About the journal

_Hadeeth ad-Dar_ is a publication of the Dar-al-Athar al-Islamiyyah. Every year, the Dar-al-Athar al-Islamiyyah organises a series of lectures known as the Cultural Season. _Hadeeth ad-Dar_ was created to share these lectures with academic and cultural institutions and Friends of the Dar-al-Athar al-Islamiyyah around the world. Cultural Season 18 will get underway in September 2012 and run through May 2013 and, as with previous years, it presented scholars in a wide variety of fields related to arts and culture in the Islamic world.

The Dar-al-Athar al-Islamiyyah (DAI) is a government cultural organisation based on a Kuwaiti private art collection. Since its inception in 1983, DAI has grown from a single focus organisation created to manage the loan of the prestigious al-Sabah Collection of art from the Islamic world to the State of Kuwait to become an internationally recognised cultural organisation.

This publication is sponsored in part by:

LNS 4 C
Bowl
Frit body, decoration painted in blue and black under a transparent glaze
Iran (Kashan); c. 1200 - 1220
Height 7 cm
Diameter 16.4 cm

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Pottery is one of the earliest art forms. Indeed, arguably the earliest evidence of pottery manufacture can be found in Japan during the Jōmon period, ca. 13,000 BCE. to ca. 300 BCE. The Jōmon peoples of Japan were gatherers, who maintained their identity until the 3rd century BCE. Surprisingly, the earliest fragments were not of utilitarian objects such as drinking, cooking or eating vessels, but rather of human and animal figurines, known as doghu.

In the Near East the situation was different. For instance British archaeologist and author James Mellaart observed that there was a Neolithic Revolution. The domestication of crops and animals had completely changed the lives of those early prehistoric communities. While the majority of these communities were preoccupied with farming, a few talented craftsmen were freed-up to create essential objects for the community. Initially these took the form of pottery objects.

Among these excavated early pottery objects there were not only functional items such as jars and dishes but, similar to Japan, there were also human figurines. Typically these represented gods or fertility goddesses. These early settlements were found mainly in Anatolia, northern Mesopotamia and the Iranian highlands, i.e. in the Fertile Crescent. Perhaps we are not far from the truth by saying that the remains of several hundred such early sites were discovered and excavated during the last 150 years. Many amongst these early peoples were producing fine pottery.

The two earliest and most important pottery centres in the Near East were at Tell Halaf in northern Syria and Tell Hassuna, south of present day Mosul. (figure 1) These two sites flourished between the late 7th millennium and mid 5th millennium BCE. Tell Halaf was excavated by the German diplomat and engineer, Max von Oppenheim towards the end of the 19th century. The excavations were more recently continued by German and Syrian archaeologists. Excavations at Tell Hassuna started in the early 1930s and were directed by British archaeologist Seton Lloyd, jointly with the Chicago Oriental Institute and later were continued by the Iraqi Department of Antiquities.

Figure 1
One slightly later centre was established in Samarra, which then became the temporary Abbasid capital. Another important site was Tell ‘Ubaid, some 6km south of Ur in southern Mesopotamia. The site was first excavated by H.R. Hall in 1919. Hall was followed by C.L. Woolley in 1923-24 and by P. Delougaz and Seton Lloyd in 1937.

It was at Tell Halaf and Samarra that thousands of pottery fragments came to light. The unglazed white or red earthen wares were decorated with geometrical patterns, in the form of squares and triangles; others revealed animals, depicting gazelles or swimming fish. Each was painted in monochrome black or brownish-red colours.

As far as is known, it was at Tell Halaf where the earliest bichrome painted pottery was produced. These vessels show geometrical patterns, flowers and wavy lines, painted in red and black (figure 2). Some of the vessels were made in zoomorphic forms, depicting gazelles, or zebus [humped oxen]. Human figurines were also present, which likely represented fertility goddesses, human figures holding a bowl, or larger vessels combined with a figure (figure 3). Another favourite and frequently occurring ware was the rhytons or drinking vessels with an animal, usually with gazelle-shaped spouts.

An early, but lesser-known archaeological site is Tal-i Iblis, “The Devil’s Mound”, situated in Kirman province, some 80km south of Kirman, Iran. This site was discovered by Sir Aurel Stein in the 1930s. He suggested that it was most likely producing pottery and possibly even copperware. The site was excavated by an American archaeological team under the direction of the late Joseph R. Caldwell and a report was subsequently published. During the excavations crucible shards were recovered and after spectrochemical analysis it was found that they had copper stains, indicating that copper smelting had been practised at Tal-i Iblis, as early as the 5th millennium BCE. The large number of excavated pottery included simple undecorated, monochrome and bichrome painted wares, with dates ranging between the 5th and 2nd millennium BCE.

Glazes are especially important for earthenware vessels because of their porosity. Glazes allow earthenware to contain liquids, whereas liquids would seep out of unglazed earthenware. Faiance and glazing were discovered very early, during the late 5th or early 4th millennium BCE in Egypt. These early faiance vessels were coated with beautiful turquoise alkaline glaze. Their use continued right up to the Roman period. In Mesopotamia glazing was discovered and introduced at a much later date, during the 2nd millennium BCE. However, it was not alkaline, but lead glaze. It should be mentioned that alkaline glaze, which has a beautiful turquoise-blue colour, has a great disadvantage in that it “does not like earthenware”, or to be more precise, it does not cover it effectively. Therefore alkaline glaze was very rarely used on earthenware vessels. This is perhaps one of the reasons that Mesopotamian potters were looking for a different solution to coat their earthenware.
It was in the early 1930s that a cuneiform inscribed clay table was discovered in northern Iraq, which describes the recipes for copper-lead glazes. Sir Leonard Woolley’s excavations at a site called Atchana brought to light large numbers of earthenware vessels which were coated with greenish-blue lead glaze, dating back to the first half or mid-2nd millennium BCE. In Iran glazing was introduced during the Kassite (1750 – 1170BCE) and the early Elamites periods (6th – 4th centuries BCE). The capital of the new Elamite kingdom was Susa. The nearby ziggurat at Choga Zanbil, which served both as a temple (dedicated to their god Inshushinak) and a tomb, was erected by the Elamite King Untash Gal in 1250 BCE. It was at Choga Zanbil that the earliest known glazed pottery was discovered in Iran. Much further north, in Iranian Azerbaijan at a place called Zwiye large numbers of ivory plaques, gold and silver objects and, more significantly glazed pottery came to light, dating from the same Elamite period. Among these early glazed vessels were a number of tiny bowls coated with yellow and green lead glazes. The same type of greenish-blue lead glaze remained in use throughout the Achaemenid period (550 BCE – 330BCE), but only in the western part of Iran until the beginning of the Parthian period (c.211 BCE – 227 CE).

By the Parthian and the subsequent Sassanian periods (227 CE– 632 CE), the lead glazed wares gained more importance. A substantial number of large jars, jugs and amphorae were discovered, not only in Iran itself, but throughout the Parthian Empire. The majority of such vessels were found in the excavations at Dura-Europos, in the eastern part of Syria, on the right banks of the Tigris. Nevertheless unglazed pottery continued to play a significant role right up to the Islamic period.

Meanwhile in Egypt, under Roman influence, terra sigillata, a beautiful shiny, relief decorated pottery became the vogue. (figure 4) After the collapse of the Roman Empire, the terra sigillata continued and became known as “African red ware”, occasionally with additional black painting on it. (figure 4.a)

Apart from the already mentioned lead glazed wares of the Sassanian period, numerous unglazed vessels and objects have also come to light. They have a few special characteristics which distinguish them from earlier examples. (figure 5) Nevertheless it has to be mentioned that some of these unglazed and glazed items could be early Islamic vessels from the Umayyad period.

Unglazed Umayyad pottery vessels, showing black or dark brown decoration, were excavated in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, together with some outstanding glazed examples. Large numbers of pottery oil lamps have also survived from the Umayyad and early Abbasid periods, some of which are dated and signed by their masters.

An entirely different type of unglazed pottery, datable to the period between the 7th and 9th centuries CE, was excavated in Central Asia, or to be more precise in Uzbekistan,
Kazakhstan and Afghanistan. Among these early Central Asian unglazed vessels were a number of remarkable ewers with spherical bodies and high rising, almost straight semicircular spouts. They were decorated with extensive black paintings, showing four-lobed rosettes, scrolls and serpentines. Some of them exhibited paintings of fish and a serpent inside the high rising spout. There were also large numbers of zoomorphic vessels collected from the region and these were probably used as aquamanilae [a ewer or jug-type vessel in the form of one or more animal or human figures, usually used for the washing of hands (aqua + manos) over a basin]. They imitated the shapes of camels, horses and birds. They were decorated with black or with bichrome paintings. (figure 6.a)

Moving forward, more refined green and yellow glazed vessels were produced in the eastern Mediterranean world and in Iran, most likely under the influence of late Roman artisans. Today there are also large number of Umayyad and early Abbasid glazed vessels preserved in various public and private collections. Yet, this author believes that the four finest specimens are in the Keir Collection, Richmond. Three are green glazed bowls and one is a yellow glazed pitcher or ewer, all attributed to Iran and dated to the 8th century CE. In the opinion of this writer, the yellow glazed ewer was made not in Iran, but most likely in Central Asia, possibly in Afghanistan (figure 6.b). Its shape reveals connections to earlier or contemporary glass and bronze ewers.

