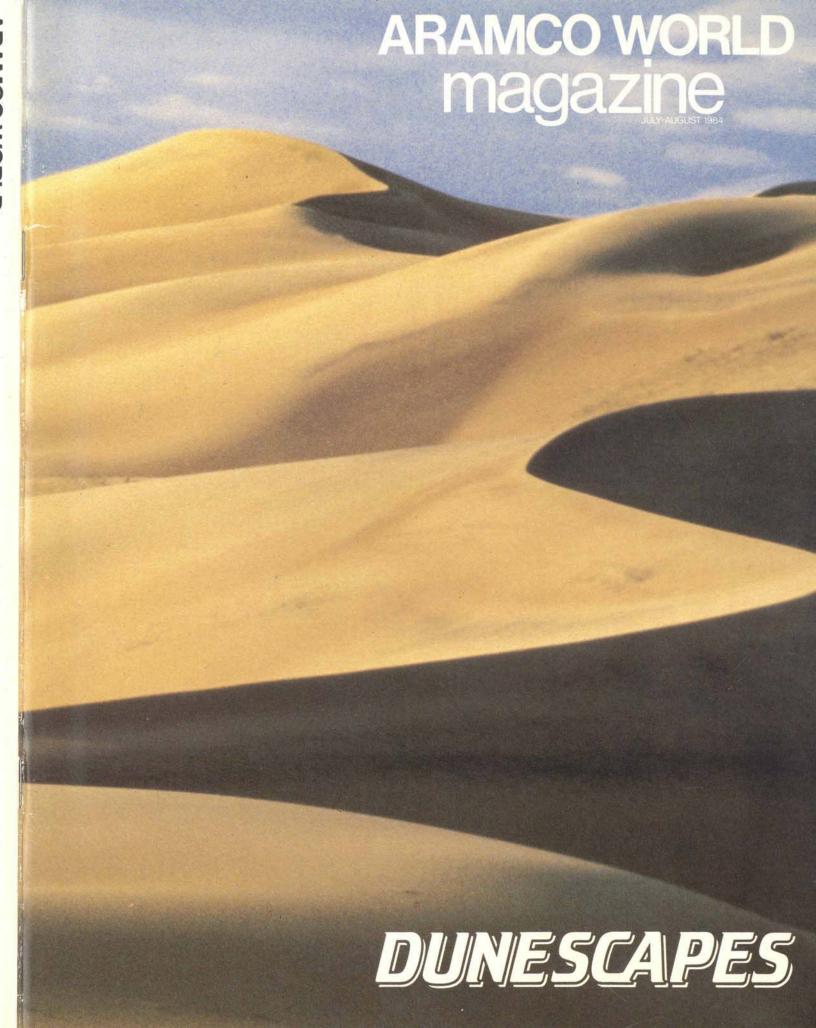


ARAMCO WORLD magazine





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Sphinx II

By Jay Gissen

In Egypt this February, Malcolm Forbes, an American publisher, unveiled one of the most unusual balloons ever flown – an enormous replica of the Sphinx.





Shards of History

By John Lawton

For nearly 1,000 years the mysterious wreck and its unusual cargo kept their secret - until May, this year, when scientists announced some solutions to the "million-piece" jig-saw puzzle.







Bahrain through the Ages

By Arthur Clark

In Manama last year, more than 100 scholars gathered for what Reuters described as "the biggest event of its type ever staged in the Middle East" – a conference covering 5,000 years of history.





Dunescapes

By Pamela Roberson

In 1972, an American photographer set out to record her personal impressions of the desert. A decade later, "Dunescapes," an exhibit of her work from the desert, is currently touring the United States.





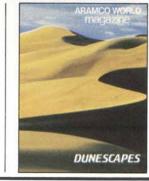
Memories of Samarkand

By John Feeney

For centuries, the "blue city" of Samarkand tantalized the minds of western men, and – though today it is only a few hours flight away – its ruins still lure travelers on the "golden road."



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Cover: The play of light and shadow on these dunes explains their fascination for photographer Pamela Roberson, whose "Dunescapes" exhibitions in the U.S.A. have communicated her "love affair with the desert" to a wide audience. Dunes, with their shifting colors and forms, also held the imaginations of some of the great poets of pre-Islamic Arabia. Roberson's photographs evoke the verses of these poets, for whom the desert was a place of danger, desolation and sadness, as well as great beauty.

■ In 1973, divers discovered a mysterious wreck and its unusual cargo: a million pieces of brilliantly-colored broken glass.

n Egypt this winter, publisher Malcolm Forbes unveiled what must be the most unusual balloon ever flown: a huge, bright-yellow replica of the Sphinx 40 meters long (131 feet) and 20 meters high (66 feet).

Part of a Forbes personal goodwill mission to Egypt from the United States, "Sphinx II," as the great balloon was called, enchanted thousands of Egyptians as it soared over the real Sphinx and the Pyramids at Giza, above a stadium in Alexandria and over places like El-Minia, Asyut, Luxor, site of the Valley of the Kings, Aswan, site of Egypt's High Dam, Lake Nasser, the Suez Canal and the Sinai Desert

Sphinx II, moreover, was only part of the mission. Continuing a well publicized tradition of touring the world on a motorcycle, Forbes, the wealthy, extrovert publisher of *Forbes Magazine* and part-time aeronaut, also led a caravan of roaring motorcycles to those locations. Though motorcycles in Egypt are hardly a novelty these machines, brilliantly painted and freshly waxed, turned heads and drew applause along their 20-day, 3,701-kilometer trip (2,300 miles).

The tour, scheduled to include nine Egyptian cities, began in late February when we flew into Cairo, biked to the Sphinx in a siren-led parade, circled the pyramids, unpacked 272 kilograms (600 pounds) of rumpled nylon from a truck, inflated the balloon for the first time – before some 500 spectators – and sent it soaring high above the great stone figure

that it roughly duplicated.

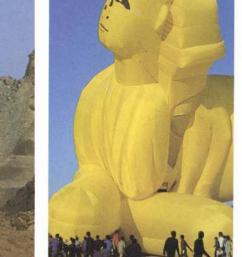
Though it was tightly tethered to stay no more than 30 meters or so above the ground (100 feet), the balloon, whipped about by strong winds, had to be brought down almost immediately. The following morning, however, we gave it another try – successfully, this time – and then headed for Alexandria, the second stop, where a crowd of 1,000 turned out at the city's stadium to see our huge yellow mascot soar up into the sky.

The next day, it was back to Cairo – for the start of six tough days of riding along the Nile to Aswan. On the first day we covered 264 kilometers (164 miles) and received our warmest welcome: people lined the roads and crowded into the streets, marathon runners came loping along beside us, and signs and banners made us welcome.

The children were especially enthusiastic. Whenever we began to deflate the balloon, they would come swarming onto the field to leap with great glee onto the collapsing skin and help depress it.







In Luxor, we finally unleashed Sphinx II for a free flight. Accompanied by a second, more traditionally shaped balloon – for photographers and observers – Sphinx II soared into the sky on a clear, windless morning to thunderous cheers and for an hour or so hovered over the Valley of the Kings, the great temples of Karnak and the site of Thebes, capital of ancient Egypt.

At Aswan, the next day, Sphinx II flew free again – but not without some anxious moments. The wind could easily have taken it out into the desert, or over the Nile or, worse, north to the huge Lake Nasser. Fortunately, a gentle breeze carried the balloon over Aswan and landed it on a hillside just outside of town.

From Aswan, we headed across the Eastern Desert to the Red Sea and up to the Suez Canal – a gruelling 440-kilometer run (275 miles) consisting mostly of rocks, gravel and deep red sand which explains, perhaps, why the Red Sea is so named. It took more than eight hours for that run, but the welcome we received was worth it: a festival of sports, dancing and singing, suggesting that this was one goodwill tour that was indeed generating goodwill.

The Sinai Desert was a shock. Mountainous, gritty, rocky and windy, the Sinai seemed like another world, its only inhabitants the 49 Bedouin tribes that have lived there for hundreds of years. We sometimes made speeds of 120 kilometers an hour (75 miles), but at other times got bogged down so badly that we were lucky to make a mile every 10 minutes.

By then, we were down to six motorcycles, two of them having succumbed at the Red Sea to the desert track's bruising punishment, and lost another on the way back to Cairo for what Malcolm Forbes decided would be a fitting end to the tour: a free flight over Cairo in Sphinx II.

It took time to get permission, and then we ran into trouble with the wind. But on a second attempt, Sphinx II soared up early one morning just as Cairo was on its way to work; as a result millions of Egyptians saw the balloon as it floated and hovered over the Nile and drifted northward before descending gently into a turnip field, to end the tour.

Before departing, Forbes conferred with President Hosni Mubarak. Then, balloons and bikes packed and loaded, he headed for New York, leaving behind a bemused audience of millions who, no doubt, will be telling the story of the flying yellow sphinx to enthralled children for generations.

Jay Gissen, who wrote for Forbes Magazine for three years, is now on the staff of Manhattan Inc., a New York business publication.



SHARDS OF HISTORY

In an ancient wreck deep in the Aegean, the largest collection of Islamic glass ever found

WRITTEN BY JOHN LAWTON PHOTOGRAPHED BY DONALD A. FREY n Corning, New York, this summer, scientists presented some answers to questions raised by the discovery, 10 years ago, of a mysterious medieval wreck and its unusual cargo: nearly a million fragments of brilliantly-colored broken glass.

The story of the "glass wreck" began in 1973, when Mehmet Askin, a retired Turkish sponge diver, guided members of the Texas-based Institute of Nautical Archeology (INA) to Serce Limani — a remote anchorage on a peninsula jutting into the Aegean Sea — and Yuksul Egdemir, a Turkish official assigned to the expedition, went down to see what was there. He surfaced with a rainbow of brightly-colored shards in his hands. "There's glass everywhere," he reported.

Because the INA was busy working on other wrecks then, nothing was done about the glass wreck for four years, and the glass littering the sea bed at Serce Limani remained a riddle. Was it simply jettisoned cargo, or was a wreck lying there too? In the spring of 1977, the institute, determined to find out, assembled a team of 20 Turkish and American divers and scientists and equipment: a wooden diving barge, a one-and-a-half-ton decompression chamber and a "telephone booth" - a submergible plastic dome connected by telephone lines and compressed-air hoses to the surface; divers can rest in the "booth" during seabed excavations.

"I was gambling heavily at Serce Limani," wrote George F. Bass, then the president of INA and now its archeological director. "The cost of such an expedition . . . is sizeable. Unless we found a ship along with the glass, the funds would be wasted."

Diving in two's for a maximum of 20 minutes at a stretch, the divers began their search. The first pair uncovered more glass and some amphorae — large clay jars used to carry oil or wine — but no wreck. A second pair went down to continue the search. They too made out several amphorae and a lump or two of glass, but still no ship.

"Then suddenly, at the very end of the dive," said Frederick van Doorninck of Texas A & M University, INA's head-quarters, "there it was, almost as if it had materialized from empty sand — the definite lines of a hull." It was lying on its port side in a bank of sand — that had



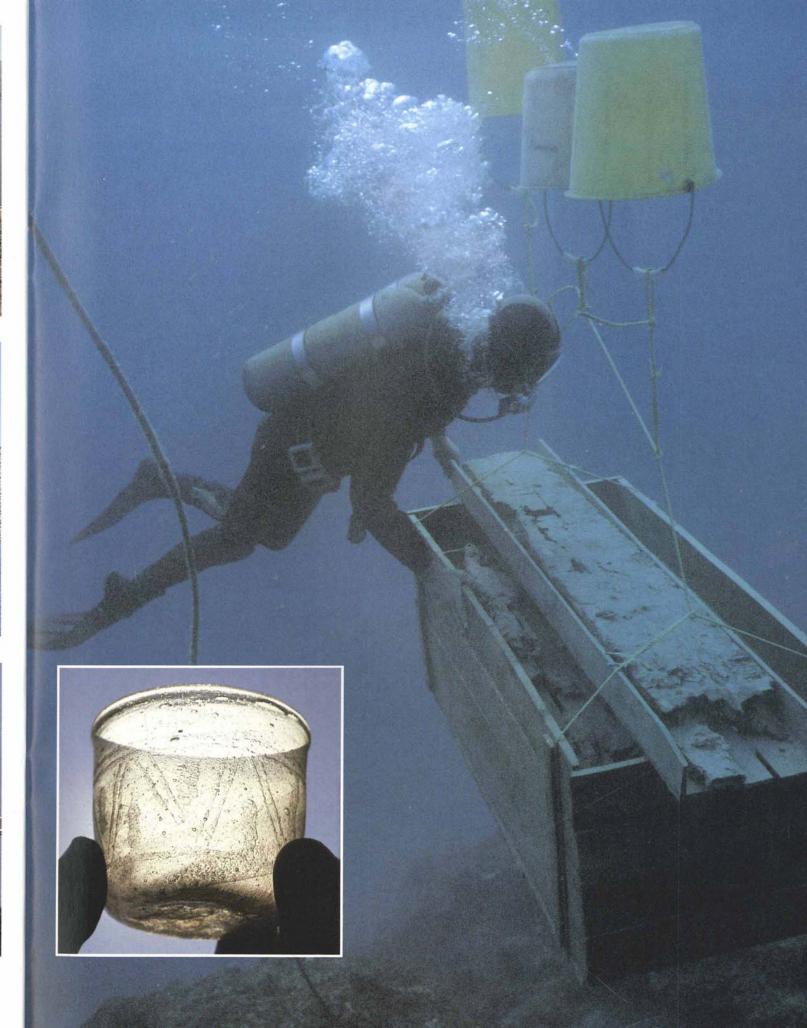
Above, Serce Limani, the remote anchorage in southwest Turkey, where, 10 years ago the mysterious "glass wreck" was found.



