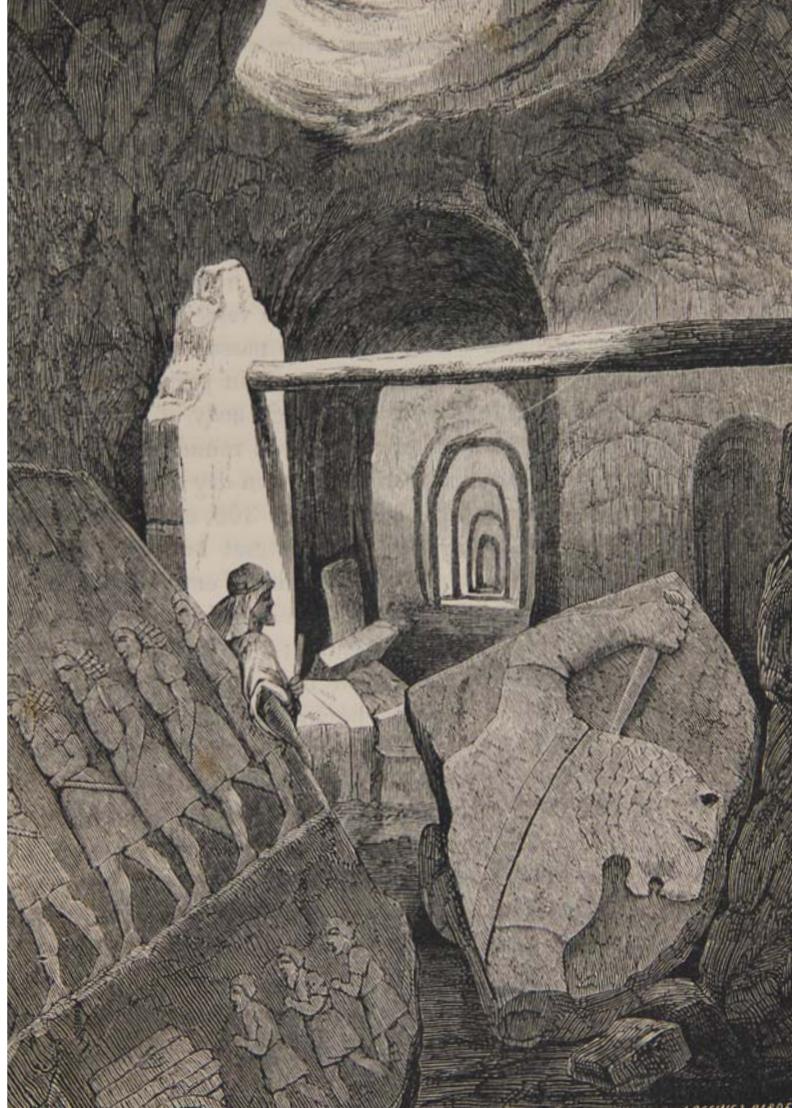


MAY JUNE 2018

AramcoWorld





6 Hike Palestine

Written by Matthew Teller
Photographed by George Azar

With the wide wanderings of Abraham more than 4,000 years ago as a multicultural motif, 21 linked stages of rural pathways and back roads now make up—after a decade of development—the 330-kilometer Masar Ibrahim al-Khalil, a name that means “Trail of Abraham the Friend.” Last year, an estimated 6,000 people walked on it, and the experience, says one local hiker, “makes a new connection to Palestine.”

16 Iraq’s First Archeologist

Written by Jane Waldron Grutz

Hormuzd Rassam was 19 years old when a British archeologist hired him to help with excavations near Rassam’s hometown of Mosul. It was 1846, and picks, spades and bucket brigades soon began to uncover long-forgotten palaces and temples at Nimrud and later at Nineveh, splendors of first-millennium-BCE Assyrian kings. The artistic treasures and the libraries of inscribed tablets from these sites, as well as others Rassam excavated, became for scholars a foundation for the recovery of the history and language of Assyria—and for the public, a window into one of the world’s first empires.

 Online **CLASSROOM GUIDE**  **2 FIRSTLOOK**  **4 FLAVORS**

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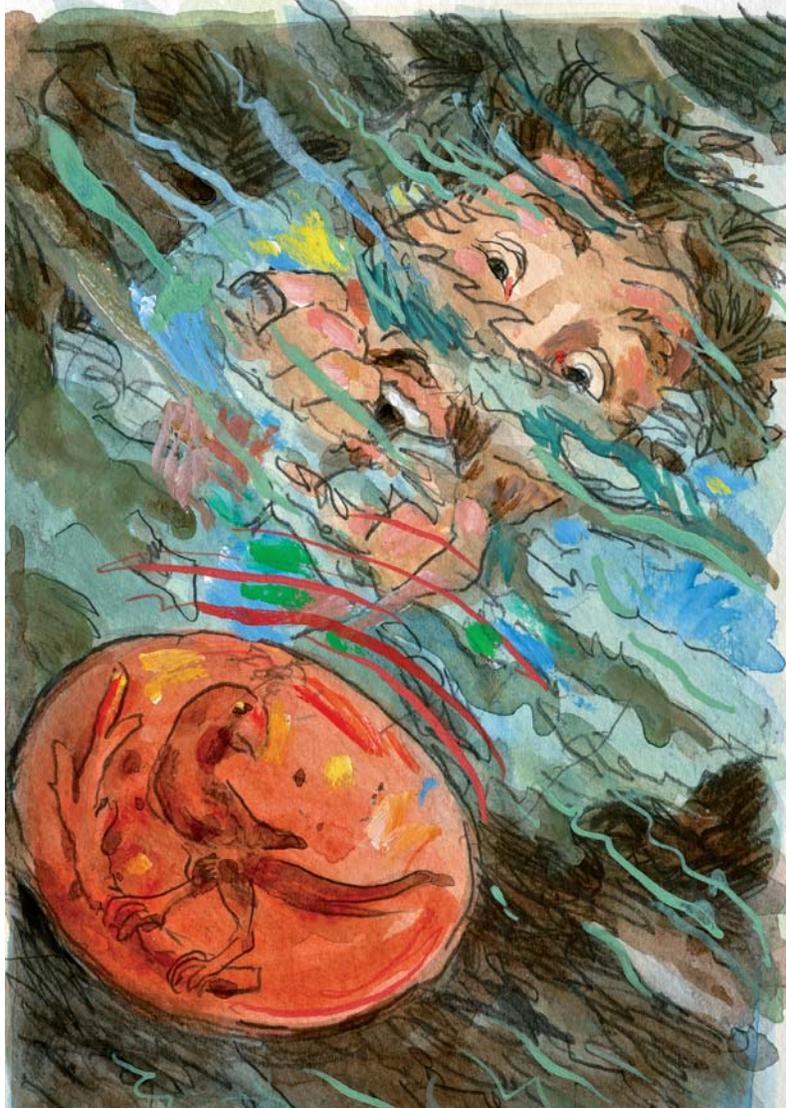
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We distribute *AramcoWorld* in print and online to increase cross-cultural understanding by broadening knowledge of the histories, cultures and geography of the Arab and Muslim worlds and their global connections.

Front Cover: After a night at a Bedouin-run campsite near Rashayida, hikers on the Masar Ibrahim await sunrise from atop a bluff whose heights fall off to the Dead Sea and Jordan beyond. Photo by George Azar.

Back Cover: Horses work for a farmer high in the Carpathian Mountains, crossed by centuries of merchants bound for towns and villages in Transylvania. Some merchants brought wares from Ottoman Turkey, including one of the era’s top luxuries: carpets. Photo by Matthieu Paley.



24 **I Witness History: I, Down the Drain**

Written by Frank L. Holt

Illustrated by Norman MacDonald

Arabian by birth, Indian by design, Roman by trade and oath but British by residency, I know more than you think about the hardships of life in the gutter. You see, I was carved to adorn a soldier's ring, but one day in the steamy bathhouse of the Second Legion Augusta, I came unglued, slipped my mooring, and then darkness—and plenty of rotten company—for nearly 2,000 years.

30 **The Ottoman Carpets of Transylvania**

Written by Louis Werner

Photographed by Matthieu Paley

Some of the finest carpets ever made came from Ottoman workshops in western Anatolia between the 16th and 19th centuries. One of the best collections of them can be found displayed and stored among more than a dozen churches in central Romania, in the region known as Transylvania—thanks to a post-Reformation desire to find new ways to adorn newly austere walls.

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FIRSTLOOK

Inside/Outside

Photograph by Tuba Koymen

This photograph was both inside and outside of my grandmother's sister-in-law's adobe house near Ankara, Turkey. I was seeking scenes of people in liminal spaces such as windows and doors; in addition, a curtain—which both reveals and conceals—can be a metaphor for the difference between a perspective from the inside or from the outside of any situation.

The image used a pinhole camera that I made by hand from a paint can. Along its curve I made four holes and covered each one with electrical tape that worked like a shutter. Each hole exposed a different image, making a collage on one sheet of 8x10-inch film. To me, the ephemeral, dreamlike quality of pinhole images underscores the instability of meaning and individual perception. The contingency of the medium mirrors the contingency of understanding and life itself. Although unmanipulated, the image is disorienting because of its multiple exposures and nearly infinite depth of field, which makes it like looking at the surface of reality from another dimension. Meant to create a sense of displacement as well as engagement, it is a kind of paradox that reflects the process of disconnection and connection or, more simply, the process of understanding. I believe we can only truly understand others by being in their locations, in their worlds.

—Tuba Koymen

www.tubaoztekin.net







FLAVORS

Chicken Dahiwala

Recipe by
Roni Mazumdar

Photograph courtesy
Roni Mazumdar

This recipe comes from my home; my mother used to make it for us during the hot days of summer.

Yogurt does wonders for cooling the body and digestion, so we always enjoyed this healthy, hearty, wholesome dish. The origin of the dish is northern Indian, but many mothers across India make this dish with their own spin. Yogurt is popular in the cooking of northern India, while coconut milk is more common in the southern coastal areas. I have used chicken, but this recipe can also be made using fish or vegetables. It is best served with rice.

(Serves 4)

¼ c (60 ml) vegetable oil
1 T ginger paste or finely chopped ginger
1 T garlic paste or 3 garlic cloves, minced
2 medium onions, thinly sliced
Salt
3 lb (1.4 kg) boneless, skinless chicken thighs
1 T tomato paste
2 T plain whole milk yogurt
¼ c (15 g) chopped cilantro leaves

Whole Masala

3 medium bay leaves
½ t cumin seeds
3 cloves
1 cinnamon stick
4 green cardamom pods, cracked
5 whole black peppercorns

Ground Masala

1 t turmeric
1 t cumin
1 t cayenne pepper
1 t ground coriander
1 t garam masala

In a large sauté pan, heat the oil over medium heat. Add the whole masala ingredients and cook until the spices release their fragrance, 30 to 45 seconds. Add the ginger and garlic and fry until golden brown, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the onions and 2 teaspoons salt, and cook, stirring, until the onions turn golden brown, 4 to 5 minutes.

Add the ground masala ingredients and stir for 30 seconds. Add 2 cups (480 ml) water, bring to a boil, then lower the heat to medium-low and simmer until the sauce thickens, 8 to 10 minutes.

Add the chicken, return the heat to medium, and simmer, stirring occasionally, until it is about three-quarters cooked, 10 to 15 minutes. Stir in the tomato paste, and simmer until the chicken has cooked completely, 8 to 10 minutes.

In a small bowl, whisk the yogurt thoroughly. Just before serving, gradually mix the yogurt into the curry, stirring slowly. Cook for an additional 5 minutes or so to heat through, without letting it come to a boil. Taste, add salt, if needed, and remove from the heat.

Sprinkle with the chopped cilantro, and serve.

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**The Immigrant
Cookbook**

Leyla Moushabeck, ed.
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Roni Mazumdar is a New York–based restaurateur. Growing up in Kolkata, India, food played a central role in his household. In 2011 he opened the Masalawala, which he runs with his father. Its success led Roni to open a second location in 2016, followed shortly by Rahi, a modern Indian restaurant named *Zagat's* hottest new restaurant in 2017; and recently, Unico, a globally influenced fast-casual restaurant in Long Island City, named in *New York Magazine's* “Best New Cheap Eats, 2017,” and *Eater's* “Hot-test Restaurants in Queens.” He has used his success to benefit his community, establishing a scholarship program in West Bengal, India; as well as working to empower victims of abuse and trafficking in New York; and staffing and training students from LaGuardia Community College’s Food Service Management Program.

LEFT: COURTESY RONI MAZUMDAR



HIKE

Written by MATTHEW TELLER

Photographed by GEORGE AZAR

Palestine

We have such a beautiful country, but it's not been utilized before for this kind of [local] tourism. This is an opportunity for people to reconcile their heritage.

— GEORGE RISHMAWI



It's a torrent of teenagers, flowing uphill toward me on the narrow trail. I step to the left, cramming myself into a wedge of stone wall beneath the spread of an olive tree as they clatter past in a cloud of bubble-gum perfume, sullen-eyed puffing, laughter and primary colors. The last in line gives me the side-eye as he shoulders an outsized loudspeaker up toward the trailhead on the slopes above.

Rest awaited him just above in Battir, a village lining a curve of terraced hills a few kilometers southwest of Jerusalem. After drinks and snacks there, he would join his fellow students on a bus back to their home city of Ramallah.

"These rural trails are fun, but they're also enriching our Palestinian identity," observes Battir café-owner Hassan Muammar, after they'd gone.

Earlier, on the opposite, eastern side of Jerusalem, I spent most of a day with the serene crunch of my own bootsteps on a dry trail that echoed down through the canyon of Wadi Qelt. Velvet heat rose in waves. At the end, the palm trees of Jericho appeared through salty lashes like beach umbrellas, stuck into liquid heat-haze on the floor of the desert in the distance below.

"Walking like this makes a new connection to Palestine. Your belonging becomes less poetic and more concrete," says Rosann, a local college graduate.

Palestinians have always walked the land. But now walking is changing how many Palestinians feel about the land.

"The previous generation—I'm talking about the 1930s and 1940s—they were out there walking, especially Wadi Qelt in spring, when everywhere is filled with flowers," says Ali Qleibo, professor of anthropology at Jerusalem's Al-Quds University. "We see them in old pictures. This is part of the foundation of the Palestinian identity."

But even earlier, when walking was a necessity for the lack of transport (other than four-legged varieties), Palestine still had a tradition of walking for pleasure. Qleibo mentions local writer Raja Shehadeh, who describes the concept of

Striated by sun, shadow and geology, a wilderness of high desert stretches eastward along the Masar Ibrahim, or Abraham's Path, from near the village of Rashayida. Lower: Local youth take a day hike along one of the many historic rural paths integrated into informal trail networks. This one leads to Battir, a few kilometers southwest of Jerusalem.





Hikers crest a rocky hill between Hebron and Bethlehem along the Masar Ibrahim, which built on the success in the late 1990s of the Nazareth-to-Bethlehem Nativity Trail, “one of the first ideas linked to mass-market tourism” in Palestine, says developer Raed Saadeh.

sarha in his 2007 book, *Palestinian Walks*:

It was mainly young men who went on these expeditions. They would take a few provisions and go to the open hills, disappear for the whole day, sometimes for weeks and months. They often didn’t have a particular destination. To go on a *sarha* was to roam freely, at will, without restraint.

The idea of walking for pleasure survived war and social dislocation. Shehadeh himself led walks in the hills around his home city of Ramallah in the 1980s and 1990s. But since the intensification of Israeli occupation two decades ago, checkpoints, road closures and other impediments have made it difficult for Palestinians to move around the West Bank.

Horizons shrank, says tourism entrepreneur George Rishmawi. Many people live their lives in and around their home neighborhoods. Walking in the countryside faded from view.

“There are generations that don’t know Palestine,” he says.

Beside the physical blocks, there’s also a mental one. Arabic has no word for “hiking.” Different dialects substitute their own circumlocutions, but Palestinian Arabic relies on *sarha*, which connotes a less purposeful kind of wandering, or *shattha*, which means an enjoyable outing, such as a picnic. Neither really fits, and an idea without a name is always hard to grasp.

Rishmawi was involved in the first of Palestine’s initiatives to reintroduce long-distance walking for pleasure. In the late 1990s, as part of the UN-backed “Bethlehem 2000,” the Palestinian government sponsored the creation of the Nativity Trail. Developed by tour operators Alternative Tourism Group and Siraj Center, this trail forms a 160-kilometer walking route from Nazareth south to Bethlehem that roughly follows the journey taken by expectant parents Mary and Joseph before Jesus’s birth.



