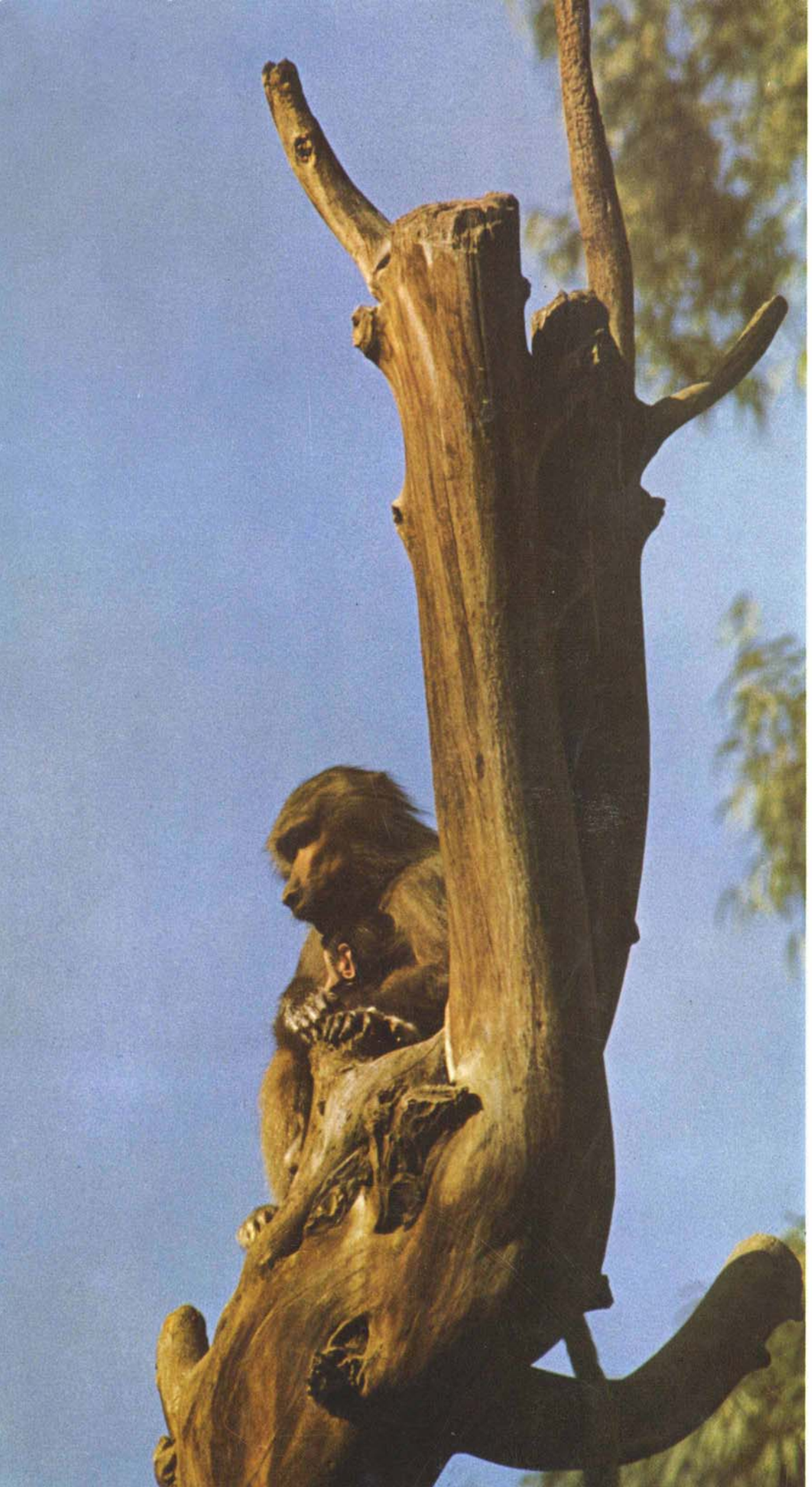

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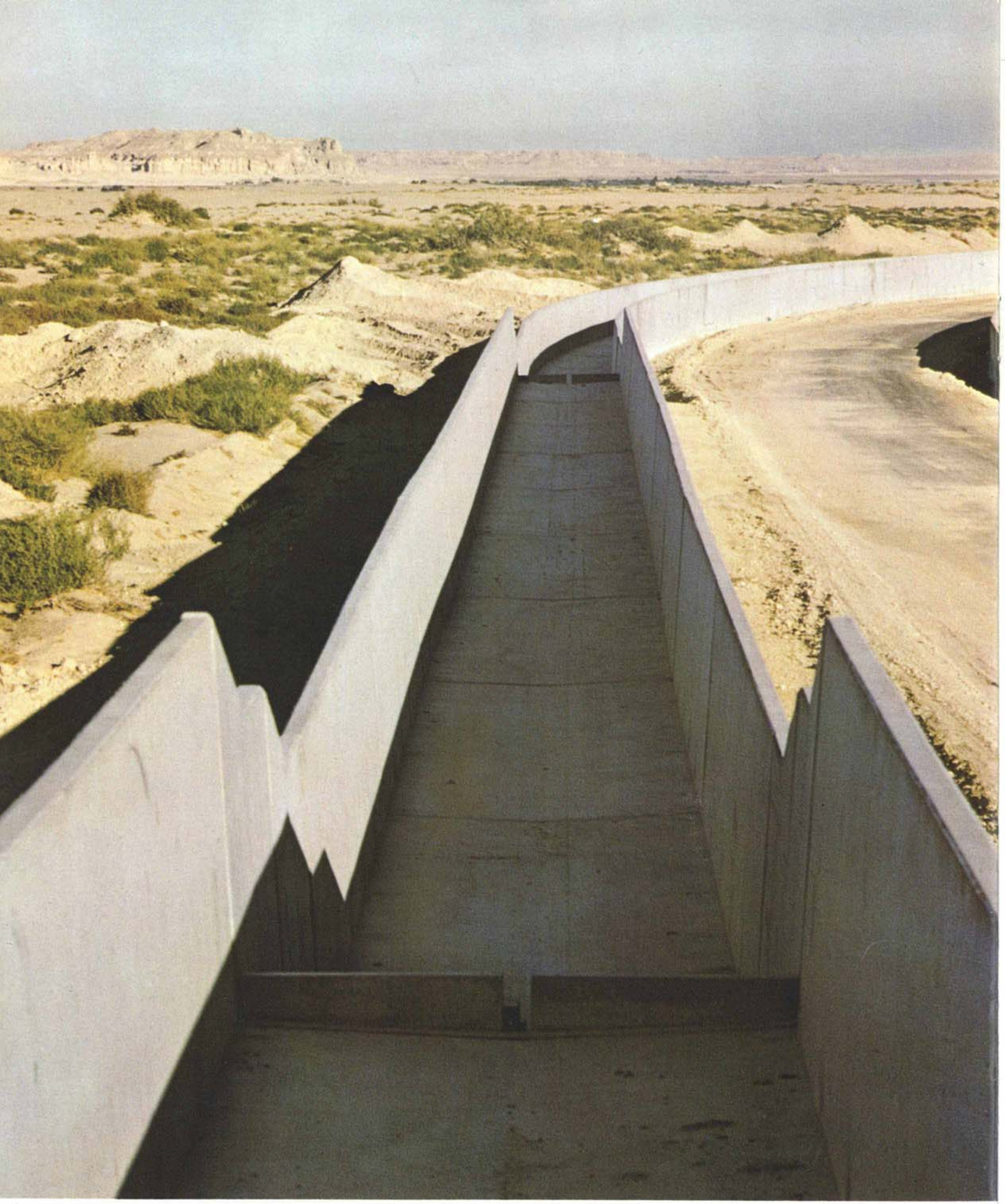
NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1970

A ZOO STORY



One day soon water will surge through this canal, part of a vast new irrigation and drainage web spread across 50,000 acres of Saudi Arabia's ancient al-Hasa oasis to make it bloom again. Story on page 22.

ARAMCO WORLD magazine

VOL. 21 NO. 6 PUBLISHED BIMONTHLY NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1970

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Cover: When photographer Tor Eigeland went on camera safari to the Cairo Zoo he journeyed to a land where animal pictures go back to the pharaohs. But in this photograph of sand, shadows, cage and camouflage, he stumbled on a secret older than that—what a tiger's stripes are all about. A Zoo Story begins on page 4.

BY PHILIP K. HITTI / DRAWINGS BY PENNY WILLIAMS

THE FIRST BOOK

"The beauty of a man is the eloquence of his tongue."

Few people in history seem to have been as susceptible to the influence of the word, spoken or written, as the "sons of Arabic," the Arabs' favorite designation of themselves. It was only in the field of verbal expression that pre-Islamic Arabians distinguished themselves. The extent to which they developed their language is surprising; it was out of proportion to the development of their political, social, and economic institutions. How illiterate camel breeders living in scattered tribes, with no political cohesion to unite them, could develop a refined, richly worded means of expression remains a mystery.

Linguistic development culminated in rhythmical, usually metrical, composition known as rhymed prose, or poetry. The ability to create such composition was the Bedouin's only cultural asset. Typical Semites, those early Arabians neither created nor promoted any art other than the linguistic. If the Indo-European Greek gloried in his sculpture and architecture and the Hebrew in his Psalm, the Arabian gloried in his ode *(qasidah)*...

Islam made full use of this linguistic phenomenon and psychological peculiarity. If Christianity's focus centered on a personality, Islam's was on a book.

The book is entitled *Qur'an* (Koran). Etymologically the term simply means "reading"; theologically it means the word of God incarnate. It is eternal and uncreated.

The Arabic copy that a Muslim uses today is an exact replica of a heavenly prototype, dictated word by word to the Prophet Muhammad. "And lo, it is in the Mother of the Book in Our presence, exalted, wise" (43:3); "Nay, but it is a glorious Koran on a guarded tablet" (85:21-2; cf. 56:76-7).

This metaphysical concept of heavenly prototypes did not originate in Islam. It belongs to a cycle of thought that can be traced back to the dawn of history. The Sumerians, originators of the Euphratean civilization, believed that their temples on earth had counterparts in the sky. Their Semitic successors in the area picked up the idea. The Hebrews personified Wisdom, made her a goddess, and viewed her as existing by Yahweh's side from the beginning (Prov. 8:22 et seq.). Plato correlated the concept of "idea" with "being" as the permanent, self-existing, transcendent entity. It became the perfect model for the imperfect copies we see around us. Hence such expressions as "the ideal teacher," as if somewhere there existed or exists a perfect teacher of which this one is a replica. In his Revelation (21:10 et seq.) John the Divine saw a heavenly Jerusalem, which he described in detail. We still sing of this heavenly Jerusalem in our Sunday services.