Above, INA's diving barge positioned over the wreck, and, opposite a diver bringing part of it to the surface.



Above, Bodrum Castle, where the "glass wreck" is being restored, and, inset opposite, part of its glittering cargo.



fortuitously preserved it from shipworm at the base of a rocky slope 33 meters (110 feet) below the surface.

Laying a metal grid over the wreck area to enable the precise plotting of every find, the divers began the slow, painstaking task of salvaging the sunken

ship and its contents.

It was difficult — and often painful work. The divers, for example, had to pry thousands of razor-sharp glass fragments out of the wreckage - some of them cemented together by silt and sand and though the risk of cuts and infection was high, the divers could not wear gloves, as touch, says Bass, was as important as sight when working on the murky sea floor.

Because they were working at depths of more than 30 meters (100 feet), they also had to think about the "bends," an often crippling, sometimes fatal malady, caused by nitrogen bubbles forming in the blood stream when a diver surfaces too rapidly.

There were other dangers too. Once, says Bass, a huge octopus descended from its lair in the rocky slope above the wreck, spread its tentacles across a twometer (six-foot) section of metal grid and remained for a while as if to say "I'm the king of Serce Limani." No one argued.

There were, however, compensations. Once, gently probing the sand in his assigned area of the grid, Bass felt the base of what he took to be another broken bottle. So far the divers had found no glass vessels intact, but now they did: a lovely piece of work rounded at the base — pinched at the sides in an hourglass effect - and, miraculously

unbroken.

This was to be rare. Of an estimated 10,000 glass vessels on board, only 80 remained intact — in living areas at the bow and stern of the ship. The rest, stowed in the ship's cargo hold, were smashed in a million pieces — literally. Nevertheless, the divers carefully brought up every fragment - including some that were cemented together and had to be separated with dental tools. Each of the shards was washed, dried and individually labeled with the exact position it was found on the wreck. From the hold, the expedition also salvaged two-and-a-half tons of blue, green and amber "cullet" - heavy chunks of glass, which, melted down, were the raw materials of the medieval glassblowers' trade — plus hundreds of shipboard artifacts: terra-cotta cooking vessels, lead fishing-net weights, a wicker basket of

iron tools, some weapons and some wooden chess and backgammon pieces.

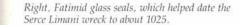
Two finds — a dozen copper coins and the 16 glass weights - helped date the wreck to about 1025. Other finds, however, tended to confuse the archeologists. The glass weights, for instance, were traced to the reign of the Fatimid Caliph al-Zahir (1021-1036), suggesting they belonged to an Arab merchant. But Byzantine lead seals, one still unused, pointed to the presence on board of one or more Greek merchants.

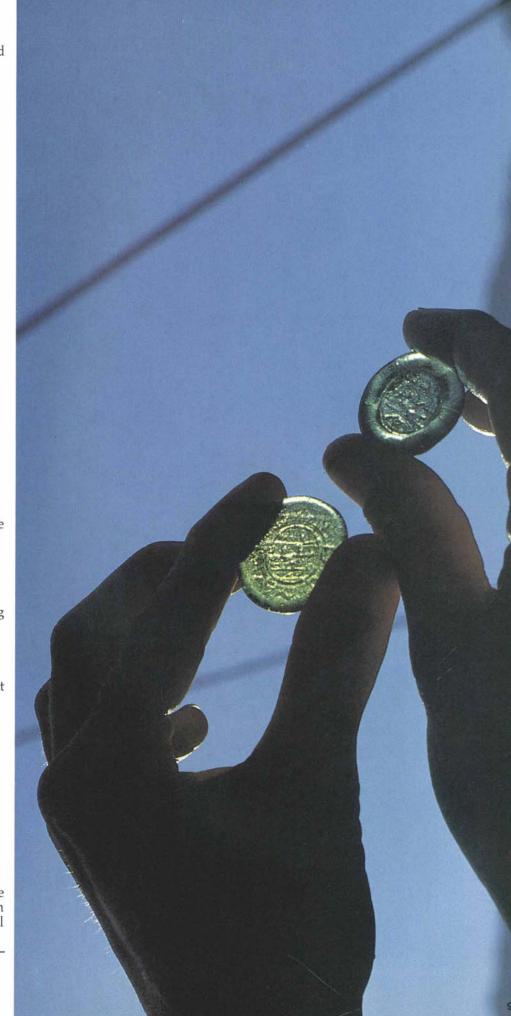
Shipboard pottery was also confusing — it included a mixture of Islamic and Byzantine shapes and designs. A bucket with an Arabic inscription was without doubt of Islamic origin, and jewelry found on board was almost certainly Fatimid. But food remains included pig bones, and many of the 900 lead fishing weights were inscribed with Christian symbols. One of the ship's eight iron anchors, on the other hand, is stamped with an Arabic letter. And although the glass was definitely Islamic in design, part of the cargo comprised dozens of Byzantine wine jars scratched with Greek graffiti. So was the ill-fated ship Islamic or Byzantine? And what was the nationality of the crew?

As the excavation progressed, the divers also realized that the wreck's hull was unlike any other they had seen before. "The Serce Limani wreck," wrote INA Ship Reconstructor J. Richard Steffy, "represented an undocumented ship type from a period and area in which comparatively little is known about maritime matters."

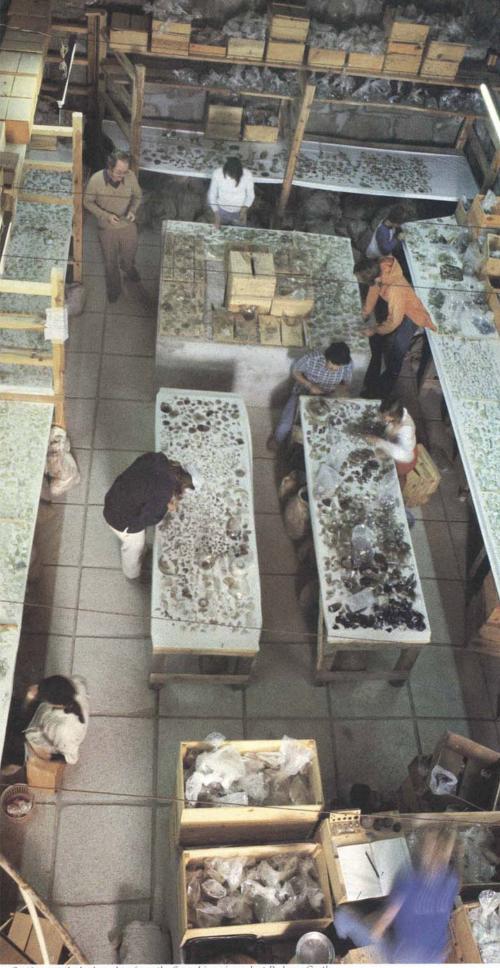
Accordingly, the INA set about raising and preserving the ship's waterlogged timbers - by a two-year bath in polyethylene glycol - with a view to reconstructing the hull as accurately as possible. "Hundreds of hours were spent experimenting with research models, making drawings of details, compiling lists of evidence to confirm or deny a process, or just pondering the reason for assembling things the way we found them," says Steffy. "Always the results were the same; only one construction sequence satisfied all the evidence at hand: the Serce Limani shipwright set frames before planks."

This was significant because hulls of earlier vintage were fashioned from the bottom up, a plank at a time, and the framework inserted afterwards. The Serce Limani craft had apparently been built in reverse — by nailing planks onto a skeletal frame of keel and ribs, much the same





Right, one of the 80 Islamic glass vessels found intact aboard the Serce Limani wreck.



Sorting out the broken glass from the Serce Limani wreck at Bodrum Castle

way as wooden ships are still made today. The result was a stronger, roomier hull, and a saving of time and timber. In fact, says Bass, the Serce Limani wreck is the "remains of the earliest known seagoing hull built with modern notions of naval architecture."

By the end of the summer of 1979, the INA had completed mapping and raising all fragments of glass and wood at Serce Limani, and towed them by barge to an imposing 15th century Crusaders' castle overlooking nearby Bodrum harbor. "The task before us was staggering," says Bass. "Stacked around us were crates containing about two thousand plastic bags of broken glass, each holding from one-to-five hundred fragments . . . of glass vessels."

To solve this million-piece jig-saw puzzle, the INA assembled a team of Turkish and American students of nautical archeology at long work tables in the basement of the Bodrum Castle's "English tower," with the shards piled upon them. The shards were arranged according to areas where they had been found — in the belief that joining pieces would be discovered among those fragments that were closer to each other in the wreck.

This, they soon learned, didn't work. So the students tried to catalog tumbler bases, jar rims, bottle necks and other recognizable shapes on the assumption there were few, if any, complete vessels in the cargo. And when this didn't work either, all the glass was packed back in the plastic bags and the search for joining pieces began again. The students sorted the shards into more than a dozen different categories according to color blue, amber, green, purple and plain and decorative patterns, both molded and engraved. Finally, by further subdividing individual color into darker and lighter shades, they began to spot "joins."

The student sorters — now joined by half-a-dozen local glass menders, a professional glass conservator and two full-time illustrators — each study a specific shape; one has classified nearly 250 glass lamps, and another has identified and partially mended the remains of 800 tumblers and beakers, 100 of them engraved with intricate designs. Other shapes noted include bowls, bottles, pitchers, plates, jars, cupping vessels for draining blood — even hospital urinals.

Some of the Serce Limani wreck's glittering cargo is already on show in Bodrum Castle, along with the remains, found nearby, of the Tomb of Halikarnassos — one of the Seven

Wonders of the World (See Aramco World, May-June, 1980). Eventually a new museum at Bodrum will house the restored hull of the glass wreck. But meanwhile, at least, the scientists have been able to answer some of its riddles.

In Corning, New York, for example, chemical analyses of 80 specimens of glass from the wreck, made by the Corning Museum of Glass, indicate that it is of Islamic manufacture, according to Dr Robert Brill, a research scientist at the museum. "With few exceptions, the vessel glass and cullet have a uniform composition and could well have been made at a single factory," says Dr. Brill.

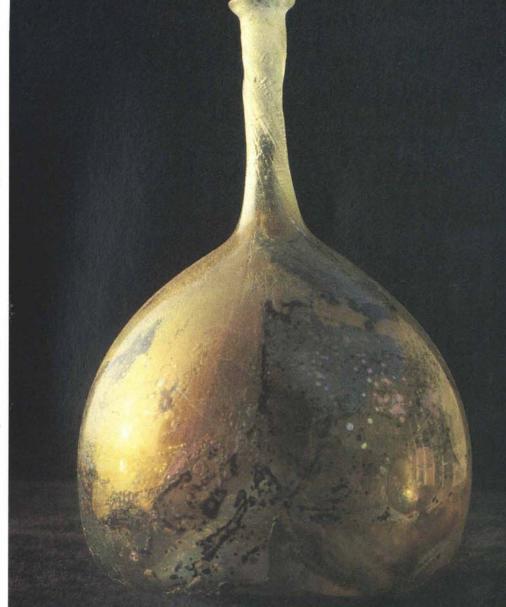
One surprise was the discovery that "four fragments of rare examples of emerald-green glass from the wreck have an extremely high lead content," says Dr. Brill. "Discounting certain Chinese and Japanese glasses — which are many centuries earlier than the Serce Limani glass — only four parallels for this unusual composition are known among the more than 1,600 samples of ancient glass analyzed previously in Corning. The parallels are all Islamic."

The rare emerald-green glass and other lead-containing objects on board were also subjected to lead-isotope analysis — to try and learn where they might have been made. "The objects contain lead from four or five different mining regions, and probably were brought on board at different ports of call," says Dr. Brill. "At the present it appears that these leads came from mines in Turkey or Iran."

The emerald-green glasses, some ceramic glazes, and a lead net sinker all contain a particularly rare type of lead. "Among nearly 1,500 ancient objects and ores studied previously, only two other leads have ever been found with the same isotope ratios," says Dr. Brill. "One is an ore from a mine in northwestern Iran, which might have supplied lead to cities along the Black Sea coast. The other is from an emeraldgreen flask from Heshbon, an archeological site not far from Amman in Jordan. That glass dates from the 9th to 11th centuries and might have been made in the same factory as the Serce Limani emerald-green glasses."

