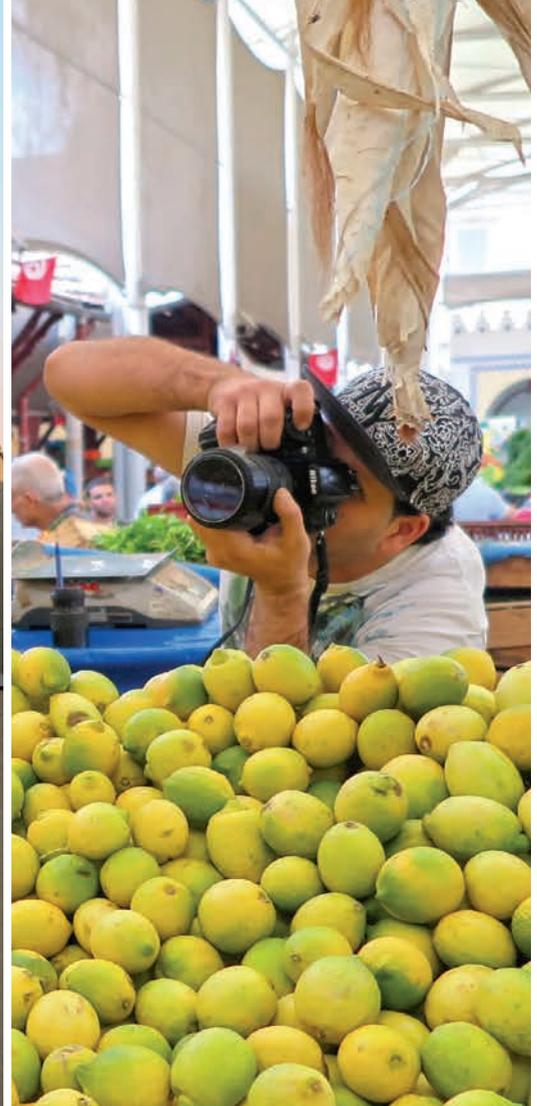


JANUARY FEBRUARY 2018

AramcoWorld





4 Asian Nations Unite to Protect Snow Leopards

Written and photographed by Adriane Lochner

In Central Asia's mountains, heritage and folklore show a centuries-old respect for the most elusive—and ecologically vulnerable—of the vast region's wild predators: *Panthera uncia*, the snow leopard. In August delegates from 12 countries met at the Second International Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Forum in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, to advance increasingly successful collaborations in government, education, wildlife management and law enforcement.

14 Lemons, Garlic, Mint, Portraits

Written by Jeff Koehler
Photographs by Hamza Ayari

Hamza Ayari describes himself on Facebook as having a "photo addiction," which fuels his growing collection of portraits made on location at his produce stand in Tunis' central market.

Online CLASSROOM GUIDE

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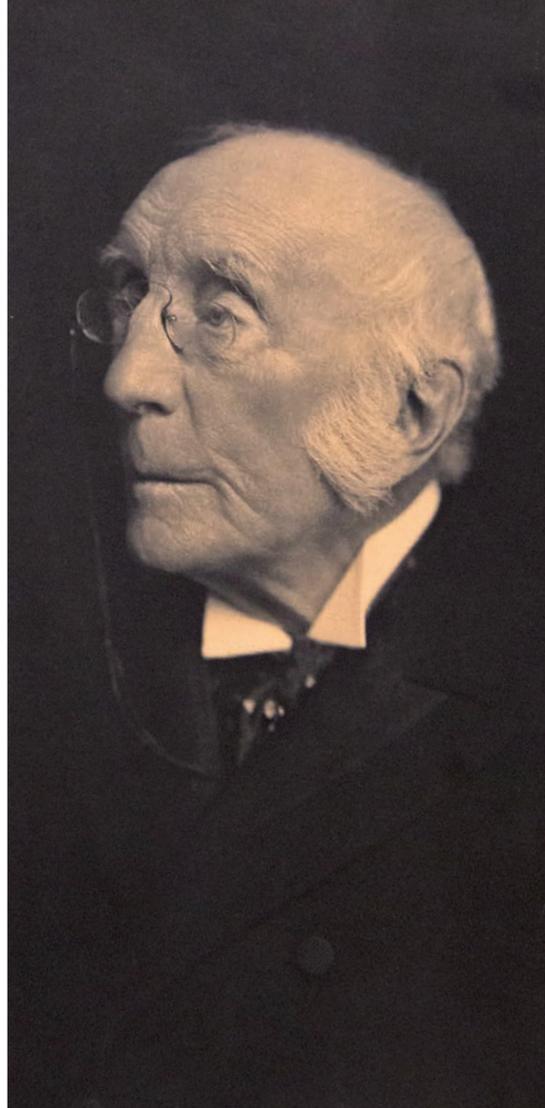
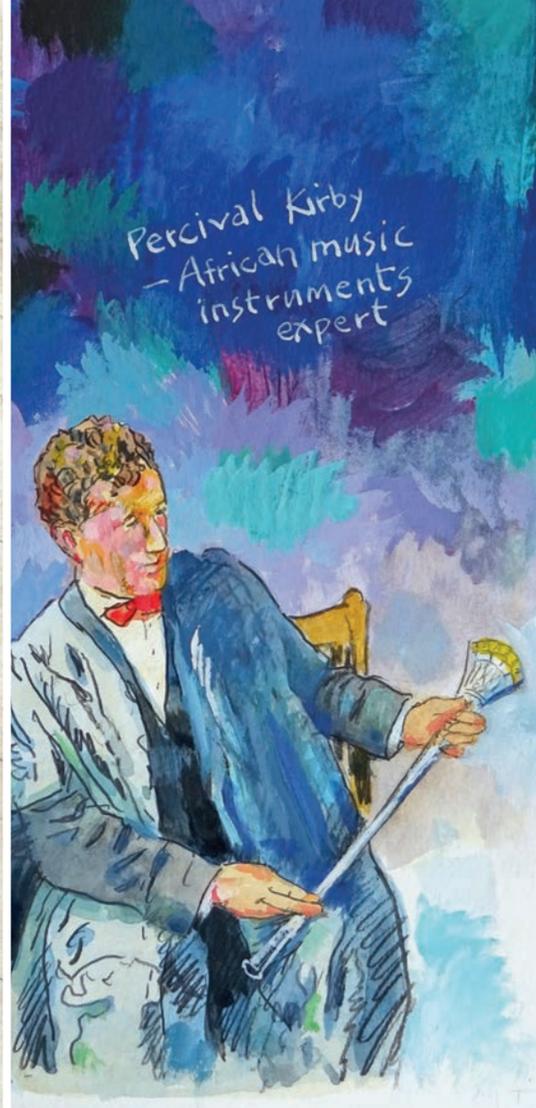
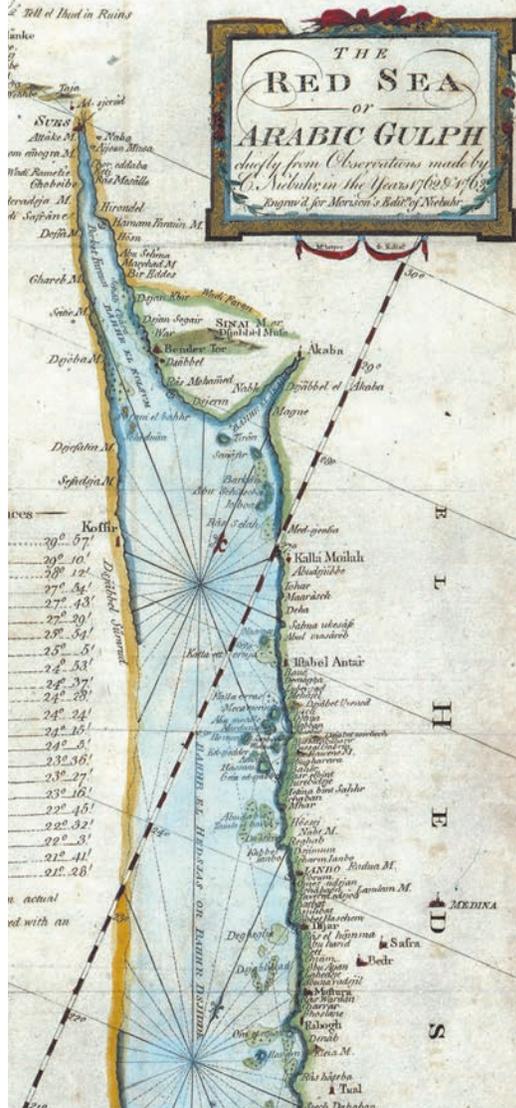
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We distribute *AramcoWorld* in print and online to increase cross-cultural understanding by broadening knowledge of the histories, cultures and geography of the Arab and Muslim worlds and their global connections.

Front Cover: Still wet from the waters of the Uchkol River in eastern Kyrgyzstan when captured by a motion-triggered camera, this snow leopard can now be counted and individually identified. Human sightings of snow leopards in the wild are so rare that even field biologists regard themselves as fortunate when they see one. Photo by Sebastian Kennerknecht / Panthera.

Back Cover: Until recently, most of photographer and vendor Hamza Ayari's customers in the Marché Central came to buy his produce, but now, he says, many come asking for a portrait. Photo by Jeff Koehler.



18 Carsten Niebuhr and the Danish Expedition to Arabia

Written by Paul G. Chamberlain

Of six men who set out from Denmark in 1761, disease took five; only Carsten Niebuhr—mapmaker and empathic observer—returned, and he published what became a foundation of European scientific knowledge of Arabia.

26 I Witness History: I, Horn of Africa

Written by Frank L. Holt
Illustrated by Norman MacDonald

Royal trumpet of Pharaoh Tutankhamen, I was born to command armies, priests and whole populations. But my days with him were few. Layed to rest with my mouthpiece toward my 19-year-old pharaoh, I fell silent for 3,262 years. Then one of you tried to play me.

32 The Legacy of Arabic in America

Written by Piney Kesting
Photographed by Krisanne Johnson

The eighth most-studied language in us schools and universities today is Arabic. That would please Edward E. Salisbury of Yale, who in 1841 became the country's first full professor of Semitic languages—nearly 200 years after North America's first Arabic class was offered at Harvard.

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14: JEFF KOEHLER; 18: BUKHARI COLLECTION (DETAIL)





FIRSTLOOK

Tassili n'Ajjer National Park

*Photograph by Sebastião
Salgado / Contact Press Images*

At first impression, the Sahara appears to be lifeless, with golden sand dunes stretching out as far as the eye can see. Yet it is one of the places where I have felt closest to the past of humanity.

We were fortunate during this part of a journey in south-east Algeria to have a helicopter made available by the Algerian army for some 12 hours over Tassili n'Ajjer National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site of outstanding scenic, historical and geological interest. It has one of the largest and best-preserved groupings of prehistoric cave art in the world, more than 15,000 drawings and engravings that record climatic changes, animal migrations and the evolution of human life on the edge of the Sahara from 8,000 to about 1,500 years ago. It is also, in parts, an island of life that harbors the endemic Saharan cypress, one of the rarest trees in the world.

From on high, it was possible to see how this vast plateau ends abruptly in what resembles a cliff face that in turn is slowly being eaten away by erosion. As compacted sand disintegrates, it adds to the desert. In other areas, deep ravines have been cut through the plateau by rivers that flowed thousands of years ago.

—Sebastião Salgado

This previously unpublished image was made in 2009 as part of the global project *Genesis*, by Sebastião Salgado and Lélia Wanick Salgado (2013, Taschen).



ASIAN NATIONS JOIN
TO PROTECT

Snow Leopards

WRITTEN AND
PHOTOGRAPHED BY
ADRIANE LOCHNER

The snow leopard is an irreplaceable symbol of our nations' natural and cultural heritage and an indicator of the health and sustainability of mountain ecosystems.

—from the Bishkek Declaration on the Conservation of the Snow Leopard, October 2013



Rolling waves are breaking on the beach. It could be a Mediterranean scene if not for the vast wall of snow-capped mountains across the waters of Issyk Kul, the world's second-largest mountain lake, in the landlocked Central Asian nation of Kyrgyzstan. Along its north shore, in the small town of Tamchy, some 30 children, aged about three to nine, wait on rows of benches inside the colorfully painted Jash Muun Kindergarten building near the beach. It's a sunny afternoon in late August, still summer-holiday season, yet their parents have brought them here for a special presentation. Environmental educator Nurzat Iskakova, from the German nongovernmental organization Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union (NABU), has come to talk about a native animal so elusive and rare that few people ever catch as much as a fleeting glimpse of it in the wild: *ak ilbirs*, "white panther" in Kyrgyz and, in English, the snow leopard. To the children, it is as if Iskakova is telling them about a mythical creature from a fairy tale. Wide-eyed, they listen.

MAIN: SEBASTIAN KENNERKNECHT / PANTHERA





In central Bishkek a family stops to look at artist Nikolai Cherkasov's life-size sculpture of a snow leopard, commissioned to accompany the International Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Forum. The plaque beneath it reads, in Kyrgyz, Russian and English, "Slowly the snow leopard is disappearing from our mountains. We must all do the best to conserve it."

A few hours by car from Tamchy, along what was once part of the Silk Roads that connected East Asia with the Middle East and Europe, signs and statues depicting snow leopards are easy to spot. There is even a café named Ak Ilbirs.

In the capital, Bishkek, faces of snow leopards peer out from billboards, largely unnoticed by drivers and pedestrians navigating traffic that seems to flow as wild as whitewater mountain rivers. A few people find a calm escape near the city's Philharmonic Hall, where on its spacious square, the glow of the evening sun sparkles the fountains and washes in gold a monument to the national epic hero Manas. Nearby is a series of contemporary public artworks, set on a small park strip called Youth Alley.

One sculpture draws attention—it's new. It depicts a life-sized snow leopard, not much taller than a Labrador retriever, and compared to other members of the "big cats" family such as lions, it seems rather small. Constructed of welded hexagonal screw nuts, it invites stroking, selfies and toddlers climbing onto its back.

"People are supposed to touch it. That's why it is on the ground," says Nikolai Cherkasov, the 29-year-old local artist. "We did not want to build a monument for a dying animal," he explains. Rather, he adds, he wanted something that en-

courages a relationship—and action. Under his statue, a metal tag reads, in Kyrgyz, Russian and English, "Slowly the snow leopard is disappearing from our mountains. We must all do the best to conserve it."

Cherkasov's sculpture, like the billboards along the city streets, was part of the Kyrgyz government's hosting of the Second International Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Forum at the Ala Archa State Residence, a park-like venue for state receptions on the outskirts of the capital. The national flags of each of the forum's 12 officially participating countries flew at Enesai Reception House, designed after the traditional Central Asian yurt: Canvas-white and circular with a shallow conical roof, it is an unmistakable symbol of the country's nomadic roots.

On opening day, August 25, men and women from Afghanistan, Bhutan, China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan all chatted and greeted each other outside the hall. Amid the gray suits and business dresses, the occasional Indian sari could be glimpsed, or the robe of a Buddhist Lama, or the orange-, red- and green-striped *gho*—the men's national dress of Bhutan. Inside, the 250 delegates listened as Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambayev welcomed them and congratulated them for their efforts to make common cause. "Today, the conservation and increase of the snow leopard population is the main task for all of us," he said.

Stretching in and through each of these 12 nations run seven major mountain ranges and numerous smaller ones, covering a

Previous spread, main: In the Sarychat Ertash State Nature Reserve in the Tien Shan mountains, near Kyrgyzstan's border with China, a male snow leopard (*ak ilbirs*, or "white panther," in Kyrgyz), peers over a snowdrift. A moment later, he was darted with a tranquilizer, documented, fitted with a tracking collar and released unharmed.

total area greater than India. All are habitat for the snow leopard, *Panthera uncia*, whose only borders are altitude, for it lives mostly between about 3,000 and 5,400 meters.

In almost every culture in the 12 nations, the snow leopard carries deep cultural meanings. For the Kyrgyz people, ak ilbirs is a national icon and talisman, an animal that is even sacred. “The snow leopard is a heritage of our fathers,”

Atambayev said. For its strength, it became also a symbol of heroism. Almost 1,200 years ago, the leader of the tribal association that became the first Kyrgyz khaganate was called Barsbek (“Sir Snow Leopard”). Atambayev appealed to his people to respect their ancestors: “The snow leopard,” he stated, “is one of us.”

Other cultures of the region, too, have long regarded the big cat as a mountain spirit, as archeological finds and petroglyphs show. “According to the views of the Mongols, Khakas, Tuvinians and Altaians, the leopard is the representative of the higher heavenly forces on earth. It became a totem, an ancestor and the protector of the family,” explains ethnographer Yuri Loginov in an interview with the Kyrgyz youth magazine *New Faces*. Living side by side with the snow leopard was a sign of distinction.



Above and lower: In August some 250 delegates from the 12 snow leopard “range countries” of Central Asia, together with representatives of international NGOs committed to protection and conservation of the snow leopard, met in Bishkek at the Second International Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Forum.

In Mongolia, calling the “guardian of the mountains” by its actual name is viewed as disrespectful even today, says Mongol shaman Buyanbadrakh, adding that people there instead use descriptive names such as “spotted fur coat.” Lama Danzan-Norbu, from the Siberian Russian Republic of Buriatia, says, “The snow leopard is a symbol of justice, an embodiment of everything pure in our mountains.”

The snow leopard’s elusiveness has done much to earn it this mystical reputation. Inhabiting some of the most remote mountains on earth, much covered by ice and snow, its gray-white coat spotted with black open rosettes provides camouflage so perfect that even at close range it can be virtually invisible. Like a ghost, it seems to appear and disappear from and into nowhere.

Kyrgyz field biologist Kubanych Zhumabai Uulu knows this well. Only after a decade of studying snow leopards in the wild did he see one. “I was waiting for this a long time,” he says, bright-eyed, recalling the moment like a reward for hard work.

As head of the nongovernmental organization (NGO) Snow Leopard Foundation Kyrgyzstan, Zhumabai Uulu’s



tasks include tracking and counting snow leopards in the central Tien Shan mountains. His team of trackers undertakes month-long expeditions with strenuous hikes in thin air and freezing cold nights that make high demands on both people and equipment. September, he says, is usually the best time to go. “When it starts snowing in the high mountains, [the snow leopards] descend to lower, more accessible mountain regions together with their prey animals,” he explains.

During each trip, the team covers around 1,000 square kilometers, setting up around 40 camera traps with weather-resistant photo and video recorders that react on motion-triggers. Finding the right spot can be tricky. “We look for overhanging rocks. Snow leopards use them for urine markings,” the scientist explains. It is easy to tell if a snow leopard has been to a particular spot, he adds, because the scent is detectable even to humans for several months afterward.

