

Journey to the Time of the Bedouins

يَوَدَّب



STORY
TWO

Hello Friend,

For a long time now, I have been looking for someone to help me solve the mystery behind the tale of an Arab coffee pot, a missing camel and a Bedouin girl named Noora.

I am hoping you are the one that can help me.

Let me first introduce myself. I am an archaeologist.



Studying artifacts lets you discover stories that have not been told yet. This is my job - to understand the story behind artifacts.

I do this by asking questions. Some of the questions I ask are:



“Who used this artifact?”
“What did they use this for?”
“What was their life like?”

The first thing I do is ask questions. Then I try and find answers.



In this way, I discover interesting facts and history about the Bedouin people that others may not already already know.

My dog Ma'amoul accompanies me on archaeological digs. Over time and with rains, winds, and sand storms, artifacts sink into the ground and need to be dug out of the sand. Together, Ma'amoul and I dig and search for artifacts used by the Bedouin people 100 years ago or more.



Ma'amoul and I see stories everywhere we look. We believe that we create and live stories as we go about living our daily lives. The Bedouin people represent the culture and heritage of the United Arab Emirates. Their lifestyle tells an important story of the United Arab Emirates.

You, too, are living a story. After you help me solve this mystery, maybe you can take a look at the stories being created around you. Pay attention to what you are wearing, at the buildings outside, at the trees, at the noises on the street, at what people are saying, and what language they are using. These are all elements that go into a story!

But, my friend, I **digress**.



One afternoon, while Ma'amoul and I were on a dig in the Liwa area, the strangest thing happened. Are you familiar with the Liwa oasis region? Its center is Mezairaa, where today the highway from Abu Dhabi enters the oasis and divides it to the east and west. The easternmost village is Mahdar Bin Usayyan and the westernmost village is Arada.

I have always loved going on digs in this region because of the date palm tree plantations. That's right, a date palm tree farm in the middle of the desert! How I love looking beyond the golden sands and spotting healthy, rich and fertile palm date trees. Liwa oasis has been a date-palm farming area for Bedouins, especially the Bani Yas, and remains that way.

Let's go back to my story about Ma'amoul on the dig.

On this particular afternoon, Ma'amoul started barking and wouldn't stop. After he barked for ten minutes straight, I knew he had found something. I walked over to him and found his nose buried deep in the sand. Indeed, he had come across something exciting! Ma'amoul started tugging at a huge latch sticking out of the sand. Together we pulled the latch out as the sun was beating down on us. It was attached to a dusty tin box with a padlock. Once we removed the padlock, there was a cloud of dust everywhere. Ma'amoul started sneezing. Every time he sneezed his tail wagged a little.



Dear Musafir, Salaam. If you are reading this letter, it means you can help me. The task for you is to find the family that has my family jewels and give them this coffee pot. Once they have the coffee pot, they will return the family jewels to my family.

I will tell you a tale of a camel, the Arab coffee pot and my family jewels. This is a true story that happened when I was a young girl. I am now married and have four children. I write this letter to you from my village in Liwa oasis. The Liwa oasis is vast and spans in the shape of a crescent moon from the east to the west. In the mornings, the brilliant sun rises over our sand dunes in the East. For a short while, the sands that we call our home seem to be a burnt orange color. Then during the day, as the sun makes its journey from the east to the west, the sand turns a brown color. At the end of the day, when the sun goes to sleep in the west, the sands turn a red and purple color.

My family belongs to the Bani Yas tribe. We live a life rich with traditions and family values. When I was a young girl, my uncle loved his camel Sadiq. He claimed that Sadiq was magical. At first, I didn't believe it. I thought that the Nabati poetry written by Bedouin people of my tribe was magical, but not a camel.

My uncle and Sadiq spent days roaming the desert and sand dunes. Like all Bedouins, my uncle owned nothing more than could be loaded onto a camel. He cherished Sadiq because he relied on Sadiq for survival. When they returned from the desert, my uncle would tell me stories of their exploration. He told me about the Tal Moreeb, the largest sand dune, and freshwater pools. Sadiq and I became friends. He sat next to me during sand storms, watching me with big eyes. Like most Bedouin families, I had many siblings - five brothers and three sisters. Sadiq wouldn't sit next to them. We couldn't speak the same language but I felt a special connection with him. I started to also believe he was magical.

One particular evening, members of my tribe held a traditional Bedouin music and poetry festival. I was sick with a fever and couldn't attend the festival. I spent all day lying in the tent. The tribal doctors came to help me. My family members gave me camel milk and dates to cure me. But nothing worked. So the night of the music and poetry festival, while Sadiq stood outside, I listened to Nabati poetry from inside the tent.

