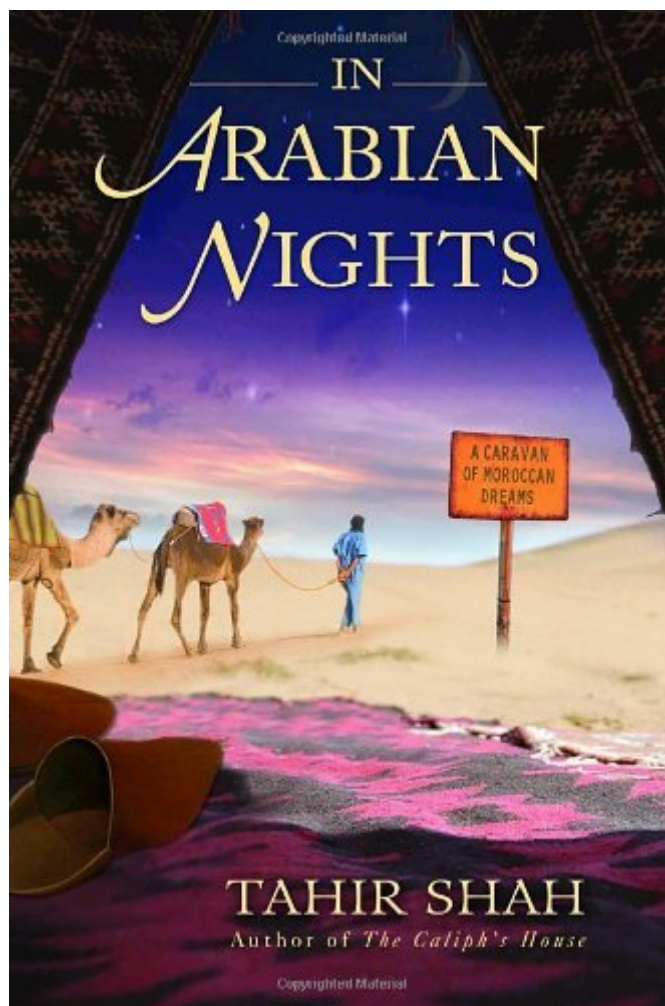


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# In Arabian Nights



## Synopsis

Tahir Shah's *The Caliph's House*, describing his first year in Casablanca, was hailed by critics and compared to such travel classics as *A Year in Provence* and *Under the Tuscan Sun*. Now Shah takes us deeper into the heart of this exotic and magical land to uncover mysteries that have been hidden from Western eyes for centuries. In this entertaining and penetrating book, Tahir sets out on a bold new journey across Morocco that becomes an adventure worthy of the mythical *Arabian Nights*. As he wends his way through the labyrinthine medinas of Fez and Marrakesh, traverses the Sahara sands, and tastes the hospitality of ordinary Moroccans, Tahir collects a dazzling treasury of traditional stories, gleaned from the heritage of *A Thousand and One Nights*. The tales, recounted by a vivid cast of characters, reveal fragments of wisdom and an oriental way of thinking that is both enthralling and fresh. A link in the chain of scholars and teachers who have passed these stories down for centuries like a baton in a relay race, Shah reaches layers of culture that most visitors hardly realize exist, and eventually discovers the story living in his own heart. Along the way he describes the colors, characters, and the passion of Morocco, and comes to understand why it is such an enchanting land. From master masons who labor only at night to Sufi wise men who write for soap operas, and Tuareg guides afflicted by reality TV, *Arabian Nights* takes us on an unforgettable journey, shining a light on facets of a society that are normally left in darkness. From the Hardcover edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I'm a new fan of Tahir Shah, this being the third book of his I've read. This is my favorite, so far, and I think it will remain so because of the subtlety and depth of the topic: storytelling. I realized reading this that I already know the story in my heart, and it is very similar to his. It is about coming home and finally understanding the place . . . or at least realizing that the place is worth trying to understand in some mysterious and ancient way. It is about seeing without images and hearing without words.

