

Glossary for A Caravan of Brides – This glossary covers Arabic and cultural terms as well as geographic locations mentioned in the story.

A`alam al-Sa`ad – rock formations in the Nafud desert, a signpost for travelers.

Abaya – A women’s outer garment worn as a cover when in public in Saudi Arabia. Abaya styles have changed over the decades and have included loose thigh-length versions as well as floor-length. Today most are semi-fitted cloaks, with matching headscarves (*shailah*, plural *shailat*). Very conservative women add a mask to cover their face known as a *burqa*, or *niqab*.

Abha – Town in southwestern Saudi Arabia.

Agaal – Circular black double-looped rope worn on top of the men’s headscarf to hold it in place. See *ghutra*.

Ageyli –Arabian townsmen who traveled from home for work. In the 18th and 19th centuries, Ageylis worked as long-distance traders and hired hands. The traders imported and carried goods across Arabia from Kuwait, Cairo, and even as far as India. Some lived abroad for years and took second wives in their foreign homes. The laborers hired themselves out for projects such as the building of the Suez Canal. Being townsmen, they were looked down on by those with pure Bedouin tribal lineage.

Ahlan wa sahan – Greeting to a visitor. This is used throughout the Arab world and means, roughly, you are among your own people and have found comfort.

Al-Ahli – A popular soccer team in Jeddah.

Akaba (also Aqaba) – Jordanian port city on the Red Sea.

Allaaah! – Literally means God, but is used to express excitement.

Alhamdulillah – Praise God.

Allahu akbar – God is great. These words are sung out five times a day throughout the Muslim world to call the faithful to prayer at the mosque.

American University in Beirut (AUB)–Founded in 1866, the AUB is considered one of the leading universities in the Arab world. It is well-known for its medical school.

Amir – Prince, also a regional or local ruler of a province or city.

Amira – Princess

As-Salaam-u-alai-kum – Peace be upon you. A formal greeting whose response is Wa alaikum as-salaam, upon you be peace.

Asir – A verdant region in southwestern Saudi Arabia with both mountains and coastal plains, the Asir includes coastline on the Red Sea.

Attar – Powerful perfume made from flower petals.

Bait Nassif – Nassif House, a historic mansion in the old center of Jeddah or “balad.” Bait Nassif is now a museum.

Balad – In Jeddah this refers to an old residential neighborhood of ancient homes. The homes are set on a hill looking west over the Red Sea. The word can mean country, countryside, and town.

Banu Thaqeef, Bani Thaqeef – Bedouin tribe from Taif. Tribal descendants still live in the area.

Bedouin – Nomadic or semi-nomadic tribal family groupings. In centuries past, nomadic tribes made up most of Arabia's population. Today, tribal family groupings are still important in Arabian society, and even many city-dwellers hold fast to their tribal lineage with pride. However, the word Bedouin (*Badu*) was rarely used in Saudi speech until recently.

Bi'r – Water spring. Plural is bu`ur.

Bismillah al-Rahman al-Rahim – Literally, "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Beneficent." This important saying is spoken at the beginning of speeches, letters, and books throughout the Arab and Islamic world. It is also used in oaths.

Buraidah – City in al-Qasim, a "twin city" to Unaizah

Burqa – Women's mask-like face covering that reveals only the eyes. There are many traditional styles, including those with elaborate decorations, such as coins.

Dabke, or Dabkah – A lively social line dance found in Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, and Jordan.

Deir al-Zor – City in eastern Syria.

Dahhah – A men's group dance of the northern Arabian tribes, famous for the distinctive grunting sound the participants make.

Dallah – Brass coffeepot used to cook Arabian-style cardamom coffee in the coals of a wood fire. It is used to serve the same coffee in modern homes today.

Dhubb – A desert lizard, uromastyx, found from North Africa east to Arabia and into Iran. They were a source of food for the desert tribes.

