ARAMCO WORLD
JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1990

MUSLIMS IN THE USSR

ARAMCO WORLD

Published by
Aramco Services Company,
9009 West Loop South,
Houston, Texas 77096

ISSN 1044-1891

Hamad A. Juraifani
PRESIDENT

Shafiq W. Kombargi
DIRECTOR, PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Ismail I. Nawwab
CONSULTING EDITOR

Robert Arndt
EDITOR

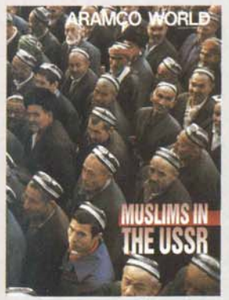
William Tracy
ACTING ASSISTANT EDITOR

DESIGN AND PRODUCTION
Scurr, Barnes & Keenan Ltd.

PRINTED IN THE USA
Judd's, Incorporated
Shenandoah Division

Aramco World is distributed without charge to a limited number of readers with an interest in Aramco, the oil industry, or the history, culture, geography and economy of the Middle East.

Editorial correspondence should be addressed to
The Editor, Aramco World
Aramco Services Company,
Post Office Box 2106,
Houston, Texas 77252-2106, USA
Requests for subscriptions and changes of address should be sent to
Aramco World, Box 3725,
Escondido, California 92025-0925



Cover: "What a feast of beautiful faces!" wrote photographer Brynn Bruijn of the Uzbek men she saw leaving Margelan's Mestchit Khanaka mosque. "They have kind eyes that seem to have been given patience by many years of hard living." Most Uzbek men wear the traditional black-and-white cap called a *chupan;* variations in its pattern indicate different regions of the republic. Inside front cover: The call to prayer from the Derone Bay mosque. Back cover: Masud Hasanov, imam of the Shaykh Imam mosque in Namangan.

ARAMCO WORLD

VOL. 41 NO. 1 PUBLISHED BI-MONTHLY JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1990

MUSLIMS IN THE USSR


HALSELL


BRUIJN


LAWTON


ANDREWS


GRIMSDALE


EIGELAND

Writer Grace Halsell and photographer Brynn Bruijn independently submitted the idea of a special issue of *Aramco World* on the Muslim peoples and provinces of the Soviet Union at about the time we were covering the region in another context, for our earlier special issue "Traveling the Silk Roads" (September-October 1988). Some two years later, as television and newspapers report dramatic changes in the crescent of Muslim republics across the southern USSR, this issue – produced by the contributors named below – has become more timely than we anticipated. We hope it illuminates the present and the future as well as the past.

Long before her two trips to the Soviet Union for *Aramco World*, Texas-born **Grace Halsell**'s journeys had already taken her to Europe, the Far East, South America and the Middle East – and to equally foreign parts of her own United States. She covered the war in Vietnam for *The Houston Post*, then served President Lyndon Johnson as a speech writer. To research her books *Soul Sister*, *Bessie Yellowhair* and *The Illegals*, Halsell disguised herself, respectively, as an Afro-American, a Native American and a Mexican migrant laborer. Her most recent book, her twelfth, is *Prophecy and Politics*.

American photographer **Brynn Bruijn** varies her menu of portrait and interior photography for Dutch magazines with expeditions to Africa or the Far East to take travel and anthropological pictures. Based in Holland for the last 10 years, she took photographs during visits to Nepal that won her a Leica Silver Medallion, and she recently spent three months in Tibet for the Dutch National Ethnographical Museum. Her first book of interiors, *The Royal Progress of William and Mary*, was published in 1988. Traveling in Central Asia for *Aramco World*, Bruijn carried Leica R4 cameras and four lenses, all unobtrusively stashed in a heavy coat with big pockets.

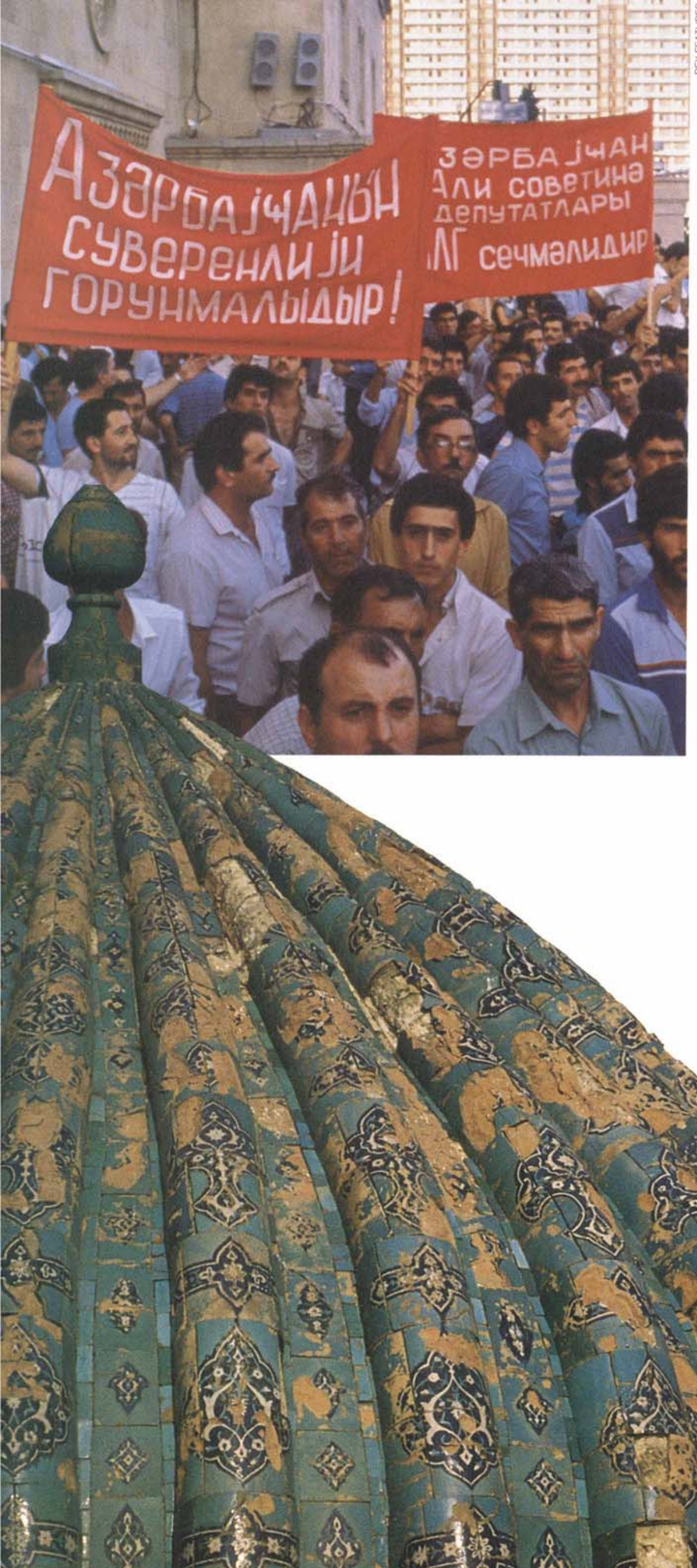
Contributing editor **John Lawton** is a veteran foreign correspondent who has lived in and covered the Middle East, Turkey and Eastern Europe for 15 years for UPI. He studied Soviet affairs in Columbia University's Advanced International Reporting Progam in New York and, more recently, traveled across Central Asia from Istanbul to China to research and write "Traveling the Silk Roads" – his eighth single-subject issue of the magazine. Lawton is currently writing a book on Samarkand and Bukhara for KEA Publishing Services' "Travel to Landmarks" series .

Mike Andrews, once a free-lance photographer for London's *Sunday Telegraph Magazine*, is now a BBC television documentary producer who always carries a still camera when he travels to film locations. A specialist in wildlife and environmental subjects, he created and produced the much-acclaimed series "The Flight of the Condor." Andrews took the photographs in this issue while attending a television conference in Ashkabad.

Designer **Peter Keenan** studied at Southampton College of Art. His Middle East connections include work with Saudi Arabian Airlines' in-flight magazine and Turkey's *Turquoise*, and he is currently design consultant for UNESCO's Silk Roads project. This is the fourth special issue of *Aramco World* designed by Keenan, whose work has won two Ozzie Awards for the magazine.

Michael Grimsdale grew up in Hong Kong, Malaya and South Africa. After studies at Cheltenham, Sandhurst and St. Martins School of Art in London, he traveled and observed in Mexico, Australia and the Pacific. His paintings, drawings and maps have appeared in more than 20 issues of *Aramco World*.

Photographer **Tor Eigeland**, a frequent contributor to *Aramco World* for two decades, recently provided photographs and text for a new *National Geographic* book on New England.



REX FEATURES

CRESCENT AND STAR

WRITTEN BY JOHN LAWTON PHOTOGRAPHED BY BRYNN BRUIJN

We think of the inhabitants of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics simply as Russians. But in fact, there are over 100 non-Russian nationalities living in the USSR who, after a century of near-invisibility to casual Western observers, are making their presence felt in today's changing Soviet Union. Of the Union's 15 republics, six – including its second-biggest – are still, despite decades of religious repression, largely, actively and consciously Muslim.

In fact, the Soviet Union's 53 million Muslims compose almost one-fifth of the entire 280 million population of the USSR. After ethnic Russians, they are its second-largest population group. And since their numbers are growing four times as fast as the Soviet population as a whole, Soviet Muslims are projected to outnumber Russians in 30 years.

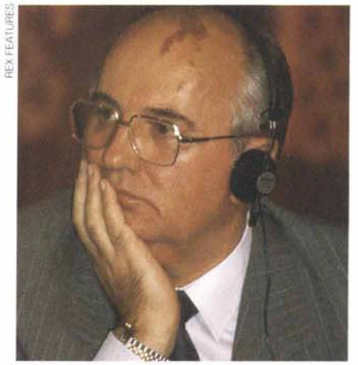
They are mainly Turkic peoples: Azaris, Balkars, Bashkirs, Karachays, Karakalpaks, Kazaks, Kirgiz, Kumyks, Tatars, Turkmen, and Uzbeks. Along with Farsi-speaking Tajiks, they occupy the vast crescent of land stretching from Europe to China along the southern rim of the USSR. These peoples are descendants of the fierce nomadic tribes of Mongolia, the one-time rulers of Central Asia who founded the glittering medieval cities of Bukhara and Samarkand. They were swallowed up by the southeasterly expansion of Russia's czarist empire in the 19th century, and then fell under control of the communists after the 1917 revolution.

Now, however, as the century draws to a close, the peoples of the Soviet Union's Muslim republics – Azerbaijan, Kazakstan, Kirgizia, Tajikstan, Turkmenia and Uzbekistan – are seeking to regain control of thier own destinies.

Although they have not been as strident as the USSR's Ukrainians, Estonians or Latvians in their calls for autonomy, Soviet Muslims were among the first to test Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of democratization: In 1986, Kazaks staged demonstrations against the imposition of a Byelorussian as Communist Party boss of their republic – the USSR's second-largest.

Since then, more than 100 protests have been recorded in Soviet Turkestan, as the Muslim republics are collectively known. And recent visitors report the growing isolation of local Communist Parties and the emergence of an alternative and definitely Muslim leadership. As *The Times* of London reported, "It is among the younger generation, especially students and intellectuals, that Islam is recruiting its most ardent advocates."

Many Muslims, including some former communists, are returning to the "sure values of their ancestral culture," says Tajik poet Mir-Goliev, because of present uncertainties in the Soviet Union. "If the Russians themselves do not know what they are going to do next," he asks, "why should we ask them for solutions to our problems?"



REX FEATURES

Mikhail Gorbachev

Muslims' leaders claim that, although under communist rule there have been vast improvements in health and education, the Russians have restricted their lives religiously, politically and economically.

Moscow, they say, shut down all but 400 of their 26,000 mosques and all but two of their religious colleges. Muslims were able to keep their religion alive by their own grass-roots efforts: through hundreds of illegal Koranic schools and unofficial prayer centers, and through the work and faith of thousands of itinerant, unofficial clerics.

And despite their numbers, Muslims say, they have been allowed virtually no voice in government: Since the communists gained control of Muslim regions in the 1920's, only three members of the ruling Soviet body, the Politburo, have had Muslim backgrounds.

Also, although Central Asia, the Caucasus and the Volga River basin, where most Muslims live, together account for more than half of the USSR's agricultural production and a good part of its mineral wealth, Muslim-populated regions are among the poorest in the union. The Russians, Muslims say, have utilized the resources of Soviet Turkestan almost as if the region were a colony.

Moscow's central planners, for example, designated Uzbekistan as the USSR's cotton-producing republic and pinpointed Kazakstan to grow wheat, bringing vast tracts of "virgin lands" under cultivation. But it was done at a price: Diversion of rivers to irrigate these new lands has resulted in the virtual dessication of the Aral Sea. Once the fourth-largest lake in the world, the Aral has fallen 13.5 meters (44 feet) and shrunk to half its original area; it is surrounded by a grim desert land of salt and sand.

A shared symbol of Turkestan's patrimony, the slow death of the Aral Sea is an issue that has cut across the borders of the republics and has become a vehicle for nationalist expression: Turkic writers are using it as a blind from which to snipe at more sensitive issues such as social problems and political control by Moscow.

Although it has been possible to learn more about Muslims in the USSR since Gorbachev ushered in his policies of *perestroika* (economic restructuring) and *glasnost'* (openness), no foreign embassy or consular personnel live or work in the USSR's Muslim regions, and no foreign journalists are based there. But according to Edward Allworth, of the Central Asian Center at New York's Columbia University, Western and Middle Eastern nations disregard the "rumble of change in contemporary Turkestan only at great, long-term risk." For "very soon," he warns, "developments in Turkestan will increasingly affect nearby regions."

All the major Muslim nationalities in the USSR have relatives in neighboring countries with whom they share close ethnic and religious ties. Two million Tajiks and over one million Uzbeks live in Afghanistan. Four hundred thousand Turkmen live in Iran, and Kazakstan and Kirgizia share a frontier with China, with its own large Muslim population.

Certainly the binding force of Islam extends across the Soviet south and beyond, yet the forces for change within Soviet Turkestan so far "have carefully avoided making their appeal religious," *The New York Times* noted recently, because of fears that Moscow might cite religious extremism as a reason to suppress them. In fact, the newspaper adds, radicals form only a small and isolated minority among Soviet Muslims. And Amir Taheri, author of the recently published *Crescent in a Red Sky*, says that while "some believe that the way is now open for Muslim regions to regain control of their own destiny, few dream of independence, which would mean the breakup of the USSR."

As an unsigned article in the magazine *Turkistan* explained recently, the Muslims of the USSR "demand a solution, not a revolution." Their lands, lives and hopes are depicted in the pages that follow.

MUSLIMS IN THE USSR

MAP ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL GRIMSDALE

UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS

СССР

URALS

UKRAINE

VOLGA RIVER

KAZAKSTAN

ARAL SEA

UZBEKISTAN

TURKMENIA

BLACK SEA

GEORGIA

CAUCASUS

ARMENIA

AZERBAIJAN

BAKU

CASPIAN SEA

TURKEY

IRAQ

TEHRAN

IRAN

ASHKABAD

MERV

HERAT

AMU DARYA (OXUS RIVER)

BUKHARA

SAMARKAND

TASHKENT

KOKAND

FERGHANA

TALAS

FRUNZE

KIRGIZIA

TIAN SHAN (HEAVENLY MOUNTAINS)

ALMA ATA

ALTAI

CHINA

KASHGAR

TAJIKSTAN

PAMIRS

DUNSHANBE

AFGHANISTAN

HINDU KUSH

PAKISTAN

INDIA

Seventy-five percent of Soviet Muslims live in Central Asia, in five republics.

Uzbekistan is ten percent larger than California and ten percent smaller than Spain; it has 19,906,000 people, 70 percent of them Muslim, and most of them cotton farmers. Its capital is Tashkent, with 2,073,000 people. (Figures for this republic and others are from the January, 1989 census.)

Kazakstan, the size of Argentina and one-third the size of the United States, occupies almost one-eighth of the territory of the USSR. Heavily settled by Russians and Ukrainians to provide labor for "virgin" wheatlands, new industries and the Soviet space program, only half of its 16,538,000 people – 1,128,000 of them living in the capital, Alma Ata – are Muslim.

Tajikstan, the size of Wisconsin – a little larger than Greece – has 5,112,000 inhabitants, of whom 70 percent are Muslims. The capital, Dushanbe, has 595,000.

Kirgizia is larger than Syria and Lebanon combined. Its 4,291,000 people are mainly mountain pastoralists and only 55 percent are Muslim – one third of the Kirgiz having fled to China in 1916 following an unsuccessful revolt against Russian colonization of their best grazing lands. Frunze, the capital, has more than 616,000 inhabitants.

Turkmenia, twice the size of the United Kingdom and about as large as Oklahoma, Missouri and Arkansas together, has a population of 3,534,000 people, 70 percent of them Muslim. Its capital, Ashkabad, is a city of 398,000.

A sixth Muslim republic, Azerbaijan – west of the Caspian Sea – has a population of 6,921,000 people, 80 percent of whom are Muslim. The capital, Baku, is the fifth-largest city in the Soviet Union, its 1,700,000 people swelled by oil workers of more than 100 Soviet nationalities.

Another four to five million Karachay and Balkar Muslims live in the North Caucasus, within the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic.

Still more Muslims, including about 5,000,000 Tatars and some 2,000,000 Bashkirs, live along the banks of the Volga River and in the Ural Mountains.

