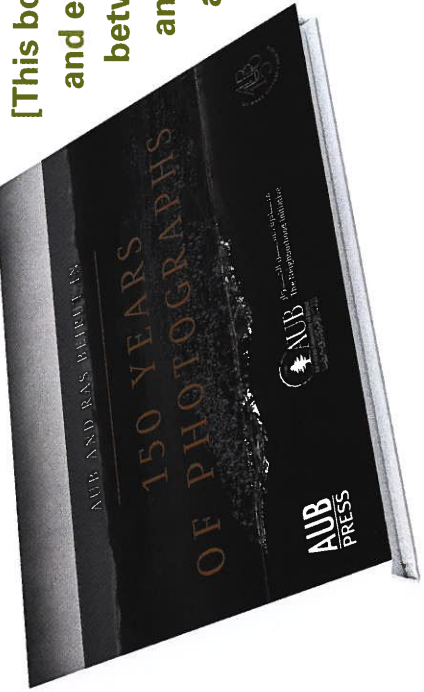




REVIEWS

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

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[This book] "evinces the rich and enduring relationship and its surroundings ... between the university and the bonds formed and place over 150 years."

AUB and Ras Beirut in 150 Years of Photographs

Maria Bashshur Abunassar. 2018, AUB Press, 978-9-95358-6-359, \$50. This coffee-table volume of photography focusing on the American University of Beirut (AUB) and the community of which it's a part is one that readers familiar with the Lebanese capital will undoubtedly enjoy. Published as a companion to the eponymous photo exhibition marking AUB's 150th anniversary in 2016, its 230 pages feature some 380 color and black-and-white photos, several previously published in *Aramco-World*. The book includes photographs of landmarks such as the university, Bliss and Hamra streets, 'Ayn al-Mreisseh and the Saint George Hotel, as well pictures of the old tram line, Uncle Sam's restaurant, Clemenceau and Sadat streets, Pigeon Rocks, Manara and the Corniche area. Historic maps and views from the sky show how the Ras Beirut area has grown and evolved from 1876 to the present. —WILLIAM TRACY



Islamic Monuments in Cairo: The Practical Guide
Caroline Williams. 2018, AUC Press, 9-789-77416-855-0, \$29.95 pb. Cairo's historic center contains "the most concentrated, most numerous, the most varied collection of monuments in the Islamic world," Caroline Williams reminds readers in this updated, seventh edition of her classic guide. This comprehensive and compact edition is easily totable in a backpack or hip pocket. The guide is indispensable for exploring Cairo's architectural and cultural history, from its founding era in the seventh century CE to the Ottoman period and beyond. Williams reports that since the book's last edition was published in 2008, old residences "have been rescued from oblivion," while the cleaning and restoration of many monuments, such as the 13th-century tomb of Shajar al-Durr, with its glorious mosaics, have been made "beautiful and delightful" and "visible once more." Sadly, other sites such

as the 14th-century Mosque of Al-Ingbugha al-Maridani have suffered neglect or damage. Loaded with practical information and details, this title remains unmatched. —TOM VERDE



Rewriting the Nation in Modern Kazakh Literature: Elites and Narratives
Diana T. Kudaibergenova. 2017, Lexington Books, 978-1-49852-892-0, \$95 hb. In the early part of the 20th century, when Kazakhstan was transitioning from a Russian tsarist colonial outpost to a socialist republic in the Soviet Union, a movement of Kazakh intellectuals and political activists emerged. Known as the Alash, this group introduced the birth of both Kazakh literature and the Kazakh nation. The author, a Kazakh graduate of Cambridge University, examines the relationship of Kazakh modernity and nationalism, and the "cultural production of generations of pre-Soviet, Soviet, and post-Soviet writers in Kazakhstan." Literature became the main "channel of communica-



The Vanishing Stepwells of India
Victoria Lautman. 2017, Merril Publishers, 978-1-85894-658-0, \$60 hb. Some of the most interesting, and probably least known, monuments in India are stepwells: *baoli* or *vav*. Built by both Hindus and Muslims, and often endowed by women, the oldest date back some 14 centuries. These extraordinary examples of hydraulic architecture, found largely in the Northwest, provide not only access to water, some as many as 13 stories underground, but also an escape from the heat and a social gathering place with, almost invariably, a religious component.

Edible Journeys Across Space and Time

Bazaar: Vibrant Vegetarian Recipes

Sabrina Ghayour. 2019, Octopus Publishing Group, Ltd., 978-1-78472-5-754, \$34.99 hb.