In Christianity the word of God (Logos) becomes Christ (John 1:1); in Islam it becomes the Koran. This makes the Koran more than a Bible of its religion. It makes it a participant in a way similar to the host in the Roman Catholic Church. "None but the purified shall touch it" (56:78). An old-fashioned Muslim goes through the legal ablution before he opens the book. He never puts it beneath another book, never reads it except in a reverential tone and posture. If he is a book dealer, he won't sell the book. He bestows a copy on the would-be-purchaser, who in turn bestows a specified sum of money—an act of mutual bestowal, but not a business transaction.

The Bible, as the word indicates, is a library of books written in different languages, by different men, in different places, at different times. The period covers about eight hundred and fifty years. The Koran was produced in a few years by one man who was living in one area. The Bible is inspired; the Koran is dictated. Any quotation from the Koran can be introduced with "saith Allah." Biblical text has been subjected to editorial and emendatory treatment, but not the Koranic. The Koran itself sets forth the few permissible variant readings. In its phonetic and graphic reproduction, as well as in its linguistic form, the Koranic text is identical with its celestial original. No Muslim, whatever his native tongue may be, should use the Koran except in its Arabic original. No followers of Muhammad, other than the Kemalist Turks, are known to have violated that rule. A paraphrase of the text is permissible for the benefit of a non-Arab, but that is not the Koran.

Without the benefit of a computer every word in this book has been counted (77,934), every letter (323,621), and every verse (6,236). In length the Koran is no more than four-fifths that of the New Testament, but in use it far exceeds it. Not only is it the basis of the religion, the canon of ethical and moral life, but also the textbook in which the Muslim begins his study of language ... Its literary influence has been incalculable and enduring. The first prose book in Arabic, it set the style for future products. It kept the language uniform. So whereas today a Moroccan uses a dialect different from that used by an Arabian or an Iraqi, all write in the same style.

The style of the Koran is God's style. It is different — incomparable and inimitable. This is basically what constitutes the "miraculous character" *(ijaz)* of the Koran. Of all miracles it is the greatest: if all men and jinn were to collaborate, they could not produce its like (17:90). The Prophet was authorized to challenge his critics to produce something comparable (10:39). The challenge was taken up by more than one stylist in Arabic literature—with a predictable conclusion. The relevance of Muhammad's "illiteracy" to this argument becomes obvious.

In a formal reading the Koran is chanted—reflecting the influence of the liturgical reading of the Syrian Christian Scripture. But Islamic chanting *(tajwid)* has been developed into a science and an art. With chanting, the beauty of the Koranic style, the charm of its cadence, the music of its rhyme, and the sequence of its rhythm are heightened. Most if not all of that artistic merit and emotional appeal is lost by translation.

The first translation into a foreign language was into Latin (ca. 1141); it was sponsored by Peter the Venerable, abbot of Cluny (France), and intended to refute the beliefs of Islam. Another work of the abbot was entitled *The Execrable Sect of the Saracens*. For five centuries the only translation was in Latin. In 1649 the first English rendition appeared in London—*The Alcoran of Mahomet*, "translated out of Arabique into French ... and newly Englished, for the satisfaction of all that desire to look into the Turkish vanities." Other early versions in European languages were introduced by equally condemnatory statements. The first English translation from the original (by George Sale) did not appear until 1734. Writing in 1840, Thomas Carlyle, whose choice of Muhammad as the hero-prophet indicates special respect, described his holy book as "a wearisome confused jumble, crude, incondite." In truth the Koran is a literary monument of a culture and should be studied in the light of the religious, political, social, and economic aspects of that culture.

Philip K. Hitti, who retired in 1954 from Princeton University, where he was Professor of Semitic Literature and Chairman of the Department of Oriental Languages, is the author of many books, including the classic History of the Arabs.

A ZOO STORY

BY JOHN BRINTON/PHOTOGRAPHED BY TOR EIGELAND

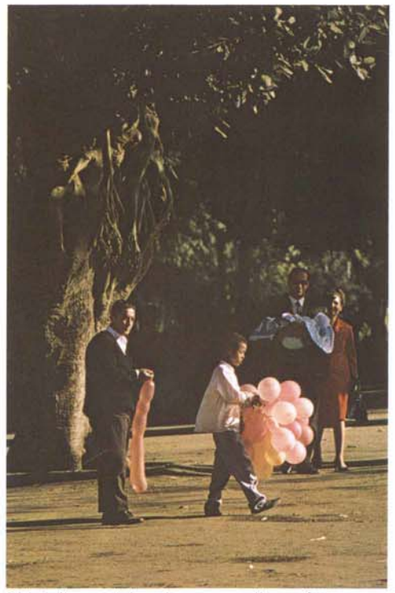
In a pasha's palace garden, Cairo Zoo introduces boys to beast.

During half a century I have visited the Cairo Zoo countless times. My father took me there for the first time in 1922. My last visit was at Christmas time 1969, when my daughter and I spent an enchanting morning visiting old friends amid an aura of calm and contentment quite at odds with the troubled state of affairs in Egypt and the Arab world.

It was during this visit that I began to wonder how such a splendid zoo had come into existence in an area where animals are not overly popular. To find an answer I consulted a short history of zoology in Egypt by Dr. Lewis Keimer, a noted German Egyptologist, who had, conveniently, included a section on the Cairo Zoo.

According to Dr. Keimer animal collecting in Egypt dates back to the 5th Dynasty (2500 B.C.). Wild animals were captured, probably in connection with some religious cult, and kept in the sacred temple compounds. There is a bas-relief at Sakkara which shows two lions in strong wooden boxes, dragged by slaves. A third slave follows with two gazelles in a sling over his shoulder.

The Pharaoh Thutmose III (1504-1450 B.C.), was also interested in flora and fauna, and instructed his armies to bring local specimens back from Syria. These can be seen at Karnak in a series of bas-reliefs known as "the botanical garden of Karnak." Another pharaoh, Akhenaton (1372-1354 B.C.), had a large park of rare plants and animals at his new capital at Tel-el-Amarna and it also seems likely that Ptolemaic rulers of Egypt (332 B.C.—A.D. 30) had a zoological garden in Alexandria. It is certain that they assembled menageries and



Bright balloons, a baby, a banyan tree: all part of a zoo story.

displayed them during victory processions.

Until the 4th century A.D., animals were also collected and kept by religious cults. Then, under the Roman Emperor Theodosius, a Christian, the cults were abolished, the temples destroyed, and the animals moved to special parks near Christian churches. They were seen and reported on by Christian pilgrims during the 5th century.

In the Middle Ages the new masters of Egypt continued to take a great interest in catching and taming wild animals, especially the cheetah, which was used for hunting. Maqrizi, the Arab historian, gives a detailed account of the palace gardens and the menagerie kept by the Tulinid Prince Khumarawayh (A.D. 883-895).

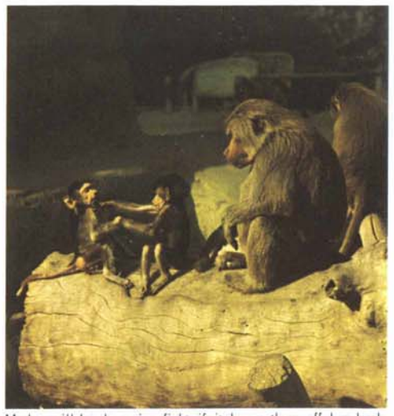
According to European travelers who came to Egypt during the Circassian Mamelukes' rule (1382-1517), and later during the Turkish rule (from 1517), lions, elephants and giraffes were caged in the menageries attached to the palaces. In 1436 Pero Tafur, a Spaniard, saw seven elephants and a "girafe." Some 20 years later Roberto da Sanseverino, a Milanese count, relates that he saw the "girafe" but that all the elephants were dead except for one which had been sent as a present to the Sultan of Turkey. Andre Thevet mentions that in 1556 the Pasha of Egypt kept a large variety of animals in a castle overlooking Cairo. One of the curiosities was a rhinoceros which he describes as being a large animal with four feet and a horn on his nose—a great enemy of the elephant.

During the Napoleonic occupation in 1798, a Frenchman made an attempt to gather together all the animals in the possession of the Mamelukes, and place them in a park. By the time Muhammad Ali (see page 18) emerged as the ruler of modern Egypt, the menagerie—one weary elephant, and a few threadbare lions chained to the entrance of the Citadel—was "pretty wretched," as one writer said. Over the years, more and more travelers mention seeing a wider selection of animals. During the last years of Muhammad Ali's reign an American traveler from Buffalo related that, "coming from a visit to the Citadel I was told that a fine lion from Dongala (Sudan) was to be seen, and I stopped to take a look at his majesty. It was an enormous red lion, a fine specimen."

About 1850, Maxime du Camp, the first photographer to come to Egypt, mentions that Abbas Pasha, son of Muhammad Ali, had transferred his father's collection from the Citadel to some wonderful new gardens at Shoubra and that the chief display was an enormous elephant, chained to a tree. Some years later, an Englishman, John Gadsby, reported that this same elephant had been transported to Alexandria. That same year the sad news was reported by a German, A.E. Brehm, that the said elephant had been drowned in Lake Mariotis. How, we shall never know, but it is interesting that early travelers have enabled us in their reports to follow the life and death of an elephant!

During the reign of Sa'id Pasha (1854-1863) the first serious effort to establish public parks in Alexandria and Cairo began, but the project was completed by Ismail Pasha (1863-1879), the extravagant impressario responsible for the grand opening of the Suez Canal (*Aramco World*, September-October, 1969). It was on Gezira, a Nile island owned by Ismail, that Cairo's first public garden was planted. It included a small zoological garden and an aquarium built in the form of a grotto, and streams of running water pumped up from the Nile watered it all. The aquarium exists till this day.

Officially, however, the Cairo Zoo did not come into being until Wilfred E. Jennings-Bramly was offered the job of creating a new zoological garden at Giza. Major Jennings-Bramly, who had come out to Egypt to serve as private secretary to the Khedive Tewfik, told me shortly before his death what he remembered concerning his work in founding the Cairo Zoo.



Mother will let the twins fight if it keeps them off her back.

