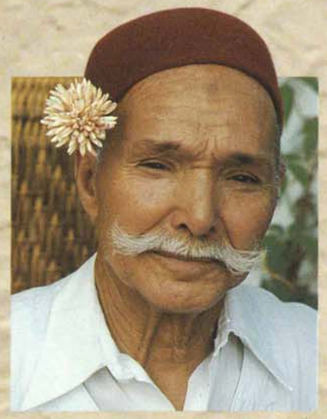

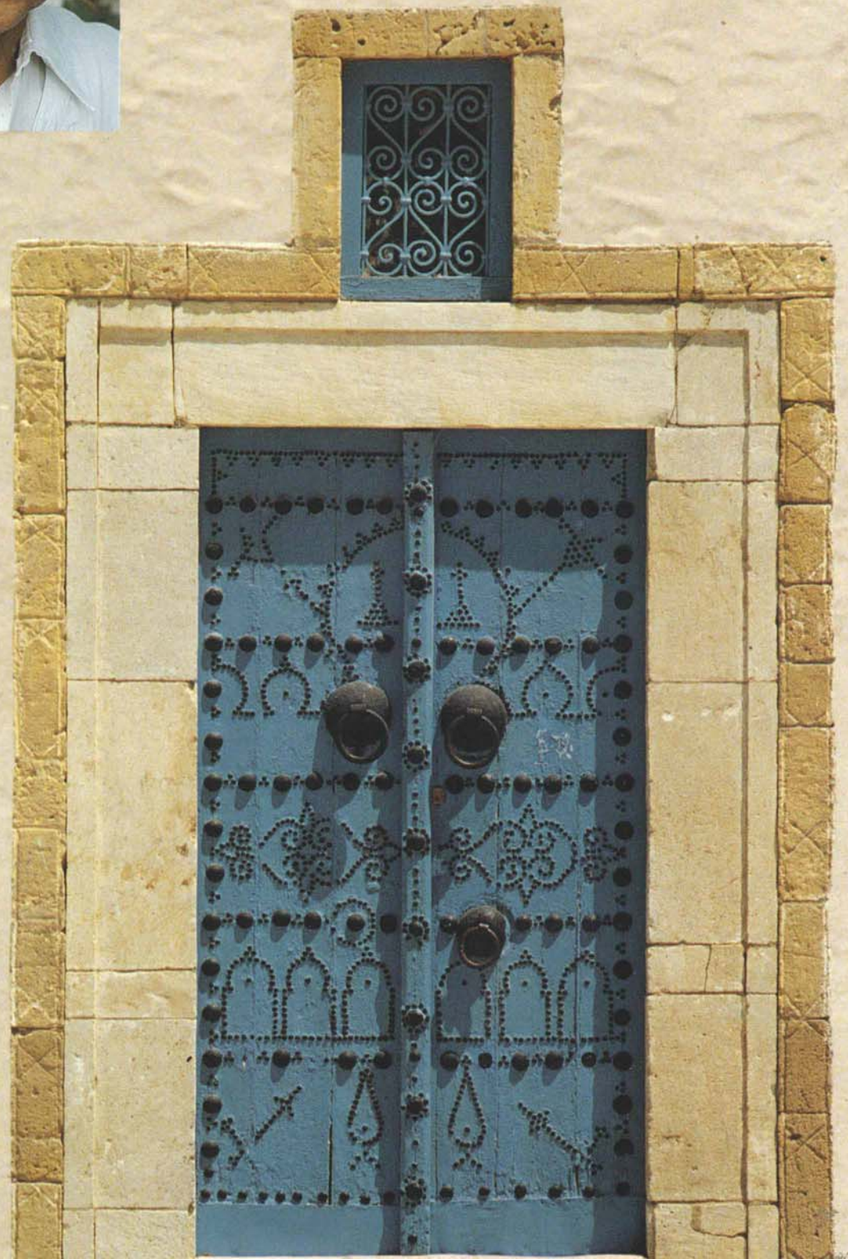

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Hamad A. Juraifani
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Ismail I. Nawwab
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Robert Arndt
EDITOR

Robert W. Lebling, Jr.
ASSISTANT EDITOR

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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:
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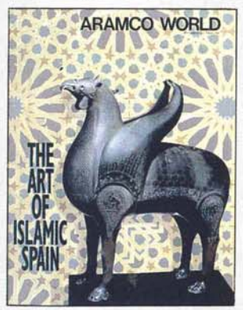

Cover: A puzzling masterwork of Islamic art, the Pisa Griffin's stiff pose, rounded volumes and incised decoration persuade some scholars it was produced in 11th-century Islamic Spain, though the bronze sculpture was first recorded atop the cathedral of Pisa. Background: part of a mosaic-tile dado from the Alhambra, created by Nasrid artisans in Granada in the 14th century. Back cover: Blue doors, whitewashed walls and welcoming people are among Sidi Bou Said's charms. Photo: Charles O. Cecil.

◀ Elegant and treasured, a silver powder flask from Morocco.

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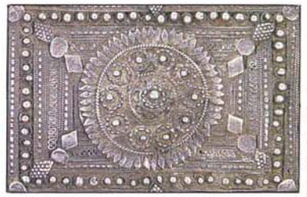
BILKADI

CECIL



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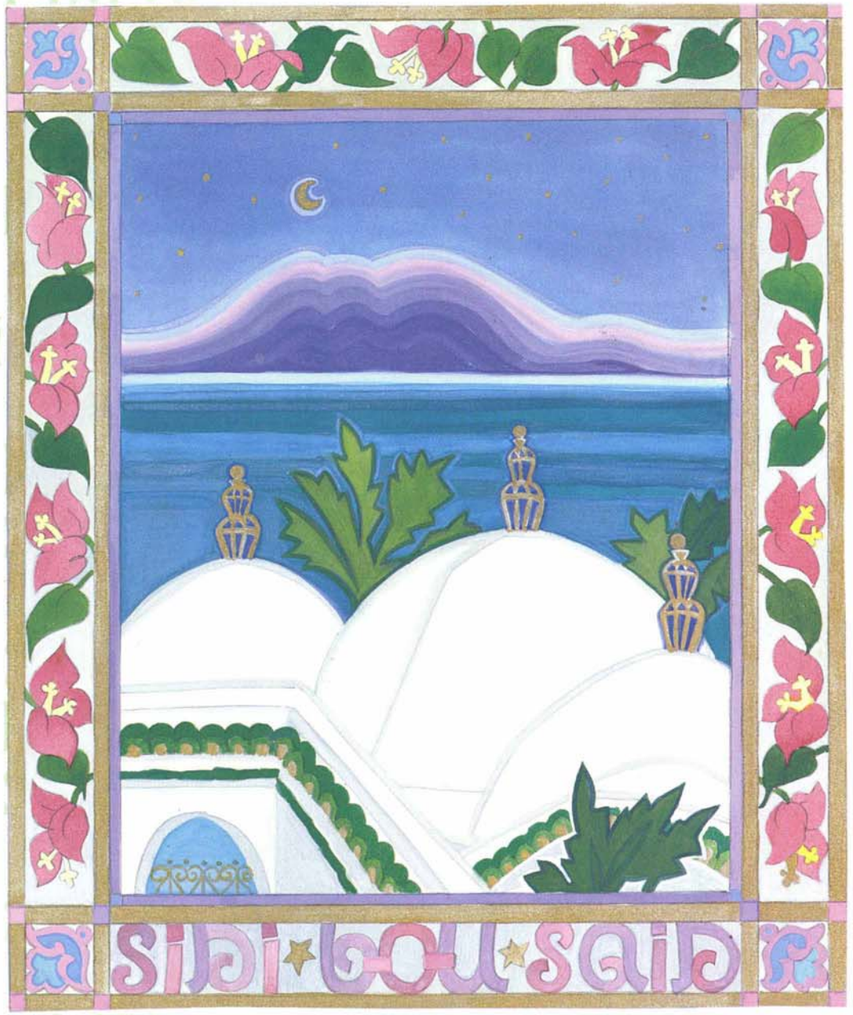


Sidi BouSaid

HEAVEN'S GATE

WRITTEN BY ZAYN BILKADI
ILLUSTRATED BY PENNY WILLIAMS-YAQUB

I first visited Sidi Bou Said when I was eight years old. My great-grandmother Mammati Fatma, then in her eighties, must have sensed that her hour was drawing close, and in the final days of her life she wanted to be the first one to show me what she called "Bab al-Jannah" – the Gate of Heaven – and tell me its legends.

It was in the 13th century, she told me, that a great Muslim teacher called Shaykh Bou Said chose a remote hilltop on the beautiful coastline of Tunisia as the place where he would live and preach. The fame and piety of this master, or *sidi* in North African Arabic, spread throughout much of Tunisia and as far as the distant Aurès Mountains of Algeria, and when he died, his body was buried in his own home, and above his tomb the present-day mosque was built.

That, at least, is one version of the legend, the version that most people – and most historians outside Sidi Bou Said – would agree is closest to the truth. But as Mammati Fatma told me, "There is the truth of legends, and there is the legend of truths – which one do you prefer?" The people of Sidi Bou Said themselves are divided on what happened in their village six centuries ago: Some claim that Bou Said was really someone else – specifically, in fact, the French king St. Louis!

King Louis IX of France and his chevaliers led two crusades against the Arabs: The first, in 1249 against Egypt, ended in the king's humiliating imprisonment by a woman, Queen Shajarat al-Dur. King Louis's pride was injured, and he returned to his kingdom vowing to wage a second war against the Muslims. He set out for Tunisia in 1270. But the fate of his military campaign there was no better than the one in Egypt, for shortly after they landed on the shores of Carthage nearly all his troops were wiped out by cholera.

It is then, people say, that God's guidance brought the king, frustrated and broken-hearted, to a beautiful hilltop nearby where the air smelled of jasmine, where sunlight was tarnished by no sin, and where cypress trees and swallows danced day and night. Love healed the king's broken heart. He soon converted to Islam, the legend claims, changed his name to Bou Said, and spent the rest of his days on the hilltop in prayer and meditation. Impressed by his new life of piety and asceticism, it is said, Rome finally saw in him more than a worldly monarch, and canonized him upon his death. Thus did Louis IX come to be known in the land of the Franks as St. Louis.

For my great-grandmother, these legends were part of the reason that Sidi Bou Said was almost literally the gate of heaven. For me, though, the legends are unnecessary in the face of the great beauty of the site. Perched on a jagged cliff that cuts into the Mediterranean waters like the prow of an ancient galley, this small village of a few thousand residents overlooks one of the most beautiful bays in the world – the Bay of Carthage. For more than 400 years, writers and painters have come here looking for solitude, for new beginnings, for new shades and colors. In 1579 it was Miguel Cervantes, author of the epic masterpiece *Don Quixote*. In 1860 it was Gustave Flaubert, author of *Madame Bovary*, whose stay inspired his novel *Salammbô* (See *Aramco World*, September-October 1988); in the early part of this century it was André Gide, and such influential masters of the brush as Paul Klee and August

Macke (See *Aramco World*, May-June 1991). Even today, Sidi Bou Said is home to one of Tunisia's foremost painters, Jellal Ben Abdallah.

