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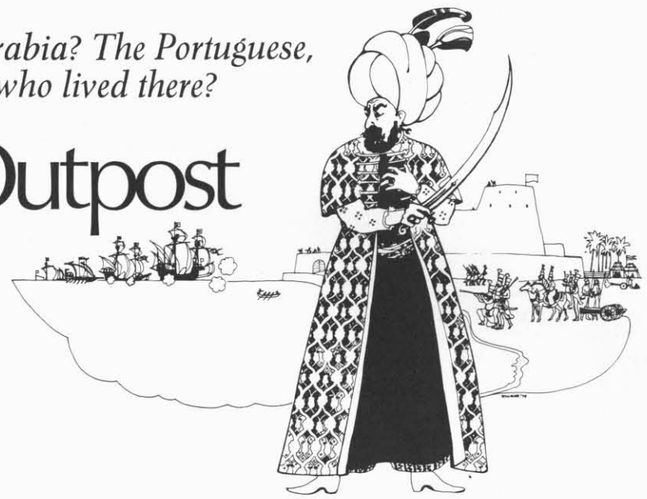
Cover: Northern Saudi Arabia, in the area along the Trans-Arabian Pipeline, had unusually heavy rains last winter and by spring the desert was carpeted with wild flowers such as yellow, daisy-like **Senecio desfontainei**, which the Bedouins call "crow's-foot," and, rear cover, violet-colored **Diplotaxis acris**. Color section on page 12.

← Two boys kneel in prayer at the Shah Hamdan Mosque in Srinagar, capital of Islamic Kashmir, a land of gentle valleys and towering mountains. Color on page 18.

Who would control Eastern Arabia? The Portuguese, the Turks or the Arabs who lived there?

AL-HASA: Outpost of Empire



WRITTEN BY JON MANDAVILLE
ILLUSTRATED BY PENNY WILLIAMS

It is difficult to picture the quiet oasis farming towns around the bustling modern center of oil of Dhahran near the Gulf in eastern Saudi Arabia as the pivot of a struggle between great empires, centuries before the oil beneath had any meaning to the world. What, you might ask incredulously, would they fight over? Dates? Sand? Fish? None of those and all, and more besides. The answer is trade. Three thousand years before the first oil well was brought in on Dhahran Hill, al-Hasa, as these lands were known, was the center of a great mercantile empire of its own between Iraq and India. It kept this role, if not the political power, as centuries passed. Control of al-Hasa meant control of this trade. In the early 1500's it was the Portuguese seaborne empire that made a play for it, and the Ottoman Empire that countered.

Throughout the Middle Ages Western Europe bought its pepper, ginger and cinnamon from the monopoly of the Mediterranean middlemen. To break this monopoly Portuguese sea adventurers braved the uncharted depths of the Atlantic down the west coast of Africa. Finally, in the late 15th century, while Columbus and Spain sailed west to America, Portugal pushed east, rounding the tip of Africa into the Indian Ocean and wealth. It was Portugal's turn to control the spices. They set to with a vengeance to block up the old trade channels, maintaining ship patrols at the southern gates of the Red Sea and Arabian Gulf, burning and pillaging the port towns there.

From 1517 on, it was the Ottoman Turks who ruled the Arab lands which depended on this trade. It was up to them to break the Portuguese blockade and keep the channels clear. Discussion in the palace cabinet meetings in Istanbul, 1000 miles away, made it clear that they would have to establish strong military and naval bases on or near the mouths of these gulfs.

The motives of a military occupation are always mixed, whatever the army, new or old. Establishing the bases fell in nicely with an equally important theme of Ottoman policy in those years under the sultans Selim the Grim and later Suleiman the Magnificent: bring all old Islamic territories under the direct, centralized rule of Istanbul. So while Ottoman marines established a base at Aden to keep the Portuguese out of the Red Sea, the hinterlands of Yemen, a few hundred miles north, were invaded by the Ottoman army. The Yemenis, unprepared to trade their independence for military advisors, fought long and hard but were no more able than Europe to withstand the onslaught of Ottoman discipline and artillery.

With the Red Sea coastline secured, the Ottomans turned to the Gulf. Here policy was complicated still further by a continuing war with Persia which, since 1511, had made the plains of Iraq little more than a parade ground for Persian and Turkish armies. Not until 1534 did the Ottomans take Baghdad; it took another 15 years for the Turkish forces to move on down the river to the head of the Gulf at Basra.

From there, with a watchful eye on Persia on their flank, they sent an expedition in 1551 down the Gulf to confront the Portuguese and claim the Arabian coastal towns for the sultan. The Portuguese had by this time fortified the island of Hormuz at the narrow entrance of the Gulf; that left the Turks with only one reasonable first-line site, the al-Hasa oasis.

Al-Hasa made sense. Its plentiful natural springs and large farming regions guaranteed a sufficient tax base to support the garrison and pay the salaries of the bureaucracy of its provincial government, while passing on a surplus to the imperial treasury. Though the communications line was long—it took one to two months for a letter from Istanbul to reach there—it was safe. There was also the established caravan route from al-Hasa across the Arabian Peninsula to Mecca and Jiddah and the new Ottoman garrisons there. But more important than any military calculation in the psychology of conquest were the fabled pearls of al-Hasa. Even if the court in Istanbul knew nothing of the geography of this region, they at least had read in the Islamic literary classics of its pearls: great golden pearls and small; pink pearls and white; baroque and perfect pearls worthy of any sultan's household. More than trade policy, defense or the orderly unification of Islam was considered when the al-Hasa campaign was launched.

When the Turkish expedition stumbled and splashed ashore across the tidal flats of Qatif Bay in 1551 no army opposed them. They were about 1000, half from the crack Janissary Corps, the rest gunners, marines, a few engineers and a motley crew of militia from Basra and Baghdad. Several hundred of the long and heavy muzzle-loading muskets came ashore with them and a few cannon. A crowd of curious from the town stood discreetly back up the beach observing the proceedings. Among them several merchants exchanged satisfied glances as the firearms, the latest modern tools of war, were offloaded. A year before a small force of attackers, Portuguese, had with the aid of weapons like these wreaked havoc on the anchored shipping and the town of Qatif. Now a Muslim ally was here to repay the pirates in kind.

It quickly became apparent, however, that the ally was here to stay. Among the officers that came ashore that day were representatives of the Imperial Land Records Office, and within a week their team was surveying all the income-producing lands around Qatif, as well as shops, mills and factories. Title deeds were demanded, produced and copied into the great registry book along with a carefully calculated tax assessment; a copy would be made and sent back to the main land office in Istanbul for future reference and inclusion in the imperial budget. The taxes were all of them justified and proper according to Islamic law, but it had been some time, perhaps centuries, since they had been so assiduously applied and collected in Qatif. Several landowners were thrown in jail for refusal to cooperate. More simply fled.

While this went on all available troops were put to work with pick and shovel, throwing up a fort in Qatif to consolidate the beachhead. Centuries later, long after the Turks had gone, these fortifications would be remembered by the people of Qatif as the "Portuguese Fort"—with hindsight, a bitterly ironic comment on the Turkish protection.

A few months later, with the fortress complete, the army once again was on the move. Inland they marched about 100 miles south of Hofuf (*Aramco World*, Nov.-Dec., 1970), largest town in the entire complex of oases, which later would be the Ottoman headquarters of the province. News of their invasion preceded them, and there they met their first resistance. It was led by Sa'dun, head of the Bedouin tribe which had for generations dominated the politics of al-Hasa before the Ottomans: the Bani Khalid.

Nothing is known of the battles which took place, the Ottomans with absolute superiority of firepower, the tribesmen with their knowledge of the terrain and more mobile forces. What emerged was a stalemate. The situation as described in the Ottoman reports of a year later show Sa'dun enrolled with a respectable salary as district officer of the desert regions of the province, responsible for keeping the peace there among the tribesmen. What this means, of course, is that the Ottomans were willing to pay the Bani Khalid to stay out of the towns. Sa'dun, with a strong appreciation now of the power conferred by muskets and cannon, was prepared to accept the offer—for the time being. It was a fragile agreement, and both sides must have known it. There was no ground laid for a real peace. The strength of the Bani Khalid lay at this time over the entire eastern seaboard of the Arabian Peninsula, from al-Hasa north into Iraq. Sa'dun settled back like a hawk on the mesa and bided his time, watched for his moment.

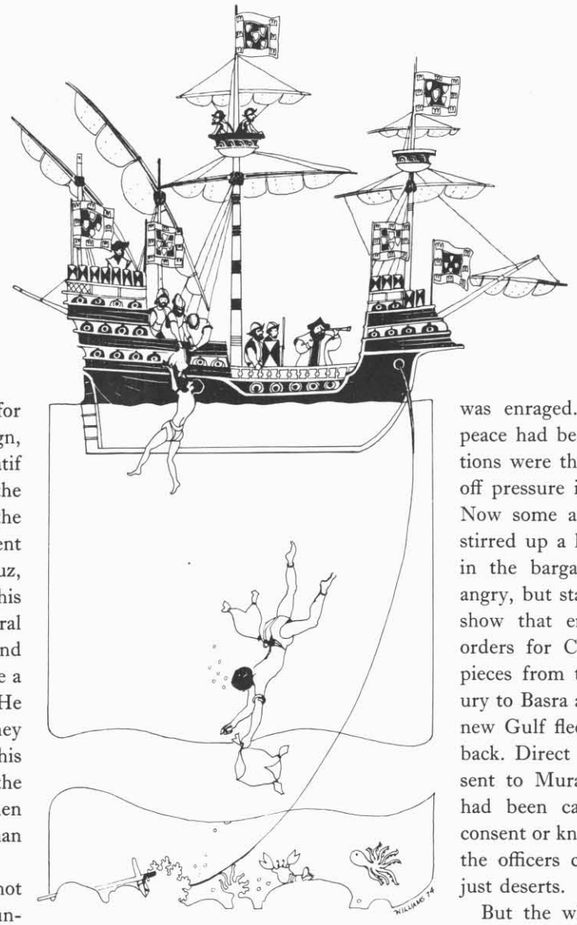
The Ottomans pushed feverishly ahead, building on old foundations the massive mud-walled fortress, al-Kut, at Hofuf, which still stands today. Dispatch after dispatch went out to Istanbul requesting more cannon, more muskets, more men. All were sent. At the same time, in 1555, the first of several new mosques was built in Hofuf; it too stands today, the governor's name proudly inscribed on the lintel piece with the date of its dedication. With the encouragement of Istanbul, abandoned lands and wells were cleared and rented out to farmers. The administrators were well-trained. They knew that a flourishing province meant contented subjects and benefited the imperial coffers.

Everything seemed possible in those early days of conquest. Grandiose plans were laid. Why stop at al-Hasa? With one supply ship came an officer from Istanbul to be district officer of Najd, the central region of the Peninsula where lies today's capital of Saudi Arabia, Riyadh. It was west another 200 desert miles inland from Hofuf, 200 miles across Bani Khalid territory. The Jabrin Oasis, 200 miles south of Hofuf, again all 200 miles across Bani Khalid territory, is mentioned as a tax district in the early land records of al-Hasa. The whole of the Peninsula? Why not!

It was one man's calculated gamble, and the Portuguese response to it, which put a damper on these dreams, roughly recalling the Turks to their original purpose. In the early fall of 1559, with the worst heat of the summer past, the new Ottoman governor of al-Hasa, a general named Mustafa, decided to outdo his predecessors in conquest and add Bahrain Island to the province.

In more ways than one it was a risky venture. Bahrain was a mere 40 miles across shallow waters from Qatif, but its ruler had sent a delegation to Suleiman the Magnificent in 1534, after the conquest of Baghdad, promising allegiance and cooperation against the Portuguese. In response to this Suleiman had issued orders to his provincial governors that there should be no interference in the island's affairs. Mustafa knew perfectly well that an invasion of the island would be in direct disobedience of this order, and might be paid for by death. On the other hand, he suspected that the rulers of Bahrain were neutral at best, and at worst were quietly working in collusion with the Portuguese. And the island was a rich land, with fresh water aplenty, its principal town, Manama, the major port of call for the vast Gulf pearling fleet. If by its taking the imperial treasury could be increased, an Ottoman monopoly of Gulf pearls assured, Portuguese influence undermined, then pardon for any disobedience seemed assured; indeed he might even be rewarded by promotion to a larger province with a higher rank and salary—Baghdad, perhaps, or Damascus.

It is on such private decisions in the field that many a general's career has been made—and many more destroyed. General Mustafa's gamble failed, and with near disastrous effects for the Ottoman hold on the entire province of al-Hasa. Mustafa ferried 300 musketeers, 200 cavalry and



100 or so local militia across to the island for what was to be a lightning campaign, stripping the forts at Hofuf and Qatif of weapons and men to do so. Murad, the ruler of Bahrain, took one glance at the cannon and muskets being landed and sent a courier boat flying downwind to Hormuz, calling in the Portuguese to defend his island. Two weeks after the landing General Mustafa looked up from his siege and bombardment of Manama's fortress to see a Portuguese fleet rise over the horizon. He watched helplessly a few hours later as they systematically shot up and burned his support ships, which were anchored off the coast before him. The Portuguese fleet then anchored in full view of the Ottoman forces—and waited.

Another stalemate. The fortress had not fallen. The Turks were low on gunpowder and shot and now had no way of replenishing their supplies. Without ships they could not even withdraw from the island. For a week a detachment of cavalry hid behind shrubs and sand dunes hoping to catch the Portuguese landing for water, but to no avail. For close offshore to the island were Bahrain's unique seafloor freshwater springs (*Aramco World*, Nov.-Dec., 1964), and with the help of Murad's divers, the Portuguese supplied themselves with drinking water miraculously bubbling up from the bottom practically under their ships.