It was during the 9th century CE that a new type of glazed ware was introduced in the eastern part of the Islamic world, the so-called "splashed ware". It was frequently claimed that it owed its origin to the T’ang three-coloured ware. This theory has now been refuted since splashed ware fragments were discovered at several pre-Islamic Near Eastern sites. Furthermore, a glance at the Elamite period glazed bowls from Ziwiye manifestly proves its Near Eastern provenance (figure 7). Not surprisingly splashed ware vessels were discovered among the ruins of Umayyad palaces, indicating that the buildings were still in use in early Abbasid times. In 1964 this writer discovered a near complete splashed bowl left amongst the ruins of Khirbat al-Mafjar and took it to the Rockefeller Museum in Jerusalem.

Alongside with these glazed wares, beautifully decorated black, bichrome moulded or carved unglazed vessels were also widespread and popular throughout the Islamic world. In particular three types of unglazed vessels were the most widely used: jugs with spherical bodies and funnel-shaped necks and with simple handles, or alternatively with tall cylindrical necks. Their bodies are richly decorated with floral or epigraphic patterns and occasionally even with human or animal figures. The second type was the so-called pilgrim flask with flattened round bodies with extensive incised or relief decoration and topped with a short neck and flanked by small handles.

The third and extremely interesting enigmatic type had conical shapes, with or without surface decoration. Their original function is still not known. They have been variously identified as hand-grenades, beer bottles or vessels holding some precious liquids. As to this last possibility there is some interesting archaeological evidence. The late Professor David Storm Rice, who was excavating at Harrān in south-eastern Turkey, found half of such a conical vessel. He was allowed to take it back to London for chemical examination. They discovered traces of mercury indicating that the containment of precious or exotic liquids might be the correct interpretation of their use.

Recent scholarly and clandestine excavations at several Near Eastern and Central Asian sites brought to light large numbers of moulds for producing pottery vessels. Some of these were used for shaping the outside, others for the inside of pottery vessels. The latter ones usually have a handle inside the mould. The Tareq Rajab Museum possesses a wood matrix which was used for making a pottery mould.

Pottery kilns have also come to light. A large round kiln was excavated in the late 1960s at Siraf, (modern Bender Taheri) on the Iranian side of the Gulf and the Kuwait excavations at Bahnasa/Oxyrhynchus have also uncovered several such kilns.

Figure 1: The early pottery centres of Tell Halaf and Tell Hassuna
Figure 2: A pottery zebu
Figure 3: A human figure
Figure 4a: Early Egyptian faience vessels
Figure 4b: African red ware from Egypt
Figure 5: Unglazed vessel from the Fertile Crescent
Figure 6a: Chinese splashed ware vase
Figure 6b: Zoomorphic vessel
Figure 7: Glazed bowl from the Keir Collection
Conservation grew initially within a nostalgic paradigm, as a call for historic revival during the romantic period in the nineteenth century and the turn of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, cumulative research has led to growing awareness of other aspects responsible for changing the perspective towards preserving historic areas, to be envisioned as a collective urban phenomenon. Hence, the initial nostalgic, restoration oriented approach to conservation, especially area conservation has changed.

Area conservation has developed to call for a more comprehensive meaning to define historical areas. It is pursued through the introduction of different perspectives by the different groups such as: a nation and its officials, planners and representatives, historic area occupants and users, world heritage organisations, and international community representatives interested in heritage/cultural tourism. All are the stakeholders with varied levels of claims to each historical area. Such a comprehensive meaning of historical areas can only be pursued through introducing the different perspectives by the different groups N (nation and its officials, planners and representatives), U (historic area occupants and users) and W (world heritage organisations and the international community representatives interested in heritage/cultural tourism).

Nevertheless, the many environmental qualities and stakeholders involved in the conservation process increase its level of sophistication.

Literature is rich with many case studies; stories of success and failure. Some cover the importance of different qualities to consider; other urges the priorities of certain groups.

Furthermore, international conservation charters reflect clear concerns about treating historical areas as a whole through emphasising the coherence of the historical urban fabric. A growing demand for preserving on an equal foot both the tangible and the intangible heritage led to a definition of the

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value of the authentic quality of any historic area. Such environmental qualities are defined based on careful review of international conservation charters as the quality of integrity, authenticity and sustainability.

The above has certainly increased the complexity of the whole conservation process. Hence, profound definitions of the above qualities distinguish each historic environment that has undergone conservation. As reviewed from the different perspectives of each and every stakeholder involved in such an urban phenomenon (members of U, N and/or W groups), it is essential that the ideal comprehensive urban management model needs to create a balanced historic environment; not to exhibit historical artefacts and edifices but to understand and actually live within said environment.

**Integrity**

Integrity means the quality of the manifested whole which exists in an indivisible unity that potentially may continue to exist in its parts...and be based on what is suggested by the potential unity of the work of art [the conservation project in our case], taking into account the demands of its historical and aesthetic aspects (Jokilehto, 1999, p.232). Integrity can be also a tool for the identification of elements that make up an organic whole, ...such as the complexity formed of the fabric and infrastructures of an historic settlement, and the mutual relationship of such elements with the whole (Jokilehto, 1999, p.299).

**Authenticity**

Authenticity has been used before as a technical term to evaluate the historical quality and provenance of a work of art, to determine if it is fake or genuine. It has acquired, however, a more profound meaning when incorporated in other contexts, such as architectural design, urban design and conservation. Authenticity, in general, is used to define the genuine, sincere, original, true and reliable. It is also antonym of the superficial, kitsch, artificial, imposed, manipulated, doubtful, illogical, clichéd, deceptive and fake (Walker, 1992; Assi, 2000).

**Sustainability**

In general, sustainable development is the development that meets the needs of the present communities without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Brundtland, 1987, p. 8). It can be achieved only if humans work in harmony with their natural and manmade environments in order to safeguard the long-term interests of that environment and its many life forms (Rodwell, 2003, p.58). Sustainable development also looks for ways to enhance the quality of different aspects of human life (social, economic and environmental) (Barton, 1996). The above three aspects (social, economic and environmental) are defined by Carmona, de Magalhaes and Edwards (2002, p.67) as the main sustainable value measures that can assess sustainability as an
environmental quality of any area that has been under development.

Focusing on the case of area conservation, as an especial kind of environmental development, Rodwell (2003, p.67) finds that conservation in historic cities places conservation shoulder-to-shoulder with sustainability. Also within the same context, Stovel (1999) recognises sustainability as being concerned with: extending life, balancing conservation, health of the relationship among heritage resources, maintaining ongoing processes which portray character and meaning of heritage, maintaining desirable condition over the span of a lifetime, enhancing the meaning of heritage in daily life, and increasing responsible involvement of citizens.

Consequently, it is important to consider all the above qualities as well as the requirements of the stakeholders contributing to each historic area undergoing a conservation scheme. Seeking a balanced environment that serves all without compromising any of the historic area’s main qualities must be a priority.

A call for a legislative, collective and technical charter should be made. A legislative technical body/institution developed especially for the very Arab-Islamic context, and not merely a translated application of UNESCO charters, is a must. Al-Marsad Al'Umrrani (the Urban Observatory) was thus suggested as a program to evaluate and assess area conservation projects in the region. It is currently working with some major regional heritage and cultural organisations in the region, encouraging them to adopt in its evaluation criteria. To this end, Al-Marsad Al'Umrrani has created a broad, comprehensive model taking equally on board the above qualities as defined in international charters and literature as well as those relevant and defined by the regional culture and different perspectives.

Thanks to Dr Sedky for the images in this article.
As cultural repositories, museums are mediators of culture and are able to address visitor groups of all kinds. Each year, hundreds of thousands of visitors from all over the world come to Berlin’s Museum Island, where they experience the diversity and splendour of the cultural heritage of Muslim civilisations at the Museum of Islamic Art at the Pergamon Museum.

The Museum serves as key resource, helping formulate answers for today’s questions: what are Muslim cultures? Where do they come from? Which cultural experiences are embedded in this rich artistic heritage? Geographically, the classical Islamic world extended from the Iberian Peninsula, northern Africa, south eastern Mediterranean, the Middle East, and Central Asia to south eastern Asia. Historically, we describe the periods from late antiquity to modernity.

At the Museum, one may experience cultural diversity by visiting the settings of caliphal and sultanic palaces from eighth-century Jordan, ninth-century Iraq, or the famous dome from the Alhambra Palace in Spain (fourteenth century). Architectural elements from houses and splendid prayer niches from mosques open up the rich cultural legacy of the Middle East. The famous Aleppo Room (1601) (figure 1), which was the splendid reception hall of a Christian merchant, and the Damascus Niche (around 1500), originating from a Jewish residence, highlight aspects of religious pluralism in the pre-modern era. Here our visitors experience modes of the Muslim world that breathe tolerance, internationality, and cosmopolitanism just as we counterbalance simplified notions of a single culture in the public discourse by providing a diverse experience supported by academic authority.

While addressing the general public, the museum also provides a symbolic space for citizens who come from Muslim societies and, as a public institution, it offers a cultural home. This provides a positive reaffirmation of Muslim culture for groups which may find themselves in a defensive and peripheral position because of negative connotations attached to collective identities in popular public discourse. Diverse and positive images of Muslim cultural identity are crucial for collective self-esteem as is the greater public acknowledgment of this collective cultural identity.