In Arabian Nights is a wide-open window into another world, but only because Tahir Shah draws us into himself. He writes with complete honesty, showing in his prose his many questions regarding the acts of life. He is a storyteller, but that does not reflect in his book as a simple story, for the book is much more complicated--and simple--than that. The streams of his story flow merrily only to disappear beneath the sands of some trauma (or jinn); but they bubble up again and again if you wait for them. He is a storyteller in search of the story in his heart. In the process of looking for that story, he sifts through the stories around him as well as the one he is living, and looks at each...weighing it...trying to know it. It is his awareness that he is participating in a story that makes the book so precious. As a storyteller myself, I admire Tahir Shah's metacognitive frankness, his knowledge of story, and his awareness of the stories pressing against him from both within and without. As someone who has been to Marrakesh, he brought back to me the taste of the tepid water from goatskin bags...and it makes me smile. Like the stories of Joha (Nasrudin), you can read this book on a number of different levels. But if you choose to dive deep, there is much for the soul and the intellect to revel in.

I liked this one even better than the Caliph's House! This book is an homage to Tahir's father, and it's a beautiful homage. I loved the Berber idea of finding the story in your heart and that Tahir Shah actually took that on literally and went to search for his story. The cast of characters he meets along the way are terrific. I badly wished I understood Arabic while I was in Marrakech as I would have loved to join the circles of storytellers in the medina at night. At least I knew what they were doing,

only because I read this book. The stories told in this book were also much easier to read than the original Arabian Nights and I appreciated that fact very much.

This book reminded me of my grandmother who used to tell us stories, as well and though she repeated them, they took a new meaning each time she told or retold them. A wonderful book, full of surprises, opening the beautiful world of Morocco and its people and at the same time giving us the beauty and depth of the Afghan culture, that of hospitality, and honor through the authors description of his father and grandfather. It is a book that is truly beautiful and brings the art of storytelling, its history and importance to the fore. Through this book, one "remembers" yet again, that art, which is worthy of preservation and handing down to the generations ahead of us. Looking forward to more books from Tahir Shah.

This book was the perfect book to read on my trip to Morocco! Several of my friends on the same trip downloaded it ...and enjoyed it along with me. A great read...seems everyday it was where I was or "that just happened"!

This is an excellent book, which I devoured in less than a week and will read again and again and again. However, a correction is in order here. One of the past reviewers (who did not like the book) wrote - and I quote: "The book is a journey about a story - every person has a story that is close to his or her heart. Finding that story is the hard part. Mr. Shah does indeed find the story, but guess what? The reader has no idea what it was!" Were we both reading the same book? Reader, do not be put off by such a remark. This book is not about a wild goose chase. Mr Shah does indeed find the story close to his heart and even has physical reactions and symptoms that indicate this story is the right one. Please read the book carefully -- it's there in black and white! I must admit I did find the characters' names a bit daunting and confusing. Without knowledge of Arabic, it was difficult to tell the characters apart by name only... A future edition of this wonderful book would benefit greatly by the addition of a Character List at the front, designed especially for Western readers, as is often found in Russian novels such as War and Peace or Dr. Zhivago. Publishers, please take note!

Author Tahir Shah once again catches us in that magical moment where we suspend all disbelief and absorb the delicious details of a good story. Starting with his illegal imprisonment in Pakistan and quickly shifting back to Morocco, his adventures and challenges, discoveries and experiences are shared in vibrant detail. Pen sketches enchant us as we wander through our imagination. Highly

recommend this read for all expats preparing to visit or move to Morocco, all readers who love a good story, and all those seeking a little twinkle of delight in their lives.

Tahir Shah describes the people, places, passions, and stories of Morocco as he lives and travels there. He is on a mission to collect and preserve the stories people tell as well as find his own story. He succeeds at both, and passes them along to us as well. Teaching and learning in that region of the world are accomplished by storytelling, and has been so for millenium. Think Jesus and Mohammed -- both great storytellers -- used it as a way of teaching. I am looking forward to re-visiting Marrakesh and Casablanca, and to visiting Fez, Tangier and Chefchaoun. I wonder why he omitted Rabat; maybe he covered it in The Caliph's House. I am looking forward to that one now, too. Shah has a style of writing that I had to adjust and settle into, but when I did, I realized how it truly captured the pace of the Moroccan people and how authentic it felt.

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