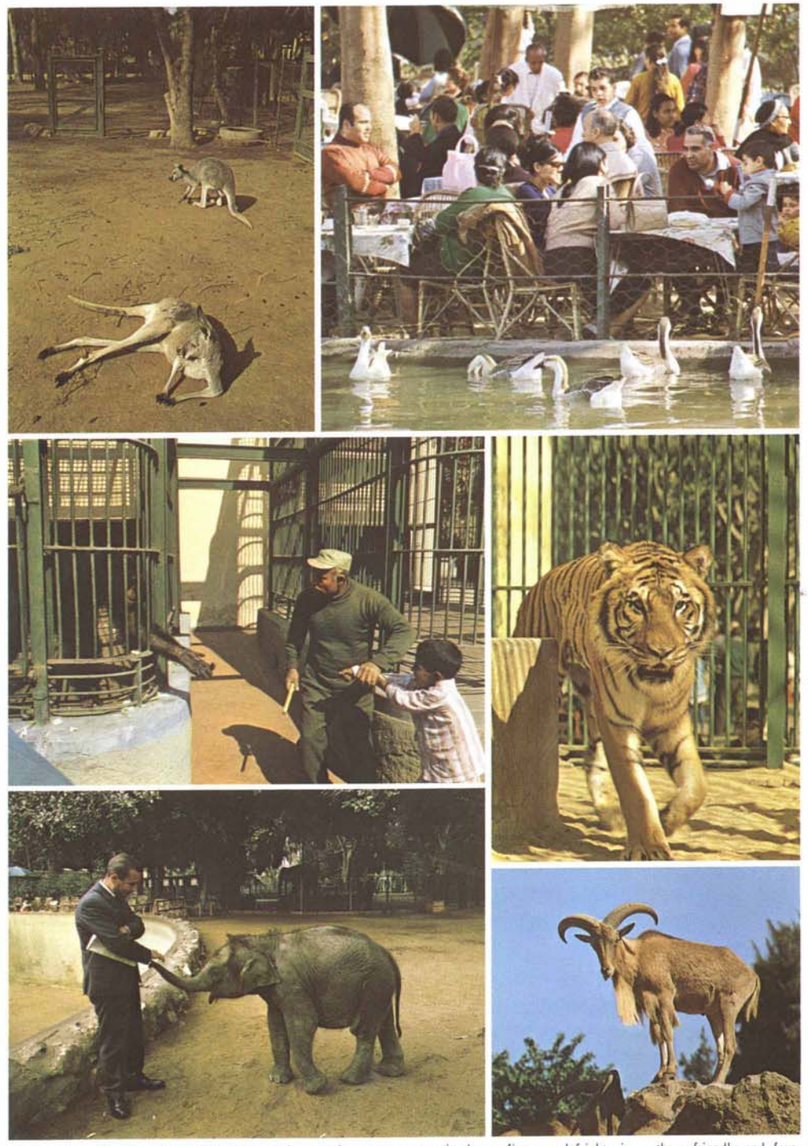
The site chosen for the zoo was the garden of an old palace of Ismail Pasha's, and Jennings-Bramly immediately proposed to divide the gardens into two large enclosures, bordered by high railings, with a path down the center. In one enclosure carnivorous animals could roam at will, and in the other the herbivorous. Had the plan worked it would have anticipated London's Whipsnade Zoo plan by years, but it had to be shelved when furious Egyptians accused him of "caging" them, while allowing the animals to run free.

One of the first wild animals to arrive was a lion from the Sudan, in a wooden cage so small it gave him no room in which to turn around. He was eventually transferred to a large iron cage, the first of its kind in Egypt, and subsequently developed an affectionate regard for his keeper. Every time he saw him the lion would come to the bars to be petted and scratched and the young man obliged. The lion fully repaid these kindnesses when the keeper was called up for his military service. The lion refused to eat and the keeper was promptly exempted from service and returned to the zoo.

Another early favorite was a Russian wolf which seemed large and fierce, but was in actual fact quite tame. The wolf was very useful when Jennings-Bramly wished to clear the garden. He simply let the wolf out of his cage and let him run through the gardens. He "cleared the people out in no time," Major Jennings-Bramly chuckled.

Major Jennings-Bramly lived in an old 500-room, 20 million-franc palace built by Ismail to house his harem, and which was later used to house Egyptian antiquities before the present museum was built. Jennings-Bramly found it large and delightful, except for one problem: no Egyptian servant would remain there at night. They believed that at night "the ghosts of all Ismail's murdered wives went out of the palace and hurried to one of the huge, iron-gated entrances where carriages awaited them, and drove them off." For six months Jennings-Bramly lived alone in the palace at night, without harm, but still without servants. Then a friend came to visit and when no harm came to him either, it was gradually felt that the ghosts had been buried.

Animals—and visitors—soon began to arrive at the zoo in great numbers. And Major Jennings-Bramly, whose knowledge



Kangaroos, ducks, apes, tigers, pachyderms and mountain goats; some animals are fierce and frightening, others friendly and free.

of zoology was limited, was only too happy to turn over the direction of the zoo to a professional, Major Stanley Flower. Flower was only 20 when he was appointed director of the Zoological Gardens of Giza, but it was he who deserves the credit for creating and organizing the scientific institution that still exists today. By carefully selecting and preserving a great variety of foreign animals, reptiles and birds, and by developing unique settings for their display, Major Flower made it one of world's most famous zoos. Flower also pioneered today's preservation movement by defending game in Egypt and Sudan. He also fought for and saved such valuable insect-eating birds as the lovely buff-backed herons, which had been reduced, at one time, to a few colonies. Today they can be seen by thousands all over Egypt.

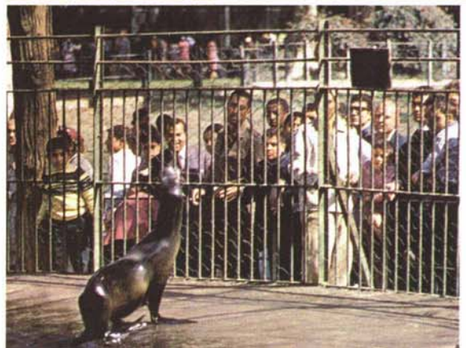
As I was musing about all that during that Christmas vacation in 1969 my daughter had guided me through the old turnstile and down some steps into the gardens where gorgeous red, green and white parrots sat arrogantly on large, high perches amid a colorful array of flowers. Birds are everywhere in the Cairo Zoo and it is often difficult to tell the wild ones from the permanent residents. Not far from the entrance is a huge wire cage where vultures, eagles and other birds of prey sit on tree trunks and branches erected inside the cage, monsters, evil-looking scavengers, with little to scavenge except the offal thrown to them by their keepers which they tear to bits with their great hooked talons.

Further on, there are more pleasant birds, storks and the dignified but comic secretary birds, buff-backed herons, a colony of flamingos in a shallow pond, ducks, geese, and swans.

Among the nicest aspects of the zoo are the superb trees from all over the world raising their branches toward the sky on all sides, a green paradise of leaves through which the sun shines in glittering blades of light onto the shadowed ground.

All around us was a great variety of people. Egyptians of all classes. Students in earnest groups led by their teachers, government officials and their families, workmen, soldiers, fellaheen, Bedouins, the bread seller with his basket of seed-encrusted rings balanced on his head.

The sidewalks in the zoo are laid out in



Big cats, hippos, rhinos, seals and some mischievous monkeys.

intricate designs of red, white and black pebbles—like mosaics. This was originally the work of Italian artists imported by Khedive Ismail, but the tradition and work was maintained up to 1933, as one dated and inscribed design testified. Unfortunately, newer walks are made of cement.

Bordering the paths and scattered among the animal enclosures is a profusion of charming, sometimes grotesque pagodas, kiosks, gazebos and belvederes. Two hills near the hippopotamus lake are joined by a miniature suspension bridge under which flows an artificial river where enormous carp laze about between tall tufts of papyrus and giant water lilies. And nearby is a special pool enclosed by a high fence where the crocodiles, once the emblem of the Egyptian kingdom and even today a special creature, live on a small island. They lie so still we thought they were dead until a keeper threw them a bit of meat.

At the heart of any zoo, of course, are the animals, and the Cairo Zoo is splendidly endowed with animals. There are any number of fortunate gazelles, antelopes and zebras that, for a coin, the obliging keepers will let the children feed. And, of course, hippopotami, in a lake filled with water straight from the Nile. And lions and tigers and other big cats in a special building where keepers tempt them to spring against the bars and roar with anger, to the terrified delight of children clinging firmly to mama and papa's hands. People living in the neighborhood of the zoo hear them roaring sometimes during the night.

The most unlikely animals in semi-tropical Cairo are polar bears. They live in a large cage in a part of the zoo where the sun doesn't penetrate and where a shower runs permanently from the ceiling of the cage to keep them cool. On hot summer days they appear cooler than the spectators!

But the primates are always the main attraction, especially the colony of baboons in a sunken pit ringed with tables and chairs where visitors can sit, drink coffee, and observe the communal life at their feet. It's always interesting and amusing, and little goes on without the knowledge and approval of the chief baboon. He usually sits aloof, disdainfully watching his charges frolic about the pit, interfering only when there is misbehavior, and then with quick, severe punishment. For the Egyptians, young and old, who sit fascinated for hours, it's an action-packed show.

Next door is a tame elephant which the children can ride, an ostrich which pulls a little cart, and a huge tortoise which can carry a small child or two on its back. In former times it was a gay sight to see little Egyptian boys, their small red tarbooshes on the backs of their heads, riding the tortoises.

The reptile house is new and contains all that is mysterious, frightening and poisonous: Egyptian and Indian cobras, a sleepy boa constrictor digesting his once-a-month meal, non-reptiles such as scorpions and giant spiders. There is also the deadly Egyptian sand viper, its head scarcely visible against the sand it has burrowed into, as it coldly watches white mice scampering about the cage oblivious to the danger that awaits them.

We always finish our tour at a delightful "tea island," on an artificial lake connected to the mainland by a wooden bridge. Here you can sit beneath the trees at a table by the water's edge and watch ducks making perfect landings almost at your feet. Many of these ducks are wild visitors from abroad, as the bands on their legs testify. They mingle freely with the other ducks, swans and geese and show no fear, eating the crumbs we offer them out of our hands.

An island café is a pleasant, shady spot to end a visit to the zoo.

For me the visit brought back, as always, a sense of change. As I looked around at the thousands of Egyptians lying contentedly on the grass, sitting on benches, watching children play or listen to their transistors, I remembered when it was a quiet, very orderly place, greener, more tidy—and very dull. Today there is more disorder, more dust and untidiness, but more fun all around—a welcome legacy from Sa'id Pasha, and his British and Egyptian successors.