Other Tatar Muslims, deported by Stalin from their Crimean homeland in World War II, are now mainly settled around Kazan in central Russia. They number about 400,000.

FROM XERXES TO GORBACHEV

WRITTEN BY JOHN LAWTON PHOTOGRAPHED BY BRYNN BRUIJN

Behind Soviet Muslims' growing vitality, visible even in newspaper stories of recent months, lies a grand legacy of ancient and medieval culture.

Descended from some of the world's most powerful peoples – the redoubtable archers and horsemen of Attila, Timur (Tamerlane) and Genghis Khan – the Muslims of the USSR occupy an area of the world that, throughout history, has been both a communications hub and a garden of high civilizations, which flowered in the glittering caravan cities of the Silk Roads. (See *Aramco World*, July-August 1988)

Much of the region's turbulent history has stemmed from competition for control of these lucrative trade routes and the fortress towns and agricultural centers that, as early as the eighth century BC, developed at oases along them. Many citizens of these ancient towns were former nomads, converted by economic necessity or lured by urban comforts to take up the settled life.

The Persian Achaemenids, including Cyrus the Great, Xerxes and three rulers named Darius, were the first to establish an empire in what today is Iran; it extended over parts of Central Asia and Transcaucasia. Their empire dates back to 559 BC.

Between 330 and 327 BC, Alexander the Great overthrew the Achaemenids as he conquered most of the land from the Mediterranean to the Indus River valley of India. When he marched into Central Asia, such cities as Samarkand and Bukhara were already flourishing trade centers.

Following Alexander's death in Babylon, his empire was divided up among his generals. The general who won control of the eastern part founded the Seleucid dynasty, but the sheer size of the territory made it difficult to rule. In the more remote areas, particularly in Central Asia, native aristocrats took matters into their own hands, and by the middle of the third century BC Iranian chieftains had staged a successful revolt in Parthia.

Mithradites II came to the Parthian throne in 124 BC, and during his reign he conquered Babylon and extended the empire's sway northward along the Euphrates River. He made contact with both China and Rome and established Parthia as middleman in the rich East-West trade.

Parthian power began to wane in the second century of this era. Part of the resulting power vacuum in Central Asia was filled by the Kushans, a semi-nomadic tribe that encouraged commerce by protecting the trade routes through the Pamirs and the caravan centers of Bukhara, Merv and Samarkand.

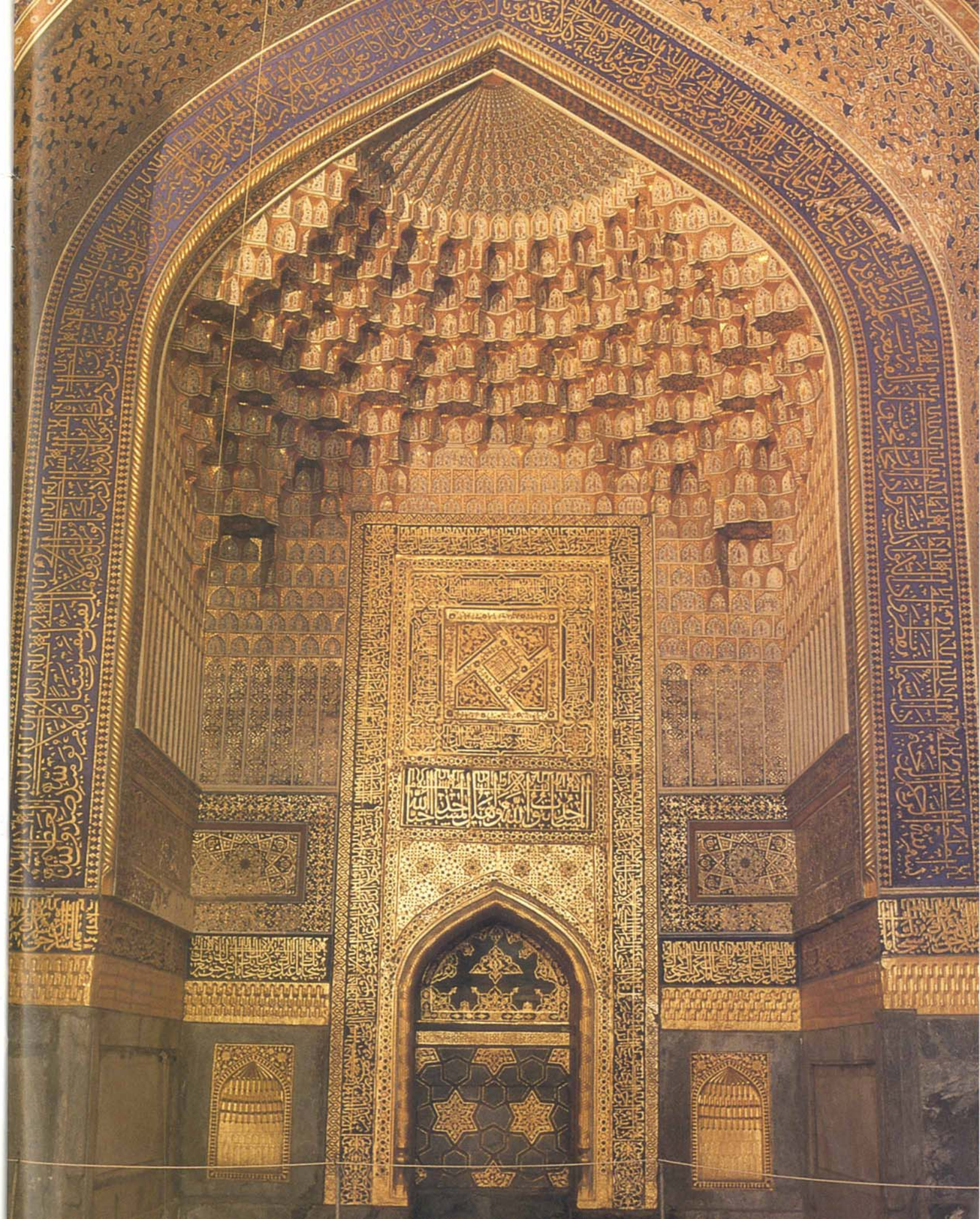
The third century Sassanian revolution in Iran brought dynamic new leadership to the region, and by the fourth century the Sassanians had wrested control of Central Asia from the Kushans and reimposed a central authority over the Silk Roads.

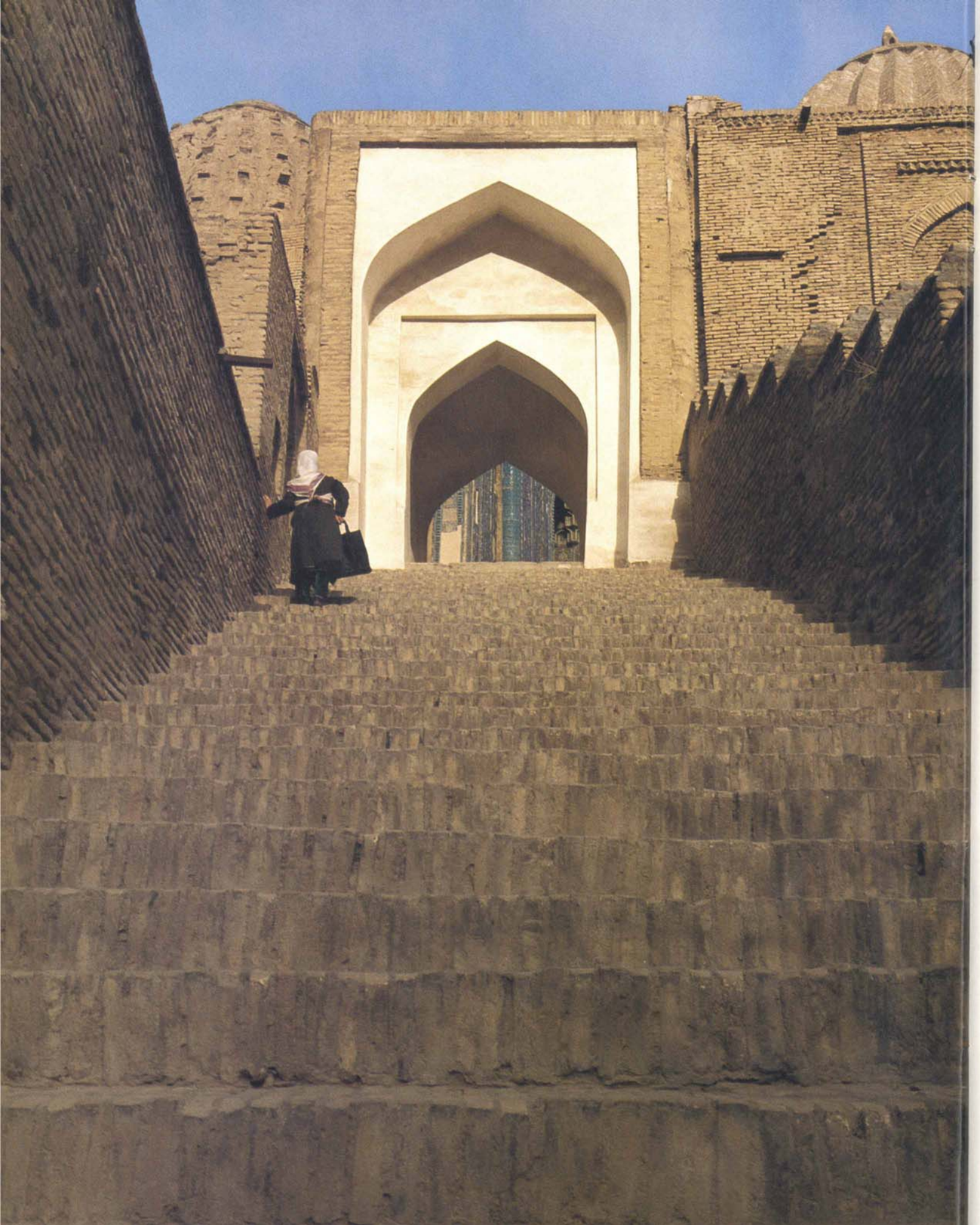
But by the middle of the sixth century new disturbances had broken out on the steppes of Central Asia, and once again central authority over the trade routes was lacking. Trade continued, however, partly as a result of the activities of city-dwelling minorities, such as the Sogdians, whose communities provided secure settings for the exchange of goods.

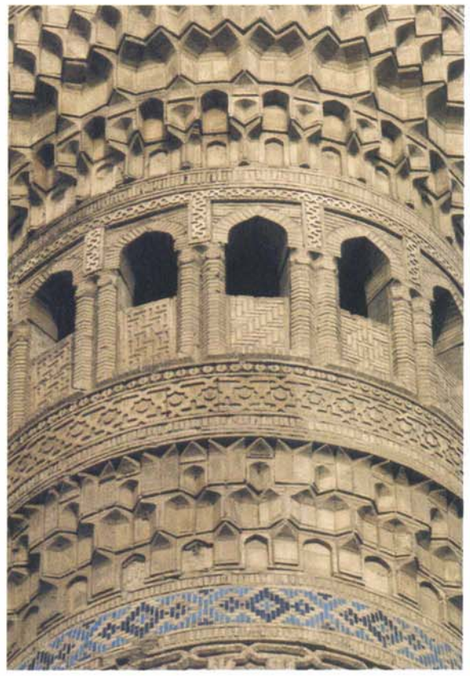
At this stage a new group of steppe nomads suddenly appeared: the Turks. Their origins, like those of nearly all Central Asian peoples, are shrouded in mystery and legend. Chinese historians say their origins were connected with the late Huns, but there is no real evidence to support this theory, and the opinions of contemporary researchers differ.

NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Right, one of the massive portals flanking Samarkand's Registan Square. Above, the ceiling of the Mosque of One Hundred Pillars, Bukhara, and below, third-century pendants found near Alma Ata.







Left, Timurid royal cemetery at Samarkand, and, above, decorative brickwork of the Kalyan minaret, Bukhara.

The story favored by the Turks themselves centers around a youth – the sole survivor of a tribal massacre–and the 10 sons he begot, one of whom, A-shin-na, founded the line which in turn, several generations later, gave rise to the Turks.

The Turks, whose name means "forceful" or "strong," are first mentioned in Chinese annals in the third century BC, but it was not until the sixth century that they became a force to be reckoned with. Their homeland was in the Altai mountain range in present-day Mongolia, where they were originally a subject people of the Juan-Juan, whom they served as blacksmiths and ironworkers.

The rise of the world's first Turkic empire, typically for the steppelands, revolved around a single charismatic personality – in this case that of Bumin, who challenged the Juan-Juan overlordship by requesting a Juan-Juan princess in marriage.

In AD 552, allied with forces from the Western Wei, the Turks destroyed the Juan-Juan state and subjugated their other, nomadic, neighbors to become uncontested masters of the Mongolian steppe. In the west they conquered Central Asia and reached the Volga; in the east their power extended to the Yellow River. It was the first time so great an expanse of Asia had come under the control of a single ethnic group.

By 565, the Turks had extended their sway over most of the main caravan cities of Central Asia, including Bukhara, Samarkand and Tashkent, and controlled the Silk Roads. Between the sixth and seventh centuries, the Turkic Empire split into eastern and western segments. Weakened by internecine wars, the East Turkic Empire became a protectorate of the Chinese Sui dynasty.

Then, in the seventh century, the Umayyad Arabs, centered in Damascus, swept east under the banner of Islam and conquered Central Asia, including the West Turkic Empire.

The swiftness of the early Arab conquests was astonishing; scarcely two decades after the death of Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, in AD 632, the entire Near East had fallen to the Arabs.

In 651, the last Sassanian shah, Yazdagird, was killed at Merv; the Sassanian dynasty was at an end and the Arabs' way to Central Asia lay open. It was some time, however, before they turned their attention to the territory across the Oxus River and the cities of Bukhara, Samarkand and Tashkent – now under the influence of the Sogdians, who had come to an uneasy alliance with the Turks.

Arab soldiers initially crossed the Oxus, now the Amu Darya in Soviet Uzbekistan, in 654, but it was not until 705, when Qutaiba ibn Muslim became the Umayyad governor of Khorasan, that the Arabs achieved real success in Central Asia. In the following decade Qutaiba subjugated the cities of Bukhara and Samarkand, and by the end of the Umayyad period in 750 most of Central Asia had been incorporated into the Islamic realm.

This conquest put the Muslims on a collision course with China, which was also in the midst of a vigorous period of expansion.

The two powers met for the first and only time in 751, at Talas near Tashkent (See *Aramco World*, September-October 1982), in a battle which determined which of the two civilizations, the Chinese or the Muslim, would dominate Central Asia. Aided by the Turks, the Muslim Arabs won.

During the seventh and eighth centuries the Islamic hegemony left an indelible imprint on the region south of the Aral Sea. The teachings of the Prophet rapidly superseded other religions, and Islamic customary law took firm root. The whole of Central Asia was influenced by Islamic tradition and practice from the ninth century onward; by the middle of the 10th century Islam had become the only religion of the vast region, and Central Asia had become one of the world's most verdant and influential centers of culture.

Although many strong traditions of pre-Islamic Turkic culture were stubbornly preserved, most of the Turkic peoples embraced Islam during the 11th and 12th centuries. Indeed, the Turks of Central Asia came to be among Islam's main champions. As they fanned out across the steppe, tribal divisions among them had become more pronounced, and several Turkish tribes now had kingdoms of their own, the Seljuqs among them. In the 11th century, under the banner of Islam, the Seljuq Turks swept west into Asia Minor, which makes up most of today's Turkey.

Meanwhile, in the East, a group of tribes from northeastern Mongolia, who traced their origins back to the forests of the Amur River basin, began a remarkable rise under their leader Genghis Khan. They were the Mongols. Early in the 13th century, they successfully laid siege to Bukhara and Samarkand, and became the new rulers of Central Asia.

At its zenith, the Mongol Empire was one of the largest the world has ever known – stretching from the Pacific to the Danube and from Siberia to

PRINCES OF LEARNING

WRITTEN BY GRACE HALSELL

Ceiling of the Shaykh Imam Mosque, Margelan

In Bukhara, Uzbekistan, I felt lucky to be in the home town of Ibn Sina, born in 980 and known in the West as Avicenna, a philosopher and the greatest physician of his time – indeed, the greatest name in medicine until about 1500. (See Aramco World, *January-February 1969) He wrote* The Canon of Medicine, *a systematic encyclopedia based on the achievements of Greek and Arab physicians: The work was translated into Latin and used as a textbook in medieval Europe.*

For centuries considered the "prince of all learning," Avicenna's works are still studied in theological, philosophical, pharmacological and medical circles.

Walking around modern Bukhara, a city of half a million people, I reflected on the library where Avicenna studied. Now obliterated, it was one of several private libraries in the city that were open to public use at a time when manuscripts were "published" only through the tedious labor of copyists. Writing 1000 years ago, Avicenna reports on the free use of a sultan's royal library in Bukhara:

> *I found there many rooms filled with books which were arranged in cases, row upon row. One room was allotted to works on Arabic philology and poetry, another to jurisprudence and so forth, the books on each particular science having a room to themselves. I inspected the catalogue of ancient Greek authors and looked for the books which I required; I saw in this collection books of which few people have heard even the names, and which I myself have never seen either before or since.*

I tried to imagine what life was like back in the days of al-Biruni, born near here, in Khiva, in 973, who searched into every branch of human knowledge: history, law, sociology, literature, ethics, philosophy, mathematics and science.