An important chapter of classical history began only five kilometers to the south of Sidi Bou Said, in ancient Carthage, the Phoenician city founded in 814 BC by Queen Elissa-Dido. But in fact, long before Carthage was ever imagined, the Phoenicians were already using a

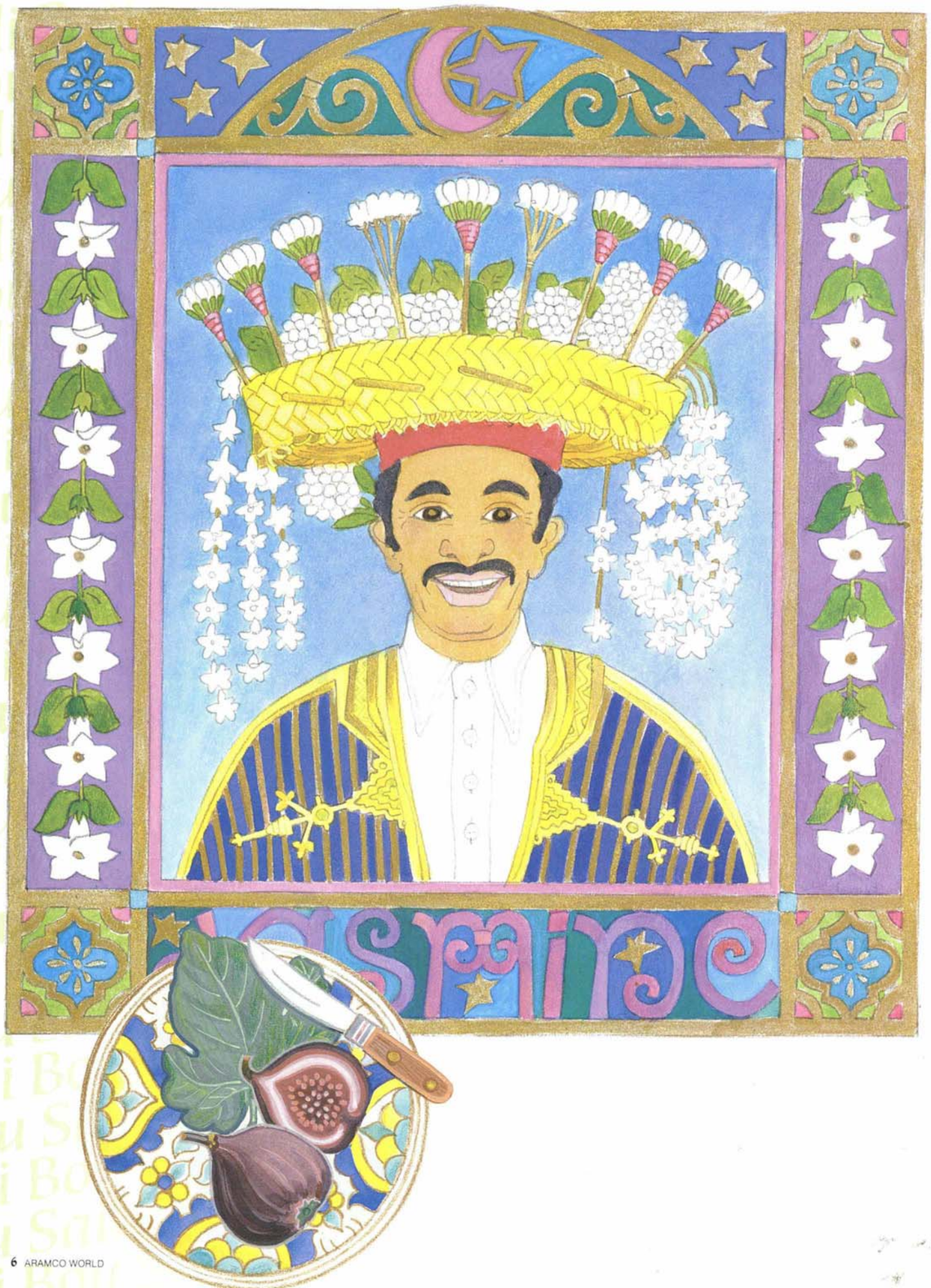
lighthouse at Sidi Bou Said to guide their merchant ships along the coastline – the same lighthouse, built and rebuilt countless times, that later guided the Romans on their way to destroy Carthage, and eventually aided the barbarian Vandals, the Byzantines, the Arabs, the Spaniards, the Turks, the French, and even the Allied navies in World War II.

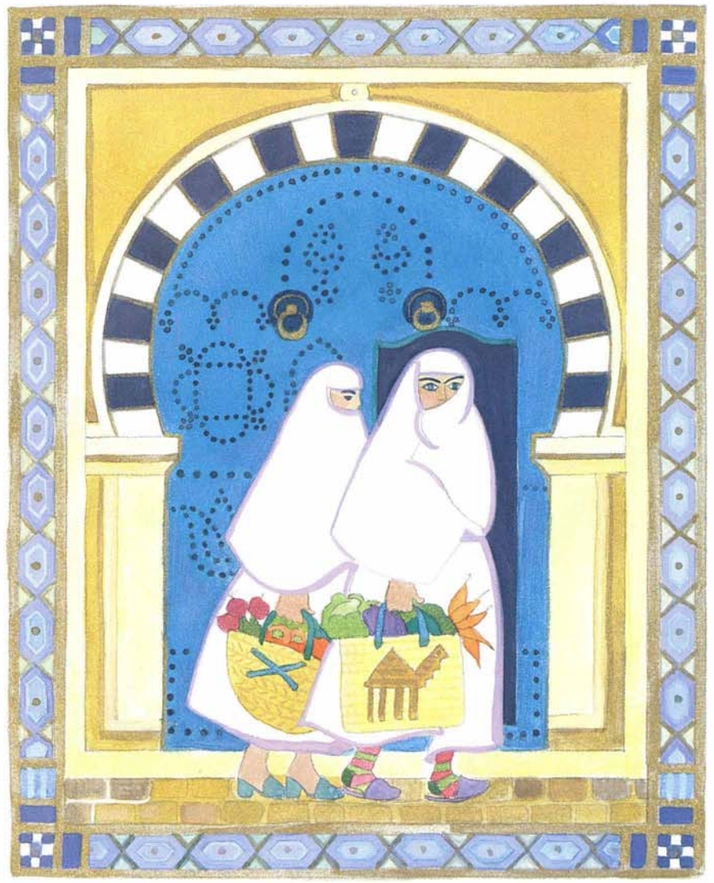
In 19 BC the Roman writer Virgil counted 240 steps that led his hero Aeneas from the beachfront to the lighthouse above. The steps number only 232 today, but they are still there, and still adorned with flower beds, succulents, palms and young fig trees. Though Carthage was ravaged and flattened at least twice as the price of its history and glory, neighboring Sidi Bou Said remained untouched, always in the shadow of time, never seeking fame, forever beautiful, its eyes on heaven.

Whereas Carthage is Phoenician and Roman in character, Sidi Bou Said is, heart and soul, a Muslim town. Its maze of narrow cobblestoned streets, its domed whitewashed houses, its walled gardens, its arched entry doors studded with arabesque designs, all underline a Muslim-Moorish heritage rooted in centuries long past, and frozen almost intact in time. The entire village is now a historical monument. It knows none of the ugly clutter of our century: no billboards, no neon signs, no gas stations, no shopping malls and not a single freeway. In fact, there was a time when no automobiles were allowed here, lest they offend the spirit of the place. Every house and every wall is milky white, as tradition requires. And against this whiteness of quenched quicklime stand the evergreen lushness of tall cypress trees and the crisp, neatly trimmed lines of thorny cactus beds. Early in the summer, Sidi Bou Said glows with the brilliant blossoms of the prickly pear, which look like sea anemones before you touch them. By July and through August, the village is drenched in the spectacular blushes of purple-red bougainvillea, bursting uninhibited from the mystery of walled gardens, or leaping in a mad downward rush from the wrought iron of elevated bay windows.

Every window and every door is blue, echoing, no doubt, the color of the sky and sea at the horizon. When an entry door is momentarily left open, you can catch glimpses of the colorful ceramic tiles, famous from Marrakesh to Tashkent, covering the floor of the walled garden. And then, of course, there is the venerable Café des Nattes, one of the landmarks of Sidi Bou Said. With its arched entryway and wide front staircase, this old institution would make a perfect setting for Mozart's *Abduction From the Seraglio*. Yet here, at dusk, while sipping the house specialty – very sweet mint tea with roasted pine nuts – you can hear not Mozart but the touching sounds of the *maluf*, the distinctive music of Moorish Spain. Down the sloping street from the café you can still bargain your way to a handwoven Kirwanese or Berber rug in a poorly lit shop, or buy tiny cork-sealed bottles of rose, musk, amber and orange perfume from the local *attarji*, the perfumer, or his son.

Life in Sidi Bou Said still has its own rhythm – a rhythm that I knew well as a boy, but which, alas, is faltering today, partly under the daily stampede of foreign tourists, and partly because the bounty of the sea, the one element that for centuries guaranteed the livelihood of the majority of the villagers, is no longer reliable.





The day begins early. In the pre-dawn darkness, before the first call to prayer rings from the mosque, a line of shadows carrying squeaky-handled lamps descends the 232 steps from the village to the beach. The noise is subdued at first: a few coughs, a few mumbles; then gradually, as they approach the stone and gravel pier to which their wooden boats are tied, the shadows grow more vociferous and restless. "Pass the rope," "Watch the net," "Hold the handle" and "God bless this day" is all you hear in the short bustle that accompanies the boarding. And within minutes, the tiny flotilla of white and blue *flukas* – all of the same shape, all of the same size – roars away towards the rising sun. Twenty-five years ago, they numbered in the dozens, but now you can count the *flukas* on two hands. This may be the last generation of these harvesters of the sea.

By seven a.m. it is time for breakfast for those who remain on shore: not just a humdrum breakfast of cold cereal and milk, but an affair that takes time and demands patience. You can tell it is that time of day by the wonderful aroma that suddenly embalms the streets. First you go to the corner fritter man – the *flayri* – and take your turn in line. From his freshly leavened dough he will make you several *ftiras* – Frisbee-shaped dough pieces stretched very thin in the middle and dipped quickly into boiling olive oil. The idea here is to "shock" the dough, not fry it, so that the delicate skin turns crispy brown, while the porous inside becomes chewy and tender at the same time. The stack of *ftiras* is then brought home and devoured while hot, with in-between bites of fresh purple figs just plucked from the garden. In autumn or winter, when fresh figs are not in season, whole dates or triangular slices of red, sweet oranges are a fine substitute. No tea, no coffee and no milk to drink, just a glass of water will do. And, oh, use your hands, please – no forks are allowed.

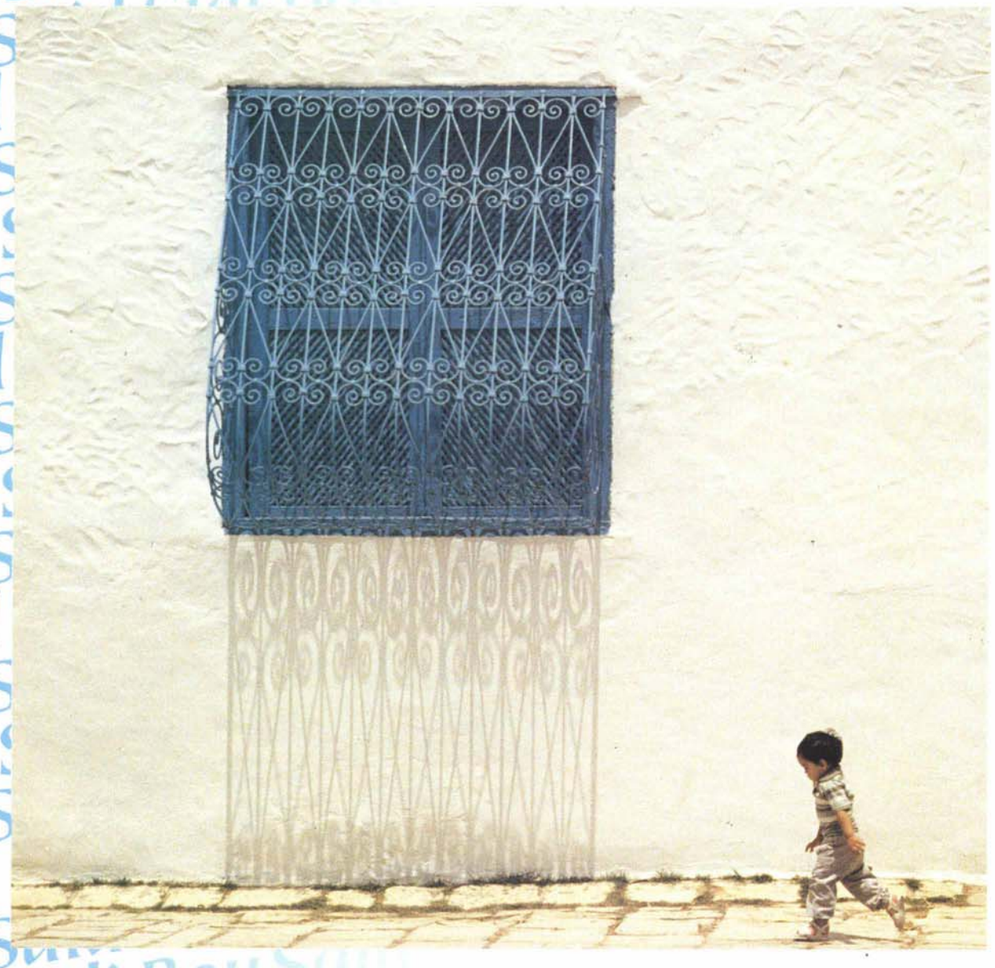
At midday in summer, Sidi Bou Said becomes a village of ghosts and echoes. The heat is crushing, the light blinding, and the streets, all but deserted, become playgrounds for twirls of hot air that seem to spring from the stony ground in quivering bursts of shimmering shadows. And in the silence of the narrow alleys every sound becomes an echo – the distant shrieking of sea gulls, the clicking of lonely traffic lights, the footsteps of women wrapped head-to-toe in their silky white *sifsari*, tending to their daily errands, oblivious of the heat.

