



Camel Tails Glossary

Arabic Spelling: Arabic spelling is strictly phonetic in the English language, as there is no direct correlation of the Arabic alphabet to the English version. Thus you will find such things/places spelled as Mekka, Mecca, Jeddah, Jidda, Jiddah, Mohammad, Muhammad, Osama bin Laden, Usama bin Laden, etc. All are essentially correct, and usually dependent on the source (or physical location) of the information. Earlier spellings (for instance from “The Seven Pillars of Wisdom” by Lawrence) will have the same locations spelled quite differently, but readily recognizable.

Arabic Names: These can get tricky. The last name of an Arabic individual is usually indicative of his tribal origin. For instance: Abdul Aziz al Saud (using the short form), would indicate that his given name is Abdul Aziz of the family of Sa’ud (or more correctly, the tribe of Sa’ud). Essentially, “al” means “of,” such that he would be Abdul Aziz **of** the Sa’ud Tribe. We had one Navy Commander whose name was Ammar al Katani. This means (in its simplest form), Ammar of the Katani Tribe. We initially called him Commander Katani, but were quickly corrected to calling him Commander Ammar (who, if you wish to get specific) comes from the Katani Tribe. Calling Commander Ammar, Commander Katani would equate to calling an American Indian of the Apache Tribe who happened to hold the rank of Captain in the Tribal Police say, Captain Apache! This mistake in Arabic is closely equated to the same faux pas.

Occasionally you will see the designation “abu” in an Arabic name, and this usually means “father of” or “grandfather of”. This would equate to the Scandinavian custom of making names to identify certain individuals as Lars’ Son or the son of Lars. This eventually was shortened to Larson. Or in English, John’s Son (obviously being the son of John) would eventually become Johnson. Simple, eh what?

Ryial – The official (folding) currency of Saudi Arabia like a dollar bill or similar. At the time of this writing, 100 Ryials was worth approximately \$26.

Hollala – A fractional Saudi Arabian Coin. Normally figured on the basis of 100 hollahas per Ryial. Thus “counting your hollalas” would be an expression equivalent to “counting your pennies,” or pocket change.

Expat – Expatriate. A term essentially used to describe an individual working for a foreign government, or working on a foreign contract in a country other than his or her own.

TCN – This is an abbreviation standing for “*Third Country National*”. In Saudi Arabia, it was used to describe virtually any national working “in country” from a country other than the United States, Britain, or in some cases France. Examples would be individuals from the Philippines, Korea, India, and Pakistan, etc. They were usually “technically unskilled” laborers that the Saudis could hire to clean the streets, and water the transplanted palm trees with water extracted from septic tanks. They usually worked for what we would consider starvation wages, but sent every available extra penny home to those even less fortunate. They were not well regarded by the Saudis, but without their services, the main cities would have been hip pocket deep in trash as the average citizen of the Kingdom considered manual labor or throwing things in a trash can beneath them! The attitude seemed to be, “why bother when you can hire it done?”

KSA – Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Jeddah – Even though Riyadh is the nominal capital of Saudi Arabia, from a standpoint of trade and ingress and egress, Jeddah is the city most folks will initially enter the KSA from. Located on the Red Sea, it provided a convenient seaport and jumping off point for the Islamic Pilgrims performing their obligatory Hajj to Mecca (only a few miles away). Until about 1985 (or perhaps slightly earlier), the United States Embassy to Saudi Arabia was located in Jeddah vice Riyadh. A very cosmopolitan city with modern buildings and shopping centers. Legend has it that the word “Jeddah” means “*grandmother*” in Arabic, and the city is named for Eve, considered by the Arabs as the Grandmother of the human race. Legend has it that Eve’s burial place is in Jeddah.

Mecca (Mekka) – The holiest city in all of Islam. Located somewhat northeast of Jeddah, and location of the Kabba (known irreverently as “the big black rock” by most of the infidels). Also the site of the “Zam-Zam” spring found by Hagar (Abraham’s Concubine and mother of Ishmael) by striking the ground with a stick when she and Ishmael were dying of thirst (there is an Islamic version of this where the Angel Gabriel struck the ground with his wings to start the spring flowing – see the footnote below on the **Kabba**). The Muslims claim that Ishmael was the first born of Abraham (correct actually), and was the son offered up for sacrifice by Abraham at God’s direction (Allah only knows). The Israelis of course are sure it was really Isaac, Abraham’s son by his wife Sarah, but somewhat after the birth of Ishmael. Entire wars are fought over such disagreements, and the (only) true successor to Muhammad, (thus defining the difference between the Sunnis and the Shiites) have caused more hate and discontent among the Islamic culture. Iraq is literally (internally) war-torn over this disagreement.