Seeing that they might be on the island a long time now, the Turks decided to withdraw to more defensible high ground, abandoning the hopeless siege. Once again they left the cavalry in ambush to cover the retreat, this time with more success. Murad come forth from the fortress with his men and, scenting a rout in the wind, persuaded the Portuguese to land and join him in pursuit. They were fallen on by the cavalry and after hard fighting driven back to the fortress. Both sides took heavy casualties in the battle, but the Turks had succeeded in capturing several wounded Portuguese, one of them a distant relative of Sebastian the First, king of Portugal.

Secure on the heights, the Turks sent an officer to parley, offering their cannon and the prisoners for ships to withdraw from the island. In response Murad demanded not only the cannon and prisoners but also their muskets and swords, their horses, whatever supplies they had, their personal effects, and 10,000 gold pieces as indemnity! Impossible, sputtered the officer. Well then, Murad retorted, if they wouldn't accept they could sit on their hill until they starved to death.

They nearly did. One Turkish officer managed to cross over to Qatif and thence to Basra bearing word of the defeat and the need for ships and ransom money. When the news reached Istanbul a month later, it was the first the palace had heard of the whole escapade; the imperial council was enraged. Only a few years earlier a peace had been signed with Persia; indications were that the Portuguese were easing off pressure in the Red Sea and the Gulf. Now some ambitious frontier general had stirred up a hornets' nest and been caught in the bargain. They had a right to be angry, but statesmen are seldom allowed to show that emotion. Instead, they issued orders for Cairo to transfer 200,000 gold pieces from the Egyptian provincial treasury to Basra and orders for Basra to build a new Gulf fleet to bring the stranded army back. Direct by palace courier a letter was sent to Murad, explaining that the attack had been carried out without Istanbul's consent or knowledge and that once released the officers concerned would receive their just deserts.

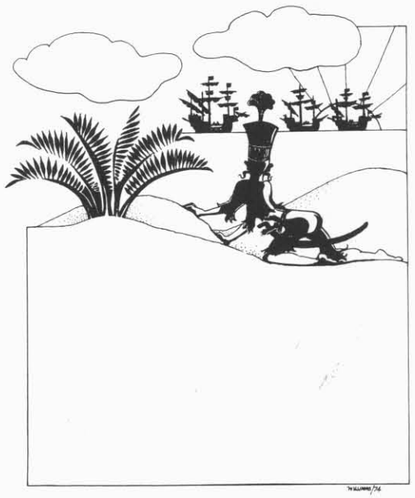
But the wheels of imperial bureaucracy grind exceedingly slow, perhaps more so in this kind of situation. Prisoners of war can fare badly in the hands of diplomats, and seasoned soldiers know it. Four months after, the Ottoman troops on Bahrain gave up waiting. They persuaded the Ottoman chief justice of al-Hasa to sell some 200 pearls in the provincial treasury to pay the ransom. General Mustafa apparently died on the island before the money arrived. Records give no indication as to what brought about his demise, but it is safe to assume that if it was due to natural causes it merely saved the Istanbul government the expense of a formal execution. Mustafa's men, though stripped of all their possessions, eventually straggled back across to Qatif, a sorry lot. It was a sorrier scene that greeted them there.

Taking advantage of the lengthy absence of Ottoman gunners and musketeers the Bani Khalid with their desert supporters had stormed Hofuf and the surrounding villages. Only the fortress at Hofuf held out. With the desert approaches controlled by the tribal army there was little that the Qatif garrison could do to relieve the inland city. In any case, thanks to the abortive attempt on Bahrain they now had neither guns nor animals. New troops would have to be sent, with new weapons—and a new governor. Mustafa's gamble had not only failed in Bahrain, now al-Hasa itself would have to be conquered anew.

So troops and cannon and muskets were sent, and a new governor with them. The revolt was put down and Sa'dun the hawk returned to the desert. From this point on there is a subtle shift in the emphasis of Ottoman governance over al-Hasa. The next 30 years saw a gradual weakening of Portuguese control over Gulf trade; in 1602, in fact, they were thrown out of their Hormuz base by a joint Anglo-Persian force. With this went the initial Ottoman motive for the al-Hasa occupation. Were there other justifications for remaining? Well, it had taken only 10 years to show that though the province was self-supporting, it could make little financial contribution to the central treasury in Istanbul; some years, in fact, its governors were obliged to borrow from the Basra accounts to cover garrison pay. There were the pearls; every few years customs officials in Iraq and on the Gulf were notified that so-and-so would be passing through to buy pearls for the palace and no duty was to be charged on the items. But al-Hasa without Bahrain gave no monopoly on pearls.

No, the only justification for remaining was a belief in the Ottoman superior ability to maintain law and order. This was enough for the townsmen of al-Hasa. No one could fault the Ottomans in that portion of their government, not in the years of their strength. With the security of roads, with the consistency of justice and administration, the right of appeal from local oppression, the Ottoman occupation was tolerated, even liked, by the townsmen of the province. But townsmen made up a minority of al-Hasa's population. The rest shaded imperceptibly into the nomadic society of the desert through family ties and culture. And that desert society would find no accommodation with the Ottomans.

"This has been from time immemorial our land, and it still is!" Sa'dun of the Bani Khalid declared simply, when asked the meaning of his attack on al-Hasa. In part there is expressed in these words a kind of elemental nationalism which every person in any time might have, a dislike of foreign rulers. And certainly, there is scarcely concealed here the individual ambitions of the rebel leaders. But there is more to it than that. Drawn in broad strokes, it was the classic confrontation between country folk and city people, between the ranchers with their rough and ready justice, their hearty hospitality to strangers with strangers so few and far between, their reliance on the honor and dignity of the individual and his family even when this led to the brink of anarchy, and on the other hand the shopkeepers and lawyers in apron and waistcoat, their reserve, their reliance on the police force, trusting the system, the bureaucracy, to give them position and defend them in it.



Only time, patience, understanding and a willingness to compromise would maintain peace in this confrontation; that, or a clear superiority of force on one side. But there was too little of the first, and the Ottomans only precariously maintained the second. From 1580 onwards Istanbul was too beset with rebellions closer to home and a new war with Persia to maintain full garrisons and armories in al-Hasa. Between 1622 and 1639, in fact, the province was cut off from direct communication because of the occupation of Baghdad by the Persians. By the time Baghdad was retaken al-Hasa had become nothing more than a pawn in the provincial politics of Basra. Istanbul made no attempt to return it to direct rule. Al-Hasa was called "Ottoman" but the administration there was but a parody of what had been.

When the Ottoman troops were at last thrown out of al-Hasa in 1680 and the Bani Khalid—the tenacious Bani Khalid—returned, it was by a general uprising of citizens outraged by what had become corrupt and arbitrary appointees by Basra. The event caused scarcely a ripple in the palace circles of Istanbul. The empire, a little older, a little wiser—threatened from the West by a rapidly modernizing Europe—decided to cut its losses and al-Hasa, like the Hijaz, Egypt, Syria and Iraq centuries later, returned to the control of its own people.

Jon Mandaville, a teacher of Middle East studies at Portland State University in Oregon, writes frequently for Aramco World.

In a park in Lisbon, a statue of millionaire Calouste Gulbenkian before a replica of a Pharaonic hawk and, right, the museum he founded to house his splendid acquisitions.

Imagine for a moment that you had the chance to assemble a collection of world art which would include masterpieces in every medium from every period and every culture. Imagine further that the works were to be in perfect condition, absolutely authentic, and only the best examples of any given artist or workshop. Finally, imagine that you had at your disposal a virtually unlimited amount of money.

The secret dream of every museum director? The reverie of a handful of fabulously wealthy men? Perhaps, but this is in fact the reality behind the Gulbenkian Museum in Portugal, founded by an extraordinary Armenian who made his fortune in oil and personally brought together the roughly 5,000 pieces in the collection.

Undoubtedly the most mysterious and perhaps the greatest oil magnate of them all, the richest man in the world in his time, the first billionaire in the days before world inflation, Calouste Sarkis Gulbenkian, sometimes called after his most famous deal "Mr. Five Percent," died in Lisbon in 1955 at the age of 86. According to the terms of Gulbenkian's will, his entire estate, including his magnificent art collection, was to serve as the nucleus of an international foundation for charitable, artistic, educational and scientific purposes to be located in Lisbon.

The art collection was at first temporarily housed in the famous Palácio Pombal outside of Lisbon on the coast toward Estoril. However, Gulbenkian had expressed his wish that as much as possible of his art be permanently exhibited according to a chronological and geographical scheme, and though the Palácio was a particularly attractive setting, it was too small to accommodate all the treasures. Thus an ultra modern concrete and glass structure, harmoniously attached to the architecturally similar headquarters of the foundation, was inaugurated in October 1969.

The entire complex faces the broad Avenida de Berna, close to the heart of Lisbon in the midst of a 20-acre wooded and landscaped garden-park which was formerly St. Gertrude Park and is now more appropriately Calouste Gulbenkian Park. In a continuous single-level exhibition area the visitor can travel from Pharaonic Egypt to 20th-century Paris, passing through Mesopotamia, the Islamic Near East, China, Japan, and medieval, Renaissance and modern Europe on the way. The Gulbenkian Museum is among the newest and most striking in the world and it houses one of the greatest art collections of all time, a collection patiently assembled over half a century, the eternal fulfillment of a single man's artistic conception.

Eternal because, by the terms of Gulbenkian's will, the collection is to remain exactly as he formed it; no pieces to be sold, no new acquisitions to be made. Yet, despite the imposing size of the new museum with its nearly 60,000 square feet of display area, only part of the total can be publicly shown at any one time. The display space is divided into two wings—one for Western art, the other for Oriental art—which, though they have separate entrances, organically flow into each other near the middle of the building.

Calouste Gulbenkian's aesthetic interest and his money marched side by side. It is generally believed that by the turn of this century, while he was still in his 30's, the aspiring oil magnate had already made his first million. And as his fortune continued to grow during the following 50 years he used it to indulge his already well developed passion for art and collecting. Gulbenkian was fond of relating the following episode from his childhood. At age 14, because of good marks at school, his father Sarkis gave him the not unimportant sum of half a Turkish gold pound, hoping to instill in the youth the virtues of thrift. Young Calouste, already a frequent habitué of the antique bazaars of Istanbul, secretly purchased some ancient coins. Having mentioned in passing the acquisition, he was severely reprimanded by his father for being prodigal. Little could the elder Gulbenkian foresee that this was the foundation of a collection which would bear his own last name into history for generations to come. Those few pieces were eventually to inspire one of the best and most beautiful collections of Graeco-Roman gold and silver coins in the world.

A man who shunned any kind of publicity, Gulbenkian quietly went about acquiring chefs-d'œuvre of all kinds with the constant requirements of fineness, faultlessness and authenticity. Perhaps his greatest coup was the remarkable package deal of art works belonging to the Hermitage Museum in Leningrad which he bought from a Soviet government hard pressed for cash in the bitter post-revolutionary years of the 20's. He devoted much time to his collection, systematically studying the general development of art, concentrating on the artists and periods which he most aggressively purchased. In so doing he became an ardent museum and gallery frequenter, and friend and intimate of the most famous dealers, scholars and museum curators. He also built up a 30,000-volume library which now serves as the core of the art research library housed on the lower level of the Gulbenkian Museum.

One of the world's leading collections of Islamic art is in Portugal at...

THE MUSEUM CALOUSTE BUILT

WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHED
BY ANGELE AND DICKRAN KOUYMJIAN

Gulbenkian's collection has been internationally known for decades, thanks mostly to its extraordinary masterpieces of Western painting, the finest of which were on loan for many years to the National Gallery in London and afterwards to the National Gallery of Art in Washington. Rembrandt and Rubens, Degas and Van Dyck, Gainsborough, Guardi, Hals, Monet, Manet, Renoir are some of the artists whose canvases rest carefully and comfortably in the new museum.

But it was not just painting he collected; there were no real boundaries to the extent of Gulbenkian's interests: sculpture, furniture, illuminated manuscripts, textiles and carpets, glass and jewelry, coins, ivories, rare bindings, tapestries, tiles, costumes, silver, ceramics—all the best in their category, all in perfect condition, all strikingly beautiful. He collected for his pleasure. He loved his works of art; he called them his children. Never just an accumulator or hoarder of art, Gulbenkian was a connoisseur. With excellent judgment and discrimination, he would often replace a fine work of art by a finer one if the opportunity became available.

Though it is less known and appreciated, Gulbenkian's collection of Islamic art is as remarkably rich and carefully chosen. With its oriental splendor, accentuated by extravagant colors and fecund designs, this was the section to which Gulbenkian was particularly attached. His own deep feelings for and associations with the area, his Armenian ancestry, his youth and early manhood in Constantinople, the trips to Caucasian and Middle Eastern oil fields, all contributed toward creating a special affinity for Near Eastern art.

The vast gallery of Islamic art is probably the most striking room in the museum, not just because of the richness of the items displayed, but also because of its extremely handsome physical layout. Piercing the walls along the entire length of the room are successive glass bays cut vertically through the concrete, admitting floods of light from the surrounding landscape. The sober illumination of the interior is enhanced by brilliant streams of natural light causing mirror-like reflections of the brook, trees and rolling hills without, on the glass cases housing the multicolored profusion of ceramics, glassware, textiles, illuminated manuscripts and precious bindings within.

Most of the objects in the room are from Persia and Ottoman Turkey; only a few works originate from other parts of the Islamic world: ceramics from Raqqa in Syria, some Mogul carpets and miniatures from India, and less than a dozen pieces of Mameluke glassware from Aleppo, Syria. Toward the rear of the room, in a small vitrine, are the only ostensible examples of Armenian art, consisting of four 17th-century illuminated manuscripts and a couple of pieces of Kutahya pottery. These, along with some Caucasian rugs, are seemingly the only items from Gulbenkian's own artistically rich heritage which are displayed in the museum.