A few hours later, a strange transformation takes place, a cleansing act of nature that dispels the suffocating mugginess of the past hours. A refreshing breeze from the northeast breathes in. Trees shake and hiss, people awaken from their torpor, and then the entire bay gradually disappears in a thick veil of chilling fog. Heaven and earth become one in the little white village.

For a while, in this balmy, surrealistic interlude, the little mosque becomes the focal point of the village. Its tiny outdoor courtyard overlooking the bay is quickly filled with men assembling for the mid-afternoon prayer, the *duhr*. As they kneel, the dark mass of the Djabel Bou Kornein, the Vesuvius of Africa, 16 kilometers across the water, begins to reemerge from the gray dampness – the first sign that the sun is on its way back.

Life is back to normal in Sidi Bou Said. At least, so the legends say....

Zayn Bilkadi, a Tunisian-born research chemist, is working on a book on the medieval Arab petroleum industry.



Sidi Bou Said
A STUDY IN BLUE & WHITE

WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY CHARLES O. CECIL

A young resident of Sidi Bou Said hurries along a village street, left. The window, with its grillwork and blue shutters set against a whitewashed facade, exemplifies the protected architecture of this hilltop community. Below, Sidi Bou Said basks in the afternoon sun.

From the rising promontory of Sidi Bou Said, on the western flank of the Bay of Tunis, you could have watched the Roman destruction of Carthage, a few kilometers away, in 146 BC. In 19 BC, you could have observed the arrival of 3000 Roman colonists, dispatched by a decision of the emperor Augustus to rebuild the city.

From your vantage point near the top of the hill in AD 1270, you could have viewed the entire army of Louis IX of France camped on the shore, its tents stretching toward Tunis in the distance, as the king lay dying of a fever. Was it perhaps a lingering memory of these and other images of the ebb and flow of temporal power that led pious men to seek these heights as a retreat for meditation, to be able to contemplate the ways of the world from the physical and spiritual viewpoint they named *kursi al-sulh* – the seat of reconciliation? It's best to visit this Tunisian village yourself and let your own sense of history provide the answer.

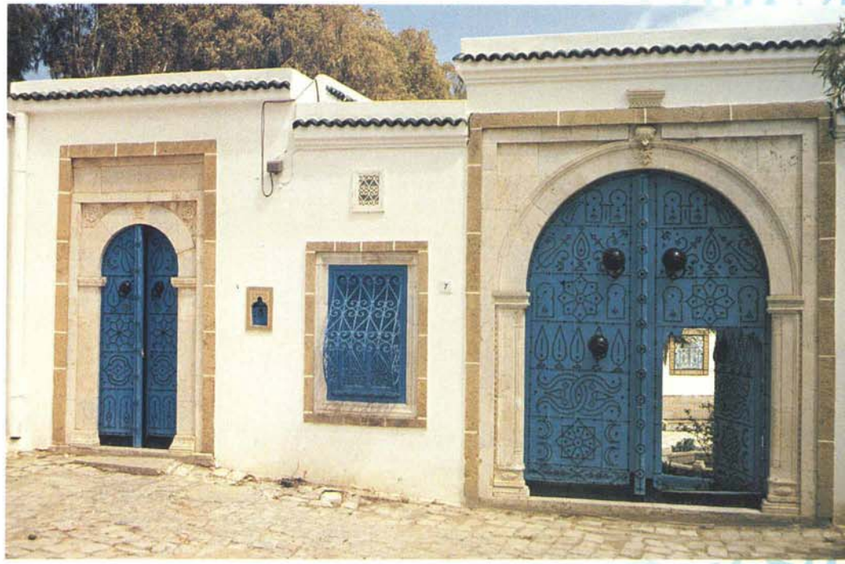
Set on the uppermost point of the headland guarding the entrance of the Bay of Tunis, this village only 16 kilometers (10 miles) from Tunis itself has a distinct, traditional character and an architectural style that have been protected since 1915 by local ordinance. A strong community spirit, with a little persuasion where necessary from the municipal authorities, ensures that houses are painted as needed to maintain their fresh appearance. Brilliant white facades, with doors and some grillwork a striking, near-turquoise blue, or the darker, deeper "Sfaxian" blue, draw the eyes as well as the feet up the hillside toward the minaret of the village mosque.

This site was first settled more than 2000 years ago, but as suburb and fortress rather than as a principal urban center. Vestiges of Punic settlement dating to the fifth century BC have been found, corroborated by texts referring to the area as a wealthy suburb of Carthage. It is said that the house of Hamilcar, father of Hannibal, was on this hill, though there is no actual evidence of this. Since today's settlement covers the highest and most desirable part of the hill, it is likely that any confirmation of the site's early history will be revealed only slowly, as it is almost certainly underneath the present dwellings.

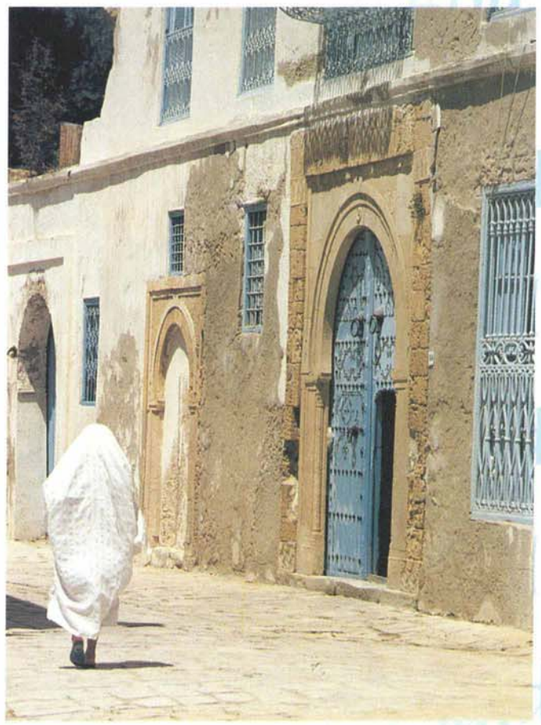
As the importance of Carthage declined, even after its resettlement by the Romans, and as the city of Tunis grew from the ninth century onward, Sidi Bou Said became too distant for those seeking nearby escape from a bustling urban environment. Settlement was reduced to small farmers and herdsmen, who used the land at the base of the hill. Some Tunisian authorities believe that because of its strategic importance overlooking the entrance to the bay, there must always have been a fortress of sorts on the promontory. But for centuries, settlement was limited.

continued on page 12

An archway leads to the courtyard of an upper-class house in Sidi Bou Said, below, gives a hint of what lies beyond.



The interior of the courtyard, left, reveals a fountain, greenery and a wealth of decorative tilework. By the middle of the 19th century, Sidi Bou Said had become a popular retreat for well-to-do Tunisians, and many of the larger homes date from this period.



A woman passes by old, arched doorways typical of Sidi Bou Said. The town's architectural style has been protected by local ordinance since 1915.

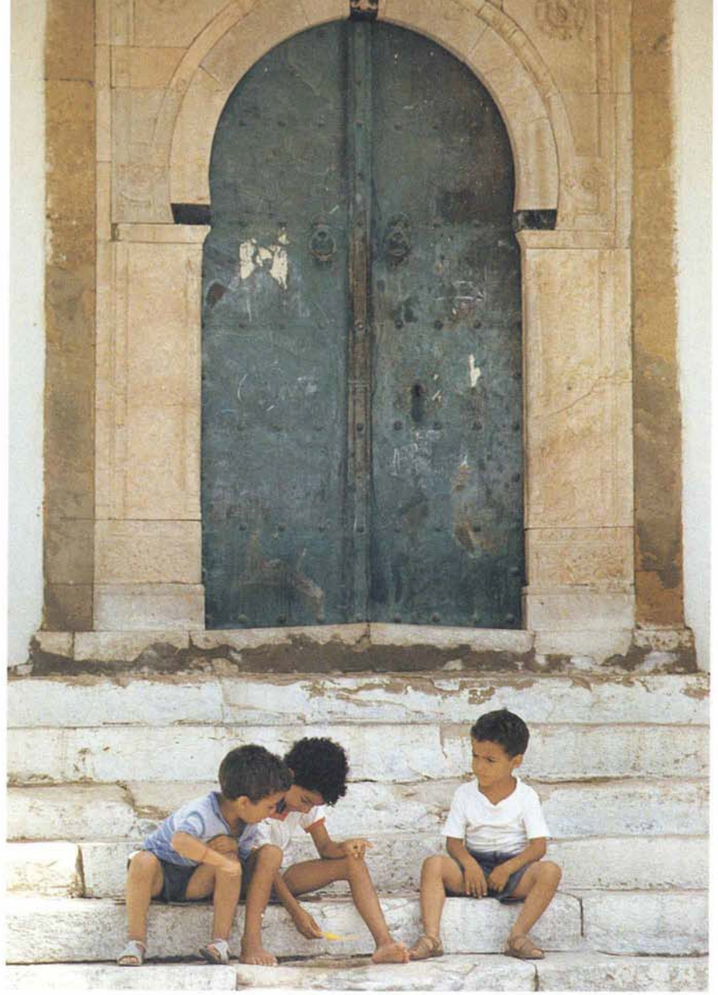
A cobblestone street, right, leading to the Café des Nattes, where Tunisians and tourists alike can enjoy a cup of mint tea and watch the passersby.

Thanks to the respect accorded Abu Said al-Baji, a local religious leader who died in 1236, the site became a place where Muslims might visit, learn and pray. Abu Said, from whom the village takes its name, lies interred at the base of the minaret of the mosque toward which thousands of tourists annually make their way, but more to photograph the narrow, picturesque streets and to bargain for souvenirs than to pay their respects to the Muslim teacher. Indeed, non-Muslims are not allowed to enter the mosque – one of the few restraints on foreigners in tourist-conscious Tunisia. Two coffee shops adjacent to the mosque, with others beyond, soothe the disappointment.

Some say that it is Saint Louis himself who is buried in the mosque, rather than Abu Said al-Baji, but there is enough historical evidence on both sides, Christian and Muslim, to refute this folk belief.

It was, perhaps, the increasingly military nature of the encounters with Europe which led the Hafsid ruler Abu al-Abbas (1370-1394) to construct a defensive fortification at Sidi Bou Said. The area nevertheless appears to have continued to serve primarily as a gathering point for pious retreats, with some sparse rural habitation, until the Hafsid fortress was captured by Charles V in 1535. It was then occupied by the Spanish until 1574, at which point it passed to Turkish control.

It is to the Turks that we owe the present mausoleum in which lies the body of Abu Said, now called Sidi (a term of respect) Bou Said, and the present-day village traces its origins to the period of Turkish hegemony. The mausoleum's principal entrance was later closed and a portion of it was transformed into the café which today is the goal of most tourists, particularly in the summer months.



Three boys play on stone steps below a village doorway, upper right. At right, a snack salesman welcomes a customer. Tunisians and foreigners alike enjoy walks through the narrow streets of Sidi Bou Said, with occasional stops for candy, tea with pine nuts or local doughnuts.

These tiles decorate a public bench in Sidi Bou Said. Artistic touches like this, and the restoration of old buildings, have helped the village keep alive its atmosphere of bygone eras.

As Tunis expanded in the late 18th century, princes, ministers and senior officials began to take a new interest in Sidi Bou Said. They sought escape from the cramped, urban conditions of the capital, which – because of its low location between two hills – suffered from high summer temperatures and still air. By the middle of the 19th century, Sidi Bou Said had acquired its character as a desirable retreat for the upper classes, who availed themselves of its pleasant breezes and cooler temperatures. Many extensive palaces and country residences date from this period.

Hafsid Sultan Abou Faris Abdulaziz (1394-1434) in one of the dozen rooms opening off its interior courtyard. Another is the Café des Maures, actually another mausoleum, which offers one of the best vantage points for looking down on the site of Carthage, the Punic Ports, the Bay of Tunis and the capital beyond, while enjoying a soft drink or a cup of tea. After a half-hour here, in this beautiful site, one understands the origin of the name, "seat of reconciliation."