According to Islamic legend, all Islamic faithful who are (physically/financially) able, required to make a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once during their lifetime during what is known as the

Hajj... This is a yearly occurrence and the actual period of Hajj (a month in the Arabic Calendar) varies as do all the months of the Arabic Calendar, based on phases of the moon. Islamics travel from all over the world to visit Mecca, and the Saudi's take great pride at having the guardianship of the Mosque in Mecca, the holiest of holy places (followed closely by the Mosque in Medina (Mohammad's burial place), not too far removed from Jeddah or Mecca). Islamic tradition prohibits Infidels from setting foot in either Mecca or Medina.

Mohammed was born in Mecca in 570 AD and ran a caravan managing business from there for some years (some claim he was a caravan raider, hustler, and possible bandit, but then everyone has their detractors). He commenced to preach his new religion (Islam) in 610 AD staying in constant hot water from the leaders of Mecca. The elders of Medina asked him to change his base of operations to Medina and become *their* ruler. Mohammed accepted on the condition that he could bring the followers of his new religion. His move to Medina has been known as "Hijra" and took place in 622 AD. The Meccans attacked Medina several times following his move, but were always driven off by Mohammed and his followers. In 630 AD, Mohammed and his followers defeated the Meccan forces, and Islam returned to Mecca to "cleanse" the Kabba of its idols (the Kabba has supposedly been in place since the time of Abraham, well before the rise of Islam!). Mohammed continued to rule Medina until his untimely death in 632.

The Kabba – See above under Mecca. As mentioned previously, it is Irreverently known by the Infidels as "The Big Black Rock", located in Mecca, and the center of their religious ceremonies. Here is the Islamic interpretation/explanation of the Kabba:

***Kabba**-The place where the Prophet Abraham, (who was "ordered by Allah to leave") left his wife/concubine Hagar (Egyptian Princess, the daughter of the first Pharaoh) – (note) Hagar was his concubine as approved by Sarah, his wife who was supposedly too "long of tooth" to conceive a child. Miraculously after Ishmael was born of Hagar, Sarah became pregnant with Abraham's second son, Isaac¹ – the Arabic Tribes are certain that Ishmael was the one offered up by Abraham as a sacrifice to God/Allah, and the Arabic Tribes are as equally certain that it was Ishmael. The Jews feel that Isaac was the founder of the Jewish Race, and the Arabs feel that Ishmael was the founder of the Arabic race.) Abraham's first born, Ishmael and Hagar were left with no food or water at a place where no one could be seen for 1000s of miles (Kabba)! It was a plain desert, where no one lived. So when Hagar panicked to find water for her tiny son, Allah was pleased to see her love for her son and sent the Angel Gabriel who struck his wings on the ground and a fountain of water started, - The water fountain is still there at the grounds of Kabba and is called "Zam Zam", - .it has never stopped flowing. And that place is now (considered) the center of Islamic world*

As above, according to the Islamics, the Kabba is considered to be the center of the earth. It is the World's first and only worshiping place since Adam and Eve. All of Allah's Prophets have come and prayed here at one time or another. It is known as "Kabba", meaning square or four sides, East, West, North and South. Probably the English word "Cube" is derived from it. You can be anywhere in this world, face Kabba and pray,

¹ A slightly different take on this evolution has Sarah becoming a bit miffed at the attention being paid by Abraham to his son Ishmael, and ordered Abraham to banish Hagar and Ishmael. The Arabic version has Allah ordering Hagar and Ishmael into the desert. Take your pick!

because Allah is everywhere. (An interesting note, originally, those of Islamic faith were told to face Jerusalem as opposed to Mecca, a very changeable and moldable religion indeed)!

The Kabba was sent down from Jannah and its color was originally whiter than milk, but the sins of sons of Adam have turned it black.

Hummm...

Medina – The second holiest (most holy?) city in Islam and the city in which Mohammed died (some say of poisoning by one of his wives who happened to be Jewish) in 632 AD. Mohammed was buried on the spot where he died, and a mosque was built near his grave, (as have six more [mosques] been built over the ensuing years). When the Saudis speak of being “The custodians of the Two Holy Mosques”, they are speaking of the mosques in Mecca and Medina.

