

Readings from “ARAMCO World”

Beginning with the large-scale development of Arabia’s oil fields and the ebbing colonial ambitions of France and Britain in the 1930’s, the USA began to emerge as the most visible foreign power on the Arabian Peninsula. American interests in the region differed from those of its western colonial predecessors and American visitors brought their own set of attitudes towards their relationship with the Arabian Peninsula and its inhabitants. Published since 1949, the journal *Saudi Aramco World* (originally *Aramco World*), traces the success of its parent company ARAMCO (“The Arabian American Oil Company”), in integrating Saudi and American business interests to create the world’s largest petroleum company. Initially conceived as a newsletter linking ARAMCO’s USA-based offices to its Arabian headquarters in Dhahran, *Saudi Aramco World* later developed an educational mission with the goal “of fostering cooperation and building mutual appreciation between East and West”

(<http://www.saudiaramcoworld.com/about.us/history.htm>, accessed 4/9/2014).

Thanks to the uninterrupted run of its publication, *Saudi Aramco World* provides a panoramic perspective on the evolving Saudi-American relationship. As a journal that embraces scholarly and propagandistic motives, *Saudi Aramco World* also reflects changing ideas of how ARAMCO (that is, ARAMCO’s Saudi and American investors) would like to be perceived by its readership.

For Tuesday’s class (4/15), please read the brief history of the magazine published by *Saudi Aramco World* on the occasion of its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary ([“Aramco World Turns 50”](#) [November/December 1999]) and then the following articles. Be prepared to discuss the questions listed below.

- a) [“The City that Grows and Grows”](#) (Mar. 1960)
- b) [“‘Country Store’ In Saudi Arabia”](#) (Aug./Sept. 1961)
- c) [“A City Within A City”](#) (Sept./Oct. 1987)
- d) [“New Doors to the Kingdom”](#) (Mar./Apr. 2001)

*Note: I recommend downloading the pdf versions of the articles available through the archives (<http://www.saudiaramcoworld.com/index/BackIssues2000.aspx#at>). That way, you’ll get the pictures that accompany each article.*

Questions:

1. What are some of the chief themes in the evolution of this magazine from an internal company magazine during the first decades of its publication to the “public face” of ARAMCO at the present time?
2. Keeping in mind the acquisition of “Aramco World” by the Saudis in the 1980’s, how do the articles reflect the shifting orientation of the magazine as described in “Aramco World Turns 50”?
3. Looking beyond the magazine’s own version of its history, how do the articles reflect a shift in the representation of the Arabian Peninsula from the 1960s to the present day?
4. Look for two articles – one dating from the 1960-1980 and another from 1980-2014 – that best reflect *Aramco World’s* changing readership and editorial orientation. Be prepared to present your findings to the class.
5. Does *Saudi Aramco World* succeed in balancing its academic and propagandistic motives?