ARAMCO WORLD
magazine
1345 AVENUE OF THE AMERICAS
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10019

ARAMCO WORLD
magazine
NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1973

FROM KHANS TO KHILTONS

Hotels in the Middle East

ARAMCO WORLD magazine

VOL. 24 NO. 6 PUBLISHED BIMONTHLY NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1973

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Published by the Arabian American Oil Company, a Corporation, 1345 Avenue of the Americas, New York, N.Y. 10019; L. F. Hills, Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer; F. Jungers, President; J. J. Johnston, Secretary; E. G. Voss, Treasurer. Paul F. Hoye, Editor. Designed and printed in Beirut, Lebanon, by the Middle East Export Press, Inc. Distributed without charge to a limited number of readers with an interest in Aramco, the oil industry, or the history, culture, geography and economy of the Middle East. Changes of address should be sent to T. O. Phillips, Arabian American Oil Company, 1345 Avenue of the Americas, New York, N. Y. 10019. Correspondence concerning **Aramco World Magazine** should be addressed to The Editor, Box 4002, Beirut, Lebanon.

Cover: Muslim photographer S. M. Amin found this air-conditioned tower serving pilgrims to Islam's holiest city a far cry from the fortified caravanserais of old, but it is typical of new hotels springing up throughout the Middle East today to accommodate a jet-age tide of visitors. Story on page 16. Rear cover: An Armenian lady of Constantinople, 1818, from One Man's Gallery.

← A 1938 photo of Arabian explorer St. John Philby by pioneer Aramco geologist Max Steineke. An excerpt from Elizabeth Monroe's new Philby biography on page 6.

give to the waqf of your choice

WRITTEN BY JON MANDAVILLE/ILLUSTRATED BY ED DAVIS

A thousand years before Ford and Rockefeller, a tradition of charitable foundations had spread throughout Islam.

Just as the Ford, Rockefeller, Carnegie and other lesser known private foundations and endowments have played a leading role in fashioning health, education and welfare in America's history, so in the Middle East the great mosques, elementary schools, universities and hospitals were built and sustained with private donations.

In many cases the donors carry an even larger name in history. Harun al-Rashid, Saladin, Suleiman the Magnificent, all the great figures in Islamic history, made their contribution to the everyday welfare of the community. But they were not alone. Charity to one's fellow man, one of the five fundamental principles of Islam, brought countless thousands of anonymous shopkeepers, farmers and other ordinary citizens to make their small contributions as well. Wherever, in fact, one travels in the Islamic world, from West Africa to the Philippines, wherever there is an established Muslim community, one finds the *waqf*.

The *waqf*, as these endowments are called, is one of the oldest legal traditions in Islam. The classic precedent case used by Muslim lawyers concerns the Caliph Omar (d. A. D. 644), father-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad, who earned the nickname in the West "St. Paul of Islam" for his gentle encouragement of Muslim converts. According to tradition, on the advice of Muhammad he set up some of his lands as a source of income for the needy.

The practice grew by leaps and bounds, and within a generation or two the basic legal principles and methods were defined, though they were modified slightly in the

following centuries to suit the different times and places.

If one were a wealthy man (or woman) wanting to build and endow an orphanage in his home town, he would go to the town judge or one of his assistants and together they would work out the conditions of the *waqf*. First, he might stipulate that his orange grove located on the south side of town, the mill on the river adjacent to it, and his bakery shop in the town center would be set aside as the properties of God, inalienable properties which henceforth and forevermore could not be sold or in any other manner change hands. All of the income from these properties would be used to support the orphanage. In this same *waqfiya*, or deed of *waqf*, he would very carefully outline the number of orphans to be admitted, the staff to care for them, a budget for clothing, food and supplies, and the method by which a general supervisor would be chosen. Nothing would be left to chance, every possible legal check written in to guard against mismanagement or embezzlement. The document complete, he would take it before the judge and sign it with him before two witnesses; the *waqf* would then be in force.

The *waqfiya* itself was often an extraordinarily ornate affair, lavishly decorated in gold leaf and brilliant color. Some are displayed in museums today as prime examples of calligraphy. They came in all shapes and sizes. An ordinary storeowner might have his deed written on a page or two of legal-size paper; the wife of a well-to-do landowner might have hers copied on a scroll which when unrolled stretched nine feet long. It all depended upon how much space was demanded by the complexity of the deed, the number of conditions set upon it, the number of properties put aside. The original endowment deeds of large colleges were even bound as books running over a hundred pages.

Such were the fundamental principles. The property was made perpetually inalienable, a gift to God, and the income from it tied to a charitable enterprise for the good of the community. Put in the jargon of Western trust law, the *settlor* may be anyone, the *trustee* must be God, and the *beneficiary* must be mankind. These were the principles upon which, for example, the mosques of Islam were founded and maintained.

They were also the principles supporting many churches and synagogues. The *waqfs* of Muslims, Christians and Jews were equally admissible in the Muslim courts of law. *Waqf* law, after all, insisted only that the property be given into the ownership of God for the benefit of mankind. Muslim schools differed as to the extent to which endowments were to be made for the establishment and maintenance of churches and synagogues, but many were allowed. A Greek Orthodox Palestinian of Lydda in the 19th century, for example, set up and registered in the Muslim court a *waqf* for the poor monks of the Orthodox monastery in Jerusalem. As stipulated in the deed, when there were no more poor monks to be found there, the income was to go to the Christian poor of Lydda and Ramla, then to the poor of all the Jerusalem monasteries, then to all the Christian poor in Syria, then to all the poor of Jerusalem.

When in the 1490's the Jewish communities were expelled from Spain, many came to the Middle East, where they were helped to resettle by the Muslim governments. Several thousand took up residence in Palestine, particularly in Jerusalem and Safed. Government documents reflect this immigration to Safed clearly—through the registration of *waqfs* for some 30 new synagogues!

Gradually new developments along the basic theme gained acceptance in the courts. It came to be felt that as long as the *waqf* income eventually was to go to some charitable activity, it mattered not what initial use was made of it. Quickly a new style of *waqfiya* came into popularity. It read something like this: "I, ————, hereby make the following property *waqf*. I shall receive its income during my lifetime; upon my death my son shall receive its income, then his children, then his children's children, then their children, to the extinction of the line; *whereupon* it will be used to feed the poor of Mecca and Medina."

For obvious reasons this type of *waqf* was called "family *waqf*," and for equally obvious reasons the stricter schools of legal thought frowned upon it. Some judges refused the documents out of hand. Though charity was finally stipulated in this *waqfiya*, a judge might rightly question the charitable intent of the endower. But Muslims are Muslims, Christians are Christians, Jews are Jews, men are men; how after all could one really question the sincerity of any donor in any type of foundation or trust?

There are no inheritance taxes in traditional Islamic law. There are, however, strict and detailed inheritance laws which demand among other things that no less

than two thirds of an estate be split up among a number of close surviving relatives. A successful businessman who had worked hard all his life to accumulate capital, or a farmer to extend his fields, would view the prospect of its dispersal with real anguish. Or, he would set up a family *waqf* naming his most competent son as sole beneficiary after him.

A million mixed motives, simple and complex, supported those university buildings in Cairo, Damascus and Mecca, the hospitals and soup kitchens, mosques and chapels. We can see mirrored in the endowment deeds the everyday life and hopes of these cities as the centuries passed.

For every conceivable enterprise of social benefit there was a *waqf*. Many of them centered on water and its uses. Water in the hot dry Middle East is the most precious commodity of nature; making it easily available to the community was one of the most charitable of acts. Aqueducts were built and endowed by Muslim princes to bring water to the cities; others constructed cisterns, writing *waqfs* for their maintenance.

Once in the city, the water had still to be brought to the houses. Piped water was, as in traditional rural America, a rarity in the home, a luxury owned by the wealthy few. So one finds the ubiquitous fountain with its *waqf* inscription. Every village and city quarter has one still, some gigantic, others a plain pipe emerging from masonry, but all more or less with the same aim in mind: make the water as convenient to the household as possible. One can't ignore their secondary purpose, a matter of sheer esthetics—few sounds can be so pleasing as the cool trickle of water in the desert summer. Some were skillfully designed to heighten this pleasure. Many an emigrant who made good in the Big City, in Europe or America, has returned to his home town to visit with relatives—and endow a fountain.

In the 14th century several *waqfs* were written for watchtowers along the Lebanese coast. According to the *waqfiyas*, their primary purpose was to warn and help defend the towns of Sidon and Beirut against pirate raids. Along the major highways of the Arab lands small guest houses and larger caravanserais were built a day's journey apart and endowed, "motel" chains erected not for profit but as a charity to travelers. One large *waqf* endowed by Mehmed, Conqueror of Constantinople, anticipated 20th-century practice; he set aside a large sum of money, the yearly interest of which was paid out as pensions to retired soldiers.

But the majority of the *waqf* foundations fell into the four basic categories of food, health, education and religion.

In every city and large town there was the soup kitchen. A typical example is that of Hersekoglu Ahmed Pasha, an Ottoman grand vizier who died in 1517. He built and endowed a soup kitchen in a town near Gallipoli in 1511. The deed calls for a food inspector (it's not clear from the text whether the quality of the ingredients or the cooking was at stake here), a host for visiting dignitaries, a qualified cook, a qualified baker, a "completely trustworthy" storekeeper who will keep an inventory of food on hand and under *no* circumstances give a grain of rice to any unauthorized person or keep it for himself, a person to grind flour and wash the dishes and pots, and, last but not least, a reliable clerk familiar with bookkeeping and accounting to keep records on income and expenditures. Each day 15 aspers worth of mutton is to be bought and served in 45 equal portions at the evening meal, along with 2 aspers worth of onions, greens and salt. Fifty pounds of wheat will be ground into flour each day and baked into loaves weighing a little less than a pound each. Five pounds of clear honey will be bought to serve with the bread. No conditions are set on who is to be served; the only limitation is the number per day—45.

Soup kitchens were not the only endowments to serve food. Al-Maqdisi, the famous Arab geographer, after a visit to Hebron and the Tomb of Abraham there in A.D. 985 wrote, "In the sanctuary at Hebron is a public guest house, with a cook, a baker and servants. These present a dish of lentils and olive oil to every poor pilgrim who arrives, even the rich if they desire it. Most men wrongly imagine that this dole is of the original Guest House of Abraham, but in fact the funds come from the endowments of a certain Companion of the Prophet and many others. At the present day in all Islam I know of no charity better regulated than this one. Those who travel and are hungry may eat good food here, and thus the custom of Abraham is continued. For he during his lifetime rejoiced in the giving of hospitality and after his death God, may He be praised, has thus allowed the custom to be continued. Now I myself have been a partaker, so to speak, of the hospitality of the Friend of God."

With the soup kitchens, every town of reputation had its endowed hospital. Saladin may be remembered in the West primarily as a general, a powerful military leader who drove the Crusaders out of Jerusalem; the casual tourist in Cairo has this picture reinforced when his first walk takes him up to the massive citadel that Saladin built there. But if he looks harder he will find a large hospital nearby, also built by Saladin, a work just as appreciated by the people of Cairo as the fortress which overshadows it.

Damascus had two hospitals, both of them well known throughout the Arab world. Neither was particularly large in terms of staff—the largest had two doctors, an eye specialist, a surgeon, a pharmacist, ten attendants for the sick, one cook and kitchen help, a janitor and doorkeepers. They functioned more as clinics than as resident hospitals. The important point to note is that these hospitals were fully endowed; the *waqfs* covered all expenses, food, lodging, treatment and medicine. The doctors did quite well for themselves on the endowed salaries, since usually they taught classes at the three endowed medical schools of the city.

Next to those endowing mosques, the most popular *waqfs* have always been for schools and colleges. Islamic culture places enormous store on the importance of learning. Again, consider Damascus. In 1500 there were 10 formal elementary schools there; most children in times past learned their three R's at home from their parents. There were 131 endowed secondary schools and colleges, plus 16 more colleges specializing in religious traditions. Few of the colleges had more than four or five teachers; several at the time had none. The faculty at the Umayyad Mosque Schools numbered 27. But with a total population of about 7,000 souls, as indicated by the tax rolls of the day, it is clear that private endowments were ample to provide education for those who wished it for their children. The *waqfiyas* of perhaps one half of these colleges stipulated scholarships for poor students, some only for tuition, others covering room and board as well.

Libraries for the students, teachers and the public at large were also endowed, though their collections may seem small to us. Before the 19th century and the spread of the printing press, each book had to be painstakingly copied by hand, which put severe restrictions on the number in circulation.

One such town library set up through *waqf* in the 18th century contained 943 volumes. The staff included three librarians, an attendant for opening and locking up, and a janitor. The building was to be open from one hour after sunrise until one hour before sunset every day except Friday (the Muslim day of rest) and Tuesday. It was also closed for three days on each of the two main Muslim religious holidays. It was not a lending library; few were before the advent of printing. The librarians were to take the books from the shelves for each reader and replace them. Special care was urged on the librarians to watch for students who defaced or tore pages; every librarian the world over is familiar with that problem.

Each of these soup kitchens, hospitals, schools and libraries was originally founded and endowed by men and women of means, people with capital enough to construct the buildings and set the institutions going. But this was not enough to keep them so, century after century. The original endowment properties suffered decline; fire, storm and war took their toll. What maintained them for the continued benefit of the community was the steady stream of small "gifts to God," thousand upon thousands of "five-dollar contributions" from the earnings of peasants, doormen, shopkeepers and carpenters. For every one *waqf* establishing an institution, there were countless more reading, "I, ——, hereby give 1/24th of the income of my shop, located in——, as *waqf* toward . . ." Thus though the great mosques of Islam carry only the famous names of their original donors, they stand like the medieval cathedrals of the West a testimony to the faith of the ordinary people who have supported them for centuries.

Waqfiyas are still written, but not so many as before. Nowadays the concerns of health, education and welfare each have ministries and a budget in the modern Arab governments—many of which also have a ministry responsible for *waqfs*. The new schools and universities, the hospitals and welfare systems now are paid for by income taxes, property taxes, capital gains taxes and all of those other "normal" features of modern life. These areas of social activity are considered to be too important to be left entirely in the hands of private donors.

Today the system of "family *waqf*" has been all but abolished. There are still a few private schools and colleges, and they have their alumni drives just as Princeton does. And like Ford and Rockefeller, wealthy benefactors in Saudi Arabia, Egypt and other Arab lands have established *waqf* scholarship funds tenable at any college, private or public. There are new labels, new modern styles afoot in the Arab world, but in matters of principle and charitable impulse, perhaps not so much has changed after all.

Jon Mandaville, who teaches history and Middle East studies at Portland State University in Oregon, is especially interested in the Ottoman period of Arab lands.

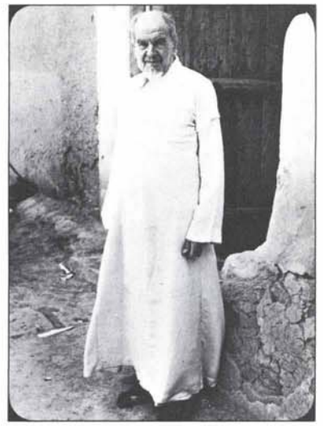
H. St. John Philby's Great Arabian Journeys of Exploration

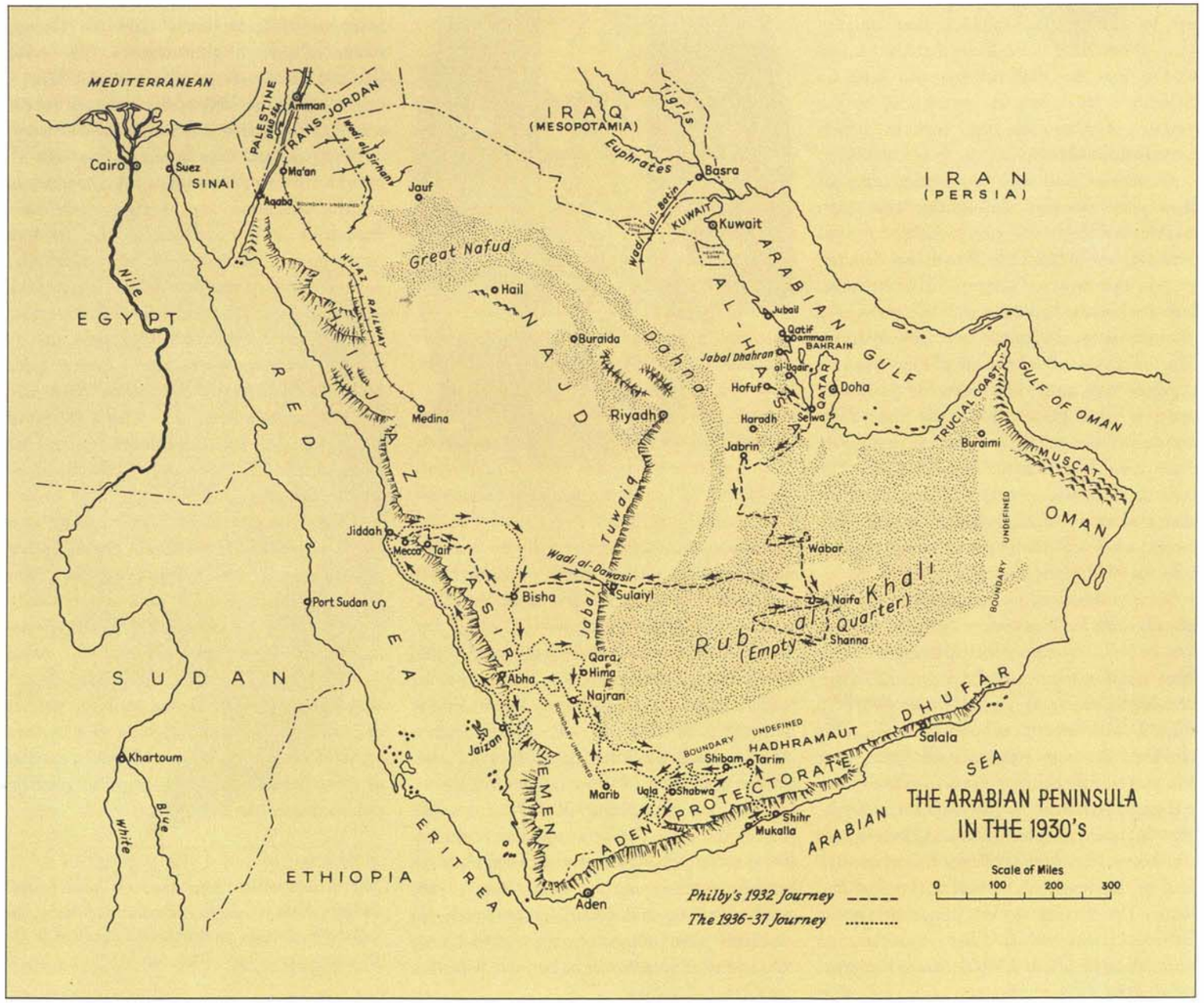
Part one, 1932:

