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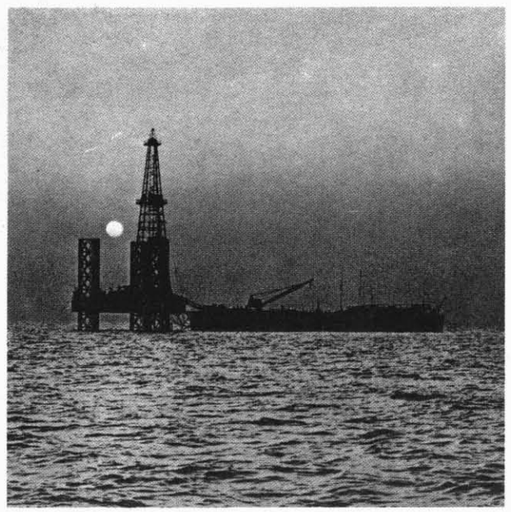
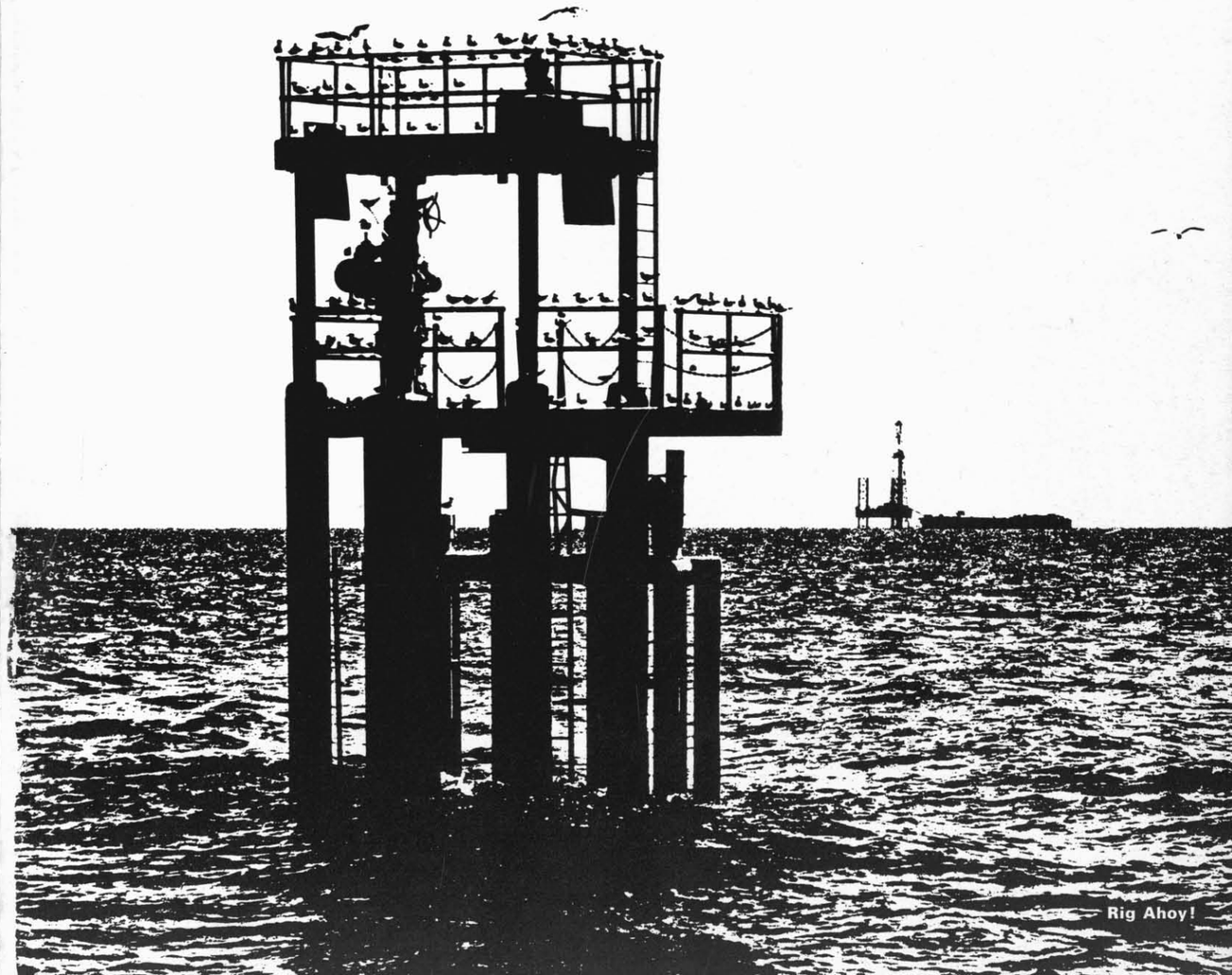


# ARAMCO WORLD

March—April 1965





Rig Ahoy!

# ARAMCO WORLD

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Illustrations: Rig Ahoy! — photographs by V.K. Antony. Carpets East, Carpets West — drawings by Sydney King. Another Easter — color photography by William Tracy; black and white photographs by Tracy and the Jordan Tourism Authority. The Treasures of Shrewsbury Road — photographs by J.B. Cafferkay, Erich Hartmann. Pottery Points the Way — photographs and drawings by John Carswell. Manners in the Middle East — drawings by Don Thompson.


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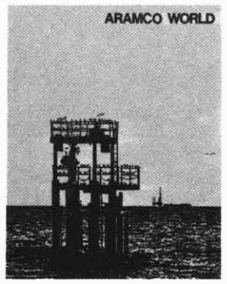



Cover: In the apparent emptiness of the Arabian Gulf, 28 miles northeast of Ras Tanura in Saudi Arabia, stands the gaunt outline of Abu Sa'fah No. 1. Its steel frame, on which sea gulls rest between forays for food, marks the first of several wells drilled in the Abu Sa'fah underwater oil field. In the distance, nearly two miles away, an Aramco mobile drilling platform and drilling tender are anchored over Abu Sa'fah No. 7.

# RIG AHOY!

BY W. VERNON TIETJEN

For fishermen, Mobile Drilling Platform No. 1 is a fine place to work. Set down in the Arabian Gulf, its three great steel legs sunk deep in the bottom, it offers possibilities that would excite the most phlegmatic of anglers. If they had a mind to, for example, workers could go fishing before breakfast, or just seconds after work. They could enliven their lunch break by dropping a line down into the blue waters of the Gulf and hauling in a hammur, a shannad, a blue marlin or even a fighting barracuda.

The purpose of Mobile Drilling Platform No. 1, of course, is rather more serious than fishing. It is there to put an Arabian American Oil Company (Aramco) drill into the bottom of the Arabian Gulf and, hopefully, find petroleum. That's not a task that is accomplished easily. It requires hard work and long hours in sometimes sweltering heat (120°F) and debilitating humidity (100 per cent). Night and day, right around the clock, the ship and the adjacent platform echo to the whir of generators, blowers and pumps. Her topside decks are loaded to the scuppers with pipe, casing, drilling mud and other materials for the 24-hour drilling operation. At any time, the calm breezes of the Gulf can change within minutes into raging gales that raise 12-foot waves and send them crashing against the sturdy legs of the platform—at which time the crew of the tender must rapidly cast off and flee.

Yet the approximately 50 men aboard Mobile Drilling Platform No. 1—45 of whom are Saudi Arabs—rarely complain. Life aboard, they find, is good.

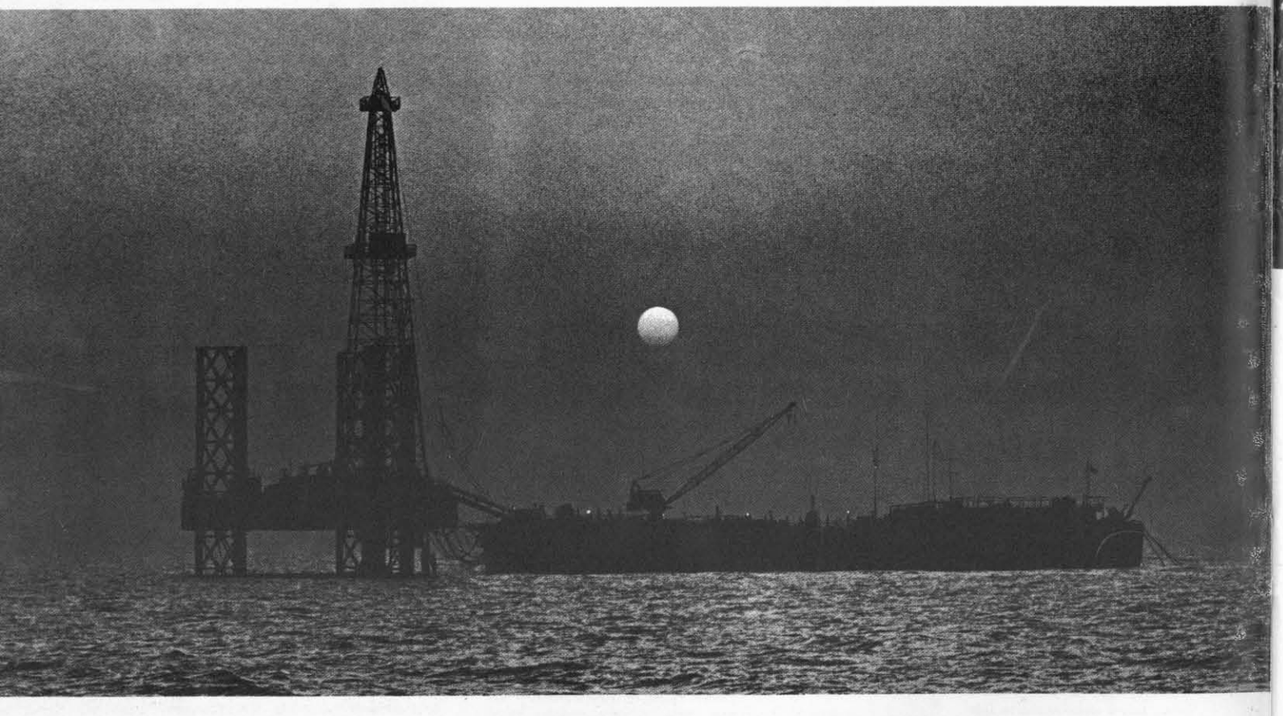
For one thing, men on the tender have seven days off every third week, compensation for an unbroken two-week work stint. There is a certain freedom from the routine of shore work. And there are, besides, all the amenities available nearly anywhere else.

The tender, in the first place, is air-conditioned, no minor convenience during summer months. It has a six-cook staff in the commodious galley of the tender, which maintains the ship's reputation as a "good eatin' ship." Walk-in chill and deep-freeze compartments assure a steady supply of choice meats and produce. The offshore drilling crews also derive all the benefits of the increasingly varied harvests of vegetables and fruits which come out of eastern Saudi Arabian oases. All food served is plentiful—and free.

In the drilling tender's recreation lounge a central fixture is the big-screen television receiver that can pick up with ease the all-Arabic-language programs put on the air over Channel 2 from Dhahran. The tender is also on the company's movie circuit; men aboard can watch 16-mm versions of the same feature films in the same sequence as are shown in the Aramco operating centers ashore.

