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The Last Patrol

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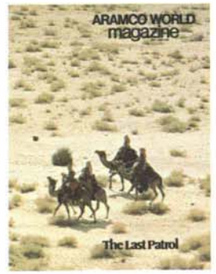
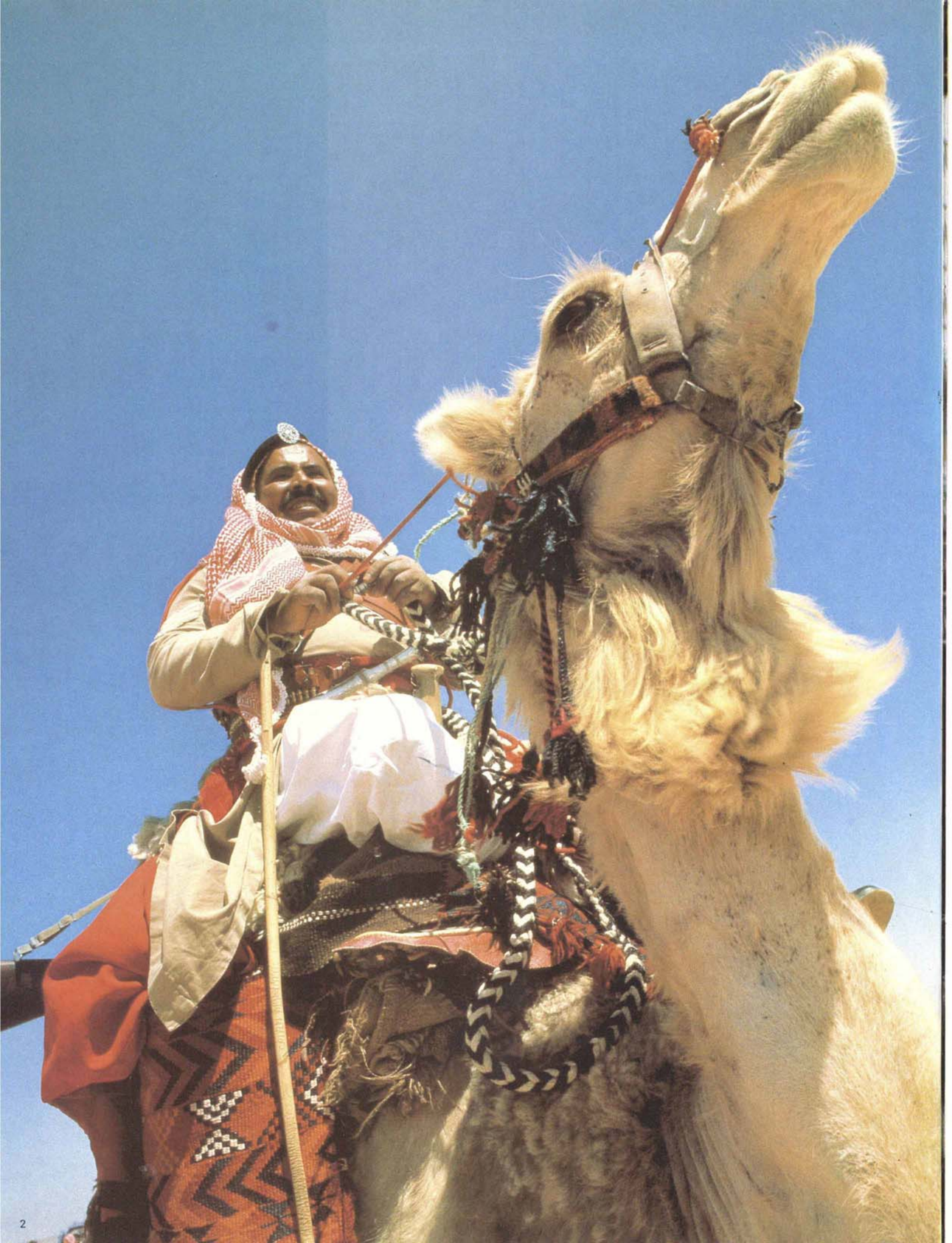


Cover: On the desert floor of the great Wadi Rum, the colorfully uniformed Desert Patrol – sometimes called the Camel Corps – still uses camels to cover harsh terrain where even Land-Rovers have difficulty. But the Desert Patrol today is changing; like the Rangers in Texas and the Mounties in Canada, the Camel Corps has had to adapt its methods to the problems of a modern world. Back Cover: In today's Jordan the Desert Patrolmen cover their huge beat – some 25,000 square miles – in Land-Rovers, pick-up trucks and even helicopters. Photographs by Tor Eigeland.

◀ Intense blues, fuchsia, green and 24-karat liquid gold combine to make a flower design in the Persian style, painstakingly illuminated by Edmond Tiffou.



The Last Patrol

WRITTEN BY RAMI G. KHOURI
PHOTOGRAPHED BY TOR EIGELAND

In legend at least, the policemen of the past were often romantic figures: Texas Rangers quelling lynch mobs with a glance, Canadian Mounties tracking their man by canoe and dog sled, and – less famous, but equally colorful – Jordan's Desert Patrol guiding their camels across desert sands to save stranded travelers.

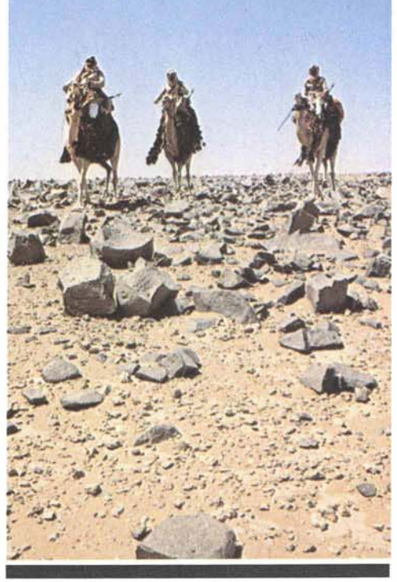
Today, sadly, much of the romance has vanished. The Rangers drive Chevy's, the Mounties use snowmobiles and the Desert Patrol spends more time in jeeps – and sometimes helicopters – than on camels.

In Jordan, it is true, there are still traces of the old days. The Desert Patrol, on occasion, still sends its famous Camel Corps into regions where even Land-Rovers have trouble, and at special ceremonies the desert police, in their dashing uniforms, still lead the parades. But as the desert changes, so too does the role of the desert police. The day of the last patrol is approaching.

Formally named *Shurtat al-Badiya* – the police of the *badiya*, the desert regions of the Bedouins – the Desert Patrol was first established in 1931 when Prince Abdullah of Trans-Jordan decided it was time to end the tribal raiding and constant turmoil that was typical of the time. As that, then, was a formidable undertaking, Abdullah shrewdly recruited the sons of tribal shaikhs and – just as shrewdly – clad them in uniforms derived from traditional tribal dress: the striking garb still worn today. Together those moves helped give the police instant prestige and legitimacy among the Bedouins.

In those days, and for years afterwards, that prestige was crucial. With a beat of 25,000 square miles – more than two thirds of Jordan's territory – the *Shurtat al-Badiya* could rarely impose its will on the tribes. Its strength, more often than not, was in its reputation, and as the years went by that reputation grew.

Like the Mounties – the Royal Canadian Mounted Police – whose scarlet tunics became a symbol of law, order and safety in some 300,000 square miles of Canadian wilderness, the Desert Patrol became a symbol of justice and help in the desert. Equally striking – in khaki robes, blood-red belts, crossed bandoleers, silver daggers and red pistol cords – the desert police soon won the respect of the Bedouins by rescuing lost tribesmen, bringing water to livestock and settling disputes on the spot – most often by invoking Koranic and traditional principles passed down from generation to generation.



First the Mounties, then the Rangers, now the Desert Patrol...

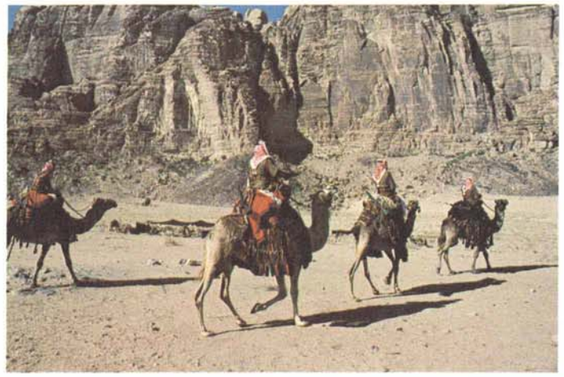
By 1980, however, the role of the Desert Patrol had begun to change. In earlier days, for example, its mobile police units had to patrol the big oases where, each season, up to 1,000 Bedouins with their herds converged – places like Burga in northeast Jordan. The site of a natural reservoir, Burga will fill up, and remain full for three years, after heavy rains.

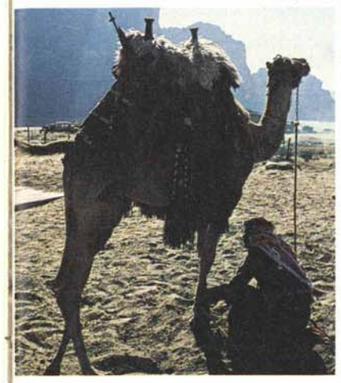
In the last five years, however, a prolonged drought has left Burga bone dry – thus accelerating the movement of Bedouins into towns and cities. Even if it fills up again, the old gatherings will be smaller, as Bedouins, after sampling the easier life of the towns, decide to stay on.

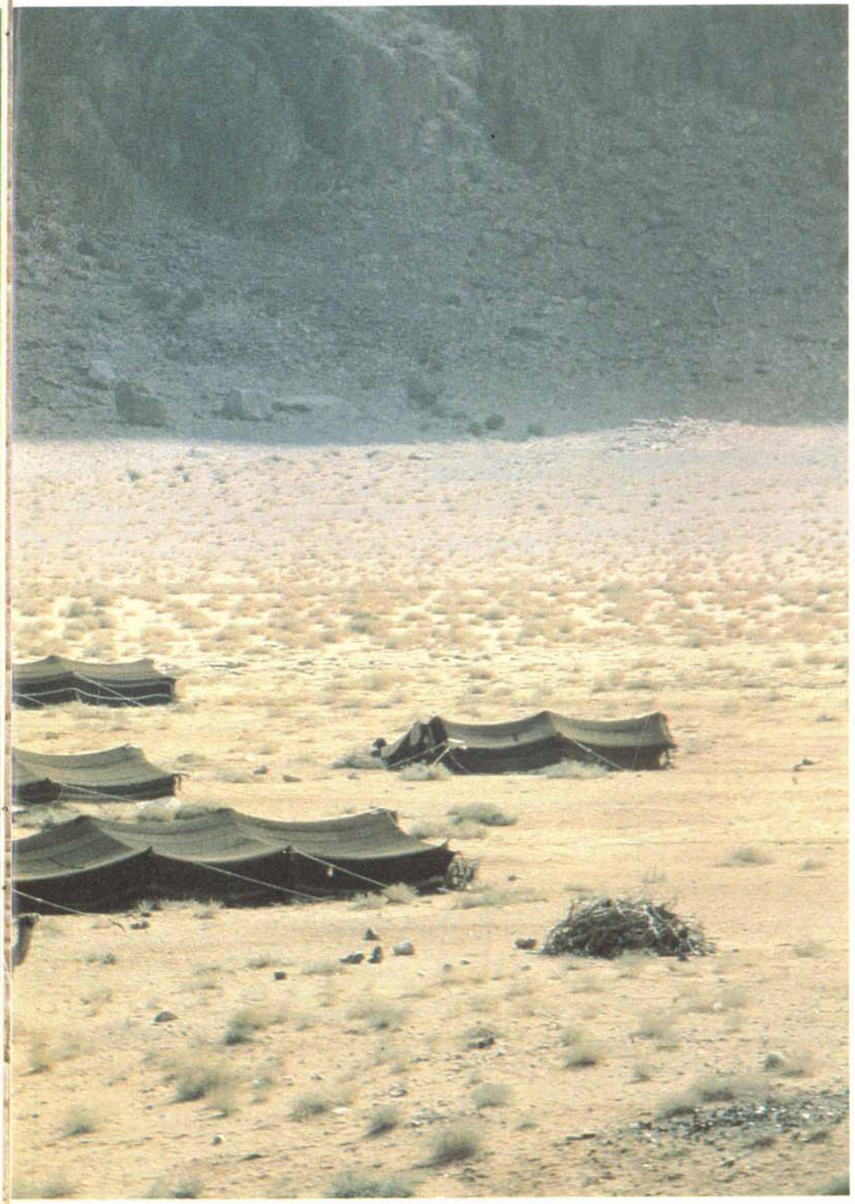
Indeed, according to Lieutenant Colonel Anbar Dahash, head of the desert police, the drought is wiping out the traditional nomadic life of the Bedouin. "Because of the drought," says Colonel Dahash, whose father fought alongside Lawrence of Arabia during the Arab Revolt in World War I, "there is less food and water for the animals and that means the entire basis of life in the *badiya* is threatened."

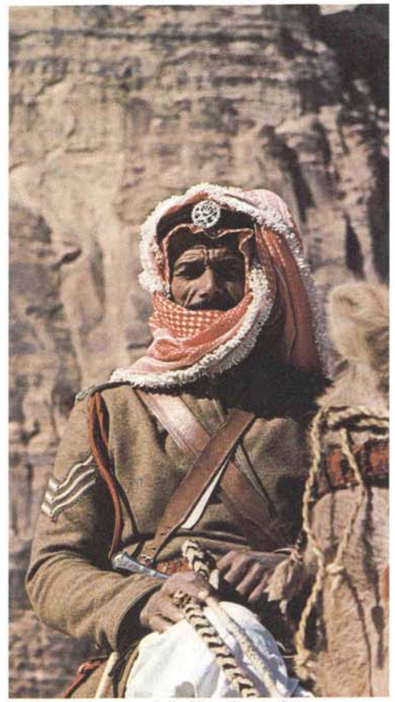
"As a result," he continues, "I'd say 15 to 20 percent of the Bedouin population moves into the cities every year now. Ten years from now there will not be any real nomadic Bedouins."

According to a study made by a team of professors from the University of Jordan, Colonel Dahash is right. The study concluded that the country's population of nomadic Bedouins has dwindled from 220,000 in the 1950's to a mere 60,000 today. And Colonel Dahash estimates that there are now 300,000 Bedouins living in









villages and cities, many of whom have, with the assistance of the government, settled down permanently. They have been lured to urban life, he believes, by the attractions of schooling for their children, medical care and a life that is much easier than the demanding life of a herdsman in the *badiya*.

As a result, the desert police now face different challenges. Today, for example, they have few, if any, tribal disputes to quell or moderate. Instead, they are much more likely to receive calls for help from stranded motorists or be sent to help a family needing medical assistance. And in these situations pick-ups and jeeps – and helicopters provided by the military – are far more valuable than camels.

Actually, says Colonel Dahash, today's services more closely resemble those provided by urban rescue squads than by the Mounties. Patrolmen rescue lost sheep as often as people, and on some occasions have even transported whole herds to waterholes. In addition, they can sometimes provide instant communications across the huge, still-desolate *badiya* by radio; some motorized patrols and permanent outposts are linked directly with urban centers.

"We used to spend much more time helping stranded Bedouins," Colonel Dahash says, "but today most Bedouin families own their own jeeps or pick-up trucks, so they can move around the desert more quickly than they used to in the days when they had only camels."

On Patrol

WRITTEN BY TOR EIGELAND

On a sunny but chilly afternoon at the desert police station in southern Jordan, Captain Ghazi Dughayyim of the Desert Patrol, a driver, and three policemen armed with rifles, pistols and daggers piled into a blue Land-Rover. For reasons of his own, the captain had suddenly decided it was time to patrol a certain region, and with one impatient shout had gotten us underway.

