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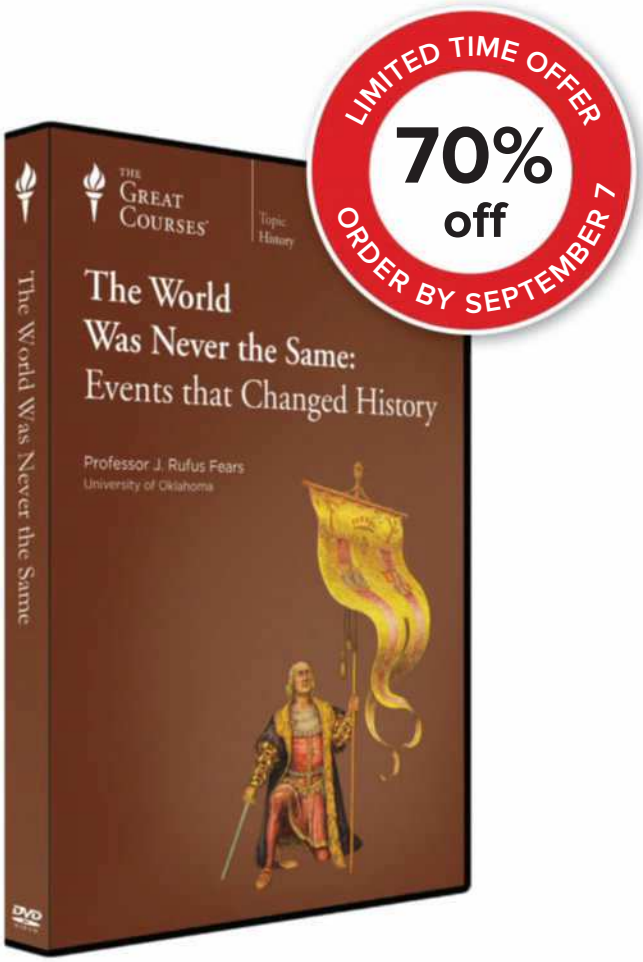

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When studying history, historians look to the facts. Knowing names, dates, and places helps explain past events, but there is often another factor whose influence remains intangible: luck.

Fate's role in major events cannot be denied, and perhaps no ruler understood that more than Queen Elizabeth I. Chance decreed that Elizabeth's mother, Anne Boleyn, would not give birth to a son, which soured her young daughter's luck. Elizabeth's mother was executed, her half brother declared her a bastard, and her half sister threw her in prison. Elizabeth survived this series of unfortunate events to become queen, and England entered a golden age, one that included the defeat of the Spanish Armada, a victory often credited to Elizabeth's good luck rather than her good strategy.

Despite her successes, it seems that Elizabeth I never forgot how one's luck could turn. Tradition says that the queen always wore a locket ring (above) until her death in 1603. On the outside was the letter *E* in diamonds. On the inside were two portraits—one of Elizabeth herself and the other of her mother, whose visage she kept close to her, perhaps to remind her of the broad consequences of a simple twist of fate.

Amy Briggs

Amy Briggs, Executive Editor

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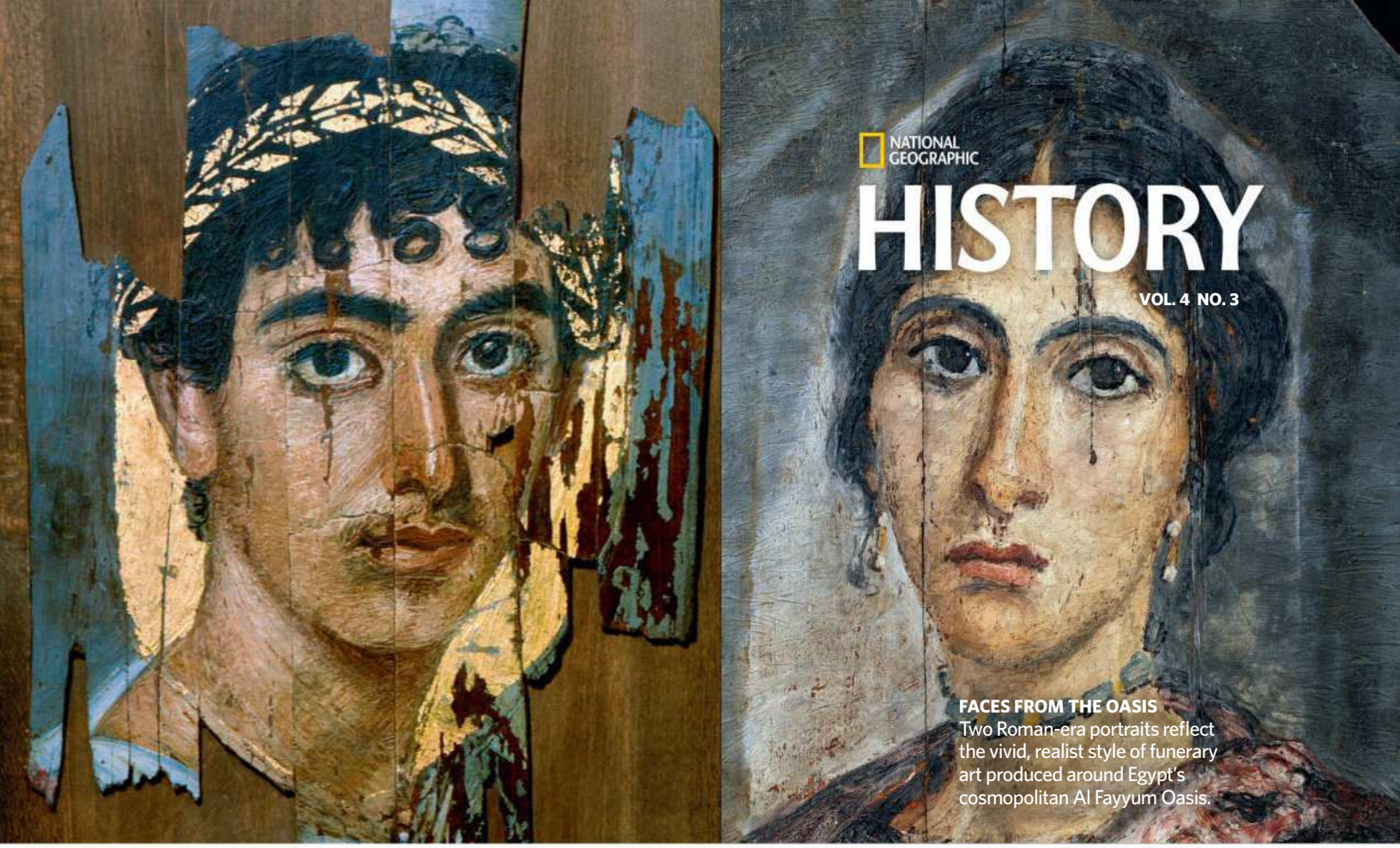

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC
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VOL. 4 NO. 3

FACES FROM THE OASIS
Two Roman-era portraits reflect the vivid, realist style of funerary art produced around Egypt's cosmopolitan Al Fayyum Oasis.

Features

1913 FABERGÉ EGG COMMEMORATING THE TERCENTENARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE ROMANOV DYNASTY

Departments

PROPHET AND LOSS: The clay "Isaiah" seal (right) was found in an ancient fortified area of Jerusalem, bearing the name Isaiah, followed by three letters equating to *n-v-y* in Hebrew. Archaeologists are mulling two basic theories. The word *n-v-y* might just be a proper name or a reference to a place. But there is another, vastly more explosive theory: Blemishes on the tablet may have erased extra letters—marked in blue in the illustration above—which, when combined with *n-v-y*, form a complete inscription reading "Belonging to Isaiah the prophet."

ILLUSTRATION: REUT LYVIATAN BEIT-ARIE/©EILAT MAZAR. **"ISAIAH" SEAL:** OURIA TADMOR/©EILAT MAZAR

ANCIENT ISRAEL

Is This Seal the Mark of the Prophet Isaiah?

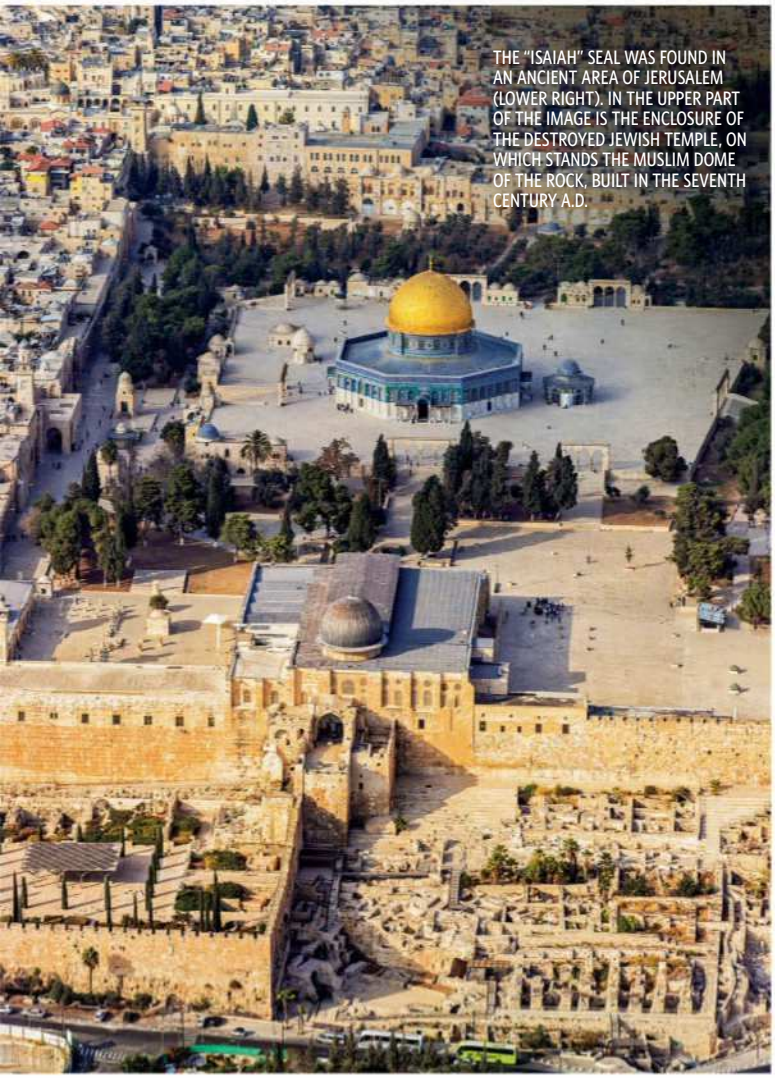
A 2,700-year-old clay seal may be the first archaeological reference, outside of the Bible, to perhaps the most influential prophet of all time.

Although the words of the biblical Book of Isaiah have inspired Jews and Christians for generations, no archaeological references to the prophet have been found from the time when he lived. That may be about to change, thanks to a tiny clay seal unearthed from an ancient Jerusalem rubbish pit.

If archaeologist Eilat Mazar's hunch is correct, the half-inch seal bears the name of the Prophet Isaiah himself. In an article in *Biblical Archaeology Review* the Israeli scholar argues that although the lettering on the artifact is damaged, it may read "Belonging to Isaiah the prophet." If it does, it would be stunning physical evidence of the existence of a figure central to Jewish and Christian theology. Many scholars now believe

KING HEZEKIAH
A seal (above) bearing the name of King Hezekiah of Judah, whom Isaiah advised, was found feet away from the "Isaiah" seal. The eighth-century B.C. king readied Judah against an Assyrian invasion.

OURIA TADMOR/©EILAT MAZAR

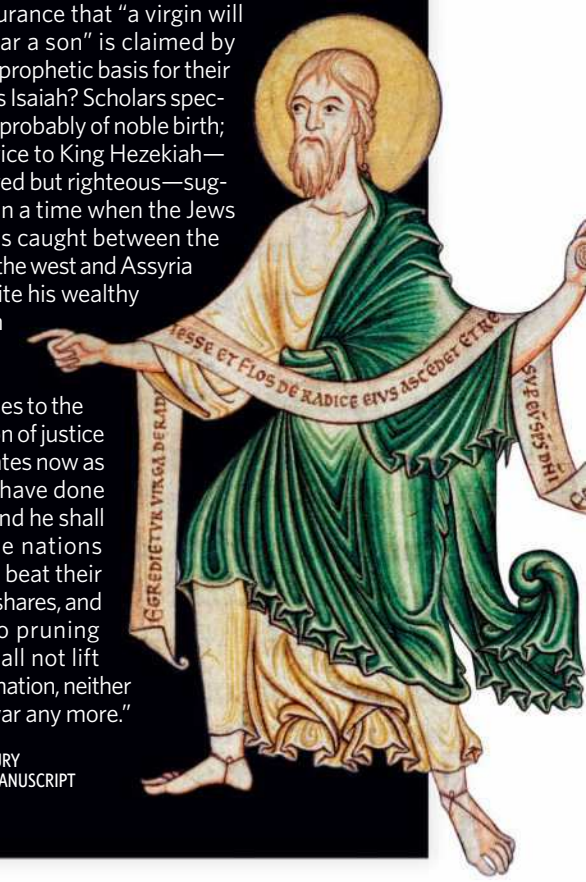


THE "ISAIAH" SEAL WAS FOUND IN AN ANCIENT AREA OF JERUSALEM (LOWER RIGHT). IN THE UPPER PART OF THE IMAGE IS THE ENCLOSURE OF THE DESTROYED JEWISH TEMPLE, ON WHICH STANDS THE MUSLIM DOME OF THE ROCK, BUILT IN THE SEVENTH CENTURY A.D.

AKG/ALBUM

THE ELUSIVE ISAIAH, PROPHET OF KINGS

HIS ORACLES shaped Jewish national history, and his assurance that "a virgin will conceive and bear a son" is claimed by Christians as the prophetic basis for their faith. But who was Isaiah? Scholars speculate that he was probably of noble birth; his forthright advice to King Hezekiah—portrayed as flawed but righteous—suggests steeliness in a time when the Jews found themselves caught between the might of Egypt to the west and Assyria to the east. Despite his wealthy origins, Isaiah faulted the ruling class for neglecting their duties to the poor, and his vision of justice and peace resonates now as much as it must have done centuries ago: "And he shall judge among the nations . . . and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."



ISAIAH IN A 12TH-CENTURY FRENCH ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPT

DAE/AGE FOTOSTOCK

that the Book of Isaiah does not record the words of just one Isaiah figure, but of three, and that its composition took place over two centuries. The book presents Isaiah as an adviser to eighth-century B.C. King Hezekiah, a ruler faced with the daunting task of defending Jerusalem from the regional superpower of the day, the Assyrian Empire.

According to the book, Isaiah warns of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Assyrians, counsels against sin at home, and reassures his people that God's special bond with the Jews will eventually bring deliverance. Scholars believe that the later chapters, which predict the fall of Babylon, were written in the sixth century B.C., after the time of Hezekiah. This period was when the exile of the Jews to Babylon, and the subsequent crushing of Babylon by Persia, had deeply marked Jewish theology and national history.

Missing Letters

The mystery as to the identity of Isaiah is what makes the discovery of the clay seal potentially significant. Mazar has another archaeological find to bolster her claim that the Isaiah on the seal may be the prophet: Discovered in what is believed to be the ruins of an ancient royal bakery, to the south of Jerusalem's Temple Mount, the seal was found feet away from an object bearing the name of Isaiah's ruler, King Hezekiah. Historians are in no doubt that Hezekiah existed, and the proximity of both objects, both dating from the eighth-century B.C., helps make the case for Isaiah's existence as well.

Mazar and other archaeologists, however, urge caution, because the lettering on the "Isaiah" seal is damaged: The Hebrew word for "Isaiah"—Yesha-yahu—is clear enough. It is then followed by the Hebrew letters *n, v,* and *y,* almost spelling the Hebrew word for "prophet"—but lacking the final letter, an *a*. A blemish on the seal after the *y* might have obstructed the all-important *a*, or the word may be complete. The letters *n-v-y* could be a surname or a place-name.

Researchers still do not have enough evidence to make a firm conclusion, but the intriguing object may take scholars a step closer to realizing the figure who once wrote of the messiah as "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Averroës, the Philosopher Who Saved Aristotle

A brilliant polymath born in medieval Muslim Spain, Averroës attracted powerful patrons with his brilliance. Attacked by enemies and denounced by theologians, his thorough exploration of Aristotle's writings would endure to become the foundation of Europe's emerging universities.

Ideas and Adversaries

1126

Averroës is born in Córdoba into a respected family of *qadis* (religious jurists) and imams of the city's Great Mosque.

1169

Appointed *qadi* of Seville, Averroës will become qadi of his native **Córdoba** two years later.

1182

He is appointed doctor to the Almohad caliph **Abu Yaqub Yusuf,** who values Averroës's philosophical learning and his medical expertise, while protecting him from powerful enemies.

1194–97

Following a power shift, **Abu Yusuf Yaqub al-Mansur** strips Averroës of all his titles to appease theologians.

1198

After heeding the caliph's summons to travel to **Marrakech** in North Africa, Averroës dies.

Aristotle is one of the best known ancient Greek philosophers, but there was a period, after the sixth century A.D., when his works had fallen out of favor and were almost lost to time. Through his writings, one 12th-century Muslim philosopher pulled Aristotle back from the brink and put him at the center of intellectual European thought.

Theologian, scholar, and physician, Ibn Rushd—commonly recognized by the Latinized version of his name, Averroës—devoted three decades of his life to writing and thinking about Aristotle. As he tried to understand and explain the philosopher's original intent, Averroës was forced to defend his beliefs in spiritually and politically turbulent times.

Son of Al-Andalus

As part of the westward phase of the Muslim conquest in the eighth century, large swaths of the Iberian Peninsula fell under the control of the caliphs, an area that became known as Al-Andalus. In 1031 (about a century before Averroës's birth), the ruling caliphate based in Córdoba, in what is now southern Spain, collapsed. Al-Andalus split into rival emirates, which spent as much time fighting among themselves as they did repelling the increasing threat from Spain's Christian north. Despite the upheaval, Al-Andalus emerged as one of the most intellectually and artistically vibrant places in the world at the time.

Averroës—whose full name was Abu al-Walid Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Rushd—was born in 1126 in Córdoba. From a family of renowned *qadis,* or religious jurists, he studied law and medicine as a young man. Although schooled in Quranic teaching, Averroës was outspoken in his defense of secular philosophy against theologians who claimed it had no place in religion. His ideas won him plenty of enemies among Muslims and Christians, at a time when Muslim Spain was undergoing bouts of political turmoil.

In Averroës's youth, the North African Almoravid dynasty occupied Al-Andalus and modern-day Morocco. It faced increasing pressure from a rival African dynasty, the Almohads. In 1147, when Averroës was 20, the Almohads toppled the Almoravids in North Africa, seized their capital, Marrakech, and extended their influence over the Strait of Gibraltar to Muslim Spain.

Dangerous Inquiries

Recognized as a brilliant scholar, Averroës was granted an audience with the Almohad caliph, Abu Yaqub Yusuf.

COLOPHON FROM A COPY OF ONE OF AVERROËS'S COMMENTARIES ON ARISTOTLE

WHA/AGE FOTOSTOCK

Averroës devoted three decades of his life to writing and thinking about Aristotle.

REGARDING WOMEN

IN STRIKING CONTRAST to prevailing attitudes at the time, Averroës's view of women was very progressive. Following Plato, he argues that "since some women are formed with eminence and praiseworthy disposition, it is not impossible that there be philosophers and rulers among them." If women played a more active role in society, it would benefit the whole state. "The competence of women is unknown, however, in these cities since they are only taken for procreation and hence are placed at the service of their husbands and confined to procreation, upbringing, and suckling. This nullifies their [other] activities. Since women in these cities are not prepared with respect to any of the human virtues, they frequently resemble mere plants."

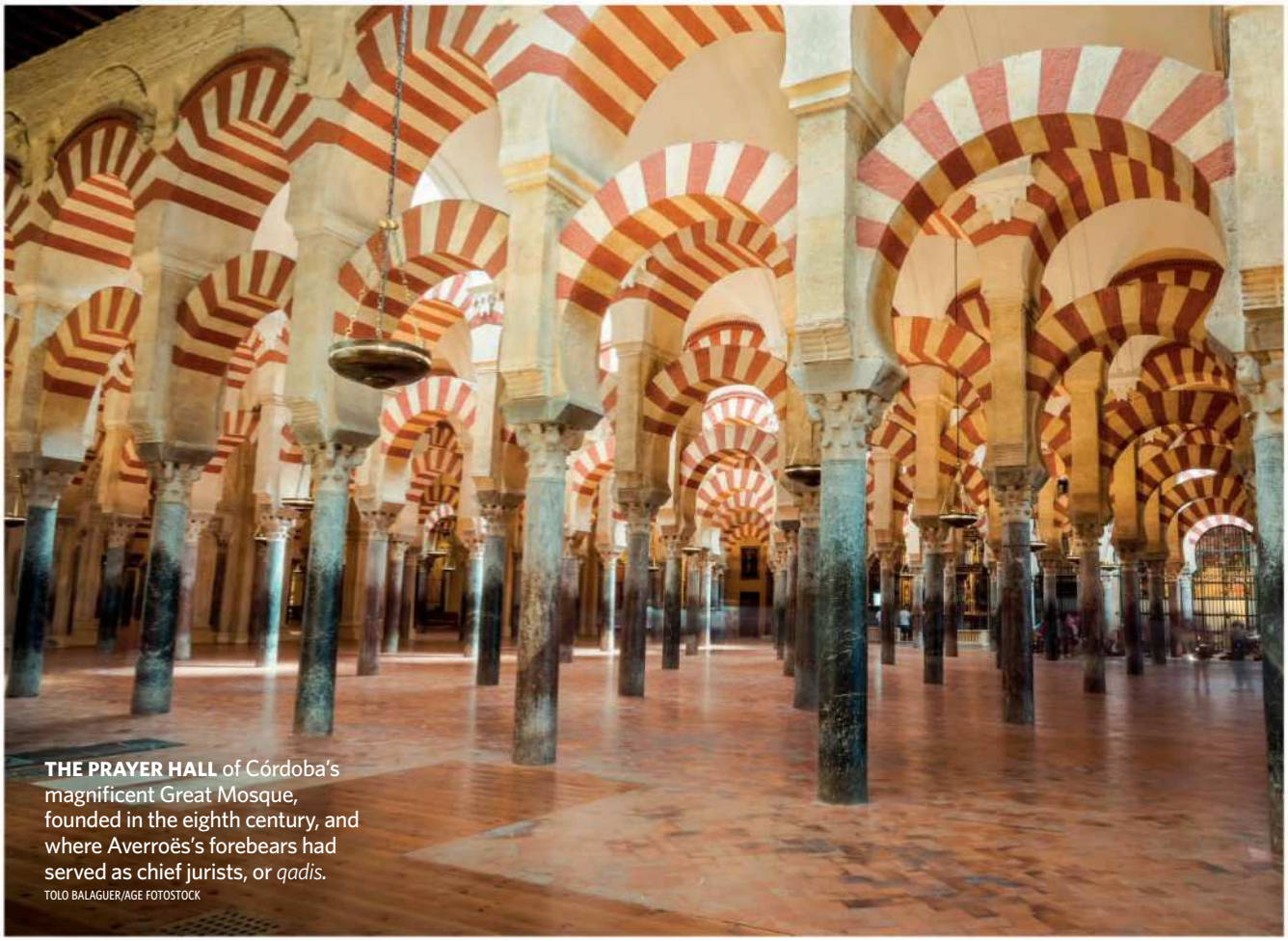
AVERROËS, A DETAIL FROM THE 1365 FRESCO "THE TRIUMPH OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS," BY ANDREA DA FIRENZE, THE SPANISH CHAPEL, SANTA MARIA NOVELLA, FLORENCE

BRIDGEMAN/ACI

Ibn Tufayl, another renowned Andalusian doctor and philosopher, secured the prestigious introduction for his younger colleague. But during the meeting, the Almohad ruler asked Averroës a dangerous question: "What is the opinion of the philosophers about the heavens? Were they created within time or are they eternal?" Averroës was taken aback—the Aristotelian theory of the eternity of the world, which he himself advocated, contradicted the Islamic belief that the world was created by God.

Protesting that he was not an authority on the matter, Averroës avoided the question at first. Then the caliph discussed the subject with Ibn Tufayl instead. Averroës was amazed to see the depth of the ruler's knowledge about the subject. Abu Yaqub Yusuf was able to compare the Aristotelian view with that of Plato and other philosophers while showing the counterarguments put forward by Muslim scholars. Averroës relaxed and joined the conversation with the Almohad leader. He must have made quite an impression, as Abu Yaqub Yusuf gave Averroës two fine gifts: a fur coat and a saddle for his horse.

Despite Abu Yaqub Yusuf's solid grounding in philosophy, the young ruler asked Ibn Tufayl to prepare some commentaries of Aristotle to help clarify the texts. Conscious of the magnitude of such a task, Ibn Tufayl turned down the request, making the excuse of his advanced years, and offered the work instead to Averroës, who was quick to accept the job.



THE PRAYER HALL of Córdoba's magnificent Great Mosque, founded in the eighth century, and where Averroës's forebears had served as chief jurists, or *qadis*.
TOLO BALAGUER/AGE FOTOSTOCK

Aristotle had been known to the Muslim world since the ninth century and almost all his works had been translated from Greek into Arabic, often via Syriac. Averroës did not speak Greek, so choosing reliable translations was his first step. Time spent working on the project would often be interrupted by other obligations. In 1169 Averroës was appointed qadi, or jurist, in Seville. Although the new role was an honor, it kept him from his library in Córdoba and his work on Aristotle. Two years later, he became qadi of Córdoba and was able to return to Aristotle. Following in the tradition of philosopher-medics, Averroës also excelled as a doctor. Thanks to his knowledge of medicine, in 1182 he succeeded Ibn Tufayl as chief doctor to Abu Yaqub Yusuf in Marrakech. That same year he was promoted to the leadership of the Córdoban qadis. Completing his commentaries on Aristotle would take roughly 30 years, but Averroës produced a work that lasted for centuries to come.

A UNIVERSAL THINKER

ALTHOUGH AVERROËS'S WORK was condemned by the pope in the late 13th century, the poet Dante so admired the Muslim philosopher that he placed him among the virtuous heathens in Canto IV of the *Inferno:* "Seneca the moralist; Euclid the geometer, and Ptolemy; Hippocrates, Avicenna, and Galen; and Averroës, who wrote the vast commentary."

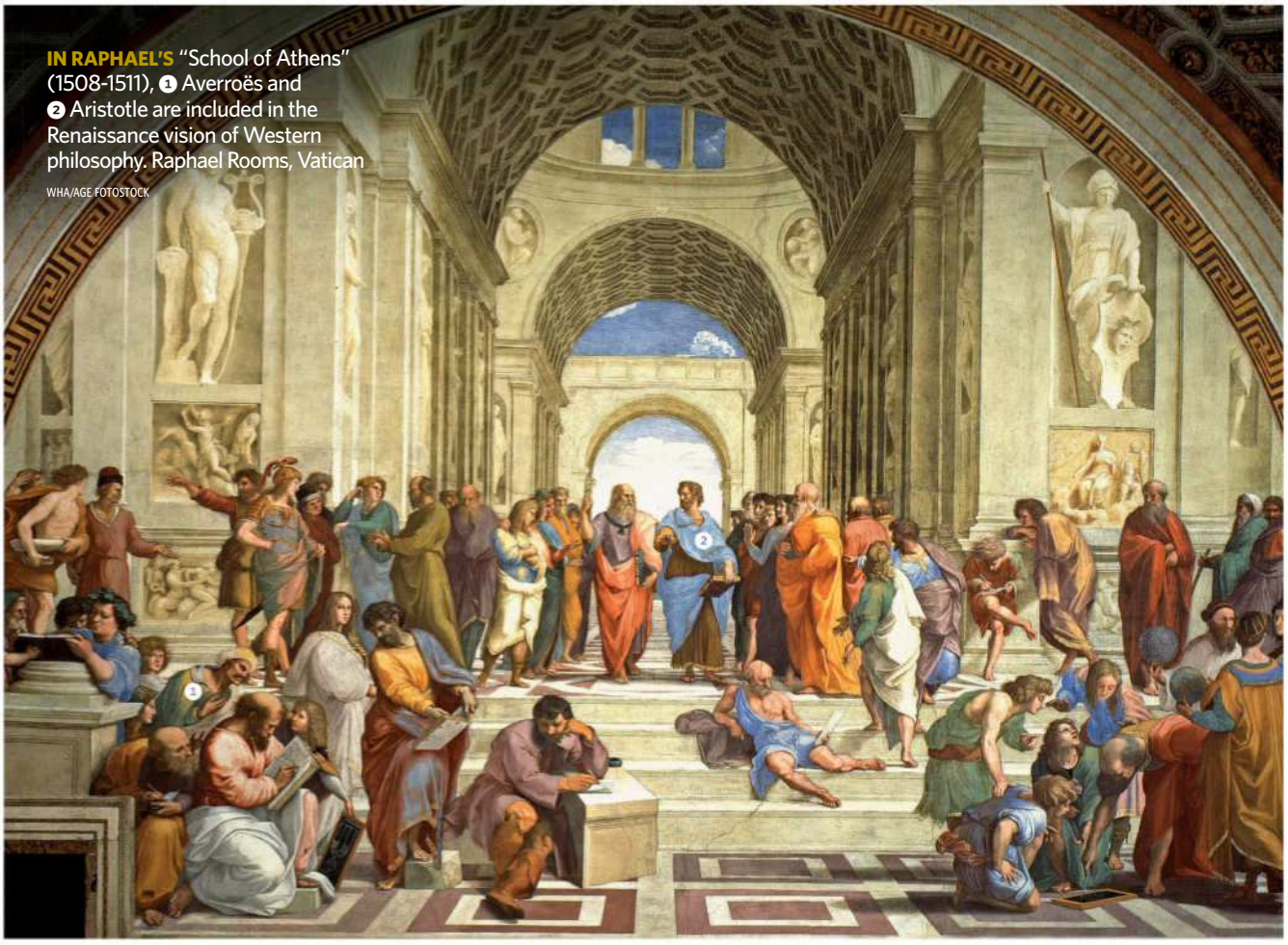
AVERROËS, DEPICTED ON A 14TH-CENTURY MINIATURE

AKG/ALBUM

Falling From Favor

Averroës enjoyed the protection of the Almohad power, which had never been fully accepted in Al-Andalus. Many scholars and judges opposed Almohad doctrine and viewed Averroës as a representative of it. Despite his powerful patron, these factions took every opportunity to act against him.