The ceramics collection is one of the world's best (*Aramco World*, July-August, 1974). It includes fine specimens from the famous late 12th- and early 13th-century Persian manufacture of Rayy, a city whose ruins are near the modern city of Teheran. Among those are the so-called "Minai" —polychrome and gold overglazed painted pottery producing an effect remarkably close to miniature painting—and lustre painted wares. Various types of wall tiles are also represented; an outstanding one is a late 13th-century example of the technique known as Kashi after Kashan, the great center in eastern Iran, in the form of a rectangular, highly embossed blue and turquoise green metallic lustre tile, adorned with a *mihrab*, or prayer niche, and Koranic inscriptions.

Gulbenkian seemed to be especially fond of the ceramics of the Asia Minor city of Iznik, ancient Nicaea. The museum displays faultlessly beautiful specimens of three characteristic types from this center: late 15th-century ware exclusively in blue and white; early 16th-century ware, to which are added turquoise, sage green, manganese purple and black; and finally, mid-16th-century faience pieces with the famous tomato-red color called *bol d'Arménie*, applied so thickly that it created a high relief.

The Islamic gallery also exhibits fabrics and brocaded costumes from the period of Safavid rule in Iran (16th to 18th centuries), chiefly from the centers of Yazd and Bukhara. An exceptionally exquisite and decorative silk brocade fragment bears a mirror-image, double portrait of a young man wearing a turban, with wine bottle and cup in hand, seated in an exuberant flower garden. This piece matches similar fragments in the collections of the Textile Museum in Washington, the Detroit Art Institute and the Moore Collection of Yale University.

In splendid individual glassed recesses set along the entire width of the back wall of the gallery are displayed a large number —perhaps too large—of Ottoman brocades and velvets of the 16th and 17th centuries. These works, from Bursa and Istanbul, are dominated by stylized designs of the "four

classical flowers''—tulips, hyacinths, carnations and roses—in very lush and deep tones of red.

Most of the carpets in the collection belong to the classical period of Persian rug manufacture, the 16th and 17th centuries. All the major court factories, where the carpet industry reached its apogee, are represented: Tabriz, Isfahan, Herat. Because of their fragility, carpets woven of silk are displayed in glass wall cases, while the more sturdy woolen ones lie majestically spread throughout the spacious room on specially mounted platforms raised a few inches off the floor.

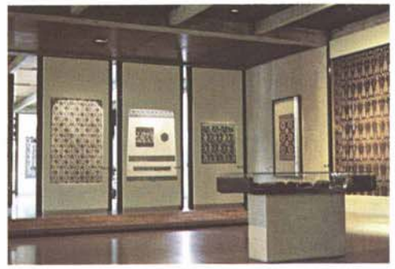
Arthur Upham Pope, the great authority on Persian and Islamic art and founder of the Asia Institute, once wrote to Gulbenkian about a 16th-century silk carpet, most probably woven at the royal workshops of Tabriz. "This rug should be in your collection ... which I have the greatest desire to see enriched and consolidated. You are today the only person in the world capable of making a collection of carpets worthy of the name. For, the formation of a collection with a purpose is not a matter of checkbooks .... I do not care how much money a man has in the bank; unless he had character, taste and intelligence, it is impossible for him to assemble a true collection." Gulbenkian did assemble such a collection, of course, and in it is the same carpet Pope wrote him about. Decorated with an unusual pattern of human masks and animals in a floral setting around a cartouche containing a delicate Persian inscription, it is thought to have come from the famous tomb of Imam Reza at Mashed in northeastern Iran. A similar example is found in the Cincinnati Art Museum.

Due to a disastrous flood in and around Lisbon in 1968 (just one year after the ruinous Florence flood), only a few of the many important oriental manuscripts in Gulbenkian's collection are on exhibition. The others are being painstakingly restored by trained experts in laboratories built and equipped specifically to rehabilitate the large number of manuscripts, Renaissance prints and other art objects submerged in the mud and water which inundated the Palácio Pombal while the new museum was still under construction. These modern facilities are already serving as a central restoration center for the many other important museums and art collections in Lisbon and the rest of Portugal. Those manuscripts which are currently on display are mostly Persian works of the 15th to 19th centuries from the schools of Shiraz, Herat and Bukhara, and include a special group commissioned by the Safavid ruler Shah Abbas I.

Accompanying the manuscripts is a selection of precious bindings in wrought and gilded or filigreed leather, as well as fine examples of lacquered *papier mâché*. Some of the bindings are separated from their manuscripts while others still cover the original texts they were fashioned for, such as the binding of the *Anthology* of 1410-11 prepared for Sultan Iskandar in Shiraz with an elaborate blind-tooled arabesque cartouche.

There is a very special area, adjacent to, but still part of, the main Islamic gallery, giving onto an inner garden-court of the museum by means of an entire wall of glass. Appropriately, it is devoted totally to 10 perfectly preserved 14th-century enameled and gilded glass receptacles from Aleppo. Representing one of the high points in the history of glass making, seven lamps, a large cylindrical beaker and two spherically bellied bottles, richly decorated with blazons, flowers, fabulous animals (some of a distinctly Chinese inspiration), shimmer under the play of natural light which immerses this section. The whole room has an ethereal quality produced by the greenish blue transparency of these objects against the verdant foliage and open sky of the court.

Finally, if one were to try to pick a single object from among the many extraordinary works in this impeccable treasure of Islamic



The Gulbenkian Museum's spacious Islamic Gallery displays wall tiles, brocades, illuminated manuscripts and pottery (above), ceramics and tapestries (top, right), brocade costumes (center), and carved wooden panels and Persian carpets (bottom).

CALOUSTE GULBENKIAN: MR. FIVE PERCENT

Calouste Sarkis Gulbenkian was born in 1869 of a well-to-do Armenian merchant family in Istanbul. After studying engineering at King's College, London, he was sent by his father, who among other things was in the lamp oil business, to inspect the oil fields around the Caucasian city of Baku in southern Russia. Thus, at 21, he was launched into a career in the petroleum industry which would last more than six decades.

Although the Gulbenkians left Turkey for England after the Armenian massacres in 1896, they were able to maintain influential business and government connections which eventually enabled young Calouste to secure a concession for the British-owned Turkish Petroleum Company to explore for oil throughout the Ottoman Empire, which at the time included Iraq and parts of Arabia. Gulbenkian himself had a 40 percent interest in the company, which in 1928, following the war and the break-up of the Ottoman Empire, became the Iraq Petroleum Company (I.P.C.). In the new company four large national oil interests—British Petroleum, Royal Dutch Shell, Compagnie Française des Pétroles and the U.S. companies Esso and Mobil—each controlled 23.75 percent. Gulbenkian himself managed to retain five percent, although he had to fight to protect this interest as oil's importance increased during the inter-war years.

Gulbenkian insisted that his share of I.P.C.'s profits be paid in cash rather than in crude oil. Refusing the offer of one British penny per ton of crude, he held out for one shilling. When he won that battle he capped his victory by demanding the shilling not in paper but in gold. For many years before he became known as Mr. Five Percent, he was called Mr. Gold Shilling.

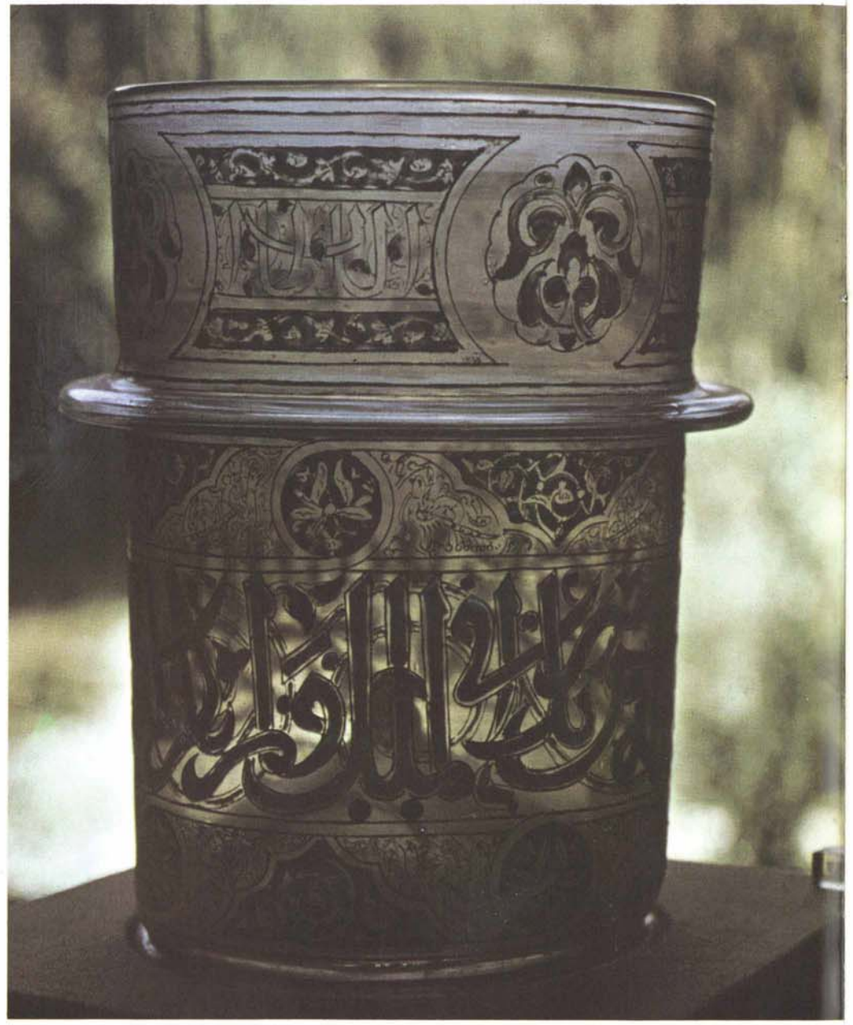
As the years went by the public saw or heard little of Gulbenkian, for he treasured his privacy, quite unlike his son Nubar, who became an international celebrity, fostering a bizarre public image with his tinted beard, monocle, gourmet appetite and the ever-present fresh orchid in his lapel. But those among Calouste's business or art collecting associates who came to be his friends regarded him as intelligent, industrious, meticulous, careful about how he spent his money, a strong persuader and an excellent listener.In his own family he was considered the model of an Armenian patriarch.

During the Second World War, when the Nazis occupied France, Gulbenkian moved to Lisbon. There, in the elegant Aviz Hotel, he spent most of his last 13 years. Even with his total involvement in the oil industry there always seemed to be energy left for art, his life-long passion. Gulbenkian long thought of establishing a charitable and cultural foundation with a museum to keep his money and art together. He wanted to start and supervise it while still alive, but was only able to prepare a will, which provided for an international foundation based in Portugal. Gulbenkian died in 1955, and today the Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, established in Lisbon, sponsors in the name of a remarkable businessman and lover of art, the Gulbenkian Museum, as well as nearly every other type of educational and charitable activity in Portugal and much of the world.

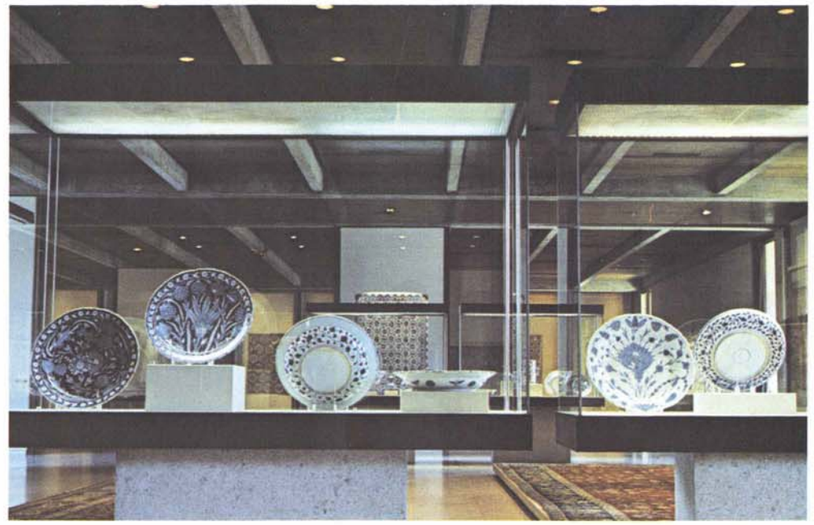
art, one might choose the small (six inches high) white jade ewer with a slight pale green cast. Its translucent neck is carved with an Arabic inscription which tells us it was made for the Timurid prince Ulugh Beg, probably in Samarkand during the first half of the 15th century. Defying classification, it is of a material rarely used in the Islamic tradition for a jug, and must be considered as being something between a piece of pottery, though not potted, and a precious jewel.

Calouste Gulbenkian did not strive to form a didactic or museum collection of Near Eastern art, one which traces all important periods and geographical areas in the various media which came under that art's authority. There are none of the famous Islamic metalworks, no early pottery, hardly any woodwork. Rather, he was interested in those objects which gave him pleasure, and for him this was manifested by the perfection of artistic form rather than the historical importance of a work. He demanded palpably beautiful creations, the high points of royal manufacture. Thus, thanks to Gulbenkian's love for Islamic art, there is brought together under a single roof in Lisbon an overwhelming array of aesthetically and technically superior examples of the Muslim artistic tradition.

Angèle Kouymjian, who is French, studied Islamic art at the American University in Cairo and is writing a book on medieval Armenian travelers to Egypt. Her husband Dickran, an American, is an associate professor of Near Eastern and Armenian history and art at the American University of Beirut.