We shot off in a southerly direction, bouncing and veering sharply and frequently to avoid bushes, bumps, rocks and deep, loose sand, the policemen in the back, Bedouin trackers all, calling directions to the driver to keep him out of trouble in the difficult, roadless terrain.

Now and then, when we stopped to check unusual tracks and footprints, I was able to focus on the magnificent scenery of mountains and desert, but most of the time my eyes were riveted on the track ahead; born hunters, my excited companions seemed to insist on a bone-rattling, brain-busting ride.

At one point, spotting a lone figure walking in the desert miles from anywhere, we raced after him and stopped. As the patrolmen knew him, and he them, we exchanged greetings and dropped him off near his tent several miles on.

As we drove, I learned that the captain, somehow, expected to find smugglers; close to the border this region was known for its smuggling. Minutes later, when we came across the tracks of a lone vehicle, it began to look as if the captain's instincts were right: the tracks were those of a Toyota pick-up truck that had just passed here, heading for the border.

Shouting back and forth to each other, the patrolmen picked up the Toyota's trail and, no more than 15 minutes later, spotted the smoke of a small fire in the distance. Then we saw the truck parked, indeed a Toyota, and some men. There was mounting excitement. Was it friend or foe?

The excitement, however, quickly subsided. The men were people the trackers knew; they had come to fetch firewood, very plentiful in this area. I felt somewhat let down.

Since we had stopped anyway, the patrolmen decided to make tea and, since they had a fire going, to bake some bread in the glowing embers before resuming the patrol.

By then, late in the afternoon, the light of the sun had turned a warm, yellowish red and Captain Dughayyim decided to turn back to Wadi Rum – the great scenic valley described so vividly by Colonel Lawrence. Along the way he sent his trackers off on foot to the right and left into difficult, mountainous terrain where smugglers, or anyone else who preferred to avoid the police, might hide. The jeep would then move on through the open areas, and wait for the trackers.

We were in the middle of a narrow valley, waiting for the last of the trackers to reappear when, suddenly, a single shot shattered the silence. Two of our trackers who were outside the car instantly dropped to a kneeling position, their rifles at the ready, and carefully scanned the surrounding valley. For a moment or two, the tension was tangible, but then the last of the trackers appeared behind us, running with a loping gait, and the patrolmen relaxed; apparently he had fired to attract our attention. He had spotted the tracks of two young camel-thieves with two camels. He knew they were thieves because they were obviously trying to stay out of sight, taking a difficult, tortuous route – and any good Bedouin tracker can tell whether footprints are those of a man or woman, young or old, and even – according to legend – whether the woman is pregnant.

After conferring rapidly with the captain, the policemen started out on the tracks of the thieves at an easy, slightly crouched run, the captain and I following in the Land-Rover. By then the sun had slipped behind the wadi's towering cliffs and, except for a deep red glow on the horizon, there was little light. But the trackers, still running, seemed to have no trouble seeing.

After about 20 minutes, the trackers stopped to confer with the captain. Their breathing was not even heavy but, apparently out of consideration for me, and against my protests, they decided to suspend the chase till the next day. First though, they gathered a huge pile of dry brush and wood and set fire to it.

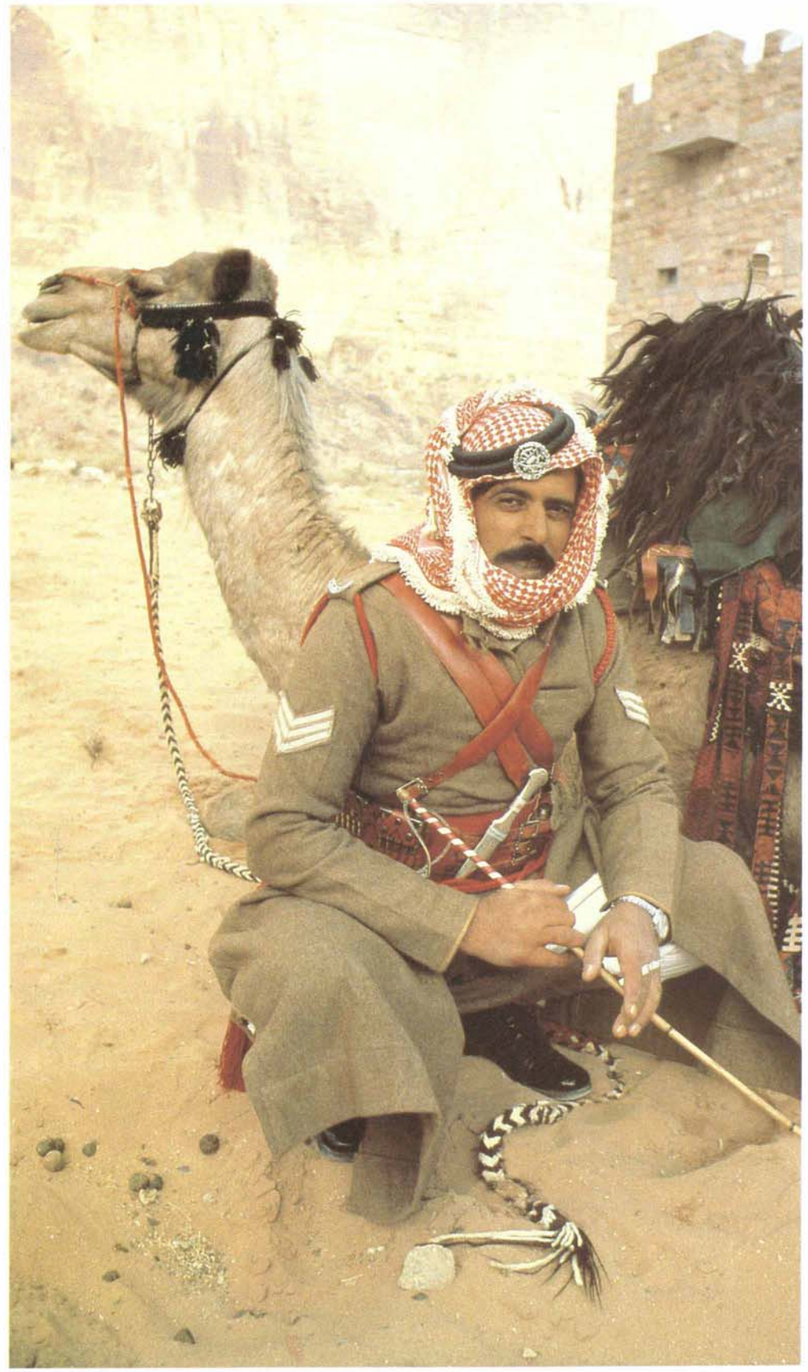
I stared at them in surprise. Against the blackness of the night the great blaze could be seen from miles away. Wouldn't this warn the thieves?

Why, yes, replied the captain, explaining that it was a traditional way of telling the thieves that the police were on to them. "Anyway," he said confidently, "tomorrow we'll catch them."

And they probably would have. But at dawn, as the patrolmen prepared to close in, a tremendous windstorm blew up, followed by torrential rains that washed out all the tracks. The patrolmen shrugged, returned to the jeep and continued the patrol...

On the other hand, the desert police still function as an investigative police force too. In 1978, for example, *Shurtat al-Badiya* had to deal with three murder cases, 14 cases of rape and 39 thefts. By western standards that's an astonishingly low crime rate, of course, but in addition the force also arrested 198 smugglers – one arrest involving a chase across the eastern desert in pursuit of a truck carrying 10,350 cartons of cigarettes destined for Jordan's increasingly consumer-oriented markets.

That smuggler, as it happened, surrendered meekly, but as bullet-riddled pick-ups parked near police posts testify, not all the smugglers are as cooperative.



Traditional shoot-outs between the smugglers and the Desert Patrol are by no means uncommon.

The desert police have also modernized their approach to whatever disputes still occur in the desert. These days such disputes usually involve land demarcation or contested water rights, and although the police sometimes invoke the traditional principles, more often they refer the problem to a recognized *qadi*, a religious leader trained in the Shari'a, the law of Islam derived largely from the Koran. More flagrant offenses, such as murder, are referred to Jordan's criminal courts.

Today, too, it is not enough to know the desert to qualify for acceptance. Recruits, should they be illiterate, are taught to read and write and must take the same three months of training that an urban policeman does. Recruits must also take a course in desert work and older officers are required to attend special training courses with their counterparts in urban police units; this is to enable the Patrol to maintain close coordination with the entire national police force. Today they even take courses in such elements of criminology as photography and fingerprinting.

In a sense, therefore, the "Camel Corps" – as the whole Desert Patrol is affectionately called – is becoming an anachronism. Like the Mounties, they lead parades, their gleaming insignia pinned to their traditional red-checkered *kaffiyas*, or pose graciously for the odd visitor who makes his way to the old forts they still maintain as outposts in the desert.

But while it is true that the 1,000-man force has changed substantially – its herd of 150 specially trained camels is now down to 40 – the spirit of the past still stubbornly survives. Despite modern technology, there are still some areas where only camels can go and there are still some skills that no one but the Bedouin has ever mastered. As one consequence of this, the Desert Patrol still recruits exclusively from the sons of the desert – partly from tradition, but also because only they can survive, let alone function, in the desert.

A few years ago, government pay scales began to lag behind those of the private sector and the reservoir of recruits began to dry up. It was the perfect time to change the tradition, yet Jordan refused to do so. Instead, the government increased pay scales and continued to recruit their patrolmen from the Bedouin tribes which originally provided them – and undoubtedly will until the last patrol has been ridden.

Rami Khouri, formerly Managing Editor of The Jordan Times, *now free-lances in Amman, where he is editing one book on Jordan's Bedouins and writing another on agricultural development of the Jordan Valley.*

A Journey to Hail

CONDENSED FROM *EXPLORERS OF ARABIA* BY ZAHRA FREETH AND VICTOR WINSTONE

ILLUSTRATIONS BY LADY ANNE BLUNT
REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION OF THE BRITISH LIBRARY

As the opening words of *A Pilgrimage to Nejd* suggest, Lady Anne Blunt, like many Victorians, was fascinated by the East. "It is strange," she writes, "how gloomy thoughts vanish once one sets foot in Asia."

By "Asia," however, Lady Anne meant what is today called the Arab East – where, just over 100 years ago, she became the first Western woman ever to penetrate as far as Hail, in today's Saudi Arabia, then the capital of the region called Najd.

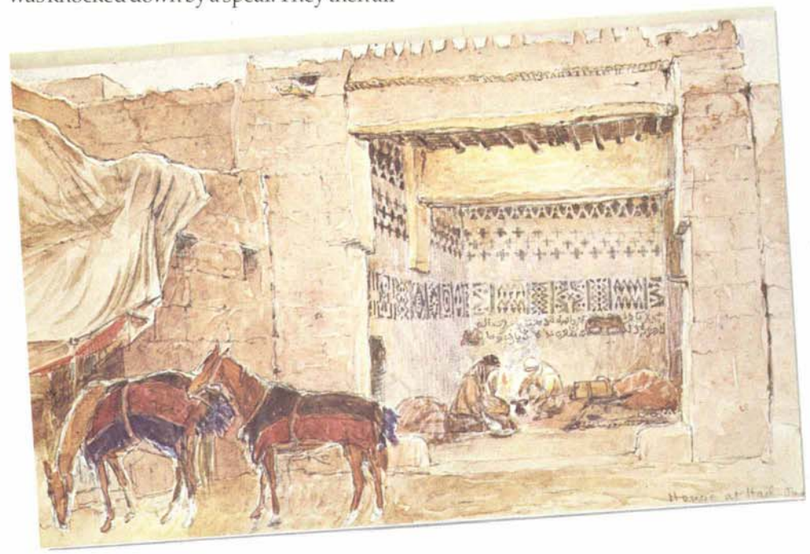
The daughter of the Earl of Lovelace – and the granddaughter of Lord Byron – Lady Anne Blunt first went to "Asia" – that is, to the Levant – in 1873 after her husband had retired from Britain's diplomatic corps. As both she and her husband, Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, a fierce opponent of Victorian imperialism and a poet, were instantly captivated, they began to study Arabic and in 1878 went on an expedition to the Euphrates. The point of the trip was to buy Arab horses – which they shipped back to their estate in Sussex – but while at Palmyra (Tadmor) they met Muhammad ibn Aruk, son of the shaikh of Palmyra, who was about to set out for Jauf in Najd to find a wife.

To the Blunts, who shared a passionate interest in horses, this seemed like a splendid chance to see the famed horses of Ibn Rashid – then the ruler in Najd – and perhaps explore the great central deserts of Arabia, still largely unknown to the West. Except for Johann Ludwig Burckhardt (See *Aramco World*, November-December 1974 and September-October 1967) Richard Burton and two or three other Europeans, few Westerners had explored any part of Arabia, and fewer still had managed to reach the central regions. Indeed, William Palgrave's great account of his trip there was only 10 years old and Charles M. Doughty, whose book on the region would become a classic, had left Arabia only a few months before when the Blunts – having persuaded Muhammad to let them go with him – set out on a journey to Hail – the subject of one of the better books written by the Western explorers of Arabia.

Lady Anne's story is told in diary form – its narrative style admirably clear – and from it she emerges as anything but the traditional Victorian lady. To the contrary, she emerges as a cool, self-assured, strong-willed and totally unsentimental woman. When buying camels and stores for the journey, for example, Wilfrid, as one writer put it, was the Commander-in-Chief, but Anne was the Quartermaster-General.

These qualities emerged even more clearly when – on December 13, 1878 – they set out for Arabia. Discarding her Victorian hat, she donned a *kaffiya*, threw a Bedouin cloak over her normal coat and, as the trip went on, calmly accepted all the unconventional food that came her way – from a young camel to locusts which their men collected and fried for her in Wadi Sirhan. "There was never anybody," wrote her husband, "so courageous as she."

The Wadi Sirhan, however, had more in store for the Blunts than fried locusts: a Bedouin raid. This was not unexpected; raiding, 100 years ago, was common in the desert and the Blunts' party, rich in horses and provisions, was a natural target. Nevertheless, Lady Anne wrote, the attack caught them off guard – just as she and Wilfred had dismounted some distance from their escort. "As I scrambled round the bush to my mare I saw a troop of horsemen charging down at full gallop with their lances, not 200 yards off. There was no time to think and I had hardly struggled to my feet, when the enemy was upon us, and I was knocked down by a spear. They then all



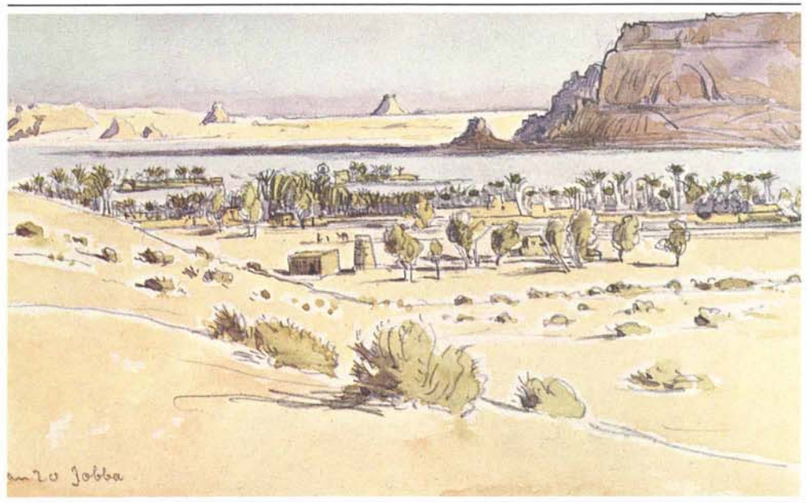
"There was no one so courageous as she."

turned on Wilfrid. He fortunately had on very thick clothes, . . . so the lances did him no harm. Resistance seemed to me useless and I shouted to the nearest horseman the usual form of surrender."