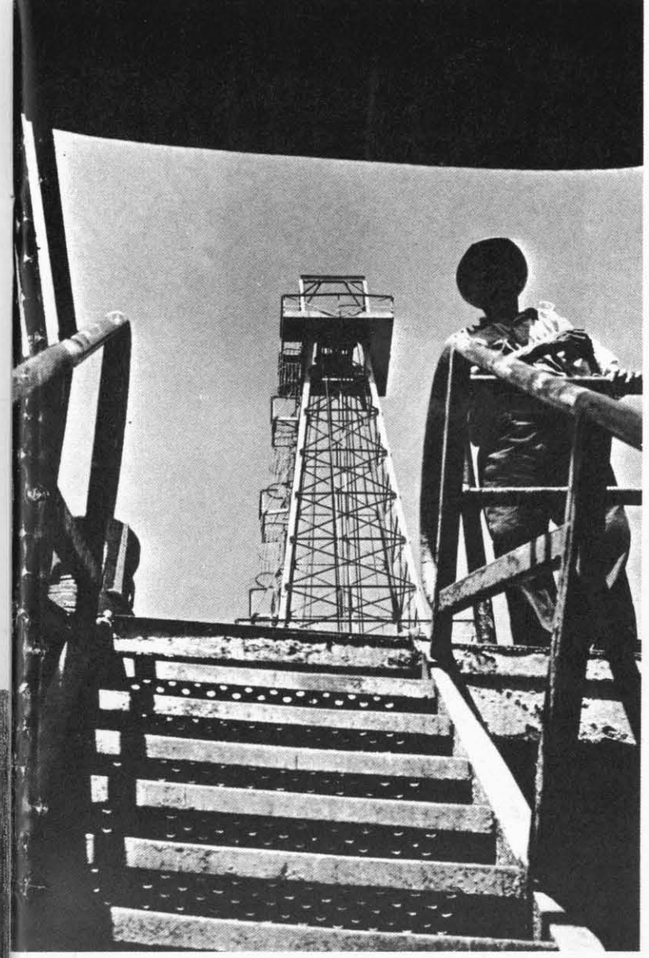
But most of the men aboard have been working on a succession of drilling sites in remote areas ashore and afloat 15 years or more. And, as resourceful veterans, they refuse to depend entirely on electronic or canned entertainment for their off-duty recreation. Some play dominoes, many fish, others read books from the tender's well-stocked library, and all, at one time or another, follow a tradition among seamen the world around—sitting over innumerable cups of coffee and spinning yarns. "In fact," one man said, " the two weeks out here on the rig are great; what to do with the week ashore is the problem."

From the floor of the mobile platform, Saudi Arab assistant driller (foreground) and rigmen carefully guide the probing bit to the Gulf floor.

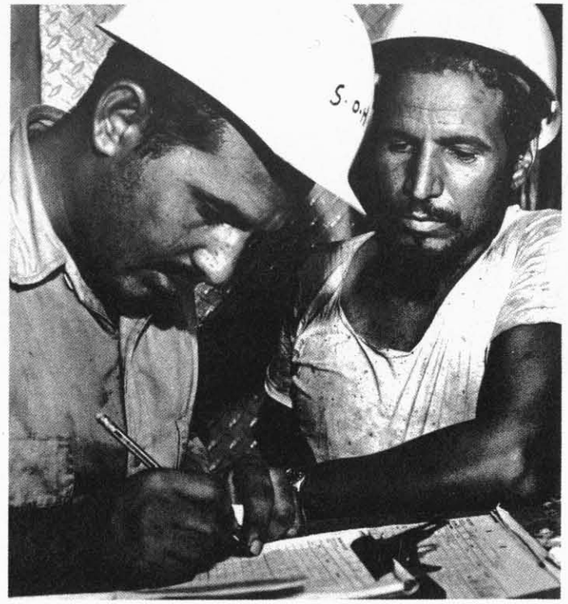


A silvery moon over the Arabian Gulf outlines Aramco's drilling installation at Abu Sa'fah No. 7.

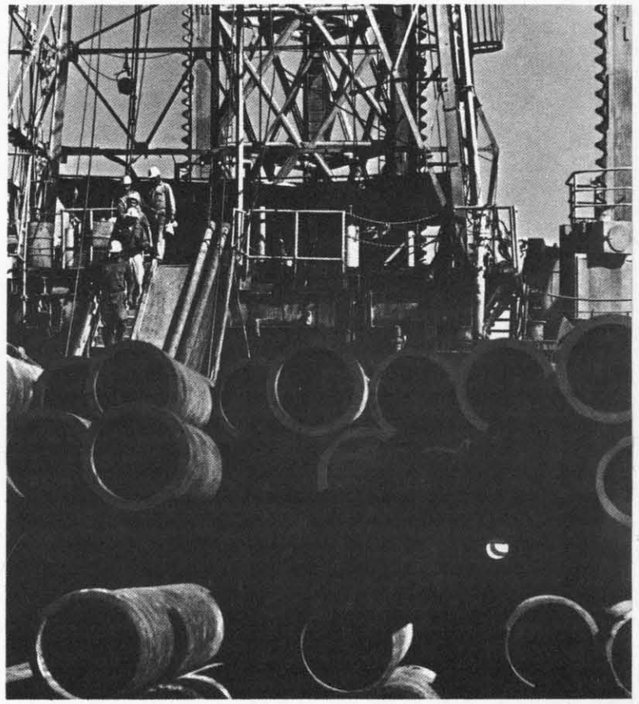




Drilling derrick on mobile drilling platform, seen through companionway of drilling tender, remains erect when platform is moved to new location.

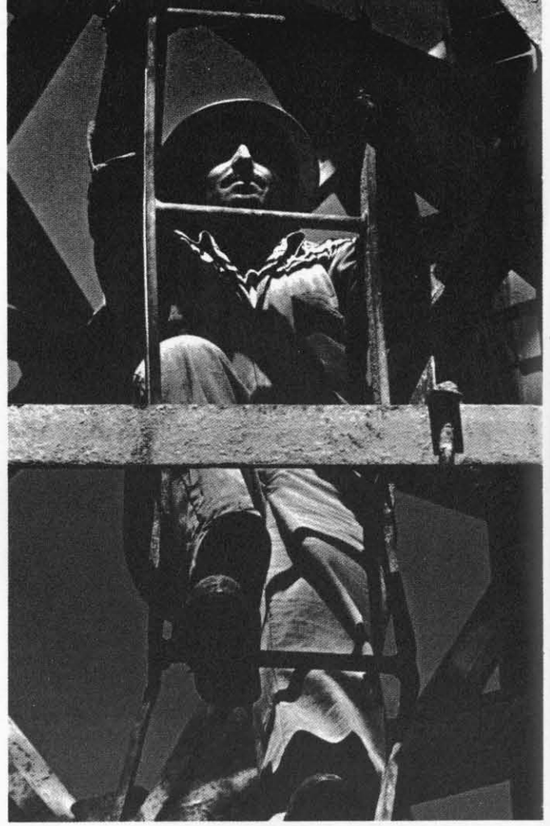


Saudi Arab assistant drillers maintain daily tower reports, in English, of drilling operations during their shifts.



Thirty-foot-long sections of casing are stacked on the tender, available at a moment's notice.

A 136-foot climb is ahead of this assistant driller, on his way to top of the drilling derrick for an inspection.

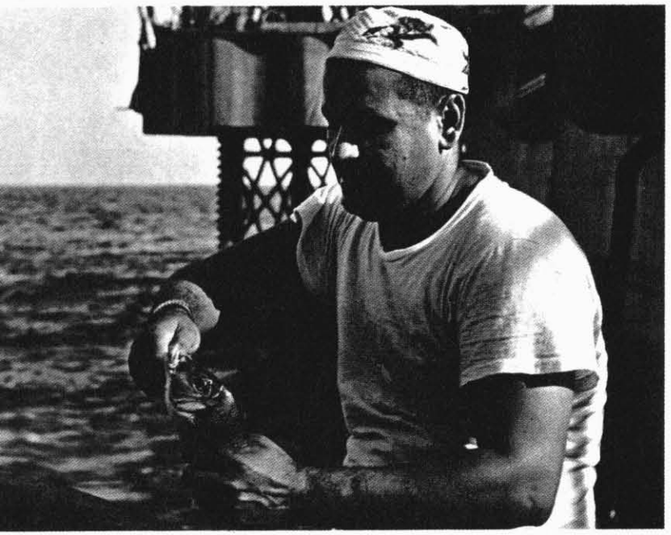


Aboard mobile drilling platform, a Saudi Arab assistant rotary driller keeps a firm but sensitive grip on the controls.

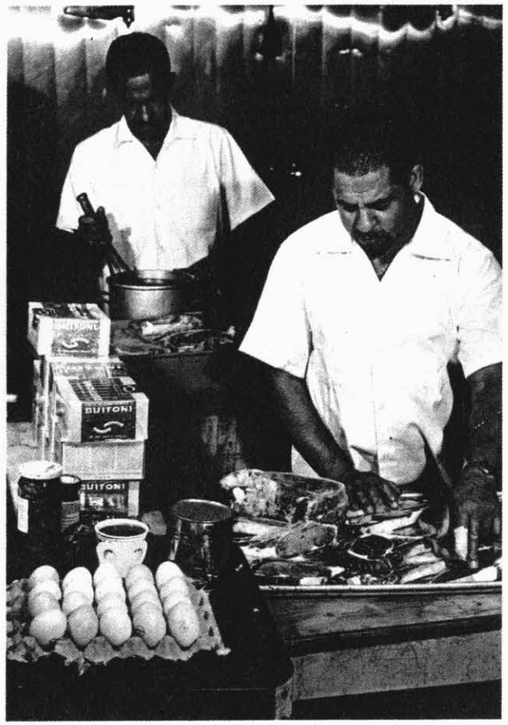
Rigman carries a steel-alloy drilling bit with its rolling cutters that grind deep into the earth in search of oil.



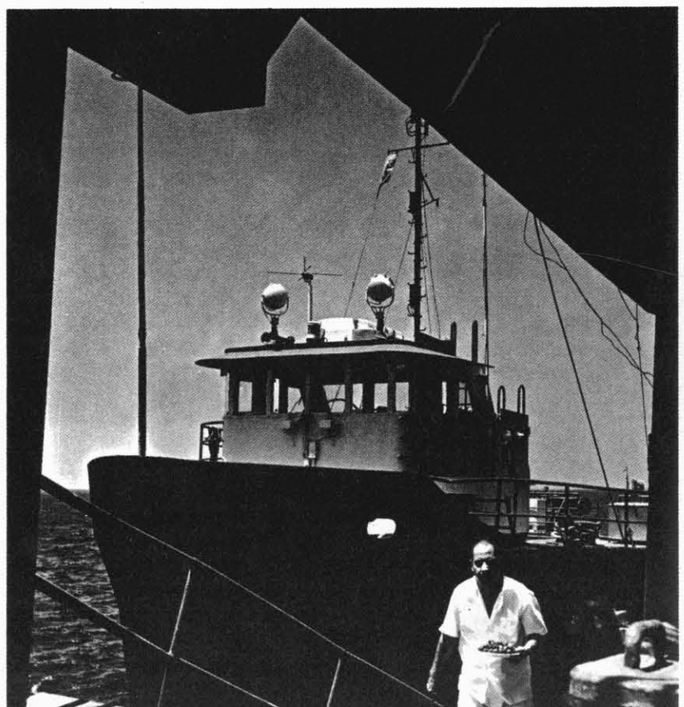

During off hours, offshore drilling workers relax in recreation quarters aboard drilling tender.



The Gulf is an abundant source of fresh fish, and fishing is a popular off-duty activity with most of the drilling crew.




All meals aboard the floating drilling tender are excellent, varied and provided free. Food is prepared by a staff of six cooks.

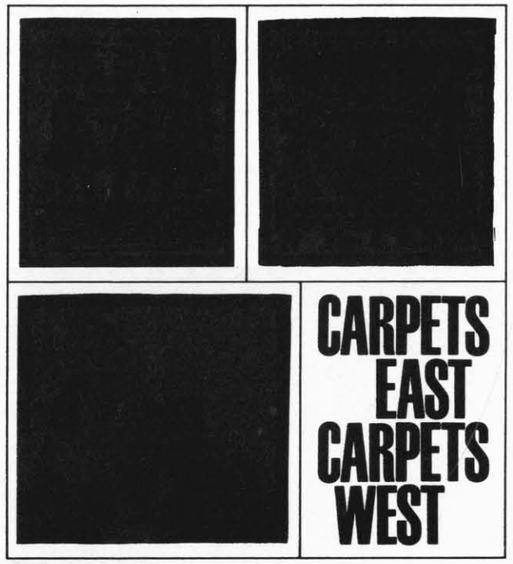


The mainland is not too far away, but fresh dates brought over on a launch are still a treat.