This is particularly true with regard to education for children, (figure 2) young people and adults, and to the approximately 400,000 Muslims in Berlin. Ensuring that they will not only find a symbolic

Dr Stefan Weber is the Director of the Museum of Islamic Art at the Pergamon Museum in Berlin, Germany. Currently, he is organising the re-conceptualisation of the Museum of Islamic Art/Pergamon Museum, which will explore new grounds in researching and communicating the legacy of art, architecture and archaeology of the Middle East and neighbouring areas under Muslim rule.
home here, but also have access to public and state forums is now more critical than ever.

We welcome all comers; the Museum of Islamic Art at the Pergamon Museum is the most important educational institution in Germany dedicated to the history of Muslim cultures and civilizations. Educational work at the Museum of Islamic Art is of the utmost importance! One of our most crucial fields of activity, which is also of great socio-political significance, is the promotion of culture as a fundamental mainstay of national and international coexistence in the future.

Commitment to improving the Museum of Islamic Art encourages an understanding among modern nations in general and the presentation of the cultural legacy of Muslim societies to Germany in particular. We search for the means and possibilities that would allow our sometimes ill-informed contemporary public to explore positive aspects of the Middle East and to display to them the extraordinary cultural achievements in the fields of science, philosophy, medicine, architecture, and the arts. This complex cultural heritage cannot be conveyed by objects alone: a museum needs innovative and engaging museological tools, educational programs and cultural activities if it is to function as a genuine educational and cultural institution.

Starting with a donation of twenty-six carpets from the famous museum pioneer Wilhelm von Bode, the founder of the Islamic Art Department in 1904 and originator of carpet studies, the museum now has one of the most famous carpet collections in the world. The recent long-term loan of the internationally renowned Keir Collection will further enrich the museum’s holdings.

The museum will be moving inside the Pergamon Museum and re-opening with an exhibition space of about 3,000 sq m. The layout and concept will explore new and innovative ways of presenting the cultural legacy of Muslim Societies to an international audience, which now numbers more than three million visitors a year on the Museum Island. With its annual Ramadan Festival and other events year-round, it invites Muslims and non-Muslims alike to discover the rich cultural legacy of Middle Eastern societies in the centre of Berlin.

As a repository of culture, the museum not only takes care of and restores objects, but also, owing to the increasing numbers of visitors every year, performs a socio-political service. Both uninitiated visitors and people searching for their home cultures and countries come to our museum, looking for answers. In the domain of popular public discourse, which is a very sensitive area at present, we add the culture-historical value and mediate between cultures at a very high level. With its space tripling in size by 2019, and its ambition to communicate the complex cultural history of the Muslim peoples in a novel way, the Museum of Islamic Art will become the largest museum of its kind in the Western hemisphere with an international reach.

Berlin, the birthplace of Islamic archaeology and carpet studies, was until 1933 the most important early centre for the academic study of Islamic art history and archaeology. After destruction, exile and deportation, the collections in East Germany went through decades of restoration, while in Dahlem a West German Museum of Islamic art developed. The unification of Germany opened up new horizons for Islamic art and archaeology in Berlin. The unified collections opened to the public in an interim exhibition in 2001.

A grand re-opening of the newly conceived collections is scheduled for 2019 (figure 4), when the

Figure 3

Major architectural elements are one of the main attractions, providing representative environments while revealing diverse concepts of space: the monumental façade of the caliphal palace of Mshatta in Jordan (figure 3), dating from the mid-eighth century (the largest Islamic artefact in any museum); archaeological finds from the caliphal capital of Samarra in Iraq, providing evidence of global trade in the ninth century; spectacular thirteenth-century prayer niches from Kashan in Iran and Konya in Turkey; and the finely painted wooden panelling of an elegant house from Aleppo in Syria, dating from around 1600: the earliest surviving example from the Ottoman World. Interiors from similar houses not only testify to their educated owners, but also remind us of the pluralism of societies comprising people of diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds.

Figure 4
Mshatta Façade will become part of the main narrative of 6000 years of artistic legacy of the Middle East. This is a spectacular architectural promenade through ancient Egypt (the Temple of Sahurê and the Palace Gate of Kalabsha in the new fourth wing), ancient Mesopotamia (the Façade of Tell Halaf and Ishtar Gate), the Hellenistic and Roman Middle East (the Great Altar of Pergamon and Market Gate of Miletus) to the heritage of early Islamic caliphal residences (the Umayyad castles of Mshatta, Qusair Amra, and Khirbat al-Minya and the Abbasid cities of Samarra and Raqqa)—a tour unique in all the world and possible only in Berlin.

As well as having a rich collection that also acts as a cultural reservoir, the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin is one of the foremost research centres for the study of the material culture of the Middle East and adjacent areas.

Six permanent scholars are situated in the museum, and are supplemented by post-doctoral fellows and project assistants. The institution houses one of the most important collections of archival photographs on Islamic art and architecture in all of Germany as well as an internationally outstanding library focused on art, architecture and archaeology in the world of Islam (figure 5).

Our research, restoration and curatorial projects focus on cities in the Middle East, beginning with the famous excavations of the caliphal capital of Samarra in Iraq between 1911 and 1913—the birth of Islamic archaeology—and concentrate on the urban heritage of the region. Our interdisciplinary approaches combine architectural and urban research, art history and historical research, all accompanied by an interest in documents and other written evidence. One main aim is to explore, protect, restore, and present the cultural heritage and material memories of lands marked by a Muslim presence, while also training scholars, curators and conservators from these areas and elsewhere.

In conclusion, the Museum preserves, studies, restores and communicates the cultural memory of Muslim societies from the Mediterranean to the Pacific, and from Antiquity to the Modern Age. Its restoration workshops, with their four permanent restorers, enjoy an international reputation.

The museum’s textile workshop looks after one of the most comprehensive collections of carpets and textiles outside of the East. Its main focus is the conservation of knotted-pile carpets and flat-woven fabric from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries, as well as the conservation of textiles excavated during archaeological investigation. Unique in Germany, the 40-square-meter washing facility allows movement-free wet cleaning of fragile textile art. In 1972, the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art in Istanbul decided to build and equip its own workshop based on the example set by Berlin. The co-operation with conservators from Islamic cultural backgrounds makes it possible to exchange knowledge and experience with conservators of the countries of origin.

Finally, the conservation workshop in the Pergamon Museum cares for non-textile items in our museum, including works of art made of wood, stone, plaster, ceramic, metal, ivory, glass, leather and paper. The studio’s main responsibility is the conservational care of works both on exhibition and in storage. This includes the continual improvement of storage conditions as much as regular measures to ensure care and cleaning of objects on permanent exhibition. Works of art in need of conservation are examined, analysed, documented and restored using current practices. Interest in the conservation of Islamic art is encouraged among a range of experts. Co-operation with and advanced training for colleagues in conservation from Islamic countries is also a chief aim.
Early Muslim historians have documented little about the topic of the social status of women in society. This has made researching such a topic somewhat difficult for historians, who not only try to assess but understand the indispensable role women played in this early society. This problem is coupled with stereotypes embedded in our society today about how women lived in this early period. Thus, deconstructing these contemporary stereotypes is the starting point of our research which still has to face the challenge of relying for the most part on early Islamic sources. Indeed, our sources must be looked at closely and critically in order to get a glimpse of the actual role that women played in early Islamic history.

In this modest study, we try to present the actual picture reflected in our early sources about the nature of women’s role in early society. Unlike the stereotypical view which believed that women were entirely absent in early Islamic history, we notice that early scholars had no gender bias against women. On the contrary, we often see a mention of women as a mother, wife, or daughter in the biography of major scholars. Again, some women occupied significant status as scholars and historians have included their complete biographies among major scholars of that time. This shows that the early Islamic period allowed scholarly women to participate in society and the more women acquired knowledge the more their role in society and culture become visible.

Now we turn to our biographical dictionaries to find how women are presented as scholars with a significant role in passing knowledge from one generation to another. Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi is very important in this regard. He is Ahmad b. Ali b. Thabit al-Baghdadi, born in 392 AH/1001 CE and died 463 AH/1070 CE and his book “The History of Baghdad” is particularly significant for our research. It includes 7,831 biographies of major characters such as scholars of fiqh and hadith as well as statesmen and notables who lived up to the middle of fifth century AH/eleventh century CE Baghdad.

Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi presents a complete biography for any given scholar including his name, lineage, fame, his teachers and students, the place and year of his birth as well as the place and year of death. This biography included scholarly opinions about the scholar being reviewed, including his level of knowledge precision in memorizing and so forth. As for mentioning the women of Baghdad, al-Khatib al-Baghdadi deals with charitable women and those who are famous for their scholarly contributions. “The History of Baghdad” includes 32 names of scholars in religious sciences, story tellers- narrators - and the women in the caliphate palace (including 11 Sunna tellers, 5 story tellers, and 5 worshippers – 1 Sufi and four from the caliphate palace). We notice the
significance of mentioning the names of those great women though their number is statistically small when compared to men. Still we clearly see a departure from the pre-Islamic “Jahiliyah” where women were just buried alive.

The second book we use in this research is “Wafayat AL-Ayan wa Anbaa Abna Alzaman” by Ibn Khallikan. He was born Abi Al-Abbas Shams Al Din Ahmed Ibn Khalkan in in Irbil in Iraq in 608 AH/1211 CE. Ibn Khalkan was a student of the greatest judges of the period, met the greatest scholars, and he was an expert in the art of virtues. He spent most of his life in Al Sham and Egypt, where he worked as a judge. His book contains the biographies of 850 people; it is considered as a basic reference for studying Arabic and Islamic history and it was translated to many languages.