A sunny fall morning in Bethlehem sees municipal workers clearing leaves in Manger Square, the main public space. On the edge of a small group of fit-looking Europeans and Americans kitted out for hiking, two middle-aged Palestinian men are getting acquainted. Silver-stubbled Yusuf Salah, with a few belongings clutched in a plastic bag, says he’s done a bit of walking before, but never this route.

His new-found trail buddy, Hani Abu Taih, smiling under a straw hat, concurs.

“This will be my first time walking long-distance in the countryside,” Abu Taih says. “Twenty years I’ve been walking—one or two hours every morning, but just around my village near Nazareth, and always alone. I want to try walking with a group.”

Slightly removed by language and appearance from their fellow hikers—some of whom are tourists, some resident expatriates—the two pals psych themselves up for the day ahead walking the Masar Ibrahim, now the best known of Palestine’s long-distance hiking trails.

Masar is the Arabic word for path, and Ibrahim is Arabic for Abraham, the founder of Judaism, Christianity and Islam: The name translates into

Rishmawi remembers the first thru-hike, in December 1999: “We arrived to Manger Square in Bethlehem with three camels, a donkey and a lady on the donkey who was pregnant [representing Mary, soon-to-be mother of Jesus].”

At that time Palestinian walkers didn’t really feature in the equation.

“The idea was to attract foreign tourists,” says tour operator and walking guide Mark Khano. At Khano’s invitation in 2000, two British explorers, Tony Howard and Di Taylor, walked the Nativity Trail and published a pioneering English-language guidebook.

“Palestine wanted products, and the Nativity Trail was one of the first ideas linked to mass-market tourism,” says Raed Saadeh, a leader in sustainable tourism development.

“This sort of ‘alternative pilgrimage’ attracted a lot of visitors who felt a link to Palestine. But tourism is a platform for identity. What we’d like to see is a trend toward connecting to the local community, rather than just a trend to walk.”

In Battir, Sabrina Zaben is out for a country walk with her partner, Ahmed Abu Haniya, and one of her two children. “When I have a chance, I like to walk here. It’s easier than before. By following social media, there are lots of hiking groups online,” she says.

“Twenty years I’ve been walking—one or two hours every morning, but just around my village near Nazareth, and always alone. I want to try walking with a group,” says Hani Abu Taih as he sets out on the Masar Ibrahim from Bethlehem’s Manger Square.

English as Abraham’s Path.

Unlike the region’s numerous and ancient pilgrimage routes, the Abraham Path is a modern creation, devised in 2006 by a group from Harvard Law School in the US headed by William Ury, a specialist in negotiation strategy. Ury’s idea was to help fuel cross-cultural understanding among the peoples of the Middle East—and bring transformational socio-economic benefits—through the power of the simple act of walking. As he puts it, walking creates space for people to envision fresh solutions to long-standing challenges.

Abraham is said to have walked with his family all across the Middle East from Ur, his place of birth (often identified with Ur in Iraq, but also linked with Urfa in southern Turkey), through Syria and Jordan to Palestine, where his tomb is honored today at a mosque in the city of Hebron. Further traditions place Abraham—known as *al-Khalil* (the Friend), for his embodiment of loyalty and hospitality—in Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

There is no documented historical evidence for Abraham’s existence 4,000 years ago, or for the routes he might have followed. No pre-existing path links these places. All we have are stories. After listening to local people, however, researchers with Ury’s nonprofit Abraham Path Initiative (API) were able to begin mapping a constellation of traditions, folk memories, tales and legends that suffuse the multiethnic cultures of the Middle East. A trending line began to emerge, connoting linkages in a shared Abrahamic heritage. From that a physical walking route could be plotted.

For most of the last decade, API has painstakingly built local capacity along sections of that route through a loosely affiliated network of trekking scouts, community-outreach volunteers and partner organizations on the ground. Today, as API steps back from trail development toward



a quieter role in funding, ownership of the route’s active sections has passed fully to local partners.

In Jordan, for example, guides, tourism professionals and community activists built on the Abraham Path’s early growth in one remote highland region to develop a full-blown national hiking project. The result was the Jordan Trail, launched

in 2017 as 36 day-hikes that link together to form a six-week, 650-kilometer trekking route from one end of the country to the other.

Elsewhere, southern Turkey had 170 kilometers of Abraham Path trail open by 2012, though war in Syria cut further progress short. Specialists are currently working with API to explore trail development in Saudi Arabia. In Egypt, three Bedouin tribes, backed by NGOs and local volunteers, in 2015 launched the 250-kilometer Sinai Trail, which links the Red Sea coast with the summit of Egypt’s highest peak, Mt. Katherina.

Support is shared: Partners of the Sinai Trail, beside the Jordan Trail Association, include Masar Ibrahim al Khalil, the Palestinian NGO that has developed API’s route in the West Bank.

That route begins at Rummana, at the northernmost limit of the West Bank near Jenin. It winds south, through the cities of Nablus, Jericho and Bethlehem, to end among the villages

Plotting constellations of traditions, folk memories, tales and legends, a thru-hike route began to emerge.

On a clifftop overlooking the Dead Sea, guide George Giacaman chats with Danish hikers Laura Bendix Pedersen, Nina Timm Ifversen and Julie Nielsen.



south of Hebron: 330 kilometers in total, divided into 21 day-hike stages. It deliberately zigzags, binding otherwise marginalized rural communities into what has become a national trail.

“Masar Ibrahim bypassed the old trails,” says Raed Saadeh. “It is a community endeavor, built in such a way as to induce community empowerment.”

It has also drawn substantial international funding: In 2014 the World Bank gave the project \$2.3 million over four years. The French agency for international development, AFD,

provided €1.4 million (\$1.7m) in 2016, and French NGOs and private-sector bodies continue further support.

This has paid for trail development, waymarking, training for guides, ancillary support along the trail such as homestays and guest houses, a staff of 10 at offices near Bethlehem, and a subsidized public program of weekly walks. High-quality digital cartography by US trail developers David Landis and Anna Dintaman forms the basis of a detailed website. Local and online marketing gets the word out.

Such open access to the trail, however, means assessing success is difficult. Rishmawi, who serves as executive director of the Masar Ibrahim NGO, explains that by using data from partners, guides and guest-house owners, he can estimate that last year, 6,000 people walked on the path. Between a half and three-quarters of them were Palestinian—some individuals, but mainly organized groups that included students and youth associations.

Rishmawi speaks passionately about the value of creating new reasons for Palestinians to visit the countryside.

“We have such a beautiful country, but it’s not been utilized before for this kind of [local] tourism. This is an opportunity for people to reconcile their heritage,” he says.

One of Masar Ibrahim’s founding partners is the Rozana Association, set up to help overcome rural problems of economic disadvantage and loss of community. Headquartered in the pastoral university town of Birzeit, a tight tangle of cobbled lanes in the hills north of Ramallah, Rozana has facilitated architectural restoration in Birzeit itself, including converting an Ottoman mansion into a science center that draws school groups and establishing an annual cultural festival that now brings 35,000 visitors to this town of around 7,000 residents.

“The question was, how to strengthen this attractiveness? You need to have tourism demand, especially local,” says Saadeh, founder of Rozana.

“So, in 2008 we created the Sufi Trails. This is different from Masar Ibrahim, which is a long trail that zigzags from village to village. The Sufi Trails starts with a hub, then creates a cluster of routes to villages.”

The resulting web of generally unmarked footpaths connect to centuries-old monuments to Muslim mystics, known as Sufis. Many such sites dot the hills of the northern West Bank, and today they often stand half-forgotten.

“Walking helps protect this type of heritage,” Saadeh says, explaining that Rozana sources funding both for preservation of the buildings and conversion of the surrounding areas into small community parks. “They’re spiritual, sentimental places that tell stories. They become an attraction,” he says.

Rozana’s principle of clustering also avoids imposing a new system of external management by combining the abilities of pre-existing community organizations. In the highland village of Deir Ghassaneh, one of Rozana’s rural hubs, the head of the local women’s association, Insaf Shuoibi, speaks of the economic benefits that have accrued by joining forces with a neighboring village to work on their local trails.

“Five years ago it was mostly foreigners visiting, but now



Top: In the village of Tuqu', Um Naseem and her daughter Sajida prepare a meal for hikers. Left: The women's group in Jericho's Aqbat Jaber refugee camp converted a traditional, mud-built kindergarten into a guest house to accommodate hikers.

the word is spreading, so we have more Palestinians,” she says.

Another of Masar Ibrahim’s founding partners is nonprofit tour operator Siraj Center. For Siraj’s ebullient director Michel Awad, the last few years have seen an astonishing shift.

“People never thought of walking as a journey. It was just a way to get from point A to point B,” he says.

“Now they’re discovering hiking for pleasure. They’re beginning to understand the beauty of this land.”

Ramallah-based mountain guide Wael Haj runs Palterhal, a firm offering rural hikes and eco-retreats for companies.

“Managers used to organize corporate retreats indoors, in hotels, but now they’re asking us to take their staff out to small villages and into nature,” Haj says. “This makes a big change in how Palestinians see their own country.”

After chatting in Bethlehem’s morning sunshine, the hikers in the Masar Ibrahim group that includes Yusuf Salah and Hani Abu Taih take their first steps, down the steep streets leading out of Manger Square. Their route soon leaves the city behind, passing a spring in the hills before winding through a fertile valley to end almost five hours later in the village of Tuqu’.

There, householder and construction worker Salim Saba greets the walkers, bustling them through the narrow hallway of his house and out to a shaded rear balcony where glasses of cold juice and sweet tea await.

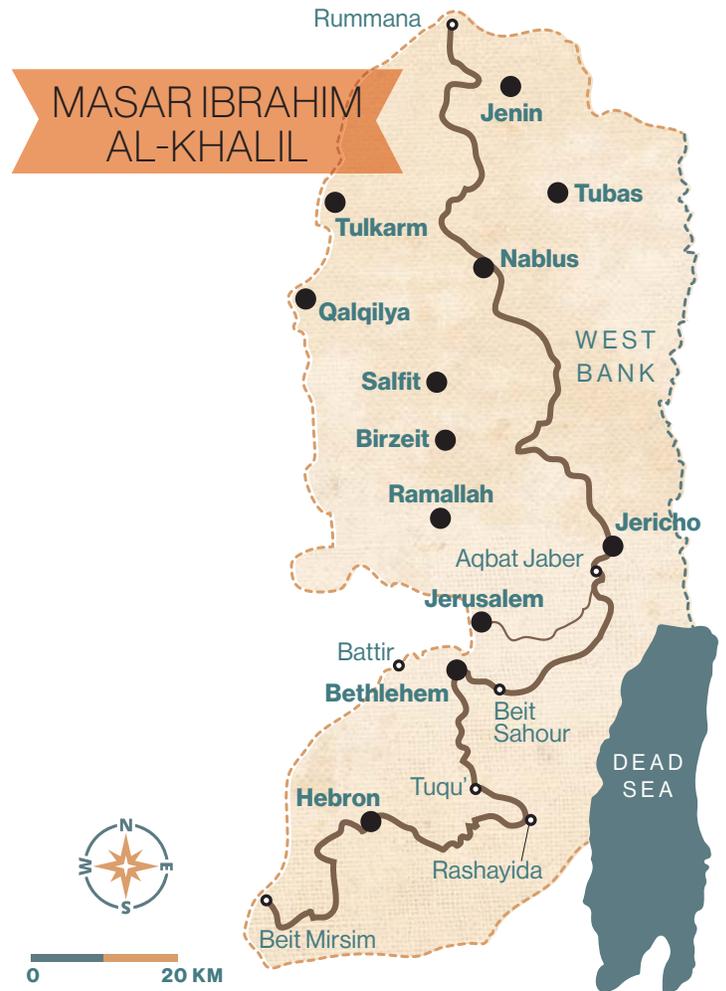
“The walk was better than I was expecting,” grins Abu Taih, looking across to the 2,000-year-old hilltop fortress Herodium just beyond Tuqu’.

“The guide, the company, the landscapes—what a great opportunity to share this path.”

As Saba shows the group into his dining room for a home-cooked lunch of chicken, rice and salad, he tells me: “I believe in this 100 percent. For economic reasons, it helps support my family, but I’m really enjoying it, meeting all these people.”

He shows me the guest rooms he has fitted out with help from the Masar Ibrahim NGO, which split its cost with him. The NGO will retain ownership for five years, after which the beds (and their neatly branded covers) become his. Then he takes me through to the half-built extra rooms he is adding to the house

Near Battir the trail winds through olive groves.



to accommodate the increasing numbers of walkers passing through.

The group’s Palestinian guide is George Giacaman. Wiry, pencil-thin in Lycra, he explains that he just came from leading a group of 35 Norwegians on an 11-day Nativity Trail trek, and that he is proud to be involved.

“The Masar Ibrahim is especially helping women in the villages, who work at home. They make food for people walking through, or products to sell,” he says.

This is a familiar model for sustainable development: Relatively small amounts of external funding spur creative input from local minds building trust and skills that help open new markets, bringing new consumers into direct contact with rural suppliers.

Dutch economist Stefan Szepesi was another of those who grasped the potential early on. He arrived in Palestine in 2006 to work on governmental projects with the European Union. But he had itchy feet.

“I first started walking out of curiosity. What was Palestine like beyond the confined view of a diplomatic car?” he writes.

Eventually, the walking took over. Szepesi switched jobs to become executive director of API to work with the Masar Ibrahim NGO and others. He also published a thick, full-color guidebook of walks around the West Bank.

But, as he readily acknowledges, English-language books have limited local readerships, and foreign tourism is simply not big enough in Palestine to deliver sustainable economic growth.

Enter social media: Over the past decade, it has [cont’d. on p.14]

MAP COURTESY OF MASAR IBRAHIM AL-KHALIL



• SINAI TRAIL •



Trailblazers on the first international thru-hike of the SinaiTrail included, *top right*, trail guide Nasser Mansour, one of the Jebeleya tribe's top representatives to the Sinai Trail Bedouin cooperative and an expert on the region's plants and animals; *top center*, Nada el Shazly, who handles social media accounts for the trail organization; *center*, organizer and trail ambassador Ben Hoffler; *lower, left to right*: Mohammad Al Zaeadeen, who helped develop the Jordan Trail; Karim Abada, who produced a video documentary; and Cristina Gheza, who also leads diving expeditions in the region.

HIKE *Sinai*

Written by **BETHAN STATON**

Photographed by **DAVID DEGNER**



Built by guides from three Bedouin tribes with backing from NGOs and help from local volunteers, the 250-kilometer, sea-to-summit Sinai Trail offers hikers a new way to experience the southern Sinai Peninsula. To residents it offers a path to rejuvenate an ailing economy.

From an isolated spot in the heart of the Sinai Peninsula, a small group of hikers are watching the sunset. Their faces, chapped by sunshine and icy wind, turn toward north Africa; behind them are Saudi Arabia's Hijaz mountains. From the 2,626-meter-high peak of Mt. Katherina, their view is obscured only by clouds.

It's December, and the group has just become the first international team to complete the Sinai Trail, a 250-kilometer route across the coast, desert and mountains of Egypt's neglected peninsula. Established in 2016 by local activists and guides, it's a bid to revive a tourist economy left reeling by years of instability. Organizers hope the fully mapped path, the country's first long-distance hiking trail, will bring back international visitors who once flocked to Sinai.

"After the revolution there were lots of problems," Nasser Mansour, a guide and founding member of the Sinai Trail, explains as he picks his way down a mountain path only he can see. Like many guides here, Mansour made a good living from

tourism before 2011, when he estimates the Sinai's sweeping deserts, scraggy high mountains and coral-rich seas attracted around 5,000 visitors a year. Now he guesses that's dropped to a few hundred.

In recent years the troubles—illuminated by the 2015 bombing of a flight from Sharm El Sheikh and an ongoing insurgency in northern Sinai—have continued. While the decline has been devastating for the community, the Sinai Trail is their way of fighting back.

Mansour and a small team have been working for nearly three years to create the trail, walking hundreds of kilometers to map out a previously uncharted route; training young Bedouin to become qualified guides; and building a publicity campaign including a slick website. And Mansour believes it's paying off: "The people now feel they trust to come. They see the Sinai Trail and all these things, and they trust," he says.

The trust is essential to the success of the project, and it exists because the Bedouin here truly have a stake in the project. Msallem Faraj, Mansour's colleague, compares the Sinai Trail to luxury hotels

that now stand empty along the coast: It allows local people to genuinely take control of their own environment.