At this point, the raiders paused for breath, and Muhammad declared that the Blunts were "Franjis" (Europeans) and friends of Ibn Shaalan, the great chief of the

Ruwala. Ibn Shaalan, Lady Anne explains, had been their host in the desert the previous year, and "was bound to protect us." Her assumptions, it turned out, were correct. As soon as the raiders learned that the Blunts knew Ibn Shaalan they began to make amends by returning the Blunts' horses and guns. "The young fellows who had taken the mares made rather wry faces, bitterly lamenting their bad fortune in finding us friends. 'Ah the beautiful mares,' they said, 'and the beautiful gun.'. . .

"Presently we were all on very good terms," Lady Anne says, "sitting in a circle on the sand, eating dates and passing



round the pipe of peace." Anne's final verdict on their attackers is characteristic: "We liked the look of these young Ruwala. In spite of their rough behavior, we could see that they were gentlemen. They were very much ashamed of having used their spears against me. . . they only saw a person wearing a cloak, and never suspected but that it belonged to a man."

The adventure behind them, the Blunts again set out and a day later arrived at Jauf. They had covered the 190 miles from Kaf in eight days.

Now that they were among Muhammad's kinfolk, the matter of finding a wife for him became of immediate importance and Anne lost no time in sounding out the women of the family. It turned out that their host had a 15-year-old niece, who, Anne told Muhammad, was pretty, intelligent and amiable, and after three days of discussions and negotiations it was arranged that Muhammad would come and collect his bride in a year or two.

In between their match-making activities the Blunts had called on Johar, Ibn Rashid's governor in Jauf, and persuaded him to provide a guide across the desert called the Nafud to Hail.

Anne was excited at the prospect of seeing the Nafud. Although the established caravan route between Hail and the north held no mysteries for the Bedouins, the sheer size of the desert ahead presented real danger to the unprepared traveler. "We shall want all our strength for the next 10 days," wrote Anne on the eve of their departure. On January 12 they set out and at first, Anne's diary suggests, the journey was exhilarating. "We have been all day in the Nafud, which is interesting

beyond our hopes, and charming into the bargain. It is, moreover, quite unlike the description I remember to have read of it by Mr. Palgrave, which affects one as a nightmare of impossible horror. It is true he passed it in summer, and we are now in

mid-winter, but the physical features cannot be much changed by the change of seasons, and I cannot understand how he overlooked its main characteristics. The thing that strikes one first about the Nafud is its color. It is not white like the sand dunes we passed yesterday, nor yellow as the sand is in parts of the Egyptian desert, but a really bright red, almost crimson in the morning when it is wet with dew. . . It is however a great mistake to suppose it barren. The Nafud, on the contrary, is better wooded and richer in pasture than any part of the desert we have passed in leaving Damascus. It is tufted all over with ghada bushes, and bushes of another kind called *yerta* . . ."

Moving through the red dunes, the Blunts also observed a series of huge hollows, some a quarter of a mile across, which, to these two expert horsemen, suggested enormous hoof-marks. "These, though varying in size . . . are all precisely alike in shape and direction. They resemble very exactly the track of an unshod horse . . . the toe is sharply cut and perpendicular, while the rim of the hoof tapers gradually to nothing at the heel, the frog even being roughly represented by broken ground in the centre." Today it is accepted that the uniform shape of the huge dunes which circle these horsehoof hollows (called *falj* in Arabic) is due to wind-action. To the Blunts the answer did not seem immediately obvious. "Wilfrid . . . has not been able to decide whether they are owing to the action of wind or water or to the inequalities of the solid ground below. But at present he inclines to the theory of water."

They were also very pleased, Lady Anne says, with Radi, the guide provided by Jofar. "He is a curious little old man, as dry and black and withered as the dead stumps of the *yerta* bushes one sees here . . . He has his *delul* with him, an ancient bag of bones which looks as if it would never last through the journey, and on which he sits perched hour after hour in silence, pointing now and then with his shriveled hand towards the road we are to take."

When he did choose to speak, however, Radi told them hair-raising tales of travelers who had perished in the desert and backed up his stories with evidence: in nearly every hollow there were camel bones, and in one *falj* they saw the remains of a Ruwala party which had run out of water and failed to reach Shakik after raiding southwards 10 years before.

During the morning of January 16, the Blunts sighted the cheerful landmark of Aalam, the twin conical hills which reassure travelers that they are on the right line for Jubba, site of the next wells. "It was an immense relief to see them, for we had begun to distrust the sagacity of our guide on account of the tortuous line we followed." Still, Lady Anne goes on, "the next days were not easy. Three of the camels were showing signs of distress and one was incapable of carrying his pack. By the 19th two of the beasts could not stand under their loads; and a third was too exhausted to keep up." Wilfrid and Anne were the only ones who rode, though

at times Wilfrid persuaded Hanna, the old cook, to mount his mare for a while.

But the end of the waterless crossing was at hand. That afternoon they reached the rocky hills outside Jubba, and with relief left the sand for hard ground. Just after sunset they arrived at the oasis itself. At the end of that day Anne admitted in her diary that she feared they would never make the crossing, "adding a new chapter to old Radi's tales of horror." By then too, they had another worry; thinking they would be the first self-confessed English Christians to reach the Jabal Shammar, they were worried by the unfriendliness of the Jubba people. They did not know that Doughty had preceded them to Hail; he had left Arabia not long before they started out, and the story of his travels had not yet reached them. Thus, as they headed toward Hail, the Blunts felt that all would depend on the attitude of Ibn Rashid.

"Without his countenance and protection, we should be running considerable risk in entering Hail," she wrote.

But Anne's brisk common sense soon reasserted itself. "Still, the die was cast. We had crossed our Rubicon, the Red Desert . . . There was nothing to be done but to put a good face on things and proceed on our way."

Meanwhile they were determined to enjoy the four days' ride which still lay before them. "There is something in the air of Najd which would exhilarate even a condemned man, and we were far from being condemned." The high spirits of their companions returned and in the evenings as they sat around great bonfires of *yerta* their men competed in feats of skill.

During this time they discussed how they should introduce themselves to the amir of Hail, and concluded – with that astounding Victorian self-confidence – that they would "tell Ibn Rashid that we are persons of distinction in search of other persons of distinction." In words reminiscent of the Queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon, Anne says they planned to tell Ibn Rashid that they had met all the great shaikhs of the north, and "each time we have been told that these were nothing in point of splendor to Hail, and that hearing this, and being on our way to Basra, we have crossed the Nafud to visit him . . ." And so it was settled.

Radi fully approved of the dignified attitude that they had decided upon, and promised that he would sing the Blunts' praises "below stairs" in the palace. Now, for the first time, he mentioned that a Franji had already been to Hail, and had gone away with money and clothes from Ibn Rashid. The Blunts, still unaware of Doughty's trip, were puzzled. "Who this can be we cannot imagine, for Mr. Palgrave was not known there as a European."

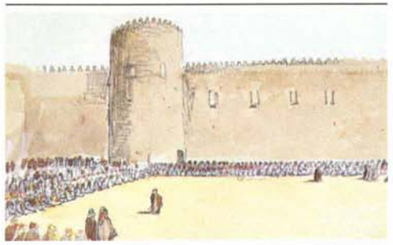
At last, on January 23, they reached Jabal Shammar, an event that obviously moved Lady Anne deeply. "The view in front of us was beautiful beyond description, a perfectly even plain sloping gradually upwards, out of which these rocks and tells cropped up like islands, and beyond it the violet-colored mountains . . . with a precipitous cliff which has been our landmark for several days towering over all. The outline of Jabal Shammar is strangely fantastic, running up to spires and domes and pinnacles, with here and there a loophole through which you can see the sky, or a wonderful boulder perched like a rocking-stone . . . It is like a dream to be sitting here, writing a journal on a rock in Jabal Shammar. When I remember how, years ago, I read that romantic account by Mr. Palgrave, which nobody believed, of an ideal state in the

heart of Arabia . . . and how impossibly remote and unreal it all appeared; and how, later during our travels, we heard of Najd and Hail and this very Jabal Shammar, spoken of with a kind of awe by all who knew the name . . . I feel that we have achieved something which is not given to everyone to do . . ."

Early next morning they sent Radi ahead with letters to Ibn Rashid, for they were only a few miles from the capital. While feeling a certain nervousness, they sensibly prepared to create the right impression by putting on their best clothes and making their mares look smart. Soon they met Radi coming back, with a message that the amir would be delighted to receive them and that a guesthouse would be prepared for them. "Nothing more remained for us to do, than to present ourselves at the qasr." Which they did.

Their letters to Ibn Rashid had evidently struck the right note, for their reception in the square outside the castle was "everything we could have wished." They were met by 20 handsomely dressed palace guards, and Wilfrid's "Salaam alaikum" was cordially returned by a chorus of voices. Then the Blunts, with Muhammad ibn Aruk – after choosing his wife, he had accompanied them – were led to the great pillared coffee-room where Palgrave, Guarmani and Doughty had been received before them and after coffee finally met Muhammad ibn Rashid. He held out his hand to the three visitors in turn, exchanging the usual salutations with them in the most friendly way. "It was plain that we now had nothing to fear," says Anne.

It was also plain that Ibn Rashid impressed Anne. ". . . clothed as he was in purple and fine linen, he looked every inch a king," she said, adding that the weapons he carried were of a quality to match his status. "He wore several golden-hilted daggers and a handsome golden-hilted sword, ornamented with turquoises and rubies."



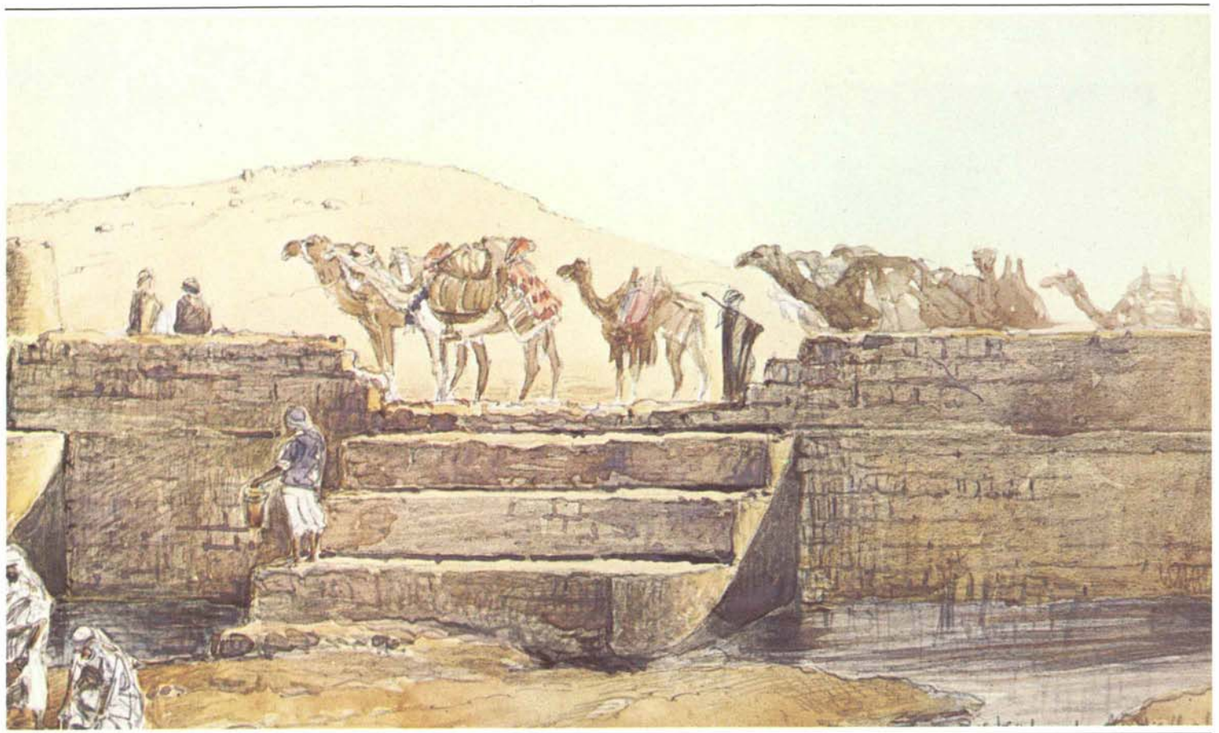
This first meeting with Ibn Rashid lasted only a quarter of an hour but later they attended the morning majlis in the square and were taken down to sit with the amir as he dispensed justice. Of all the Europeans who have described this colorful occasion, none was more impressed than the Blunts. "We were quite dazzled by the spectacle which met our eyes." Anne counted 800 of the amir's soldiers lining the square and behind them was a great throng of pilgrims: Persians returning from the Hajj at Mecca, and enroute to Persia.

Later they toured the palace gardens and after passing through an orchard of orange and lemon trees, came finally to a stable-yard full of mares tethered in rows, each to a manger. "I was almost too excited to look," writes Anne, "for it was principally to see these that we had come so far." Altogether the Blunts saw about 40 mares, 8 stallions, and 30 or 40 foals, but on this occasion they were allowed only a brief look, and there was little time to ask questions. "We had seen enough, however, to make us very happy . . . There was no doubt whatever that these were Ibn Rashid's celebrated mares . . ."

During the following days Wilfrid and Ibn Aruk paid courtesy calls on the notables of the city, escorted always by a soldier from the palace, and, in the evening, visited the amir who, Anne writes, aroused conflicting reactions. "He has something of the spoiled child in his way of wandering on from one subject to another; and . . . of asking questions which he does not always wait to hear answered." But at these meetings she enjoyed hearing desert news of the Ruwala and the Shammar whom they had known in the north. Far from sitting back and letting the men talk, she took an active part in the discussions, a novel experience for Ibn Rashid, who had never met a European woman, let alone one so spirited and intelligent as Anne.

The Blunts also surprised their hosts with their knowledge of horses. As Lady Anne put it, "Our knowledge caused general astonishment." Since horses were the Blunts' major interest, Anne devotes a whole chapter to the subject, giving detailed descriptions of some of the finer animals in Ibn Rashid's stables. Because the horses in the palace yard were ungroomed and practically never exercised, Anne, at first, had decided that they did not compare with Syrian horses, but later realized that under the slovenly appearance were some very fine animals. "Mounted and in motion, these at once became transfigured," she said.

On another occasion the Blunts rode out with Ibn Rashid to the plain where the Persian pilgrim caravan was camped, and where the amir's soldiers and mares were preparing to give a display of horsemanship. "We saw what we would have come the whole journey to see . . . all the best of the amir's horses out and galloping about." After tedious days in town Anne felt alive once again. "It was one of those mornings one only finds in Najd. The air brilliant and sparkling to a degree one cannot imagine in Europe, . . . the sky of an intense blue, and the hills in front of us carved out of sapphire." The horsemen, she continues, were galloping over the plain and indulging in sham fights, "charging and doubling back, yelling with Bedouin zest until at last the amir could resist it no longer, and seizing a . . . palmstick from one of the riders, went off himself among the others. In a moment



his dignity was forgotten, . . . bare-headed with his long Bedouin plaits streaming in the wind . . . he galloped hither and thither."

At last, however, it was time to depart. Wilfrid had decided that it would be a good idea for his party to travel to Najaf in Iraq with the pilgrim caravan; and on February 1 they took formal leave of Muhammad ibn Rashid, then mounted and rode out of town.

To Anne the trip onward from Hail was as colorful as their trip out and she vividly describes the spectacle of the vast caravan coming towards them across the plain: 4,000 camels in a procession three miles long, with hundreds of men on foot, a mounted troop of caparisoned camels and in their midst the bearer of Ibn Rashid's standard, a great purple flag with a green border and a white inscription in the middle.

Six days later, however, the Blunts, finding the pace of the caravan too slow, decided to make their own way at a greater speed, and were soon making much faster progress. In the evening they could see the zodiacal light. "It is a very remarkable and beautiful phenomenon, seen only, I believe, in Arabia. It is a cone of light extending from the horizon half-way to the zenith, and is rather brighter than the Milky Way." She was, of course, wrong in this; the "light" varies in brightness and can be seen elsewhere. By now they had come to the series of cisterns built along the pilgrimage route by Zubaida, queen of Caliph Harun al-Rashid. Many were in ruins but a few still held some water.