John Brinton, a frequent contributor, spent his childhood in Alexandria and spent many hours at the zoo which is the subject of this article.

How to win friends and...

STAMP OUT DEFICITS!

BY ROBERT OBOJSKI

Stamps from the author's collection.

Some familiar household names for your collection: Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, Ras al-Khaimah, Dubai, Ajman, Fujeira, Umm al-Qiwain. Household names? Yes, if there's a philatelist in the house. Since they first started issuing their own postage stamps in 1963 and 1964, the seven Trucial States have attracted the attention and enthusiasm of stamp collectors around the world—and I do mean around the world. Stamp issues from these tiny Arabian Gulf shaikhdoms grace front windows in shops everywhere—Waterloo, Iowa and Meadville, Pennsylvania, as well as New York, London and Tokyo.

There was a time when these seven seafaring states tucked into that upsweep of the Arabian Peninsula known as the Trucial Coast paid their way with piracy. And many today have begun to collect substantial incomes from recent oil discoveries. But in between, during the years after the British Navy moved in and before the discovery of oil, the Trucial States, as well as a handful of other shaikhdoms, protectorates and republics scattered along the east and south coasts of the Peninsula, hit upon the idea of helping to balance their budgets by issuing stamps for sale to collectors. As one wag put it: "They decided to just stamp out deficits!"

Most of the stamps are designed and printed under contract in Europe or Britain. To confirmed purists, such stamps, apparently issued with big-spending collectors in mind rather than post offices, are not quite cricket. On the other hand these stamps are all officially recognized postal issues which can be used to mail letters and which are regularly described and illustrated in the world's stamp journals. With few exceptions they are listed by standard catalogues such as "Stanley Gibbons Postage Stamp Catalogue" (London), and "Scott's Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue" and "Minkus New World Wide Stamp Catalogue" (New York). More to the

point, they are also among the most handsome, interesting and artistic specimens available.

The fact that the Trucial States are in Arabia doesn't prevent them from adopting themes as far removed from the Arabian Gulf as —well, the moon, to cite just one example. In fact, the outlook of the various postal departments seems to be the more unlikely the subject the brighter the stamp.

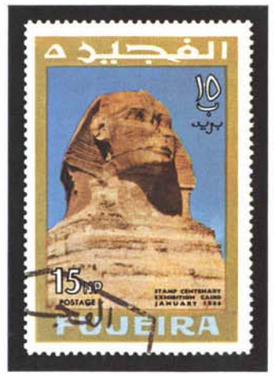
America, for example, is not exactly a neighbor of the Trucial States, nor are its Middle East policies altogether popular there. Yet themes from the American scene recur with surprising frequency, such as Ajman's 1969 "Champions of Sport" issue. This series portrays six U.S. Hall of Fame major league baseball players: Honus Wagner, Joe DiMaggio, Ty Cobb, Stan Musial, George Sisler and Babe Ruth. Like many of the new issues of the Arab world, the vignettes on these stamps are based upon actual photographs.

Even more popular are the Kennedys. Stamps bearing portraits of President John F. Kennedy have been issued by a score of Arab countries, of course, but Ajman's 1970 set, consisting of two, three and ten-ris values, bear color portraits of the three Kennedy brothers: Senator Robert F., President John F., and Senator Edward "Ted" Kennedy. Sharjah has also issued Kennedy stamps, a Kennedy memorial series which was issued on November 22, 1964, portraying the late President with the Statue of Liberty in the background.

The same year Sharjah released a set of three airmail stamps to mark the opening of the New York World's Fair of 1964-65. The one-riyal value, measuring no less than three and a half by one and three quarter inches, has a panoramic view of the New York skyline as seen from lower Manhattan. Dubai also commemorated the opening of the New York World's Fair with the issuance of six stamps in 1964, all featuring the Unisphere, symbol of the fair, and joining panoramas of New York's skyline with views of Dubai's harbor.

On the other side of the Peninsula, the Yemen Arab Republic has marked America's space achievements on a number of stamp issues, including a "moon landing" set in 1965 (four years before the U.S. actually achieved this feat), and an issue released in the same year citing President Kennedy's role as staunch advocate of the space program.

Still more unusual than the varied stamps with American themes are the numerous Arab issues which portray the works of some of the world's greatest artists and which have attracted worldwide attention among collectors. Writers have said before that stamps might sometimes be considered as miniature works of art (Aramco World, May-June 1966), but several Arab shaikhdoms have taken it quite literally. Umm al-Qiwain issued a 1968 set of stamps inscribed with



the self-portraits of seven classic painters: El Greco, Henri Rousseau, Titian, Goya, Rubens, Hogarth, and Modligiani.

Nor has classic Middle Eastern art been forgotten. Fujeira in 1966 released a series of eight stamps featuring ancient Egyptian treasures, in honor of the successful international effort to save the ancient and magnificent monuments at Abu Simbel from inundation by waters backed against the new Aswan Dam.

Further south, on the Arabian Sea, the Kathiri State of Seiyun, formerly a part of the British-controlled Aden Protectorate, has produced art stamps which have particularly caught the attention of philatelists. Kathiri State's Winston Churchill series shows the great World War II leader at work at his easel, as well as examples of his water colors, and a 1968 series of eight stamps features works by various world artists, including George Bellows (the only American in the group), who is represented by his famous painting of two boxers, "Stag at Sharkey's."

Both the Yemen Arab Republic and the Kingdom of Yemen have produced a variety of excellent art stamps, with the former releasing a 1968 series showing a number of notable paintings by Peter Paul Rubens, the Flemish artist. In 1967, the Kingdom of Yemen issued a six-stamp Rembrandt souvenir sheet in connection with the "Amphilex" philatelic exhibition held at Amsterdam in that year. The souvenir sheet is remarkable, since the stamp designers adhered very closely to the colors Rembrandt himself used in executing the six original paintings.

Robert Obojski, who recently revised Fred Reinfeld's "Stamp Collectors' Handbook" *(Sterling Publishing Co., New York, 1970), has been the regular stamp columnist for the* Christian Science Monitor, *and has contributed to many philatelic publications, including* "Linn's Weekly Stamp News," "The Minkus Stamp Journal," *and* "The Gibbons-Whitman Stamp Monthly."

Ali's Navy

BY JAMES HORGEN

Most accounts of 19th-century Red Sea history tell how Egypt's ambitious Muhammad Ali Pasha was assigned by his nominal sovereign, the Ottoman Sultan, to put down a challenge to his authority in the Hijaz, how he raised an army, invaded Arabia and eventually forced the leader of the insurgents to capitulate—after they had retreated to their central-Arabian stronghold at ad-Dir'iyah—in September 1818. What they don't tell is how at the same time and without essential materials, skilled shipbuilders or even a naval tradition, he assembled and sent into action an imposing naval force which proved to be indispensable.

Muhammad Ali wanted a naval force on the Red Sea for several reasons. One ostensible reason was to transport troops to Arabia. Although the land route from Suez to Yanbu in Arabia could be traversed by his cavalry, for whom intermediate relief stations were set up, the Pasha knew that infantry, food supplies and camels would probably suffer losses from exposure and Bedouin attacks. And he also knew that to protect transport ships against Arabian corsairs, which had been attacking Turkish shipping, he would need a number of armed vessels. Beyond these immediate needs, however, were other more ambitious plans: the occupation of the entire Arabian Red Sea coastline including Yemen, and establishment of Egyptian control of the Red Sea.

In the fall of 1809, when the Pasha first conceived the idea of developing a fleet, he did not expect to *build* ships. He thought that Ghalib, the Sharif of Jiddah, who nominally supported the insurgents but secretly remained loyal to the Sultan, would be able to provide enough vessels. By the time his expeditionary force was ready to leave for Arabia two years later, however, he had found it necessary to set up a naval shipyard, seek the help of the Pashas of Tripoli and Albania, enlist the aid of shipbuilders at the Greek island of Hydra, and turn to the Governor of Cyprus and the board of directors of the British East India Company.

What happened, Muhammad Ali told the Sultan in a letter explaining why it would be necessary to build vessels in Egypt, was that news of Egyptian naval preparations had reached Jiddah and his secret confederate, the Sharif, did not dare send the ships he had promised Muhammad Ali, lest his true loyalties be discovered. "I am the ally of the Pasha of Egypt," he wrote Muhammad Ali, "and I shall give him as many vessels as he wants, but he must understand my delicate position ..."

In response to the Sharif's letter, Muhammad Ali told the Sultan, he had advised Ghalib to load up some choice vessels with cargoes of coffee and send them to Suez with the apparent intention of taking advantage of the prevailing high price of coffee in Egypt. The Sharif agreed and sent several dhows to Suez, which were promptly unloaded and incorporated into the Egyptian fleet. But "these few vessels won't be enough," the Pasha told the Sultan, and "there is no choice but to make our own vessels."

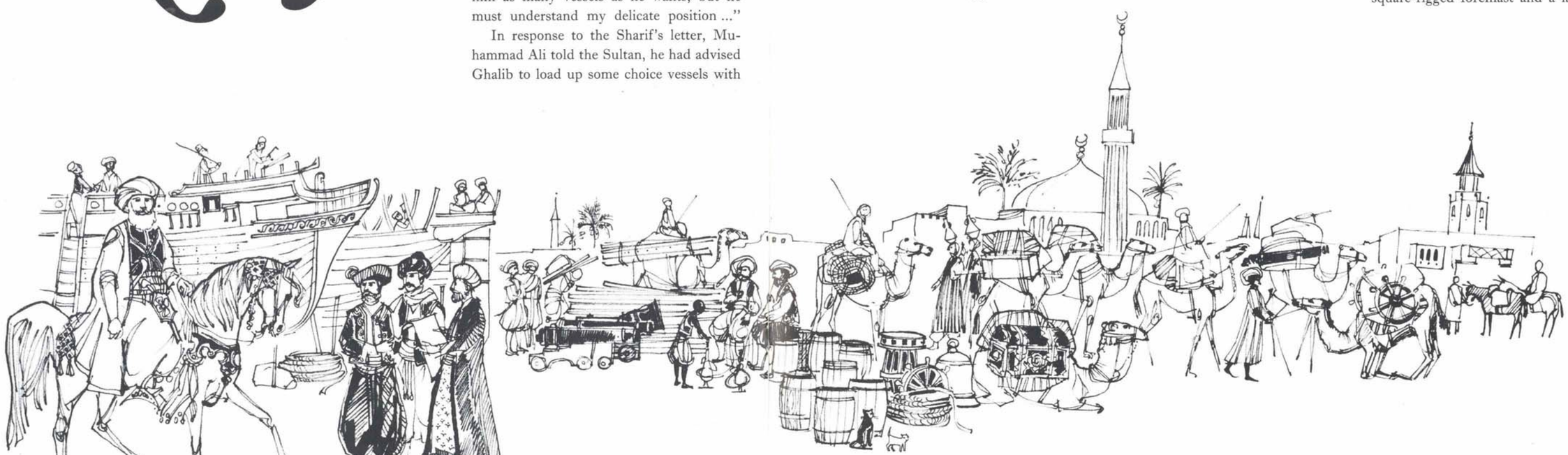
The Sultan, suspicious of Muhammad Ali's intentions, hesitated. But six months later, for the sake of what he called the "holy mission," he formally authorized the Pasha to "construct the ships and necessary port facilities to transport the army to the Hijaz."