"In the Bedouin community, there's a very good system. We are helping each other. We are kind of like survivors," he says, explaining the extent of the decline in recent years. "The Trail is important for this, to show the people we are here, we are still alive, still doing trips, and we invite everybody to Sinai."

The first group that sat atop Mt. Katherina has been followed by others. A mix of outdoor enthusiasts, first-time hikers, Egyptians and international visitors, many are now enthusiastic supporters of the Sinai project, volunteering to coordinate trips from Cairo or spreading the word online. The message that Sinai is not a war-torn province but a destination with stunning natural beauty and rich culture can be difficult to broadcast over the clamor of conflict, but it's slowly making a difference.

"I think now the problems are less and less," Mansour says. "And tourists come more and more. This is showing us that life is going to be good, it's going to be better."

HIKE *Jordan*

Written by GAIL SIMMONS

On May 13, 2016, a small group of exhausted yet exhilarated hikers leaped into the clear, warm waters of the Red Sea in Jordan's Gulf of Aqaba. This aquatic celebration was the climax of a six-week, 650-kilometer hike from Um Qais in the north of the country to Aqaba in the south, and the culmination of the inaugural thru-hike of the new Jordan Trail.

 Cont'd at aramcoworld.com.

[cont'd. from p.11] brought walking into the Palestinian mainstream.

Outdoor enthusiasts have created dozens, maybe hundreds, of online and email groups where like-minded people can share information on routes and publicize excursions and weekend hikes.

Szepesi's Facebook group "Walking Palestine" was one of the first, alongside others created by students in Ramallah, Nablus, and elsewhere. Szepesi has stepped back from active involvement, he says, but "Walking Palestine" continues with almost 5,000 members.

"Walking didn't happen until it became formalized, thanks partly to the work of Stefan Szepesi," says Ihab Jabari, director of the Holy Land Incoming Tour Operators' Association.

"I've just done Wadi Qelt with my kids. This is so new for us as families. It gives you a sense of belonging again."

Seeing shared images posted by local walkers out in the countryside, and hearing their first-hand accounts, has brought a fresh sense of scale, immediacy and possibility, says Walking Palestine's current moderator, Simon Jaser.

"It's the 35-to-55 demographic who are really into walking. These are professional people," he says.

Sharing tea at one of Ramallah's busy sidewalk cafés, Jaser

tells me he has covered most of the West Bank on foot.

"First, I study Google Earth to find possible trails. Then I try to do experimental hikes on my own before I bring people out. Every Sunday I take a taxi somewhere and walk into the hills."

Besides working part-time as a consular official, Jaser is a successful independent guide who also channels some of his profits back into rural communities; he also offers his services for free. Each weekend he advertises a walk via Walking Palestine, which can draw as many as 120 people.

One of his regulars is Issa Abu Dayeh, 74.

"Last Friday we were around 100 people, ladies and young men—I'm the only old one!" says Abu Dayeh.

"I love it: the wilderness, the trees, open nature. We pay very little, only around \$10 to cover the bus."

Jaser is clear about his motivation.

"I want Palestinians to walk throughout the land, and not

just a kilometer or two outside their city," he says.

"That's my priority—to show people the vast open spaces."

A striated wilderness of canyons and scree slopes reaches out near Rashayida village, southeast of Bethlehem. This patch of highland desert—a rarity for Palestine—leads out to cliffs that gaze east directly into a breathtaking sunrise over the Dead Sea. It's gaining renown as a weekend getaway.

"Lots of people go onto my Facebook page asking about these landscapes. 'Can we really go there?' 'Do we need a permit?' 'Is it safe?' These are Palestinians from Hebron or Nablus: They have no idea such places even exist in Palestine," says Farhan Ali Rashaydeh, a guide from the local Bedouin community.

"It's only in the last couple of years that Palestinians have started coming. Now, month by month, you can count more and more of them. They are amazed by it all. 'Oh wow, this is our country, this is a magic place.' I see the relationship between these people and the land deepen while they're here."

The impact of online networking is being felt everywhere.

In Battir, Sabrina Zaben was out for a country walk with her partner, Ahmed Abu Haniya, and two children. "When I have a chance, I like to walk here. It's easier than before, by following social media. There are lots of hiking groups online," she explains.

"Social media lets people come together and plan something. It's becoming much simpler," says hiker Joudeh Abu Saad, resting outside Bethlehem with friends after a day's walk.

Nearby, one of his companions pipes up: "We're creating our own story. Facebook is the only way I could have found my way here."

For tour operator Mark Khano, the last few years have seen a happy coming-together of influences.

"Masar Ibrahim began focused on foreign tourism, but inadvertently also started the ball rolling domestically," he says.

"Technology has lowered the barrier to entry for new players, creating new ways of mobilizing groups."

For Ghaida Rahil, program manager at Masar Ibrahim, net-

working on Facebook led her to set up the Palestinian Women Hikers Club, a group of around 30 women who meet once a month to spend a day on the trail.

"We need to teach women to take care of themselves. Women don't have the same chances as men to go outside, but why should we only see the people around us? No, we should go out and experience other places and other people," she says.

This all makes the trails more than simple footpaths. The Masar Ibrahim, the Nativity Trail, the Sufi Trails and the informal path networks in Battir and elsewhere all exemplify a bottom-up, community-led model of both cultural and economic inclusivity. They become platforms for a form of national reconciliation, linking far-flung communities together in a shared experience of outdoors.

That sharing extends to the most deprived. On the edge of Jericho, the Masar Ibrahim diverts into Aqbat Jaber refugee camp, a low-income neighborhood where in 2014 the local

*I see the relationship between these people
and the land deepen while they're here.*

—FARHAN ALI RASHAYDEH



From cliffs above the Dead Sea, hikers look out over Jordan at sunrise. Lower: At nightfall, Farhan Ali Rashaydeh and other Bedouin guides on the Masar Ibrahim tend a campfire.

women’s association converted a traditional mud-built kindergarten into a guest house.

“It was an idea from Masar Ibrahim, to let people passing through from Wadi Qelt stay here,” says association director Jamila Abul-Assal.

The NGO split conversion costs with the community, which now has a marketable resource: The Mud House is the only lodging of its type in Palestine, and it draws outsiders looking for experiences they can’t get anywhere else.

“We know more people, we have more relationships, life has changed a lot. Aqbat Jaber is now on a par with other communities because of Masar Ibrahim,” says Abul-Assal.

It’s a similar story at Rashayida, where Bedouin patriarch Mohammed Ali Rashaydeh, known as Abu Ismail, has carved out a business catering to walkers and weekenders seeking desert solitude.

“First, I made just one communal tent here, in a quiet place outside the village. But nobody knew about it. I had to go to Bethlehem to tell tour guides myself. By chance, I met George Rishmawi and brought him here.”

That meeting led to an offer of partnership with Masar Ibrahim. Under the NGO’s shared costs approach, Abu Ismail built a sleeping block and toilets, and he brought in beds and bedding. Now his tent is an overnight stop on the national trail.

“Life feels very different now,” he says with a hawk’s frown, and eyes to match.

“Even Palestinians are coming to experience nature and our Bedouin culture. Everyone working here is making money from tourism. I’m supporting my community. I’m very proud.”

After lunch in Tuqu’, Yusuf Salah returns home to Bethlehem, but Hani Abu Taih presses on, crossing the desert with Giacaman, his guide, and the group for a night of campfire conversation—and that amazing Dead Sea sunrise—with Abu Ismail.

As we stand by the tent flap after breakfast slurping a glass of hot, sweet tea, I ask Giacaman if he ever gets tired of walking.

“Never,” he says. “We are pioneers. We are opening up Palestine for Palestinian people.”

With a shout, he gathers his group, shoulders his pack, and hits the trail, destination Hebron, two days away. ☹



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 www.matthewteller.com.

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



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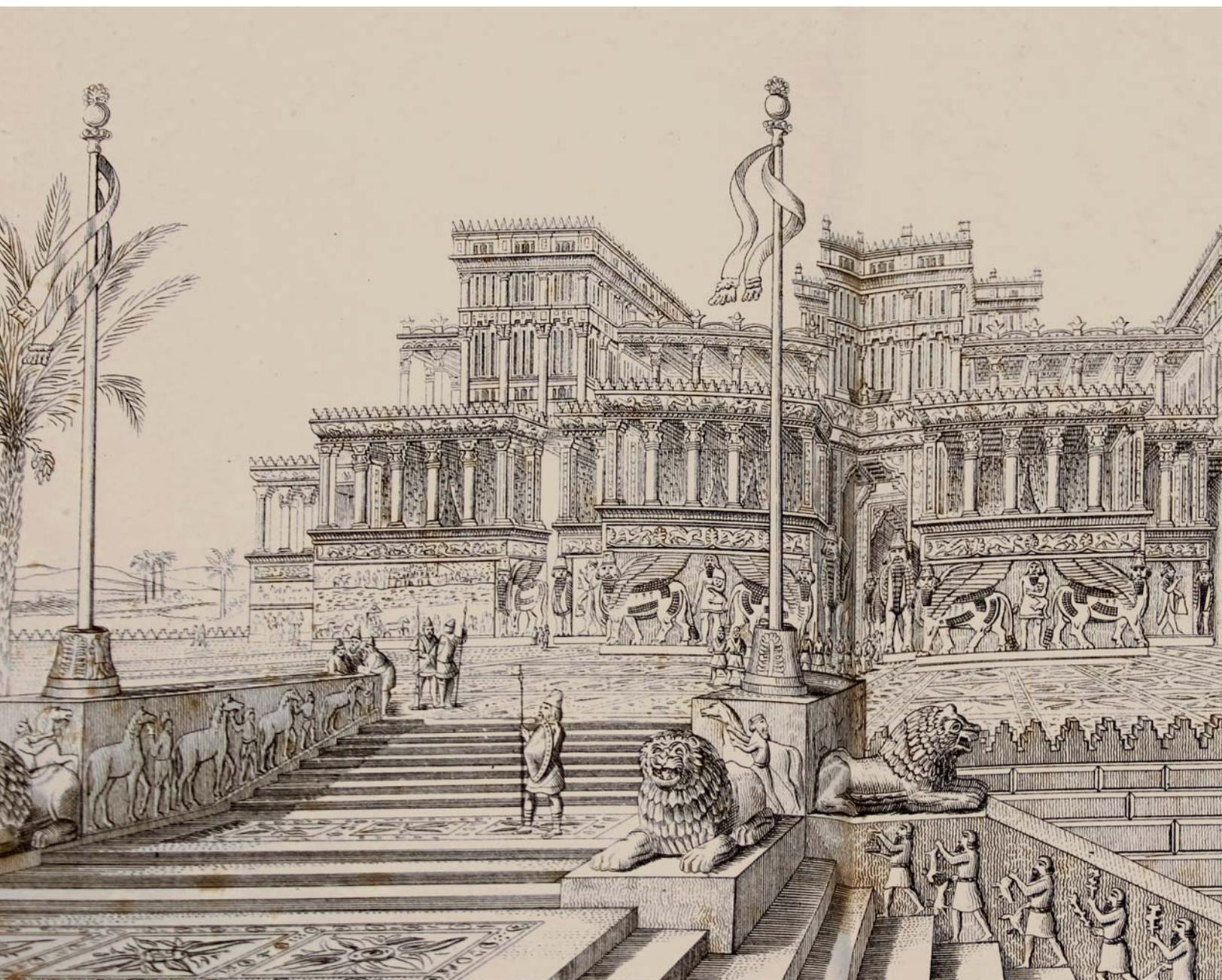
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IRAQ'S *First* ARCHEOLOGIST

Written by JANE WALDRON GRUTZ



When Hormuzd Rassam went to work in January of 1846 as an assistant to Austen Henry Layard, Rassam was 19 years old and eager to help the man who had come from England to dig out a buried palace near Rassam's home town of Mosul.

Six years earlier, while en route to visit an uncle in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), Layard had passed through Mosul, in northern Iraq and then under Ottoman control. There Layard met the British vice-consul for Mosul, Christian Rassam, who showed his guest around the area. The men got along well. Of all he saw, Layard wrote, nothing intrigued him more than the two great sets of mounds called Nabi Younis and Koyunjik that lay across the Tigris river from Mosul, on its east bank, said to be the ruins of ancient Assyrian Nineveh. Days later and a few kilometers downriver, Layard saw the towering cone of ancient Assy-

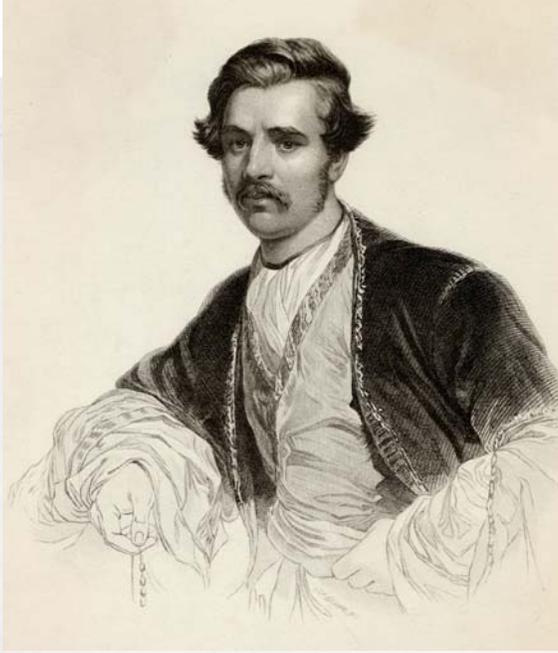
rian Nimrud, "and the impression that it made upon me was one never to be forgotten." The scenes were so compelling, he wrote, that "my thought ran constantly upon the possibility of exploring with the spade those great ruins."

Layard paid a second visit to Mosul in 1842 as an assistant to the British general consul in Constantinople. This time he was accompanied to the Koyunjik mound by the newly appointed French consul to Mosul, Paul Emile Botta, who not only shared Layard's interest in history, but also had, with the backing of his government, begun excavation there. Though Botta had yet to find much, his enthusiasm inspired Layard.

In November of 1845 Layard secured a loan of 150 pounds sterling from the British ambassador in Constantinople, Stratford Canning, whose own interest in archeology had led him to acquire for the British Museum the so-called "Canning Marbles" from Bodrum, Turkey. With help in Mosul from Christian Rassam and a British merchant named Henry Ross, Layard began

Over the roughly eight years from 1846 to the time of this portrait in 1854, Hormuzd Rassam, working both under Austen Henry Layard and independently, uncovered first-millennium-BCE tombs, libraries and palaces, including that of Sennacherib, who ruled Assyria and Babylonia in the seventh century BCE, shown in this artist's conception produced in 1853, which used the discoveries to imagine how the palace's northeastern facade and entrance might have appeared.





Austen Henry Layard oversaw excavations until 1851, a year after this portrait was made. Right: Rassam's supervisory skills afforded Layard time for the careful drawings that, together with artifacts, laid foundations for the field of Assyrian studies.

to lay out trenches. Luck was with him. After just a few days of digging, the 28-year-old archeologist began to uncover what turned out to be the palace of the mid-ninth-century-BCE Assyrian king Ashurnasirpal, one of the largest and most magnificent structures of the 300-year neo-Assyrian period, 911 to 612 BCE. Layard's success was met well back in London, and the British Museum soon agreed to grant him funds for more extensive excavations. The funding would include a salary for an on-site supervisor who spoke both Arabic and English. That duty fell to Christian Rassam's young brother Hormuzd.

Hormuzd Rassam came with much to recommend himself. Fluent in Arabic, English and Chaldean, he also added "inexhaustible good humour, combined with necessary firmness, to his complete knowledge of the Arab character," wrote Layard. "Mr. Hormuzd Rassam lived with me," he continued, "and to him I confided the payment of the wages and the accounts. He soon obtained an extraordinary influence over the Arabs, and his fame spread throughout the desert."

Within weeks at Nimrud, Rassam took on increasingly more of the field duties, which afforded Layard, an accomplished draftsman, the time to record the extraordinary finds that were, it seemed, turning up every day. A 1911 obituary written for *The Geographical Journal* described how Rassam "developed rapidly," having possessed "that instinctive skill in locating ancient remains." He quickly climbed to the rank of foreman, second in command only to Layard.