*W. Vernon Tietjen is a former reporter and feature writer who worked for the* New York Herald Tribune *and the old* St. Louis Star-Times *before joining Aramco's Public Relations staff in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.*

Launches maintain communication with the mainland and bring equipment, food, new crews and visitors.




BY KURT ERDMANN

"...East is East, and West is West, and never," wrote the skeptical Mr. Kipling, "the twain shall meet." With respect to carpets he may have had a point.

Everybody knows that no one makes carpets like the craftsmen of the Middle East. Everybody knows that one of the real prizes a tourist can carry back home in triumph is a bargain in a "Persian rug." And everybody knows also that the Western world has been extravagantly enthusiastic about Oriental rugs ever since that first shrewd Arab merchant loaded a caravan with rugs and plodded off to Europe some 500 years ago. What everybody does not know is that despite this apparent reverence for carpets, Westerners do not really appreciate them.

Contradiction? Not really, but it will take a good long look into history to see why not. And that look might as well start with the observation in 1554 of Pierre Belon, the French naturalist, who was fascinated by what he found out about the Arab world and carpets. "A Turk," he wrote, "will neither require nor acquire any furniture as long as he has a carpet spread out on the ground on which he can sit."

To M'sieur Belon's observation can be added that of Mechior Lorch, a painter from Flensburg, Germany, who said that before entering a room, "a Turk will take off his shoes to prevent the fine carpets from being soiled," and that of a man called Helfrich who visited Cairo in 1581 and noted that the Egyptians' greatest ornaments are carpets.

"The Egyptians," he wrote, "have neither tables nor benches in their homes or rooms because they always sit on the floor, where they rest, eat, sleep and attend to their business affairs."

As those comments suggest, the Oriental carpet several hundred years ago was much more than a mere floor covering. It was an integral part of one's living arrangements, one which took the place of chairs, beds and, sometimes, tables. The carpet was an object of such importance that to describe the severity of the sacrifices made by a certain ascetic called al-Tusi it was said that "he never possessed a carpet."

Carpets, in short, were necessities, not merely decorations, and so were worth the great care that was lavished on them. Those belonging to the wealthy never remained in one place all the time. At the Seraglio in Constantinople, for instance, they were changed every three months. The ones removed were first expertly cleaned and then sent to a treasure chamber for safekeeping. In Persia there were special "carpet houses" where the valuable carpets that needed a rest were stored. They were looked after by the house's own permanent staff and the director (custodian) also decided which carpets should be used, where and on which occasion. A traveler named Engelbert Kaempfer visited the royal carpet house in Isfahan in 1683 and wrote: "... it is very huge and spacious as not only all kinds of carpets and mats are piled up there but also tents and accessories for camping in the open. Management of this establishment rests with the Warden of the Royal Carpets whose function is a respected and influential one; his task is also to supervise the servants who wash the Shah's clothes."

Since not only the wealthy and the mighty maintained such storage facilities, but also personages of less importance, such as well-to-do merchants, there were probably many such carpet houses. None, unfortunately, has survived except one in Yeypur, in India. Many of the pieces kept there still carry their original labels, showing in detail the carpets' history.

From that it is clear that people of the Orient treated their fine carpets with great respect and did all they could to protect them and keep them in an excellent state of cleanliness and beauty. They were, of course, less exposed to injury than in the West since there was no furniture to leave its imprint, and since no one would think of entering a house, and thus step on a carpet, wearing shoes. "Even the Shah," Tavernier observed, "took off his slippers when he stepped on the carpets that were embroidered with gold and silk threads. In his retinue were always two old and venerable men whose only task was to take off the Shah's footwear when he entered a room and put it back when he left again." So important was this custom that the report of the German envoy Damian von Virmondt of his experience in Persia seems shocking. Received at the Persian court in 1723, von Virmondt reported with crude pride that he had "walked on Turkish, gold-embroidered carpets wearing boots, which had never been done before because the others first put on what we call *Paposchen* (slippers)."

Carpets were so vital that when kings, generals and other important men went off hunting and visiting, or even when they went off to war, their carpets went along with them, as furnishings for the great tents. (These tents could not be compared to the original Bedouins' tents or "houses of hair" where, in all probability, the woven carpet was developed some 2,000 years ago.) In that period, when a ruler traveled the most ingenious means were employed to make his tent as comfortable as his palace. Nothing was lacking and a whole army of servants kept well ahead of the sovereign so that at the place of destination they would have time to erect huge tents which were really portable palaces with many rooms furnished with every imaginable luxury and with many fine carpets. In some cases brooks would be diverted, gardens laid out and fountains built. Even trees would be carried along and the master's menagerie would not be forgotten either. During such trips, tent palaces, even whole communities of tents, would suddenly emerge, to be pulled down a day or so later in order to be erected somewhere else.

In the West this simply isn't the case. Even in the very early days when carpets had a very specific and important function—covering the damp and drafty walls of great castles—the West's emphasis was already different. For it was on the *walls*, for the most the part, that the carpets were displayed—which is why pictorial designs were woven into European carpets. On walls the pictures and the stories they told could be studied and appreciated.

This difference in focus can be seen in many ways. There is much more furniture in Western homes and there is far more decoration of walls. Carpets, of course, are an important part of the total decor, but they are not the focal point by any means.

Even today in the most modern of Eastern homes, there are subtle differences in the arrangements of furniture. There is an uncluttered look, a sense of openness to rooms, as if perhaps the furniture had been juggled around in deference to a particularly handsome carpet. And today still, carpets are always removed from the floors in the summer time, partially, it is true, because it is thought that homes are cooler when rugs and draperies are removed, but also to avoid unnecessary wear.

Such sentiments go back to the essential differences between carpets in the East and carpets in the West, differences one summarized this way: "The West *walks* on carpets; the East *lives* on them."

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*Dr. Kurt Erdmann, director of the Islamic Department of West Berlin State Museums until his death last fall, was an authority on Islamic and pre-Islamic art, particularly carpets and ceramics, and was the author of two books on the subject of Oriental rugs.*

The beginning of the Via Dolorosa, the Way of the Cross, with, in the background, St. Stephen's Gate.

# ANOTHER EASTER

Each year, from around the world, the visitors come, some to watch, some to pray ...

In Jerusalem's Good Friday procession, a cross is carried along the Via Dolorosa, the route taken by Christ through the city to Calvary on the first Good Friday.

BY WILLIAM TRACY

It is the week before Easter and the cool night winds off the hills of Judea swirl through the dark, shuttered streets of Jerusalem. Behind the massive, crenelated walls of the ancient city, naked bulbs cast circles of thin light on the stones of the narrow passageways and on the shabby walls and iron scaffolding of Christendom's greatest shrine—the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, where, most Christians agree, Jesus Christ was crucified, was buried and rose again.

Suddenly, from the slender minaret of a mosque just across the courtyard from the church, the rasp of a loudspeaker crackles into the stillness and a *muezzin's* high-pitched, plaintive call to early prayer echoes across the city. From a narrow lane a watchman emerges, wool trousers stuffed hastily into the tops of his boots, a red checked headcloth pulled across his face. He strides across a courtyard and tosses a pebble at an upper window. An old man's face appears at the window and a moment later he comes out. Together the two men proceed to a huge double door beneath a maze of scaffolding at the facade of the great church. The watchman draws a long, curiously-shaped key from his shirt and opens a lock. A small square door shoulder-high in the bigger one opens and a black-bearded priest, his hair tied in a firm bun, peers out and hands them a ladder. The watchman mounts the ladder and turns a key in a second lock on the upper bar of the door and the three, hauling and tugging, ease it open. From the darkness within emerges the whisper of prayer, the smell of hot wax, the gleam of candles and, deep and strong, the echo of male voices chanting the devotions of an Armenian Orthodox Mass.

The watchman, a Muslim, helps the second man, a Roman Catholic, to take the ladder down, stuffs the key back into his shirt and shakes hands with the third man whose black beard and flowing robes identify him as a Greek Orthodox priest.

"Peace," the watchman says.

"Peace," reply the others and they part, having played their roles in a ritual that goes deep into the history not only of Christianity, but of Jerusalem itself.

That history, like that of most central points in the Middle East, begins early and includes the inevitable chapters on war and conquest. The Assyrians came. The Egyptians came. The Romans came. At the time of Christ, of course, it was the Romans who ruled Jerusalem and who later tried to stamp out the Nazarene's teachings. In 132 A.D. the Emperor Hadrian rebuilt the city of Jerusalem as a pagan center, renaming it *Aelia Capitolina* and erecting a temple to Venus on the site of the crucifixion. As all the world knows, such efforts failed. The construction of the temple to Venus, for instance, which was intended to stamp out secret worship at Calvary, only marked the site of Christ's death for history. And the disciples of Christ, moving over the famous Roman roads and speaking the common language of the Hellenistic era, carried the new faith in ever-widening circles throughout the known world. It spread to Athens, to Alexandria, and, at last, into the heart of the Empire itself to convert the Emperor Constantine and, with him, most of the Empire.

For Christianity this was a remarkable triumph, but it was not to endure. In 451 the Emperor Marcian convoked the Council of Chalcedon to define certain aspects of the faith. Many Eastern and Orthodox churchmen, however, rejected the new definitions and the Emperor issued an imperial act expelling them. So began the official divisions of Eastern churches that were to have such an impact on the Holy Land.

Another century passed and much of another, and suddenly a third great religious force arose in the Middle East. First Judaism, then Christianity, then—in 637—Islam, bursting out of the desert to seize and hold, until the Crusaders came, a city that was as holy to them as to the Jews and Christians. This was partially because Muslims accept and revere Abraham and Jesus as prophets and partially because it was in Jerusalem that, according to tradition, Muhammad ascended into heaven—from the same rock, where, it is believed, Abraham was to have sacrificed Isaac, and where Solomon built his famous temple. There, on Mt. Moriah, they built the resplendent Dome of the Rock on the spot toward which Muslims first turned to prayer.

In their first days of conquest the Muslims were most gracious toward the Christians. The Caliph Omar even declined to worship in the Holy Sepulcher (which Saint Helena had had erected by Roman artisans after she proclaimed that she had found the true cross), as a sign of respect toward the Christians. He prayed instead in the courtyard and later built a mosque, which still stands, across the courtyard from the church. For the Christians of Medieval Europe, however, such tolerance was not enough. They wanted the Holy Places in Christian hands and set out on the Crusades that were to rack the East with religious war for more than three centuries. In 1187, the Muslims, led by the great Saladin, recaptured Jerusalem and the city remained in Muslim hands until England's General Allenby took it from the Ottoman Turks in World War I.

In the light of such history it is easier, perhaps, to see why the Holy Land has, on many occasions, been rather less peaceful than the various religious groups would like, and why quarrels and disagreements and conflicting claims among the Christian sects raged unchecked for years. It is easier to see why, even today, it is Muslims who have been charged with a major role in the guarding of the great sepulcher. It is easier, at least, if Jawad Joudeh explains why.

Jawad Joudeh is a dapper businessman who runs a small souvenir shop in the new city and who has in the

Jawad Joudeh shows his commission as keeper of the Holy Sepulcher key.

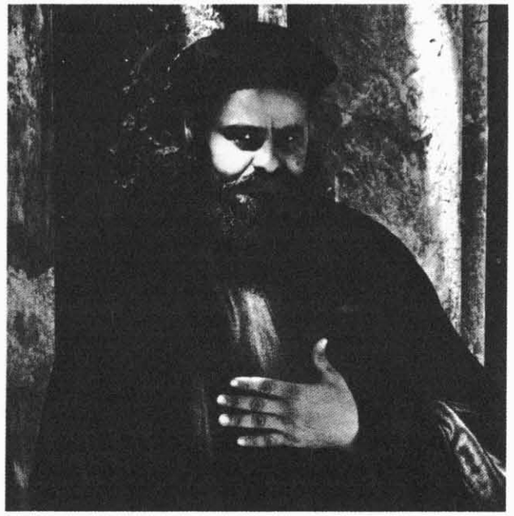
shop a collection of parchment scrolls (*firman*) that, in effect, names his family as doorkeeper and keeper of the keys of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. The Joudeh family and a second family—the Insaibis—were so designated by the Ottoman Turks in 1789 and, Mr. Joudeh says, the positions have been handed down from father to son ever since. He adds, however, that the real story behind Muslim control of the keys goes back to the first years after the recapture of Jerusalem by Saladin.

