

The western Silk Roads: An Annotated Bibliography of select works on the middle east/west asia By Char Simons The evergreen state college

Relative to China and perhaps parts of Central Asia, scholarship and popular media about the Middle East is underdeveloped and makes little connection to that region's role as part of the Silk Roads. Hence most of the sources listed below are about specific aspects of the Middle East and not necessarily explicitly in relation to the Silk Roads.

The categories of sources listed are broad, and represent some of my favorites that I've used in programs over the years, and that have been most popular with students, as well as more advanced work suitable for research. The list is not all-inclusive, and I have attempted to be integrative in the categories listed (for example, there is no Women's Studies category. Rather than "ghetto-ize" works about women, those sources are integrated into more inclusive categories, such as history or religion).

The Arts

Islamic Arts by Jonathan Bloom and Sheila Blair. Phaidon Press, 1997. Descriptions and full color plates of art in a variety of mediums from Islamic lands. Organized in three major time period: the rise of Islam 600-900 AD, regional centers and local powers 900-1500, and the great empires 1500-1800. Although these time divisions are arguable, each section has a rich compilation of the dominant arts of the era, including mosaics, calligraphy, metal work, weaving and jewelry.

Islamic Calligraphy by Sheila Blair. Edinburgh University Press, 2006. Extremely thorough book on this traditional art form from the early years of Islam through contemporary works, such as those by Seattle-based Syrian calligrapher Mamoun Sakkal. Includes a discussion and illustrations of the role and principles of Arabic script, early Quranic manuscripts, development of round scripts, emergence of classical regional styles in Iran, Egypt, Syria, Anatolia, India and north Africa, dynastic styles of empires, such as the Safavids and Qajars of Iran and Central Asia, the Ottomans of Anatolia, the Balkans and the eastern Mediterranean, and the many faces of Islamic calligraphy in modern times. Beautiful full-color plates sprinkled throughout, plus very useful smaller plates of isolated segments of specific calligraphic pieces so that greater detail can be seen.

Film and film studies

A wonderful collection of scholarly films and documentaries can be borrowed free of charge through the Middle East Center at the University of Washington. Several of the videos have Silk Roads connections. For an annotated catalog of the collection, see <http://jsis.artsci.washington.edu/programs/mideast/vidlib.htm>

Here are a few other favorites (see Arab Film Distribution Center for more titles.
www.arabfilm.com/

The Battle of Algiers (Algeria, 1966). Classic black-and-white film of the Algerian struggle which eventually ended 130 years of French colonial rule.

Children of Heaven (Iran, 1997). When a young boy loses his sister's only pair of shoes, they hatch a plan to share his shoes and keep his negligence a secret from their parents. This is the first Iranian film ever to be nominated for an Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film.

Forget Baghdad (Israel, 2003). Documentary of four Baghdadi Jews, all former members of the Iraqi Communist party who were forced to emigrate at Israel's founding. The four elderly protagonists (all now successful Israelis) were influenced in their youth by the internationalism of the Iraqi communist party. But in the early 1950s, their Jewish identity put them at odds with the rising Arab nationalism. Fleeing to Israel was hardly a solution, as the men found themselves on the outskirts of a society built and governed by European Jews. Winner of a 2002 Locarno Jury Prize.

Journey of Hope (Turkey/Switzerland, 1990). A Turkish family leaves their homeland for the dream of prosperity in Switzerland. [Winner of the 1991 Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film.](#)

Mahmoud Darwish: As the Land is the Language (Middle East/France, 1997). A documentary following Darwish from the Jordanian desert to Paris via Cairo and Beirut, tracing the path of his exile from Israel. Places the popular Palestinian poet and his work in political, historical and cultural contexts.

Monsieur Ibrahim (France, 2004). The story of a young Jew and an elderly Muslim (played by Omar Sharif) in a working class Paris neighborhood of the 1960s.

Once Upon a Time Beirut (Lebanon, 1994). Distraught over Beirut's destruction, Yasmine and Leila embark on a journey in search of its past. Their possession of two rare, unreleased film reels lands them an encounter with Monsieur Farouk, a reclusive film connoisseur. Through the magic of cinema, the three of them go back in time on a mythical and history-laden tour of the city. Here the movie shines with images of Beirut from the large-scale American studio efforts of the 1970's to the Beirut of the 1960's as seen through the lenses of Arab filmmakers, to the French-directed films of the 1930s.