One of the pleasures of walking the streets, narrow and cobblestoned, and enjoying the many pleasant views of the village and the bay, is that Tunisians themselves are likely to be as numerous as foreign visitors – and they give the coffee houses at least as much business. A dozen varieties of candy, the local doughnuts, called *bambaloni*, or cups of sweet tea with pine nuts floating on the surface are all for sale, tempting families of any nationality out for a pleasant afternoon or early evening walk. Except at religious sites, where non-believing visitors are generally considered out of place, the Tunisian tolerance of tourists, their cameras, and their dress demonstrates the general open-mindedness of the people toward foreign ideas and presence.

Tunisians are as likely as foreigners to visit Sidi Bou Said. These girls, from the seaport city of Sfax, were in town for a wedding party.

Within 50 years of this 19th-century construction boom, the ordinance of 1915 stabilized the village, stylistically if not structurally, at something resembling its present appearance. Although many houses fell into ruin with the passing of the era of the Ottoman upper classes, others were adapted to new, modern uses as restaurants, cafés, and hotels, profiting from the village's growing reputation as a picturesque site that captures, in cameo, the atmosphere of the Tunisia of the 19th and earlier centuries.

An example of this is the budget Hotel Abou Faris, which holds the coffin of the

With 3000 years' experience in dealing with the Mediterranean economy and its various cultures, Tunisians have concluded that they know how to profit from such exchanges. Sidi Bou Said is only one of the features of modern-day Tunisia which demonstrates that the foresight to preserve one's own culture and tradition assures benefits, material and intangible, to both present and future generations.

Charles O. Cecil was director of the U. S. State Department's Arabic Language Field School in Sidi Bou Said. He is now assigned to Abidjan. Cecil is required to state that "the opinions and views expressed are the author's own, and not those of the Department of State."

BERBER SILVER ARAB GOLD

WRITTEN BY CAROLINE STONE
PHOTOGRAPHED BY FRANCESCO VENTURI

Jewelry in Morocco, and all across North Africa, is of two kinds. There is the heavy silver characteristic of the mountain Berbers, the nomads and the country people, and there is the gold, usually more delicately worked, preferred by the Arabs of the towns. The latter is sometimes also worn by those Berbers who live in close contact with the Arabs in the cities and the plains.

The Berbers are believed to be the original inhabitants of North Africa, preceding Carthaginians, Greeks, Romans and Goths. The Arabs were the last of the great waves of invaders of the region; led by 'Uqba ibn Nafi', they crossed the whole width of the continent in 684, and reached the Atlantic. Succeeding waves followed, but as settlers rather than invaders, coming up out of Arabia with their herds and households. The Berbers converted to Islam at an early date, but they retained their language, customs and ethnic identity. Indo-Europeans, the Berbers are the only fair-skinned people native to Africa; many have red hair and light eyes. In the southern oases, they have intermarried with sub-Saharan Africans to produce the Berber-speaking Haratine.

Roughly speaking, the elegant city culture of North Africa is Arab. The Berbers are typically country people, excellent farmers and stock-breeders, and inhabit the Rif, the Atlas and the oases, as well as certain towns such as Meknes and Tangier. Arab dress is essentially cut and sewn; Berber dress, far more archaic, is draped, as in classical times, and held with brooches and a belt. All of this has influenced both Arab and Berber jewelry.

For both Arabs and Berbers, jewelry is not merely a means of decoration – it is a way of saving. Jewelry given to a woman is hers absolutely, and it is normal for her to sell an ornament or two to buy something else or to tide her family over a lean period; she may even sacrifice a number of pieces in order to acquire animals or land. In this way, the women often act as the families' bankers and their jewelry thus has a different significance than in the West.

Women begin to build up their collection of jewelry as children, and it is greatly increased about the time of their marriage. After that, they will add to it at every possible occasion, whenever the men of the family have some spare money. Old pieces are not prized, except by the most sophisticated, and Berber women in particular like to wear jewelry made for them personally. This means that, in each generation, jewelry tends to go back to the smith to be melted down and reworked, and so very old pieces are very rare. Fashions change, however, and it is possible to class a piece roughly as "antique" or "modern," meaning that it is made either before or after the period 1900 to 1920.

The Berber and the Berber-speaking Tuareg prefer silver jewelry to gold, but the reason has nothing to do with poverty. The Prophet Muhammad disapproved of gold jewelry for men, but – by his example and by instruction – allowed them to wear silver. Gold was allowed as an adornment for women.

Berber jewelry is nonetheless almost entirely silver, enriched with niello-work, enamel, engraving, repoussé and semi-precious stones, the colors of which have a symbolic meaning. Necklaces of huge amber beads, held to have protective properties, were in the past traded all the way from the Baltic. Now, they are often made of plastic or copal resin from Mauritania.

The main pieces of Berber jewelry – best seen at weddings and during the harvest, when it is traditionally displayed – include *head ornaments*, which may be like the urban *taj* (15), or made of silver coins, old and new; *earrings*, usually so large that they have to be supported on a chain that runs across the head or that is hooked into the hair, and similarly, *pendants* which hang over the temples (14); *necklaces* of various kinds (13); *rings*; pairs of great silver *brooches* (6), essential for holding the draped robes in place; pairs of *bracelets* (11) of different types, including the star-shaped, heavy ones of the Aït Atta, whose points can be used for self-defence; and pairs of *anklets*, usually of the horseshoe shape also worn by townswomen.

These pendants, called *louha* – "small board" – would have been worn by women of the Atlas interspersed with beads, often huge spheres of amber or an amber substitute, to make massive necklaces called *loubane* or *talloubane*. Three of the louha feature a lizard or salamander, a creature which, some Berbers believe, has healing powers and can predict the future. The leopard is also believed to have healing powers, especially against the common cold.

Throughout North Africa, as in many countries of Europe and sub-Saharan Africa, smiths hold a peculiar position on the fringes of society, needed and respected for their skills, but at the same time socially distrusted and feared. The Tuareg say of the metalworkers that they are "older than memory, proud as the crow, and mischievous in mind." Some of the techniques still in use are ancient, probably going back to the Carthaginians, who reached the Maghrib some 500 years BC. They include cloisonné enamel and niello work (6, 11, 13), which often give Berber jewelry a look reminiscent of medieval Europe, and filigree, some of the designs for which were brought by the Muslim refugees from Granada in the 16th century (See *Aramco World*, July-August 1991), and are still called *rarnati* – "of Granada." (7)

While Berber women, especially the Haratine, are often loaded with remarkable amounts of jewelry, men wear little, apart from rings – and in modern times, watches – in accordance with the example of the Prophet; the same is, by and large, true of townsmen. Traditionally, however, all of a man's personal possessions are beautifully made and decorated, in particular his *dagger* (3) *and chain*, which until recently was a standard part of the male wardrobe; his *gun*, often magnificently inlaid; his *powder horn* (4) or *powder flask* (9); and in some cases, his *Qur'an case* (17) – worn by the Tuareg, for example, bound to their turbans. Unlike the custom in many other parts of the world, both men's and women's belts – an essential element where clothing is draped – are almost invariably made of cloth rather than metal.

There is a difference between town and country jewelry. Arab women have a strong preference for gold, and so the pieces are apt to be smaller and more delicate. Filigree or incised gold, enameled or set with precious or semi-precious stones, is very popular and pearls are greatly sought after (12), as are emeralds. One of the most distinctive pieces is the *taj*, or diadem, (15) worn for marriages and for certain other formal occasions. A central forehead ornament is also worn, confusingly called *taba* (plural: *touaba*), like the brooches (7) and hanging decorations (*fnarat*, singular *fnar*) that frame the face. Normal wear includes earrings (2), often so heavy that, like their Berber counterparts, they need to be supported; rings; bracelets, (5) which are always worn in pairs; and, now mostly on special occasions, anklets. Pairs of brooches (7, 8) were worn with elements of traditional dress which involve draping, while single brooches are a recent Western introduction.

It is very difficult to date jewelry from Morocco. Traditional patterns tended to be copied over and over again. Western motifs do not always indicate modernity, because of the very old link with Spain, but pieces such as the diadem on page 21 (15) are obviously completely European. Generally, the older pieces of both Arab and Berber jewelry tend to be larger and heavier, often with more delicate detail; newer pieces are apt to be less bold in design but flashier in their execution. There are several reasons for this: the rise in the price of precious metals, with a corresponding tendency to compensate by using large, bright, but not very valuable stones; the emigration of a very large number of the jewelers during the 1950's and 1960's, which caused a break in the tradition – a tradition only just now reviving, for example in the Algerian Kabyle; and perhaps most importantly, the fact that jewelry throughout North Africa is bought by weight, with the workmanship counting for very little. As a result, in the modern world, the craftsman often cannot afford to put a lot of time into delicate and painstaking effects (6), unless he is specially commissioned, but tends instead to go for the bolder, cruder – and thus quicker – forms of decoration.

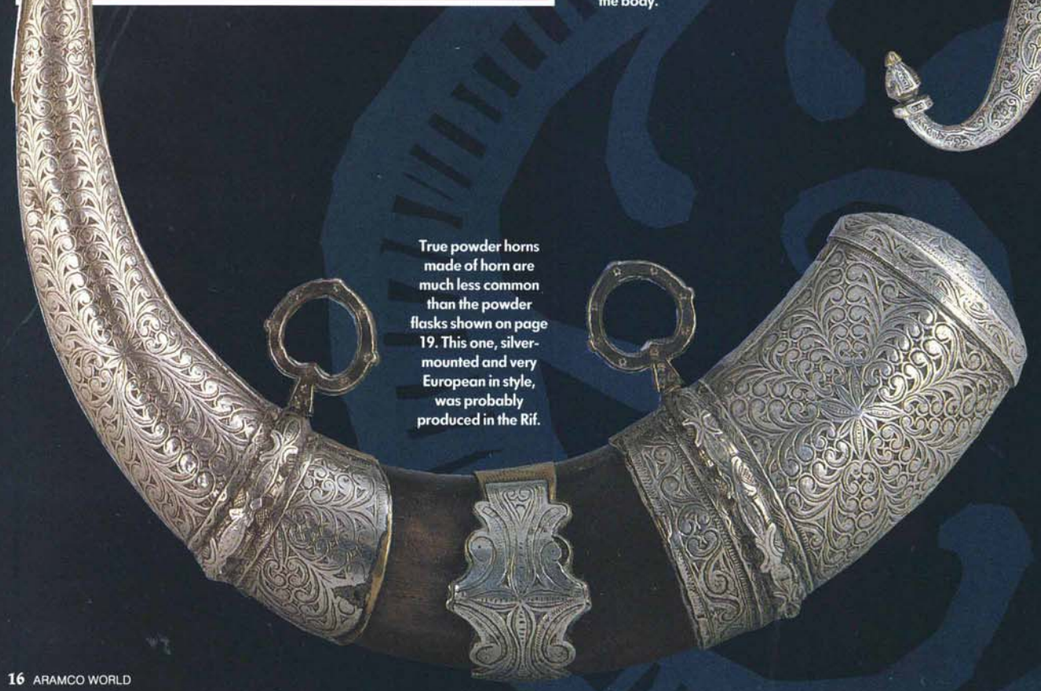
The traditional techniques, however, are still available in the hands and heads of at least the older craftsmen, and it is to be hoped that an increased appreciation of Moroccan jewelry will lead not only to antiques being sought after by collectors, but to new pieces being commissioned.

Caroline Stone, a specialist in the textiles and jewelry of North Africa, divides her time between London, Rome and Seville.

Large earrings called *douah*, left, are common in Rabat and a specialty of Marrakech. They always have five pendants, though generally of coral rather than pearl and filigree, as here. The chains, with their decorative ends, enable the wearer to hook the heavy rings into her hair or headdress for support. At right, two fine and highly decorative *koummiya*, or slender daggers, with elaborate silverwork and cloisonné. The shape of these weapons is similar to examples from Persia, and they were often worn on a chain, slung across the body.