Saladin, a generous and liberal ruler, did not wish to bar the Holy Land to Christian pilgrims despite the years of struggle with the Crusaders, and in a display of tolerance offered safe and free passage through the Holy Land to all genuine pilgrims. If Saladin were tolerant, however, he was not a fool. He realized that soldiers might conceal themselves among the thousands of pilgrims who poured into the Holy Land each Easter and took certain steps to insure his safety. First, he proclaimed a feast day to be celebrated just about Easter time. The Muslim faithful who flocked to the Holy City for the new feast provided a nice numerical balance to the Christians. Second, Saladin ordered the key to the church to be retained by Muslims.

As the most current keeper of the key—the long, curiously-shaped key that the watchman and the priests use at dawn—Mr. Joudeh must see that each of three major sects gets it for one day during Holy Week. On Holy Thursday he takes it to the head of the Franciscan Monastery. On Good Friday he leaves it with the Chief Dragoman of the Greek Orthodox Monastery. On Holy Saturday it is held by the Armenian Orthodox Church. Other sects may use the church, of course, but only these three may hold the key.

In addition to being keeper of the key, Mr. Joudeh is also a diplomat who declines, graciously but firmly, to discuss the conflicts that have arisen because of the very natural, if sometimes overzealous, desire of Christians to have some claim on some part of the Holy Sepulcher. Nor would he discuss the effects of the conflicts on the Sepulcher: crumbling ceilings, peeling paint and gold leaf, precariously buckling columns and the unsightly tangle of rusted scaffolding that has obscured the facade of the church since 1935. The scaffolding was erected by the British that year to buttress the church after an earthquake seriously weakened it. It was never removed, partly because of disagreements among the sects. Over the years those disagreements were responsible for essential repairs being delayed or ignored. Decay set in and the ancient church was well on the way to disintegration when, suddenly, in the new ecumenical spirit, major churches agreed last year to share in a five-year, $2,000,000-project to restore the church to a condition worthy of the rich and sumptuous rituals that are celebrated each Easter.

To a large extent those rituals reflect the differences that divide the nearly 50 sects, Catholic and Protestant, Eastern and Western, which are represented in the Holy Land—differences, for example, among the Greek, Armenian and Russian Orthodox churches, or between the



A Coptic priest pauses in front of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.

Syriac Church, with its rituals still preserved in Aramaic (the language Christ spoke) and the Coptic Church with its roots deep in the history of Nubia and Abyssinia. To a large extent, too, they contribute an essential character of colorful diversity to the Holy Land when Lent draws to a close and Easter is at hand.

At that time of year Jerusalem is a lovely land. It is kissed by a warm sun and a sweet breeze, and passing showers rinse the chalky hills where red poppies and yellow daisies toss brightly against the green of olive groves and vineyards. In the streets, village peasants and Bedouins from the deserts beyond the Dead Sea jostle Copts from Egypt and delicately-featured Ethiopians. Schoolgirls in blue smocks pass graceful maidens with tin pails balanced on their heads. Persians and Indians, Sudanese and Kurds, priests and beggars, old women and young boys shove and push through the crowded passageways, stopping at shops to buy honey-sweet *baclawa* and oven-gold buns, or to bargain for trinkets in mother-of-pearl or crosses carved from olive wood. Pilgrims and processions inch through the crowds, candles flickering and icons gleaming, the murmur of prayers and the acrid smell of candles lost in the clamor and odors of the market place.

It is at any time a rich tapestry of sight and sound, ancient and modern, hung against a backdrop nearly as old as history; and at Easter time, as visitors from throughout the world arrive by the thousands, it is richer than ever. To the incredible mixture of ancient tongues such as Latin, Arabic, Aramaic, Greek and Armenian are added those of today's world, English, Spanish, German, French, Italian and Russian, and in each of those tongues, somewhere in the Holy City, some service celebrating Easter will be held.

The Eastern and Western churches calculate the date of Easter differently, the Eastern church by the Julian calendar and the Western church by the Gregorian calendar. Every fourth year the calendars coincide so that Easter is celebrated on the same date, but this year the Western churches will celebrate Easter April 18 and the Eastern churches April 25. Thus it is that on April 11 Roman Catholics will open Holy Week with their traditional Palm Sunday procession along the very route followed by Christ nearly 2,000 years ago: from Bethpage, along the steep rocky path across the Mount of Olives, down by the Garden of Gethsemane, through the valley of Kidron and into the Old City by St. Stephen's Gate. The appearance of the area, of course, is changed considerably now. On the Mount of Olives, for example, on the spot where Christ taught the Lord's Prayer to his disciples, stands the Church of Pater Noster with its tiny jewel-like cloister in which the prayer that begins "Our Father, Who art in heaven..." is inscribed on brilliantly colorful tiles in 47 languages. There is a church, too, over the Rock of Agony where Christ prayed and wept through the night, and another over the site of the Palace of Caiphas where he was taken after his arrest; and the Golden Gate through which he entered the city on Palm Sunday has been stoned up for centuries. Only Gethsemane, where Christ spent the night with the disciples before Judas' betrayal, offers a link to the time of Christ; for in its quiet garden there still stand ancient olive trees, old enough to have been growing there that fateful night.

As the week goes on, the pace and variety of the ceremonies increase. On Ash Wednesday the column of flagellation where, it is believed, Roman soldiers whipped Christ and mockingly put a crown of thorns on his head, is exposed to view in a cellar just off the Via Dolorosa, the Way of the Cross. On Maundy Thursday, in the crowded courtyard of the Holy Sepulcher, the Latin Patriarch, divested of his miter and cope, kneels and washes the feet of 12 clergymen to commemorate Christ's washing of the feet of the disciples. In the evening there is an hour of silence in the Basilica of Gethsemane to commemorate Christ's agony there. In the neighboring Russian garden of the Cathedral of St. Mary Magdalene, the Anglican Bishop leads devotions. Also, the same evening, the Lutherans walk to the Garden of Gethsemane along the Way of the Cross from their white stone Church of the Redeemer near the Holy Sepulcher.

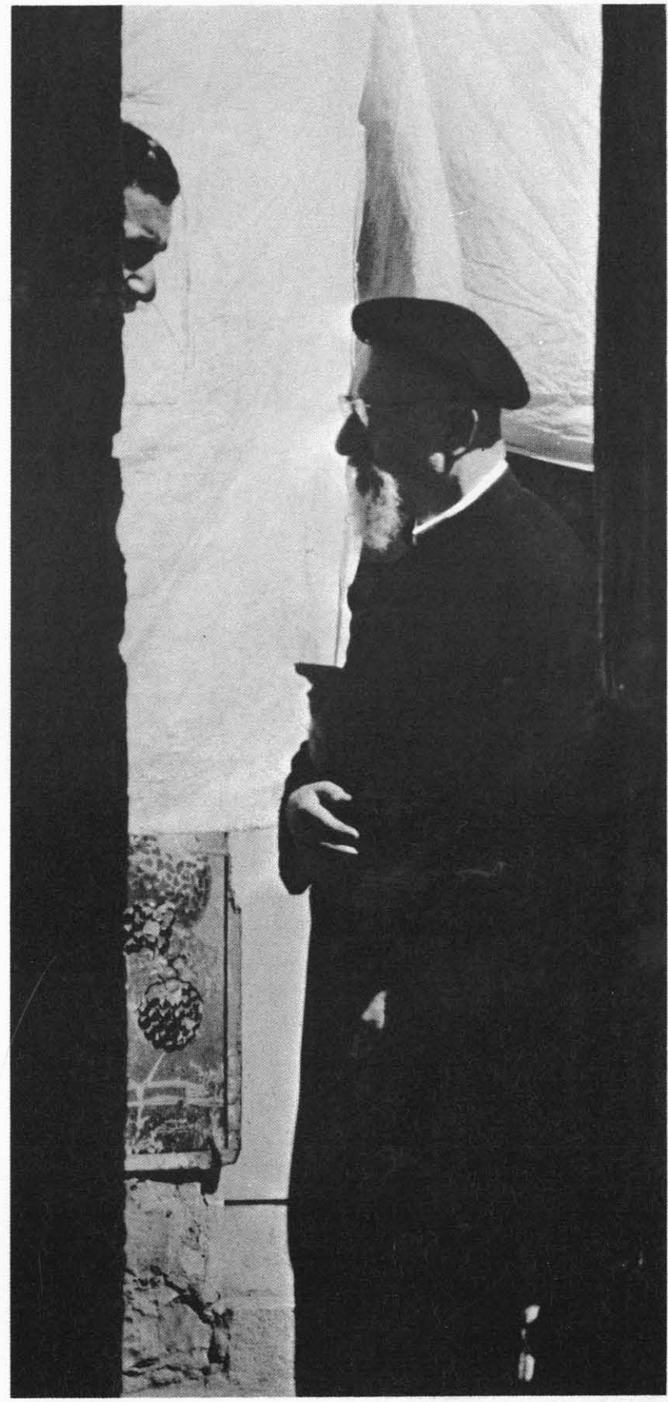
Every Friday throughout the year, a group of Catholic priests moves along the Via Dolorosa retracing Christ's steps as he shouldered the heavy cross on which he was to die, and staggered under it to Calvary. On Good Friday, the day of Crucifixion, throngs of pilgrims join the solemn, close-packed procession inching along the streets that Christ trod. Divided into language groups, they pray, weep and murmur sorrowfully as they move to the 14 stations, each marking a different stage in the progress of Christ toward Calvary. Many orders of priests and nuns themselves carry heavy crosses.

In the church of the Holy Sepulcher, in the evening, Roman Catholics present a stark re-enactment of Christ's burial. His crucified body is removed from the cross, wrapped in a winding sheet, carried to the Stone of Unction where it is spiced and censed, then placed in the tomb, a rock-cut vault in the Chapel of the Angel.

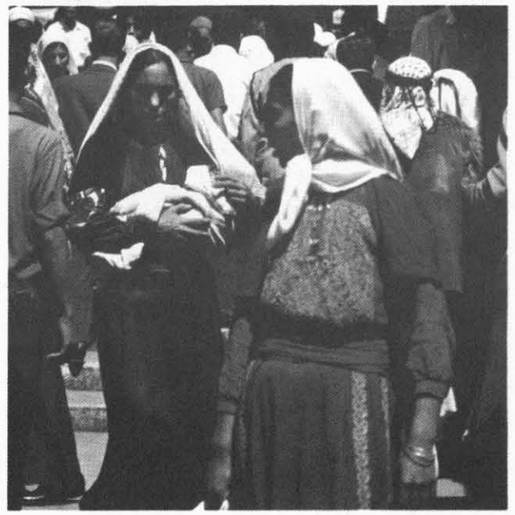
Holy Saturday, the Roman Catholics celebrate another Pontifical High Mass before the tomb and hold the Blessing of the Fire. At the same time, in the Greek Orthodox Church, this is Lazarus Saturday (the Western Easter coinciding as it does with the Eastern Palm Sunday) and the Greeks move in procession to the tomb of Lazarus in the town of Bethany on the road to Jericho. There Lazarus lay four days in his tomb until Christ raised him from the dead. Both the Greek and Armenian Orthodox also hold special services in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.

Easter Sunday, Roman Catholics hold Mass in the Holy Sepulcher without pause throughout the day. Holy Communion is held in the Anglican St. George's Cathedral, and interdenominational sunrise services are held by the Lutherans and other Protestants at the Garden Tomb. This tomb, discovered by General Charles Gordon, famed for his military exploits in China and Sudan, is cut into a cliff in a pleasant, well-kept garden outside the present walls of the Old City. Because of its grooved entrance, that was once used for rolling a heavy mill stone before the door, and the craggy rock formation on the hillside nearby, it is considered by some Protestants as the site of Calvary.