On February 16 the pilgrims' caravan, now at its full strength and double its former size, caught up with them and swept past. They decided to rejoin it and by February 21 it was clear that they had made a wise decision; two of their camels began to show signs of exhaustion. When their route took them up a steep escarpment the next day, one of their beasts collapsed and they had to abandon him. "We left him, I am glad to say, in a bit of a wady, where there was some grass, but I fear his chance is a small one."

After four hard days, averaging about 28 miles a day, the caravan reached Qasr Ruhaim on the edge of the Euphrates district. The last day had been a terrible one: 10 hours of marching against a bitterly cold north wind which blew sand constantly into their faces. The Blunts had lost no more camels, but "many of the pilgrims' camels, 60, or some say 70, lay down and died on the road . . . In the last six days we have marched a hundred and seventy miles, the greater part of the Hajj on foot and almost fasting." It was a marvelous relief at Ruhaim to camp amid green grass on the bank of a running stream.

On the morning of February 27 they were cheered by the sight of the golden dome of the mosque rising above the town of Najaf, which topped a line of cliffs on the far side of a lake. "It was a beautiful sight as far as nature was concerned, but made horrible by the sufferings of the poor dying camels, which now lay thick upon the road, with their unfortunate owners, poor Bedouins perhaps with nothing else in the world, standing beside them . . ."

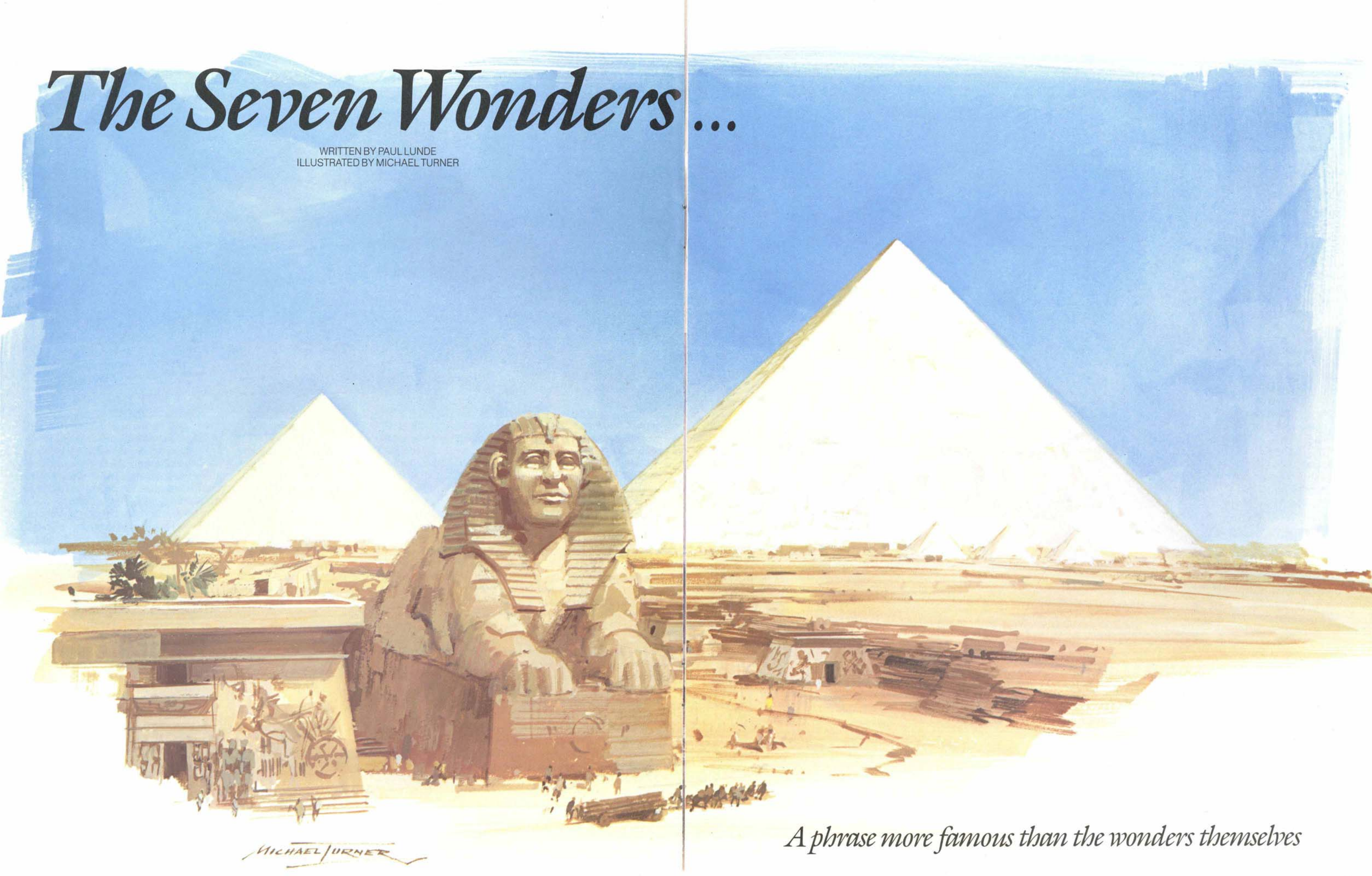
After resting and buying supplies in Najaf, Anne and Wilfrid moved on to Baghdad in a more leisurely fashion, and there they were welcomed at the British Residency. "On the 6th of March we slept once more in beds, having been without that luxury for almost three months." Their Arabian journey was over.

In 1881 the Blunts bought an estate, named after Shaikh Obeyd, in Egypt; from then on they divided their time between this home and Sussex, until in 1906 they parted, and she decided to live in Egypt, where she died in 1917. She was the first European woman to penetrate the heart of the Peninsula, and one of the most attractive and sympathetic figures among the great travelers of her age.

Zahra Freeth, daughter of the famous H.R.P. Dickson, is the author of A New Look at Kuwait. *Victor Winstone, a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, has written for* The Guardian *and is the author of a biography of the little-known explorer Captain W.I.H. Shakespear.*

The Seven Wonders...

WRITTEN BY PAUL LUNDE
ILLUSTRATED BY MICHAEL TURNER



A phrase more famous than the wonders themselves

The ancient Greeks and Romans, like us, loved to make lists. Organizing things in a series made them easier to remember, and the very fact of having organized them was as psychologically satisfying to them as it is to us. One of the most enduring lists ever drawn up is that of the "Seven Wonders of the World" – a phrase that has entered most Western languages and is known even to those who would be hard put to name them.

The difficulty in naming the seven wonders of the world is understandable: few people know exactly which "world" is meant and the classical authors, although agreed that there were seven, were not so unanimous about their identity. One, for example, insisted that Rome's Colosseum be included, another pushed for Noah's Ark and the Temple of King Solomon, and in later years other "wonders" were added that reflected the list-makers' location, religion or national prejudices.

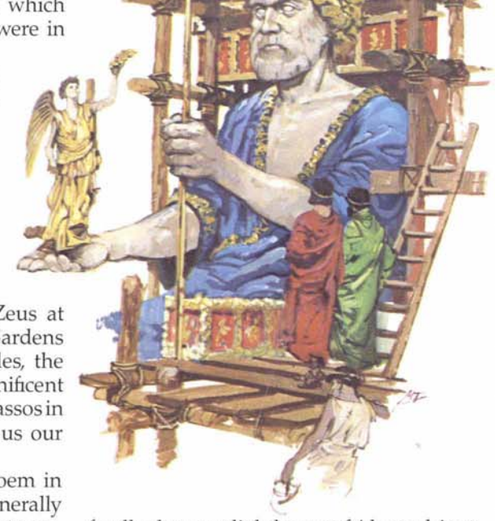
The passage of time, however, has tended to reduce the earlier disagreements and today there is a consensus that would perhaps have surprised the authors of the classical world. Both ancient and modern lists *do* agree that five of the seven wonders were located in what is now the Middle East, seat of the cultures from which ancient and modern civilizations were in part derived.

The first known list of the seven wonders occurs in a poem by Antipater of Sidon, a Greek-speaking epigrammatist who lived around 100 B.C. The poem is primarily in praise of the Temple of Diana at Ephesus – for him the seventh, and ultimate, wonder (See *Aramco World*, January-February 1971) – but he also lists the other six: the Walls of Babylon, the Statue of Zeus at Olympia, in Greece, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, the Colossus of Rhodes, the Pyramids and, finally, the magnificent Tomb of King Mausolus at Halikarnassos in today's Turkey – which has given us our word "mausoleum."

Later lists – such as Martial's poem in praise of the Colosseum – agree generally but show variations. Martial, for instance, accepts the Pyramids, Babylon – he counts the city's walls and its gardens as two wonders – the Temple of Diana and the Tomb of Mausolus, but he substitutes, for the Statue of Zeus, the Colosseum, which he says will replace all the other wonders of the world. For the Colossus of Rhodes, he makes another substitution: an altar at Delos made of interlaced animal horns – which sounds curious rather than wonderful.

The most famous classical list of the seven wonders was the work of an obscure writer and engineer named Philo of Byzantium, in a short account called "The Seven Sights of the World." As there is some doubt that this was really the work of Philo – who lived in the second century B.C. and was a contemporary of the poet Antipater of Sidon – scholars have dubbed the author the "pseudo-Philo." But whoever it was did write a list that agreed with Antipater's – or very nearly. As the manuscript of the little book is incomplete, it only lists six wonders, giving a short description of each.

With the coming of Christianity, there were sporadic efforts to replace some of the obviously pagan wonders with more suitable ones. Gregory of Tours, writing in the sixth century, presents us with the following list: Noah's Ark, Babylon, Solomon's Temple, the Grave of the Persian King (possibly the tomb of Mausolus), the Colossus of Rhodes, the theater of Herakleia – carved from a single piece of stone – and



finally, the great lighthouse of Alexandria at Pharos. The addition of the lighthouse to the list is important, for it came to replace the walls of Babylon – included in the lists of Antipater and Philo – and thenceforth was considered as the seventh wonder of the world.

Another Christian list-maker, the pseudo-Bede – a fit successor to the pseudo-Philo – also includes the lighthouse, but added what does indeed sound like a wonder: the iron statue of Bellerophon upon his horse, suspended in mid-air by the attractive power of lodestones. He also included a bath kept alight forever with a single inextinguishable flame. With the exception of the lighthouse at Pharos, however, the departures of Gregory and the pseudo-Bede from Philo's list did not catch on, and today the "official" list of the seven wonders of the classical world is (1) the Pyramids (2) the Hanging Gardens of Babylon (3) the Statue of Zeus at Olympia (4) the Temple of Diana at Ephesus (5) the Mausoleum of Halikarnassos (6) the Colossus of Rhodes and (7) the Lighthouse of Alexandria. Of these, only the Statue of Zeus at Olympia (site of the ancient Olympic games) and the Colossus of Rhodes, in Greece, lay outside what is now the Middle East.

Because the seven wonders were man-made, modern man might be inclined to ask how they compare with today's achievements. How, for example, would the Colossus of Rhodes measure up to the Statue of Liberty? The answer, cruelly, is that, with the exception of the Lighthouse at Pharos and the Pyramids, they don't come off too well. The 100-foot Colossus, for example, was only two thirds the size of the 151-foot Statue of Liberty – without the pedestal.

In another sense, however, the seven wonders were far more wondrous than today's Superdomes and Pentagons. Given the technology of the times in which they were built – and the previous achievements by which they were judged – they were remarkable structures, one reason they went into the record books and onto the lists of Antipater, Martial, the pseudo-Philo, the pseudo-Bede and Gregory of Tours.

There are other reasons too. While some of the wonders won fame because of their sheer size and magnificence, others did so because they were particularly beautiful or had endured a long time. Already legendary when Antipater wrote, the Statue of Zeus – the work of Phidias, greatest of the classical sculptors – was only a bit more than 30 feet high, but the entire surface was made of ivory and gold, and it stood for almost 900 years.

The Statue of Zeus was first erected about 430 B.C. The temple in which it stood was destroyed in A.D. 426, and the famous statue was moved to Constantinople, where it was destroyed by fire in A.D. 462. No copies of the statue survived, except a representation on a coin issued by the Emperor Hadrian, but Pausanias, in his *Guide to Greece*, written in the second century of our era, left a long and detailed description of the statue and the temple which housed it.

Another statue on the list is the Colossus of Rhodes – one of the more famous wonders, and the inspiration, centuries later, for the Statue of Liberty. A huge statue of the Greek sun god, it took 12 years for the sculptor Chares to complete; work began in the year 292 B.C. and was finished in 280. The statue was erected by the grateful people of Rhodes because the sun god was thought to have been instrumental in lifting a siege of the city. Over 100 feet high, the Colossus stood with one hand shielding its eyes, looking over the harbor of Rhodes; Pliny says that few men could encircle one of the thumbs of the Colossus with their arms, that the fingers were bigger than most statues, and that the hollow insides of its limbs yawned like vast caverns.

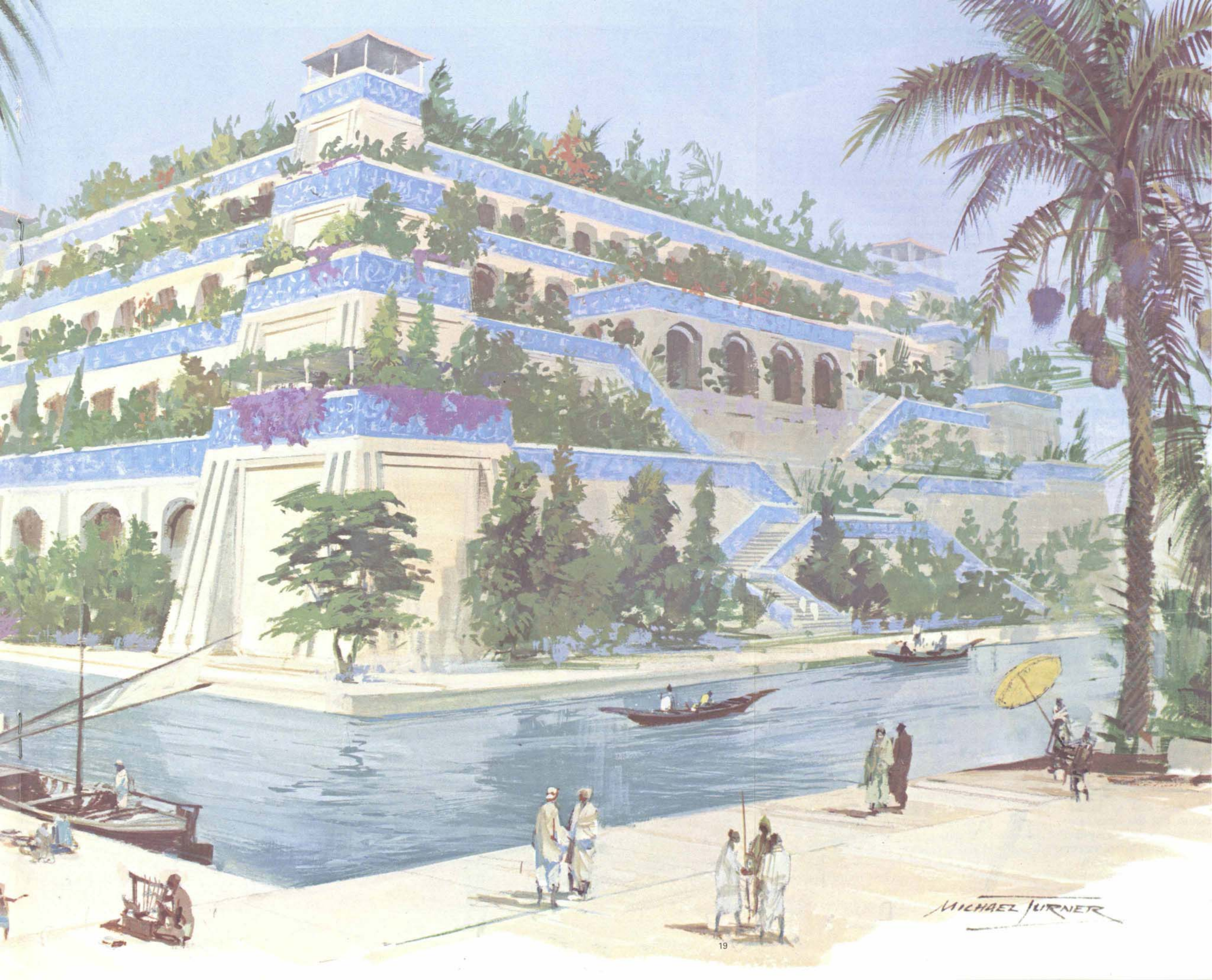
In the Renaissance, long after the statue had perished, it was traditionally pictured as standing with its legs astride the harbor entrance, and prints commonly show tiny boats sailing dramatically between its legs.