In the spring of 1184 Abu Yaqub Yusuf crossed the Strait of Gibraltar from Marrakech in an attempt to repel the



IN RAPHAEL'S "School of Athens" (1508-1511), ❶ Averroës and ❷ Aristotle are included in the Renaissance vision of Western philosophy. Raphael Rooms, Vatican

WHA/AGE FOTOSTOCK

Christian kingdoms in the Iberian Peninsula. After a disastrous defeat, the Almohad leader died of his battle wounds. With his protector gone, Averroës suddenly felt the full force of the hostility aimed at him.

The new caliph, Abu Yusuf Yaqub al-Mansur, had no interest in philosophical speculation. Averroës's detractors continued their campaign to discredit him, hoping to deprive him of the new sovereign's favors. His rivals claimed he had denied the truth of certain Quranic passages and misquoted him as saying that he considered the planet Venus to be a god. Tensions rose, and Averroës and his son were expelled from Córdoba's Great Mosque.

In 1194 Averroës's enemies brought a case against him, but the caliph was distracted by his military campaigns. The trial was delayed. Relations between the Andalusian scholars (*ulamas*) and the Almohads had always been fraught and often times teetered on the brink of a revolt, so al-Mansur needed to strike a balance. He was forced to make concessions to the ulamas and stripped Averroës of his honors. In 1195 Averroës was exiled from his native Córdoba for good and went to live in Lucena, a town to the south.

In time the caliph partly forgave Averroës and summoned him to Marrakech, where he would die at age 72 in 1198. After his death, accounts say that his body was loaded into the side pannier of a mule; to balance the load, his books and writings were placed in the other pannier. His body was heading back to the place of his birth, Córdoba, while his ideas and commentaries, translated into Latin, would spread throughout Europe.

Controversy around the orthodoxy of Aristotle alarmed conservative Christian scholars as much as it had their Muslim counterparts. In 1277, during a periodic flare up of anti-Aristotelian sentiment, Pope John XXI instructed the Bishop of Paris to investigate Averroës-inspired "errors" at the University of Paris. Despite these occasional controversies, Averroës's commentaries on Aristotle would endure.

In the decades following his death, great universities would begin to arise in Europe. As these centers of education spread across the continent, much of their curricula would be focused on philosophy, of which Averroës's commentaries were an integral part. Despite being controversial during his life, Averroës's lucid explanations of Aristotelian thought had a profound impact on Western thought and understanding of ancient Greek philosophy in the present day.

—Vicente Millán

The Jaguar: Divine Feline of the Americas

The Aztec called it the *ocelotl*, while in the Tupi-Guarani languages of South America it is called the *yaguara*, meaning "he who kills with one leap." Whatever the name, the jaguar has inspired fascination, fear, and reverence for centuries.

MAYA FIGURE OF A JAGUAR DEVOURING A MAN. A.D. 700-900. CAMPECHE, MEXICO

GRANGER/ALBUM

Throughout time, inhabitants of Mesoamerica, the geographic region comprising Mexico and Central America, all worshipped *Panthera onca,* the jaguar. Apex carnivores with the strongest bite of all the big cats, they once roamed from the southern United States, through Mexico and Central America, and as far south as Argentina. Stealthy hunters with camouflaging coats and eyes that can see in the dark, they easily take down prey anywhere—up in the trees, down on the ground, or even swimming in rivers.

To the ancient peoples of Mesoamerica, the jaguar was more than just an animal; it was divine. Almost every ancient Mesoamerican civilization revered the jaguar in some way. The Olmec (circa 1200-400 B.C.) heavily featured jaguars in their art and religion. Sculptures of cats were popular, as were depictions of deities who appear to be half human, half jaguar, which scholars describe as were-jaguars.

The Maya also connected the magnificent feline's abilities with various natural phenomena. The Maya believed that the jaguar's ability to see at night made it possible for it to move between worlds, associating it with the underworld and mortality. Maya art and architecture are also filled with jaguars, the most famous perhaps is the red jaguar throne found in El Castillo, the great pyramid of Chichén Itzá, built more than 1,500 years ago.

Symbol of Strength

The jaguar became a universal symbol of political and military power. In all Mesoamerican cultures it is depicted on reliefs and sculptures in temples and palaces. The jaguar's association with both light and darkness gave it a complex, sacred energy and transmitted its qualities to the ruler, making the jaguar the ruler's *nahual*—an alter ego, or a kind of protective animal counterpart.

The jaguar was also an icon for the brave hunter and warrior, who created military orders of jaguar soldiers. Their members were the most valiant and highly acclaimed. Gods, kings, warriors, and priests added the jaguar epithet to their names, burnishing their reputations with a symbol of prestige and power. In Maya civilization only kings could don their spotted pelts.

The jaguar was believed to be an animal of the stars as well as of the earth, playing a highly prominent role in the mythology of the Aztec and Mexica peoples roughly

MOST JAGUARS HAVE SPOTTED YELLOW COATS; SOME HAVE MELANISTIC, OR ALL BLACK, FUR DUE TO GENETICS.

PHOTOCECH/GETTY IMAGES

SHAPED LIKE A JAGUAR, this Aztec *cuauhxicalli* was designed to hold the blood and hearts of those sacrificed to appease the Mesoamerican gods. Museum of Anthropology, Mexico City

RAFAEL MACIA/AGE FOTOSTOCK

700 years ago. Jaguar dens are sometimes found in caves, which linked them to the earth and fertility: The fierce Aztec earth goddess Tlaltecuhtli is often represented with a jaguar's claws. The cat's dual nature connected it to transitions, like the daily cycle of the sun rising to usher in the day and setting as it gave way to night. In time the jaguar became absorbed into a complex dual mythology, representing both light and darkness, heaven and earth.

According an Aztec myth, the first sun that shone on humanity was the god Tezcatlipoca, who reigned in the heavens. His brother Quetzalcóatl was envious of his power and tried to usurp him with a heavy blow. Tezcatlipoca, however, did not die but turned into a jaguar instead. Tezcatlipoca sometimes manifested himself as Tepeyóllotl, Heart of the Mountains, because his domains reflected the jaguar. He was found not just in caves and the underworld but also in the night sky, for which the jaguar's dotted pelt became a symbol. The Mexica had another myth to explain the animal's characteristic "stained" pelt: When the gods created the sun and moon, the jaguar was thrown onto the sacred fire and came back to life in the flames with its fur spotted and singed.

An Enduring Presence

Modern human activity in its habitat has brought about a worrying decline in jaguar populations. Rarely spotted north of Mexico, the cat's wider survival is threatened by trappers and hunters throughout Central and South America. Conservationists estimate that roughly 15,000 are left in the wild.

Even so, people continue to venerate this powerful cat. Today in the Mexican province of Guerrero, rain festivals are held in which people dress as jaguars and engage in ritual battles. A large number of Central Americans still deeply believe that the enigmatic presence of this animal draws from the wisdom of a sacred universe beyond human understanding.

—Isabel Bueno

1767

The Shower: A Blast From the Past

In the 1700s the invention of a mechanical shower started people on the path to replacing their Saturday night baths with daily morning showers.

GUSMAN/LEEMAGE/PRISMA ARCHIVO

HYDROTHERAPY AT HOME. A FRENCH MEDICAL PUBLICATION FROM 1884

The first mechanical shower was not invented until the 18th century, but getting clean from above has a history that goes back millennia. The earliest showers were generally enjoyed by the wealthy, who could pay for servants or slaves to pour water on them. In sixth-century B.C. Babylon bathrooms were common in residences, but bathtubs were not; their absence indicates that people probably bathed with water poured from above. Bathrooms were also common in Egypt going as far back as the Middle Kingdom. Wall paintings show how the wealthy were showered by their servants with water. Excavations of wealthy homes in Thebes, El Lahun, and Amarna found stone-lined chambers equipped with sloped floors that allowed water to drain.

Ancient Greek inventors created indoor showers at gymnasiums through advances in plumbing and sewers. Users would stand under jets of cold water that cascaded from the ceiling. Classical societies associated regular washing with civilized values: In his fourth-century B.C. *Symposium,* Plato records the arrival of Socrates to a dinner party, "fresh from the bath and sandaled." Archimedes is said to have pondered on water displacement in the bathtub, and the ample archaeological evidence of public baths highlights the centrality of bathing to Romans across the empire, from the damp of England to the heat of Palestine.

With the rise of Christianity, public bathing began to be regarded as indecent and extravagant. Cyprian, the third-century Bishop of Carthage, warned a woman "a bath sullies; it does not purify… you are looked at immodestly." Until well into the early modern period, European society associated the word "cleanliness" more with purity of the soul rather than the body.

Feetham's Feat

By the 18th century scientific advances in medicine and epidemiology prompted growing interest in personal hygiene in Europe. People generally bathed infrequently, partially because bathing at home was cumbersome. Filling large bathtubs consumed not only a lot of water but also a lot of labor since water had to be heated and then hauled to the tub in buckets.

An English stove and heater manufacturer, William Feetham was also an inspired inventor. Already the creator of an ingenious mechanical chimney sweep, in 1767 Feetham patented the first mechanical shower, a portable cone structure made up of two sections. The lower

"DOMESTIC SANITARY REGULATIONS" AN 1851 CARTOON IN *PUNCH* MAGAZINE
NTPL/SCALA, FLORENCE

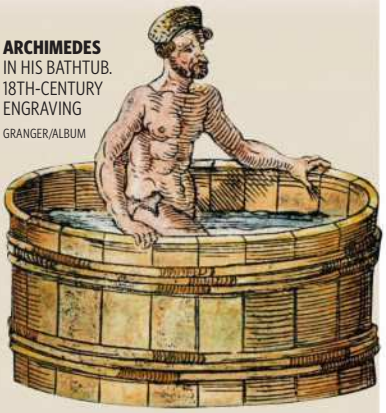
NATIONAL TRUST PHOTOLIBRARY/ALAMY/ACI

A 19TH-CENTURY SHOWER, based on Feetham's original design from the 1700s. The hand pump can be seen to the right. Erddig Hall, Wales, United Kingdom

part was a basin where the bather stood; the upper was a tank that stored water until bathers pulled a chain to release it. The bather could then use a hand pump to collect water from the base and return it to the tank. Although the water would be dirtier and colder with each cycle, Feetham's invention marked a huge saving in both water and time. Improvements to the basic design were continuously made, with even Feetham applying for a new patent in the 19th century.

Inventors attempted several different methods to warm up the water. Benjamin Waddy Maughan's patented water heater did not factor in the need for ventilation, and frequently exploded. In 1889 Norwegian-American engineer Edwin Ruud invented a safe, gas-heated water heater, and a new era began for warm showers. Once regarded as an unimaginable luxury, a daily hot shower is a regular indulgence for many bathers all over the world.

—Josemi Lorenzo



ARCHIMEDES IN HIS BATHTUB. 18TH-CENTURY ENGRAVING

GRANGER/ALBUM

GOING WITH THE FLOW

1767

William Feetham patents the first pump-activated shower in London. The bather releases the water in the overhead tank by pulling a chain.

1868

English painter Benjamin Waddy Maughan patents a water heater. Its tendency to explode makes it unsafe for household use.

1889

Norwegian-American engineer Edwin Ruud develops a safe, gas-powered water heater, ushering in a new age of hot showers.

1900s

Advances in plumbing and heating drive the popularity of the regular shower in both Europe and the United States.

A PARISIAN MODEL DEMONSTRATES A RIBCAGE SHOWER IN 1897.

MARY EVANS/SCALA, FLORENCE

Fast and Furious: Chariot Races in the Roman Empire

Constantinople's favorite spectator sport, chariot races at the glorious Hippodrome were at the center of life in the sixth century A.D., sparking passionate fans and fueling political fires.

DEA/ALBUM

THE THRILL OF THE RACE, captured in this first-century fresco from Pompeii. National Archaeological Museum, Naples

Perhaps the greatest action sequence caught on film is the chariot race from the 1959 Hollywood blockbuster *Ben-Hur*. Before a frenzied crowd of thousands, horse-drawn chariots hurtle around a track as each pilot tries to avoid catastrophic crashes to win the day. For all its artistic license, the movie's creators were not exaggerating the danger of the races nor the excitement of the arena. If anything, the emotions on the big screen pale in comparison to the passions of ancient Romans.

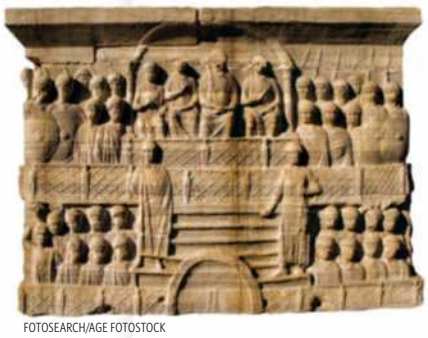
Chariot racing stoked fanaticism in the Roman world, and fans flocked to see their favorites compete. The fervor of the races led to tensions that occasionally simmered over into full-scale revolt. From provincial outposts such as Jerusalem, the setting of *Ben-Hur,* to Rome—whose Circus Maximus was the biggest arena in the empire—chariot racing packed in the crowds with its spectacle. Even after Rome's importance began to fade, the new eastern imperial power center, Constantinople, built a monumental racetrack, the Hippodrome. While not as large as Rome's Circus Maximus, it was still huge; historians disagree on its capacity, putting it somewhere between 30,000 and 100,000.

The Hippodrome

Constantine the Great, the first Roman emperor to convert to Christianity, took interest in charioteering. After A.D. 330, the year he re-founded Byzantium as Constantinople, he remodeled the Hippodrome to make it one of the capital's most prominent buildings. The Hippodrome was one of the four buildings framing the central square of Constantinople. If the Senate, the imperial palace, and the Christian cathedral stood for the legislative, executive, and religious power of the eastern Roman Empire, the Hippodrome represented the power of entertainment. To the public, circuses were no less important than bread, and the fortunes of their favorites were followed obsessively by a huge fan base.

Races attracted huge crowds. On race days, people would arrive at the Hippodrome hours early, sometimes sleeping in the stands to save their seats. Earlier in Roman history, it was common for an arena to have four chariot teams, but by the later Byzantine period, the typical number was two—in the case of Constantinople, the Blues and the Greens.

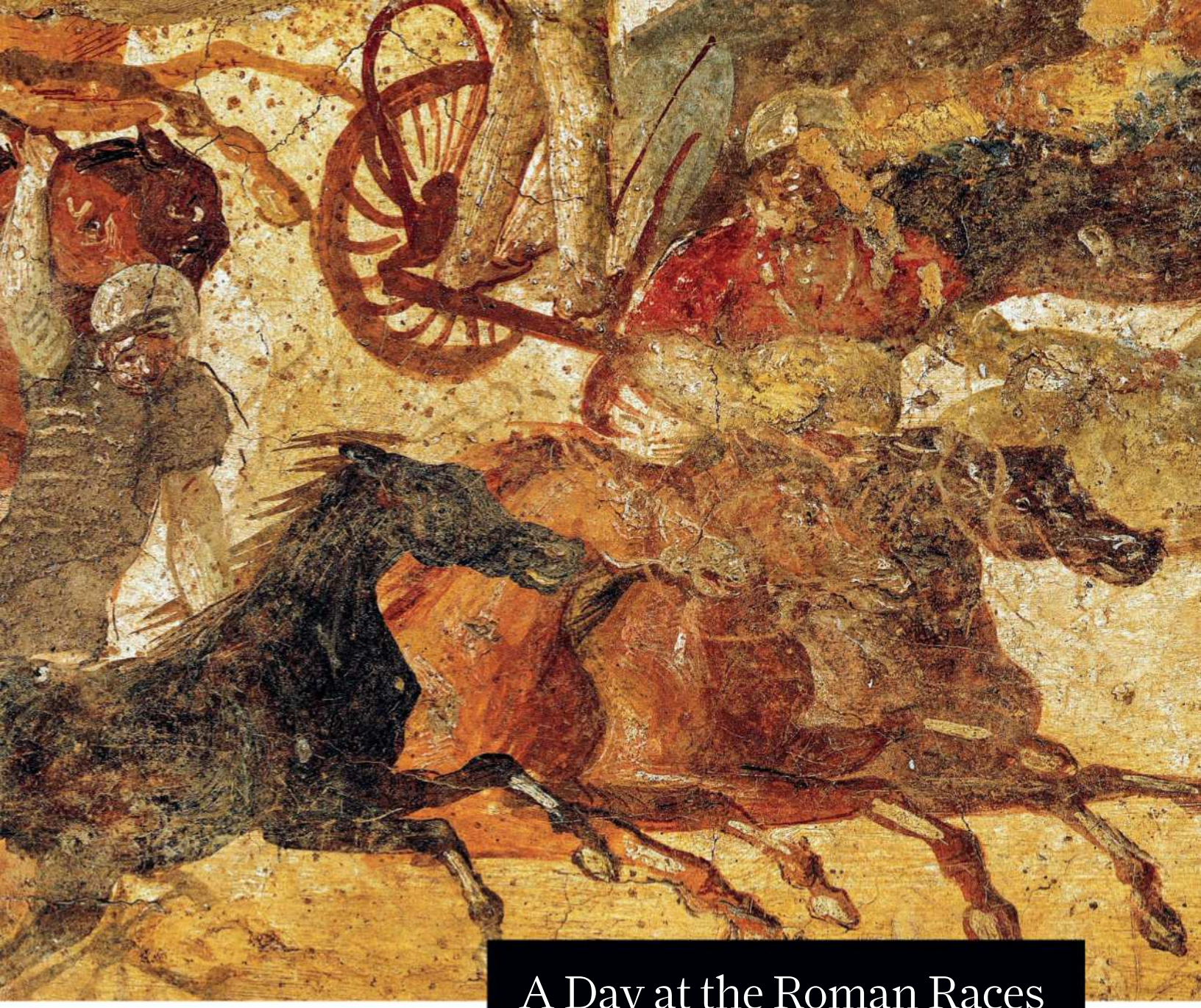
Byzantine charioteers were idolized by tens of thousands of fans. These heroes



FOTOSEARCH/AGE FOTOSTOCK

EGYPTIAN INFLUENCE

IN A.D. 390 Theodosius I had the obelisk of Pharaoh Thutmose III (died 1426 B.C.) brought from Alexandria and placed on the *spina* of the Hippodrome. Among the scenes Theodosius carved around its base, one (left) depicts him distributing prizes to a chariot-race victor. The obelisk still stands on the site in Istanbul.



piloted the quadriga, a chariot drawn by four horses. Often traveling at highly dangerous speeds, each chariot raced around a track about 150 feet wide. Shorter races lasted about 15 minutes, marked in laps around the central *spina* (spine) of the racecourse. The Hippodrome's spina was crowned with the ancient Egyptian Thutmose obelisk, the so-called Constantine Obelisk, and a bronze pillar composed of three entwined snakes that had been looted from Delphi. The most dangerous moment was the sharp, full turn at each end of the spina, a maneuver that involved slowing the horses, but which was still executed at nearly 20 miles an hour. These brutal contests were

A Day at the Roman Races

THE TYPICAL EVENTS at the Hippodrome promised nonstop spectacle and excitement for the fans of chariot racing. The number of races might range from eight to 25 in the course of a day, giving viewers the chance to see many of their favorite racers risk their lives. In the quest for victory a charioteer faced plenty of hideous fates: crashing his vehicle, becoming tangled in the reins and being throttled or maimed; or falling out and being crushed under stampeding horses' hooves. The number of laps varied, but a seven-lap race could last as long as 15 minutes. There were several categories of race, typically broken up by the age of the driver: teenagers, charioteers in their early 20s, and very experienced pilots ages mid-20s and older. Bets were placed on which team or driver would win, and although the charioteering was top billing, there was plenty of activity to keep the crowd amused between races: Food vendors, acrobats, dancers, and animal tamers, all were a part of the noisy scene at the Hippodrome.

Running the Course

BELOW, AN ARTIST'S RE-CREATION of the horseshoe-shaped Hippodrome, some 1,300 feet in length. The central *spina* was studded with various looted artifacts, including the Constantine Obelisk (center) and the Obelisk of Thutmose. In the lower section, the palace abuts the arena, providing easy access to the imperial box, made of white stone.

BYZANTIUM 1200 PROJECT

often the scene of smashups and horrific injuries—but also opportunities for glory and gain.

Haloed with an aura of skill, speed, and danger, charioteers were the professional athletes of their day. One of the most famous was Porphyrius, an African-born pilot who took the sport to new heights of popularity in its sixth-century heyday. Accounts describe Porphyrius, who started in provincial arenas before working in Constantinople, as oozing with divine charisma, dashing good looks, and amazing athletic abilities.

Political Races

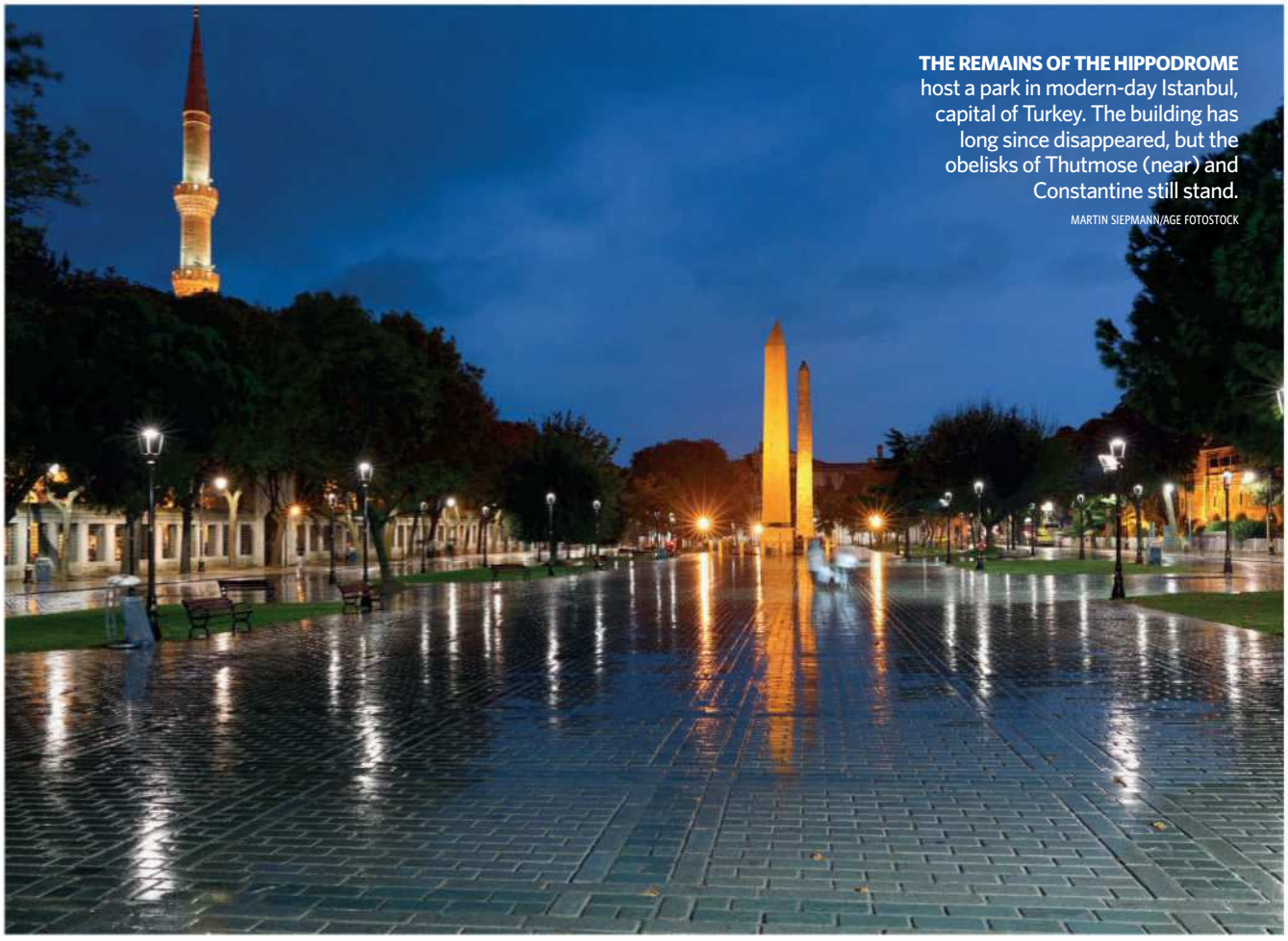
Chariot racing had long been intimately linked with power and violence. Since the time of Constantine, the emperors took a close interest in channeling the passion of the races and trying—not always successfully—to turn it to their political advantage, usually by funding it from their own pocket. The Hippodrome of Constantinople had always had a political dimension, not least because of its size. The emperor presided over races with his consort and family in the *kathísma,* a kind of imperial private box, accessed directly from the neighboring palace.

THE BRONZE HORSE GROUP, LOOTED FROM THE CONSTANTINOPLE HIPPODROME IN THE 1200S, AND NOW IN ST. MARK'S BASILICA, VENICE

SCALA, FLORENCE

For Empress Theodora, wife and co-ruler with Emperor Justinian in the mid-sixth century, the link to the Hippodrome was political as well as personal. Theodora had been born not into nobility but into a circus family. Her mother was most likely an acrobat, and her father was a bear keeper for the Greens. Her father died unexpectedly, and when her widowed mother remarried, she asked the Greens to employ her new husband. They denied her request, but the Blues were happy to take him on. From that moment, Theodora's allegiance switched from the Greens to the Blues, the favored team of her future husband, Justinian.

Much of what is known of Theodora comes from the *Secret History* written by Procopius of Caesarea. He described how the unlikely Theodora captured the heart of Justinian and rose to become his bride. Intelligent and beautiful, she also



THE REMAINS OF THE HIPPODROME host a park in modern-day Istanbul, capital of Turkey. The building has long since disappeared, but the obelisks of Thutmose (near) and Constantine still stand.

MARTIN SIEPMANN/AGE FOTOSTOCK

became one of Justinian's most trusted political advisers.

In A.D. 532 tensions in Constantinople were running high, especially between the Blues and Greens. "Better to be a Pagan than a Blue!" was an insult hurled by the Greens at their rivals in this period. There was also growing, citywide rage at high taxes levied on them to pay for Justinian's recent military victories. When fighting between the Greens and Blues broke out at the Hippodrome, Justinian fretted that public order was breaking down. Ditching his allegiance to the Blues, he had seven members from both teams rounded up and hanged as a show of his strength.

The execution was botched, and two of the condemned—one Blue and one Green—survived. They were taken by the crowd to a church and given sanctuary. Many believed the two had been spared by God and rallied behind the condemned. Even the two teams at last found common cause. At the next chariot race they turned their combined fury on Justinian and Theodora with the cry of "*Nika! Nika!*—Conquer! Conquer!"

Days of looting ensued as the Nika riot spread. Alarmed, Justinian agreed to sack his minister responsible for taxation, but the crowds were not satisfied. They wanted Justinian to step down, and they would crown a new emperor.

Frightened, Justinian considered fleeing, but Theodora stood firm, saying she would rather die with her boots on—or as she expressed it: "[C]onsider first whether, when you reach safety, you will regret that you did not choose death in preference. As for me, I stand by the ancient saying: that imperial purple makes the noblest shroud." Emboldened, Justinian sent to the Hippodrome his troops, who cut the people to pieces and left as many as 30,000 men, Greens and Blues alike, dead on the arena floor.

Game Over

Justinian and Theodora had no trouble shoring up their power after the Nika revolt, which marked the high-water mark of Byzantine chariot races. A century later, the power and influence of the teams, as well as the sport's popularity, had declined. Distracted by wars with the Persian Sasanids, and later the Arab Muslims, Constantinople's rulers found it harder and harder to finance the extravaganzas in the Hippodrome.

When mutinying Christian armies sacked Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade in the early years of the 1200s, the gilded bronze chariot group that topped the monumental entrance was carted off as booty to Venice. What remains of the Hippodrome in today's Turkish capital, Istanbul, is a peaceful park, a marked contrast from the frenzy of a day at the races of the past.

—Julius Purcell

THE SLAVES OF ANCIENT GREECE

Silenced Voices, Hidden Lives

While the Golden Age of Athens is loudly trumpeted for its achievements in philosophy and government, Greek reliance on chattel slavery often remains in the shadows. Rendered nearly invisible by history, enslaved people were an integral part of life in ancient Greece.

ANA IRIARTE

AT HIS SERVICE
A young slave girl attends to a guest on this fifth-century B.C. cup from Athens, attributed to the Brygos Painter. Most slaves who served at Greek banquets were, in fact, male. British Museum, London

BRITISH MUSEUM/SCALA, FLORENCE

CARRIED AWAY
Ancient Greek sailors abduct slaves in a romanticized 19th-century engraving. Slave raids were carried out by armed merchants rather than outlaw pirates in the modern sense.

LOOK AND LEARN/BRIDGEMAN/ACI

The culture that gave the world the Parthenon, the teachings of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, and the foundations for representative democracy was also a society dependent almost entirely on slavery. The economy of Greece, and Athens in particular, depended on the labor of vast numbers of enslaved people who hailed from all over the Mediterranean world.

In ancient Hellas—as Greece was known—slaves were everywhere, working in households, the armed forces, civic administrations, agriculture, and silver mining. Fragmentary records have made accurate calculations impossible of the number of slaves in the city of Athens and its surrounding area, collectively known as Attica. Figures range from as low as 20,000 to as high as 150,000 in the classical era. A census from the late fourth century B.C. puts the total number of slaves at 400,000, but that figure is regarded by most historians as an exaggeration. There is, however, some consensus that slaves comprised perhaps a third of Attica's population.

Some slaves came from Greece itself, as was the case with abandoned children or those sold by destitute families who could not afford to raise them. It was also possible for freeborn adult Greek citizens to become slaves. If an insolvent debtor could not pay his debts, he might become the slave of his creditor. Impoverished freeborn men could sell themselves into slavery. Far more frequently, however—and far less morally troubling for most Athenians—slaves came from "barbarian" lands, the countries beyond the borders of Greece.

Spoils of War

Most slaves originated in lands beyond Hellas. A common source was war. In the classical world, an enemy captured was an enemy enslaved. The Greeks took slaves during their frequent raids and military campaigns in the regions beyond their frontiers and outside their colonies. Accordingly, the Greek slave population abounded in people from lands constituting modern-day Turkey, Balkan countries such as present-day Bulgaria, and Libya and other regions of Africa. There were instances of Greeks enslaved by fellow Greeks during the numerous wars between states, although the practice was considered undignified.