Early the next morning, while everyone was still sleeping, I crawled outside my tent. The stars were still visible and the sun was still sleeping. I knew Sadiq wasn't tied up. My uncle trusted him not to wander off during the night. Such was my uncle's friendship and trust with my Sadiq. Sadiq would wander by himself in the morning hours, oftentimes to go look for water, but always came back.

Photos



Vocabulary Words

Bedouin: The Bedouin people of the United Arab Emirates have a rich history, traditionally living in the desert and on the sea. Bedouin culture is an important part of the identity of an Emirati national.

Digress: To become distracted from the main topic when one is writing, thinking, speaking or taking an action.

Maps



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Bedouin Fun Facts

1. The Bedouin people of the United Arab Emirates have a rich history, traditionally living in the desert and on the sea. Bedouin culture is an important part of the identity of an Emirati national.
2. Before oil was discovered in the 1960's in the United Arab Emirates, the Bedouin society mainly consisted of desert living Bedouins and Bedouins who made a living from the sea through fishing or pearl diving.
3. There are Bedouin communities in many countries including the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Iraq in the Middle East and Morocco, Sudan, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya in North Africa. Altogether, the Bedouin population is about 4 million.
4. Bedouin comes from the Arabic word badawiyin, meaning desert dweller. They are also called bedu.
5. The Bedouin people are friendly and follow rich traditions and rituals specific to Bedouin culture.
6. Bedouin society is tribal and patriarchal, typically composed of extended families. There is a strong honor system and loyalty to the tribe. Each Bedouin tribe is lead by a sheikh. All the members of the tribe usually have a common ancestor.

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Bedouin Fun Facts

7. The bedouins wear lightweight, light colored clothing because of the tremendous heat of the desert. Their cloth is loose-fitting, allowing for the circulation of air and freedom of movement, yet providing protection from the sun and windblown sand. Their garments are designed to cover the entire body except for the face, hands, and feet. The main garment for men is the cotton thawb, which is a long straight-cut white, brown, or gray robe. Over the robe, the men wear long silk or cotton jackets called kibrs. The jackets are open in the front and secured with leather belts.

8. Bedouins owned nothing more than could be loaded onto a camel, but the hospitality offered by a cup of coffee was, and remains, central to their culture. As such, a pestle and the accompanying dallah coffee pot would have been precious possessions. The women would use a brass pestle and mortar which would grind roasted coffee beans for the preparation of gahwa, or Arabic coffee.

9. The Bedouins lived off the products of their animals and adapted to hostile environments such as the hottest driest of areas. They traditionally moved following the rains, grazing their animals on small patches of grass wherever they could be found, enduring hunger and thirst and traveling great distances to obtain water. It was a harsh, nomadic life, driven by pure survival necessity.

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Bedouin Fun Facts

10. Bedouin culture is rich in the arts such as Bedouin music, dance, and poetry.

Ašā'ir, or traditional music, poetry such as Nabati poetry, dances (like Saas), and many other cultural practices are found in the Bedouin arts.

11. An arc of villages, shaped like a half-moon, is called Liwa and spans about 70 kilometers from east to west. It has been the center for the economic and social life of the Bani Yas tribe, one of the largest tribes in the United Arab Emirates, from at least since the sixteenth century.

- The tribes of the Liwa province lived in palm homes at the oasis but typically relocate to the coast for summer when the men would join the pearling fleets. Almost all Bani Yas families returned to a home in one of the Liwa settlements at certain times of the year. The inhabitants of the Liwa developed the knowledge of where best to dig for good water and did not have to go deeper than three meters to find water.

12. The camel was known as the ship of the desert and was the main means of transportation for the Bedouins. Camel racing used to be a popular activity. Often camel milk and the products derived from it were almost the only source of protein for the entire family.

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Bedouin Fun Facts

13. For Bedouin tribes, owning camels signified great wealth. Caring for camels was often prioritized. In the winter, camel owners or caretakers would wander for weeks in an area where sufficient rain had caused vegetation to feed the camels. When the camels have enough vegetation to graze from, they do not need water themselves in the winter. In the heat of the summer, when the grazing is dry, the camels are kept close to a well. They would return daily by themselves to the tribal camp.

- The milk from the camels was enough to nourish Bedouins, particularly when there was no water well nearby. Camel hide was used to make bags and other useful utensils, while some of the finest mens' outer garments (bisht) were woven from the hair.

14. Bedouins are also traditionally date farmers. The date tree, which flourishes in the desert where water is available, is an anchor for the existence for Bedouins in the desert environment. Harvested dates were essential for the survival of the inhabitants in the desert. The yield from the small palm groves that grow in the sandy desert was, however, insufficient for entire families to live off throughout the year. So ripe dates are lightly boiled and compressed into a congealed substance called tamr, which can be kept for long periods of time. Tamr could be taken on journeys through the desert, into the mountains, or out to sea.