ACROSS THE RUB' AL-KHALI

WRITTEN BY ELIZABETH MONROE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY H. ST. JOHN PHILBY





Harry St. John Bridger Philby was born on a tea plantation in Ceylon in 1885 and went to Mesopotamia (now Iraq) as a Political Officer with the Indian Civil Service in 1915. From that time until his death in 1960 at the age of 75, in Beirut, Lebanon, he devoted his life to studying, exploring and writing about the Arab world. He became vocally disillusioned with British policy in the area and resigned his post in 1925. After 1930, when he embraced Islam and settled in Mecca under the name Hajj Abdullah, he became a trusted confidant and adviser to Ibn Sa'ud, a man he admired as much when he first met him as Amir of Najd in 1917, as he did later when he was King of Saudi Arabia, an independent state which the ruler moulded with his deep religious faith and led into a new era of prosperity. With the King's bemused tolerance, and sometime sponsorship, Philby ranged across the Arabian Peninsula mapping and exploring unknown corners where no Westerner had gone before, then emerging to publish a whole series of books including The Heart of Arabia *(1923),* Forty Years in the Wilderness *(1957), and* Arabian Oil Ventures *(posthumously, in 1964).*

Elizabeth Monroe, a Fellow Emeritus of St. Antony's College, Oxford, who this year became a Companion of the Order of St. Michael and St. George, an award by Queen Elizabeth "for services to Middle Eastern studies," knew Philby from 1938, though never well. She first went to the Middle East in 1937 and has recently traveled extensively in Saudi Arabia, personally visiting many of the areas originally explored by Philby. For 13 years she was Middle East correspondent of The Economist. *Miss Monroe is the author of a number of books on Middle East affairs including, in 1972,* The Changing Balance of Power in the Persian Gulf, *and has now written a biography of Philby. The following article is the first half of the chapter of her new book dealing with the explorer's great journeys in the sand desert of the Empty Quarter and the mountainous frontiers of southern Arabia. The second section will appear in a later issue of the magazine.*

In spite of Philby's hopes, adoption of Islam and attendance at court did not at once win him the longed-for permission to cross the Rub' al-Khali. He fretted over each week's delay because rumor had it that Bertram Thomas was planning an attempt; Thomas, as Wazir to the Sultan of Muscat, had been probing the South Arabian province of Dhufar for months. Another anxiety was a warning from Rosita Forbes that the Egyptian explorer Ahmed Hassanein also had his eye on the Rub' al-Khali. Philby had by now abandoned all thought of Rosita as a companion, or indeed as a serious contributor to the science of desert exploration. In any case, were the King to be behind him, no question of funds need arise. He was in a position to set out on his own.

But throughout the whole winter of 1930-1, 'tribal unrest' in a new area balked him once again. Ibn Sa'ud had in 1926 declared his protection over the buffer region called the 'Asir that lay between the Hijaz and the lands of his rival the Imam Yahya of Yemen. In 1930, he reduced the 'Asir's ruler to a mere figurehead; frontier clashes with Yemen followed, and included a battle for the great inland oasis of Najran—the key to the route into Arabia for Yemen's coffee trade. The Yemenis at one point captured Najran but the Ikhwan secured it once and for all for Ibn Sa'ud early in 1932. 1931 was therefore not a propitious year in which to ask permission for a southern journey, and on January 11th the King dealt Philby a crushing blow by 'very gently and very nicely breaking to me the news that the Rub' al-Khali trip is off'.

> There is nothing to do [he confided to his diary] but drain the dregs of disappointment with a bitter heart. I shall be seeing Madina instead, but with me nothing counts but the Rub' al-Khali and I can find no peace of mind till that is over and done with. Curse!

Further nagging only annoyed the King. On one occasion he shouted 'Uskut' ('Shut up!') and left the room . . . Philby was in Jiddah ruminating about his disappointment and about his failure to collect the large debts owed to his firm when he received the blow of blows. He had been forestalled. In February 1931, Bertram Thomas, without so much as a by-your-leave to Ibn Sa'ud, had crossed the Rub' al-Khali from Salala, in Dhufar on the south coast, to Doha on the Arabian Gulf. The pill was so bitter that Philby shut himself indoors for a whole week.

> Damn and blast Thomas [he wrote to his wife Dora in England] . . . I have sworn a great oath not to go home until I have crossed the R.K. twice! and left nothing in it for future travellers.

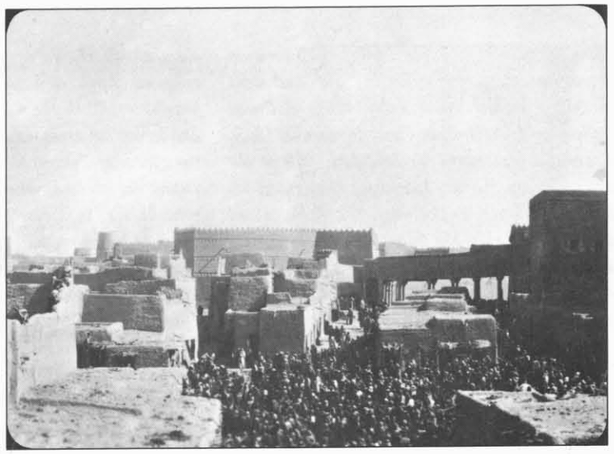
He emerged from seclusion to call on the Dutch explorer Dan van der Meulen, then Netherlands consul at Jiddah, to congratulate him on an adventurous journey to the Wadi Hadhramaut in South Arabia. Van der Meulen, gratified by the tribute, was unprepared for the outburst that followed. An Englishman, once his subordinate, Philby began, had snatched from him a wreath long promised by Ibn Sa'ud. But of what value was a journey performed in a straight line and so fast that it amounted to a race with death?

> He, Philby, was going to explore the Empty Quarter and tell the world what that part of Arabia was like. 'I am going now and you will not see me for a year, perhaps two years, or you will never see me again. If I come back I shall have *explored* the Empty Quarter.'

Philby noted that the King did not mention the Thomas exploit; performed without permission, it was a slight, and best passed over in silence. He spent the summer and autumn of 1931 in worry and anxiety both over a collapse of business, and over ruminations about the Empty Quarter that he described to Dora as 'this beastly obsession which has so completely sidetracked me for the best years of my life.' In his depression, he went through one of the phases of disenchantment with Arabia and Ibn Sa'ud that beset him whenever idle. At the end of 1931, with nothing to do but collect bad debts, he wrote home that:

> The last six months have certainly been a nightmare to me and would be to any genuine admirer of the Arabs. Ibn Sa'ud has disappointed me for the time being, but there is still time for him to save himself from the abyss. At the actual present moment his show is worse than Hussein's, which is enough said. . .

In November 1931, Philby returned to Riyadh, where he waited on the King's pleasure. He soothed his nerves by practicing



desert conditions and going for long periods without water. In mid-December, without warning and, as it were, on impulse, the King spoke the longed-for words. He could set out.

By Christmas Day he was in Hofuf, where—as with his Wadi Dawasir journey in 1918—Ibn Jiluwi was to supply him with camels, guides and provisions. He spent a fortnight there, on tenterhooks as to when he could start; exasperated by the wait, he wrote to Dora on January 1st that 'after this trip I shall never want anything more from the Arabs.' Suddenly he was told that all was ready; Ibn Jiluwi would provide him with an itinerary as far as the wells of Maqainama that lie at the south end of the Summan, or steppe, that runs south from Hofuf into the great desert. Beyond that, he said, was beyond his knowledge; nevertheless, the companions that he had chosen were to take the King's friend wherever he wished to go, to answer for his life with theirs, and to return from the farthest point that he chose. From there, they were to strike west across the Rub' al-Khali to Sulaiyl—the point at which the Wadi Dawasir breaks through the long mountain chain of the Jabal Tuwaiq.

Pausing only to write out a telegram to Dora ('Starting. Love everyone') and to visit Ibn Sa'ud's new radio station in order to check the two chronometer watches that were vital to his mapping, Philby left Hofuf in a dismal fog on January 7, 1932. Ten miles south of the town, he joined the 14 Arabs, 32 camels and provisions for three months that formed his caravan. On the third day out, his exuberance was marred by a fainting fit that reminded him alarmingly of the 'stroke' that he had had at Jiddah 18 months earlier. Luckily, this attack lasted only for an evening. Within a matter of days, and although everyone was observing the Ramadan fast, 'I was gloriously conscious of physical well-being and spiritual contentment as I marched through the desert in a climate that was as nearly perfect as possible.'

Experiences were by Philby's standards seldom great unless they could be counted as of 'first-ever' quality. The line that Philby chose to follow, which lay somewhat to the west of Bertram Thomas's, was therefore zig-zag enough to enable him to pinpoint wells that Thomas had missed, and to establish to his satisfaction that he was crossing a series of great inlets into promontories that are the cliffs of an ancient sea. Quantities of small sea shells confirmed his theory. Collecting these fossils, insects and rock specimens, and cross-checking the observations for a good map kept him content until the cavalcade reached Jabrin.

Thereafter, there was no further communication with the world. As they entered the Rub' al-Khali proper, Philby's spirits soared, whereas those of his companions sank. Henceforth, most of their drinking water would come from wells due south, some unknown, some only vaguely heard of, that were likely to be either polluted with camel dung, or have the qualities of Epsom salts, or both.

Philby's first object was to unravel the story that he had heard in 1918 from his then guide, Jabir ibn Farraj, about a group of ruins in the sands, supposed to be the remains of castles in which the legendary King Ad ibn Kinad had stabled his horses and kept his women and eunuchs in a paradise of orgies. Somewhere in the same area was a block of iron 'as big as a camel.' King Ad's fabled city, mentioned in some medieval Arab classics, was called Ubar, or Wabar, and was said to have been destroyed by fire from heaven as punishment for the sins of its king—a fate that is mentioned in the Koran. Was it right to identify it with the burnt-out site of which Philby had been told in 1918, where Bedouins were alleged to have picked up the blackened pearls of the king's ladies? Members of his party confirmed both stories; Bertram Thomas's men had done likewise; one member of Philby's team even knew a poem about the ancient king.

Setting out from Maqainama wells, Philby struck east in search of the ruins. Jabir's 1918 directions had been wonderfully accurate; on the strength of them Philby located the site almost exactly where Jabir had indicated. But as soon as he set eyes on it, the legend was shattered:

> I looked down not upon the ruins of an ancient city but into the mouth of a volcano, whose twin craters half filled with drifted sand lay side by side surrounded by slag and lava outpoured from the bowels of the earth.

His men picked up round pellets, and found a heavy piece of iron the size not of a camel but of a rabbit, but were discouraged

Left: Jiddah in 1928, and the Najd town of Riyadh in 1917. Above: Near the start of Philby's journey, on January 18, 1932, his escort paused near Jabrin to dig for jerboas, edible rodents. Right: Meteor crater "B" at Wabar.

when he gave his verdict. By a coincidence, the number of the Royal Geographical Society's *Journal* that he was carrying with him because it contained Bertram Thomas's map also contained an article on a supposed meteoric crater in West Africa. Philby, little knowing how rare such craters are, jotted in his diary a note that the Wabar craters were 'perhaps depressions created by the fall of meteorites.' This guess was confirmed when the rabbit-sized fragment was later presented by Ibn Sa'ud to the mineral department of the British Museum. Wabar is the result of a shower of large masses of meteoric iron that, on falling, create craters in which kinetic energy generates heat, and leads to violent explosions which throw fragments around; the 'pearls' are grains of silica coated with black in the process. Most of these iron masses still lie as they fell; one handsome piece of immense weight today decorates a forecourt of Riyadh University.

By now the composition of the party had slightly changed. At Jabrin, its men had picked up a dog—a saluki bitch which might, they thought, be useful for hunting hares (Aramco World, March-April 1973). At Wabar they were obliged, much against the will of Ibn Jiluwi's men, to abandon a lame camel. (They learned later that, miraculously, she had made her way back alone to Hofuf.) They went on southwards for about 100 miles to the well of Naifa, potently briny country. The well lay in a high horseshoe of dunes and here, much to the alarm of Philby's escort, they met with another natural phenomenon:

> Quite suddenly the great amphitheatre began to boom and drone with a sound not unlike that of a siren or perhaps an aeroplane engine—quite a musical pleasing rhythmic sound of astonishing depth.

Only once before, near Medina, had Philby heard singing sands, and then far off. Now they were near at hand, and were, of course, attributed by his companions to jinns; Philby soon saw that they were caused by a sand-slide set off by one of the men who had climbed the slope. This deduction he confirmed by manipulating the orchestra; while doing so, he plunged downhill and knelt on the singing mass; here he noticed a deep, sucking sound as he pulled hand or knee out of the slope, and felt a 'curious but unmistakable sensation of a pulsing and throbbing below the surface, as in a mild earthquake.'

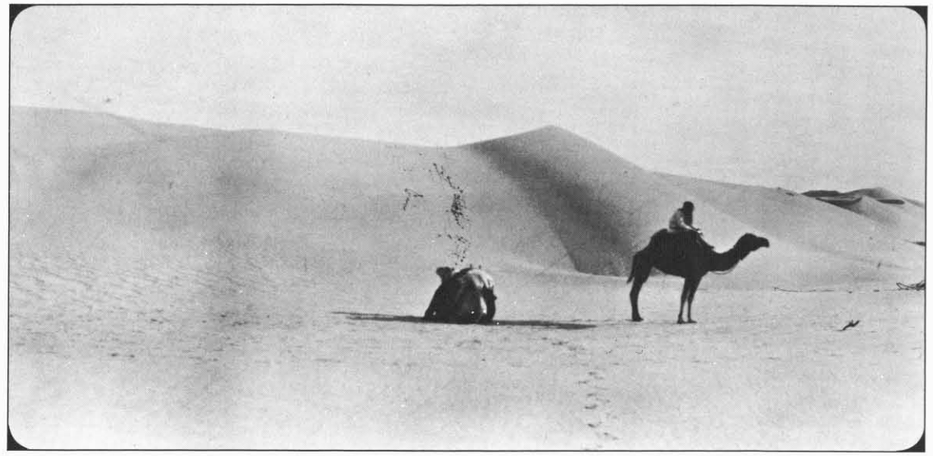
On they went, always southwards. From Naifa onwards, tension set in between the members of the escort. Some were disgruntled because, being born hunters, they had hoped for oryx, but had found only their tracks. Others chafed at Philby's mapping detours. He was determined to get at least as far south as a waterhole called Shanna, which Bertram Thomas had reached from the east, and of which he knew the latitude:

> For many days now [he recorded on February 16th], I had endured the constant and inevitable friction engendered by the struggle between the insistent urge of my own fixed and unalterable purpose and the solid weight of the innate national inertia thrown into the balance against me by the united body of my companions.

They were 47 days out from home; the voices were fourteen to one, and at Shanna these odds turned the scale. Years later, he learned that his escort had here planned to murder him, but after discussion had decided not to risk the wrath of the King. But they would go no farther, unless along Thomas's track east into Dhufar. He, by contrast, was determined to cross the waterless desert to the west. They demurred; they knew men who had hunted west from Shanna and east from the Wadi Dawasir, but always within reach of their base wells. They had no idea of the width of the gap between these two hunting grounds. At length they agreed to try his plan and so, contrary to his custom, which was to pay all rewards at the end of a journey, he distributed largesse to be shared among them; on February 22, 1932, the party set off westwards, riding camels, baggage train and all. He had taken bearings at Shanna which showed that the direct distance across to Sulaiyl was 360 miles, or 15 days for laden camels.