Most of the finds at Nimrud, Layard observed, differed

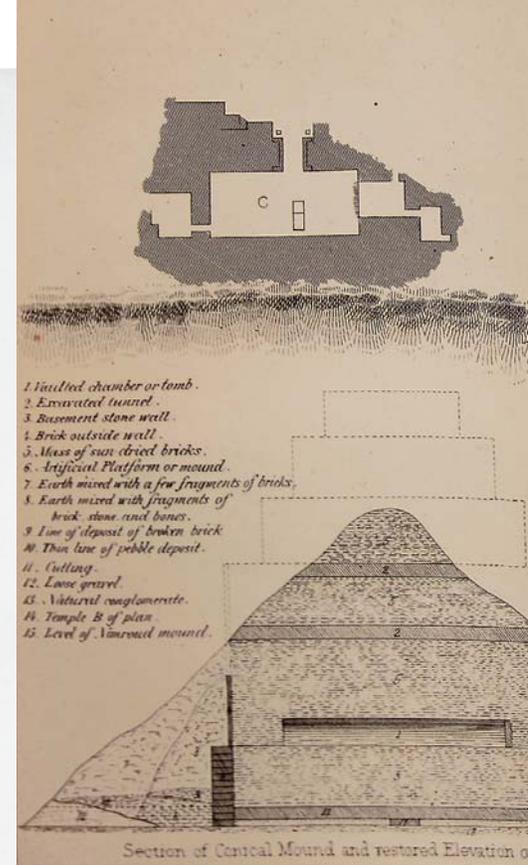
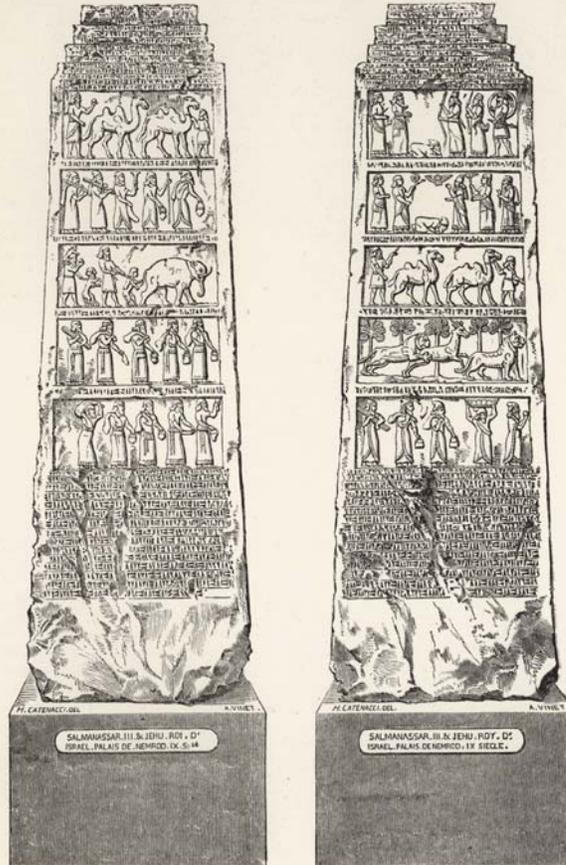


in style and even "surpassed in design and execution" much of what had been revealed recently a few kilometers north at Khorsabad, at the palace of Sargon II, at the time the only other excavated Assyrian palace. At Nimrud, Layard was able to capture much of the detail depicted in the many wall reliefs that were like windows into the Assyrian court: the king performing religious functions, hunting lions, defeating enemies. Layard also noted floor plans of the palace rooms and courtyards as workers were uncovering them.

One find in particular impressed Layard as being "the most remarkable discovery." A black obelisk measuring almost two meters high and dating from the time of Shalmaneser III (858–824 BCE) offers a record of the Assyrian king's "capture of nations" over his 32 years of rule. Of particular interest to Layard was the second panel from the top, showing what Layard and Rassam conjectured, based on the illustrated attire of boots and pointed caps, to be "some race living to the north of Assyria." One of those shown paying tribute is Jehu, king of Israel, which proved

Fluent in Arabic, English and Chaldean, Rassam added "inexhaustible good humour, combined with necessary firmness," wrote Layard.

Right: One of Layard's important early finds was the black basalt obelisk, nearly two meters tall, of Shalmaneser III. Dating to the ninth century BCE and carved on all four sides with chronicles of 32 years of conquests, it is now on display in the British Museum. Far right: Excavations by Layard and Rassam dispelled notions that Koyunjik's conical mound, shown in this sectional diagram, covered a pyramidal structure: Instead, Layard uncovered "the remains of a square tower."



of particular interest to Layard for its verification of Biblical accounts.

Layard and Rassam continued working at Nimrud until May of 1847 when, curious as to what else might be found in the area, they moved to survey the two mounds at nearby Nineveh. The smaller, called Nabi Yunus, was accepted locally as the site where the body of the prophet Jonah rested, and that made it off limits to excavations. There were no local objections, however, to excavating the larger mound, Koyunjik. Layard and Rassam began soundings and, based on their trenches, Koyunjik appeared to be even more promising than Nimrud.

On June 14, 1847, Layard wrote the secretary of the British Museum:

The discovery of this building and the extent to which the excavations have been carried out, I conclude, establish our claim to the future examination of the mound should the Trustees be desirous to continue the researches in this country.

In his introduction to the 1970 edition of Layard's book, *Nineveh and Its Remains*, British Assyriologist H. W. F. Saggs noted, "it was owing to this fortnight's work that the British Museum could afterwards claim the rights by which it obtained the famous collection of more than 20,000 cuneiform tablets and fragments from Koyunjik

upon which Assyriology is based."

But it was growing late in the season for archeology. Ten days later Layard left Mosul for England, and he took Rassam with him. "The best time of the year for explorations in Mesopotamia is from September to November inclusive, and from the beginning of March to the end of May," wrote Rassam, "because, during December, January and February the days are short, and the weather generally wet; and from June to the end of August the heat of the sun is so powerful."

In England Layard helped Rassam obtain a place at Magdalen College at Oxford. Rassam's father had died some years before, and Christian and his English wife, Matilda Badger Rassam, agreed to pay Hormuzd's expenses.

Rassam did well at his studies. He did even better at making friends. He learned to ice skate—and to even think it funny when he fell through the ice. He gave his new friends gifts

of his own calligraphy, and he waxed proud when one of his examples was exhibited in the university's Bodleian Library. He became a favorite of the local bishop, who invited Rassam to dinner so often, Rassam wrote Layard, that it became rumored he might marry the bishop's daughter.

He did not, and in 1849, at the request of the British Museum, Rassam rejoined La-





Among the numerous, grandly sized bas-relief friezes found leading from the entrance of the grand palace at Koyunjik was this one, above, showing King Ashurnasirpal plunging his spear into the head of a springing lion, which Layard described as "one of the finest specimens yet discovered of Assyrian sculpture." Less spectacular but no less significant, the sixth-century-BCE, barrel-shaped "Cyrus Cylinder," left, unearthed in 1879 by Rassam, measures only 10 x 23 centimeters, but its minutely inscribed chronicle details the restoration of Babylon by the Achaemenid ruler.



yard in Constantinople to return to the Koyunjik mound in Nineveh.

Digging in the mound's southwest corner, Layard and Rassam soon came upon the vast "palace without rival." It had been built by the late seventh-century-BCE King Sennacherib, and within it was one of the most spectacularly detailed reliefs of its epoch: a room devoted to a complex relief telling of Sennacherib's destruction of Lachish, an outpost of Jerusalem at the time of Jehu, the same king who was represented on the black obelisk. Twelve meters long and more than five high, the relief showed Assyrian battering rams and chariots attacking and breaching the city walls as well as the punishments meted out to the rebel leaders afterward.

Days later Layard's team came across two large chambers "of which the whole area was piled a foot or more deep in tablets." This was the seventh-century-BCE library of Sennacherib's grandson Ashurbanipal, the largest of its time by far.

Although the discoveries were extraordinary, the work

conditions were abysmal. By the summer of 1851, the heat and infestations of mosquitoes had taken their toll on Layard who, ill with malaria, left the region, never to return to Nineveh.

With Layard's departure, the British Museum in 1852 entrusted Rassam, then in England, to carry on the excavation. As Rassam was still only 25 years old, the trustees of the museum asked him to "take charge of the excavations under the general control of Colonel Rawlinson," an English cavalry officer turned linguist, who then served as British resident in Baghdad, some 320 kilometers to the south of Mosul.

Rawlinson was celebrated for his work copying the trilingual cuneiform inscriptions carved in the sixth and fifth centuries BCE by the Achaemenid King Darius high on a towering rock at Behistun, 550 kilometers southeast of Mosul. Teetering on long ladders, Rawlinson had copied the Old Persian and Elamite inscriptions on several visits beginning in 1836 and, with the help of a telescope and two Kurdish boys, completed copying the Babylonian inscription in 1847. By comparing the three languages, Rawlinson and other scholars came to a crucial determination: Cuneiform was not a language in itself but rather a writing system that, over some 3,000 years, was used for many languages. This meant more work for archeologists: To decipher the languages, linguists needed more tablets.

Rawlinson had little experience in digging, and so the task fell to Rassam,

who had developed into an able field archeologist. During his time with Layard, he had developed a keen sense of which areas might prove worth exploring. As Rassam wrote in his book, *Asshur and the Land of Nimrod*, he had long wished to investigate the northern corner of the Koyunjik mound, "which, in my opinion, had never been thoroughly explored."

His ambition was thwarted, however, by Rawlinson and the French consul at Mosul, Victor Place, who agreed to divide the area of Mesopotamian exploration between them as the lure of ever-greater discoveries began to pit the French against the English in a race to claim each potential site. The agreement allotted the north part of Koyunjik to Place.

Rassam was devastated. In his mind, not only was Koyunjik an original British claim, but he also knew that part of the mound was private property upon which the British had long been paying rent. "Moreover," he wrote, "it was understood, and indeed it is an acknowledged etiquette, that no agent of any museum was to intrude in the sites chosen by the other."

The situation that followed might have been different had Place begun excavating there, but he showed little interest: The French archeologist was making good progress nearly 20 kilometers southeast at Khorsabad and, with limited funding, was not in a position to overextend himself.

Convincing himself that Rawlinson had had no right to assign the northern part of Koyunjik to the French, who in any case seemed uninterested, Rassam resolved to conduct “an experimental examination of the spot at night.” On December 20, 1853, Rassam gathered his men.

The first three nights brought disappointment. On the fourth, they came upon an ascending passage, which experience had taught Rassam would likely lead to a main building. His instinct did not let him down, and he watched as “a large part of the bank which was attached to the sculpture fell, and exposed a beautiful bas-relief in a perfect state of preservation.”

The sculpture represented a king, later determined to be Ashurbanipal, “standing in a chariot, about to start on a hunting expedition.”

It was Ashurbanipal’s north palace, and within it lay some of the greatest treasures ever unearthed in Mesopotamia. These include the now-famous bas-reliefs of the king’s ritual lion hunt, arguably the finest Assyrian reliefs ever found.

Days later, they came upon the main part of one of the libraries of Ashurbanipal, whom scholar Jeanette C. Fincke of the University of Heidelberg credits as having been blessed with “great intelligence,” and “talents to learn the scribal art.” His instructions as king of Assyria, maintains Fincke, to “collect all the tablets as much as there are in their houses” eventually led to chambers filled with compilations of thousands of inscribed terracotta tablets with hieroglyphic and Phoenician characters dating as far back as the Sumerian period (5000–1750 BCE).

Rassam, scheduled to return to England in spring of 1854, worked feverishly. He excavated as many of the better-preserved lion-hunt panels as he could, and he packed them for shipping to London under Rawlinson who, short of money, asked Place to make room in his cargo raft for the British finds. Place had intended to accompany what was now the combined shipment, but the Louvre insisted that Place travel with it only as far as Baghdad. It was a mistake. As the rafts neared the port of Basra, pirates rammed them and sank them.

Place lost everything excavated in his two years at Khorsabad, including all his notes. The British lost one shipment of lion-hunt reliefs, but most of the wall slabs, and nearly all of the tablets, would make it to England by May of 1856. None of the lost treasures were ever recovered.

Rawlinson had little experience in digging, and so the task fell to Rassam, who had developed into an able field archeologist.

By this time, however, Rassam had begun a new chapter. Shortly before leaving Oxford, he wrote to Layard, now a member of the British Parliament. Rassam asked his mentor if he might find him, once the dig was over, a diplomatic post. Layard recommended Rassam to the port of Aden at the southwest tip of the Arabian Peninsula, strategic gateway between the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. In making his recommendation, Layard remembered well Rassam’s innovations in employing gangs of seven men carrying on simultaneous, different excavating tasks. Indeed Rassam rose quickly in Aden to first assistant political resident, a position comparable to a lieutenant governor under the directors of the East India Company.

His work was varied and interesting. He was proud that no one ever asked to reverse one of his decisions while serving as a magistrate, and his genuine interest in helping people won wide praise. In diplomacy he was commended for settling a border dispute with neighboring Muscat (now capital of Oman).

So it was that in the summer of 1864, it seemed only natural that the British government would select him for a sensitive mission: Negotiate freedom for several British missionaries who were being held captive in Abyssinia (now Ethiopia). Warned that it could be both complex and dangerous, Rassam

Among Rassam’s other notable finds were 16 bronze bands embossed and engraved with figurative scenes and called the Gates of Balawat, after the village, some 15 kilometers northeast of Nimrud, near which they were found. The bands adorned a pair of wooden doors to a palace of Shalmaneser III. This particular band shows the Assyrian conquest of Khazazu, a city in northwestern Syria known today as Azaz.



This artist's depiction of the grand entrance to a four-chambered temple built by Ashurnasirpal II at the northwest part of Nimrud was excavated under Layard and Rassam in 1846. It shows the human-headed lions that today stand on display in London (opposite); the artist also showed the palace in the vivid colors that may have resembled its original condition.

nonetheless set sail in July for the port town of Massowah.

The mission fared badly. It took some three years to resolve—and then only by a British army. Although Rassam was commended for bravery, the British press suggested he had been the wrong man for the job. In

1869, at age 43, he left the foreign service, married Anne Eliza Price, an Englishwoman of Irish descent, and settled in Twickenham, Middlesex, England. There he set out to write his own account of Abyssinia, which he published in 1869.

Three years later an Assyriologist named George Smith with the British Museum used tablets Rassam had found some 18 years earlier in an Ashurbanipal library to decipher the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. The story, written long before the earliest manuscript of the Biblical book of Genesis, told of a great flood, of a man who builds an ark, and of a dove released in search of land. The resemblance between this and the Biblical Flood accounts both alarmed and fascinated the European public. The texts, however, were deemed incomplete. Missing were records believed still buried at Koyunjik. To satisfy the resurgent interest, Rassam agreed to once again pack his cases and return to Nineveh, now in search of as many more tablets as he could find for, as he wrote, “the completion of the records which were already amongst the national collection.”

In four expeditions between 1878 and 1882, Rassam unearthed literally tens of thousands of tablets from sites as far away as Syria and the region of Lake Van in eastern Turkey, as well as from Nineveh, Nimrud and Babylonian cities to the south, including an important cache from the temple of Marduk in Babylon itself. During those years he also located and excavated the Babylonian city of Sippar, famous as “the oldest city known amongst the ancients.” At that site alone, Rassam and his team gathered between 60,000 and 70,000 tablets.

Perhaps his most famous find was a sixth-century-BCE terra-cotta cylinder written by Cyrus the Great and excavated in Jimjima. On it is recorded the capture and enslavement of Babylon by Cyrus's predecessors.

Another spectacular find was two sets of inscribed bronze



To strengthen thousands of inscribed tablets before shipping them to London, Rassam oversaw baking them in hot ashes.

bands that once adorned the gate of Balawat, near Nineveh, which is still considered among the most informative illustrations of ancient military campaigns in existence.

Yet for all his successes, Rassam felt his four Assyrian expeditions failed to garner much appreciation. He himself even called them “an unworthy sequel to the fascinating and interesting narratives” of Layard. Part of the problem was support: Although Rassam had planned to make as full a record of the buildings he uncovered as Layard had, by this time political provocations among British, Ottoman and Russian interests had dampened British enthusiasm for investment in further excavations. Rassam warned the trustees that the monies they were providing barely covered the costs of excavating. He offered his services without remuneration.

Moreover, despite Rassam's pleas, the museum also failed to send out an artist, nor were there funds to buy a camera. With only his trusted workmen to help, Rassam took as

much time as he could spare to make his own rough sketches.