Unfortunately, the Colossus stood with its legs together; even more regrettably, it only stood for 55 years. In 225 B.C. an earthquake broke it off at the knees.

The Byzantine historian Cedrenus, and other Byzantine writers, claimed later that when the Muslim navy occupied Rhodes – probably in A.D. 672 – the remains of the Colossus were gathered up and sold for scrap. They add the fascinating detail that the bronze came to 900 camel loads. This story is almost certainly apocryphal; it is not mentioned by Muslim historians, who would have had no reason to conceal such a striking event, and it is also very unlikely that such a useful metal as bronze would have been left lying around for almost 900 years. But it suggests the fame of the great statue.

The Colossus caught and held the imagination of the world like no other wonder except the Pyramids. Although it fell not long after being erected, stories about it have persisted almost until the present day. Muslim writers of the Middle Ages, for example, record vague legends of gigantic statues keeping guard over abandoned cities in the furthest west, or warning mariners not to proceed beyond the Pillars of Hercules into the "Sea of Darkness" – the Atlantic.

Almost directly opposite Rhodes, on the mainland of Turkey, stood another of the seven wonders – in the ancient city of Halikarnassos, modern Bodrum. This is where the Carian ruler Mausolus was buried in the tomb which bore his name and which Pausanias says was "of such great size and so wonderfully constructed that it has amazed even the Romans, who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use the word 'mausoleum' for their own largest tombs."

Built by Mausolus' wife Artemisia in 353 B.C., it was decorated with sculptured friezes depicting, among other things, a battle between the Greeks and the Amazons, the work of the leading artists of the time. Above the rectangular tomb 36 columns supported a pyramid, which in turn supported a chariot containing statues of Mausolus and his wife. The statue of Mausolus may be the one now in the British Museum; the tomb was excavated in 1857, and many fragments of it survive, both in the British Museum and in Turkey. The Mausoleum stood for more than 1,000 years, partially falling sometime in the Middle Ages as the result of an earthquake. By 1522, nothing of it remained.

Not far from Halikarnassos was the site of still another of the wonders of the ancient world: the Temple of Diana at Ephesus in Turkey. This is the temple which the craftsmen of Ephesus feared would be destroyed by the Christians led by the apostle Paul, the temple containing the image of Diana "whom all Asia and the world worshippeth," as their spokesman said. Pausanias, writing not long after Paul's visit to the city, says that...

> every city recognizes Ephesian Artemis [Diana], and people individually honor her above all the gods. I think the reason is the glory of the Amazons who have the reputation of having established the statue, and also the fact that the sanctuary was built so very long ago. Three other things have contributed to make it famous: the size of the temple, which overtops every other human construction, the flourishing strength of the city of Ephesus, and the glittering position of the goddess of the city.

The temple was indeed huge. It measured 300 by 150 feet and its columns were 60 feet high. It was also old: it was begun about 555 B.C. by Croesus, king of Lydia. This original temple was burned down by a vandal in 356 B.C., but was rebuilt by Alexander the Great; it was not completed until 290 B.C. and in A.D. 262 was destroyed by the Goths. Portions of the decorated column bases were found by an English archeologist in the 19th century and are now in the British Museum.

Zeus, the Colossus and Diana, of course, are associated more with Greece than the Middle East, and so, to an extent, is Mausolus. But the other, more famous, wonders were indisputably in what is now the Arab world: Babylon, the Pyramids and the Lighthouse of Alexandria.

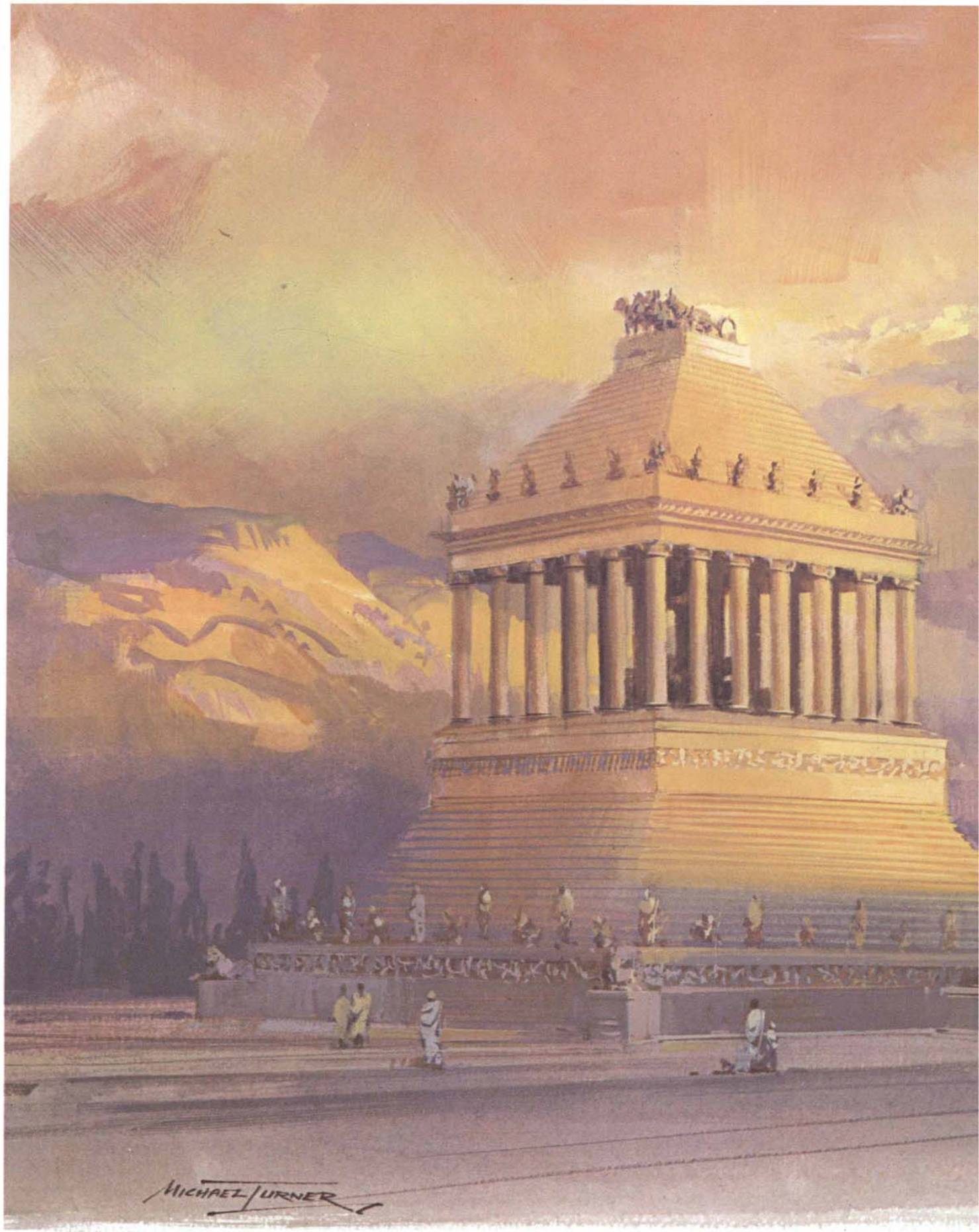
Babylon, according to Antipater and the pseudo-Philo, possessed *two* wonders: its walls and its gardens. But its walls were dropped from later lists in favor of the Hanging Gardens. Nevertheless, the walls which so struck the Greek traveler Herodotus were magnificent. He says the top of the wall was so broad that two four-horse chariots could pass each other in opposite directions along it.

Although the walls were the work of Nebuchadnezzar, who built them about 600 B.C., legend has attributed them to Queen Semiramis. Diodorus Siculus gives a full account of their construction by this mysterious queen, who at the end of her life was said to have changed into a dove and flown away:

> This northern lady Semiramis, haughtily minded, desirous to excel her husband in temporal glories, made to be ensearched all the country through for curious workmen and cunning artificers, carpenters, and masons: and so when she had them altogether... she set upon... the city of Babylon to edifice and to build. The number of workmen that out from all nations thither repaired to the accomplishment of this famous work was accounted to 300,000 people. This city was built... whose walls in circuit were 360 furlongs about with many towers of wonderful bigness... and the walls were of such bredth that six carts might go abreast each one by the other upon them; and... it is incredible to many that heareth of the altitude of them. After the opinion of Clitharcus and of them that went with Alexander on his journey into Asia, these walls be 365 foot of height. They also report in their writing of record how every day in the year a furlong of the wall was finished and made up, so that there be as many furlongs in circuit as there be days in the year. The walls were made of brick and of alabaster that some men call plaster of Paris...

Subsequent generations, of course, dismissed such descriptions as gross exaggerations – but they weren't entirely. In 1899 the German archeologist Robert Koldeway vindicated the classical writers by unearthing two walls: a first wall, more than 22 feet thick, separated from another wall 25 feet thick by a space almost 40 feet wide. This space was apparently filled with packed earth and patrolled by watchmen – possibly in chariots. This main wall had 360 watchtowers, one every 160 feet – much as Diodorus Siculus had reported.

Koldeway also found evidence of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, one of the most famous of the seven wonders of the world. The gardens, however, did not really "hang"; they were on a terrace – or series of terraces – supported by arches, and rose



some 400 feet above the level of the plain. They were built by Nebuchadnezzar to console his queen, who missed the mountains, trees, and flowers of her native Media. Diodorus Siculus again has the most complete description of them:

> There was of old time a king of the Syrians which for his sovereign lady's sake prepared this garden as ye shall after hear. This mistress whom so tenderly he loved, was a Persian born, and as the nature of that country is, she was passing desirous to stand upon high hills and oversee the country about. Wherefore . . . she entreated her sovereign lord to make a ground or arbor of pleasure artificially devised by curious workmanship for her disport and pleasure, so that this ground were planted with trees of passing singular fruit, and so embeautied with meadows fresh and green that it should represent by delectable appearance as it were a country commodious to behold.
>
> Every panel of this garden extended itself unto the quantity of four plough lands. The coming unto it was as it had been in an hill, building upon building of wondrous height, that a man out of it far and wide might see and behold. There were vaults under the ground that bore up all the weight of this garden. Then one vault was set upon another, and ever the higher that the building proceeded, the bigger was the work; for the uppermost vaults, whereupon the walls of this garden were founded and set was one fathom of height, and they were 12 foot in bredth.
>
> The walls which were sumptuously builded were 22 foot of thickness. The foundation stood in this wise: there were laid beams of stone, 16 foot of length and 6 foot of bredth. Upon them were strewn reeds of the pavement which was compact and together engrossed with this plaster aforesaid. Above that were couched two layers of brick stone, and thirdly they were covered with lead for that no moisture of rain should annoy the vault.
>
> Then were there made cisterns for receipt of waters in the same pavement. In this garden were all manner of passing goodly trees, joyous and delectable to behold, so that it was a royal pleasure for a prince or any great estate in this lusty ground themself to recomfort with solacious disport. Moreover, there was a conduit that by craft covertly water conveyed for the irrigious moisture of the soil.

By the fifth century B.C., unfortunately, the walls and the Hanging Gardens of Babylon had been destroyed. During the Middle Ages the site of one of the mightiest cities of all times was no more than a heap of rubble, which the local inhabitants habitually used as a source of building materials: baked bricks, some bearing the seals of the Babylonian kings.

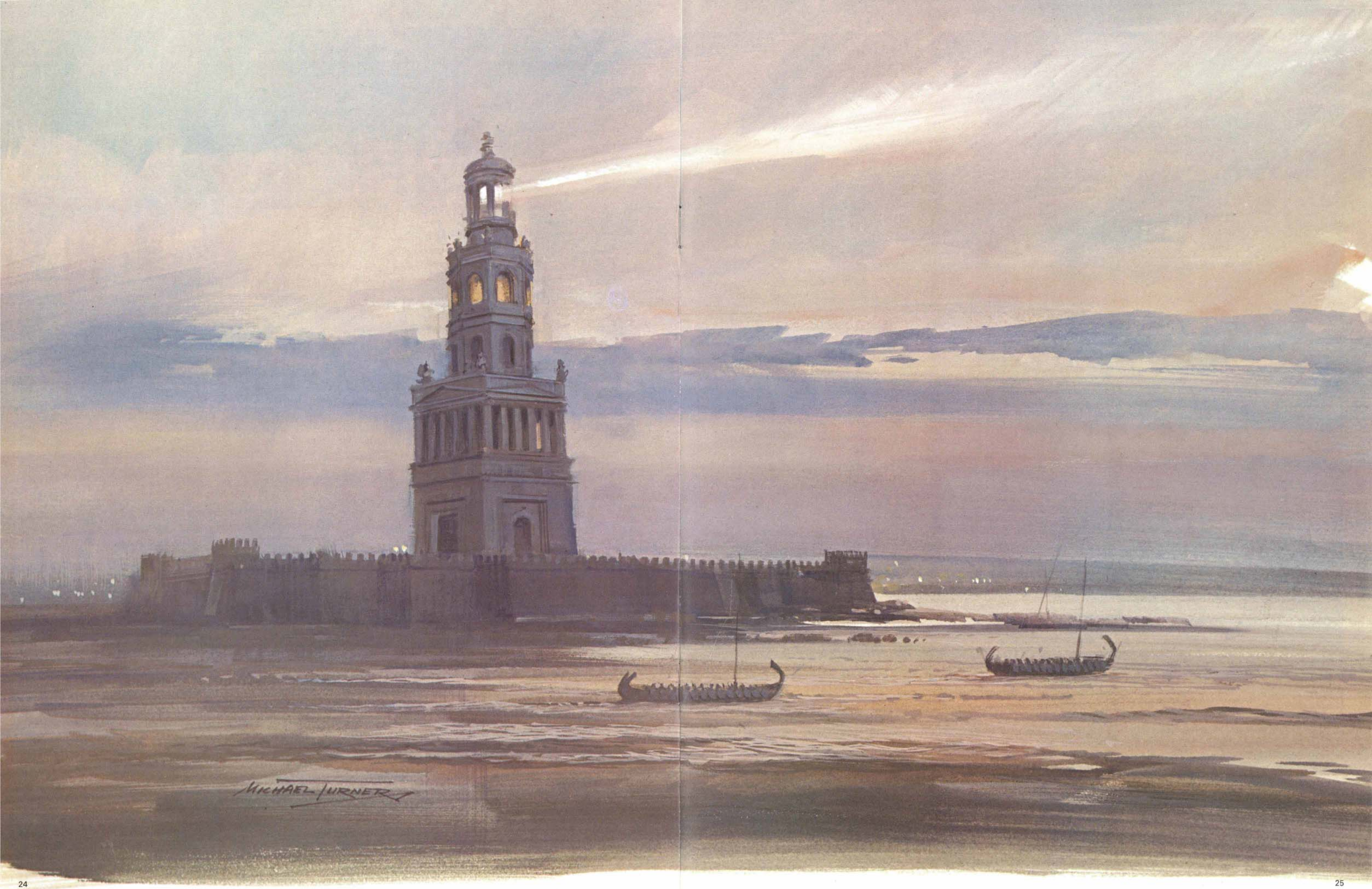
The oldest and most famous of all the wonders of the world are, of course, the three great Pyramids at Giza. They are the only ones still standing on their original site in their original form – or very nearly: the limestone sheathings are no longer in place. They date from the Old Kingdom (2700-2300 B.C.), and since the time of Herodotus have been considered the paramount wonder of the world, evoking such tributes as this by 'Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadi, written in the 13th century:

> The shape and solidity of the pyramids are both wonderful. Their form has the advantage of resisting the passage of time. If you reflect upon the structure of the pyramids, you will find they illustrate man's intelligence, and the pure genius that has been expended on their construction, and that the sciences, geometry and engineering have been brought to the highest pitch in them. These structures speak to us of the people who built them, they teach us their history and tell us of their science and intelligence. Rightly interpreted, they teach us of the lives and history of those who made them.