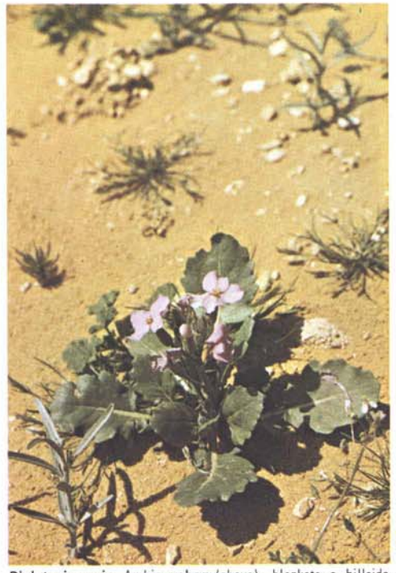
In a room with glass bays looking out on the park and reflecting the gardens onto interior glass cases (bottom, left and center), Islamic glass and ceramics are displayed. Above and right: pottery and ceramics. Left and below, right: two examples of 14th-century glass enameled lamps from Mameluke-period Aleppo, Syria.



When record rains wake dormant desert seeds...

Arabia in Bloom

PHOTOGRAPHED BY KHALIL ABOU EL-NASR



Diplotaxis acris, Arabic **yahaq** (above), blankets a hillside.

In years of good rains the Arabian desert is carpeted briefly in spring with grass and wild flowers (*Aramco World*, January-February, 1968). During the 1973-1974 rainy season in northern Saudi Arabia, along the frontier with Iraq and Jordan, the rains came early, they came abundantly and—most important in a desert area where a few days' downpour one season frequently exceeds the entire rainfall of another year—they came with some consistency. Dry river beds (*wadis*) which usually flood but once a year flowed with something like the regularity of normal streams. Some high areas received a brief mantle of wet snow.

It was, in fact, the wettest winter season in the 19 years for which written records have been kept. During the period from October to May the average rainfall measured at four stations over a 500-mile length of the Trans-Arabian Pipeline came to 6.48 inches, compared to the 19-year average of 3.27. The previous high of 5.92 was in 1967-68 and the low, a meager .4 inches, fell in 1970-71. The result of this year's rains was not only welcome pasturage for Bedouin flocks, but also an unusually colorful view of Arabia in bloom.

— THE EDITORS

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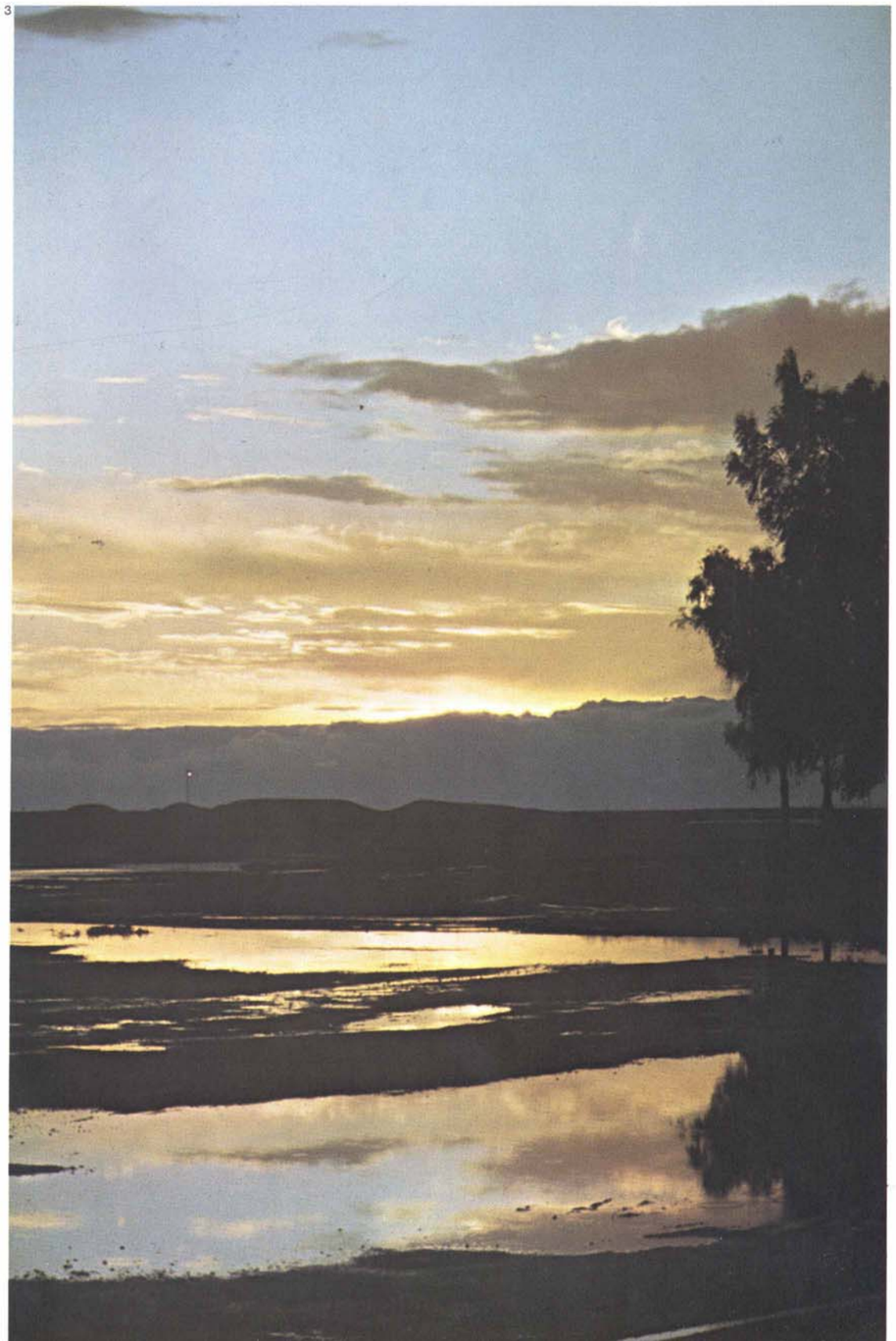
First came the rains (1, 2 and 3), flooding low spots where highways cross usually dry river beds and creating temporary ponds in the desert. Then came dense grass, to provide grazing for Bedouin flocks (4), and flowers of all kinds: **Onobrychis ptolemaica** or **tummayr** in Arabic (5); a plant the Bedouins call **qaf'a,** probably **Astragalus schimperi** (6); **qulayqilan** or **Savignya parviflora** (7); **hawdhan** or **Picris babylonica** (8); and **raqmah,** a cranesbill, **Erodium laciatum** (9).



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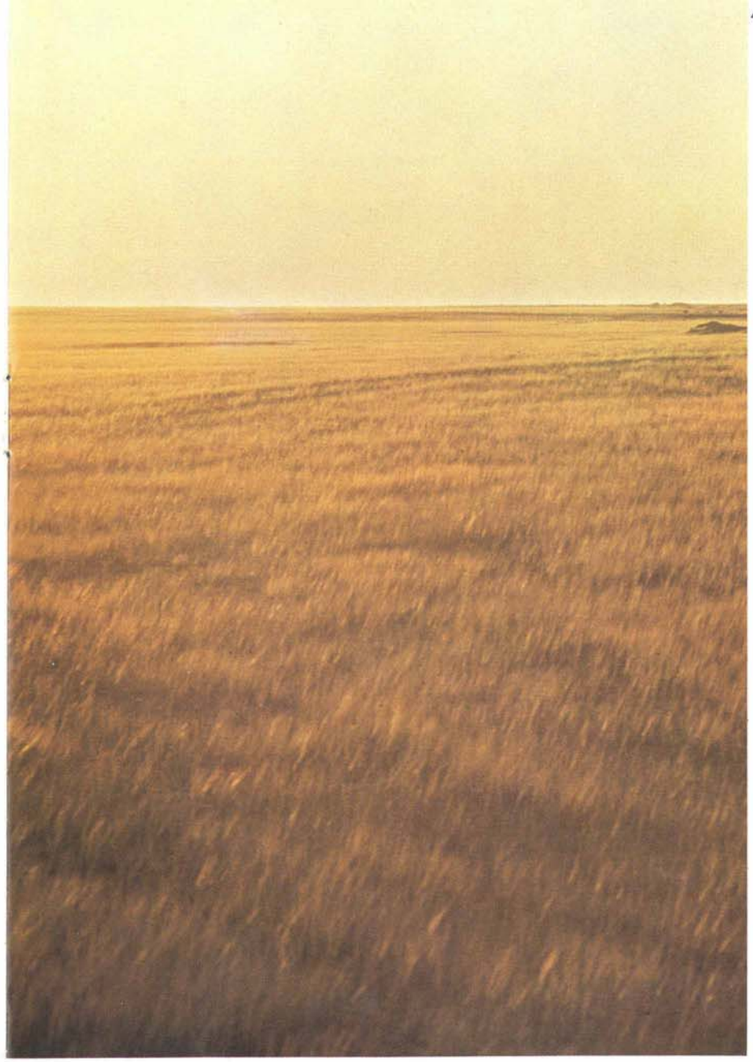

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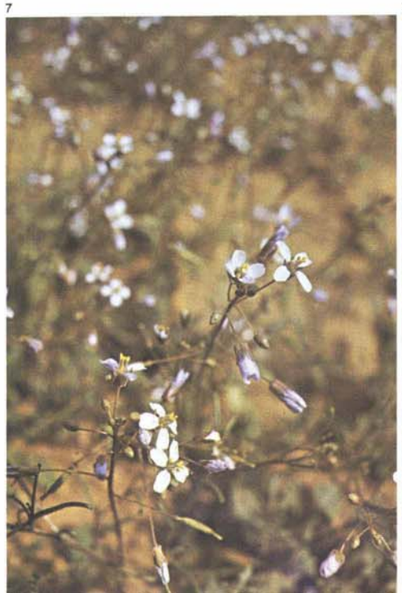

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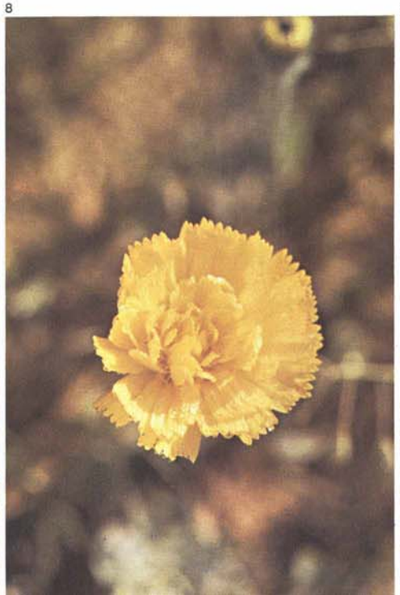

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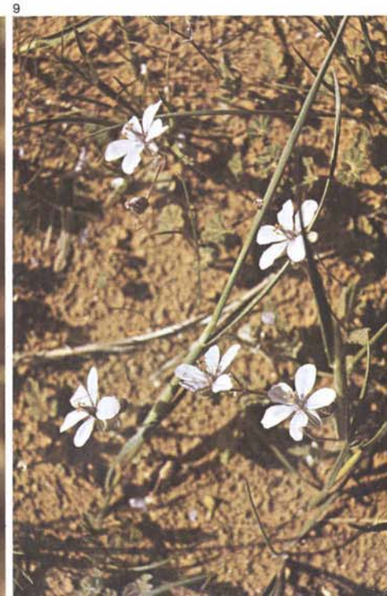

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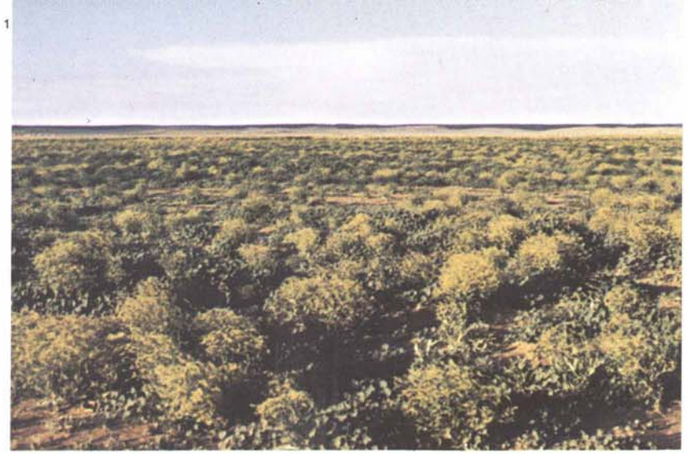

The yellow flowers at left are **suffar** or "yellow one," **Schimpera arabica;** the clusters of round leaves with them are a different plant, **khubbayz** or "little baker," from their resemblance to Arab bread loaves, **Malva parviflora** (1). The Arabic **khuzama** or **Horwoodia dicksoniae,** named after Violet Dickson **(Aramco World,** Nov.-Dec., 1972) (2); **qahwiyan,** a desert camomile, **Anthemis deserti** (3); **rubahlah** or **Scorzonera papposa,** which has an edible nut-like root (4); **Lotus lanuginosus** (5); **kahil** or **Arnebia decumbens** (6); and, opposite page, another **raqmah** or cranesbill.