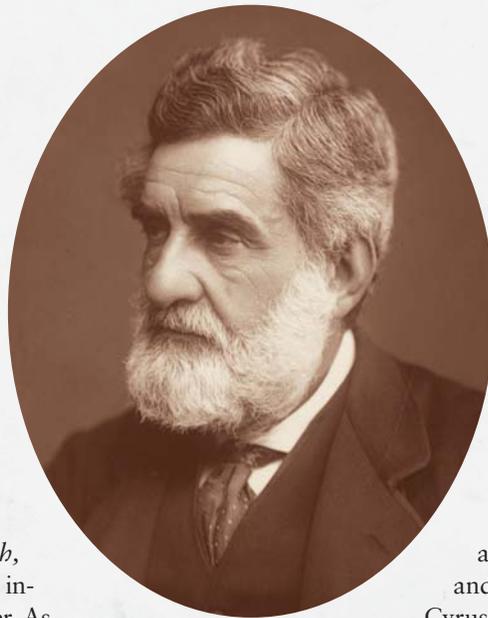
There were other difficulties as well. Rassam found the mud brick walls at Babylon almost impossible to differentiate from the dried mud that covered them, commenting that his workmen “are obliged to dig at haphazard as every trace of the old walls is lost.”

Even the tablets themselves were a problem. Other than those at Nineveh, which had been both partially destroyed and partially preserved by fire in 612 BCE, most of the tablets Rassam found were unbaked and, consequently, they suffered almost immediate disintegration when handled. He begged for a linguist to decipher the cuneiform before the tablets crumbled into dust, but in the end, he resorted to baking the tablets in hot ashes before shipping them to London.

Rassam's biggest hurdle was the scope of his assignment. To uncover as many tablets as possible, Rassam found it nec-



Now flanking the entrance to galleries in the British Museum much as they flanked a portal of a temple built by Ashurnasirpal II, the human-headed lion figures arrived in London in 1851 together with hundreds of other artifacts. *Right:* In his later years, Rassam won a libel defense against charges of collusion with artifact thieves, an ordeal that left him at times dispirited, but he continued to publish monographs, including *Asshur and the Land of Nimrod*.



essary to open more than 30 dig sites, a scheme that entailed the appointment of local supervisors so he could move on to other sites. Pilfering antiquities had been a way of life long before Rassam arrived, but with the publication of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the search for tablets exploded, and the incentives to looters had never been higher. As former British Museum curator Julian Reade noted, Rassam had sought the support of guardians of local shrines “by employing them as guards and contributing to the maintenance of their buildings. And he was careful to identify the promising places from which tablets had been coming.” At site after site, Rassam did all he could to prevent theft. But one British Museum curator, Wallis Budge, remained skeptical.

Aware that large numbers of tablets were appearing on the open market, the museum sent Budge to investigate. For reasons that remain unclear, Budge concluded that not only were the artifacts being stolen and sold by the very workmen Rassam had left to excavate them, but that Rassam had colluded with them.

Layard, who had had his own problems with Budge, was outraged. He rushed to his friend’s public defense, declaring Rassam “one of the honestest [*sic*] and most straightforward fellows I ever knew, and one whose services have never been acknowledged.” Deeply hurt, Rassam sued Budge in 1893

for libel and won. But the resulting publicity left Rassam’s reputation in tatters. Rather than continue the debate, he retired to Brighton, where he wrote a number of scholarly articles as well as his book, *Asshur and the Land of Nimrod*, which he dedicated to his old friend, Austen Henry Layard. He died in Brighton in 1910, 16 years after Layard. He was 84, beloved by family and friends.

His considerable contributions to Mesopotamian archeology are well appreciated by those who continue to work in the field, and his name appears prominently in most recent books devoted to the subject.

Perhaps the greatest testimonies to Rassam’s work, however, are the artifacts themselves, the treasures he discovered while working both with Layard and on his own, that today stand among the highlights of the British Museum. Prominently displayed on the main floor, in galleries that transport visitors back millennia, are the famous lion reliefs, panel after grand panel, arranged just as they were found at Koyunjik. The bronze bands of Balawat are now fixed to a replica of the enormous, original gate. A colossal bull and lion from Nimrud still stand as flanking guards at the entrance to the Assyrian galleries, and the Obelisk in Black Marble and the Cyrus Cylinder claim their places among the most visited exhibits in the museum.

Within a decade, Layard and Rassam uncovered three of the four most magnificent Assyrian palaces ever found. Their findings, together with those of Botta, opened the study of Assyriology. Rassam stands alone as the first archeologist both of and from Mesopotamia. 🌐

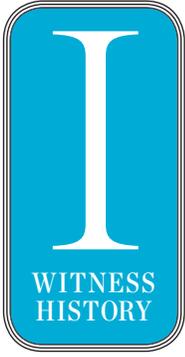


Jane Waldron Grutz dates her interest in archeology to 1996, when she participated in a dig at Tell es-Sa’idiyeh in Jordan. She has since taken part in excavations throughout the Middle East and maintains a strong interest in archeological work within the region. A former staff writer for Saudi Aramco in Dhahran, she now divides her time between Houston and London.



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 Hanging Gardens of Babylon: N/D 68



I, D O W N

— THE — DRAIN



Written by FRANK L. HOLT

Illustrated by NORMAN MACDONALD

Have you ever been so steamed that you came unglued in a public place? That happened to me once, more than a thousand years ago. I blame my misfortune on your relentless obsession with hot baths, especially the Turkish kind passed on to the Ottomans by the Romans I knew so well. You hygienic humans love to relax in them, but for me, all that steam was a hiss of death. Long ago it loosed my grip and sent me into a downward spiral that ended in the darkest of places. I am better now, and it helps to talk about it—so here goes.

Arabian by birth, Indian by design and Roman by trade, I know more than most about the hardships of living in your human world. Toppled obelisks and exploding temples have nothing on me, for I had a white-knuckled tour of duty on the hand of a Roman imperial soldier. I would prefer a view of the Aegean Sea or the Nile Val-

ley any day to watching men die a mere sword-length away.

I am, after all, a gemstone of red jasper from the Arabian Peninsula, something prized among your spiritualists as a healer and bringer of peace. I therefore made no complaint when someone carried me off to a workshop and into my mineral flesh carved a picture—quite a pretty one. I bore the intaglio image of a distinctive parrot perched on a leafy branch. Borrowing the Latin of the serviceman who later owned me, the winged creature is nowadays known as *Psittacus torquatus*, an alluring green squawker with a bright red neck-band, a hooked beak and a long, plumed tail that curves jauntily upward. These exotic birds hailed from north India, but merchants hauled them west in fancy cages to eager buyers in the Levant and across the Mediterranean. One of them appears in a mosaic from the Pergamon acropolis in modern-day Turkey. Prized as companions, these parrots can be trained to chatter in many of your human languages. According to Pliny the Elder, patriotic Roman citizens taught them to screech “*Ave Caesar*,” but he added that these birds tended to fall forward onto their heavy beaks. For such creatures, Roman poets wrote elegies.

With such an image emblazoned across me, I guess it is

no wonder that I can speak to you so well. My next adventure was to be trimmed around my edges, into an oval that measures about 14 millimeters wide. I was then set into a sturdy iron finger ring, where I became a personal signet. But about all who possessed me, I cannot tell. You see, a signet must pledge loyalty to its latest owner, forswearing all before.

I still faithfully serve the Roman warrior who acquired me last, and none before him. He was a typical man of his times, muscled and mouthy. Against my nature, I occasionally had to punch those who angered him, leaving a little parakeet bruised into the offender’s jaw. Sometimes I was swung too slow, and it was my bearer who toppled, ironically, onto his own heavy beak.

At his bidding, I journeyed to lands far from Arabia and India. He served his master as I served mine. Roman soldiers lived most of their adult lives in the legions, taking up posts along the vast frontiers of their empire. Many of them wore rings like me, each set with a small but impressive treasure carved from jasper, cornelian, nicolo, amethyst, plasma or quartz. Every gemstone bore a specially chosen image. Some types you would naturally expect as adornments of fighting men: imperial eagles, heroes, horsemen, weaponry, and fierce deities such as Mars. Other



stones betray their abiding concern for safety and prosperity with depictions of cornucopiae, money bags and deities of health and fortune. I suppose my parrot meant something personal to my ring bearer, perhaps an homage to a lost pet. Then, too, my owner may simply have liked the exotica of the East and the sense I conveyed of the wondrous world he watched over. To each his own.

Eventually, my bearer and I traveled about as far west as we could go, all the way to the frost-fringe of the known world, a region now called Wales. There he soldiered with me until the fateful day we parted company, the day my life went down the drain. I mean that literally, for I spent nearly 2,000 years clogging a drainpipe that emptied the baths of Rome's Second Legion Augusta (II Augusta) in the province of Britannia. Yes, I was lodged in that filthy prison by the swirling bathwater of thousands of soldiers and their dependents, the compatriots of my erstwhile ringbearer. I was hardly alone there, and I shared this unpleasant fate with many other inmates, including the soggy carcasses of frogs, rats, cows, sheep, pigs, fish, ducks, geese and other fowl things. Mostly there were table scraps dropped by bathers. I lay surrounded, too, by shattered glass, broken pots, nails, and a collection of human teeth. If you have ever felt revolted by the sight of a giant clog, imagine me, living in one, for centuries. I would have given the entire *orbis terrarum* to see the bright skies of Arabia again. It was all dark, damp and deeply depressing.

My long nightmare took place specifically in the central drain underneath the main building of the military base at Isca, now called Caerleon, or "Fort of the legions" in Welsh. The Romans built the original camp on virgin soil during the reign of first-century-CE Emperor Vespa-

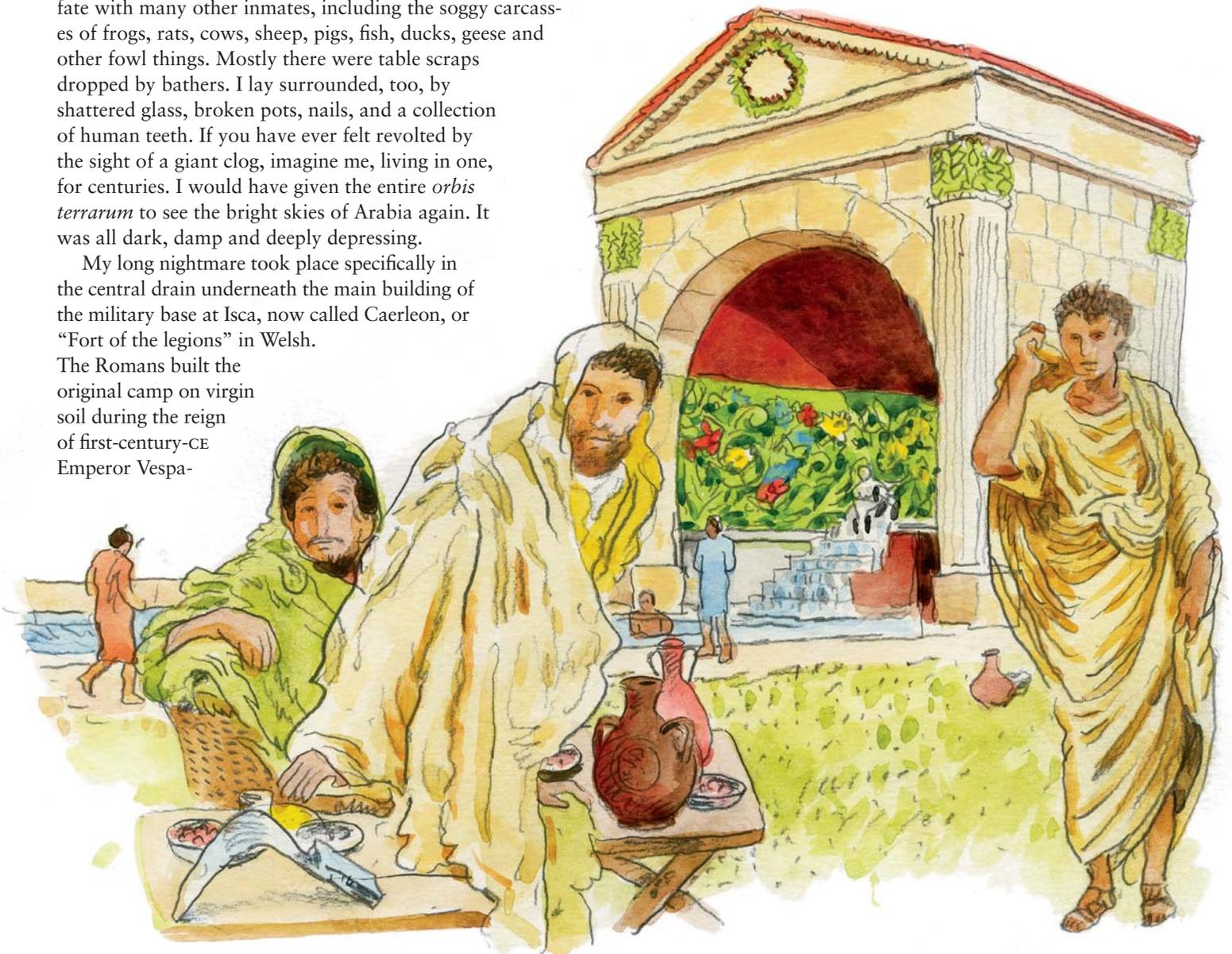
sian—"Ave Caesar," as the parrots might say. Isca became the home of II Augusta, which had previously served in Hispania and Germania. You might remember Vespasian for his engineering miracle, the Amphitheatrum Flavium, now known simply as the Colosseum. But baths, which the Romans called

thermae, like those at Isca, reflect the true zeal of Rome. Why conquer the world if you cannot keep it clean? The industrious Romans constructed public baths wherever they soldiered and set-

tled—a legacy passed down for centuries in the Levant. In fact, it was around the turn of the 10th century that Hilal al-Sabi' reported that the Abbasids had out-built even the Romans by constructing some 60,000 bathhouses in Baghdad alone.

Nothing so grand took place at Isca. In 75 CE the local Silurian tribe watched from their thatched huts as soldiers in the thousands erected for themselves a little Rome away from home. The provincial governor happened to be a general

I know I should not blame the boys of II Augusta for building the baths that became my prison; they meant well.



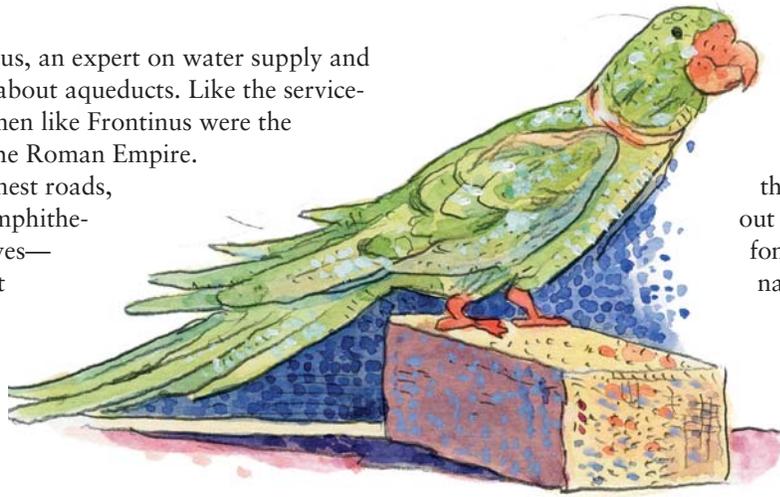
named Sextus Frontinus, an expert on water supply and the author of a book about aqueducts. Like the servicemen of every caesar, men like Frontinus were the busy builder ants of the Roman Empire.

They fabricated the finest roads, aqueducts, bridges, amphitheatres, basilicas and—yes—baths. As Isca's largest structure, the massive *thermae* aimed as much to impress the Silurians as to improve the lives of the legionnaires.

I know I should not blame the boys of 11 Augusta for building the baths that became my prison; they meant well, all 5,000 of them and their families. The latter, of course, were something new by the time I reached Isca. Until the reign of Emperor Septimius Severus, Roman soldiers had to stay bachelors until their discharge after an enlistment of about 25 years. Once the Romans started building permanent garrisons like Isca, soldiers gradually became less mobile, making it possible to marry and more or less settle down. Legionary fortresses, like the three built in Britannia, slowly became cities as their bustling *canabae* (civilian suburbs) expanded around the original military camp. These areas included family housing, shops, taverns, temples, private clubs and so on.