The notion that to the victor go the spoils was considered legitimate even by some of classical Greece's most brilliant minds. In his fourth-century B.C. work on political philosophy, *Politics*, Aristotle paraphrases dissenting voices, who "detest the notion that, because one man has the power of doing violence and is superior in brute strength, another shall be his slave and subject." Aristotle himself, however, argues that while in some circumstances slavery may be unjust, slavery is not, in and of itself, "a

BROUGHT TO HEEL

Above, a detail from a fifth-century B.C. krater shows a slave attending an Athenian ephebus—a youth in his late teens—at the palaestra, the school for wrestling and boxing.

GRANGER/AGE FOTOSTOCK

SLAVERY IN THE GOLDEN AGE

8th c. B.C.
Enslavement by Phoenicians and other powers is chronicled in Homer's poem *The Odyssey.*

7th c. B.C.
Athens's slave trade is boosted by Greek commercial expansion around the Mediterranean.

5th c. B.C.
The number of slaves in the Athens area may comprise upward of a third of the population.

4th c. B.C.
In his *Politics,* Aristotle examines the ethics of slavery but does not regard it as a "violation of nature."

AFRICAN SLAVE BOY. BRONZE STATUE, HELLENISTIC PERIOD. LOUVRE MUSEUM, PARIS

H. LEWANDOWSKI/RMN-GRAND PALAIS

BROUGHT LOW
Widow of the Trojan prince Hector, Andromache reflects on the murder of her young son and her life as a slave in Frederick Leighton's 1888 painting "Captive Andromache." Manchester City Art Gallery, England

FINE ART/ALBUM

violation of nature . . . For that some should rule and others be ruled is a thing not only necessary, but expedient; from the hour of their birth, some are marked out for subjection, others for rule."

Greek society did not turn a blind eye to the suffering of prisoners of war who faced enslavement. In 416 B.C. Athens had invaded and conquered the island of Mílos, whose men were killed and women and children sold into slavery. Some historians believe that the Euripides tragedy *The Trojan Women* is a commentary against this brutal fact of life. Published in 415 B.C., the play takes place as the victorious Greeks are sacking Troy. Queen Hecuba, her daughter Cassandra, and her daughter-in-law Andromache reckon with the deaths of their husbands and children while dreading the inevitability of their future enslavement. In one heartrending scene, Hecuba laments:

> And who will own me, miserable old woman
> that I am,
> where, where on earth shall I live as a slave
> like a drone, Hecuba the wretched . . .

While perhaps not an explicit condemnation of enslaving prisoners, Euripides' play does show compassion and understanding.

WHO'S LAUGHING NOW?

SLAVE CHARACTERS found their way into Greek comedies, sometimes as the butt of cruel jokes, but also as ribald commentators on their masters. In *The Frogs* by Aristophanes, the slave Xanthias delights the audience by proving cleverer than his master. New Comedy, the next generation of plays written after Aristophanes, established the wily or cunning slave as an archetype, which in turn influenced Roman theater.

Piracy and Pillage

Another supply of slaves to Greece came through piracy. Pirates would attack other vessels on the high seas and raid coastal settlements. They made money from their captives either by selling them outright as slaves or by offering them up for ransom. Under Athenian law, a ransomed captive became the slave of his liberator until the ransom could be repaid in either money or labor.

Classical Greek society had, of course, grown out of, and been influenced by, the practices of neighboring cultures. Of these, the Phoenicians, great commercial traders from what is now Lebanon and Israel, were seen as especially industrious pirates. A passage from Homer's eighth-century B.C. epic *The Odyssey* shows how different cultures could be both slaves and slavers, and how individual slaves could in turn enslave others. A ship of "rapacious Phoenicians, bearers of a thousand trinkets," arrives at a tiny island in the Aegean. One of the pirates seduces a palace slave on the island, by chance, a fellow Phoenician. The young woman tells her companion of her fate: "I am proud to hail from Sidon [in Lebanon] paved in bronze. Arybas was my father, a man who rolled in wealth. I was heading home from the fields when Taphian pirates snatched me away, and they shipped and sold me here to this man's house. He paid a good stiff price!" In Homer's tale, this slave girl and her seducer then kidnap the king of the island's son, Eumaeus, just as she had been kidnapped as a child. The prince is sold to the king of Ithaca and becomes the servant of his son, Odysseus, and plays a key role in Odysseus's homecoming.

Slaves were generally taken to the bustling slave markets in Greek ports. The price of slaves varied and depended on variables such as age, gender, place of origin, and specialization. Xenophon, in his fourth-century B.C. work *Memorabilia,* gives a good idea as to the range of prices, quoting his teacher Socrates: "[D]omestic slaves

FALSE FACE

A New Comedy theater mask from the second century B.C. (above) would have been worn by a slave character. Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, England

BRIDGEMAN/ACI

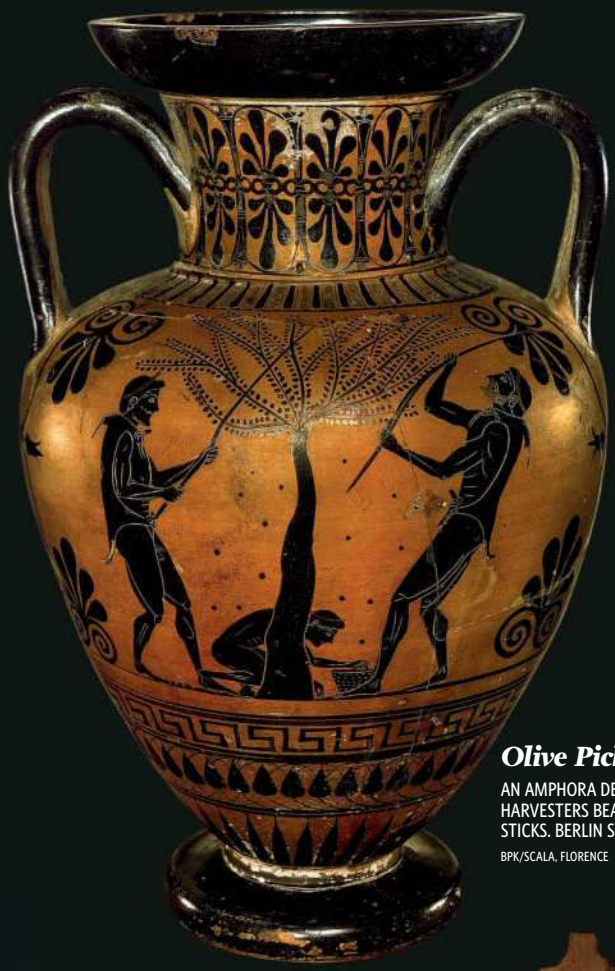
Stablehand

THIS DETAIL FROM A THIRD-CENTURY B.C. FRESCO SHOWS A SLAVE HANDLING HORSES FOR A CHARIOT RACE. FROM A TOMB IN KAZANLAK, BULGARIA

DEA/SCALA, FLORENCE

The Many Faces of Slavery

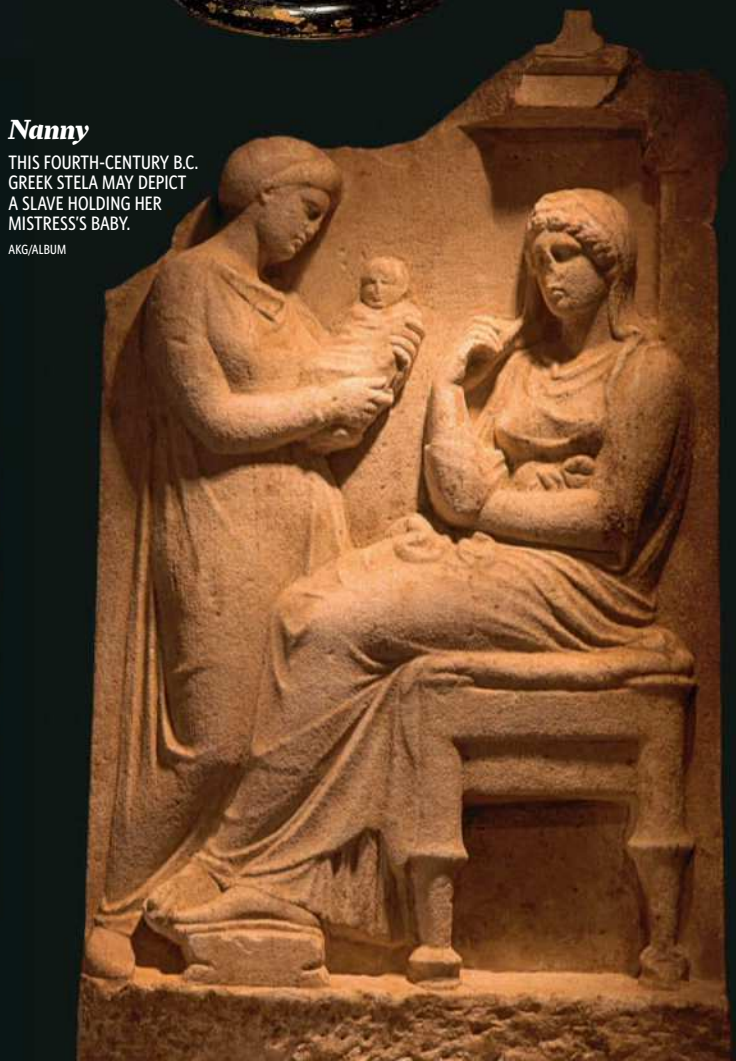
LATER FICTION AND ART has often presented Greek slaves in a sensationalist or titillating light, bound in chains or naked on the auction block. Although some unlucky wretches were consigned to the mines, most were employed in agriculture, as farming was the mainstay of the economy. The ability of a Greek polis to retain and control its slave population was essential to its success. The escape of some 20,000 slaves from Athens during the Peloponnesian War with Sparta in the fifth century B.C. was a severe blow to the city because so many branches of the economy depended on them—food production, shipbuilding, domestic work, childcare, the civil service, and even sport.



Olive Picker

AN AMPHORA DEPICTS OLIVE HARVESTERS BEATING THE TREE WITH STICKS. BERLIN STATE MUSEUMS

BPK/SCALA, FLORENCE



Nanny

THIS FOURTH-CENTURY B.C. GREEK STELA MAY DEPICT A SLAVE HOLDING HER MISTRESS'S BABY.

AKG/ALBUM

Maids

SLAVE WOMEN ATTEND TO THEIR MISTRESS AFTER HER BATH. FOURTH-CENTURY B.C. RED-FIGURE VASE. ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM, PAESTUM, ITALY

PRISMA/ALBUM

A SLAVE, MINING WITH A PICK, ON A CUP FROM THE FIFTH CENTURY B.C.
GRANGER/AGE FOTOSTOCK

. . . may be worth perhaps two minae [a unit of weight or money used in ancient Greece and Asia], another only half a mina, a third five, and a fourth as much as ten." As a guideline, however, the average price of a slave was roughly the annual salary of a Greek construction worker.

From a legal standpoint, Greek slaves, whether men, women, or children, were considered the property of their masters and had no legal standing. The words used to identify slaves reflected this radical dispossession. A slave would often be referred to as an *andrapodon,* literally "one with the feet of a man" as opposed to *tetrapodon,* "quadruped" or livestock. The most common word for slave, however, was *doulos,* which indicated a lack of freedom, the single attribute that best reflects the Hellenic ideal of a man.

Athens's treatment of its slaves varied from master to master. A magnanimous owner was often praised, because treating slaves well was seen both as well-bred and as being in one's best interest. In Aeschylus' fifth-century B.C. play *Agamemnon,* Clytemnestra tells her new slave, the Trojan princess Cassandra: "Praise God thou art come to a House of high report / [...] The baser sort / who have reaped some sudden harvest unforeseen, are ever cruel to their slaves." Xenophon seemed to advocate for kind treatment of slaves in the *Oeconomicus,* his treatise on household management: "On the one side you shall see them fettered hard and fast . . . and yet for ever breaking their chains and running away. On the other side the slaves are loosed, and free to move, but for all that, they choose to work, it seems; they are constant to their masters."

Slaves' Work

Slave labor was used in almost every facet of Greek life. The most common perhaps were domestic servants, which included highly respected tutors and wet nurses, responsible for educating and feeding the children of well-to-do families. The worst job, and often most fatal, was mining. Thousands of enslaved men and boys worked in the mines of Laurium, south of Athens, in appalling conditions which shortened their lives considerably. Many slaves worked in the fields growing and harvesting crops; they quarried stone, guarded forests, and felled trees used for timber in construction. Blacksmiths, jewelers, and potters all put skilled slaves to work. In the trades, they worked as barbers and cobblers. In times of war, the hoplite infantry and navy were also assisted by large numbers of slaves, although typically as workmen, not soldiers, according to a later Greco-Roman author, Pausanias.

Slaves were even employed as policemen. In Athens 1,200 Scythian slave archers policed the city. One special category of slaves was the *demósioi,* or public slaves, who drafted legal documents, maintained archives, inspected coinage circulating in the agora, and kept public accounts. In his comedy *Lysistrata,* Aristophanes refers to public slaves acting as magistrates, and Herodotus mentions them running public auctions. Only one profession was closed to the slave: politics, for which one was obliged to be a citizen. ■

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BURIED ALIVE

RICH, NEW VEINS of silver in the Laurium mines near Athens financed the building of the navy that defeated the Persians at the decisive Battle of Salamis in 480 B.C. But if its silver saved Athens, being sent to dig it could be a death sentence. It was the worst job for slaves, reserved for the lowest of barbarians. Men worked 10-hour shifts in suffocating conditions, many dying months or a couple years after arriving.

MINTING IT

The silver from the mines at Laurium was minted to make owl-stamped tetradrachms such as the one shown below. The owl was associated with Athena, patroness of Athens. British Museum, London
BRITISH MUSEUM/SCALA, FLORENCE

THE TALE OF EUMAEUS

Odysseus's treatment of Eumaeus in Homer's *Odyssey* was often cited as an example of a wise master's benevolence toward his slave. Eumaeus was of noble birth and came from the same class as his master, which was held up as a cautionary tale of the fate that could befall any man or member of his family.

WHEN HE RETURNS TO HIS HOME IN ITHACA after a two-decade absence, the first man Odysseus meets is Eumaeus. Odysseus passes himself off as a travel-weary foreigner and urges Eumaeus to tell him about his life.

EUMAEUS RECOUNTS HIS INFANCY as the son of an island king, kidnapped by pirates who sold him to Laertes, Odysseus's father. But, he says, he spent a happy childhood in Ithaca, sharing toys with his lord's sons and later finding work as a master swineherd for the royal household.

THINKING ODYSSEUS TO BE a stranger who is down on his luck, Eumaeus provides him with a feast. Apart from demonstrating his decency, it also illustrates the unusual power he enjoys as a country slave, with lower-ranked slaves under his command, who help him look after the estate. Touched by his swineherd's goodness and generosity, Odysseus reveals his identity. Together they plan a raid on the palace to expel the suitors of Odysseus's wife, Penelope, who have been trying to usurp him. The nobility of the slave and the magnanimity of the master combine to restore Ithaca to its rightful owner.

HOMECOMING OF ODYSSEUS (ABOVE RIGHT) TO PENELOPE. THE FAITHFUL EUMAEUS IS SEATED ON THE LEFT. TERRA-COTTA PLAQUE, FIFTH CENTURY B.C. METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM/SCALA, FLORENCE

AN ATHENIAN POT FROM THE FIFTH CENTURY B.C. IS DECORATED WITH FIGURES BELIEVED TO REPRESENT ODYSSEUS AND THE SWINEHERD EUMAEUS. FITZWILLIAM MUSEUM, CAMBRIDGE, ENGLAND

BRIDGEMAN/ACI

IN THEIR PRIME
Gold leaf and intricate details give life to the Al Fayyum mummy portraits of a teenage boy—on display at the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow—and wealthy young woman (opposite), on display in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

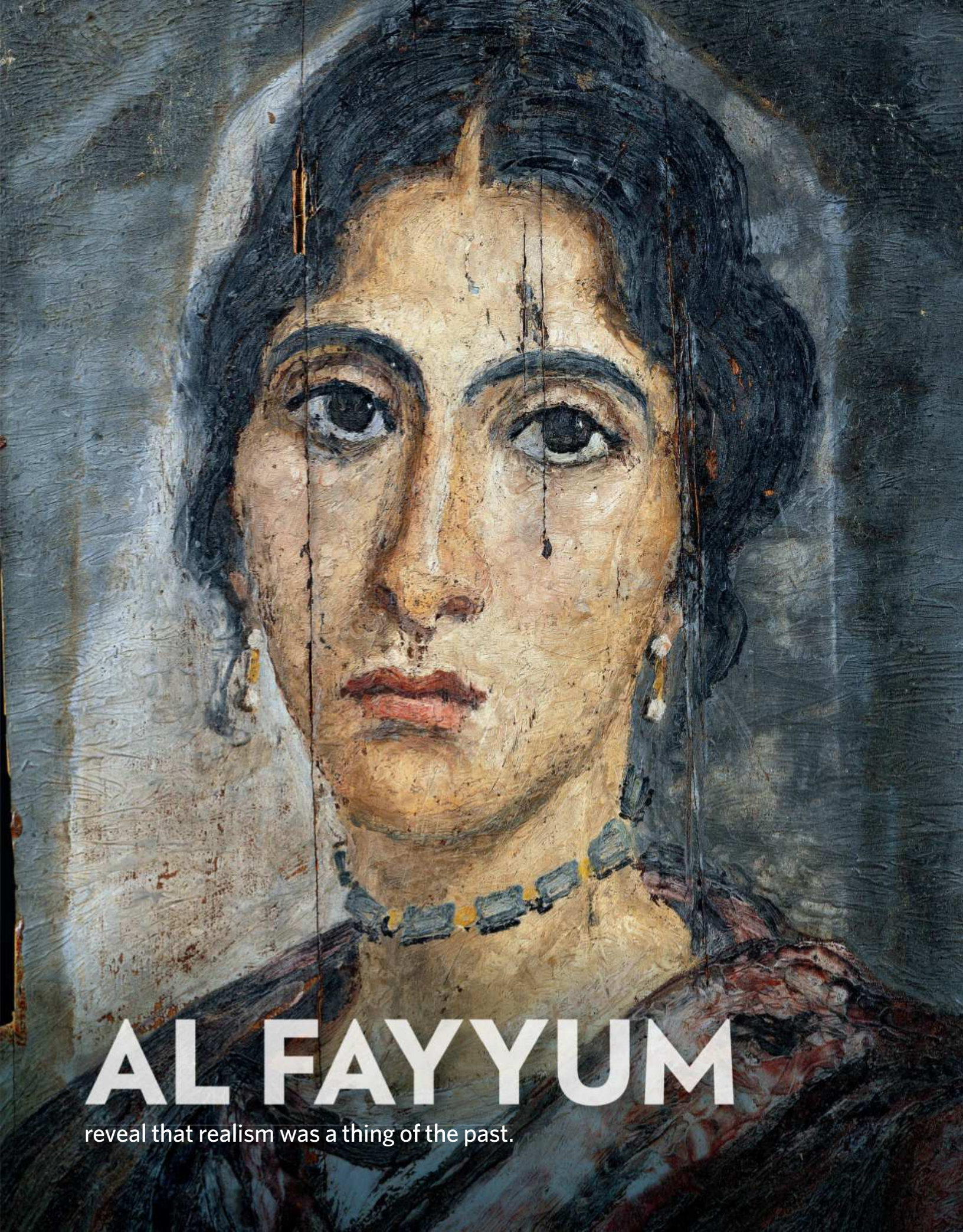
MAN: FINE ART/SCALA, FLORENCE
WOMAN: S. VANNINI/GETTY IMAGES

PORTRAITS FROM THE PAST

THE FACES OF

Stunning, lifelike funerary portraits from cosmopolitan, Roman-era Egypt

EVA SUBÍAS PASCUAL



reveal that realism was a thing of the past.

Dark, direct, soulful: The eyes of the Al Fayyum portraits stare out and invite viewers in to see the faces of Egyptians who lived thousands of years ago, when the Greek Ptolemy rule gave way to Rome. Created to adorn the dead, these funereal portraits reveal how Egyptian, Roman, and Greek practices began to blend, creating a hybrid culture of enduring fascination to archaeologists and museumgoers alike.

In 1887 British archaeologist Flinders Petrie started excavating at the pyramid at Hawara near Egypt's Al Fayyum Oasis in the hopes of finding tombs from the third millennium B.C. To his disappointment, he uncovered a first-century B.C., Roman-era cemetery instead. Soon his chagrin turned to curiosity and then to mounting excitement: On a mummified body found in one of the brick tombs, his team found a portrait: "the beautifully drawn head of a girl, in soft grey tints, entirely classical in its style and mode." Over the course of the dig at Al Fayyum, Petrie uncovered some 60 similar panels, whose realism moved him to describe them in his notes almost as they were living, breathing people: "A young, married woman of about 25," he wrote of another find, "of a sweet but dignified expression, with beautiful features."

Petrie was not the first Westerner to have come across the painted mummy panels of Egypt. In the early 17th century the Italian traveler Pietro della Valle saw lifelike mummy art when he passed through the necropolis of Saqqara just south of the modern-day city of Cairo. Petrie was, nevertheless, the first archaeologist to submit these portraits to academic study, beginning the task of piecing together a unique world in which Egyptian, Greek, and Roman styles and customs began to intertwine from the first century B.C. through to the fourth century A.D. The artistic style seen in the mummy portraits reflected this cultural intermingling and may have influenced later Christian art.

Flowering at the Oasis

The modern-day city of Al Fayyum is located about 60 miles southwest of Cairo, between the Western Desert and the Nile. Known as Shedet during pharaonic times, the city, the nearby oasis, and the surrounding area were transformed when Alexander the Great conquered Egypt in 332 B.C., incorporating Egypt into an empire that would grow to encompass what is now Greece, Turkey, the Palestinian territories, Israel, Syria, Iran, Iraq, and much of Central and South Asia.

Alexander's successors, the Ptolemy kings, would rule Egypt for nearly three centuries. They were drawn to the fertile land around Al Fayyum. Irrigation systems of canals were built, and it turned into one of Egypt's most productive agricultural regions producing abundant crops of fruits, vegetables, and vines.

As the region grew prosperous, people from many backgrounds were drawn to the oasis, leading to a multicultural population of Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans. Many of the Greeks, or Hellenes, had come with Alexander during his conquest. Many local Egyptians were peasants and artisans who migrated from other regions of

Because the portraits were initially discovered at sites in and around the Al Fayyum region—including Hawara and the Ptolemaic-era garrison city of Karanis—this kind of art gets its name from the oasis area. Even so, similar mummy portraits have also been found in other parts of Egypt, notably the area around the necropolis of Saqqara.

PORTRAITS OF THE AGE

332 B.C.

Alexander the Great conquers Egypt and founds a new capital bearing his name, Alexandria.

305 B.C.

Alexander's general, Ptolemy I Soter, is the first ruler of the **Ptolemaic dynasty.** The area around Al Fayyum becomes a melting pot of Egyptian and Greek cultures.

30 B.C.

Egypt is made a province of the **Roman Empire.** Greco-Roman traits mix with Egyptian customs to create the mummy portraits of Al Fayyum.

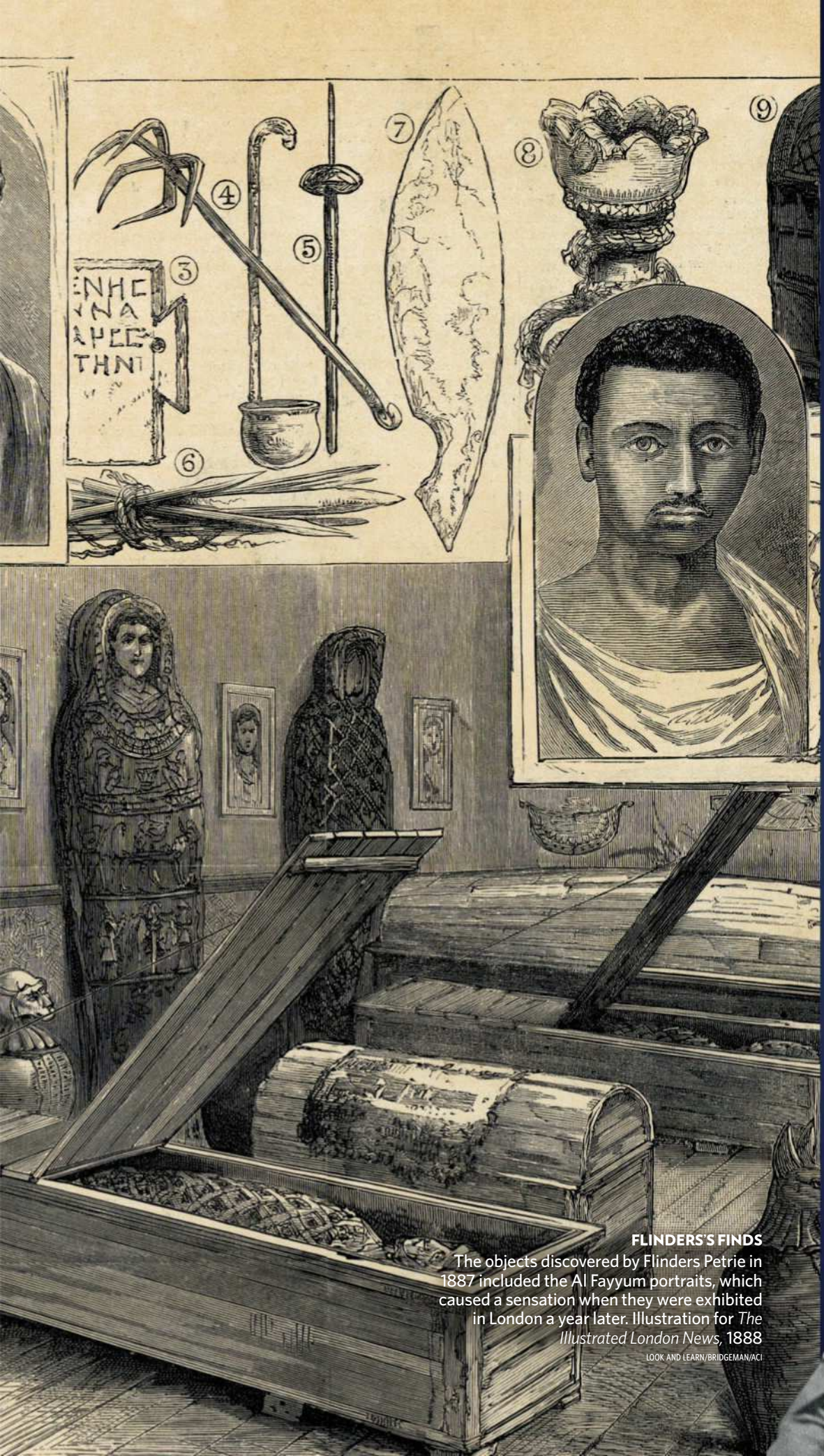
A.D. 392

Emperor Theodosius I bans the pagan practice of mummification as part of his empire-wide program to impose Christian orthodoxy.

1887

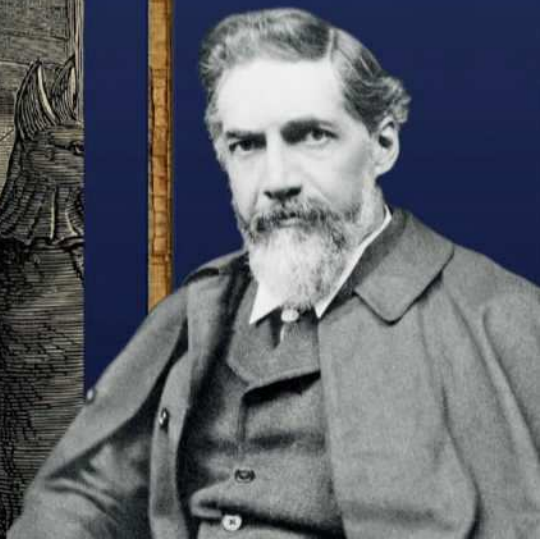
The discovery by British archaeologist **Flinders Petrie (below)** of 60 Al Fayyum portraits at Hawara brings the art to a wide European public.

BETTMANN/GETTY IMAGES



FLINDERS'S FINDS
The objects discovered by Flinders Petrie in 1887 included the Al Fayyum portraits, which caused a sensation when they were exhibited in London a year later. Illustration for *The Illustrated London News*, 1888

LOOK AND LEARN/BRIDGEMAN/ACI



SURPRISE FINDS

While digging in 1887 near the 19th-century B.C. pyramid of Amenemhet III at Hawara (left) in the Al Fayyum region, Flinders Petrie stumbled on a Roman-era cemetery containing dozens of vivid mummy portraits.

AKG/ALBUM

the country. After 30 B.C. the Roman presence intensified under Octavian—soon to become Emperor Augustus—made Egypt a Roman province following the death of Cleopatra, the last of the Ptolemaic rulers and lover of Julius Caesar and Mark Antony.

Al Fayyum's multiculturalism expressed itself in many ways: art, religion, and language. Archaeological evidence shows that the burgeoning population spoke and wrote in Greek and took Greek names—such as Antinoüs, Polion, Soter, and Irene—as well as names bearing Egyptian influence, such as Ammonius.

Culturally Greek families around Al Fayyum and other parts of northern Egypt seemed perfectly comfortable adopting Egyptian traditions and religious rituals. Many Greek speakers worshipped Osiris, god of the afterlife, and inclined toward Egyptian customs in funerary rites. Although cremation and burial were common in the wider Greco-Roman world, many recent arrivals in Al Fayyum adopted Egyptian mummification rituals. Recent scholarship suggests the portraits were created to keep the essence of the deceased intact and encapsulate the moment of a person's transition from life through death and on to the realm of Osiris.