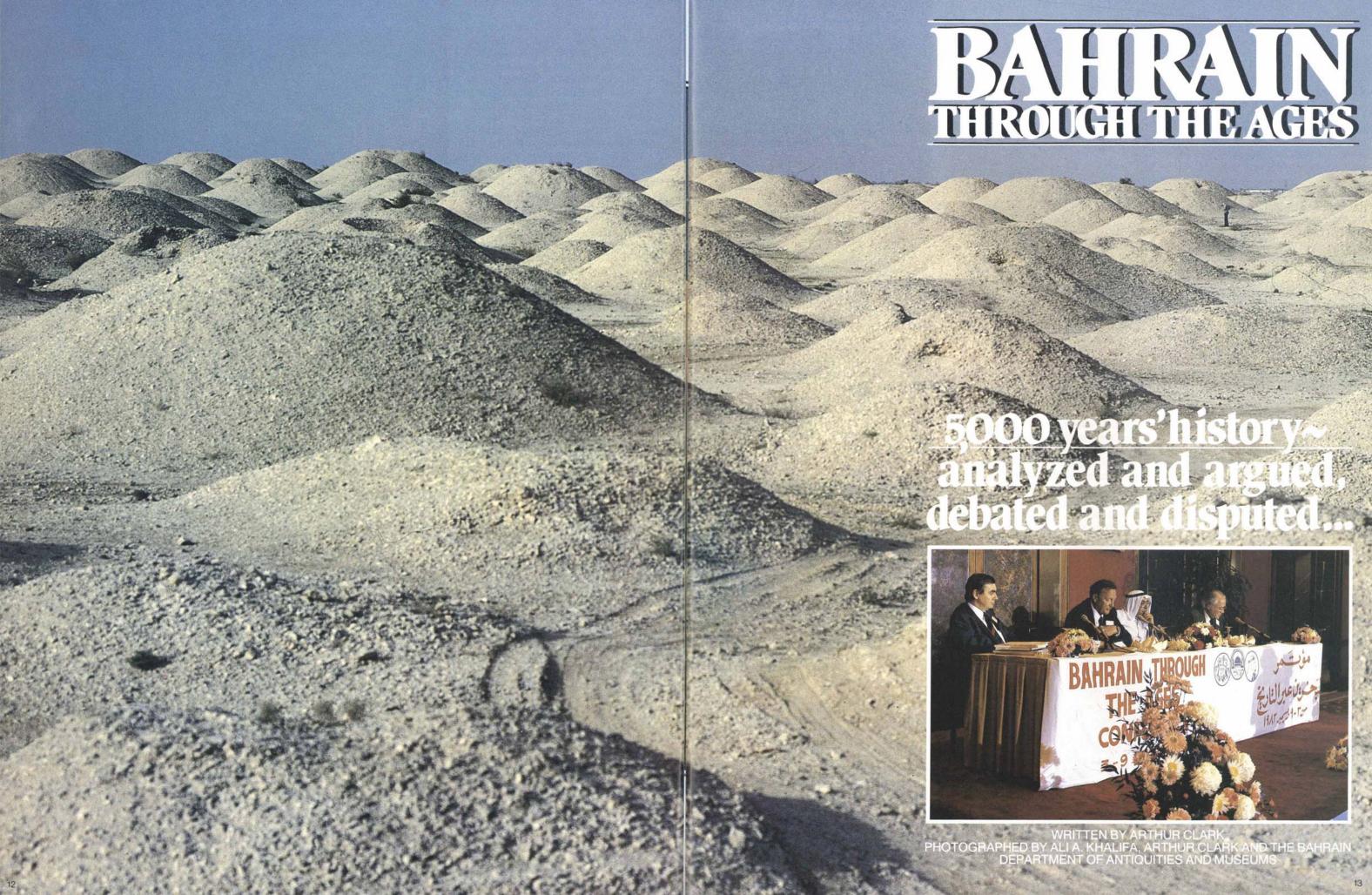
Dr. Brill's research, of course, is just a start. Despite this summer's discoveries, the wreck remains what one nautical archeologist describes as "the most intriguing ancient ship yet discovered."

John Lawton is a contributing editor of Aramco World Magazine





A glass vessel, above, and a piece of raw glass, below, which scientists say could have come from the same factory.



n December last year, exactly two centuries after the Al Khalifa family conquered Bahrain, the tenth Al Khalifa to rule that small Arabian Gulf island brought together 116 world-class scholars for six days of discussion and debate on 5,000 years' history on and around Bahrain. Called "Bahrain through the Ages," the conference was the imaginative way chosen by Shaikh Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa to commemorate both 200 years of the family's rule and the anniversary of his own accession 22 years ago.

To both the local and international press, the conference was news. Reuters, for example, called it "the biggest event of its type ever staged in the Middle East." It was also a success in terms of those involved — not only the specialists invited to attend but also those who asked to participate. "We were amazed at the number of scholars who just wrote and asked to attend," said Tariq Almoayed, Bahrain's minister of information and a member of a ministerial committee formed in 1982 to plan the commemoration.

As one result, the 116 scholars who showed up spanned a multiplicity of disciplines: archeologists, historians, anthropologists, geologists, geographers, numismatists, philatelists and archivistsas well as the man who, in 1981, retraced the route of the legendary sailor Sindbad from Oman to China. Furthermore, the conference was deluged with information on Bahrain: 106 papers in four main categories: "Pre-Islamic Archeology and History," "The Islamic Period in Bahrain," "Bahrain's Modern History" — dated from the Al Khalifa conquest by Shaikh Ahmed Al-Fatih in 1783 – and "The Conservation of Historic Monuments in Bahrain."

In such papers, the history of Bahrain — a 33-island archipelago one-fourth the size of Rhode Island, with a population barely ahead of Tucson, Arizona — was analyzed and argued, debated and disputed

Perhaps even more important than the papers were the endless talks between or among the scholars. These talks hardly halted one day before they were taken up again the next morning, continued inside and outside conference headquarters in the capital of Manama, on field trips that ranged over the northern half of the country's main island — and even in dashes over the



H.H. Shaikh 'Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa greeting a delegate

causeway linking Bahrain to the island of Muharraq — site of the National Museum and the nation's busy international airport. Many delegates, in fact, kept right on talking to colleagues until their planes were called for boarding after the conference officially closed.

Indeed these talks, a sort of conclave, were much more important than the public forum. "What's been most important here is the contacts, the relationships that will be established between scholars in different countries,"



said Dr. Jacques Tixier of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique,
Valbonne, France, an archeologist with six seasons of work in Qatar under his belt. In fact, said Tixier, who delivered a paper entitled "Pre-history and Protohistory of Bahrain," information exchanged "under the table is almost as important as that exchanged over the table."

His comments were echoed by Dr. Iuris Zarins, an American archeologist from Southwest Missouri State University, who has worked for several seasons in Saudi Arabia. "It's a chance," the University of Chicago-educated scholar said, "to meet colleagues you just read about," adding that the meeting made the vital delivery of first-hand information easy. "Exchanges don't take place at 15-minute paper deliveries," he said, "but at breakfast, at dinner, at coffee breaks. Informally, that's where you get your data. Formal paper readings are just the tip of the iceberg. Bahrain's providing a good service; it's really nvaluable.

"There are lots of misconceptions," Zarins went on. "This way, eventually, you can hammer out a consensus. You can go on from here to build a strong regional case [for ancient man] which you haven't had in the past."

The consensus, to be sure, was tentative; no one at "Bahrain through the Ages" could fully absorb more than 100 points of view in six days. Nevertheless, the history of Bahrain was unrolled — in detail — from the time, 4,000 to 5,000



An aerial view of the Saar burial complex in Bahrain

years ago when, according to Dr. Curtis E. Larsen of the U.S. Geological Survey, rising sea levels — the result of the end of a glacial era to the north — separated Bahrain from what, today, is the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia.

Throughout its history, Bahrain has been the crossroads for traders and invaders, and is also believed to be the "holy" and "pure" land of Dilmun referred to in cuneiform tablets recovered from ruins in Mesopotamia — present day Iraq. As such, it is the land — according to a Sumerian story more than four millennia old — to which the gods sent Ziusudra, the survivor of the Flood, and to which the legendary Gilgamesh sailed in his vain search for immortality (See *Aramco World*, July-August, 1983).

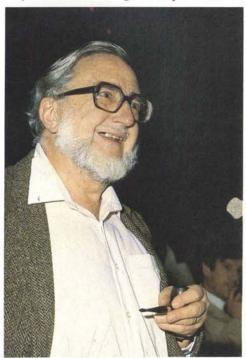
As Dilmun, around 2000 B.C., Bahrain was the center of a trading network through which were funnelled valuable cargoes from Mesopotamia, from "Meluhha," believed to be the rawmaterials-rich Indus valley, and from "Makkan," thought to have been copper-producing Oman (See *Aramco World*, May-June, 1983), and the eastern part of today's Saudi Arabia.

Third-and second-millennium B.C. "temples" at Barbar on the northern edge of Bahrain highlight this ancient history. Other parts of the Bahrain story are revealed at Qala'at al-Bahrain — site of seven "cities," dating from before the earliest temple to the ruins of a 16th century Portuguese fort — and more is unveiled at "one of the largest, if not the largest, burial grounds in the Middle

East," according to Harvard Peabody Museum Director C.C. Lamberg-Karlovsky.

Bahrain's later history is just as rich, particularly with the rise of Islam in the seventh century, when Bahrain "had its share in the shaping of Islamic history . . . (and) acted as a launch pad for Islamic conquests in the East . . ." said Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs Shaikh Abdullah bin Khaled Al Khalifa, chairman of the conference organizing committee.

Such a varied history, of course, requires a wide range of experts to



Geoffrey Bibby, first to "dig" Bahrain.

study it and the specialists at the Bahrain conference were nothing if not varied. One was Bahrain Antiquities and Museums Department Director Shaikha Haya 'Ali Al Khalifa, the only woman in the Gulf to hold such a post.

Shaikha Haya, who will head the new, \$34.5 million National Museum in Manama when it is completed, took advantage of the conference to display sliced seashells uncovered in excavations in Bahrain and first identified as jewelry. Shaikha Haya argued that they were, in fact, not decorations but rather another ancient seal-stamp fashioned from a local marine resource — rather than the usual chlorite or soapstone seals found in many locations in the Gulf.

Another of the specialists was veteran

Geoffrey Bibby, co-head of the pioneering Moesgaard Forhistorisk Museum expedition from Aarhus, Denmark, which commenced activities on the island on December 4, 1953, three decades, almost to the day, before the opening of the conference. Back in Bahrain with five more of the little museum's experts — two thirds of that institution's staff — Bibby described the Danish museum's pioneering work in Bahrain as part of a process wherein "a new civilization discovers itself when the time is ripe . . . and we were lucky to be the nearest archeologists at that time."

Author of the popular book Looking for Dilmun, about the Danish museum's work on Bahrain and neighboring countries, Bibby praised the Bahrain government for its "enlightened attitude," and said the conference was invaluable. "There's not merely factual information being exchanged here," he said, "but ways of thinking about things. And that means there will be more work going on here. People now know what they are going to look for. Before, we got together occasionally. Earlier we had a lot of 'duologues.' Bahrain has let us all get together."

For Bibby, of course, Bahrain's good will toward scholarship is not new. In the early 1950's, Shaikh 'Isa's father, the late Shaikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, helped pave the way for the initial Danish expedition by offering £1,100, to assist in its proposed work — an action unique in Near East archeology at that time. Then, in 1970, Bahrain hosted the Third International Conference on Asian Archeology — at which Bibby served as general secretary.



Conference chairman Shaikh Abdullah talks to a Saudi delegate.

As to this conference, Bibby said the Bahrain gathering was "the most strenuous conference I've ever attended," adding that "everybody is enjoying the dogfights thoroughly" and is "going away with a lot of new ideas and inspiration."

Among the "dogfights" – academic disputes - mentioned by Bibby was one that broke out over a controversial paper entitled "Death in Dilmun." The work of Harvard's Lamberg-Karlovsky, it posited that all the tombs in the vast Bahrain fields were not meant for its local population, as most scholars believe.

There were "insufficient indigenous settlement patterns [i.e. population]" on the island "to account for the enormous number of graves in Bahrain and the adjacent eastern provinces of Saudi Arabia," Lamberg-Karlovsky argued. Instead, he claimed, the tombs "represent an elaborate funerary cult reflected in Sumerian literature referring to Dilmun" which suggests "the possibility that Dilmun was a place for burial where immortality could be obtained.'