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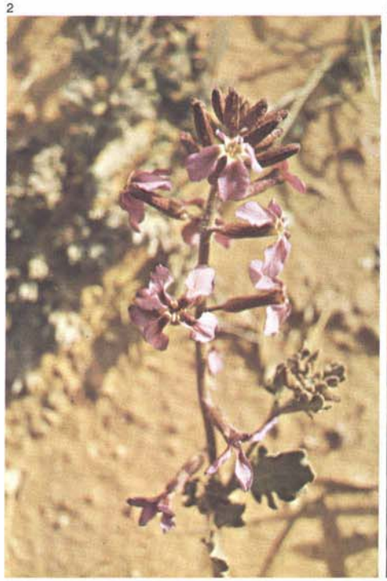

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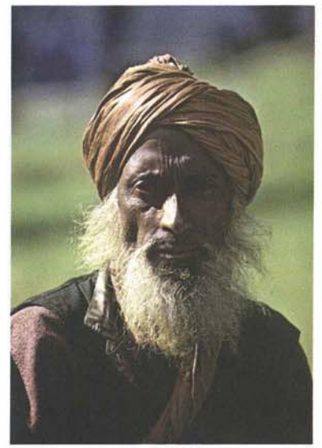
A towering land where spirits soar…

Islam in Kashmir

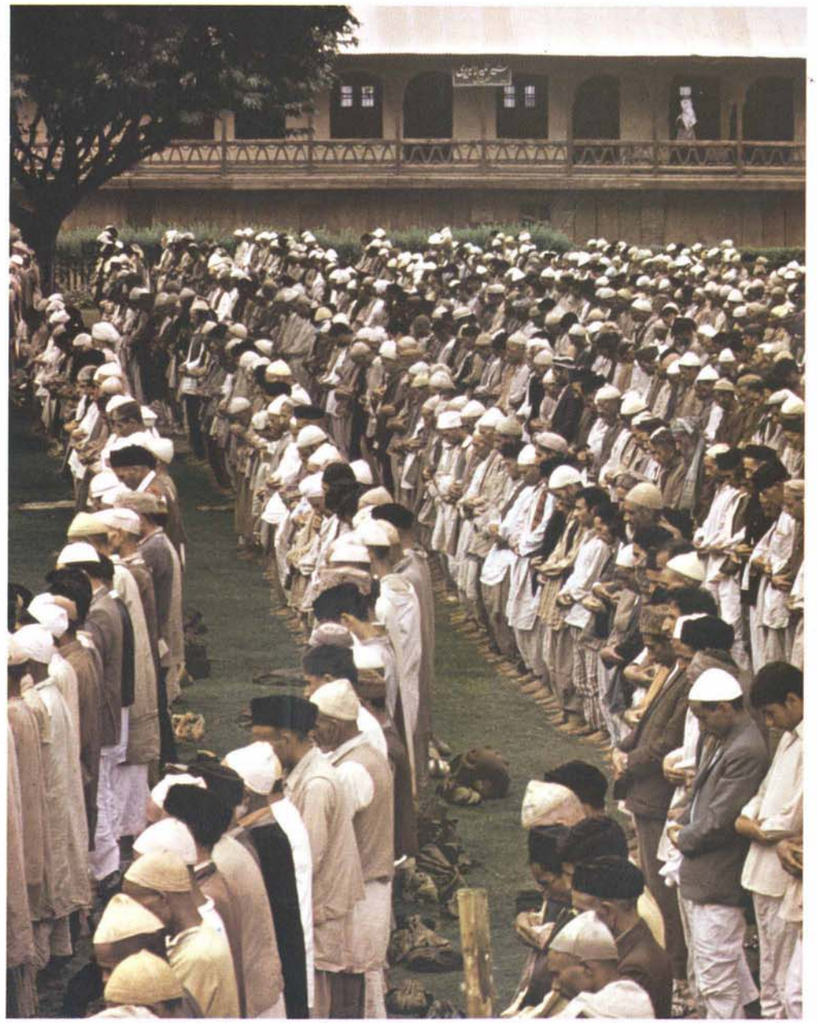
PHOTOGRAPHED BY HAROLD SEQUEIRA



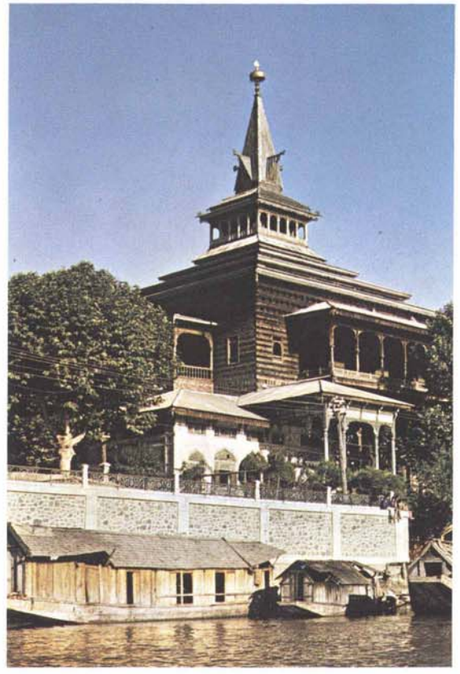
The world of Islam, embracing about 600 million persons, extends across much of Africa and Asia. Most people in the West know that large numbers of Muslims live in the Arab states and in such countries as Turkey, Iran, Pakistan and Indonesia. But there are also sizable communities in such unexpected places as Taiwan (*Aramco World*, July-August, 1970) and Yugoslavia (*Aramco World*, May-June 1973). One of the most beautiful of Muslim lands is Kashmir, a remote haven of green valleys and towering mountains on the northern borders of Pakistan and India. Kashmir has a population of about five million, nearly all Muslim.

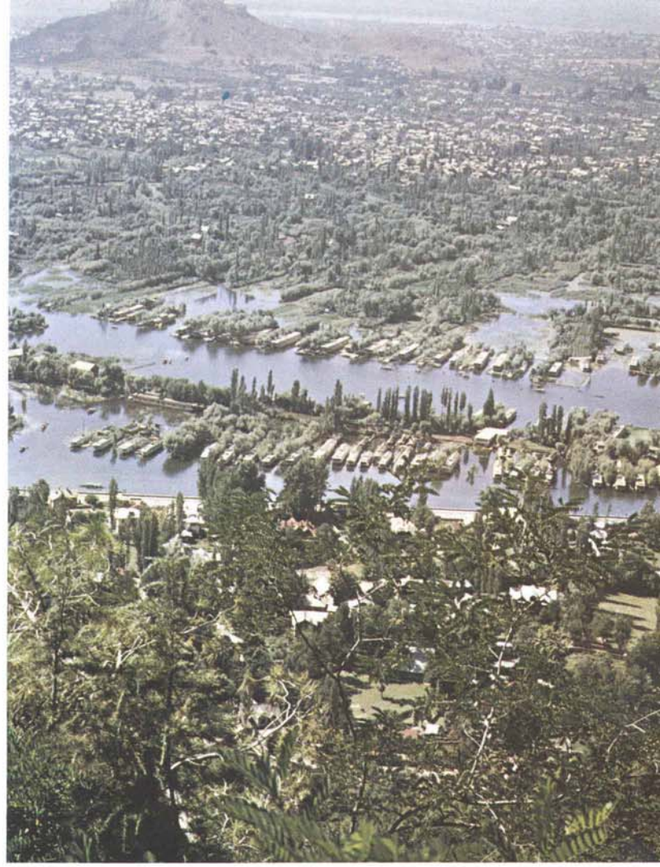
Islam came to Kashmir late in the 14th century and for a time, in the 16th and 17th centuries, the land was part of the great Muslim Mogul empire of India. Later there was a century of local independence, then a century of British rule. In 1948 Kashmir fell into strife which ended with its partitioning and a United Nations truce.

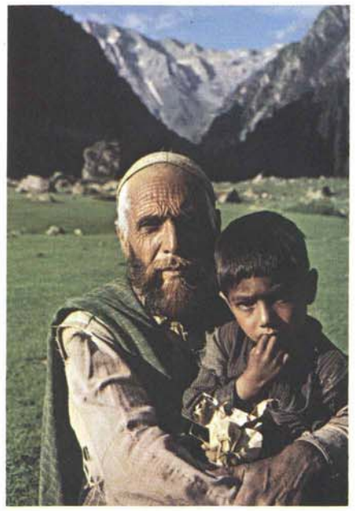
Srinagar, a quiet town in the famous Vale of Kashmir, is the capital of Jammu and Kashmir—the larger part of the original country and now attached to India. It lies along the Jhelum River, surrounded by clear lakes and formal Mogul gardens, at an altitude of one mile. Forested hillsides and lofty glacier-covered peaks of the Himalayan range surround the heavily populated central valley. The people of Kashmir, merchants, craftsmen, farmers, woodsmen and shepherds, are as handsome as the land they dwell in, as the color photographs by Harold Sequeira on these pages suggest.



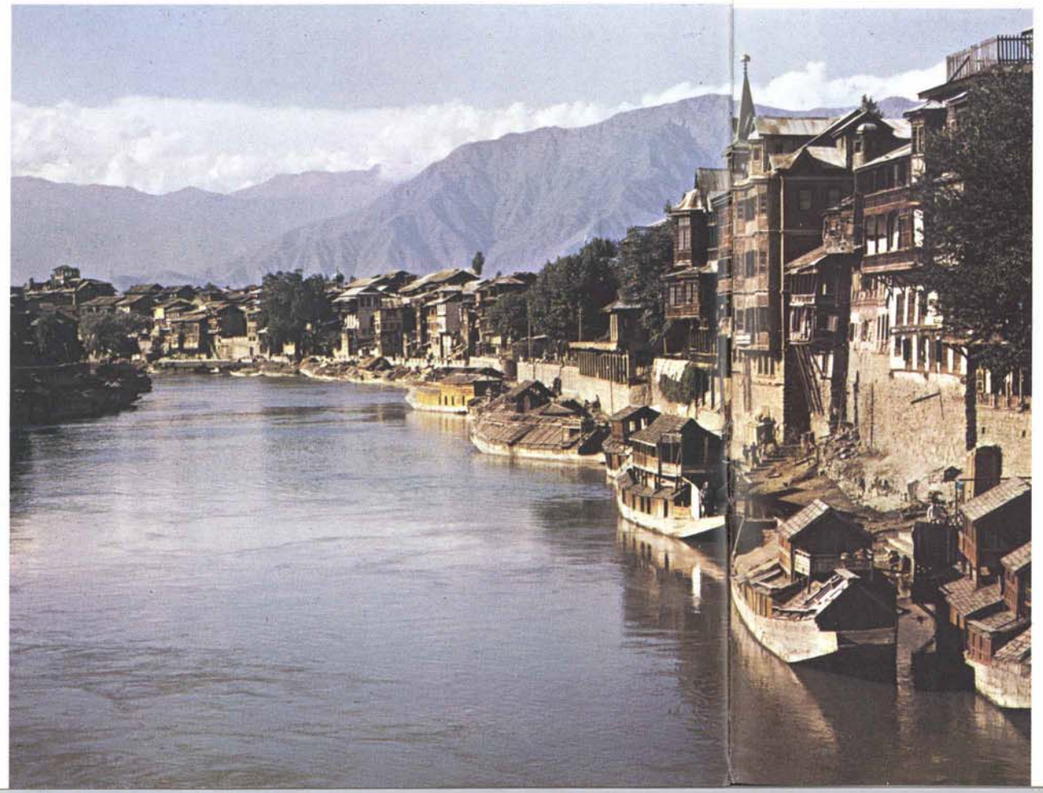
Left: a shikara taxi on Dal Lake in Srinagar, known for its houseboats. Above: worshippers pray at Hazratbal, a shrine on the lake.