But the agreement of his team had been grudging, and trouble began again almost immediately. He wanted to march in a beeline and fast, they to stop and hunt oryx, of which they spotted many fresh trails. They wanted to march by night, he by day to see the country even if his wish meant discomfort from heat. They complained of his inconsideration, he of their faintheartedness. By the end of the fifth day out from Shanna their incomprehension of his motive was total, and misunderstanding was complete:

Left: January 31, 1932; treating a sick camel at Tuwairifa. Above: A group of the escort posed at Naifa before returning to Riyadh. Right: Dunes at Khillat Hawaya in the Empty Quarter, reached on February 29, and camels on a steep sand slope at Bani Makassar.



Could one be anything but critical and on one's guard [he wrote later] with companions who would readily have sacrificed the whole object of our endeavour to their own miserable comfort? . . .

I could not, would not yield. We had come 140 miles [since Shanna]. A third of the journey was behind us and a steady effort would carry us through if only they would play the man. They were of course weak and disheartened with hunger, for we had had nothing but dates since Shanna. I was famished myself and could sympathise with their condition. I felt like Moses in the wilderness when the multitude clamoured against him.

* * *

But the sands of South Arabia are more relentless than those of Sinai, and there was no rock to strike. Laden camels were collapsing; Philby suggested a plan whereby he and the unladen riding camels should go forward while the baggage train went back. But the party would have none of this; they must stick together. Even the threat of Ibn Sa'ud's wrath would not move their leading spokesmen. Finally, after much argument, he had to agree that the whole party should turn back, and return not to Shanna but farther north, to Naifa of the singing sands:

> The Empty Quarter had routed us. . . At last sleep blotted out the nightmare of the day—the worst of the whole journey from beginning to end, and perhaps the most terrible of all my experience.

Even when at the end of his tether owing to hunger, thirst or exasperation, Philby was never too tired to take notes and use his instruments to determine where they were; his thumbed notebooks, preserved at the Royal Geographical Society in London, record every change of terrain and shift of direction, each plant observed, each snake or insect seen, each trace of bird or animal. His Bedouins helped him by their inborn capacity for interpreting signs; they could tell by the state of some plant how lately it had rained, and by the prints and dung of a camel how lately it had passed, where and when it had watered, and whether the man riding it was hunting or with a party of raiders. News later picked up at wells always proved them right.

On this retreat towards Naifa there were few pauses for speculation. Philby was too dispirited, and his men were too eager for water and coffee, to do anything but press ahead. The one incident that cheered them all was the birth of a calf to one of the camels—a baby delivered from a flagging mother at the hands of such hungry midwives that Philby feared that it would be born dead, and so be unlawful meat. But no! It lived, and was at once cut up and eaten immediately after a perfunctory roasting on a small fire.

> In ordinary circumstances I do not think I could have brought myself to partake of such a meal, but our immediate circumstances were far from ordinary and I could have eaten anything, cooked or raw.

They here used the last of their water. By nightfall, having done some 30 miles, men and camels were so spent that Philby wanted to stop and cover the last short stretch in daylight. But his men pined for coffee and made him press on, he fearing that they would lose the way, they sure that they could find it. They were right. They struck the summit of the last ridge plumb above the well. The chief guide, Ali,

> had surpassed himself. He had a sense of the desert shared only by the very best of his own kind. It was something incredible, altogether inexplicable.

Philby, by now thankful to be alive, for the camels were nine days out from their last proper drink at Shanna and could hardly have done another day without water, himself drank three bowls of the foul briny Naifa water as if it were nectar. He wrote that it was 'the first water I had tasted in 55 days'; if so, what a tribute to his training.

Back at Naifa, everyone cheered up. Storm clouds were around; it might rain. They rested for four days, in the course of which Philby made up his mind that the baggage train must go north, and that he with a picked band of men and unladen camels would once more strike west for Sulaiyl. To win everyone's consent he had to persuade the men to slaughter a camel and dry its meat, for they were by now short of dates, and the fast party could not count on using rice as there would be no spare water in which to cook it. On the third day it rained; damp seemed to stop the sands from singing; with no jinns about, the moment seemed propitious for dividing the party. To his surprise, several of the faint-hearts wanted to come with him. In the end, he sent back only seven men to Hofuf with the baggage and with all his maps, diaries and observation books 'so that these at least should not be lost to the world in the event of our failure to get across the desert.' Finally, on March 5th, strengthened by rest, water and meat, and traveling light on the best of the camels, the desert party set off once more. Over 350 miles without water lay ahead.

So long as a journey is made through dunes and sand there is a chance of finding vegetation; the last outposts among plants are too saline for pasture, but they afford fuel, and therefore coffee, or for Philby, tea. For the first four days sparse growths were sometimes to be had, but on the fourth evening Philby was so thirsty that he asked, as well as his tea, for the milk of a camel that Ibn Jiluwi had decreed should be his alone. The result of the request shows the pitch that nerves had reached. The men, instead of bringing him the milk, set out his bowl and theirs in equal halves with their common meal, silently but publicly challenging him to drink a bowl to himself. He, to show his anger, adopted a technique that he used ever after, and shamed them by refusing to drink at all. 'I will drink no milk until we reach Sulaiyl.' Their consternation was immediate and immense. They pressed him; they brought the bowl to him privately; they said that they could not drink his share. If they would not, he said, give it to the dog. So the saluki profited from the bickering of men worn out with thirst.

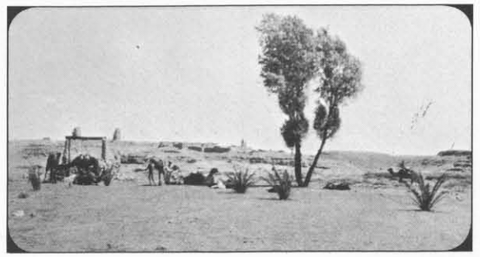
By far the worst physical ordeal of the journey came near its end. When they crossed the last low ridge and passed the last dead bush, they looked out over the wholly flat and featureless gravel plain that is called Abu Bahr—the father of the sea—a dreary phenomenon that stretches south for about 150 miles from the end of the Summan steppe at Maqainama. One of the guides had once crossed this daunting waste, but much farther north, where it was narrower. Here no one knew how wide it was; they therefore set out across it with the certainty of no water, no fuel, and therefore no coffee, till they reached the sands on its far side.

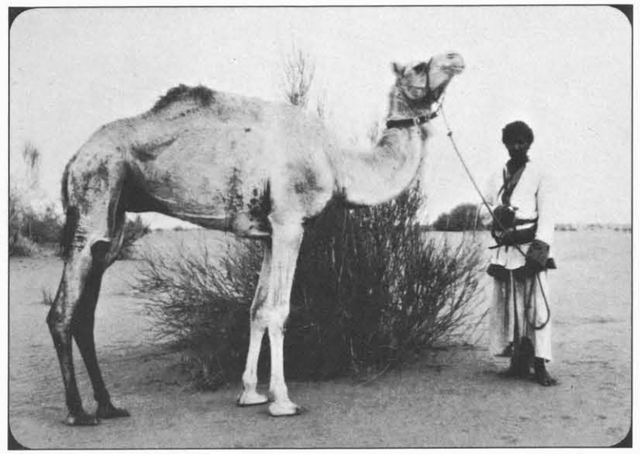
A ride which began at midnight on March 5th went on with short breaks only for prayer until 11 a.m., when they stopped for a drink and a few dates; to keep them going some of the camels had to have water poured into their nostrils—a process called 'snuffing.' On they went, marching through the heat of the day. By 2.30 p.m., when they dismounted for another drink from their skins, Philby was so parched and weary that he sipped his first water since Naifa, 250 miles back. Again they went on without rest. Philby grew irresistibly drowsy; unlike his escort, he was not a born rider and was unable to doze on camel-back. Bedouins always sing as they march—a shanty type of ditty that sounds monotonous to Western ears. Now their voices, grown falsetto, by degrees died away. When the halt for afternoon prayer arrived, Philby had to drink again; his need for sleep was overwhelming; but the guides, bent on fuel and coffee, remounted and went straight on.

> Marching now into the sinking sun was as trying an ordeal as one could well imagine. Yet there was no sign among my companions of the customary search for a spot to camp in. . . . We halted for the sunset prayer and, absolutely dead beat, I heaved a sigh of relief that at last our labours were over for the day. But I was mistaken, for no sooner had we got through the service and had another drink of water all round, than Zayid [the leader] gave the order to mount and continue the march. I was too weary to protest or argue and followed suit meekly enough.

Zayid pressed on, occasionally even making them trot, because he had seen traces of grazing camels—a sure sign that they could not be far from plants and some fuel. But they could see nothing in the black dark, and at 9.15 p.m., after 18 out of 21 hours in the saddle and after covering 70 miles without rest, Philby insisted on stopping, and, coffee-less, Zayid consented with an ill grace. They had by now spent six days on the way, three of which had been traveled in a furnace. They had had no food for 48 hours, and had only three skins of water left.

But the worst was over. When they moved off again in the morning twilight, undulations in the gravel began, a first range of dunes appeared, and edible vegetation stopped the camels in their tracks. 'Their hunger was terrible to watch.' Lizards and a locust appeared and men who had hunted from Sulaiyl spotted landmarks that they recognised. From one of the higher ridges they sighted in the distance the mountains





Above: After crossing the waterless desert the party reached the wells of Latwa, near Sulaiyl, on March 14. Right: Al Na'riya, the she-camel Philby rode from Naifa across the Rub' al-Khali to Sulaiyl and on to Mecca.

of the Tuwaiq barrier, and the gap in it where Sulaiyl lies. For one last cloudy night they marched by Philby's compass instead of Jupiter, and for one last day in intermittent rainstorms which afforded him the enjoyment of hearing twittering birds in the bushes. They sent two messengers ahead to announce their coming. They passed first through sheep droppings, then through tamarisk clumps, and then past women drawing water; at last they reached the oasis of Sulaiyl and an orgy of food, bread and meat. The date was March 14th, and they had covered 375 miles in nine days.

Sulaiyl, nowadays a stop on an internal air route, was then remote from the world. In 1932, it had seen no foreigner since Philby's visit 14 years earlier. Then, he had come in the wake of a huge and welcome flood; now again, he brought storm clouds and propitious weather to break the 12 years of drought that its inhabitants had suffered in between. They were poor beyond belief, not only because of drought but because the seasonal trek of their menfolk to the pearl fisheries of the Gulf was no longer worthwhile; the world no longer demanded real pearls. Nevertheless, they were hospitable. They offered ample meals, and the desert party was smitten with colic to a man.

Everyone rested, but only for two days because, if they were to get to Mecca for the Pilgrimage as Philby had promised, they must push on. The Pilgrimage was on April 15th; they had over 400 miles to go, more than half of it through country unmapped and unknown to any European, and on overstrained camels. Though their suspense was over, Philby's voyage of discovery was incomplete. Fortunately the way was well known, and he picked up with ease a series of local guides and plenty of local provisions; grazing for camels was also plentiful in that rainy spring.

Philby, fortified by good meals and peace of mind, resumed all his habitual practices. He climbed heights to either side of the way in order to get an idea of the lie of the land, and to measure angles for his map. He took sun and star observations and challenged his guides to name every feature that they sighted. He crept about at halts with his butterfly net and killing bottle; he picked up specimens of rock for the British Museum; as they climbed towards the mountains of the 'Asir, he even found time to admire their colors—here the deep dark red of ironstone, there the pinks and purples of sandstone, or the gloomy black of basalt.

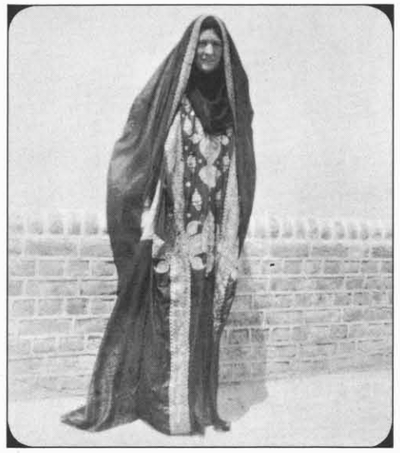
On their way, Philby made his first acquaintance with the three great wadis that flow down from the 'Asir. These are the Wadi Tathlith, coming up from the south, and the Wadis Bisha and Ranya, coming more directly from the west. Bisha itself was the point at which they turned north; here Philby noted the town's flourishing entrepôt trade in coffee from Yemen, gums from the 'Asir forests and slaves from the south, and the relative security in which the villagers grazed their herds. He heard none of the 'shouted alarms' recorded by Doughty in the bad old days of tribal feuding.

From Bisha northwards they were on a well-trodden route up and down which conquerors have passed since pre-Islamic times. Other parties traveling to Mecca began to join them; Philby spent his 47th birthday, April 3rd, enveloped in a sandstorm, and was tickled when his men, on learning his age, told him that they had thought he was 60. They traveled north so fast that in the end they had time at their disposal, and Philby was able to make a detour, and to find an inscription and rock drawing which Doughty had seen and copied in 1879. This found, he dropped down to Sail, which is a gathering point for all pilgrims from Najd. From there, he was offered and accepted a lift in a lorry to Mecca.

The date was April 5th. For nearly a month he had been back amongst human kind; at Bisha he had even been shown a copy of the Mecca newspaper. But he had been out of communication with the world. The last that Dora in London had heard of him was his parting telegram from Hofuf, followed more slowly by letters telling her that she must borrow from their lawyer, Horne, to keep going. She had passed an anxious and desperate spring, at her wit's end for money:

> God knows where you are and what you are up to [she wrote into the blue in mid-January] . . . I have literally no one I can turn to.

Towards the end of March—that is, about the time that Philby reached Bisha—news that 'Philby has been seen' somehow



Left: Dora Philby, in a dress given to her by Ibn Sa'ud, photographed in Kuwait in 1935 by Violet Dickson. Above: Government Street in Mecca, 1931.

reached the press. From then on, she was pestered with inquiries that she could not answer, until, on April 6th, the house on Acol Road was plunged into delirious excitement by a telegram from Mecca. The telephone pealed all day:

> The relief at hearing your news [she wrote off to Mecca] has completely gone to my head and in addition to this I ordered a bottle of sherry and we have all, even Helena, drunk to your very good health. Kim is wild with excitement. His confidence in your success has helped me through the last fortnight. I was on the verge of a breakdown before he arrived [from Cambridge]. Now I could take on a tiger.

Philby's first letter, which crossed hers, showed that he was worn out:

> I think [he wrote on April 14th] that I have done with desert exploration for good. It is hard work on short rations of dates and raw dried camel's meat. The skin on my hands is burnt through to the quick.

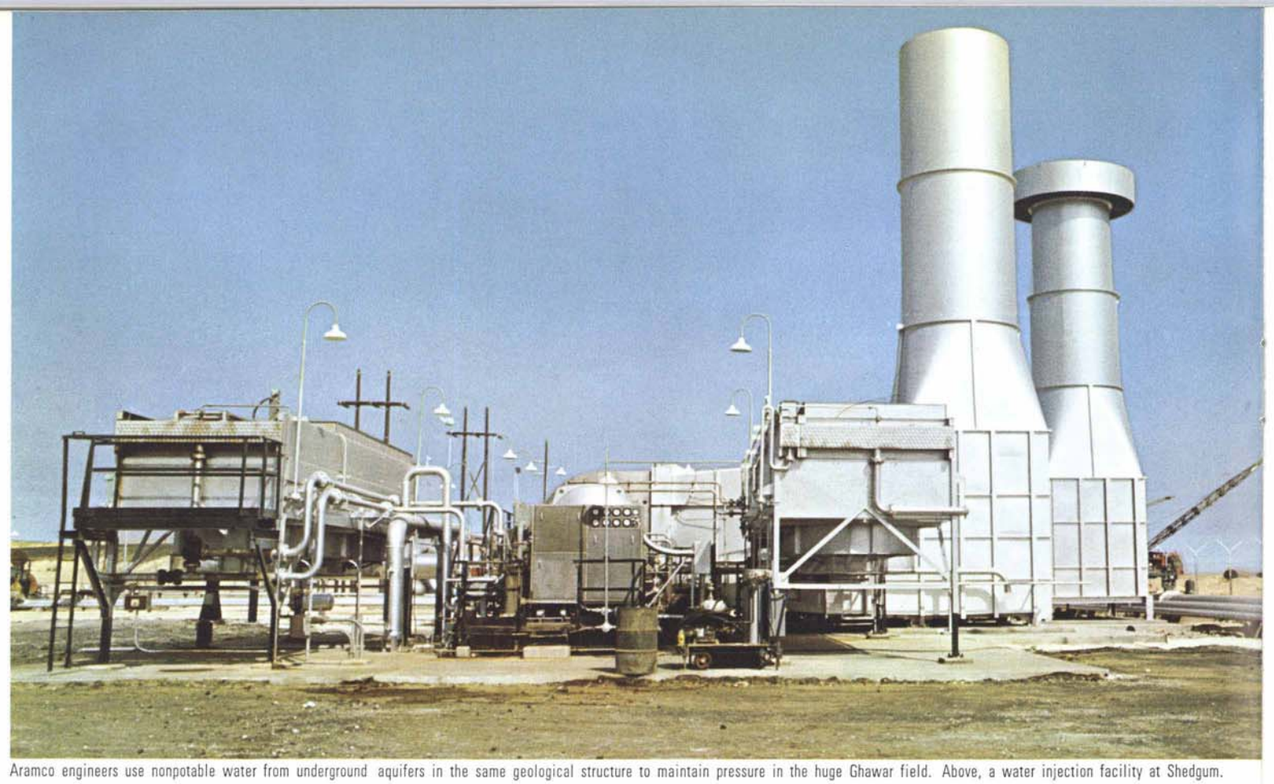
What was worse: 'I am a pauper.' Sharqieh, of his firm, owed him £500 but there was 'not a bean in the till.' He told Dora to negotiate with his publisher, Constable, for an advance on a book, and with *The Times* about articles. For the outlook was not wholly bleak; his mind was at rest at last and he was 'bursting with my epic in embryo.' Directly the Pilgrimage was over he set out for home, a hero's welcome, and a summer of scribbling at his record and basking in success.