The archeologist also took up the question raised by the Arab Expedition to Bahrain in the late 1970's: why nearly 20 per cent of the tombs opened contained no human burials. "These vacant tombs may have been commemorative tombs, to serve as a home for the spirit of one who died in more distant lands," Lamberg-Karlovsky said, or perhaps "commemorative and/ or actual burials of Sumerians were

interred on Dilmun ..." he hypothesized. Lamberg-Karlovsky's theory was immediately challenged from many sides. Bibby, for example, said accounts of transportation of corpses to distant lands for interrment were nowhere to be found in the corpus of Sumerian records and that, indeed, the Sumerian Ziusudra

had been carried to Dilmun by the gods

Dr. Bruno Frohlich, a physical anthropologist from the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C.,

not because he was dead but for

everlasting life.



Tariq Almoayed, Bahrain's Minister of Information.



ousef Shirawi, Minister of Development

presented a fascinating rebuttal of Lamberg-Karlovsky's theory based on an analysis of bones found in the tombs.

Frohlich, a Dane who has studied human remains found in Bahrain tombs, said that statistical tables showed that the island's population could account for most of the tombs. "About 150,000 burial mounds are estimated to be associated with the time period approximately between 2800 and 1800 B.C.," he said. Taking into consideration various life expectancies and possible periods of major tomb building, "the



Dr. Bruno Frohlich of the Smithsonian Institution.



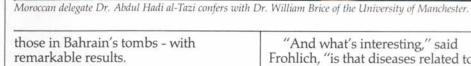
Shaikh Abdullah gives the opening address.

large number of burial mounds can easily be explained by demographic patterns on Bahrain island...

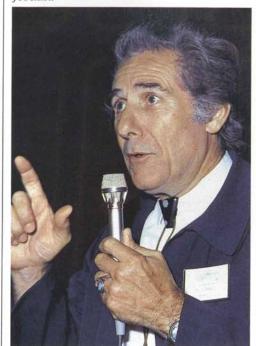
The Smithsonian expert also corrected his early findings that some Bahrain tombs were empty, explaining that he has since discovered that the saline environment of the tombs crystallizes bones into particles too tiny to be easily seen. Frohlich, whose computer-aided analysis can determine a tomb occupant's sex, age at death, and even what he or she died of, has compared bones found in Jordan with



Marny Golding of Dhahran



For one, life expectancy in Bahrain around the turn of the third millennium was up to 40 years, "about five to eight years more" than in Jordan. Furthermore, the Bahrainis had "the highest stature in the Middle East," said Frohlich. Adult males averaged 170.4 centimeters (about five-and-a-half feet) compared to 164 centimeters in Jordan; adult females stood 162.4 centimeters. compared to just 154 centimeters in Jordan.



Dr. Jacques Tixier of the CNRS

"And what's interesting," said Frohlich, "is that diseases related to old people, such as degenerative arthritis, are found in much higher frequencies here than other places." One skeleton uncovered in Bahrain was that of a man over 35 years old with a fully fused backbone. "That man could not function in society," related Frohlich, concluding that Bahrain's Bronze Age society "was obviously so successful it could take care of sick people. It didn't ask them to leave or kill them or starve them to death. Based on its skeletons, it was a wealthy and successful society.'

The tombs have yielded other secrets too. Bahrainis living as long as 4,000 years ago had a sweet tooth, ate highsugar foods, suffered tooth decay and even had dentists, said dental anthropologist Dr. Karen Hojgaard of Copenhagen.

Studies of the teeth and jaws of ancient Bahrain residents, she reported, revealed "a pronounced ante-mortem loss of especially molars," and X-rays revealed cracked tips or roots still in jaws, so the Bahrainis appear to be the first people in the world known to have carried out dental extractions."

In her Dilmun article, Hojgaard even included a photo of ancient metal instruments unearthed in Bahrain, alongside modern Danish instruments used to extract teeth today. The resemblance was not mere chance; it was quite likely, she said, that the "common torment" of toothache was treated by extracting the offending tooth by means

of instruments like the old tools shown.

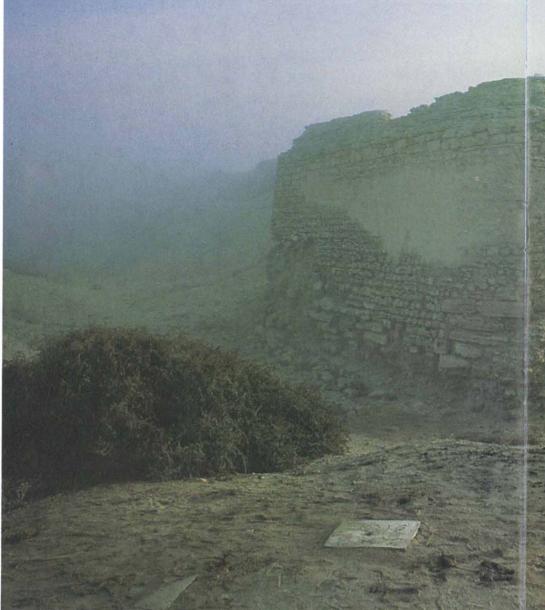
Yet another delegate, Marny Golding, a longtime resident of Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, zeroed in on her specialty in a talk entitled "Artifacts from Later Pre-Islamic Occupation in Eastern Arabia." Golding, who stunned the 1970 Asian Archeology Conference in Bahrain when she and colleague Grace Burkholder revealed finds in the Eastern Province of pre-Sumerian 'Ubaid pottery, until then unknown in the Arabian Peninsula, took delegates on a tour of important sites in the region which has long had close ties with Bahrain. She ranged from the tomb fields near Dhahran to the old inland trading city of Thaj – with remarks and slides that focused on the period from the eighth century B.C. to the third century.

Some 20 papers focused on "The Islamic Period in Bahrain," describing the first letters from the Prophet Muhammad to the ruler, his early embrace of the faith and the strong financial support given Islam. Spanning the era from the seventh century to the 17th century, they included a paper by Dr. Abdul Latif Kanoo, Bahrain's undersecretary of housing, "Bahrain in the First Century Hijra," and one written by Dr. 'Ali al-Doi, Bahrain's consul in Montreal on "The Geography and History of Bahrain during the Middle Ages"

On this subject there was also a paper by Dr. Monique Kevren of the Mission Archéologique Française, Paris, on "Qala'at al-Bahrain: A Strategic Position from the Hellenistic Period to Modern Times," and by Dr. Abdul Karem Al Ane, Baghdad University, on "The population of Bahrain at the Beginning of Islam."

Dr. Paul Kunitzsch, Munich University, discussed a 1490 account of Bahrain by the navigator Ahmad ibn Majid: "And on it there is sweet water in all directions. The most interesting thing there is a place called *al-Qasasir*; there a man can dive into the salty sea with a water skin and fill it with sweet water while being down in the salt water..."

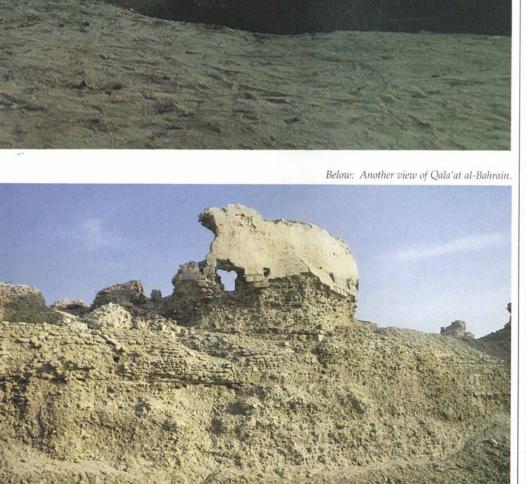
Lending a practical knowledge of sailing to the conference was Tim Severin, lately captain of the *Sohar*, a traditional, hand sewn, fully rigged Arab sailing vessel which made the 9,600 kilometer (6,000 mile) voyage from Oman to China in 1980-81, following in the wake of the legendary sailor of the



Above: A view of Qala'at al-Bahrain, which contains seven different occupation levels.

Below: The modern Hilton Hotel in Manama shows the modern face of Bahrain.





Middle Ages named Sindbad (See *Aramco World*, September - October, 1981).

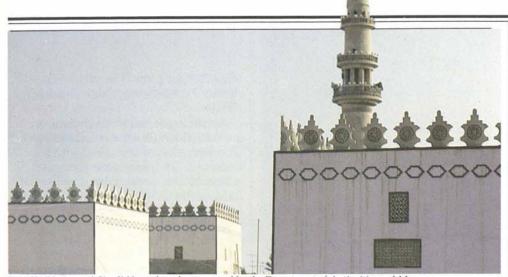
According to Severin, scholars, who are considering trade carried out by early wooden sailing ships, should "think timber . . . (and) forget the European notion of a harbor: it's not relevant to India or the Gulf."

"Look for a land route trade," Severin said, "fresh water, a good holding ground to get the anchor down and — most important — a facility to apply antifouling to the ships to get rid of 'shipworm' and to load the vessel." That meant, he said, a place where a ship could be beached at high tide so that work could be carried out with ease at low tide.

Some papers dealt with material from the archives of nations with former strategic and commercial interests in Bahrain. Dr. Salih Ozbaran of Ege University, Izmir, Turkey, discussed "Bahrain in the 16th Century as Reflected in Turkish and Portuguese Sources," and Dr. Ihsan Surayya Sirma, Ataturk University, Ankara, spoke on "Turkish Documents in the History of Bahrain in the 16th, 17th and 18th Centuries." B.J. Slot, the director of the Dutch State Archives, delivered a paper on "The Dutch East India Company and Bahrain (1645-1762)," while Dr. Magbul Ahmed of Kashmir University, Srinagar, India, spoke on "The Geography and History of Bahrain as Described in Arabic and Persian Sources."

The conference section on "Bahrain's Modern History" ranged all the way from a paper by Shaikh Abdullah Al Khalifa and Dr. 'Ali Aba Hussain, director of Bahrain's Documentation Center, on the history of the tribe from which sprang the Al Khalifa — "From the History of the 'Utub During the 18th Century" — to one entitled "The Making of Modern Bahrain: Reflections on an Effective Experiment in Nation Building" by Dr. Emile Nakleh of Mount St. Mary's College, in Virginia.

In their paper, Shaikh Abdullah and Dr. Hussain described how the 'Utub moved from Qatar to al-Hasa in the eastern part of the Arabian mainland, participated in the conquest of Qatif in 1671, and moved back to Qatar to take part in the seafaring trade. In 1700, they attacked Bahrain for the first time but failed to capture it, and settled in Kuwait until, in 1762, they returned to Qatar and



Bait Shaikh 'Isa and Siyadi House have been restored by the Department of Antiquities and Museums. Opposite, the gaily painted ceiling and exquisitely fashioned windows of Siyadi House.

built a fortress at Zubara on the coast. In 1783, under Ahmed, later known as "The Conqueror," they first beat off an attack from Bahrain, then conquered it.

Focusing on Bahrain's ages-old economic lifeline, Shaikh Khalid Al Khalifa, a member of the ruling family who teaches at Bahrain University College, traced "Bahraini Trade from 'Utub Rule to the Discovery of Oil."

"It is anticipated that this commodity (oil), too, will vanish at the beginning of the next century," said Shaikh Khalid. "The end of the economic role of oil does not mean that Bahrain will be resourceless. Trade is a continuous process and its development will take the place of preeminence in the economic life of the country."

Later records, as well as those from earlier centuries, figured strongly in the Manama meetings. Among them were the diaries of C. Dalrymple Belgrave, advisor of the British government to Bahrain from 1926 to 1957. Containing rich, day-to-day details of life on Bahrain, as well as astute political insights, the advisor's diaries might prove a valuable resource for historians today, said his nephew, Robert Belgrave, of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, noting, "It is in the consciousness and understanding of its own history, the bad parts as well as the good, that a country can best find its own history, the way through the tangle of current events."

Dr. T.A. Anthony, Savannah State College, Georgia, struck a similar chord in her paper documenting the "Modern History of Bahrain (1890-1935) from American Sources," including photographs of the period. Using records of the Mission of the Dutch Reformed Church of North America to the Gulf, whose headquarters was in Bahrain, Anthony noted that the information left by the doctors and nurses who had worked in eastern Arabia and Bahrain could provide valuable additional information to historians working on the area.

"There is nothing more valuable for a historian than having an eyewitness who is an outsider observing events and happenings... The contribution of various members of the American-Arabian Mission in this connection should not be underestimated. Both doctors and nurses wrote extensively on the social and economic life of the inhabitants in places visited across the Gulf," she said.

Screening photographs from the Arabian mainland and Bahrain, she added that students of the region could tap a rich vein of information by looking at mission photos. They could prove invaluable in researching the history of "medicine and modern education, the architecture and the landscape of the period (and) social and cultural history," she said.

Dr. Carney Gavin, curator of the Harvard Semitic Museum, could not agree more (See *Aramco World* November - December, 1983). In fact, his contribution to the conference, titled "Early Photographic Records of Bahrain," had almost exactly the same message.