In his book, Ibn Khallikan handled different prominent characters from the pre-Islamic period till 654 A.H. He also included the history of Saffarids, Seljuqs, Umayyids, and Al-Ayoubi states. He mentioned the names of some women, despite their scarcity, with their relationship to the highlighted man like aunt, mother or sister without explaining their life story. This reflects the importance of women in the civil life of men and leads to the realisation that our early historians were never biased against women in the way that made them omit the names of women or marginalised their role in historical writing.

However Ibn Khalkan himself has declared that he rarely mentioned the names of the companions, also he was careful to obviously specify to the reader some names of women in some biographies. He would say, his mother Malikiyah bint Yazeed Binqais Al-Neke’a, the sister of Al Aswad bin Yazeed, and put her name before the name of one of the great Arab men. We can number those sixteen as follows:

- Boran, the wife of Caliph Ma’amon, with almost three pages on her; two pages on ‘Taqiyah, the daughter of Abi Al Farag (poetess); four pages on Rabe’a Al Adawiyyah (the famous worshipper); four pages on Zobaidah, the mother of the caliph Al Amin Mohammed (the son of the great Caliph Haron Al Rashid); one page on Zainab bint AlShe’ary (scientist); four pages on Sakinah bint Al Hussein, the wife of Mosa’ab Ibn Al Zobair, who he categorized as one of the most beautiful and literate women in her era; two pages on Shahdad bint Al Ebr (writer); Katr Al Nada bint Khumarawayh Ibn Ahmed Ibn Tolon, the wife of Caliph Moatadid; AlAzra’a bint Shahin Shah Ibn Ayowb, the daughter of the prince; Asma’a bint Abi Bakr Al Sadiq; Om Kolthoum bint Abi Bak Al Sediq; Set Al Sham bint Ayowb, the daughter of the prince; Nafisah bint Abi Mohamed Al Hassan bin Zayd bin Al Hassan bin Ali bin Abi Talib; Fatema bint Mohamed bin Molk Shah Al Solgoky, the daughter of the prince; bint Nezam Al Molk, the wife of the minister; Al Khansa’a bint Amr bin Sharid Al Solmi (poetess).

Take, for example, Zobaidah, the mother of caliph Al Amin Mohamed bin Haron Al Rashid. It is recorded that she spent one million seven hundred thousand Dinars to supply water to Makkah. It is also mentioned that once she spent over fifty-four million Dinars in one journey of pilgrimage to Makkah. We find those highly exaggerated sums of money mentioned in the history books, despite the uncertainty regarding the facts. This reflects the great influence of those powerful women had on the lives of their husbands, the Caliphs of the Abbashid era and on the social conditions of their society. The entry demonstrates her character as a political power among the diverse branches of the society.

The third source for biographies is bin Hajar Al Asqalani’s “Aldurarr Al-Kamenah Fee Aayaan Al-Ma’aa Athhamenah.” Ahmed bin Ali Mohamed Al Kehani Al Asqalani, Abu al-Fadl, Shehab al-Din Ibn Hajar was one of the greatest scholars in Islamic sciences and history. He published 5,400 biographies of notables, scientists, kings, writers, ministers, poets and the top Hadith scholars, starting from 101 AH/719 CE to the year 800 AH/1397 CE. What interests us in the writings of Ibn Hajar is what he wrote about women during this period. We can recognize the historian’s vision of the future for women in this middle period of Islamic history.

First of all, Ibn Hajar mentioned about 5,152 names of men in his book and 176 names of women (approximately 3% of all names). Looking at the women included, it is obviously true that this is an era with many religiously knowledgeable women (33). 81 women are shown as scholarly women who could easily fulfill gap in a class that is considered one of the best social classes of the period.

Ibn Hajar concentrated on writing biographies about women, focussing on the religious side. This is obvious in his effort to mention the times of pilgrimage for every woman, also the good deeds that they did, like charitable giving, building mosques, and helping poor people. In addition, when we read Ibn Hajar we find that he even when he focused on writing about
scholarly women and the notables of his time he described them briefly, highlighting significant socially, politically and religious attributes.

Ibn Hajar followed an approach that tilted to the critical side in the process of analysing and describing the characters he is writing about. One of the most common features of Ibn Hajar is “the repetitive signs”. Given the strong presence of women in his writings, he always mentions that this woman “X” was “the leader” or that had a “leadership” role. This signifies the reality of the position of women in those times and their important role.

The fourth source in our research is “Tabakat AL-Hufadh,” by Jalal al–Din al-Suyuti Abdulrahman b. Al-Kamal Abi Bakr bin Mohammed Sabq al-Din Al Suyuti, known as Jala Al din Al Suyuti (911 AH/1505 CE). He based his book on Al Zahaby’s book “Tathkerat Al Hufath” and combined those whose work can be analysed in the context of documentation, authentication, refutation, languishing and correction. He focussed on the works of Hadith narrators; where he classified them in twenty-four levels: the first level starts with Companions of the Prophet, peace be upon Him, and ending with Ibn Hajar at the last level. Comparing the statistical data between the number of men and women included in the book, we find that 98.8% are men while 1.2% are women.

The fifth source in our research is “Siyar A’lam Al-Nubala” by Al-Dhahabi Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn ‘Uthman ibn Qaymaz Ibn `Abd Allah; known as Shams al-Din (673 AH/1274 CE). Shams al-Din arranged his biographies on the basis of classes, which signifies certain periods of time. The book is comprised of thirty-five classes which dealt with the different Islamic eras, from the Rightly Guided Caliphs until the mid-seventh century AH/mid-thirteenth century CE. The 93 women are mentioned, including 47 female companions with a percentage that reached to 56% of the mentioned women, about 20 female scientist (about 21%) and 14 female narrators “Muhadithah” (about 13%) and 12 female politicians and wives of governors (also about 13%).

The last source is “Taqrib Al-Tahdhib” by Al-Haafidh Shihabuddin Abu’l-Fadl Ahmad ibn Ali ibn Muhammad, better known as Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani. This book is considered to be significantly important and an advanced Islamic resource on women, particularly female narrators “Muhadithat” and jurists. Ibn Hajar mentioned about 824 women (out of 8826 women mentioned in the book) who were renowned in Hadith narration up to the beginning of the third century AH/ ninth century CE. It is noticed that the female narrators who studied Hadith and science have written on many Hadiths, and the time and year of their death is often not included. For many, it was hard to determine the century or time during which they lived. Among those mentioned by Ibn Hajar are Asma’a bint Zaid Ibn Al Khattab Aladawayah, Asma’a bint Saed Zaid Amr ibn Nufail, Asma’a bint Shakl Al Ansaryah, and Asma’ bint Abdulrahman Ibn Abu Bakr Al Sediq.

In addition, Ibn Hajar specially addressed the life of Rufaidah Al Ansaryah, the woman who established a tent in the mosque in order to treat the injured. This reflects the keenness of Ibn Hajar to highlight the social activity made by women in the earlier Islamic ages. There is no doubt that this tent though was primitive, but believed to be the first Islamic hospital in the field.

Through such limited and simple illustrations we find that the women included in the previous six sources exceeded 1000, which reflects that the narration and presence of women occupied much attention of our authors and historians. This is shown clearly in the inclusion of female politicians and those classified as from the houses of the rulers, as well as female jurists, female Sufis and female poets.

Although many current writings have dealt with this topic, we still need to know more about the history of the woman especially from the Islamic sources. This means that there must be serious attempts by researchers to engage in this topic. It is important to rely on Islamic tradition and historical documents since they are considered basic and real sources and are known to be sources which we should follow without any prejudice or biases. Sources which pre-date Islam presented the biographies of women in an inherited culture. Our early historians stated that the Islamic religion elevated the standard of women and put her in a high cultural and social position so women who lived under the umbrella of Islam had a good standard of life.
Windows into Early Science: This was the opening title of an exhibit at Harvard’s Houghton Library, one that provides a good introduction to science in the Islamic Middle Ages, as well as the earlier Greek and later European traditions. The part featured here highlights Arabic scientific traditions, as distinct from those in Persian, the subject of a sequel exhibit at Brown.

The Harvard exhibit highlighted mathematical sciences in general, and optics in particular. The image associated with that exhibit represents one of most important scientific traditions, namely optics.

The first ‘Windows’ exhibit features three display cases with different labels and themes. The first case is labelled ‘From Alexandria to Baghdad’, after a well-known study with that title, and is focused on transmissions from ancient Alexandria, then part of Greece, to Baghdad as a major centre of scientific activity. The two other display cases are labelled ‘From Baghdad to Isfahan’, and ‘From Maragha to Samarqand’, with a focus on science in Persian and European lands respectively. The cases present different themes and sources, from historical ‘dialogues’ representing those themes to relevant scientific manuscripts and printed editions. A ‘dialogue of pen and sword’ represents the theme ‘science and authority’; a ‘dialogue of Baghdad and Isfahan’ represents the theme ‘science and locality’; a ‘dialogue of chess and backgammon’ represents the theme ‘science and universality’.