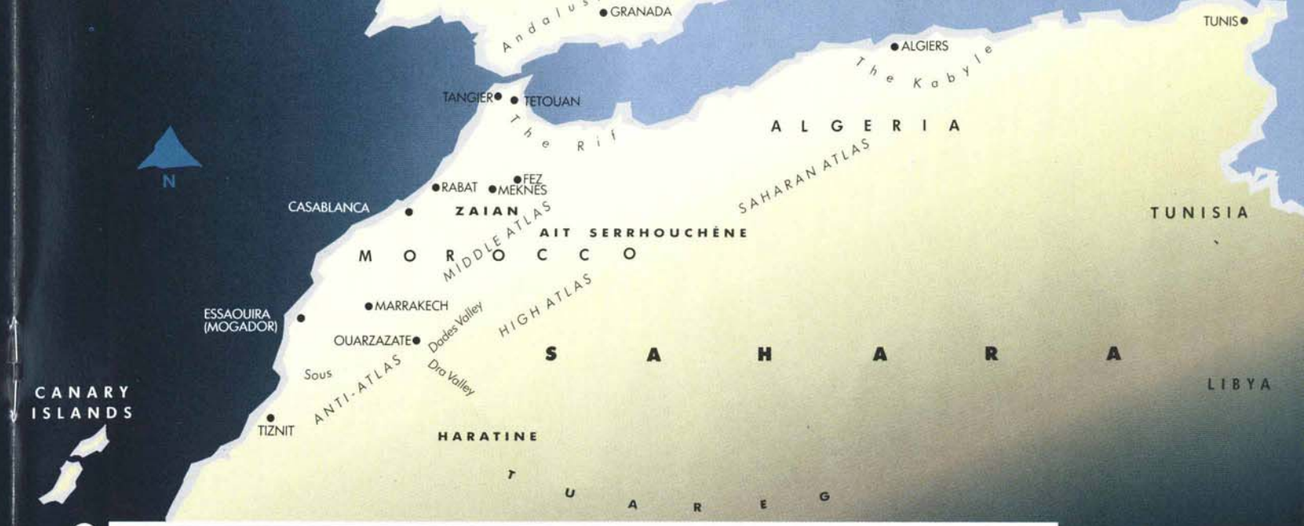
2

3



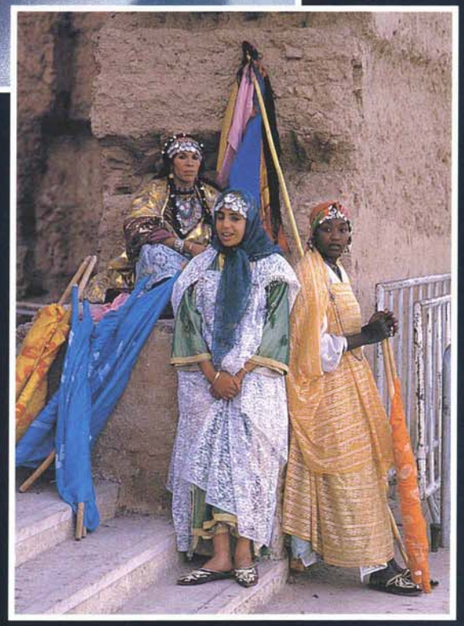
True powder horns made of horn are much less common than the powder flasks shown on page 19. This one, silver-mounted and very European in style, was probably produced in the Rif.

4



5

A pair and a single bracelet of the type known as *shams ou qmar* – "sun and full moon" – from their alternating elements of gold and silver. These bracelets are particularly characteristic of Fez and Tangier, and they are always worn in pairs.



6

7

The very pretty pair of brooches at right was probably made in northern Morocco – perhaps in Fez or Tangier – and was then traded south, where the silver chain (*arouz*) and pendant (*taguemout*) were added to adapt the pair to local tastes. The pendant, typically a large, egg-shaped bead, symbolizes fertility. At top of page, one of a pair of *tizerzay*, or fibulae, probably from the Tiznit region of the Anti-Atlas. These are an essential part of Berber women's dress, placed just below the level of the collarbone to hold the draperies in place; their size, sometimes up to 18 or 20 centimeters on a side, indicates the wearer's status. The time-consuming form of decoration with little holes is a speciality of the craftsmen of the Anti-Atlas.

8

NICOLAS SAPIEHA

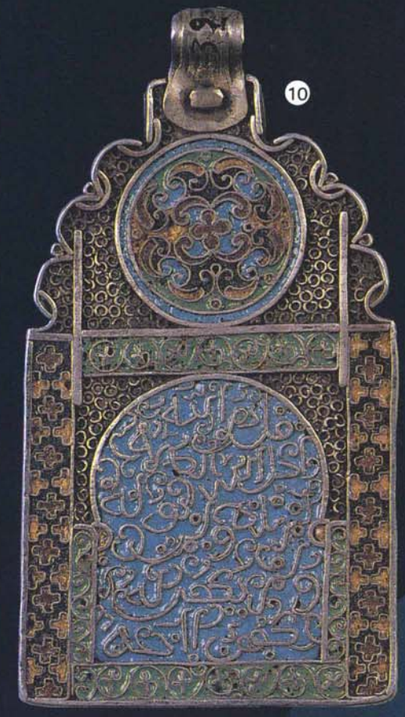
Bziyem (singular *bzim*) are the fibulae used to pin the draperies worn over formal clothes. Like the *tizerzay* of the south of Morocco, the bziyem are always worn in pairs but, unlike them, they are not joined by a chain.

9

Though, in the past, men wore little or no jewelry, their utilitarian personal possessions were made to be as beautiful and elegant as possible. Nomads especially, who owned few objects, commissioned each piece with great care as an investment in beauty, to be used and enjoyed for a lifetime. Of these two powder flasks, the one at left has been repeatedly mended.

This silver piece with cloisonné enameling is probably a buckle, or *fekroun*, from a shoulder strap used to hold a decorative Qur'an case. The workmanship is typical of the Zaian, but the calligraphy appears to come from Mogador.

10



11

This fine pair of bracelets with pin closures, known as *nbail* in Arabic (singular *nbala*) and *tanballin* (singular *tanbalt*) in Berber, are brilliantly enameled in colors that suggest the European Middle Ages and are decorated with new or antique coins. They are always worn in pairs, and are particularly popular with the Haratine, whose women are famous for their spectacular jewelry-laden dress.

This type of good-luck piece with pendent stones, an urban rather than Berber design, is called *keff*. It is often worn as here on a necklace of stones. This style, featuring jewels in a filigree setting, is called *rarnati* – "of Granada" – indicating its old Spanish origins.

12

13

This "choker" necklace of silver and enamel beads represents another style said to have been brought from 16th-century al-Andalus. These so-called "jewels of Sous" are worn throughout the Anti-Atlas and the pre-Saharan oases, customarily under the larger and much more spectacular *loubane* necklaces. The combination of blue and silver is a particular favorite at Tiznit and among the Zaian.

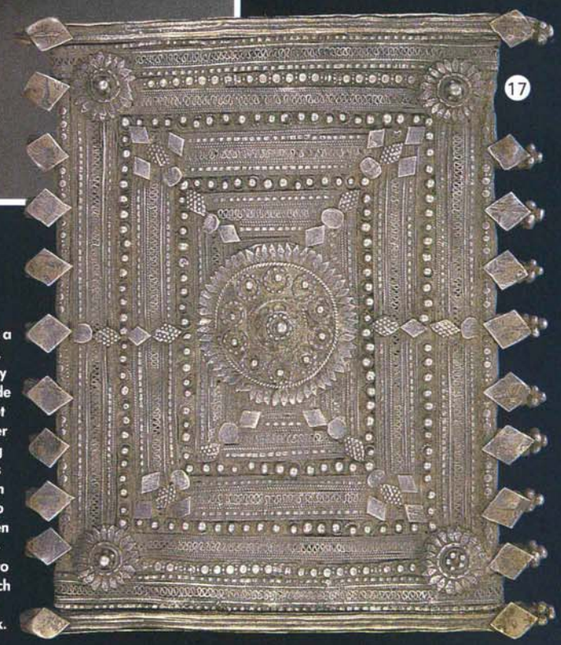
14

This handsome niello work is typical of the Moroccan southwest, and the use of seven pendants, rather than three or five, is often found in Tiznit. The pieces may be *tiknouchine* – pendants intended to be worn over the temples – of the Aït Serrhouchène of the Middle Atlas region, though they are missing their supporting chains.

16

15

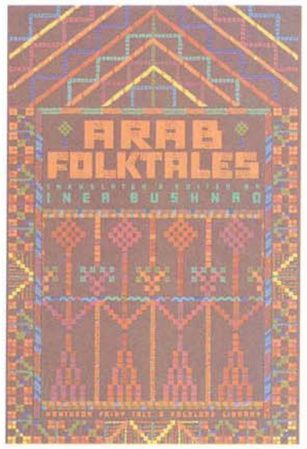
Above, a *taj* or crown worn by a Muslim bride. This piece is in the modern style and clearly shows Western influence. It may well have been made in Tangier or Rabat. In contrast, the very archaic form of earrings at left has been known since classical times. These earrings are worn particularly in Tangier and Fez and are known as *khras kbach*, or ram's head. They are attached by a chain to the headdress.



17

This beautifully worked silver box is a case for a Qur'an, and stylistically very similar to those made in Zanzibar. It is not uncommon for silver work to travel long distances, and this box may have been traded from East to West Africa and then north by the trans-Saharan caravans to Morocco, where such pieces are called simply *kitab* – Book.

RECALLING THE TALES



"In these days of fax machines, it's reassuring that people still like to sit down and listen to a story," says Palestinian-American folklorist Inea Bushnaq, who enchants audiences and readers with traditional Arab folktales, just as her father once enchanted her. Bushnaq's interest in folklore began in the 1980's, when she undertook to compile, translate and edit a collection of Arab folktales. As she researched collections of Arab folklore from many countries dating back to 1860 and, during visits to the Middle East, tape-recorded tales still told there, the project led her on a "nostalgic journey" to the landscape of her youth, and revealed parts of her own culture that she had forgotten.

Childhood memories of tales told at her father's family home in Tulkarm, 55 kilometers (34 miles) northwest of Jerusalem, led Bushnaq to begin scouring Palestinian villages in search of stories. Tape recorder in hand, she took to the hills, often climbing through centuries-old olive groves, to reach villagers eager to recount the tales their parents and grandparents had told.

"The people were so proud to be able to tell me these stories," she recalls. For Palestinians, "the interest in folk art has intensified during the past decade or so."

After five years of research, Bushnaq's *Arab Folktales* was published by Pantheon in 1986. The first International Conference of Palestinian Folk Heritage was also held not long afterward, in 1987. Today, Birzeit University in the West Bank boasts an active folklore department, and in nearby al-Bireh, the In'ash al-Usra (Family Restoration) Society has a division of folklore and social research.

Yet, writes Bushnaq, "It is a wistful moment when interest in recording an oral tradition awakens. It means that the tradition is well past its finest days, since it is the fear of losing it altogether which first motivates the collector to preserve the oral legacy."

Bushnaq's family left Jerusalem, where she was born, in 1948 and ultimately settled in London, where she was educated. She attributes much of her success to her parents' emphasis on education and languages. A master's degree in classics from Cambridge University and her fluency in Arabic, English, French and German led to work translating two books, and gave her entrée to the New York publishing world after she moved to the United States in 1967.

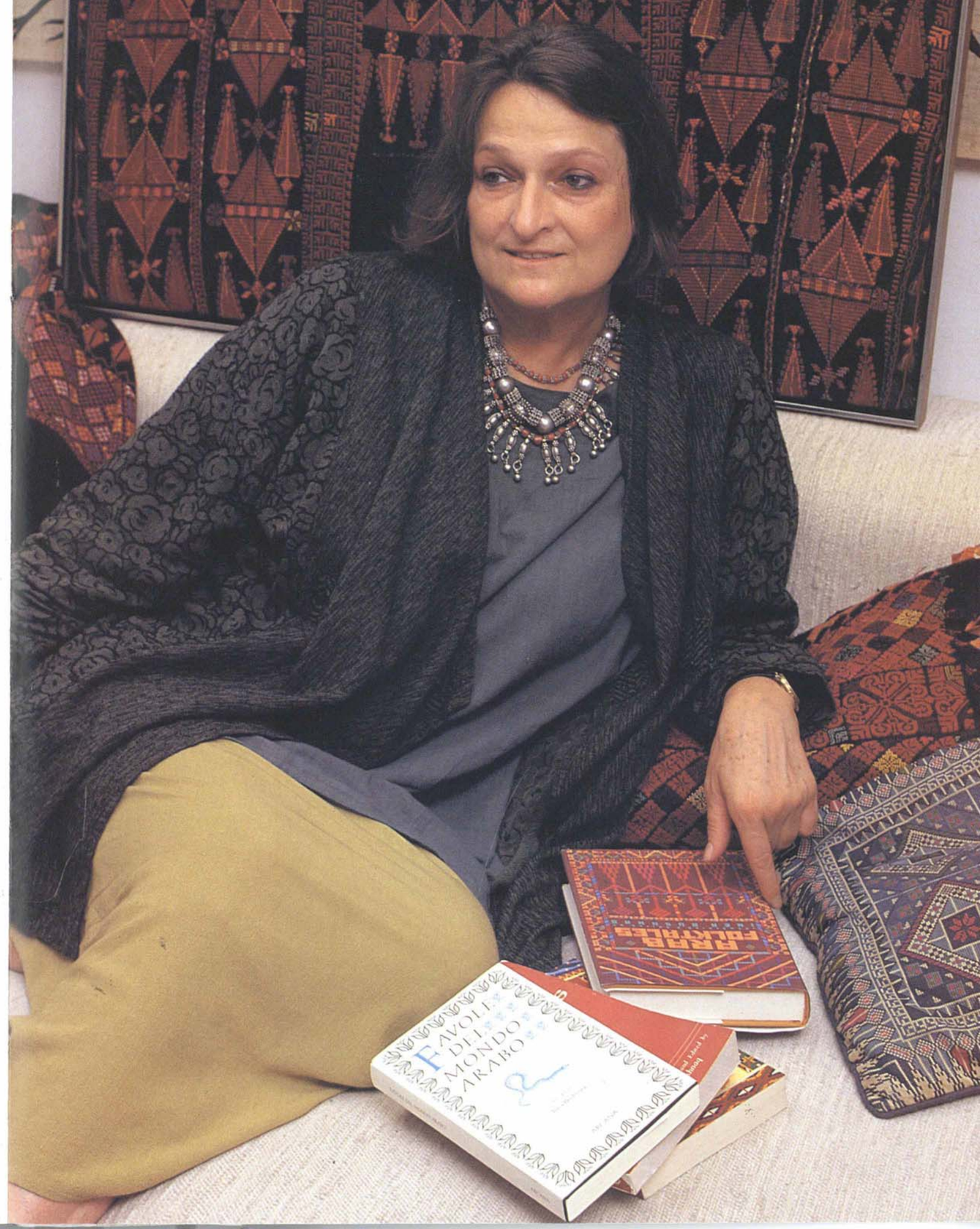
Bushnaq considers herself "an interpreter of my past, to the present." The same folktales that were such a "wonderful treat of my childhood ... seem to be the ideal instrument to open doors for people who might not be predisposed to listen to anything about the Middle East." Thus, during the 1991 Gulf War, Bushnaq was invited to tell Arab folktales to children in New York City schools, and children in her Greenwich Village neighborhood still remember her as "the one who told us those stories!"