Rana's Wedding (Palestine, 2002). Shooting on location in East Jerusalem, Ramallah and at checkpoints in-between, the film follows the Palestinian-Israeli conflict through the eyes of a young woman who, with only 10 hours to marry, must negotiate her way around roadblocks, soldiers, stone-throwers and overworked officials. Winner of the Human Rights Watch International Film Festival's 2003 Nestor Almendros Prize for courage in filmmaking.

A Summer In La Goulette (Tunisia, 1996). Set in 1967, the film examines a time when Muslims, Jews and Catholics lived together in harmony as neighbors. Youssef (a Muslim), Jojo (a Jew) and Giuseppe (a Catholic) are best of friends until each of their daughters swears to lose their virginity by a certain date. To make matters worse, each daughter sets her sights on a boy of a different religion, thus challenging an inviolable taboo and causing a rift between their fathers. As the families resolve their differences, the Six Day War breaks out in the Middle East, which will divide Jews and Arabs the world over.

Arab Cinema: History and Cultural Identity by Viola Shafik. American University of Cairo Press, 1998. Extensive coverage of Arab cinema, tracing the industry's development from colonial times to the present. Analyzes the ambiguous relationship with commercial Western cinema, and examines indigenous cinema of North Africa, Syria, Palestine, Iraq and Lebanon. Includes extensive index of film titles.

History

The Colonizer and the Colonized by Albert Memmi, 1955. The author was born in colonial Tunisia of Jewish origins and spoke Arabic as his native tongue. A novelist and sociologist, Memmi found himself at the crossroads of three cultures, and based his work on the difficulty of finding a balance between the East and the West. Three factors typify the colonizer (who, according to Memmi, means any European in a colony): profit, privilege, and usurpation. The colonized child is not taught his own history, but the unknown settings of his colonizer's history. The colonized learn that they are inconsequential, no longer in the game, so to speak. Because they are excluded from government, they become less interested in government. The colonial system is fundamentally unstable and will lead to its own destruction, due to the mere rigidity of the system. Revolt is still a stage in colonial alienation, and colonialism doesn't disappear until this stage is over.

Convivencia: Jews, Muslims and Christians in Medieval Spain by Jerrilyn Dodds, et.al. This beautifully illustrated art book examines the cultural coexistence of Muslims, Christians and Jews in Islamic Spain between 711 A.D. and the beginning of the Inquisitions in 1492. Jointly, they created a civilization known as one of the most glorious in Islamic history. This convivencia is examined through Sephardic Jewish eyes, and includes essays on Hebrew poetry and Hebrew illuminated manuscripts that use Islamic motifs.

Europe and Islam: The Making of Europe by Franco Cardini. Blackwell Publishers, 2001. A scholarly examination of historical medieval ties between Europe and the Middle East from an Italian perspective. Focuses on 1,500 years of ideological interchange and armed conflict between Europe (which he treats as a whole) and Middle East countries of the Mediterranean basin, Cardini examines the ideas, prejudices and disinformation that have formed and colored Europe's attitude towards Islam.

In an Antique Land: History in the Guise of a Traveler's Tale by Amitav Ghosh. Vintage, 1994. A multi-genre blend of travelogue, history and cross-cultural analysis that flips back and forth between a contemporary Egyptian village and medieval Aden and India's Malabar coast. Based on documents from the Genizah in one of Cairo's remaining synagogues, Ghosh reconstructs a 12th-century master-slave relationship between a Jewish merchant and his Indian servant that confounds modern concepts of slavery and speaks to the pre-colonial relative ease of trade along the Silk Routes.

The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times. Reeva Spector Simon, Michael Menachem Laskier and Sara Reguer, eds. Columbia University Press, 2003. Addresses the variety and diversity of Jewish life within Arab cultures during the past 200 years. The first half of the book is thematic with discussions on language, economic life, religion, music and the role of women. The second half of the book is a country-by-country survey that covers the major Arab countries plus Iran Afghanistan and Turkey.

Nationalism and The Genealogical Imagination: Oral History and Textual Authority in Tribal Jordan by Andrew Shryock. University of California Press, 1997. Discussion of the transition from oral to written culture, how history is recorded when there are conflicting accounts, and how a nation-state manufactures its own history to legitimize its power. Set in the framework of tribal relations of the Balga in western Jordan and the national regime which appropriates Bedouin culture to legitimize its rule and create a unified Jordanian identity while stripping Bedouin of their traditional political power.