Philby's notion that he had done with unexplored desert soon died a natural death. He talked for a while of being ready to retire gracefully, but as soon as he was back in Arabia and court life or salesmanship palled, he began to make minor journeys. By 1935, when he resumed exploration in earnest, cars in general, and Fords in particular, were penetrating desert and mountain tracks. Dependence on a machine instead of a camel presented travelers with new problems. Whereas a camel could pick up fodder en route, a car needed to be self-supporting in fuel and to carry not only spare parts but someone who understood its engine. For this last purpose, Philby was useless; his daughters used to twit him about his need to ring up before attempting to light a Primus stove. Sometimes he ventured to drive alone along a frequented route, but in untracked desert he had to travel in convoy; to do so is still essential unless a driver is equipped with a transmitter and sets out from a base that he can count on to listen for him.

Early in 1935 Philby inaugurated his car-borne mapping with a trip eastwards from Medina to the Qasim towns of Anaiza and Buraida. Later in the year, he scored another 'first ever,' though a tamer one since it never left established routes. He and Dora went on leave, traveling overland by car; he did all the driving, without a mechanic on board and without a hitch apart from a violent bout of fever when staying with the Harold Dicksons in Kuwait (Aramco World, Nov.-Dec. 1972). Dora became the first European woman to cross Arabia from sea to sea. They took two different routes. Homebound, they traveled to Riyadh, where Ibn Sa'ud presented Dora with elegant Arab clothes; thence they drove to Kuwait, Basra, Baghdad and Damascus and into Europe through Turkey. Returning via Gibraltar in the late autumn, they traveled the length of North Africa, crossing Libya in spite of the Ethiopian War. They caused a sensation in Cairo by describing to everyone from the High Commissioner down how polite the Italians had been all along their way. Their marathon continued through central Sinai where they crossed the Mitla pass—unheard of by most people until the Israelis dropped a paratroop battalion there to threaten the Suez Canal in 1956; then on to Jerusalem and Amman and back into Arabia by the Wadi Sirhan. In Jauf and Hail, Philby resumed Arab dress and Muslim prayer, and enjoyed himself while Dora, alternately bored and enraged, sat in harem, watched by women and slaves to whom she could not talk. She was thankful to get back to Riyadh and Jiddah:

> It will probably be a long time [wrote Philby in his autobiography] before anyone else attempts or accomplishes this double journey, which provided us with a delightful, if sometimes strenuous, holiday at the modest cost of £100 a month and occupied five and a half months.

TO BE CONTINUED



Aramco engineers use nonpotable water from underground aquifers in the same geological structure to maintain pressure in the huge Ghawar field. Above, a water injection facility at Shedgum.

Ghawar, an underground structure 150 miles long, is the largest—and most productive—oil field in the world.

OSCAR FOR AN OIL FIELD

WRITTEN BY
BRAINERD S. BATES
PHOTOGRAPHED BY
S. M. AMIN

Aerial view of GOSP No. 8 at 'Uthmaniyah (top), and turbogenerator at GOSP No. 3.

An oilman's map of eastern Saudi Arabia pinpoints the location of gas-oil separator plants, pump stations, pipelines, storage tanks, a refinery, a marine terminal and the many other kinds of installations required for the processing and shipping of petroleum. Clearly indicated too are all the oil fields whose production is sent through that myriad assortment of fixtures. One field shown on the map stands out above all others because of its sheer dimensions. Ghawar is the largest known oil field, not only in Aramco's concession area, but in the world. If there is one thing that is more impressive than Ghawar's size, however, it is its productivity. Along about the time this issue reaches its readers the field will be producing on the order of five million barrels of oil a day. Large as this figure is, however, the experts say it is modest when stacked up against Ghawar's potential.

The northernmost portion of Ghawar field lies about 60 miles west of the Arabian Gulf port city of Dammam, which is a 20-minute drive north of Aramco's headquarters community of Dhahran. From its northern extremity Ghawar extends southward some 150 miles as essentially one long continuous anticline, about 25 miles across at its widest point. Geologically, the field is categorized as a fairly simple structure with a complete closure, a typical Middle East reservoir of porous limestone and dolomite. The oil comes almost entirely from a producing zone known as Arab D, about 7,000 feet, on the average, below the surface.

Long before 'Ain Dar Well 1, the field's discovery well, was spudded in in 1948, geologists had a pretty good idea of Ghawar's potential. Along the whole piece of territory they could see, by means of detailed survey mapping, what they called "surface expression" of dips to the east and west. Later, as small, portable "structure drilling" rigs probed the earth, it was confirmed that these dips followed a somewhat parallel course below the surface on either side. It took little ingenuity on their part for geologists to reason that if two opposite sides slope outward from each other there must be a rise in between them, and this rise might be an anticline containing oil.

These structure indications were so clearcut that it was possible to bypass on Ghawar the use of technically complex seismic means of oil exploration (*Aramco World Magazine*, Jan.-Feb. 1966; Nov.-Dec. 1972). Structure drilling told the geologists all they needed to know before they recommended going for broke with wildcats and then production drilling. Development/delineation drilling is still the means in progress of exploring and fully defining the oil-bearing anticline that has long given Ghawar its preeminence.

Before it became clear that Ghawar was actually one big field, wildcat wells were drilled over a period of nearly nine years in widely separated areas along the recognized Ghawar structural trend. Wildcatting began with 'Ain Dar in the north, then moved to Haradh at the extreme southern end. Success at these two broadly removed locations led to "fill-in" wildcats at 'Uthmaniyah, Shedgum and Hawiyah. Ultimately, on February 21, 1957, Arab D oil was also discovered at Fazran, the most northerly protuberance of Ghawar. There are today some 300 producing wells altogether in these areas of the field.

The oil being produced carries up gas dissolved in it, which must be separated out in stages in big vessels called traps before the oil can be pumped any distance for processing or export. There are, so far, 25 of these gas-oil separator plants (GOSPs) distributed over Ghawar field, with more in various stages of construction. The jumbo of all these plants, functioning up in the northern section of the field, is Shedgum GOSP No. 1, whose three pairs of traps operating in parallel together have a daily rated throughput capacity of 750,000 barrels of oil, piped in from wells producing in a surrounding area nearly 60 miles square.

After the two initial stages of pressure reduction, first down to 175 pounds per square inch and then to 50 psi, have been carried out in GOSPs at Ghawar, the oil with some gas still in it arrives by pipeline at Abqaiq, where stabilizers in the industrial area remove the corrosive and poisonous hydrogen sulfide initially present in all of Aramco's inland crude, making that oil "sweet" and fit for transporting further through pipelines and aboard tankers.

Everyone concerned with production at Aramco is acutely aware that oil is a highly valuable natural resource which must be brought out of the ground with techniques that make it as certain as is economically possible that first-rate oil field practices are maintained (*Aramco World Magazine*, Nov.-Dec. 1965). Saudi Arabian oil happens to rise through wells to the surface under its own innate pressure, but after a field has been produced for a long time that fortuitous force tends to diminish. A great deal of Aramco's best engineering talent concentrates exclusively on ways to maintain pressure in its fields by induced means.

In Ghawar this is accomplished by means of water, augmented in the 'Ain Dar area by gas. There exists in underground aquifers within the structure, but above the Arab D producing reservoir, water with such a high mineral content that it is completely unfit for human or animal consumption, or for agriculture. Some of this water flows downward by gravity through injection wells connecting the aquifer directly with the reservoir. Additional nonpotable water is pumped to the surface from specially drilled water supply wells and then pumped down with considerable force into the producing reservoir. A properly designed system with optimum strategic placement of the injection wells will maintain the reservoir pressure somewhere near its original force. At the same time, the water introduced under pressure into the reservoir will "sweep" the oil in the direction of the production wells.

Everything connected with a pressure-maintenance program in a field the size of Ghawar must obviously be on a massive scale to be at all effective. For example, the field has a total of 94 injection wells and 32 water supply wells, and more are being drilled. The pipelines which carry the great volumes of water for injection purposes must not only be huge in diameter but must have walls able to withstand extremely high pressures. No pumps previously existed in the marketplace large enough to handle all the water used in the injection program at Ghawar, so Aramco had to go out and have such pumps specially designed and built. The results were 20,000-horsepower giants able to handle a half-million barrels of water a day at approximately 2,000-pounds-per-square-inch pressure.

The planning, construction and operation of oil-production and pressure-maintenance facilities in such fields as Ghawar represents a deliberate, coordinated effort to produce crude oil in Saudi Arabia at optimum conditions. It is common knowledge in informed circles that the volume of crude produced daily by Aramco's fields, including Ghawar, is very substantial. While the company's storage tank capacity is large, and growing, it would take very little time to overflow its tanks with current production. This is a problem that company oil planners do not expect to face. Large quantities of oil are being produced in and exported from Saudi Arabia these days because there is a demand for it. Ghawar field is pulling its weight to help meet the world's urgent—and increasing—requirements for energy.

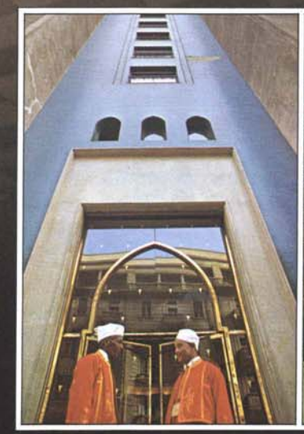
Brainerd S. Bates is Aramco's chief writer on petroleum and a regular contributor to Aramco World.

The story of hotels in the lands where hospitality was born ...

FROM KHANS TO KHILTONS

WRITTEN BY JOSEPH FITCHETT

PHOTOGRAPHED BY S.M. AMIN AND BURNETT MOODY (Saudi Arabia), PETER KEEN (Egypt), WASEEM TCHORBACHI (Lebanon) and NIK WHEELER (Cyprus, Syria, Iraq and Iran).



Large photo: front entrance of the Palestine Hotel, Alexandria, Egypt. Insets: the rebuilt Shepheard's in Cairo (left), and the Cecil Hotel, described in Durrell's "Alexandria Quartet."

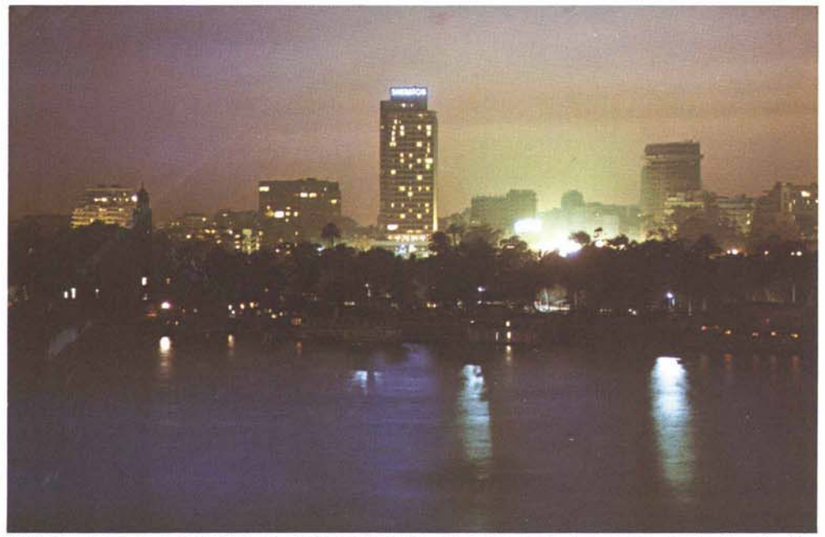
In Mecca, they're finishing up an Inter-Continental. A Holiday Inn just opened its doors in Beirut. In Cairo, a Sheraton and a Hilton face each other across the Nile and both hotels are booked solid. Throughout the Middle East today jumbo jets are spilling out travelers in search of a room for the night and builders are racing to provide them. There are journalists and diplomats, the ubiquitous Japanese salesman and Texas oil man, and tourists—camera-toting Westerners and, in numbers growing by leaps and bounds each year, Arabs. Hotel construction looms large in economic planning throughout the area, with nearly every Arab country hoping to double present facilities—in some cases quadruple—in the next two years.

It was not always so. In ancient times travelers either carried their meager needs with them in a humble bedroll or camped in aristocratic style. Fort-like *khans* or caravanserais grew up after the 13th century, European travelers brought along the Grand Hotel in the 19th, and the jet plane and oil-fueled prosperity are largely responsible for the glass-walled, air-conditioned towers springing up today. But Middle East hotels, from *khans* to khiltons, have always been exciting, animated and cosmopolitan establishments.

In traditional Arab lifestyle, hotels had no place. Hospitality was a sacred obligation, a social duty—to sell it would make a Bedouin blush—and any self-respecting traveler took an invitation to stay with relatives, friends or local notables for granted. On the other hand, as commerce spread with Islam and public order, tribes and townsmen along the great trade routes could hardly afford to protect or entertain the growing caravans unaided, and so institutions known as *khans* were established in about the 13th century.

The early *khans* were fortified single-story buildings, enclosing a well and a central courtyard used for animals, baggage and wagons. Around the open courtyard were vaulted storerooms for goods and fodder. Built a day's journey apart, a distance of 20 to 25 miles, along the main routes, the roadside *khans* offered safe, dependable lodging to travelers, pilgrims, merchants, postal convoys—to anyone except soldiers on the march. In remote *khans* the only accommodation was a four-foot-deep inner ledge in the courtyard wall; small hearths were spaced at intervals along it where travelers made little encampments, cooking over a wood fire and sleeping wrapped in a light rug or blanket with their saddle for a pillow and camels tethered at their feet. In hot regions, a stairway led up to a flat roof where travelers assembled and ate in the evening before the caravan moved off.

In cities, larger multistoried *khans* developed, some architecturally quite sophisticated and offering private rooms with hearths, bathrooms and lavatories. The most splendid might also contain a mosque, together with a livery stable and blacksmith, plus a coffee house. French architect Le Corbusier has acknowledged that some of his designs were inspired by the duplex apartments of 14th-century Egyptian *khans*. When modern transport finally made caravans obsolete, the *khans* did not become hotels. Sometimes they were used as warehouses, more often as garages. In Beirut some became the first movie palaces.



Cairo's newest riverside tower, the Sheraton, which opened last year, adds its lights to the city's night sky and the glimmering Nile.

Another early Muslim prototype of hotels was the *tekkeye*—an endowed hostel for pilgrims which was a sort of cross between a *khan* and a monastery. In the central courtyard, usually dominated by a mosque and reflecting pool, pilgrims foregathered waiting for a caravan to form up. One of the finest examples, Suleiman the Great's Tekkeye (now a museum), is in Damascus, a starting point for the trek south to Medina and the Muslim Holy Places.

With the coming of Western travelers in large numbers, however, the old arrangements would not do, neither the *khans* nor their later urban equivalents, the *funduks*. (The *funduks* had dormitory-like sleeping arrangements and no restaurants or public rooms and many have now degenerated into flophouses.) The foreign visitors demanded a standard of hygiene which, although maintained in private Arab homes, was generally ignored in public accommodations. They wanted mosquito netting over their beds, food prepared in familiar ways and, perhaps most important, a comfortable haven where the reassuring sound of European voices helped to ward off the shock of confronting a foreign culture.

When, after 1840, Englishmen began traveling to India via Egypt and the Red Sea rather than around the Cape, Samuel Shepheard, a Victorian businessman, set up a Cairo boarding house which eventually became the most celebrated hostelry outside Europe. Others soon followed, often opening in modified private residences. A wealthy Egyptian family in Luxor, for example, whose house had a wing for each son, turned it into the Savoy Hotel. The gala opening of the Suez Canal, in 1869, gave the Khedive Ismail an excuse to construct several new hotels to join Shepheard's on what became Opera Square, Cairo's first European-style square, opposite the brand-new Opera House.

In the latter half of the 19th century, as the British tightened their grip on Egypt, the fashion of luxurious winter tourism caught on and well-to-do American and English families felt obliged to "do" at least one winter in Egypt. Shepheard's was their principal rendezvous, but European businessmen also built a whole chain of "Winter Palace" hotels along the Nile. One was the Old Cataract in Aswan, the once-tranquil village near the great cataracts. The Old Cataract evokes the splendors of past travel: its bathrooms alone are bigger than the bedrooms in many modern hotels; Oriental rugs carpet the floors and from the hotel veranda steps lead down to the riverbank where *feluccas* can be hired for picnicking on any of the small green islands dotting the river.

The Nile Hilton was the area's first big international hotel.

Many of the earliest hotels were started by former dragomans—local entrepreneurs who made all the arrangements for a traveler's trip. Throughout the Ottoman Empire many of the dragomans were Greeks. The Angleterre Hotel in Constantinople, long the Ottoman capital's leading establishment, was owned and operated by Missouli, the Greek who had served as dragoman for the British writer William Kinglake. In Beirut, Nicolas Bassoul started his hotel after gaining a reputation as dragoman to another English traveler, Eliot Warburton, whose books were even greater best sellers than Kinglake's. The new hoteliers were lavishly written up in the famous travel books authored by their customers—the best form of advertising at the time.