Today, Bushnaq still tells tales, but she is also working on an oral history of rural Palestinian life, collecting "the stories of the people who tell the stories." Back in the 1980's, recording folktales, she noticed that – after the tape recorder was turned off – the women and men told "stories about their own lives as fascinating as the tales they had recalled."

And after all, she smiles, "Lives are stories too, aren't they?"

Piney Kesting is a free-lance writer who covers Middle Eastern affairs from her base in Boston.

WRITTEN BY PINEY KESTING
PHOTOGRAPHED BY KATRINA THOMAS



Set on a hilltop overlooking Granada, the 13th-century Alhambra is itself one of the greatest treasures of was also the setting for a magnificent and provocative citadel and palace complex of the the Muslim era in Spain. Recently, it exhibition of eight hundred years of...

THE ART OF ISLAMIC SPAIN

WRITTEN BY PATRICIA, COUNTESS JELLICOE
PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF
THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

The Alhambra, site of the first presentation of the exhibition "Al-Andalus: The Art of Islamic Spain," has been an Orientalist fantasy since Washington Irving rediscovered it for the Western world in his delightful *Tales of the Alhambra*, written in 1832. But the 13th-century citadel and palace complex, set on a hilltop overlooking Granada, is not only the best known monument of the Muslim era in Spain (See *Aramco World*, May-June 1967), but itself one of that period's greatest treasures. In this setting, New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Administration of the Alhambra and Generalife together have produced a real and provocative new vision of almost 800 years of Islamic Spain. (The exhibition continues in New York through September 27.)

Some 120 pieces of the finest Hispano-Islamic art from collections in America, Britain, Russia, Sicily, Egypt, Morocco, Spain and other countries went on display: ivory and marble carvings, bronze lamps and animals, coins, jewels and ceremonial swords, superb textiles, ceramics, astrolabes and the flowing calligraphy of Qur'ans, all restoring a vivid life to the rich, exotic beauty of the Alhambra's interiors. The displays were a feat of installation: Nothing was permitted to touch the exquisite tiled and stuccoed walls, all cases and lighting standing discreetly free.

The exhibition catalogue presents the history of the various Muslim dynasties in Spain, from the first Arab conquests in 711 to the fall of the last Muslim kingdom in 1492 – for, in order to appreciate fully the art assembled in this exhibition, one should know something of the origins of al-Andalus, of the powers and interests at play, of the widespread trade and travel of Spain's Muslims and the resulting influences on their arts, and of the ebb and flow of hegemony in the peninsula, from the early days of Muslim-Christian-Jewish harmony and mutual tolerance to the final victory of the *reconquista* in Granada.

Some say the Arab conquest of the Iberian Peninsula began with an invitation: According to one account, the Umayyad governor of North Africa, Musa ibn Nusayr, was asked to aid the opponents of a Visigoth king. True or not, it is a fact that Ibn Nusayr sent his general Tariq ibn Ziyad with a Berber army into Spain in 711, following himself in 712. Toledo lured Tariq to its conquest, and within seven years the whole of the peninsula, except for Galicia and Asturias, was under Muslim control, remaining so throughout the Umayyad period, from 711 to 1031.

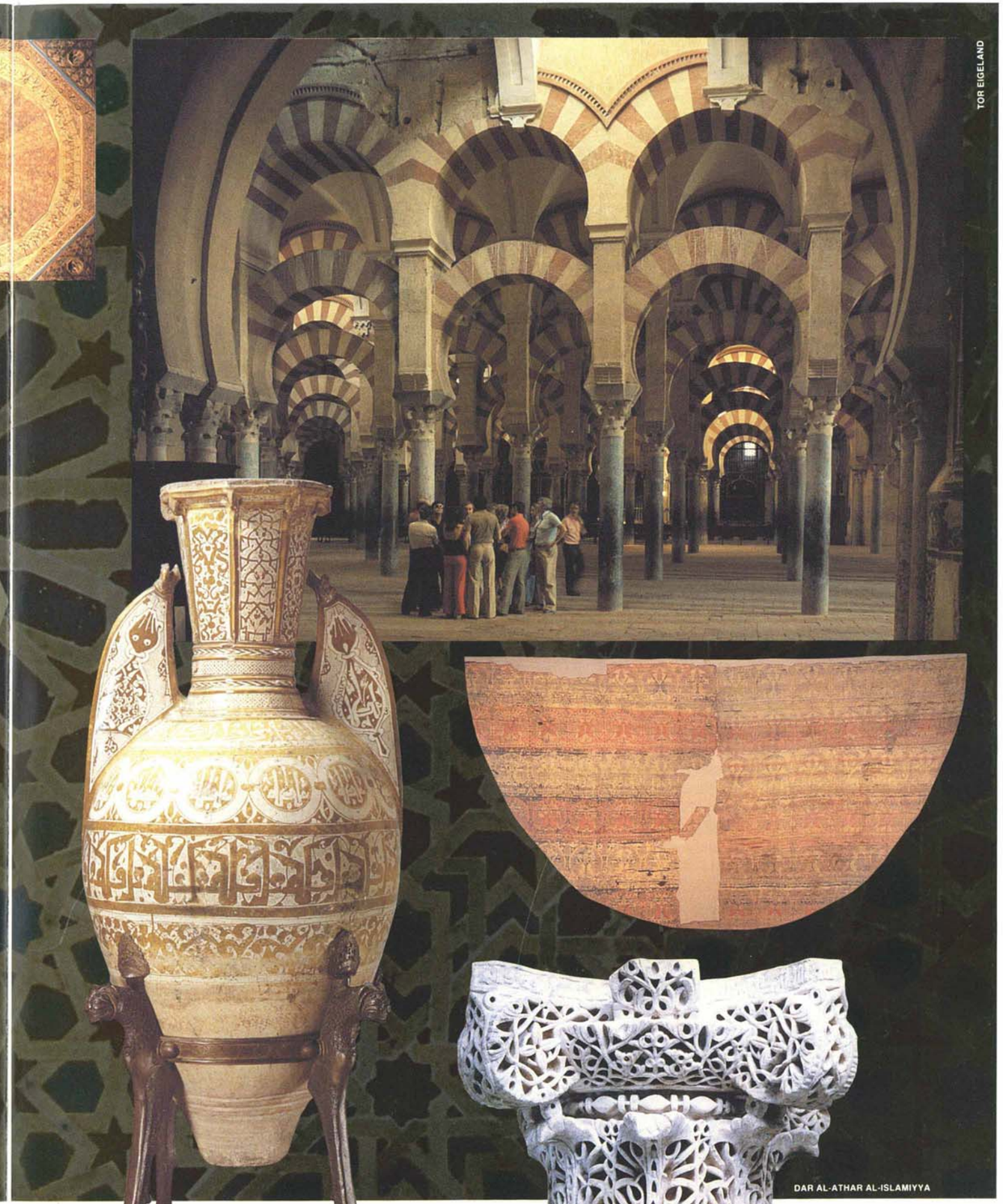
The era of the Umayyad Governors was followed by the Umayyad Emirate, established in 756 after the arrival in Spain of 'Abd al-Rahman I, sole survivor of the Umayyad caliphate of Damascus, which had been overthrown by the Abbasids in 750. The dynasty of the Andalusian Umayyads (756-1031) marked the zenith of Arab civilization in Spain.

But that dynasty collapsed after the death of the formidable dictator-chamberlain al-Mansur in 1002 and the civil war of 1010-1013, and local governors proclaimed themselves *taifas*, or petty monarchs, with Seville, Toledo and Saragossa the most powerful of the independent kingdoms. Their internecine wars cost territory: Muslim control had receded to only half of Spain by 1065. With the fall of Toledo to Christian armies in 1085, the taifas sought support from the North African Berber Almoravid dynasty – but the Almoravid leader, Yusuf ibn Tashufin, believed that the rule of the taifas had to be ended if Islamic Spain was to be rescued. In 1090, Ibn Tashufin decided to land his army in al-Andalus. One after another, Muslim-ruled cities fell to the Almoravids – Granada, Almería, Seville, Valencia, Saragossa, Lisbon and the rest. Al-Andalus remained subject to the Almoravids until 1145, when they were replaced by the Almohads, another Berber dynasty from North Africa's southern Maghrib. The Almohad rulers adopted the title of caliph and introduced a series of religious measures seeking to strengthen their territories. Two great Almohad sovereigns – Yusuf I and his son Ya'qub – raised western Islam to the zenith of its power. But in 1212, at the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa, the Christian armies avenged their previous defeats, a turning point in the history of the peninsula. Only one-third of Spain was left under Muslim control and al-Andalus was once again fragmented into tribute-paying principalities – Granada excepted.

The final dynasty, the Nasrid Kingdom (1238-1492), ruled only Granada and three tribute-paying cities: Jaén, Almería and Málaga. As pressure eased on Granada, the kingdom reached its greatest splendor during the reign of Muhammad V (1354-1359 and 1362-1391), when he added considerably to the Alhambra Palace. His ministers included some of the most learned men of the epoch: polymath historian Ibn al-Khatib, his close friend and fellow historian Ibn Khatima and court poet Ibn Zamraq. The royal court also extended its protection to Tunis-born Ibn Khaldun, the great philosopher of history (See *Aramco World*, September-October 1978). But by the end of the next century, the power of Christian Castile and Aragon, unified by the marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella – both pledged to the *reconquista* – forced the last ruling Nasrid, Muhammad XII, known to the Spaniards as King Boabdil, into exile on January 2, 1492.

The city of Córdoba, whose Great Mosque still survives with its rhythmic arched vistas, became the center of a sophisticated, luxuriously rich Hispano-Islamic civilization that ranked with Byzantium and Baghdad. By the time of its apogee in the 10th century, Córdoba was renowned for its intellectually advanced culture, its learned centers and its libraries, far outstripping the still-undeveloped Christian north. In the late 11th century, Córdoba was incorporated into the Kingdom of Seville, where it remained, continuing to thrive as an intellectual center, until reconquered by the Christians in 1236.

The dazzling double horseshoe arches of the Great Mosque of Cordoba (right), in red brick and white stone, brought complexity and tension to one of the first architectural expressions of Muslim rule in Spain. A deeply carved Corinthian capital (bottom right) from Madinat al-Zahra shows the handiwork of Byzantine or Byzantine-trained artisans. A chasuble made of cloth woven in Almoravid workshops in the early 12th century (center right) demonstrates that magnificent textiles were understood as expressions of power and sovereignty beyond the Muslim realm. An original design and great richness of decoration distinguish a domed wooden ceiling (top) from Granada's first Nasrid period, in the late 13th and early 14th centuries. A gold-on-white vase from the same period (right) is decorated with the words "pleasure," "health" and "benediction."