The same day, as the Western churches conclude their ceremonies, the Eastern churches begin. As the Catholics had the previous week, the Eastern churches celebrate Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. In the Basilica of the Holy Sepulcher, the Greek, Armenian and Syrian Orthodox, as well as the Copts, hold processions in which olive branches or palm fronds bent into the shape of birds are carried. Hundreds display crosses, flags and icons and small children often carry candles taller than themselves, decorated with flowers and ribbons. During all of Holy Week the altar in the church is draped in black and no ceremony is held for the dead in either the Greek Orthodox or Abyssinian-Coptic church. The latter holds



A French priest, a missionary in Jerusalem, walks toward the Holy Sepulcher.



The Garden Tomb, hewn into rock in a hillside outside the walls of the Old City, is considered by some Protestants as the real site of the resurrection.

seven services each day of the week with the Masses sung in a special chant and with special parts of the Bible read. Tuesday and Thursday are days of fasting.

Maundy Thursday, all the sects, including the Abyssinians, Russians and Syrian Orthodox, hold the ceremony of the Washing of the Feet. The Armenian ceremony takes place in St. James Cathedral, built on the site where St. James was beheaded by Herod Agrippa. The Greeks gather in the courtyard of the Holy Sepulcher upon a specially-erected raised platform symbolizing the Upper Room where Jesus met his disciples for the Last Supper. With a towel across his shoulder, the patriarch washes the feet of 12 bishops, dries them, and anoints them with oil. In the Chapel of St. Anthony the Copts hold their rites, the patriarch marking a symbolic cross of olive oil on the knees of 12 clergymen and any member of the congregation who requests ointment.

Good Friday, each of the churches observes symbolic burial services, the Russian in Gethsemane, and the Armenians in St. James. The Abyssinian service, which is not public, includes the reciting of the words "*Frivi Kirya Laison*" 400 times, 100 in each direction, to the beat of drums and bells. The Armenian and Syrian Orthodox services are held in their particular chapels within the Holy Sepulcher. Following the burial the Syrians hold a special service, '*Abou Galhamsis.*'

The Greek burial involves moving a cross used in the washing ceremony from among the congregation to a place behind the altar. In a second burial, later, an embroidered cloth with a painting of Christ as he was removed from the cross is spread on a table before the altar. When it has been decorated with flowers, it is carried three times around the church by the congregation during the mass, to represent God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

Holy Saturday, the Greek Orthodox Patriarch, assisted by the Armenians, Syrians and Copts, performs the ceremony of the Descending of the Holy Fire. The Holy Sepulcher is packed from early in the day with a restless, jubilant crowd. The day is called *Sebt An-Nur* in Arabic, the Saturday of Light. According to tradition, a holy fire is passed from heaven to the Orthodox patriarch who,



In Easter week, a delegation of the Assyrian Church visits other Christian sects.

dressed in white, is hidden within Christ's tomb. In the darkened church, a hauntingly beautiful chant rings out as the procession of priests moves around the tomb three times, some swinging censers from silver chains, others holding aloft faded velvet banners on gilded poles. The patriarch's emergence with a lighted torch is the sign of the resurrection of Jesus, the Light of the World. "He that seeth me seeth him that sent me. I am a light unto the world, that whosoever believeth in me should not abide in darkness." The exultant crowd surges forward, each person striving to be the first to light his candle, the Armenians from a small orifice on one side, the Greeks and others on the opposite side. Soon the cathedral is aglow with bobbing flames. Reputed not to burn those whom they touch, they will be carried home reverently as a blessing to homes and families in many parts of the Middle East. The great bells of the church ring out from the towers overhead. "Christ is risen!" The Church that has wept over Christ's death resounds with the joyous news of the resurrection.

Saturday evening, too, beneath a tent on the roof of St. Helena's Chapel, the Abyssinians hold their only public ceremony of Holy Week, often erroneously called the Search for the Body of Christ. As the olive branch in the beak of the dove was a sign to Noah, they see the resurrection of Jesus as a sign to man. Under the stars, the patriarch and bishops in full vestments, the clergy in brilliant habiliments, a choir of Ethiopian boys in lavishly-embroidered robes carrying gold-embroidered umbrellas, circle three times around the terrace surrounding the dome. Over and over they sing the phrase, "Oh Lord! Send over us believers in your resurrection, your celestial light." Again there is the throbbing bass beat of drums countered by the tin treble of the silver sistra. Afterward, in a private mass, the congregation repeatedly responds in chorus to the words "*Al-Masih Qam,*" "Jesus has arisen."

"*Haqqan Qam,*" they chant. "Truly he has arisen."

Immediately after midnight, Easter morning, the Armenians, the Syrians and the Copts begin their masses of resurrection in their own chapels in the Holy Sepulcher. About noon, a Greek Orthodox procession moves with measured step into the courtyard of the church. The patriarch, in white robe and golden crown, is followed by bishops, uniformed police officials, fashionable ladies in Easter hats, the Anglican Bishop in purple, and hundreds of the faithful. A priest knocks loudly upon the locked doors of the church. He chants Psalms 24:7. "Lift up your heads, o ye gates, and be lifted up ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in."

From within comes the query, "Who is the King of Glory?"

The priest replies, "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle." The dialogue is repeated three times. "Lift up your heads, o ye gates ..." When the great doors swing open and the procession swarms in behind the priest, the chandeliers inside the church are found to be swinging slowly back and forth. This recalls the earthquake that shook Jerusalem at the moment of Christ's death.

"*Christos anesty,*" the priest cries. "Christ is risen."

The audience thunders in responce. "*Alithos anesty,*" "Truly he is risen." Outside, the joyous crackle of firecrackers tossed by children competes with the burst of guns fired jubilantly in the air by old men.

"*Christos anesty,*" the priest repeats a second time.

"*Alithos anesty,*" choruses the audience.

It is the same phrase used the night before in the Abyssinian Mass. "Truly, he has risen," and the great bells pealing overhead call out in a joyful, universal tongue to the masses gathered below in the courtyard, the message of Easter which, like shock ripples in a pond, echoes in widening circles across the Holy City and beyond—a message of hope for a troubled world.

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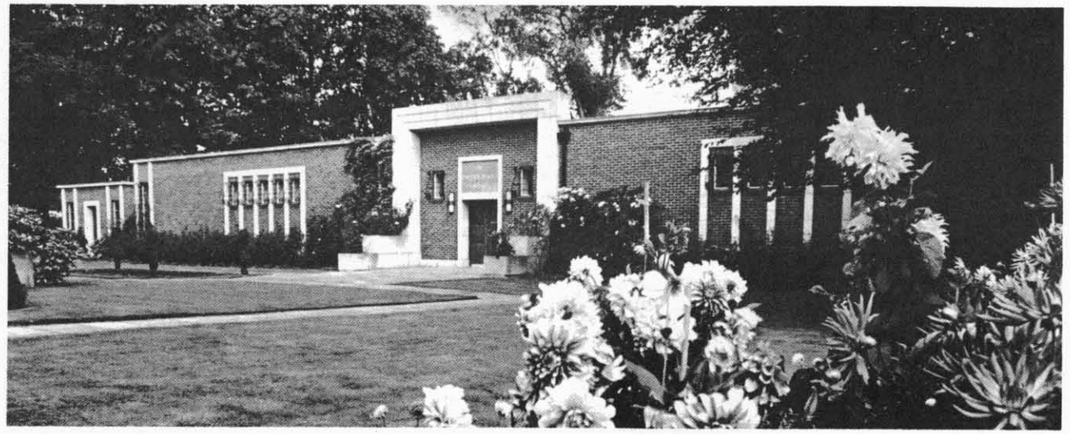
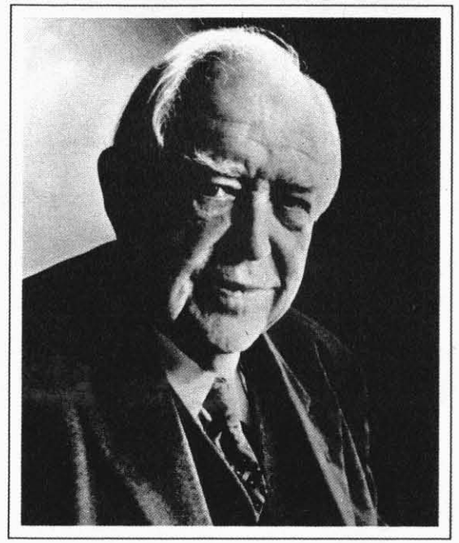
*William Tracy, a graduate student at the American University of Beirut and a free lance writer, contributes regularly to* Aramco World.





## The Irish made him a citizen; the English made him a knight; but the Arabs made him a scholar. That's Sir Chester Beatty who collected...

# THE TREASURES OF SHREWSBURY ROAD

BY PEGGY McCARTHY

It was Ireland right enough—Dublin, in fact—and the grass by the library was as green as it's supposed to be. Inside, though, one would wonder. At a table, his head bowed in scholarly absorption, an elderly, robed Arab studied a roll of parchment alive with the cursive strokes of classical calligraphy. Beyond him another man studied a 10th-century manuscript entitled *A Treatise on Falconry*. In the gallery a group of hushed schoolchildren stared reverently at the rich coiling colors of an ancient Koran.

The locale ought really to have been Damascus or Medina, not Dublin. Calligraphic inscriptions, after all, and the techniques of falconry are much more appropriate to the sands of Arabia than to the lawns of Ireland. But it was not Damascus nor Medina—nor was it Mecca or Baghdad or Jerusalem. It was Dublin. To be exact it was No. 20 Shrewsbury Road, in the Ballsbridge section of Dublin, the site of the Chester Beatty Library.

There are many persons who have not heard of the Chester Beatty Library. However, to those who have—certain scholars and connoisseurs of rare and beautiful things—it is a very special institution, drawing to its quiet rooms scholars and students from throughout Europe, North America and the entire Arab world. The very name, in fact, suggests the quality, distinction and beauty of the rare, extraordinarily handsome manuscripts, tablets, texts and other objects of art that have been gathered in the cluster of brick buildings on Shrewsbury Road by the 90-year-old American copper millionnaire whose name the library bears: Sir Chester Beatty.

The amiable, approachable Sir Chester (who won his knighthood for contributions to Britain's war effort) was born just plain Alfred Chester Beatty in 1875 in New York City. He attended and graduated from the Columbia School of Mines at Columbia University, headed west, by train and stage coach, to Montana, Utah and the Rocky Mountains and launched what was to be a spectacular career in mining. He pursued that career in Mexico, Southern Rhodesia, the Congo and Russia, becoming, while still a young man, a multimillionnaire of international prestige. In moving about the world, Sir Chester began to develop an interest in old manuscripts. Although he emphatically denies being a connoisseur ("I'm not a scholar, you know; I'm just a mining engineer with a wheezy lung to prove it."), he had, even as early as 1913, purchased a number of rare manuscripts for his modest library. Then he and his wife made a visit to the Middle East and, while wandering in the bazaars, were attracted by the beauty of the many Arabic parchments, particularly by the illuminated Korans. He purchased several and, without knowing it, began the collection of Middle East manuscripts that was to become world famous.

It is believed that the Beatty collection is the largest private collection of manuscripts anywhere. In monetary terms, its 13,000 volumes and other objects of art are worth roughly $3,500,000. In artistic terms they are priceless. The texts, tablets and other objects illustrate the entire history of civilization. Items in the collection go back to 2500 B.C., yet include work done in the 20th century, too. In geographical origins they explore the globe from Ireland on the fringe of Western Europe all the way to Sumatra and Japan.

The oldest items are some Babylonian clay tablets once known as the "Berens Collection." There are more than 100 of these, some dating from about 2500 B.C. Several of them are impressed with interesting cylinder seals which indicate the scribes employed to write them. The next oldest records in the library are the Egyptian and Greek papyri, and the earliest of these is the hieratic papyrus, known as "Chester Beatty Papyrus No. 1," written in 1160 B.C. in Thebes during the reign of Ramses V. This long, mythological narrative includes what many experts say are the most intelligible, poetic love songs which have come down to us from ancient Egypt. The papyrus is in an excellent state of preservation, and the black and red script is still brilliant and vital. Another Egyptian papyrus roll of interest is *The Book of the Dead of the Lady Neskhons*, which can be placed about 300 B.C.