One Land, Two Peoples: The Conflict Over Palestine by Deborah Gerner. Westview, 2005. Excellent introductory work on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Historically based, Gerner's greatest contribution may be her detailed narrative on the simultaneous rise of Zionism and Arab nationalism and the role of Europe beginning in the late 19th century that helped to plant the seeds of today's conflict.

A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East by David Fromkin. Avon Books, 1989. Seminal work for understanding current Middle East politics. In-depth study of the last years of the Ottoman empire through 1922, when England, France and other European powers had established themselves as colonial rulers from Afghanistan to North Africa.

[*The Renaissance Bazaar: From the Silk Road to Michelangelo*](#) by Jerry Brotton. Oxford University Press, 2002. An examination of Islam's crucial role in development of the European Renaissance and its innovations, revealing the Islamic world's contributions to fields as varied as cartography, astronomy, art, architecture and commerce.

The Rise of Historical Writing Among the Arabs by A.A. Duri. Princeton University Press, 1960. A seminal study of early historical writings of the Islamic era, highlighting whose voices were heard and have reached us today, and whose voices have not.

Sources in the History of the Modern Middle East by Akram Fouad Khater. Houghton Mifflin, 2004. Very important anthology of primary source documents of major Middle East events and issues from the 19th and 20th century. Topics include central political, social and cultural reforms, economic changes, nationalism and Islamic political movements. Specific documents range from late Ottoman era protocols and early Zionist proposals for a Jewish homeland to speeches by Egyptian President Abdel Nasser and Iranian Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, declarations on Arab nationalism, and contemporary issues, such as women's rights, homosexuality and the environment. Particularly useful introduction on how to read a primary source.

Literature

A Literary History of the Arabs by Reynold Nicholson. Kegan Paul International, 1930. As much political and military history and literary history and told from sometimes an annoyingly Eurocentric view, this volume nonetheless contains important contextual information about the development of literature and poetry.

Cities of Salt by Abdelrahman Munif. Vintage Books, 1989. Novel reminiscent of magic realism of an early 20th century Bedouin village and how lives and culture are forever changed by American oil exploration. Seen through the eyes of a large and varied cast of Bedouin characters over many years, the upheaval caused by the American colonization is shown in various manifestations. Munif is a Jordanian-born attorney and former editor of the Baghdad-based monthly *Oil and Development*. His sequel to *Cities of Salt* is *The Trench*, set in an anonymous

sultanate from the 1930s -1950s about how the fictional Sultan Khureybit consolidated his power and created a modern nation-state. One of the most intriguing protagonists is the British adventurer Hamilton, a fascinating combination of T. E. Lawrence and what might be a character out of Edward Said's *Orientalism*.

I, the Divine by Rabih Alameddine. Norton, 2001. A structurally fascinating novel told in first chapters. The plot revolves around a Lebanese-American trying to find herself in the Lebanon she grew up in and the U.S. she lives in as an adult. As with many contemporary Middle Eastern novels, there is plenty of metaphor, including a graphic rape scene suggestive of Syrian, Israeli and U.S. involvement in Lebanon.

Modern Arabic Fiction, Salma Khadra Jayyusi, ed. Columbia University Press, 2005. The definitive anthology of 20th century Arab short stories and literature by familiar literary luminaries such as Nobel Prize winner Naguib Mahfouz to authors less well known in the West, such as early 20th century writer Juri Zaydan, whose historical epics influenced the moral attitudes of several generations of Arab reads, Adb al Rahman Munif's searing exploration of the environmental and social impact of oil exploration and Palestinian Ibrahim Nasrallah's examination of alienation in contemporary Arab life. Includes a most useful 70-page introduction of the history of Arab literature from pre-Islamic times to the present.

My Name is Red by Orhan Pamuk. Knopf, 2001. This novel by one of Turkey's most acclaimed contemporary writers is a murder mystery set amidst the religious repression in 16th century Istanbul. Its thematic value is threefold: to provide a glimpse into an Islamic society, to understand the global tensions that exist when one empire waxes while another wanes, and to point out the cyclical nature of history. See Char's review in the Christian Science Monitor, www.csmonitor.com/2001/1011/p19s2-bogn.html.