It was al-Biruni who anticipated the principles of modern geology and laid the foundation for astronomy. He composed an astronomical encyclopedia and made vital contributions to geometrical problems. Al-Biruni gave an accurate way to determine latitude and longitude, investigated the relative speeds of sound and light, and – 600 years before Galileo – discussed the possibility of the earth's rotation around its own axis.

In Vestiges of the Past, *written in the year 1000, he urges, "We must clear our minds from all causes that blind people to the truth–old customs, partisan spirit, personal rivalry or passion [and] the desire for influence, in order to be able to record historical events with objectivity and accuracy."*

Bukhara is full of impressive architectural gems, many so old that I felt transported back in time a thousand years. I was especially impressed by a mausoleum built by Ismail Samani, a ninth-century ruler, for his father. Both Ismail and his father are buried in this "tomb of the Samanids," which, though small, is striking in its simplicity and beauty.

I stood in awe of the free-standing Kalyan minaret, built of honey-colored bricks that, laid in protruding and receding patterns, produce a unique texture. The minaret, rising 45 meters (150 feet) – and the tallest structure in Bukhara – stands in a small square near the massive tiled portals of a mosque and the Bukhara theological school or madrasa. In architectural perfection and beauty, I believe that nothing in our modern cities can surpass this 12th-century gem. The minaret is on UNESCO*'s list of historical monuments that should be preserved as part of the world's cultural heritage.*

By the beginning of the 20th century, Bukhara had 360 mosques. Today it has only 120 mosques and madrasas, most no longer in religious use, but still preserved as monuments.

Bukhara's sister city, Samarkand, is equally a center of learning and history. Beyond that, however, it is a gem of early city planning. Here Timur (Tamerlane) created a series of royal gardens so numerous, wrote Clavijo, a Spaniard who visited Samarkand in 1404, "that a traveler who approaches the city sees only the mountainous height of trees, and the houses embowered amongst them remain invisible."

Timur, born near Samarkand in 1336, sent back to the city armies of craftsmen and artisans from the extensive lands he conquered and had them put to work embellishing his capital. (See Aramco World *July-August 1984)*

But it was Timur's grandson, Ulugh Beg, who made his grandfather's capital into what Timur had dreamed: "Samarkand the Golden," a center of Muslim civilization. An artist himself, Ulugh Beg enriched Samarkand with superb buildings, such as Shah Zinde, a honeycomb of 60 mausoleums and mosques, of which 20 remain today. Domes and arches and other Islamic architectural splendors glisten with intricate Arabic calligraphy and geometric designs that must have dazzled the early caravan travelers just as they amaze today's visitor. (See Aramco World, *January-February 1976)*

An artist and scholar and, above all, an astronomer, Ulugh Beg created an observatory in Samarkand that was one of the wonders of the world. (See Aramco World, *May-June 1982 and January-February 1986) He sought to verify and correct Ptolemy's computations, and in so doing wrote his own* Catalogue of the Stars, *an encyclopedia containing the knowledge of time, the course of the stars and the position of fixed stars. His calculations, translated into Latin, were widely studied in Europe, and his remarkably accurate calendar brought him posthumous honor in the West when it was published in 1652 at Oxford.*

Burma. Genghis Khan and his successors ruled the massive empire by force, but also with considerable skill and with tolerance for its assorted cultures. Their diligent patronage of trade encouraged merchants, pilgrims and travelers – among whom the best known is Marco Polo.

The united Mongol Empire was, however, short-lived. The Tatars – Turkic troops fighting under Genghis Khan – occupied the Crimea. Kazaks, descended from Turkic and Mongol tribes, settled in the vast steppelands south of Siberia. Uzbek Turks occupied the semi-desert and oasis system on the southern rim of the present-day Soviet Union, while the Turkmen roamed the deserts east of the Caspian Sea and the Azeris settled on its western shores.

Nonetheless, the dream of Asian empire was not dead: A final dramatic chapter of Central Asian history was written in the 14th century by the Timurids. Timur, the dynasty's founder, known in the West as Tamerlane, claimed to be a descendant of Genghis Khan, and was one of the most successful warriors the world has ever known. In a series of military campaigns, Timur conquered all of Asia from the Great Wall of China to the Urals and made Samarkand his capital – embellishing it with buildings sheathed in millions of blue-glazed tiles which, even today, give the city a distinct character all its own.

Timur's descendants made Samarkand a center of science and art. His grandson Ulugh Beg, using an enormous sextant set in a hillside overlooking the city, plotted, without the aid of a telescope, the positions of over 1,000 stars. The royal astronomer also built and lectured at the first of a trio of great religious colleges which today command three of the four sides of the Registan – considered to be architecturally Central Asia's noblest square.

Timur's successors, however, lacked the authority of their ancestor, and were unable to hold together the vast steppe empire he had created. Tribes revolted and political instability set in – followed by a curtailment of trade, of economic depression and cultural decline.

In 1500 Uzbek tribes overwhelmed Samarkand, and by 1507 they had driven the Timurid dynasty into obscurity. Nonetheless, the brilliant artistic legacy of the Timurids – in calligraphy, poetry, metalwork, bookbinding and a broad range of other arts, as well as in architecture – has survived for centuries, and in careful restorations now under way in the USSR, as well as in museum exhibitions in the United States and Europe, is receiving the recognition it deserves.

Weak and disorganized, Central Asia was no longer capable of playing an important role in history, or even of maintaining its independence. In the 1800's, the Russians began to advance into Central Asia. By 1900, they had conquered it all.

Finally, in 1927, the Soviets – successors of the Russian empire after the communist revolution of 1917, and in complete physical control over all lands inhabited by Muslims in the USSR – divided the area. In place of one cultural entity called Turkestan, they created six republics, naming them after the Muslim nationalities which, despite Central Asia's ever-changing fortunes, still remain its majority population today.

A wall fresco in Samarkand

THE REPUBLIC OF

AZERBAIJAN

PHOTOGRAPHED BY BRYNN BRUIJN

Azerbaijan lies on the southeastern flanks of the Caucasus Mountains against the Caspian Sea – a legendary site of the Garden of Eden. Early Assyrian chronicles of more than 5000 years ago mention the riches of Azerbaijan. More than one third of the republic's 86,835 square kilometers (33,450 square miles) lies in the alluvial Kura basin, where wheat and vegetables are cultivated. Citrus fruits, tea and rice are grown in the subtropical Lenkoran lowlands, and the slopes of the Caucasus are covered with vineyards and orchards. More cotton is grown in Azerbaijan than in any other Soviet republic except Uzbekistan, and it is one of the world's most famous oil-producing areas. The Azeris, who are mainly farmers and oil workers, combine in themselves a Turkic strain dating from the 11th-century westward migrations of the Seljuq Turks, with admixtures of older inhabitants of the Caucasus, including Iranians. Like those of neighboring Iran, Soviet Azeris are mostly Shi'i Muslims.

Clockwise from right: Baku fruit stalls and the Legend restaurant, with wall paintings illustrating works of 12th-century Azeri poets; Baku bay at night; the mufti of Taza-Pir Mosque, and Baku memorial.

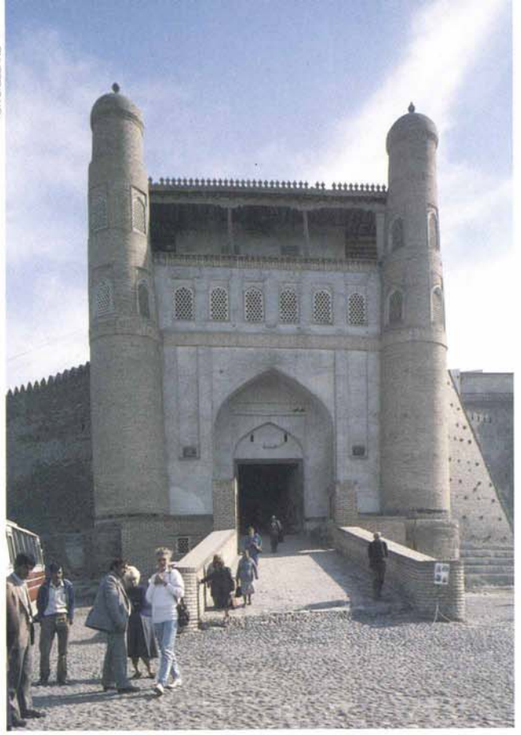
THE REPUBLIC OF

UZBEKISTAN

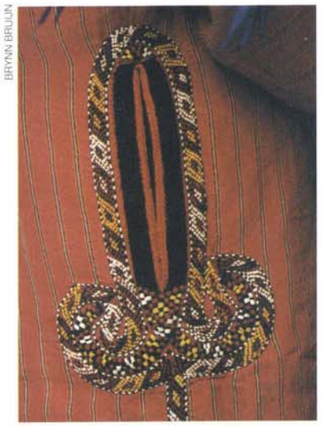
PHOTOGRAPHED BY
MIKE ANDREWS/SUSAN GRIGGS AGENCY

Uzbekistan, with its ancient cities of Bukhara and Samarkand, is the heir to Central Asia's glorious past. Lying between the Aral Sea in the north and Afghanistan in the south, it covers some 449,600 square kilometers (173,600 square miles). The northwestern half of Uzbekistan is largely desert – the Kyzl Kum (Red Sand) – while the southeastern half includes the great fertile valleys of Ferghana and Zeravshan. The Uzbeks became a distinct people at a relatively late date – toward the end of the 15th century. They take their name from Khan Uzbek, the ruler responsible for the conversion of the "Golden Horde" to Islam at the beginning of the 14th century. Although they derive largely from Turco-Mongol elements who were once nomadic pastoralists, the Uzbeks are primarily a sedentary, agricultural people. Uzbekistan today produces 67 percent of the cotton grown in the Soviet Union and half its rice. Land under irrigation in the republic has greatly increased in recent years, and industry too has undergone rapid expansion. Now, with the USSR easing entry for foreigners, tourism is showing potential as well.

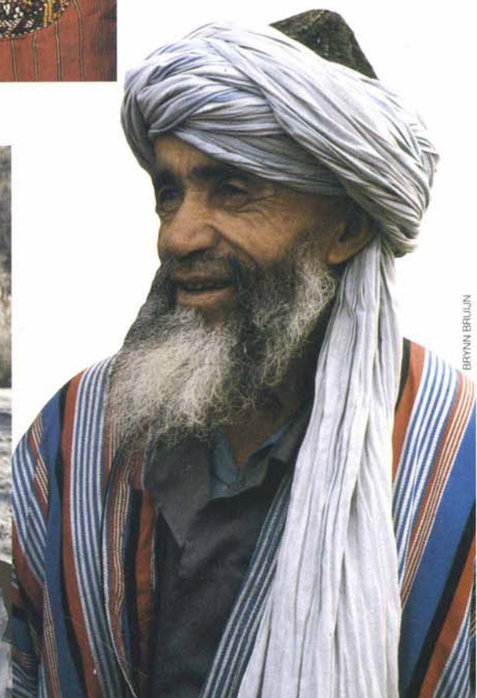
TOR EIGELAND



BRYNN BRUUN



Clockwise from left: Modern government offices at Tashkent, and ruler's ancient fortress at Bukhara. Traditional Uzbek design, and headdress. And plentiful Uzbek picnic.



BRYNN BRUUN

THE REPUBLIC OF

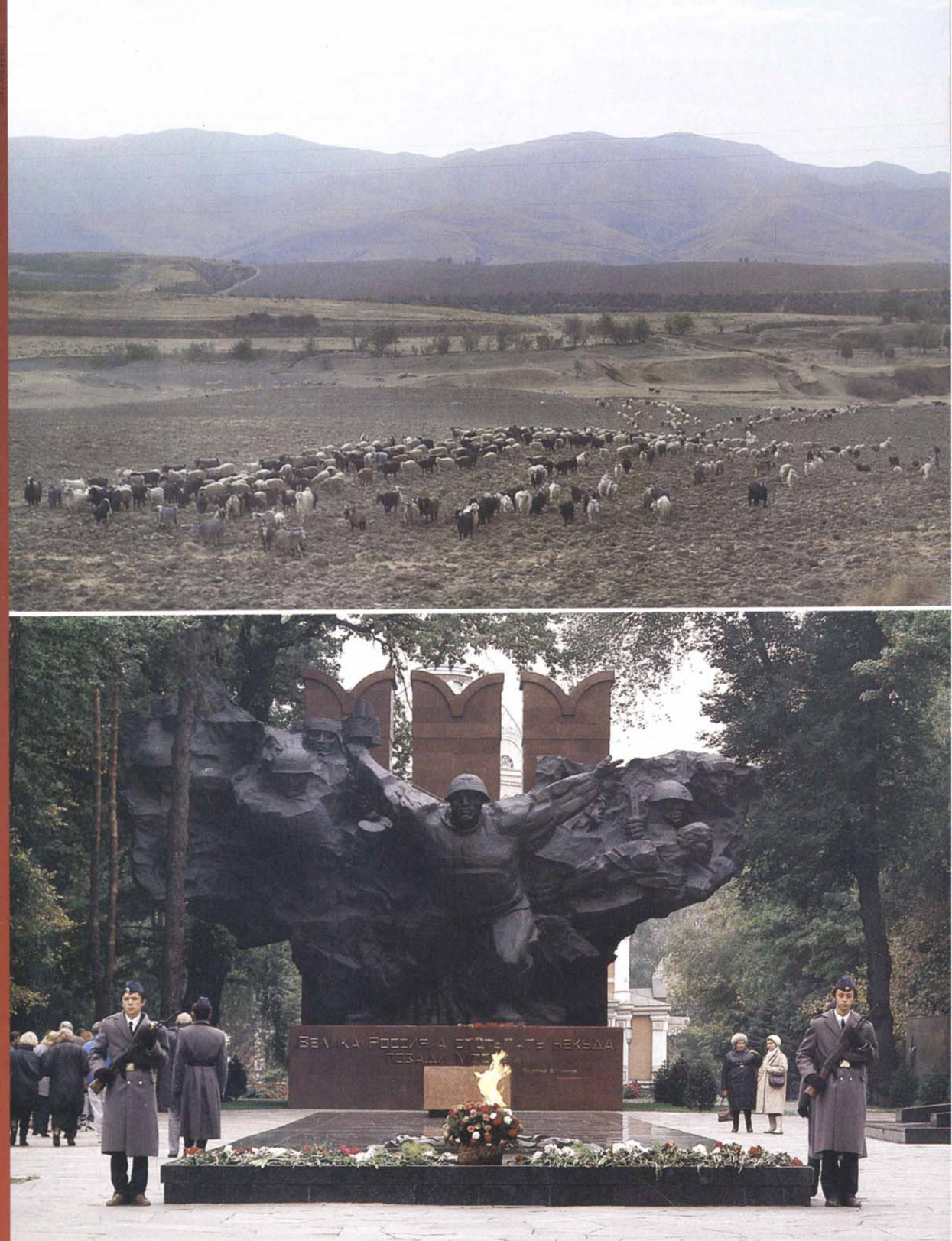
KAZAKSTAN

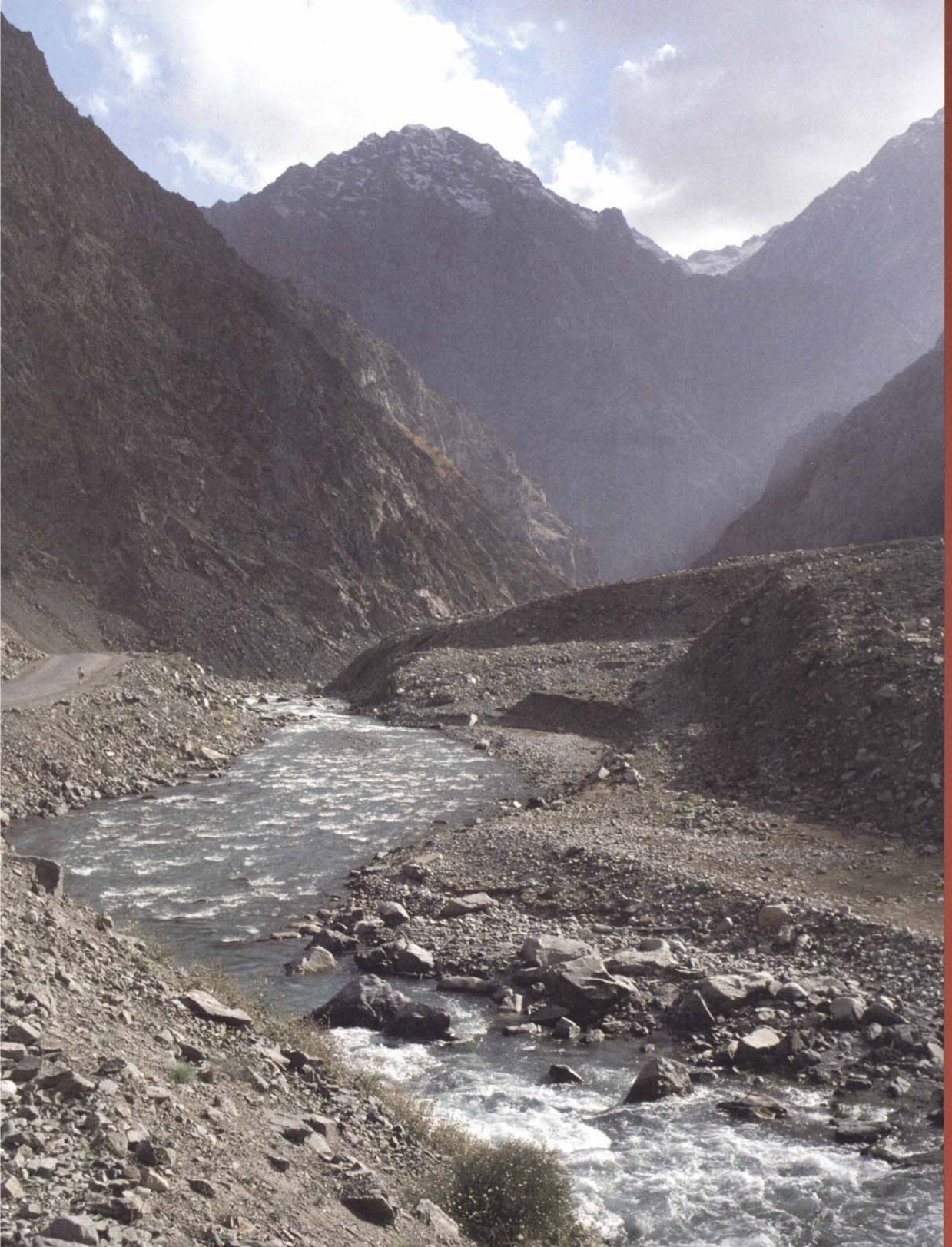
PHOTOGRAPHED BY TOR EIGELAND

Kazakstan's 2,715,000 square kilometers (1,048,310 square miles) make it the Soviet Union's second-largest republic, after the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. Mostly vast steppeland – grassy plateau – it stretches from the Caspian Sea in the west to the border of China in the east, and, under the Soviets, has been transformed from a backward livestock-raising region into one of mechanized agriculture and industry: Large chemical and steel plants now operate in several cities, and, as a result of intensive development of "virgin lands," Kazakstan is an important granary of the USSR. The Hungry Steppe, once uninhabited, now grows cotton. The Kazaks, a fiercely independent Turco-Mongol people – *kazak* is a Turkic word meaning "a man without a master" – and traditionally nomadic pastoralists, rebelled in 1916 against Russian rule. Faced with forced settlement on collective farms in 1917, many of them fled with their herds to China, where they still lead a semi-nomadic life. (See *Aramco World*, July-August 1985) Those who remain in the Soviet Union have adapted to a settled life style, while jealously guarding their traditional culture.

NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Clockwise from right: The Kazak steppe, and Alma Ata memorial; mosque at Panfilov on Sino-Soviet border, and modern and traditional Kazak musicians. Detail at center: Gold headdress decoration of snow leopard with mountain peaks, found in 2400-year-old tomb near Alma Ata.





BRYNN BRUUN

THE REPUBLIC OF TAJIKSTAN

PHOTOGRAPHED BY MIKE ANDREWS

Rugged and remote, Tajikstan consists mainly of mountains, including parts of the Pamir range, known as "the roof of the world." Its climate varies considerably with the relief: from semi-desert in the relatively low-lying west, to permanent glaciers in the Pamirs. Bounded on the east by China and on the south by Afghanistan, Tajikstan covers an area of 143,100 square kilometers (55,250 square miles). The Persian-speaking Tajiks are one of the oldest peoples of Central Asia, and also the region's longest-practicing Muslims: They adopted Islam 1200 years ago. The Tajiks' sedentary culture – they are traditionally farmers – was ultimately copied by many of Central Asia's nomadic tribes. Today, the Tajiks' principal crops are cotton and rice, and the industries of Tajikstan are mainly concerned with processing these agricultural products. In recent years, some 6400 kilometers (4000 miles) of roads – often built over difficult mountains – and wide use of air transport have reduced Tajikstan's previous inaccessibility.

Two faces of Tajikstan: tranquil Varzab valley, opposite page, in the Pamirs; and the crowded market place, left, and main square, below, in Dushanbe.

THE REPUBLIC OF

KIRGIZIA

PHOTOGRAPHED BY MIKE ANDREWS

Kirgizia lies entirely within the Tian Shan range (the Heavenly Mountains) on the Soviet Union's southeastern border with China. Its alpine-like 198,500-square-kilometer area (76,460 square miles) rarely falls below 3000 meters (10,000 feet), and rises in peaks up to 7400 meters high (24,300 feet). The Kirgiz are an ancient Turkic people who acquired a considerable Mongol infusion following Genghis Khan's march west. Historically nomadic pastoralists, they continue to make stock raising the basis of their economy. Nonetheless, collectivization of agriculture, development of industry and growth of the cities has done much to change the traditional Kirgiz way of life.

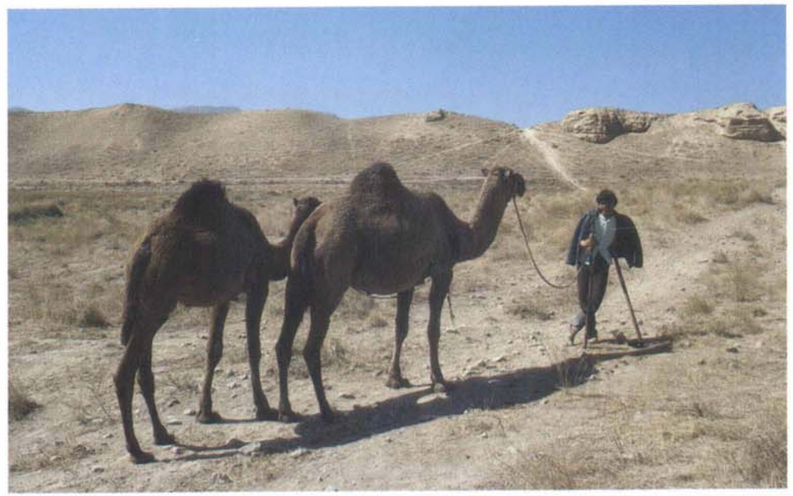
Examples of Kirgiz embroidery, above, and headgear, left. Below, the Tian Shan (Heavenly Mountains), which cover Kirgizia.

THE REPUBLIC OF

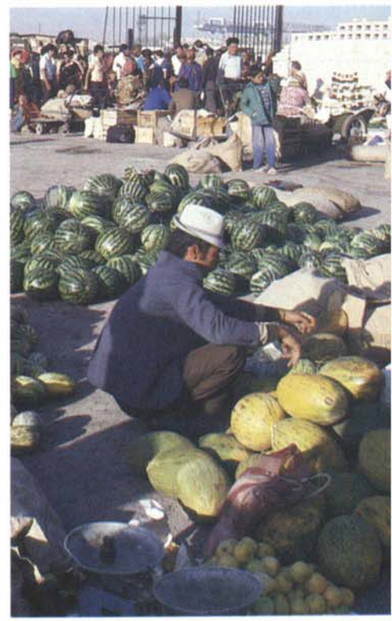
TURKMENIA

PHOTOGRAPHED BY MIKE ANDREWS

Turkmenia is the driest region of the Soviet Union. Eighty-five percent of its 488,100-square-kilometer area (186,400 square miles) is covered by the Kara Kum (Black Sand) desert. The southernmost of the Soviet republics – bordering on Iran and Afghanistan – Turkmenia has been inhabited by Turkic tribes since the 10th century. Once notorious raiders of Silk Roads caravans, the Turkmen have turned from plunder to the plow – settling in oases to grow wheat and cotton. Recently, extensive irrigation projects, including the 1000-kilometer (625-mile) Kara Kum Canal, have extended agriculture to the desert. But traditional livestock rearing still continues there – chiefly sheep to furnish wool for the famous carpets of the region.

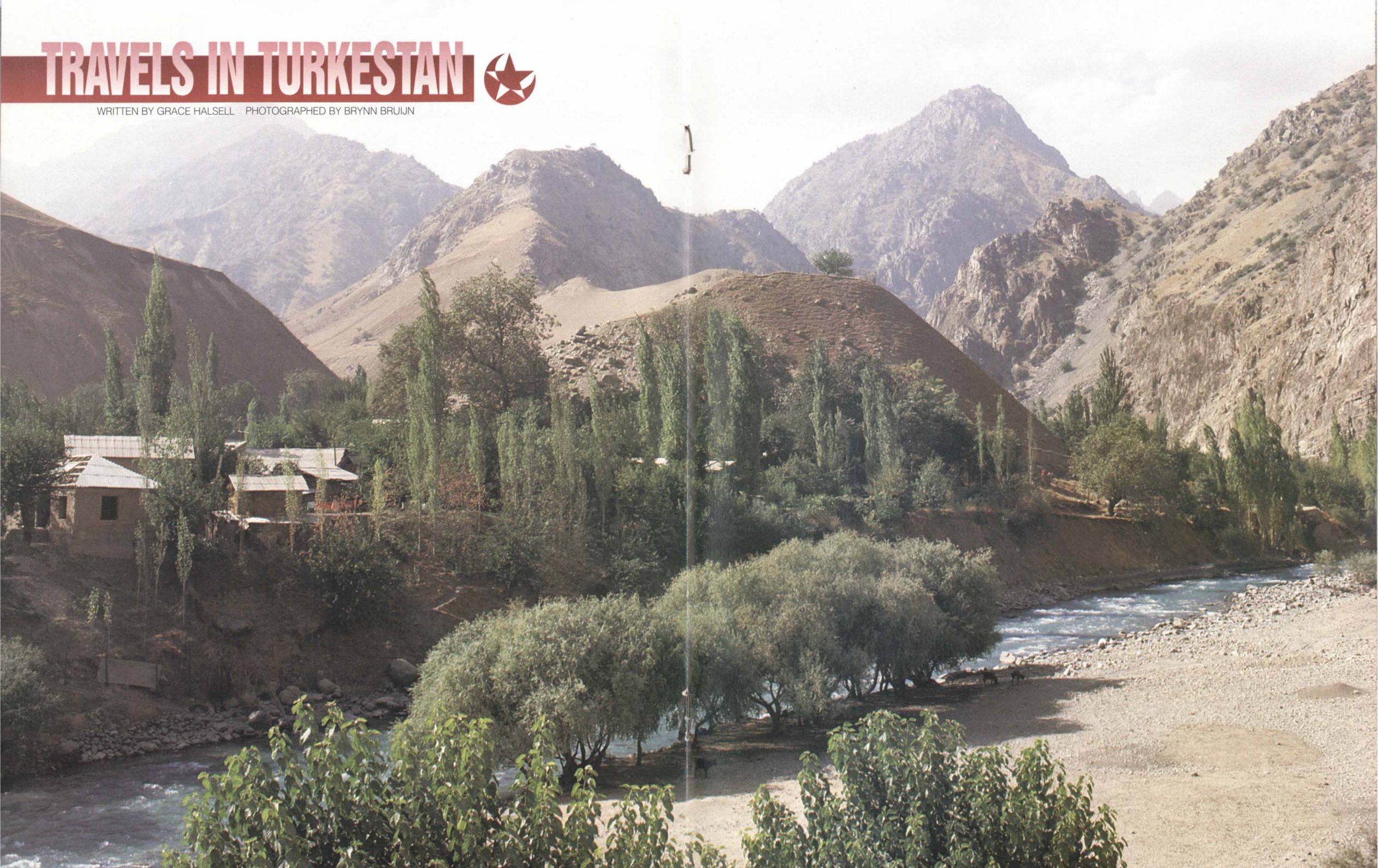


A Turkmen cameleer, left, and women in traditional Turkmen dress above. Below: stabilization in Kara Kum desert, left, and Ashkabad market, right.



TRAVELS IN TURKESTAN

WRITTEN BY GRACE HALSELL PHOTOGRAPHED BY BRYNN BRUIJN



"Here, take!" says Jamila, tugging at a garnet ring that must surely be her most prized possession. Freeing it, she attempts to press it into my hand in exchange for the inexpensive souvenir I have just given her, a replica of a John F. Kennedy coin on a small key chain.

"You are the first American I have met," says Jamila, a Muslim mother of five and one of several women picking cotton on a collective farm in the southern tier of the Soviet Union, a part of the world once called Turkestan.

Today old Turkestan is known as Central Asia. Almost half as large as Europe, Soviet Central Asia encompasses the territory from the Caspian Sea in the west to China in the east; it is bordered on the south by Afghanistan and Iran, and on the north by the largest of the USSR's 15 constituent republics, Russia – the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, or RSFSR.

Central Asia's vast area, with its five republics of Uzbekistan, Kirgizia, Turkmenia, Tajikstan and Kazakstan, is inhabited predominantly by Turkic Muslims, like Jamila.

Jamila is an Arabic word meaning "beautiful," and indeed she is a beautiful woman, with a quick, engaging smile. "And how is your President Bush?" she asks, adding, "Even though I am a farmer, I keep up with the news." Jamila says she is happy to know that Tashkent, the capital of her republic, Uzbekistan, and the fourth largest city in the USSR, is a "sister city" of Seattle, Washington. Such ties, she says, "will help bring more understanding."

On my first visit to the USSR, in 1979, when the winds of the Cold War were still blowing, I felt I was seeing only stony faces and stone walls. Ten years later, in the era of Gorbachev and his twin goals of *perestroika* (restructuring) and *glasnost'* (openness), I was astonished by the eagerness of Soviet citizens to shake hands, to assure me of their desire for world peace – and to practice their English.

But when photographer Brynn Bruijn and I arrived in Ferghana, in southeast Uzbekistan, Intourist guide Elitgaly ("Ali") Usmanov, a native Uzbek, greeted us in neither English nor Russian. Instead, he put his right hand on his heart, bowed slightly and wished us peace: *"Al-salaam alaikum."*

"But," I exclaimed to Ali, "that's Arabic! Do you speak Arabic?"

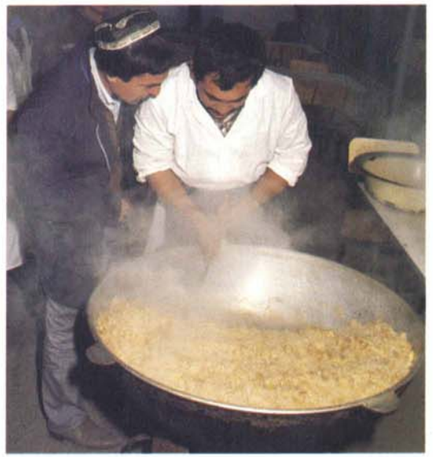
"Only a little," he said. "But the greeting in Arabic is universally used throughout Central Asia."

Ali explained that the Arabs had come to this region 13 centuries ago. While they themselves stayed in Central Asia only from the seventh to the ninth century, they bequeathed to the land both the Muslim religion and the Arabic script, which was widely used there for 1300 years.

Fifty years ago, however, the Soviet government – concerned by the cultural unity of the Turkic peoples living under its rule – imposed different Cyrillic alphabets on each of the Muslim nationalities of the Soviet Union, effectively cutting them off from their common literary language and making it more difficult for them to communicate with each other as well.

Yet I found the legacy of Muslim hospitality to be very much intact as I traveled in Soviet Central Asia. Nowhere have I ever found people who are more warm and generous in spirit. Jamila, the generous woman in the cotton fields, seems typical of this hospitality. Additionally, however, she is typical of the region in three other ways: ethnically, linguistically and economically. Ethnically, Jamila is not Russian, but Turkic, and the language she speaks is a Turkic tongue.

I had talked with Jamila using Ali as interpreter. Ali and Jamila spoke to each other in the Uzbek Turkic language, and he translated into English. Their language is not very different from the Turkic language spoken by other Central Asians, nor from the Turkic language spoken in Turkey. Indeed, Jamila calls herself a Turk, as does Ali. "Three-fourths of the Muslims living in the Soviet Union belong to the Turkic linguistic family," said Ali, adding that the other quarter are Iranian peoples, including Tajiks, Kurds, Iranians and Baluchis, who speak a dialect of Farsi, the Persian language.



In addition to being ethnically and linguistically Turkic, Jamila is representative of her people in a third way: She, like most Central Asians, is a manual laborer. Jamila and other workers on the collective farms rise before dawn and go to the fields. They are grouped under the administration of vast state or collective farms, with names such as "Communism," "Twenty-First Party Congress" and "Lenin." They live in small clusters of private mud-brick homes opening onto pleasant family compounds with shady courtyards. Many of the workers now have television.

Jamila tossed fistfuls of white bolls into a long, deep bag slung over a shoulder. She has taught all five of her children to pick cotton, she said, and they all helped after school. Formerly, schools were shut for two months of the year so children could help with the harvest, but in 1988, Soviet authorities passed a new child-labor law designed to eliminate the practice.

People of Turkestan: Jamila, right, Muslim mother of five, picking cotton on a collective farm in the Ferghana Valley; above, Intourist guide Elitgaly ("Ali") Usmanov, left in picture, supervises the preparation of pilaf, the traditional rice and lamb dish of Central Asia.

The law, prohibiting children who have not finished high school from working, has brought little change, however. I saw that women routinely take their children, some as young as 10 years old, to pick cotton after school. Employment of children to help bring in the harvest is traditional, since the adult labor pool never seems sufficient to meet the official production goals. The target for Uzbekistan's cotton production in 1988 was five million metric tons. Workers exceeded that goal, according to official statistics, producing 5,600,000 tons.

Half the cotton produced in the USSR is still handpicked. One day, Jamila said, she picked 250 kilograms (550 pounds) of cotton, her all-time high. "But yesterday I picked only 50 kilos [110 pounds]." At 14 cents a kilogram, she earned $7.70 for a nine-hour day.

Central Asian workers produce 90 percent of the cotton grown in the Soviet Union, most of it in the one republic of Uzbekistan. According to Rafik Nishanov, a former first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan – became chairman for Soviet nationalities in the Supreme Soviet of the USSR last year – only six percent of the cotton grown in Uzbekistan is both processed and sold there. The rest is sent to the RSFSR for processing, and most of the products made from it are sold abroad to earn hard currency.