While the Sultan was weighing his decision, the Pasha had given the order to establish a naval shipyard at Bulaq, near Cairo, site of a shipyard which Napoleon Bonaparte founded in 1799 during his occupation of Egypt and in which he built five ships to patrol the port of Kosseir in the Red Sea and prevent the English from landing troops from India. When the Pasha's order was given 10 years later, all that remained of Bonaparte's effort was a fenced-off area at Bulaq with some loose timber and empty barrels lying inside.

Ship construction in Egypt presented several challenges to the shipwrights. With the exception of some red mulberry wood in Upper Egypt, suitable only for interior paneling, all timber had to be imported, mast poles and hull wood either from Turkish forests around Konya, or those on the island of Rhodes. Pack mules, cannons and wooden barrels came from Cyprus. Compasses, cannons, cannon carriages and huge cauldrons for mixing gunpowder came from Istanbul, where the Pasha's agent, Najib Effendi, had instructions to get the material even if it meant "stripping the Imperial Fleet." Until this material began to arrive in Bulaq, cannons were removed from the fortresses at Damietta and Alexandria, and mast poles and rigging were stripped from feluccas on the Nile.

To design his fleet, Muhammad Ali hired deserters from ships calling at Alexandria, and local Greeks and Italians, including some who had worked at the shipyard for Bonaparte. Assisted by more than 1,000 Turkish and Egyptian workers, and a crew of 300 carpenters sent especially for the project by the Pasha of Albania, they were soon turning out a ship a month. Eventually they also began to produce cannons and were able to supply the Imperial Fleet at Istanbul with gunpowder. The few foreign visitors to the yard were startled at seeing Turkish workers sitting nonchalantly on kegs of gunpowder smoking the hubble-bubble but, on the whole, they said, the operation was well-organized and efficient.

Two main types of vessels were preferred, the "corvette" and the "brick," each with many variations. The name corvette was applied to a wooden, flush-decked vessel of about 200 tons with a square-rigged foremast and mainmast, that carried around 50 cannons. Some corvettes, called "mortarboards," were equipped with rows of mortarpieces on the deck secured at the base. With a relatively shorter tube and larger bore than the other cannons, they could hurl cannon balls at a higher angle and enable a vessel to bombard the inside of a coastal fortress. The name brick referred to a wooden vessel of about 100 tons with a square-rigged foremast and a lateen-rigged



DRAWINGS BY PENNY WILLIAMS

mainmast. It carried around 20 cannons. Both types were patterned after French and English Mediterranean warships, and of the two, the brick was best suited to the Red Sea. Its combination of square and lateen sails made it easier to maneuver along the long, razor-sharp coral reefs common to the Red Sea coast, especially when fighting clear of the strong winds there, which tend to drive vessels onto a lee shore. For this reason, most of the vessels at Bulaq were of this type.

After several ships were completed, they would be disassembled—their parts numbered for identification—and carried by camel caravan to Suez, where crews of workers waited to reassemble them. Up to 10,000 camels made up some caravans. (It took four to carry a single mast pole.) Along the way, bands of Bedouins often raided the caravans for firewood and, it was said,

warmed their hands by enough mast poles and hulls for a small squadron.

Some delays in construction were caused by the rebellious Mameluke Beys. Edged out of power by Muhammad Ali just five years before, they were still prowling the Egyptian countryside waiting for the chance to strike back. On two occasions, their attacks halted construction and caused supplies for the fleet to pile up in Istanbul and Alexandria warehouses. Finally, in March of 1811, the Pasha took care of the Mamelukes once and for all after ambushing them in the courtyard of the Citadel, where he had invited them to attend a ceremony for the investiture of his son, Amir Toussoun, with command of the Arabian expedition. That trickery accomplished, and the Mamelukes killed to a man, work on the fleet was resumed without further interruption.

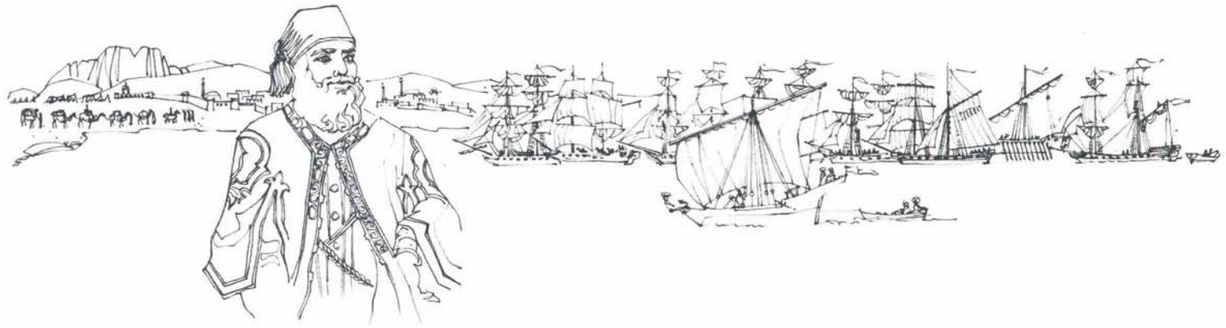
As his contribution to the Egyptian fleet, meanwhile, the Pasha of Tripoli in North Africa donated several archaic rowing galleys. Constructed at the port of Tripoli, they were taken apart and moved to Damietta, where they were loaded onto camels and sent to Suez. Weighing about 100 tons and somewhat narrower and shallower than the brick, they were fitted with a sail, but depended mostly on a bank of oars on each side which were manned by slaves, four to five on a single oar. The galley proved to be even more dependable than the brick because it could ignore the unfavorable winds that often hampered vessels trying to sail up the sea. The Turks last used the rowing galley in the Battle of Lepanto in 1571 and their appearance in Muhammad Ali's Red Sea fleet would be their last in modern history.

Another ship joined the fleet when the Pasha's agent, Najib Effendi, visited the Greek island of Hydra, noted for its skill in shipbuilding, and bought the *Souliou Psara*, a brick with 15 cannons that came complete with crew. At Damietta, the Pasha put an Egyptian garrison aboard to give the vessel a "Muslim character," and ordered it to sail the ship around the coast of Africa to Suez. The crew claimed the vessel wasn't seaworthy enough and it remained anchored at Damietta.

In the spring of 1811, the Pasha went to Suez to complete his naval preparations. More than 42 vessels lay at anchor—corvettes, bricks, galleys and dhows—but, for the enormous quantity of soldiers and supplies the Pasha planned to send with the first landing force, still not enough. He ordered the Governors of Suez and Kosseir to seize all the commercial dhows that happened to be calling in their respective ports—a dozen altogether—unload the cargo from them and

add them to the fleet. To further augment his fleet, he sent some of these dhows to Yemen with orders to seize "any dhow in sight" and bring the captured vessels to Yanbu, north of Jiddah, to await the imminent arrival of his son, Amir Toussoun.

For his day it was excellent planning, but his plans almost ran aground when he began



recruiting sailors. As a people, Egyptian peasants were conservative, and strongly attached to their families and village life in the relative security of the Nile Valley. They rarely ventured out to sea. Even the few fishing boats that did sail along the Mediterranean and Red Sea coastlines never went beyond sight of land. So Muhammad Ali had to rely on Turks and Albanians from the army and on deserters from English and French vessels at Alexandria.

When at last completed, in 1811, Muhammad Ali's navy was an impressive and colorful sight. There were 60 ships, hundreds of guns, thousands of sailors colorfully costumed in orange turbans, embroidered tunic vests, knee-length pantaloons and sandals with turned-up toes. The officers, in ankle-length pantaloons covered by a floor-length, gold-piped gown, open at the front, usually sat prominently on the deck smoking a hubble-bubble while an entourage of personal slaves looked after them and the sailors went about their work without any apparent order or discipline.

As the vanguard of this fleet, the Pasha had a 400-ton corvette with 40 cannons called the *Africa*. Unfortunately, to send such a warship into the Red Sea without an OK from powerful England would have been a hazardous gamble. Muhammad Ali decided to send Admiral Ismail Jibraltar to England to ask the East India Company, then responsible for governing the India possessions, for their leave to sail into the Red Sea and up to Suez. The company's board of directors held a series of meetings about the matter over a two-month period, came to the conclusion that the *Africa* might encourage the Egyptian Pasha to occupy the Yemeni coast and threaten Aden, where British forces had already established bases for the protection of India's western flank, and informed Ismail that the trip would be "too hazardous." To compensate, the Prime Minister, Lord Liverpool, paid for damage suffered by the *Africa* en route to England and presented Ismail with gifts of guns and ammunition, including a set of gold dueling pistols for Muhammad Ali. Ismail was impressed, but when he returned to Alexan-

dria, the Pasha was furious that the British could "prevent a boat from going from one Turkish port to another." He briefly considered sending the ship down the Nile as far as possible during the flood, dismantling it and transporting it to Suez. He soon realized how impractical that would be, however, and decided to leave the vessel anchored at Alexandria. Then he turned his attention back to the campaign that had spurred the construction of a fleet in the first place.

The campaign, which went on for seven years, fully justified the Pasha's Herculean efforts. The transport vessels served as a safe and reliable means of carrying camels, food and ammunition from Egypt to Arabia, notably during the six-month siege of ad-Dir'iyah. At that point Ibrahim Pasha depended completely on a supply line of more than 80,000 camels between his camp and Jiddah, where boats arrived daily from Kosseir with food.

As for the warships, they were less valuable, but they did protect the transports against the occasional attacks by the Wahhabi corsairs and their allies. In Arabia itself, the fleet moved the Pasha's army along the coastline for a number of attacks where the greater number of soldiers he was able to land from the vessels gave his army a decisive advantage.