The Arabic texts—some 3,000 of them—form what is by far the largest group of manuscripts in the library, and Sir Chester, who makes no secret of his particular pride in them, has engaged A.T. Arberry, professor of Arabic at Cambridge University, to manage the gigantic task of cataloguing them. Six volumes have already been published as part of this enterprise, and more are to follow. The criteria in operation when these texts were being considered for the library were 1) exceptional age, 2) unusual rarity and 3) the presence of an author's autograph and/or annotations by especially famous theologians or scholars. This selectivity has been fruitful; today, one in three of them is said to be unique, and together the texts cover a vast range of religious and secular literature, as well as such unconventional works as a treatise on poisons and their antidotes, another on the magical properties of letters and numbers, astrology manuals, instructions on the employment of amulets, a study of ophthalmology, and a compendium of Aristotle on logic dated, 1045.

Among the loveliest texts in the library are the 250 illuminated copies of the Koran. The art in which Islam achieved its richest artistic expression, book illustration, was at first an art of geometric ornament, with vegetal patterns as secondary motifs separating the verses. Later, with calligraphic inscriptions, integrated designs were arranged to separate chapters, to embellish margins and to point to passages where ritual prostration was required. In the end, elaborate full-page frontispieces were added.

Sir Chester's Korans span about 1,000 years and represent most countries of the Islamic world. Perhaps the most exquisite were made in Persia where miniaturists achieved a delicate perfection of drawing, sumptuous coloring and meticulous binding and enamel-work, all disclosing a deep dedication and reverence. Among the more memorable Korans is a magnificent 9th-century fragment written in gold on blue vellum. There are some decorated pages from a Persian Koran of about 1400 A.D. and sections of a text in a peculiar, sophisticated and very rare Persian kufic script. There is a series of notable Egyptian Korans and decorated pages of the Mameluke period (the 13th to the 16th century), some so large one might presume they might have been intended for use in mosques. There are also numerous bindings remarkable for their engravings.

To those who hear of the Chester Beatty Library for the first time, it somehow seems incongruous; Ireland simply doesn't seem to be the proper location for a great collection of Islamic art. Yet for all the apparent differences between the Celtic world and the Arab world, the great manuscripts are not altogether on foreign soil. Ireland, after all, has its own tradition of book illumination brought to stunning perfection in the Book of Kells, and behind that tradition was the same spiritual drive. The Gaelic scribes played no small role in the preservation of northern civilization's vital records during the Dark Ages and their role was not unlike that of the Arabs, who preserved so much of Western philosophy and science in their manuscripts. The incongruity of Arab texts in Ireland is more illusory than real, and although there are no *jabals*, no *minarets*, no *dhows* visible from the library windows, one would hope, even expect that the brilliant craftsmen who created the beauties of the texts would not be unhappy to find their treasures on Shrewsbury Road.

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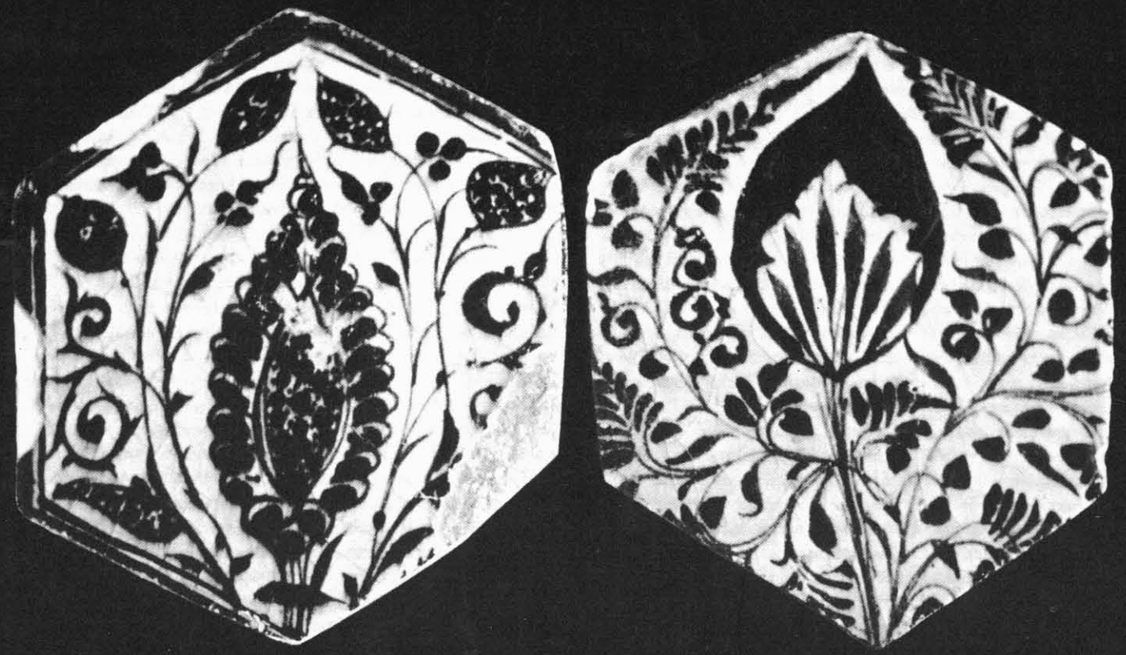
*Peggy McCarthy is a free lance writer who spent many years in Saudi Arabia. She now lives in Ireland's County Kildare and contributes to newspapers and magazines.*



Porcelain plates and bowls from China, above, have influenced the design and decoration of Middle East pottery ever since the 14th century. How strong that influence was can be seen in the motifs on these hexagonial tiles, below, made in the 15th century.

BY JOHN CARSWELL

# POTTERY POINTS THE WAY

**In the pattern and shapes of plates and tiles are important clues to the ebb and flow of culture...**

It took ancient man thousands of years to invent pottery and as soon as he did he made a second discovery—that it broke easily. This was unfortunate for him, of course, but not for his descendants. For them broken pottery has been invaluable, pointing the way to the accumulation of most of the archeological knowledge developed in the Middle East and elsewhere, and offering clear signposts in tracing the cultural currents of the past.

In some ways it is easy to see the role of pottery in the gathering of archeological information. Pottery may be fragile but it is also durable. As one archeologist put it, pottery may be easy to break but it's hard to destroy. That characteristic means two things: that a lot of it will have to be thrown away and that the fragments will not decay. And this, over the centuries, is just what happened. As pots, jars, tiles, plates and other utensils were made, used, broken and discarded in roughly the same area for hundreds of years, there accumulated great mounds of debris, layer upon layer, each reflecting the characteristics of the people who made, used, broke and discarded that particular layer.

More subtly, however, and in some ways more interestingly, pottery can also offer clues as to how ancient and

even not-so-ancient peoples affected and absorbed each other's culture. If, for example, archeologists of the future were to excavate a small American community some day and find bits of Wedgwood china intermingled with fragments of Rosenthal china, they could reasonably surmise that the United States had some commercial contact with both England and Germany; and if the patterns on the Rosenthal and the Wedgwood were at all similar the archeologists could go on to assume that there had also been contact between England and Germany.

In exactly the same way, archeology can trace the movement of art through the Middle East at different times in history. By classifying fragments according to their form and decoration and by mapping out all the different sites where the same type of pottery is found throughout the Middle East, it is possible to follow closely the movement of artistic ideas from one country to another.

The primary value of pottery, of course, applies to those eras prior to the development of writing and the keeping of written records. Certainly from the rise of Islam onward, manuscripts become of paramount importance to the scholar concerned with the Middle East. Yet even in these later periods, pottery can offer valuable evidence about the tastes and cultural contacts of the era.

Chinese blue and white porcelain, for instance, was exported to the Middle East from the 14th century onward and was apparently so highly prized in Syria that Syrian potters began making imitations of it. This Syrian pottery, decorated with patterns based on Chinese prototypes, has been found in the ruins of the ancient town of Hama and elsewhere in Syria. Since the pottery was discovered below the layer of debris left from the burning and destruction which marks the sack of the town by the Mongol conqueror, Tamerlane, in 1401, it must have come into fashion before this date.

Some beautiful Syrian tiles painted with undulating flowers and patterns in the Chinese style decorate to this day the early 15th-century tomb of al-Tawrizi, in Damascus. More extraordinary, the same—or very similar—tiles are found in the Murad II mosque at Adrianople, on the modern frontier between Greece and Turkey. This mosque was built by the Ottoman Turks in 1433 and the striking resemblance between its tiles and those in Damascus suggests that they were almost certainly made by imported Syrian craftsmen.

Although fierce warriors, the Ottoman Turks were also great patrons of the arts, and many foreign craftsmen were employed by them to satisfy their taste for splendid surroundings. Even before the capture of Constantinople in 1453, the Turks had constructed magnificent buildings in their capital at Bursa. Inscriptions on the famous Green Mosque at Bursa indicate that the tiles used to enrich it were made by Persian craftsmen from Tabriz.

Imported Persian workmen were employed also in Jerusalem. When Sulayman the Magnificent—who led the troops of the Ottoman Empire to the gates of Vienna—began the restoration of the Dome of the Rock in 1545, he decided that the badly damaged Umayyad mosaics on the outside walls should be replaced by tiles. They were replaced and an inscription on one of the tiles, dated 1552, reads: " 'Abd Allah of Tabriz," clear proof that at least some of the tiles were made by Persians. To this deduction history adds some evidence with the story that, earlier, Sulayman had once visited Tabriz during a military campaign; perhaps he got the idea of employing craftsmen from Persia at that time.

Chinese porcelain has always been popular in the Middle East; it was even supposed to have magical properties and it was a general belief that it was possible to detect instantly the presence of poison

A Dutch tile (left) traveled to China and was copied and "orientalized" (center), moved on to the Middle East where, after several adaptations, it came to resemble the Ka'bah at Mecca (right).



by eating from a Chinese plate. In the atmosphere of suspicion and intrigue that prevailed at the Turkish court in that period this would have been a valuable asset, and it is not surprising that the Turks amassed great collections of such porcelain. Many collections came as gifts from the emperors of China and many pieces still survive in the Seraglio Museum in Istanbul, where, when one collection was being arranged in the 1920's, some of the china was found still in the packing cases in which it had arrived, centuries before. Naturally Chinese porcelain greatly affected the decoration of Turkish pottery. The lotus flower, for example, and certain other patterns were copied almost unchanged.

Another great collection of Chinese porcelain, now in the museum in Teheran, was once housed in the shrine of Shaikh Safi, at Ardebil in northwest Persia. Here a special porcelain room was constructed in 1611 to house it, each piece displayed in an elegantly-carved niche. (It still is one of the finest collections in the world of early Ming porcelain, and many pieces have the additional distinction of the name of Shah 'Abbas, the Persian emperor, engraved with a diamond on the underside.) Again, Persian pottery was affected in its turn by Chinese porcelain and in the 17th and 18th centuries many Chinese patterns occurred although subtle changes and a looser, free quality in the painting betray the influence of the Persian craftsmen.