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Bedouin Fun Facts

15. Al-Taghrooda traditional Bedouin chanted poetry is composed and recited by men traveling on camelback through desert areas of the United Arab Emirates. Bedouins believe that chanting entertains the riders and stimulates animals to walk in time. Short poems of seven lines or less are improvised and repeated between two groups of riders often as antiphonal singing.

Generally the lead singer chants the first verse and the second group responds.

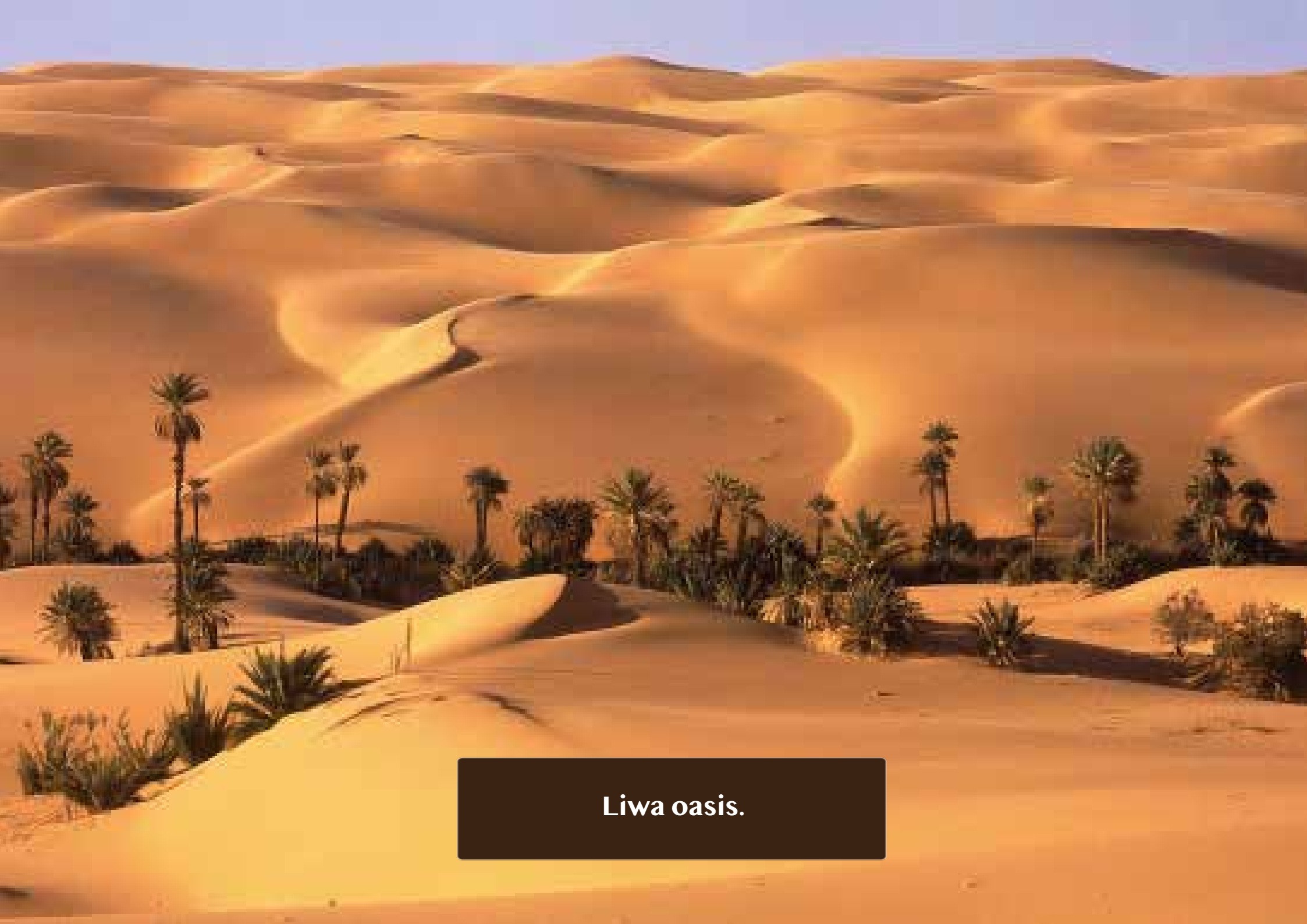
- Poems are also chanted around campfires, at weddings, and at tribal and national festivities, particularly camel races. Some Bedouin women compose and chant while engaged in collective work.

The most important aspect is the social bonding during the oral exchange of verses.

Themes of poetry include sending messages to loved ones, relatives, friends or tribal chiefs.



Traditional Bedouins with their camels.



Liwa oasis.