Today Beirut's Bassoul is probably the oldest surviving example of early hotel arrangements in the Middle East. Now amputated of gardens which used to stretch down to the sea, and dwarfed by the new Hilton going up next door, the Grand Hotel Bassoul is a stone building with ample proportions. American University of Beirut professor John Carswell gives a guided tour to his architecture students each year, pointing out that all the bedrooms on each floor open onto a central salon, an imaginative adaptation of open-plan Turkish architectural tradition designed to ensure a maximum amount of contact of guests with one another. Being able to exchange experiences and complaints and share the common denominator of being strangers in the same place helped people cope with the alien environment which assailed them outside the hotel.

An unusual early traveler who left his impressions of 19th-century hotels was the American merchant sailor, later author, Herman Melville. The journal of his Middle East trip in 1857 shows a wanderer's sensitivity to hotel life. In Beirut, he was comfortable at Bassoul's, which a contemporary description admitted was "wanting in many comforts to which an English traveler is accustomed, but considered the best in Syria." Shepheard's overwhelmed Melville:

> The magnitude of Shepheard's, lofty ceilings, stone floors, iron beds, thin mattress, no feathers, blinds, mosquito curtains—all showing the tropics. And that you are in the East is shown by fresh dates on table for dessert, cool water in stone jars; waited on by Arab dragomen; clap your hands for servants . . . a brilliant scene!

In Palestine travel had always been more spartan. While people went to Egypt for health or pleasure, Palestine drew mostly Christian pilgrims. They had been coming in limited numbers since the 13th century, usually staying in monasteries, and carving their names on wooden doors even in medieval times. Franciscan monks operated a chain of hostels, one at each stopover on the pilgrim circuit. In the late 19th century the Franciscans opened separate, lay facilities. One hostel, the Casa Nova, had a vaulted cellar dining room which it still a favorite of teachers and young people in Jerusalem.

German Kaiser Wilhelm's spectacular pilgrimage through Palestine and Syria in 1898 focused the world's attention on the Holy Land. With improved transportation pilgrimages had already been increasing in size and many prosperous Victorian travelers chose to use the services of Thomas Cook. Cook, a temperance movement worker who started out in Great Britain organizing railway "day-trips" as a distraction for non-drinkers, found the Holy Land ideal for his type of development, providing comfortable camping arrangements. Servants would precede a party of travelers to the evening campsite, so after a day of sketching, touring and picnicking they would arrive in time for a bath in large copper tubs and a hot dinner before retiring in floored, blue-cloth tents.

What is today Jerusalem's most gracious and comfortable old hotel, the American Colony, also began its career about this time. The hotel building, which was originally the palace of a 19th-century pasha, sits in a small garden a few minutes' walk from the Old City. In the upstairs salon a midnight-blue dome marks the spot where the pasha sat to receive visitors in audience. The older parts of the building are insulated by walls six feet thick and, above the ceilings, a three-foot layer of pottery jars. Drinking water is kept cool in stone jugs with weighted handkerchiefs over the mouths to keep out dirt. It is graceful, picturesque, refined.

The manager is Horatio Vester, a scion of the Vester family, which went out to Jerusalem at the end of the 19th century after a series of personal tragedies (Aramco World, July-August, 1967) and, with other American expatriates, formed a kind of commune. This "American Colony" found itself taking in paying guests and gradually evolved into what became the city's most sophisticated hotel, with a reputation that has spread far beyond the Middle East. Many have tried to write about it, but its elusive special quality is the hotel's close links with the community around it. In Jerusalem, diplomats and correspondents, Arabists, archaeologists and writers foregather at the American Colony. Continuous management by the same family throughout this century has given the hotel an assured identity. The staff have always been Palestinians, many of whom have practically grown up with the hotel, and the Vesters have won a place for themselves as people

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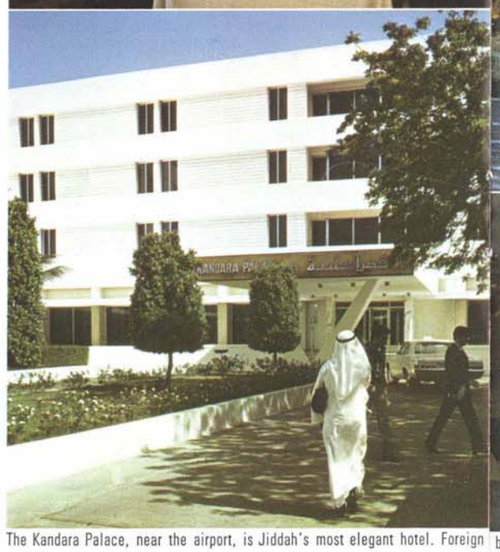
The dining room of Al-Fateh Hotel and Convention Center in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. The Arabic name recalls the era of Islamic conquests.

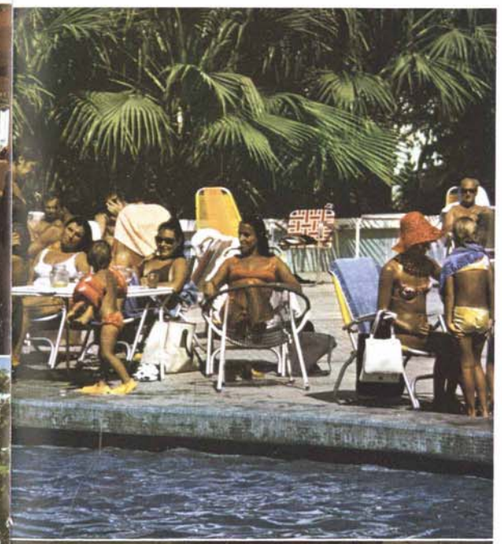
William Tracy

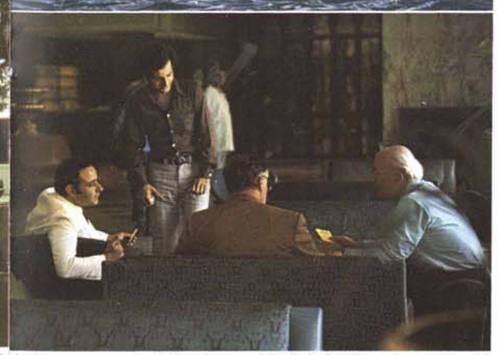
With businessmen flocking to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia's bustling capital, Al-Yamama Hotel on Airport Road rarely has a vacancy.

Al-Attas Oasis Hotel in Jiddah, a Red Sea commercial center and port of Mecca.



The Kandara Palace, near the airport, is Jiddah's most elegant hotel. Foreign businessmen meet in lobby alcoves while their families relax at the pool.





TWO BIG ONES FOR SAUDI ARABIA

William Tracy

The Riyadh Inter-Continental Hotel. Architect/Engineers: Trevor Dannatt, Ove Arup and Partners, London.

Sometime next year, in Mecca and Riyadh, doors will swing open on the Middle East's two newest and most luxurious hostelries. Both—each with 200 rooms—will be managed as integral parts of two mammoth new conference centers designed to provide 1,500-seat auditoriums, meeting rooms, exhibition space and banquet facilities for international gatherings, one in Islam's holiest city, the other in Saudi Arabia's burgeoning capital. The Riyadh complex alone is a $40 million investment in that city's future as an administrative, cultural and commercial center of the kingdom.

Both projects date back to 1966, when the Saudi Arabian Government asked the International Union of Architects to organize an international competition. British architect Trevor Dannatt's monumental design was chosen for the Riyadh center, while the Mecca project was awarded to the German team of Rolf Gutbrod and Frei Ott. British, French, Italian and Lebanese firms won engineering and construction contracts and the American company, Inter-Continental Hotels, signed a 20-year management agreement with the government.

Each of the hotel/conference center complexes has a land-scaped, oasis-like setting with large interior spaces which are light and cool. The Mecca center, located on the Jiddah highway about three miles from the Sacred Mosque, features an aluminum roof suspended on a spider-web of steel cables. The hotel in Riyadh is M-shaped, with rooms (each with a shaded private patio-balcony facing north) arranged along open galleries overlooking a covered six-story lobby. The resulting sense of spaciousness is in the true 'Grand Hotel' tradition.

French Muslim engineers supervised the Mecca project. With trained personnel already running hotels in Muslim Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Indonesia, as well as several Arab countries, Inter-Continental was the obvious choice among the experienced international chains to manage the completed hotel in the Holy City.

Inter-Continental also plans an extensive five-month training program for Saudi Arab personnel at all levels, including some on-the-job assignments abroad. In imaginative pre-recruitment advertising, the chain is stressing the importance to modern Saudi Arabia's continued economic growth of its newest—and oldest—"industry": hospitality.

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attached to the city, regardless of political turmoil. During the Turkish retreat in 1919, for example, the commander left his wounded at the American Colony, confident they would be protected; looking for a white flag for the actual surrender, he used a bed sheet from the hotel.

After the turn of the century, as the conservative Ottoman Empire crumbled and Westerners penetrated Arab cities in swelling numbers, hotels were a means of keeping the foreigners and locals out of each others' hair.

Cocoons for tourists, venue for meetings of state, military headquarters, expatriate clubs, a swank annex for local society offering liquor, dancing and gambling, the Grand Hotels had their heyday after World War I. Most, even those built as late as the 1930's, were solid, spacious, Edwardian establishments with room for the stately occasions and scampish hi-jinks of colonial life. Many acquired virtual extraterritorial status as bridgeheads of European living. As readers

The Manial Palace, in Cairo, features bungalows and gardens.

of Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* will recall, Justine first encounters Darby, the English writer, in the Cecil Hotel amid dusty potted palms in the old hotel's gaunt vestibule. In the colonial Middle East, whenever East met West it usually happened in a hotel.

The most intact—and picturesque—survivor of the great old colonial hotels today is surely the Grand Hotel in Khartoum, Sudan. The long, low hotel has hardly changed from the days when Britain held full sway. Broad terraces run along the Nile where the Blue and White branches join, at sunset the mighty river reflecting the red of the dust-filled sky. Inside there are acres of hand-polished red floor tiles, ashtrays filled with sand, and massive silver cutlery marked "Sudan Railways." The dining ritual includes a gargantuan, five-course fixed menu at every meal, sometimes opening with a Nile fish specialty called "Chinese Gordon Soup," after the British hero who died a few hundred yards further along the river bank. Dinner is followed by coffee, served never in the dining room, only in the lounge.

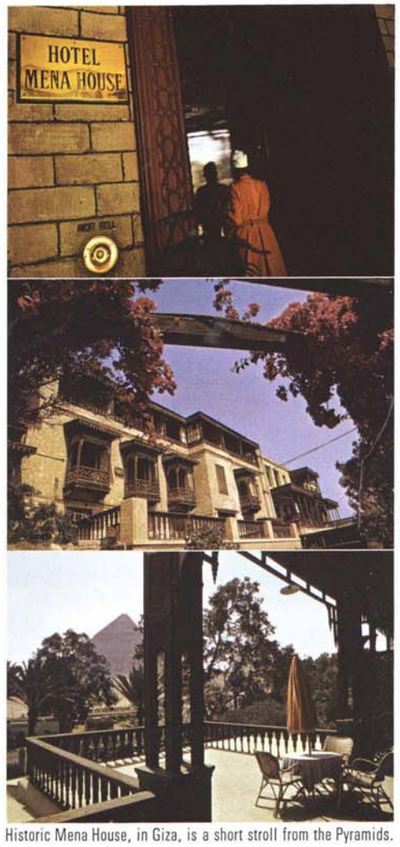
In Egypt, of course, Shepheard's was the legendary landmark—like Raffles in Singapore—an inseparable part of foreigners' impressions of the country.

For some, it was almost the whole scene. From Shepheard's celebrated terrace, over a coffee or lemonade, Europeans gazed out on Opera Square and the teeming, colorful Cairo street scene. As British interests in Egypt expanded, so did Shepheard's (it was rebuilt three times). Decorated in pseudo-pharaonic style—thick, lotus-topped pillars, dull colors unthinkingly copied from faded ruins, Egyptian divans, marble tables, potted palms—Shepheard's grew into a big hotel for its day, with reading rooms, banks, and post offices spreading in all directions. Tall unruffled Nubians provided calm service. Wearing long embroidered gowns, sashes, and turbans that were the livery of slaves at the Turkish court, the Nubian *suffragis* had drifted to Cairo from Upper Egypt after the first Aswan dam flooded their lands.

Shepheard's always came into its own during wartime. It was British Headquarters in World War I (Lawrence detested it as a hive of bureaucracy), and unofficial Allied Headquarters in World War II. Rommel boasted he was going to have his headquarters there, too. The hotel was also virtually an antechamber of the Egyptian court, which only perished with the revolution in 1952.

The besetting problem of new arrivals in Cairo was how to get a room at Shepheard's, which was always full to overflowing, but somehow always found room for the "right" people. It was "an island of English imperial living," says British writer Desmond Stewart. Its Grill Room giving on the back garden was considered the most desirable place in the city to dine out.

Shepheard's finally paid for its years of imperial glitter: angry Egyptian crowds burned it to the ground in 1952, on what came to be known as Black Saturday. When Shepheard's was rebuilt a few years later, it moved away from Opera Square to the Nile, where Cairo's leading hotels now choose to locate.



Historic Mena House, in Giza, is a short stroll from the Pyramids.

After World War I, Shepheard's lost part of its carriage trade to a new establishment, the Semiramis, the first Cairo hotel on the river. Built in 1886 and located between the British Embassy and the British army base (later the site of the Nile Hilton), the Semiramis stressed luxury from the outset. Open only during the three-month winter season, the whole roof was a single suite, and there was a special mezzanine of small rooms, the "étage des courriers," entirely for guests' personal servants. Always an elegant hostelry, the Semiramis had Cairo's first elevators (brassbound mahogany marvels still working today), its first European-style nightclub (a rooftop restaurant with an orchestra for dancing—still unsurpassed) which began when the hotel reopened on a year-round basis after World War II, and a renowned catering service. "The hotel with the most style in Cairo," was the local assessment.

A 60-year-old newspaper cutting conveys some the flavor of life at another such establishment, Mena House, a rambling hotel overlooking the Pyramids:

There will be the usual small dance on Friday evening at Mena House, and a special motor-bus will be running to Mena and back to Cairo after the dance. The pipers and drummers of the Gordon Highlanders will be in attendance at the gymkhana at Mena House tomorrow afternoon.

On moonlit nights, a pleasant way of viewing the Pyramids and the Sphinx was to dine at Mena House. The hotel orchestra was in attendance for tea and dinner. After dinner it was time for a horseback ride around the great monuments. In Cairo itself each hotel had its "night," and those who today would be called the Beautiful People rotated from hotel to hotel.

Beirut was as French as Cairo was British. In French-mandated Lebanon, local society mingled with French officers and officials at the St. Georges Hotel in an aura of plush serenity which had vanished from France. The leading social rendezvous of pre-war Beirut was a Sunday afternoon *thé dansant*, on the celebrated terrace overlooking St. Georges' Bay and the Lebanese mountains in the distance. The Levant coast did not have an opulent tourist season such as Egypt's, but the St. Georges—built in 1932 as the first in the area on a par with the best existing European facilities of the day—offered a degree of comfort and convenience which attracted business from the beginning. It has gone on from strength to strength as Beirut has emerged as the Middle East's commercial and communications center, and is today probably the best-known hotel in the entire Eastern Mediterranean.

The St. Georges is also one of Beirut's outstanding buildings, architecturally. It was designed by a young Lebanese named Antoine Tabet, who interned in the ateliers of Auguste Perret during the years the French masterbuilder pioneered the use of ferroconcrete, the material which made possible much of modern architecture. The hotel was Tabet's first commission when he returned home. His bold use of raw concrete—in strong, simple rhythms reflecting both a severe functionalism and a feeling for Arab forms—shows the confidence of true modernism.

Cairo's stylish old Semiramis Hotel is now slated for demolition.

Although much of the hotel's grandeur departed when the bedrooms were cut down to their present cubicle-like proportions in 1948, the St. Georges is still justly renowned for many things: its unmatched location, rich cuisine and discreet service make it one of the world's great hotels. Its atmosphere was described by the British writer Laurie Lee in London's *Sunday Times Colour Magazine:*

Francis Kalafat, headwaiter at the Baghdad Hotel, Iraq's largest.

> Especially at lunchtime, it is Beirut's centre of business and rumour, of brief encounters and social display. Oilmen, government officials, the rich and the lonely, conmen and journalists of all nations—all gather here at midday to taste . . . Beirut's simmering sense of affairs. Nubile, bikini-wrapped oil-girls, with figures like greyhounds and waists as pliant as a bundle of banknotes, inhale and exhale their exquisite physical presences up and down the sunspotted terraces.

The St. Georges' style is incarnate in its suave, unflappable chief concierge, Mansour Braidi. The job has no real equivalent in American hotels: roughly speaking, he is the man who solves guests' problems—from arranging to pick up their shopping to getting them out of the country in a crisis. Braidi has also helped make the St. Georges an international port of call for foreign correspondents. His discretion and tenacity in getting messages delivered have gained him wide confidence; during tense episodes on Middle Eastern fronts, correspondents have been known to smuggle their copy to Beirut marked simply "St. Georges Hotel" —confident Braidi will see it forwarded to the right editor and keep the bill until the reporter next reaches the hotel.