Why enlist for such a long life in the legions? Well, besides a regular bath at the *thermae*, you got job training, medical care and money. I remember the smile on the face of my ringbearer, early in the third century CE when Severus' son, Emperor Caracalla, announced a salary increase of about 50 percent. Not shabby at all, but then his smile dimmed with the news that Caracalla also debased the currency at the same time: Give a gift but take some back, I learned, was something of an imperial motto. The government was trying to stretch its silver while also keeping the legions happy. Times were tough with wars up north in Caledonia, now Scotland—where Severus died—and there were problems along the Danube frontier and big trouble brewing in Syria. Quite a few lads in the 11 Augusta had to be temporarily redeployed to these hotspots. Their departures, called *vexillationes*, left the ranks awfully thin at Isca.

It was about this time that I

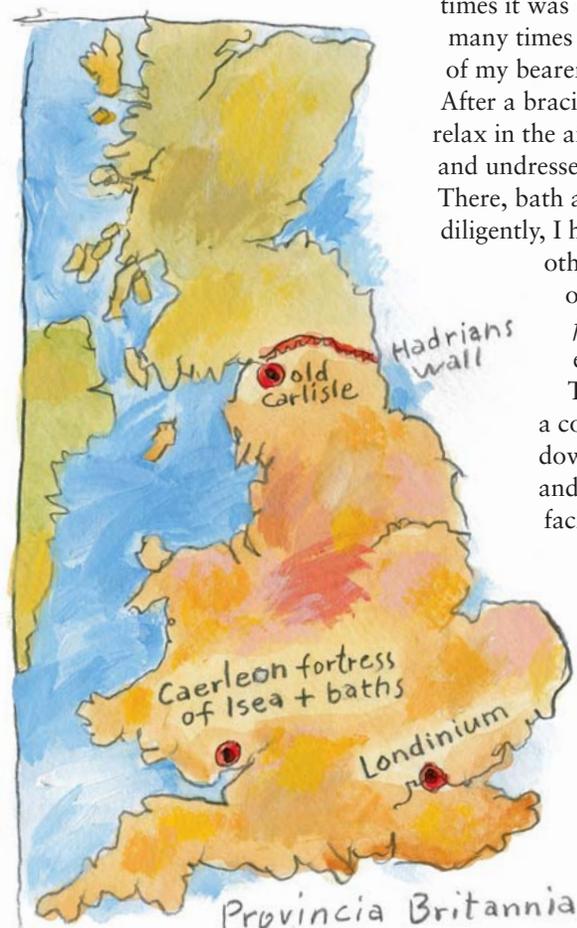


slipped from my soldier's hand and, worse, slid down the main drain beneath the baths. How sad I was to see those familiar surroundings gurgle out of sight above me! I remember fondly the *palaestra*, that colonnaded exercise yard and, in case of poor weather, the *basilica*, the vast indoor training facility; the *natatio*, or outdoor exercise pool, stretched alongside the baths holding 365,000 liters of water. Attached to the *natatio* used to be a beautiful *nymphaeum*, a fountain-house that cascaded a continuous supply of fresh, clean water into the pool below.

The baths themselves constituted a soaring edifice of brick and concrete faced with dressed stone. Tall glass windows towered overhead, framed by gaily painted walls beneath an amazing triple cross-vaulted ceiling accenting the *thermae*'s three main chambers. Mosaics decorated the waterproofed interior like an art gallery. Even though the Usk flowed nearby, bathers did not rely on river-water. Such a source could too easily be fouled, so spring-water was drawn down from the hills about eight kilometers away. That explains the coal-dust that afflicted me in the drainpipe, brought there as tiny traces from the coalfields located near the spring.

My memory, you see, is still keen, and at times it was all I had to keep my spirits up. So many times did I observe firsthand the rituals of my bearer and his countrymen bathing. After a bracing round of exercise, or simply to relax in the afternoon, they entered the baths and undressed in the heated *apodyterium*. There, bath attendants guarded (not always diligently, I heard) everybody's clothes and

other personal belongings. The first of three bathing rooms was the *frigidarium* because, obviously enough, it featured cold water. The patron could take a dip in a cold plunge bath and perhaps oil down, scrape away dirt, dead skin and sweat along with a splash of the facility's perfumed body oils. All of this slurry drained into the main pipe, either through subsidiary lines in the basins or through a large grate in the center of the room. Next, our bathers circulated into the *tepidarium*, which featured warm water and, finally, the *caldarium*, which was the hot room. The floors of these two chambers were raised





on piers so that furnaces could deliver heat underneath them. This ingenious *hypocaust* created a steam system and fueled hot bathing pools. Hollow channels in the walls funneled this warmth upward, and in the bitter winters of Britannia, this felt like a miracle to the patrons. Thoroughly refreshed, the patrons wandered back through the building to the apodyterium to retrieve belongings, get dressed and leave.

Mind you, from what I observed, all of this activity at Isca sounded just as loud, and smelled just as strongly, as anything in the more famous imperial baths in Rome itself. If you haven't had the pleasure, unroll a copy of Seneca's epistles, and read for yourself. He describes the bellowing and grunting of the patrons, some of them wheezing while trying to lift weights, others crooning as if in love with their own voices, and arguments as hot as the caldarium when they came to discussing sports. You're deafened by the slapping of expert hands during a massage. Oblivious blokes sing in the tubs or thrash around in the plunge baths, carelessly dousing water on everyone. Professional depilators make grown men cry as they pluck unwanted hairs from armpits and other places. Food vendors stroll the rooms, hawking

sausages, cakes and other delights, some snacks, some whole repasts. Their aromas mingle with sweat and filth for a memorable experience. Imagine gym class, lunch and bathtime all rolled into one.

The by-products of this recreational activity usually got swept in my direction. Lead drainpipes linked together all the plunge-baths, tubs and pools of the entire complex, so whatever hit the floor or dropped into the basins would end up where I finally did. In the old days, that journey started in a brick-lined underground channel 60 centimeters wide and 70 centimeters high, sloped with a precise downward gradient. It ran below the building and, some 12 meters beyond the baths, made a sharp left turn in order to travel alongside, rather than beneath, the outdoor exercise pool. That abrupt bend was a mistake, for it disrupted the flow of water. Within a quarter-century the main drain became so congested that drastic measures had to be taken.

During the reign of Emperor Trajan in the second century CE, soldiers remodeled the *thermae*. They raised all its flooring, unroofed the drain and called on engineers and *artifices plumbarii*—you call them plumbers—to assess the problems. Their solution was to lay down over the debris a new base of stones and to heighten its walls—in essence



building a larger drain on top of the older, clogged one. This new channel was 1.3 meters high, with gentler turns to improve the flow of water. For a while, it drained with the best of the empire's conduits. Yet, a century later, there I got stuck, by then beyond the reach of even the finest artifex plumbarius in the land.

Like cellmates in the dark, those of us incarcerated in the clogged drainpipe shared miseries in whispers. Beneath me, in the older layer of trash, we heard muffled cries from the detritus of Isca's beginnings. Those old-timers formed a distinctive group washed down when the aboveground bathers consumed only light snacks, mostly mutton chops, chicken legs, shellfish, eggs and pork ribs. The later legions acquired a taste for heartier fare, and we saw how they filled the upper part of the drainage channel with bones from bigger cuts of meat. In my day, bathers devoured whole meals while relaxing. I'd like to believe that the occasional rodent and frog that came down to join us had been an intruder dispatched in the baths, not something on the menu. I was never quite sure.

With more substantial foods came more dishware, poking us with shards of bowls, plates and drinking cups. Since the meals had been prepared off-site, I was at least spared the company of cook-pots and frying pans. Nothing was free, so patrons brought money to pay for these meals and some of that, too, trickled down to me. Not that I could use it. The oldest coin I ever saw was already more than 360 years old when it rolled down: a silver denarius from the Roman Republic, and probably some unlucky soldier's lucky talisman. Plenty of games were played in the baths, so along with wagers, a few dice and game pieces came my way too, either through carelessness or tantrums.

Women and children were there too, always in time-slots separate from the men. Bits of jewelry and numerous lost hairpins tell their tales, the latter a losing effort to keep elaborate coiffures high and dry in the baths. Even though I remember their shrieks and laughs, I can prove to you the presence of kids by their jaw-droppings. I met a handful of human teeth over the years, and some of them were milk-teeth. I'm guessing the older, decayed molars down here were pulled by a barber/dentist, since among Romans the same guy did both jobs.

I, of course, was never the only gemstone in the clog—hardly. Our roll call eventually included 87 others: 32 in the older channel below and 55 up in the newer drain with me. Every time one of my fellow gemstones took the plunge and

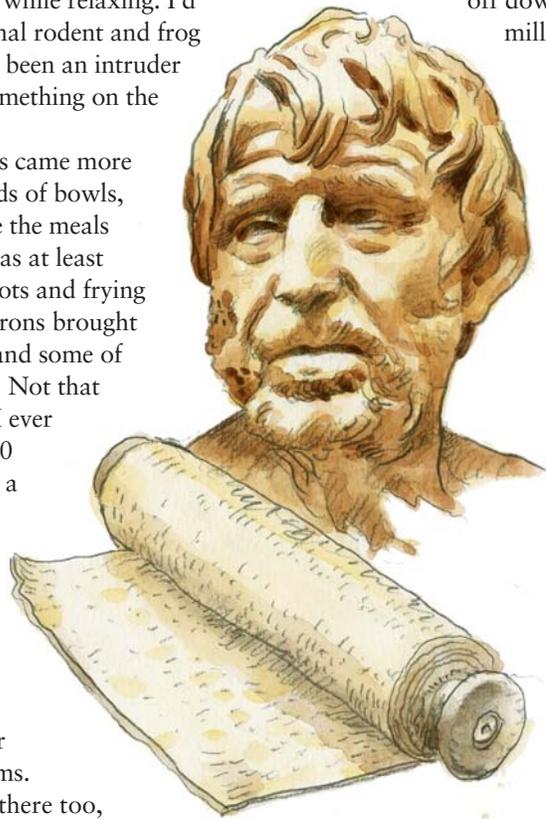
joined the clog, we could hear its desperate owner wail after it, with one eye squinting through the drain cover at the hopeless situation down below. I doubt they regretted the cost of the stone as much as its sentimental value.

That was the dilemma, you see. Patrons never liked to leave their talismans in the apodyterium, where they might be stolen. Besides, the soldiers needed their rings to protect them from evil forces that

allegedly grew more potent when men were without their armors, leathers and weapons. Of course, gamblers among the lot simply had to wear their good-luck charms. These concerns convinced most Roman bathers to accept the well-known risks of losing gemstones in the thermae. Set into iron rings using bitumen or resin, the steamy, wet conditions easily loosed stones from their mounts, sending them slipping off down the drain and into the sludge that was my millennial home.

You might say that it was an artifex plumbarius of sorts who finally rescued me in 1979. By then, the plumber had a new title—archeologist. A non-Roman, his name was David Zienkiewicz. The II Augusta, and with it the empire it protected, were long gone when I emerged from the drain. Liberated at last from my prison, I enjoyed—with no loss of irony—what I had craved for centuries: a nice long bath. I and the other leavings of the lads and ladies have since found a refreshing, dry, well-lit home in the National Roman Legion Museum at Caerleon. Of all the engraved gemstones to gaze upon in these fine new barracks, I am surely the most impressive. After all, you might expect to see gods and goddesses, horses and chariots, soldiers and weapons. But I am the epitome of the Pax Romana that allowed a stone from Arabia to capture a charming little chatterbox from India and bring it to Wales perched on a Roman's finger. Think about that the next time you sink into a nice warm, civilized bath. ☺

You might say that it was an artifex plumbarius of sorts who finally rescued me in a year you call 1979.



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The OTTOMAN CARPETS *of* Transylvania

Written by
LOUIS WERNER

Photographed by
MATTHIEU PALEY

Its central plateau open only to the Great Hungarian Plain to its west, Transylvania could be likened, on a geographical scale, to a walled city: To get there from any other direction, one must cross the high passes and navigate the labyrinthine valleys of the Carpathian Mountains. Perhaps it is this relative inaccessibility that lent Transylvania—literally “beyond the woods”—a reputation as a land of mysteries both romantic and real. It is famously the haunt of the fictional 19th-century Count Dracula, as well as, infamously, that of the factual 15th-century Prince Vlad Țepeș (the Impaler). More curiously, even surprisingly, this region of north-central Romania is home to the world’s finest collection 16th- and 17th-century Ottoman carpets—some 400 of them.



The Black Church in Braşov, *left*, is so called due to a fire in 1689, and it holds more than 150 Ottoman rugs, the largest collection outside Turkey. The carpets, woven in western Anatolia, show floral, arabesque and geometric motifs, and most have never been walked upon. This display wall shows plain-niche prayer rugs. *Right*: This coupled-column rug dates from the second half of the 17th century and hangs in the choir of the Black Church.

How these carpets arrived in Transylvania not long after they were woven, and how they remain there today, is a story of pluck and perseverance. Recognized by the world's top connoisseurs and collectors, these carpets have only lately been given their due, and they have animated discussion about the interplay of endangered property, ethnic pride and the ownership of cultural patrimony.

Inhabited in antiquity by Dacians, the region had long been a prize contested by outsiders. Romans, Hungarians and Turks were the most powerful players, even if often from a remove. Romans left behind their Latin-based language, Hungarian kings sent their princes to rule in their stead, and the Turks collected tribute for protection and nearly complete internal autonomy. German Saxons from the southern Low Countries and Rhineland arrived in the 12th century at Hungarian invitation as a population buffer against intruding tribes from the east.

Instead of serving as Hungary's buffer, however, Transylvania ended up a few centuries later serving as an Ottoman vassal.

A 16th-century miniature captures the relationship as Hungarian King John II Sigismund Zápolya kneels in fealty before Ottoman Sultan Suleiman (the Magnificent) in 1556. This would have been the heyday of Transylvanian Turkophilia, as reflected in the carpet collections of today. Although the demand for Ottoman carpets appears to have dampened by the early 18th century, when the Hapsburgs took control of the region and several Anatolian manufacturers closed, it endured through the early 19th century.

To its advantage, and despite its Carpathian fortifications, Transylvania sat astride a major east-west trade route, with many of its traders doing business with the region's prosperous German Saxons in towns such as Sibiu, Sighişoara and Braşov. Luxury and other goods were exchanged under what was called "the right of staple," which meant that passing merchants were obligated to offer all wares at fair prices in the town market.

Among the wares were carpets. A Braşov customs register



from 1503 recorded that 500 carpets passed through the town in that year. While Western Europeans were accustomed to placing carpets under foot, Transylvanians often used their carpets to adorn walls—nowhere more than in churches, where they were also frequently placed on pew fronts. There was reason for this: The Reformation came to Transylvania in the late 16th century. Its reformers whitewashed or destroyed Catholic frescoes, some dating from the 14th century, while the new Lutheranism did away entirely with figurative images and icons inside its places of worship. In their places, for decoration, they hung Ottoman rugs, many of prayer niche or arabesque designs, including distinctive white-background designs known as Selenidis, after the Anatolian village of their manufacture.

Indeed, as art historian Agnes Balint-Ziegler pointed out, Ottoman carpets were a means by which a church "was stripped of the everydayness and imbued with a sacred character." In this essentially public setting, Ottoman carpets donated by artisan guilds became equivalent to corporate status symbols, and those given by patrician families became a similar "means of private posturing."

English writer Emily Gerard, whose essay in *Blackwood's Magazine* titled "Transylvanian Superstitions" inspired Bram Stoker's 1897 *Dracula*, lived in Sibiu and Braşov in the early 1880s. Her book *The Land beyond the Forest: Facts, Figures, and Fancies from Transylvania* described Braşov's mix of Germans, Romanians and Hungarians alongside "other figures red-fezzed, be-turbaned, or long-robed, which, giving the population a kaleidoscopic effect, makes us feel that we are



Horses graze near Bran Pass in southern Transylvania. The region was contested for centuries despite the natural barriers of the Carpathian Mountains. *Right:* This rug's design started with a traditional *mihrab* (direction of prayer) plain niche, and added a second one below in mirror-image. Such rugs were made for export to Christian lands, for their dual-niche patterns complied with the Ottoman edict barring Islamic religious imagery from carpets sold to non-Muslims.



next door to the East, and only a few steps removed from such things as camels, minarets, and harems.”

