

examines how the Cordoba Mosque-Cathedral has been invoked, either as a symbol of intercultural harmony or Islamic ascendance, in competing narratives about the city's history during its failed bid to become a European Capital of Culture.

While the essays in the volume offer much insight into the politicization of culture, they are less attentive to economic factors and the market conditions under which cultural artifacts are produced and circulated. Even in the chapters that do consider the emergence of new markets for Muslim consumers, the emphasis tends to be on the Islamization of commodities rather than the commodification of Islam. Thus the essays tend to overlook issues like profit motivation, market share, funding structures, and distribution networks when analyzing the production and consumption of cultural goods.

Nonetheless, this volume should be of great interest to students and scholars of Islam in Europe. The impressive breadth of topics and case studies included in the collection make it an excellent primer for understanding how the transformation of European societies has been reflected and contested in the field of cultural production. ✎

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**RANSOM, MARJORIE.** *Silver Treasures from the Land of Sheba: Regional Yemeni Jewelry.* Photographs of jewelry and costumes by Robert K. Liu. Cairo and New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 2014. xviii + 246 pages, maps, bibliography, index, 320 color photographs. Cloth US\$49.50 ISBN 9789774166006

**Silver Treasures from the Land of Sheba** is an important study of a neglected topic, Yemeni silver jewelry. The book is organized straightforwardly; the introductory chapters set up the research basics. In the first chapter we learn that when Marjorie and David Ransom were posted to the U.S. Embassy in the Yemen Arab Republic (North Yemen) they arrived already fascinated by Middle Eastern silver work. Over the years the couple collected about 1900 pieces, most crafted from the mid-nineteenth through the twentieth centuries. In 2001, when Marjorie was asked to exhibit items from her collection, she realized her limited knowledge of the pieces. Ransom embarked on a formal study that led her to all areas of the by-then-united Yemen.

Chapter 2 establishes the timeliness and import of the study. If Ransom had not had a stellar collection, celebration of this Yemeni craft would be impossible. Jewelry is decorative and important, especially, to women's security and wealth. Falling silver prices in the last fifty years have heightened demand for imported gold jewelry. The culture of which silver was a part is passing; the women for whom silver jewelry was vital are aging and their stories disappearing. Ransom's background, Arabic fluency, and grandmother status, made her the ideal person to collect this soon-to-be-lost cultural history.

The introductory section concludes with notes about the metal. Jewelry was made from melted silver coins including the Indian rupee, Saudi riyal, and most often Maria Teresa thalers. The 1780 striking became the standard thaler, still minted, and was for many years North Yemen's de facto currency. The coin was prized because its stable silver content and inscribed edge made shaving impossible. Long after modern currency was introduced, thalers were still being used in rural highland Yemen especially for payment (or calculation) of bride wealth.

The book's remaining two parts present details on jewelry and costume by region. Ransom follows the preunification partition of Yemen between Ottoman/Imamate Yemen (the north) and British Yemen (the south). These regions are subdivided by geographic-cultural areas. Maps are provided to orient readers.

"The North" opens with a chapter on the Northern Mountains, site of Sana'a, the ancient city and modern capital. At the core of the city was a thriving market that was the workspace of Muslim and Jewish silversmiths. Most of this chapter is devoted to the styles of key silversmiths whose application of filigree, granulation, and chasing created distinctly recognizable pieces. Some silversmiths were renown, their work more often identifiable by style than by their signature seals. This environment changed when Jewish smiths immigrated to Israel in the late 1940s. Muslim craftsmen preserved the craft until silver prices fell and interest in their products declined. Ransom also includes notes on the relatively few young men who are at present preserving the art.

The remainder of "The North" is presented in six chapters, the length of each depending on craftsmen and examples of their work. Largely because of artisanal styles, each locality had somewhat characteristic or unique pieces. Jewelry photographs are complemented with pictures of women's dresses and headdresses. Additional photographs present local architectural styles and environment. Together they present the reader-viewer with the context for Yemeni silver jewelry.

The third section presents “The South” in eight chapters. As a consequence of out-migration and South Yemen’s incorporation into British India, Indian jewelers introduced new elements that were assimilated by Yemeni smiths such as nose rings and gold gilding. Glass bracelets were also popular. Ransom presents examples of the jewelry, costume, architecture and geography.

The Ransom Collection represents the full range of women’s adornment: necklaces, earrings, rings, wrist and ankle bracelets, hair pieces and bridal headdresses. Robert Liu photographed the jewelry on black backgrounds which highlights the details of the craftsmanship. Captions contain details about pieces location, acquisition, size, and often much more interesting information.

Silver jewelry is worn art and a key cultural component; it was integral to being a Yemeni woman. *Silver Treasures* may seem like another Yemen coffee table book of which there have been superb volumes. Ransom’s book stands out because the accompanying text provides insight into the lives of the women who own or owned the jewelry, their attachment to and pride in it, how they came to have it, and when the pieces were worn. Although readers are not overwhelmed, these short accounts contain a trove of information on a disappearing way of life.

*Silver Treasures* is a visual and ethnographic treasure that makes an important contribution to the literature on Yemen. It should be on the bookshelves of scholars of Arabia, material arts, women, and Yemeni history. ✨

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