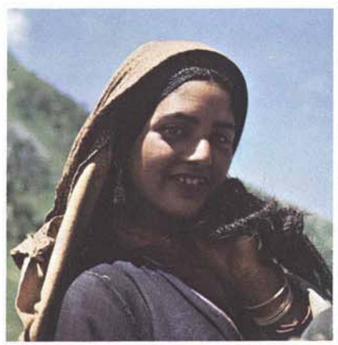


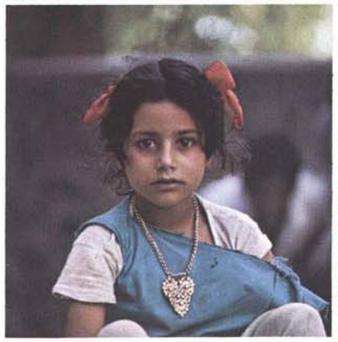


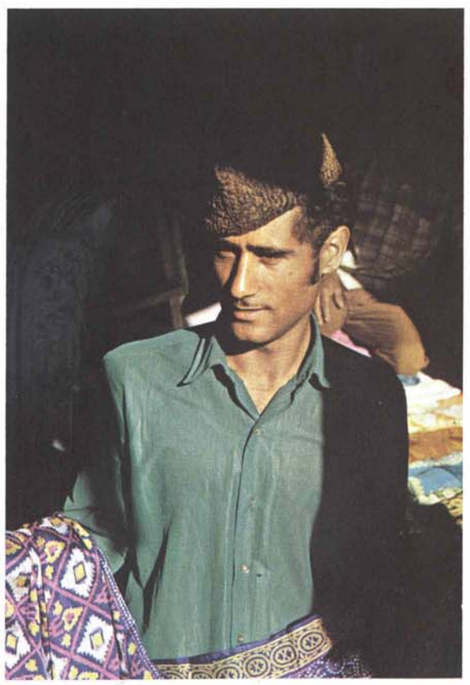


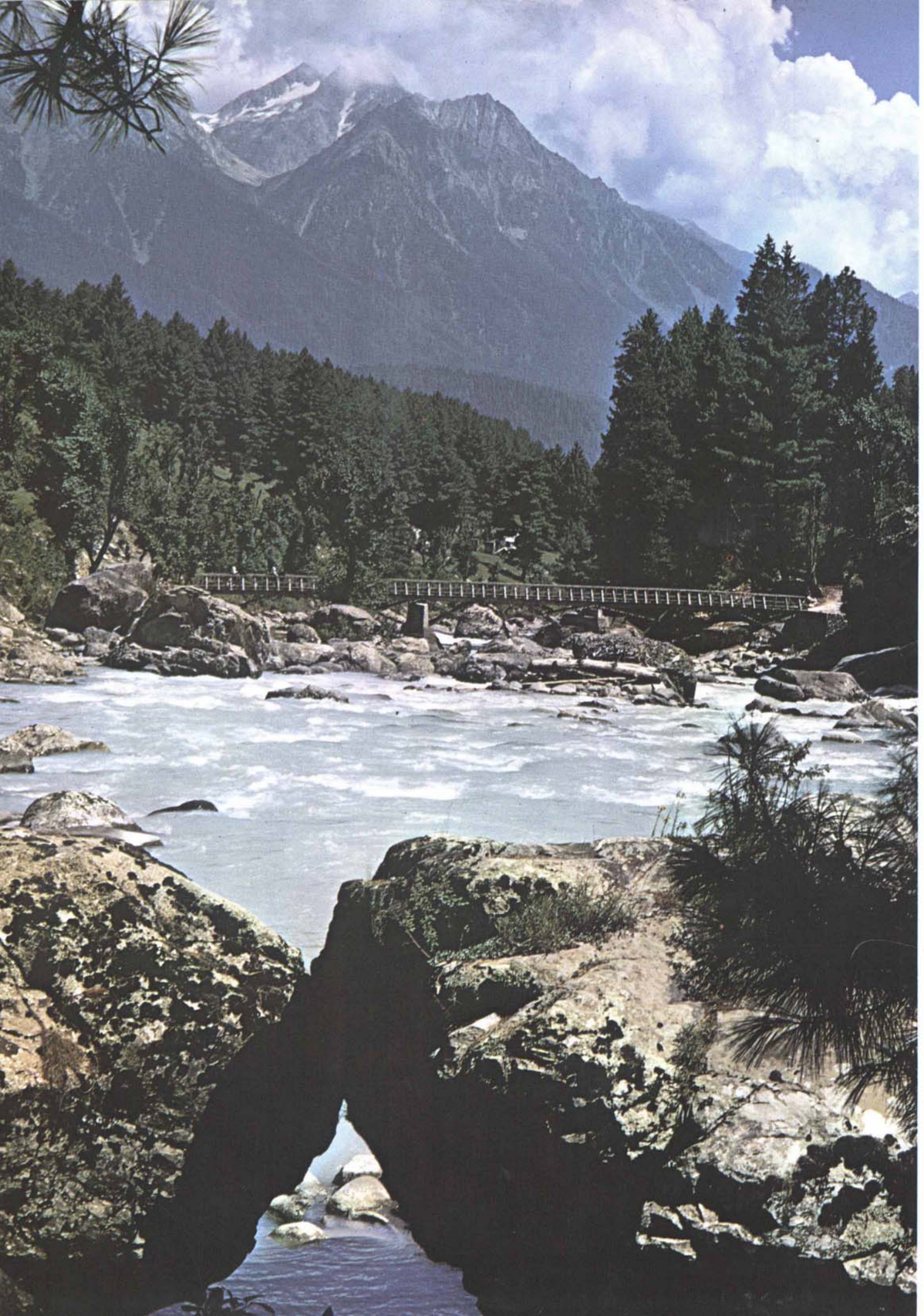
Clockwise from top, left: 17th-century Shalimar Garden, near Dal Lake; Shah Hamdan Mosque in Srinagar; Srinagar and Dal Lake in the Vale of Kashmir; merchant, shepherdess and schoolgirl; the Jhelum River in Srinagar; farmer and son in the Liddar River Valley near Pahalgam.



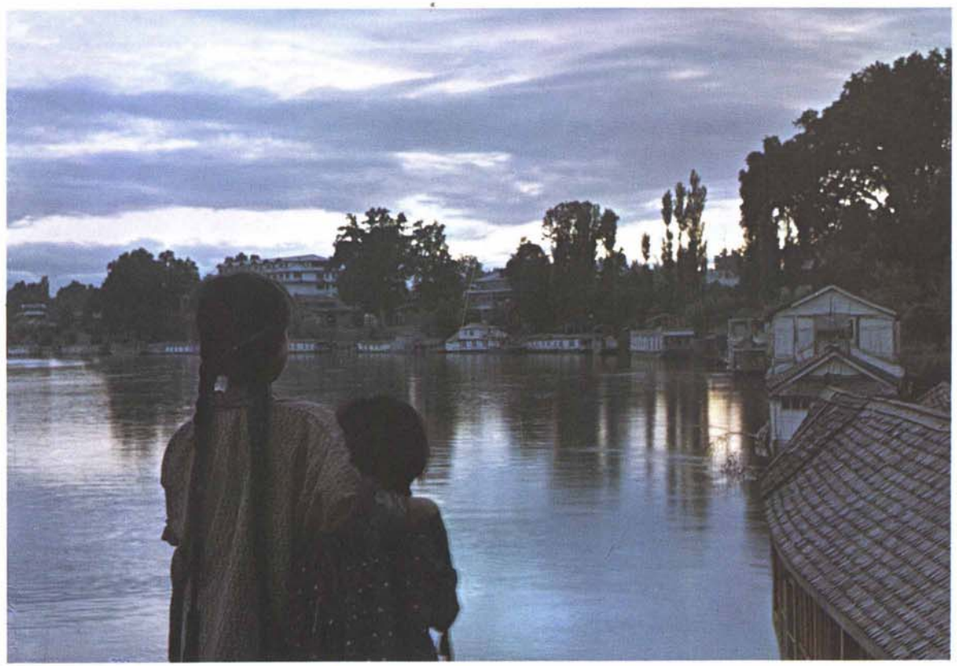








Three faces of Kashmir: its mountains, mosques, lakes. Left, the Liddar River and 18,000-foot Himalayan peaks; above, a mosque in the mountain resort of Pahalgam; below, Dal Lake and houseboats in Srinagar.



The new look—
7,000 years old...

ALL THE PERFUMES OF ARABIA

WRITTEN BY KAREN DE WITT
DRAWINGS BY ED DAVIS

In a magazine recently I noticed that the latest thing in cosmetics is the "natural" ingredient. Women can now put roses in their cheeks with such substances as earth pigment, beeswax, honey and wheat germ and freshen their pollution-dried complexions with lotions made from avocados and almonds. I also noticed that this great discovery is called the "yummy new look."

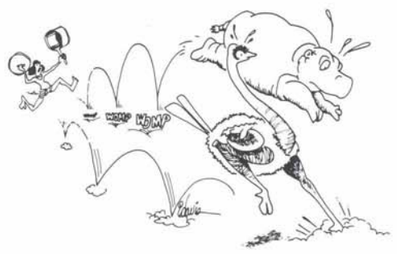
Fine. I'm for nature and I don't even mind if you call it "yummy." But new? No way. In the Middle East they've never done it any other way, and I do mean never. They were making cosmetics back when most people thought the world was flat, and in the 16th century they were putting out a complexion cream using honey, beeswax and sesame seed oil. Surprising though it may sound, the cosmetics industry was not only born in the Middle East, but is flourishing there today.

It probably all started as a result of the Middle East climate, where harsh sunlight and dry desert winds do awful things to a girl's complexion. Somebody sometime began to make aromatic oils and ointments as protection and the archeologists are still digging up palettes and perfume vials. Not long ago, in fact, they reported that a cosmetics shortage nearly caused a strike in the reign of Pharaoh Ramses III. Workers at a Theban graveyard, the

archaeologists said, went on strike because there were "no ointments."

Early Middle Eastern peoples, moreover, had virtually all the creams, tonics, lotions and powders that clutter modern vanity tables—although the ingredients may have been slightly different. One recipe for a facial, guaranteed to smooth the skin and prevent wrinkles, was made from powdered ostrich egg and wheat germ. And among numerous recipes for removing dandruff were some calling for hippopotamus fat, fish oil and soft grease.

Ancient men and women also used perfumes. Unlike today's alcohol-based scents, though, they were made from animal fats or vegetable oils—radish, lettuce and sesame seed oils impregnated with natural perfumes. The ancient unguent maker and perfumer produced a variety of scents from natural products which, until the advent of man-made



smells only a few years ago, were the same ones his modern descendants used. Bitter almonds and anise seeds, jasmine, rose, peppermint, cassia, and heliotrope flowers, ginger root, cinnamon bark, citrus fruits, and cedar and sandal woods were just some of the things used in providing the scent for perfumes.

Using only the arts of the kitchen for their laboratory technique, the ancient perfumers had several ways of extracting scent from these natural products. One was by putting flowers in layers of fat and replacing them as soon as their scent was exhausted. This technique—called **enfleurage** — produced perfume pomades which were part of every ancient Egyptian woman's regular make-up; tomb paintings picture slant-eyed beauties at festivals or parties with perfumed balls or cones of this pomade attached to their heads. Even today it is still the best, if most expensive method there is.

Another way of extracting scent was by dipping flowers, seeds and fruits into hot oils or fat. But as early as 2700 B.C. an improved method was introduced based on the technique for producing oils and wine. The flowers were placed in a cloth whose ends were attached to sticks; these were twisted in opposite directions so that the pressure would squeeze out the essential oils. One of the 4700-year-old tombs at Saqqara near Cairo has pictures of women gathering lilies, the heraldic flower of Upper Egypt, and extracting their scent in this way.

Eye paints, mascara, lipstick and powder puffs can also be traced to the Middle East. Both Egyptians and Mesopotamians colored their lips and cheeks with small pieces of red ochre inserted in a hollow reed, while the Sumerians used a face powder made of yellow ochre and called it "Golden Bloom." Max Factor couldn't do better.

Originally, painting the eyes was a protection against eye diseases which are still prevalent in some areas of the Middle East. Women painted their upper lids black with the mineral galena and their lower lids green with powdered malachite. Later they switched to painting both lids black with antimony, an ingredient still used in modern eye preparations. The Mesopotamians too made up their eyes. Indeed the Accadian term for galena, **guhl**, gave birth to the Arabic word for eye paint, **kohl.**

There was also a religious aspect. Where modern woman uses cosmetics only for cleansing and general beautification, her ancestors attributed medicinal, magical and religious qualities to them. One of the ancient Egyptian words for perfume is "fragrance of the gods," and their word for the cosmetic palettes used for grinding eye paints suggests religious "protection." Indeed, eye paints were offered to the gods and their statues were painted with them.

That aspect died out eventually, but without affecting the popularity of cosmetics. By then, in fact, it was big business, particularly in Alexandria whose "Royal Ointment" and a brand of jasmine perfume were especially popular with the ladies of Imperial Rome.

But not just the ladies. Perfumes became so popular that many Romans used it in lamp oil and even wine in order, as Cicero put it, "... to enjoy the lavish scent both inside and outside." Perfumes even spread to the army. As Cicero wrote, "This horrid indulgence has even spread to the camps. The anointing of the steward and eagles on holidays is only an excuse for using hair oil under a helmet."

Within the Arab world itself, cosmetics were equally popular. In the 13th century, Ibn Arabi, an Hispano-Arab mystic, wrote in his "Pearls of Wisdom" that "of all the wordly goods, three things are dearest to my heart, perfume, women and prayer." Another Arab writer, speaking of the trade which made Arabia famous, wryly remarked, "If I am told to transact in goods, I choose perfumes. For if I miss the profit, I'll not miss the smell."

In the golden days of Abbasid rule (775-847), flowers were cultivated on a large scale for cosmetic purposes. The preparation of perfumes from roses, water lilies, orange blossoms, violets and other plants flourished in Damascus and also in Persian cities like Shiraz and Jur. Jur was noted for its attar of red roses and Jurian rosewater was exported as far east as China and as far west as Morocco, but the extract of violets was the most popular in the Arab world.

Rose perfume also enjoyed a wide acclaim. Al-Mutawakkil, the ninth-century Abbasid caliph, loved rose perfume so much that he monopolized its cultivation, saying, "I am the king of sultans and the rose is the king of the sweet scented flowers, each of us is therefore worthy of the other." Other scents favored by the Arabs were myrtle, narcissus, jasmine, poppy and safflower.

During the Crusades, Europe was again introduced to the cosmetic products of the Middle East. Frankish knights became so addicted to the heady aromatic gums of Arabia, the sweet scents of Damascus, and the numerous fragrant oils and attars from Persia that their tastes later supported the commerce of Italian and Mediterranean cities. And, although the role of cosmetics in fashion fluctuated, we know they were still popular as late as the Elizabethan era when Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth was bitterly complaining on stage that "all the perfumes of Arabia" could not wash her hands of the blood of the murdered King Duncan.

But if the use of perfumes and cosmetics went in and out of fashion among Westerners, in the Middle East their use remained fairly constant. In the 19th century, for example, Isabel Burton, whose husband was the British Consul at Damascus from 1869 to 1871, devoted a whole chapter of her two-volume book on the customs of the Arabs to the make-up and bathing practices of the "hammams," or public bath houses. Oriental ladies, she wrote, put soured goat's milk on their faces to clear complexions, cucumbers on their eyes to freshen them, and henna on the tips of their fingers.

Although the cosmetic industry is no longer restricted to the Middle East, many of the natural scents used in modern perfumes, creams, hand lotions and powders still come from Egypt. About 90 percent of the essential fruit and flower oils produced in Egypt are marked for export to Russia, France and Holland. Though this export does not play nearly the role that it did in antiquity, Egypt is still the third largest producer of essential oils for the perfume industry in the world.

Egypt exports geranium, cassia, water lily, orange and lemon, jasmine and safflower oil. The jasmine is especially prized by the perfumers of Grasse, center of the perfume industry in France, for the specific note it lends to different perfume formulas. The formulas for some of France's most famous perfumes would all have to be altered if Egyptian jasmine had to be replaced with Italian or Moroccan jasmine. Perfumes are as temperamental as wines about the soil in which their basic ingredients grow: indeed, for the perfumer there are even vintage year flowers that go into perfume.

In 7,000 years, the only real change in cosmetics has been in their manufacture and marketing. Despite the achievements of science and technology in developing synthetic scents, the cosmetics industry more than ever is turning to natural ingredients. New shampoos commend the benefits of their herbal ingredients, beauty magazines laud the superiority of **kohl**, and henna once again becomes a popular coloring for the hair. Modern woman, dabbing perfume behind her ears and blackening her eyelids, has more in common with the ancient queens of the Middle East than either would have dreamed possible.