Gavin showed delegates what he said was the first-ever photograph of Bahraini citizens — two pilgrims in Jiddah in 1886. Then the enthusiastic Gavin flashed another photo on the screen. "Does anyone know where this is?" he asked his audience of experts, and drew an immediate reply from someone in the Iraqi delegation: "Basra — probably at the turn of the century." Gavin called his

discipline "photo-archeology" and invited all delegates to "save old photos." Said Gavin, "I'm eager to work with you" to preserve and utilize old photographs for research.

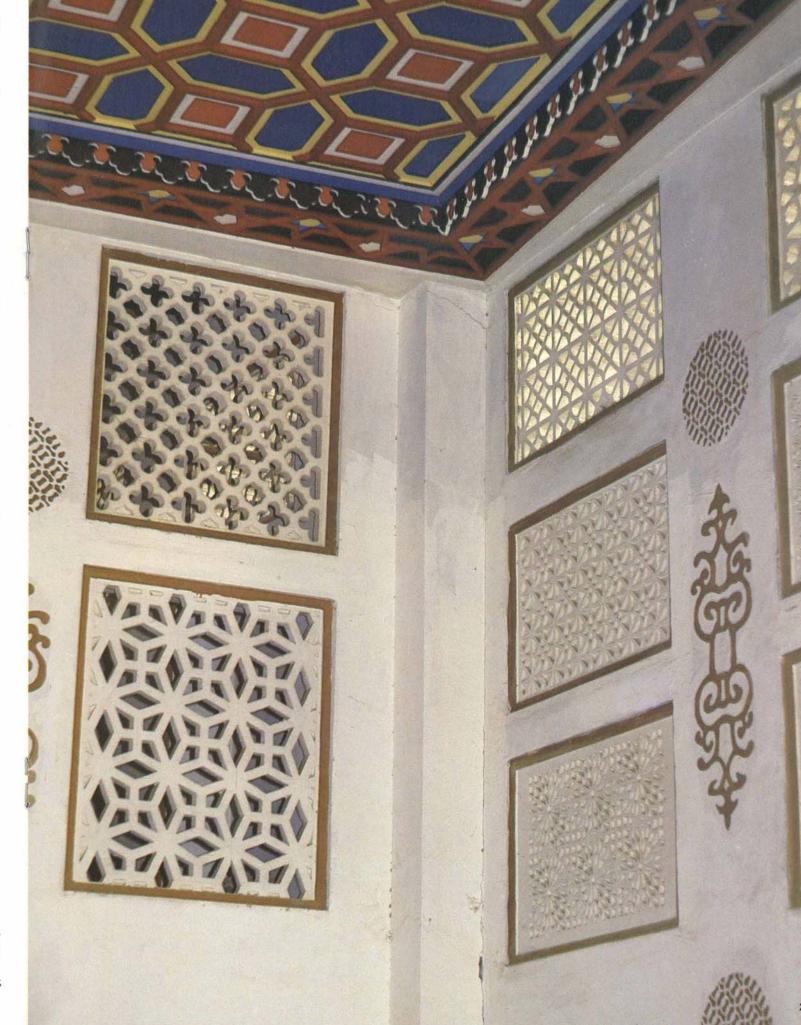
The most modern era — today, and even tomorrow — was another conference target. George Rentz, an Arabist who retired from Aramco's Government Relations Department in Dhahran in 1963 after 17 years in the kingdom, touched on a point of major importance in the area today: state-to-state and regional cooperation. He described the 1958 "Abu Sa'fah Agreement" between Bahrain and Saudi Arabia which settled the question of ownership of a shoal located between the two countries.

The accord, reached in face-to-face talks between the Amir of Bahrain, and King Sa'ud ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz of Saudi Arabia, seven years after negotiations under British auspices in London had failed, gave title to Abu Sa'fah to Saudi Arabia under an arrangement that called for the sharing of any oil found there. In the mid-1960's oil was found at Abu Sa'fah and, noted Rentz, "both parties have adhered faithfully to the agreement since it was signed."

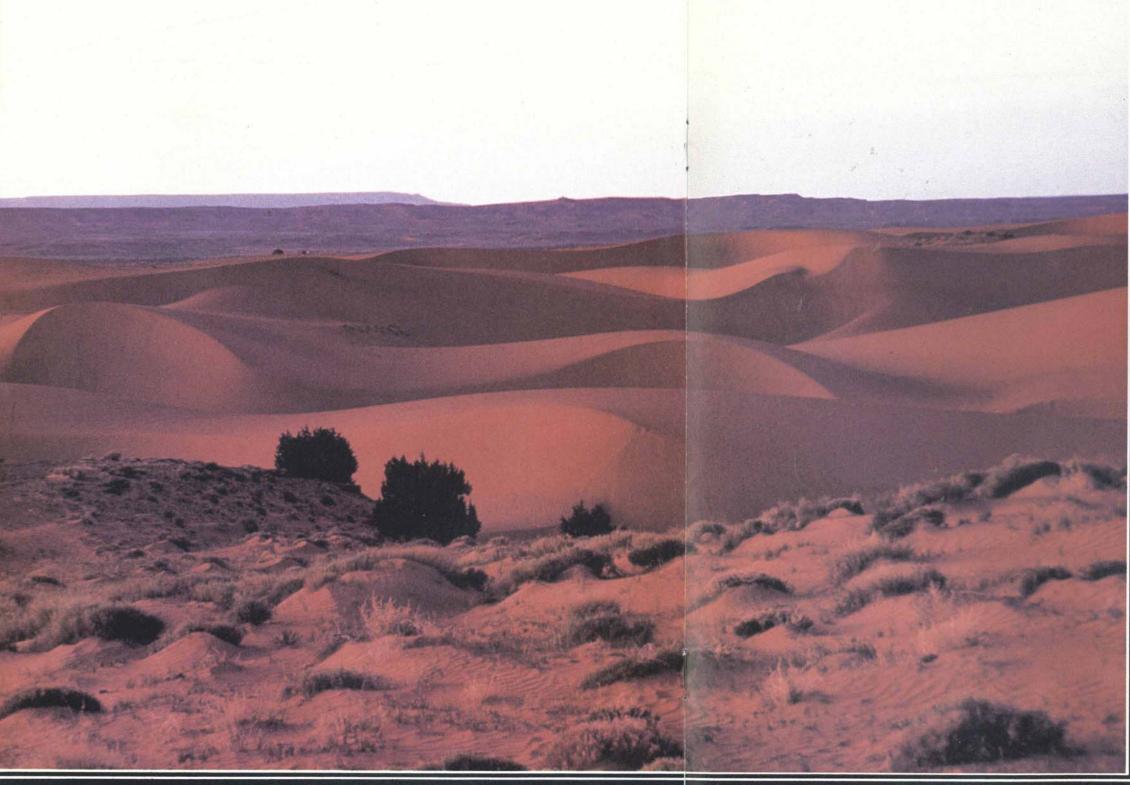
Dwelling on Bahrain's most recent history, including its independence in 1971 and especially its membership in the Gulf Cooperation Council, (See Aramco World, January-February, 1984), modern historian Emile Nakleh noted, "Bahrain's stature in regional and international political and economic relations has far exceeded its small size, both territorially and demographically... as an open, cosmopolitan society, Bahrain has provided us with a success story in nation-building..."

Apart from making Bahrainis themselves "more aware of their historical heritage," Minister Almoayed predicted a boom in the number of persons researching about Bahrain. The "biggest import" of the meeting was to the scholars in attendance themselves, he said, in turn "generating interest among students so that everything being said here today, by multiplier effect, will produce maybe five times the interest we have today. If we have 100 papers today, we will have 500 researchers to follow."

Arthur Clark, now a writer for Aramco Public Affairs in Dhahran, formerly worked on U.S. newspapers, and was a free-lance writer in Egypt.



DUNESCAPES



...the desert where the endless past endures...
Nabigha al-Dhubyani

PHOTOGRAPHED BY PAMELA ROBERSON

n 1972, Pamela Roberson, inspired by T.E. Lawrence's Seven Pillars of Wisdom, set out to record her own personal impressions of the desert. Ten years and many thousands of miles of solitary travel later, the result – a photographic exhibition called "Dunescapes" – is currently on tour in the United States.

Roberson's self-confessed love affair with the desert began while she was living in the Arab East. On trips out of Lebanon, where she spent four years studying life in a Druze village, she learned of the "incredible hold the desert has on people." Brought up on the green East Coast of America, Roberson's curiosity was aroused. "I went to the library and took out Seven Pillars of Wisdom," she says, "... and my love affair with the desert began. Any landscape which could inspire so many laudatory passages written with such fervor for the land, was something I felt compelled to experience first hand."

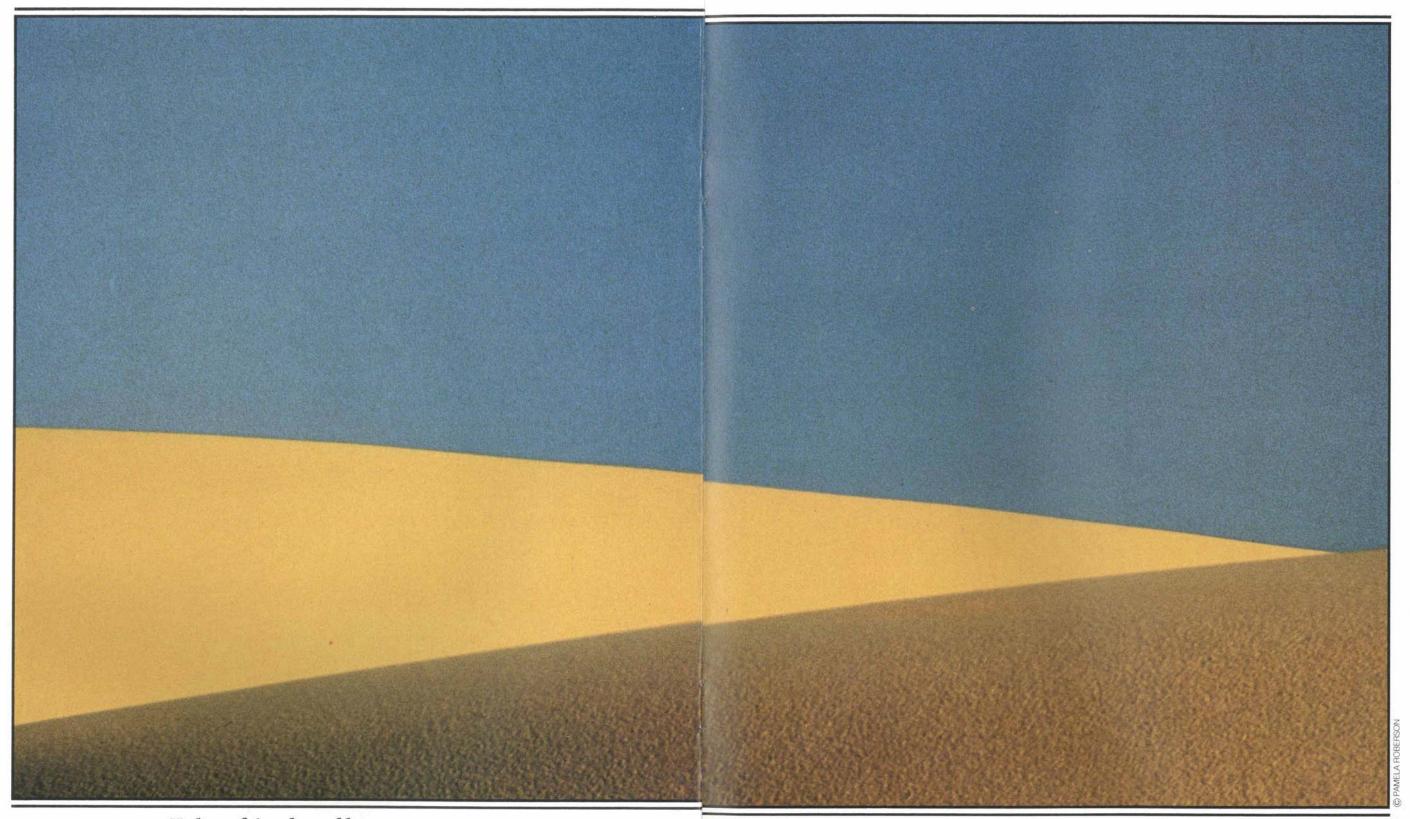
During the next nine years, Roberson hiked the deserts of the Middle East — Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia — as well as deserts in the United States, Turkey and Morocco. "I was stuck in quicksand, caught in sand storms and ruined several outfits of camera equipment," says Roberson. "Sometimes I camped for days and days in temperatures soaring to 52.5 degrees Centigrade (126 degrees Fahrenheit) waiting for the right moments of dawn and the afterglow of sunset — the magic."

Roberson does not work with filters. "I always work with natural light, unfettered and unadulterated. I wait – period. I work alone, hiking into the desert with my 35 millimeter, tripod, polarizer and water. That's my equipment. There are no tricks or changes in the printing."