Produce of Turkestan: Succulent radishes, left, on sale in a Ferghana market, and mouth-watering honey, above, displayed in Samarkand, are among the abundant agricultural products of the fertile valleys and high pastures of Turkestan.

Many Uzbeks are aware that the economic relationship between Russia and their republic is like that between a mother country and its colonies. Uzbek writer Muhamed Salih says Central Asians should manufacture cloth as well as produce raw cotton. "We sell cotton as raw material. The cotton goes to the Russians, and they sell us our shirts." He adds that Uzbeks pay the equivalent of $42 for a shirt made in the European part of the USSR, whereas if they manufactured them at home a shirt would cost only about seven dollars.

Writing in a Central Asian Turkic newspaper, a farmer on a collective farm complained, "Most of our cotton is sold at low prices to the state, which in turn reaps enormous profits." He said that farmers sell a kilogram (2.2 pounds) of cotton to the state for the equivalent of 20 cents, and the state sells the same kilo overseas for the equivalent of $3.50.

While conditions have in many cases improved for Central Asian workers, they still earn 40 percent less than other workers in the Soviet Union. The average Soviet worker earns the equivalent of $150 per month; workers in Uzbekistan earn $85 per month. (These wages are not comparable to wages abroad because many necessities of life – rent, bread, transportation – are subsidized in the USSR.)

Soviet officials are working to remedy some of the obvious inequities in the economic system that benefit Slavic bosses more than the Central Asian workers who produce such raw products as cotton – but larger-scale changes under way in the country may distract them from that goal. Meanwhile the land inhabited predominantly by Muslims remains a rich and vast storehouse of natural treasures. In addition to its mammoth crop of cotton, Central Asia is the third-largest producer of oil in the USSR; it produces one-quarter of all Soviet natural gas, one-quarter of the copper, half the country's gold and 100 percent of its uranium.

Ali arranged for us to hire a car and driver to travel extensively in the Ferghana Valley, an area somewhat larger than Massachusetts, that includes portions of the Uzbek, Tajik and Kirgiz Soviet Socialist Republics. The valley consists partly of the very fertile Karakalpak Steppe and partly of desert land. It is nourished by many mountain streams and drained by the river Syr Darya. In the north the Ferghana Range rises as part of the Tian Shan system – the Heavenly Mountains – and in the south are the Pamirs, so high they are known as "the roof of the world."

Although the main East-West trade route, the Silk Road, once passed through Ferghana, few foreigners have visited the valley in recent decades. (See *Aramco World*, July-August 1988) Our guide, Ali, said most visitors came from the Soviet-bloc countries, and that the second-largest group of tourists was the Japanese. Ali, who has worked with the Soviet Intourist Agency for the past 21 years, said that, except for an official agriculture delegation during the Khrushchev era, we were the only Americans he had seen in Ferghana. And other than one group from Hungary, I saw no other tourists during my stay in the Ferghana Valley.

One day we drove toward Kokand, an important city since the second century BC and once the capital of the anti-Bolshevik autonomous government of Turkestan. Enroute, Ali related something of its ancient history.

Ferghana was the original home of the legendary "heavenly horses," he said – big, strong, intelligent beasts much prized by the ancient Chinese. When the people of Kokand repeatedly refused to part with their fine breeding stock, the Han emperor Wu sent a 60,000 man army 4,000 kilometers (2,500 miles) to capture the city, opening up Central Asia to Chinese power for the first time and paving the way for China's first contacts with the West.

"If we arrive at a certain restaurant by noon," said Ali, returning to the realities of the 20th century, "we can be assured of a fine pilaf" – the delicious rice with lamb traditionally served throughout

A VISIT TO BAKU

WRITTEN BY GRACE HALSELL

"Quite a crowd to meet us!" I jokingly remarked to photographer Brynn Bruijn as we disembarked from the Aeroflot plane in Baku, on the western shore of the Caspian Sea.

We had flown from Leningrad to this capital of Azerbaijan, a republic the size of Austria. Although it was midnight when we landed, there was a huge crowd at the airport. Inside the terminal, I noted people's hurried movements and tense faces: clearly, something was going on.

By prearrangement, an Intourist guide approached and introduced himself in flawless English as Rafiq Hashimov. An Azeri in his mid-forties, he was of medium build, with cinnamon-colored skin, a pleasant, friendly face and dark eyes.

What, I asked, were all the people doing at the airport? Ignoring the question, Hashimov busied himself with our gear, led us to a car, and escorted us to the huge, modern Azerbaijan Hotel. Here we soon got our own explanation of the midnight crowds.

Going to our 10th-floor rooms, we stepped out onto balconies that overlooked Baku's huge Lenin Square, as large as Moscow's Red Square and Leningrad's Palace Square combined. Some 2000 people were demonstrating to urge their own Azerbaijani government to action.

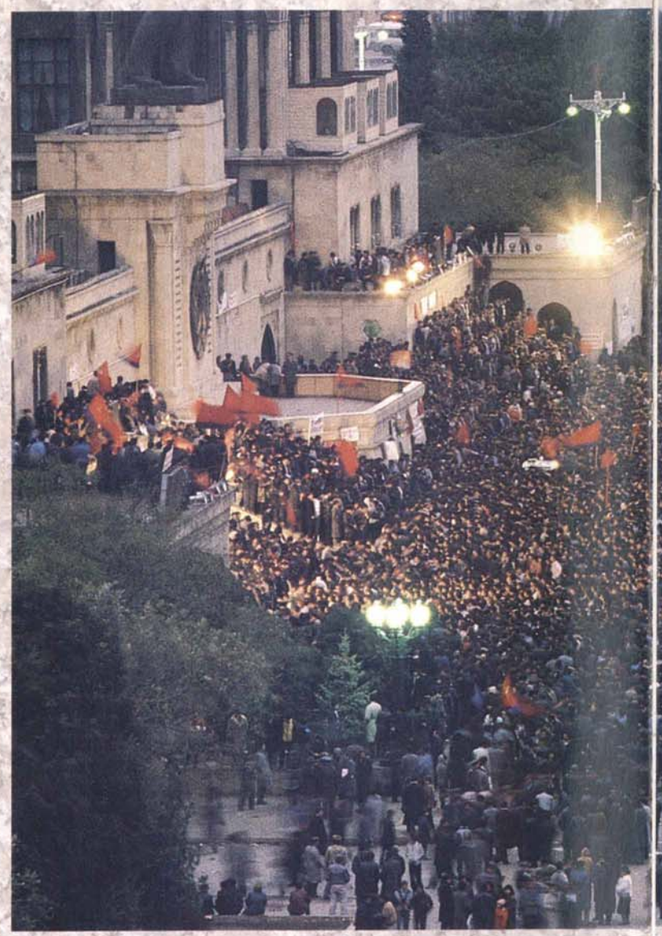
We listened as the Azeri demonstrators, in one gigantic chorus, repeatedly shouted the name of the territory of Nogorno Karabakh, an enclave which has a large Armenian population but is part of Azerbaijan. The neighboring Soviet Republic of Armenia had been demanding administrative control of the territory.

"No-gor-no Ka-ra-bakh!" The refrain filled the cold night air. We saw families, well dressed and well behaved, huddling near small camp fires around the square. Other clusters of Azeris were greeting one another, sharing food. Dozens of police stood guard around the square, allowing the orderly demonstration to continue as one speaker after another addressed the crowd in their Azeri Turkic language.

We later learned that our flight had been the last one permitted to land in Baku until the week-long demonstrations ended. More important, we realized we had been present at one of the first manifestations of a trend toward looser internal ties in the Soviet Union and greater internal and popular autonomy. In the months to come, an unofficial Muslim group, the Azerbaijani Popular Front, would play a leading role in the dispute with Armenia, would use rallies like the one we had seen to press Azerbaijan's official leadership into action, and would even win a promise from the head of the republic's Communist Party to pass a law asserting Azerbaijan's theoretical right of secession from the USSR.

Just over a year after our visit, the Soviet parliament confirmed Azerbaijan's control over Nogorno Karabakh – though it also granted the enclave increased autonomy – in a move that was interpreted as a sign of the growing influence of the Azerbaijani Popular Front.

All that lay in the future, however, as we visited Baku. Our explorations revealed a strikingly beautiful city built on hills rising above the Caspian Sea, long famed for its sturgeon and caviar. Our guide, Rafiq, told us that Azerbaijan has a history of civilization that dates from long before the Christian era. The region was once part of the kingdoms of Urartu, Media and Persia; it was the birthplace of the religious reformer Zoroaster in the seventh century BC, and was conquered by Alexander – who knew it as Atropatene – in the fourth century BC. It was on the West-East trade route from the Black Sea to China, the famed Silk Road, and it was also long known for its beautiful carpets.



BRYNN BRUIJN

Azeris demonstrating in Baku's Lenin Square.

We visited a Muslim watch tower, dating from the 12th century; the Madrasa Mosque, built in 1301; a medieval market place, and a 15th-century inn or caravansarai, where we stopped for hot tea served in small glasses. While relaxing, Rafik related more about his native land: "We are part of Transcaucasia – along with Georgia and Armenia. It's one geographical entity. While Georgia and Armenia became predominantly Christian, the people here have been Muslim since the Arab expansion in the seventh century."

The Russian Empire incorporated the northern part of the area in the 19th century, and that is now the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic. The republic has a population of six million Azeris, who share their history, their Turkic language and their Muslim religion with five million Azeris who live across the border in Iran. In January of 1990, indeed, crowds of Soviet Azaris led by the Popular Front demonstrated their desire for closer links with their Iranian cousins by demolishing lengths of border fences between the two countries.

With the oil boom of the 1970's, Baku emerged as one of the most important Soviet cities in the petroleum industry, and became an important center of world trade. Azerbaijan is the second-largest producer of oil in the USSR, the first being another Muslim region – the Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic.

With almost two million people, Baku is the fifth largest city in the USSR after Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev and Tashkent. The majority of its population is Muslim.

After a tour of the city, Rafiq suggested going to a typical Azeri restaurant, called "Legend," built on the site of an old Turkish bathhouse. It was part of an open-air museum of Azeri culture that had been created in a caravansarai that once served travelers on the Silk Road. There we met the manager, Bagadur Salimov, a graduate of the Moscow Institute of Catering. "I wanted to open a restaurant, so I met with friends and we went to a bank and got backing," he explained. This very capitalist undertaking is a success: Salimov now has 13 Azeris on his staff, and the attractive restaurant, with its walls decorated with brilliant murals of scenes from Azeri poems, hums with talk and laughter.

To begin our meal, Salimov served a variety of appetizers including olives, salads, and small, meat-filled dumplings. Next came dovga *yoghurt soup with meatballs and herbs. As the main dish, he recommended either a kebab grilled over an open fire, or a rice and lamb pilaf, which I opted to try.*

"In Uzbekistan, the rice and other ingredients – vegetables, including carrots, lamb or beef, sometimes fish – are cooked in one pot, whereas here we cook all the ingredients in separate pots," Salimov explained. My pilaf was served in a metal dish, with a lid. It was piping hot and delicious.

"In Azerbaijan," said our host, "we have more than 100 varieties of pilaf." Thanks to Azeri hospitality, we must have tasted most of them before continuing our journey through Soviet Central Asia.

Central Asia. We were speeding to make the deadline when Ali suddenly shouted for the driver to stop. He had seen a young Uzbek roadside vendor with steaming hot, round loaves of bread for sale, and he ran to purchase half his supply to see us safely to our destination.

At the restaurant, a cooperative run by three young Uzbeks, we sat cross-legged on a small open-air terrace under an arbor of grapevines. Ali himself went to the kitchen, returning with plates heaped with the freshly-made pilaf, which we enjoyed along with the fresh bread. Later, Ali introduced us to the three young entrepreneurs, who operate out of a kitchen hardly larger than a telephone booth.

On our drives through the Ferghana Valley, I was impressed by the productivity of areas that can be irrigated. In addition to cotton, the valley produces a wide variety of fruits – apples, apricots, pomegranates, succulent melons, pears, an abundance of grapes – as well as huge crops of carrots, greens for salads, tomatoes, and cabbages as large as basketballs. I also noted the rows of mulberry trees whose leaves are devoured by silkworms, famous for providing the silk that was traded for centuries by merchants traversing Central Asia.

"In Margelan," Ali promised, "you will see the best silk products in all Central Asia." After our car pulled to a stop in front of the Margelan silk factory, Nabijan Valiev, the chief engineer, greeted us.

As we began our tour with rows of shuttling machines operated by hundreds of young Uzbek women, Valiev, who has worked at the factory for 30 years, told us, "The factory was opened in 1928 with 250 workers. In that year, they sold about one ton of raw silk products. Now we have 10,000 workers, about 85 percent of them women. And we have increased production 700 times."

Eventually we moved to a section where we saw the finished material rolling off the machines, silk-screened with one of the most famous of the designs of Central Asia, an imitation of the ikat weave called *atlas*, a Turkic word meaning "silky." Another pattern, featuring a blending of brilliant reds and yellows, dates from the time of woodblock prints and today, made into dresses and pantaloons, is almost the national dress for Uzbek and Tajik women.

After the tour, engineer Valiev introduced us to his wife, who has worked at the factory for 30 years. She proudly told us that she is the mother of 10 children: five sons and five daughters.

Having 10 children is not unusual, I learned, in the Ferghana Valley. In Namangan, called "the city of apples," with its population of 180,000, we visited the home of Mahmud and Sobirahon Ahmadjenor, who have six daughters and four sons. Mrs. Ahmadjenor, 40, proudly showed us, pinned onto her dress, a "Hero Mother" medal, an award which the Soviet government presents to any woman who gives birth to 10 or more children.

The Soviet government created the Order of Maternal Glory and began the distribution of the medals representing the order's successive levels before the Second World War, to encourage the birth of more defenders of the motherland. Although they continue to hand out the medals, the Soviets are presently conducting a campaign urging Central Asians to practice birth control. Soviet writers in Central Asian journals extoll the virtues of planned parenthood, and in the hospitals, one Uzbek told me, "a Russian nurse will tell a Muslim woman, 'It is better to have a small family.'"

I asked a Central Asian woman why, if the Russians were urging Muslim women to have fewer children, they continue to give the Hero Mother medals to those women having 10 children. "They must feel that it is now too late to stop giving the medals," she replied. "Even if they stopped, it would not lower the birthrate. A Muslim woman does not give birth to a child to get a medal."

When I visited Moscow and Leningrad, I noted that in these cities most couples have no more than one or two children, whereas many Central Asian women have five, six, seven or more. These statistics mean that Muslims are no longer simply one of the Soviet Union's many "minorities," but the *only* rapidly growing segment of the country's population. At Ferghana airport, for example, I saw 150 army recruits in a long line boarding a sleek Ilyushin-62 troop-transport plane that would carry them to training camps. Some Central Asian experts say that by the year 2000, one of every three Soviet recruits will be Muslim. And a daring Russian comedian claims that he performed at a military base where all the officers laughed uproariously at his jokes, while none of the enlisted men even smiled. "Don't worry about that," an officer allegedly told him, "it's just that none of them speak Russian – they're all Central Asians."

Among the two million people in the Ferghana region, there are 6,000 Hero Mothers. And, said our Intourist guide, Ali, that ratio holds true in each region of Central Asia: "Large families are closely associated with honor, respect and self-esteem." Ali added that when he and relatives or friends greet one another after a long separation, "We do not ask, 'How are you?' but rather, 'How many children do you have?'"

I noticed a special respect and esteem paid to the elderly in Central Asian families . "Here," said Ali, "we traditionally look after our parents. When the eldest son marries, he and his wife live with his parents until the second son marries. Then the second son and his wife live with the parents – and this continues until the youngest son marries. Then he will remain with his parents until they die."

One Central Asian woman in her 30's, who told me she was a Communist Party member, said, "There is something remarkable about the way Muslims look after their old people. If I see an old man sitting in a park and he looks lonely and miserable, I know he is probably Russian, and if I see an old person sitting in a park who looks content, I know he has a pattern to his life, a home to which he can return, and I know he is probably Muslim."

I heard expressions of respect for Islam from another communist, the young editor of a Ferghana newspaper whom I had asked about the problem of drugs in the Soviet Union. "People living in the villages are more influenced by Islam, and have fewer problems with drugs. In the small towns, the mosque leaders say, 'Don't drink, don't take drugs', and they call on people to have good behavior. But in the large cities," he said, "there is less influence of Islam and some of the people do have these problems."

As we prepared for our departure from the Ferghana Valley, Ali told us that his neighbors were inviting us to a farewell luncheon. We arrived at noon at the home of Husanali Akramov and his wife, Salimahon, who have three handsome and well-behaved sons, Murad, 14, Umid, 12, and Nodir, four. The couple and their children share the home with his parents, Karim and Makhuba Akramov.

Ali had told us that the family owned the home, and when I asked Karim Akramov, an electrician with the city hydroelectric plants, how in a communist country he was able to own his home, he said that in 1958 the state had given him 500 square meters of land (5380 square feet). "Then I began building, with my own hands." He built one section for himself and his wife, who works in a factory, then started another section for his son and his son's family.

"Hero Mother" Sobirahon Ahmadjenov, far left, and the medals, left, she received for having ten children. Above, a table of typical Central Asian dishes prepared by Salimahon Akramov.

Good

As we talked, seated in cushioned comfort on a carpeted floor, we sampled a variety of appetizers, including small slices of cheese and meat, as well as olives, and a variety of fruits and nuts: grapes, pears, apples, walnuts, pistachios, almonds. Every 15 minutes or so, our hostess, the younger Mrs. Akramov, brought more food: green radishes and a compote of stewed peaches, cherries and mulberries. After we had talked and nibbled for an hour, she arrived with a pilaf.

