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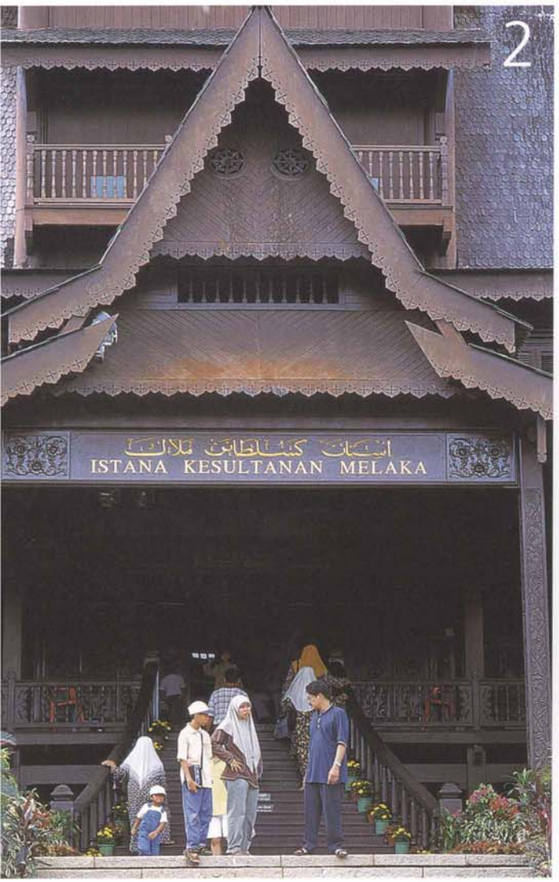

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Beyond the Monsoon

By Douglas Bullis
Photographed by Kevin Bubriski

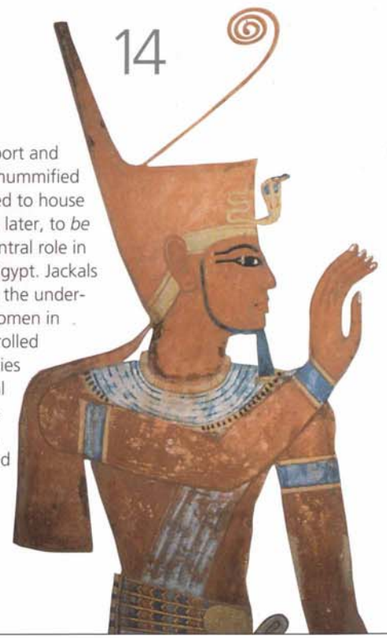
Melaka, now the capital of the Malaysian state of the same name, rose as a Muslim kingdom early in the 15th century. Thanks to its location and its rulers' policies, it became a center for traders from as far away as China, Arabia and Europe, and became as well a regional melting-pot of cultures. Its glory is recalled in Malay epic literature, architecture and Muslim influences on the crucial Malaysian social codes known as *adat*.

Living With the Animals

14

By Joseph J. Hobbs

Kept as pets, hunted for sport and food, offered in sacrifice, mummified by the millions, and believed to house the spirits of the gods—or, later, to *be* gods—animals played a central role in the life, beliefs and art of Egypt. Jackals escorted the dead through the underworld; hippos protected women in childbirth; a scarab beetle rolled the sun across the sky; deities were portrayed with animal heads; and detailed scenes of the Nile's abundant fish, fowl and wildlife were carved on tomb and temple walls and painted on papyrus. Perhaps no other culture has so intertwined itself with the animal kingdom.



The Musical Pulse of Tunisia

By Thorne Anderson

Even its aficionados say that *maluf* music takes patience to appreciate—let alone play, write down, or compose. But it's deeply embedded in Tunisian culture and under the skin of every Tunisian, harking back to rhythms more than half a millennium old that have been preserved and continually reinvented as a living emblem of national identity.

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34 The Arabs of Honduras

By Larry Luxner

One of the largest populations of immigrant Arabs in the Americas resides along the north coast of Honduras. From its hardscrabble beginnings more than a century ago, this community has in recent decades provided its adopted country with leaders in education, industry and politics—including Honduras's president, Carlos Flores Facussé.

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A Gift of Ghazals

By Louis Werner
Photographed by Kevin Bubriski

Deeply rooted in Kashmir and the Urdu language, teaching and writing in English in the United States, Agha Shahid Ali lives an exile's twofold life. He has been recognized as a unique and passionate voice in modern poetry, and is also championing the grafting into English of the *ghazal*, a poetic form so beloved in Urdu that it inspired competitive, all-night poetry symposia in the Mughal courts of the 18th and 19th centuries.