Bucharest's National Museum captures well Romania's multiethnic society at the time. There hang portraits of men with such titles as *serdarul*, or cavalry officer, a word derived from Persian via the Ottoman language; *negustorul*, or merchant, the name taken from Latin; and *voievodul*, or prince, this one from Old Church Slavonic. (For each, the Romanian suffix *-ul*, denotes a definite article, just as the name *Dracula*, from *drac*, means the devil.)

“In the church itself,” Gerard observed further, “hang some of the most exquisite Turkish carpets I have ever seen—such tender idyllic blue-green tints, such gloomy passionate reds, such pensive amber shades, as to render distracted with envy any amateur of antique fabrics.” Unfortunately, Gerald continued, these masterpieces were not “purchaseable for even the untold sums of heavy gold.”

Awestruck by the value and beauty of the carpets, Gerard wrote, some foreigners coveted them, yet their longings were in vain, for they were not for sale. “There was *ein verrückter Engländer*

(a mad Englishman) here some years ago,” a churchwarden informed Gerard, “who would have given any price for the pale-blue one up yonder, and he remained here a whole month merely to be able to see it every day; but he had to go away empty handed at last, for these carpets are the property of the church, and not even the bishop himself has power to dispose of them.”

Not until 1898 were the rugs catalogued, and Romania's 50-year period of communism further isolated them from scholars and enthusiasts. Only recently has an Italy-based Romanian independent scholar named Stefano Ionescu taken on the task of cataloguing, protecting, replicating as necessary and generally defending the carpets as one of Transylvania's most beautiful artistic treasures, one that should stay in its historic place.



Brașov's Black Church, believed to be the largest church between Vienna and Istanbul, is so called because of a fire in 1689 that burned many of the carpets in the nave. Those held in the sacristy survived, and it still holds almost half of the carpets still in Transylvania. Only some can be easily seen: The more valuable ones, including those brought from the



The marketplace of Braşov was one of the places where merchants for centuries brought their Turkish wares. In the municipal building, at left, the town used to make donations of carpets for special occasions such as prominent weddings, births, and to honor important guests.

town's other parishes of St. Bartolomeu and Blumena, as well as those from the nearby fortified village churches of Prejmer, Sânpetru, Râşnov and Hărman, are stored away. Many, however, still hang throughout the church, giving its interior the appearance of a tactile patchwork of red and yellow pile threads against the austerity of its flat, white walls.

Ionescu, along with a Lutheran church administrator named Frank Ziegler and a handful of pastors in nearby towns, work as the carpets' foremost champions. Ionescu calls the survival of these carpets a "fascinating intercultural phenomenon" and attributes their number to more than mere trade—not just in carpets, but also tenting, blankets, towels and fine clothing. (Local Hungarian nobles and urban Saxons, with Greeks and Bulgarians, were among the first Europeans to adopt articles of Eastern dress.)

Ionescu largely credits the religious tolerance of Transylvanians to explain the presence of the rugs' frequent Islamic symbolism in a Christian setting, noting also the practical role that carpets play in everyday life—as a kind of bridge walked across, whether from one side of the room to another or from one culture to another. German Saxons certainly saw them in almost entirely secular, commodified terms—as prestige items—as painter Robert Wellmann showed in "The Adornment of a Saxon

Bride," an early 20th-century painting that shows, draped on a table beside a young woman being dressed, a Selendi "bird" carpet.

Similarly, it was not uncommon for 19th- and 20th-century Romanian painters to feature Ottoman carpets in their interior scenes. Nicolae Grant, whose English father was a diplomat and rug merchant, studied under the famous French orientalist painter Jean-Léon Gérôme in Paris. Modernist Gheorghe Petraşcu painted Transylvanian rooms in the style of Henri Matisse's Moroccan tableaux,

strewn with patterned textiles and upholsteries.

Ziegler notes that for some time it was a Transylvanian tradition to honor visiting dignitaries with gifts of carpets from the municipal guilds. In the 17th century alone, an estimated 1,000 carpets were given away.

Among Ziegler's favorites, is a Lotto—so called after Lorenzo Lotto, an Italian painter who favored this style in his paintings. "Red, with yellow branches, and a narrow border, it represents 100 percent our uninterrupted heritage here," he says. "It was never bought or sold again once it was given to the church, possibly after a funeral when the casket of the donor's relative rested on it at the altar, or maybe it had dressed the church for a wedding or baptism. In any case, it transmits the value of past generations to all of us living today.

Not until 1898 were Transylvania's rugs catalogued.

“We are not as much interested in holding copies as we are in maintaining the originals. Each bit of missing pile or stain speaks of our story too,” Ziegler adds. Some carpets have donation inscriptions written on the borders in black ink, “so we know the names and dates of the carpet’s donor.” For example, an early-17th-century prayer rug given to the church in Sibiu is noted with the date 1720 and “D. Mays.” Still vividly hued, a late-17th-century double-niche carpet was given to the church in Ghimbav in 1706 by Hannes Merglers. And more.

Nineteenth-century English writer and poet Charles Boner traveled through the Carpathians and wrote of its various guildsmen—furriers, goldsmiths, cabinet-makers and others—sitting in St. Margaret’s Church in Mediaș, a two-and-a-half-hour drive from Brașov’s Black Church. There, he wrote, “oriental carpets hung upon a great

St. Margaret’s holds the most exquisite of the collections.

number of the pews as a sort of arras,” and carpet fragments were used as seat covers and possibly wintertime lap rugs.

St. Margaret’s still holds the most exquisite of the collections, including four Holbeins and an Ottoman *çintamani* design marked by its tiger stripes: three dots and a squiggly line, lightheartedly translated into German as *katzenpfoten* (cat’s paw). The collection also comprises those with *vogelkopf*, a “bird-head” pattern, as the name implies. A replica carpet with an animal motif woven a few years ago in the Anatolian town of Konia, based on a 1930s photograph of a now-lost carpet, hangs next to a 16th-century Holbein fragment that first hung in a nearby church in Băgaciu; also there is a 17th-century, fully intact Lotto from Agârbiciu.

Such esteem goes a long way toward explaining why Teodor Tuduc, one of history’s greatest rug forgers (to the extent that carpet buyers often call any kind of fake “a Tuduc”), who

With the coming of Reformation aniconism—proscriptions against religious imagery—church frescoes were whitewashed or destroyed. The Anatolian rugs, with their soft colors and floral or complex geometric motifs became a prestigious decoration for churches. In St. Margaret’s Church in Mediaș, several fine types of Ottoman rugs survived: Holbeins, which are the earliest; Lottos; white-ground Selendis of three types—“bird,” “scorpion” and *çintamani*; and a variety of rugs called “Transylvanian” rugs.





Sighișoara is one of the very few medieval citadels in eastern Europe that is a continuously inhabited UNESCO World Heritage Site. Today its collection consists of 36 classical Anatolian rugs, many of which are inscribed with the names of donors. Just under half are Lottos. Because many of the rugs had been cut, they have been restored and reintegrated using pieces from other rugs.

worked in Brașov between the two world wars, chose to make and sell hundreds of fake Transylvanians before trying his hand at faking Persian, Caucasian and even Spanish carpets. As a result, there are still many unrecognized Tuducs in the market, and even some of those known for what they really are have become collector's items in their own right.

According to Walter Denny, a professor of art history at the University of Massachusetts and a carpet consultant for the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, Tuduc's fakes can tell us much about how the original carpets were valued and perceived at the time the forgeries were made. "He imposed a precision and symmetry on artistic traditions that today we know once valued more improvisation," says Denny. Thus to an expert, Tuduc's fakes are easy to spot precisely because they were too perfect in pattern. They "imposed an element of outline and linearity on traditions we now realize exploited color first and foremost." In other words, he exaggerated the perfection of form and neglected to perfect his color palette.

An Ottoman *fatwa* dating from 1610 may help solve another mystery about Transylvanian carpets: Why are there among them so many "double-niche" carpets? These are carpets in the style of a traditional Islamic prayer rug, in which a pointed center field, designed after the Islamic *mihrab* that, in a mosque, points the direction of prayer. The double-niche carpets, however, show *two* points to the center field, as if the *mihrab* has two directions. This is no small question: According to a recent worldwide inventory, among 17th-century Ot-

toman carpets, 337 are double-niche designs, most in collections outside Turkey, and many in Transylvanian churches.

Ionescu believes there may be a connection between this and the 1610 edict by Ottoman Sultan Ahmad I that forbade the export of carpets with specifically religious patterns to Europe: By adding the *mihrab*'s mirror image on the opposite side, a carpet woven for export could not be considered—strictly speaking—a prayer rug.

At some point in Transylvania, one encounters Dracula. The northern town of Bistrița figures in the first chapter of Bram Stoker's novel. Protagonist Jonathan Harker heads there and, as he says in the novel's opening, "The impression I had was that we were leaving the West and entering the East." After spending a troubled night, "I did not sleep well though my bed was comfortable enough.... There was a dog howling all night under my window, which may have had something to do with it; or it may have been the paprika."

It is odd indeed that Stoker, giving voice to Harker, should blame his insomnia on paprika. The Ottomans introduced the dried and powdered New World pepper spice to eastern Europe in the 16th century—just about the same time that the first Ottoman carpets arrived in Transylvania. From a purely culinary point of view, Harker might as easily have blamed other Romanian staple foods and beverages with names borrowed from the Turks—*ciorbă*, or soup; *ceai*, or tea; and *covrig*, a pretzel.



Left to right: A Lotto and a Selendi “bird” carpet both hang in St. Margaret’s Church in Mediaș. In the northern Transylvanian town of Bistrița, Pastor Hans Dieter Krauss displays a replica of a column carpet. Its original is among 53 Bistrița carpets taken in 1944 for safekeeping in Nuremberg, where they await return for secure display in their home country. Opposite: A Kula prayer rug with floral arabesques and a decorated trellis in the Black Church.

Bistrița also provides its own tale, this a cautionary one on the nexus of community and patrimony, as told by Hans Dieter Krauss, the ebullient pastor of the town square’s grand gothic church. Pastor Krauss is trying hard to keep his flock intact despite its dwindling numbers in the latter years of the 20th century—first from the depredations of war, then communism and finally the call from the Federal Republic of Germany for ethnic Germans to return to the homeland. The 1910 census recorded 12,000 Germans in town, but that dropped to 5,000 in 1940, and by 1996 there were only 223 counted. (Since the fall of communism, some 1.5 million Germans have left Romania, leaving behind a national total of 36,000.)

Krauss, however, mourns more than the loss of community. In 1944, fearing the arrival of the Soviet Red Army, the town’s Saxons took 53 fine Ottoman carpets from the church for safekeeping in Germany, where they remain today in the Nuremberg Museum. Now he wants them back “because they are ours,” he says simply, “and they belong to their home parish.” He cites the principle of national patrimony as well as the basic property rights of Romania’s Lutheran Church and its Saxon culture.

Because Krauss stayed put when so many of his fellow ethnic Germans left, he feels a personal claim for their return. In the interim, Ionescu and others are arranging for authentic facsimiles to be made in the Sultanhanı weaving center and to do-

The fortified church in Biertan, left, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site where fragments of a very fine white-ground Selendi have survived. Right: A rainy square in Mediaș, not far from the prize carpet collection of St. Margaret’s. Opposite: In Brașov’s Black Church, a pair of plain-field mihrab carpets, one single-niche and one double-niche, flank a war memorial plaque.





nate to Bistrița. Such work requires high-resolution photos and knot counts transferred to precise designs, and no fewer work hours as the originals. A red field-column carpet has already been donated to celebrate the church's 500th anniversary.

Bruno Fröhlich is the senior pastor of the main German parish in Sighișoara, first recorded in 1298 as a Dominican church that later converted to Lutheranism. Among its 40 carpets is one with a donation inscription dated 1646. Pastor Fröhlich notes how in the 19th century the church took over from the guilds as the custodians of German patrimony, as industrialization displaced the highly skilled craft workers. As the laymen lost status, churchmen

Despite the ethical and moral rights of custodianship, others question the degree to which small churches are able to care for carpets of such value.

became the community's symbolic representatives.

He muses about the carpets engaging in a kind of unspoken interfaith dialogue for the 21st century. "Romania is a meeting place of many faiths and ethnicities," he says. "Go to Dobrogea [the Black Sea region], where prayer is called daily from minarets in Babadag, Constanța, and Mangalia. And they are not just ethnic Turks and Tatars in mosques there. Many Arab students came to Romania during the Soviet period, and married and stayed on. Just as Brașov merchants controlled the Eastern trade routes, the physical distance—or should I say proximity?—has not changed in today's times."

Despite the ethical and moral rights of custodianship, others question the degree to which small churches are able to care properly for carpets that now carry so much value. Light and heat are damaging; there is a risk of theft. The fortified church of Biertan, a UNESCO World Heritage Site near Mediaș built high on a crag and for three centuries the bishop's seat, has two Selendi white field carpets. Five years ago in a London auction, a similar carpet sold for over a third of a million dollars, despite a condition report indicating reweaves, repairs, repiling and uneven overall wear—nothing like the fine state of those in Biertan. Carpet thieves are not necessarily deterred by having to climb a crag.

In Sibiu, the Brukenthal National Museum displays carpets that have helped make Transylvania's Ottoman legacy most famous. Ionescu lauds an early-17th-century prayer carpet there

as the best-known example in the world: Its lobed mihrab and star-and-cartouche border, with a lamp motif in the spandrels, is modeled, he says, on the stained-glass design in Sinan the architect's great 16th-century Mosque of Suleiman, a conclusion Sinan scholar

Gülru Necipoğlu-Kafardar called "fascinating."

Other pieces in the Brukenthal collection help close this story's circle. A painting of St. Jerome by Lorenzo Lotto, whose painting of another saint, "The Alms of St. Anthony," in Venice, gave his name to the most recognized design motif in all Anatolian carpets, hangs not far from a Lotto carpet originally from a nearby church. Just across the floor from this is a painting by the Romanian Theodore Aman, also born nearby, of an Orientalist room strewn with Ottoman rugs. Might his models have been some of the carpets now in the museum, once displayed in churches, one of them, perhaps, that very same Lotto? 🌐



Louis Werner is a writer and filmmaker living in New York. Photojournalist **Matthieu Paley** specializes in documenting the mountain cultures and lands of Central Asia and Turkey. He currently lives in Portugal.



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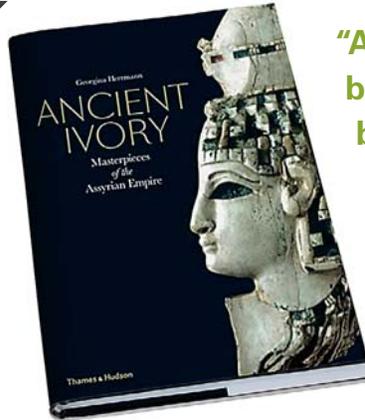
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REVIEWS

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“All archaeology is a form of destruction, but one that also reveals lost cities, their buildings and their contents. Among the many remarkable discoveries at the site of Nimrud ... with its palaces, temple and royal tombs, were thousands of superb ivories, the largest collection ever found.”

Ancient Ivory: Masterpieces of the Assyrian Empire

Georgina Herrmann. 2017, Thames & Hudson, 978-0-50005-191-7, \$60 hb.

British archeologist Austen Henry Layard discovered the first pieces of carved ivory at Nimrud in 1845, but it wasn't until a century later that his countryman Max Mallowan revealed the astonishing number of ivory masterpieces at the first-millennium-BCE Assyrian capital in northern Iraq. Mallowan's team unearthed thousands of ivories, probably made from the horn of the African elephant, in the most unlikely places: well bottoms, palace storerooms or just strewn about. This may attest to the low value the Assyrians placed on the artworks, writes Herrmann, a specialist in Nimrud ivories at University College London, who says the majority were not made at Nimrud but acquired as gifts or tribute, or booty from enemy states. Hundreds of the finds, which illuminate Middle Eastern art and culture more than 2,500 years ago, are superbly photographed and meticulously described, including their provenance at Nimrud and last-known location. The value of this volume to academics and interested amateurs is immense, as many of the pieces shown no longer exist or have been lost to looters during recent conflicts.

—GRAHAM CHANDLER



Arabic Type-Making in the Machine Age: The Influence of Technology on the Form of Arabic Type, 1908-1933, Vol. 14

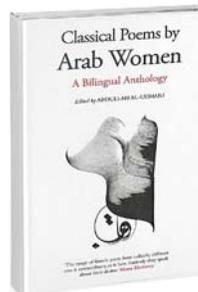
Titus Nemeth. 2017, Brill, 9-789-00430-377-5, \$156 hb.