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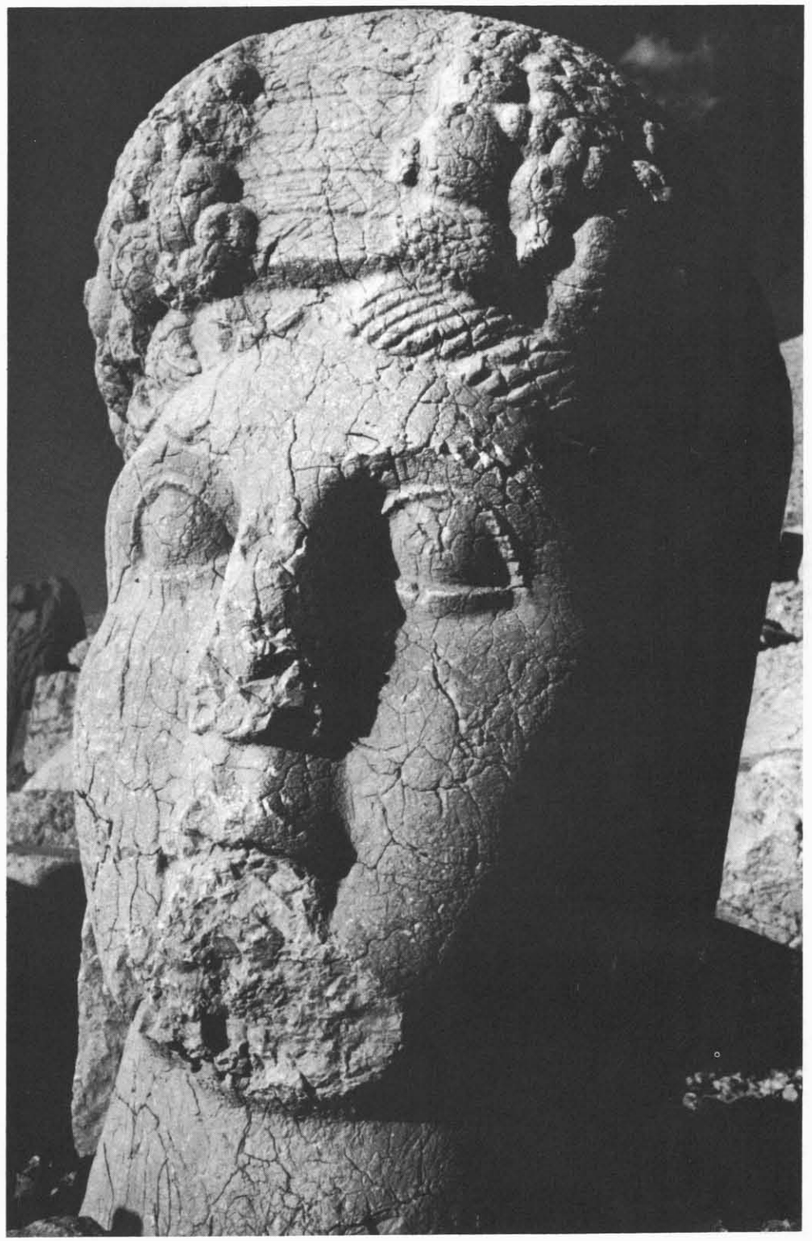
On a remote cone-shaped mountain, the heart of an enduring mystery...

throne room of the gods

WRITTEN BY ROBERT ARNDT/PHOTOGRAPHED BY ALICE AND ROBERT ARNDT



Stone heads on the West Terrace. Left, Zeus; above, young king Antiochus; right, Fortuna with headdress of fruit and wheat.

"*And I have decided to lay the foundation of this tomb, indestructible by the ravages of time, in closest proximity to the heavenly throne, wherein the outer form of my person shall rest through immeasurable time.*"

The young god-king Antiochus I, ruler of the independent kingdom of Commagene near the Euphrates River in what is today southern Turkey, wrote those lines over two thousand years ago. The intervening millennia have indeed left his outer form as undisturbed as he had intended, and his tomb atop a 7000-foot mountain peak, with the overwhelming ceremonial-religious site that surrounds it, is now one of modern Turkey's most remarkable historical treasures. But in the king's own time it was more. The great hierothesion or sacred place on Nemrud Dagh was the center of a king-

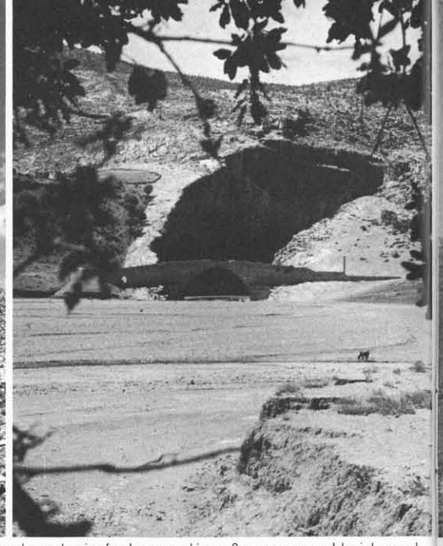
dom and a religion, the interface between three civilizations and two empires, and the heart of an enduring mystery.

The mystery begins with the kingdom itself, about whose early history we know little more than that it was an Assyrian tributary, that it became independent in 163 B.C. and that it was, although very small, very fertile. According to Strabo, Commagene was rich in fruit trees and vines. It also exported grain, wood and wine and manufactured iron of unmatched quality. Known all over the ancient world, and produced in Asia Minor's earliest ironworks, the steel-like Commagene iron contained manganese, still used today to lend toughness and impact-resistance to steel.

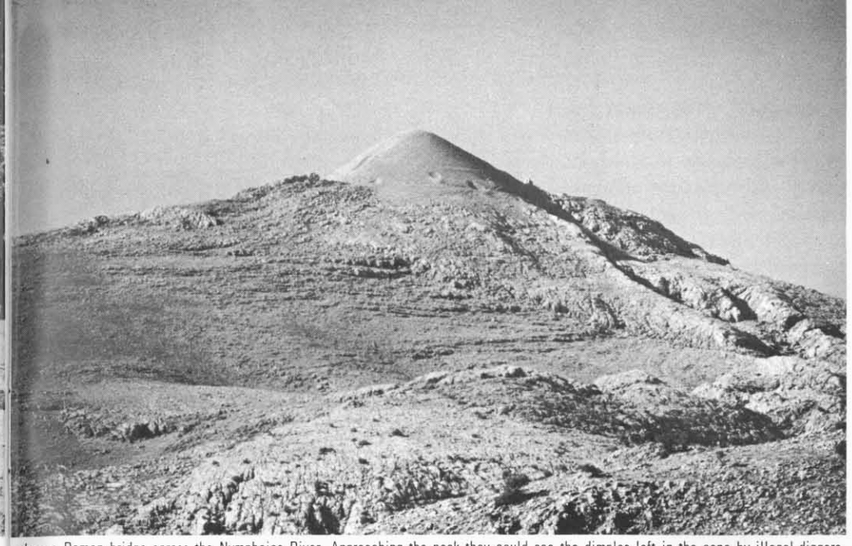
Commagene itself displayed similar toughness and impact-resistance in the political sphere after Antiochus I succeeded to the throne around 70 B.C. Despite his precarious position—a petty prince trapped among the Armenians, the Romans, the Parthians and even Herod the Great—Antiochus managed to throw off Armenian overlordship, stave off Herod and, in 62 B.C., win independence and security from Rome. The Romans formalized Commagene's status as an independent state by a treaty that also confirmed Antiochus as ruler, thus giving him personally as well as his kingdom a badly needed measure of security.

With that assured, Antiochus turned his attention to religion. The cult of Mithra, the rock-born Persian sun-god, was Commagene's official creed, and each year a great ceremony ended with the reappearance of the king as the *epiphanes*, the incarnation on earth of the god. The monotheist Mithra cult nonetheless recognized other gods as manifestations of different aspects of the deity, and Antiochus spent some years in refurbishing, reconstructing and elaborating religious sites throughout his kingdom: he once boasted that he had left no holy place unadorned. His special attention went to a site where his father had been buried, the tomb cut deep in the solid limestone of a mountainside near Arsameia, overlooking the Nymphaios river.

There Antiochus established a major temple site dedicated to Mithra himself, endowing it with royal lands to provide it a permanent income, and decorating it with reliefs showing his father Mithridates being greeted, as an equal, by the gods. Here, too, was a tunnel that sloped downward over 45 degrees, running more than 500 feet into the mountain's heart; at the bottom of this tunnel, surrounded by the rock that gave Mithra birth, the mysteries of the cult were performed, and from the tunnel's mouth the king appeared each year as the god's incarnation.



En route to Nemrud Dagh the travelers passed Karakush, a gravel tumulus and pair of columns marking a Commagene royal burial ground,



then a Roman bridge across the Nymphaios River. Approaching the peak they could see the dimples left in the cone by illegal diggers.

From his father's tomb, Antiochus' mind turned to his own. In planning and building it during his own lifetime, however, he had more in mind than self-glorification. Influenced perhaps by his kingdom's dual role between east and west as buffer and borrower, or perhaps by his own ancestry —a combination of Persian, Greek and Anatolian—King Antiochus set out to create a new religion that would unite the varying cultural streams in his kingdom and similarly unite his people. Built on Mithraic principles, the new orthodoxy would emphasize that the varying names given the gods by different nations were only differences of language; it would establish Antiochus himself as fully co-equal with the other gods; and the vast, monumental religious site and tomb it centered on would proclaim the nobility and legitimate succession of Antiochus and his forbears all the way back to Alexander and Darius.

The tomb and its surroundings would occupy the most prominent site in the entire kingdom, a mountain-top holy since human memory; it would be the goal of religious processions and the site of monthly and annual celebrations; and it would be worthy to be what Antiochus intended: "the common throne room of all the gods."

That was two thousand years ago. What effect might the passage of that time have had on King Antiochus' grandiose conception? How would Western eyes today see the common throne room of all the gods? What could be the spirit of such a place in modern, secular Turkey? It was to answer these questions that we set out last fall to climb Nemrud Dagh, the center and highest point of the kingdom of Commagene and of the modern province of Adiyaman.

Airplane and bus brought us to Adiyaman town, a journey of several hours from Istanbul. En route we examined the list of modern-day visitors to King Antiochus' kingdom and to his 7000-foot mountain.

One of the earliest was Captain Helmuth von Moltke, a young German army captain seconded to the Ottoman imperial forces in 1838. By raft and on horseback von Moltke crisscrossed south-central Turkey on a reconnaissance mission during which he used Nemrud Dagh's bright, symmetrical peak as a triangulation point. But it was not until 1878, a full 40 years later, that a road engineer named Sester climbed the mountain and returned to the Berlin Academy of Sciences with an awed report that spurred Germany to investigate and then announce to the modern world the hierothesion atop Nemrud Dagh.

The world, as it happened, was not terribly interested and a further 50 years of neglect followed. Theologians, epigraphers and astronomers did some work on the discovery, but most seem to have relied exclusively on the descriptions published by the Germans—and by Osman Hamdi Bey, father of Turkish archaeology—in the 1880's and '90's. But at last, in 1952, a young American archaeologist, Theresa Goell, decided to undertake a new and thorough exploratory investigation of the mountaintop, an investigation that only now, more than 20 years later, is winding up. It had provided us with most of the background for our visit. Miss Goell has thoroughly mined the investigative and speculative riches of the Nemrud Dagh complex, and last summer she began a new campaign of "several seasons" to rebuild the site as King Antiochus left it.

Months of cruel drought had left Adiyaman dusty and scorched when we arrived. The town's chief virtue in our eyes was that one could hire a jeep there for the remaining section of the trip to Nemrud Dagh—a four-to-six-hour odyssey that we would undertake the next morning. In the meantime we found a hotel that rejoiced in the name of Wideawake—Uyanik in Turkish—whose owner took us thoroughly and competently in hand, proposing a schedule, arranging transport and recommending a restaurant.

In the morning we met driver Davrish and his jeep, both of them stocky and capable-looking, and both radiating a battered verve that somehow inspired confidence. Our route took us through some of Turkey's most remarkable scenery: dusty and all but treeless, violet and buff in color, yet, despite the drought, grimly determined to be productive: wheat stalks almost outnumbered the stones in the fields, and rare groves of pollarded oaks held goat-fodder in their branches above the level of the coming winter snows. Where a stream or ditch held water, a burst of vivid, almost violent, green reminded us of how Strabo had seen this land centuries ago and always, as we drove, Nemrud Dagh's white conical peak showed in the far distance. So symmetrical is the mountain's rounded cone that its apparent shape remained unchanged even while our angle of view shifted 45 degrees during the morning.

We rolled on through heat so intense that the air almost vibrated with it, past dun-colored villages so well built into their hillsides that only the black doorways and the stone rollers on their roofs betrayed human occupancy. Powered by four wheels, but often driving on only two, we twisted downward to the bed of the Nymphaios River (now called the Kahta Cayi). Davrish chose to ford it just below a Roman bridge, filling the simmering radiator and stripping for a swim himself in midstream.

From the river, we began the climb toward Nemrud Dagh's conical peak. With the mountain out of sight for the first time since leaving Adiyaman, we had to regain the plateau and then climb the remaining height to 7,000 feet, leaving behind us the Kahta Cayi and a pastoral tributary where cows and cowherds dozed side by side among brilliant purple oleander. On the way we explored the tomb of King Mithridates, Antiochus' father, and drank water filtered through a hundred feet of limestone into the royal burial chamber of 20 centuries ago—now a cistern for goats, shepherds and occasional tourists. We crossed the sloping path of the ancient processional way and climbed through a steep village built along —and in—a rushing stream where Kurdish girls laughingly handed us bunches of sweet grapes and, still laughing, volleyed rocks at us when we raised our cameras. We climbed on, finally reaching the foot of Nemrud Dagh itself and catching sight again of the great tumulus at its top.