Faisaliyyah Charitable Society – one of many women-run charities in Saudi Arabia that provide social services, literacy classes, and job training.

Fatwa – Ruling by a Muslim cleric.

Fi Aman Allah – In God's care. It is a way of saying goodbye, but often has a finality to it, as in a lover's final farewell.

Gabel Street – Road in the center of Jeddah that leads from the sea uphill into the balad. It is now a pedestrian-only street.

Ghada bush – One of many salt bushes growing in the Arabian deserts, used for fuel by the Bedouin.

Ghutra – The cloth that Saudi and some Gulf Arab men wear on their heads. It can be white or checkered, and is sometimes fringed along the edges, with tassels on the corners. Worn underneath the *agall*.

Hadramawt – Region in Yemen. Several prominent Hijazi families originated here.

Hail, or Ha`il – Oasis city in northern Najd, south of the Nafud desert and set in the Shammar Mountains. Long ruled by the Rasheed family, former rivals to the Saud.

Hajj, Hajji – The hajj is the pilgrimage that Muslims are encouraged to make to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina at least once in their lifetime. The formal hajj occurs once a year, and millions of pilgrims converge on the area for it. A *hajji* is someone who has performed the hajj. It is an honorific title.

Hadith – Important component of Islamic jurisprudence, these are anecdotes about the life of the Prophet Muhammad. His actions and sayings are the basis for many parts of Islamic law and common practice.

Hajr al-Wadi – River stone. This is an expression for the coloring of a grey horse.

Halalah – Saudi coin, 1/100 of a Riyal.

Hamour – Seabass found in both the Red Sea and the Arabian Gulf.

Hijaz – The western province of Saudi Arabia that borders the Red Sea. Includes the holy cities of Mecca and Medina as well as the major port city of Jeddah and Yanbu to its north.

Hijazi or Hijaziyyah – A person or thing from the Hijaz.

Hijaz Mountains – Mountain range running north to south in western Saudi Arabia. Also known as the Sarawat Mountains and the Asir Mountains in certain sections. Taif is located on a plateau in the Hijaz Mountains.

Hilm – Forbearance, considered a desirable quality among Bedouin men.

Ihram – Simple white cloth worn by pilgrims on the Hajj to Mecca and Medina.

Ikhwan – Literally, “Brotherhood.” In Saudi Arabia, the first ruler of the Kingdom helped establish a network of Bedouin settlements to train tribesmen in the ways of Islam. The young men in those settlements became a fighting force known as the Ikhwan. In 1929, Ibn Saud had to subjugate them, as they wanted to keep fighting people beyond the borders that would, in 1932, become those of the Saudi Arabian state.

Imam – Mosque preacher and prayer leader.

Inshallah – Literally, “God willing.” This expression is sometimes used when one feels it would be impolite to say no to an invitation.

Isfahan – City in Iran.

Al-Ittifaq – A popular soccer team in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. Also written as Ettifaq in English.

Jabal Shammar – The Shammar Mountains are south of the Nafud in central Saudi Arabia. Their major city is Hail.

Al-Jawf – also written as al-Jouf, this is a city in northern Saudi Arabia, currently known as Sakakah.

Jeddah – Major commercial and port city in western Saudi Arabia on the Red Sea coast. Ancient gateway

to holy cities of Mecca and Medina.

Jiddah – Grandmother. Jiddati means “my grandmother.”

Jims – GMC Suburban.

Al-Jubbah – Small town in the middle of the Nafud desert.

Kaaba – The marble stone cube building in the Grand Mosque in Mecca. In one corner is a meteorite, now encased in silver, that pilgrims try to touch or kiss as they perform the Tawwaf, the ritual circling of the Kaaba. All Muslims the world over pray toward the Ka`abah. It is covered with a large black cloth. Kaan ya maa kaan fee qadeem iz-zamaan – Literally, “There once was and o, what there was!” Formulaic opening to a folktale or traditional story, like “Once upon a time.”