Jubail – A former sleepy fishing village on the eastern side of the Arabian Peninsula. It gained some importance with the discovering of oil and a major oil refinery lies not too far out of town. When we moved to Jubail, the slave market still occupied a prominent place in the town square, although they claimed it was no longer in use. Supposedly slavery was phased out of Saudi Arabia circa 1966, but there were rumors to the contrary. When the Saudi Arabian Marines moved from Jeddah to the eastern side of the peninsula bordering on the Persian Gulf (the Arabians insist on calling the Persian Gulf, *The Arabian Gulf*), they moved their command post to a small amphibious port roughly 17 clicks south of Jubail in a spot known as “Ras al Gar”... The word “*ras*” means “*point*”, “*al*” is “*of*” and “*Gar*” the name of the point. This is the same base where the American Marines were billeted during the 1st Gulf War. The facilities (messing and training facilities) were much less elaborate and well thought out than they had been in Jeddah. Quarters for the Marine Instructors (and for that matter the Navy instructors) were now refurbished trailers, and the mess facilities were run on contract by a Pakistani outfit with a penchant for fish and “yard walker” (birds of various kinds). Suspicious said that this much reduced culinary fare was based on the price of the chow. Since I am not a fan of either fins or feathers, I stocked up on lots of other stuff to supplement their meager offerings. Alas, no more retired British Mess Personnel running the dining facility, and Rosey’s (the retired British Army Mess Sergeant) brownies were no more! A great comedown from living in a leased hotel and dining first class when Basil was running the show. I was more than ready to hang it up when the contract expired.

Pig – The Infidel’s irreverent terminology for the Saudi Arabian Marine Corps six wheeled amphibious armored cars. Very similar to the U.S. Marines’ LAAV with one less set of wheels. They come in a variety of flavors from standard mounting a .50 caliber M2 Machine Gun, to a medical version (an armored amphibious ambulance), a communication and command version, etc. The British often refer to their armored cars (in England) as “Pigs” and having an evil sense of humor, we picked up the terminology as a way to yank the Saudi’s chain(s) knowing their aversion to swine! Heh, heh, heh...

Gutra & Agal – The traditional Saudi headdress consisting of a cloth placed over the head, and a rope-like circular device that sits on top. Known by the irreverent infidels as the “*tablecloth and fanbelt*.” The cloth was originally designed to protect the head in the

sometimes savage desert heat, and the Agal was supposedly a “camel hobble” that was twisted into a circle and stowed on the protective headdress by the desert dwellers for convenience. While the earlier versions of the Agal were often quite decorative, resplendent with fancy knots and sometimes decorated with gold/silver, the modern version is usually quite plain (black with circular pattern almost like a miniature expandable sewer hose). The traditional decorative version is still sold and used in official functions, but very rarely seen in public. Typical winter color for the Gutra is red and white checkered (with a variation of black and white checkering) thus giving them the slang term of “tablecloth.” Summer versions of the Gutra are usually white (to better reflect the heat).

Thobe – The (usually) white robe worn on a daily basis by the inhabitants of Saudi Arabia. The Saudi Military of course wore an appropriate uniform on duty, but their “liberty clothes” were Thobes.

SOUK – The Souk is essentially a shopping center or complex either in terms of a conglomeration of shops winding their way down many alleys, but generally located in one more or less central area. The city of Jeddah for instance has many modern shopping malls, and sophisticated specialty shops located in various and sundry locations. In some areas in the Mid-East, the Souk is also referred to as a Bazaar.

Penguin – Slang term indicating an Arabic/Saudi member of the fairer sex wearing the covering garb (usually including a face-veil to obscure the facial features) designed to cut down on “wench poaching” by the great Prophet himself. Seems that during the education of the Prophet by Allah himself (or *herself* if you are a “Femi-Nazi”). The (usually) black robes and white sub garments give an appearance somewhat reminiscent of a penguin.

Ladies Clothing – The following three clothing items when worn together give rise to the occasional reference to the Muslims Ladies as *Penguins*.

- 1) **Abaya** – a black wraparound garment that essentially covers all of the visible skin on the lady. Essentially, a black potato sack covering the female body that is apparently propelled by a set of feet.
- 2) **Hijab** – head covering that goes with the Abaya. Usually light colored, although it CAN be black.
- 3) **Niqab** – a face veil of varying colors (usually of a wispy material) allowing the lady to breath, but masking her more alluring facial features. This is designed to allow enough vision for the camouflaged female to navigate the streets without bumping into an occasional donkey cart during the normal course of a day’s activities.

Common Arabic Words or Phrases: – Careful, some of these can get you in trouble!