To find the best position for a camera, one of the trackers may scramble on all fours past the motion sensor until the angle is just right—a sight that has baffled more than one mountain herder watching them from afar. When set, the camera stays in place all winter. In spring the team returns to read out the memory cards.

“Each snow leopard has a unique coat pattern, like our fingerprints,” Zhumabai Uulu explains. This is why, at each location, the trackers usually set up two cameras opposite each other. With pictures from both sides, he explains, they can identify individuals better. This is not difficult: In the Snow Leopard Foundation’s office in Bishkek, on a wall of

framed portraits of snow leopards, each has a name.

“This one we call Fighter,” says Zhumabai Uulu, pointing to a picture of a snow leopard with numerous scars on its face. Another is Hunter, for in every photo it carries a dead marmot in its fangs. James Bond “behaved like a spy,” not showing his face to the camera, while Jessica Alba appeared to relish the attention like a celebrity.

According to Zhumabai Uulu, camera trapping is one of the best methods to estimate snow leopard populations. With it, biologists learn about the range of individuals, as well as how they share territory with fellow snow leopards and other predators such as wolves and bears. By counting cubs the biologists learn about population dynamics. Other monitoring methods include DNA analysis of feces and interviews with herders living in the small villages and yurts scattered on the high plateaus. The herders “are the only ones who really know how frequently certain animals occur in a region,” says Zhumabai Uulu.

Still, it is not easy to take stock of mountain ghosts. To date, snow leopard populations have been assessed in less than two percent of its estimated 2.8 million square kilometers of total habitat. Population estimates by individual countries, published in 2016 in the book *Snow Leopards* by Tom McCarty and David Mallon, add up to 7,000 to 8,000 individuals left throughout the mountains of Central Asia.

With diverse methods and limited data, it is thus no surprise that scientists may disagree over both the numbers and their significance. On September 14 the International Union



The Snow Leopard

The snow leopard (*Panthera uncia*) belongs to the genus *Panthera* together with lions, tigers, jaguars and other leopards. Interestingly, the snow leopard is genetically more closely related to the tiger (*Panthera tigris*) than it is to its namesake, the leopard (*Panthera pardus*). The snow leopard is distinct from other *Panthera* members because of its inability to roar, its uniquely thick and light-colored coat and its long bushy tail that helps it keep balance when jumping from rock to rock. While from head to tail base snow leopards only measure somewhere between 90 to 115 centimeters, the tail itself can be 100 centimeters. Snow leopards are smaller than the other big cats, with a shoulder height of around 60 centimeters and a weight of 27 to 55 kilograms. Their thick fur and stocky bodies adapt them perfectly to the extreme environments of mountain ranges such as Altai, Himalaya, Hindu Kush, Karakorum, Kunlun, Tien Shan and Pamir. Usually, snow leopards are solitary. The home range of a single snow leopard can vary from 12 to 1,000 square kilometers. Wild prey are mainly ibex, argali and blue sheep, as well as marmots.



In an image captured by a motion-sensitive camera trap, a snow leopard overlooks the Spiti Valley in India. *Right:* The Snow Leopard Trust lists Mongolia as home to the second-largest population of snow leopards at an estimated 500–1,000.

for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) upgraded the snow leopard’s conservation status from “endangered” to “vulnerable,” which means that instead of facing “very high risk” of extinction in the wild, it faces “high risk.” Some organizations such as the Snow Leopard Trust regard the move as premature due to insufficient data; others see it as a signal that conservation efforts may be working. In either case, it is no cause for rest.

Back in the classroom in Tamchy, environmental educator Iskakova tells the kids about Kyrgyzstan’s national “Red Book” of endangered species, which lists not only the snow leopard but also the maral, a large stag, and the red wolf, which has not been spotted for 50 years.

The word “extinction” comes up, and Iskakova explains that yes, animals can be lost forever. “Many years ago, there were more than a thousand snow leopards in Kyrgyzstan. Now only a few hundred are left,” Iskakova says. Then, raising her voice with encouragement, she asks, “Should we protect the snow leopards?”

In unison the kids shout back, “Yes!”

“How can we protect them?” Iskakova asks them.

Dozens of fingers shoot up. She smiles and points to a boy not more than five years old. In a soft voice, he says, “We must not shoot them.”

The boy cut right to the chase. Over the past decades, poaching and fur trading were the leading threats to the snow leopard. Well-heeled people, it turns out, are willing to spend large amounts of money in the black market to buy a physical piece of the big cat’s mystical power. Its skin has become a



status symbol, and its claws and bones are used for ointments and tools in traditional medicines.

According to the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), a skin can fetch us\$2,200 to \$5,000, and a skeleton can command \$10,000—amounts many times greater than the monthly salaries of civil servants charged with enforcing anti-poaching regulations. As a result, struggling families can find themselves faced with choosing among economics, ethics and long-held beliefs.

In a 2016 report, the wildlife trade monitoring network Trade Records Analysis of Flora and Fauna in Commerce (TRAFFIC) estimated that since 2008 between 221 and 450 snow leopards have been poached annually across the range countries—an average of at least four kills a week. The authors added that the actual number might be substantially higher since kills in remote areas cannot be detected.

“Who kills a snow leopard, kills their own people. Who sells a snow leopard skin, sells their own land,” said President Atambayev, making clear his government’s position and articulating



In eastern Kyrgyzstan, biologists and a veterinarian fit a tranquilized snow leopard with a tracking collar. They also take readings of its weight and dimensions as well as samples of blood and fur in the effort to understand its range and well-being. *Lower:* The snow leopard is an iconic logo for the republic's Department of Natural Resources.

the important role the snow leopard plays in national identity.

Officially, all 12 range countries have protected the big cat for many years, but enforcement has been weak and, at times, nil, as economic and social issues have kept governments from being effective in this policy area. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, for example, former Soviet states had much to do to find their own identities and develop their own systems amid newly gained independence.

Others, including Afghanistan and Pakistan, have worked amid war and conflict to establish the concept of environmental protection. Abdul Wali Modaqiq, deputy director general of the National Environmental Protection Agency of Afghanistan, explains that when his agency started in 2002, “People looked at environmental protection like it was a fashion. It took us eight years to convince them that taking care of the environment is not impeding development. It takes time to rebuild our country. If we wait until there is a hundred percent peace, it will be too late.”

Modaqiq is proud of his country's accomplishments. For example, in 2002 Afghanistan was a member of only one international environmental convention. Now, it is a signatory to 15 multilateral environmental agreements and protocols. Recognizing the important role of the snow leopard in

high-mountain ecosystems, Afghanistan put the big cat on its national protected list and in 2014 declared the country's entire northeastern Wakhan district a national park—an area four times larger than Yellowstone National Park in the US.

The first multinational step toward saving the snow leopard across all the range countries was taken four years ago, in October 2013 in Bishkek, at the First Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Forum. A much smaller gathering than the one this year, representatives of the 12 Asian countries there signed the Bishkek Declaration, in which they agreed that “the snow leopard is an irreplaceable symbol of our nations' natural and cultural heritage.” They also agreed on the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection (GSLEP) program's goal of “20 by 20”: identify 20

habitat areas by the year 2020, each with a “secure, healthy population” of at least 100 breeding-age snow leopards, sufficient and reliable populations of wild prey and the interconnection of their habitat to others.

In the four years between forums, what has happened? “We are midway as far as the implementation is concerned,” says Koustubh Sharma, international coordinator at the GSLEP-Secretariat, which was formed after





Left: A snow leopard's eyes glow in the glare of a camera trap's flash. Biologists will examine its pattern of spots to identify the individual. Right: Sturdy and weatherproof, camera traps are placed in the mountains for months at a time.

the 2013 forum. Its five staff members consult periodically with the signatory countries, as well as with implementation partners, donors and academics, to track progress toward “20 by 20” and other GSLEP goals.

“We started from scratch. We started with few resources,” Sharma says. Consequently he finds it encouraging that of the GSLEP’s total budget commitment of US\$182 million, the countries have to date acquired some \$50 million from both national sources and the international Global Environment Facility.

The funds so far have enabled, for example, the establishment of new protected areas such as Afghanistan’s Wakhan National Park, Tost-Tosunbumba in southern Mongolia and Khan-Tengri in Kyrgyzstan. Existing protected areas, such as China’s 160,000-square-kilometer Sanjiangyuan National Nature Reserve, are receiving more intensive monitoring. Kyrgyzstan and Bhutan have increased penalties for poaching and illegal trafficking. Across each country, more than 250 people have received training in environmental protection work, in some places with the help of the international police organization Interpol. To strengthen incentives for conservation enforcement, for example, Kyrgyzstan raised the salaries of state rangers from around 4,000 som (about US\$60) per month to 15,000 som. To discourage poaching, Pakistan, India, Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia have all established dozens of community-based protection programs. National governments have entered into cooperative relations

with international organizations including the Snow Leopard Trust, Snow Leopard Conservancy, Wildlife Conservation Society, Panthera, WWF, and NABU.

One goal, Sharma adds, already has been exceeded: The

range countries have identified not just 20, but 23 snow leopard habitats with potentially healthy populations—depending on the implementation of wildlife-management plans by 2020. To date,

The “20 by 20” protocol defines a healthy population as one comprised of at least 100 breeding-age snow leopards.

six of the 12 countries—Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Bhutan and Nepal—have completed “blueprints of how snow leopard populations can be secured while at the same time ensuring the development of the local communities,” Sharma explains.

One of the most critical challenges is what conservationists call “human-wildlife conflict” and what 38-year-old herdsman Mahabat Isaliev calls the threat to her family’s livelihood. Isaliev lives with her

husband and five children in the Pamir Mountains of Tajikistan, in the Akhtam Valley, where the high plateau reaches as far as the eye can see and income for everyone depends on livestock: sheep, goats and yaks.

Isaliev takes care of the family’s small farmhouse while her husband spends his days with the herds in the mountain pastures. In the evening, when the sunset illuminates mountains and sky in all shades of red, pink and purple, he returns the livestock to the corrals. There, be-

Reacting with delight to camera-trap photographs recovered from the field, a team of conservationists examines digital files on location in Chon-Kemin National Park in Kyrgyzstan.



hind the high clay walls, the animals spend their nights, safe from wolves, jackals and bears—but not from snow leopards, which are strong jumpers. Isaliev points to the scratch marks on one of the top corners of the corral.

“Here it got in,” she says, furrowing her brow. Just thinking about it seems to make her angry. Last winter, she says, a snow leopard came almost weekly to raid the corral. One time she saw it, and for Isaliev it is no mystical memory: Altogether her family lost seven sheep and goats worth about a month’s income. The family worried that the snow leopard would return the next winter.

“Without the conservation efforts, the only solution for us would be to kill the snow leopard,” says the herdsman. The family got help when it reported the incident to Burgut (Golden Eagle), a local NGO that helped the family with a simple, effective solution: a wire mesh over the top of the corral.

Across all range countries, snow leopards often prey on slow-moving domestic livestock due to both ease and, in some places, a shortage of wild prey. While predator-proofing corrals is one way to address human-wildlife conflicts, another is livestock insurance, through which owners can insure individual animals or proportions of herds.

Alternative sources of income are also part of conservation models. These include tourism services such as sustainable hunting, guided hiking and game viewing or wildlife photography expeditions. Burgut, founded in 2013, applies all of these concepts in Tajikistan. Sixteen herders from three villages work not only as rangers to prevent poaching but also as tour and hunting guides. Burgut uses the revenues to pay them for their services and invests the surplus in the communities by buying new books for schools and appliances or medication for hospitals, for example.

“Our big dream is it to supply the communities with elec-



To protect this farm’s herd from snow leopards—and to protect snow leopards from herdsmen protecting their livestock—ranchers in Mongolia install wire fencing.

tricity. We are saving to build a 100-kilometer-long power supply line,” says Makhan Atambaev, the NGO’s chairman and head of the rangers. In the past four years, he says, conservation has become a significant part of local livelihoods, and this is reflected in wildlife numbers.

“In 2012 we counted around 300 wild ungulates in the area. Now it’s close to 1,500,” Atambaev reports. This helps snow leopards, he explains, because wild ungulates such as Siberian ibex and Mar-

co Polo sheep are the cat’s most important prey in the region. And indeed, the predator is returning. “A few years ago, there were no snow leopards in our mountains. Now there are at least six,” Atambaev says with visible pride.

Another alternative-income model for mountain communities comes from the US-based Snow Leopard Trust (SLT), which in 1997 launched Snow Leopard Enterprises. Partici-

pating communities agree not to hunt snow leopards or their prey animals, or to support poachers. In return for compliance, SLT buys local handicrafts and distributes them globally via its online trade

The ancestral power of the snow leopard is taking new form as a flagship species that unites nations and ecosystems.



In Tajikistan’s Akhtam Valley, a child holds up an illustration of a snow leopard that was part of an educational effort to assist residents living in shared habitat to protect both the species and their own livelihoods.

One cub's motion tripped the camera trap to make this image of three young snow leopards near Tost, Mongolia. In 2016 Mongolia's parliament designated portions of the Tost-Tosunbumba mountain range, in the country's South Gobi Province, as a protected reserve. Tost-Tosunbumba National Park is currently the site of the world's most comprehensive long-term snow leopard research study, which is monitoring 20 cats.



platform and its wholesale partners. Snow Leopard Enterprises currently operates with more than 400 women from 40 communities in Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan and India. The largest percentage is in Mongolia, where participating communities currently protect about one-fourth of the known snow leopard habitat.

Although poaching has been the single gravest threat to the snow leopard, the forum countries acknowledge that the 21st century is rapidly becoming an era of more numerous issues connected to global integration and its ever-growing hunger for natural resources and infrastructure development—roads, railroads and pipelines that can block the movements of wildlife. Add to that the degradation and loss of habitats through overgrazing, climate change, environmental pollution and mining, and it easy to see that the challenges will continue.

Someone who worried deeply about the relationship of environment and economic development was the award-winning Kyrgyz writer Chingiz Aitmatov, who in the 1950s won international recognition for his novella *Jamila*. During the following half century, Aitmatov both pursued a career as a diplomat and wrote almost 20 novels and novellas. In his last book, *When Mountains Fall*, written in 2006, Aitmatov used the snow leopard as a symbol for the natural heritage of his people.

When villagers plan to take a group of wealthy foreigners hunting for snow leopards, the main character, journalist Arsen Samantshin, criticizes them: “How often have we put our heads together for the protection of the environment? Whole epics were written about it, but when it comes to money, the ecological oaths are over, for money people are willing to do anything.”

When the villagers scout the mountains in preparation for the hunt, Aitmatov puts a powerful warning into the voice of an elder snow leopard he names Dschaa-Bars: “Don’t disturb us! Soon the mountains will fall and you, too, will fare badly.”

The message was clear, and although Samantshin dies alongside Dschaa-Bars, Aitmatov did not want to let it end like this. As Samantshin’s body is carried to the village to be buried, the body of the snow leopard mysteriously disappears, implying supernatural power. Aitmatov sends the reader home with the picture of Dschaa-Bars, now a ghost, forever roaming Kyrgyzstan’s mountains—much as the snow leopard does today in the cultural imagination of the region and beyond. The snow leopard has become a representative of

Central Asia’s ecosystems, a global keystone species, a banner under which nations can gather not only for its conservation, but also for the conservation of dozens of other animal and plant species together with human economies and lifeways.

And while in the yurt-shaped conference hall in Bishkek adults agree on new protected areas and strategies to fight wildlife crime, in the beach-side classroom in Tamchy, kids do some brainstorming of their own.

“Let’s think about what we can do to protect the snow leopard!” Iskakova says, and together they build a “life raft” of ideas. The children write their thoughts on pieces of paper, and those who cannot yet write have the grown-ups help them.

One by one, they pin their ideas on a whiteboard. One of the notes says, “Whoever kills a snow leopard must go to jail.”

Others say, “We always have to pick up our garbage”; “We have to conserve our lakes and rivers”; and “We have to love the nature with all our heart.”

Seven-year-old Adelya Saparbekova, with long dark hair and lively brown eyes, tells how proud she is to share her home country with such a great animal. She rhapsodizes: “The snow leopard has a beautiful skin. It shines in the sunlight.” So far, she has seen snow leopards only on television and in pictures. She hopes that soon there will be more of them. Perhaps then she, too, will be able to see one. 🌐



Adriane Lochner is a biologist by training. As a freelance journalist, photographer and travel writer covering cultural and environmental topics worldwide, Lochner spent a year in Kyrgyzstan learning about its culture, environment, people and the snow leopard. Currently, she is based in Germany.

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Lemons, Garlic, Mint, Portraits

WRITTEN BY
Jeff Koehler



PHOTOGRAPHS BY
Hamza Ayari

Outside the main entrance to Tunis's *madinah*, or old city, the Marché Central covers a whole city block. Built in 1891 and refurbished a decade ago, this vast market houses hundreds of vendors who offer everything from fresh swordfish to preserved capers to hanging *ristras* of leathery red peppers essential to harisa, North Africa's favorite chile paste.

In the produce section, a stall in the corner is stacked with lemons, mint and garlic. Every day behind its generous mound of citruses and wearing a trademark baseball cap stands Hamza Ayari, 31, known in the market as *al-mosawer baye' al-limoun*—"the photographer who sells lemons."

Patient and affable, Ayari grew up a child of the Marché Central. At seven he spent weekends and school holidays helping out in his uncle's stall. It was at 15, he explains, that he began working full time. By then he had also discovered photography. With a Samsung digital pocket camera, he started making pictures of the market's many cats. Soon he moved on to people—friends, neighbors and customers. Most of all, he says, he liked taking portraits of kids and elders.

Among the visitors to his stall was a middle-aged German photography enthusiast who introduced himself as Norman. He would come by to talk about their shared passion for photography, says Ayari.

“Norman was surprised I could take so many pictures with such a small camera,” Ayari explains. Then one day about 10 years ago, Norman showed up with a present: a Nikon D80 camera. Ayari recalls the moment as one of great surprise, happiness and a sense of profound luck: He could now take his hobby toward a professional level.

He taught himself to use the camera by experimenting with every setting and button. Each day he brought it to the market, wrapped in a cloth for want of a camera case. He carried it with him everywhere. “I was crazy for taking pictures,” he says.

He worked seven days a week, and although this afforded few opportunities to explore beyond the market, the city came to him. In the market, he says, he could find the heart of Tunis in the faces of pensioners, professors and bankers; singers, seamstresses and mechanics; cooks, homemakers and children on errands. He captured them all.

As word spread, people began coming to the market not for produce at all, but for a portrait. Younger photographers began to hang around, too, and they would pepper him with questions. He always made the portraits requested, and he answered every question.