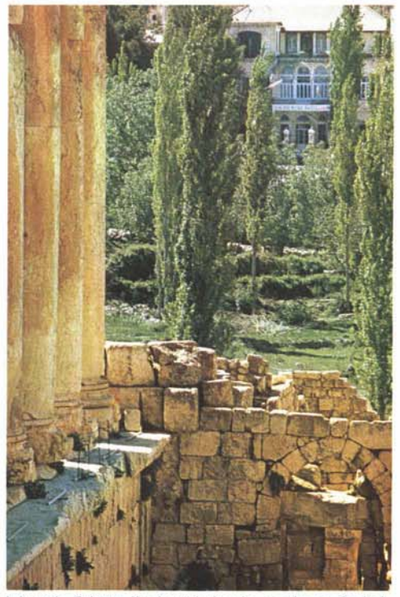
Every capital has a hotel to which journalists mysteriously gravitate; the reasons are never satisfactorily explained, but more often than not the secret attraction is the concierge. In Cyprus, Nicosia's Ledra Palace was pratically an overseas press club because of Kavassis, the legendary Greek concierge known as "The Night Editor."

Another drawing card at the St. Georges is its well-known bar, where business, politics and reporting mix as smoothly as the drinks. Kim Philby, the British double-agent, was last seen outside Russia in this bar, his favorite, and he was something of a connoisseur. Philby actually called another Beirut hotel home—the Normandy. As a young man, Philby stayed there on his first trip to the Middle East, to visit his famous father, H. St. John Philby. The Normandy was very much of a period. Walls and columns encrusted with millions of tiny square mirrors, it was an exaggerated, cinematic vision of the 1920s, like a set left over from a Busby Berkely movie extravaganza. The St. Georges in contrast, was—architecturally and professionally—of international caliber.

With 90 rooms the St. Georges was the biggest hotel of its period in Lebanon or Syria. But smaller, earlier hotels had strong personalities, still perceptible to travelers today. The Palmyra Hotel in Baalbek, built in the same reddish limestone as the majestic Roman ruins there, has bathtubs (installed in 1924) which are so long the tallest guest can stretch out full length in the steaming water. On winter mornings, you can wipe the condensation off the high French doors

of each room's balcony and see the celebrated columns of Baalbek silhouetted against the sun-reddened, time-rutted flanks of Mount Lebanon. Built in 1875 by a Greek from Istanbul, the Palmyra was Lebanon's first Western-style hotel. Baalbek was already a tourist attraction but more important, it was the first day's stage by diligence from Damascus. (The next diligence stop, the Massabki Hotel in Chtaura, was a lively place under the French mandate, when it was not only the mid-point meeting place for officials and politicians from all over Syria, but also the Lebanese equivalent of Niagara Falls, where honeymooners could have a few days by themselves.)

The Palmyra is built above a Roman theater, its gardens are peopled with statuary, and its fortunes have continued to rise



Lebanon's Palmyra Hotel overlooks the temples at Baalbek.

with those of renascent Baalbek, particularly because of the world-renowned summer festivals of music and theater there. The brilliant soirees in the Palmyra after Baalbek premieres are enhanced by the hotel's sense of belonging to the place.

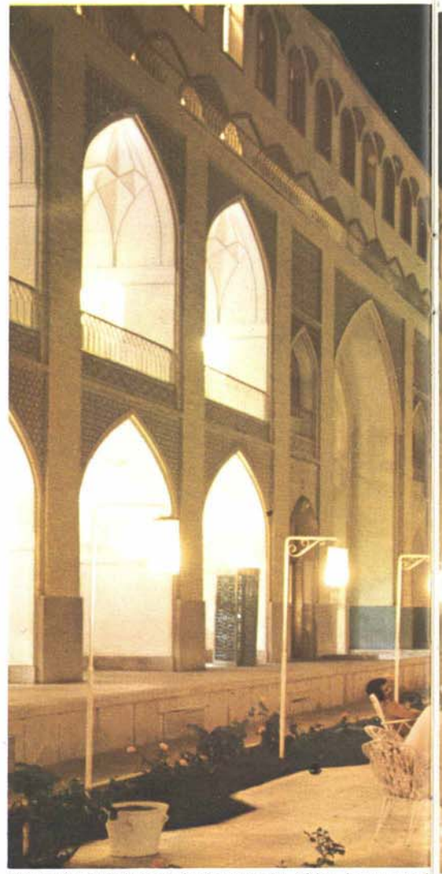
Two Syrian hotels, neither of which is in Damascus, have survived from that period—the Baron in Aleppo and the Zenobia in the ruined city of Palmyra.

Hotels in Aleppo, the bustling commercial capital of Syria, were virtually a monopoly of Armenians. From father to son, they passed down a habit of speaking several languages and other gestures of a meticulous host: slippers were waiting inside every room so guests would not track in street dirt.

The two Mazloumian brothers had made money operating a small Aleppo hotel, the Ararat, but, early in this century, they thought the city was ready for something new—a truly palatial hotel. In its day, their Baron Hotel was an establishment of unheard-of splendor. The architect was French; concrete was used for the first time in Aleppo; workmen were brought from Egypt; there was a bathroom on *both* floors. (The only concession to practicality was the name "Baron," not a title, simply the Armenian word for "mister"—which is easy to pronounce in any language.)

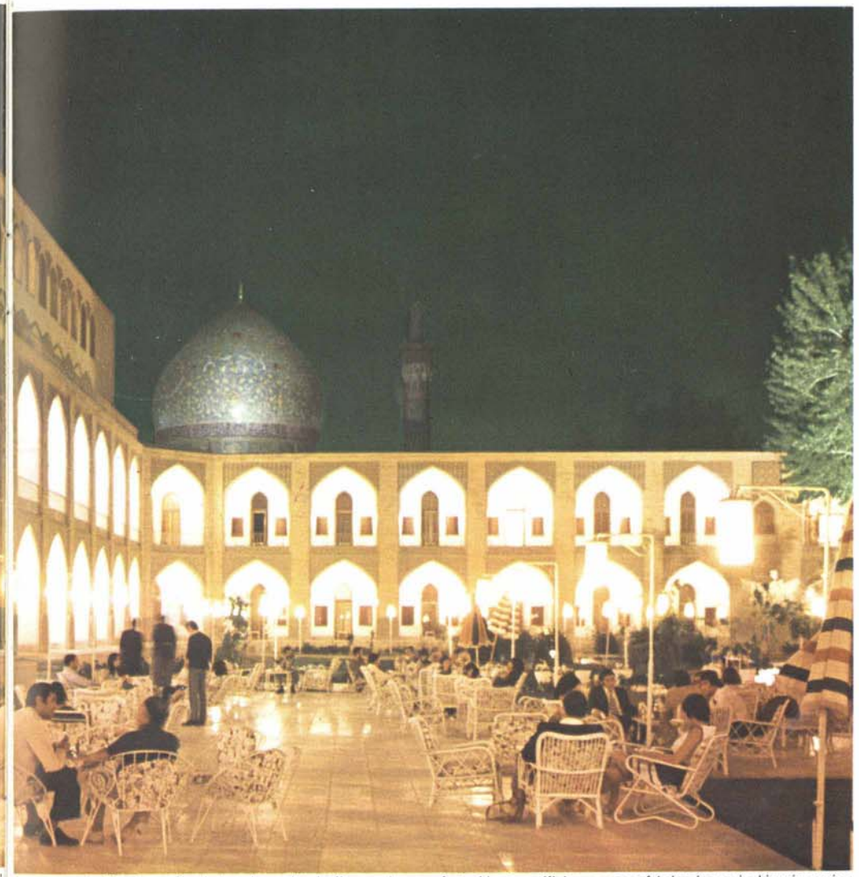
The Mazloumians' gamble paid off. The hotel was barely completed when World War I broke out. The Turkish commander-in-chief, Jamal Pasha, took over the Baron as his headquarters, and his lavish entertainment started the hotel's reputation. Near the end of the war, when the Turks unleashed a series of Armenian pogroms, only Jamal's intervention saved the Mazloumians from deportation or worse. The victorious British commander, General Allenby, eventually used the Baron as his headquarters and Emir Faisal, leader of the Arab revolt, reviewed allied troops from the balcony of his room. When peace was restored the Turks returned as civilians, including Kamal Ataturk, the revered Turkish leader: the room he stayed in is kept unchanged because so many Turkish guests still ask to see it.

Perhaps the hotel's most interesting early guest was Lawrence, who periodically moved to the Baron for a rest after the rigors of nearby Carchemish, where he was busily engaged in archaeology and spying. In a letter he said, "You can see what style I'm enjoying," a cryptic reference explained by the Baron Hotel stationery he was writing on, which had a drawing of the hotel printed at the top of each sheet. Koko Mazloumian, who managed the hotel until nationalization, also remembers Gene Tunney suddenly appearing one snowy night: the American boxer had been staying in Beirut to welcome the cars on the "Citroën Expedition" to China, and he'd heard the Baron still had a stock of a rare French vintage. So he came to buy it.



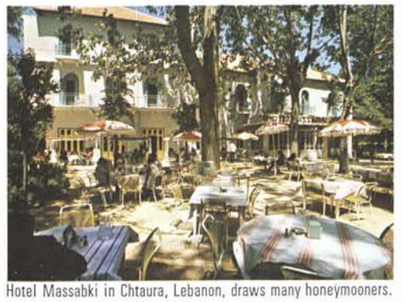
The glittering Shah Abbas, in Iran's garden city, Isfahan, is a converted

Palmyra has been the stage for larger-than-life heroines since the Empress Zenobia proclaimed her desert kingdom (Aramco World, Jan-Feb, 1966). Lady Hester Stanhope, a forceful romantic of the 18th century (Aramco World, Sept.-Oct., 1970), claimed Bedouin tribes crowned her "Queen of the Desert" there. The Hotel Zenobia, still standing on the sand in the heart of the imposing ruins, also has its woman. It was built and run by the Baroness d'Andurin, a personable,strong-willed French noblewoman, whose career in Syria—and graceful touch as a hotel manager—gathered a rich aura of scandal. The first bedroom has a gallery where the Baroness, peering down through a spy-hole, could keep an eye on things without breaking the local taboo on women appearing in public. Today, staying at the Zenobia involves braving indifferent service and brackish plumbing (tainted by the sulfurous stench of the oasis water) noticed by authoress Agatha Christie Mallowen when she stayed there with her archaeologist husband.



caravanserai. The international-class luxury hotel offers modern comfort without sacrificing a sense of belonging to its historic setting.

In their present reduced state, these hotels testify to the vicissitudes of the travel industry in the Middle East. At times, wars have disrupted the tourist circuits, political tensions have imposed travel restrictions, the bureaucratic fumbling typical of most newly independent countries has hampered entrepreneurs. Thus, in spite of general optimism about tourism's future in the area,



Hotel Massabki in Chtaura, Lebanon, draws many honeymooners.

uncertain times have taken their toll in spots. Some of Egypt's oasis spas such as Helwan and Siwa and also the Red Sea resorts are now in restricted military zones. Syria's seaside hotels have fared badly and the grandiose Bludan Park Hotel, in the pleasant hill town on Syria's border with Lebanon, is today a sanitarium. Political austerity programs have all but eliminated pleasurable hotel life in Iraq. A string of half-empty beach hotels on the coast south of Beirut speak mutely of what can happen when speculation races too far ahead of sound planning.

During Jordan's civil war in 1970, Amman's Jordan Inter-Continental was familiar to every journalist—too familiar to many, who were held hostage there. During the fighting, guests quickly discovered the survival rules. "The bathtub is the safest place to bed down for the night," wrote one steady hand, "but when the mortars start, the corridor gets crowded. Visitors are invariably amazed at the hotel's capacity to absorb fire during the night and pick up the next morning as if nothing had happened," he continued. "They just sweep up the plaster and glass, and break out the cheese sandwiches."

Such crises aside, however, the prospect for the future is that the Middle East hotel industry will not only survive, but—because present regional prosperity is stimulating a real and still-growing demand for rooms—flourish. Young people are beginning to see the industry as a promising career. Arab governments are actively encouraging tourism and private Arab capital is increasingly aware of hotels as investment opportunities.

In the earliest days, many hotels were hard up to hire service staff. The average Arab worker in from the village preferred a job in the extensive government bureaucracy when he could find it, or if not, service in a household in his own community, rather than with an alien, anonymous establishment in the city. The problem was resolved by turning to the minority groups: Armenians in Aleppo; Nubians in Cairo; Christians from one particular village, Tell Assam, in Baghdad.

The 500-room Nile Hilton in Cairo opened in 1959 with more than 50 Europeans among its staff of 500. Today nearly all are Arabs. Countless others who first trained there now run hotels, restaurants, pastry shops, catering agencies and nightclubs all over the Arab world. The Hilton had considerable modernizing impact, in fact. Girls were hired to serve in its coffee shop, at the time a shocking novelty in Egypt. Many were college girls of "good family" who were glad of a chance to earn money and practice foreign languages. Rules against dating customers were rigidly enforced.

Today there are modern government-run hotel institutes in both Tunisia and Lebanon. Lebanon's accepts girl students and finds jobs immediately for all its graduates, male and female. The Vienna-born manager of Beirut's Phoenicia Inter-Continental, Robert Kulka, singles out the Arabs' inbred sense of politeness, "so that 'service' is not 'servile'," as a quality making them excel in the hotel industry.

In the early 1960's Egypt faced a severe room shortage when tourism boomed

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THE NAZZALL FAMILY

five generations of Arab innkeepers

Jordan Tourist Agency

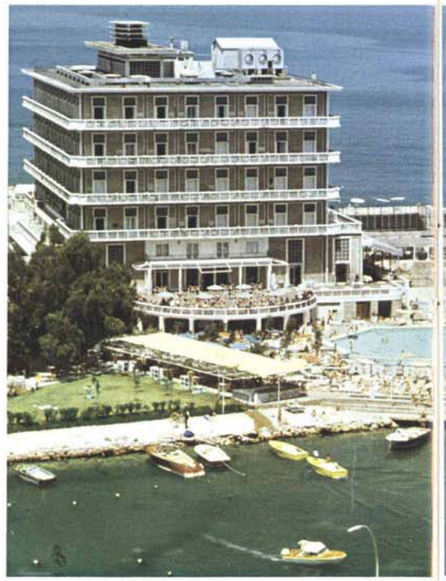
Great-great-grandfather Nazzall ran a khan in Palestine on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, and many of his clients were Russian pilgrims to the Holy Land, walking down through the tawny hills to visit the Jordan River bank where John the Baptist is believed to have baptized Jesus. In the late 1880's one of his sons, Ibrahim, followed the customers to Jericho to open an inn there, forerunner of a series of hotels the Nazzall family eventually built in the ancient oasis town as the reputation of its mild Jordan Valley climate helped it grow into a fashionable winter spa.

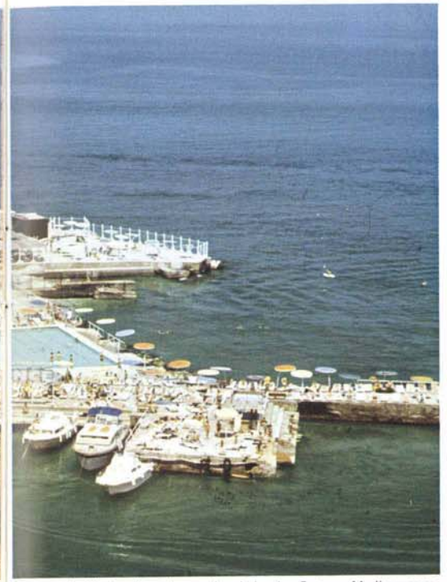
In 1924 came an important guest, Sherif Abdullah, ruler of the newly established country across the river, Transjordan. Abdullah's capital, Amman, was then little more than a watering station on the Hijaz pilgrim railway from Damascus to Medina. Anxious for development, Abdullah urged the Nazzalls to invest there.

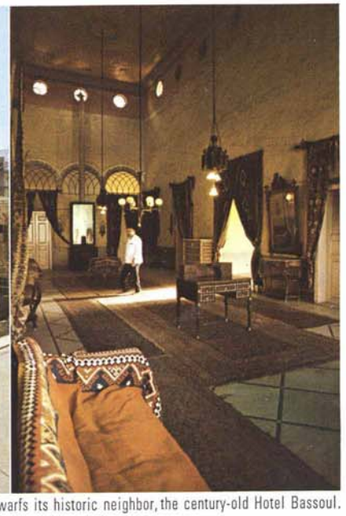
With royal patronage, the next Nazzall, Antoun, began looking for finance. Thomas Cook, firmly established in Jerusalem, was anxious to set up a tourist circuit to Petra, the rose-rock Nabataean city in the desert mountains south of Amman, so he promised financial backing for a hotel which would provide a halfway house for groups going to the camp he built among the ruins. The Nazzalls opened their new hotel in 1928, in the first solid building in Amman, a six-room structure near the railway station. They called it the Philadelphia, in honor of the sleepy town's prosperous Roman predecessor. But the grand name didn't help business, which was slow, and the Nazzalls ran their newest hotel as a boarding house or, more accurately, an extended family with paying guests. There was no competition, however, so they survived. Within a decade Antoun Nazzall bought out Cook's camp in Petra, and business eventually picked up enough for the family to build the present Philadelphia Hotel, which stands in a garden opposite Amman's restored Roman theater. Today the Philadelphia prospers, presided over by Antoun's son, Nabi.