Sabrina Ghayour's aim in this colorful Middle Eastern cookbook is "to deliver as much flavor as possible using few ingredients." While many of her recipes require a dozen or more ingredients, most are pantry items even the casual cook likely has in the cupboard, such as cinnamon, cumin, olive oil, flour or canned chickpeas. The complexities arise from each of Ghayour's combinations, which as the title suggests, are as wide-ranging and enticing as a bazaar. Whether mixing a salad of smoked eggplant, pepper and walnut, charred corn and baby tomatoes, or making a rice-and-vegetable *ash*, this book's creative variety should appeal to vegetarians and non-vegetarians alike. —TOM VERDE



The Food Explorer:

The True Adventures of the Globe-Trotting Botanist Who Transformed What America Eats

Daniel Stone. 2018, Dutton, 978-1-10199-059-9, \$17 pb. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries botanist David Fairchild was a "plant explorer" for the US Department of Agriculture. His mission: "to scour the planet for new foods and plants and bring them back to enliven his country." Americans who today enjoy avocados, mangos, dates, pistachios and papayas, consume foods made from soybeans or sleep on Egyptian cotton sheets, have Fairchild to thank. This book traces his journeys. In Egypt he was "as eager to see the place where farming was invented as a matador might find a pilgrimage to Spain," though cotton, a crop introduced in 1800, was of particular interest to him. In Baghdad he "amassed hundreds of dates" as well as new strains of wheat, barley, chickpea and maize. Indonesian mangosteens—cousins of mangos—were among his favorite fruits, but their thick skins and meager flesh were too much trouble for American consumers. This is an entertaining, informative culinary armchair read. —TOM VERDE

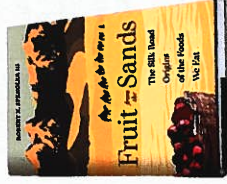


Fruits from the Sands:

The Silk Road Origins of the Foods We Eat

Robert N. Spengler III. 2019, University of California Press, 9-780-52030-3-638, \$34.95 hb.

Robert Spengler offers a rich history of commerce among the Arab-Persian empires and those of Central Asia and the Far East, underscoring their contributions to the last five centuries of global commerce. He unearths archeological data and other early records related to centuries-old voyages, many of which were never circulated or scrutinized in English or Romance languages. A delightful



Lautman's book is the first generally available description of these threatened monuments, which range from UNESCO World Heritage treasures to abandoned ones used as rubbish pits. Her accounts of some 80 wells are accompanied by photographs—many excellent—although the color reproduction leaves something to be desired. The work will appeal to anyone interested in Indian art and architecture, water management and Indian social history, especially rural. It also provides a great temptation to explore India far from the tourist routes—but one longs for a map! —CAROLINE STONE

raconteur and astute field archeobotanist. Spengler relates this history in a personalized manner, as if he is conversing with the reader. His command of both botany and linguistics gives readers a front-row seat to historic discoveries about culinary traditions that will dramatically alter the way they think about populations living thousands of miles apart. —GARY PAUL NABHAN

Saffron in the Souks:

Vibrant Recipes from the Heart of Lebanon

John Gregory-Smith. 2019, Kyle Books, 978-0-85783-577-2, \$29.99 hb.

The "sour tang" of Lebanese cooking, along with its "intricate use of herbs and spices," such as sumac, za'atar and Lebanese seven-spice—a local, ubiquitous blend of seasonings—infuse this lively cookbook. For travel writer and cook John Gregory-Smith, the colorful and exotic beauty of Tripoli's *souq*, as well as the kitchens of Lebanese friends, inspire this collection of recipes that highlights the dynamism and diversity of the country's cuisine. In Beirut, Smith discovers the Ottoman-linked history of *douad basha*—meatballs swimming in a heady, glistening sauce of cinnamon, allspice and pomegranate molasses. In the Bekaa Valley, he learns how to make *sfiha*, bite-size meat pies of ground lamb, tomatoes and allspice. In Batroun, between Beirut and Tripoli, he is treated to a Lebanese friend's rendition of shrimp scampi, enhanced with chili and fresh mint. Gorgeous images of the food and the country add to the book's allure. —TOM VERDE



The Seven Culinary Wonders of the World: A History of Honey, Salt, Chile, Pork, Cacao, and Tomato

Jenny Linford. 2018, Smithsonian Books, 9-781-58834-6-421, \$27.95 hb.

Humankind's relationship with the seven ingredients so diligently and informatively explored in this cookbook is "a long one, developed over thousands of years," to the extent that they "have acquired cultural and religious values."

With these pedigrees in mind, food writer Jenny Linford reaches back into the histories of each ingredient, advising that none should be taken for granted. Images of honey-gathering adorn caves in Valencia, Spain, occupied in prehistoric times, as well as the walls of temples in Egypt where "we come across the first records of beekeeping or apiculture." Those same Egyptians relied on salt "medicinally to dry out and disinfect wounds." Rice had a long journey from India and China, reaching the Middle East around 1000 BCE, and was introduced to Europe by Arabs through southern Spain. It forms the foundation of Middle Eastern *mejadra* (rice and lentils), one of 62 recipes in this thoughtfully curated culinary history. —TOM VERDE



War Songs

'Antarah ibn Shaddad, James E. Montgomery, tr., with Richard Sieburth, Peter Cole, fwd. 2018, New York UP, 978-1-47985-8-796, \$14 pb.

Najid-born 'Antarah ibn Shaddad, (525–608 CE) is considered one of the greatest pre-Islamic Arabian poets. His verses glorified battle and his love for Abilah, a noblewoman he could never marry because he was a slave and the son