Old Traditions, New Expressions

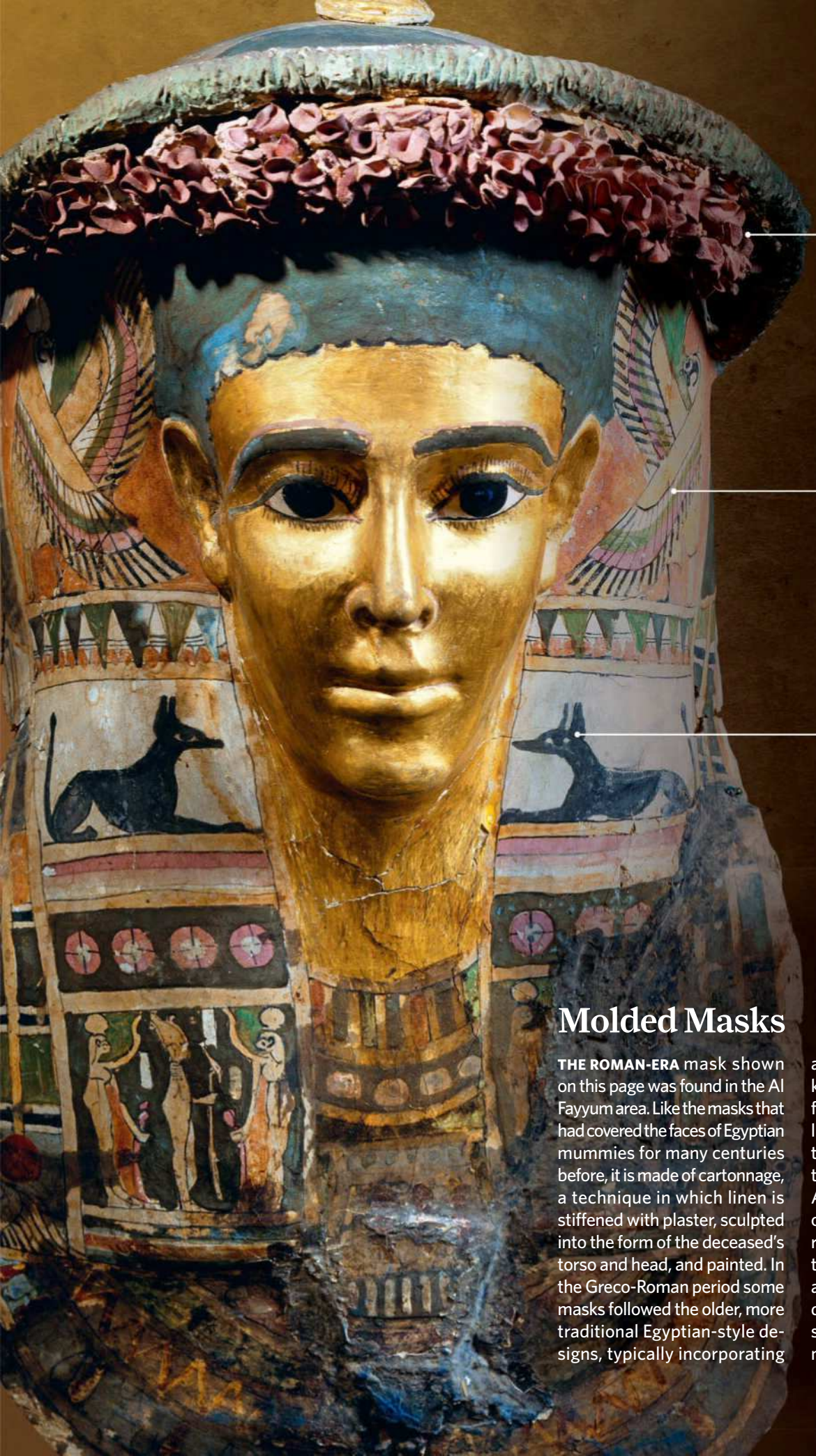
Elaborate mummification rituals for elite burials appeared very early in Egypt's history, during the Old Kingdom, which ended around 2130 B.C. The practice started to spread to the wider population during the Middle Kingdom. Mummies from this time were found wearing funerary masks made from cloth stiffened with plaster. These masks, however, tended to be highly stylized and all looked similar in appearance.

In Al Fayyum at the end of the Ptolemaic era and the beginning of Roman rule, Greek and Roman influences become apparent on mummification portraits. Rather than the uniform appearance of the traditional masks, these portraits manifested the same realism present in Greek and Roman works of art. Subjects were depicted naturalistically, creating a vivid image

N. J. SAUNDERS/AURIMAGES

DEA/ALBUM

Mummies of infants and children are all too abundant in Greco-Roman cemeteries in Egypt. Their embalmed corpses are delicately bound in linen bandages and often wear a golden funeral mask covering the face. One bearing a small golden mask (left) was found in a Ptolemaic-era necropolis in the Al Fayyum region. Greco-Roman Museum, Alexandria



FLOWERS
Placed over a distinctly Egyptian headdress, the floral wreath reveals a Roman influence.

FEATHERED GUARDS
A protective winged divinity appears on either side of the face to guard the deceased in the afterlife.

ANUBIS
A seated figure of Anubis, god of mummification and protector of the deceased, appears on either side of the face at chin level.

Molded Masks

THE ROMAN-ERA mask shown on this page was found in the Al Fayyum area. Like the masks that had covered the faces of Egyptian mummies for many centuries before, it is made of cartonnage, a technique in which linen is stiffened with plaster, sculpted into the form of the deceased's torso and head, and painted. In the Greco-Roman period some masks followed the older, more traditional Egyptian-style designs, typically incorporating a wig and protective necklace known as an *usej*. This mask features Egyptian gods and religious scenes that will serve to protect the deceased during the journey to the underworld. A crown would often be placed on the head—in this case, a floral wreath, a typically Roman touch. While some masks made an attempt to individualize the deceased's features, the constraints of cartonnage favored more generic representation.

OASIS TOWN

Near the oasis of Al Fayyum in the third century B.C., the Greek pharaoh Ptolemy II founded Karanis, where the remains of a temple still stand today (left). The site has yielded numerous lifelike mummy portraits.

S. VANNINI/DEA/AGE FOTOSTOCK

of the deceased that celebrated their lives, virtues, and achievements.

There is a wide range of craftsmanship of mummy portraits from Al Fayyum. Specimens have been found with crude coloring and construction, suggesting that even poorer people were having their portraits done. Many of the faces of Al Fayyum largely belong to the wealthy or professional members of society. Some experts have suggested that these uncannily lifelike images were painted while the people still lived, and decorated their homes until needed to adorn the mummy.

Making Mummies, Making Art

In artistic style and technique the portraits follow the Greek style. Although surviving examples of Greek panel paintings from this era are rare, scholars know what they looked like from glowing literary descriptions. The discovery of the Al Fayyum mummy panels finally let historians see, firsthand, the great artistic skill of first-century B.C. artisans. Subjects are generally depicted in a three-quarter rather than frontal view. Shadows and highlights are employed to reveal contours and curves of facial features.

Although the images seem highly customized, this impression can be deceptive. Art historians have noticed that many of the paintings are, in fact, schematic drawings onto which individualized traits would be mapped. Close examination of various portraits reveal that there is a basic structure: an oval shape for the face, the position of mouths and noses, and even the poses are often identical from one to another. It is the eyebrows, eyes, hair, and accessories that distinguish the subjects from one another.

Identifying the person in the painting has been challenging. A few portraits have Greek inscriptions indicating the name and profession of the deceased on the image itself, such as "Hermione, the Schoolteacher," but most do not. Visual clues can lend insight to the identity of the deceased. Soldiers and athletes are usually depicted wearing a sash and bare shoulders, respectively. Women are portrayed flaunting

BRITISH MUSEUM/SCALA, FLORENCE

A seven-pointed star, symbol of the Greco-Egyptian god Serapis, adorns this man's head. Some suggest he was a priest of Serapis; others argue Egyptian priests were usually shown clean-shaven, and that he was a novice. The style of the beard suggests the portrait, now on display in the British Museum, London, was painted between A.D. 140 and 160.

GOLDEN TOUCH
Diamond shapes are formed by carefully criss-crossing the bandages. Gold-painted stucco has been applied at the places where they meet.

BRITISH MUSEUM/SCALA, FLORENCE

FALSE FEET
Pairs of feet were typically made from cartonnage and adjoined to the mummy during the wrapping process.

DEA/SCALA, FLORENCE

Bound to Last

FOUND AT HAWARA, this Roman-era mummy of a young boy, on display in the British Museum, London, is made up of a complex structure of bandages. The cloth is wrapped in thick, decorative layers to form diamond shapes to create an effect of depth and geometric rhythm. In the center of each of these diamonds have been placed small pieces of gold stucco. The feet of the bound figure were created separately from cartonnage (plaster-stiffened linen), and protrude from the sheathed body. The mummy was found complete with its very lifelike portrait, shown here as it would have been placed. Painted on wood using the encaustic technique, the boy in the portrait wears a white mantle. His close-cropped hair, the clothing, and other stylistic details allow researchers to date the mummy to the beginning of the second century A.D.

Picture of Innocence

CHILDREN ARE COMMON SUBJECTS among the Al Fayyum portraits. It is believed that half of all children in Roman-era Egypt did not live to celebrate their 10th birthday. The child in this portrait appears to be around five years old and wears a necklace bearing amulets that were thought to protect against the evil eye. First or second century A.D., Egyptian Museum, Cairo

S. VANNINI/DEA/ALBUM

Brothers or Lovers?

DISCOVERED IN ANTINOÖPOLIS, a Roman city on the Nile, the "Tondo of the Two Brothers" was painted in the second century A.D. Some studies now believe it could, in fact, depict two male lovers. Next to the man on the right is a figure of Hermanubis—a fusion of Hermes and Anubis—and beside the man on the left is Osir-Antinoüs, a combination of Osiris and the deified Antinoüs, Emperor Hadrian's young lover, for whom the city is named.

S. VANNINI/CORBIS/GETTY IMAGES

ICONIC IMAGE
Traits of Al Fayyum portraiture—such as its emotional intensity and large eyes—influenced later Christian art. To the left, a Byzantine icon from the Russian State Museum, St. Petersburg

SCALA, FLORENCE

splendid jewelry, clothes, and elaborate hairstyles, and children often appear wearing gold necklaces with amulets, a common Roman symbol for childhood.

Stylistic and cultural diversity can also be observed in subtle details concerning the symbolism of the paintings. For instance, the subject of one of the portraits wears a seven-pointed star, a designation of the Greco-Egyptian god Serapis, while others wear crowns of golden leaves, a symbol attributed to Macedon, Greek, and Roman royalty. Aside from their striking appearance, these funereal portraits give scholars great insight into the diverse population of the Al Fayyum region and how different cultures influenced each other. Typically, portraits show their subjects looking their best, so the clothing, hairstyles, and accessories reflect the fashion of the time. They show people dressed not in the Egyptian manner but in the Roman style, showing the influence of the imperial court.

Mummy portrait panels were typically painted on wood, although some were painted on stiffened linen. Many artists created their paint by mixing beeswax with pigment and making applications in multiple layers, a technique known as encaustic. The term is from the Greek for "burnt in," but no burning is necessary for creating the paints or the portraits. This method likely originated in the Greek world and may have been introduced to Egypt at the time of Alexander's conquests. The layering of different colors helps achieve a distinctive range of subtle hues to give the image intensity and depth. Encaustic portraits are easy to spot due to their glossy finish. Some artists employed tempera paint, a mixture of pigment, egg, and water, for portraits. Unlike the reflective surface of the encaustic works, finished tempera portraits often have a flat, matte finish. Another important detail in some of the more costly portraits is the application of gold leaf, which gives the crowns and the jewelry their richness and glow.

Looking Forward, Looking Back

At the end of the fourth century A.D. Emperor Theodosius I ordered the suppression of mummification in a bid to strengthen Christian orthodoxy across the empire. Despite the disappearance of a ritual that had been part of Egyptian culture for millennia, the mummy portraits would themselves enjoy a kind of afterlife.

Echoes of the Al Fayyum panels can be seen in later artworks of the Byzantine period and medieval Europe, as well as in early Christian art. Their individuality, large eyes, and use of gold leaf would live on in Byzantine icons, and in the art of medieval and Renaissance Europe centuries later. Nearly 1,000 of these portraits are held in museum collections worldwide—from Egypt to London to Los Angeles—allowing modern people to gaze into the eyes of the past.

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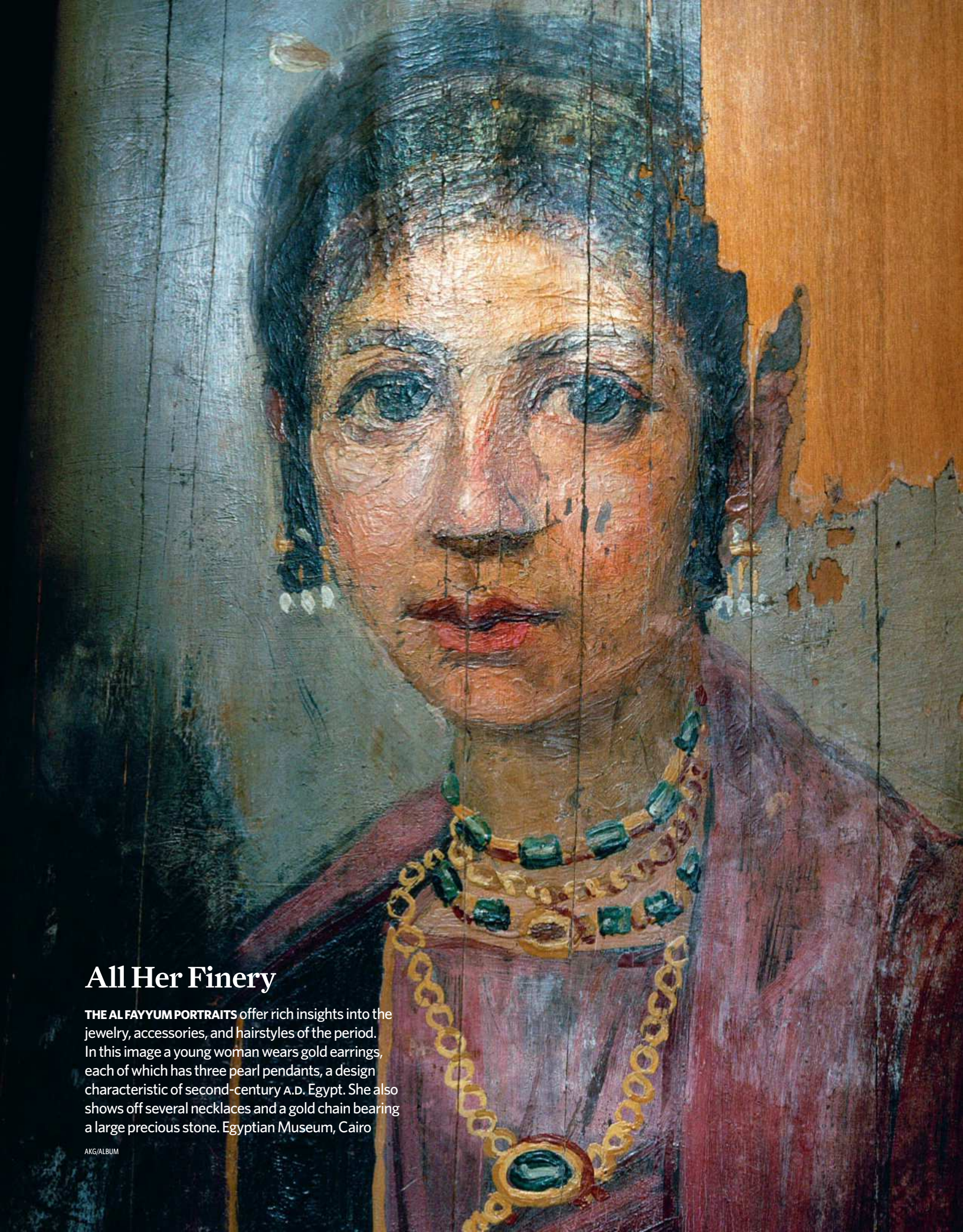
GODS AND MEN

BLENDING BELIEFS

Greco-Roman mummy cases and shrouds were often painted with images reflecting pharaonic religious beliefs about the hereafter but adapted to suit the prevailing Greco-Roman style. Egyptian divinities of the afterlife feature prominently, and include some or all of the following: Osiris, god of the afterlife and the underworld; his sisters Isis (also his wife) and Neftis, also considered a protector of the dead. Anubis, the jackal- or wolf-headed god is also often shown as patron of the mummification process and responsible for delivering the soul of the deceased into the kingdom of Osiris. The falcon god Horus often makes an appearance too. The Greco-Roman tradition had no problem about mixing in classical motifs. So in addition to representations of the Egyptian funerary gods, shrouds and mummy cases might depict figures in Roman dress. Greek elements might be included too: pomegranates, boughs of myrtle and rose, and kraters or goblets of wine, all alluding to eternal life in Greek iconography.

FACING THE AFTERLIFE
The image to the left is of a Roman-era Egyptian shroud. The deceased in the center is dressed in Roman style, flanked to the right by the Egyptian deity Anubis. Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow

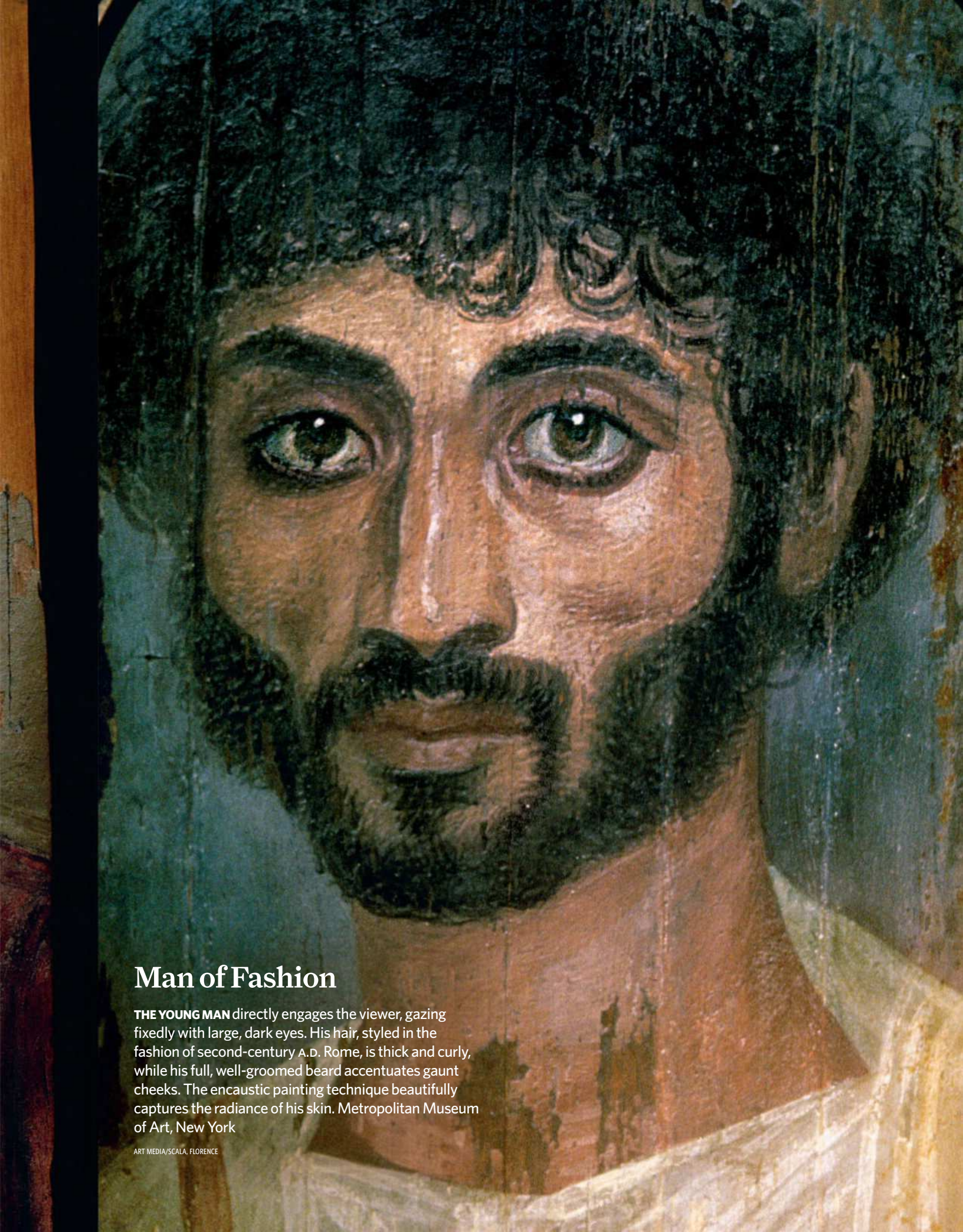
SCALA, FLORENCE



All Her Finery

THE AL FAYYUM PORTRAITS offer rich insights into the jewelry, accessories, and hairstyles of the period. In this image a young woman wears gold earrings, each of which has three pearl pendants, a design characteristic of second-century A.D. Egypt. She also shows off several necklaces and a gold chain bearing a large precious stone. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

AKG/ALBUM



Man of Fashion

THE YOUNG MAN directly engages the viewer, gazing fixedly with large, dark eyes. His hair, styled in the fashion of second-century A.D. Rome, is thick and curly, while his full, well-groomed beard accentuates gaunt cheeks. The encaustic painting technique beautifully captures the radiance of his skin. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

ART MEDIA/SCALA, FLORENCE

ZHENG HE

ASIA'S GREATEST ADMIRAL

MASTER AND COMMANDER
Against a backdrop of the mighty treasure ships under his command, Zheng He stands dressed in white in Hongnian Zhang's modern oil painting of China's greatest naval hero. The two main goods traded during his seven great voyages (1405-1433) were silk and porcelain. Below, an early 15th-century Ming tankard from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

PAINTING: HONGNIAN ZHANG
TANKARD: METROPOLITAN MUSEUM/SCALA, FLORENCE

Seeking to spread Chinese goods and prestige to far-flung new markets, the Ming dynasty chose a former captive and eunuch to comm nd their fleet of treasure ships. Pushing ever farther westward, Zheng He's seven remarkable na al expeditions established China as Asia's leading naval power.

DOLORS FOLCH

FAR-FLUNG FAME

At the Tay Kak Sie Chinese Taoist temple in Semarang on the island of Java, Indonesia, a statue of Zheng He (above) shows how far his legacy stretches across Asia.

ARTERRA PICTURE/ALAMY/ACI

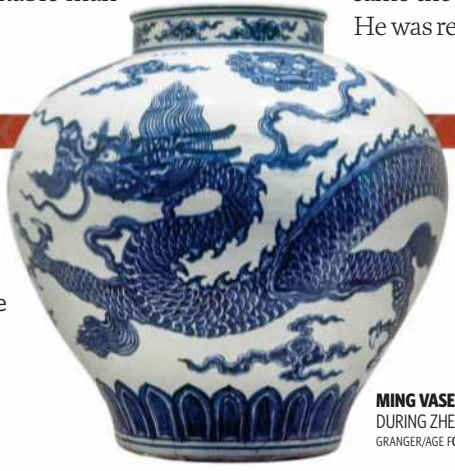
Perhaps it is odd that China's greatest seafarer was raised in the mountains. The future admiral Zheng He was born around 1371 to a family of prosperous Muslims. Then known as Ma He, he spent his childhood in Mongol-controlled, landlocked Yunnan Province, located several months' journey from the closest port. When Ma He was about 10 years old, Chinese forces invaded and overthrew the Mongols; his father was killed, and Ma He was taken prisoner. It marked the beginning of a remarkable journey of shifting identities that this remarkable man would navigate.

Many young boys taken from the province were ritually castrated and then brought to serve in the court of Zhu Di, the future Ming emperor Yongle. Over the next decade, Ma He would distinguish himself in the prince's service and rise to become one of his most trusted advisers. Skilled in the arts of war, strategy, and diplomacy, the young man cut an imposing figure: Some described him as seven feet tall with a deep, booming voice. Ma He burnished his reputation as a military commander with his feats at the battle of Zhenglunba, near Beijing. After Zhu Di became the Yongle emperor in 1402, Ma He was renamed Zheng He in honor of

MIGHTY MING EMPERORS

CIRCA 1371

Born into a family of Muslim traders from Yunnan Province in 1371, Ma He (as **Zheng He** was originally named) is captured and castrated by invading Chinese forces. He is sent to serve Zhu Di, the future Ming emperor Yongle.

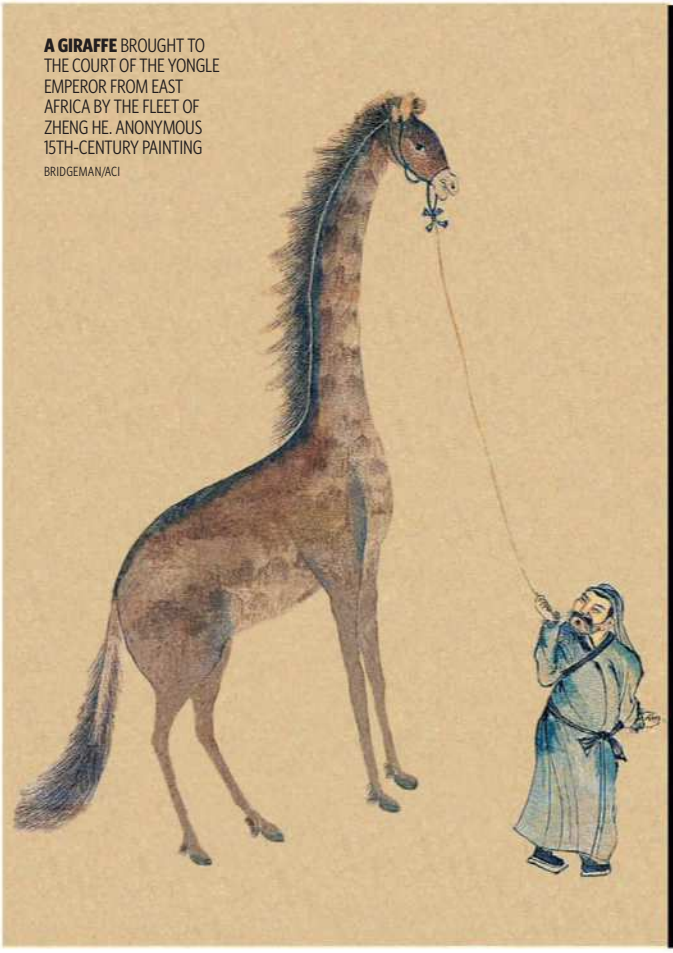


MING VASE FROM 1431, OF THE TYPE TRADED DURING ZHENG HE'S SEVEN VOYAGES

GRANGER/AGE FOTOSTOCK

1405

The **Ming emperor Yongle** appoints Zheng He (as he is now known) to lead the first Chinese naval expedition. Zheng He has already proven himself as a high-ranking civilian and military official.



A GIRAFFE BROUGHT TO THE COURT OF THE YONGLE EMPEROR FROM EAST AFRICA BY THE FLEET OF ZHENG HE. ANONYMOUS 15TH-CENTURY PAINTING

BRIDGEMAN/ACI

MA HUAN'S TRUE TALL TALES

OF THE THREE chroniclers who helped to provide written records of Zheng He's voyages, **Ma Huan** was perhaps the most reliable. Of humble origins, Ma Huan converted to Islam as a young man. He studied Arabic and Persian, and at the age of 23 was taken on as an interpreter for the fourth expedition. He participated in the sixth and seventh voyages as well, and he was one of the few members of the expeditions to visit Mecca. On arrival in the south of the Arabian Peninsula, Ma Huan lists the rich array of goods the Chinese exchanged for silk and porcelain: "Frankincense, dragon's blood, aloes, myrrh, benzoin and storax [both used to make perfume]." In East Africa Ma Huan first saw what he called a *qilin*—the Chinese word for a unicorn-like creature—evidently a giraffe: "The head is carried on a long neck over 16 feet long," he noted, with some exaggeration. "On its head it has two fleshy horns. It has the tail of an ox and the body of a deer . . . and it eats unhusked rice, beans and flour cakes."

that battle. He continued to serve alongside the emperor and became the commander of China's most important asset: its great naval fleet, which he would command seven times.

China on the High Seas

Zheng He's voyages followed in the wake of many centuries of Chinese seamanship. Chinese ships had set sail from the ports near present-day Shanghai, crossing the East China Sea, bound for Japan. The vessels' cargo included material goods, such as rice, tea, and bronze, as well as intellectual ones: a writing system, the art of calligraphy, Confucianism, and Buddhism.

As far back as the 11th century, multi-sailed Chinese junks boasted fixed rudders and watertight compartments—an innovation that allowed partially damaged ships to be repaired at sea. Chinese sailors were using compasses to navigate their way across the South China Sea. Setting off from the coast of eastern China with colossal cargoes, they soon ventured farther afield, crossing the Strait of Malacca while seeking to rival the Arab ships that dominated the trade routes in luxury goods across the Indian Ocean—or the Western Ocean, as the Chinese called it.

DIVINE PROTECTION

The goddess of sailors, Mazu or Tian Fei (depicted below) was worshipped aboard Zheng He's ships. Maritime Museum, Quanzhou

AKG/ALBUM

1424

The Yongle emperor's successor temporarily suspends naval expeditions under pressure from his ministers, jealous of the influence of eunuchs at court. Zheng He oversees work on the **Bao'en Pagoda,** known as the Porcelain Tower, in the co-capital of Nanjing.

CIRCA 1433

After setting sail in 1431 on his seventh and final expedition under the patronage of the new emperor **Xuande,** Zheng He dies several years later. Many believe the great admiral died on the return voyage and was buried at sea.

THE CENTER OF THE WORLD

EVEN BEFORE ZHENG HE embarked on his seven voyages, China already possessed a wealth of information about the world beyond the Indian Ocean. The first Ming emperor, Hongwu, commissioned a world map that has been reproduced many times since its original creation. The most famous version of it dates from 1402, a Korean rendering today known as the "Kangnido Map." This iteration shows a disproportionately large Korea and places China at the center of the known world, detailing its rivers and the Great Wall. Other East Asian countries are located far from their true positions and diminished in size. The archipelagoes of Indonesia and the Philippines, for example, appear as little more than a line of dots, and only the Malay Peninsula is recognizable. Mesopotamia, Europe, and much of the Middle East is likewise scrunched into a narrow band to the left. It is worth remembering that the "Kangnido Map" was produced three years before Zheng He's first expedition, and although Africa's size and shape are inaccurate, the outline does show clearly that its southernmost tip is navigable. Above Africa, the Mediterranean Sea appears in compressed form, surrounded by a handful of countries. Morocco and Egypt are the most prominent in the south, and in the north, Germany, France, Spain, Italy, and Greece are identifiable, albeit lumped together.