Two years later Norman was back. “He asked if he could use the camera for a few days,” Ayari recalls. “When he returned, he said he was impressed with how well I had taken care of it and how much I had used it.” Norman, it turned out, had brought another gift. This time it was Nikon’s professional D700 camera with a pair of high-quality lenses. “It was another joy and a surprise,” Ayari says, deeply aware of



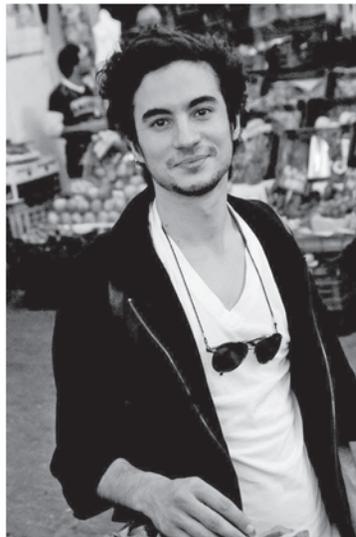
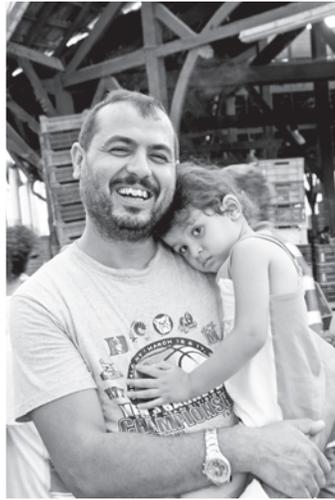
Among the Marché Central's colors and fresh smells of fruits and vegetables, Hamza Ayari sets up, on an average day, about 10 portraits. He invites some people as they shop near his stand; others have heard about his photography either by word of mouth or through local media, and they seek him out.



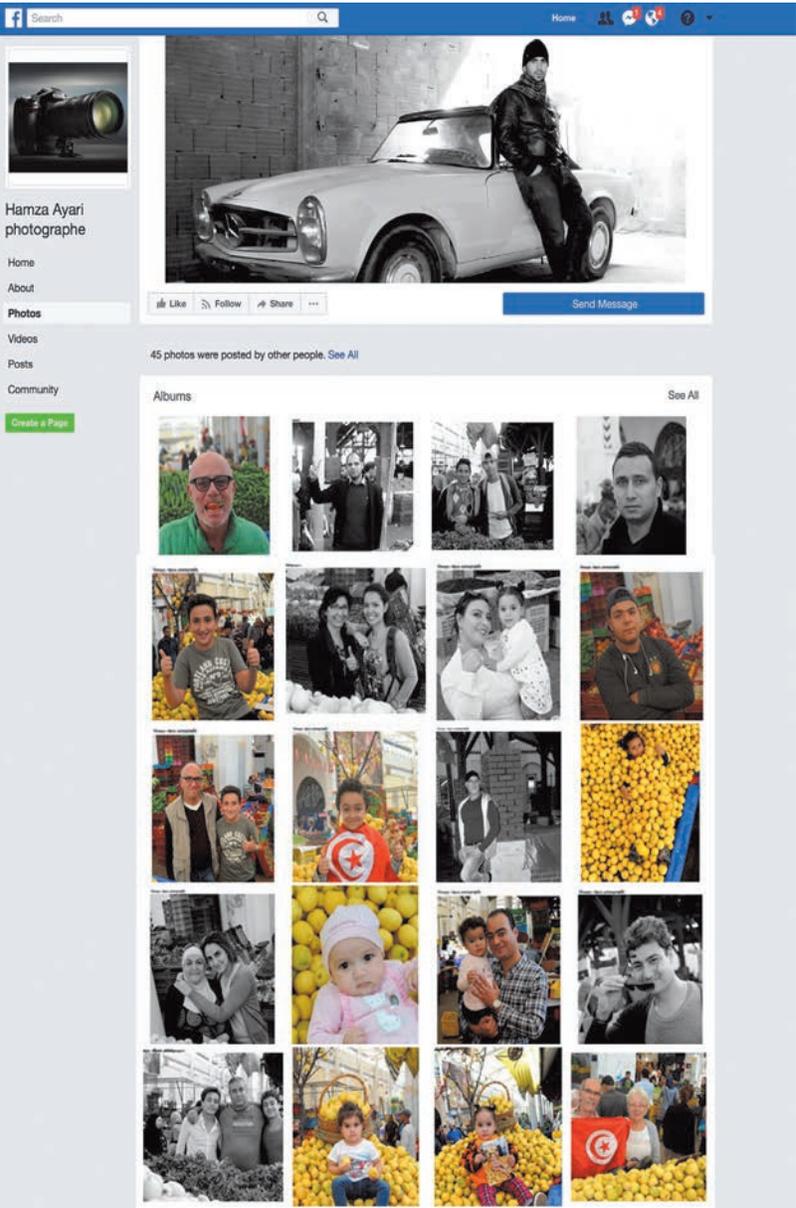
his continuing fortune. “I know a lot of photographers, and no one gives you a gift like that.” As with his other cameras, he keeps it under the counter of his stall, and every day he uses it to make photos of people.

In 2013 a Tunisian television channel ran a 20-minute feature on Ayari. This brought people to the market even from beyond Tunis, just to have a portrait made by “al-mosawer baye’ al-limoun.” At the end of that year, he held an exhibition—fittingly in the Marché Central itself.

In his portraits, people are noticeably relaxed. Although some know Ayari from years in the market, many do not, and as a Marché Central professional, Ayari has cultivated a breezy confidence with strangers. They trust him and follow his posing directions, and it all shows in the images. Since the



Although many of Ayari's portraits are in color—as he says, “That is what the children like”—he prefers showing his images in monochrome for its “timeless look.”



Ayari has gathered more than 5,000 followers on Facebook, and his page has become a gallery of the playful, unguarded exchanges between his subjects and his camera. Some of his favorite subjects are children, whom he often poses atop, and sometimes amid, piles of lemons and, at other times, with a Tunisian flag.

2011 Tunisian Revolution, Ayari has kept a flag in his stall, often draping it around the shoulders of kids. “It was a way to show pride in being Tunisian,” he says.

In the 1995 movie *Smoke*, a character named Auggie Wren, played by actor Harvey Keitel, works in a Brooklyn tobacco shop and each day takes photos from the same spot. Not “just some guy who pushes coins across the counter,” says Wren, photography is “my project—what you’d call my life’s work.” In the film, Wren points to 4,000 photos stuck into 14 albums.

Unlike the fictional Auggie Wren, Ayari does not shut away his prints in albums. Before he received his first Nikon, he had begun printing the portraits using money earned by selling mint and giving them to the people he photographed, often during the three days of *‘Id al-Fitr* that mark the end of Ramadan. “At least 500 a year,” he says. He adds that when he was young, receiving a photo of himself gave him a warm and contented feeling. Now giving them to others is a similar pleasure.

Perhaps also it is a subconscious way of passing on Norman’s generosity. Ayari never even learned Norman’s sur-

name, he says. He has not seen him for several years.

On a Saturday morning in October, Ayari was in his usual place, bantering with familiar faces, weighing lemons, selling brilliant green mint by the handful and dropping Tunisian dinar coins into a wooden box of change.

A couple approached, their 10-year-old daughter somewhat reluctantly in tow. Ayari smiled and spoke a few words to her, and the girl’s apprehension seemed to evaporate. He moved some lemons aside to make a space on the mound for her to sit. He then lifted her up, smoothed out her white dress, adjusted her pink feather hairband and gave her some directions on turning before clicking off a couple of frames.

After he showed the girl and her parents the results on the camera’s back screen, he slipped the camera back under the counter. They would have their pictures soon enough, he assured them, as a lemon-buying customer was waiting. He started to gather up her order.

Ayari’s aspiration, he says, is to help promote awareness of photography as art in Tunisia. “I want to spread it around the country. This is my dream,” he says.

And it is a dream he will pursue from his produce stand in a corner of the Marche Central. “I love the market,” he says. “And it is my source of livelihood.” ☺



Jeff Koehler (jeff-koehler.com; @koehlercooks) is a writer, photographer and cook based in Barcelona. His latest book is *Where the Wild Coffee Grows: The Untold Story of Coffee from the Cloud Forests of Ethiopia to Your Cup* (Bloomsbury USA, 2017). His previous one, *Darjeeling: The Colorful History and Precariously Fate of the World’s Greatest Tea* (Bloomsbury USA, 2015), won the 2016 award for literary food writing from the International Association of Culinary Professionals.

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TOP RIGHT: JEFF KOEHLER

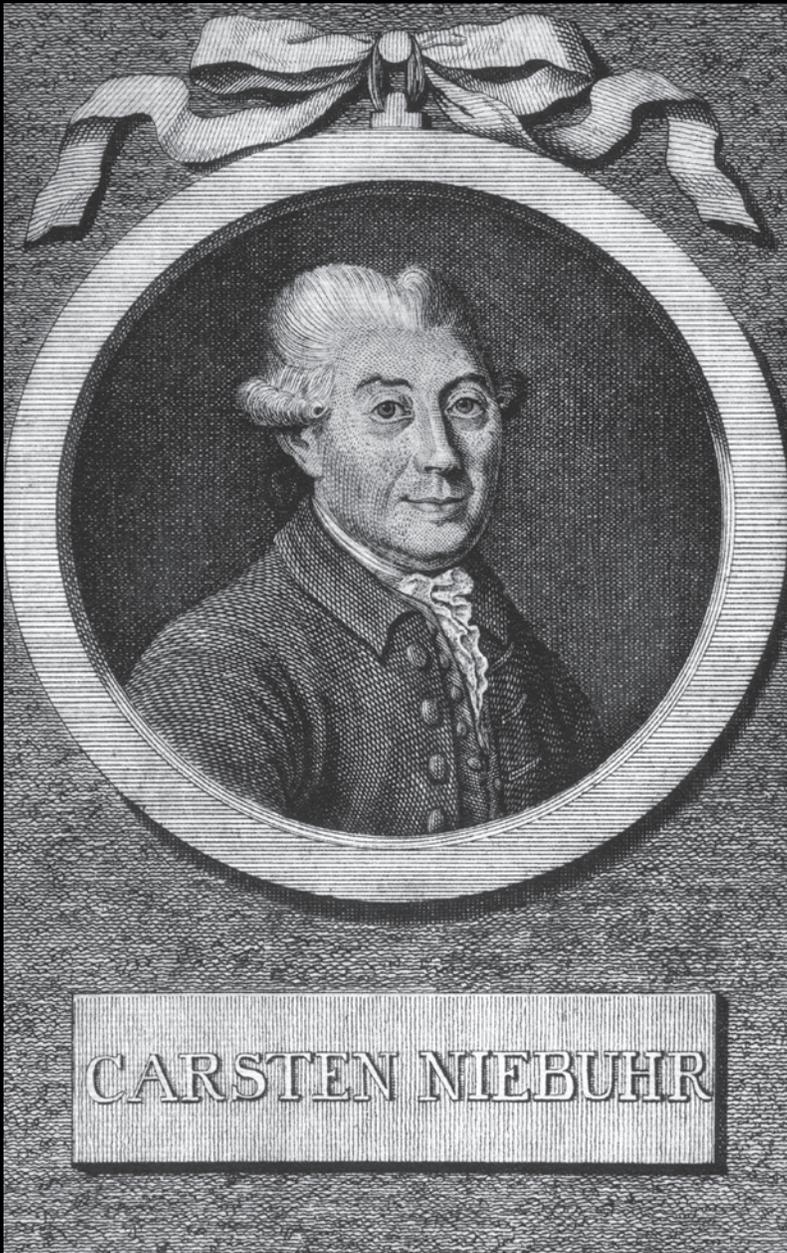
CARSTEN NIEBUHR

AND THE

Danish Expedition

TO

ARABIA



Written by

PAUL G. CHAMBERLAIN



On a winter evening 250 years ago, a lone horseman rode through the cobbled streets of Copenhagen toward the Royal Palace. Sunburnt and gaunt, Carsten Niebuhr was the only survivor of the Royal Danish Expedition to Arabia that had departed the city seven years earlier in 1761.

To understand how a boy born to a German farm family in 1733 came to be part of one of his century's most ambitious and consequential scientific expeditions, we need to look at history. Niebuhr grew up on the threshold of the Age of Enlightenment, that period of growth in Western intellectual development that did so much to shape Europe's understandings of the rest of the world—including the lands, peoples and cultures to its east, "the Orient." Unlike many in the West who viewed the Orient judgmentally, Niebuhr adopted a more empathic attitude toward people and places he encountered over nearly six years of travels. As he wrote in his diary, "[c]ultures are not good or bad—they are just different."

If it had not been for the king of Denmark, however, the expedition to Arabia might have never occurred. Like other learned Europeans of his time, King Frederick V was painfully aware of how little was actually known about the East: Other than the Bible and a few tales of European travelers, the Arabian Peninsula was still almost entirely a *terra incognita*. The king proposed to change that. Enthralled by the intellectual achievements of Prussia's Frederick the Great, Frederick V eagerly responded to an expeditionary proposal put to him by Johann David Michaelis, distinguished theologian and orientalist of the University of Göttingen in central Germany.

Michaelis outlined five goals that won the king's favor. First, the expedition was to explore the geography of Arabia; second, it would record the plants and animals en route; third, it was to describe the habits, customs and architecture of the people; fourth, it would seek to learn about diseases and remedies peculiar to the region; and finally, it was to collect as many antique books and manuscripts as possible.

Michaelis also posed a list of specific questions. He wanted to know, for example, if tides could have parted the Red Sea; whether a land bridge had once linked the Horn of Africa with Arabia; and if stars really shone more brightly in Europe than in the tropics. The project was truly scientific in scope, and in keeping with the spirit of the Age, the king requested that the expedition be conducted with "an open-mindedness



Frederick V

towards everything that was new, along with a respect for other ways of seeing."

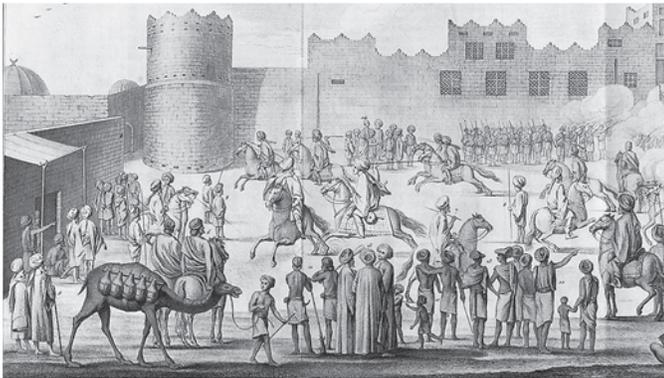
Selecting candidates for this project was no easy task. Michaelis eventually chose six men for the expedition. The linguistic expert was Friedrich Christian von Haven of Denmark; the biologist was Peter Forsskål of Sweden, a student of Carl Linnaeus, "the father of taxonomy"; the artist was George Wilhelm Baurenfeind, a German; the physician was Christian Carl Kramer of Denmark; Lars Berggren, also from Sweden, was the servant; as cartographer and—most importantly—treasurer, he named Carsten Niebuhr, a military surveyor who held the rank of lieutenant.

For the first stage of their journey to Constantinople, the expedition was given the man-o'-war *Greenland*, which departed Copenhagen on January 4, 1761, with all aboard but von Haven, who was still in Europe and had arranged to embark in Marseilles. It took four attempts for the ship to break out of the harbor's ice into the North Sea. To compound their

Schooled in mathematics, cartography and surveying, Carsten Niebuhr was 28 years old when King Frederick V of Denmark sent him and four fellow experts to Arabia. Frederick died the year before Niebuhr's return, after which Niebuhr organized and published the expedition's voluminous materials while also serving as a postal clerk.



After receiving permission from Ottoman authorities in Constantinople to travel to Arabia, the six-man crew landed in Alexandria, left. After a year in Egypt, the crew traveled to Jiddah and south for nearly a year in Yemen, where the expedition's artist, George Wilhelm Baurenfeind, sketched a court scene, lower left. By late 1763, when Niebuhr reached Bombay (now Mumbai), above, four crew members had perished.



immediately set about collecting scientific evidence. Biologist Forsskål recorded some 120 species of plants. He also studied the caravans unloading their wares in the busy markets: cotton, silk, pearls, emeralds and diamonds came from Makkah; and dyes, ivory, parrots, ostrich feathers and slaves, he noted, came in from Sudan.

Niebuhr mapped Cairo and explored its elaborate irrigation system. In addition, he studied clothing, customs, musical instruments and games, noting in his diary that “[i]f the Mahometans [sic] show any degree of passion for any one game, it is for chess, at which they spend, sometimes, whole days without interruption.” The Pyramids particularly fascinated Niebuhr. There, he not only used his surveyor’s octant to calculate the height of the Great Pyramid with great accuracy, he also recorded the hieroglyphs, particularly those glyphs that appeared repeatedly, hoping “[t]his fact may be of some use in helping to [understand] the meaning which they were intended to convey.” He also mapped dozens of villages along the Nile Delta.

early difficulties, the explorers had set off in the middle of the Seven Years’ War, and England’s Royal Navy waylaid the ship in the Mediterranean in search of contraband. While on board, Niebuhr was stricken by dysentery.

Seven months later the expedition debarked on the north-eastern Aegean island of Tenedos. From there, the members took a small Turkish boat to the mainland and on July 30 entered Constantinople. In the Ottoman capital they were greeted by turbans, veils and the shady balconies of the East. There they began their work, collecting specimens and purchasing books and manuscripts in the backstreets of the city. Most importantly, they received permission from the Ottoman authorities to continue their voyage toward Arabia. A few weeks later they sailed south for Alexandria.

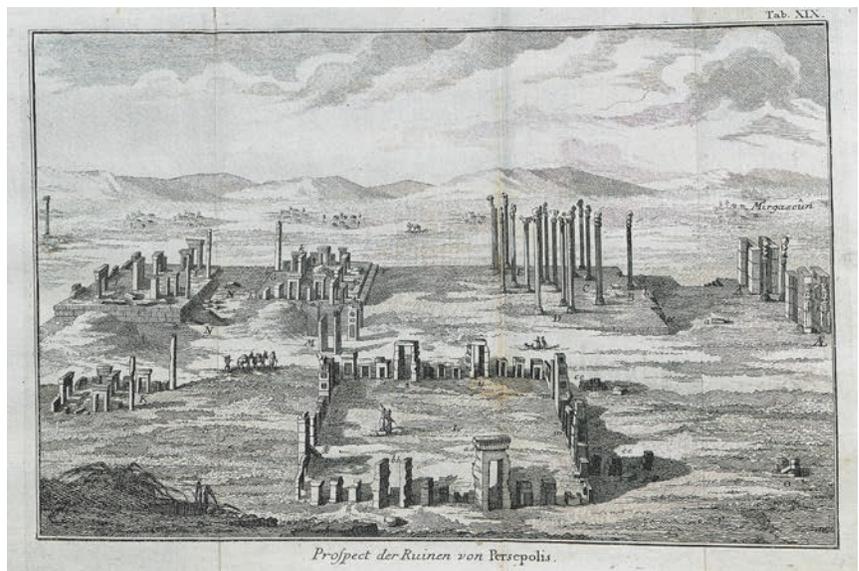
Proving his mettle as a resourceful individual with an appetite for hard work, the young German surveyor’s qualities would soon be put to harder tests.