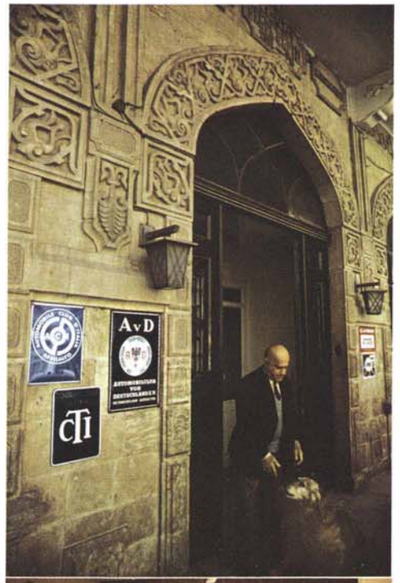
Innkeeping blood seems to surge through the entire family's veins. London's Bedford Hotel is owned and operated by a Nazzall brother, and Nazzall women have married husbands outside the family with hotels in Jerusalem, Texas, California and Australia. The "fifth generation" are Yussef and Mazin Nazzall, both recent business graduates of Rhode Island, the University of who today run three hotels in Beirut—the Commodore, the Byblos and the New Melkart. From their office across the street from the Commodore, the two brothers personally supervise their hotel by closed circuit television, using remote-control cameras to zoom in on any bottleneck in their operations.

The roving electronic eye enables them to continue the family's five-generation tradition of personal attention to detail and small gestures of generosity. These things, they believe, are the key to running a hotel which is successful by Arab standards. "Arab clients are much more difficult than Americans," Yussef feels, "because in this part of the world the middle classes are still able to afford servants at home and a hotel has to match that standard of care."

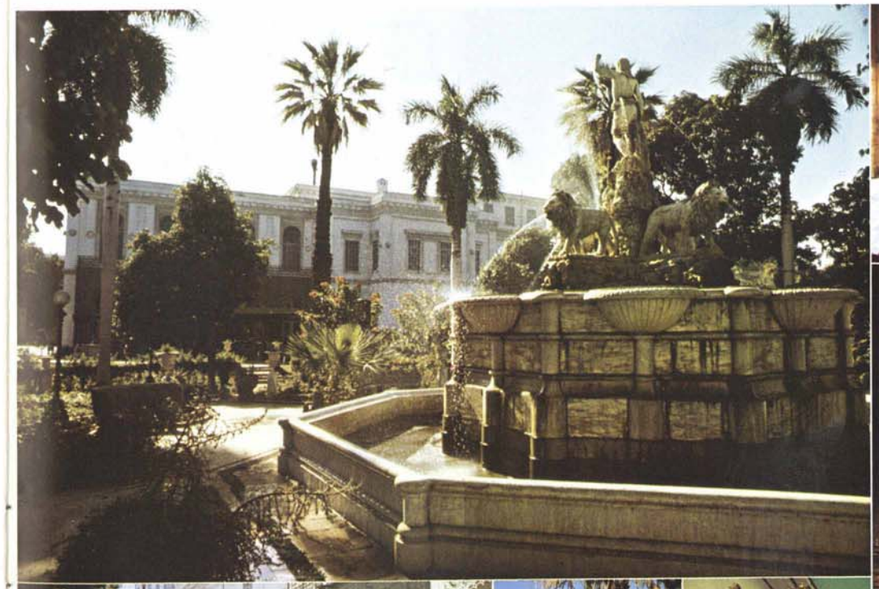

Beirut's Saint Georges Hotel is headquarters for foreign correspondents,


and probably the best-known hotel in the Eastern Mediterranean.

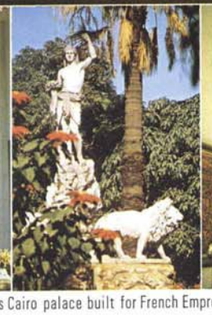


The Beirut Hilton, under construction (above, left), dwarfs its historic neighbor, the century-old Hotel Bassoul.




Koko Mazloumian (top) and Aleppo's once-grand Baron Hotel.







Nik Wheeler

At the time of the gala opening of the Suez Canal, Khedive Ismail had this Cairo palace built for French Empress Eugenie. It survived a century of genteel decay to be converted into the Omar Khayyam Hotel.

continued from page 25

suddenly following publicity from the international Save-the-Temples campaign to raise money for the Abu Simbel project. It responded with a crash hotel-building program and conversion of some of the palaces and resthouses from Egypt's royal past. At the time of his Suez extravaganza, for example, the Khedive Ismail erected a palace near the Nile especially for visiting French Empress Eugenie, with sublimely Victorian cast-iron imitations of Cairo's traditional wooden balconies and latticework. One hundred years later, when Egypt desperately needed hotel rooms, the palace was reopened as the Omar Khayyam Hotel. A century of genteel decay in the hands of the Lutfallah family, who had inherited it, did the palace less harm than has a decade of tourism. Today its gardens are disfigured with bungalows and its very existence is threatened by a new throughway. Still, the hotel has preserved a special fin-de-siècle flavor. The rosewood and silk bedrooms upstairs where the Empress slept contrast with the smoky billiards room in massive oak below stairs, where young Egyptian dandies can still be found engrossed in their game.

Another converted palace, a relic of more recent pre-revolution days, is the Montazah in Alexandria, once King Farouk's favorite. It has three separate beaches, each landscaped in a different style, each named for a different queen. A third, the Manial Palace in Cairo, which once belonged to Farouk's uncle, has gardens shaded with trees collected from all over the tropics. It too has been transformed into a bungalow-style hotel as the palace itself, with its huge rooms and limited plumbing, resisted conversion.

Now, to accommodate the five million tourists government planners expect to come each year by 1980, Egypt hopes to increase hotel beds from the present 18,000 to a spectacular 100,000. Nearly half of these will be in the "furnished-flat" category since many Arab tourists, particularly large families whose needs would strain a hotel's routine and the guest's pocketbook, prefer the flexibility of an apartment. Outlining these dramatic increases, Egypt's Minister of Tourism, Harvard-educated Dr. Zaki Hashem, stresses that he has decided to seek the cooperation of big international companies in order to profit from their ability to market their hotels' attractions internationally.

With travel figures spiraling, most Arab countries feel, like Egypt, that they are compelled to industrialize their hotel business. Ill adapted to mass needs, the great landmark hotels are disappearing, like vintage cars vanishing amid fleets of mass-produced vehicles. Cairo's grand old Semiramis is a case in point. Its ideal location on the Nile was simply too tempting for developers. It is now slated for demolition, to make way for a giant 600-room luxury hotel and marina which will be turned over to one of the international chains for management. Of course some splendidly individual establishments do still exist—in non-Arab Iran, Isfahan's magnificent Shah Abbas Hotel, a converted caravanserai, is a glittering example—but most Middle Eastern countries, like the rest of the world, increasingly welcome the great chains of hotels which

The Ledra Palace is outside the old walls of Nicosia, Cyprus.

alone seem able to cater to the sheer volume of travel business today.

Cairo, by far the region's largest metropolis, started the trend. After the Egyptian revolution, President Nasser's first major development project was the Nile Hilton. He felt that a big international chain was a highly visible way of showing the world that hard-headed investors believed the new regime could make Egypt prosper. He was also convinced that Cairo needed a big, efficient, comfortable hotel to make it an international pole of attraction, even though many nationalistic Egyptians, perhaps remembering the old days of Shepheard's, feared a Hilton would be a new Western enclave breeding intrigue and debauchery. The Arabic plaque on the Nileside—"Erected by order of President Nasser"—rightly stresses the Egyptian leader's personal role in creating it.

Since that time the successful formula of American-managed, locally-financed hotels has caught on throughout the Middle East. Sheraton competes with Hilton in Cairo, Kuwait and Teheran, has hotels under construction in Damascus and in planning for Beirut. Hilton manages other hotels in Tunis, Istanbul and Nicosia, and is building in Manama, on Bahrain Island, and in Beirut.

Abu Dhabi, one of the federated shaikhdoms of the United Arab Emirates, has what is probably the area's supreme status symbol: *two* Hiltons. One is in coastal Abu Dhabi town and the other 95 miles straight across the desert to the east in a remote spot called Al Ain, near the Buraimi oasis. Conceived as a resort retreat for exhausted oil men up and down the Gulf, the Al Ain Hilton has all the usual amenities including, improbably, barmen in plum-colored jackets and a breakfast menu featuring "Freshly Squeezed Orange Juice" and "Country-Fresh Eggs."

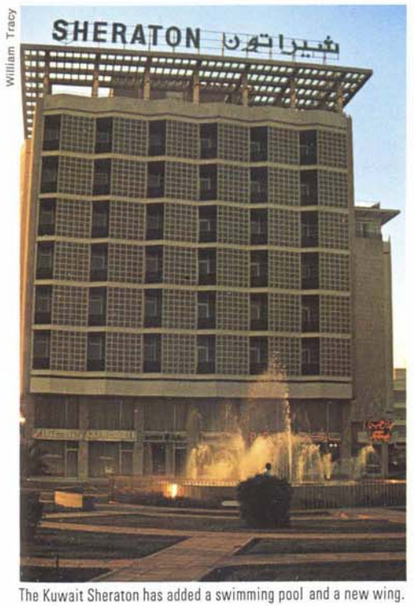
Inter-Continental Hotels Corporation opened the Phoenicia Hotel in Beirut in 1961. It was the first hotel outside the Western Hemisphere for the big chain, which was started by Pan American World Airways after World War II to give South America the kind of hotel it needed to attract U.S. travelers and their dollars. The Phoenicia limped along for its first few years, but by 1966 it had to add a second, bigger wing. The hotel now owns adjoining property in anticipation of further expansion. Inter-Continental also manages hotels in Amman, Jerusalem and Teheran, and has others under construction in Matrah (near Muscat, in Oman), Dubai, Riyadh and Mecca. (See box.) The chain has just signed agreements for new hotels to be built in both Dhahran and Jiddah, Saudi Arabia, and is studying the feasibility of projects in Medina, Yemen's capital Sana, and Cairo.

The medium-price chain, Holiday Inn, which just opened a 26-story, 500-room tower with rooftop restaurant and glass-enclosed outdoor elevator in Beirut, has signed an agreement for two hotels in Jordan, one in Amman and one on the Red Sea coast in Aqaba. Informed Beirut gossip says that U.S. chains Marriott, Hyatt House and Ramada Inns all have representatives currently scouting the Middle East for choice sites. Other international chains such as Meridian, which is linked to Air France,

On St. Georges' Bay in Beirut, the 26-story Holiday Inn rises behind the two adjoining towers of Inter-Continental's Phoenicia Hotel. This November, Holiday Inn hosted a meeting of the International Hotel Association attended by representatives of nearly 40 countries.

Meliá of Spain and the Indian hotel magnate, Oberoi, are also showing interest in the area, almost certainly initiating their campaigns for business with Cairo. But this doesn't seem to bother the Americans. As one major director confided recently in Beirut, "Frankly, I welcome new 'competition' since their promotion will give the entire area more exposure and is bound to help us all in the end." And Phoenicia manager Kulka says he sees the Middle East market going up, up, and away.

William Tracy



The Kuwait Sheraton has added a swimming pool and a new wing.

The latest arrival in the field is an Arab chain, Gulf Hotels, linked to an airline, Gulf Air, as are so many top chains. Bahrain, where BOAC's "Speedbird House" once overnighted passengers and crew on the old five-day-long flying boat odysseys out to Australia, is headquarters for the dynamic young chain. Concrete had hardly set a few years ago when the Bahrain Gulf had to start a new wing, doubling capacity. The hotel still turns people away most days. New Gulf hotels are operating in Qatar, under construction in Oman, and planned for Kuwait. Not part of the chain, but just across the Gulf from Bahrain in Saudi Arabia, is the spanking-new Al-Gossaibi Hotel, set in a palm garden on the waterfront at Al Khobar. By the time the planned swimming pool, shopping arcade and rooftop restaurant are completed the total cost will have come to nearly $14 million.

What lies ahead? Continued growth seems a safe prediction, as does a dramatic expansion of resort hotels. The celebrated hotels in the Middle East today are primarily for businessmen (an estimated 75 percent of the guests at the Phoenicia, for instance) and certainly the new hotels springing up throughout the Peninsula and the Arabian Gulf area are catering to the oil men and salesmen following the current production boom. But the Middle East is also beginning to emerge as a playground. Sample things to come: resort villages, like the ones already attracting crowds to North Africa, will appear in Egypt (on both its Mediterranean and Red Sea coasts) and in Lebanon; another complex is talked of for Saudi Arabia, at Abha, 'Asir Province, in the mountains north of Yemen, as cool as Lebanon.

Political resistance to expanded tourism is also disappearing. After the attractive new hotel at Damascus International Airport, Syria is going ahead with a $25-million program to build five new international-class tourist hotels. Besides the 350-room Sheraton, a 400-room Damascus Meridian is also now under construction. Syria's Tourism Minister explains, "We want tourists, and not just for their money. We want them to visit our country and see for themselves what kind of a people we are and what kind of future we have."

Brainerd Bates

The Al Ain Hilton, in Abu Dhabi, is a resort hotel in the desert.

The concept behind Turkey's string of successful filling station motels will probably catch on elsewhere, as restless Europeans continue to drive further afield. Some low-price chains will probably emerge on the scene, too, although Tunisian officials now concede privately that they regret opening their magnificent beaches to waves of package tours, which leave much of the profit with the organizers abroad.

But in the coming decade the most important question facing the hotel industry in the Middle East is probably this: can the race to provide rooms for the spiraling numbers of visitors be won without sacrificing time-honored traditions of Arab hospitality?

So far the answer seems to be a resounding yes.

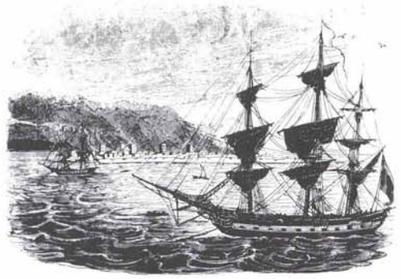
Joseph Fitchett, a frequent contributor to Aramco World, *stayed in most of the hotels he writes about while on assignments for the* Observer *and* Time.

DOCUMENT:

Britain's "General Treaty with the Arab Tribes of the Persian Gulph," 1820.

FROM PIRATE COAST TO TRUCIAL

WRITTEN BY JOHN BRINTON Manuscript from the author's collection



A great spur of mountain juts into the turquoise waters of the southern Arabian/Persian Gulf behind Ras al-Khaimah ("Headland of the Tent"), a tiny coastal oasis with a shallow inlet where the pirates often sheltered their fleets. In early January, 1820, a handful of men, British officers and Arab tribal chiefs, gathered solemnly on the beach below the brooding headland and, one by one, affixed their signatures to a piece of paper which would change the history of the desolate crescent of sand and water sweeping from Qatar to the tip of the Oman peninsula. Previously, this hostile, sunbaked shore had been known to Englishmen as the Pirate Coast, so called for the privateers, smugglers and soldiers of fortune who for generations had darted out of hidden coves to menace Arab, Persian, Portuguese and British merchantmen as they passed through the narrow Straits of Hormuz, astride the busy shipping lane between Mesopotamia and India.

Today mammoth tankers ply these straits and nearby, on the booming Arab coast, the seven tiny shaikhdoms which gained independence from Britain in 1971 and federated as the United Arab Emirates prosper from oil, trade and construction. But it was not always thus. In the early 19th century this was a bleak and unpromising shore where the poor inhabitants scratched out a living from a little pearl diving or fishing, and, inland, grazing for their sheep and camels. For many, coastal piracy and desert raiding had been the key to survival.

Then, in January 1820, a British-imposed peace came to the southern Gulf and with the strokes of six pens the "pirate" coast became the "trucial" coast.

England had first become interested in the waters of the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Gulf when she saw the need to establish trade routes and safe lines of communication with her empire in the East after Queen Elizabeth, in 1559, granted a charter to English merchants, "for their own adventurous costs and charges" to traffic merchandise in the East Indies. British navigation and trade were continually harrassed by the local pirate chiefs, and several attempts were made to subdue them. All had ended in failure.

In late 1819, the time seemed ripe to eliminate the pirate threat once and for all. A powerful naval expedition was organized out of Bombay under the command of Major General William Grant Keir. It was the strongest force ever sent to the Gulf, with 3,000 fighting men in three British naval ships. At the same time, another force moved overland from Muscat in a pincers movement designed to prevent the pirates from making a strategic withdrawal into the desert. After bitter fighting, the pirate stronghold at Ras al-Khaimah fell early in the new year. The remaining seacoast towns surrendered like a row of falling dominoes.

Captain J. Perronet Thompson of the 17th Light Dragoons, who was General Keir's interpreter and aide, drafted the resulting treaty in Arabic, as well as "a true translation" in English. Keir and Thompson signed for the British. On the pirate side Shaikhs Hassan ben Rahman and Karib ben Ahmad were the principal signatories.