There was the rub; not everyone was able to rightly interpret the meaning of the great structures. In the Middle Ages, for example, it was popularly believed that they were the granaries in which the Bible's – and the Koran's – Joseph stored wheat for the pharaoh against "the seven lean years."

Some scholars, of course, knew better, and some were even aware that the Pyramids had served as the burial places of the pharaohs. As early as the 10th century, for example, the Arab historian al-Mas'udi recorded an interview that took place in the year 873 between the ruler of Egypt and an aged Copt, who unequivocally declared that the Pyramids were the tombs of ancient kings:

> When one of their kings came to die, his body was placed in a sarcophagus of stone, and the top was sealed; then they began to build the pyramid to the height which you see. The sarcophagus was placed in the center of the edifice . . . the door was placed under the pyramid itself, and one entered it by an underground corridor surmounted by a vault, which could be as much as 100 cubits long; each pyramid had such a door and such a corridor.
>
> "But," he was asked, "how were the sides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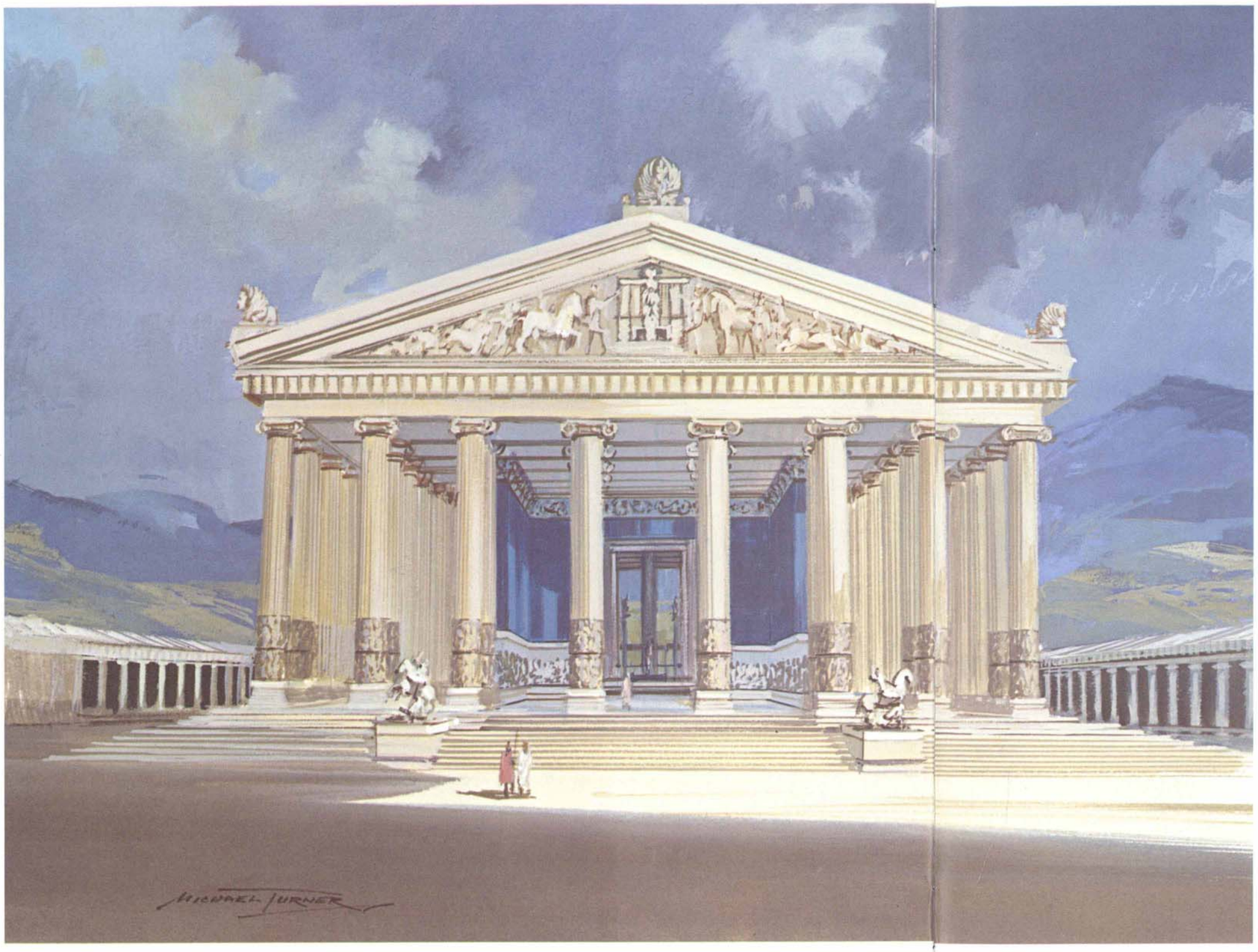


of the Pyramids made so smooth? How were the workmen able to climb up and work? What sort of machines transported these enormous stones, so big that a single one could not now be lifted without unheard-of efforts, and even then it might not be possible?"

The Copt explained that the Pyramids were built in stages, like a staircase, and then polished from the top down.

In al-Mas'udi's account, there is also a story of how another ruler of Egypt, the son of Saladin, once attempted to remove some stones from the smallest of the three Pyramids, in an attempt to discover how the ancients moved the massive stones. He assembled a large work force of stonecutters and masons who "pitched their camp beside the pyramid, and collected a great number of laborers from every quarter..."

Here they stayed for eight months, entirely occupied in the task they had been assigned. Every day they removed, with great difficulty and complete exhaustion of strength, one or two stones. Some used wedges and levers to force the stones forward, while others pulled with ropes from below. When one of the stones fell, it made a fantastic noise, heard at a great distance, shaking the earth and causing the very mountains to tremble. When it fell, it buried itself in the sand, and required great effort to dig it out ... After spending a long time and a great deal of money, their strength was exhausted and they were forced to abandon the task. Instead of success, all they accomplished was to spoil the pyramid and prove their incompetence and failure.

The seventh and last wonder of the ancient world is the Lighthouse of Alexandria. It was built in 279 B.C. by Sostratus of Cnidus for Ptolemy II on the small island of Pharos – which gave its name to the lighthouse – just off Alexandria.

One of the greatest esthetic and technical achievements of the ancient world, it became the symbol both of a city and a civilization. Even today, the word for "lighthouse" in French *(phare)* and in Italian *(faro)* preserve the name of this masterpiece of ancient engineering. In Arabic it was sometimes called *faris* (as were other lighthouses), but more often *manara,* "place of light," the same word which gave us our "minaret," and it has been suggested that the architectural form of the earliest minarets was derived from the Pharos. It was over 400 feet high – perhaps as much as 440, which makes it taller than any lighthouse in the world today – and built in three stories, each of a different geometrical form. The bottom story, which stood in a courtyard surrounded by colonnades, was square, the second story octagonal – with a spiral ramp to the top story – and the third story cylindrical. It was surmounted by a huge lantern – and perhaps a reflecting mirror – and atop the lantern there was a statue of Poseidon, god of the sea. The square, bottom story contained 300 rooms, which housed the workmen and technicians who attended the light.

No one knows exactly what the lighting arrangements of the Pharos were, or of what material the mysterious "mirror" was made. Was it glass? Polished metal? Polished stone? In any case, it was said that it reflected ships at sea invisible to the naked eye.

Legends went much farther. One had it that the mirror was used to focus the sun's rays and thereby destroy enemy ships, and in *The Romance of Alexander the Great,* probably written in the second century, the last pharaoh, Nectanabos, uses the magic mirror both to see the arrival of an enemy fleet and, by focusing the sun's rays, to destroy it.

The great lighthouse appears in Islamic history too. Al-Mas'udi, for example, says that there were several statues – not just one – on top of the Pharos. One of them, he says, indicated the position of the sun with its right hand; another pointed out enemy ships when they were still a day's sail away, while yet a third told the hours of the night and day with a chime, which varied with each hour. Given the technical accomplishments of the engineers of ancient Alexandria, none of these – with the exception of the statue which pointed out enemy ships – is inherently improbable.

Unlike some of the ancient wonders, parts of the Lighthouse of Alexandria survived into modern times. It disappeared in stages. Muslim historians say that the mirror and part of the structure were destroyed by the Umayyad Caliph al-Walid – who was tricked into doing so by a Byzantine spy so that the Pharos could not be used against the Byzantine fleet – but the rest survived much longer. Because of its value as an aid to navigation, the Muslim rulers of Egypt attempted on several occasions to restore the Pharos, but about the year 1100 the second story fell to the ground. It was, nevertheless, still an imposing structure. Some 90 years later, for example, the Andalusian traveler Ibn Jubair saw it and wrote:

> One of the greatest wonders that we saw in this city was the lighthouse which great and glorious God created by the hands of those who were forced to such labor ... as a guide to voyagers, for without it they could not find the true course to Alexandria. It can be seen for more than 70 miles, and is of great antiquity. It is most strongly built in all directions and competes with the skies in height. Description of it falls short, the eyes fail to comprehend it, and words are inadequate, so vast is the spectacle. We measured one of the four sides and found it to be more than 50 arm's lengths. It is said that in height it is more than 150 heights of a man. Its interior is an awe-inspiring sight in its amplitude, with stairways and entrances and numerous apartments, so that he who penetrates and wanders through its passages may be lost. In short, words fail to give a conception of it.

In the next century and a half, however, the lighthouse, although "most strongly built," had began to crumble. Ibn Battuta, that indefatigable traveler (See *Aramco World,* January-February 1978), visited the Pharos in 1349 and found it so ruinous that he was unable to enter it. Finally, in 1480, the Mamluk ruler Qa'it Bay constructed an elegant little fort on the exact site of the Pharos, and used bits of it in the walls. The seventh wonder of the world was no more.

The seven wonders of the world were more than just a list of sights; they were a reminder of the achievements of the ancients. Long after most of them had crumbled to dust, their memory persisted. Al-Baghdadi, speaking of the antiquities of Egypt, could also be speaking of all of the remains of the ancient world and, perhaps, predicting the future of today's monuments: "The sight of them confirms the truth of tradition. These monuments also point to the future, for they call attention to the fate reserved for the things of this world."

Paul Lunde is a staff writer for Aramco World.

In a village in France, a lost art revived...

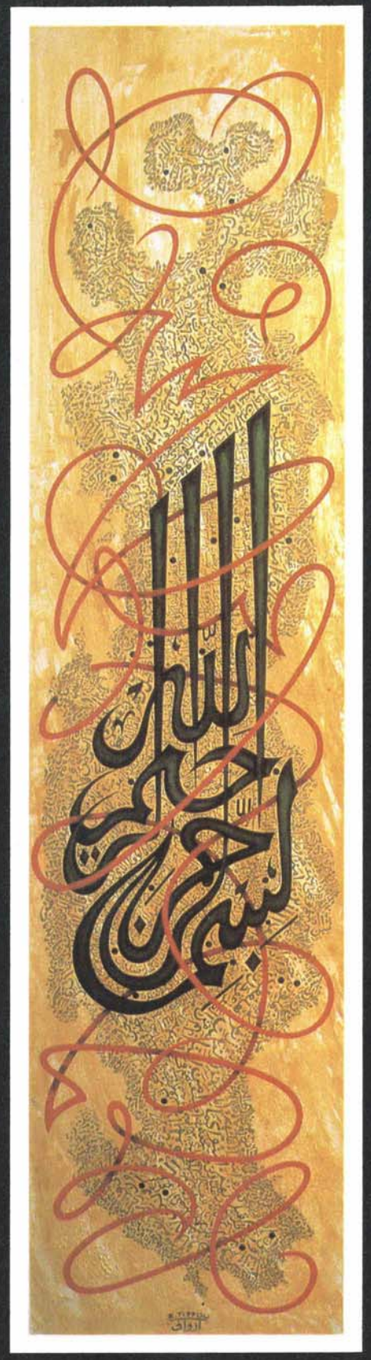
In the foothills of the Pyrenees, a French artist named Edmond Tiffou keeps the ancient Islamic art of miniature painting alive and flourishing to this day.

A French North African of Catalan background, Tiffou, who attended the Faculté des Beaux Arts in Algiers, first worked in advertising – and won several prizes – but then, during the Algerian wars, returned to Argelès-sur-Mer, a village near the Pyrenees, to explore more fully the ancient art forms of the Muslim empire.

At the academy in Algiers, Tiffou had studied Arabic calligraphy under Omar and Muhammad Rassim, two of the great modern masters of the art. Now, in his seaside village in France, he began to focus on calligraphy and Islamic miniatures and illuminations.

"Islamic design is purely intellectual," he explains. "Calligraphy requires dexterity, and an advanced understanding of its artistic possibilities. My training in lithography gave me the background for studying the details, and the proximity of the Arab palaces in Spain provided the sources. The history of religion has always fascinated me, and the Koran and the Old and New Testaments became my bedside reading."

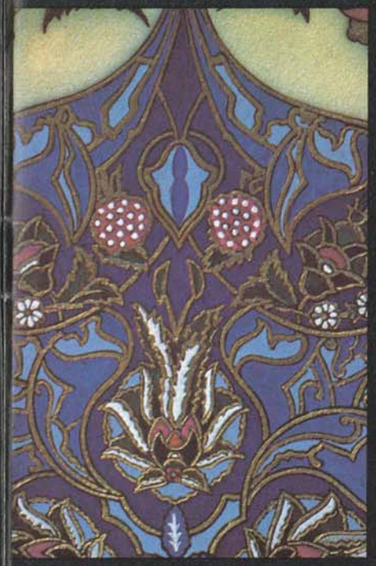
This preparation was a necessary preliminary, Tiffou points out, since calligraphy and miniature painting are not only crafts but arts (See *Aramco World*, September-October 1979). They can be created only with a thorough understanding of the philosophy of Islam and a deep knowledge of its history. Geometric designs, for example, are fundamental to Arab decorative arts; because they can be continued into infinity, they impose shape and form upon the chaos of the material world and can be regarded as divine inspiration working through the hand of man.

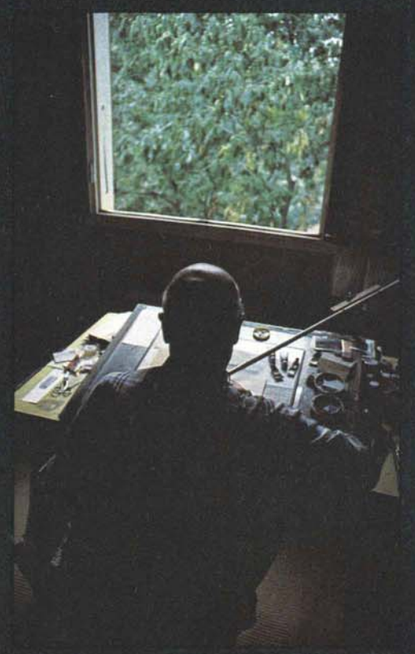


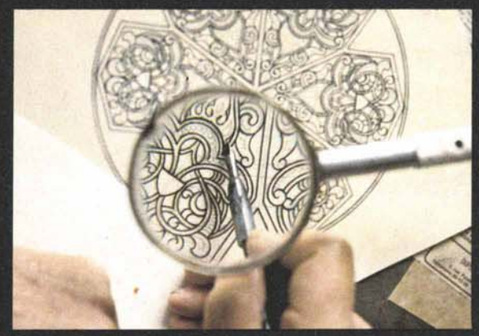
"What attracted me most was the illumination, that is, the decoration providing the frame of the miniature, which many artists of earlier times neglected," Tiffou said. "This adventure has continued for 12 years now; it takes me up to 300 hours to lay out and color a carpet of illumination around a central subject... and this illumination, with its varied colors, is the true meaning of my works."

