

Relics of what were once tributaries to a vast, prehistoric inland sea, the 18 Lakes of Ounianga count among them the only permanent freshwater desert lakes in the world. Photo by George Steinmetz.

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**Back Cover**



"It's the beginning. We're seeing the ecosystem happening," says Samih Toukan, founder of Maktoob.com, the first major Arabic-language Internet provider. "We're seeing more and more examples of innovation not only for the region but that can be global." Photo by David Degner.

Saudi Aramco, the oil company born as an international enterprise more than eighty years ago, distributes *Saudi Aramco World* to increase cross-cultural understanding. The magazine's goal is to broaden knowledge of the cultures, history and geography of the Arab and Muslim worlds and their connections with the West. *Saudi Aramco World* is distributed without charge, upon request, to a limited number of interested readers.



## 2 Hayy Was Here, Robinson Crusoe

Written by Tom Verde

Marooned, but later enlightened by the experience: The first fictional character of this genre appeared in the 12th century, named Hayy Ibn Yaqzan by his Arabic-speaking author in southern Spain. Later translators helped make his tale a 600-year best-seller that influenced the emergence of European rationalism and empiricism. Among its admirers was likely Daniel Defoe, whose 1719 classic *Robinson Crusoe* follows much of Hayy's philosophical trail.



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## 30 Poland's New Tatar Trail

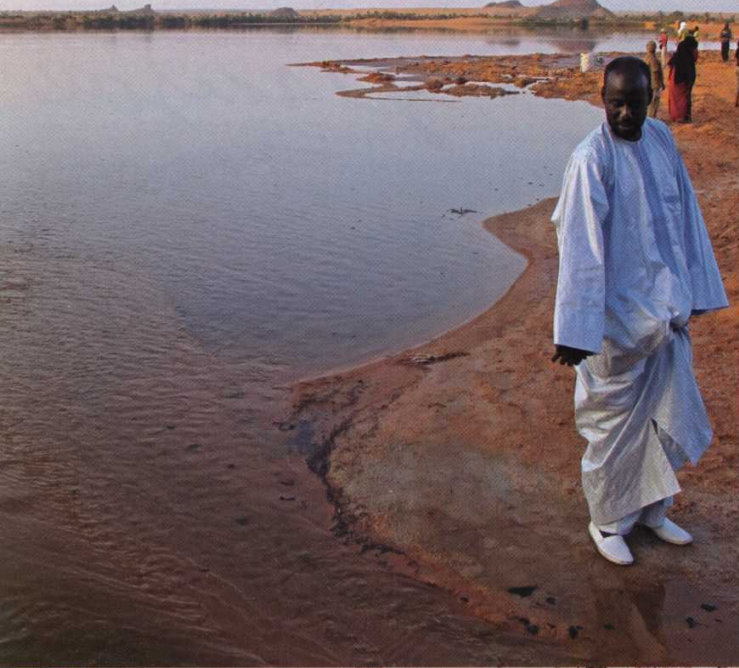
Written by Katarzyna Jarecka-Stepień, photographed by Aga Luczakowska

One woman's discovery of her Tatar Muslim heritage has helped rekindle interest in a cultural history that links northeastern Europe with Central Asia—beginning in a quiet village of 160 souls along Poland's border with Belarus.

# 12 Last Lakes of the Green Sahara

Written and photographed by Sheldon Chad

Buried in the layered sediments of an anomalous group of lakes in northern Chad are scientific treasures that may help modern climatologists understand the most dramatic climate-driven event since the last Ice Age: the transformation of once lush northern Africa into the Sahara.



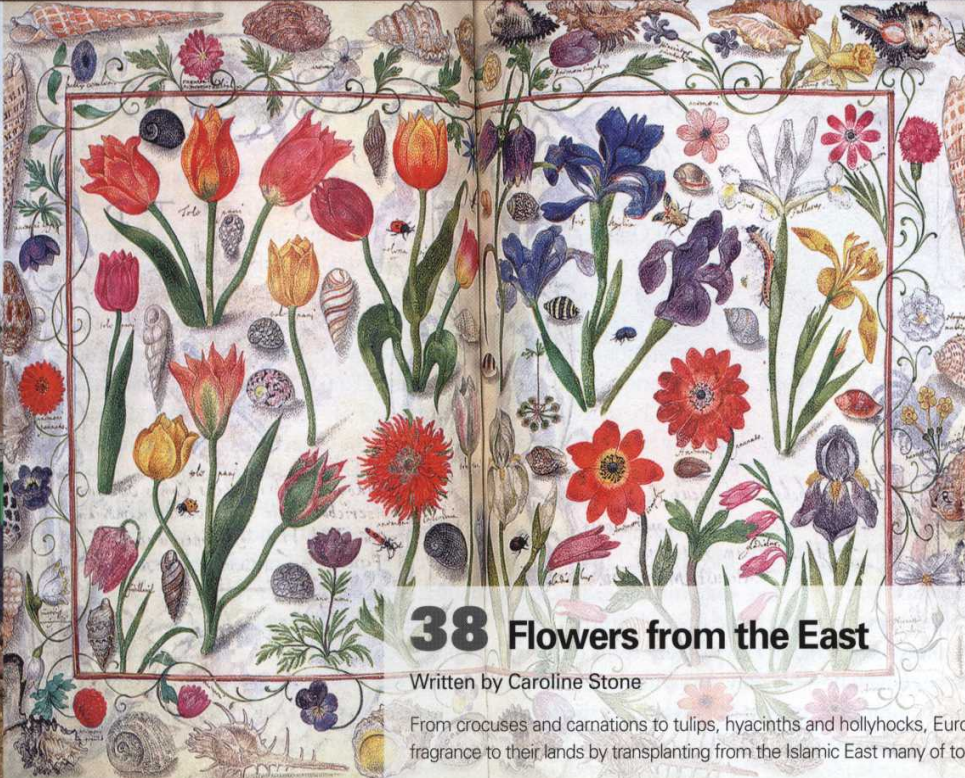
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#techboom  
#arabnets



Written by Habib Battah  
Portraits by David Degner

Welcome to the new ecosystem: Where would you like to incubate? In a region with deep historical roots in trade and innovation, a new generation is leading the Middle East's youngest, fastest-growing and most promising economic sector: tech.



# 38 Flowers from the East

Written by Caroline Stone

From crocuses and carnations to tulips, hyacinths and hollyhocks, Europeans brought color and fragrance to their lands by transplanting from the Islamic East many of today's most popular flowers.

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Written by Julie Weiss

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