The first display case, labelled ‘From Alexandria to Baghdad and Beyond’ captures the theme ‘Science and Authority’ where scientific authorities go beyond ancient authors such as Euclid and Ptolemy, and political authorities beyond local patrons. The source highlighted in this case is Optics by Ibn al-Haytham, the 4th century AH/11th century CE scholar from Basra, and later Cairo, whose seven volume Optics became an authority in Europe in Latin an Italian translations and a printed edition (Basel, 1572: figure 1).

The second display case, labelled ‘From Baghdad to Isfahan and Beyond’ captures the theme ‘Science and Locality’, and contains material generated in non-Arab localities, both ethnically and geographically. A side-by-side Canon of Medicine by the contemporary Ibn Sinâ, Latinized Avicenna,
and an arithmetical work by Bahā’ Din ‘Āmilī-Shaykh Bahāyī, are written in Arabic, but clearly in Persian intellectual and national settings. A ‘dialogue between Baghdad and Isfahan’ reworked as an illuminated manuscript represents Arabic and Persian traditions, and a calendar-of time keeping contains, besides Arabic and Persian, text in Ottoman Turkish.

The third display case, labelled ‘From Maragha to Samarqand’ captures the theme of ‘Science and Universality’. Besides the Persian connections to Arabic works, in this case two astronomical authors from the 8th century AH/14th century CE, there are other elements like the locality and community of supporting institutions such as the Maragha and Samarqand schools, with Chinese and Indian scholars in the case of Maragha, and Sanskrit and Latin transmissions in the case of Samarqand. The displayed models include an astronomical device called the ‘Tusi Couple’ after the name of the Persian director of the Maragha Observatory, Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī. The models are first presented in Persian, then in Arabic and later via Sanskrit and Latin.

Such elements make designations such as ‘Arabic’, ‘Persian’, or ‘Islamic’ science quite problematic when it comes to the universality of science. What is problematic about Arabic science is non-Arabic writings or sources, about Persian science is non-Persian authors or Patrons, and about Islamic science, non-Islamic practices and institutions. There are at least three indicators for the identifications of scientific traditions and their distinctions: the texts’ linguistic expression, authors’ ethnic associations, and subjects’ geographic specifications.

The linguistic expression of a text is the most obvious indicator of what a scientific tradition is called. It is well known that the standard language of science throughout the peak period was primarily Arabic, while later Persian and Turkish traditions were typically based on the Arabic tradition. But things are not always that simple. In the case of this text, for example, this Calendar of Time-keeping (mīqāt), the headings are mostly in Arabic, figure labels in Persian, and comments in Ottoman Turkish, not to mention the Greek and Syriac astronomical names. Does this text properly belong to Arabic, Persian or Ottoman Turkish traditions?

The ethnic association of an author or patron is another important indicator, requiring their own set of considerations. In this text from an Arabic manuscript of a pseudo-Galenic work, nine Greek figures are presented, cross-legged in Islamic robes, with Arabised scripts of Greek names such as Phythagoras, Galenus written in Arabic. But it is hard to distinguish between original and dependent traditions, in both external and internal terms.

The geographic specification of a subject extends to boundaries and other local parameters. An example of a problematic case for astronomy is a place like Samarqand, long a Persian city, and now in Uzbekistan. So is an institution like the Samarqand Observatory, patronised by the Timurid Prince Ulug Beg, a Persian institution.

‘Windows into Early Science and Craft’

This was the opening title of an exhibit at Brown University’s John Hay Library displaying the Persian manuscripts of the Minassian Collection that shifts the focus to Persian and to the subject of the ‘science of stars’, and ‘craft of war instruments’. The sources for Persian scientific traditions may be scientific; but they can also be literary or material sources. (figure 2)

A good example of a scientific source is a Persian work with astronomical concepts and figures displayed at the second ‘Windows’ exhibit. One of these is in the tradition of star catalogues, a subject within the science of stars (‘ilm al-nujūm) with a rich Arabic and Persian tradition starting from the Greek tradition of Ptolemy in the 2nd century, CE. The earliest known work in that tradition is the Arabic Book of Constellation (Ṣuwar al-kawākib) by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Şūfī, from the 4th century AH/10th
century CE. Such works include northern and southern constellations, like Pegasus (faras) from the manuscript of Sufi’s text illustrated by his own son, and not always identical with Ptolemy’s Star Catalogue.

A good example of a literary source for scientific traditions is the Persian Book of Kings (Shahnameh) of Firdausi, from around the same period. The verses above the title ‘Education of Alexander’ (Dānish Āmūkhtan-i Iskandar), reflect the standard vocabulary of the time for the seven heavenly spheres and twelve zodiac constellations.

And a good example of a material source for scientific traditions is a celestial globe, by a certain Kirmānī from about 7th century AH/13th century CE. This object positions astronomical constellations on a globe.

The case for the ‘science of wars’ is similar. Firdausi’s Book of Kings (Shahnameh) from the 4th century AH/10th century CE, for example, contains the poet’s description of ‘Iron Men and Horses’. It tells how Alexander of Macedonia, after his defeat of Persia, goes to India where King Für and his army of elephants force him to seek extraordinary war instruments like hollow iron statues of men on iron horses, filled with flammable mixes to scare the elephants of the Indian army and defeat it.

A scientific source corresponding to such war instruments is a work called Jāmi’ al-‘ulūm of Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī (d. ca. 1210), with an excerpt from The Science of War Instruments (‘ilm-i ālāt-i al-ḥurūb), including nine instruments used in battles. This is an unusual case where a Persian scientific work does not correspond to one in Arabic.

There are other cases for the relationship between Arabic and Persian sources, which may now be summarize as a good introduction to the second part of this paper. The least common case is a Persian composition without any Arabic correspondence, like Razi’s Persian ‘Compendium of Sciences’. This may be usefully contrasted to a Persian translation from Arabic, such as that by Razi’s contemporary Ṣūfī, namely a Persian translation of Ṣūfī’s Book of Constellations (Ṣuwar al-kawākib). Another rare case is an Arabic and Persian composition by one and the same author, like the Book of Instruction, or Kitāb al-Tafhīm of Abū Rayḥān Bīrūnī, from the 4th century AH/10th century CE, whose Persian version is dedicated to Rayhāna bint al-Ḥasan, a supposed female courtier.

A rather common case, on the other hand, is an Arabic composition with later Persian versions. An example of this is a Book of Geometrical Constructions (A’māl al-handasa), by the contemporary Abū al-Wafā Buzjānī. Buzjānī was known to have observed in Baghdad in coordination with Bīrūnī, in Khwarazm, a lunar eclipse covered in Bīrūnī,’s Book of Instructions (Tafhīm).

No less common is the case of an Arabic composition without a Persian correspondence altogether. The Kitāb al-Manāẓir of Ibn al-Haytham from the same century as Bīrūnī, is one such case. The composition has no equivalents in any language and the only Arabic edition is published in Kuwait by Abdel Hamid Sabra (The National Council for Cultures, Arts and Letters, 1983 and 2002). The seven-volume Optics became so important in Europe that it won its author, Ibn al-Haytham, a place next to later European scientists such as Galileo, in a frontispiece from the Renaissance period to represent textual and experimental traditions.

‘Micro-mapping Early Science’

This is the title of an ongoing project with a focus on the period of people like Ibn al-Haytham, Bīrūnī, Buzjānī, and Ṣūfī working within various parts of Islamic lands during the 4th century AH/10th century CE, and how the evolving technologies can even direct, not just facilitate such efforts. The ‘Micro-mapping project’ involves creating interactive maps for specific areas and periods, with zooming and colour-coding capabilities for selected case studies and transmission problems. (figure 3)
Micro-mapping Islamic lands in about the year 1000, for instance, allow one to zoom in on places besides Basra or Cairo. Examples from the same period pose interesting historical questions. For example, are *The Book of Instruction* by Bīrūnī, *The Book of Construction* by Buzjānī, and the *Book of Constellations* by Ṣūfī, all with Arabic and Persian scientific traditions?

The questions posed by each of these books are naturally different. In the case of the *Book of Instruction*, where we have compositions in both Arabic and Persian by Bīrūnī, the most immediate question is which composition came first and who is the female commissioner of the Persian version? For this, following the footsteps of Bīrūnī by micro-mapping his patrons, may be helpful. In the case of the *Book of Constructions*, questions include where and when were its different Persian versions composed, and can Buzjānī be considered the author of that trilingual time keeping calendar? For this, microscopic work has turned up the names of later authors such as Maghribī from the 7th century AH/13th century CE, something which makes the Buzjānī attribution unlikely and a later tradition based on his work much more likely. As for the *Book of Constellations*, the questions include what are its relation of this to Bīrūnī’s *Tafhīm* and of the latter to comparable manuscript collections elsewhere.

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Weaving in the Arabian Gulf:
Historical Traditions and Future Prospects

Keireine Canavan
Presented in English
25 April 2011

The historical weaving traditions of the Arabian Gulf are a vibrant and essential element of traditional material culture. The ancient Bedouin tribal weaving art form is in its broadest linguistic identity rhythmically linked to poetry, memory, the weaving practice, the extension of the hand, and the graceful moving pace of a camel. The resultant traditional woven textiles convey the Bedouin's rich heritage and instinctive awareness of natural beauty, with patterns and designs messaging the nomadic lifestyle, the desert environment, and the emphasis of symmetry and balance due to the making process.

Nothing is written down or recorded. Due to widespread illiteracy of Bedouin nomadic tribes people, all motifs, patterns and associated symbolism are memorised and passed from generation to generation, by word of mouth and example.