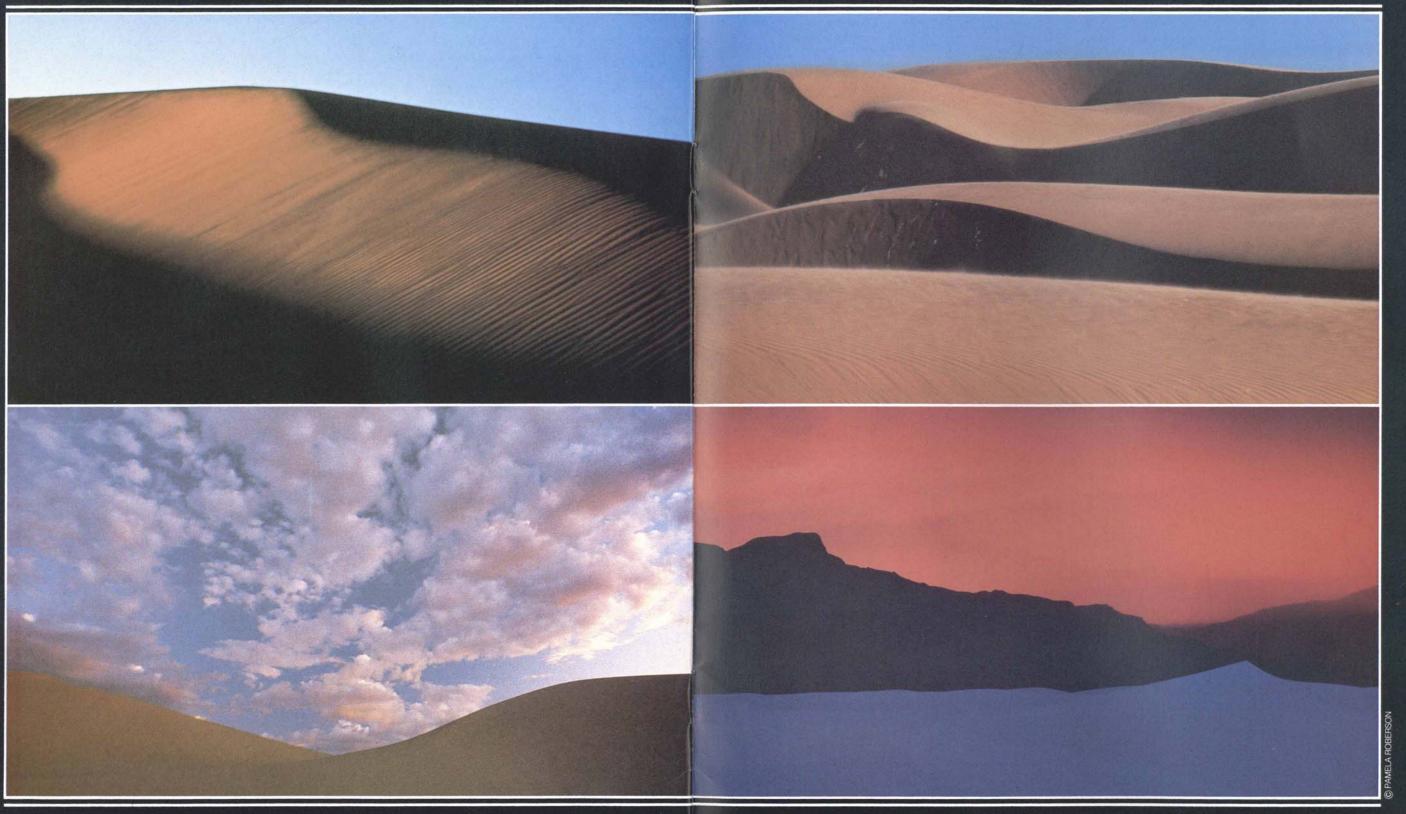
Roberson's "Dunescapes" exhibition – a selection of 27 of her best photographs – opened in December, 1981, at the Los Angeles Museum of Science and Industry, and further museum and fine art gallery exhibitions have since followed – the latest in Washington in June.

- The Editors

© PAMELA ROBERSON

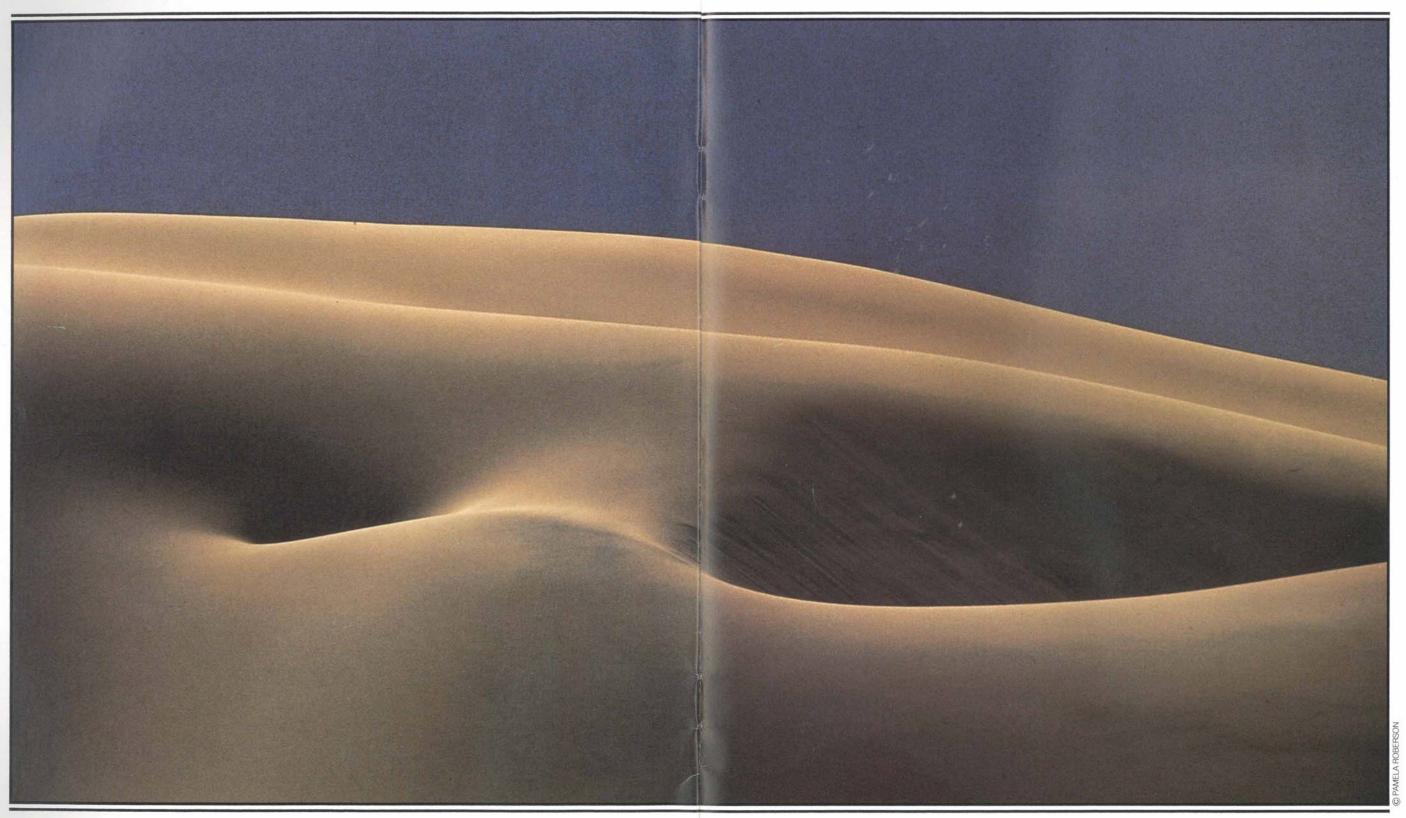


Halt my friends and let us weep for the memory of a loved one and a camp by the dune between al-Dakbkbul and Hawmal... Imru al-Qais



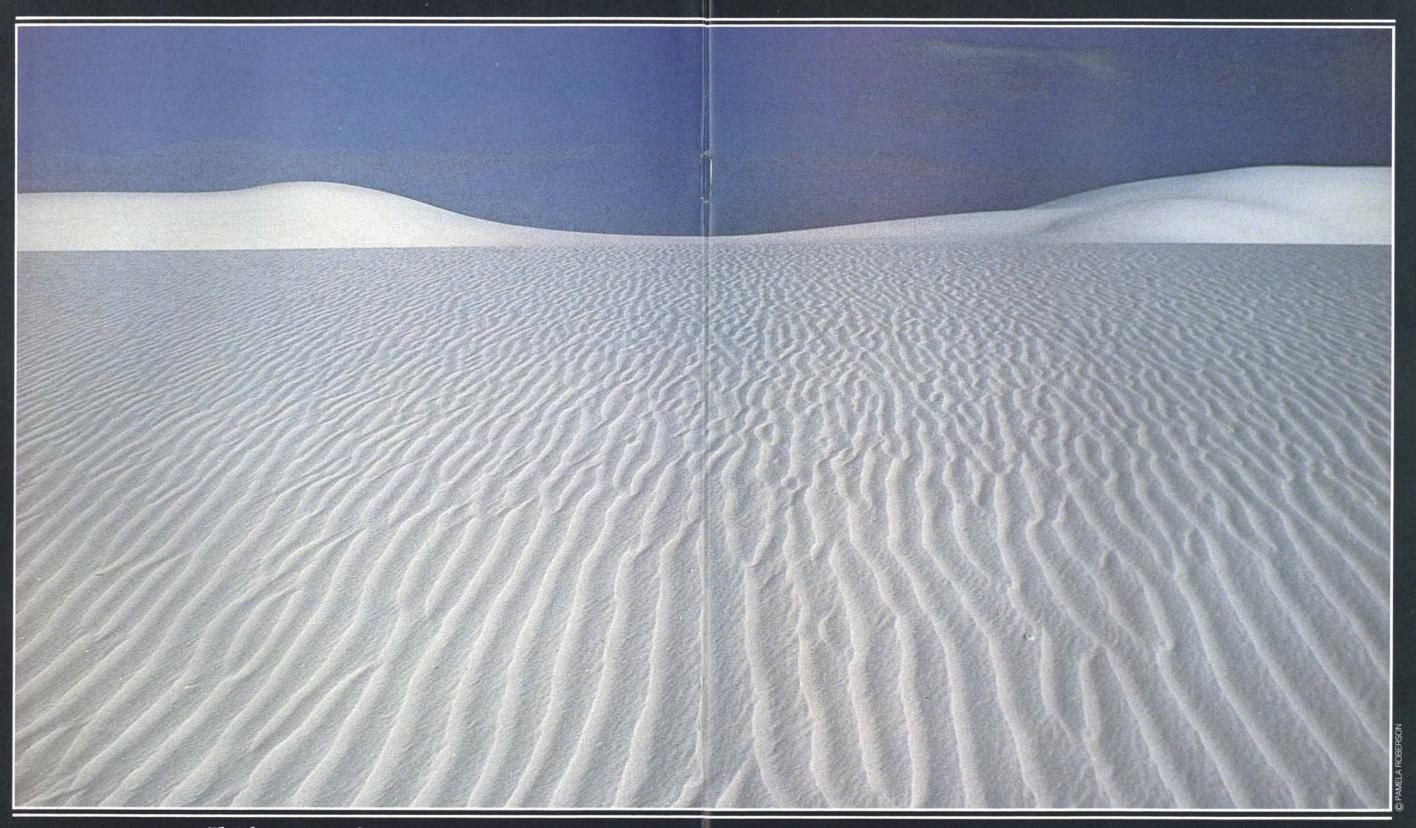
...**and the winds unleash their burning laugh.**.. Labid ibn Abi Rabi'a