TOR EIGELAND

DAR AL-ATHAR AL-ISLAMIYYA

In the exhibition, marble capitals from the Madinat al-Zahra Palace in Córdoba show the influence of Byzantine artisans invited to the court to train Muslims, while the schematized interweaving of marble window screens (*celosías*) is a forerunner of the later, geometrically more intricate Islamic designs. A supreme example of the quality of Umayyad artistic production is the deep overall carving of ivories such as the "Pamplona Casket," dating from 1004 or 1005, with its foliated Kufic dedication to 'Abd al-Malik and its images of princely hunting and feasting, traceable to textile patterns. Of 21 medallions on the casket, one outstanding one may show the reigning Caliph Hisham II – a bearded, bareheaded figure seated on a lion throne, a flower or fruit in his hand and a signet ring on his left ring finger. Flanking him are two attendants, one holding a fly whisk, the other a perfume bottle or sprinkler and a woven fan.

Two carved ivory pyxides – containers for precious aromatics – have the domed cover unique to 10th-century Spanish containers, and are designed to resemble a pavilion, with its palatial and paradisiacal connotations, suggesting the richness of the gifts within. One pyxis, made in 968, features within its overall carving large medallions of such vividness that they have been included in virtually all discussions of early Islamic art: One contains the ancient Middle Eastern motif of lions attacking other animals, bulls in this case; the second portrays a lute player on a lion throne, flanked by two seated youths; the third is of two beardless, bareheaded riders picking dates from either side of a tree while cheetahs seated on their horses' flanks hold two parrots by the tail.

One of two 10th-century textile fragments on display, of silk, linen and gold thread, is thought to be part of an *almaizar* – a cloth which served as both veil and turban – of Hisham II, to whom there is a dedication in Kufic, while its embroidered medallions of people, lions, birds and other animals show Egyptian Coptic influence.

The Madinat al-Zahra Palace, built by 'Abd al-Rahman III and his son al-Hakam II between the middle and end of the 10th century, was tragically looted and destroyed in the 11th century. Found in its ruins was the well-known bronze Córdoba Stag – probably made as a fountain-head – that is the surviving masterpiece of the palace's metalwork atelier. The body of the stag has an overall pattern of leaves within circles, a common textile design of the period. Fountains were an integral part of Islam's aesthetic – particularly in western Islam. Medical philosophies of the time maintained that health followed from the freshness of flowing water and perfumed air. The musk and ambergris from ivory pyxides, perfume from silver and gilt bottles, and perfumed candles would all have filled the palace's rooms with scent.

The taifa kings emulated Cordoban power in their patronage of the arts; thus many scholars, merchants and the richest citizens emigrated to their realms, which became centers of small renaissances. Islamic literature in Spain attained its peak during the taifa era when the poet-king of Seville, al-Mu'tamid, established an academy of letters, and al-Mansur's poet, Ibn Darraj al-Qastalli, who took refuge in Saragossa, penned a series of *qasa'id*, or poems, of unequaled beauty.

In architecture, buildings took on new forms and decoration. An example in the exhibition from the Aljafería in Saragossa, the best-preserved palace complex of the taifa era, is a carved-stucco relief with a design of interwoven arched columns – derived, perhaps, from the Córdoba Mosque's curving *maqsura* arches, but giving birth to a new style of more complex and integrated geometrical shapes against a fuller scrolled-leaf ground. The relief still bears some of the red and blue color of the paints once used on all such stuccoes.

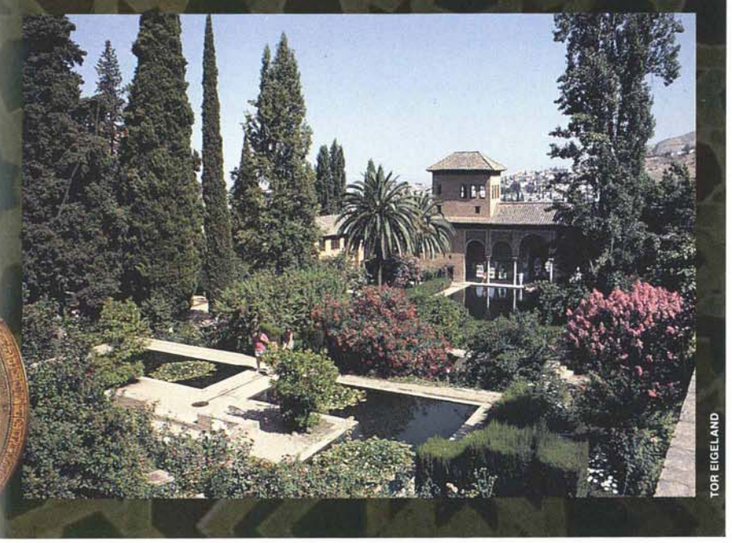
By the end of the 11th century, al-Andalus was at the forefront of European sciences. The Saragossan king al-Mu'tamin (1080-1085), an outstanding mathematician himself, gathered at his court a distinguished group of scholars and philosophers. In the mid-11th century, Abu Qasim Sa'id ibn Ahmad of Toledo, in his book *The Categories of Nations*, discussed the schools of sciences which had developed since their establishment a century before by "the Euclid of Spain," astronomer-mathematician Maslamah al-Majriti of Madrid – whose translated work was known to European monasteries. Muslims, Christians and Jews collaborated on the *Materia Medica*, a revision of the Eastern Arabic version of the first-century Greek physician Dioscorides' text, while throughout al-Andalus further medicinal plant properties were being discovered and disseminated.

The Andalusians excelled in astronomy, both theoretical and practical, perfecting their tables and the precision of their astronomical instruments. Trade and travel brought dependence on the celestial globe – known to Muslims from Ptolemy's *Almagest* (See *Aramco World*, May-June 1992) – and the development of the Hellenic astrolabe, which became known to Europe through numerous Muslim treatises between the ninth and 16th centuries. Toledo astronomer Al-Zarqali, who died in 1087, simplified the astrolabe; his version, known as the *saphea azarchelis*, remained in use until the 16th century. He also anticipated 17th-century German astronomer Johannes Kepler by suggesting that the orbits of the planets are not circular but oval. Impressive elements of the exhibition are one of the two oldest known celestial globes, made in about 1085, and a Saragossan astrolabe dated with the hijri year 472 (AD 1079/80).

The true origins of the controversial 11th-century bronze "Pisa Griffin," which once sat atop the cathedral in that Italian city, are unknown, but local legend calls it booty taken from conquest of the Balearic Islands east of Spain. Monumental and fearsome, the griffin stands rigid, its rounded chest and body, curled-back wings and beaked head

More than three meters (10 feet) tall, the Las Navas de Tolosa banner (right) may have been the ensign of an Almohad general. Its Qur'anic inscriptions and abstract design reflect the Almohads' austere authority. Timekeeping was the principal use of this standard astrolabe (below), made in Saragossa in 1079 or 1080 by Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Naqqash, but, because it was in effect a hand-sized model of the universe, it could also be used for any astronomical purpose, such as navigation – or astrology. The Torre de las Damas (below right) in the Partal Palace, part of the Alhambra, was a *mirador*, or viewing point, that overlooked all the landscape beyond the castle to the Albaicín hill to the north.

ROLAND & SABRINA MICHAUD



TOR EIGELAND

covered in zones of textile-like feathering, scales and bands of Kufic lettering, with a tear-drop design on the legs portraying birds and animals in a scrolling surround, reminiscent of Sassanian Persia. But the puzzling meter-tall sculpture exhibits characteristics of many other regional styles as well, and it has been variously attributed to Fatimid Egypt, Fatimid North Africa, Spain, Sicily and Iran.

Silk textiles were a large part of al-Andalus's export trade, and the iconography of two 11th-century textiles is Middle Eastern – Sassanian Persian or Mesopotamian. Conserved in startling freshness is the lining of the Reliquary of San Millán, in brilliant crimson silk with alternating friezes of confronting winged lions and paired griffins flanking the stylized "tree of life," or *hom*, in green outlined in yellow. An altar panel, called "the Witches Pallium," is an extraordinary design on crimson silk with a central frieze of half-sphinx, half-harpy composites of lions and eagles beneath arches of serpents with feline heads under attack by ibises; above and below are friezes of the *hom* between confronting peacocks.

The Almoravids vigorously developed textile production; the most prosperous and brilliant period was within the first quarter of the 12th century, with Almería taking over from Córdoba and becoming one of the first great manufacturing cities. The Almoravid silks that stand out above all others are often referred to as "the Baghdad group," but should more accurately be termed "the Baghdad imitations." Contemporary chroniclers call them "tabby" after al-'Attabiyah, a district of Baghdad where such weaving was done.

A special technique in these textiles "favored fine woven lines between two juxtaposed colors and accentuated outlines in preference to massed color – a technique Spanish weavers developed with such skill that their delicate and intricate textiles are more like a painted miniature," according to the catalogue. Their decorative style is based on large rondels, pearl-banded surrounds, and pairs of animals, face-to-face or back-to-back – lions, griffins, sphinxes, harpies, heraldic eagles, peacocks and others – Sassanian themes widely used since ancient times.

The best example is a 12th-century fragment showing "the Lion Strangler," an ancient Middle Eastern motif: A man stands in turban and richly embroidered tunic between two confronting lions, which he strangles in the crooks of his arms; his head, hands, feet and belt and the lions' heads are brocaded in gold in a unique system which joins the strands of *oropel* – tinsel, in this case thin threads of gilded leather – to produce a brocade with an unusual honeycomb effect.

These textiles were equally prized by Spanish Catholics: This particular fragment is from San Bernardo Calvo's dalmatic, or religious robe. Another fine example is a 12th-century silk chasuble, badly worn but very beautiful, from the Basilica of Saint-Sernin in Toulouse. The vestment's rondel design is

formed by the spread tails of paired, facing peacocks with a stylized *hom* between them. There are also gazelles and dogs within each roundel, all standing on a pedestal on which Kufic lettering repeats the Arabic phrase "perfect blessing."

Examples of textiles from the Almohad period are few, but of high quality. Simplicity and piety were enjoined upon them by their more austere religious beliefs, so the Almohad rulers initially had no royal textile and embroidery workshops, and prohibitions were issued against wearing luxurious silks. However, like the Almoravids, they finally succumbed to the attraction of rich textiles and resumed their production. Rondels containing animals gradually disappeared and circles were substituted with rosettes, lozenges, polygons and stars inspired by caliphal marbles, together with bands of script. Christians made use of such textiles as well, associating the fabrics with power and wealth, just as the caliphal rulers had.

Maria de Almenar's coffin cover, dating from about 1200, is of great technical simplicity and magnificent artistry, with gold rampant lions and gold Kufic writing on a blue band against the crimson silk ground. The covered headrest for Leonor of Castile's corpse, with its soft blue-and-gold bands, is totally Islamic in design: The central piece consists of silk and gold thread in overall geometric patterns, and a band of blue cursive Arabic script reads "happiness and prosperity."

An important, carefully restored historical textile, dated between 1212 and 1250 and a tour de force in the Almohad tradition, is the striking wall hanging known as the Las Navas de Tolosa Banner, now held to be a trophy won by the Castilians in some other battle. Its central eight-pointed star is enclosed in a ring and a square of stars and circles, surmounted and edged with bands of large Kufic inscriptions and Qur'anic quotations.

The Almoravid and Almohad dynasties, both born of religious movements, introduced Qur'ans on vellum, parchment and paper – the oldest surviving one, dated 1090, lent to the exhibition from Uppsala, Sweden. From Marrakesh, a superb page from a 13th-century, 20-volume Qur'an is written in beautiful, large Maghribi script in brown ink, the *sura* (chapter) heading in Western Kufic and marginals in blue and gold on peach-colored paper, probably from Játiva, a center for Spain's famed papermaking industry.

Morocco played a significant role in the history of bookbinding and influenced the craft's later development in Europe, where the first gilded bindings did not appear until the mid-15th century. An engraved, gilded and painted Qur'an binding from Rabat (1178) has its distinctive flap, or *lisan*, intact (See *Aramco World*, March-April 1987). An exquisite, small blue-and-gold frontispiece, dated 1143, from a Cordoban Qur'an manuscript on loan from Istanbul, is a fascinating example of the mystic element in Islamic geometrical design, creating a sense of movement outward at the same time, paradoxically, as inward. Also from Istanbul comes a folio from a Qur'an copied in Marrakesh early in the 13th century – part of the sura titled *Maryam*, or "Mary." The red-and-gold heading is written in Western Kufic script, with verses separated by gold and red-and-gold decorations. From the Vatican Library, the exhibition features one of the very few illustrated manuscripts to have survived from Muslim Spain, a version of the peerless love story of Bayad and Riyad.