In Isfahan, Shah 'Abbas the Great and his successor, Shah 'Abbas II, were responsible for building what must always remain one of the greatest capital cities in the world. Even contemporary European travelers were awed by its magnificence and splendor. The great facades of the mosques, often dating to an earlier period, were sheathed in walls of tiles which were also used to cover the curving surfaces of the great domes and cylindrical minarets. It is known that Shah 'Abbas transferred a large number of Armenians from Julfa, on the River Araks, to the new capital of Isfahan in the early 17th century. These Armenians were settled outside the town across the river, in a suburb called New Julfa, where they prospered as merchants. They had a monopoly of the silk trade, and Armenian agents were sent west as far as the Netherlands and Spain, and east to what are now India and Indonesia. As middlemen, they were responsible for much of the trade between Europe and the Far East. They owned many ships and in their own town of New Julfa built elegant houses and churches. Thirteen of these churches still survive, some built of brick with great onion-shaped domes, which seem to resemble mosques. Inside, the decoration is a mixture of east and west, a perfect testimony to their far-reaching mercantile interests in the 17th century. First, a frieze of tiles with floral and animal motifs in the Persian style; they are however less abstract than the more typical Safavid tiles in Isfahan itself, and even human figures and angels are included in the designs, as well as typically Chinese ornaments. These tiles also incorporate Armenian inscriptions and it has been suggested, partly because of their superior workmanship, that the main tile works in Isfahan were manned by Armenian craftsmen. Certainly the tiles in the churches must have been specially made for them, and it is hardly likely that Muslim workers would have consented to decorate a Christian church. Above these tiles in several churches is a frieze of oil paintings of Biblical scenes in pseudo-Flemish style, which introduces an oddly occidental note. These in turn are surmounted by carved and gilded stucco panels of purely Safavid floral decoration.

In the 18th century, the Turks also began to look westward; a short while after the secret of making porcelain was discovered in Germany, European porcelain began to be exported to Turkey. Fragile little Meissen coffee cups were made for export to the East, cups that were decorated with pseudo-oriental designs developed as a concession to local taste. In the harem quarters of the Seraglio, the old palace of the Ottoman sultans in Istanbul, large quantities of Dutch tiles have been found, their delicate airy patterns forming an elegant background for the pretty inhabitants, but contrasting strangely with the ripe eastern flavor of the rest of the palace decorations.

Just how far cultural ideas travel, and how quickly, and how they develop and change can be seen in a motif used in a certain kind of Turkish carpet, a motif that can, as it happens, be traced to its origins.

The motif began as a small Dutch tile, bearing a landscape scene of a little house and a tree on an island. This tile found its way to the Far East at the end of the 17th century, probably through the intermediary of the Dutch East India Company. In China the design was copied, apparently by some mystified artist who, in trying to cope with this odd scene, changed the perspective of the house and gave to the tree a definite oriental look. This artist also added a typical flowered border. Used on Chinese tiles, the design was exported to the Middle East where it has been found in such places as a mosque near Scutari, the 'Azam Palace in Damascus, a Coptic church in Cairo and the Armenian Cathedral in Jerusalem. In Turkey, Armenian potters copied the design, again making changes, and that version can be seen in many 18th-century churches in the Levant. The final modification was what appears in the Turkish carpets—a design in which the Dutch island and tree have disappeared and only the house and a severely stylized border remain—a design that may have been once a Dutch cottage but is today, after a trip to China and back, unmistakably the Ka'bah, the central shrine of Islam in the Holy City of Mecca.

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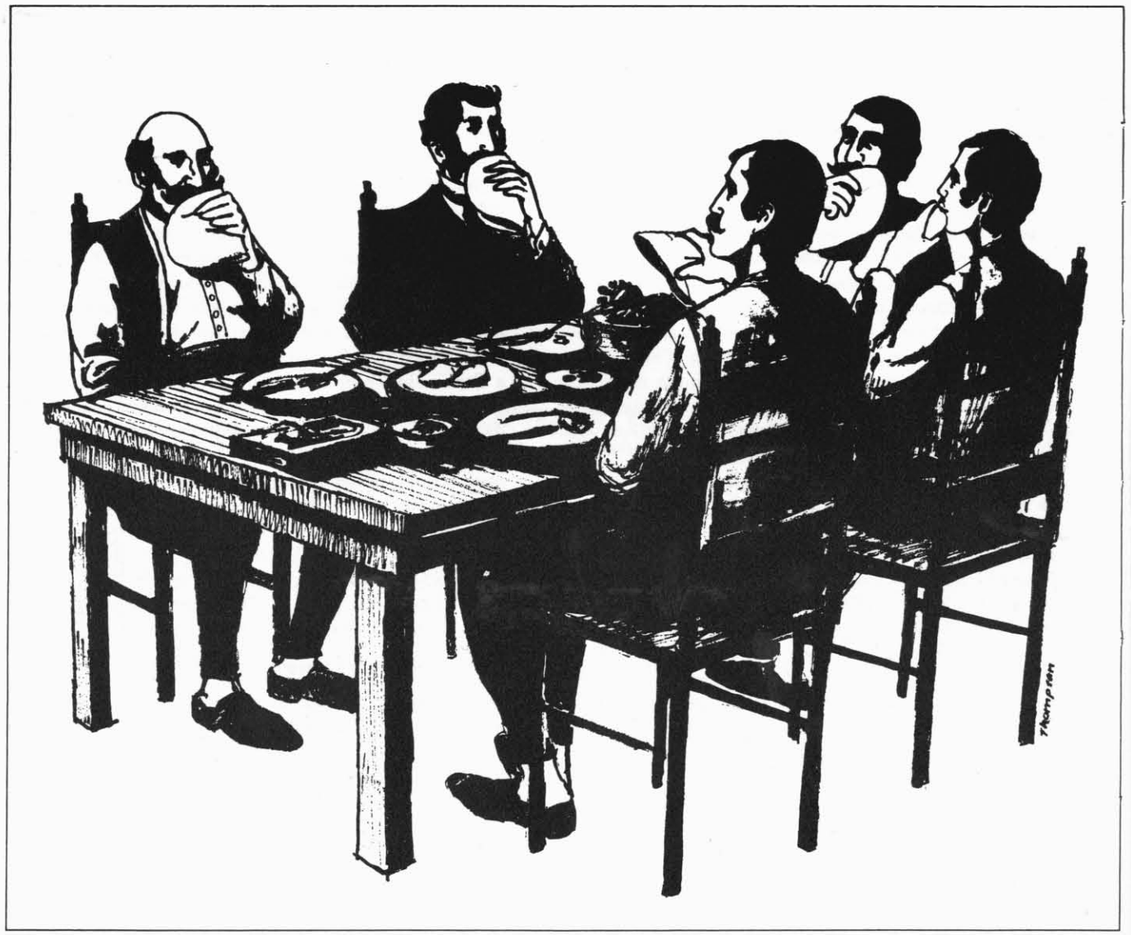
*John Carswell, Associate Professor of Art at the American University of Beirut, is a graduate of the Royal College of Art in London. Before coming to Lebanon he spent four years as an archeological draftsman in Crete, Jordan and Turkey. He is the author of several articles on the applied arts in the Middle East.*

# MANNERS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

BY LEILA SHAHEEN

**"You have descended on your own people and have stepped upon the plains..."**



In Middle East folklore there is the story of the British emissary who accepted an invitation to dine in the Chouf district of Lebanon. In this mountain district, as it happens, the bread is baked in paper-thin discs shaped like long-playing records but twice the diameter. Because it is so large, it is folded several times and left beside the plates. Not knowing this, the emissary mistook his bread for a napkin and placed it on his lap—at which point everyone at the table immediately did the same rather than embarrass him.

The story may be apocryphal; many such tales are. But in view of the traditions and customs that dictate and regulate hospitality and manners in the Middle East it is probably true. In the Middle East guests are most important persons.

Every country has its traditions of hospitality and most countries pride themselves on their friendliness toward strangers. But the traditions of the Arab world go somewhat deeper than elsewhere and for good reasons. They stem from a long hard struggle to survive in hostile environments where human contact was treasured, where the infrequent traveler was the sole source of news and information and where safety hinged directly upon the size and strength of one's family, tribe and clan. Out of that struggle evolved an elaborate code that governed the Arab's most important social relationships—those with his family and those with his guests.

For westerners, to whom family relations are often casual, it is sometimes difficult to understand how close and how important family ties can be. They are so extensive as to bewilder the stranger and there is no better example than the linguistic elaboration of the word "cousin." Whereas there is just one such term in English, there are eight words denoting "first cousin" in Arabic and 16 pertaining to "second cousin," each designed to make it perfectly clear which first cousin is referred to and what the degree of kinship is.

It is confusing too, because not only are there blood relationships, but numerous foster brothers and foster sisters, godchildren and godparents and sometimes even neighbors, each of whom, depending on circumstances, may have a very definite claim upon one's good will and revenues. It is an unending maze made even more confusing by the tradition of teaching young people to call older persons *ammi*, ("my uncle") or *khalti* ("my aunt") as an informal yet respectful way of addressing adults.

To govern these relationships there slowly evolved over the years a code of behavior and manners almost as complex as the family groupings. And it is this combination of complexity and prescribed ritual that leads many Westerners to look upon family ties as impossible burdens and unwarranted intrusions upon privacy and individuality—an understandable view, perhaps, but one that also has another side to it. Members of a large family need never fear the loneliness and insecurity that many experience in the cities of the West. As one writer said: "In spite of the hard life, the Badawin is never in danger of actual starvation, or of dying from want. His *ahl* (family) would never permit this, nor would the system of affording three days' hospitality to all and sundry—such a splendid feature of democratic Arabia—allow of a man reaching such straits. A person who is down and out, without a penny to his name, would in reality be far worse off in London than in Arabia..."

In the desert, however, even the largest families could not have branches everywhere and so there also developed that generous spirit of hospitality that has become world famous, a spirit best expressed by the most common greeting in the Arab World: *ahlan wa sahlan*, short for "you have descended on your own people and have stepped upon the plains," the latter part to signify easy and pleasant traveling and the plenty that rich plains afford.

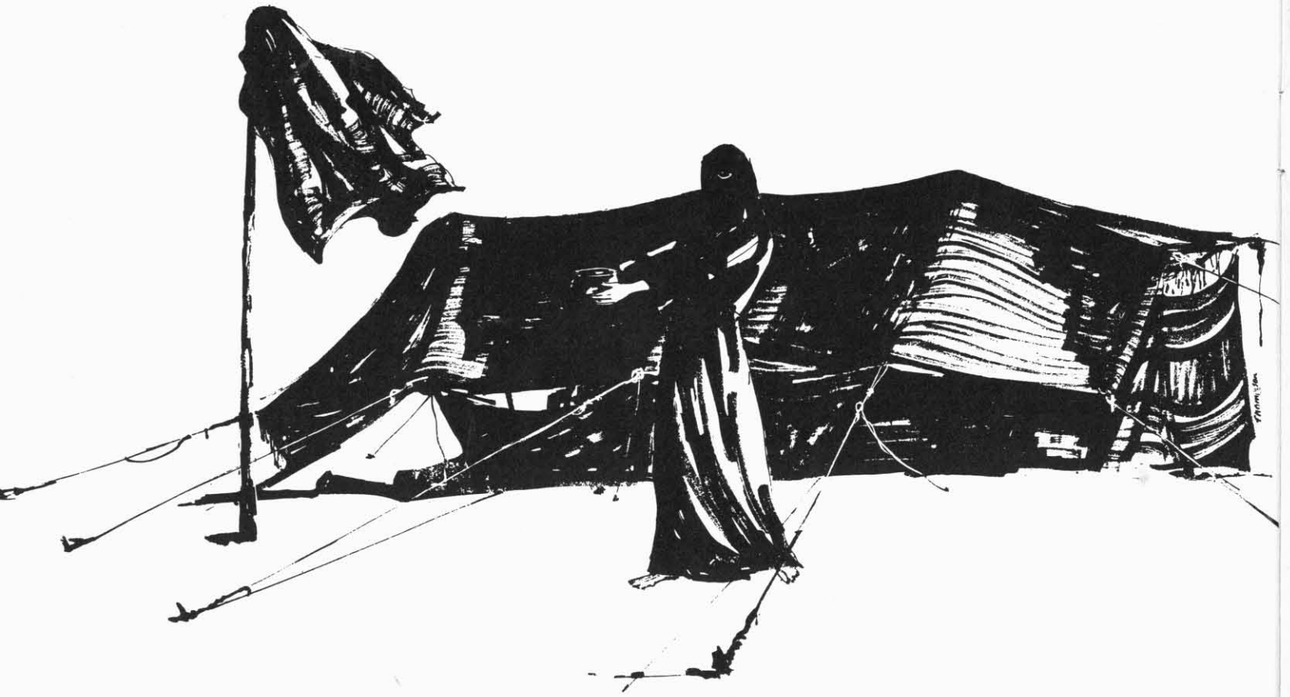
Whether it was in the desert or in a remote mountain village, tradition has always been that every man, rich or poor, will feed and lodge a passing stranger. In the villages of Lebanon, the Church often supported a room for the poor where a traveler could stop at no cost to himself. And every village had at least one family which played the role of host to officials and important guests. Today, of course, much has changed, but visitors still can expect, at least in settled communities, a glass of cold *sharab* (fruit drink) immediately upon arrival and then, later, coffee, unless it happens to be close to mealtime. (Since coffee is believed to curb the appetite, offering it too close to mealtime might be misunderstood to mean that the guest is not welcome to stay for the meal.) If a guest is just stopping for a visit, many hostesses will not offer the coffee too soon as it might be taken as a gesture to speed his departure. For the same reason a traveler is never asked, early in the day, what his business is or when he is planning to leave. The impression that the host must give in his every word and action is that the guest is not only welcome, but welcome to stay indefinitely.