This lecture discussed findings of the ongoing field study of Bedouin textiles in the Arabian Gulf, focussing on Kuwait's al Sadu textiles, in collaboration with University of Wales, Cardiff, AlSadu Weaving Co-operative Society, Sadu House, Kuwait National Museum, National Museum of Scotland, Bedouin master-weavers, academics, poets and social anthropologists. The oral histories of a dwindling number of master-weavers are video-recorded and documented to preserve the declining memory, practice and awareness, and to prevent further loss.

The focus is on the interpretation of the woven patterns and symbols of the central tent divider or bei al-sha’ar, within the sharjarah panel [Note: a decorative textile panel], establishing the wealth of meaning and communication from the codes or pictographic language. Quoted from recorded interviews, the lecture discussed contemporary weavers’ knowledge of the names and meaning of single motifs or components of motifs, if names and definitions are personal testimony only to the weaver who created them, and whether the language of AlSadu has been lost in modern-day Kuwait, appreciated only for its traditional aesthetic values.

It is known that the Greek and Ottoman Empires influenced architecture and crafts, but nomadic tribes people and cultural interactions of the past, disregard political borders and political agreements, making it very difficult to accurately attribute material culture to specific tribes and places of origin. Long before Islam, these migratory cultures from the vast region of the Arabian Gulf had been influencing one another, as evidenced archaeologically. These migratory cultures shared weaving techniques and common functions, as was typical across the world along the silk and trade routes.

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Women wove the traditional Bedouin tent or ‘beit al Sha’ar’ and all the furnishings within it, on simple ground looms. They also wove most of the camel trappings and associated decorations. The most important woven items were the tent itself, the rugs, storage bags, cushions and the tent divider, which was the most impressive and magnificence achievement of the weavers. These large patterned textiles protrude out from the traditional Bedouin tent, to segregate the men and the women’s quarters. Tents vary in style throughout the region, but are essentially the same, with variations in Bahrain and the UAE where the tents are rather less impressive, and in Oman where the custom was to make smaller tents.

The tent divider is the most decorated and impressive item with an interesting array of motifs and symbols. It was regarded as an important part of a woman’s possessions or trousseau and accompanies her into marriage. With its strong geometric and symbolic designs, and deep rich colours, the creation and production of this extraordinary textile enabled the weaver to express her technical skills but also her ingenuity as a weaver. There were no borders or framework, but seemed to flow endlessly, representing the desert environment, and were woven for special occasions, or as gifts to tribal leaders, and were testimony of a tribe’s wealth and prestige.

Throughout the ages, textiles are recognised as an essential element of material culture, and textiles across the world represent a vitally important requirement for lifestyle and innovation. But textiles are also an important part of human creativity, and early man appreciated pattern and decoration, as shown in early cave paintings and as seen in the very early extant textile fragments found in Yemen. Likewise, textiles were important for the nomadic Bedouins of the Arabian Gulf, where textiles serve the everyday nomadic needs of the people for utilitarian requirements and at all major life ceremonies.

Camels were adorned with large, elegant wooden frames or litters, constructed from pomegranate or tamarind wood, for times of migration or battle. The litters were impressively decorated with narrow woven strips of intricately patterned textiles and tassels. Smaller wooden frames were covered with woollen shawls or blankets and decorated imaginatively, sometimes including cowrie shell decorations. Here the women would sit with their babies and possessions, sheltering from the sun. Camel trappings and decorations were normally woven by the women, but according to JRL Carter (1982) men made many of the simple ropes, girth straps and camel halters, particularly in Oman, where a greater variety of camel trappings were made.

Apart from the colourful weaving traditions of the Bedouin women, urban weaving was done by men on pit looms producing fine woven fabrics for cloaks or bisht. In Yemen and Oman, men undertook some of the functional weaving elements, weaving simple, loose woven textiles without complex patterning. In Saudi Arabia only the women weave. There are understandably overlaps and a sharing of techniques among all countries in the region, but one universal method, for all, is to weave narrow textile strips, which are then stitched together to make larger textiles.

HRP Dickson, the great British chronicler and political agent to Kuwait, recorded Bedouin lifestyle customs and aspects of material culture in the early 1930’s. Much of his information applied closely to north-east Saudi Arabia, when nomadic lifestyles predominated.

There were similarities of colour with a wide range of oranges and red predominating, with
accents colours of natural blacks, whites and beiges with occasionally highlights of green or blue. Natural dyes were traditionally used, sourced from the desert environment, but chemical dyes from India have long been available throughout the region, and Yemen and Oman had thriving indigo industries in the past. Dickson’s wife, Dame Violet Dickson MBE published her findings on the flora and fauna of Kuwait, inadvertently collecting important data about natural dyeing materials. Sadly much of this knowledge has already been lost among weavers in Kuwait.

Poetry for Bedouin tribespeople exemplified their skills as storytellers, which was at times predominately boastful and rather bold. In contrast, Bedouin textiles showcased not only the women’s dexterity and skill, but also her emotional sentiments. The motifs and patterns are based on a series of dots, stripes, and triangles, which are combined and repeated to flow in parallel and symmetrical lines. Symmetry and rhythm are very important principles in the design composition and link to the rhythm of poetry, the desert cycle, and the rhythmical pace of the camel.

Camel branding or wasm denote tribal ownership of camels and other animals. When Bedouin weavers include wasms into their weavings, it indicates tribal identity or ownership, but also act as a form of signature of the weaver.

A typical symbol of concentric diamonds is thought to represent water ponds, and due to the significance of water in the desert, and how a water pool quickly evaporates or sinks into the sand, the decreasing concentric shapes suddenly come to life and have more meaning. A simple zig-zag pattern denotes a snakes-path impression in the sand, and figurative forms of humans, camels, coffee pots, jewellery and possibly a transistor radio are seen. Rows of repeating triangles represent loftiness or sublimity, but can also represent sand dunes, piles of dates or birds wings. Or are they simple geometric shapes, due to the limitations of the basic ground loom?

It is important to remember that the Interpretations of motifs and symbols, can only be known and attributed to the actual weaver herself at the time of weaving construction. Anything else can only be based on informed knowledge and personal experience.

I was funded by the University of Wales, UK for a nine-month research sabbatical in Kuwait, which I undertook at Sadu House, the National Museum and later at National Museum in Scotland. With kind permission from Sheikha Altaf Al-Sabah to study at Sadu House, I collaborated with Dr Ali Alnajadah from the Basic College of Education, PAEET and researched the semiotics of the sharjarah of carefully selected textiles from the permanent collection.

The aim of the study was to understand the patterns and symbols; the unwritten lexicon that unlocks the weaver’s interpretation of her cultural and social history. These textiles convey an important message. They speak a silent, yet eloquent language that is in danger of being lost forever.

Contemporary Designs Projects

During my research in Kuwait, I was approached by the Kuwait Naval Force to design some new motifs and shajarah symbols as a gift from Kuwait to the Defence Academy in London. I created a mix of old and new designs and worked with Master Weaver Muteira, to include ‘Kuwait’, the British flag and the Defence Academy emblem. I started by
sketching and formulating design ideas including camels, scissors, earrings, coffee pots.

The designs were then transposed by Master Weaver Mateira Theferee into woven textiles. While some of the images were familiar, Mateira found transposing new designs from 2D drawn images on paper into the woven textiles very difficult at times. Normally weavers rely upon motifs and symbols that are learned from observation, earlier in her life, or by using their own creativity and ingenuity. After many trials and refining, the final textile was completed and was gifted to the Defence Academy in London, where it now hangs.

University of Wales Institute Cardiff UWIC Textile Design Student Competition 2011

I directed a ‘live’ sponsored competition with final year textile design students in Cardiff UK. Students were introduced to textiles of the Arabian Gulf and the traditional process of production by means of lectures, images and literature. I described modern day Kuwait and shared my own research information with them. None of the students had visited Kuwait at this point.

The undergraduate students, having a thorough understanding of textile hand-processes, worked in a design studio, interpreting their own understanding of Bedouin culture and traditional textiles. Inspired by geometric diamonds or triangles, cultural mixes of Arabic coffee pots and the British obsession with drinking tea, and modern Kuwaiti architecture, the students began by sketching their ideas, which culminate in impressive and exciting digital designs created on computers, prior to being either hand or digitally rendered into paper or fabric samples.

Modern design interpretations are not trying to copy or replace the original Bedouin textiles. Nor

Thanks to Dr Canavan for the photographs used in this article.
are they trying to speed up the process making, but they are emulating something of the beauty of the original textiles, in a contemporary way for a new, contemporary market.

Conclusion

Today, due to rapid regional cultural and economic changes in the Arabian Gulf, where hand made glimpses of historic traditions are the only faint reminders of the past, it is obvious that many of the regional traditions are fast disappearing in the face of mechanisation and modernism. Due in part to the settlement of the Bedouin people and rapid economic developments, the requirement of Bedouin traditions has diminished, and the number of weavers has declined considerably.

In fact many of those who remain are in the autumn years of life, leaving only a few women who retain the knowledge, the skills, the memories and the oral history. Due to widespread illiteracy, nothing is written down, and while these textiles still retain a role today, particularly with the older generations, at traditional ceremonies and on special occasions, Bedouin weaving in the main has lost its importance as a utilitarian and vital cultural craft form.