Post-Gibran Anthology of New Arab-American Writing, Khaled Mattawa and Munir Akash, eds. Syracuse University Press, 1999. Wonderful collection of short stories and poetry by authors representing the great geographical, class, political, age and gender diversity that is the Middle East. Whether born in the U.S., Arab lands or Europe, the authors demonstrate why fiction and poetry are such powerful political and cultural tools.

Snow by Orhan Pamuk. Vintage, 2005. An intricately woven novel about contemporary political dissidence in a small Turkish town, with threads of romance, murder, poetry, women's rights, freedom of speech and life as the "other" as a guestworker in Germany. Pamuk's masterful storytelling techniques and use of sophisticated literary techniques are ample evidence of why the author received the 2006 Nobel Prize for Literature.

Wounding Words by Evelyne Accad. Heinemann, 1996. Powerful novel on Arab feminism as told through the lives of a Lebanese scholar working in Tunisia with a group of feminists to get a journal off the ground and the internal and external obstacles they encounter.

Media studies and Online English-language press (selected)

Al Ahram (Egypt). <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/>

Al Jazeera (Qatar/pan-Arab). www.aljazeera.com/

Daily Star (Lebanon). www.dailystar.com.lb/

Jordan Times (Jordan). www.jordantimes.com/

Links to other Middle East English-language newspapers, including ones from Israel, Turkey and Iran, can be found at www.world-newspapers.com/east.html

Al Jazeera: How the Free Arab News Network Scooped the World and Changed the Middle East by Mohammed El-Nawawy and Adel Iskandar. Westview Press, 2002. Written in accessible journalistic style, El-Nawawy, a former journalist in the Middle East and a journalism professor (University of West Florida), and Iskandar, a communications professor (University of Kentucky), examine the history of the network, its operation, and its effects on Arab viewers across the world. The authors also chronicle the negative reaction of Arab governments to some of the political coverage, and use of some controversial formats, a la CNN's Crossfire.

Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World by Edward Said. Vintage Books, 1997. Although written pre-9/11, a noteworthy exploration of how little has changed in terms of American coverage of the Middle East and Islam.

POETRY

Arabian Love Poems by Nizar Kabbani. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998. Erotic love poems by Syria's most beloved poet. When Kabbani passed away a few years ago, he had the largest state funeral in modern Syrian history. Bilingual Arabic/English.

Arabic Poetry: A Primer for Students by A.J. Arberry. Cambridge University Press, 1965. Anthology of major poets from the classical era. Includes a good introduction on the history of pre-Islamic and Qur'anic poetry. Bilingual Arabic/English.

Arabic Poetics in the Golden Age by Vicente Cantarino. E.J. Brill, 1975. First-time English translations of works by some major poets from 800-1500 A.D., including Ibn Sina, Ibn Rashiq, Al Farabi and Al Jurjani. Also includes discussion of poetry and religion, and Aristotelian influence on Arab poetry of the time.

Bedouin Poetry from Sinai and the Negev: Mirror of a Culture by Clinton Bailey. Clarendon Press, 1991. For more than 20 years, the author lived among the Bedouin tribes of the Egyptian Sinai and the Israeli Negev desert. The result is a collection of 113 Bedouin poems grouped into themes of expression, communication, instruction, entertainment, and historical and episodic poetry. Poetry retains a prominent position in Bedouin life and is also vital in studying and understanding desert nomads from ancient times to the present.

Human Landscapes from My Country by Nazim Hikmet. Persea Books, 2002. An epic poem on early 20th century Turkey, from the waning days of the Ottoman empire, through the Young Turk revolution and establishment of modern Turkey by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. Hikmet, a communist who was jailed frequently due to his political beliefs, is one of Turkey's most acclaimed poets, and his work is frequently used in international solidarity movements.

Introduction to Arab Poetics, Adonis. Saqi Books, 2003. Brief introduction to the development and culture of pre-Islamic, Islamic and modern periods of Arab poetry. Written by one of the most renowned contemporary Middle Eastern poets.

Music of a Distant Drum: Classical Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and Hebrew Poems, Bernard Lewis, translator. Princeton University Press, 2001. A wonderful collection of poems spanning a millennium and including Rumi and Omar Khayyam as well as rarely-translated poets.

The Poetry of Arab Women: A Contemporary Anthology, edited by Nathalie Handal. Interlink, 2000. A selection of poetry by more than 80 women from various classes and backgrounds

around the Middle East and North Africa. The editor's introduction describes the significance of women's poetry and its importance in contemporary Arab cultures.