Our host that day, Husanali Akramov, had traveled to Tokyo, Singapore and other cities in the Far East, and had recently returned to the Ferghana Valley. He said with conviction, "I did not find a single place I liked as much as Ferghana."

The Soviet government, bowing to outside ethnic groups speaking on their behalf, has permitted only three groups of Soviet citizens to emigrate: Jews, Armenians and Germans. To an Uzbek who had received a Soviet exit visa for a visit to the United States, I posed the question, "How many of your people would leave if they could?" "Few," he said – adding that during the Stalin period, those who could get out did so. "But most of the people love their homeland; they have always lived here and they will stay here."

I asked Ali and others the same question, and always the answer was more or less the same: Some few would leave, but most would not want to. Like people everywhere, Central Asians are attached to their homeland and to the place where they were born. But their feelings may be unusually strong because of the foreignness they perceive in the rest of the Soviet Union. Tajiks, for example, do not emigrate and more than 90 percent live in their native land. Even when offered better jobs in Russia or Siberia, they will generally not leave home.

Flying over the huge expanses of Central Asia, from the Caspian Sea to the Chinese border, I marveled how the early Greeks, Turks, Persians and Arabs had traversed, by horseback and on foot, this region of mountains up to 8500 meters (28,000 feet), rocky plateaus, sand dunes and desert wastes. It is a land of geographical contrasts, much of it taken up by the scorching, arid Kara Kum and Kyzyl Kum deserts. As in any instance when nature runs to extremes, one finds the scene at first not beautiful, but overpowering, awesome. "It is difficult for you to imagine," said a guide in Tashkent, "looking at our parks and fields with their trees, plants and flowers. But most of Central Asia is a desert, and cities such as Tashkent are oases in that desert. Now it is April, the rains are over. And those of us who live in Tashkent will not see rain again for 200 days, from April to October."

Not only is the area arid, it is prone to devastating earthquakes. Taskhent suffered serious temblors in 1946, and in 1966 a big quake devastated the city. "For the next two years we suffered one, two or three shocks a day," the Tashkent guide related. "We had more than 2,500 earthquakes. With the big shock, they left 75,000 people homeless."

Ashkabad, the capital of Turkmenia, was almost leveled by earthquakes in 1948. The destruction wrought by an earthquake that struck Armenia, west of the Caspian Sea, in 1988 brought the deaths of some 25,000. In early 1989, seated in a Moscow café, I was one of the millions worldwide who witnessed on television the tragedies suffered by the Tajik people after an earthquake destroyed much of a rural area of Tajikstan.

Flying to Alma Ata, the capital of Kazakstan, located in the far eastern part of that vast Muslim republic, I learned of the rapid changes taking place. They are important changes, but have little to do with the Kazak people's Islamic culture.

"Turkic-speaking Kazaks have for centuries been admired as skilled horsemen," our guide, Eugenia, told me as we traveled about this capital, set spectacularly at the foot of the snow-covered Altai Mountains. "Formerly this was a land of nomads. Families lived in yurts, circular felt-and-skin tents with a framework of withes. They raised sheep and moved about. My father, until he was drafted into the Soviet army, was a nomad." Posted to Moscow, he met and married her mother, a Russian.

"We are proud of our educational accomplishments," Eugenia said. Before the revolution, "there were less than 20 literate people per 1000. Women were almost all illiterate. Now, illiteracy has been all but eliminated. More than half the adult population has a secondary or higher education."

In recent years, "due to the intensive development of our 'virgin lands', many Slavic farmers have moved here. They came after Soviet agronomists pinpointed Kazakstan as an ideal place to grow wheat and they turned vast tracts of heretofore uncultivated lands into the Soviet Union's second-largest granary, after the Ukraine," Eugenia said.

We had journeyed a long distance in our travels in Turkestan. One day I walked a short distance from my modern hotel to a large, new bus station built on the site of a former caravansarai on the old Silk Road. The centuries-old traffic continues: A Dane, my next-door neighbor at the hotel, told me, "I will leave in the morning by bus to travel all the way to China. China," he said, "is only 200 miles from our hotel."

ISLAM IN A COMMUNIST STATE

WRITTEN BY GRACE HALSELL PHOTOGRAPHED BY BRYNN BRUIJN AND TOR EIGELAND

It was the imams in the various cities of Soviet Central Asia who told me that the Russians, after years of attempting to eradicate Islam, are now allowing more freedom and are relaxing their previously rigid controls on mosque building permits.

In Baku, for example, Hajji Adil Zeinalov, director of the Taza-Pir mosque, told me, "Five to six thousand mosques, all with historical significance, are still standing, but not functioning. We have made more than 100 requests that the mosques be reopened. Now, thank God – and thanks to Gorbachev – it is being done."

Still, in early 1988, on the second of three trips to the Soviet Union, when I wanted to visit the Muslim central office in Tashkent, I reminded myself that I would probably not be able to interview a religious official unless both he and I had state approval for such a visit. In a communist society, the state controls all enterprises – even religion.

I went to the state travel agency, Intourist, and asked an employee to make an appointment for me with the mufti. She hesitated, then said she would – "but not today."

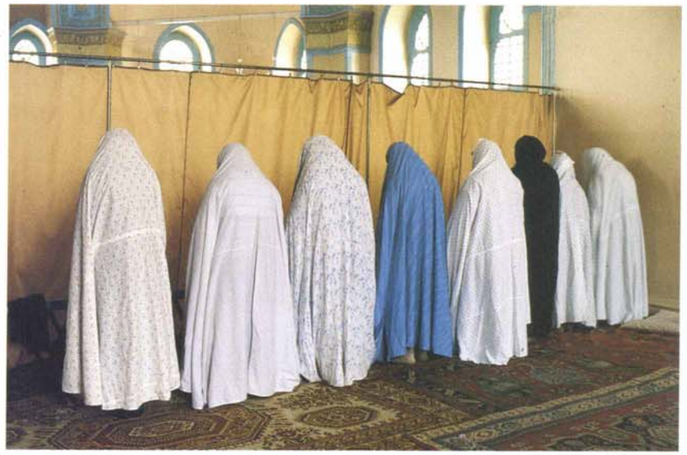
Meanwhile, on my own, I determined at least to find the site of the Muslim Board, the central office for all official Islamic activities in the Central Asian republics. I bought a map of Tashkent and unfolded it before a pleasant 25-year-old man in a "service bureau" in my hotel. I asked him to pinpoint the Old City. He studied the map, with all its information printed in the Russian Cyrillic alphabet, and eventually said I could take Trolley Number One. Chatting with him, I learned that he was a Russian and a native of Moscow who had lived in Tashkent for 15 years. As for the Old City, he said, "I have never been there."

Leaving the huge tourist hotel, I walked a couple of blocks and boarded a trolley. Moving through the streets of new Tashkent, I noted large, modern edifices and an array of impressive parks, so beautifully designed and maintained they make the city a showcase for the vast Central Asian region of the USSR. The trolley rolled on into an area where only Uzbek Muslims live, and I noted housing reflecting a far smaller economic outlay, with few public buildings and parks.

After 30 minutes, I disembarked at the end of the trolley line, and began walking. I passed mud-brick homes facing windowless onto narrow streets. I saw few vehicles and almost no pedestrians. Then suddenly I heard a voice, chanting the call to prayer. I searched for an edifice that might be a mosque, but I could not see one. Finally, I realized the voice was emanating from one of the look-alike houses, but it was impossible to discern which one.

I continued walking, past structures that must once have been mosques or schools, now crumbling in total disrepair. Scholars tell us that once in the land that became the USSR there were 26,000 mosques. When the communist regime came to power, especially after Stalin's absolute dictatorship began, the leaders ordered the destruction of places of worship. Many mosques not destroyed were converted to warehouses, restaurants, tea houses – even stables; only about 400 were left as functioning mosques.

Continuing to walk through a maze of twisting, abruptly ending streets, I felt hopelessly lost when suddenly I turned a corner and saw what looked like an Islamic structure. Walking closer, I saw a sign with raised letters in Arabic, Russian, Uzbek Turkic and English: "Muslim Religious Board of Central Asia and Kazakstan." As I had surmised, I was not permitted to enter without authorization.



On another day, after Intourist had cleared me, I returned to the Board and was ushered into the courtyard of a former religious school, the Madrasa Barak-khana, dating from the 16th century. I was led to the office of Dr. Usufkhan Shakir, vice-chairman of the directorate.

There are three other Islamic boards, but because of the importance of Central Asia, where 75 percent of the Soviet Union's Muslims live, the Tashkent directorate is especially important. Dr. Shakir said their executive committee, composed of both religious functionaries and laymen, is responsible for the inspection, cleaning and furnishing of mosques, as well as the restoration of old mosques and the appointment of imams and preachers, known as *khatibs*. The committee also oversees the only two official madrasas in the Soviet Union: the Bukhara Mir-i Arab madrasa and the Tashkent Institute. These two academic centers train religious cadres in the essence and content of the Qur'an, the Hadith literature on the customs and practices of the Prophet, and the laws of the *shari'a*. They also teach the Arabic language.

The Mosque of One Hundred Pillars, top right, and Mir-i Arab Madrasa, bottom right, Bukhara. Above, women praying in Taza-Pir Mosque, Baku.

FROM THE CRADLE TO THE GRAVE

WRITTEN BY GRACE HALSELL

BRYNN BRUIN

"Here in the Ferghana Valley," an Uzbek told me, "we maintain centuries-old traditions connected with birth, circumcision, marriage and burial."

When a child is born, a Central Asian Muslim asks the local imam or another member of the religious establishment to officiate at a name-giving ceremony. When a son is circumcised – often at age four, five or six – the father asks a member of the 'ulama to officiate. "Circumcision has a special Islamic significance among Central Asians," an imam said. "It means that a young boy becomes a member of the universal community of Islam, that he is one with his fellow Muslims around the world."

Jamila, the woman I met in the Ferghana Valley cotton fields, told me that when she and her husband were married, they had not only a civil ceremony, but a Muslim religious one as well, in the mosque in Ferghana. "Without a religious ceremony, we do not consider any couple married," Jamila said.

Later, when I inquired of Ali, our Uzbek guide, how many couples have the Islamic religious ceremony when they marry, he said, "All do." Later he amended that to say that in the Ferghana Valley, "ninety-nine percent have the religious ceremony." And, what, I asked, if they are Communist Party members?

"They sometimes will ask the imam to come to the home anyway, for a religious service, but everyone keeps quiet about it."

I happened to be visiting with imams in two cities, Namangan and Ferghana, when, in each place, the imam said he had to excuse himself to conduct a wedding ceremony. In each instance he added, "You are welcome to come along."

In Ferghana, I followed Imam Abdul Vali, 35, to a nearby room. I wondered if the couple would be nervous with a stranger in their midst, but the young bride and groom and their two witnesses gave no indication they felt me to be an unwelcome intruder.

The bride was wearing a long white gown, while the groom was in a business suit. They listened attentively as the imam read certain verses from the Qur'an, and when Imam Vali asked the bride if she accepted the groom as her husband, she gave a soft but audible affirmative reply. The groom gave her a gold ring, and as to their vows, the imam asked the two witnesses if they had heard. Each replied in their Uzbek Turkic language, "Yes, I heard."

When the ceremony was over, the bride and groom invited me to have photos taken with them. They were as open and warm to me as if I had been family.

The wedding party, Ali said, was the biggest family event in the Muslim's life. "The previous day, women arrive at the home of the bride's parents and begin chopping carrots, maybe 100 to 200 kilos, that will go into a huge pilaf. Several sheep are slaughtered. Perhaps 400 to 500 guests will come to the celebration, mostly old people who are not tied to a regular job. The host will serve two or three meals in one day. He will have hired actors or other entertainers, and there will be music and dancing.

"The first night the married couple sleep in their clothes, they do not consummate their vows. On the second night, they do." Ali said that the practice of hanging out sheets to show the community that the bridegroom had won a virgin was still widely practiced, at least, he added, "here in Ferghana Valley."

In Andizhan, I was talking with Imam Mohammed Sulli Parviev in the 111-year-old Derone Bay mosque when he told me that a couple was waiting for him to perform the marriage ceremony, "and you are welcome to attend." With Ali, the guide, I followed the imam into a nearby room, where we saw a bride of 18 and a groom a few years older. The bride had her head covered, and both bride and groom seemed extremely shy and nervous. Ali again interpreted what the imam was telling the couple.

"He is saying that if the husband travels far, he must provide for his wife in advance of his leaving. He is emphasizing respect for each other and for one's parents, and he is telling them that they should bring up children in the proper way. Work is good; live the honest way; do not steal."

After the couple left, I asked Ali if the groom was expected to pay a dowry to the bride in cash. He insisted that this was no longer done. "The groom may need to furnish 100 kilos of rice, one cow, two sheep to the parents of the bride, but it is now uncommon to give money."

In the case of the third most important Islamic ceremony, a religious burial, I witnessed two services, the first in the Khoja Akra mosque in Samarkand. I was standing, admiring the 17th-century mosque, when I noticed the strange quietness and grief-stricken faces of Muslims sitting nearby. Looking behind me, I saw a mass of people moving toward the mosque in silence. Those in front were carrying the dead person at shoulder height on a bier, covered by a white sheet. I learned she was a woman, 60 years of age.

The ceremony was brief. A guide explained what the imam was saying: "This is the work of God. Some day every one of us will die. Don't cry so much, but give thanks to God." Afterward, the same delegation of about 200 persons accompanied the body to the cemetery, where the woman was put into the earth. No coffin is used in such an Islamic burial.

In Bukhara, I had walked with a guide to the Khoja Zainudin mosque, built in 1530, where in the courtyard a burial ceremony was about to begin. Without hesitation, one of the religious functionaries ushered us into the office of the imam. We met Abdulgafor Razakov, 35, who explained that the funeral service was for a 70-year-old man and his grandchild, who by coincidence had died at about the same time.

The imam left to conduct the ceremony, and from his office I could see the grieved faces of the relatives, who sat near the bodies.

All the mosques in the Ferghana Valley are filled to capacity for Friday prayers. In Kokand's Norbuta Bey mosque, built in 1798, for example, as many as 10,000 people attend Friday prayers. In Margelan, 3000 to 5000 come to the Mestchit Khanaka mosque, built in 1558. In Namangan, 7000 go to the Sheikh Imam mosque and in Andizhan, 5000 to 6000 go on Fridays to the 19th-century Derone Bay mosque. These streams of people testify that, despite 50 years of official repression and co-optation, Islam flows as visibly – and as nourishingly – as a river through the lives of Central Asian Muslims.

MIKE ANDREWS

Two generations in Samarkand, left, and a wedding car in Dushanbe, above.

The Tashkent Board is the only office where Muslims may officially publish Islamic material – but no one there was willing to cite numbers of publications or the size of press runs. Since the state officially sanctions only small quantities of Islamic religious material, little or none gets into the hands of the average Muslim. Soviet authorities have authorized only limited printings of the Qur'an, a limited number of Hadith collections and a few reference books on the *shari'a*, the Islamic law.

Dr. Shakir said the Tashkent Board also publishes an official organ, *Muslims of the Soviet East*. Printed in Uzbek, Arabic, English, French, Farsi and Dari (a language of Afghanistan), the journal offers editorials on religious themes, detailed historical articles and legal texts. Most of its circulation, however, is abroad.

After my talk with Dr. Shakir, a guide showed me the Tillya-Shaikh Jami mosque and introduced me to Imam Madurshid-kari. Together we looked at rare Qur'ans and other treasured Islamic books in a new and impressive library, designed and built by Uzbeks. Since my visit, the Uzbekistan government turned over to this Muslim library a reputed seventh-century Qur'an of Caliph 'Uthman.

Later, I was introduced to Muhammad Sadiq Mamayusupov, the rector of the Tashkent Institute. It had been cloudy, but now the sun was shining. The rector and I stood in the garden, just outside the classrooms of the institute, named for Ismail al-Bukhari, whose compilations of the sayings of the Prophet are one of the most revered texts in the Islamic world, after the Qur'an. The rector, 36, had a serious, even stern face, yet compassion, warmth and modesty seemed evident in his manner of speech. He had traveled in the United States, and among the five languages he's mastered, he speaks fluent English.

"I was born into a religious family in the Andizhan region, and I received my primary religious education from my father," he related. After finishing at the Mir-i Arab madrasa in Bukhara, he graduated with highest honors from the Tashkent Institute. He then studied for four more years in al-Baidha Theological University in Libya.

As I chatted with Mamayusupov in the garden, I could not have guessed that he would shortly be named mufti of the religious board. His appointment came in 1989 after 10,000 Muslims marched in Tashkent's streets demanding the removal of his predecessor, whom they accused of immoral conduct. The Fourth Central Asian Muslim Congress, meeting in Tashkent, unanimously named Mamayusupov as mufti, and in Moscow, the Council of Religious Affairs approved the choice. Attached to the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union, the non-Muslim Council of Religious Affairs oversees all "official" religious matters throughout the Soviet Union.

In addition to the Tashkent Board, the Soviets established an Islamic Religious Board for Siberia and European Russia, another for the North Caucasus, and a third for Transcaucasia. All Boards are Sunni except the one in Transcaucasia, which is mixed Sunni-Shi'i because the majority of Transcaucasian Muslims are Shi'ites.