According to Niebuhr’s diary entries, the expedition spent a year in Egypt.

After a brief stay on the Mediterranean coast they traveled inland to Cairo, where they found comfortable lodgings in the French Quarter. Niebuhr’s son Barthold Georg, a diplomat and historian who wrote an appendix to Michaelis’s memoirs, explained that although not having traveled “any higher up than Cairo,” the crew

The following year the expedition made its way east to

After Baurenfeind’s death, Niebuhr himself took on the task of composing pictorial records along his route, which in 1765 took him to the ruins of Persepolis.



Suez, where its real desert journey began. Now attired in Arab clothing, and outfitted with tents, beds, pots, flour, rice biscuits, butter, coffee beans and their array of scientific instruments, the team arrived at the small town on August 31, 1762. While Forsskål remained in Suez with his companions to study Red Sea tides, marine life and boatbuilding techniques, von Haven journeyed south to the Sinai Peninsula's mountains, in particular to Jebel el-Mokateb ("Mountain of Inscriptions"), to examine its epigraphy. The artist Baurenfeind was to accompany him, but he had fallen ill, so Niebuhr had to go in his place.

Niebuhr was not happy. Part of the problem was that von Haven, the eminent Danish philologist, was condescending not only to Niebuhr—the low-born farm boy—but also to everyone else on the expedition. His ill treatment of the group's Arab guides made matters even worse. Niebuhr, by contrast, proved

sometimes behind me on my camel. From him I received honest and distinct answers."

After traveling through the desert for five days, von Haven and Niebuhr reached Jebel el-Mokateb, known today as Serabit el-Khadim ("Heights of the Servant"), crowned with a small temple dedicated to the goddess Hathor. Long ago, Egyptians had smelted copper and mined turquoise there, but the primary task of the Danish expedition was to determine if there were any inscriptions in Hebrew that might link the mountain to Moses. But all they found were inscrutable hiero-

glyphs. Von Haven showed little interest and left Niebuhr to copy them.

The pair spent the next few days on Jebel Musa (Mount Sinai; literally "Mount Moses"). At its foot lay St. Catherine's

I fought to gain the confidence and friendship of one of the guides From him I received honest and distinct answers.

—Niebuhr

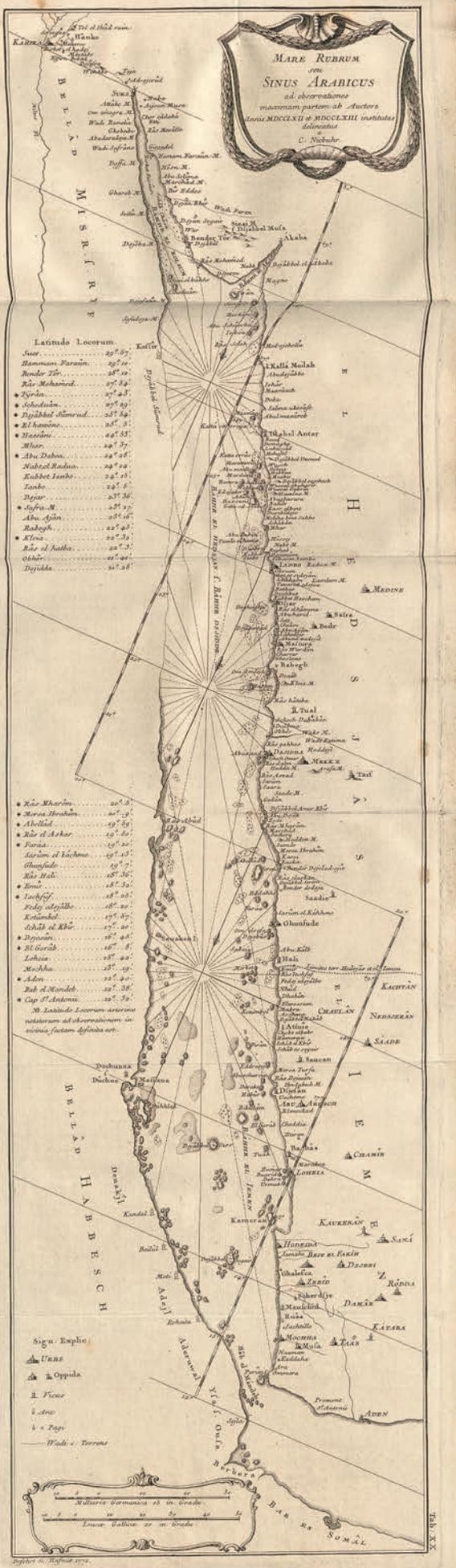
more accommodating toward his colleagues, and he quickly learned how to interact as an equal with the Arabs, confessing, "I fought to gain the confidence and friendship of one of the [guides], by making him some presents, and causing him to ride

This view of Aleppo dates to the 18th century and corresponds roughly with the map of the city Niebuhr drew, which appears on page 23.



ROYAL DANISH Expedition to Arabia 1761–1767





As the expedition's cartographer, Niebuhr spent much of the time during the voyage down the Red Sea meticulously surveying the coast with a compass, a magnifying glass, a thermometer and an octant.

Monastery, whose library von Haven looked forward to examining. The monks, however, refused to recognize his letter of introduction from Constantinople. The vast collection of ancient manuscripts, including the *Codex Sinaiticus* (one of the oldest Bibles in the world), could not be studied. It was a devastating humiliation for von Haven, but Niebuhr once again set to work: He sketched the monastery, scaled the mountain and diligently copied its inscriptions. On his return journey to Suez, Niebuhr even recorded a mirage, noting in his diary “how greatly objects are magnified, when seen through mist.”

On September 25, 1762, they rejoined the rest of the group in Suez. It must have been a relief for Niebuhr. They sent home Forsskål's specimens, Baurenfeind's drawings and Niebuhr's maps, and then purchased berths on a ship sailing down the Red Sea coast and across the mouth of the Gulf of Aqaba to Jiddah, a three-week journey. A few days into the voyage a curious event occurred: The expedition predicted an eclipse. Arabs who witnessed this, many of them pilgrims on their way to Makkah, were so impressed that they begged the scientists to also cure their chronic ailments, believing that the foreigners possessed magic powers. The expedition spent six weeks in Jiddah. Niebuhr mapped the town, and Forsskål set to work collecting seeds. But there was little to interest von Haven, who was exhibiting signs of a serious illness.

On December 29, 1762, the crew disembarked at the Yemeni port of al-Luhayyah. The Danish explorers had finally reached the country that was, to them, a mystery, and which they hoped would be the highlight of their journey—Arabia Felix. Initial impressions were indeed felicitous: the governor generously offered to pay for their journey from Jiddah; Berggren cured the amir's horse; and, while Niebuhr mapped the town, Forsskål collected hundreds of botanical specimens and recorded details of the country's history, trade, currency and legal system.

In the months that followed, the expedition traveled throughout western Yemen. On February 25, 1763, they arrived in Bayt al-Faqih, four days from al-Luhayyah; there the expedition set up base, and each member carried out his own explorations. In the months that followed, Niebuhr trekked solo to the nearby coastal villages of Chalefca, al-Hudayah, Zabid and Kahme. In late March, Forsskål accompanied Niebuhr on a trip to Ta'iz, via Djobla.

Upon their return, Niebuhr once again became feverish, and von Haven's condition grew serious. The expedition together decided to move south along the coast to Mokha before heading inland toward the capital, Sana'a. It proved to be a challenging journey. The coast was hot and humid, and as the men moved deeper inland, they encountered scorching heat. Along the way, the monsoon arrived, and to escape the torrential rains they slept on the mud floors of coffee huts.

It was too much for von Haven. Although Michaelis considered him a “diligent pupil,” he was, as Barthold (Niebuhr's son) later described him, “lazy by nature” and prone to despair and revolts that weakened him physically. “It seemed to me,” wrote Michaelis, “that his physical constitution would not sustain the fatigues and hardships of such a journey.” The linguist succumbed to his fever in Mokha on May 25, 1763. A few weeks later, en route to Sana'a, Forsskål suffered a similar fate in Jerim. Barthold attributed Forsskål's demise to “a bilious disorder ... partly augmented by his capriciousness.” Niebuhr, convinced the biologist was stricken with a bout of dysentery, was shaken by his death, and he described Forsskål as a brilliant scientist, extolling his fluency in Arabic: “We all greatly mourned Herr Forsskål.... He devoted himself with tremendous industry to our expedition, the successful pursuance of which lay very close to his heart.” Despair began to overcome Niebuhr. “This is the only period in all his travels,” wrote his son, “when he gave way to melancholy and sunk under it.”

Now reduced to four—Niebuhr, Kramer, Baurenfeind and Berggren—the

❖ *Niebuhr's maps proved so accurate that a century later English explorer Gifford Palgrave dedicated his book to Niebuhr.*

expedition continued to push deeper into the Yemeni interior. As they reached the mountains, they found relief from the heat, and when they at last rode into Sana'a on July 16, 1763, they were surprised to discover running water and shady streets—it was paradise. They secured a comfortable residence in one of the town's picturesque buildings and were given a private audience with His Royal Highness the Imam, who sat on cushions beneath an arched roof, surrounded by fountains. He was astonished when the expedition displayed its scientific equipment, which included Niebuhr's prized octant, a compass, a magnifying glass and a thermometer. Niebuhr wasted no time in mapping the town, and he carefully recorded details of its trade with Turkey, Persia and India.

Their sojourn in Sana'a, however, was brief. A nagging fear of disease prompted them to depart back to Mokha, where they planned on sailing to the Danish mission in Bombay (now Mumbai)—their travels in Arabia at last complete. Unfortunately, their timing was poor. As summer temperatures soared

above 40 degrees Celsius, the journey across Tihamah (a coastal area of the Red Sea so named for its heat), was a brutal one. By the time they boarded an English ship for India on August 21, 1763, the only man left who could stand was Niebuhr.

On the voyage to Bombay, Niebuhr gradually recovered strength. He continued to take sightings with his octant, and he pondered several of the questions posed by Michaelis in his original instructions to the expedition. While on board he also spent time putting the finishing touches to his maps of Yemen, which proved to be so accurate that a century later the English explorer Gifford Palgrave dedicated his book to Niebuhr, praising the German surveyor as “one who first opened up Arabia for Europe.”

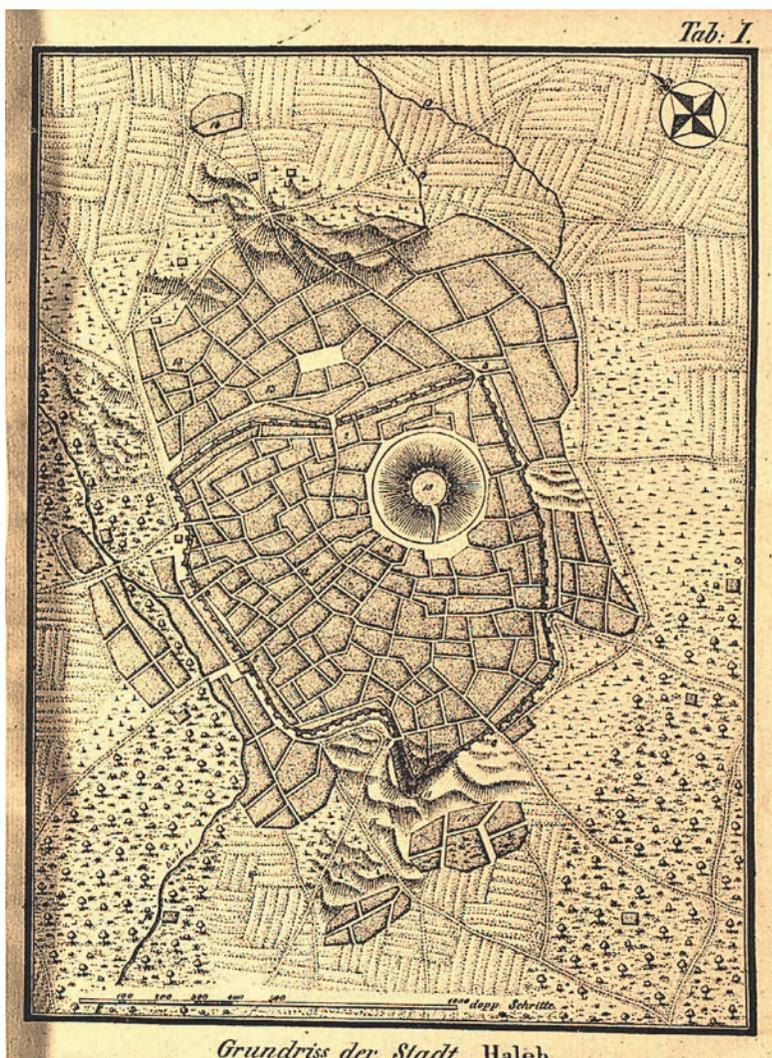
Unfortunately, his companions only grew weaker. Barthold described how all were “attacked by fever of this climate”—malaria. Baurenfeind, the German artist, died eight days into the voyage. Berggren, the Swedish servant, passed away the next day. Both were buried at sea. In his diary, Niebuhr recalled the irony that *Arabia Felix* meant “Happy Arabia,” but not for his expedition. “Our diseases were our own fault,” Niebuhr reflected, and “[w]hile my companions yet lived, I was myself several times very ill because like them I chose to live in the European manner.” This prompted Niebuhr to make changes.

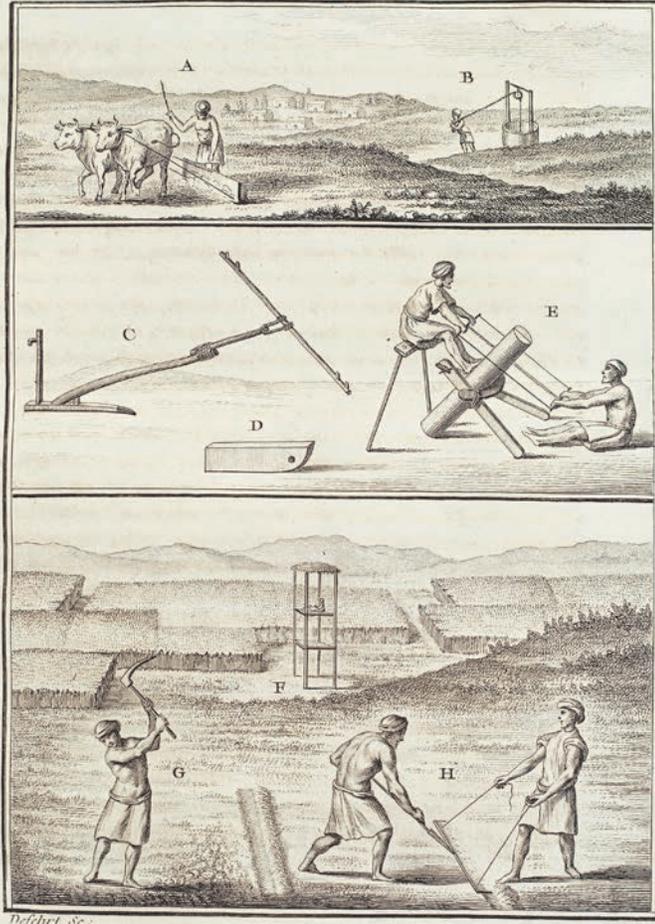
Niebuhr arrived in Bombay with physician Kramer on September 11. Though still suffering from his own illness, Kramer had exhorted Niebuhr to adhere to what Barthold described as a “strict regimen of only bread, rice and tea,” abstaining from meat and other heavy foods. Niebuhr's self-discipline and subsequent return to full strength astonished the doctor, who spent his last days in Bombay, before passing away soon after his arrival.

Yet Niebuhr was not entirely alone. For the first time since leaving Cairo he found himself in the company of Europeans. Niebuhr took off his Arab attire and learned the English language. He befriended English officers, benefited from their hospitality and gained access to their “engraved charts of the Indian seas ... roads and harbours, of the south-eastern coast of Arabia.” Characteristically, the surveyor also set to work mapping Bombay for the Danish crown and studying its history and trade. He commented in his diary on its alphabet, as well as the calendar, the caste system and the Parsees, demonstrating once again the breadth of his interests and the keenness of his observational skills.

A year later, after witnessing the colorful festivities 250 kilometers north at Surat, including its enormous elephants, he left Bombay for Oman. He was accompanied by another Danish servant whom he had chanced upon in the city.

Niebuhr's bird's-eye view of Aleppo shows the walled city, with its citadel toward the eastern side, surrounded by residential, cultivated and grazing lands, as well as hills, rivers and roads.

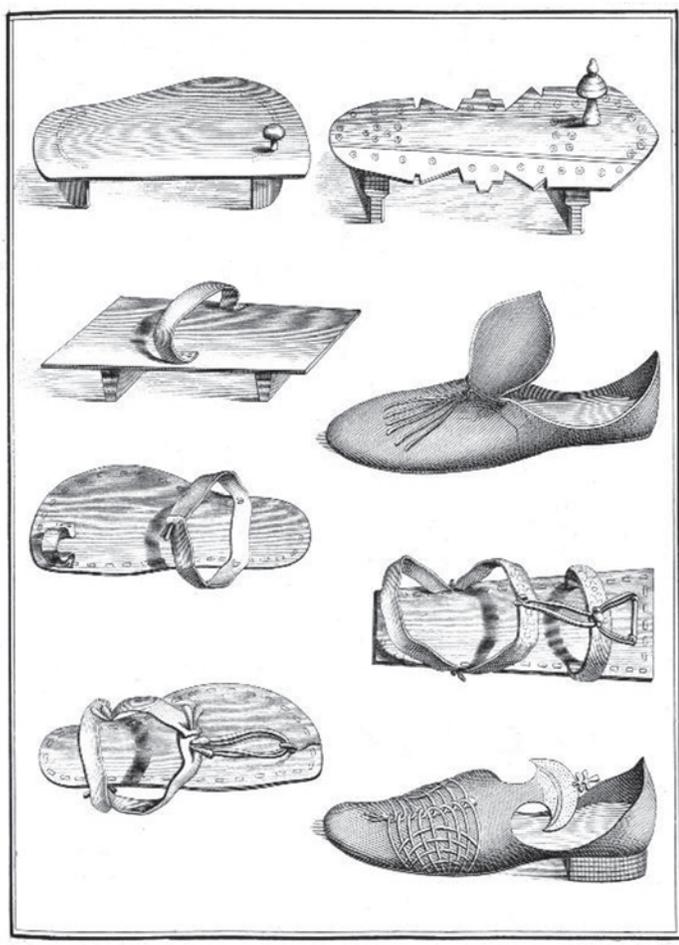




Watching the porpoises darting across the azure waters of the Arabian Sea along the southeastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula, Niebuhr must have pondered the wisdom of continuing his journey alone, but his loyalty to the Danish crown and the completion of the expedition was never in jeopardy. Feeling much better after experimenting with his diet of rice, water and fruit, Niebuhr eagerly mapped Muscat, Oman's capital, and documented the pearling activities in Bahrain along the peninsula's western coast, before disembarking in Persia on February 4, 1765.