Hospitality is not limited to the way a guest is received in one's home. It includes making his trip easy and helping him, through one's contacts, accomplish his mission if he has one. In the mountain villages of Lebanon the passer-by was expected to help himself in the vineyards and orchards to whatever he could eat. A noted Lebanese author who traveled extensively in Lebanon on muleback some 40 years ago, relates how he was not only entertained royally by friends of friends wherever he stopped, but was also loaded with provisions for the road and supplied with letters to other friends at his next stop where he was sure to find just as hearty a welcome. Today, of course, this is impractical, but in Beirut shopkeepers will still walk with you several blocks to help you find your destination.

In the desert, hospitality has been commonly understood to extend for three full days. Being under a man's roof also means, to the *Badu* (Bedouins), being in their protection. Among the famous incidents in Arab folklore is that of a man who took refuge, unwittingly, in the tent of a shaikh whose son he had just killed. Even under these circumstances the sacred law of protection was observed. Not until three days had passed, at which time the guest was obliged by custom to depart, was the tribe free to go in pursuit and avenge the shaikh's dead son.

The law of protection works both ways. Should a man stop by a certain tribe as its guest, a bond of "bread and salt" is created between them and he becomes honor-bound to offer protection to his host at a later date. Similarly, if a man returns your greeting *assalamu 'alaykum* ("peace be upon you") with the reply *wa 'alaykum as-salam* ("and on you be peace"), it is equivalent to sealing a peace-pact with him; it is as if he had eaten bread and salt or drunk coffee with you: you can count on his protection, and he on yours.

Even women, who normally must stay in the background in the presence of guests, enjoy the prerogative of offering hospitality should a traveler pass their tents while the men are away. The senior woman will come out holding a bowl of *laban* (yoghurt) in her two hands as a sign that the passer-by is welcome to stop and refresh himself. Should the stranger appear to be a distinguished



personage, and this is usually determined by the size of his retinue, the woman will hang one of her gowns on a pole in front of the tent. This is her silent way of inviting him to rest under her roof.

(Oddly enough, a corollary to this custom is practiced in Denmark today. Driving along the Danish countryside one often sees flagpoles in front of the cottages. A pennant raised on the flagpole indicates that the family is at home and happy to receive their friends should they be driving by. When the pennant is down they are either away or wish to be spared an unwelcome intrusion.)

The Arab guest, in return, is bound by custom to spare his would-be host every possible inconvenience. In the desert the *Badu* will light a fire at night to guide the traveler to their tents after a long day's journeying. But should the traveler be within a mile or two of his destination, he will make every effort to get there rather than impose on a willing, but possibly impecunious, host for the night.

The forms of hospitality differ from one part of the Arab world to another, sometimes even within the same country. The elaborateness with which they are observed varies according to the means of the host. But one thing is constant and that is the host's efforts to make the guest comfortable and to make him feel that he has honored the house with his presence.

The guest is always offered the best seat in the house, usually the one farthest from the door or *fi as-sadr*, meaning "at the top of the room." Another place of honor that is reserved for him is at the right of the host, while walking or sitting at table. The guest is accompanied on his departure not only to the door, but often to the gate of the garden or further, where the host repeats his thanks for the visit and farewells until his guest is out of sight. In the city, a good host will not close the door to his home the minute his guest leaves. In fact, he might well accompany him to the elevator or even down to his car. But in any case, he waits at the door until his guest is out of sight.

Respect for the guest is also shown in the way the host receives him and sits in his presence. As in the West, many will put on tie and jacket when the guest arrives instead of receiving him in informal attire. In no case will a host put his feet on his desk in a guest's presence, or point the soles of his shoes at him in home or office. Certain formulas are used before the mention of a topic that is unpleasant or derogatory. Before the mention of death, for example, one says "may it remain far from you." If mention is made of "shoe," "foot" or certain animals in the conversation, they are preceded by *ajallak* or *hashak* ("may you remain far above this topic!").

At table the guest is naturally served first and offered the choicest cuts such as, in the desert, the eye of the sheep, which is considered to be a delicacy. In some areas the host is so attentive that he will not eat until his guests have finished, but will wait on them personally to make sure that they are filled to repletion.

It is important to emphasize that in the Middle Eastern society the intricate laws of precedence in the family group overlap the practices of good guest-host relations. The same patterns apply to those who are older, or of higher rank in the family, as would apply to a guest. A younger person will always stand should an older person enter a room, and the older person is always served first. In a conservative mountain community where these social customs are strictly observed an older man might well refuse to take coffee if it is offered to a young woman first.

Perhaps the most perplexing aspect of Middle East manners to a foreigner is the importance of food. It seems, and rightly too, that the essence of hospitality is the amount and variety of food put before a guest and how well one succeeds in feeding it to him. Some *Badu* pride themselves on their greasy tents as demonstrative of their great hospitality. Since they and their guests wipe the grease off their hands on the flaps of their tents after eating, the amount of grease is an index of the host's generosity. The quantity and variety of courses are usually proportional to the means of the host, but there are always those who will go beyond their means to preserve appearances. One of the more famous incidents involves a man called Hatim Tayy who, on receiving an unexpected guest, killed his only she-camel (a Bedouin's most prized possession) to feed him. His sacrifice became a legend that is repeated even today to describe the ultimate in generosity: *akram min Hatim Tayy* ("more generous than Hatim Tayy").

In accepting food, the guest acts with reticence and reserve. A guest will often refuse the food offered him several times before he finally accepts it. It is not necessarily because he does not want it, but because he is too proud to accept it too readily. It is also by pressing it on him that the host is allowed to show his generosity. Of course, the dilemma arises when this is carried too far—as it often is. Then the guest is literally imposed upon by a host who refuses to take "no" for an answer.

In the Arab world there is a special food for every occasion. Easter has its little cakes filled with minced dates or spiced nutmeats. The month of Ramadan has its fancy dishes and sweets that are indulged in after the day's fast. Guests at a wedding receive small boxes filled with dragées (sugar-coated almonds). A highly spiced pudding known as *maghli* and garnished with almonds, pistachios, walnuts and pine seeds is offered at the birth of a child, and usually for the 40 days following. At celebrations of circumcision rites in Syria a special tiered table, brightly painted and very ornate, is rented for the occasion, and on it is offered a wide and colorful variety of nuts.

candies and preserves. The eve of St. Barbara's (the Halloween of the East) has its special pudding of boiled, sweetened wheat garnished with raisins and nuts. A sheep is usually killed when a roof is raised in Jordan, to offer thanksgiving and to provide a feast for all the relatives and neighbors who lend a hand. And Epiphany has its deep-fried *zalabieh* and *awwamat* drenched in syrup.

One of the more fascinating spreads, pleasing both to the eye and the appetite is the Lebanese *maza*.

A *maza* is composed of a number of small dishes (anywhere from four to forty) containing hors d'œuvres that are nibbled on along with the popular anis-flavored grape essence called *arak*. A *maza* will include nuts, tart fruits, salted seeds, any number of cheeses, salads, marinated bone marrow, cooked and raw liver, cucumbers, tomatoes, other greens, a whole gamut of vegetables cooked in olive oil (foods cooked in olive oil are more delicious cold and one day old, so leftovers are perfect for the purpose), *tabbouleh* and *kubbeh* (specialties with a cracked wheat base), pickles, olives, seafood, preserves and so on according to a hostess's ingenuity and flair. It is a wonderful social institution that at its best goes on for hours.

To the Western world in which social customs and manners are constantly moving toward simple, more natural levels, the elaborate structure of manners in the Middle East seems sometimes unnecessarily cumbersome. Manners, however, make a distinct contribution to civilization. As the Rev. Daniel Bliss, the founder of the American University of Beirut, wrote of life in Lebanon in 1856:

"... if civilization takes account of an elaborate etiquette covering speech as well as conduct, delicately adjusting the law of precedence, furnishing the lowliest peasant with a stereotyped phrase, always polite, and often poetical, for every possible event or act—a birth, a death, a marriage, eating, drinking, bathing, haircutting, the wearing of a new coat or gown—surely the Lebanese possessed a highly complicated civilization."

Dr. Bliss's observations may not hold true today as much as they did 100 years ago. The speed, efficiency and impersonality of modern business practices have infected the conduct of affairs in the Middle East as elsewhere. Yet manners in the Middle East still reflect the spirit described by Dr. Bliss. Coffee, for example, or the manner in which it is served, is still a tradition rather than just a drink, a symbol with its own elaborate etiquette which suggests the whole complex structure of manners in the Middle East and with subtle nuances that vary from one region to another.

To the Bedouin, for example, the ritual of coffee has been and to an extent still is part and parcel of his most prized tradition. Preparing it is a ceremony which means that the guest is honored and welcome. The further south in Saudi Arabia and tribal Iraq and Jordan—the more it becomes a solemn duty performed by the host himself, unless he is a prince, in which case it is delegated to a trusted servant who stands high in his master's esteem.

The coffee beans are first roasted over an open fire in a long-handled iron skillet. After they are cooled they are crushed in an ornate wooden mortar with a long-handled pestle known as *mihbaj*. The pounding is an art in itself and makes a very exciting rhythm when the pestle is manipulated by an expert. The saying "So and So pounds coffee from morning till night" is a way of describing his generosity and the great number of guests he entertains.

The strong Arab coffee is served in tiny cups without handles which the guest holds between the thumb and forefinger of his right hand and into which is poured a sip at a time. The host usually drinks first as a sign that it is not poisoned. One of the inviolable rules of this ritual is that the host holds the coffee pot in his left hand and pours into the cups which he holds stacked in his right and passes around among his guests according to seniority. A guest is allowed to take as many cups as he likes, but good manners usually dictate that he stop after the third or fourth. A fifth may be pressed on him if he is an important person. In the course of the visit he will have the opportunity to take a second and third round. When he wants to indicate that he has had enough he shakes the cup with five or six rapid little rotations of the wrist.

In Kuwait it is a tradition that a casual visitor, who drops in on the *majlis* or morning reception of a shaikh or important merchant, will be given a round of coffee on arrival and another about 10 minutes later. Then scented wood, placed on top of some lighted charcoal, is passed around in a hand censer. This is a signal that he should take leave, thus the common Arab saying *bakhir wa ruh* or *aqub el-udh gaud*, both meaning "after the incense, it is time to go."

In settled areas it is mostly Turkish coffee which is served, always in small cups. It is brewed in varying styles and with different degrees of sweetness. A good hostess still takes real pride in the quality of the coffee that is offered in her home. In public places or business offices you can order it to your taste. It can be *murrah* (bitter), *'arrihah* (barely sugared), *sukkar alil* (little sugar), *maghlieh* (well-boiled), or *mazboutah* (just right).

But whatever your preference and no matter where you are, in office or home, among the rich or humble, in a remote village or the bustle of a town office, you can always count on a cup of coffee, the one unfailing sign that the guest is still esteemed and honored in the Arab world.

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*Leila Shaheen was born in Lebanon, is a graduate of the American University of Beirut and has traveled extensively in Europe and the United States. She is the former editor of* al-Kulliyah, *the A.U.B. alumni magazine, and has contributed to other Middle East publications.*