Khalwa – Used to mean socially inappropriate mixing of men and women in Saudi society.

Kilo – Slang for kilometer.

Ma`an – City in southern Jordan.

Mahdi – A promised prophet, according to some sects of Islam, but not in the strict Unitarian interpretation of the Saudi clerics. Shi`a Muslims believe in a Mahdi.

Majlis – Sitting room. In many family households, there is a sitting room for men and their guests, and a separate one for women and their guests.

Marash – City in Turkey, once inhabited by Armenians. Since 1973, it has been known as Kahramanmaraş.

Mashallah – Literally, “What God willed.” It is used to express wonderment at something positive.

Mashrabiyya –Carved wooden shutters that cover the old homes in the balad of Jeddah. They provided shade and privacy while allowing air to flow in and out. These were once found in many parts of the Arab world and also go by the term rowshan.

Mazbu-tation – A joke Anglicized version of *mazbut*, ‘correct’ in Arabic.

Mecca – Holiest city in Islam, located in western Saudi Arabia. Contains the Grand Mosque and the Kaaba, toward which Muslims turn in prayer. Pilgrimage to Mecca and its sister city Medina is one of the five pillars of Islam, key tenants of Muslim life.

Medina – Holy city in Islam, located in western Saudi Arabia north of Mecca. Like Mecca, pilgrims visit Medina on the annual hajj or on a lesser pilgrimage. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is buried there.

Muezzin – Person who calls the faithful to prayer in a recitation called the *azzan*.

Mutawa, plural Mutawain – Literally “volunteer,” in Saudi Arabia it refers to the vice police, officially known as the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice.

Nafud Desert – Great red sand desert that stretches across north central Saudi Arabia. Now easily crossed by road, but in the past, travelers once scaled its towering dunes on camelback along paths marked by stone piles.

Najd – Central region of modern Saudi Arabia that includes its capitol city, Riyadh. The Qasim region is a northern district in Najd.

Neem Tree – Shade tree of the mahogany family said to be native to India. A great neem tree stands just outside the Nassif House in Jeddah.

Obhur – An inlet in the Red Sea north of Jeddah, site of many beach-side homes and private beach clubs.

Oud – A pear-shaped string instrument said to be the precursor of the European lute. Modern players use a piece of cow horn or plastic for a pick, although traditionally players used an eagle feather.

Qadi – Judge in Islam.

Qasim – District in northern Najd that includes the cities of Unaizah and Buraidah.

Qina – Small town on the southern edge of the Nafud desert, pronounced Gina in the local dialect.

Rababa – Stringed, bowed instrument played to accompany desert bards.

Rawi – Reciter of poetry among the tribes and towns of Arabia.

Rawshe – Neighborhood in Beirut.

Ras Beirut – Neighborhood in Beirut where the American University of Beirut is located.

Rijlat al-Gharab – Purple flower found in Arabia.

Riyal – Saudi Arabian currency. In the late 1970s, one US dollar equaled about three riyals.

Ruwais – Neighborhood in Jeddah. In the 1970s, it was a residential area.

Ruwala – A large Bedouin tribe of northern Arabia. Today, people of the tribe, many with the last name al-Ruwaili, are found in Saudi Arabia and Jordan.

Sakaka – Modern-day name for the town of al-Jawf, in northern Saudi Arabia.

Saluki – A Greyhound-like dog prized by the Arabian Bedouin tribes.

Samiri – A genre of folksong and folk dance from the Qasim region. It also refers to a style of song and dance performed in Kuwait.

Sarawat Mountains – Mountain range that runs north-south in western Saudi Arabia. In the central northern sections, they are known as the Hijaz Mountains, and in southwestern Arabia they are referred to as the mountains of the Asir. The city of Taif is located on a high plateau above the Hijaz Mountains segment.