The first Arabic typefaces did not appear until the early

16th century. Yet with the demands for “international document exchange” in an increasingly globalized economy over the last century, it “comes as no surprise that Arabic [is now] the second most widely used phonemic script in the world” and “plays a leading role” in international communications, commerce and trade, Nemeth writes. His deeply researched, wide-ranging history of mechanized Arabic script in the 20th century examines its challenging entrée onto the modern, printed page. Highlights include the introduction of the Arabic

typewriter (patented by Egyptian Selim S. Haddad in 1899), that prevailed over the “major obstacle” of rendering Arabic calligraphy into mechanical type, and its earliest appearances on computer screens in the early 1970s via programs called Katib (scribe or clerk) and Hattat (calligrapher), “a reflection of their respective functionality.” This detailed study features numerous illustrations of Arabic fonts and early printed pages in Arabic.

—TOM VERDE



Classical Poems by Arab Women: A Bilingual Anthology

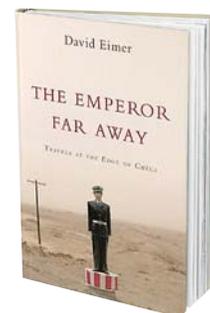
Abdullah al-Udhari, ed. 2017, Saqi Books, 978-0-86356-047-7, \$19.95 pb.

“Now let us listen to the women telling their story-poems and discover a humanity blurred by a man-made veil,”

writes al-Udhari in his introduction to this compilation of poems by 50 women that was first published in 1999. Their *diwans* (collected poems), presented in Arabic and English, span 5,000 years and five eras: the al-Jahiliya

(4000 BCE–622 CE); early Islamic (622–661); Umayyad (661–750); Abbasid (750–1258); and Andalus (711–1492). This esoteric anthology tells the story of early Arab poetry through the perspective of women such as Mahd al-Aadiyya (ca. 4000 BCE), whose poem is one of the earliest examples of a *muzdawaj* (heroic couplet); Laila bint Lukaiz, a leading poet of the fifth century CE; and Khansa, whose seventh-century work was greatly admired by the Prophet Muhammad. Short biographical sketches of each poet make the reader want to learn more about these outspoken, spirited women who contributed so much to the ancient classical Arab literary traditions.

—PINEY KESTING



The Emperor Far Away: Travels at the Edge of China

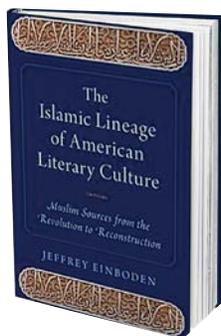
David Eimer. 2014, Bloomsbury, USA, 978-1-62040-363-1, \$28 hb.

To counter the notion that all Chinese are



ethnic Han people (in fact there are more than 100 million non-Han citizens), journalist Eimer took a *tour d'horizon* at the perimeter of the world's most populous nation, touching on 14 different border countries including three Central Asian republics. Eimer's chapters on western China, where the Islamic world rubs closest against the Confucian-turned-Communist country, are likely to appeal most.

—LOUIS WERNER



The Islamic Lineage of American Literary Culture: Muslim Sources from the Revolution to Reconstruction

Jeffrey Einboden, 2016, Oxford UP, 978-0-19939-780-8, \$78 hb.

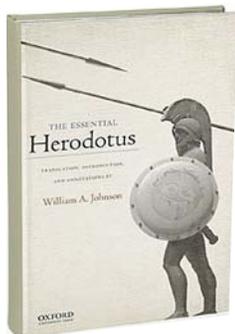
Before there was even a United States, religious

scholars in North America were pursuing the study of Islam and Arabic to interpret religious scriptures. Einboden, an English professor at North Illinois University, takes us from the mid-1700s to the mid-1800s, exploring the key American literary figures whose work was partly grounded in an interest in the Muslim world. He starts with 18th-century minister and avid Arabic and Hebrew reader Ezra Stiles and includes America's first "best-selling author," Washington Irving, who ventured into the Islamic world more than any other American figure of this period, basing himself in Andalusia for some time and writing *Tales of the Alhambra* (1832). Einboden's surprise entry is Lydia Maria Child, who wrote *The Frugal Housewife* and *An Appeal in Favor of that Class of Americans Called Africans* (1833), an abolitionist text which spoke of Jo Ben Solomon, a Gambian Muslim slave sold in America.

—ALIA YUNIS

on the Kurds of Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran, as well as analyses of their contested relations with the us and non-Kurdish insurgencies. His most helpful contribution is twofold: a synopsis of Kurdish literary and linguistic identity, and his noted parallel between Kurdish nationalism, as it emerged from the Ottoman and Persian empires, and various European nationalist movements born from similar crumbings of the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires.

—LOUIS WERNER



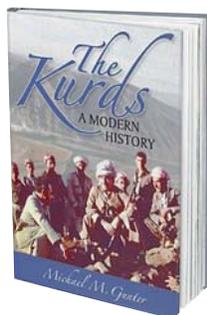
The Essential Herodotus

William A. Johnson, trans. 2017, Oxford UP, 978-0-19989-795-7, \$16.95 pb.

In the Internet age, it may be hard to interest readers in

dusty old tomes of the ancient Greeks, but this book should prove to be an attractive portal to a wondrous world. It's a perfect introduction to the fifth-century-BC historian, with key excerpts from his history, freshly translated by a skilled classics scholar who captures the charm and conversational tone of the original Greek. Herodotus, a Greek of Asia Minor and arguably the first Western historian, wrote about the Persian Wars, in which Greeks had been major players. He interviewed many participants. But the politico-military stories of this conflict were just the framework for Herodotus's larger story about the peoples of Asia Minor, Egypt, Scythia, Greece and Persia. Herodotus wrote with excitement, relating wonderful cultural details about the worlds he encountered. He described techniques for mummifying pharaohs, ways of driving off winged serpents guarding frankincense trees in Arabia, and Greek encounters with female "Amazon" warriors. He might not have believed all the tales he heard, but his sources usually believed them, and the stories qualify as metaphors for a fascinating period in world history.

—ROBERT W. LEBLING

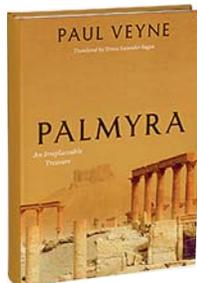


The Kurds: A Modern History

Michael M. Gunter, 2016, Markus Wiener, 978-1-55876-614-3, \$68.95 hb.

Kurdish history is a fast-moving, tough-to-tackle topic in these first two decades of the 21st century.

Cross-bedded loyalties, the fiftful roles of outside observers and international players, and the oft-contradictory needs of reconstructing artificially drawn nation states in the aftermath of uprisings and invasions all greatly complicate the subject. Gunter offers a survey of what might be called the Kurdish Questions—note the much-needed plural!—of today, with chapters



Palmyra: An Irreplaceable Treasure

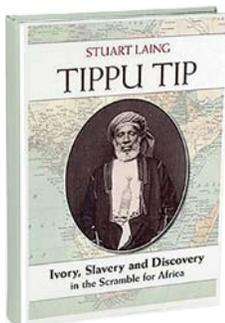
Paul Veyne, Teresa Lavender Fagan, trans. 2017, University of Chicago Press, 9-780-22642-782-9, \$22.50 hb.

Like Orpheus arising from the Underworld,

archeologist Paul Veyne takes this fleeting look back at a lost beloved that is irretrievably fading away. The object of Veyne's haunting lament is the ancient city of Palmyra (Tadmor), a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Syria recently destroyed by extremists. The author sketches a brilliant portrait of this once-thriving merchant republic, stressing the singular character of the place and its people.

From A to Z (the moon-god Aglibol to Queen Zenobia), he packs the entire story into 88 pages of fluid prose. We learn that Palmyra was not an oasis in the middle of nowhere, but an entrepôt at the crossroads of everywhere. A map and site plan would have helped to make this point, but otherwise the book delivers a powerful requiem.

—FRANK HOLT



Tippu Tip: Ivory, Slavery and Discovery in the Scramble for Africa

Stuart Laing, 2017, Medina Publishing, 978-1-91148-705-0, £25 hb.

The extent of Oman's penetration of central Africa through Omani Zanzibar well into

the 19th century may not be fully appreciated by many readers today. Stuart Laing's highly readable, care-

fully researched portrayal of Hamed bin Mohammed al-Murjabi (1832–1905), known in the West as Tippu Tip, helps remedy that. He outlines not only the extent of influence and power of Tippu Tip, but also notes other important Omanis in what today are Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and eastern Congo. While professing loyalty to the sultan of Zanzibar, Tippu Tip exercised considerable personal authority in East Africa's Great Lakes region for many years, assisting several European explorers. Laing shows that while he owned and used slaves in his trading caravans, he was primarily interested in the ivory trade, his most profitable activity. Through Tippu Tip's eyes, Laing sketches Europe's territorial acquisition in Africa (the "Scramble"), which the Arabs, whose concept of loyalty came through family, clan and tribal links, were ill-equipped to resist. An extensive annotated bibliography guides those wishing to delve further into this fascinating period.

—CHARLES O. CECIL



Visit the Old City of Aleppo: Come with Tamim to a World Heritage Site

Khalidoun Fansa, 2017, Cune Press, 978-1-61457-145-2, \$19.95 pb.

Given the damage done to Aleppo in recent years, writing a book to celebrate

the city might be considered a grim undertaking. But Khalidoun Fansa—Aleppo native, architectural preservationist and fierce urban defender—knows just how to begin. His book is pitched to children, the generation charged with the city's long-term repair. Written as a conversation between a boy and his father, who—like the author—knows the city from top to bottom, the book follows them as they visit the city's landmark Citadel, the *sugs*, a walled city gate, the 15th-century adjacent neighborhood of al-Jdayde (the diminutive form of "new") and the interior of a traditional house. The book's sidebars on architectural history, its old and new site photos, and city maps and plans add value for adult readers. Fansa's final words might serve as a defiant epigraph: "Before the identity is lost, before the insight is blurred, and despite the multiple afflictions today, this City, built with stone, remains."

—LOUIS WERNER



EVENTS

Highlights from
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CURRENT / JUNE

Rembrandt and the Inspiration of India. The 23 surviving drawings Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (1606–1669) made of Mughal emperors, princes and courtiers mark a watershed moment when the Dutch master responded to the art of a dramatically different culture. This exhibition considers the unique significance of these cross-cultural works in the context of 17th-century global exchange.

What motivated Rembrandt to study Mughal portraits? Did he own an album of them? Can we trace his drawings to specific, surviving artworks imported into Amsterdam from the Dutch trading post in India? This show reveals the critical eye and attentive curiosity he turned toward Mughal portrait conventions. For Rembrandt, the art of Mughal India was not merely a foreign curiosity. It carried certain associations of empire, trade, luxury and artistic skill. The J. Paul Getty Museum, **Los Angeles**, through June 24.

astronomy, mathematics, magic and medicine. Through this cultural prestige, as well as trade and diplomacy, Egypt exerted considerable influence on neighboring cultures throughout the Mediterranean, and was in turn affected by them. This exhibition explores the rich history of interconnections among Egypt, Greece and Rome over a span of more than 2,000 years from the Bronze Age to the Roman Imperial period. The J. Paul Getty Museum, **Los Angeles**, through September 9.

Art and Peoples of the Kharga Oasis. In 1908 The Metropolitan Museum of Art began to excavate late-antique sites in the Kharga Oasis in Egypt's Western Desert. The museum's archeologists uncovered two-story houses, painted tombs and a church. They also retrieved objects that reveal the multiple cultural and religious identities of the people who lived in the region. The finds represent a society between the third and seventh centuries CE, a time of transition between the Roman and Byzantine

CURRENT / SEPTEMBER

Beyond the Nile: Egypt and the Classical World. Egypt was the oldest and most imposing civilization of the ancient world, renowned for its invention of writing, its monumental pyramids and temples, and its knowledge of history,

Globes: Visions of the World

How do we know the Earth is round? What is the shape of the universe? This exhibition brings together more than two millennia of globes, maps, art and scientific instruments in one journey of discovery. For thousands of years, humans have created models and scientific instruments to understand and explore the world. Here a wealth of these rare and beautiful objects are on display in the Arabian Peninsula for the first time. Starting in ancient Greece, the exhibition follows humanity's quest for knowledge. It uncovers the role played by the pioneering scientists of the Islamic world and tracks the science of astronomy as it passed through Muslim Spain in the 10th and 11th centuries. It includes display of some of the earliest-known celestial globes from the Islamic world as well as one of the earliest-known Arab astrolabes. Louvre **Abu Dhabi**, through June 2.

This mechanical, geocentric armillary sphere was built in the late 17th century by French clockmaker Jérôme Martinot to demonstrate the relative movements of the sun, the Earth, planets and cosmos.





periods, which integrated Egyptian, Greek and Roman culture and art. This exhibition features some 30 works from these excavations. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York**, through September 30.

CURRENT / NOVEMBER

Cultures in the Crossfire: *Stories from Syria and Iraq* sheds light on the ongoing destruction of cultural heritage in the Middle East by showing what's at stake—the rich history of the region and the diversity of its people—and what's being done to prevent the loss of this history and cultural identity. Ancient art and artifacts from the museum's own extensive Near East collection tell stories of Syria and Iraq through time, while contemporary artwork from Issam Kourbaj, a Syrian artist based in Cambridge, UK, provides an art intervention—a modern-day response to the artifacts and themes. The exhibition features the important work being done by the University of Pennsylvania and Smithsonian Institution in conjunction with individuals and groups in the Middle East to help combat the loss of irreplaceable cultural heritage. Penn Museum, **Philadelphia**, through November 25.

CURRENT / DECEMBER

Little YARAT: *Creative Weekends for Your Children and Family* is a playful, arts-oriented “taster” program

held on weekends for school-age children and teenagers. It aims to get kids involved in YARAT's workshops and to interact with local and visiting artists. Each artist and his or her respective practice inspires this unique workshop, providing a window into making art through play. Activities range from traditional painting and drawing to new-media exploration making cameraless films, street photography, fashion and art collaborations. YARAT Contemporary Art Space, **Baku**, through December 30.

Al-Tibb: *Healing Traditions in Islamic Medical Manuscripts.* Medicine in Islam carries a history of inquiry, innovation and change, reflecting the esteemed place occupied by knowledge in Islamic traditions. This exhibit highlights this journey of discovery and accomplishments. A selection of manuscripts with accompanying objects seeks to bring to life the intellectual impulse of the scholars of past. In gauging the breadth of the subject, the exhibit navigates prophetic medicine; the translation movement; pharmacy and dietetics; *bimaristans* (medieval Islamic hospitals); anatomy; Malay medicine; and traditional remedies. “Every disease has a cure,” the Prophet Muhammad said, and the search for healing in Islamic traditions has held great importance ever since. Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia, **Kuala Lumpur**, through December 31.

Orientalism: Taking and Making. “Orientalism” describes the widespread popularity of European and American artists taking inspiration from art and people—both real and imagined—of Middle Eastern, North African and East Asian cultures. A new installation drawn from the permanent collection of the museum celebrates the beauty of 19th-century Orientalist artwork while also highlighting undercurrents of racism and superficial cultural understanding layered in these paintings, photographs and decorative arts. Much Orientalist artwork was insensitive and factually incorrect, but its romanticism was powerful and effective in the West because it was titillating and esthetically alluring. Academically, this gives us complicated and conflicted material through which to consider our own history and also shows how “exoticism” continues to color the ways in which we view other cultures today. **New Orleans** Museum of Art, through December 31.

COMING / SEPTEMBER

Wandering Spirit: African Wax Prints. Clothing in Africa serves as an important means of communication, sending social messages and affirming proverbs, as well as communicating social position, political convictions, ambitions, marital status, ethnicity, age, sex and group affiliations. The names and stories associated with the

fabrics differ from country to country and region to region. One fabric may have different names in different countries, depending on the symbolism the consumer can read in the fabric. The history of the African wax print is a history paved along colonial trade routes and globalization in the post-colonial era. Though not originally African, these textiles have become ingrained in African culture and society and loved and identified as their own. Ruth Funk Center for Textile Arts, **Melbourne, Florida**, September 1 through December 15.

COMING / NOVEMBER

Misk Art Week transforms Riyadh with art and design exhibitions, music and performing arts, film programs, creative workshops and art fairs as it brings together artists, galleries, creatives and cultural enthusiasts. Celebrate modern and contemporary creativity with gallerists, filmmakers, curators and cultural producers. Various locations, **Riyadh**, November 1 through 7.

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