The ruins of Persepolis, Persia's ancient summer capital, were in some ways the highlight of Niebuhr's journey. Although alone, he felt both physically fit and safe. The cooler temperatures were a welcome relief, and his only complaint was that his European clothing was uncomfortable. He spent 24 days in the ruins of the Achaemenid city, mapping the site, sketching stone figures and copying its inscriptions. Some people there even asked him to write on paper, believing it would protect them from illness if they would press the words against their body. Ironically, copying the cuneiform tablets in the harsh sunlight damaged Niebuhr's eyes, and he had to rest. But the inscriptions he sent back to Denmark

In 1772 Niebuhr published *Beschreibung von Arabien (Descriptions of Arabia)*, which, with other publications, gave historical value to the Royal Danish Expedition to Arabia. *Left*: Scenes depict agricultural techniques for sowing fruits and grains such as lentils and barley. *Left, lower*: A compilation of shoes, drawn up by Baurenfeind and included in Niebuhr's journal, exemplifies the kind of details of daily life the expedition reported. *Lower*: Epigraphy of one of two sepulchral stones seen by the crew in the village of Chalefa in Yemen.



❖ Stating that “the true observer is always a person who has lost his own identity,” Niebuhr for a time changed his name to Abdullah.

were priceless. Within a few years European scholars had deciphered most of the Babylonian, Elamite and Old Persian scripts. A child of the early Enlightenment, his work proved to be an important catalyst.

Niebuhr’s journey was still not over, however. Several weeks after leaving Persepolis, a brief reference to his whereabouts surfaced in Europe in the French *Gazette d’Utrecht*, which reported that the “Danish [sic] scholar ... who plans to travel on to Baghdad ... and Aleppo ... is [now] the only survivor [of the Danish expedition].” But from this moment on Niebuhr decided to travel incognito. “He lived and talked and ate as if he were an Arab among Arabs ... [and] avoided everything that might draw attention to his presence,” wrote Thorkild Hansen in his 1962 biographical novel, *Arabia Felix: The Danish Expedition 1761–1767*. Niebuhr once again adopted Arab attire, and he ate a diet of rice, sun-dried meat, prunes, apricots, coffee beans and water laced with brandy (to purify it). He replaced his Danish servant with a Muslim guide. He even changed his name to Abdullah, believing that “the true observer is always a person who has lost his own identity.”

Niebuhr sailed up the Tigris on a riverboat, stopping at Basra and staying in Baghdad before setting off for Aleppo via Mosul. He was particularly impressed with Baghdad, admiring its libraries, observatories and splendid quays. Farther upstream he approached the ruins of Nineveh, the ancient capital of the Assyrians, and he encountered the Yazidis, a religious sect that worshiped the Peacock Angel. Niebuhr diligently mapped the small towns and villages all along the river, and he continued to record vivid experiences in his diary. On June 6, 1766, after visiting the Crusader city of Urfa, Niebuhr rode—triumphantly—into Aleppo.

He spent the next two weeks in Syria. After changing back into European attire, Niebuhr devoted most of his time to investigating the Druze. On June 24, 1766, he decided to leave for Antioch (now Antakya, Turkey), 100 kilometers west. He went via Cyprus, where he examined rock inscriptions Michaelis suspected to be of Phoenician origin but that proved to be Armenian. Niebuhr then sailed back to the Levant where he stopped briefly in Jerusalem to map the city and make a sketch from the Mount of Olives. After a short detour to Bethlehem, Niebuhr set off for Damascus. From there he traveled north along the coast via Sidon to Latakia before returning to Aleppo. Finally, on November 20, 1766, he began his long journey home.

The ride across Anatolia proved a harrowing ordeal with heavy snow, which caused his camel to slip on the icy mountain roads. It took the caravan four months to reach Constantinople. After a few weeks of rest, he continued into Europe through plague-ridden Bucharest, and then he made his way across Central Europe through Warsaw, Breslau and Hanover. It was not until November 20, 1767, that he rode into Copenhagen.

At first, his solo arrival on horseback was not cause for celebration: The city had almost completely forgotten about the expedition to Arabia. In the days that followed, however, Lieutenant Niebuhr was invited to the Royal Court and promoted to captain. Over the next few years he compiled an exhaustive account of the expedition’s work and then, to everybody’s surprise, Niebuhr married and took a post as clerk in Dithmarschen, a remote little district less than 60 kilometers from where he was born, along the shore of the North Sea at the mouth of the Elbe in today’s northern Germany.

Nevertheless, his achievements were gradually recognized more widely. In 1801 the farm boy—who had never even mastered High German—was honored in Paris as a corresponding Fellow of the French Academy. Although he continued to enjoy good health, his “curious cold” never fully disappeared, and toward the end of his life Niebuhr’s eyesight began to fail. He died a few days before the Battle of Waterloo, aged 82, on April 26, 1815. On that day, the sole survivor of Europe’s first truly scientific expedition to the Arabian Peninsula, the man who had conducted himself with “an open-mindedness towards everything that was new, along with a respect for other ways of seeing,” took his well-deserved place in history. 🌐

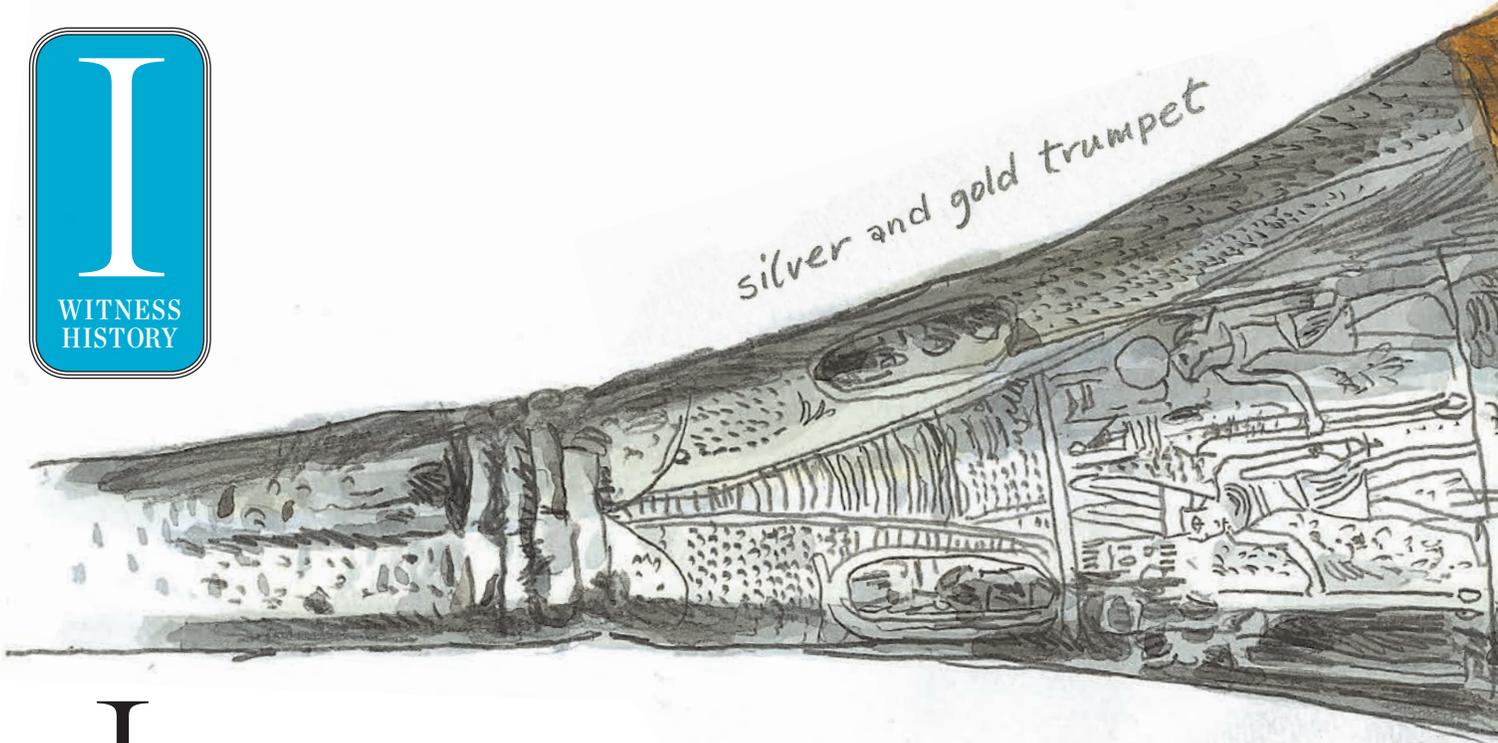
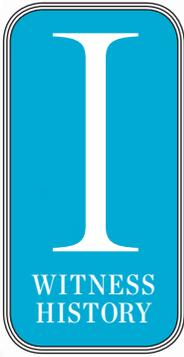


In Meldorf, Germany, where Niebuhr died in 1815 at age 82, a bust by Hamburg-based artist Manfred Sihle-Wissel commemorates the explorer and his legacy of knowledge.



Paul G. Chamberlain, Ph.D., is a historical geographer who grew up in Kuwait, and he has traveled extensively throughout the Middle East, researching, writing and lecturing about the region. He teaches in the School of Continuing Studies at the University of Victoria in Canada, specializing in history, comparative religion, and current events in the Arab world.

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Written by FRANK L. HOLT | Illustrated by NORMAN MACDONALD

Let me give you some sound advice. We all live in a world of noise. Mine echoed with the grunts of crocodiles, the tramp of cattle, the banter of workmen and the wails of mourners. Yours endures the rumble of traffic, the pounding of jackhammers, the blare of televisions and the thump-thump-thumps escaping alike from nearby headphones and helicopters. In all this chaos and cacophony, your ears struggle to identify the sounds that matter: Is that *my* car backfiring? Are those crocs near *my* feet? Is there an aircraft landing on me, or is that just the heavy bass of someone's playlist? You need help, and that's where I come in. At least I did, long ago.

Called a *sheneb* in the language of the pharaohs, I am a royal trumpet. I was invented to cut through useless noise and let it be known that something important should be heeded. In full-throated blare, I announced to his people the god-king's arrival on state occasions; I summoned worshipers to religious observances; I even commanded armies on the battlefield. Whereas your modern trumpets *play*, we sheneb worked for our livings. Our mission was never to make

Painting on one side of a trunk
in Tutankhamun's tomb





idle toes tap, but to bring order to the world around pharaoh. We were the ultimate communication technology of our day—megaphones, microphones and mass media all in one.

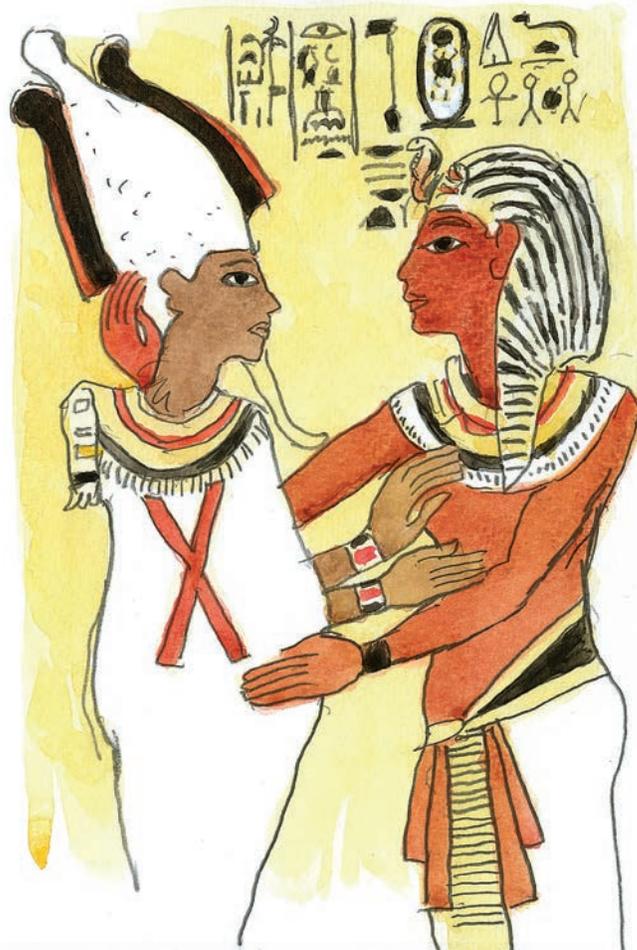
Our usefulness made us the mainstays of war and religion throughout the Middle East. My ancestors spread across North Africa and then into Spain and far beyond. In many places, the sheneb-like *nafir* still trumpets during Ramadan, and some say your English word “fanfare” actually derives from *al-nafir*. Many diverse believers expect us to make the final sounds of this world on Judgment Day. This expectation reminds me of the Egyptian legend that it was Osiris, lord and judge of the underworld, who invented the very first sheneb.

Sadly, only two of my family members survive from the long age of the pharaohs. Both of us were buried together in the legendary tomb of Tutankhamun. For years, my brother and I had given voice to the boy-king’s every command. Our different pitches allowed the right people to respond appropriately to our distinct calls, much as you program your cell phones with personal ringtones. Do not doubt, however, that I commanded the greater

respect, as established by my fancier uniform. I, glistening in silver and gold, am the general; my little brother is my adjutant. I stand 58.2 centimeters tall, whereas he is shorter and made of copper alloy. My shape resembles, quite deliberately, a tall lotus in bloom. In fact, the unmistakable design of *Nymphae caerulea Savigny* has been pressed indelibly into my bell. There, too, a pair of my pharaoh’s many names may be read, recorded in two sets of cartouches that spell out *Nebkheperuretutankhamun*, followed by one of his royal titles. These hieroglyphs have been oriented so as always to be read from the vantage point of the trumpeter, meaning that no matter who might sound me on his behalf, I am the voice of Tut himself.

As a sheneb, I lack the separate, cupped mouthpiece found on modern trumpets, nor do I have those three valves to vary my length and, thereby, my pitch. This means that I cannot hum a tune, not even something as simple as a bugle’s “Taps” or “Reveille.” My natural voice is limited to a single harsh note (Greek writer Plutarch later likened me to “a braying ass”), but in my day a sheneb’s bold intonation could not be ignored: “Heed Pharaoh, Lord of the two lands,” say I! My voice carried across the Nile valley, resonated with conviction and communicated in limited pitch, but with long or staccato bursts, rather like your simple Morse code.

Producing this sound was hard on the trumpeter. The trumpeter gripped me tightly by the throat, usually with



Tutankhamun embraces and is embraced by Osiris, ruler of the underworld, a scene from the north wall of the burial chamber

both hands, and with a firm kiss issued the requisite number of blasts to convey pharaoh’s bidding. This took skill and stamina; in fact, the Greeks later made trumpeting an Olympic sport.

Because I needed to be with Tut wherever he traveled, in peace and in war, I required a wooden insert to protect me from dents and other damage. This body double, called a core or stopper, preserved my shape during the busy nine years of my pharaoh’s reign, and for the 33 centuries since. Painted red, blue and green to appear also as a lotus, this core is removed only when I am called upon to speak

for pharaoh. In some Egyptian artwork, the trumpeter can be seen cradling the stopper under his arm while blowing the horn itself. Given my long tubular construction, I am ironically a fragile thing of power—as one of your bumbling modern musicians can personally attest. You will soon learn that after what he did to me, I am lucky to be alive.

Many of you would shudder at all I have seen and signaled. Imagine pharaoh’s palace, filled with people,

Imagine pharaoh’s palace, filled with people, all answering to my every call.



all answering to my every call. Picture grand processions marshaling under my orders. Contemplate the thunderous ranks of the god-king's army as it wheeled at my whim. I sounded off at the center of it all, at a time when Egypt was the envy of the world. With me at his side, Tutankhamun restored to pre-eminence the ancestral gods of the Nile after the experiment of his predecessor Akhenaten, who had embraced monotheism. Egypt's priests and generals found fresh hope in the reign of the boy-pharaoh whose potent voice I was. All seemed well.

Then, in a year now called 1323 BCE, I fell silent alongside my pharaoh. No one knows to this day exactly what illness or injury transformed Tut from living Horus to resurrected Osiris. The news that winter came as a terrible shock, since he had been idolized as the very image of youthful vitality in spite of his limp. Tutankhamun stood 1.7 meters tall, less than three times my own height, but he towered in the minds of his people. He smiled with unusually healthy teeth (a sheneb notices), and he enjoyed an adventurous if abbreviated life. Tut had a great fondness for chariots, and it is still rumored that a violent crash may have injured

Carter cleans the hardened unguents from the coffin of Tutankhamun.



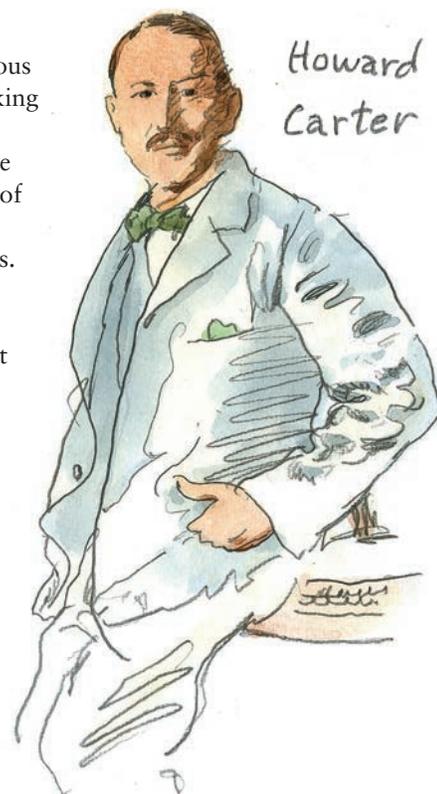
his left thigh and contributed to his death.

No royal tomb was ready to receive him so young, thus attendants piled into a borrowed grave the treasures of this fallen teenager: six of his favorite chariots, eight fine shields, four swords and daggers, 50 bows and other weaponry. They also stacked boxes, beds and model boats. Clothing and cosmetics vied for space next to jewelry and jugs of wine. Even the two tiny mummies of Tut's stillborn children were stowed inside the tomb. I, along with my brother, joined pharaoh in these cramped quarters—he in the antechamber, but I more prestigiously in the burial chamber, my mouth-piece oriented toward Tut.