The Prophet by Kahlil Gibran. Originally published in 1923, considered a classic work by Lebanese poet, philosopher and artist Kahlil Gibran.

Unfortunately, It Was Paradise: Selected Poems by Mahmoud Darwish. University of California Press, 2003. Most recently translated work of the Palestinian poet whose performances draw stadium-sized crowds. These selections cover more than 20 years. Although particular to Palestinian exile, Darwish's poetry is frequently borrowed by other liberation movements.

Politics/Law/Area Studies

In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong by Amin Maalouf. Arcade, 2001. Lebanese journalist and Paris resident Maalouf writes eloquently about the use and misuse of religion and other identities that are used for political means and the implications for who we are as the human race.

Islamic Family Law in a Changing World: A Global Resource Book. Abdullahi An-Na'im, ed. Zed Books, 2002. A comprehensive guide to laws on marriage, divorce, child custody and other legal practices and institutions in Africa, Central Asia, the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia. Each geographical section contains social, cultural and historical background followed by country profiles. Because family law is a rapidly changing area, the book includes authoritative Web sites for more up-to-date information.

Jordan's Palestinian Challenge, 1948-1983: A Political History by Clinton Bailey. Westview Press, 1984. While better known for his 20-year study of Bedouin in the Sinai and Negev and collection of their poetry and proverbs, Bailey presents a very useful history of contemporary Jordanian politics. Issues discussed include both domestic and international, including the delicate socio-political balance among Jordanians, resident Palestinians and Bedouin, war and peace with Israel, and Jordan's relationship with its Arab neighbors, particularly Egypt.

100 Myths About the Middle East, Fred Halliday. University of California Press, 2005. The most useful book I've run across for talking about the Middle East in plain, understandable language. Generally sound and well-researched arguments for refuting standard American stereotypes and misperceptions about the region.

Orientalism by Edward Said. Vintage Books, 1979. Seminal critique of Western views of the Middle East by one of the field's foremost scholars. Told through the lenses of comparative literature, art and politics, Said deconstructs the academic discipline of Oriental Studies. His book makes three major claims. Firstly, that Orientalism, although purporting to be an objective, disinterested, and rather esoteric field, in fact functioned to serve political ends. Secondly, that Orientalism helped define a European (mainly English and French) self-image. Lastly, Said argues that Orientalism has produced a false description of Arabs and Islamic cultures.

Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward Said. Gauri Viswanathan, ed. Vintage Books, 2001. A collection of 29 interviews over three decades in which Said, former comparative literature chair at Columbia University, reflects on literature, music, history and politics.

Shattering the Stereotypes: Muslim Women Speak Out. Fawzia Afzal-Khan, ed. Anthology of post 9/11 nonfiction essays, journalistic accounts, poetry, short stories and plays confronting the

stereotypes of Muslim women by the U.S. and replacing those images with a healthy dose of reality. While several of the essays are too tied to the specific events of 9/11/01 to have much shelf life, there is enough here if one reads selectively that will lead to greater insights about the lives and issues some Muslim women deal with.

State Interests and Public Spheres: The International Politics of Jordan's Identity by Marc Lynch. Columbia University Press, 1999. An examination of key events in recent late 20th century Jordanian foreign policy, such as disengagement from the West Bank, the peace treaty with Israel and neutrality during the first Iraq War. These events are discussed in the context of the relationship between government actions and public debates. Written in a political science theoretical framework that can be difficult to read, but the high points are worth sifting for.

Understanding the Contemporary Middle East. Deborah Gerner and Jillian Schwedler, eds. Lynne Reiner Publishers, 2003. An anthology of Middle East geography, history, politics, economics, women's issues, religion and literature. A good overview of the region.

Women and Gender in Islam by Leila Ahmed. Yale University Press, 1993. A classic historical study by a renowned scholar of Middle East and women's studies. Focusing mainly on Egypt, this survey examines the historical roots and contemporary condition of Islamic discourse on gender. An eye-opener in terms of understanding the impact of pre-Islamic practices, colonialism and culture on today's Muslim women of the Middle East.

Religion

The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600-1800 by Jonathan Berkey. Cambridge University Press, 2003. Interesting discussion on the political and culture forces at work that contributed to the establishment and development of Islam.