It has become solitude itself; The tribe has moved on... Nabigha al-Dhubyani

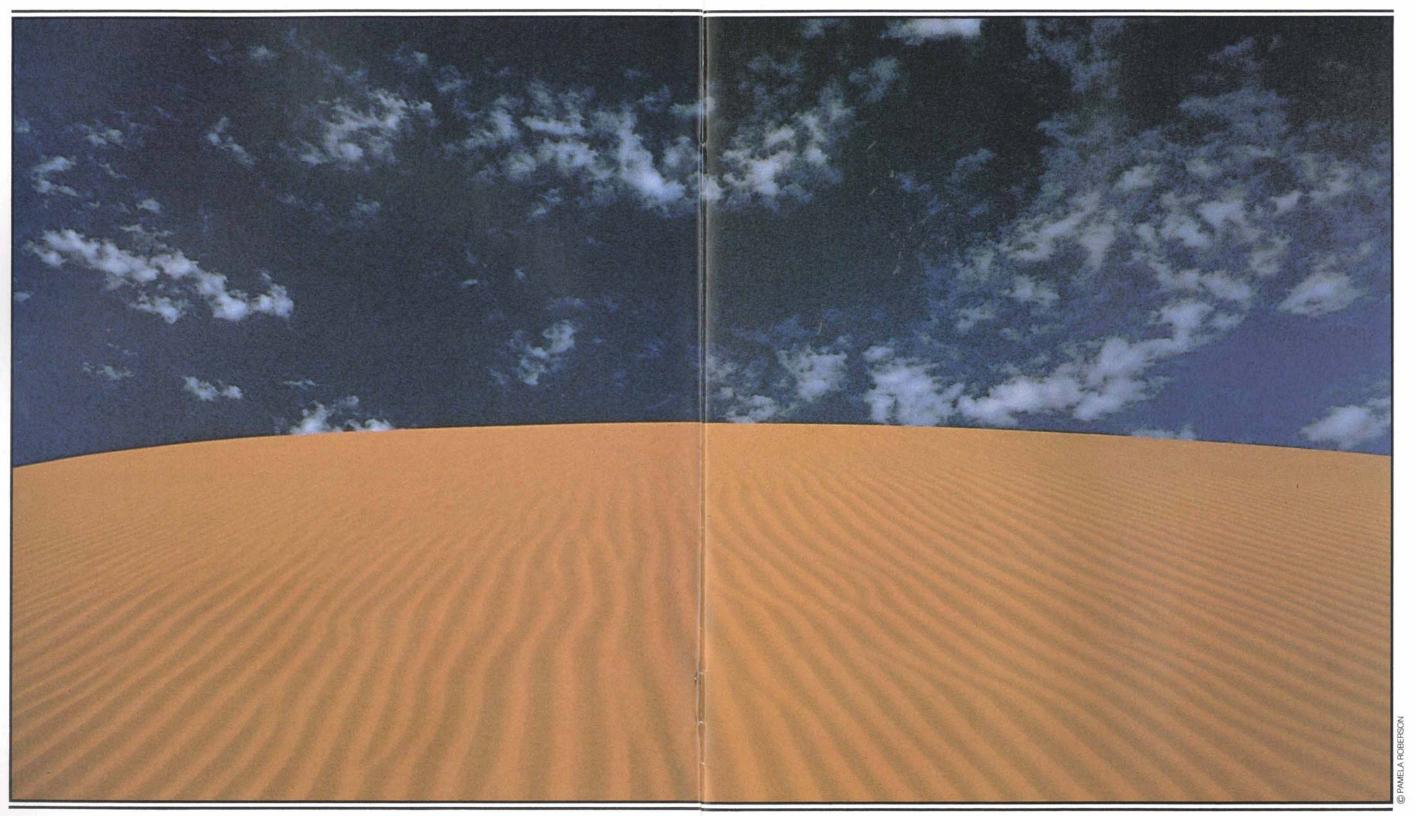


They departed and the mirage swallowed them up...

Labid ibn Abi Rabi'a

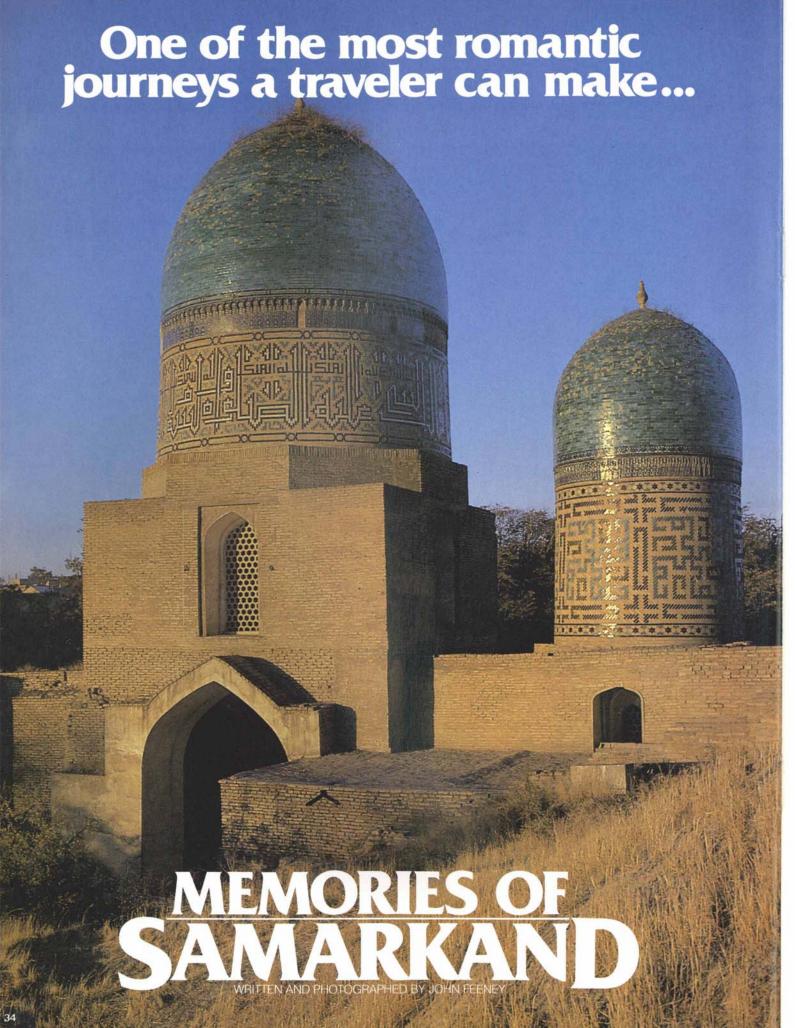


The dune crests pierce the mirage's mantle... Labid ibn Abi Rabi'a



O land that bequeaths ... sterilities Abid ibn al-Abras

32



"At midnight starts the great summer caravan for the cities of the Far North East, divine Bokhara and happy Samarkand. It is a desert path as yellow as the bright sea-shore; therefore the pilgrims call it 'The Golden Journey.'

- James Elroy Flecker "The Golden Journey to Samarkand."

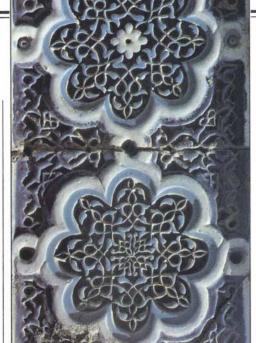
The caravan in Flecker's poem was setting out from Baghdad, and the desert prospect was hardly golden. Yet to this day, whether you start from Baghdad or Moscow, the journey to Samarkand is still one of the most romantic journeys a traveler can make. Remote and inaccessible, this fabulous city of Central Asia, was, until recently, visited only rarely by travelers from the West. Surrounded by desert and some of the highest mountains on earth, the only way of getting there was by camel.

For centuries, ancient trade routes from Siberia to India, from China to Egypt - converged on the oasis of Samarkand. Greeks, Persians, Turks, Mongols and Arabs all made their way there. Alexander knew it, Genghis Khan destroyed it, but it was Tamerlane's Samarkand that western men longed to see.

Tamerlane was born at Kash, "the green city," not far from Samarkand; a wound in the leg, received in a local rebellion, gave him the name of "Timur-the-lame." A born leader with a genius for strategy, he was only 21 when he set out "to conquer the world." By the time he was 37, his gigantic nomad empire stretched all the way from present day Moscow to the Great Wall of China.

... they built a city possessing a new and dazzling Tartar conception...

As Lord of Asia, Tamerlane needed an imposing city to reflect his power, and so, after each victorious campaign in Persia and India, he collected the best artists and craftsmen he could find and brought them back to build his new city. What they created was neither Persian nor Indian in concept - nor was it modelled on the old Samarkand. Instead, they built a city possessing a new and dazzling Tartar concep-



Two tiles showing Chinese influence.

There were no building materials at Samarkand and so - out of the dust of the surrounding desert, mixed with chopped straw, camel urine and clay from the Zeravshan River - the captured craftsmen had to make do with mud bricks, and with them created swelling domes and mud minarets. But then these inspired craftsmen began to face the brick in lovely glazed tile in every shade of blue imaginable - Tamerlane's favorite color - until, adorned from top to bottom with glittering blue tiles, Samarkand became the most fabled city on earth.

Built out of desert dust and in great haste - Tamerlane was always in a hurry much of the "blue city" has long since blown back into the desert. But enough endured to tantalize the minds of western men for centuries. Marlowe and Milton wrote about it, and in our own time so did Kipling, though none of them had seen it.

By the 18th century, Bukhara and Samarkand had become "forbidden cities" to all but Muslims; others who tried to get there either perished on the way or lost their heads on arrival. The two 19thcentury superpowers, Czarist Russia and Great Britain, sent emissaries on secret missions seeking favors from the amirs of Bukhara and Samarkand - without success; their agents, traveling in disguise, were ruthlessly killed once they were discovered. The rulers were determined that no unbelievers should desecrate their holy places.

In 1866, Russia began taking over Cen-

'the golden road" was still something of an ordeal. If the days of travel in disguise and on camels were passing, the days of trains and bureaucracy were just beginning. An old edition of the Baedeker's travel guide notes:

Foreigners are not allowed to visit this area except by special permission of the Russian government and the traveller must send in his request . . . at least six months before beginning the journey.

And what a journey. From Moscow all the way by train to Odessa in southern Russia, then by steamer across the Black Sea, by horse and carriage through the Caucasus Mountains, another steamer journey across the Caspian Sea and on by camel caravan across the Kara-Kum Desert to Samarkand.

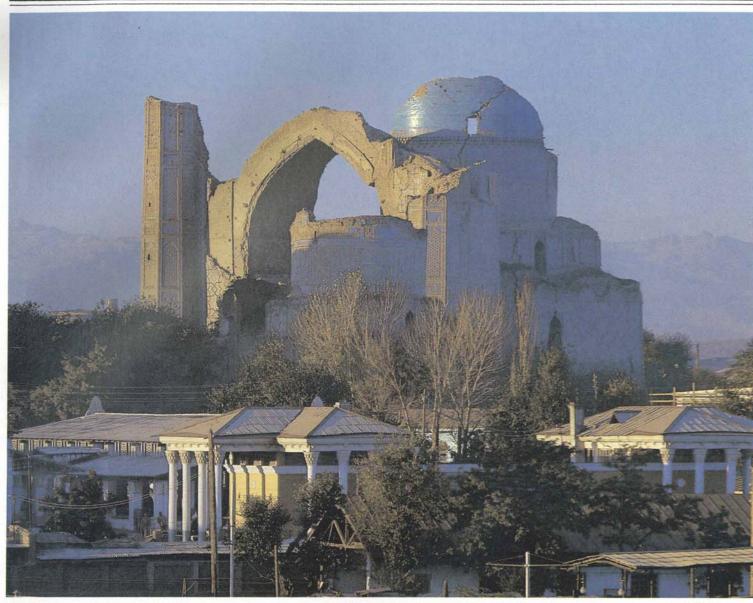
By 1886, the journey had been cut to just 11 days; two years later, in 1888, a new railway line opened, and it was possible to cross Europe and take the new Trans-Caspian Express which went direct from St. Petersburg to Samarkand - no disguise, no camels - but you were advised to "take your own sheets, pillows, blankets, towels and bath." One who took "the golden road" about this time, inflatablecollapsible rubber bath and all, was the intrepid Victorian traveler, Lord Curzon.

By the 20th-century, the Moscow-Orenburg-Tashkent Express had cut the journey to just five days. But in the 1930's, at the height of Stalin's purges, foreigners who did manage to make it - like Sir Fitzrov McLean, then a junior diplomat at the British embassy in Moscow - found that the journey meant "sleeping on hard boards and eating on station platforms."

...Samarkand-old and new seeks shade and coolness...

Today, from Moscow, Aeroflot, the Soviet national airline, will get you there in just three hours and 50 minutes - across the mighty river Volga, writhing like a pre-historic serpent across the land, and over the forests, seas and deserts once crossed by Alexander, the Mongol hordes tral Asia - but even under Russian control | and Genghis Khan - and after them -

Dawn strikes the tiled domes of the Shah-i Zinda.





Above: The ruins of the great mosque called Bibi Khanum still dwarf the modern city of Samarkand in the U.S.S.R. Left: The huge arc of Ulugh Beg's giant sextant in Samarkand was aligned with one of the earth's meridians.

Timur-the-lame.

Intense sunlight, and a desert dust so light the very heat waves rippling up off the sand raise it into the air, greet the modern traveler. Consequently, in spite of much modernity, all of Samarkand – old and new – seeks shade and coolness. The city abounds with avenues of trees and small tea platforms – raised from the ground under the trees, sometimes built out over streams – with carpets laid upon them, where men in flowing silk gowns sip their green Uzbek tea from china bowls.

To see Tamerlane's Samarkand, you must leave the broad Lenin Ulitsa, with its traffic fumes and iced juice machines, and go into a labyrinth of narrow twisting dusty lanes that lead to all that is left of the "blue city."