The Soviets established the Boards in 1943 and 1944 to gain Muslim support for the battle against the Nazis – support seen as critical to offset the tens of thousands of Central Asians who had defected from the Soviet Army to the German side, preferring to fight against the irreligious communists and, at the same time, tempted by hopes of independence if Germany won the war.

I asked one Central Asian how the rank-and-file Muslims feel about the official religious boards. "We often are not trusting them," he replied, "because we know the boards are government-controlled." He added, "Because we cannot or do not trust them completely, many Muslim communities in villages and towns organized or built praying places in private homes, and organized classes for children on Sundays. The Soviets do not condone such non-official Islamic activities."

Traditionally, anyone who is educated in the Islamic religion and law is one of the *'ulama*, or the learned. However, to be an official member of the *'ulama* in the Soviet Union, a religious leader must be appointed by one of the Boards.

Obviously, the few mosques, the two small madrasas and the limited number of official *'ulama* – the number was reduced from 45,000 earlier to an estimated 1,000 in 1989 – do not meet the needs and demands of the masses of Muslims in the USSR. In literally thousands of towns and villages, there are no mosques and no official imams or *'ulama*; the people thus turn to illegal, unofficial Muslim functionaries. Unless they did so, they could not conduct a religious marriage or honor their dead with a Muslim burial.

The non-official Muslim leaders, however, serve at grave risk, since any unsanctioned religious activity, especially when it is performed by a group, can be a crime under Soviet law. Thus, one Muslim told me, this "parallel" Islam is so covert that "those bent on eliminating Islam don't know how to find its practitioners." And, he added, because it lies beyond the control of the Muslim religious boards and therefore of the Soviet authorities, it often proves to be "more dynamic than official Islam." To their credit, the official leaders of the Islamic community have always refused to condemn parallel Islam as heretical or unorthodox, because, I was told, "it has served as a haven for Islamic practices."

The Russian-Muslim relationship goes back several centuries. In 1552, Ivan the Terrible occupied the Khanate of Kazan. Ivan, married to the daughter of a Tatar Muslim, tolerated Islam. After his death, however, his successors forcibly Christianized the land. They destroyed mosques and confiscated Muslim land and property; in response, the Muslims went underground.

In contrast to her predecessors, Empress Catherine II had the highest regard for Islam, considering it "a reasonable religion." In 1782, she created the Muslim Spiritual Assembly of Orenburg, which later moved to Ufa; it was a precursor of the Boards established by the Soviets during the Second World War.

It was in 1928, after Joseph Stalin's sweeping victory at the 15th Communist Party Congress, that the massive destruction of mosques began throughout the Muslim regions of the Soviet Union – a destruction that lasted until World War II. Despite all obstacles, however, the Central Asian Muslims maintained their devotion to Islam, learning the Qur'an and the teachings of the Prophet from their parents and grandparents and in turn teaching their children.

Now, however, as the 1990's begin, Soviet Muslims are hoping that the new tolerance recently experienced by Soviet Jews and Christians will also be extended to them. They cite the fact that Christians were recently allowed to celebrate the 1000th anniversary of Christianity in Russia. And, indeed, in Baku, orders have come through granting permission to reopen 60 mosques, Zeinalov said, and each renovated mosque will have its own imam.

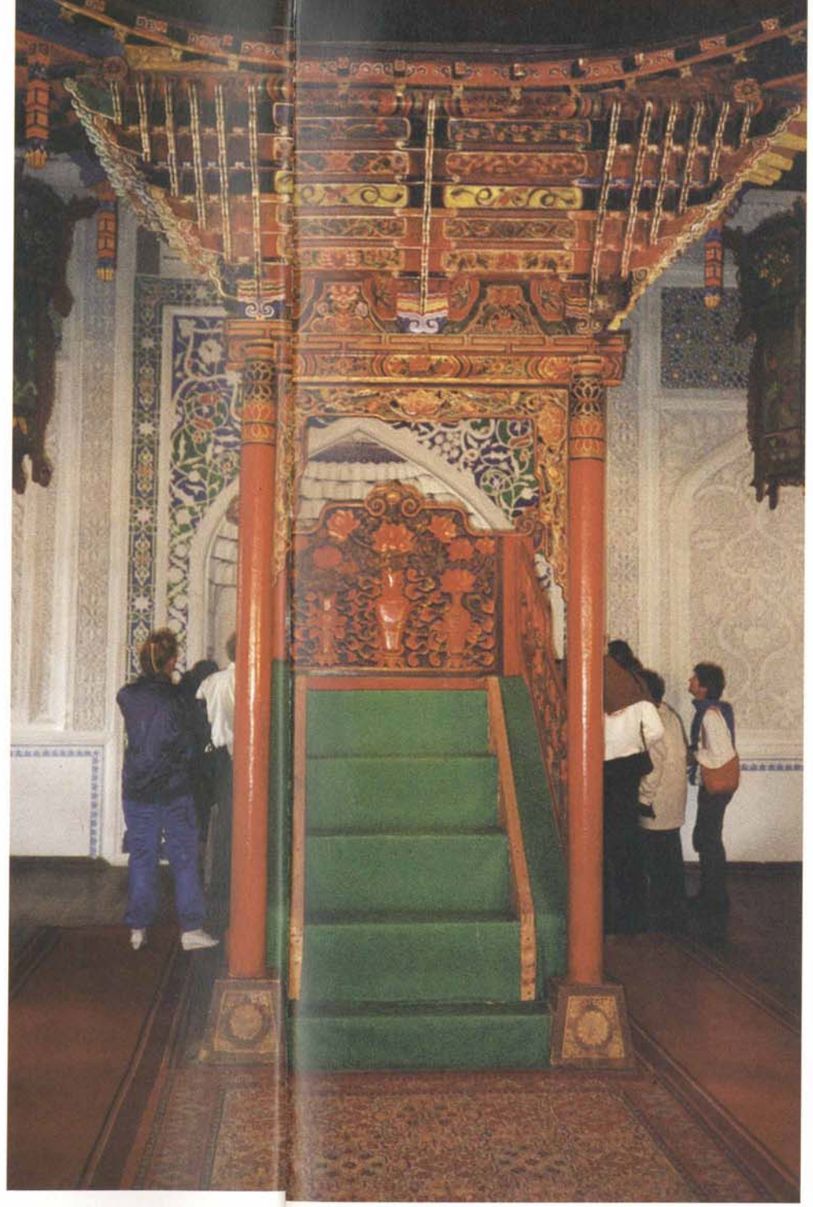
Baku will also have a new madrasa, Zeinalov added. "Formerly Shi'a Muslim students from Azerbaijan traveled to either Bukhara or Tashkent, both oriented to Sunni Islam, for higher education. Now they can stay here for their studies."

In Bukhara, Abdurrahim Tadjiakhmatov, deputy director of the Mir-i Arab madrasa, told me, "We will get a new madrasa here, too. Our capacity will increase from 84 to 200 students, with a new class entering every year."

In Tashkent, the chief mufti said, "We will build a new institute here. We will increase the capacity from 50 to 120 students." The new institute will be built at a cost of more than four million dollars, and nearby will be new facilities for international seminars, for all the Muslim leaders I spoke with agreed that meeting their co-religionists from around the world was rewarding. Imam Zeinalov spoke of his great satisfaction in learning, during a Baku conference, that "an American [Muslim] had prayed the same prayer I had prayed."

The Tashkent mufti said conferences there had attracted Muslims from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria and Iraq, as well as other countries. "We have five or six conferences annually in Tashkent, and we are hoping for more."

Forty mosques in the Tashkent jurisdiction have been restored, and more will be reopened, I was told. "Formerly, if one put in a request to reopen a mosque, it took three years to get a reply," the mufti said. "And the reply could be a 'No'. Now it only takes one month to get a reply – usually 'Yes.'" He added that "the highest authorities" had ordered the granting of permits.



Left, mosque interior at Panfilov, near Sino-Soviet border, and, below, Shamoddinkan Babakhanov of the Muslim Board for Central Asia.

In Kazakstan, as of 1989, there were only 30 to 40 working mosques; I found only one in Alma Ata. But there too a permit has been granted for another. And to the south, near the border with Afghanistan, the Tajiks in Dunshanbe are building a madrasa; it will be only the fourth Islamic school of higher learning in all of the USSR.

What else do Central Asian Muslims hope for in a changing world? In addition to more mosques, more madrasas and more *'ulama*, they want more control over their observance of Ramadan, the holy month of day-time fasting; broader availability of the Qur'an; and visas for more pilgrims to make the Hajj to Makkah.

One Muslim pointed out that in the USSR, state ownership or control of all workplaces and factories and – above all – a demanding system of production quotas make it virtually impossible to observe Ramadan. In factories, and more especially in agriculture, production goals often require workers to labor from dawn to dusk, often with no weekends free. To abstain from food and drink during those same hours is enormously difficult.

Still, as Imam Parpiev of Andizhan said, "Those who can, observe Ramadan by fasting." Margelan's Imam Khatib Shaykh Sabirjan Eminev told me, "We read the Qur'an during night prayers. We translate the Hadith, the sayings and customs of the Prophet, into the Uzbek language. And we speak of the duties of the people during Ramadan." Recognition of those duties by factory and cooperative managers would be welcome.

The Tashkent mufti, soon after assuming his position in 1989, made a strong plea to the Soviet government: "There must be more copies of the Qur'an." Until now, the Qur'an has been officially printed in the USSR only in Arabic: No translation is available in the modern script and language of any Soviet Muslim nationality. The Tashkent mufti requested that Qur'ans be printed in three editions: in the original Arabic, in Uzbek-Turkic using the Cyrillic alphabet, and in Uzbek using the Arabic script that Muslims in Central Asia have used for 1400 years. An Uzbek scholar, the late Altinchan Tora Terazij, who died in 1988 at the age of 90 in Medina, spent three decades translating the Qur'an into the Uzbek Turkic language, using Arabic script. His work was published in Saudi Arabia, but is not available in the USSR.

The scarcity of Qur'ans was made clear to me when, seated in a Baku mosque interviewing the director, I asked if the Qur'an were readily available. "Certainly," he assured me, and handed a large key to an assistant, who brought from its safekeeping an old and well-thumbed copy of the holy book. Having thus demonstrated how readily the Qur'an was available, he asked the assistant to replace it in the locked cabinet.

In Tashkent, I asked an official how many Qur'ans had been printed. "It's been printed six times in the past 35 years," he told me – but he did not know how many copies each printing comprised, except for the last edition in 1977. That was an edition of 10,000 copies.

Because so little Islamic literature is available through official channels, Muslims have repeatedly turned to underground publishing to produce more of it. The scale of such illegal activities is not easy to judge, but in 1985, Soviet papers reported ambitious efforts by a number of groups using clandestine presses to print Islamic publications, some in Arabic, which were distributed from Namangan to Samarkand. At least one of these operations was big business, with tens of thousands of rubles in sales.

A few months earlier, an Ashkabad newspaper reported that the authorities had discovered an increased distribution of audio cassettes of religious programs. And in 1987 a Tajik newspaper told of Soviet officials apprehending Tajiks who were printing religious literature and prayer books. Several unofficial Muslim *'ulama* were arrested in that case and imprisoned for terms of two to 10 years. And in Samarkand, a 45-year-old woman and her father were arrested for selling Islamic literature; they were part of a larger network, with headquarters in Namangan.

Few Muslim families in the Soviet Union own a Qur'an. In 1980, the black-market price of a Qur'an was $300. Soviet soldiers thus found it profitable to smuggle Qur'ans back from Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation of that country; they brought in enough copies to lower the black-market price to $75 a copy by 1989.

All imams with whom I talked expressed the hope that more Soviet Muslims would be permitted to go on the Hajj, the sacred pilgrimage to Makkah, which every Muslim who is physically and financially able is supposed to make at least once in a lifetime.

Before the 1917 October revolution, 30,000 to 40,000 Russian pilgrims went on the Hajj each year. Then in 1930, the Soviet government prohibited all Muslims from making the pilgrimage. It was only in 1945 that the authorities again began permitting a well-screened few – only 18 to 20 people – to go to Makkah each year. Indeed, in each instance when an imam told me he had been on the Hajj, he had been one of a small delegation of 18, 19, or 20 pilgrims: I did not hear of a delegation since 1945 that comprised more than 20 people. In comparison, China, with fewer Muslims, permitted 2000 of its citizens to make the Hajj in 1988.

One Muslim said he resented the fact that the Soviets permit medical doctors and supervisory agents to go for other than religious reasons, whereas there are millions of devout Muslims who want to make the Hajj but are denied permission. Also, he said, some in "official" Islam go repeatedly. The former mufti in Tashkent had made the pilgrimage 14 times.

I asked one Central Asian Muslim, "What would the Russians have to do to make you and other Muslims happy?" He replied, "Just give us the ability to make some of the important decisions for ourselves." Then he added, "Gorbachev obviously has been attempting to do this."

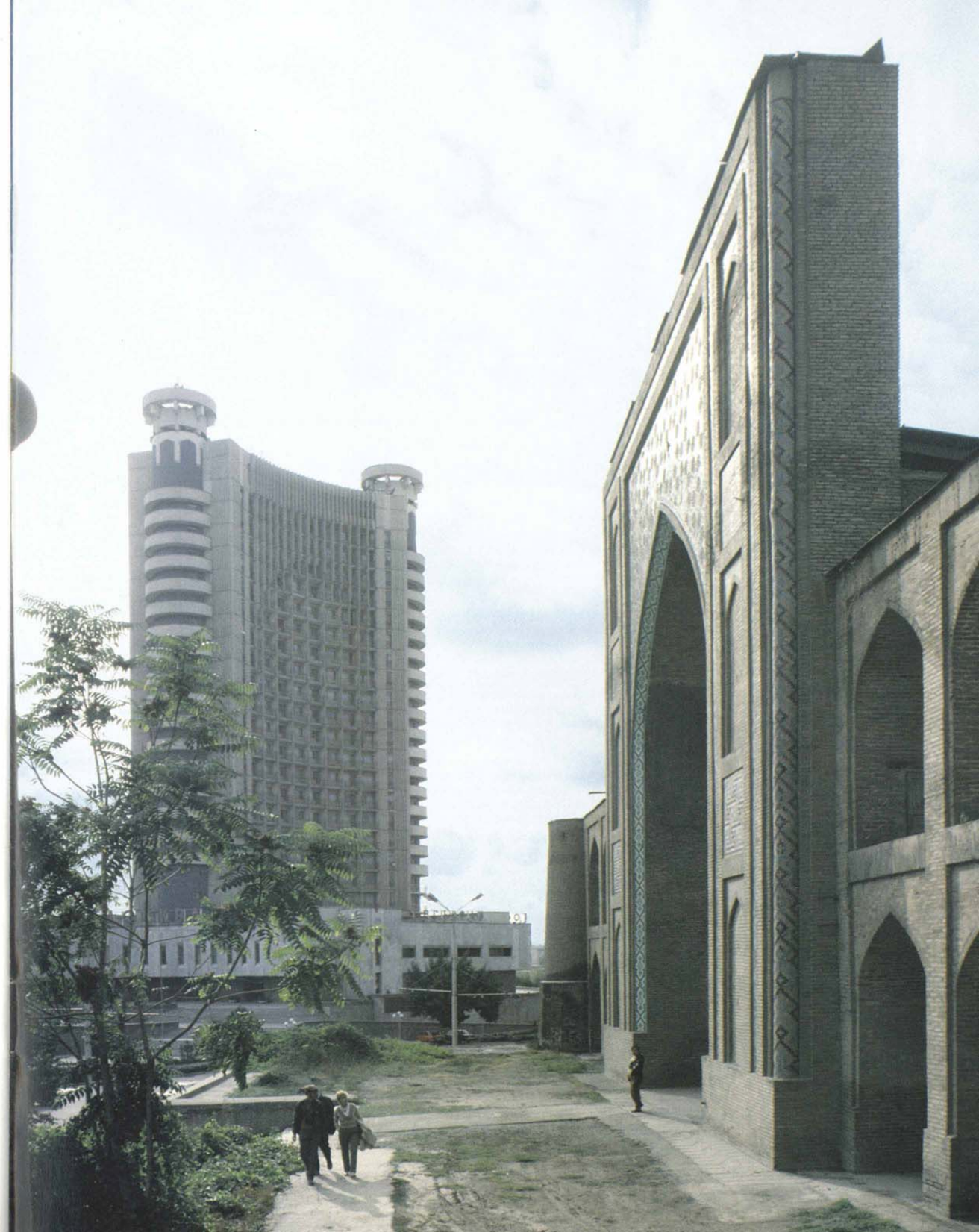
According to some students of Soviet ideology, the communists have steadfastly striven toward the creation of a nation of citizens adapted to the Soviet system – what has been termed a "Soviet man" or *Homo sovieticus*. But Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, author of *Islam and the Russian Empire: Reform and Revolution in Central Asia*, says there is also *Homo islamicus*, who remains unassimilated, unrussified, unadapted and distinct.

Above, lunch for visitors to Shaykh Imam Mosque, Margelan, and, right, the modern Hotel Moskova and medieval madrasa at Tashkent.

The Muslim of the USSR, she says, is not necessarily a dissident, "but simply by his existence, by his presence in the whole area where the Muslim civilization has existed, he bears witness that ... the human prototype that socialist society intended to shape does not exist – or does not exist everywhere."

D'Encausse asserts that the existence of *Homo islamicus* demonstrates that, while it is "relatively easy" to change the general structures of a society, "it is extremely difficult to alter minds."

What seems clear is that despite Communist attempts to eradicate Islam, it has not only survived, but is beginning to flourish again. In Tashkent, Abdulghani Abdulla, a deputy chairman of the religious board there, made it clear what he thinks of Islam and the future: "We are the fiber of life here," he said. "We were here in the seventh century and I can assure you that even more of us will be here tomorrow – and the day after that."