THIS VERSION OF THE "KANGNIDO MAP" IS A 1470 COPY OF AN ORIGINAL PRODUCED IN KOREA SHORTLY BEFORE ZHENG HE'S FIRST VOYAGE IN 1405. IT SHOWS THE EXTENT OF GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION COMPILED BY CARTOGRAPHERS OF THE CHINESE COURT DURING THE 1300S.

AKG/ALBUM


Lake Balkhash
Great Wall
Korea
China
Southeast Asia

DETAIL FROM A 13TH-CENTURY JAPANESE SCROLL PAINTING DEPICTING THE DOOMED INVASION OF JAPAN LED BY MONGOL EMPEROR KUBLAI KHAN IN 1281.

GRANGER/ALBUM

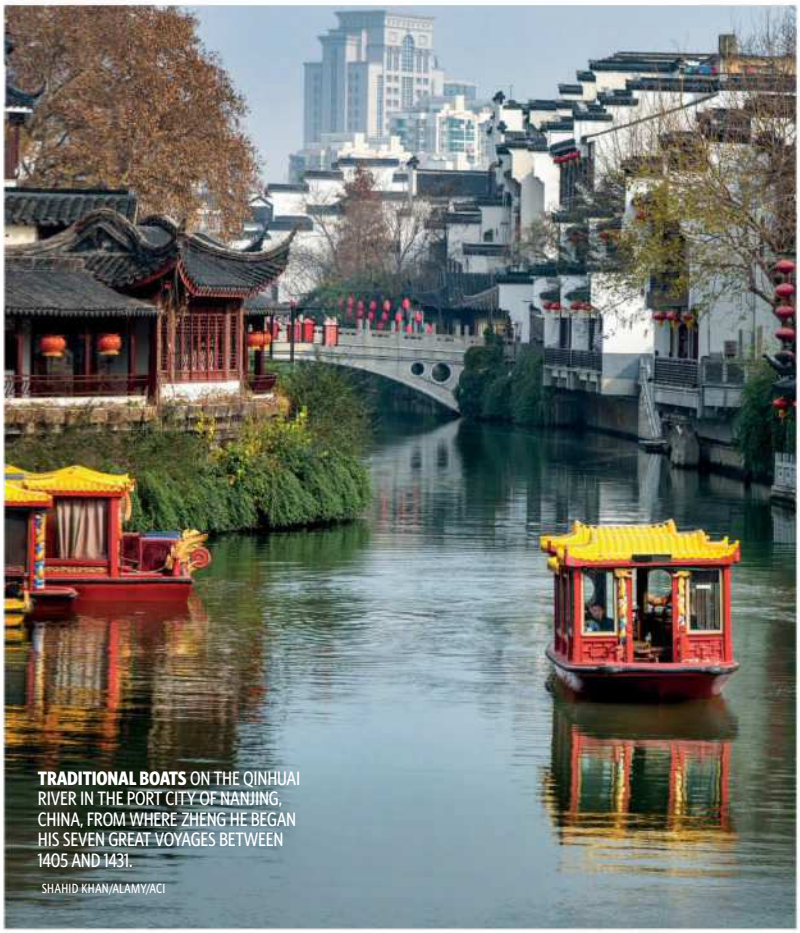
KUBLAI KHAN KAMIKAZED

GRANDSON OF THE GREAT GENGHIS KHAN, the Mongol Kublai Khan built an empire for himself in the 13th century, famously conquering China in 1279. He also had his sights set on Japan and tried to invade, not once, but twice: first in 1274 and again in 1281. Chroniclers of the time report that he sent thousands of Chinese and Korean ships and as many as 140,000 men to seize the islands of Japan. Twice his massive forces sailed across the Korea Strait, and twice his fleet was turned away; legend says that two kamikazes, massive typhoons whose name means "divine wind," were summoned by the Japanese emperor to sink the invading vessels. Historians believed the stories to be legendary, but recent archaeological finds support the story of giant storms saving Japan. A century and a half after Khan's attempted invasions, Zheng He's treasure ships would resemble the vessels of Kublai Khan. His ships were numerous and notably large—approximately 230 feet long. It seems both Zheng He and the Ming emperor clearly appreciated impressive size, both in terms of the vessels and the fleet, and made it an important factor in spreading Chinese prestige and dominance throughout the Indian Ocean.

While a well-equipped navy had been built up during the early years of the Song dynasty (960–1279), it was in the 12th century that the Chinese became a truly formidable naval power. The Song lost control of northern China in 1127, and with it, access to the Silk Road and the wealth of Persia and the Islamic world. The forced withdrawal to the south prompted a new capital to be established at Hangzhou, a port strategically situated at the mouth of the Qiantang River, and which Marco Polo described in the course of his famous adventures in the 1200s. For centuries, the Song had been embroiled in battles along inland waterways and had become indisputable masters of river navigation. Now, they applied their experience to building up a naval fleet. Alas, the Song's newfound naval mastery was not enough to withstand the invasion of the mighty Mongol emperor Kublai Khan.

The Mongols and the Ming

Having toppled the Song and ascended to the Chinese imperial throne in 1279, Kublai built up a truly fearsome naval force. Millions of trees were planted and new shipyards created. Soon,



TRADITIONAL BOATS ON THE QINHUAI RIVER IN THE PORT CITY OF NANJING, CHINA, FROM WHERE ZHENG HE BEGAN HIS SEVEN GREAT VOYAGES BETWEEN 1405 AND 1431.

SHAHID KHAN/ALAMY/ACI

Kublai commanded a force numbering thousands of ships, which he deployed to attack Japan, Vietnam, and Java. And while these naval offensives failed to gain territory, China did win control over the sea-lanes from Japan to Southeast Asia. The Mongols gave a new preeminence to merchants, and maritime trade flourished as never before.

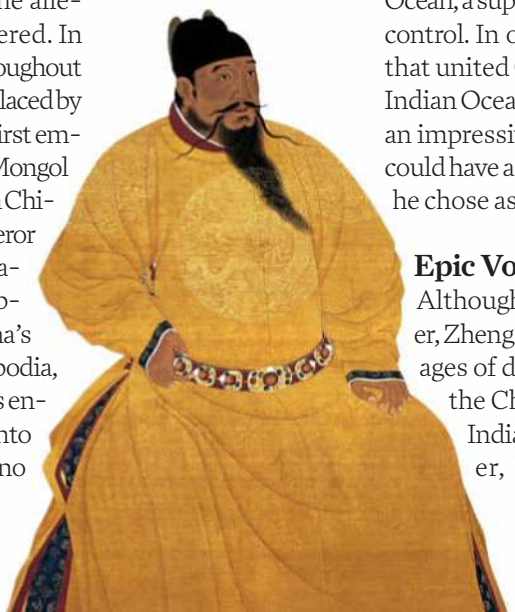
On land, however, they failed to establish a settled form of government and win the allegiance of the peoples they had conquered. In 1368, after decades of internal rebellion throughout China, the Mongol dynasty fell and was replaced by the Ming (meaning "bright") dynasty. Its first emperor, Hongwu, was as determined as the Mongol and Song emperors before him to maintain China as a naval power. However, the new emperor limited overseas contact to naval ambassadors who were charged with securing tribute from an increasingly long list of China's vassal states, among them, Brunei, Cambodia, Korea, Vietnam, and the Philippines, thus ensuring that lucrative profits did not fall into private hands. Hongwu also decreed that no oceangoing vessels could have more than three masts, a dictate punishable by death.

Yongle was the third Ming emperor, and he took this restrictive maritime policy even further, banning private trade while pushing hard for Chinese control of the southern seas and the Indian Ocean. The beginning of his reign saw the conquest of Vietnam and the foundation of Malacca as a new sultanate controlling the entry point to the Indian Ocean, a supremely strategic location for China to control. In order to dominate the trade routes that united China with Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean, the emperor decided to assemble an impressive fleet, whose huge treasure ships could have as many masts as necessary. The man he chose as its commander was Zheng He.

AT THE HELM

Sponsor to Zheng He, the Ming emperor Yongle—pictured in a 20th-century illustration (below)—moved his capital to Beijing and built the Forbidden City, seat of imperial power.

AKG/ALBUM



Epic Voyages

Although he is often described as an explorer, Zheng He did not set out primarily on voyages of discovery. During the Song dynasty, the Chinese had already reached as far as India, the Persian Gulf, and Africa. Rather, his voyages were designed as a

1405-1433

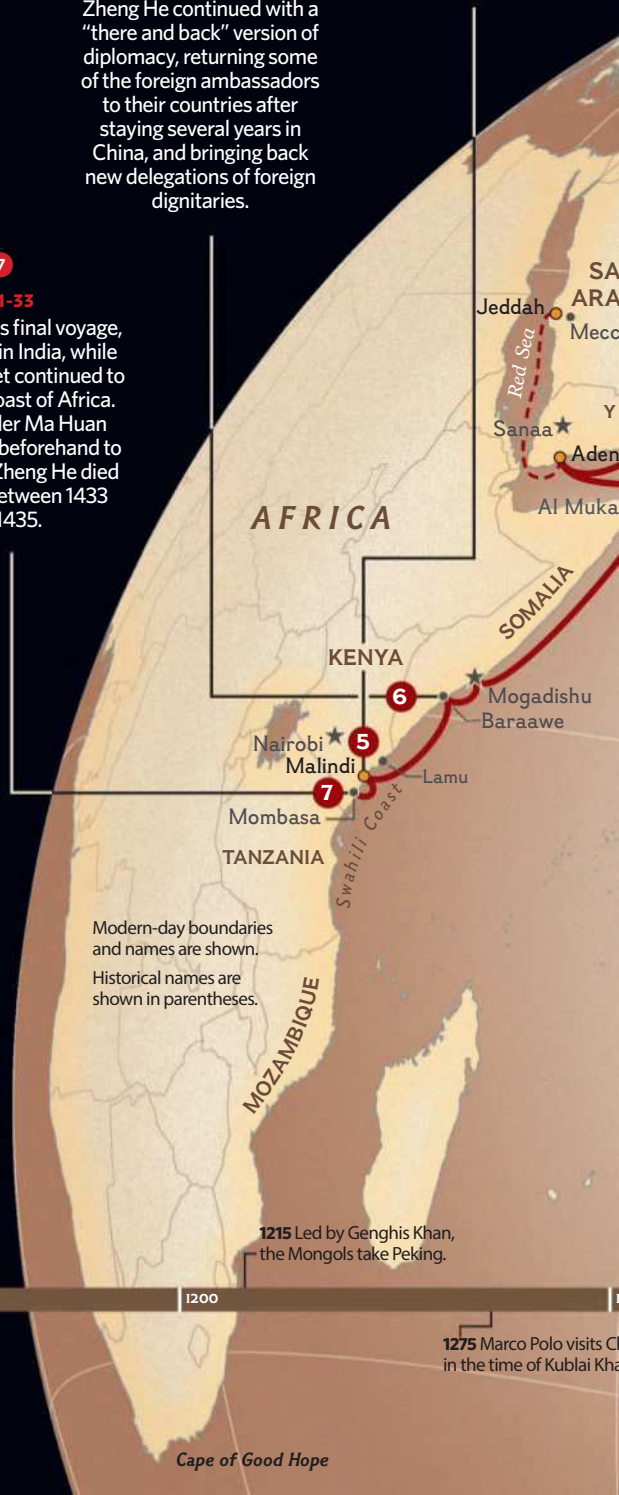
THE 7 VOYAGES OF ZHENG HE

BETWEEN 1405 AND 1433 the seven voyages of Zheng He touched 30 modern-day countries in Africa and Asia. The fleet sailed to East Africa on Zheng He's sixth and seventh voyages, and an advance party may have gone farther, reaching Mozambique or even the Cape of Good Hope. A total of 100,000 people—passengers, troops, and crew—participated in these trips, which were intended as diplomatic missions rather than voyages of discovery. Over 300 foreign envoys, including nine kings, were brought back to China on Zheng He's ships, facilitating commerce across a huge swath of Asia and kindling new relationships with Islamic and African lands.

5
1417-19
The Treasure Fleet arrived at the Arabian Peninsula and embarked on its first expedition to Africa. In Aden the sultan showered Zheng He with exotic gifts, including lions, zebras, and ostriches.

6
1421-22
Zheng He continued with a "there and back" version of diplomacy, returning some of the foreign ambassadors to their countries after staying several years in China, and bringing back new delegations of foreign dignitaries.

7
1431-33
On Zheng He's final voyage, he stayed on in India, while part of the fleet continued to the Swahili coast of Africa. The chronicler Ma Huan disembarked beforehand to visit Mecca. Zheng He died sometime between 1433 and 1435.



EAST MEETS WEST IN 500 YEARS OF EXPLORATION

ca 1000 Leif Eriksson sets foot on Newfoundland.

ca 1050 Chinese sailors first use liquid compass.

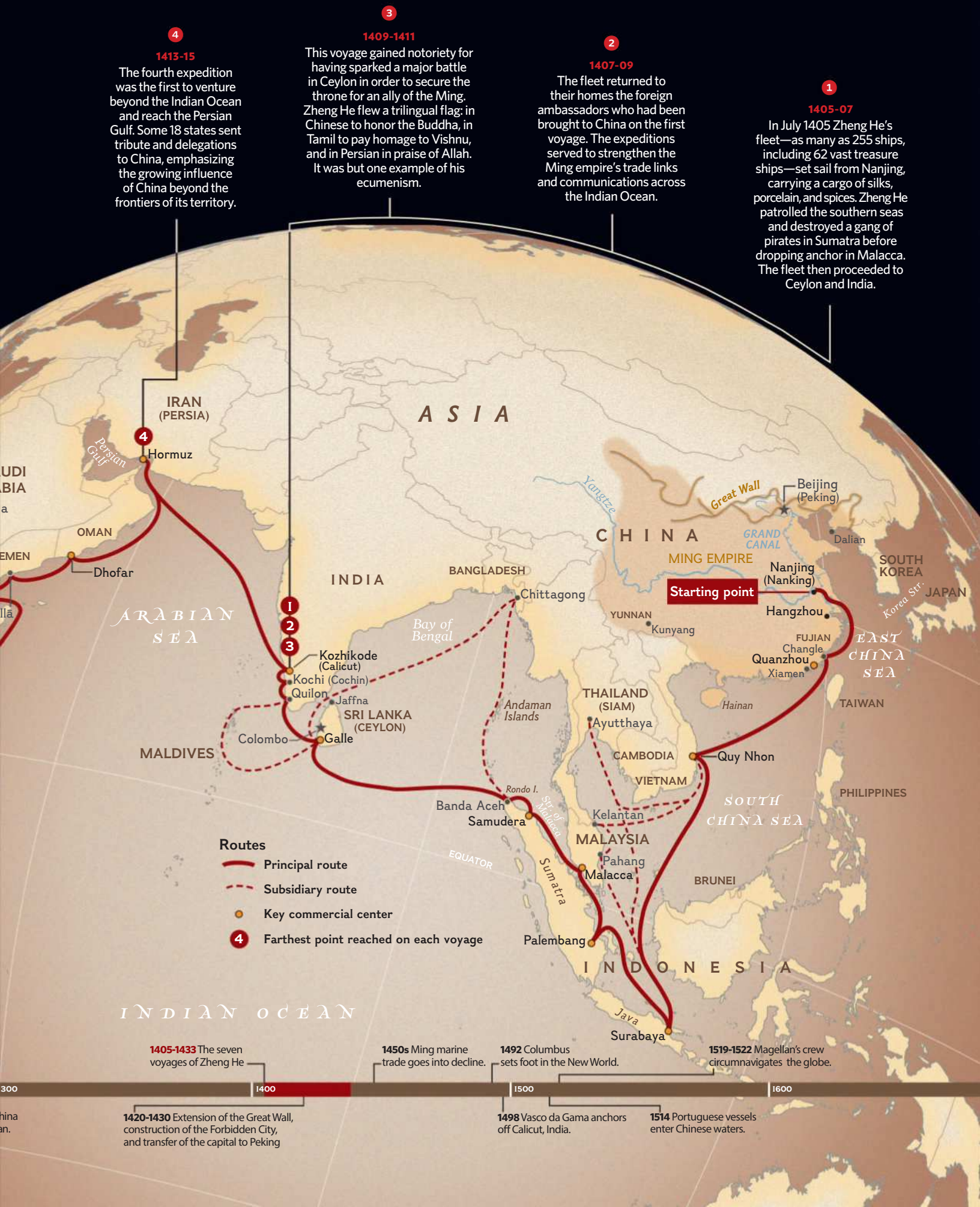
1000-1100 Chinese junks dock in the Persian Gulf and Red Sea.

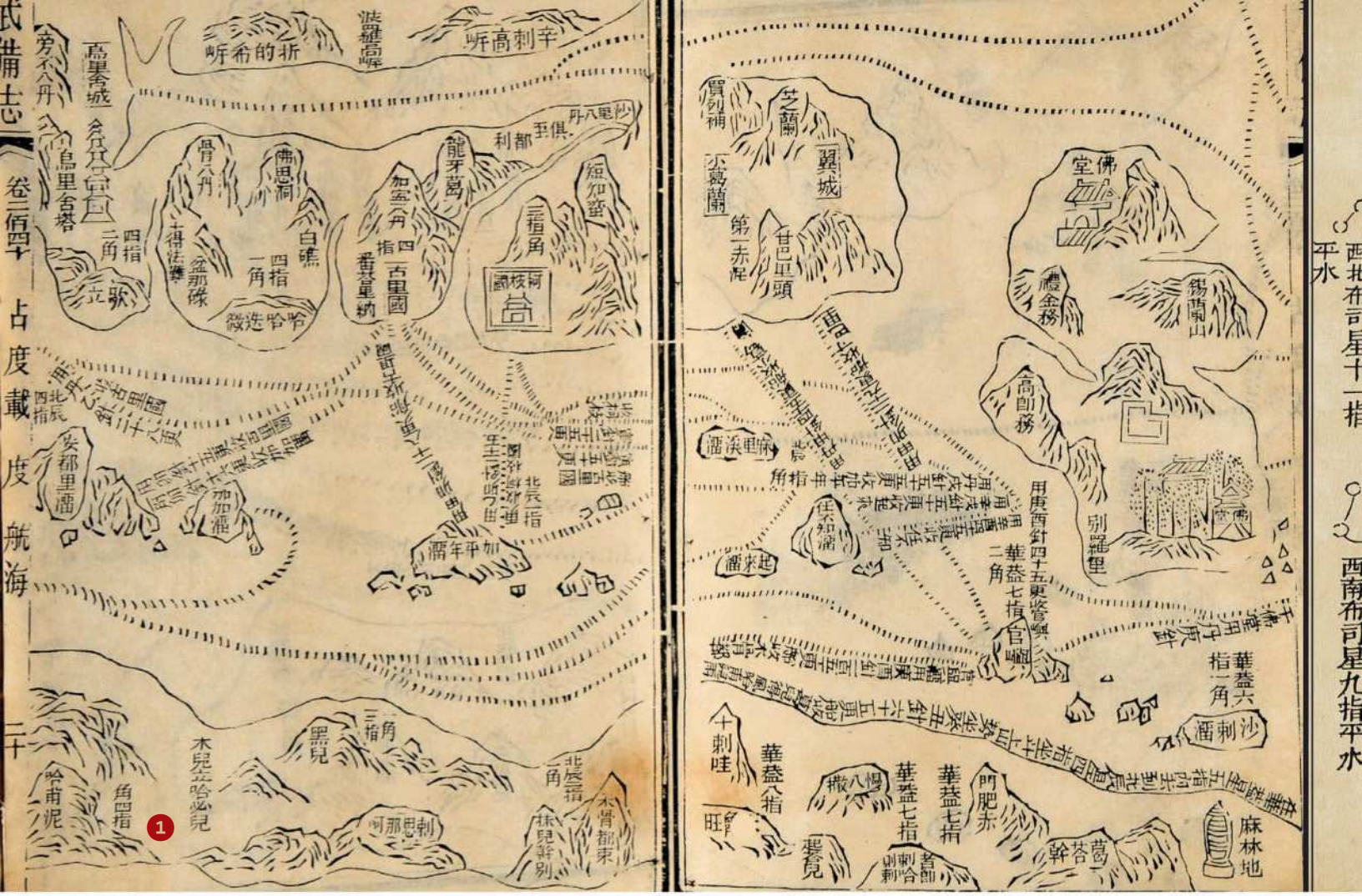
1215 Led by Genghis Khan, the Mongols take Peking.

1275 Marco Polo visits C in the time of Kublai Kha

A.D. 1000 | 1100 | 1200

NG MAPS


4
1413-15
The fourth expedition was the first to venture beyond the Indian Ocean and reach the Persian Gulf. Some 18 states sent tribute and delegations to China, emphasizing the growing influence of China beyond the frontiers of its territory.
3
1409-1411
This voyage gained notoriety for having sparked a major battle in Ceylon in order to secure the throne for an ally of the Ming. Zheng He flew a trilingual flag: in Chinese to honor the Buddha, in Tamil to pay homage to Vishnu, and in Persian in praise of Allah. It was but one example of his ecumenism.
2
1407-09
The fleet returned to their homes the foreign ambassadors who had been brought to China on the first voyage. The expeditions served to strengthen the Ming empire's trade links and communications across the Indian Ocean.
1
1405-07
In July 1405 Zheng He's fleet—as many as 255 ships, including 62 vast treasure ships—set sail from Nanjing, carrying a cargo of silks, porcelain, and spices. Zheng He patrolled the southern seas and destroyed a gang of pirates in Sumatra before dropping anchor in Malacca. The fleet then proceeded to Ceylon and India.
ASIA
IRAN (PERSIA)
Persian Gulf
Hormuz
OMAN
Dhofar
ARABIAN SEA
INDIA
BANGLADESH
Chittagong
Bay of Bengal
Kozhikode (Calicut)
Kochi (Cochin)
Quilon
Jaffna
SRI LANKA (CEYLON)
Colombo
Galle
MALDIVES
Andaman Islands
THAILAND (SIAM)
Ayutthaya
CAMBODIA
Quy Nhon
VIETNAM
Rondo I.
Banda Aceh
Samudera
Str. of Malacca
Kelantan
MALAYSIA
Pahang
Malacca
EQUATOR
Sumatra
BRUNEI
Palembang
INDONESIA
Java
Surabaya
INDIAN OCEAN
Yangtze
Great Wall
Beijing (Peking)
CHINA
GRAND CANAL
MING EMPIRE
Dalian
SOUTH KOREA
Nanjing (Nanking)
Starting point
Korea Str.
JAPAN
Hangzhou
YUNNAN
Kunyang
FUJIAN
Changle
Quanzhou
Xiamen
EAST CHINA SEA
Hainan
TAIWAN
SOUTH CHINA SEA
PHILIPPINES
Routes
Principal route
Subsidiary route
Key commercial center
4 Farthest point reached on each voyage
1405-1433 The seven voyages of Zheng He
1450s Ming marine trade goes into decline.
1492 Columbus sets foot in the New World.
1519-1522 Magellan's crew circumnavigates the globe.
1300
1400
1500
1600
1420-1430 Extension of the Great Wall, construction of the Forbidden City, and transfer of the capital to Peking
1498 Vasco da Gama anchors off Calicut, India.
1514 Portuguese vessels enter Chinese waters.



LEFT TO RIGHT: WHITE IMAGES/SCALA, FLORENCE; BRIDGEMAN/ACI

display of Chinese might, as well as a way of rekindling trade with vassal states and guaranteeing the flow of vital provisions, including medicines, pepper, sulfur, tin, and horses. The fleets that Zheng He commanded on his seven great expeditions between 1405 and 1433 were suitably ostentatious. On the first voyage, the fleet numbered 255 ships, 62 of which were vast treasure ships, or *baochuan*. There were also mid-size ships such as the *machuan,* used for transporting horses, and a multitude of other vessels carrying soldiers, sailors, and assorted personnel. Some 600 officials made the voyage, among them doctors, astrologers, and cartographers.

Charting Distant Waters

The ships left Nanjing (Nanking), Hangzhou, and other major ports, from there veering south to Fujian, where they swelled their crews with expert sailors. They then made a show of force by anchoring in Quy Nhon, Vietnam, which China had recently conquered. None of the seven expeditions headed north; most made their way to Java and Sumatra,

STERNER STUFF

Below, a dragon graces a replica of one of Zheng He's treasure ships docked in Nanjing, China.

CHINA PHOTOS/GETTY IMAGES

resting for a spell in Malacca, where they waited for the winter monsoon winds that blow toward the west.

They then proceeded to Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka) and Calicut in southern India, where the first three expeditions terminated. The fourth expedition reached Hormuz in the Persian Gulf, and the final voyages expanded westward, entering the waters of the Red Sea, then turning and sailing as far as Kenya, and perhaps farther still. A caption on a copy of the Fra Mauro map—the original, now lost, was completed in Venice in 1459, more than 25 years after Zheng He's final voyage—implies that Chinese ships rounded the Cape of Good Hope in 1420 before being forced to turn back for lack of wind. Chinese ships had always been noted for their size. More than a century before Zheng He, explorer Marco Polo described their awesome dimensions: Between four and six masts, a crew of up to 300 sailors, 60 cabins, and a deck for the merchants. Chinese vessels with five masts are shown on the 14th-century "Catalan Atlas" from the island

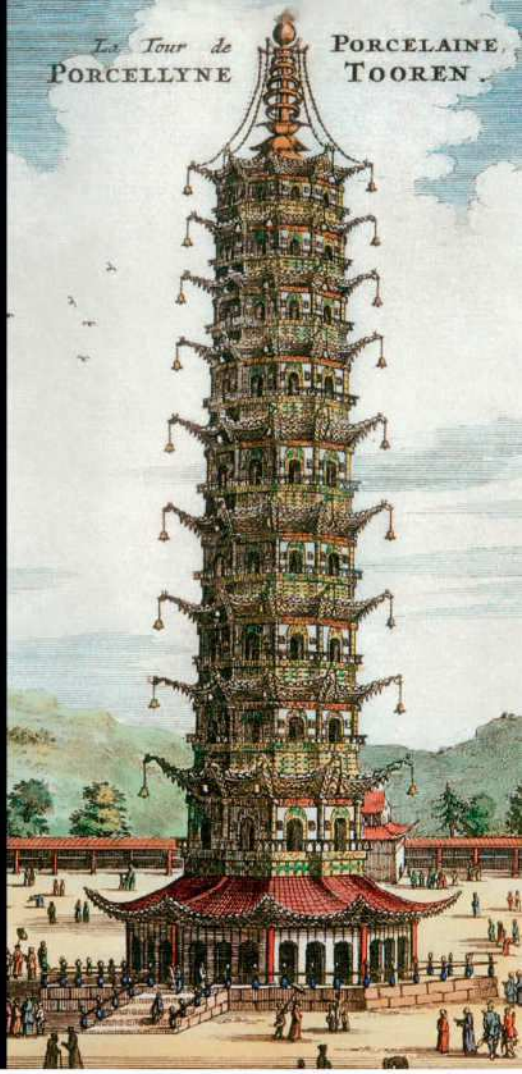
GETTING HIS BEARINGS

ZHENG HE´S NAVIGATORS used compasses for measuring distances and calculating sailing times as well as for orientation. Copies of the charts used on his voyages survived and were later reproduced in a 1621 printed work, saving them for posterity. From these, historians know that Zheng He used both stars and land features to orient his fleet; he also annotated his routes with compass bearings that act as sailing directions: Follow this course for such-and-such a number of *gengs*, to arrive at a specific destination. A *geng*, or watch, aboard a Chinese ship lasted 2.4 hours, or one-tenth of a 24-hour period.

CHARTING SEA AND SKY

FAR LEFT ①, A PORT MAP FROM ZHENG HE'S TRAVELS DETAILS FEATURES THAT SERVED TO POSITION HIS SHIPS.

NEAR LEFT ②, A STAR CHART SHOWS THE CORRECT POSITION OF A CRAFT SAILING FROM HORMUZ TO CALICUT.



of Mallorca. Still, claims in a 1597 adventure tale that Zheng He's treasure ships reached 460 feet long do sound exaggerated. Most marine archaeological finds suggest that Chinese ships of the 14th and 15th centuries usually were not longer than 100 feet. Even so, a recent discovery by archaeologists of a 36-foot-long rudder raises the possibility that some ships may have been as large as claimed.

End of an Odyssey

Zheng He's voyages ended abruptly in 1433 on the command of Emperor Xuande. Historians have long speculated as to why the Ming would have abandoned the naval power that China had nurtured since the Song. The problems were certainly not economic: China was collecting enormous tax revenues, and the voyages likely cost a fraction of that income.

The problem, it seems, was political. The Ming victory over the Mongols caused the empire's focus to shift from the ports of the south to deal with tensions in the north. The voyages were also viewed with suspicion by the very powerful bureaucratic class, who worried about the influence of the military. This fear had reared its head before: In 1424, between the sixth and seventh voyages, the expedition program was briefly suspended, and Zheng He was temporarily appointed defender of the co-capital Nanjing, where he oversaw construction of the famous Bao'en Pagoda, built with porcelain bricks.

The great admiral died either during, or shortly after, the seventh and last of the historic expeditions, and with the great mariner's death his fleet was largely dismantled. China's naval power would recede until the 21st century. With the nation's current resurgence, it is no surprise that the figure of Zheng He stands once again at the center of China's maritime ambitions. Today the country's highly disputed "nine-dash line"—which China claims demarcates its control of the South China Sea—almost exactly maps the route taken six centuries ago by Zheng He and his remarkable fleet.

DOLORS FOLCH IS PROFESSOR EMERITUS OF CHINESE HISTORY AT THE POMPEU FABRA UNIVERSITY, BARCELONA, SPAIN.

