mattresses (*kurpacha* in Tajik) that every house has. People use them for guests; they sit on them on the floor. And of course, Barzu, who just got the bread, which is most delicious when it comes out of the oven. When people from the region see this illustration, they love it.

How about the illustration of the men who are standing by their tanours?

These are several generations of one family (of *tanoor* makers or masters called *ustos* in Tajik and Uzbek). In Central Asia for any craft, whether it is embroidery or ceramics or woodcarving, it's very often that the secrets and the skills are passed on from generation to generation. And it is the same with the *tanoor* master.





EVENTS

Highlights from
aramcoworld.com

Please verify a venue's
schedule before visiting.

CURRENT / NOVEMBER

Converging Lines: Tracing the Artistic Lineage of the Arab Diaspora in the U.S. presents works from artists belonging to the Arab diaspora in the US and contributing to the development of American art since the early 20th century. The exhibition identifies some of the esthetic threads that connect diverse groups. Middle East Institute, **Washington D.C.**, through November 17.

CURRENT / JANUARY

Egypt: The Time of Pharaohs features more than 350 original artifacts, some more than 4,500 years old. The exhibit sheds light on facets of life along the fertile Nile Valley, from everyday people to their dynastic rulers. Included are models of famed pyramids, temples and Egyptian homes as well as multimedia overlays, films and interactive displays. Natural History Museum of Utah, **Salt Lake City**, through January 2.

ReVision: Annu Palakunnathu Matthew is a retrospective of two decades of work in still, animated and video formats in which the artist draws from her personal experiences to treat themes of history, immigration, language, colonization, memory and trauma. **Newport** Art Museum, Rhode Island, through January 9.

CURRENT / FEBRUARY

14 Dynasties and a Region: The History and Culture of the Muslim World highlights the diversity of Islamic cultures

and promotes deeper understandings of the Islamic world. Islam emerged as a monotheistic religion in the seventh century CE on the Arabian Peninsula. After its founding, Islam spread outward, with many Islamic dynasties over the centuries rising and falling and developing their distinct expressions of Islamic heritage enriched by local cultures. **Tokyo** National Museum, through February 20.

CURRENT / MARCH

Sound and Music takes visitors on a sonic journey back in time. The interactive installation features masterpieces from the museum's collections that inspire listening while looking. Paintings and artifacts evoke soundscapes of madinas and ateliers from centuries past, the sublime poetry of music and humanity's relationship to our sense of hearing. Aga Khan Museum, **Toronto**, through March.

CURRENT / JULY

Baseera Khan: I Am an Archive presents emerging Brooklyn artist Baseera Khan, who uses her own body as an archive, often employing a variety of multimedia collage techniques to visualize the lived experiences of people at the intersections of Muslim and American identities, both today and throughout history. **Brooklyn** Museum, through July 10.

CURRENT / LATER

Shatr al-Masjid: the Art of Orientation explores historic developments,

meanings and functions of mosques, their interiors and their material expressions. Through more than 100 masterworks in wood, calligraphy, textiles, glass and more from Islamic cultures worldwide, the exhibit examines how mosques have served as places of worship and community centers. Ithra, **Dhahran, Saudi Arabia**, through October 2022.

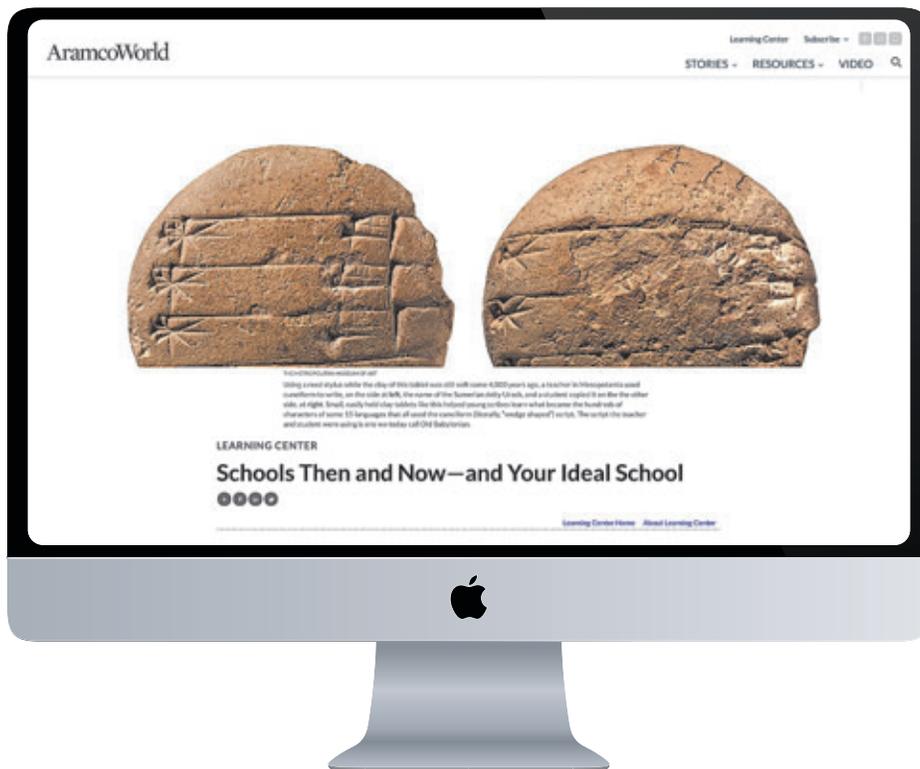
She Who Wrote: Enheduanna and Women of Mesopotamia, ca. 3400–2000 B.C. brings together artworks that capture expressions of women's lives in Mesopotamia during the third millennium BCE, bearing testament to the roles of women in religious contexts as goddesses, priestesses and worshippers, as well as in social, economic and political spheres as mothers, workers and rulers. The Morgan Library & Museum, **New York**, through February 19, 2023.

Abdulrahim Salim: Between Chaos and Serenity presents an immersive virtual walk-through that surveys the Emirati artist's major paintings, examining his recurring narratives and the breadth of his expression. Divided into six chapters, the exhibition explores Salim's investigations of dualistic subjects and inner conflicts that oscillate between the figurative and the abstract. **Abu Dhabi** Cultural Foundation, online.

Readers are welcome to submit event information for possible inclusion to proposals@aramcoamericas.com, subject line "Events."



Zarah Hussain: Breath is a commissioned series of paintings that, together with animation and soundscaping, explores the universal sanctity and necessity of the act of breathing. Produced by the London artist while under lockdown due to COVID-19, Hussain integrates personal stories of both loss and transformation with her fascination with mathematics, geometry and traditional Islamic art to guide visitors in contemplation and toward a deeper awareness of breath. She has timed each expansion and contraction of colors in her animation to last precisely 5.5 seconds—the average cadence of a full breath, in or out, while a person is at rest. Peabody Essex Museum, **Salem, Massachusetts**, through April 18.



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