At this distance—two miles away through remarkably clear air—we could see that the huge cone, 315 feet high and 1,000 feet in diameter at its base, itself constituted the peak of the mountain; its unusual brightness even over large distances was the result of its composition: white limestone rubble, from gravel- to melon-size, held only by gravity in a gently rounded, 45-degree cone. On the side that faced us was a dimple in the curving surface: all that remained of some grave-robber's—or archaeologist's—attempt to tunnel into the loose, shifting gravel sometime during the last two millennia. Against the sky on the cone's east edge we could vaguely discern some vertical structure, but no other details were visible.

We drove the last winding miles up the mountain, grateful that just last year the rough dozer-cut road had been extended so far, and grateful too for the heavy sweaters we had been warned to bring. At this altitude there was a constant half-gale blowing, and the temperature drop since three hours earlier was fully 50°; we countered with several glasses of hot tea at the 'Nemrud Hilton,' a tiny hut whose fieldstone walls were held together by wide chinks, and which an enterprising villager had erected to feed the summer's archaeological team. Our goal loomed just above us.

Spurs of weathered limestone radiated from the top of the mountain—Nemrud Dagh's ribs showing through the thin scrubby soil—and formed barriers to our spiral clamber up the slope. But only a few minutes later we stood breathless on the skirts of the tumulus itself, and then walked around the path at its base—actually the top of an immense buried retaining wall—and discovered the east terrace.

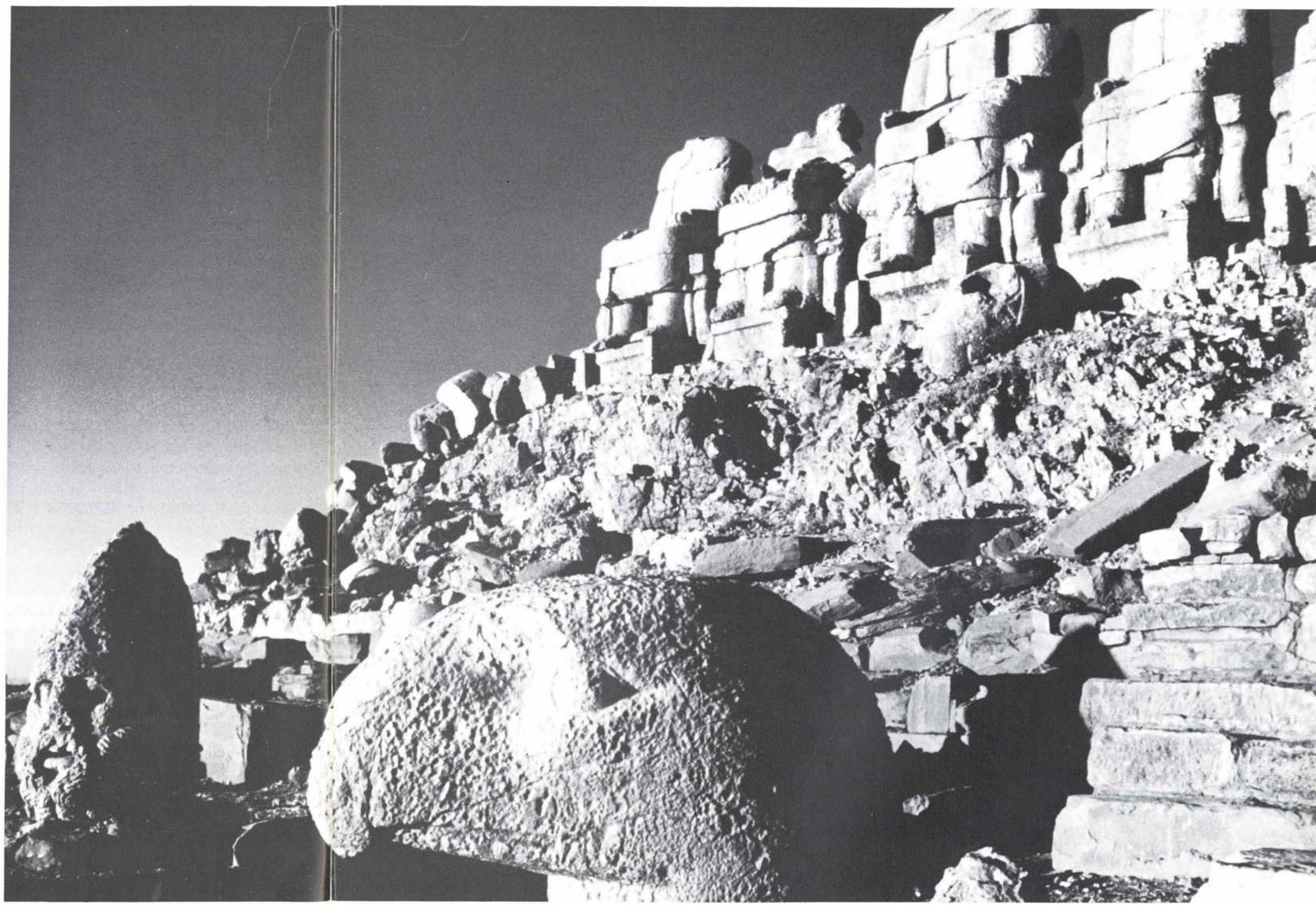
Hewn into the mountain's flank was a level open area 75 by 110 feet in extent, cut into a U-shape by a 40-foot square fire altar, three steps high, placed in the center of the terrace's downhill edge. Opposite the altar, their backs to the gravel tumulus, were five colossal headless statues, three stories high, their seated figures built of

Right: On the West Terrace, left to right, heads of Hercules, an eagle, Zeus, Fortuna and Antiochus. Below, left: East Terrace, a view from the tumulus of backs of statues and the fire altar. Below, right: East Terrace, a head of Hercules and a guardian eagle.

massive limestone blocks and the monolithic heads, up to 10 feet tall, lying scattered around the terrace at the statues' feet. The stone bodies were built like massive architecture, with no implications of humanity or life in their formal, four-square fists-on-thighs positions; but the heads, in sharpest contrast, were not only alive but almost portrait-like, the faces expressing god-like power, serenity and concern. Indeed, these *were* the gods, seated here in their common throne room, each named not with one name but with two or three, Greek as well as Persian, in accordance with the syncretistic principle of King Antiochus' new religion. Flanked left and right by Commagene's eagle and lion were Apollo and Mithra in one godhead, Fortuna and the Persian fertility goddess and the personification of Commagene in one, the god-king Antiochus himself, Zeus/Oromasdes, and Hercules/Ares/Artagnes in his lion skin and carrying a club. Here was the company among which Antiochus had set himself; here ceremonies on the 10th and 16th of each month—the days of the king's birthday and of his confirmation on the throne—honored all the gods.

The psychologically necessary connection to earth and mortality had not been neglected when this sanctuary was planned; the left and right edges of the terrace each are marked by a long, low sandstone plinth into which are socketed flat slabs of the same soft green stone: 15 on the north edge, 17 along the south. Though only fragments remain today, it is clear that each slab displayed a full-length relief of one of Antiochus' ancestors on its front face, with an identifying inscription on the back, and that the paternal Persian ancestors, beginning with Darius, were on the north side, and the maternal Greek ones, beginning with Alexander the Great, made up the south row. In front of each socket still stands a small altar stone for sacrifices, each a reduced version of the huge ones at the feet of the five great statues of the gods. This dual possibility of sacrifices either to mortal ancestors or to gods who, though immortal, yet included in their number those ancestors' offspring, somehow bridged the paradox of life and death, god-head and mortality, and made King Antiochus' invention a religion in the full sense of the word.

The awe, if not the belief, that was inherent in that religion is still very much present here, despite all the destruction that 20 centuries of time, weather and human interference have wrought. Though their heads lie scattered on the terrace, to climb behind the enthroned colossi a little way up the tumulus, and to sit and look over the shoulders of Apollo and Zeus as the sun rises behind a Genesis landscape, lighting the mist-filled Commagene valleys and gleaming on the Euphrates—this is to understand, in a way perhaps not possible by other means, what Commagene's mon-



archy and religion, and thus the kingdom itself, were all about. We stayed a long time on the east terrace, thoroughly chilled on the outside by the dawn gale, but as well warmed internally by our imaginings.

These were interrupted by the sight of a procession of people and donkeys on a trail below us that traversed around the mountain's peak. Wind-tattered scraps of music from drum and *zurna* floated up, and were answered by repeated shotgun blasts, all, we learned, in celebration of a village wedding.

Keeping sight of the bridal party as it marched around the contour of the mountain had taken us halfway round the tumulus to the west terrace, where the topography of Nemrud Dagh had dictated a somewhat different layout to King Antiochus' architects. On this smaller terrace, as on the larger east one, seven pedestals held five colossal statues of Antiochus and his fellow gods, flanked by the guardian lions and eagles. Here too, rows of commemorative plaques lined the open space, though not at opposite sides as on the east terrace but at the left and front edges. No fire altar ever existed here on the sunset side of the tumulus, and unlike the east one, this terrace had been built partly by cutting into the mountainside and partly by filling in behind a megalithic retaining wall. Among the rubble on this terrace—littered like the east one with the heads of Fortuna, Antiochus, Zeus, Apollo and Hercules—is a large green sandstone plaque that archaeologists originally labeled a horoscope. It shows the Commagene lion, body in profile but looking out at the observer, and is spattered with 19 of the wavy six-pointed stars often depicted on Commagene coins and on the robes and headdresses of Commagene rulers. Recently, however, further studies have shown this relief to be an astronomic commemorative stone: the stars and the names, in Greek, of three planets graven in the stone identify a date in 61 or 62 B.C.: the day that King Antiochus was confirmed on the throne of Commagene by the Romans.

We wandered for some hours on the two great terraces and the connecting north passage, and then turned our attention to that part of the Nemrud Dagh sanctuary that, in our minds and in literal fact, overshadowed all the rest—overshadowed, indeed, all of Commagene: the tumulus. Antiochus' great proclamatory inscription on the backs of the east court's colossal statues, which has been found as well at half a dozen other sites in the kingdom, makes it clear that the king intended to be buried on Nemrud Dagh, and Karakush is only the nearest evidence that royal tumulus burials were common in many parts of Anatolia for centuries. That King Antiochus' grave is under the Nemrud Dagh tumulus itself is an obvious conclusion that has been put to the test any number of times, as dimples in the gravel surface of the cone still attest. The latest attempts to find the tomb under the tumulus have been Theresa Goell's: careful archaeological test trenches that revealed a stepped revetment of large, roughly-dressed stone under the gravel, and under that, the unbroken limestone bedrock of the mountain itself. From several directions, Miss Goell's team has tried to find the entrance of a tunnel into the tumulus base that might lead to a burial chamber; each time they found only bedrock. The result is particularly frustrating because the tomb of King Antiochus of Commagene, if it is ever found, would be the only known undisturbed royal burial of its period, and thus of inestimable scientific value.

These rich archaeological possibilities led America's National Geographic Society to finance a series of technical surveys of the Nemrud Dagh sanctuary, in the hope of pinpointing the location of the tomb that two millennia of searchers had failed to find. Under Miss Goell's direction, seismic, electrical, magnetic and gravitational methods would be brought to bear.

The seismic survey, nearly identical to methods used in oil exploration, foundered when dismayed engineers discovered that small explosions were so dissipated by the loose stone of the tumulus that no coherent reflection readings resulted, and that explosions large enough to overcome this difficulty would blow great holes in the surface. Electrical resistivity measurements were then tried, based on the fact that a void, such as a tomb, shows an anomalously high resistance compared to normal levels for the surrounding soil and rock. But this technology too was defeated by King Antiochus' tumulus: the gravel gave wildly varying base values for its own resistivity, meter needles leaping from one end of the scale to the other with the slightest shift of the electrical probes inserted into the surface of the mound. The gravitational survey was also unsuccessful; only the magnetic method produced coherent results, showing an anomaly—perhaps a void?—in the east terrace, directly on the main axis of the whole complex. But an exploratory bore there showed only a geological quirk: iron-bearing rock had given a false reading.

In the following season the investigators, now wary of the difficulties, used a different type of seismic survey that replaced explosives with sledgehammer impacts as the shock source; this series of tests resulted in a good map of the bedrock that underlies the tumulus' gravel layer. According to the map, a twin peak of bedrock, with a saddle between the peaks, is the foundation of the tumulus, whose gravel layer varies between 10 and 26 feet in depth. In the bedrock there also appears to be a rough ramp that curves up from the north passage to the saddle at the peak, and the archaeological team speculates that King Antiochus' workers carried the limestone rubble up that ramp from the east and west terraces to the peak, dumping it there to form the tumulus' deep outer layer.

But with that, the greatest question remains unanswered. Where is the tomb? None of the surveys showed a burial chamber, and the seismic map shows nothing that might be the mouth of a tunnel leading to a tomb. The only remaining possibility is a shaft straight downward from the saddle between the bedrock peaks—from the very top of the tumulus to its heart. There, undisturbed "through immeasurable time," the god-king Antiochus' body may still lie today.

Toward evening, pensive and full of the strange spirit of this place, we climbed the tumulus itself. From its rounded top we could see almost the full extent of the "fertile though small," hilly kingdom of Commagene. Beneath our feet, the man who had called himself "the Great King Antiochus, the God, the Just, the Epiphanes" had been dead for 2,000 years, and not far to the east of us a flight of three jets of the Turkish air force swept glinting past as if to recall us to a more modern, faster-moving world. But we were standing on Nemrud Dagh, and they flew past below us.

Robert Arndt, a frequent contributor to Aramco World, *lives and writes in Istanbul.*

Head of Antiochus, West Terrace.