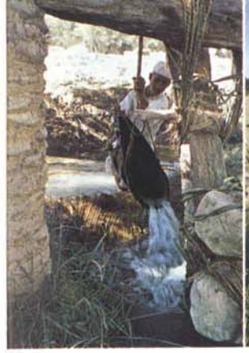
The fleet was useless, however, in implementing the Pasha's plan of turning the Red Sea into an "Egyptian lake." This was partly due to English opposition, but mainly because the fleet itself never became a navy in the true sense. Instead of functioning as a mobile and powerful striking force that could close sea-lanes and dominate coastal areas, it was never more than an adjunct of the army, which saw a ship's deck only as a platform on which to fight as it would ashore.

After the campaign in Arabia had ended and the army returned safely to Egypt, the entire fleet was allowed to rot slowly away at anchor in Suez, decaying symbol of a dream which, if realized, might have profoundly affected the history of the Middle East for the rest of the 19th century.

James Horgen, a graduate of the University of Minnesota and Cairo University, currently lives and writes in Beirut.

THE TWICE-USED WATER

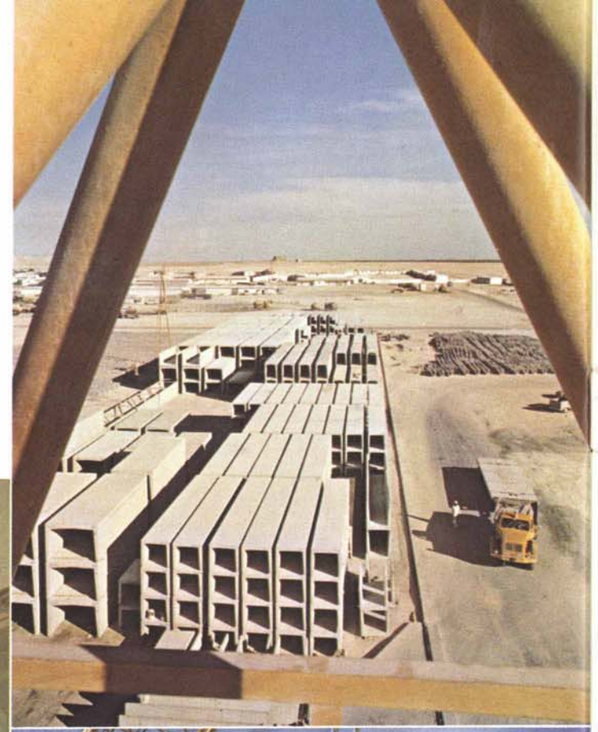
"God bless the water of al-Hasa," the Prophet said. And for centuries thereafter there was a plentiful supply.

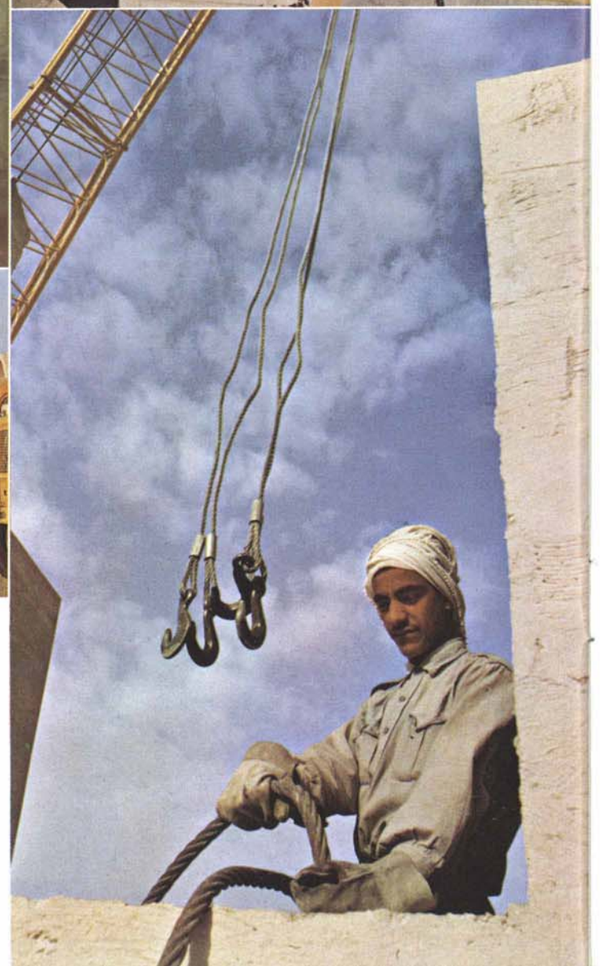


WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY TOR EIGELAND

Explosive charges rend air—and stone—at a quarry near project's prefabricating factory.

Heavy-duty trucks carry concrete canal sections weighing up to 20 tons. Highly automated plant can turn out 250 assorted concrete products a day.





Legend has it that the Prophet Muhammad once visited the huge, ancient oasis of al-Hasa in what is now the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. Hungry and weary, he asked a farmer if he could have a few dates and rest a while. The farmer apologized for his puny, withered dates: "There is almost no water here. This is all I can give you." The Prophet ate the dates and as he took leave he said: "God bless the water of al-Hasa." And for centuries thereafter the oasis has had a plentiful supply.

In al-Hasa, there is still plenty of water, but for the last few decades, because of its marginal quality, much of it has gone to waste. The oasis, now home to more than 160,000 people, is in fact under siege. Relentless desert winds have been blasting sand into cultivated areas, driving people out, blocking ancient drainage channels, silting in more than 100 fresh-water springs and creating salty swamps where nothing will grow. To make matters worse, the once-abundant irrigation water from the springs has been used and re-used, as farmers moved it along from field to field. With every application the crop-killing salinity shot up, at such an alarming rate that oasis farmers, in their special terminology for irrigation matters, began to call it the "twice-used" water.

The oasis of al-Hasa, largest in the kingdom, is actually an L-shaped collection of many palm-surrounded villages, plus three sizable towns, located about 40 miles west of the Arabian Gulf. Though nowadays a key stop on the Dammam-Riyadh railway and tied with the rest of the country by good roads, al-Hasa has been relatively isolated by its inland setting, which tended to preserve in the oasis a flavor out of Arabia's distant past.

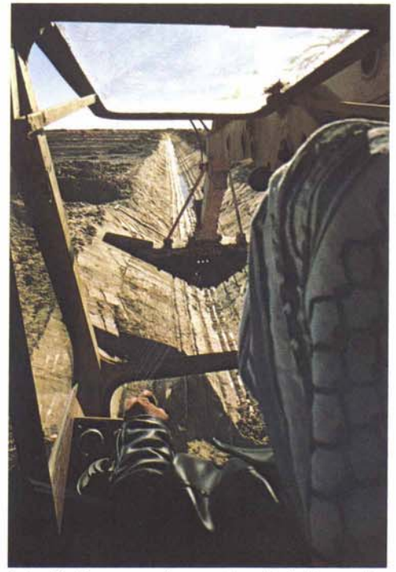
Hofuf, principal community of al-Hasa and former provincial capital, is the site of a traditional Thursday-morning camel and sheep market, with all its dusty, noisy excitement, conducted as it probably has been for centuries. Nearby the Bedouin families who have brought their herds to town can buy hand-loomed tent cloth, poles, tent pegs, and all the other accoutrements required for full-time desert living. In the colorful, colonnaded bazaar, tea-sipping merchants hunker in their cubicle stalls selling multi-hued dress material, pungent spices, iron and brass utensils for the Arab coffee-making ceremony, and hand-wrought cutlery.

The commercial bustle on Hofuf's Suq al-Khamis Street represents, of course, only a small part of the occupational activity of al-Hasa as a whole. Long known for the quality of its dates, once its leading crop, the oasis is and always has been predominantly agricultural. In recent times, instructed and encouraged by agriculturists of the Arabian American Oil Company (Aramco), al-Hasa farmers began switching to a wide range of vegetables and grains. In this essentially rainless region, water for the crops must come from artesian wells and natural springs, and be directed to the fields through sluices. Each farmer with access to a source of water has a formal agreement with the owner of the supply giving him certain days and hours, depending on the size of his acreage and type of crop being grown, when he can use the water for irrigating his land. Soon the variety, quantity and growing seasons of farmers' yields all expanded, with much acreage producing several crops a year.

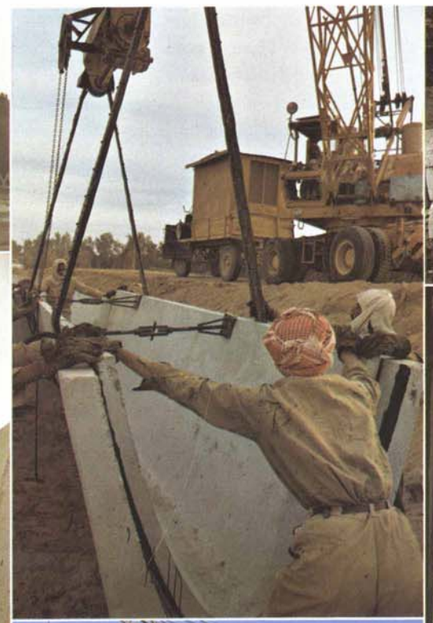
In the midst of such apparent fertility it is understandable why the first signs of blight went largely ignored. Eventually though, as the proud date palms began to droop, broad stretches of alfalfa paled and rich green vegetable gardens yellowed, died and disappeared under waves of sand, thoughtful men began to act. The results are worth recounting.

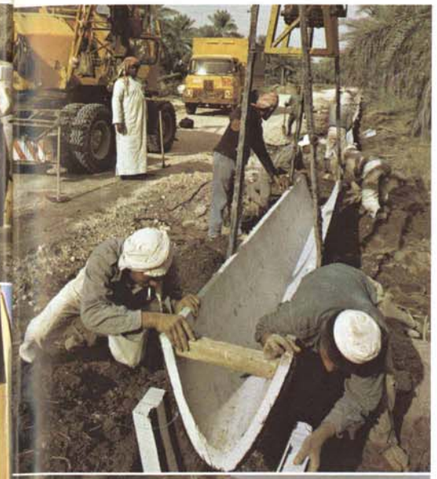
Once the gravity of the problem was realized (*Aramco World* May-June, 1965) the Saudi Arab government, working closely with experts from Aramco and adopting dune control techniques then being perfected by the Standard Oil Company (N.J.), was able to introduce a forestry program that slowed, then halted, the encroaching dunes.