I believe that the significance of preserving this identity, with all the associated knowledge and skills, is crucial if it is not to be lost forever. The young generation are familiar with computers & digitalised imagery and CAD/CAM production. It is my opinion that if these textiles are to be recognised to value the cultural heritage that they portray, it is by means of improved preservation and storage of extant textiles, and the investment of academic research and beyond existing educational programmes, both here in Kuwait at Sadu House and in Oman, I believe further educational awareness is required.

I believe it is a duty that we, who are concerned with art and traditional crafts, and their place in civilisation, need to blend the traditional and the contemporary, to encourage the mix of hand craft and digital application to ensure a future for these textile traditions. A commitment to inspire the next generation and to create new designs and applications is required if we are to sustain something of this beautiful and majestic Arabian tradition for the future.
Ceramic Sculpture from the Medieval Islamic World

Melanie Gibson
Presented in English
16 May 2011

It is generally assumed that sculpture did not form part of Islamic artistic output and in one sense this is true - there was never a tradition of making life-size portrait sculpture in the Classical sense. However, the surviving material evidence suggests that in the period from the mid-12th to mid-13th centuries CE several types of three-dimensional objects became fashionable. These include a group of life-size painted stucco figures wearing lavish costumes with crowns and jewellery and bearing arms; these were not carved in the round but were designed to be secured to a flat surface and were probably positioned around the walls of the palace throne room and represented members of the imperial guard, or perhaps even members of the ruling family.

Of a more popular nature were a range of metalwork animals, principally lynxes and different types of bird, made with pierced walls to serve as incense burners. But the most numerous group of sculptural objects were made in glazed ceramics in a wide array of shapes, depicting animals such as the lion, bull, camel, elephant and monkey, various birds and mythical creatures, and most interestingly of all, human figures in a variety of poses.

The main production centre for luxury ceramics in this period was Kashan in central Iran. There are few records of the city’s industrial history before this time but by the 12th century CE it had become pre-eminent in ceramics production. The Arabic and Persian words for tiles and pottery are kashī or kashanī; it seems that ceramics manufacture became so closely identified with the town, that the product came to be named after it. A considerable number of signed and dated pieces survive which name the city and establish the chronological framework of production there. Raqqa in Syria was also an important production centre for ceramics in this period but unfortunately Raqqa craftsmen did not sign and date their pieces.

One of the triggers for the extensive new ceramics industry in Kashan seems to have been the development of a composite body material now variously described as stonepaste or fritware. The Persian author Abū'l-Qāsim al-Kashanī lists its ingredients as ten parts of quartz, one part crushed glass and one part fine white clay. When fired the material was hard and white, the best imitation of Chinese porcelain so far achieved by Islamic potters. The small amount of clay in the fabric made it less malleable than earthenware and consequently less easy to manipulate on the wheel and this restriction encouraged the potters to refine moulding and casting techniques. The manufacture of three-dimensional objects was an obvious progression to experiments with casting in moulds.

Dr Melanie Gibson is the co-curator of an exhibition on Syrian art to be held at the Royal Academy in London in 2013. She has lectured on Islamic ceramics and glass at SOAS, Sotheby’s Institute of Art, The Aga Khan University, and as part of the Victoria & Albert Museum’s ‘Arts of Asia 1500 – 1900’ programme. Dr Gibson has presented at academic conferences, including a recent paper on ceramics from Iran and Syria at the Association of Art Historians conference.
The production process for the figurines involved several stages: first the manufacture of a model carved out of wood or modelled out of clay which served as a master copy from which a terracotta or plaster mould was made in two or more parts. To make each figure, two portions of the stoneware were rolled into flat discs and pressed into both halves of a mould; the mould might be decorated with incised or relief decoration so that when the stoneware was firmly pressed into or over the mould it was imprinted with the decoration in relief.

A great many figurines are decorated with lustre which has allowed me to suggest a putative chronology for their production. Some years ago Dr. Oliver Watson analysed the dated pieces known to him and established a chronological framework based on groups of design elements within three sequential styles which he described as the monumental, miniature and Kashan styles. (Persian Lustre Ware, London, 1985) Subsequently Dr. Robert Mason compiled a more nuanced typology of motifs and forms which could be applied to the analysis of lustre-wares and identified eleven distinct groups which he dated from 1100–1340 (‘Medieval Iranian lustre-painted and associated wares: typology in a multidisciplinary study’, Iran 1997, Vol. XXXV: 103-35). There is little evidence for the production of lustre wares in Kashan as early as 1100. The two earliest known pieces are a bowl and a fragmentary bottle, both dated 1179, although the quality of the lustre and fluently painted designs show that by this date the industry was well past the experimental stage. The decoration of the figurines suggests they should be dated to the period from c.1150-1200.

The human figurines allow us a close glimpse at the inhabitants of this period in terms of costume, hairstyle and jewellery. Most unusual are a group made in the form of women with a baby suckling at the breast. One of the best examples, in the Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin, is a large hollow figure decorated with lustre. The potter attempted quite successfully to keep the areas of flesh on both woman and child white, while the headdress and garment were coloured a pale cobalt blue. The moulding of the areas in relief is only partly accurate - the infant’s legs are cut off at the knee where they are hidden by the woman’s hair and the covered breast, although outlined, is completely flat in contrast to the rounded exposed breast. The child raises its hand to guide the breast into its open mouth, a charmingly realistic gesture; it is clearly not a new-born baby- its features and long hair suggest an infant several years old. The mother wears an open coat with narrow sleeves, fastened by a circular buckle over a shift through which the breast protrudes. The woman’s hair hangs down almost to her knees in long tresses; more strands fall along her shoulders and a veil attached to the headdress hangs down her back. She wears a crown shaped headdress with a triangular peak at the centre and a moulded pearl base; a small crescent shaped fringe of hair is just visible below the crown. Her physiognomy is of the typical Turkic type with a circular face, narrow eyes, high cheekbones and a dimpled chin. The centre of the forehead and each cheek were decorated with tattoos.

The figurines of breast-feeding women show a wide range, with variations in size and type of glaze. Lustre-glazed examples are the most carefully decorated, as one would expect from a technique which required expensive materials and two firings, whereas other examples are smaller and shaped and glazed in a bowl and a fragmentary bottle, both dated 1179, although the quality of the lustre and fluently painted designs show that by this date the industry was well past the experimental stage. The decoration of the figurines suggests they should be dated to the period from c.1150-1200.

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Figure 1
Figure 2
more cursory manner. Whatever their overall quality, the figures all share certain characteristics - they were all formed in a mould which dictated the consistency of their shape, but details of costume and jewellery varied according to the potter’s imagination. The women sit cross-legged and cradle the child with both arms supporting the body; the head in the crook of the elbow and the feet supported by the other hand. The figures are hollow, glazed on the interior and have a wide opening in the top; the headdress is generally formed with a pointed central element which functioned as a pouring lip.

This image is so unusual that it would appear these figurines, all of which served as vessels, must have had a very specific function related to the image they portrayed. In the pre-modern age pregnancy and childbirth were fraught with danger and uncertainty and women sought all manner of amulets and talismans to assist and preserve them; drinking from a vessel in the form of a nursing woman may well have been considered a protective measure to ensure a good supply of breast milk and the health of the mother and child. Breast milk was more than just the perfect baby food; it was also believed to cure ophthalmia and to have other therapeutic qualities.

Other types of human figurines include musicians, drinkers and various attendants, the type of occupations enjoyed within a palace or elite environment. Several of the musician figures are identifiable as women. The singing girl who accompanied herself with a lute or tambourine often featured in the stories of the Maqāmāt and All Layla wa Layla and was depicted in illustrated manuscripts (figure 1). Such performers were highly educated and had an extensive knowledge of songs and poetry. Figurines of tambourine players hold a circular instrument against the left shoulder which would be tapped rhythmically with the right hand. This percussion instrument, known as the tār, was made with a layer of goat or sheepskin strung tightly onto a wooden frame with metal rings attached to the interior face. Another group hold the angular harp, the curved wooden sound-box held upright while both hands strummed the strings. The musicians are shown cross-legged and wearing the same type of costume and headdress as the breast-feeding figures. A figurine depicted resting on one knee proffers a round object with two tubular spouts (figure 2); this was a leather pouch containing qumis, an alcoholic drink made from fermented mare’s milk. Leather was the ideal receptacle for freshly-made qumis because it stretched to accommodate the expansion of the fermenting liquid and its mouldable form made it suitable for transport on horseback.

A very specific type of attendant, of which there are several examples decorated in lustre, is a standing figure in a conical hat holding a straight stick directly in front of him in a defensive stance. This figure can be identified as the hājib, a type of guard under the jurisdiction of the amīr hājib, the chamberlain and head of palace security who controlled the access of visitors to the ruler. The manufacture of ceramic models of the hājib suggests that his role was not limited to court circles, but that such individuals also played a role in guarding the members of well-to-do households. This appears to be confirmed by the arrangement of three standing metal figures, positioned on the front face of a wooden strong-box with a combination dial, as if to stand guard over its valuable contents. The figures hold their hands cupped to hold a now missing element, most likely a vertical pole or mace, the defensive weapon held by the ceramic hājib figures. The box is signed by its maker, Muhammad ibn Hāmid al-Asturlābī al-Isfahānī and dated 1196-7, making it contemporary with the ceramic examples.