- 1) **Inshallah** – “If it is the will of Allah”, or simply “if it is Allah’s will”. This one is tricky, as every Arabic Commander or NCO will say “Oh yes, we will respond immediately!” – followed by a barely audible “Inshallah” meaning “*don’t bet on it infidel!*”

- 2) **Allah Akbah** – “God is great!” Also recently shouted by the “Islamic Terrorists” as they video-taped the beheading of Nick Berg, the American business man held hostage and executed near Baghdad.
- 3) **Bookra** – Tomorrow. If followed by “Inshallah” (see above) this means “maybe sometime this week.”
- 4) **Ba Bookra** – Day after tomorrow. If followed by “Inshallah” this means “probably not in *your* lifetime infidel!”
- 5) **Ba Ba Bookra** – Nice try but their logic in language stopped at Ba Bookra
- 6) **Yallah** (*sometimes spelled yella*) – Hurry, or hustle.
- 7) **Yallah, yallah** (*also seen spelled yella as above*) – This means, “hurry, hurry” or “hustle, hustle,” or in military parlance, “move it out smartly.” Similar to “Mach Schnell” in German (make speed or haste), or perhaps roughly equivalent to “double time” in U.S. Military terminology.
- 8) **Mafee Muscula** – “No sweat,” similar in meaning to “*Hakuna Matata*” (Swahili) in Kenya, immortalized in the Cartoon Movie, *The Lion King*.
- 9) **Fee Muscula?** – This means “Do you *have* a problem?”
- 10) **Fee Muscula, Nek-o-Muck?** – Literally translated, this means “Do you have a problem, oh molester of mothers?” Usually said in a more straight forward manner using the vernacular for “mother molester!” – street translation, “Ya’ got a problem MF?” If used at the airport when some rag-head baggage inspector is attempting to destroy your luggage when you are entering the country, this one will get you time in the Saudi (or Arabic) “slam” with your feet being beaten by split bamboo!
- 11) **(Al) Salam alikam** (sometimes spelled alikom) – Traditional Arabic Greeting, meaning “*Peace be Upon You*”. Generally, this is their form of “hello” when meeting or answering the telephone. Some irreverent infidels have been known to leave out the “*be*” in the Peace be upon you greeting (in English translation)! When the greeting is used between friends the greeting is often shortened to a simple “*Salam.*” Cautionary note, the same greeting in Jewish is **Salom alikam!** This is NOT recommended for long and happy existence in the Arabic world! See below for similar reply!
- 12) **Alikam (al) Salam** – Reply to above greeting, meaning roughly “and may peace be upon you.”
- 13) **Sidiki** – Literally “friend” but also used to describe bootleg/illicit “hooch” in Saudi Arabia.

Other Arabic Foul Language: (to be used with great caution) – the Arabic punishment for such unbridled insults is said to be the beating of the bottom of the bare feet with split bamboo rods. If I had known a few of these some years back, I could have made life more exciting for all hands!

- 1) **Ayir** – (*a noun*) Schwantz, (male genitalia)

- 2) **Boos teeze** – Kiss my fanny (or in a more vulgar display, “@\$\$”)
- 3) **Chraa** – Feces (vernacular “\$hi+”)
- 4) **Charra alaik** – (*a verb*) \$hi+ on you! (see above)
- 5) **CUS** (sometimes spelled KUS) – “Intercourse you!” (in a more crude form, “F++k you!”)
- 6) **Gawwad** – Pimp or manager of a brothel
- 7) **Ja-hosh** – Jackass (man or animal)
- 8) **Kul khara** – Shut up, (or in the vernacular, “eat \$hit!”).
- 9) **kus** (*a noun*) – Female genitalia, when used as an insult, KUS UMAK refers specifically to your *mother’s* female genitalia.
- 10) **Mamhoon** (*noun*) – A Homosexual
- 11) **Mibun** (*adjective, pronounced me-boon*) – Term used to insult a homosexual
- 12) **Nek-ni** – Literally means “intercourse me!” (crude form “F++k me!”)
- 13) **Sharmuta** (*slang, noun, feminine*) – Female dog (or Bitch).
- 14) **Sharmute** (*slang, masculine*) – Fool, or individual of unmarried parents, (“Ba\$tard”).
- 15) **Teez** – (*noun*) @\$\$ or @\$\$hole used in a humorous context.
- 16) **Telhasi teezi** (*slang*) – Kiss (or lick) my @\$\$ (slight caution here, some of these guys *like* this sort of thing!).