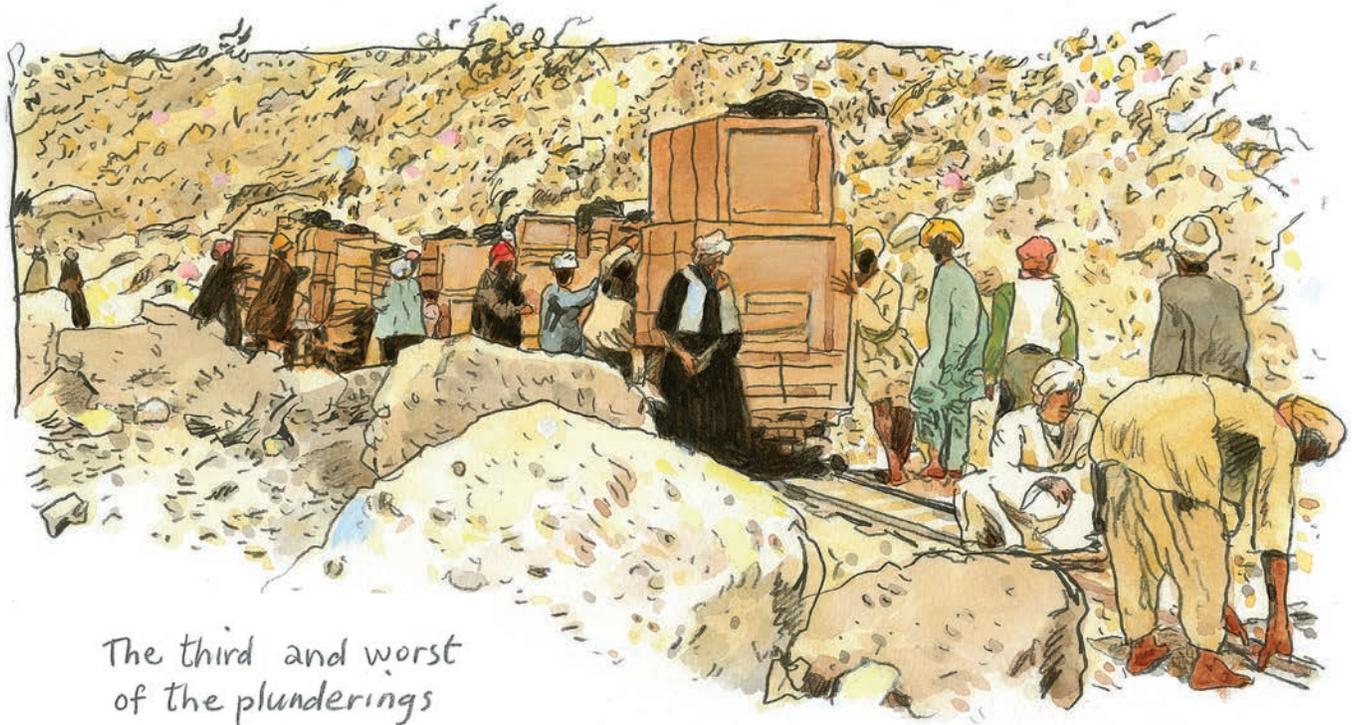
Before taking my place beside the royal sarcophagus, I let skilled artists attire me for the occasion. They added to my gilded bell a design showing the triad of Egyptian deities: Amun-Ra, Ptah, and Ra-Horakhty. These particular gods embodied all the worthies of the vast Egyptian pantheon, perhaps as a final repudiation of Akhenaten's heresy. They also represented three divisions of pharaoh's army. Thus, the decoration that altered me from active sheneb to funerary offering had the added benefit of pleasing both the priests and the generals of Tutankhamun's entourage. This must have been the brilliant idea of old Aye, who buried my pharaoh and soon became the next god-king of Egypt.

Do not imagine, in your modern way, that in that dark abyss I despaired. Along the Nile, the buried stay busy. Tut the eternal teenager lived on; I could hear his bird-like *ba* (soul/personality) come and go as it pleased, its flight unhindered by the eight meters of rock above us. Sometimes, I sensed tremors as workmen nearby chiseled out more tombs, followed by the faint trudge of feet as funeral followed funeral in the Valley of the Kings. I now know that a tomb begun by Ramses v crossed directly over Tut's and continued 116 meters into the rock, angling over the tomb of Horemheb (whom I knew as one of Tut's generals) and eventually crashing into the tunnels of yet another grave! It was like a gigantic ant farm.

Yet, not every sound was welcomed. Three times impious tomb robbers disturbed the king and me. The first came early in Tut's afterlife. Brutes broke through the outer doorways of the tomb and rifled through the pharaoh's personal effects. Their unclean hands pawed at Tut's jewelry, perfumes, oils, linens and even the chest that contained my copper brother in the antechamber. Thankfully, local authorities swooped in and restored order to the violated sepulcher. The heavy doors were resealed, only to be breached a short time later by more determined thieves. They prowled the entire tomb, passing right



Howard Carter



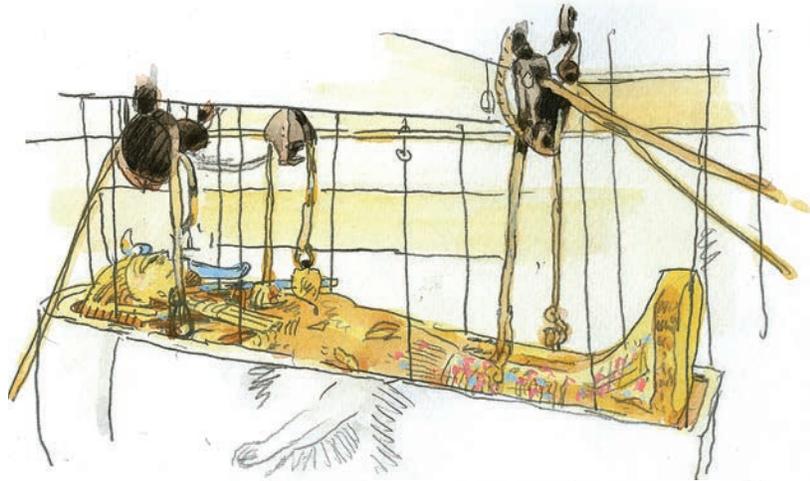
The third and worst of the plunderings

by me on their way to the so-called treasury.

Much was taken, but so were some of the robbers. I suppose these captives were tortured and then impaled according to custom. A great deal is known about the tomb robbers of ancient Thebes thanks to the survival of their case files. Papyrus records immortalize their misdeeds. I am ashamed to say that a sheneb player named Perpethewemōpe was among the worst of these thieves. He dared supplement his wages by plunder and even falsely accused a fellow trumpeter named Amenkhau, with whom he had a grudge.

In Tutankhamun's tomb the mess was heartbreaking. The royal scribe Djehutymose inventoried the disheveled tomb and hastily repacked its contents, leaving me beside the king's burial shrine, wrapped in reeds beneath a beautiful alabaster lamp. There I lay contented until the third—and worst—of the plunderings.

For a very long time the funerals had ceased, but then the digging began again. I noted the noise of tramping feet above and wondered



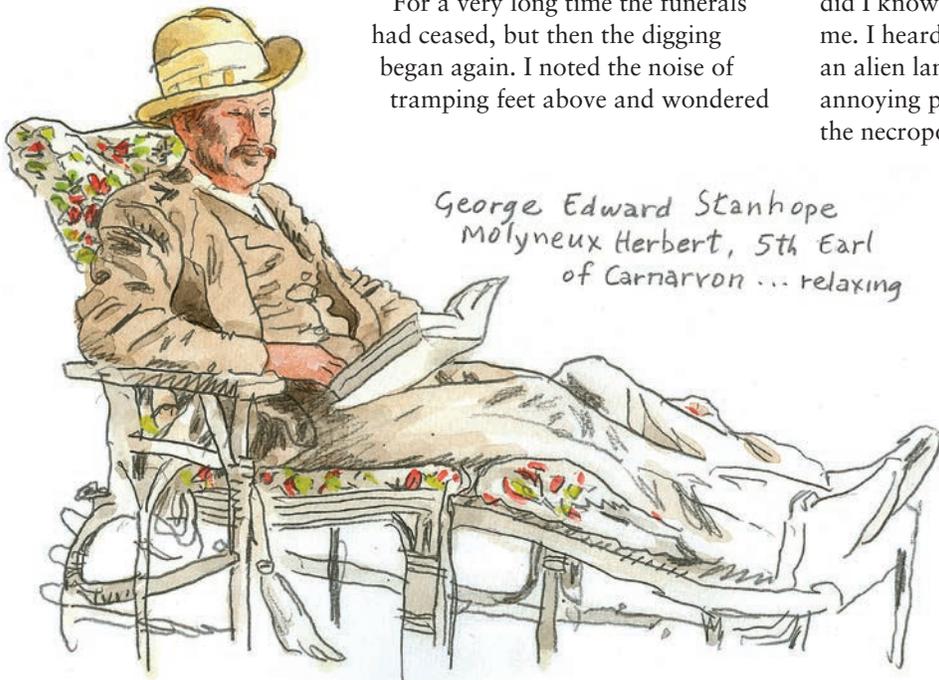
removing the coffin

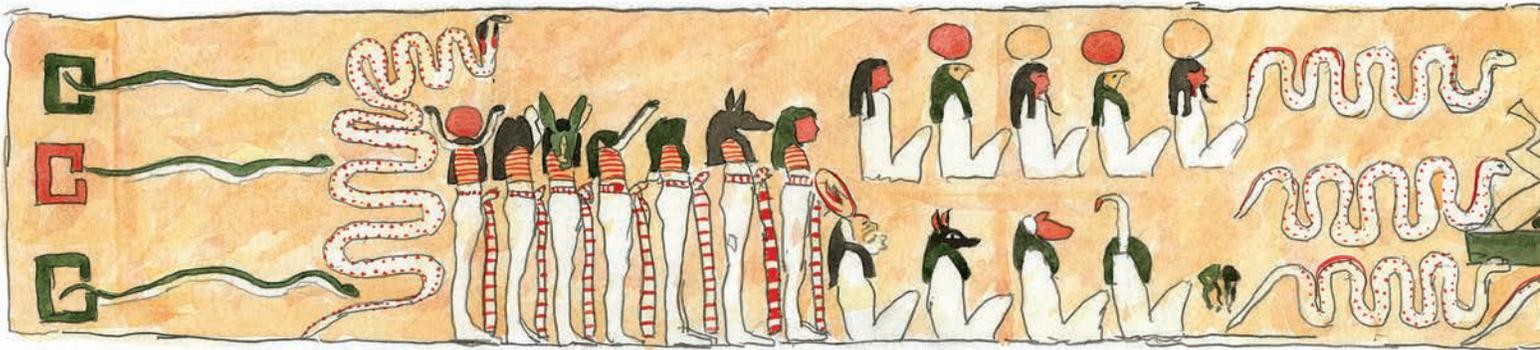
what pharaohs now were seeking their rest. Little

did I know that a new kind of grave robber was looking for me. I heard their leader long before I saw him. He spoke an alien language, and he directed his band of thieves with annoying patience, as though he had no concern at all for the necropolis police. He called himself "Howard Carter,"

"Englishman" and "archeologist." According to his strange calendar, his gang found the first hidden steps leading down to Tutankhamun's tomb on November 4, 1922. I could hear their scabbling and their excited chatter, and then it suddenly stopped. For some reason, the men reburied the entrance they had found. I learned later that the looters had decided to wait for the arrival of Howard Carter's overlord, a rich man with almost as many names and titles as Pharaoh: "George Edward Stanhope Molyneux Herbert, fifth Earl of Carnarvon." When he and his daughter Evelyn arrived, the shoveling began again in earnest. A few days later, I heard someone bang a hole through the antechamber door;

George Edward Stanhope Molyneux Herbert, 5th Earl of Carnarvon ... relaxing





the next day, the robbers entered. From the other side of the sealed passageway to the burial chamber, I could hear them.

Knowing something of tomb robbery, I was not surprised by what transpired next. Late one night, three of the band—Carter, Carnarvon and Lady Evelyn—tunneled into the burial chamber looking for the body of Pharaoh. I bristled as they stepped past me, taking note of their faces in the pale but painful flicker of their candles. Light of any kind had long been banished from my world. I wanted to sound an alarm but could not myself remove the protective core inside my throat. Muted, I watched the robbers creep away. They painstakingly concealed the breach they had made in the door as if to deceive the necropolis police. Many months would pass before two of them came back; the third had apparently died in the meantime from the infected bite of an insect, and his demise was immediately blamed on Tut, just as I would eventually be accused of killing Howard Carter—along with 60 million other of his fellow humans.

On February 16, 1923, Carter and his crew “officially” opened the burial chamber in the presence of a small audience seated comfortably in the antechamber. Few of these spectators knew anything about the secret intrusion made some weeks earlier, so the robbers feigned surprise at everything they found, including me. I was scooped from the floor and studied, as recorded in Carter’s notes. I was given an unpleasant cleansing in ammonia and water; my wooden core was treated with something called celluloid. In a letter he later wrote, Carter let slip another of his little secrets involving me: “Though I am no expert with such musical instruments, I managed to get a good blast out of it

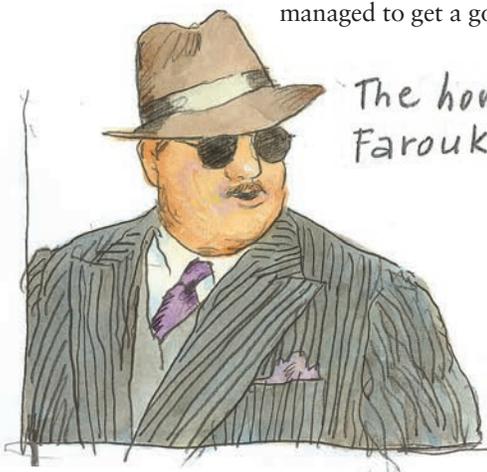
The one loud note he produced was, on your Western musical scale, a C.

which broke the silence of the Valley.” Yet the alarm I finally sounded (in Tut’s name, you recall) brought no one—no necropolis police, no royal troops, no one at all. Where had they all gone? Incensed at such insubordination, I soon was posted to the Egyptian Museum at Cairo, 600 kilometers away from the crypt and king to whom I still belonged.

I fumed without another sound until February 1933, when I was summoned before a visitor named Percival Kirby, who had taken a keen interest in all the musical instruments of Africa. Naturally, he wished to study me. With the encouragement of my museum keeper, this professor put me to his lips and the one loud note that he produced was, on your Western musical scale, a C.

Six years later, I spoke up again, but in a strange new way. A radio pioneer named Rex Keating arranged for me to broadcast a message from the Cairo Museum that would be heard all around the world. Keating, of course, knew that I could only issue a single note, and this he deemed unworthy of the event. So, he allowed a military trumpeter stationed in Egypt to stuff a modern mouthpiece down my throat in order to *play* some sort of tune. During the second rehearsal, the strain was too much, and I cracked. Then and there, in the presence of a latter-day pharaoh named Farouk, I fell to pieces. The horrified king, trumpeter and museum staffers dropped to their knees and scrambled to recover my broken remains. All witnesses to this disaster were sworn to secrecy, lest the world be outraged at my mistreatment. While experts labored feverishly to restore me to life, much as Isis had done for Osiris, Keating searched for a more reliable musician. He chose a British bandsman named James Tappern, who treated me with greater respect according to my superior rank.

At the appointed hour on an April evening in 1939, Keating and Carter’s old associate Alfred Lucas introduced me to millions of rapt listeners. A BBC announcer with a sonorous voice intoned with



The horrified King Farouk of Egypt



*‘I fell to pieces.’
- 2nd rehearsal*



all the gravity he could muster: “The Trumpets of Pharaoh Tutankhamun! Lord of the Crowns, King of the South and North, Son of Ra!” On cue, trumpeter Tappern, using a modern mouthpiece now held safely in place by cotton batting, teased from me notes I had never heard in my life. I was quite shrill, climbing in flourishes well above my native C, all to Keating’s great satisfaction. Tappern made me perform something called the “Post-horn Gallup,” a lively tune unknown to the sheneb of ancient Egypt. I suppose this exploit was therefore historic, if not quite historical. I am told that my performance can still be heard by anyone at any time simply by searching through a communications maze called Internet. On that day my adjutant brother played a little, too, but no one paid him much heed. I, on the other hand, apparently *killed*.

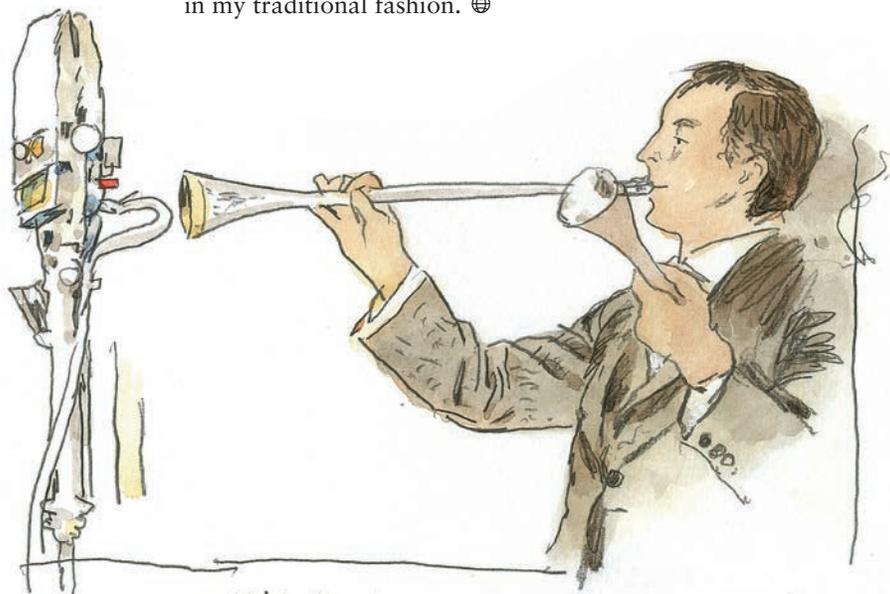
Many frightened listeners insisted that my voice unleashed a curse, one that murdered, at that very moment, my abductor, Howard Carter. This was nonsense, of course: He had already expired several weeks earlier. No less surprising, many people even claim that I caused the carnage you call the Second World War. My mighty voice allegedly summoned to battle a host of nations wielding weapons no pharaoh imagined. I vow I gave no such order! As I said, Tappern’s mouthpiece gave me a modern voice, not an authentic mandate from either my pharaoh or ancient Egypt. Keating had apparently been warned that listeners might misunderstand me, especially given the infamous “Curse of King Tut’s Tomb” that allegedly began with the death of Lord Carnarvon. I must say such talk of murderous mummies reflects poorly on your civilization. Statistics actually show that Carter’s gang lived full lives that generally exceeded the norms of the time: Carnarvon died at 57, Carter at 65, Lucas at 78, and Lady Evelyn at 79.