Tiffou, who uses 24-karat liquid gold for his illuminations, has had difficulty in obtaining it recently because of the vertiginous rise in the world price of gold. Changing prices have taken it out of everyday commerce, even if the painter is prepared to pay the going rate. He also uses gouache colors, with imperceptible gradations to give an illusion of greater depth: a great deal of blue and green, often as many as three shades of each; orange, fuchsia, and dark reds. But pastel colors lack the intensity he needs, and Tiffou hardly uses them: they are too uncertain. And in his revival of an ancient art, with the hundreds of hours of research and effort that go into each detailed and lapidary work, certainty is what Edmond Tiffou is looking for.

Rosalind Mazzawi lived in Lebanon for 20 years, where she worked as a journalist and bookseller and taught at Beirut's Arab University. She is the author of Traveller's Guide to the Middle East.

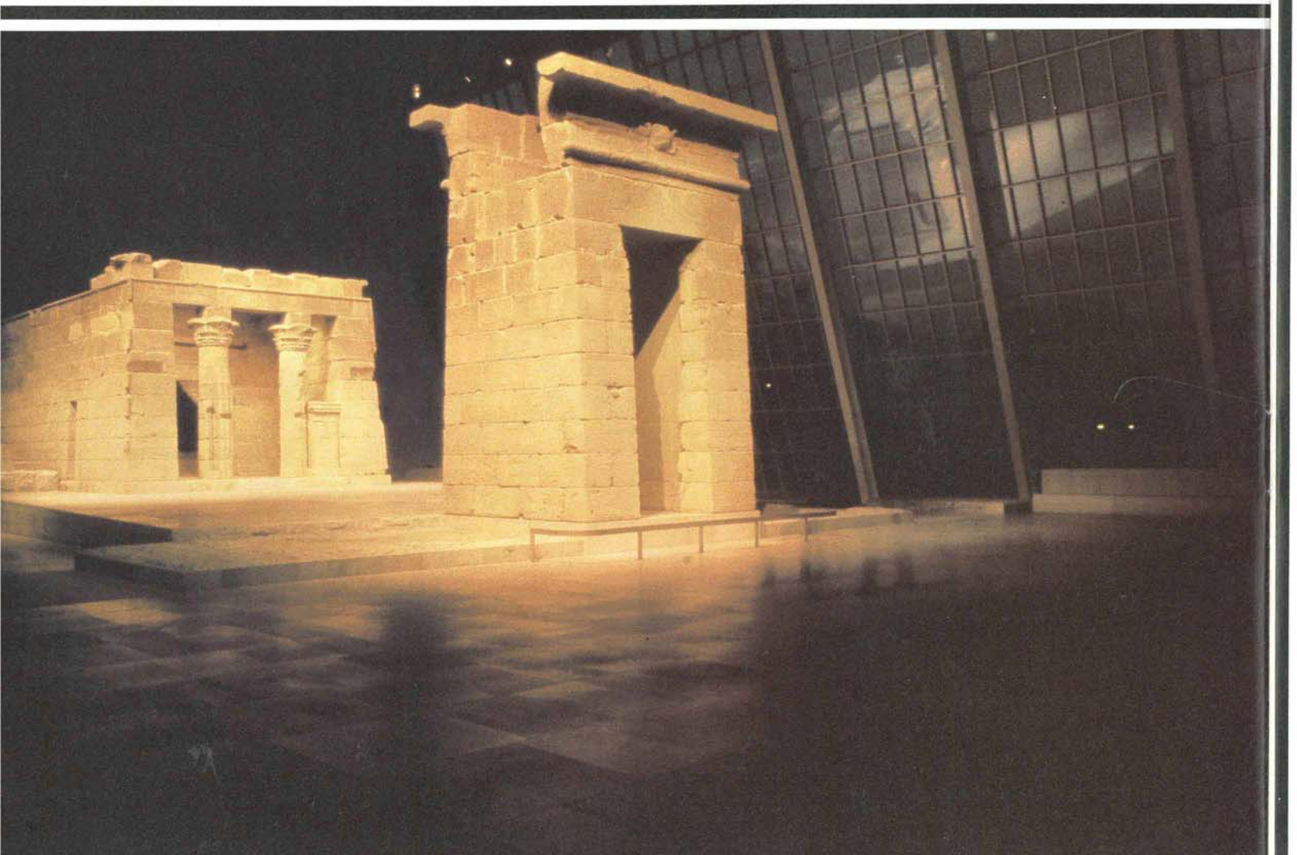






ARAB ART IN ARGELÈS

WRITTEN BY ROSALIND MAZZAWI
PHOTOGRAPHED BY TOR EIGELAND



From an island in the Nile-to another in Central Park

A TEMPLE AT THE MET

WRITTEN BY WILLIAM H. ROCKETT PHOTOGRAPHED BY NICHOLAS KOURIDES

Every Sunday, some 8,000 people wander through the Sackler Wing of New York City's Metropolitan Museum of Art. Their sole purpose: to see a little bit of the ancient Middle East reborn in the inscribed stone walls of the Temple of Dendur, a structure that has journeyed there through 2,000 years – and three times as many miles – from its beginnings on the western bank of the Nile.

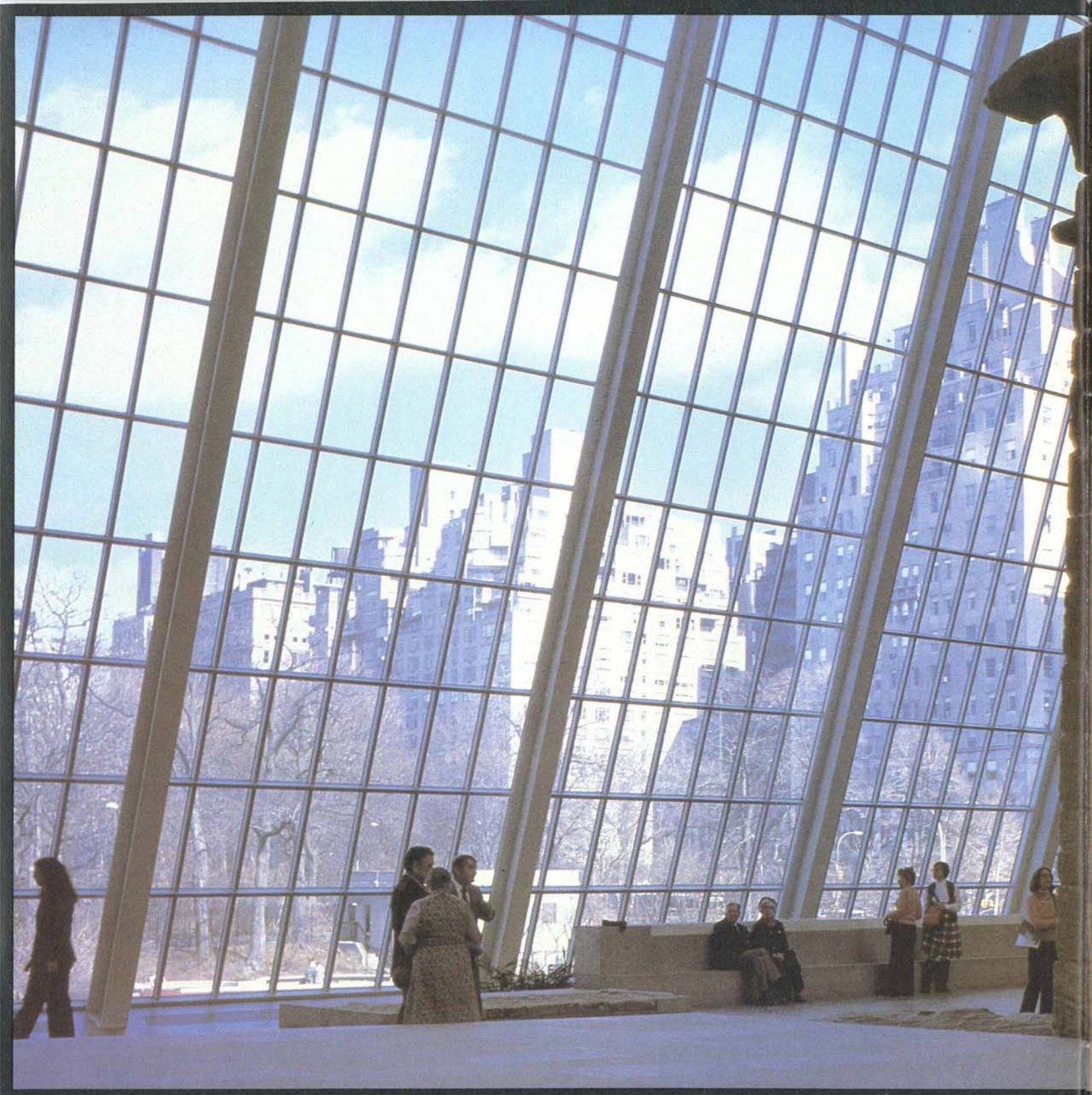
One of the treasures threatened by the construction of the great Aswan High Dam (See *Aramco World,* July-August 1976), Dendur and a number of other small temples were dismantled stone by stone and carried off to new homes in those countries which had contributed most heavily to the rescue of the Nubian heritage of Egypt and the Sudan. The United States, which had given over $16 million to the cause, was offered Dendur in 1965. (See *Aramco World,* May-June 1969)

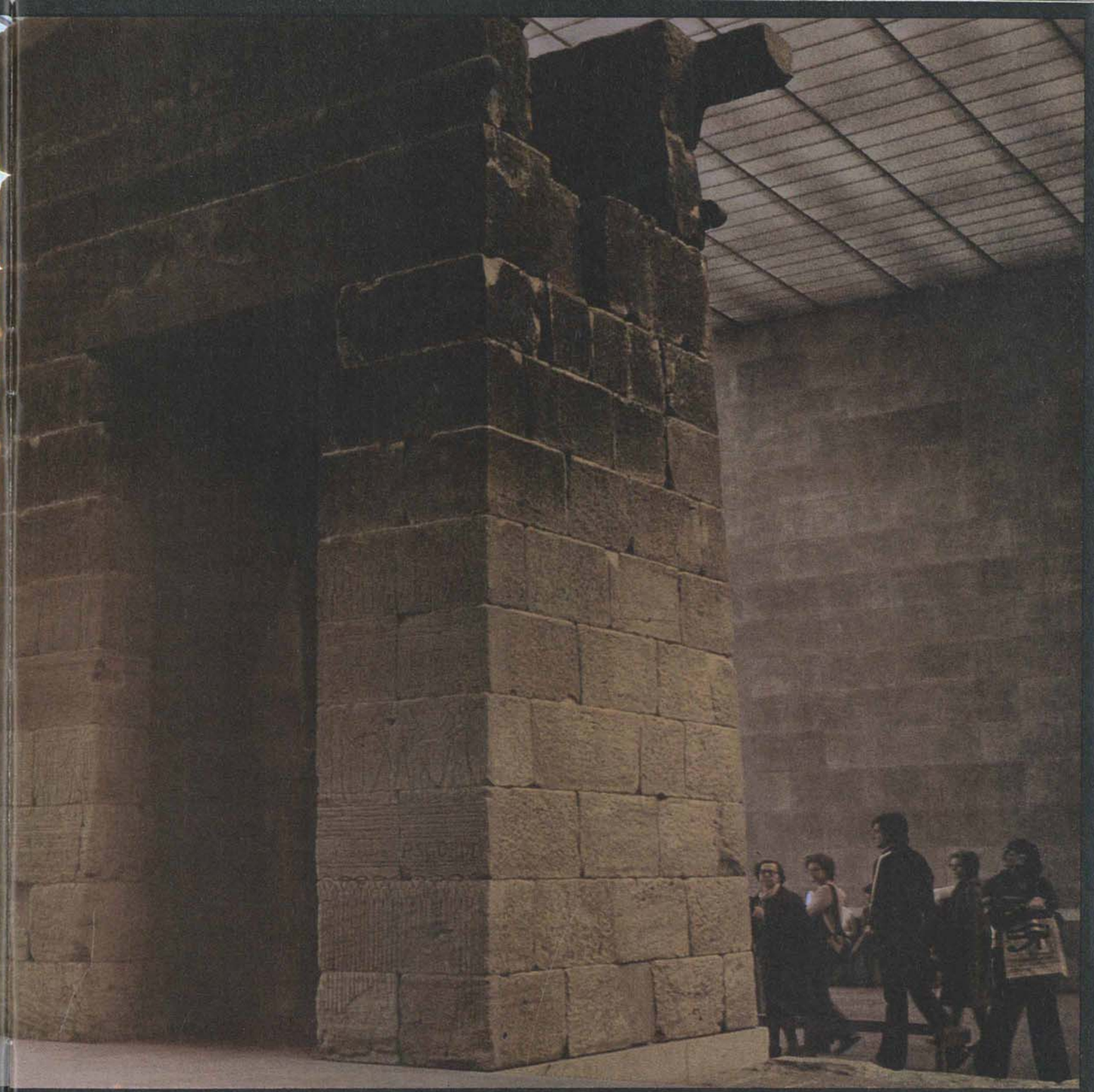
This gesture set off what delighted journalists called "the Dendur Derby," as museums in Cairo (Illinois) and Memphis (Tennessee) vied with great institutions like Washington's Smithsonian Institution and Boston's Museum of Fine Arts for possession of the temple. But the mere fact that Cairo and Memphis were named after Egyptian cities didn't weigh heavily with the presidential commission established to pick the derby winner. And the Smithsonian's plan to erect the temple on the Potomac – like Boston's intention of raising it beside the Charles River – presented serious preservation problems.

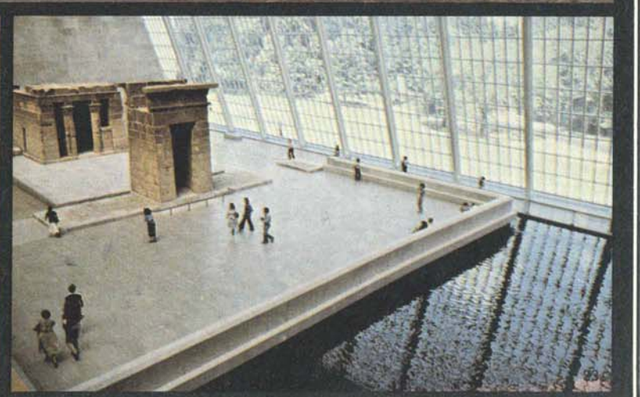
Dendur is constructed of sandstone, called a "friable" material by archeologists. This means that wind and water can quickly cause the stone to deteriorate and crumble. Thomas Hoving, then director of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, argued that a riverside setting wasn't worth the risk and proposed instead that the relatively small temple (60 feet long and 23 feet high), be housed *inside* a museum. Having promised to build "an outdoor glass display case" so the temple would be visible to strollers near the Met's Central Park quarters, Hoving won the Dendur Derby.

The cost of moving, housing and re-erecting the Temple of Dendur was $9.5 million. Did the Met get its money's worth? Was Dendur worth the trouble? Perhaps more important, did the Met keep its promises to provide a suitable home for Dendur's fragile stones? Happily, the answers are affirmative on all counts. Dendur itself is a superb work enriched by history and tradition, and architect Kevin Roche has created a "display case" as successful in what it sets out to do as the tiny temple itself.