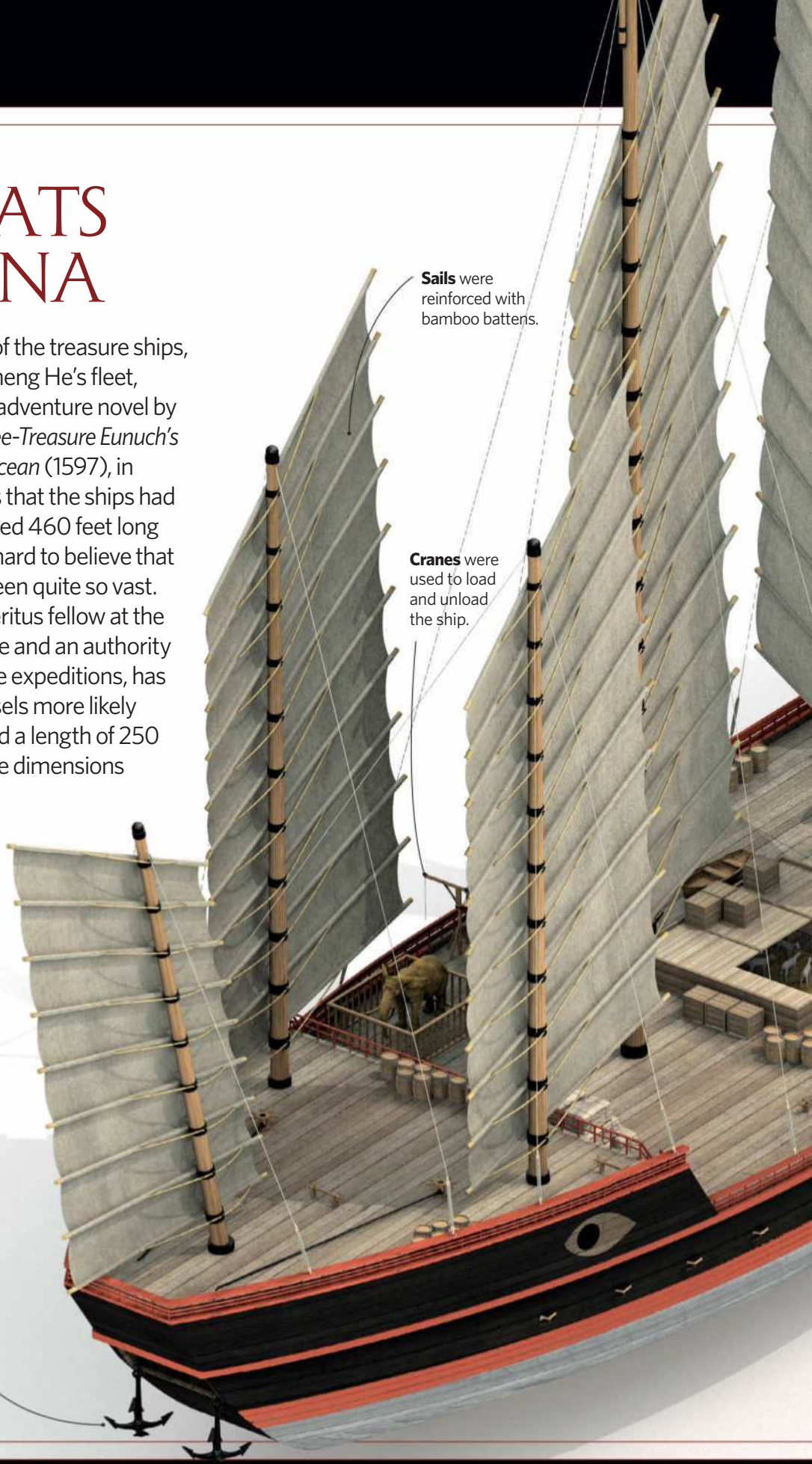
GREAT TOWER OF CHINA

Zheng He directed construction of the Buddhist Bao'en Pagoda in Nanjing beginning in 1424 (above in a 17th-century engraving). Some 260 feet high, and built of porcelain bricks, it was destroyed in 1856.

BRIDGEMAN/ACI

BIG BOATS OF CHINA

The customary image of the treasure ships, the largest vessels in Zheng He's fleet, derives from a popular adventure novel by Luo Maodeng, *The Three-Treasure Eunuch's Travels to the Western Ocean* (1597), in which the author writes that the ships had nine masts and measured 460 feet long and 180 feet wide. It is hard to believe that the ships would have been quite so vast. Sally K. Church, an emeritus fellow at the University of Cambridge and an authority on Zheng He's maritime expeditions, has suggested that the vessels more likely had five or six masts and a length of 250 to 300 feet—impressive dimensions nonetheless.



Vegetables were grown on board in baskets to feed the animals and crew.

Exotic animals were often brought back to China from distant parts of Asia and Africa.

Bronze cannons defended the ship. A vessel could be armed with up to two dozen.

Animals could be traded or used to feed the Chinese crew.

Ballast added extra weight to the ship, making it more stable.

Comparison between one of Zheng He's treasure ships at slightly more than 300 feet long and the *Santa María*—at around 120 feet long—one of the boats Christopher Columbus sailed when he reached the Americas in 1492.

Treasure ship of Zheng He

Santa María

SOL 90/ALBUM

ELIZABETH TRIUMPHANT

The Armada Portrait of 1588 shows Queen Elizabeth I majestic in victory over Spain. Over her right shoulder, the ships of the Spanish Armada are destroyed, while her opposite hand rests on a globe, reflecting England's imperial ambitions. Far right, onyx cameo of Philip II of Spain made in the 1550s

PICTURE: WOBURN ABBEY, UK/BRIDGEMAN/ACI
CAMEO: G. NIMATALLAH/DEA/ALBUM

FROM ALLIES TO ENEMIES

QUEEN VERSUS KING

When she became queen, Elizabeth I was but a poor player compared to King Philip II, ruler of the Spanish Empire. Struggles over faith and politics turned the two ambitious monarchs to rivals, competing for glory and power on the world stage.

GILES TREMLETT

Reign of the Virgin Queen

September 7, 1533
Elizabeth is born, the second surviving, legitimate child of **Henry VIII.** Her mother, Anne Boleyn, is executed when Elizabeth is two years old.

1553
On the death of her Protestant half brother, Edward VI, Elizabeth's half sister accedes as **Mary I,** intent on returning England to the Catholic faith.

1554
On Mary I's decision to marry **Philip of Spain,** Elizabeth is implicated in a Protestant plot. She is imprisoned, but Philip intercedes to save her.

1558
After Mary's death, Elizabeth becomes queen, and Philip II sees her as an ally against their **common foe, France.** She will refuse his offer of marriage.

1580
The pope declares that to kill Elizabeth would not be a sin. Amid many Catholic plots against her, Elizabeth sanctions **piracy raids** on Spanish ships.

1588
After Philip crushes Protestant rebels in Holland, Elizabeth's deteriorating relations with Spain culminate in her stunning defeat of the **Spanish Armada.**

March 24, 1603
Elizabeth dies at Richmond, age 69. She is succeeded by the Protestant James VI of Scotland, who is crowned **James I** of England in July.

POISED FOR POWER

A year before Henry VIII's death, Flemish artist William Scrots painted young Elizabeth (below) in 1546. Queen's Drawing Room, Windsor Castle

ORONOZ/ALBUM

During the summer of 1588, England prepared to face the full might of the Spanish Empire, its most dangerous foe. The indomitable Spanish Armada was sailing toward Albion's shores, carrying soldiers set to invade. Anticipating the attack, Queen Elizabeth I prepared to address her troops stationed at Tilbury Fort in England. Accounts describe her like a goddess of war: white plumes in her hair, a metal cuirass over white gown, and astride a warhorse as she delivered a rousing speech to her men: "I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman," she said, "but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too, and think foul scorn that . . . Spain, or any prince of Europe, should dare to invade the borders of my realm."

The ultimate defeat of the Spanish would cement Elizabeth's position as a formidable leader of a world power, strong enough to rival Philip II of Spain. But Philip had once been Elizabeth's family, then a potential mate and uneasy ally.

THE FUTURE QUEENS FLANKING KING HENRY VIII, ELIZABETH I (NEAR RIGHT) STANDS WITH MARY I AND HER HUSBAND, PHILIP II OF SPAIN (FAR LEFT), IN THIS 17TH-CENTURY ALLEGORY OF THE TUDOR SUCCESSION.

FINE ART/GETTY IMAGES

BONHAMS, LONDON/BRIDGEMAN/ACI

PRINCESS IN PERIL

THE WYATT PLOT of 1554—the year Mary I married the unpopular Philip of Spain—sought to overthrow Mary and replace her with the Protestant Elizabeth. Having crushed the conspiracy, Mary flung Elizabeth into the Tower of London. For two months her life hung in the balance until her interrogators, satisfied of her innocence, placed her under house arrest at Woodstock, near Oxford.

DETAIL FROM ROBERT HILLINGFORD'S "PRINCESS ELIZABETH AT THE TOWER," 19TH CENTURY

Elizabeth and Philip—these two powerful people—would begin their relationship peacefully, even warmly, but they would become enemies, facing off in a battle of empires and faiths that would last until death.

An Unlikely Queen

The future Queen Elizabeth I was conceived in controversy, a beginning which perhaps forged her strength and skill. Her father, Henry VIII, divorced his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, and broke with the Catholic Church, to wed Anne Boleyn, who would bear Elizabeth. The birth did not please Elizabeth's father, who had hoped for a son and heir. Anne Boleyn soon fell from favor and lost her head, as Henry's wandering eye sought a new queen, one who would give him a son. He eventually found one.

When Henry's son Edward was born, Elizabeth became third in line to the throne behind her new half brother and her older half sister, Mary, the Catholic daughter of Henry's first marriage. After Henry died in 1547, Edward, age nine, succeeded him, but the young Protestant king's reign was cut short by illness. Mary took the throne in 1553, to the delight of her Catholic subjects and the shock of Protestants. Throughout the religious turmoil of Henry's reign, Mary had remained a devout Catholic, and now she sought a husband so that she could produce a Catholic heir for England. She found her match in the 27-year-old prince Philip of Spain, son of the Holy Roman Emperor and heir to the Spanish Empire. If the two produced a successor, the Protestant Elizabeth would never take the throne.

Mary's pending marriage was unpopular, and in March 1554, English Protestants rebelled. They hoped to overthrow Mary and place the Protestant Elizabeth on the throne. The rebellion was quashed, the conspirators executed, and Elizabeth imprisoned. Claiming she had no involvement in the conspiracy, Elizabeth was nonetheless held in the Tower of London for two

PRINCE PHILIP OF SPAIN, AGE 22, IN A 1549 PORTRAIT BY THE SCHOOL OF TITIAN. PRADO MUSEUM, MADRID

ALBUM

SURPRISE OUTCOMES

THE RELATIONSHIP between Elizabeth of England and Philip of Spain was complex, but at their birth, few would have seen them as equal sparring partners. Philip, born in 1527, would one day inherit a sprawling empire in Europe and the New World; Elizabeth, born six years later, was an unwanted princess of a minor power. While Philip was mentored by his father, Charles V, scoring his first military victory against France at age 15, the young Elizabeth sought only to survive the religious upheaval of the reigns of her half siblings. The fact that Elizabeth eventually reigned so long, against so many odds, fueled her legacy as Gloriana. Philip, meanwhile, has been branded a gloomy obsessive, whose suspicion of advisers and hatred of Protestantism poisoned his empire. Even so, just as the notion of Good Queen Bess is challenged by historians, Philip's role has also been reassessed. More intelligent and open-minded than he has often been given credit for, his patronage led to the accumulation of one of the greatest royal collections ever, which includes masterpieces by Titian and El Greco, among much else.

months before being placed under house arrest in Woodstock Palace, some 75 miles to the north.

Four months later, a Spanish fleet of 180 ships carrying 10,000 soldiers and Mary's groom arrived in England. Although the man who stepped onto the quay at Southampton was an ardent Roman Catholic, Philip opposed attempts to put Elizabeth on trial because he did not want to stir Protestant ire. His intervention saved Elizabeth, a move he might have later come to regret.

All in the Family

Six years older than the intelligent, vivacious Elizabeth, Phillip had come grudgingly to England to marry Mary. He routinely referred to his bride as "my aunt," since she was not only 11 years his senior but also the daughter of his great aunt, Catherine of Aragon. Like most royal marriages, the union with Mary was for power, not love.

Philip's father, Charles V, ruled an empire that stretched from Spain to Holland to Naples and the New World. Perhaps the most powerful man

AFTER THE REPRESSIVE REIGN OF MARY, ELIZABETH'S ACCESSION TO THE THRONE IN 1558 WAS WIDELY WELCOMED. THIS ANONYMOUS PAINTING DEPICTS THE QUEEN BORNE ON A LITTER. SHERBORNE CASTLE, DORSET, ENGLAND

FINE ART/ALBUM

in Europe, Charles wanted to secure an alliance with England, partially motivated by the fact that their two enemies—France and Scotland—were about to ally through marriage. To bolster Philip's standing, Charles bestowed control of the kingdoms of Naples and Sicily to Philip in 1554.

Many of Mary's subjects were not pleased that Henry VIII had separated the church in England from Rome after the pope had refused to sanction his divorce. During the reign of Edward VI, England moved further away from Catholicism, laying the foundations of a Protestant reformation. As king consort of England, Philip, Mary believed, would soon have helped reverse that course.

In her quest to return England to the Catholic faith, the queen earned the nickname Bloody Mary for persecuting heretics and burning hundreds of Protestants at the stake. Mary adored her husband, who was described by one observer as having a "perfectly" proportioned body and "well-favored" face, "with a broad forehead, and grey eyes, straight-nosed and manly countenance . . . and of most gentle nature." Despite her happiness, Mary endured several false pregnancies and never had any children. If she had, the restoration of Catholicism in England might have been a success.

BLOODY MARY

Antonio Moro's painting, below, depicts 38-year-old Mary I in 1554, the year of her marriage to Prince Philip. Mass executions of Protestants followed until her death in 1558. Prado Museum, Madrid

BRIDGEMAN/ACI

Because of Mary's brutality, Philip grew unpopular in England, and murder plots were hatched against him. Luckily for him, he spent little time there, preferring his father's realms in Holland. He was there when he heard that Mary was dying in 1558. His reaction was as pragmatic as his marriage had been. While the French king denounced Elizabeth as "a bastard" who was unfit to rule, he offered her his support as heiress. By the end of the year she was England's queen.

Philip the Prudent

In many ways these two young monarchs were remarkably similar. Learned and with lively minds, they dressed simply—at this stage of their lives—as required by both Protestants and Catholics alike. They shared favorite

POLITICAL ALLEGORY OF 1590 SHOWING HOW THE NETHERLANDS REVOLT NUDGED THE BALANCE OF POWER IN FAVOR OF ELIZABETH.
GRANGER/ALBUM

REBELLION "COWS" A KING

THE REVOLT OF THE NETHERLANDS dragged Philip into a long war that would sap his resources, and leave Elizabeth strengthened. The picture above, a 1590 Flemish allegory, shows **Philip riding a cow**—representing **the wealthy Dutch**—whose resources are being milked through taxation by Philip's ruthless commander, **the Duke of Alba.** Despite Spanish efforts to control and exploit the cow, the creature is willingly letting itself be led by **Elizabeth** to the right. Problems in the Spanish Netherlands, which Philip had inherited from his father, Charles V, began roughly around the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, in the 1560s. The region's mainly Catholic magnates resented Philip's meddling in their rule, while hard-line Protestant Calvinists chafed under the repressive measures of the Inquisition. In 1567 Philip sent Alba to break the power of the magnates and impose taxation and religious uniformity. Alba's long reign of terror sparked a general revolt, during which Philip's unpaid troops undertook frequent orgies of pillaging. The region's many Protestant refugees became radicalized as pirates known as the **Sea Beggars,** who preyed on Spanish shipping. Despite the lack of social and religious unity among the different Dutch factions, they were greatly emboldened by the spectacular defeat by Elizabeth of Philip's **Armada in 1588.** By the 1590s Dutch independence was only a matter of time. Dutch victories had weakened Spain and provided Elizabeth with a Protestant ally across the North Sea.

pastimes—hunting, hawking, and riding. But when Philip asked to marry Elizabeth, claiming he would take no less care of the affairs of "the sister whom I love so much, than I take of my own," his reasons were strategic. After a long engagement, the heir to the French throne, Francis, had married Elizabeth's Catholic cousin Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, cementing an alliance that threatened Spain as much as England. An Anglo-Spanish alliance seemed prudent.

Philip insisted, however, that Elizabeth first abandon her faith—a step too far for the young English queen. Perhaps that is why she stalled and ultimately turned him down, making the Spaniard the first of many failed candidates to attempt to marry the new monarch. They nevertheless remained on good terms, but their relationship would deteriorate in years to come.

Both Philip and Elizabeth believed that monarchs were chosen by God. That God, however, was worshipped differently. As Protestants and Catholics fought all across Europe, the conflict

THE ABDICATION OF EMPEROR CHARLES V IN 1556, IN FAVOR OF HIS SON PHILIP (KNEELING). 1841 PAINTING BY LOUIS GALLAIT. MUSÉES ROYAUX DES BEAUX-ARTS, BRUSSELS
BRIDGEMAN/ACI

would shape their relationship. At first Philip was upset with the pope for excommunicating Elizabeth in 1570. But in time his religious instincts won out against other political considerations. He had always been a devout Catholic, with a messianic belief that the world must be cleansed of heresy before the Second Coming.

Changing Sides

After Philip's father abdicated in 1556, he split his empire and handed his son control of Spain, as well as his territories in the Americas and the Netherlands. Spain was Europe's dominant power, and now Philip II was its leader. As Spain's might grew, though, so did its enemies. Chief among them were Protestants, France, and the Ottoman Turks. A notorious micro-manager, Philip attempted to handle these myriad threats himself. With bullion ships from the New World flooding Spain with gold and silver, Philip could, in the short term, pay for armies. But eventually even his finances grew strained. To raise funds, Philip levied new taxes on the Dutch in the 1560s, which would spark a rebellion fueled by religious edicts and laws against Protestants. Philip and his subordinates were attempting to defend the Catholic faith from heresies and became entangled in a protracted war as the Netherlands began to revolt. Queen Elizabeth at first watched this conflict from the sides, reluctant to involve her country in the affairs of another.

COURTLY PLEASURES

King Philip II and Queen Elizabeth I shared a regal love of hunting. Below, the queen hawking on horseback in a 1575 colored woodcut

GRANGER/ALBUM

In 1571 Philip masterminded a crushing defeat of the Ottoman Empire at the naval Battle of Lepanto. That same year, the Spanish emperor changed his position on Protestant England. He instructed his finest general, the Duke of Alba, to invade England with an army of just 6,000 men. When the duke told him this was lunacy, Philip insisted that it was God's will. He had already, with Mary, restored England to Catholicism once. Now he would do it

A TALE OF TWO PALACES

QUEEN ELIZABETH I, THE RAINBOW PORTRAIT, ATTRIBUTED TO ISAAC OLIVER, CIRCA 1600. HATFIELD HOUSE, HERTFORDSHIRE, ENGLAND

BRIDGEMAN/ACI

RICHMOND PALACE

ELIZABETH'S FAVORITE PALACE was named for her grandfather Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, who defeated Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth in 1485. On the banks of the Thames River west of London, **Richmond Palace** was built of white stone and brick and sported octagonal towers with distinctive pepper-pot domes. It became the favorite residence of two of Henry VII's granddaughters: Mary I honeymooned there with Philip of Spain, and Elizabeth spent more time there than in any of her other 13 palaces. Despite its grandeur—its great hall was 100 feet long—it was snugger than her other rambling residences. The nearby park provided all the pleasures of deer hunting, and the hall was the venue for plays, including those performed by the company of which Shakespeare was a member. In March 1603 Elizabeth died at Richmond, from where her body was transferred along the Thames to Whitehall. Following the end of the English Civil War in 1651, the palace fell into ruin. Over time, it was largely demolished, although some structures, such as the gatehouse, still survive.

PALACE-MONASTERY OF EL ESCORIAL, IN AN ENGRAVING PUBLISHED IN THE 19TH-CENTURY FRENCH PERIODICAL *LE TOUR DU MONDE*

GAUL DUPLAND/AGE FOTOSTOCK

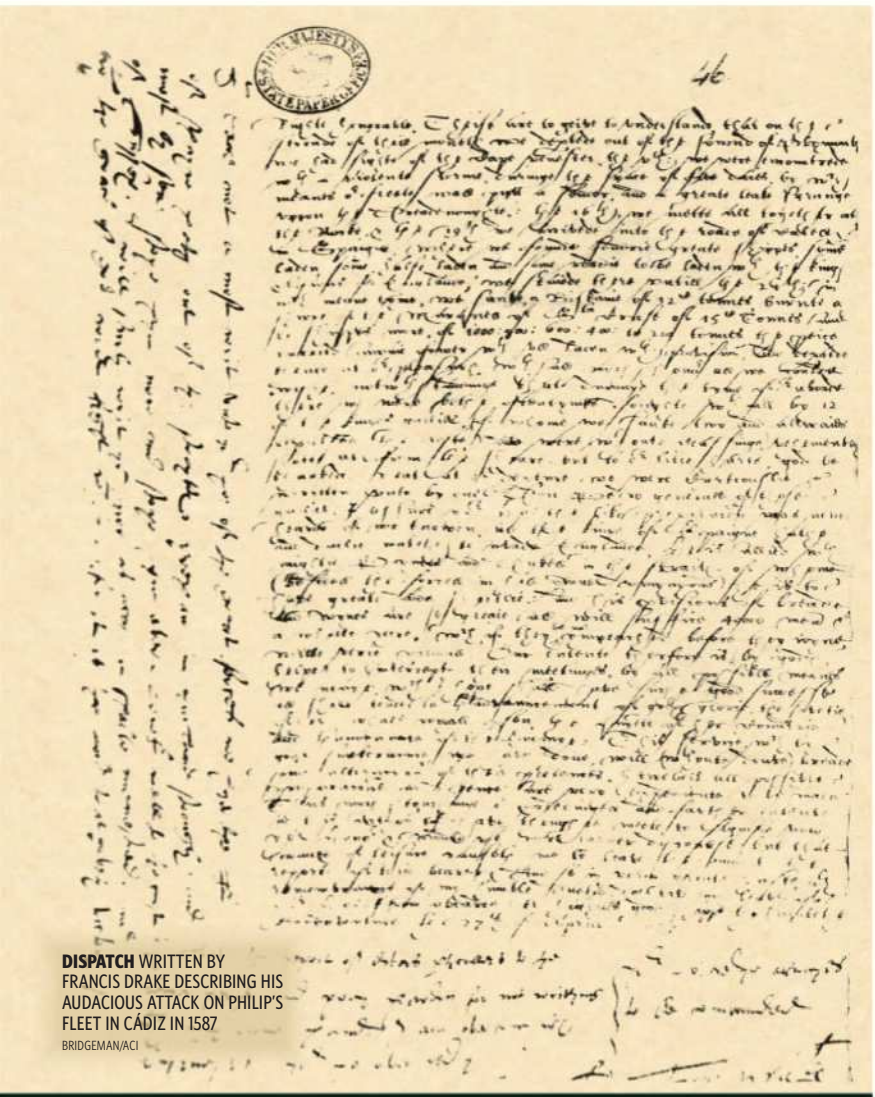
Fittingly for rulers of two vastly different realms, Elizabeth's residence of choice was relatively cozy, while Philip's was a sprawling, mini city of chilly grandeur.

RICHMOND PALACE, VIEWED FROM ACROSS THE THAMES RIVER, IN A 1638 ENGRAVING BY WENCESLAUS HOLLAR
AKG/ALBUM

PALACIO EL ESCORIAL

IN HIS WILL, EMPEROR CHARLES V stipulated that a pantheon be built to contain the remains of Spain's monarchs. Ever the dutiful son, Philip II ordered the construction of a palace 30 miles to the north of Madrid. Completed in 1567, the Italian-style **Palace of El Escorial** packs an imperial residence, a monastery, a royal mausoleum, a church, and a library containing thousands of rare, illuminated manuscripts into a forbiddingly austere quadrangle. Severe in style and overwhelming in size, El Escorial was intended by Philip to reflect Spain's divine mission in bringing Catholicism to the New World, and the role of its kings as the heirs of the emperor Augustus and the "Lords of All the World." At the heart of the complex stands the El Escorial Monastery, dedicated to the martyr St. Lawrence; its grid design, it is said, is modeled on the gridiron on which the third-century Lawrence was roasted to death. In 1598 Philip died in El Escorial, and he is buried in the pantheon he had built.

PHILIP OF SPAIN IN A 1551 PORTRAIT BY TITIAN. PRADO MUSEUM, MADRID
AKG/ALBUM



DISPATCH WRITTEN BY FRANCIS DRAKE DESCRIBING HIS AUDACIOUS ATTACK ON PHILIP'S FLEET IN CÁDIZ IN 1587

BRIDGEMAN/ACI

THE QUEEN'S FAVORITE SEA DOG

ELIZABETH DISCOVERED THAT PIRACY WAS a useful means of harassing Philip while avoiding a head-on engagement. She revived an old custom of issuing Letters of marque, royal permits for captains to seize enemy cargoes at sea. The most famous bearer of such a letter was **Francis Drake,** whose capture of booty from Spanish galleons brought him, his crew, and, of course, Elizabeth herself great wealth while hugely provoking Philip's ire. As Philip's Armada plans gathered pace, Drake's role became more openly confrontational. In 1587 he blasted his way into the southern Spanish port of Cádiz, destroying ships and supplies destined for the invasion of England. Drake's audacity, which he termed "singeing *[sic]* the king of Spain's beard," delayed the Armada's attack on England by a year.

A SPANISH PIECE OF EIGHT FROM 1590, OF THE TYPE DRAKE LOOTED FROM LADEN SPANISH GALLEONS

ASF/ALBUM

again. Elizabeth held England through "tyranny," he claimed, while Mary Queen of Scots was the "true and legitimate successor." Her French husband had died in 1560, ending the Scottish-French alliance. Philip began to see Mary Stuart as a potential Catholic replacement for Elizabeth on the English throne.

"His majesty is hot for this venture," wrote one Spanish adviser, amazed that, even after Elizabeth discovered this dramatic change in policy, Philip insisted on sticking by it. The invasion attempt did not happen this time, but Spain and England had become open enemies.

The Queen's Challenge

Elizabeth maintained a firm grip on her kingdom through her mastery of creating a charismatic public image. Her colorful language, biting wit, and willingness to display herself to her people—often after delving into a vast wardrobe, replete with symbols of power—combined to make her both popular and

QUEEN ELIZABETH I KNIGHTING SIR FRANCIS DRAKE IN 1581. 20TH-CENTURY ILLUSTRATION
SUPERSTOCK/ALBUM

revered. She boasted of her "mere English" bloodline and soon became known as Good Queen Bess. She played both domestic magnates and foreign allies against one another by dangling in front of them the possibility of marriage, dazzling them with her command of languages, deep culture, and ability to compose a well-constructed sonnet.

Abroad, however, she could not compete with Philip's growing global empire. Although England's naval power grew under Elizabeth, her navy was still heavily dependant on merchant and private ships to defend England's shores. The key expeditions of Elizabeth's reign, such as Martin Frobisher's adventures in Greenland and Canada, and Francis Drake's circumnavigation of the globe between 1577 and 1580, were remarkable achievements, but they did not present a threat to Spain. Philip II's empire could count on ports in the Americas, while England had none. In the 1580s Humphrey Gilbert's attempt to set up an English colony on Newfoundland failed, as did Sir Walter Raleigh's attempt on Roanoke Island (North Carolina).

SMITING THE ENEMY

Below, a painted wooden sculpture of the Duke of Alba crushing Spain's foes. Elizabeth's head is at the center. Private collection

ORONOZ/ALBUM

Faced with the imbalance, the queen found other ways to challenge Spain. One of the most successful was piracy, which took Spain's wealth and gave it to England. Many of the greatest pirates of the age were English, hardened sea dogs like John Hawkins and Drake. Elizabeth encouraged them, invested in their ventures, and made money for herself as they sacked Spain's Caribbean outposts and raided its treasure fleets carrying wealth from the New World.

In 1584 Elizabeth changed her low-key stance toward the conflict in the Netherlands and took an active role in backing Philip's opponents. The queen set into motion a plan "for the annoying of the king of Spayn *[sic],*" which—after another murder plot against her was discovered—turned into full-scale aggression. Not only did she back the rebels and fund them with her pirate booty, in 1585 the queen also sent Drake with a fleet on a 10-day ravaging of Spain's northwest coastal

region of Galicia—taking hostages, stealing booty, and desecrating churches. Drake would carry out a similar raid on Cádiz two years later, famously "singeing [*sic*] the king of Spain's beard."

Elizabeth had roused a dangerous beast. Two weeks after Drake's raid on Galicia, Philip decided to strike back with greater force. Combining a talent for bold gestures with obsessive micromanagement, he resurrected the Enterprise of England. "It's ten o'clock and I have not dined or lifted my head all day," he complained at one stage. He personally oversaw a campaign unlike any seen before: 130 ships carrying 30,000 troops from Iberia and ferrying 30,000 more into England from the Netherlands. Through his attack, he sought to seize England and restore it to Catholicism.

Attack of the Armada

In May 1588 his "great and joyous Armada" (later sarcastically dubbed "invincible" by his enemies) sailed from Lisbon—which had become part of his empire, along with the rest of Portuguese lands, seven years earlier. The plan was brilliant, involving the biggest armed fleet ever seen in European waters, but the plan had a crucial weakness. For while Philip set rules to prevent drunkenness, gambling, and sodomy in his fleet, he paid little attention as to how his two massive forces should coordinate. The Armada was first sighted off the English coast on July 29, forming a crescent-shaped battle order three miles wide. Hilltop fires had been readied to signal its approach and, as columns of smoke rose along the coast, the smaller, nimble boats commanded by Drake harassed the powerful Spanish fleet.

The Armada anchored off the French port of Calais on August 6, with the landing ground on the English coastline in Kent also in view. The army it had to help transport was just 25 miles away at Dunkirk, but it had not been informed and was not yet ready. While the fleet held its position for 36 hours, two things happened: First, it was attacked by eight English fireboats filled with

ALL AT SEA

Attributed to Nicholas Hilliard, this painting, of uncertain date, depicts the humiliating defeat of Philip's Spanish Armada in the English Channel in 1588. Society of Apothecaries, London

AKG/ALBUM

EOSGIS.COM

burning pitch and brimstone (sulphur); then, the weather changed. After the Spanish captains had slipped their anchors to avoid the fireboats, they found themselves unable to turn back due to a violent storm. Using the available winds—they headed home on the only path available: a long, dangerous route around Scotland and Ireland. By the time they limped back to Spain, half of the Armada's men were dead and more than half of the ships were lost.

It appeared that Philip's God had betrayed him. His enemies taunted him, proclaiming that a "Protestant wind" had driven the Armada away. "God breathed and they were scattered," boasted the special medal struck by Elizabeth to commemorate the victory. Spain went into mourning. Was "the greatest disaster to strike Spain in 600 years" (as one contemporary complained) a sign that it had fallen out of favor with God?