I have only performed twice more since that day. In 1941 I sounded a few notes as part of an acoustic experiment conducted at the Cairo Museum. Later, in January 1975, I blared another brief solo. The trumpeter, famed musician Philip Jones, said of me: “Its sound was not exactly melodious ... but it was probably the most thrilling experience I shall have as a trumpeter player.”

Probably? Can you think of anything grander than

touching your lips to the sheneb of Tutankhamun? I am sure he spoke in jest—after all, I am *the* horn of Africa. Those present were among the last ever to hear a sound from an ancient civilization.

Now, given my advancing age and recent misadventures, I may never sound again, although, in the fashion of your civilization, I have been on tour for some time now. I have been traveling first class again, learning along the way that beyond my native Nile, many lands exist. Your towns are of course much harder to pronounce than my Tjeb-nut-jer, Hut-Tahery-Ibt, and Taya-Dja-yet. Go ahead, try to say them: Fort Lauderdale, Chicago, Dallas, London, Melbourne. I find the fan-frenzied exhibitions in these exotic places fascinating from my side of the glass. Children no older than Tut when he ruled an empire crowd around my case, their mouths blowing into their little fists as if to make me speak. Kids naturally appreciate anything meant to make a noise. They jostle and joke about mummies and curses, while their elders hum a trumpet-laden parody linked to a certain Steve Martin and his band, the “Toot Uncommons.” Apparently, Tut was once celebrated in a festival called *Saturday Night Live*. I watch these antics indulgently, mindful that you honor Nebkheperure Tutankhamun in your outlandish way even as I, still dressed for his funeral, cherish for eternity his memory in my traditional fashion. ☹



British bandsman James Tappern playing the trumpet during a BBC radio broadcast in April 1939.



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The
LEGACY *of*

ARABIC
in **AMERICA**

In 2013 the University of Leiden’s announcement of its yearlong celebration of 400 years of Arabic studies in the Netherlands caught Roberta Dougherty’s attention. As the librarian for Middle East Studies at Yale University, she recalls wondering, “If they had 400 years, how long has it been here?”

She knew that in 1841, Yale had appointed the pioneering scholar Edward E. Salisbury as Professor of Arabic and Sanskrit Languages and Literature, the first such full-time appointment in the US. Inspired by the Leiden celebration, Dougherty dug into the Yale archives and began to plan for the 175th anniversary of his appointment.

In September 2016, an exhibition and six-month-long series of lectures reinvigorated the dusty legacy of one of the leading American Orientalists of his time. It also opened a window onto the history of Arabic in colonial and early America that predates Salisbury by almost 200 years.



Written by
PINEY KESTING

Photographed by
KRISANNE JOHNSON



Left: Roberta Dougherty, Yale's librarian for Middle East Studies, walks through the grand foyer of the university's Sterling Memorial Library, where the Near East Collection holds one of the most comprehensive assemblies of Arabic and Islamic studies materials in the us. Top: When Edward E. Salisbury became Yale's Professor of Arabic and Sanskrit Languages in 1841, he was the first such position at a us university. Above: Salisbury donated his own library to Yale, laying the foundation for the Near East Collection.

The Christian Reformation in Europe in the 16th century stimulated scholarship of the Bible, including the study of ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, Chaldaic, Syriac and Arabic, all to better understand original texts. Harvard was the first to introduce this theologically driven study of Semitic languages in 1640, and it added Arabic while Charles Chauncy served as the university's president between 1654 and 1672. Yale introduced Arabic in 1700; Columbia University in 1784; and the University of Pennsylvania in 1788.

"The earliest colleges founded in the us were intended to produce an educated ministry who were supposed to be able to read the Bible, and preferably early translations in Aramaic," explains Benjamin R. Foster, Laffan Professor of Assyriology and Babylonian Literature at Yale.

"However, the practicality of life in colonial America was such that very few students were actually interested," he adds.

Ezra Stiles, an ordained minister who studied Hebrew, Aramaic and Arabic, encountered this reluctance after he

became president of Yale amid the American Revolution in 1778. "I have obliged all the freshmen to study Hebrew," wrote Stiles in 1790. "This has proved very disagreeable to a number of the students."

Semitic studies were a specialization at the graduate level in Europe and later spread through the us, explains Roger Allen, Emeritus Professor of Arabic Language and Literature at the University of Pennsylvania. Graduate studies in America, he

notes, were influenced by the rigors of German scholarship and based on the German model, led in large part by the immigration of German scholars to the newly formed United States. Almost all the dictionaries and teaching anthologies at that time had been translated from the original Sumerian, Arcadian, Aramaic and Arabic into German. The old adage, jokes Allen, was that "the most important Semitic language then was German!"

Among these German scholars of Semitic languages was Johann Christoph Kunze, whose courses in Hebrew, Syriac, Aramaic and Arabic at Columbia University, beginning in 1784, failed to attract any students. Nevertheless, Arabic was introduced both at Dartmouth College and Andover Theological Seminary in 1807, Princeton Theological Seminary in 1822, New York University in 1833 and, in 1841, Yale not only offered courses but also made its historic appointment of Salisbury as the country's first full professor in the field.



Roberta Dougherty not only oversees Yale's Arabic and Near Eastern languages collection, but also organized the 2016 celebration that marked the 175th anniversary of Yale's appointment of Edward E. Salisbury to the school's Arabic and Sanskrit Languages professorship.

Unfortunately, to his lasting dismay, Yale students showed little more enthusiasm for Salisbury's offerings than Columbia's had for Kunze's. He had only two graduate students prior to his resignation in 1856.

Twenty-seven years later, at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Paul Haupt, a German Assyriologist from the University of Göttingen, found more success than either of them. In 1883, Haupt's program in comparative Semitic philology became the model for other American universities at the time when interest in Arabic was shifting from a basis in theology to the language itself, "in order to learn about premodern history, culture, religion and society," says Allen.

By the mid-19th to the early 20th century, more universities and theological seminaries began to offer Arabic. In 1900 Yale Professor Charles Cutler Torrey picked up where Salisbury left off, reinvigorating interest in Arabic-language studies and founding the first American center for Oriental

The very peculiarity of our national destiny, in a moral point of view, calls upon us not only not to be behind but to be even foremost, in intimate acquaintance with Oriental languages and institutions. The countries of the West, including our own, have been largely indebted to the East for their various culture; the time has come when this debt should be repaid. —E.E. Salisbury to Yale faculty, 1848

By 1937, 10 universities in the us offered Arabic, although only at the graduate level.

research in Jerusalem, which continues to this day. At the same time, the growth in archeology triggered further interest in learning not just written Arabic, but spoken Arabic as well, including dialects.

research in Jerusalem, which continues to this day. At the same time, the growth in archeology triggered further interest in learning not just written Arabic, but spoken Arabic as well, including dialects.



The aftermath of World War II precipitated a new and urgent shift as the emergence of the US as one of two superpowers called for new international skills. "It was abundantly evident that America was falling very short on any kind of expertise about what was actually going on post-Ottoman Empire," says Allen.

The us government enlisted renowned linguists to prepare

Ezra Stiles, Yale's president during the American Revolution in the late 1700s, had studied classical Hebrew as well as Aramaic and Arabic, but he was unable to convince students of the value of Semitic language study beyond a freshman requirement.

THE UNEXPECTED PIONEER

Like most educated men of his time, Edward Elbridge Salisbury was expected to lead a minister's scholarly and mostly contemplative life. Born into a wealthy Boston family in 1814, he graduated from Yale in 1832 and passed his ministry exam in 1836. That same year Salisbury and his bride Abigail Salisbury Phillips embarked on a three-year tour of Europe that steered him away from the ministry and launched his reputation as an American pioneer in Arabic-language studies.

Intellectually curious and amply funded, Salisbury met with prominent Sanskrit- and Arabic-language scholars in Europe. In Berlin, he studied Sanskrit, and in Paris, he began to learn Arabic from Europe's leading Arabist, A. I. Silvestre De Sacy.

In 1839 the Salisburys returned to New Haven, Connecticut, with a large collection of Arabic and Sanskrit manuscripts and books, many acquired from the auction of De Sacy's library after his

sudden death in 1838. At that time, there were no research libraries in America with collections of orientalist books, periodicals or manuscripts. Salisbury's acquisitions attracted scholars and inspired the establishment of his professorship of Arabic and Sanskrit at Yale in 1841.

Despite his inability to attract more than two graduate students to his courses, Salisbury's legacy is greater than he could have envisioned. His essays on Arabic and Islam were the first scholarly publications of their kind in the us. When he donated his library of rare books and manuscripts in Arabic, Sanskrit and Persian to Yale in 1870, it was recognized as the largest such collection in the country, and today it remains a valuable resource.

"Usefulness to him was not producing more scholars," asserts Benjamin Foster, Yale's Laffan Professor of Assyriology and Babylonian Literature, "but doing something to make the world a better place."



Edward E. Salisbury's well-worn passport symbolizes a turning point in the Yale graduate's life. After spending three years in Europe in the 1830s studying Sanskrit in Berlin and Arabic in Paris, he returned to Yale to become a leader in Arabic-language studies.

Benjamin Foster, Laffan Professor of Assyriology and Babylonian Literature at Yale, notes that the initial motivation to teach Near Eastern languages at colleges in colonial America was to produce an educated ministry .



textbooks and to create language training for military personnel. In 1947 classes in Modern Standard Arabic (literary Arabic) and dialects began at the Foreign Service Institute School of Languages in Washington, D.C., as well as at the Army Language School in Monterey, California. By the early 1950s, other government agencies such as the National Security Agency and the Central Intelligence Agency had established Arabic programs.

When the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, the world's first artificial satellite, in 1957, the Soviet educational system's

emphasis on science, mathematics and foreign languages was seen as the leading factor in its edge in space technology. In response, the 1958 National Defense Education Act (NDEA) supported the study of these subjects in schools, and it identified five languages for priority funding: Russian, Chinese, Hindustani, Portuguese and Arabic. Title VI of the NDEA supported new fellowships, instructional materials, summer programs, teacher-training workshops, research and more—many of which continue, in various forms, today.

From the private sector, a 1957 Ford Foundation grant of

THE SUMMER ACADEMY

For five weeks each summer since 2007, letters from the Arabic alphabet have decorated old metal lockers in Charlestown High School's aging five-story brick building in Boston, Massachusetts. The sounds of students practicing Arabic words and phrases float into the hallways, while other classes learn about Arabic calligraphy or dance from visiting artists.

Founded in 2007 by Steven Berbeco and Lemma Jarudi, two former Arabic-language teachers at the school, the annual Arabic Summer Academy (ASA) makes Charlestown High the only non-exam public school in Boston with an intensive Arabic summer-language program. It is also one of 84 primary and secondary schools in the US that teaches Arabic.

Like any language, explains ASA Program Director Richard Cozzens, Arabic is both a skill in itself and “a great avenue for giving students a real experience in cross-cultural communication ... the focus is on learning and connecting, and on building a community.”

Approximately 30 to 40 students are selected from public schools around Boston for the tuition-free program. After 142 instruction hours in language and culture, students graduate with the equivalent of a full year of Arabic instruction. Federal funding comes from the Startalk program, which was launched in 2006 to help increase the number of US citizens learning critical-need foreign languages.

“Because the program is free we get a huge diversity of participants in terms of socioeconomic background, academic experience, languages spoken at home, race and where they are from in the Boston area,” comments Lizz Huntley, a lecturer in Arabic at Cornell University who directed the ASA from 2011 to 2016 and currently serves as curriculum director. Students spend five hours a day, six days a week, studying Arabic language, culture, history and geography, with daily cultural clubs led by the teachers. Huntley notes that Saturday field trips to farmers' markets with Arab vendors or to local mosques not only helps the students practice their Arabic but also helps humanize what they are studying. “They see that Arabic is not just something for when they go abroad, but it's also something they can use in their own city.”

“The students are making real connections between themselves and what they are learning about the language and culture,” affirms Sarah Rangwala, the Arabic-language teacher at Charlestown High as well as an ASA instructor. “Any study of a world language is a great way to learn how to recognize



Arabic is a skill in itself and “a great avenue for giving students a real experience in cross-cultural communication,” says Richard Cozzens, *top*, program director of the decade-old annual Arabic Summer Academy in Boston's Charlestown High School. “The focus is on learning and connecting, and on building a community.” Sarah Rangwala, *above*, teaches Arabic at Charlestown High School as well as at the Arabic Summer Academy.

and understand different perspectives,” adds Rangwala. “For high-school students it is often one of the first times they are exposed to a different way of seeing the world.”

“This class has taught me to understand not only the Arabic language but also the culture and religion,” comments 11th-grader Catalina Ortiz-Sierra, now in her second year of Arabic at Charlestown High. “America is based on immigrants, and a part of them are Arabs, and if we are all immigrants, we need to understand each other.”



The Near East Collection at Yale's Sterling Memorial Library holds more than 250,000 Arabic and Persian volumes.

\$176,500 funded an inter-university summer program in Near Eastern languages shared among Columbia, Harvard, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, Michigan and Princeton, with each university teaching Arabic on a rotating basis in the summers from 1957-1961. Extension of the grant from 1962 to 1968 added the University of California at Los Angeles, Georgetown University and the University of Texas at Austin. These grants not only helped to establish the increasingly widespread model of intensive Arabic-language summer programs (see sidebar) but also generated new teaching methods.

"This was really the beginning of area studies with the idea being that Arabic should be taught as a language, not only in its classical but also in its contemporary idiom," says William Granara, director of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. "This was the new generation," he adds. Thanks also in part to new vinyl and magnetic-tape recording technology, the audio-lingual method emerged at this time, and "it wasn't just reading a dead text, it was interacting with a language."

The 1960s brought further changes. In 1963 the American Association of Teachers of Arabic formed and began to professionalize the teaching of Arabic. A series of teacher workshops from 1965 to 1967 led to the publication of the textbook *Elementary Modern Standard Arabic* as well as a college-level Arabic proficiency exam. In 1968 a consortium of eight American universities founded the Center for Arabic Study Abroad.

The 1979 Carter Commission on International Studies and Foreign Languages marked the beginning of the proficiency movement when it concluded: "America's incompetence in foreign languages is nothing short of scandalous and it is becoming worse." This introduced an element of radical new classroom strategies. "It's not texts anymore, its communications," explains Allen, who became the national proficiency trainer in Arabic for the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages from 1986-2002.

When Allen held his first workshop in Arabic proficiency

methods at The Ohio State University in 1986, many of the leading Arabic scholars showed up, including Peter Abboud, Ernest McCarus and R. J. Rumunny. "Those guys immediately realized that what they had done in the 1960s and 1970s modernized the study of Arabic, but what they hadn't done was to get entirely away from the grammar-based approach. What proficiency did was turn this whole thing on its head. They now had to figure out how to teach Arabic for communication purposes," says Allen.

"Today, you want to prepare a student to deal with the realities of Arabic as it is used in the 21st century," explains Professor Munther Younes of Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. In contrast to *Al-Kitaab*, the most successful contemporary Arabic-language textbook, Younes fully integrates formal, written Modern

Standard Arabic (*fussħa*) with spoken Egyptian and Levantine dialects (*ammiya*). "This is what best serves the modern generation of students," he says.

Arabic studies today are a far cry from their mid-16th-century beginnings as a tool to interpret Biblical texts. According to the Modern Language Association, Arabic is now the fastest-growing language studied at us colleges and universities. More than 35,000 students are enrolled in courses, a number that grew 126 percent from 2002 to 2006, and another 46 percent by 2009. Arabic is now the eighth most-studied language in the us and, as of 2013, 84 primary and secondary schools across the country offered Arabic-language classes.

"I was never really aware of the history of Arabic-language instruction in the us," confesses Lizz Huntley, a lecturer at Cornell and former director of the Charlestown High School Arabic Summer Academy in Charlestown, Massachusetts. She recalls when she and the program's founder, Steven Berbeco, were teaching a group of college students at the Harvard University campus. "When he told them that the first classes in Arabic began at Harvard, it was funny to see how the students all suddenly sat up a bit straighter, as though they realized that they were part of something much bigger than themselves," explains Huntley. "It was wonderful to see them take pride in that history." ☺



Piney Kesting is a Boston-based freelance writer and consultant who specializes in the Middle East. **Krisanne Johnson** (krisannejohnson.com) is a Brooklyn-based photographer whose work has been exhibited internationally and appeared in magazines and newspapers such as the *New York Times*, *TIME*, and *Fader*. Johnson holds a Master's degree in Visual Communications from Ohio University. Since 2006, she has been working on personal projects about young women and HIV/AIDS in Swaziland and post-apartheid youth culture in South Africa.



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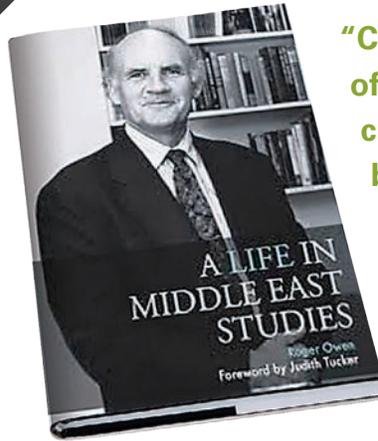
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“Cairo remained a kind of second home, full of friends, as well as buildings, nooks and crannies, and old mosque complexes yet to be explored. I loved the way it was possible to walk between its two main worlds: the old walled Fatimid city built a thousand years before and the Westernized sector ... created in the mid-19th century.”

A Life in Middle East Studies

Roger Owen. 2016, Tadween Publishing, 978-1-93906-723-4, \$18.99 pb.

Readers with an interest in the field of Middle Eastern studies, and insights gained through a lifetime of work inside and outside the “ivory towers” of Oxford and Harvard, will find Roger Owen’s autobiography a valuable read. As a British soldier in Cyprus in the mid-1950s, he fell in love with the eastern Mediterranean’s “sweet early summer evenings, Biblical ruins and the insistent hammer of contemporary politics.” That led him into Middle Eastern studies at the time the first centers for such scholarship were being established. Less than a decade later, while teaching English at the American University in Cairo, he gained entrée to the Abdeen Palace archives in Cairo and also accessed information from the Nile Delta farming community to prepare his Oxford thesis on the role of cotton in Egyptian economy in the 19th century, work that became an adventure in itself. Stories about the places he taught and visited, and the friendships he forged, add spice to this perceptive look into this important field of academia in which Owen has thrived. —ARTHUR CLARK

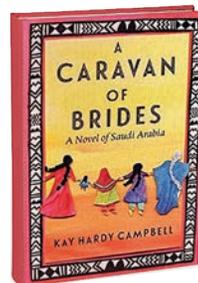


Before Copernicus: The Cultures and Contexts of Scientific Learning in the Fifteenth Century

Rivka Feldhay and F. Jamil Ragep, eds. 2017, McGill-Queen’s UP, 978-0-77355-010-0, \$35.96 pb.