A History of God: The 4,000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam by Karen Armstrong. Ballantine Books, 1993. A fascinating examination of the historical, cultural and political forces that brought about the three main monotheistic religions of the Middle East and their diffusion. Themes include how these three religions have shaped and altered the concept of God, how these religions have influenced each other, and how pagan beliefs were incorporated into all three religions.

Islam: Religion, History and Civilization by Sayyed Hossein Nasr. HarperSanFrancisco, 2003. Easy to read introduction to the diversity of Islamic faith and history. Nasr aptly distills 1,400 years of history into an accessible text that doesn't get bogged down in details, yet, for example, treats Sufism, Sunnism and Shi'ism in general and also historic and contemporary sects within those traditions.

Islam, Judaism and Christianity: Theological and Historical Affiliations by Heribert Busse. Markus Wiener Publishers, 1998. Scholarly comparative overview of the three main Middle East religions by a German academic. Suitable for survey class.

The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an by Abdullah Yusuf Ali. Amana Publications, 2001. Well-annotated version of the Qur'an (the holy text itself is both in Arabic and English). Gives important cultural, political and historical meaning to Islam's sacred text.

Muhammad by Maxime Rodinson. New York Press, 1980. A key scholarly work on the founder of Islam. Discussion of the historical roots of Islam as well as in-depth profile of Muhammad and the personal, cultural, religious and political influences on him.

Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective by Amina Wadud. Oxford University Press, 1999. A re-examination of the Muslim holy book that highlights the inclusive role of women in Islam as distinct from some cultural interpretations which are more restrictive.

The Scimitar and the Veil: Extraordinary Women of Islam by Jennifer Heath. Hidden Spring, 2004. Very engaging and well-researched history of Islam through the influential women who helped shape, develop and spread the religion. Portrays more than 50 Muslim women from the birth of Islam in 622 A.D. through the 19th century, including the women who played a crucial role in the prophet Muhammad's life, as well as scholars of the Hadith, saints and mystics, queens and warriors, rebels and concubines, and poets, musicians and storytellers.

Spirituality in the Land of the Noble: How Iran Shaped the World's Religions by Richard Foltz. Oxford, 2004. A fascinating account of how some of the major world religions, from Buddhism to the Abrahamic faiths, were shaped to the present day by the Zoroastrians of ancient Persia.

SCIENCE

Islamic Science: An Illustrated Study by Seyyed Hossein Nasr. Kazi Publications, 1995. Beautifully illustrated study of the historical importance Islam played in the development of many branches of science, including mathematics, pharmacology, environmental science and astronomy. Illustrations include Persian and Turkish miniatures, and the narration is by one of Islam's foremost philosophers, an Iranian Sufi and U.S.-based scholar. Nasr has written many excellent books on religion and philosophy.

TRAVEL LITERATURE

Journeys to the Other Shore: Muslim and Western Travelers in Search of Knowledge by Roxanne Euben. Princeton University Press, 2006. A comparison of medieval travel literature by European and Afro-Asian Muslims. Issues include travel in search of wisdom, gender and genre, and cosmopolitanism past and present, Islamic and Western.

Like Water in a Dry Land by Bettina Selby. HarperCollins, 1996. Tales of a 60-year-old British grandmother bicycling through Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel and Palestine (and not her first trip, either). Well-told tales of people and places she encounters along the way, plus an especially well-crafted narrative of Israeli institutional and individual atrocities on every day Palestinians in the Occupied Territories.

The Travels of Ibn Battuta in the Near East, Asia and Africa, 1325-1354. Rev. Samuel Lee, ed. and translator. Dover Publications, 2004. A primary document of a medieval traveler's account of 30 years of travel from Morocco to China, and through parts of sub-Saharan Africa and Spain. More widely traveled over a longer time period than Marco Polo, Ibn Battuta lends an interesting account of a Muslim who considers his own multiple identities of citizen of Tangier, the Maghreb, Maliki school of law and Sunni Islam in light of "the Other" (Muslims of various cultures and sects and non-Muslims) he encounters.

Walks and Scrambles in Wadi Rum: A Selection of Traditional Bedouin Routes through the Deserts and Mountains of Rum and to the Summit of Jordan's Highest Mountain by Tony Howard

and Diana Taylor. Al Kutba, 1993. Essential guide to hiking the magnificent Jordanian desert that Lawrence of Arabia described as the “Valley of the Moon.” The guidebook was made possible by local Bedouin who know the area intimately and shared ancient trails and routes with the authors.