As a second step, Saudi Arabia in 1962 invited the Swiss consulting engineering firm of Wakuti A.G. to study the problem further. Wakuti did, and recommended construction of surface and underground drainage channels leading into huge evaporation lakes to solve the drainage problem. With proper drainage, a complete new irrigation system for the distribution of water to all the farms became possible. The fresh water would flow into a field when needed, run through the field and come out into a drainage channel at the other end. Through a maze of channels the now slightly saline water would end up in

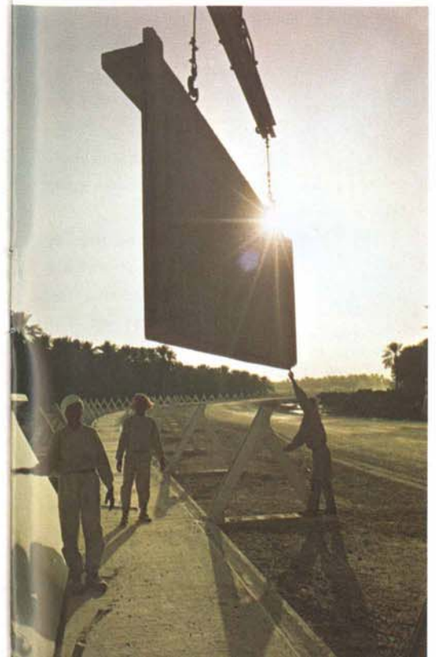


Trained Saudis operate equipment such as this ditching machine.





Constructing the $51 million irrigation and drainage network was a five-year job employing nearly 2,500 men and 250 machines. Roads had to be built, right-of-ways prepared and parts manufactured, transported and assembled before the 2,000-mile web took shape.



In places bulldozers had to cut a passage for new channels through established date groves.

an evaporation lake some distance away. This system, plus extensive leaching (washing away the salt with heavy quantities of fresh water), increased use of proper fertilizers and a more judicious use of water generally, engineers said, would mean that al-Hasa could bloom again.

It was a tall order: 20,000 hectares —about 50,000 acres—rather than the present 8,000—about 20,000 acres—were to be irrigated. It would require building 900 miles of concrete irrigation canals, 900 miles of drainage ditches, nearly 1,000 miles of new agricultural roads. It also meant construction of a concrete-fabricating factory to manufacture concrete sections for the canals.

The factory alone, to be supplied by a huge, already-existing cement plant nearby, was an impressive undertaking. Although it was to function for only five years, while the canal system was being installed, it was nonetheless a fully-equipped, highly automated plant, able to turn out 250 assorted concrete products, the most important of which are the 20-foot-long, V-shaped and U-shaped reinforced concrete canal sections, some of which run to 20 tons apiece.

Saudi Arabia was not long in accepting the recommendations nor in awarding the costly ($51 million) contract to Philipp Holzmann A. G., the West German construction company. Overnight the quiet Biblical rhythms of al-Hasa village life shattered as a fleet of bright yellow bulldozers, trucks, loaders, cranes and brisk little Volkswagens—250 in all—thundered into the oasis.

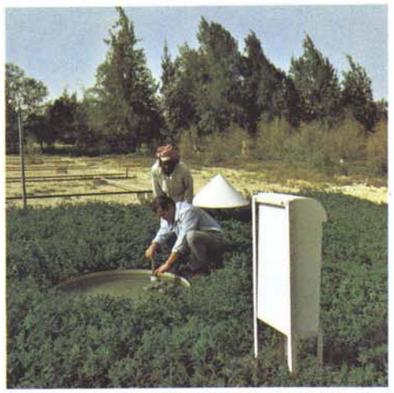
Along with the equipment came 155 German construction engineers and technicians, one of whose first tasks was to train, in some cases from scratch, the local Saudi Arabs they would need to handle the big machines. How well they succeeded can be clearly measured, says Heinrich Hopp, Holzmann's manager for Saudi Arabia, by their progress in laying canals. "In the beginning it took more than an hour to put down a length of concrete for a canal. Now it takes 10 to 15 minutes for a 20-ton piece."

The equipment operators make up only a small part of the work force. Altogether there are 2,200 Saudis, most trained on the spot by Holzmann's German employes, all

Construction engineer inspects section of a main canal by car.

of whom work from the break of the desert dawn to dusk, when the machinery stops, the bulldozers become silent and the ancient oasis regains some trace of its mysterious, drowsy peace.

As it spread through the oasis complex, the great irrigation system came to resemble a giant, weirdly-shaped concrete-gray spider web spun over a green and yellowish carpet. The big threads in the web are the main canals; the small ones are the narrow subcanals that reach the farmer's fields; and three elevated reservoirs from which the canals stretch out through the trees look for all the world like knots holding the web together.



Agricultural experts test variety of crops at experimental station.

On the ground one loses track of the plan and the system. I spent a whole week driving around the project, from the concrete factory that spews out 250 tons of concrete parts a day, to the bewildering network of canals, ditches, evaporation lakes, and the farms and villages. I never knew where I was except that in the vicinity of the factory the dust cloud was dustier than anywhere else.

No one else seemed to know either, even Mr. Hopp. "Don't feel bad," he said. "I have been here for six months and I haven't seen it all myself."

One difficulty that has not been overcome, Mr. Hopp said, is the skepticism of the al-Hasa farmers. "Farmers here, as everywhere," he said, "are conservative by nature, and since there has been a certain amount of disruption of their old canals and roads, there have been complaints. We try to take care of them immediately, but ..." He shrugged.

The Saudi farmers, when asked their opinion, made me think of the notoriously taciturn New England farmers. Said one: "We haven't seen the water yet, so it's too early to tell." Another: "We are happy about the drainage because we were almost swimming in the fields here." Then he scratched his head and added thoughtfully: "But we haven't seen the fresh water yet."

While the Holzmann people attempt to make adjustments on the spot, the Saudi Arab government itself has taken direct steps to ease the transition. Through the Directorate General of Agricultural Affairs in the Eastern Province it has already paid out compensation amounting to 7.5 million Saudi riyals (almost $1.7 million) to owners of the lands affected by the al-Hasa Drainage and Irrigation Project.

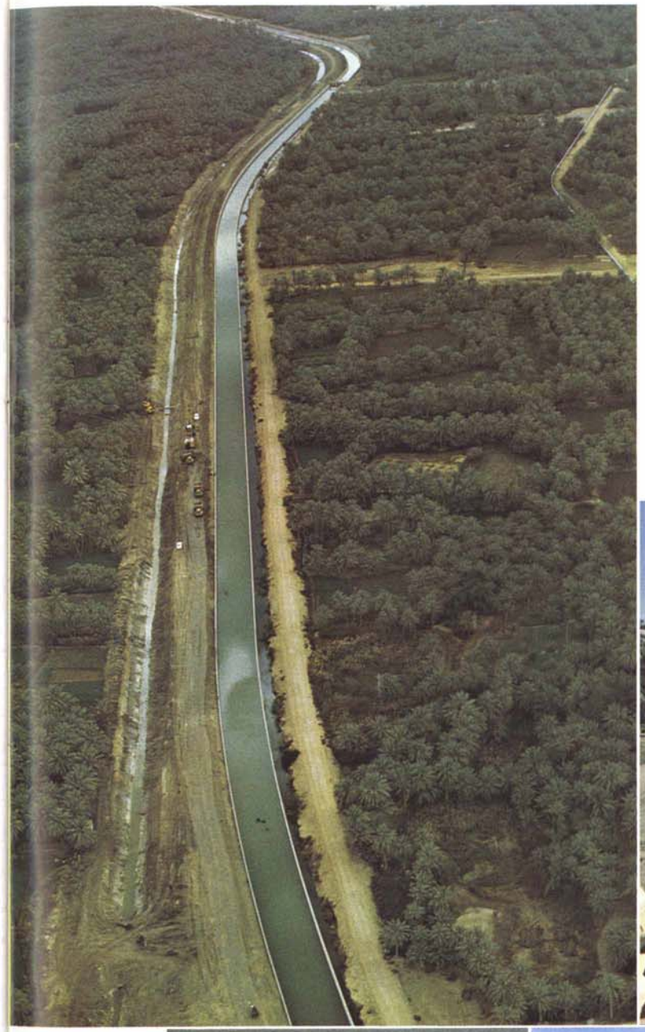
Out of 60 major springs in the oasis, 30 are being tapped for the irrigation project—at the rate of about 237,800 gallons per minute. Since that is quite a lot of water, I asked Wakuti's chief engineer, Hans W. Bahr, who supervises the Holzmann performance, where it all comes from. "We don't know very much about the origin of the water," Mr. Bahr said. "Some of it is very old 'fossil water,' or 'virgin water,' which was trapped here. The rest is from rain in western Saudi Arabia, as well as local precipitation. The Arabian Peninsula slopes from west to east and some of the water finds its way from the higher regions in the west to the Eastern Province. Since it all comes out mixed together, it is hard to tell how much is rainwater and how much is fossil water." Added Mr. Bahr: "Radioactive carbon tests (C14) have ascertained that some of the water is 17,000 years old."

From time immemorial the waters of al-Hasa have nourished the palms, which in turn provided people with their main staple—dates. In comparatively recent times al-Hasa farmers have been taught to diversify their crops, resulting in a much more varied diet for local inhabitants. New grains, fruits and a wide range of vegetables are being grown, while at the same time the traditional fare of dates is slowly passing out of style. As one Saudi farmer told me, "If water comes, we may cut some of the old dead palm trees and plant vegetables because not many people are eating dates any more."

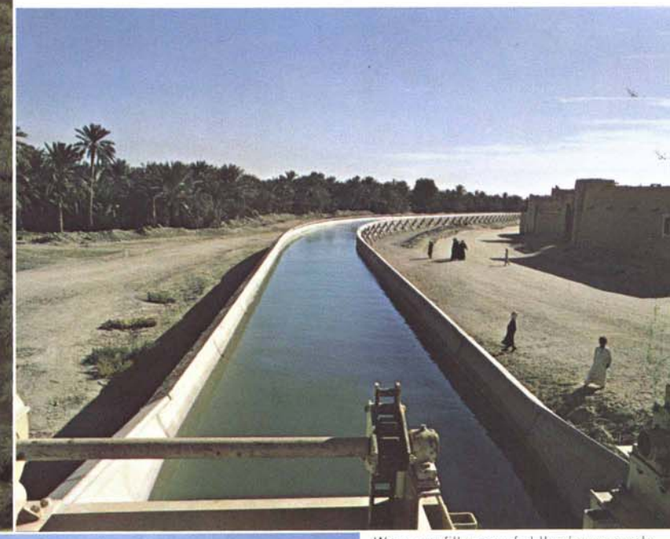
To cope with the changes in approach and scale that the enormous increase in acreage (150 percent more arable land) is sure to bring, and the difficulties sure to follow when crop changes are attempted, the Saudi government has also brought in German agricultural experts to work with the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Agriculture and Water. Complete reports on their findings are not due for another two or three years, but one early recommendation has already crystallized: there should be more concentration on alfalfa and animals. The oasis soil can produce five tons of green alfalfa per acre each and every month, which at the rate of 33 pounds a day would feed a lot of cattle. (German farmers, in comparison, can grow about one fourth as much, as they harvest only three or four times a year.) And since one of the most significant items still remaining on the list of Saudi food imports is animals, this proposal makes good economic sense.