Few groundbreaking geniuses emerge out of nowhere. This book underlines that fact in its close review of the scholarship upon which the 16th-century Polish astronomer Nicholas Copernicus relied when formulating his theory of heliocentrism, the (then) radical and controversial proposition that the Earth revolved around the sun, and not vice-versa. Featured throughout this collection of academic articles are numerous astronomers from the Muslim world, making it “clear that European astronomers took it for granted that they had many Islamic predecessors,” as one contributor observes. Among the most important were al-Battani in the ninth century, al-Haytham (10th century), al-Tusi (13th century) and Ibn

al-Shatir (14th century), respectively from what today are Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria. Like those medieval Muslim astronomers, Copernicus questioned the established geocentric cosmology of the second-century Greco-Roman astronomer Ptolemy, regarding his complicated explanations for planetary orbital irregularities as “violations of uniform circular motion” inherent to basic physics. Although geared more toward the student of astronomy than the novice stargazer, this is a welcome read that credits pioneers of science where credit is due. —TOM VERDE

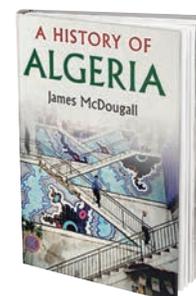


A Caravan of Brides: A Novel of Saudi Arabia

Kay Hardy Campbell. 2017, Loon Cove Press, 9-780-99907-430-5, \$14.99 pb.

Kay Hardy Campbell takes full advantage of her experiences as an Arabic-speaking journalist in Jiddah in the late 1970s and early ‘80s to tell a prescient story within a story about evolving Saudi

society. Beginning in 1978, she provides an insider’s look at the kingdom through the eyes of a young Saudi woman just returned from college in Lebanon. While navigating wildly different cultural mores, and losing a sister in the takeover of the Sacred Mosque in Makkah in 1979, she meets an elderly “shepherdess” leading her flock along a quiet Jiddah byway. The woman describes her flight from a bad marriage in 1917 across the Nafud Desert in northern Arabia, finally leading a group of Armenian orphans to safety in a “Caravan of Brides.” Notably, the book—published before the decree giving women the right to drive in Saudi Arabia this year—concludes in 2019 with the heroine, now teaching girls at university, steering her car through Jiddah traffic. —ARTHUR CLARK



A History of Algeria

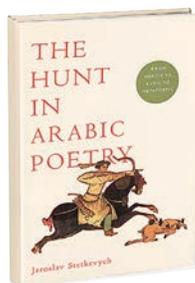
James McDougall. 2017, Cambridge UP, 978-0-52161-730-7, \$29.99 pb.

The simple, albeit implicitly sweeping, title of this



book cries out for a clarifying subtitle. This is not the story of Carthaginian, Roman or caliphal (medieval Muslim) Algeria, but rather a detailed study of the nation that emerged in the wake of its Ottoman period (early 16th into the mid-19th century). After an introductory chapter on Ottoman rule, McDougall examines the development of modern Algeria up to and including the Arab Spring of 2011 by tracing the various political ways in which “Ottoman governors, French colonial settlers and administrators and Algerian nationalist leaders, bureaucrats and generals” all shaped the contemporary state. A second focus is the history of Algerian society and culture, with its cafés, theatrical productions staged “in local Arabic dialect” and performances “rooted in classical Andalusí music.” These are among the “continuous responses, innovations and strategies” of a people whose mid-20th-century struggles for independence “marked a critical moment for the history of an emergent ‘Third World.’”

—LOUIS WERNER



The Hunt in Arabic Poetry: From Heroic to Lyric to Metapoetic

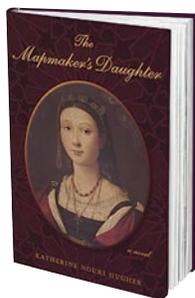
Jaroslav Stetkevych. 2015, University of Notre Dame Press, 978-0-26804-151-9, \$34 pb.

The hunt has long been a

subject of artistic expression, stretching back to the cave paintings at Lascaux, France, rendered more than 17,000 years ago. Uniquely, representations of the hunt have endured in the Arabic-speaking world, not so much pictorially as poetically. So argues scholar Jaroslav Stetkevych in this study of a little-addressed topic that nonetheless suffices Arab cultural history. Via his own translations and dissections of wide-ranging samples of the Arabic hunt poem—the *tardiyyah*—Stetkevych demonstrates how pre-Islamic motifs of “quest” were transformed by medieval Arabic poets into themes of yearning and pursuit. “We dashed out with our hound ... in the heat of youth’s prime,” wrote Abu Nawas (d. 814 CE). Yet the dawn toward which the youthful hunting party rides “appeared from

behind its veil / Like a gray-haired man’s face,” alluding to the “dark foreboding of inescapable fate,” as Stetkevych observes. Tardiyyah, he argues, lived on in the modern freestyle poetry of Egypt’s Muhammad ‘Afifi Matar (d. 2010), among others, who transformed the traditional hunt lyric “into an allegory of the poet’s search,” an artistic objective not so far removed from the cave paintings at Lascaux.

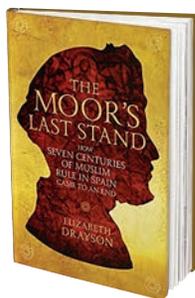
—TOM VERDE



The Mapmaker’s Daughter: The Confessions of Nurbanu Sultan, 1525–1583

Katherine Nouri Hughes. 2017, Delphinium Books, 978-1-88328-570-8, \$18 pb.

A good historical novel about a mostly undocumented figure must nevertheless rely on impeccable sources. That is the case with this richly imagined memoir of Nurbanu, the Venetian-born chief consort, or Haseki Sultan, of Selim II, and the Valide Sultan, or mother, of Murad III, the first in a line of strong royal wives who founded what some historians call the “sultanate of women.” Unlike most other historical accounts, in this novel we meet eminent but overlooked women of the harem such as Suleiman the Magnificent’s talented daughter Mihrimah; Safiye, the powerful Albanian consort and mother of sultans who steered her own fate much like her mother-in-law Nurbanu; and the worldly Esther, who as a Sephardic freewoman was able to leave the seraglio to do Nurbanu’s bidding in the domain of men. This novel is about women in the confinement of the harem, but it also describes their role in Ottoman affairs of state. —LOUIS WERNER



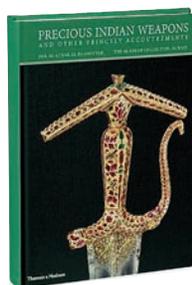
The Moor’s Last Stand: How Seven Centuries of Muslim Rule in Spain Came to an End

Elizabeth Drayson. 2017, Interlink Books, 978-1-56656-004-7, \$20 pb.

The author takes a fresh

look at the life of Boabdil (known as the “Unlucky”), the last Moorish sultan of Granada, who lost his kingdom to the Christian armies of Spain’s Ferdinand

and Isabella in 1492. The defeat was immortalized in song and legend as the “The Moor’s Last Sigh,” when the humiliated, retreating ruler took a final look at the city from a hillside and wept. Yet that famous story, which “may be truth or invention,” shortchanges our understanding of the man, writes Drayson, who describes Boabdil as the inevitable victim of family betrayal and factional infighting, not his own weak character. In fact, he emerges as a deeply moral figure. Reading at times more like a novel than a biography, this reconsideration of Boabdil’s life convincingly distinguishes the man from the legend. —TOM VERDE



Precious Indian Weapons and Other Princely Accoutrements

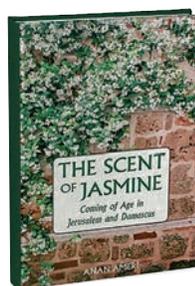
Salam Kaoukji. 2017, Thames & Hudson, 978-0-50097-080-5, \$75 hb.

As Salam Kaoukji explains in this beautifully produced and

carefully annotated guide, few accoutrements could illustrate the high prestige of the owner as clearly as the decorative weapons he carried. This has been true since antiquity, but perhaps never more so than on the Indian subcontinent from the 16th through the 19th century, where artistic traditions from many sources were combined with an extraordinary level of craftsmanship. Of the nearly 200 weapons examined, most are fully functional edged weapons: swords, daggers or knives (many of which show use) with damascened blades and hilts fashioned in fine jade, rock crystal or precious metals and decorated with myriad jewels or enameled with intricate patterns. Horse trappings, archery rings and even shield fittings were also highly decorated and are included in this remarkable collection gathered over decades by the Al Sabah family of Kuwait and curated by Kaoukji. Illustrated with more than 500 color photos, *Precious Indian Weapons* offers a close-up look at one of the most spectacular collections

of princely weapons in the world.

—JANE WALDRON GRUTZ



The Scent of Jasmine: Coming of Age in Jerusalem and Damascus

Anan Ameri. 2017, Olive Branch Press, 978-1-56656-001-6, \$20 pb.

In 2014, a year after retiring as founding director of the Arab American Museum in Dearborn, Michigan, Anan Ameri retrieved old, yellowed sheets of paper from a drawer in her home. They held recollections of growing up in the 1950s and ‘60s in Jerusalem and Damascus (and later in Amman) that she began writing down more than 20 years earlier. Distilled from those pages—and well worth the wait—this is Ameri’s soul-searching story of the trials and triumphs of her Syrian/Palestinian family as it navigated its way through tumultuous political times. From her first vivid memory as a three-year-old sent to the safety of her well-to-do maternal grandfather’s home in the Old City of Damascus during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, to her political awakening in the 1960s, Ameri’s narrative reflects the lively storytelling that she experienced when her large, extended Syrian family gathered in her grandfather’s home. “This warm tradition of conversational storytelling,” writes Ameri, “kept our memories, ties and resilience alive.” As does her heartfelt, engaging memoir.

—PINEY KESTING



Sovereign Women in a Muslim Kingdom: The Sultanahs of Aceh, 1641–1699

Sher Banu A. L. Khan. 2017, Cornell UP, 978-1-50171-385-9, \$69.95 hb., \$23.95 pb.

During the second half of the 17th century, the Islamic kingdom of Aceh Dar al-Salam in northern Sumatra was known and respected as far away as Portugal for its trade in pepper and tin. This was the island realm’s “golden age,” when it was ruled by a succession of four women. Sultanah Safiatuddin Syah ascended the throne in 1641 and hung on to it for 34 years—longer than the combined reigns of her sultan father and her husband Iskander Thani, whom she succeeded. Sultanahs Nur Alam Naqiatuddin Syah (r. 1675–78), Inayat Zakiatuddin Syah (r. 1678–88) and Kamalat Zainatuddin Syah (r. 1688–99) followed in direct, albeit not unchallenged, succession. Notably, such rule by women on the island had precedent, for eighth-century Javanese and Arabic inscriptions there testify to local acceptance of female monarchs, revered as “brilliant” and “holy.”

—TOM VERDE



EVENTS & EXHIBITIONS

Highlights from our searchable listings at aramcoworld.com



CURRENT / JANUARY

Soulful Creatures: *Animal Mummies in Ancient Egypt*. In the burial ground at Saqqara, Egypt, one animal cemetery has yielded more than four million ibis mummies. The nearby dog cemetery contained more than seven million mummies, with countless others with a variety of mummified animals found throughout Egypt. This aspect of ancient Egyptian culture and religion has remained largely a mystery. This exhibition explores the religious purpose of these mummies, how they were made and why there are so many. Drawn from the museum's own renowned collection, the exhibition features choice examples from among the many millions of birds, cats, dogs, snakes and other animals preserved from at least 31 cemeteries throughout Egypt. **Brooklyn Museum, New York, January 21.**

Pictures of Comfort and Design: *Carpets in Indian Miniature Painting*. In a region where furniture was

little-known for centuries, carpets allowed for relaxed sitting and sleeping. At the same time, they served as an important representational element and created an impressive ambiance at courtly events. This exhibition presents 22 Indo-Islamic paintings from the Mughal era that demonstrate the use of carpets in the courtly context. The paintings on display show how the carpets animated the palace architecture, which was built from light, reddish-colored stone; establish intimate resting places; and create outdoor textile rooms. In addition to miniature paintings, some fragments of Mughal Indian carpets from the collection of the Staatliche Museen's Museum für Islamische Kunst are exhibited, demonstrating the connection between the representations and the real, preserved objects. Pergamonmuseum, **Berlin, through January 26.**

CURRENT / FEBRUARY

Bestowing Beauty: *Masterpieces from Persian Lands* features more

than 100 works of art from the sixth to the 19th centuries, on view publicly for the first time, highlighting the artistic and cultural heritage of Persian civilization. Drawn from one of the most significant collections of Persian art held in private hands, these objects are rarely displayed publicly. The works span a range of media, including carpets, textiles, manuscripts, paintings, ceramics, lacquer, metalwork, scientific instruments and jeweled objects. Among the selection are exquisite miniature paintings from the *Shahnama (Book of Kings)*; a range of historically significant ceramics, precious inlaid metal works; finely woven silk fabrics; and a monumental silk carpet from the apex of Safavid dynasty carpet production. The Museum of Fine Arts, **Houston, through February 11.**

Abu Simbel: *200 Years after the Passing of Sheikh Ibrahim Burckhardt*. On the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the death of Swiss orientalist Johann Ludwig Burckhardt, who discovered one of the



"Nimo, Sumiya, and Bisharo Harvesting Flowers and Vegetables at Hope Community Garden," by Aliza Nisenbaum, 2017, oil on linen, 223.52 x 172.72 cm

A Place We Share

Over the course of a summer residency at Minneapolis Institute of Art, (MIA) New York-based Aliza Nisenbaum worked closely with groups in the Phillips and Whittier neighborhoods, including Centro Tyrone Guzman, Hope Community and MIA's own security guards to create three large-scale group portraits, each representing its respective community. Through face-to-face portrait sessions, the artist bonded with her sitters, building relationships of friendship and mutual trust. The resulting paintings represent the diverse communities that live and work in Phillips and Whittier, some of whom are Latino and Somali immigrants. The exhibition features a video documentation of the painting process, which provides the audience with an intimate window into the community groups portrayed. By representing individuals and communities that have been historically underserved by public arts institutions, Nisenbaum seeks to empower her sitters and her visitors alike with an expanded sense of ownership and belonging to the museum itself. MIA, through February 4.

COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND MARY MARY, GLASGOW



most-well-known Egyptian monuments, the Temple of Abu Simbel in Aswan, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina Antiquities Museum showcases plaques that portray locations he visited during his travels to Nubia, such as Philae, Abu Simbel and Qasr Ibrim. The exhibition explores what they represent in terms of archeological heritage. Bibliotheca Alexandrina, **Alexandria**, through February 13.

I Am: An Arts Initiative Organized by CARAVAN is a peace-building exhibition that premiered in Amman, Jordan, under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah, showing 31 of the Middle East's premier contemporary women artists. The exhibition promotes and celebrates the many accomplishments of Middle Eastern women in shaping our world toward a peace and harmony. The exhibition aims to challenge existing stereotypes and misconceptions about Middle Eastern women by showing their dynamic, significant contributions to local and global culture and showcasing the artists' insights and experiences as they confront culture, religion and social realities in a rapidly changing world both in the Middle East and the West. CARAVAN, which originated in Cairo, Egypt, is an international peace-building arts NGO that focuses on establishing bridges through the arts among the creeds and cultures of the Middle East and the West. Center for the Arts,

Jackson Hole, Wyoming, through February 25.

CURRENT / APRIL

Ahmed Mater: Mecca Journeys is an unprecedented look into the changes unfolding in Makkah by one of the most significant cultural voices documenting the realities of this historic city. Saudi artist Ahmed Mater began his monumental documentary project in 2008, bearing witness to the extraordinary expansion, demolition and new construction transforming the city. The exhibition features large-scale photographs of Makkah, as well as more intimate images of its diverse inhabitants, alongside videos, sculpture and an installation piece. Focusing on the site of the annual Hajj pilgrimage for millions of Muslims, as well as the living and working conditions of Makkah's permanent residents, the exhibition presents a complex portrait of extreme urban redevelopment and the direct effects of the ongoing reconstruction of the holy city. **Brooklyn Museum, New York**, through April 8.

Listening to Art, Seeing Music: The Aga Khan Museum transforms into a mesmerizing world of music celebrating the living traditions of the Muslim world and their interaction with other cultures through time and space with this truly unique, multi-sensory experience. Immersive musical soundscapes and

video installations featuring music from the Mediterranean, Persia, the Levant, and Central Asia combine with intimate displays of Middle Eastern instruments and related artifacts from the Museum's Permanent Collection to invite visitors on a spellbinding journey of discovery. Spaces throughout the Museum come alive through and with music, as *Listening to Art, Seeing Music* offers ample opportunity to engage directly with musicians and musical traditions. At the heart of it all, in the Museum's central courtyard, a Mongolian yurt—traditionally a warm communal gathering space and shelter from the elements—welcomes visitors to listen to live music, join musical conversations, experience stories of music-making and share a cup of tea. The Aga Khan Museum, **Toronto**, through April 8.

Paint the Eyes Softer: Mummy Portraits from Roman Egypt presents Roman Egyptian mummy portraits and related artifacts from the site of ancient Tebtunis in Egypt. The majority of the objects on view are loans from the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley, which holds one of the largest collections of mummy portraits from a single site in the world. The installation foregrounds innovative techniques for the scientific study of objects and reveal to the public how partnerships between historians, archeologists and material scientists can provide new insights into these artworks.

Block Museum of Art, **Evanston, Illinois**, through April 22.

CURRENT / AUGUST

Past is Present: Revival Jewelry. Whether copying or choosing motifs to reinterpret, jewelers have always looked to the past for inspiration. The practice became popular in the 19th century, as designers like Castellani, Giacinto Melillo and Eugene Fontenay began reviving examples of ancient ornaments, newly unearthed in archeological excavations. The exhibition examines more than 4,000 years of jewelry history through about 70 objects—both ancient and revival—tracing the revival movement from the 19th to the 21st centuries, focusing on four types: archeological, Classical, Egyptian and Renaissance. Highlights include a 1924 brooch, on loan from gold brooch by Cartier, paired with an Egyptian winged scarab (740–660 BCE) with a similar design; an 1850s embellished gold brooch by Castellani; and a Renaissance revival neck ornament designed for Tiffany & Co. Museum of Fine Arts, **Boston**, through August 19.

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