Two immense mosque lamps, a generous loan from the Qarawiyin Mosque in Fez, document Muslim-Christian wars. Constructed around Spanish church bells taken as booty, 130 of these lamps once lit the Qarawiyin Mosque; now only 10 remain. The two lent to the exhibition are made of copper alloy; one is from the late 12th or early 13th century and the other from the North African Marinid era of the 14th century.

From the Nasrid period (1238-1492), along with a spectacular display of ceremonial arms and armor, comes the large, gold-lustered Alhambra Vase from the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, an early 14th-century storage jar of a kind first mentioned by Washington Irving. Part of a glazed mosaic tile dado, or pedestal element, from the Mexuar (council chamber) of the Alhambra "bears an interlaced design forming alternating stars of eight and 16 points" and half-stars of 10 points in a design of black, buff, green, and blue motifs on a white ground, the catalogue notes. Along the top of the panel is a script frieze repeating "Power is God's, glory is God's, dominion is God's."

Wooden ceilings, which have a long tradition in Hispano-Islamic Spain, attained their greatest splendor under the Nasrids. One of the most exquisite examples of workmanship and geometric design can be seen in the Alhambra's own Salon de Comares, its beauty accentuated by the Metropolitan Museum's lighting arrangements. The original cupola ceiling of the Partal Palace's Torre de Las Damas shows an inventive transformation from a square to an octagon and from an octagon to a 16-sided figure, culminating at the crown of the roof in a 16-pointed interlaced star, with stalactites, or *muqarnas*, forming a cupola within the octagon.

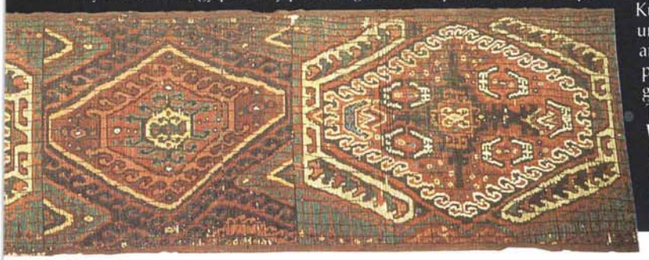
Marquetry, or *taracea* inlay work, was used for decoration throughout the period of Islamic Spain, from the minbars of Córdoba's Great Mosque and the Qarawiyin Mosque in Fez, to that of the Kutubiyyah in Marrakesh. The superb cabinet doors from the Palacio de los Infantes in Granada have their entire surfaces, inside and out, inlaid with silver, precious woods and green- and natural-colored bone in an intricate design of stars and wheels framed by hexagons, all within rectangular double guilloches, or twisted bands. A dazzling constellation in silver, they are a final accolade to the astonishing art of Islamic Spain.

Patricia, Countess Jellicoe is a London-based writer and lecturer on Middle and Far Eastern art, and garden history. Born in China, she has lived in Beirut, Washington, Brussels and Baghdad.

Young Bayad faints with love in a 13th-century illustration (right) from *The Tale of Bayad and Riyad*, one of the very few existing examples of the advanced and graceful miniature tradition of al-Andalus. An elaborate bookbinding (far right), its design based on the eight-pointed star, was produced in 1178, possibly in Marrakech, when al-Andalus and Morocco were jointly under Almohad rule. Cloisonné enamel inserts in five colors decorate a gilded steel Nasrid-period parade helmet (center right); the sword of King Boabdil, last Muslim ruler in Spain (below), has a carved ivory grip with silver gilt and enamel ornamentation on the pommel and quillions. The repeated inscription "Glory to our lord the sultan" in this Nasrid silk textile (below, far right) may identify it as one woven in royal workshops but for commercial sale. Far simpler in design, and 500 years older, is the Cordoba Stag (below right), a bronze fountainhead made for the Madinat al-Zahra palace under the Umayyad Caliphate.

EVENTS & EXHIBITIONS

A Kurdish Reed Screen. The textile arts and culture of the Kurds are highlighted in an exhibition built around a monumental dwelling partition woven by Kurdish pastoralists in the last century. The show features other textiles and photographs illustrating construction and use of the screen, as well as scenes of Kurdish life. Tribal identity, often expressed through textiles, remains vital to the Kurds, who live in Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Iraq and Syria. The screen, nearly 8 meters (25 feet) long and 120 centimeters (4 feet) high, was made by wrapping individual reeds with dyed wool yarns and laying them in sequence, creating the design. The wrapped reeds are then bound in pairs with cords, probably undyed goat hair. Rolled up, the screen could be transported by camel during seasonal migrations. Reed screens – a very old technology probably predating the development of kilim carpets – have almost vanished from Kurdish life due to urban migration and the settlement policies of central governments. The Textile Museum, **Washington, D.C.,** through February 15, 1993.



THE TEXTILE MUSEUM

Kurdish reed screen, three of five panels, eastern Turkey.

The Munayyer Collection of antique Palestinian and Syrian costumes is touring public libraries in New Jersey. Remaining schedule: **Montclair** public library, September 1992; **Clark** public library, October and November 1992; **Scotch Plains** public library, January and February 1993; and **Bridgewater** public library, June 1993.

Cultures at Crossroads: *Southeast Asian Selections From the Australian National Gallery.* The exhibition examines the impact of India, China and Islamic cultures on Southeast Asian textiles. Asia Society, **New York,** September 18, 1992, through January 17, 1993.

The Catholic Kings: *Maximilian I and the Beginnings of the House of Austria* explores the interaction of Austrian and Spanish art and culture at the time of the discovery of America. Artworks of the Spanish crown, with Gothic, Arab and Jewish roots, are among those displayed. Upper Castle of Ambras, **Innsbruck, Austria**, through September 20, 1992.

Textiles in Daily Life. Fabrics from Morocco, Egypt, India and Turkey are among the textiles to be discussed at the third biennial symposium of the Textile Society of America. **Seattle** Art Museum, September 24 through 26, 1992.

On the Fringes of Time: *Saudi Arabian Bedouin Weavings From the Collection of Joy May Hilden.* Collected over the past eight years, these weavings represent a cross-section of the Bedouin lifestyle in a time of transition, and encompass a wide range of techniques. Alif Gallery, **Washington, D.C.,** through September 26, 1992.

Al-Andalus: *The Art of Islamic Spain.* One of the largest collections of objects ever assembled from Islamic Spain, displayed this past spring at the Alhambra Palace (See article in this issue). Featured are artifacts from the eighth to 14th centuries. Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York,** through September 27, 1992.

Egypt's Dazzling Sun: *Amenhotep III and His World.* The golden age of Egyptian art is recalled in this exhibition of works from major collections in the US, Egypt and Europe. **Cleveland [Ohio]** Museum of Art, through September 27, 1992; Kimbell Art Museum, **Fort Worth, Texas,** October 24, 1992 through January 31, 1993; Grand Palais, **Paris,** March 2 through May 31, 1993.

The Fine Art of Islamic Calligraphy. Original works by Arab calligrapher Yahya Saifuddin Muhammad, including both oil paintings on canvas and pen-and-ink work with the traditional reed pen. **East Orange [New Jersey]** Public Library, through September 30, 1992.

Windows on the Maghrib: *Tribal and Urban Weavings of Morocco.* Carpets and textiles assembled from a broad range of collections and including every major weaving area in Morocco. The Museum for Textiles, **Toronto**, through October 1, 1992.

God, Man and Pharaoh: *The Development of the Human Image in Ancient Egypt.* This exhibition covers 3000 years of Egyptian history and features more than 200 artifacts on display. Kunsthistorisches Museum, **Vienna**, through October 4, 1992.

Lynn Davis: *Recent Photographs of Egypt.* A top New York photographer, best known for her 1986-89 series on Greenland icebergs, shifts her attention to Egypt's desertscape, using sepia and selenium toners to achieve the warmth of 19th-century photographs. **Cleveland [Ohio]** Museum of Art, through October 4, 1992.

Poignant, Picturesque and Berserk: *Northern Indian Paintings and Objects of the 17th Through the 19th Centuries.* This show highlights the unusual in Indian art, presenting works from the Moghul and Rajput courts and from British India that have immediate emotional impact. Harvard's Arthur M. Sackler Museum, **Cambridge, Massachusetts,** through October 4, 1992.

Ancient Nubia: *Egypt's Rival in Africa.* Less well-known than ancient Egypt, the Nubian kingdoms competed with Egypt for regional dominance; one of the kingdoms even conquered Egypt itself. The exhibition includes statues and inscriptions in the still-undeciphered Meroitic writing. University of Pennsylvania Museum, **Philadelphia**, October 10, 1992, through October 1993.

Yemen: *A Culture of Builders.* This photographic display from the University of Arizona takes an artistic look at the landscape, built form and ornamentation characteristic of Yemeni architecture. North Dakota State University's Memorial Union, **Fargo**, through October 10, 1992; Portland State University's White Gallery, **Portland, Oregon,** October 26 through November 3, 1992.

Rugged and Remote: *Central Asia Revisited.* The museum's Annual Rug Convention offers an opportunity for specialists to focus on post-Soviet Central Asia and assess its rugs, nomadic weavings and embroideries in their original context. Textile Museum, **Washington, D.C.,** October 16 through 18, 1992.

Arts of Empire: *Moghul Indian Painting, 16th-17th Centuries* features imperial Moghul artwork from the museum's own and other collections. Harvard University's Arthur M. Sackler Museum, **Cambridge, Massachusetts,** October 17 through December 13, 1992.

Columbus and the Medieval Maritime Tradition: *European and Islamic Perspectives.* The 19th New England Medieval Conference, marking the Columbus Quincentennial, examines the explorer in the context of the inter-penetrating worlds of Europe and Islam (See *Aramco World*, May-June 1992). Peabody Museum, **Salem, Massachusetts,** October 23 through 25, 1992.

Egyptian Reinstallation. After two years of gallery renovations, parts of the Brooklyn Museum's famed Egyptian galleries will again be opened to the public. **Brooklyn [New York]** Museum, from October 23, 1992.

Paul Klee. Works painted during the Swiss artist's pivotal visit to Tunisia in 1914 (See *Aramco World*, May-June 1991) are featured among some 350 paintings spanning his entire artistic development. Palazzo Forti, **Verona, Italy**, through October 30, 1992.

Classical Near Eastern and Persian Silk Rugs. The Art of Asia galleries feature two special displays of Near Eastern rugs, one of 19th- and 20th-century Persian silk carpets and the other of classical Persian rugs from earlier periods. **Cincinnati [Ohio]** Art Museum, through November 1, 1992.

Art of the Persian Courts: *Selections From the Art and History Trust.* This survey focuses on the arts of the book, and features about 125 manuscripts, paintings, calligraphy and other art works from a celebrated private collection in Liechtenstein. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, **Los Angeles,** November 5, 1992, through January 24, 1993.

Teaching About the Arab World and Islam. A series of seminars for educators around the country through the fall of 1992, conducted by AWAIR, Arab World And Islamic Resources and School Services of Berkeley, California. Upcoming: University of **Louisville, Kentucky,** November 14, 1992; others to be scheduled.

Islamic Art and Patronage: *Selections From Kuwait.* More than 100 masterworks of Islamic art – ceramics, glass, metalwork, stonework, wood, illuminated manuscripts, textiles, and rugs -- from the celebrated Al-Sabah collection. Last stop on the exhibition's North American tour. **New Orleans [Louisiana]** Museum of Art, November 15, 1992, through January 10, 1993.

Arts of Moghul India. Twenty paintings and six objects from the late 16th to the 18th century provide a good introduction to India's Moghul empire. Smithsonian's Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, **Washington, D.C.,** through December 6, 1992.

Islam and China. Drawing on Harvard University's rich collections of Islamic and Asian art, this exhibition compares and contrasts Islamic approaches to artistic design with those of China. Arthur M. Sackler Museum, **Cambridge, Massachusetts,** December 19, 1992, through February 14, 1993.

Bukhara: *Traditional Weavings From Pre-Soviet Central Asia.* Boldly patterned, turn-of-the-century hangings, garments and carpets crafted in or around the Silk-Route city of Bukhara, from the museum's own collection. The Textile Museum, **Washington, D.C.,** through February 15, 1993.

Turkish Traditional Art Today. This display of contemporary folk art reflects the cornerstones of Turkish culture: mosque, bazaar and the land. Museum of International Folk Art, **Santa Fe, New Mexico**, through June 30, 1993.

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.

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TORI EIGELAND