Shammar Mountains – Jabal Shammar – mountains south of the Nafud in central Saudi Arabia. Its major city is Hail.

Shaqiq – Well on the northern edge of the Nafud Desert.

Shaikh – Tribal leader or religious scholar. This title can be used to give honor to someone or in friendly jest.

Shaikhah – Female dignitary in a Bedouin tribe, also female religious scholar.

Sharia – A general term for the system Islamic law.

Shia – The largest minority of Muslims today, while the majority are Sunni. The two approaches to the practice of Islam differ in many ways but most fundamentally in governance of Muslims. The basis of the difference with the Sunnis is that Shia Muslims believe leadership of the Islamic nation should have followed the son-in-law of the Prophet, Ali, and his descendants. The name was originally Shi'at Ali, or the party of Ali.

Shukran – Thank you.

Solubba, also Sulaib –An ancient people of the Arabian peninsula related to the Hutaim tribe. Known for their tracking and hunting abilities, they are said to have knowledge of secret water sources deep in the desert. They may be descendants of the earliest human settlement in the region, and some believe they descend from the last of the Paleolithic hunters. With modernity, they have settled in the cities of Arabia and intermarried with others. They were also known for their music, dance, and fortune-telling abilities.

Souq – Traditional market area where small stores selling similar wares cluster together. In Arabian cities, there is often a “gold souq” where gold jewelry is sold. There are markets for housewares, women’s clothing, and even antiques. Today’s big cities have sparkling modern malls too, but some old souqs remain.

Sunni – The majority of Muslims in the world adhere to this view of the daily practice of Islam. Within the Sunni view, there are several schools of jurisprudence and philosophies of daily life, from the ultra-fundamental standpoint to what some consider more open-minded legal approaches. These legal approaches have outcomes for how daily life is to be led. In Saudi Arabia, the legal system is based on the conservative “Hanbali” legal approach.

Surah – A verse of the Qur’an.

Taif – Mountain city in western Saudi Arabia. Set on a plateau in the Hijaz Mountains, generations of Arabians have enjoyed its cool weather in summer. It is famous for its attar or perfume of roses, made from local flowers.

Tawwaf – Ritual circling of the Kaaba on foot.

Tayma – Oasis city in northwestern Arabia.

Thobe – Generic term for garment. For men, it refers to the floor-length shirt worn in Saudi Arabia and the neighboring Gulf countries. It is usually white, although sometimes dark blue or gray in winter. For women, it can mean a dress or a celebratory over-dress. One version of the women’s thobe is a “thobe nashal,” a fancy embroidered and sequined dress used for special occasions.

Tihama – Plain along the Red Sea coast in western Saudi Arabia.

Umm al-Qurra – Literally, “Mother of Cities,” usually in reference to Mecca. There is also a famous university by that name in Mecca.

Wadi – Valley.

Wadi al-Bu`ur – Valley of the Springs, a fictitious valley south of Taif.

Wadi Sirhan – Valley stretching from northern Saudi Arabia into Jordan.

Al-Wajh – Town in northwestern Saudi Arabia on the Red Sea coast.

Wasm – Describes a tribal marking that Bedouin used to brand on camels. Bedouin women incorporated them into their weavings.

Ya – Used like the old English “O,” as in “O Romeo, where art thou?” However, unlike in English, this term is used in everyday speech throughout the Arab world.

Ya weil, ya weil – Exclamation of extreme grief, literally “O woe.”

Zabun – A traditional long, fitted women’s coat, part of the traditional costume once worn by women in the Hijaz.

Zaffaf –Wedding celebration. During the event, the bride and groom will take part in a procession, or zaffah.

Zaghrutah, plural - Zaghareed – celebratory trilling cry of women heard at weddings and other joyous occasions.

Zamzam – Well in the Grand Mosque of Mecca. According to Islam, this well sprang forth to save Abraham’s son Ishmael and his wife Hagar from dying of thirst.