Spain's empire was still enormous, but this was a turning point. Over the next decade, the two monarchs continued to send fleets against one another, with Cádiz raided again in 1596. Philip's wars, meanwhile, bankrupted his country, and he defaulted on his debt. By the time he died in 1598, Spain was suing for peace with many of its enemies. Before her death in 1603, Elizabeth was hailed as Gloriana, who had wed herself not to a man but to her country. England's enmity with Spain ended with the deaths of Philip and Elizabeth, when King James I—son of Mary Queen of Scots—signed a peace treaty in 1604 bringing more than 15 years of conflict to a close.

GILES TREMLETT IS THE AUTHOR OF SEVERAL ACCLAIMED BOOKS ON SPANISH AND ENGLISH HISTORY, INCLUDING *ISABELLA OF CASTILE* (BLOOMSBURY, 2017) AND *CATHERINE OF ARAGON* (WALKER BOOKS, 2010). HE SERVED FOR MANY YEARS AS THE MADRID CORRESPONDENT FOR THE *GUARDIAN* AND THE *ECONOMIST*.

Learn more

The Armada
Garrett Mattingly, Houghton Mifflin/Sentry, 1959. Reprint edition, Mariner Books, 2005.

The Spanish Armada: A History
Robert Hutchinson, Thomas Dunne Books, 2014.

SHATTERED

Philip's costly Enterprise of England was driven onto the rocks—literally. Lashed by the "Protestant Wind," the Spanish Armada was forced north (as the map above shows), where many vessels were wrecked on the rocky coasts of Scotland and Ireland.

THE QUEEN'S TREASURES

Elizabeth's four-decade reign is counted among the most glorious periods in English history, coinciding with a period of feverish literary activity, including the early plays of Shakespeare. The finely crafted royal objects that have survived provide ample evidence of the era's rich culture.

Christening Gown

The infant Princess Elizabeth may have worn this silk-and-lace confection when she was baptized in 1533. Sudeley Castle, Winchcombe, Gloucestershire, England

MARK FIENNES/BRIDGEMAN/ACI

Gloves

This pair of elegant, fringed gloves was presented to Elizabeth on her visit to the University of Oxford in 1566. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

BRIDGEMAN/ACI

Orpharion

This orpharion (right), a type of lute, is thought to have been made specially for her in 1580. Helmingham Hall, Suffolk, England

MARK FIENNES/BRIDGEMAN/ACI

Virginal

This virginal, or harpsichord, made in 1570 bears Anne Boleyn's emblem; it probably belonged to Elizabeth. Victoria & Albert Museum, London

BRIDGEMAN/ACI

Embroidery

This accomplished needlework portraying the story of Diana and Actaeon is believed to have been produced by Elizabeth herself. Parham House, West Sussex, England

MARK FIENNES/BRIDGEMAN/ACI

Locket Ring

Bearing enameled busts of Elizabeth and her mother, Anne Boleyn, this locket ring is said to have been taken from the dead queen's finger in 1603 and shown to James VI of Scotland as proof of her death. Chequers Court, Buckinghamshire, England

BRIDGEMAN/ACI

Weights

Two of the standard weights and measures introduced by Elizabeth in 1582, used as the United Kingdom's primary standards until 1824. Science Museum, London

SSPL/GETTY IMAGES

Gold Coins

Elizabeth's portrait graces both of these rare gold coins. On the left, she hovers over a ship, a reminder of her realm's naval power.

MARK HOBERMAN/GETTY IMAGES

Coach

Elizabeth ordered the life-size version of this model to be built for Tsar Boris Godunov of Russia just before her death. Armory chamber, Kremlin, Moscow

SSPL/GETTY IMAGES

BEFORE THE FALL

The five children of Tsar Nicholas II of Russia in a 1910 photo, eight years before war and revolution would sweep them all to a violent death. Below right, a plate depicting Tsar Nicholas and his wife, Alexandra, in honor of the couple's visit to France in 1896.

PORTRAIT: GRANGER/ALBUM
PLATE: WHA/ALAMY/ACI

DEATH OF A DYNASTY

On a July night 100 years ago, Romanov rule of Russia came to a decisive, bloody end. Held captive for months by Bolshevik forces, the deposed Nicholas II, his wife, Alexandra, and their five children were brutally murdered. Shrouded in secrecy, their deaths fueled nearly a century of mystery about their fates.

TOBY SAUL

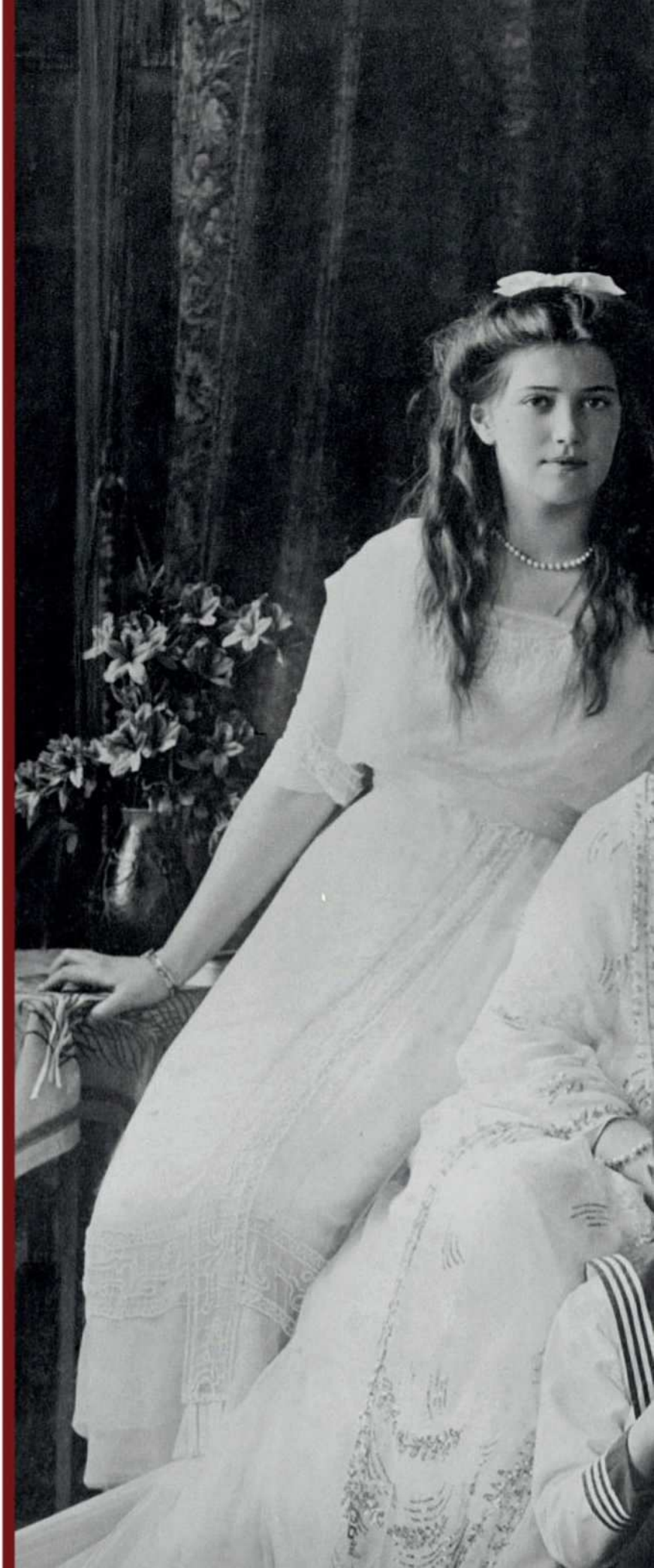
BETWEEN MARCH 1917, WHEN NICHOLAS II ABDICATED, AND JULY 1918, WHEN HE AND HIS FAMILY WERE KILLED, THE ROMANOVS WERE KEPT UNDER HOUSE ARREST IN ST. PETERSBURG, TOBOL'SK, AND YEKATERINBURG.

Revolution came to Russia in February 1917, and a month later Nicholas II, emperor and autocrat of all the Russias, abdicated his throne to become plain Nicholas Romanov. With revolution at home and catastrophic failure in the First World War abroad, the Romanov dynasty, which had celebrated its third century in power in 1913, came to a swift end. Bolshevik forces held the Romanov family as prisoners, moving from place to place until one bloody night in July 1918. The entire family was wiped out, victims to a fate that they refused to see coming.

Head in the Sand

Abdication could have been a relief for Nicholas, who took the throne in 1894 after the death of his father, Alexander III. Described as an unimaginative and limited man, he was suited neither by his abilities nor temperament to rule during such turbulent times. Chronically indecisive, Nicholas would put off issuing an order until the last minute and then simply repeat the most recent piece of advice he had been given. A joke making the rounds in St. Petersburg said that the two most powerful people in Russia were the tsar and whoever had spoken to him last.

Nicholas was not a progressive overlord and firmly believed in his divine right to rule, a view his wife, Alexandra, shared. The Okhrana—



FAMILY PORTRAIT
The Romanovs, in a 1913 photo. In the center of the group, Tsar Nicholas II sits with his wife, the tsarina Alexandra. Behind, from left to right, are their daughters Maria, Olga, and Tatiana. Their youngest daughter, Anastasia, is seated on the stool, and Alexei, their only son, kneels in front.
LOC/AGE FOTOSTOCK

CORONATION OF TSAR NICHOLAS II. 19TH-CENTURY LITHOGRAPH
DEA/ALBUM

his secret police, a terrible and murderous organization—operated with impunity.

As a leader, Tsar Nicholas knew few successes. In 1904, he fought and lost a war with Japan, and in 1905, faced a revolution at home against his autocratic regime. In the October Manifesto of 1905 he grudgingly pledged to create the Duma, an elected legislative body. Before it had held its first session, the tsar limited its powers in an attempt to hold on to his governing power. When World War I came in 1914, Nicholas led his people into a conflict that would strain the nation's resources and cost millions of lives. Despite it all, he remained blind to his growing unpopularity and was convinced that the people loved him nonetheless. The people, for their part, took a different view. Their nickname for him was Nicholas the Bloody.

Royal Family

Nicholas was, however, a family man. He loved his wife, Alexandra, and she loved him. They were lucky to have such a match at a time when the general rule was that monarchs wed for dynastic convenience rather than affection. Married in 1894, they had four daughters, Olga, Tatiana, Maria, and Anastasia in succession. Alexei, the longed-for son and heir, was their last child, born in 1904. By all reports, the Romanovs were a happy and devoted family.

IMPERIAL SPLENDOR

1 FABERGÉ EGG

Perhaps the most famous treasures, jeweled eggs were made for the tsars every Easter since 1885 by the House of Fabergé in St. Petersburg. The 1913 egg, shown here, was created to mark the tercentenary of the dynasty's founding. State Armory, Moscow

HERITAGE/GETTY IMAGES

2 FRAMED MINIATURES

Miniature likenesses of Tsar Nicholas II and his eldest child, Olga. Painted by Johannes Zehngraf in the 1890s, the portraits are mounted on gold- and jewel-inlaid jade pedestals, created by the House of Fabergé.

CLEVELAND MUSEUM, OHIO/BRIDGEMAN/ACI

3 IMPERIAL CROWN

Used to crown Nicholas II in 1896, the Imperial Crown was first used at the coronation of Catherine the Great in 1762. It is encrusted with nearly 5,000 carefully arranged diamonds. State Armory, Moscow

BRIDGEMAN/ACI

4 LITURGICAL VESSELS

Few objects better express the Romanov dynasty's blend of piety and conspicuous consumption than this set of gold vessels used to celebrate Mass. Commissioned by the 17th-century tsar Fyodor III, they are inlaid with 10 types of jewels. State Armory, Moscow

CORBIS/GETTY IMAGES

◀ **CATHERINE THE GREAT**
HERMITAGE MUSEUM, ST. PETERSBURG

ALBUM/FINE ART IMAGES

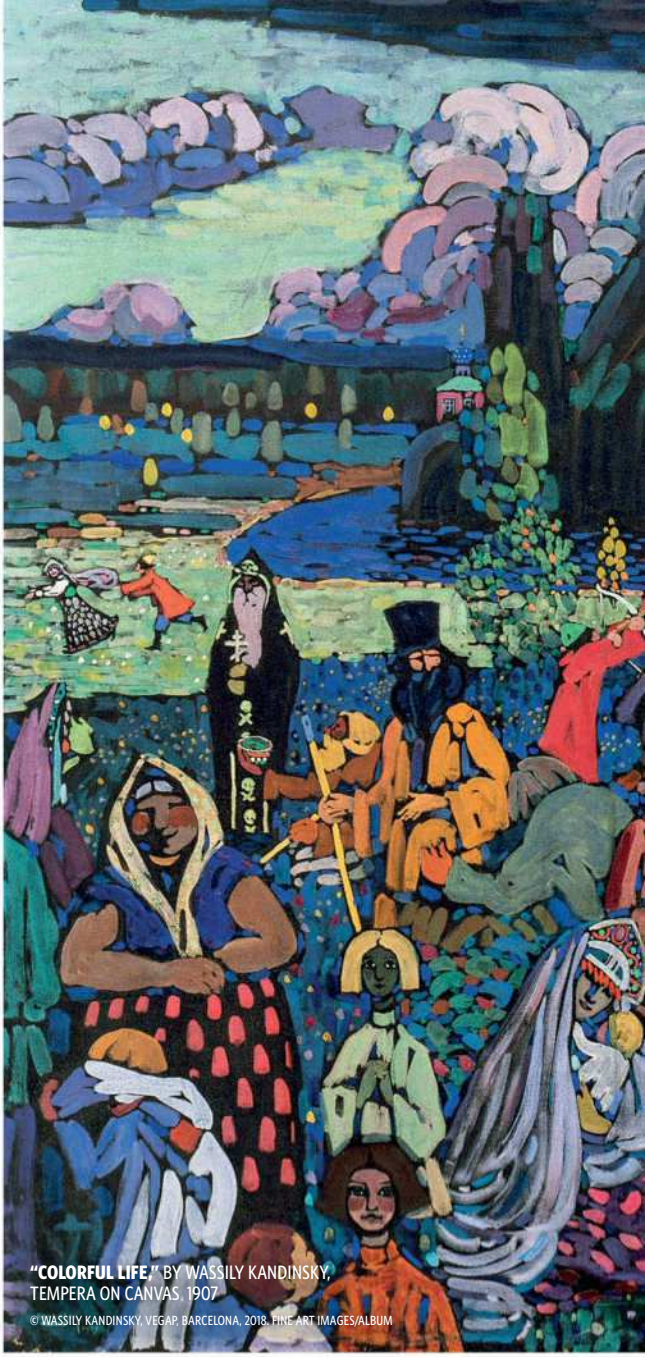
THE CATHERINE PALACE, BUILT BY CATHERINE THE GREAT (*R.* 1762-1796) IN THE TOWN OF TSARSKOYE SELO NEAR ST. PETERSBURG, WAS THE SUMMER RESIDENCE OF THE TSARS. THE NEARBY ALEXANDER PALACE, ALSO BUILT IN CATHERINE'S REIGN, WAS NICHOLAS II'S FAVORITE RESIDENCE. AFTER HIS ABDICATION IN 1917, NICHOLAS AND HIS FAMILY WERE HELD CAPTIVE THERE. ▶

PAWEL WYSOCKI/AGE FOTOSTOCK

MICHAEL ROMANOV, WHO CAME TO THE THRONE IN 1613, WAS THE FIRST ROMANOV TSAR.
UHA/GETTY IMAGES

MICHAEL, THE FIRST ROMANOV

THE ROMANOV DYNASTY ended as it began: in times of massive political upheaval. Since the ninth century, the Rurik dynasty had controlled much of what is now Russia, but it started to collapse in 1598. Fifteen chaotic years followed, known as the Time of Troubles, in which pretenders to the throne, clashes between reformers and nobles, and foreign invasion brought the country to its knees. In 1613 a *zemsky sobor* (assembly of the land) met and chose a young nobleman with blood ties to the Rurik dynasty to lead. Michael Fyodorovich Romanov, only 16 and not very well educated, reluctantly took the throne. A weak ruler, he allowed his older relatives to dominate his reign and to dictate policy that would restore order to Russia. It was the beginning of a dynasty that would control Russia for more than 300 years. The nation grew larger and more powerful, especially in the 17th and 18th centuries under the "great" leadership of Peter I and Catherine II. In 1913 the Romanovs celebrated the tercentenary of their dynasty, little knowing that another troubled time would soon come and sweep them away.



"COLORFUL LIFE," BY WASSILY KANDINSKY, TEMPERA ON CANVAS, 1907
© WASSILY KANDINSKY, VEGAP, BARCELONA, 2018. FINE ART IMAGES/ALBUM

German by birth and granddaughter of Britain's Queen Victoria, Alexandra possessed a more powerful and imposing character than her husband. An introverted and distant manner alienated her from the Russian people, who saw her as an outsider. Unlike her husband, Alexandra recognized her own unpopularity, which made her highly sensitive, controlling, and paranoid.

Sigmund Freud once remarked that a family tends to organize itself around its most damaged member. For the Romanovs that could have been Alexandra. Her high-strung temperament ensured the constant attention and solicitude of her husband and daughters. Six years separated the oldest from the youngest

TWO RUSSIAS

EVEN AS modernization transformed life in the Russian countryside, a gulf still yawned between life in the large cities and the nine million square miles of rural Russia where more than 80 percent of the population lived. Nicholas II felt much more at home with the simpler, conservative values of the country, feeling uneasy in the cities, which were crucibles of revolutionary and artistic ferment. The Russian artist Wassily Kandinsky, however—just two years older than Tsar Nicholas—embraced Russia's traditional and modern duality. His love of Russian folk art fed into his earlier works (left), before his later avant-garde works of abstract art.

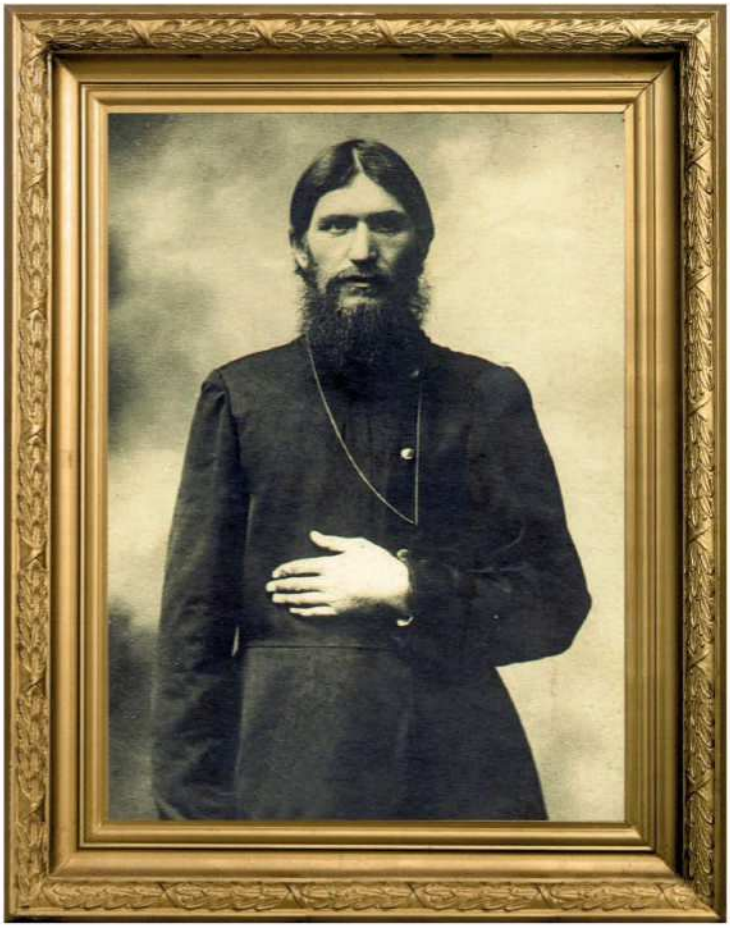
"IMPROVISATION OF COLD FORMS," BY WASSILY KANDINSKY, OIL ON CANVAS, 1914
© WASSILY KANDINSKY, VEGAP, BARCELONA, 2018. FINE ART IMAGES/ALBUM

grand duchess; Alexandra relied on all of them and kept them close. The family fondly nicknamed the older daughters Olga and Tatiana the "Big Pair," and the younger sisters Maria and Anastasia, the "Little Pair."

All of the family, especially Alexandra, doted on the youngest child, Alexei. The heir to the throne was born with hemophilia, which came from Alexandra's side of the family. His health became the main focus of their lives. Nearly any activity carried the risk of a knock or cut that could trigger catastrophic bouts of bleeding. Alexandra would sleep on the floor by his bedside during the weeks of recuperation. The boy was gentle, with a mischievous streak and spoiled by his mother and sisters. In a period where parents of the upper classes cultivated a distant relationship with their children, Alexei's physical dependence bonded him tightly to his mother and father.

It also made them vulnerable. When someone came along who could exploit that vulnerability, they fell for him completely. Grigory Rasputin, born in western Siberia, was a self-proclaimed holy man. He had a mixed reputation

THE FAMILY FONDLY NICKNAMED THE OLDER DAUGHTERS OLGA AND TATIANA THE "BIG PAIR." THE YOUNGER SISTERS, MARIA AND ANASTASIA, WERE THE "LITTLE PAIR."



HEALER OR HUXTER?
Grigory Rasputin (above in an undated image) was a peasant-born mystic whose influence on the tsarina stoked huge resentment, culminating in his murder in 1916, on the eve of revolution.
FINE ART IMAGES/ALBUM

for licentious behavior, healing powers, and the ability to see the future. Whether he was a huckster or believed he had supernatural powers is unclear. The Romanovs definitely believed in him, and he wielded powerful influence over the royal family, especially Alexandra.

Healing Hopes

When Rasputin first met the Romanovs in 1905, the tsarina was desperate. The 1905 revolution had almost seen the monarchy overthrown. The birth of Alexei the previous year gave them the heir she had been hoping for, but his hemophilia was not only a personal tragedy but also a threat to the dynasty. This situation of political crisis and maternal agony enabled Rasputin to insinuate himself into the family. In 1908 Alexei suffered a severe bleeding episode and Rasputin was able to ease the boy's pain. The mystic allegedly warned Nicholas and Alexandra that the child's health would be linked to the strength of the dynasty. Rasputin's ability to keep the child healthy would secure him a place in the palace and the power to influence the tsar.

The relationship may have helped the tsarevitch, but it wrecked Alexandra's reputation and further distanced her from the Russian people. Rumors swirled that Rasputin's debauched behavior included seducing the tsarina. Although he almost certainly was not her lover, he did have affairs with untold numbers of women at the Romanov court. Nicholas ignored the calls to remove Rasputin from court, further angering the Russian people. Keeping his wife happy and his child happy kept Nicholas from removing the threat.

In September 1915, during World War I, Nicholas II traveled to the front to take personal command of Russian forces. The tsarina saw to domestic affairs, and Rasputin's influence on her became evident in her choice of incompetent ministers. Losses on the front and Rasputin's conduct at home turned the Russian people against their tsar and his family. The time was ripe for revolution.

Life in Captivity

For the Bolsheviks, once they took power in November 1917, the Romanovs simultaneously became a bargaining chip and a headache. Russia needed to negotiate its exit from World War I while also avoiding a foreign invasion. The country's enemies would be watching what happened to the former rulers, but if the Romanovs remained alive they would forever be a symbol for the monarchist movement. Some wanted them sent into exile, some wanted them put on trial for their perceived crimes, and some wanted them to disappear, for good.

At first the family was sent to the palace at Tsarskoye Selo. Security concerns then sent them to Tobol'sk, east of the Ural Mountains. They were not treated badly, and Nicholas even seemed to thrive. He enjoyed the outdoor, rural life and did not miss the stress of being tsar. The family retained a generous staff: 39 servants altogether. They kept many of their personal possessions, including their beloved family leather-bound photograph albums. It was still possible in these early days of their imprisonment to dream of a happy ending. They might reach England and live in exile with their British cousin King George V. Better still, perhaps they would be allowed to retire to their estate in the Crimea, the scene of many happy summers.

ALEXEI, AGE EIGHT OR NINE, GAZES INTO THE CAMERA WHILE PLAYING WITH HIS MOTHER'S PEARL NECKLACE IN THIS 1913 IMAGE.

MICHAEL NICHOLSON/GETTY IMAGES

They did not understand that, little by little, each escape route was closing until only one was left, the worst one: the road to Yekaterinburg.

The most radicalized city in Russia, Yekaterinburg was strongly communist and fanatically anti-tsarist. "I would go anywhere at all, only not to the Urals," Nicholas is reported to have said as the train approached his final residence. The family stayed in a large building known as the Ipatiev House, after its former owner. A high wooden palisade was constructed to cut off the outside world. They had the use of a garden for exercise. The man in charge, Avdeev, was corrupt (his men stole freely from the Romanovs) but not cruel. The guards were ordinary men,

THE "ROYAL DISEASE"

HEMOPHILIA RAN in the family of the tsarina Alexandra, who inherited it from her grandmother, Britain's Queen Victoria, and passed it on to her son, Alexei. This genetic condition impairs the blood's ability to clot, which allows seemingly minor injuries to cause serious problems. In Alexei's case, a small bump might trigger extreme internal bleeding and put his veins at risk of rupturing. His joints were particularly vulnerable and could become inflamed, the damaged tissue pressing on the nerves and causing intense pain. The development in 1936 of an agent that could help control bleeding came too late for Alexei, whose only hope—as his mother believed—lay in the mystical healing powers of Rasputin.

NICHOLAS II AND ALEXEI REVIEWING TROOPS IN 1915
WHA/ALAMY/ACI

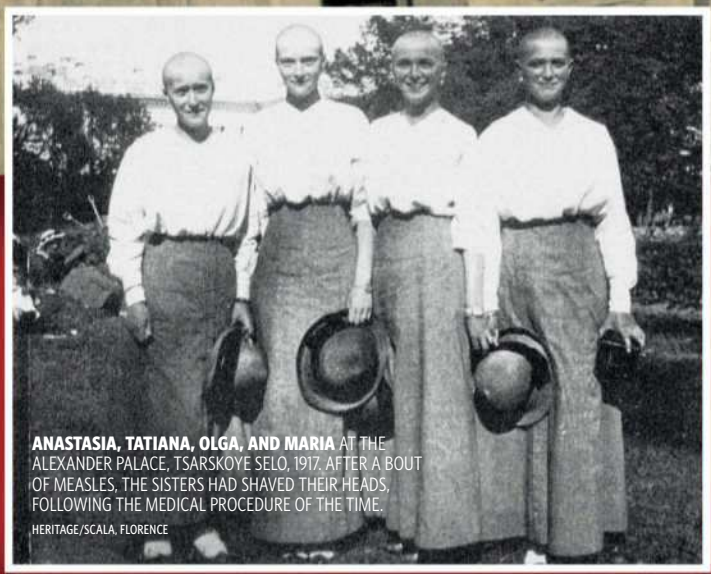
recruited from local factories. As time went on they became familiar and even friendly with their charges.

It couldn't last. The local Bolsheviks replaced Avdeev with Yakov Yurovsky, the man who would orchestrate their murders. He stopped the petty thieving that had gone unpunished by his predecessor, but he instituted a much harsher regime and recruited stricter, more disciplined guards. He maintained a distant but professional relationship with Nicholas and Alexandra, even as he planned their deaths. Nicholas—getting it wrong yet again—even seemed to like him.

The Last Days

The last civilians to see the Romanovs alive were four women who had been brought in from the town to clean the Ipatiev House. Mariya Starodumova, Evdokiya Semenova, Varvara Dryagina, and an unidentified fourth gave the family a small amount of relief from the boredom of their confinement, and one final contact with the outside world.

The testimony of these women has given the most penetrating and humane portrait of the doomed family. Forbidden to speak to the Romanovs, the cleaners nevertheless had the chance to observe them at close quarters. At first, they were struck by the contrast between the tales of the family's arrogance disseminated by anti-tsarist propaganda and the modest



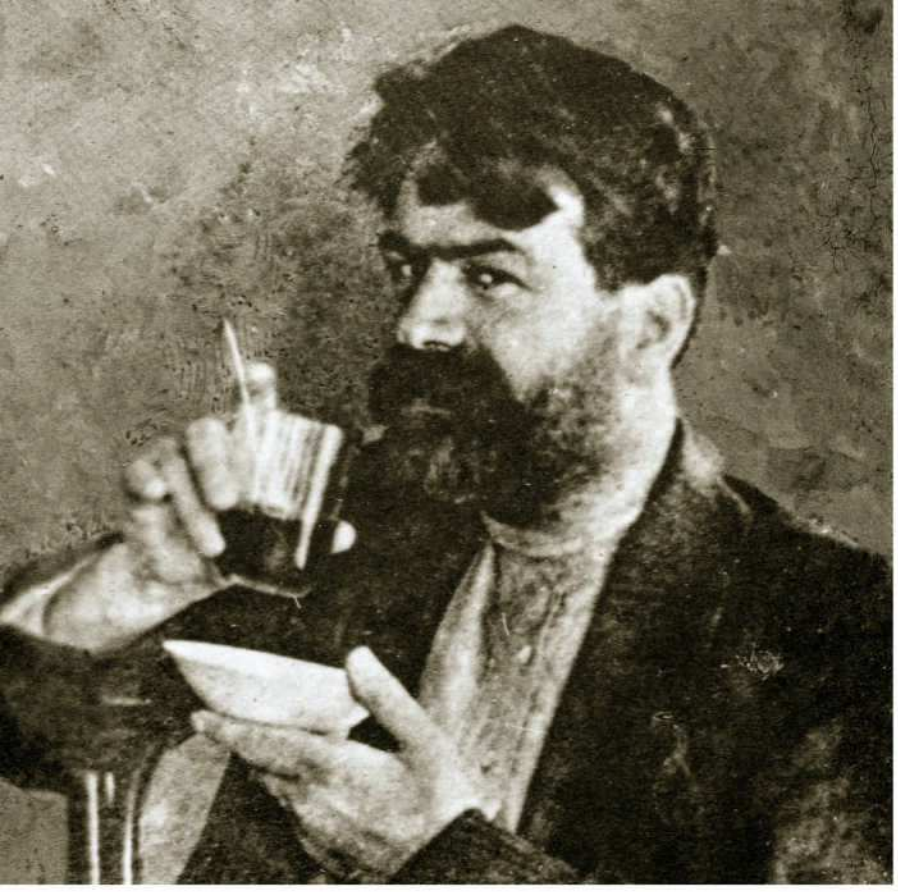
ANASTASIA, TATIANA, OLGA, AND MARIA AT THE ALEXANDER PALACE, TSARSKOYE SELO, 1917. AFTER A BOUT OF MEASLES, THE SISTERS HAD SHAVED THEIR HEADS, FOLLOWING THE MEDICAL PROCEDURE OF THE TIME.
HERITAGE/SCALA, FLORENCE

SIX OF THE ROMANOVS SIT ON THE ROOF OF THE COUNTRY ESTATE IN TOBOL'SK, WHERE THEY WERE HELD FROM SUMMER 1917 TO SPRING 1918.
SOVFOTO/GETTY IMAGES

TATIANA AND ANASTASIA, WORKING IN THE GARDENS OF THE ALEXANDER PALACE, TSARSKOYE SELO, 1917
UHA/GETTY IMAGES

A FAMILY IN CAPTIVITY

After Nicholas II's abdication in March 1917, the conditions of the Romanovs' captivity progressively worsened. Their first months passed in the luxury of the Alexander Palace at Tsarskoye Selo near St. Petersburg. In the summer they were sent to Tobol'sk in Siberia. The facilities were much more rustic, but they enjoyed fresh air, exercise, and a warm welcome from local people. Following the Bolshevik seizure of power, in spring 1918 the family was transferred to Yekaterinburg, known for its anti-tsarist fervor. Their cameras were confiscated, and no images of them in the house where they would be killed survived.