Captain Thompson had brought his wife and four-year-old son with him aboard one of the ships. After the battles were over and the treaty signed, the young officer and his family lived for a while ashore. There, in a tent on the lonely, now pacified beach, Mrs. Thompson, inspired, perhaps by restlessness, more likely by a sense of the importance of her husband's role during a significant moment of imperial history, wrote out in her own hand the copy of the treaty reproduced on these pages. Captain Thompson certified it to be "a true copy of the original."

"In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate!" it begins.

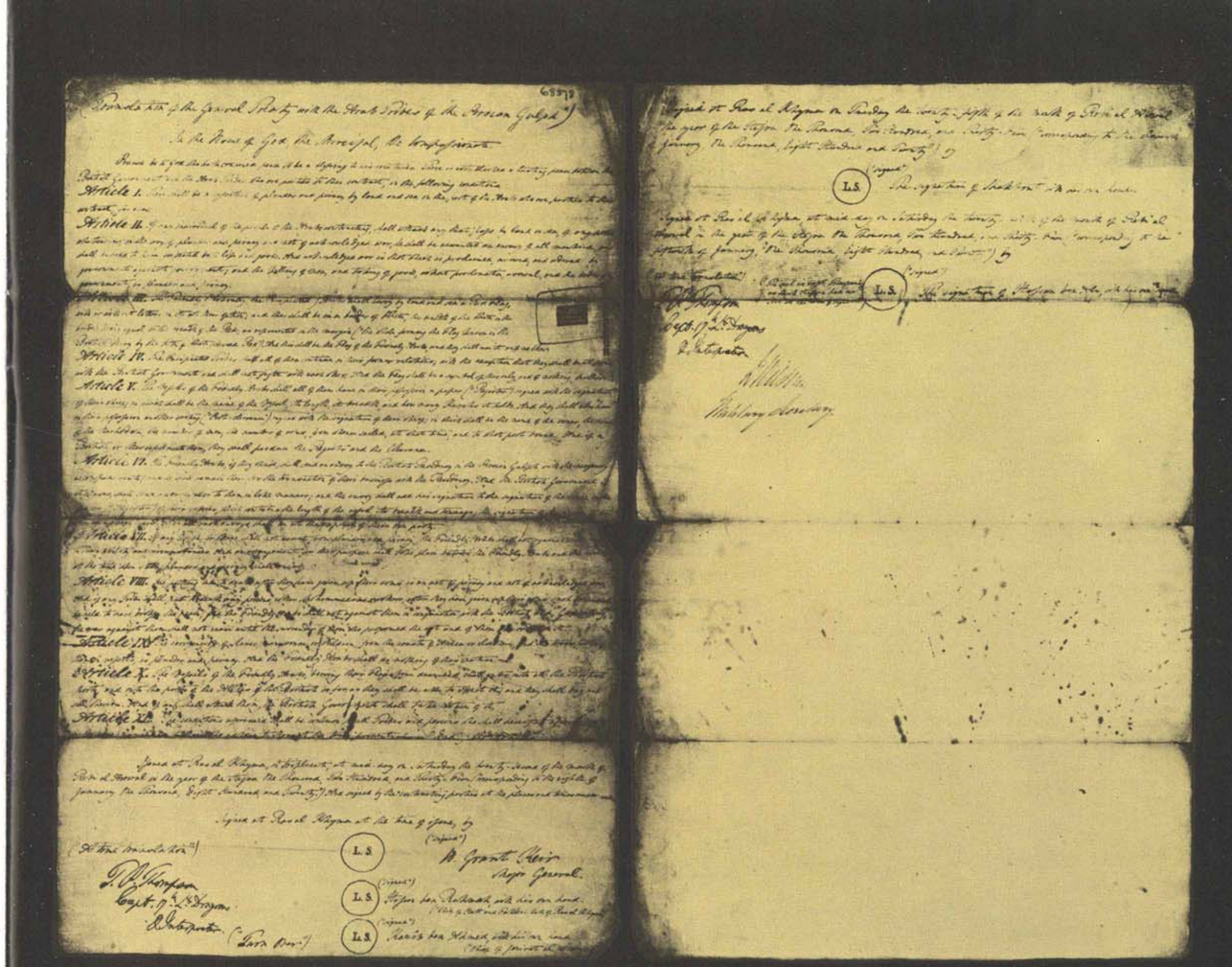
Praise be to God, who hath ordained peace to be a blessing to his creatures. There is established a lasting peace between the British Government and the Arab tribes, who are parties to this contract. On the following conditions:

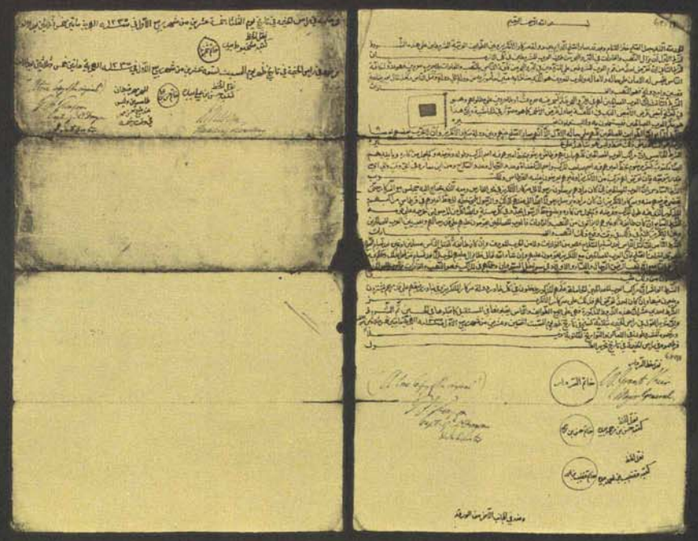
ART. 1: There shall be a cessation of plunder and piracy by land and sea on the part of the Arabs, who are parties to this contract, for ever.

There follow 10 further articles spelling out future diplomatic and trade relations in some detail. One article describes a special flag (white with a red square in the center) to be flown at all times by all friendly Arab vessels as a clearly visible sign of their peaceful intentions. Thompson, a dedicated Abolitionist, also inserted a clause including the "carrying off" or transport of slaves in the definition of now-forbidden "plunder and piracy."

There were minor violations of the treaty from time to time over the years but in any case, by the end of the century, in 1892, imperial Britain was in the mood to go much further, imposing a new treaty which, although it left the seven Trucial Shaikhdoms with some internal autonomy, effectively took over all responsibility for their foreign relations. Today, with independence and prosperity (the U.A.E. was admitted to the United Nations last year and two of the shaikhdoms, Dubai and Abu Dhabi, have substantial oil revenues), Mrs. Thompson's hand-copied version of the original 1820 treaty remains a quaint historic memento of the long-ago January day when a handful of British officers and pirate-chiefs gathered on the beach at Ras al-Khaimah.

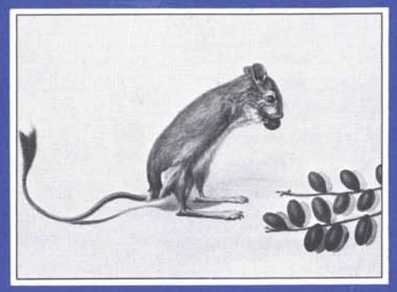
John Brinton, whose hobby is collecting old books, writes on forgotten or little-known footnotes to Middle East history.

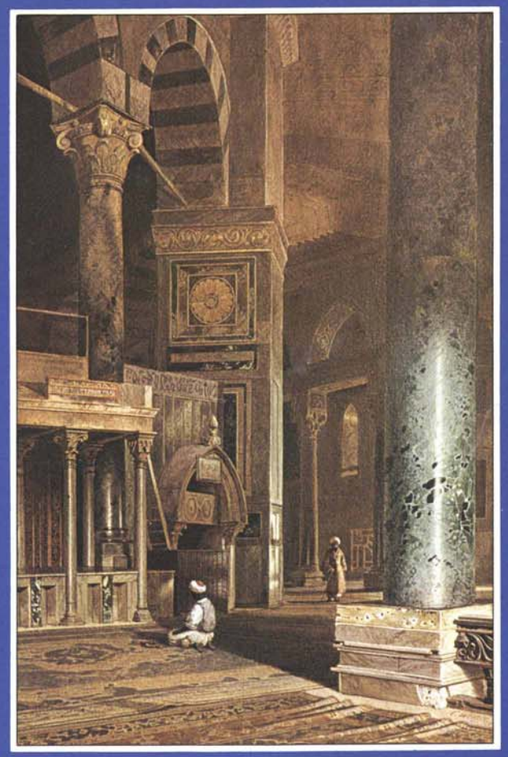




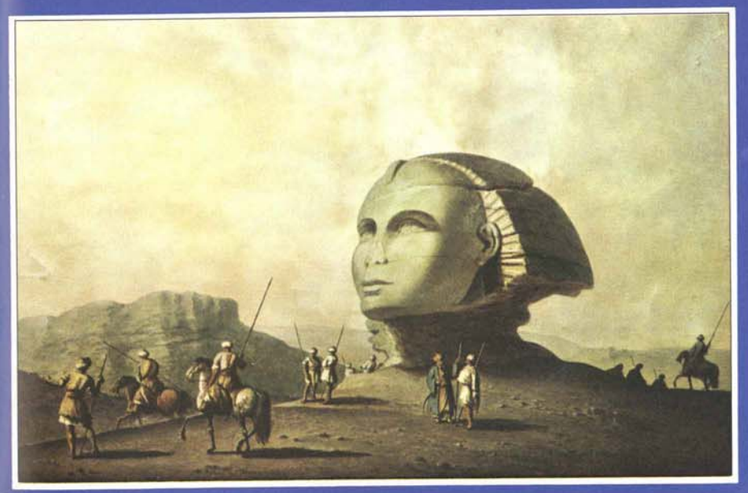
British Captain Perronet Thompson aided General William Grant Kerr in drafting the Arabic version of the 1820 treaty with tribal chiefs (right), as well as "a true translation" in English (above). Captain Thompson certified that the manuscript reproduced here is "a true copy." Mrs. Thompson, along on the campaign with her husband, wrote out the English copy.

Art from the collection of Rodney G. Searight. All reproduction rights reserved. Photographed for Aramco World *by Peter Keen.*





ONE MAN'S GALLERY



Above, left to right (all watercolors): Desert Rat or Jerboa, c. 1790, by Jean-Baptiste Adanson (1732-1804), a French consular official (in Beirut?) and naturalist; Interior of the Mosque of Omar (Dome of the Rock), Jerusalem, 1863, by Carl Werner (1808-1894), a German; A Cavalry Officer, c. 1820, from a series on costumes in Constantinople (see back cover) by William Page (1792-1872), an Englishman; Baalbek, 1838, by William James Muller (1812-1845), also an Englishman. Left (watercolor/gouache): Head of the Colossal Sphinx, 1780-90, by Luigi Mayer (d.1790), an Italian.

How does a retired company executive who worked most of his adult life in Cairo occupy his mind and time when, his wife deceased and his children grown up, he goes home to London? Without ever consciously setting out to do it, Rodney Searight, who is one such man, found himself assembling what is today probably the finest privately-owned collection of Middle Eastern art anywhere. Mr. Searight had begun by purchasing the odd picture for the blank wall. "Formerly my money always had to be used for practical purposes, like educating children," he says, smiling.

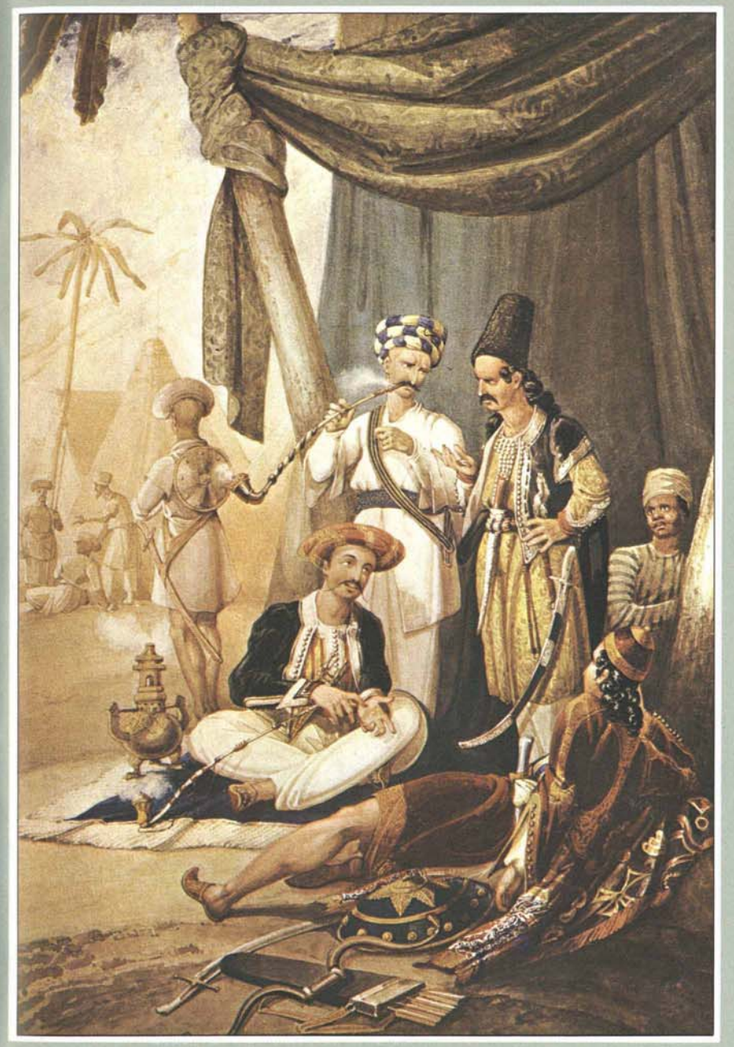
"But then I realized that over the years I had put together the nucleus of what could become a fine area collection."

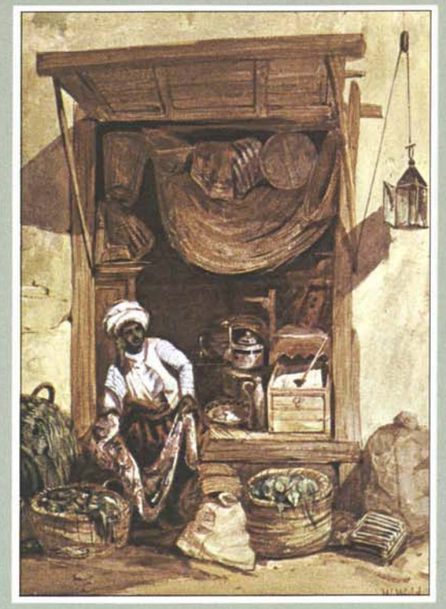
That it has. When the best of his hundreds of watercolors and drawings were shown publicly for the first time at Leighton House in London some time ago, the show prompted the usually conservative *Daily Telegraph* art critic, Terence Mullaly, to observe, "A fascinating collection . . . We gain insights into the rich heritage of a region fast being transformed by oil and the march of history." The exhibition concentrated on the work of those adventurous British and European artists who went to the exotic East in the years 1750 to 1900, when a palette or a sketch pad seems to have been as much a part of the traveler's luggage as a camera is today. The strong Anglo-French military rivalry in Egypt brought battalions of troops maneuvering up and down the Nile, often with artists in their wakes. On his campaign, Napoleon took along a whole band of artists and scholars.

At least one artist represented in Mr. Searight's collection is an American, Lieutenant J.B. Dayle, a member of the U.S. Navy's 1848 Jordan River expedition (Aramco World, March-April, 1967). Dayle illustrated the book published by his commanding officer, Lieutenant W.F. Lynch.

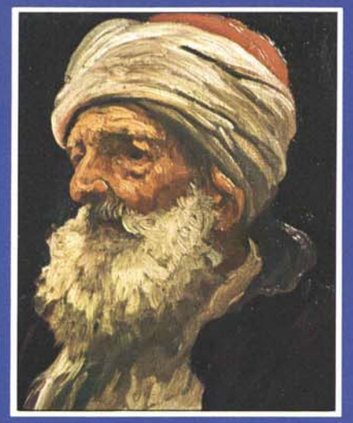
Mr. Searight's taste is eclectic. The collection displayed in his home includes dramatic, large-size panoramic oil paintings of historic events as well as artists' preliminary sketches, formal portraits, architectural renderings and natural history illustrations. In all a remarkable record of several centuries in a colorful, diverse region of the world hangs now on the walls of Mr. Searight's Kensington flat: one man's personal gallery.

Below: pen and ink studies of Arab and other figures, 1833, attributed to Frenchman William Wyld (1806-1889).





Left: Oriental Transaction, 1819, watercolor by William Heath (1795-1840), who later became a political caricaturist under the pseudonym Paul Pry. Above: Vegetable Seller in Algiers, c. 1833, a watercolor by William Wyld, later lithographed by Emile Lessore. Below: Abu-Kier MDCCXCVIII, watercolor/gouache by Countess Jane Harrington (d.1824).



Above: Head of an old Arab, c. 1870, oil by Lord Frederick Leighton, P.R.A. (1830-1896), possibly a study for a later Biblical painting. Right: Petra, 13 April, 1858, watercolor by Edward Lear (1812-1888), with notes by the artist on the preliminary drawing. Below: Constantinople, 1853, watercolor by Count Amadeo Preziosi (1816-1882), the Maltese School. Opposite page Dragoman Mahomet, Alexandria, 1874, watercolor by Elijah Walton, F.G.S. (1832-1880).