Recent work has restored the Rigestanthe main public square - to its original splendor described by Lord Curzon as "the noblest square in the world." Surrounded on three sides by ancient colleges and mosques, with a tall minaret in each corner, the fourth side is open to the wind. On one side is Shirdar madrasa, or school, named because of its giant portal decorated with a tiger and a gazelle in the rays of the rising sun. On the second side of the square is Tilakari, or "gilded" madrasa, because of quantities of gold used in its tile decoration. And on the third side is the madrasa of Ulugh Beg, Samarkand's famous astrologer and grandson of Tamerlane. As might be expected the front of his madrasa is decorated with enormous star patterns.

On a small desert hill outside Samarkand is the site of Ulugh Beg's famous observatory. Two rows of steps cut out of rock lead down into semi-darkness to the enormous arc of a giant sextant aligned along one of the earth's meridians. Here, with his brother astonomers, Ulugh Beg plotted the course of nearly 1,000 stars, observed in the clear night sky above the Kara-Kum desert. In his day, he made Samarkand a center of science and art; his star-map, the world's first accurate chart of the heavens, was used as the basis for the later Gregorian star chart and was also adopted by Chinese astrologers.

Even in ruins, the great mosque of Bibi Khanum – the only one in the world ever to possess eight minarets – still dwarfs the rest of Samarkand today. All that is left is one great arch, the base of two minarets studded in white and blue tiles, and a vast shattered turquoise dome – pierced by a Russian cannon shell during the battle of Samarkand in 1868.

Once described as the most beautiful ruin in the whole world, it is amazing to think that this colossal structure was built out of nothing more than desert mud – without the use of steel or wood.

Right next door to Bibi Khanum is the bustling municipal fruit market, full, in autumn, with mounds of Samarkand melons, piles of pomegranates and baskets of purple, green, pink and black grapes. In his day, Lord Curzon called Samarkand "a veritable garden of Eden", and in spite of film projector factories and

Right: A tiled minaret in various shades of Tamerlane's blue towers above, and dominates, the "Rigestan" once called the "noblest square in the world," by Lord Curzon.



THE DRUMS OF TAMERLANE

WRITTEN BY JOHN FEENEY
ILLUSTRATED BY MICHAEL GRIMSDALE

hen Tamerlane died, in 1405, the elaborate funeral ceremonies marking the return of his body to Samarkand concluded with the destruction of his drum. According to V.V. Barthold, a Russian authority on Central Asia, the skin was slashed to ribbons "so that the drum might serve no other master."

Centuries later, during my visit to Samarkand, I remembered that story when I chanced upon a drum in the marketplace – a lovely old Uzbek drum – and decided to buy it. Later that afternoon I was still carrying the drum with me when I came to Gur Emir, Tamerlane's tomb, built eight years before he died.

Outside, under the trees, the boys of Gur Emir were playing football and when they spotted me, or rather my drum, they came running over and trailed behind giggling and pretending to dance to the drum. Then they became more daring—one by one, they sneaked up, quickly tapped the drum and leapt away.

At first I pretended not to notice and kept on going. But then one boy, taking courage, if not the drum, in both hands, asked if he could see the drum? I hesitated, not keen to have grubby little football hands attempting to play my new Uzbek drum. But I relented and they passed the drum from one to the other, discussing its merits – in Russian.

Eventually, of course, the temptation was too great: they began to play it. With great authority they then announced that I had bought a "premier" drum and one boy raised his finger to denote "first." But, they said, it needed "firing." To explain, one boy held a match under the drum. What on earth did he mean? Tamerlane's drum may well have been slashed to ribbons but I didn't want to see mine go up in flames. Seeing me hesitate, the boys announced, in halting English, that they were sending for a "master of the drum," and with that one young boy was dispatched and ran to a nearby mud-walled house.

He returned with another boy, of about 12 summers, not much older than himself. Was this the "master of the drum?" Reluctantly I handed it to him. He took one look at it and casually handed it back implying that "it was a good one." But I expected more than this

from a master drummer and so I motioned him to play. He said, shyly, he didn't want to. His young comrades, however, would have none of that. They were so insistent that he took the drum back, raised it level to his face, paused and with great feeling began to play.

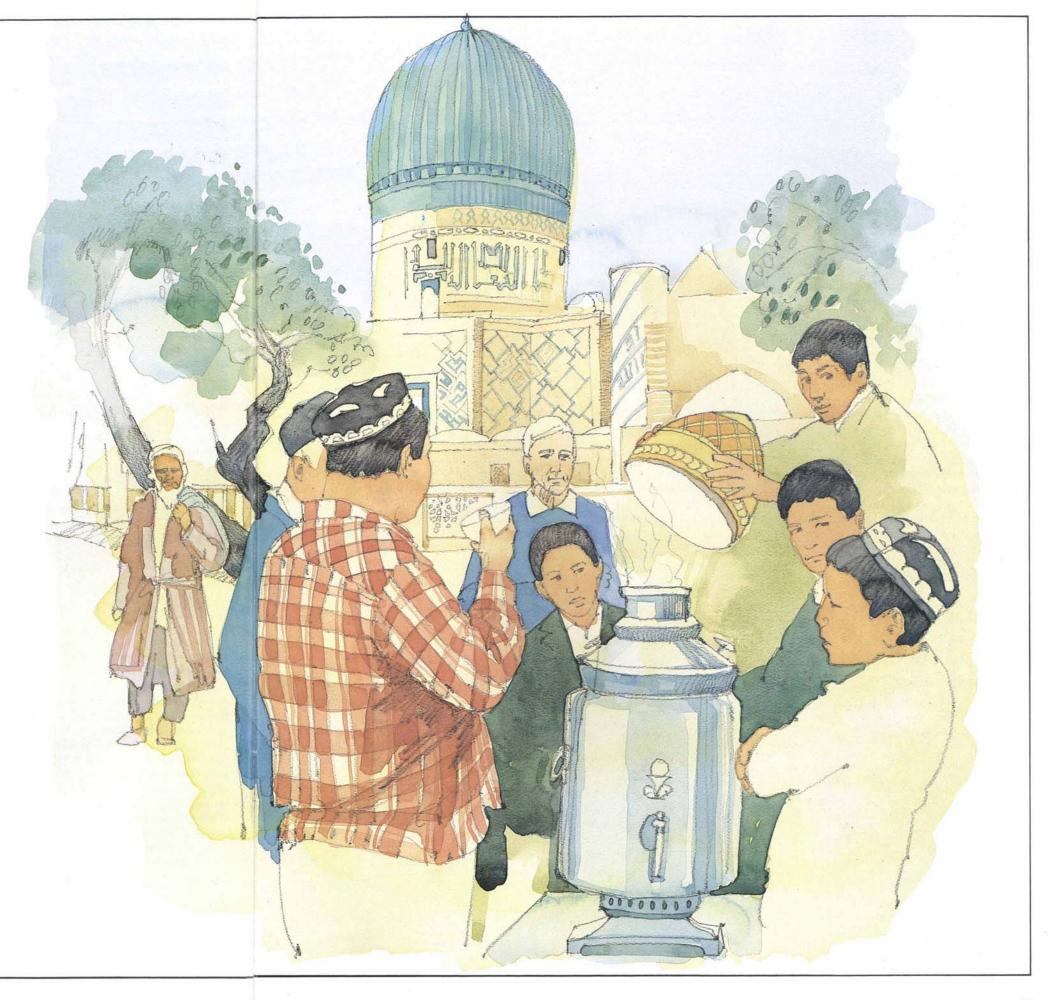
At once I knew that he was a young master of the Uzbek drum: great sonorous rhythm rolled from the tips of his fingers and the fierce beating on the drum caused the dozens of silver rings around its edge to thrash about and the children to burst into a wild dance of accompaniment.

Suddenly, the boy stopped playing. "The drum," he said, "needed 'firing'," and, like a procession led by the Pied-Piper, we all followed the master drummer to a nearby tea garden, where, set up under the trees, was a huge steaming samovar.

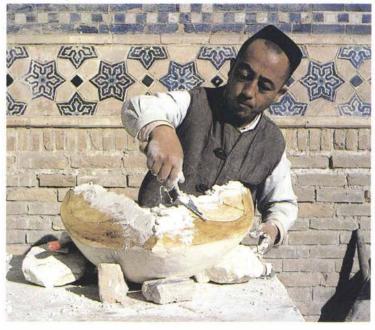
The master drummer passed the drum back and forth over the heat rising from the samovar—all the time pausing to test its timbre as its skin surface tightened. Then the dancing resumed. The higher pitched resonance brought out more boys from nearby houses until there were about 30 prancing souls performing to its vibrating sound. They went on and on until it was too dark to dance anymore and then, suddenly, vanished as quickly as they had come—disappearing through small carved wooden doors in the surrounding mud walls.

A few boys lingered, however, and I was taken to sit upon a nearby tea platform, a stone's throw from Tamerlane's swelling dome—now gaunt and silhouetted against Ulugh Beg's stars. As I sipped the hot green tea I mused on an old Uzbek desert proverb given to me earlier in the day, which says, "One heart gives water to another," and I thought what joy there is in meeting strangers in another land—be they young or old—and how kind the ordinary people of the earth always seem to be to each other.

But it was soon time to leave my new-found friends. It was a little sad to think I would never meet these kind people again and that the drum had probably been played for the first and last time. But at least it had been played—if only for a day.







The glistening domes of the Shah-i-Zinda

A craftsman prepares a mold for Shirdar's madrasa.

many small industries, it is still an oasis | city – set in a vast desert, but watered by the Zeravshan, flowing from the snows and glaciers of the Celestian Mountains, 320 kilometers (200 miles) to the east.

At dawn one morning – this was many years ago – in the shadow of the towering sunlit ruins of Bibi Khanum, I came across a narrow street packed with people all moving in the same direction. Most were on foot, dressed as if for some film extravaganza; there were men in black fur caps and others astride their donkeys in turbans and quilted gowns of bright blue and red stripes. Mixed in with the crowd were riders on bicycles and donkey carts laden with rushes.

...laid out upon the sand, was one of Asia's great open-air bazaars...

Curious, I followed them to the very edge of the city, and still they went on out across the desert, until finally we came to a deep ravine. There, laid out upon the sand, like some giant film set, was one of Asia's great open-air, one-day bazaars sometimes talked about, but rarely seen.

The desolate spot purred with a mass of humanity - Uzbeks, Afghans, Tadjiks, and gypsies – all with something to sell, or looking for something to buy. Spread out upon the sand were rows of carpets and striped kalims presided over by robed and turbaned men. Asian music came from palest opalescent found in the sky and

small radios, and there was the scent of | cooking fires, under pots of bubbling broth and thick black sausages. Lines of peasant women held up small handkerchiefs and embroidered table cloths, and gypsy women sitting on the sand were selling brightly painted drums.

On my last morning in Samarkand, I set out for Tamerlane's tomb - between the northern edge of the city and the desert in the ancient burial ground of Samarkand called "Afrasiyab." On a low hill rising above this vast cemetery there is a cluster of small turquoise domes known as "Shah-i-Zinda" – the living king. Since the 11th century the hill has been a stopping place for visitors and Tamerlane rebuilt it as a private mausoleum for his family and friends.

Flanked on both sides of a narrow lane are tombs and small mosques, including the tomb of Tamerlane's nurse, his sister, an uncle, his son, his first wife and his friend and tutor. Each tomb is like a small house complete with its sunlit courtyard luminescent in blue tiles - always blue.

...gathered along this narrow pathway are all the blues known to heaven and earth...

It is said that gathered along this narrow pathway are all the blues known to heaven and earth - from the darkest mauves to the

from the deepest pools to the shallowest ponds. And as you climb this gentle hill all these haunting blues, appearing in mystical patterns, wash about you - a triumph of 14th- and 15th-century ceramicists from Shiraz, Isfahan and Herat. Held in an incredibly thin glaze, their colors remain as radiant as the day they were made, and six centuries of frost, heat, sun and rain have not dimmed their luster.

Today, the enormous ribbed dome of Tamerlane's tomb rises out of a grove of acacia trees. The entrance leads to a dark hall lined with marble, precious stones and inscriptions in gold, and soft light, filtered through lattices of carved alabaster, falls on the crypt below.

A single piece of green jade, almost black and intricately carved, said to have been sent to Samarkand by a Mongolian princess, marks Tamerlane's tomb. Some say he was a cruel man; others, that it was not he but his army who was cruel. When he died, aged 68, he had just set off

on his greatest venture - with 200,000 men he was on his way to break through the Great Wall of China – but 640 kilometers out from Samarkand (400 miles) he suddenly became ill.

Tamerlane died on a cold winter's day in January, 1405. His body, perfumed with rose water, musk and camphor, was placed in a coffin decorated with pearls and precious stones and dispatched in the dead of night for the return to his beloved Samarkand - a city built of mud, glazed with beauty and enshrined in legend.

John Feeney, a writer, photographer and film producer, is a regular contributor to Aramco World Magazine