The Seljuqs, a nomadic people before their conquest of the Islamic territories, remained dependent on their horses and the image of the horseman is ubiquitous in this period, not least in the form of figurines. No two figures are exactly alike: some are hunting figures with a cheetah riding on the crupper of the horse, others show a warrior armed with a particular weapon. In most respects the figurines are closely comparable to the images of horsemen depicted on contemporary ceramics and inlaid metalwork, but the forming of a three-dimensional figure in clay imposed certain limitations on the complexity of the pose that could be achieved by the potter. The three-dimensional depiction of the horse had to be shown with straight legs fixed to a base, whereas two-dimensional horses were always shown in motion. These same technical limitations prevented the addition of projecting elements such as arms holding a bow or extended to support a falcon. Depictions of horsemen on minā’a ware show a wealth of detail in the harness and armour, but this could not be matched by a moulded surface, painted with colours which had a tendency to run in the firing. Nevertheless, it is clear that the potters were familiar with the correct arrangement of the equipment and harness, even if the medium imposed certain restrictions on its accurate realisation. The horses, although fairly schematically rendered, are nevertheless recognisable as the small mountain ponies favoured by the Seljuqs for their speed.
and stamina. Proportions were not carefully observed, and on some figures the rider was very large, relative to his horse. The riders are shown in some detail from the waist up but their legs and feet were moulded in very shallow relief, occasionally indicated by a painted outline, but otherwise giving the rider the appearance of a centaur, and growing out of the body of the horse.

A sculpture of a kneeling man is most unusual for its size and appearance. It shows a man with a long beard, kneeling with his hands resting on his knees (figure 3). (Khalili Collection, London; a second very similar example is in a Turkish private collection). The painting of the figures shows the work of a highly skilled artist, with a delicate touch in rendering the details of hair and physiognomy. The face is long with high cheekbones, arching brows and almond-shaped eyes; the nose is in relief and the nostrils carefully delineated. The long hairs of the beard and moustache are individually visible, as are the short hairs at the nape of the neck and the faint shadow of beard growth below the cheekbones. The glazing also required great skill: the skin of the face and hands were left the creamy white of the stoneware, whereas the garments were glazed cobalt and turquoise. The figure wears a turquoise qabā’ patterned with leafy spirals, a pale blue cloak with a floral design draped over his shoulders and a pale scarf which falls in elegant folds around his neck. On his head he wears a pointed conical hat with a tall brim on which there is an inscription written in naskhi script:

‘Our Lord Tughril, the Sultan, the learned, the just [in the] year thirty eight five hundred.’ (which equates to 1143-4).

This inscription, while apparently identifying the subject of the sculpture and the date of production, is problematic. The sequencing of the numbers is unusual and the date cannot refer to the manufacture since this style is not known until the end of the 12th century, nor does the rule of any of the Seljuq sultans named Tughril coincide with the date 1143. Michael Rogers, in order to explain this disjunction, suggested that this object was made as a monumental chess piece to commemorate the fierce struggle in which the brothers Mas’ūd and Tughril participated to establish the succession (Earthly Beauty, Heavenly Art, catalogue of an exhibition at De Niewe Kerk, Amsterdam 1999). As the date of 1143 falls within the reign of the victor Mas’ūd, this piece could thus be the surviving remnant of a set in which the two brothers were depicted as the opposing kings. In ceramic terms this argument appears unsustainable since there is no evidence that the underglaze painted technique had been developed in Kashan by 1143. Only if the numbers of the date were transposed - an error that seems inconceivable on a piece of this quality- and the intended date was 1187, would the object fit within the period in which Kashan was producing its finest wares and would also correspond with the regnal period of the last Seljūq sultan, Tughril III who reigned from 1176-94. Other anomalies include the kneeling stance and the costume, neither of which relate to the customary depiction of a ruler figure. The turquoise qabā’, pale blue cloak, scarf and conical hat resemble the costume and tall hat of the Sufi mystic, the khirqa and qalansuwa. According to manuals of Sufi practice the colour of the khirqa indicated the Sufi’s degree of spiritual advancement- a turquoise robe could only be worn by a mystic who had reached the higher stages of his spiritual journey. The cloak and the scarf, worn in imitation of the prophet Muhammad, were further indications of this elevated level.

The range of animal and bird figurines is wide but the largest single group consists of bovine figures, was made in both Kashan and Raqqa. The function of the figurines, and the manner in which they were represented, differed according to the region in which
they were produced. Potters in Syria created bull and cow figures as decorative sculptures with no openings; the animal they represented is clearly identifiable as the zebu, a type of domesticated cattle found across Asia and Africa which was distinguished by a hump on the back and a dewlap hanging down the neck. The Iranian figurines (figure 4) were made according to a much more schematic prototype, as vessels with a filler-spout attached to the back and an opening through the muzzle. Their sex is ambiguous and the Persian word گاو  (gāv), which is not gender-specific, can be understood to mean cow or bull.

Bull-shaped vessels had a very long history in Iran where they formed part of cult ritual. In the earliest phases of the Zoroastrian religion a ritual sacrifice of the bull took place but this was eventually replaced by offerings of libations in bull-shaped vessels. The symbolism of the bull appears to have remained ingrained within Iranian culture even after conversion to Islam. Research by the scholar Souren Melikian-Chirvani has found that the medieval bull-shaped vessels were used to contain wine in a ritual celebration of the dawning of Nawrūz, a festival which had strong links to ancient Zoroastrian practice. An 11th century Persian lexicography refers to the takūk گاوی (takūk gāvi) which the author defines as a bull-shaped vessel made from ceramic, gold or other material which was used as a wine vessel. (‘Les taureaux à vin et les cornes à boire de l’Iran Islamique’, Histoire et Cultes de l’Asie Centrale Préislamique, Paris 1991)

The production of ceramic sculpture appears to have been a fashion initiated and pursued within the cultural milieu of Seljūq society in its widest possible sense, encompassing the regime in Iran, as well as its successor dynasties further west in Syria, the Jazīra and Anatolia. But what was the market for these figures, in other words who was buying them? The subject matter of the figurines includes many familiar themes associated with palace life but the images of breast-feeding women and animals such as the bull, and the cockerel are not so familiar in contemporary iconography and seem intended for a much broader cross-section of the population. The quality of many of the figurines, with their simple glazes and cursory decoration, suggests that like much contemporary tableware they were intended for the middle, rather than luxury section, of the market. A rare textual reference by the Ayyubid historian Sibt ibn al-Jawzī describes how a kawwāz or jug-maker responded to the sight of a fat Ayyūbid prince entering Baghdad by producing pottery caricatures of him on horseback. The anecdote is indicative of the popular market attracted to this type of figurine, not the ruling elite who would have been appalled at this mockery, but the middle classes who enjoyed poking fun at their overlords.

The trend for ceramic sculpture appears to have ended almost as suddenly as it began. On the eastern and western sides of the central Islamic world the Ilkhanids and Mamluks inherited an artistic tradition characterised by the diversity of its figurative imagery, but within a generation or two this had been replaced by a completely different aesthetic. Ceramic sculpture, as an art form patronised by the middle classes, might have been expected to continue enjoying a popular appeal, particularly if associated with an annually occurring festival such as Nawrūz. However, artistic trends inevitably followed the lead set by the court, and it seems that the fashion for such objects had played itself out.

Figure 1: Seated tambourine player; painted in black and cobalt under a transparent turquoise glaze, H. 15.8 cm., Kashan or Raqqa c. 1150-1220, al-Sabah collection, Kuwait LNS 305 C

Figure 2: Qumis server; painted in black and cobalt under a transparent turquoise glaze, H. 25.9 cm., Kashan or Raqqa c. 1150-1220, al-Sabah collection, Kuwait LNS 36 C

Figure 3: Kneeling figure in Sufi garb; painted in black with areas of blue and turquoise under a transparent glaze; H. 40.5 cm., Kashan c. 1180-1220 Khalili collection, London POT 1310

Figure 4: گاو  vessel, lustre painted over a white glaze, H. 14.3 cm., Kashan c. 1175-1200, Victoria & Albert Museum, London, loan J. Ades 8
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Explicit Liber Regis qui dictur Caputbrevium, quem ipse dimissit in Domo Temple Maioricis, arabice scriptum

Llibre del Repartiment de Mallorca o Llibre del Rei

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applications on the same subject. The company prepared special brochures on the Amricani Cultural Centre (shown to the right) and created iPad applications for that purpose.

SK is one of Korea’s leading companies, working in the textile, oil and natural gas, and telecommunications fields. The company is also a long-time friend of Kuwait. In November 2011, SK E & C general manager for Kuwait, Mr. Won Sub Shim and Mrs. Lee Yoon Jung visited the Amricani Cultural Centre to participate in the opening celebration. During the visit, Sheikha Hussah took Dr. Lina Lee, vice president SK holdings visited the Amricani Cultural Centre to the guests on a tour of the exhibitions in the centre. She then enjoyed a taste of Korean culture when presented with a beautiful Hanbok, the traditional women’s dress. Dr. Lina Lee, vice president SK holdings visited the Amricani Cultural Centre to participate in the opening celebration. During the visit, Sheikha Hussah took Dr. Lina Lee, vice president SK holdings visited the Amricani Cultural Centre to the guests on a tour of the exhibitions in the centre. She then enjoyed a taste of Korean culture when presented with a beautiful Hanbok, the traditional women’s dress.
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The ReviewSK

Former President George H.W. Bush wrote a very thoughtful foreword for the book. In September, Sheikha Hussah received a message from former President Bush noting how much he enjoyed the book.

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