Amelia Edwards – the English lady whose 19th-century grand tour up the Nile is best remembered because she cleaned the great statues of Rameses II at Abu Simbel with pots of coffee – once called Dendur "deca-







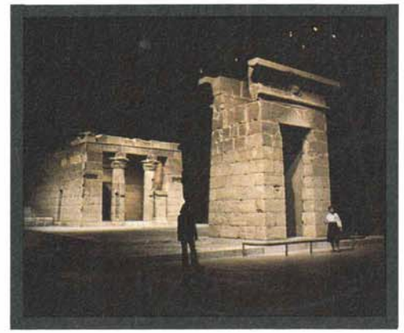
dent". Still, even Miss Edwards felt the pull experienced by museum visitors today. "The whole thing is like an exquisite toy, so covered with sculptures, so smooth, so new-looking, so admirably built. Seeing them half by sunset, half by dusk, it matters not that these delicately-wrought bas-reliefs are of the Decadence school. The rosy halflight of an Egyptian afterglow covers a multitude of sins, and steeps the whole in an atmosphere of romance."

Dendur is, in fact, a late temple, built by the Romans in 22B.C. But like the Greek Ptolemies who ruled Egypt before them, the Romans built in accordance with local tradition, both religious and esthetic. Dendur is not a house of worship but a home for gods, and the gods who dwelt together there were strange housemates indeed: Caesar Augustus, Roman conqueror of the world, and two young Nubian brothers who had the good fortune to have been drowned in the Nile.

In 31B.C., Octavian defeated the forces of Cleopatra and Mark Antony at Actium, unseated the woman who was the last of the Ptolemies, and claimed for himself the title pharaoh. Returning to Rome to become the emperor Caesar Augustus, he left his Egyptian domains in the care of the prefect Cornelius Gallus.

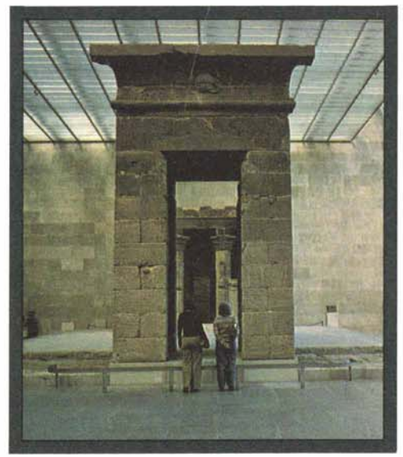
At this time, northern Nubia, between the first and second cataracts of the Nile, was a kind of no man's land. Diminished rainfall had brought about a depopulation of the area, and the region served only as a trade and military route. The only people who remained there were tribes like the Blemmye – today's Beja – warriors whose ancestors had often served in the mercenary armies of the Egyptians to the north, and of the ancient Nubians in the Kingdom of Kush to the south.

The Kushites ruled all of southern Nubia from their capital of Meroe, just north of Kartoum and the sixth cataract of the Nile. An African people who had consciously adopted Egyptian religious beliefs, written language and customs (See *Aramco World*, July-August 1979), they were enjoying a kind of golden age under the leadership of ruling queens, or "kandakes". Cornelius Gallus saw fit to sign a treaty with them in 29B.C. Under its terms, northern Nubia became a Roman protectorate but remained a part of the Kushite kingdom. Gallus appointed one Kuper, a Blemmye chief, to serve as Rome's legate in the area. Kuper's payment came in part with the admission of the Blemmye god Mandulis into the Roman pantheon, and the erection of several temples in Mandulis' honor.



Five years later, while Cornelius' successor Aelius Gallus was marching on Arabia at Augustus' orders (See *Aramco World*, March-April 1980), the Kushite kandake Amanirenas seized the opportunity to march north and invade Egypt: after all, this was a land her ancestors had once ruled as the pharaohs of the 25th Dynasty.
Amanirenas took Syene – today's Aswan – in 24B.C., defeating three Roman cohorts in the process and carrying away the head of a monumental statue erected to Augustus. But a new Roman prefect, Gaius Petronius, soon drove the kandake back to her own capital, and after two more years of desultory skirmishing, Amanirenas sued for peace. The boundary of Roman Egypt was moved south to Kasr Ibrim, placing fully half of northern Nubia firmly in Augustus' empire.
Kuper and the Blemmye had remained loyal to Rome throughout the struggle. We know the old chief was taken prisoner, and we suspect he was put to death. His sons Pedesi ("He whom Isis has given") and Pihor ("He who belongs to Horus") were drowned in the Nile, either in battle or in flight. One of the bodies washed ashore at Dendur, where it was buried in a tomb cut in the side of the western bank. A small chapel was built before it, for the manner of the boys' deaths had guaranteed their apotheosis. According to the Roman historian Herodotus...

> when anyone, be he Egyptian or stranger, is known to have been carried off by a crocodile or drowned by the river itself, such a one must by all means be embalmed and tended as fairly as may be and buried in a sacred coffin by the townsmen of the place where he is cast up; nor may any of his kinsfolk or his friends touch him, but his body is deemed something more than human, and is handled and buried by the priests of the Nile themselves.

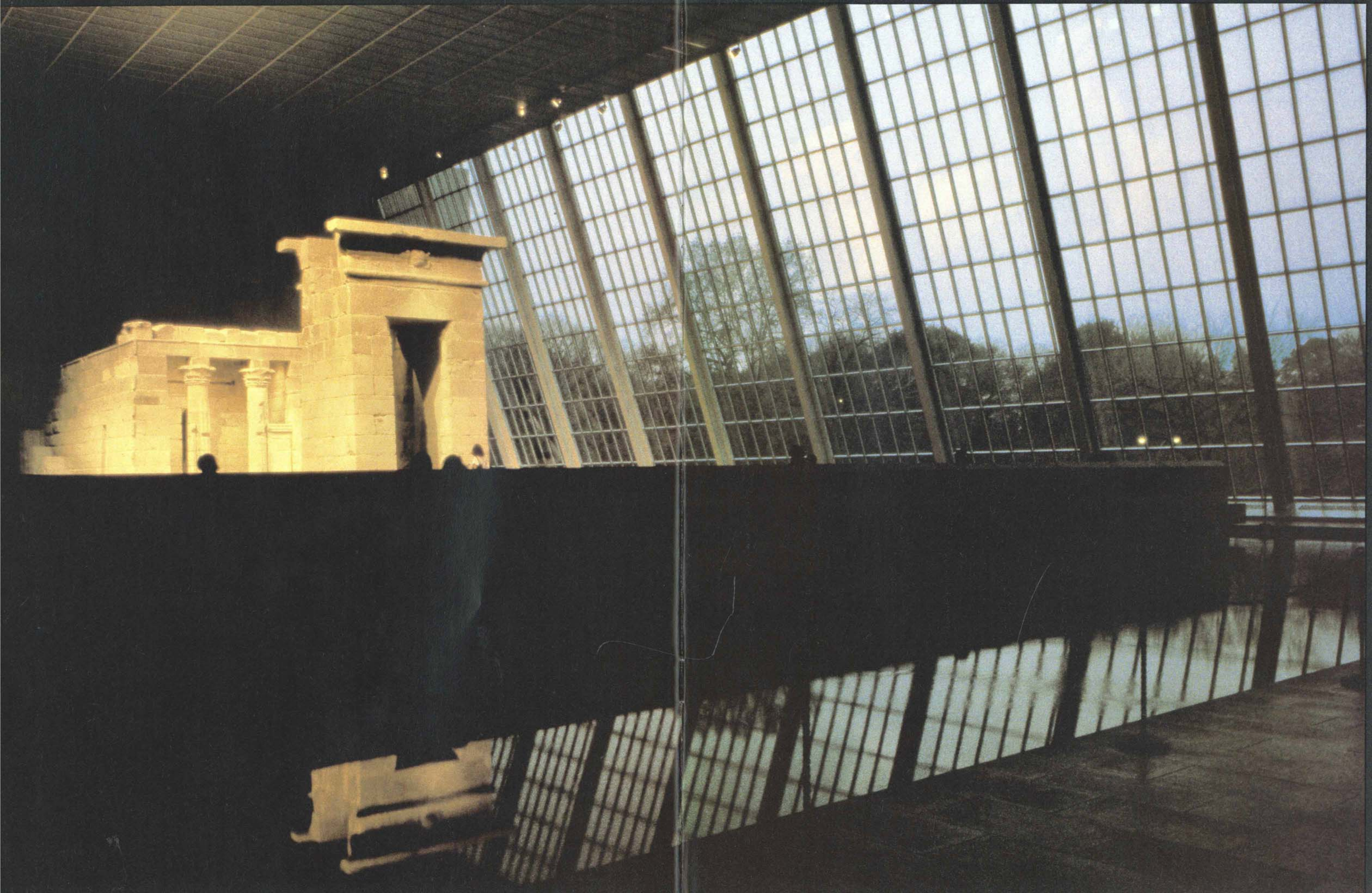


Petronius rewarded the Blemmye for their loyalty to Rome. The Temple of Dendur, with its beautiful reliefs depicting Augustus as pharaoh and Pihor and Pidesi as young gods making offerings to the great redeemer Osiris, was one such reward.
In building the little temple, Petronius' architects relied upon ancient esthetic principles to serve the religious precepts Dendur was to mark. The structure follows a pattern first established in the 18th Dynasty (1580B.C.), a pattern which remained virtually unchanged for 1,600 years.

One approaches the temple from the river through a great pylon, or *bekken*. Alexander Badawy says the ancients called this gate "the Luminous Mountain Horizon," and represented it in hieroglyphs as two mountain peaks between which the sun is seen rising. One then passes through a *wba*, or open court, before reaching the temple proper. The building itself consists of a *wadjit*, or columned hall, and the sanctuary where the gods dwelt.

To dismiss Dendur as a decadent copy is to miss the fact that it is a distillation of the knowledge and technique acquired by Egypt's master builders over the centuries. As such, it is in some respects finer than earlier and larger works. Talbot Hamlin of Columbia University has written of the late temples, "There is greater symmetry, a more careful study of the relative heights and proportions; and in such a temple ... there is a sense of simple directness of design, of perfect interrelation of parts, which is sometimes missing in the larger, more complex work of the earlier time."

"Obviously, this little temple is just a gesture," says architect Kevin Roche. "But it's been done with a lot of skill, and you see reflected in it the high level of achievement in Egyptian architecture. I don't suppose it was ever considered a very important building by its makers; a temple was needed and so they ran off another temple.



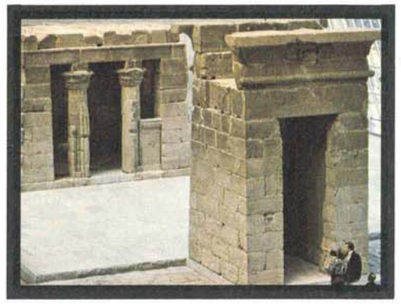
But it's a good one. You would be hard put to find a building in our culture which matches up to it in the kinds of problems it solves, and the statement it makes."
It became Roche's job to create such a building himself – namely the "display case" Sackler Wing that would house Dendur in New York. The Met could not have picked a more appropriate artist for the job.
Roche has been described by one critic as "the unpremeditated dauphin who ascended the throne at the premature death of Eero Saarinen" in 1961. His New Haven, Connecticut firm was already charged with the refurbishing of the Met and the design of additional wings, including the pyramidal structure that houses the Robert Lehman Collection.

Pyramids turn up frequently in Roche's work; one company headquarters he built in Indianapolis uses three such structures. In fact, Roche is an avowed admirer of Egyptian design. "I've been very influenced by Egyptian architecture," Roche says. "It actually means a lot more to me than the Greek or Roman forms: I can understand it much better. To my mind, the Egyptians invented everything the Greeks used later."

Neither Roche nor Arthur Rosenblatt, the Metropolitan Museum vice president in charge of architecture, was particularly disturbed by those critics who maintain that moving an architectural monument from one place to another destroys it. Such critics agree with the views of Osbert Lancaster, who said that moving Rameses' temple at Abu Simbel would turn it into "a slice of cheese on a dish. Without its context Abu Simbel is worth nothing. It would look ridiculous." Abu Simbel would at least still be out of doors and in Egypt, carped some; how much more ridiculous would Dendur look, inside a building in New York.

"As far as I'm concerned," Rosenblatt counters, "when you remove a painting from an artist's studio you are changing its original context. The light in a museum is different than that in which the painting was done, the ambience is different. It's all the same thing."

Roche loves the Nile Valley, and is especially sensitive to "the extraordinary clarity of light there, which is something you have to consider in viewing a building. You can never bridge the difference between the quality of light in Egypt and that in New York, but one does one's best." Roche's best is very good indeed: the great expanse of glass in the Sackler Wing's ceiling and north wall is stippled, diffusing the light gently over the delicately incised walls of the temple.



Rosenblatt and Roche agreed that the interior of the new wing "shouldn't be Disneyland," as Rosenblatt puts it. "We didn't want a diorama approach, with a papier maché cliffside and a fake river, like the setting for stuffed animals in a natural history museum. That would look like a cartoon. At the same time, we wanted to do the temple justice, always remembering that our responsibility is to preserve a work of art and let as many people as possible see it."
Roche pondered the problem for some time. At first, he considered "simply putting the temple on a pedestal and displaying it as an object," but in the end he chose another course. "We decided it was better to give some sense of the original setting and the approach to the temple," explains Roche. "After all, its origins are so tied to the Nile. So we built a wharf and landing, based on early sketches. Then we placed a reflecting pool before it, and a sloping wall of different stone behind it, suggesting the Nile and the cliffs of the original setting."
It was a felicitous decision. The simplicity of its setting, like a minimal frame on a painting, gives the temple a context which does not overwhelm it. When one enters the hall, one sees the temple, and not the building in which it is housed. At the same time, the schematic sketching of the setting suitably reflects what P. P. Kahane has called "the special character of Egyptian painting... a purely linear style... purely an art of surfaces."

Surfaces of water, surfaces of stone and the sky seen through glass all frame the stronger surfaces of the temple itself. And the external surfaces of the Sackler Wing, seen from outside, create yet another kind of perfection.

Seen by night, by strollers who brave Central Park's paths, the great wall of glass of the Sackler Wing ceases to exist. The artificially illuminated temple seems to glow with a burnished warmth. "That's the view the photographers love," says Rosenblatt. "*Time, Newsweek* and others have featured photographs of the temple glowing in the dark." But by daylight, something extraordinary occurs.
Roche says one of his favorite groups of Egyptian buildings is that found at Saqqara, site of the stepped pyramid built for the pharaoh Zoser by the great architect Imhotep. The pyramid is actually composed of a series of rectilinear structures known as *mastabas,* piled one on top of the other in decreasing size. The *mastaba* (its name is derived from its resemblance to the bench still found outside village huts today) is the oldest form of monumental tomb erected in the Nile Valley, dating back to Egypt's First Dynasty, about 3100 B.C. And with its flat roof and sloping glass side made firm by sunlight, the Sackler Wing, seen from without, resembles nothing so much as a great *mastaba.*

The architectural historian Wilhelm Worringer has said of ancient Egyptian building, "Space is always only a form of the relationship of the ego to the surrounding world." Kevin Roche has created Egypt itself in the Sackler Wing's inner space, and in its outer form he has linked Egypt's most ancient past in the *mastaba* with the more recent temple it contains. Like the Temple of Dendur itself, which distills a long architectural tradition in its form, the Sackler Wing is a great cycle of Egyptian history and ideas and art, made concrete.
Dendur's New York resurrection has fulfilled the promise E. Baldwin Smith saw in Egyptian architecture back in 1938: to the great joy of museum-goers, it has "gone west to be reborn, like Osiris, in the new civilizations of the Western world."

William H. Rockett, formerly a correspondent, writer and producer for the CBC, is now art critic at the Passaic Herald News *and assistant professor of communications at Seton Hall University.*