Such developments may not be too far in the future. Work at al-Hasa is already more than 80 percent complete and the water is pouring through many of the canals and sub-canals right now, restoring to a blighted soil the legendary blessing of a grateful Prophet.

Tor Eigeland, a free-lance photojournalist now based in Spain, spent five years in the Middle East contributing to Aramco World *and such publications as* National Geographic, Time *and* Newsweek.

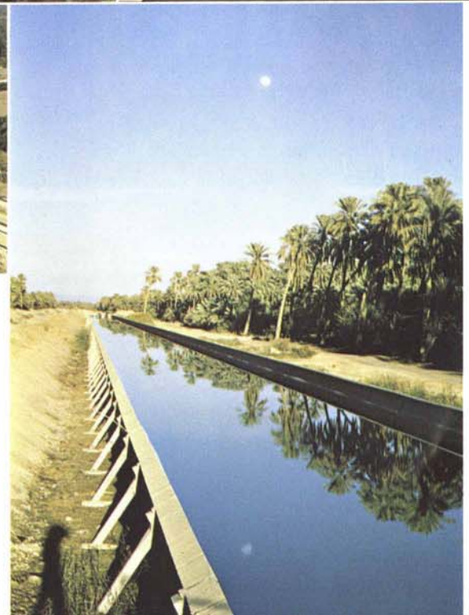


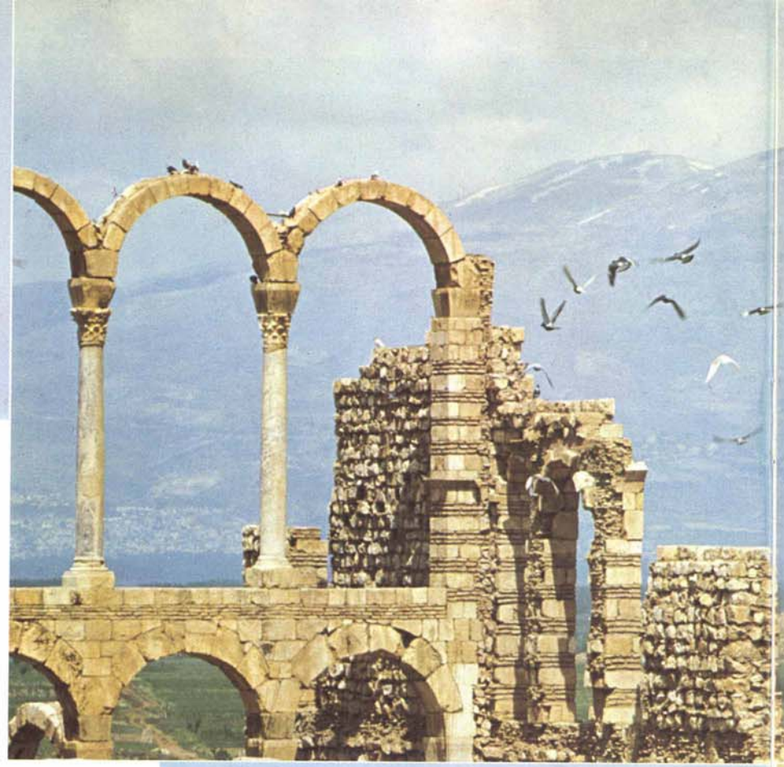
A ship in a sea of date palms, a mesa-like jabal seems to trail a wake of village houses.

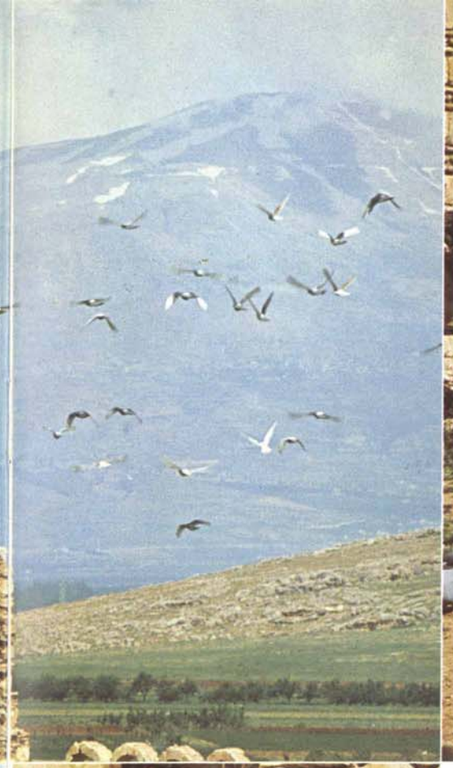


Water now fills many of al-Hasa's new canals.

Canals of different types make up the bewildering network.

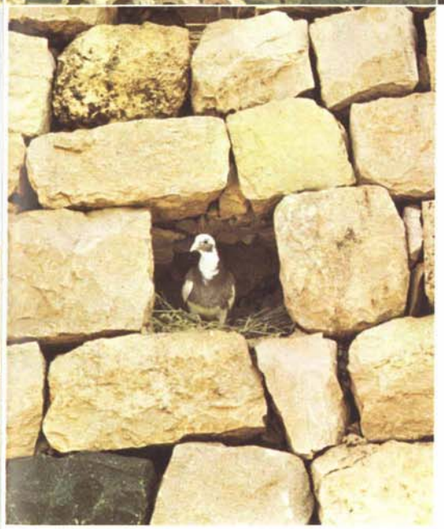






The Pigeons of Anjar

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBERT AZZI

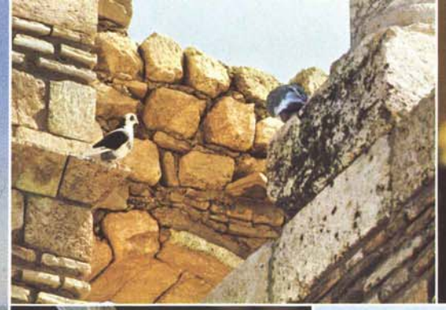


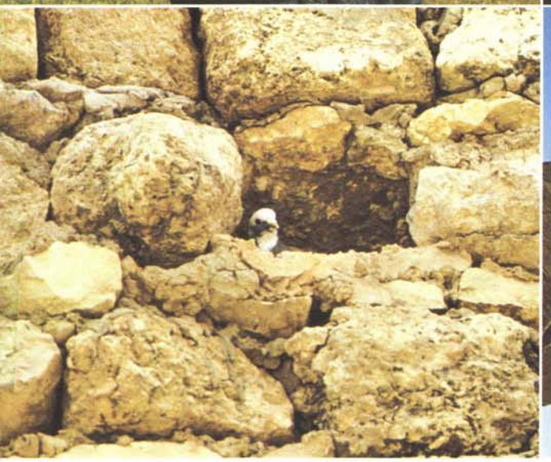
Even pigeon fanciers will tell you that pigeons—beautiful in the swept-back symmetry of flight—can be dirty, smelly creatures in rooftop city coops. But in the Middle East—where messenger pigeons once nested in the palaces of caliphs, the graceful birds occasionally still live in settings equal to their splendor. The ruins of Anjar, for example, where delicate arches soar in the air as splendidly as the birds they shelter.

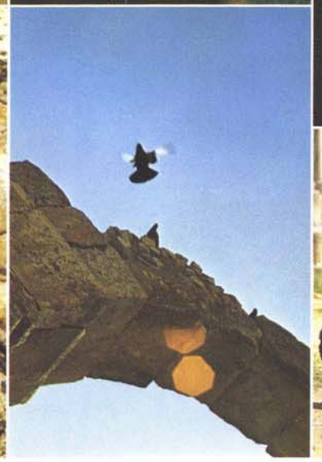
Anjar, in Lebanon's fertile Beka'a Valley, was once the summer palace of Omayad Caliph al-Walid (705-714), who was attracted there by the hunting and the icy springs at the nearby source of the Litani River. Today little remains of what was once a defensive enclosure 175 yards square. There's a cluster of soaring arches, traces of a mosque and some walls built in the Byzantine fashion with alternating layers of stone and brick.

And the pigeons, of course. The beautiful pigeons of Anjar, circling above and around the arches, nesting in the nooks and weathered crannies of golden ruin.

The pigeons belong to Anjar's watchman, also handsomely weathered, a resident of the tidy modern village (also called Anjar) which was established next door to the ruins in neatly-surveyed hillside rows to shelter Armenian refugees during World War I.







Pigeon-keeping in the Middle East goes back beyond Caliph Walid, of course, back as far as Noah. Even further, perhaps, since the wild rock dove (the names pigeon and dove are often used interchangeably) of western Asia is probably the progenitor of the common street and domestic pigeons. You see pigeons everywhere: in picturesque mud-brick crenolations built right into the wall of a house in southern Syria's Jabal Druze region, in whitewashed, egg-shaped dovecotes on free-standing towers among the palms near farm houses in Egypt's Delta. And on city rooftops.

In Lebanese towns, one often sees a man atop a building, sweeping a long flag-tipped bamboo pole in wide circles above his head to keep his flocks aloft. But there, unlike the farming villages, pigeon-keeping is frequently for sport. An owner flies only his males (the females lure them back), training them to fly far afield, then return faithfully to him, if possible bringing with them less-loyal birds which they have tempted away from competing flocks. A coward is the man who keeps his birds close to home.

In Beirut, the pigeons' silent, semi-hypnotic circling often seems a strange counterpoint to the screeching overhead approach of arriving international jet liners. In the tranquil Beka'a Valley the symbol of peace seems somehow more at home. Anjar's watchman flies his birds by clapping, and calls them with a silver whistle, but in the otherwise deserted ruins his flocks do not often face temptation.