IN COLD BLOOD
Above, the Bolshevik Yakov Yurovsky—organizer of the botched execution and probably the killer of Nicholas—had grown up in a poor, passionately pro-tsarist family.

HERITAGE/GETTY IMAGES

people they found before them. The grand duchesses were ordinary girls. As for poor, broken Alexei, he looked to Semenova like the epitome of delicate suffering. Like so many before her, she was particularly struck by his eyes, which were soft and callow, but which appeared to Semenova to be full of sadness.

The family, however, was delighted with the diversion. The sisters threw themselves into helping scrub the floors, taking the opportunity to speak with the cleaners in defiance of house rules. Semenova managed to say a few kind words to Alexandra. One of the scenes Semenova and Starodumova both remembered with great clarity was when Yurovsky sat down next to the tsarevitch and inquired after the boy's health. A scene of rare kindness and sympathy made retrospectively sinister by the fact that Yurovsky was perfectly aware that within a short time he would be the child's executioner.

The visit to the Ipatiev House made a deep impression on the women. The Romanovs were to be killed because they were the supreme symbols of autocracy. The irony was that, in Yekaterinburg, the Bolsheviks had turned them into the opposite of aristocrats. In the words of Evdokiya Semenova, "they were not gods. They were actually ordinary people like us. Simple mortals."

On the night of July 16, a telegram was sent to Moscow informing Lenin of the decision to carry out the murders. Rousing the family and the four servants from bed at 1:30 a.m., Yurovsky informed them that fighting between Red and White forces was threatening the city and that they must be moved down to the basement for their own safety.

The Last Night

No evidence survives to suggest the Romanovs reacted with anything but docility. Carrying the tsarevitch in his arms, Nicholas led the family and the four servants—family doctor Eugene Botkin, maid Anna Demidova, chef Ivan Kharitonov, and footman Alexei Trupp—down to the cellar. Gathered together in a small, bare room, they still appeared oblivious to their fate. Chairs were fetched for Alexandra and Alexei while the others stood.

Yurovsky approached them, with the executioners behind him in the doorway, and read from a prepared statement to the astonished prisoners: "The presidium of the Regional Soviet, fulfilling the will of the Revolution, has decreed that the former Tsar Nicholas Romanov, guilty of countless bloody crimes against the people, should be shot." When, he finished, they began firing on the family. Accounts are conflicting, but most say that the tsar was the main target, and that he died from several gunshots. The tsarina died from a bullet to the head.

As the room filled with gun smoke, discipline among the killers vanished. The grand duchesses seemed unharmed by the bullets, which had ricocheted off their bodies (it was later discovered that diamond jewelry sewn into their clothing had acted like armor during the initial assault). One of the murderers—a drunkard named Ermakov—lost all control and began to slash at the Romanovs with a bayonet. Finally, after a horror-filled 20 minutes, the entire family and their servants were all dead: shot, stabbed, and beaten.

The 11 bodies were hauled out of the house and loaded onto a truck. The disposal of the remains was chaotic. Scholars believe the bodies were first dumped in a shallow mine called Ganina Yama, which the Bolsheviks tried to collapse with grenades. The shaft stayed intact, so the bodies were hastily removed. On the way to the new burial site, the truck got mired in

THE BASEMENT OF THE IPATIEV HOUSE, SITE OF THE KILLINGS OF THE ROMANOV FAMILY AND THEIR SERVANTS IN JULY 1918

PRINT COLLECTOR/GETTY IMAGES

THE IPATIEV HOUSE, YEKATERINBURG, IN A 1928 PHOTO

SOVFOTO/ALBUM

mud, and two bodies—now believed to be Alexei and Maria—were removed and disposed of in the forest. The nine other bodies were burned, doused with acid, and buried in a separate grave not too far away.

Truth Comes Out

After the Romanov family's murder, Soviet officials were cagey when addressing the topic. Even shortly after the Bolsheviks announced Nicholas's death, they were claiming that Alexandra and Alexei were alive in a safe place. The deaths would not be officially confirmed until 1926, and even then the Soviets refused to accept responsibility for the execution.

VISITING THE HOUSE OF SPECIAL PURPOSE

IN 1992 U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE James Baker visited Yekaterinburg after the Soviet collapse. Recovery of the Romanovs' remains the year before had revived interest in the family, and Baker asked to go to the site of their deaths. The "House of Special Purpose," a name given to the Ipatiev House after the Romanov incarceration there, had been demolished in 1977, but a memorial had been erected. "There was snow on the ground, red and white carnations lay at the foot of the concrete cross, and people were coming and lighting candles," wrote a witness to the visit, who recorded how Baker approached and gently touched the cross.

ANASTASIA, THE YOUNGEST OF TSAR NICHOLAS II'S DAUGHTERS, IN AN UNDATED, COLORIZED PHOTOGRAPH

GRANGER/ALBUM

SURVIVOR STORIES

RUMORS THAT SOME of the Romanovs had survived their execution arose almost immediately after their deaths. Because their bodies remained undiscovered for decades and Communist authorities were coy about the events at the Ipatiev House, these whispers grew into legends. All of the Romanov children were impersonated at one time or another, but Anastasia was at the center of the most notorious claims to the Romanov estate. Perhaps the most famous claimant was a woman rescued from a Berlin canal in 1920. Admitted to the hospital, and carrying no identification, she reluctantly told the authorities she was Anastasia Romanov and recounted a detailed story of how she had escaped the slaughter. She later moved to the United States, where she went by the name Anna Anderson and continued claiming she was Anastasia until her death in 1984. Although it s generally believed Anderson was a mentally ill Polish factory worker, her extraordinary story became the subject of public fascination, and the inspiration for the 1956 movie *Anastasia* starring Ingrid Bergman (left) as the lost grand duchess. When the last of the Romanov remains were identified in 2008, any lingering hopes that some might have survived were put to rest.

SILVER SCREEN/GETTY IMAGES

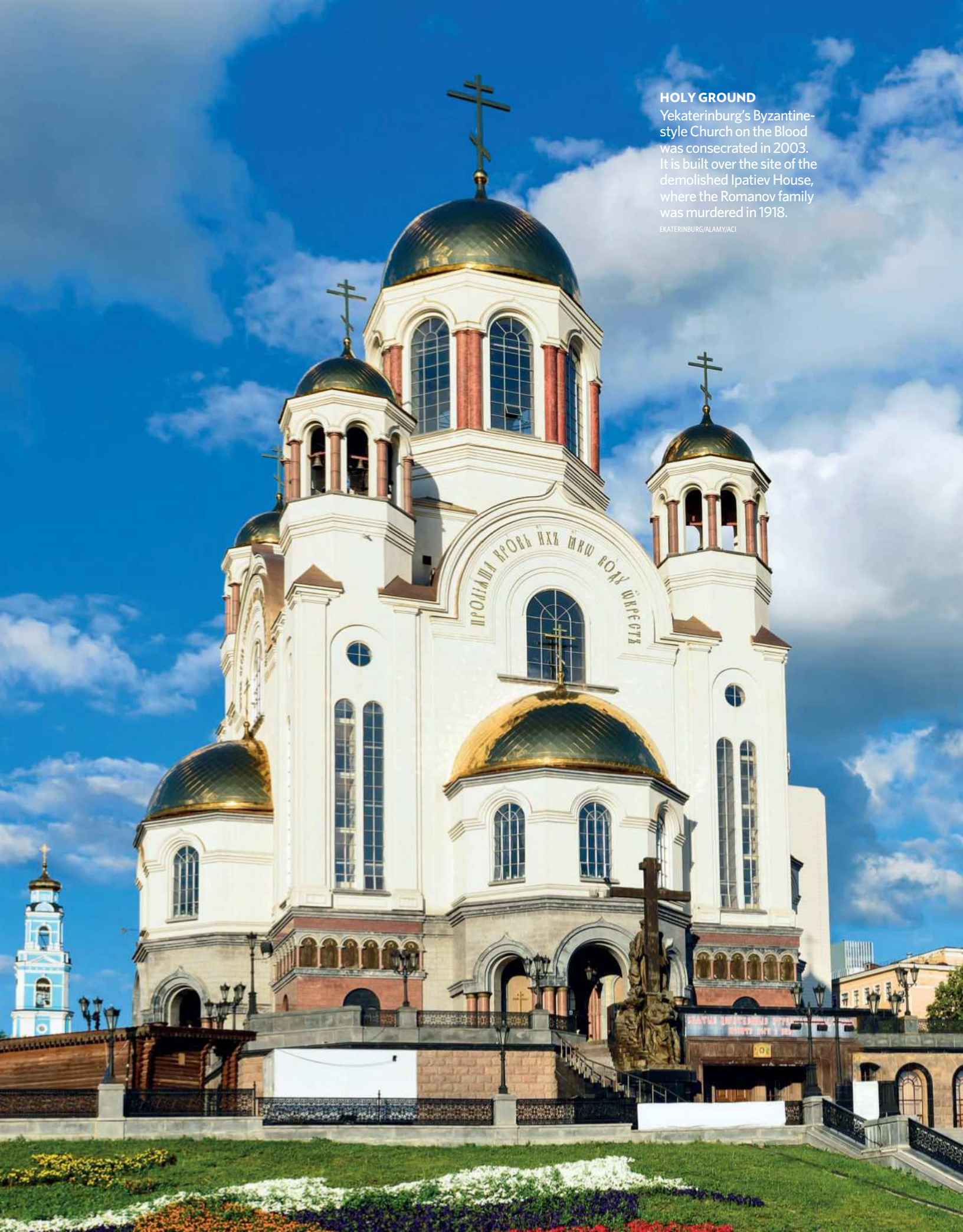
Josef Stalin officially suppressed discussion of the family's fate in 1938, and the Ipatiev House was demolished in 1977 as Soviets decreed it had "no historical value." The forced silence surrounding the Romanovs' fate may have quelled open discussion, but it fueled unending curiosity. Royal imposters would spring up in the coming decades, most claiming to be one of the tsar's children. Each time a new claimant appeared, the story would be resurrected, making it impossible for the mystery to die as the Soviets hoped it would. In 1979 a pair of amateur sleuths found the larger burial site near Yekaterinburg, but the find was kept secret until after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

As a new revolution spread through Russia, scientists returned to Yekaterinburg in 1991 to reclaim history. They exhumed the remains of nine people, who were later scientifically identified as Nicholas, Alexandra, Olga, Tatiana, Anastasia, and their four servants. Finding their bones began a healing process in which both the horrors of their deaths and their places in history could be acknowledged.

In 1998 these remains were laid to rest in St. Petersburg's Sts. Peter and Paul Cathedral, traditional burial place of the tsars. In 2000 the Russian Orthodox Church canonized Nicholas, Alexandra, and their children as "passion-bearers." At Ganina Yama—the first place where Bolsheviks tried to dispose of the bodies—the Russian Orthodox Church erected a monastery. Where the Ipatiev House once stood, the magnificent Church on the Blood was consecrated in 2003 and has since become a pilgrimage site. In 2007 Alexei's and Maria's remains were found, and later identified using DNA analysis.

It has been said that families who are closely attached may cut themselves off from the outside world. So it was with the Romanovs. Their self-absorption made them slow to appreciate their danger, but their love strengthened each other and made their confinement bearable. It was the greatest mercy of their last months that, right up to the terrible end, they were, at the very least, all together. ■

TOBY SAUL IS A REGULAR CONTRIBUTOR TO *HISTORY* AND WRITES ON ART AND HISTORY FOR THE *TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT,* AMONG OTHER PUBLICATIONS.



HOLY GROUND
Yekaterinburg's Byzantine-style Church on the Blood was consecrated in 2003. It is built over the site of the demolished Ipatiev House, where the Romanov family was murdered in 1918.

EKATERINBURG/ALAMY/ACI

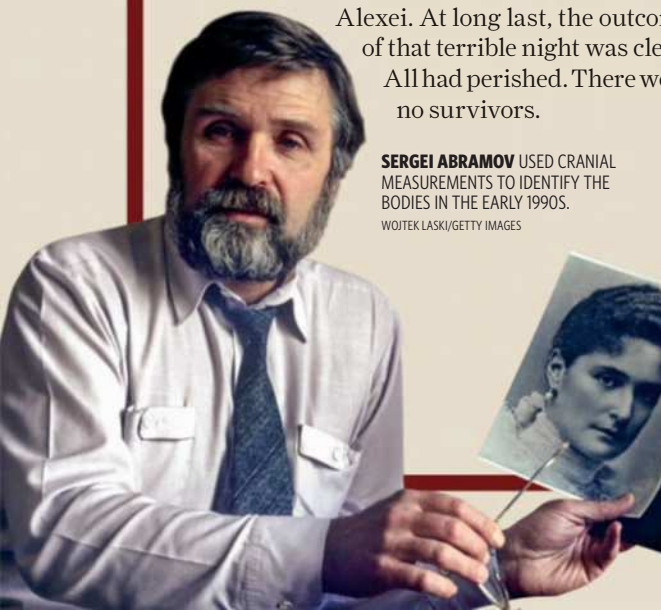
THE RIDDLE OF THE

HASTILY BURIED IN A MASS GRAVE IN 1918, THE BONES OF THE

YEKATERINBURG-BORN geologist Alexander Avdonin teamed up with Russian filmmaker Geli Ryabov in the 1970s to find the burial place of the seven Romanovs. Because of his previous employment with the Soviet Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ryabov was able to access classified documents that contained valuable clues. One 1926 publication described the grave site as "a swampy place," while a 1919 photo of a bridge intrigued them. Their team, working secretly, was able to locate the structure and in May 1979 uncovered a grave. Fearful of Soviet reprisals, they decided to keep their discovery quiet.

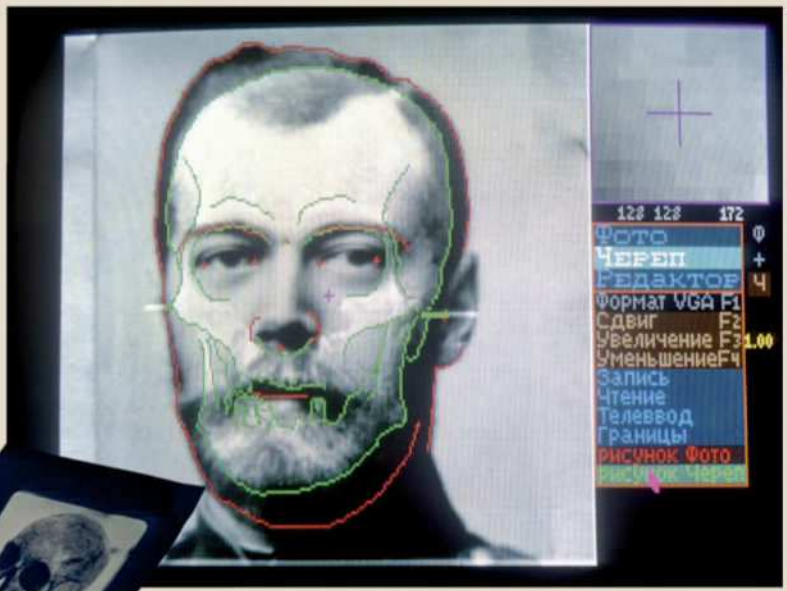
ALEXANDER AVDONIN FOUND THE SITE OF THE ROMANOV GRAVE IN 1979.
SPUTNIK/ALBUM

As the Soviet Union fell, Avdonin's find was made public. In 1991 an official excavation began, revealing that the grave held only nine people: five Romanovs and four of their servants. Soviet forensic expert Sergei Abramov used cranial measurements to painstakingly identify the bones, while British scientists took mitochondrial DNA from the remains and compared it to known relatives. In 1993 it was announced that the remains were Nicholas II, Alexandra, Olga, Tatiana, and Anastasia. In 2007 human remains were found buried near the first grave, and DNA analysis showed them to be Maria and Alexei. At long last, the outcome of that terrible night was clear: All had perished. There were no survivors.



SERGEI ABRAMOV USED CRANIAL MEASUREMENTS TO IDENTIFY THE BODIES IN THE EARLY 1990S.
WOJTEK LASKI/GETTY IMAGES

THE SKULL OF THE GRAND DUCHESS OLGA, SHOWN IN THE ACCOMPANYING PHOTO
LASKI DIFFUSION/GETTY-IMAGES



AN IMAGE OF TSAR NICHOLAS'S SKULL USING ABRAMOV'S TECHNIQUE OF PHOTOGRAPHIC SUPERIMPOSITION
LASKI DIFFUSION/GETTY IMAGES

ROMANOV REMAINS

SLAIN IMPERIAL FAMILY WERE RECOVERED DECADES LATER.

A GRAVE SECRET ▲
Amid birch forests 10 miles north of Yekaterinburg, Russian Orthodox crosses mark the site of the mass grave where the bodies of nine of the 11 victims of the Romanov household were buried.

MIKE COPELAND/GETTY IMAGES

A PLACE TO REST
The Romanov remains found in the large grave were held in storage (below) until July 17, 1998, when they were laid to rest in the traditional burial place of the tsars, St. Petersburg's Sts. Peter and Paul Cathedral, 80 years to the day of their murder.

SOVFOTO/AGE FOTOSTOCK

FRAGMENTS OF A SKELETON BELONGING TO ▼ A MEMBER OF THE ROMANOV HOUSEHOLD

LASKI DIFFUSION/GETTY IMAGES

Beast of the Baltic: The Long Search for the Battleship *Mars*

Discovering the long-lost wreck of the massive *Mars* fills a crucial gap in the knowledge of Europe's 16th-century warships.

PRESERVED As the shipwreck cannot be moved from the seabed, the National Geographic–backed project uses advanced photomosaic techniques to image the *Mars* in situ.

TOMASZ STACHURA

When Swedish brothers Richard and Ingemar Lundgren were children, they visited the Stockholm museum housing the *Vasa,* a battleship that sank on its maiden voyage in 1628. It was raised from the seafloor in 1961 and sparked a fascination with battleships for the boys. The Lundgren brothers dreamed that one day they might find the resting place of the most renowned of all Swedish warships: the *Mars,* pride of the Swedish fleet, which went down fighting in a naval battle in 1564.

Few ships had ever been found from the 1500s, the period in which Europe's first large, three-masted battleships were built. The prospect of locating the *Mars* had long energized marine archaeologists and historians. Locating that famous shipwreck would shed new light on naval advances at a crucial period in Europe's history.

A plethora of legends surrounded the *Mars,* including a ghost said to rise from the dark depths of the Baltic to prevent its ever being found. During the early 2000s, the Lundgren brothers—by then experienced professional divers—tried several times to find it but came up empty-handed.

Finally, on May 26, 2011, their luck changed. Aboard the *Princess Alice* investigation vessel, just 18 miles off the island of Öland, south of Stockholm, the ship's sonar spotted scattered debris on the ocean bed. They followed the trail of objects, and at just before midnight they found what seemed to be the hull of a great wooden ship lying on its starboard side. The command center of the *Princess Alice* erupted in cheers as Richard Lundgren cried out, "We've got it!"

A Supreme Ship

The *Mars* was the brainchild of Sweden's warrior king Erik XIV, and it was built at a time of high tension in Scandinavia. Taking the Swedish throne in 1560, Erik's determination

1560
Erik XIV becomes king and begins a campaign to expand Sweden's power in the Baltic region.

1563
Alarmed by Swedish expansion, Denmark forms an anti-Swedish alliance, triggering the **Northern Seven Years' War.**

1564
The ***Mars,*** the pride of the Swedish navy, sinks with hundreds of crew members during a naval battle off Öland.

2011
After many years searching, a team led by the **Lundgren brothers** finally locates the wreck of the *Mars.*

ERIK XIV, KING OF SWEDEN, IN A 16TH-CENTURY PORTRAIT BY STEVEN VAN DER MEULEN. NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN

DEA/ALBUM

to extend his control farther across the Baltic Sea alarmed Denmark, which had, until then, enjoyed political domination of the region. In a bid to check Swedish expansion, Denmark (united with the kingdom of Norway at the time) joined other regional powers in a coalition against the Swedes, which triggered the Northern Seven Years' War in 1563.

Consecrated to Mars, the Roman god of war, Erik's prized battleship was completed in 1564. It was the biggest battleship of its time with a length of nearly 200 feet. Able to carry a crew of nearly 900, and bristling with 53 heavy cannons and 50 additional guns, it is no wonder the alternative name for this behemoth of the seas was *Makalös—The Incomparable*. The size and firepower

THE MIGHTY *MARS*

CONSTRUCTED IN 1564, the *Mars*—shown here in a 19th-century Russian engraving—was "the most modern warship in the world," according to Swedish marine archaeologist Johan Rönnby. Two of its five decks were reserved for artillery alone.

BRIDGEMAN/ACI

A 16TH-CENTURY painting depicting the 1564 Battle of Öland, in which the *Mars* was sunk. The red Danish flags and the blue Swedish flags can be seen fluttering from the mastheads. Maritime Museum, Stockholm, Sweden

ERICH LESSING/ALBUM

of this new three-masted model of warship would transform naval warfare across Europe.

Fatal Fire

Even so, the brand-new ship had a short life and met a fiery end. On May 30, 1564, the Swedish fleet engaged the Danish coalition in battle near the island of Öland. The *Mars* dominated the battle the first day, maneuvering effortlessly and repelling any vessel that tried to approach it. At nightfall, however, the Swedish fleet dispersed, so that at dawn on May 31, only six boats were left in formation. That morning the enemy fleet assaulted the *Mars* with all its might. First they aimed for the rudder, leaving the ship directionless. Then they firebombed the deck before sending hundreds of men to board the ship.

With the deck in flames and sailors fighting hand to hand, a projectile struck a gunpowder barrel. The ensuing explosion set off other powder containers and the *Mars*'s bows burst into pieces. By dusk the pride of the Swedish navy lay at the bottom of the Baltic Sea along with nearly a thousand men; survivors, among them Adm. Jakob Bagge, the commander, numbered only around 100. Back in Sweden some people weren't entirely shocked by the tragic end of the *Mars*. To many, it had been an accursed ship all along: The unstable and arrogant King Erik had ordered church bells to be melted down for the ship's cannons, and he had now, they believed, paid the price for such sacrilege.

KING ERIK XIV OF SWEDEN'S PARADE ARMOR. DRESDEN ARMORY, GERMANY

BPK/SCALA, FLORENCE

King Erik ordered church bells melted down to make the cannons. Did the *Mars* pay the ultimate price for such sacrilege?

Landing on *Mars*

Nearly 450 years later, the Lundgren brothers and their team prepared to dive the 246 feet to the resting place of the doomed ship. On reaching it, visibility was limited to a few feet, but the

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A DIVER explores the well-preserved remains of the *Mars*. The low salinity and oxygenation, along with the lack of wood-devouring mollusks, contributed to the ship's conservation.

TOMASZ STACHURA

team was grateful for the chilly waters of the Baltic: The cold conditions in the sea had perfectly preserved the battleship for centuries.

As they swam over the wreck, the divers could see the destroyed bow and evidence of burning across the hull. There were weapons among the wreckage, along with drinking vessels, personal belongings, and bones. A bronze cannon lying on the sandy seabed drew the attention of the divers. Upon inspection, they found Erik XIV's coat of arms, which confirmed that this was indeed the coveted warship. At that moment, Richard Lundgren said to himself: "We're the first to land on *Mars*!"

His exultation was understandable: The team was about to explore the best-preserved 16th-century three-masted warship found to date. In line with Sweden's strict underwater-heritage legislation, they were only allowed to remove a few articles to bring to the surface for study. Among them were three of the 103 cannons and three silver thaler coins in such good condition that, in the words of Richard Lundgren, "we could study them immediately without even having to clean them." Specimens of the ship's structure brought up still smelled of charred wood more than four centuries after the firestorm that had sent it to the bottom.

Thanks to a grant awarded by the National Geographic Society's Global Exploration Fund, the team photographed the *Mars* wreck in situ to create stunning photomosaics and 3-D images.

Led by marine archaeologist Johan Rönnby of Sweden's Södertörn University, the team has already discovered fascinating details of what life was like aboard this ship, not least that its crew was able to enjoy eight different kinds of beer. Continued research will allow researchers to develop a much more detailed picture of the firepower and composition of the *Mars*, and to flesh out the social and military conditions of the society that built it.

—Xabier Armendáriz

The team photographed the *Mars* wreck in situ to create stunning photomosaics and 3-D images.

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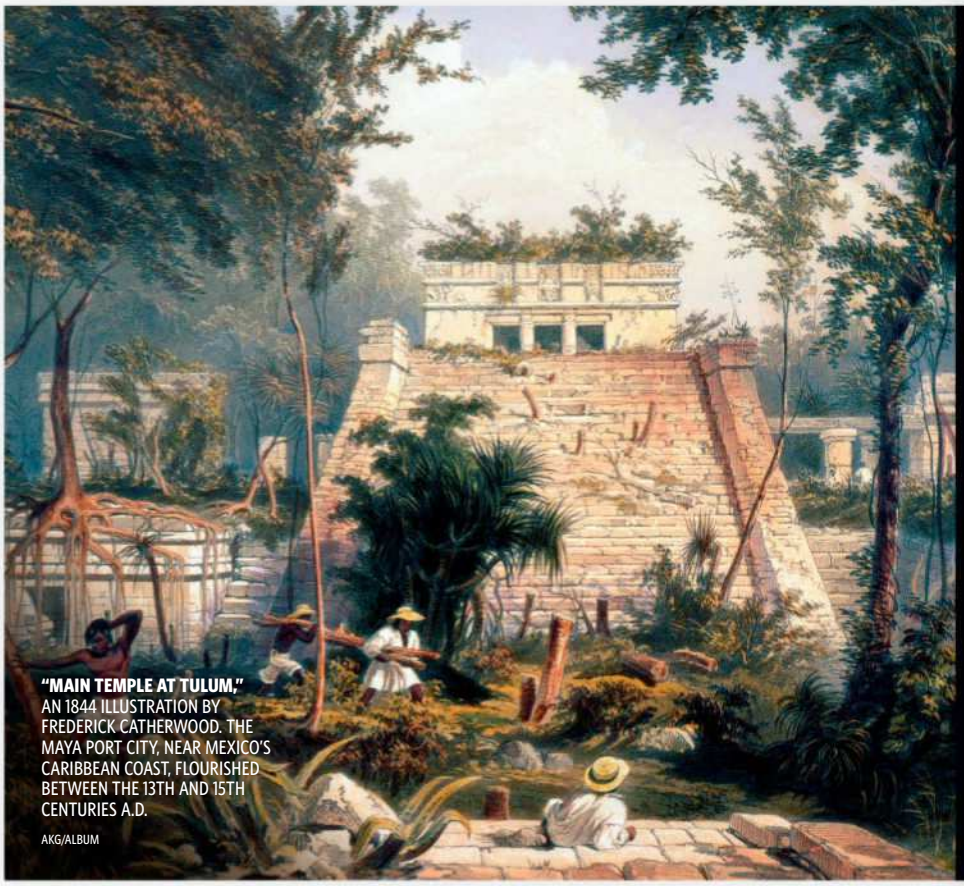

"MAIN TEMPLE AT TULUM," AN 1844 ILLUSTRATION BY FREDERICK CATHERWOOD. THE MAYA PORT CITY, NEAR MEXICO'S CARIBBEAN COAST, FLOURISHED BETWEEN THE 13TH AND 15TH CENTURIES A.D.

AKG/ALBUM

LOST CITIES OF THE MAYA

GUIDED BY LOCALS on an expedition to Central America, a team of explorers pooled their literary and artistic talents to create an unforgettable account, illustrated with sumptuous lithographs of Maya ruins, some half-swallowed by the rain forest. American historian John Lloyd Stephens and British artist Frederick Catherwood were not the first to encounter the ancient cities of Chichén Itzá or Copán, but they were the first to document in vivid detail the scope and majesty of what remained, which caused a sensation in the United States and Europe in the 1840s.

UNSOLVED MYSTERY: JACK THE RIPPER

A MONSTER WAS STALKING London's squalid Whitechapel district, killing women and mutilating their bodies. The suspected perpetrator of 11 unsolved murders between 1888 and 1891, Jack the Ripper taunted the police as he obsessed Londoners from the crown to the commoner. Over the decades, dedicated "Ripperologists" have tried to crack the case, fingering around 100 different suspects, including aristocrats, recent immigrants, and a famous painter, but the identity of "Jack" remains a mystery.

BRIDGEMAN/ACI

MARY EVANS/CORDON PRESS

AN 1889 POSTER (LEFT) ANNOUNCES THE ARREST OF A SUSPECT. A KNIFE (RIGHT) WAS FOUND NEAR ONE OF THE RIPPER'S VICTIMS.

Thus Spoke Zarathustra?

While the life of Zarathustra, Persian religious prophet, is veiled in mystery, his impact is indisputable. Believed to have lived in the seventh and sixth centuries B.C., he founded Zoroastrianism, a monotheistic faith which deeply influenced other religions, including Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

The Plot Against Alexander

While Alexander the Great was on top of the ancient world, he began to suspect some of his most trusted associates of betrayal. The mighty conqueror of Asia began a brutal purge of his closest generals, sparking paranoia among the ranks as his forces began to march on India.

A Devil of a Time

God's "adversary" in the Jewish and Christian scriptures evolved in Europe's Middle Ages into the ultimate figure of evil, a monstrous being whose grotesque features would fire artists' imaginations to strike terror into all.

Spring Embroidery

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