EVENTS & EXHIBITIONS

Tatar necklace

NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Nomads: *Masters of the Eurasian Steppe*, an exhibition of almost 1400 rarely-seen artifacts on loan from the Soviet Union, has provided a comprehensive look at the history of Eurasian nomads, among them the ancestors of today's Muslim population of the USSR. It ends its year-long tour of the US in **Washington, D.C.** at the Museum of Natural History on February 18. Nomadic peoples have inhabited the Eurasian steppes from the Black Sea to China for almost 3000 years, and have devised forms of culture suited to their migratory way of life: specialized clothing – including trousers – highly technical horse gear, falconry, the game of polo, and a brilliant artistic style, as well as stringed instruments and mobile housing, including the transportable yurt. The exhibit's innovative archeological displays delineate the powerful nomadic kingdoms, from the Scythians to the Huns, the ancient Turks and the Mongol Empire, while 19th- and 20th-century ethnographic displays include a fully furnished yurt, fabrics and costumes, musical instruments, household furnishings, jewelry, and religious artifacts. The exhibit emphasizes the military and commercial contacts with China, Europe and the Middle East that spread Eurasian nomadic cultural traditions throughout the world, with lasting impact on world history. *–L.D.*

Forced Out. A group exhibition of photographs documents the plight of political refugees. P.S. 1 Museum, **Long Island City, New York**, January 14 through March 11, 1990.

Yemen: *The Art of the Master Builders*. Photographs and architectural drawings by Pascal and Maria Marechaux, with artifacts and models. Zamana Gallery, **London**, January 24 through March 18, 1990.

The Arabic Calligraphy of Muhammad Zakariya. One of America's leading calligraphers presents 28 works in various styles. **Birmingham [Alabama]** Public Library, January 25 through February 23, 1990; University of Hawaii at Manoa, **Honolulu**, March 18 through 30, 1990; Augsburg College, **Minneapolis**, April 15 through June 1, 1990.

Ikats: *Woven Silks from Central Asia*. Colorful and prestigious hangings, robes and coats produced over a 200-year period demonstrate a complex and beautiful dyeing method. City Museum and Art Gallery, **Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire**, January 27 through March 11, 1990.

Painting for Princes: *The Art of the Book in Islam*. Arab, Persian, Turkish and Moghul miniatures show the inspiration and skill lavished on princely books. Sackler Museum, Harvard University, **Cambridge, Massachusetts**, January 27 through March 25, 1990.

Islamic Textiles: *A Sampler from Muslim Lands*. Twenty pieces from the museum's collection represent a wide range of techniques, functions and materials. Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York**, January 31 through April 29, 1990.

In Our Time: *The World as Seen by Magnum Photographers*. From the Middle East and elsewhere and arranged by themes, 300 images by 60 of the finest photojournalists. International Center of Photography Midtown, **New York**, through February 4, 1990; **Chicago** Historical Society, February 22 through April 15, 1990; **Minneapolis** Institute of Arts, May 5 through August 12, 1990.

Carthage: *A Mosaic of Ancient Tunisia*. Pictorial mosaics, Punic jewelry, Roman bronzes and 300 other pieces from 800 BC to the coming of Islam show ancient Tunisia as a center of culture and art. **Cincinnati** Art Museum, February 7 through April 8, 1990.

The Plastics Age: *From Modernity to Post-Modernity* traces petrochemical plastics from their use as substitutes for natural materials to their present role as irreplaceable high-tech materials. Victoria and Albert Museum, **London**, February 14 through April 29, 1990.

Turkey: *Splendors of the Anatolian Civilizations*. Artifacts spanning eight millennia show the subtle links among eras and civilizations and the evolution of societies in Anatolia. Musée de la Civilisation, **Quebec City, Quebec**, February 15 through May 6, 1990.

Faces of Asia: *Portraits from the Permanent Collection*. Sixty portraits, ranging from Mughal miniatures to Japanese screens. More than half have never been on public display. Museum of Fine Arts, **Boston**, through February 18, 1990.

Variations on a Script: *Islamic Calligraphy from the Vever Collection* highlights a variety of calligraphic styles. Sackler Gallery, **Washington, D.C.**, from February 18, 1990.

Dragons, Blossoms, Sunbursts: *Textile Arts of the Caucasus* demonstrates the range of 17th- to 20th-century Caucasian rugs, flatweaving, and embroideries. The Textile Museum, **Washington, D.C.**, through February 25, 1990.

The Orient Observed: *Images of the Middle East from the Searight Collection*. The world's greatest collection of Western watercolors, drawings and prints of the Middle East and North Africa. Victoria and Albert Museum, **London**, through February 25, 1990.

Islamic Silver and Manuscripts. One hundred Islamic silver objects and 25 manuscripts from AD 1400 onward, including some from the King Faisal Center never before displayed. **Stockholm** Museum of Mediterranean and Near East Antiquities, through February 28, 1990.

Gold of Africa: *Jewelry and Ornaments from Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, and Senegal*. More than 150 spectacular objects are evidence of highly developed skills and tastes in the West Africa of the 19th and 20th centuries. Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York**, through March 11, 1990; **Dallas** Museum of Art, April 8 through June 7, 1990.

Romance of the Taj Mahal. Shah Jahan's eye for beauty and his collector's instincts are demonstrated by 200 objects from European and American collections. **Los Angeles** County Museum of Art, through March 11, 1990; **Toledo [Ohio]** Museum of Art, April 28 through June 24, 1990.

The Wabar Meteorite. Fragments of the iron-nickel meteorite that left a 300-foot crater when it fell in the Rub' al-Khali, with related published material. Nance Museum, **Kingsville, Missouri**, March 15 through August 31, 1990.

Matisse in Morocco. Paintings from two American and two Russian museums illuminate the effects of Moroccan space and light on the artist. National Gallery of Art, **Washington, D.C.**, March 18 through June 3, 1990; Museum of Modern Art, **New York**, June 21 through September 4, 1990.

Indian Miniatures from the Galbraith Collection. Paintings from Kangra and other art centers collected by John Kenneth Galbraith. Sackler Museum, Harvard University, **Cambridge, Massachusetts**, March 31 through May 27, 1990.

Traditional Crafts of Saudi Arabia. The John Topham collection of weavings, jewelry, a Bedouin tent, and metal, wooden and leather handicraft objects. Maxwell Museum of Anthropology, **Albuquerque, New Mexico**, March 31 through November, 1990.

The First Egyptians. The customs and everyday life of early Egyptian society in the predynastic period between 4000 and 2700 BC. Museum of Natural History, **Washington, D.C.**, through April 1, 1990.

Saudi Arabia: *Yesterday and Today*. A 100,000-square-foot exhibition on the land and people, past and present, of the kingdom, including a live *suq*, traditional foods and dances, artifacts, and a laser slide show. **New York** Showpiers, Pier 88, March 9 through 17, 1990; The Convention Center, **Los Angeles**, June 15 through 30, 1990.

India Along the Ganges: *Photographs by Raghubir Singh*. Sixty-five recent photographs by one of India's finest photographers. Sackler Gallery, **Washington, D.C.**, through April 15, 1990.

India: *Beauty in Stone*. Islamic carvings and buildings are among those shown in 49 color prints by Beatrice Pitney Lamb. Asia Society, **New York**, through April 15, 1990.

Majolica. The origins of this brilliant and exuberant Italian earthenware lie in the energy and vivacity of Islamic pottery. Exhibit reopened on a reduced scale. Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York**, through April 15, 1990.

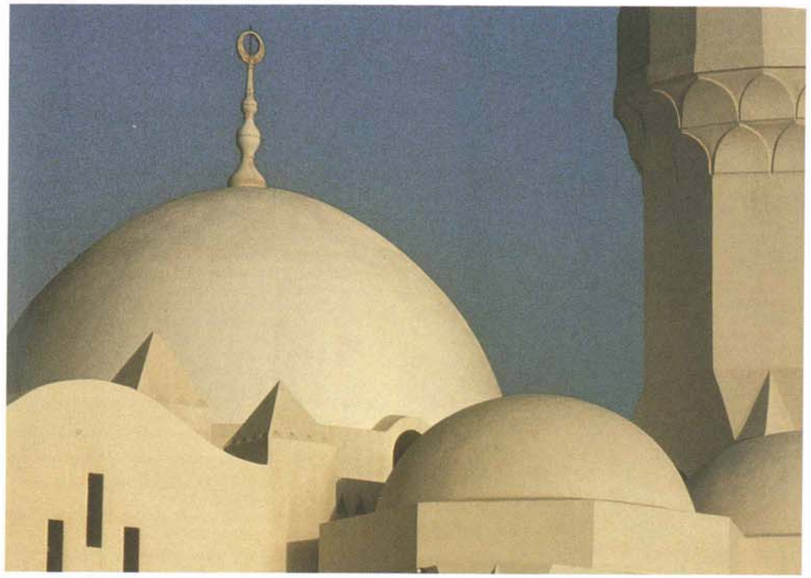
After Tutankhamun. International conference on the Valley of the Kings, including as speakers 12 of the world's leading experts on the royal tombs, their treasures and their texts. Highclere Castle, **Hampshire, United Kingdom**, June 15 to 17, 1990.

Looking at Islam: *Contemporary Devotional Posters from Pakistan* reflects a wide range of Islamic traditions with images from calligraphic to allegorical. City Museum and Art Gallery, **Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire**, July 5, 1990 through August 19, 1990.

Palestinian Costume. Richly ornamented traditional costumes, headdresses and jewelry of Palestinian villagers and Bedouins are revealed as expressions of social status and regional identity. Museum of Mankind, **London**, until November 1991.

The Aramco Exhibit. Centered on the Arab-Islamic technical heritage, this permanent interactive, "learn-by-doing" scientific exhibit relates the historical background to today's petroleum exploration, production and transportation. **Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.**

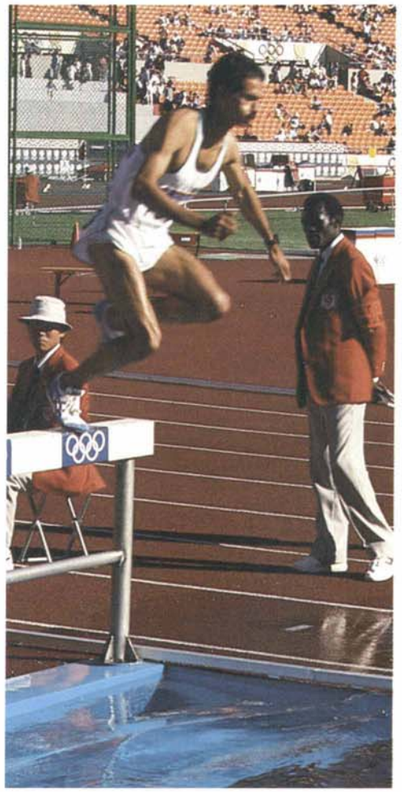
Information is correct at press time; but please reconfirm dates and times before traveling. Readers are welcome to submit information for possible inclusion in this listing.



ARAMCO WORLD

Supplementary
INDEX 1989

Contents



Authors

A – K

Photographers

A

G

GERARD, ANTOINE
Imbaba, N/D 89: 36-41
GUERRA, RICARDO
The Watcher on the Curb, M/A 89: 17-19
GÜRPINAR, TANSU
Last of the Mohicans, N/D 89: 2-5
GUSTAVSSON, TOBBE
A Nobel for the Arab Nation, M/A 89: 14-16

H

HANAUER, ERIC
Egypt's Underwater World, M/J 89: 16-27
HARTWELL, THOMAS
A Nobel for the Arab Nation, M/A 89: 14-16
HIRSCH, UDO
Last of the Mohicans, N/D 89: 2-5
NOYE, PAUL F.
An Oryx Update, S/O 89: 12-15

I–J

IVERSON, Barry
Double Vision: Rephotographing Egypt, J/A 89: 6-15

JONES, DAVID M.
An Oryx Update, S/O 89: 12-15

L

LEVINE, WENDY
The Craftsmen of Bahrain, M/A 89: 10-13
LUTTRELL, DAVID
The Adventure Ambassadors, M/A 89: 2-9
LUXNER, LARRY
Opa-Locka Rising, S/O 89: 2-7
The Watcher on the Curb, M/A 89: 17-19
LYONS, BILL
Jordan's Royal Falcons, N/D 89: 20-27

M

MANDAVILLE, ERIK A.
Crossing the Rub', M/J 89: 34-41
MATTHEWS, MARIE
An Oryx Update, S/O 89: 12-15
MOHAMED, AKRAM
Better by Design, N/D 89: 28-33
MORES, MARIE-LAURE
The Geometry of the Spirit, S/O 89: 16-27

P

PERLMAN, ILENE
The Weaver's Song, S/O 89: 8-11
PITTAWAY, A.R.
Arabian Forests, J/A 89: 38-41
POITE, CHRISTIAN
The Geometry of the Spirit, S/O 89: 16-27

R

ROGERS, FRED
A Teacher Remembers, J/A 89: 32-37
ROSA, PATRICK E.
Making a Mark, J/F 89: 26
Nouvel Ideas, J/F 89: 27
Window on the Arab World, J/F 89: 20-29

S

SALVO, CHRISTOPHER D.
Keepers of Lebanon's Light, M/A 89: 26-33
SCHUMACHER, KARL
Images of Arabia, N/D 89: 13
Presenting…Saudi Arabia, N/D 89: 7-18
ST. GIL, MARC
The Bond in Bronze, J/F 89: 6-11

T

TRACY, WILLIAM
Babylon: A Rebirth, M/J 89: 2-7
Images of Oman, J/F 89: 2-5

W

WAKEMAN, STEVE
The Geometry of the Spirit, S/O 89: 16-27
WEAVER, JONATHAN
The Geometry of the Spirit, S/O 89: 16-27
WHEELER, NIK
Golf in Morocco, J/A 89: 2-5
Last of the Mohicans, N/D 89: 2-5
WILKINS, BOB
The Mask of Midas, S/O 89: 36-41

Illustrators

D

DOTY, ELDON C.
Orientalist Travelers, J/A 89: 16-19

G

GHANDAR, KAMEL
A Visit, M/A 89: 20-25
GRIMSDALE, MICHAEL
Lakes of the Rub' al-Khali, M/J 89: 28-33

T

TAHOUKJI, MUSTAFA
A Vision of Peace, N/D 89: 34-35
TRACY, MARJORIE KREBS
Notes on a First Encounter, M/J 89: 5

Photographic Sources

A–L

AGA KHAN AWARD FOR ARCHITECTURE
Better by Design, N/D 89: 28-33
ALGERIE PRESSE SERVICE
A Reunion in Boston, J/A 89: 20-31
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO
Double Vision: Rephotographing Egypt, J/A 89: 6-15
ARAB-BRITISH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
Building on Success, N/D 89: 16-17
ARTHUR M. SACKLER GALLERY
The Lost Treasure of Henri Vever, J/F 89: 12-19
ASSOCIATED PRESS
A Nobel for the Arab Nation, M/A 89: 14-16

FLINN, DAVID
Carpets and History, M/J 89: 8-15
FLORA AND FAUNA PRESERVATION SOCIETY
An Oryx Update, S/O 89: 12-15
FOVEA
Making a Mark, J/F 89: 26
Nouvel Ideas, J/F 89: 27
Window on the Arab World, J/F 89: 20-29

HAKIMZADE, FARHAD
Carpets and History, M/J 89: 8-15
HISTORICAL ASSN OF SOUTHERN FLORIDA
Opa-Locka Rising, S/O 89: 2-7

INSIGHT
The Geometry of the Spirit, S/O 89: 16-27

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
Carpets and History, M/J 89: 8-15
Double Vision: Rephotographing Egypt, J/A 89: 6-15
LIONS CLUB INTERNATIONAL
A Vision of Peace, N/D 89: 34-35

M–Z

MANCHESTER UNIVERSITY MUSEUM
The Mask of Midas, S/O 89: 36-41
MICHAEL MAXWELL ASSOCIATES INC.
Opa-Locka Rising, S/O 89: 2-7
MUSEE D'ART ET D'HISTOIRE, GENEVA
The Geometry of the Spirit, S/O 89: 16-27

NATURAL HISTORY PHOTOGRAPHIC AGENCY
Castles in the Air, J/F 89: 30-33
NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
Double Vision: Rephotographing Egypt, J/A 89: 6-15

ROSENBERG CASTLE
Carpets and History, M/J 89: 8-15

STOCK BOSTON
A Reunion in Boston, J/A 89: 20-31
SYGMA
A Nobel for the Arab Nation, M/A 89: 14-16
The Watcher on the Curb, M/A 89: 17-19

TEXTILE MUSEUM
Carpets and History, M/J 89: 8-15
THE BRITISH LIBRARY
Selling the Ottoman Empire, J/F 89: 34-41

VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM
Carpets and History, M/J 89: 8-15

WIDE WORLD PHOTOS
Winning More Than Medals, M/A 89: 38-39
WORLD MONITOR TELEVISION
A Vision of Peace, N/D 89: 34-35
WORLD WIDE FUND FOR NATURE
Last of the Mohicans, N/D 89: 2-5

ZAMANA GALLERY, LONDON
The Geometry of the Spirit, S/O 89: 16-27

Aramco World (ISSN 1044-1891) is published bimonthly by Aramco Services Company, 9009 West Loop South, Houston, Texas 77096. Second-class postage paid at Houston, Texas and at additional offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Aramco World*, Box 3725, Escondido, CA 92025.