Cover:

A workshop at Tunisia's national university helps preserve instrument-building crafts essential to the continued vitality of *maluf*, the country's deepest-rooted musical form. The word *maluf* means "familiar" or "customary," and the form is a close but uniquely Tunisian cousin of other types of Arab classical music. There were once hundreds of elaborate *maluf* compositions, though only 13 survive today. Photo by Thorne Anderson.

Back Cover:

Hieroglyphic writing is full of animals. Some appear as pictograms, representing the animal itself in a single symbol; others are rebus-like phonograms representing sounds, much as we might draw a cat and a log to convey the word "catalog." Photo by Joseph J. Hobbs.

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Director Public Affairs
Sami H. Al Mukhaizeem

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Robert Arndt

Assistant Editor
Dick Doughty

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Herring Design

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WRITTEN BY DOUGLAS BULLIS

PHOTOGRAPHED BY KEVIN BUBRISKI

beyond the monsoon

MALAYSIA IS ONE OF THE GREAT CONFLUENCES OF HISTORY. THE INDIAN OCEAN WASHES ONE SHORE; THE SOUTH CHINA SEA THE OTHER. TO THE SOUTHWEST, BEYOND SUMATRA, LIES AFRICA. CONQUERORS, PILGRIMS, TRADERS, ARTISTS, INDUSTRIALISTS—AND NOW SHOPPERS—HAVE ALL PASSED THROUGH THE NARROW MALACCA STRAIT THAT CONNECTS THE WATERS OF INDIA AND ASIA.

SO MANY VISITORS, OVER SUCH A LONG TIME, HAVE GIVEN MODERN MALAYSIA A LONG BLEND OF CULTURES. THE HISTORY OF SOUTHEAST ASIA HAS BEEN SHAPED BY FOUR GREAT EPOCHS. THE HINDU-BUDDHIST ERA, FROM THE SEVENTH TO THE 13TH CENTURY, WAS CENTERED IN SUMATRA AND PRODUCED TEMPLES AND MONUMENTS STILL RENOWNED TODAY: ANGKOR, PAGAN, SUKHOTAI AND BOROBUDUR ARE THE BEST KNOWN. COLONIZATION BEGAN WITH THE ARRIVAL OF THE PORTUGUESE IN 1509, AND DURING THE FOLLOWING FOUR AND A HALF CENTURIES THE REGION PASSED THROUGH PORTUGUESE, DUTCH, BRITISH AND JAPANESE OVERLORDSHIP. INDEPENDENCE CAME IN 1957, USHERING IN A NEW ERA IN THE REGION'S HISTORY.

BUT BEFORE THE PORTUGUESE, THERE WAS A BRIEF BUT VASTLY INFLUENTIAL TIME: A MALAYO-ISLAMIC PERIOD THAT BEGAN WITH THE CONVERSION OF A HINDU PRINCE NAMED PARAMESWARA IN A PLACE HE CALLED "MELAKA."

From 1414 until the Portuguese arrived, the sultans of Melaka built and ruled Southeast Asia's wealthiest commercial empire, and reshaped the social and religious covenants that give Malaysian life so much of its character today.

The economy of all of Southeast Asia has always been dominated by inland agriculture, which requires little capital but abundant land. Nearly everyone had a property to protect, however modest. From this fact developed customs associated with property rights, judicial authority and political fealty. These are collectively known in Malay as *adat*. Along the coasts were known other maritime peoples, from Gujarat, Malabar and Coromandel in India; Acheh and elsewhere in Sumatra; Shahru'n-nuwi (an early name for Thailand); and China.

Although the Malaysian coastal villages strengthened their economic hand with trade, they were too small to assert themselves politically. From the seventh century, the region came under the influence of the Hindu-Buddhist empire called Srivijaya. By the 12th century, Srivijaya controlled all of Sumatra, the Malay Peninsula, the greater part of Java and many other islands in the region. There was trade with China and at least some awareness of the empires to the West: Roman coins were common dockside currency in Sri Lanka and Cochin in the fifth century. Since this trade embraced such extremely profitable luxuries as camphor, aloes, cloves, sandalwood, nutmeg, cardamom, ivory, gold and tin, the maharaja of Srivijaya was as well-to-do as his counterparts in India.

In the 14th century another powerful state, Sukhotai, emerged in what is now Thailand. Its aggressive politics might have turned the Malay Peninsula onto a different historical path but for the fact that, at about the same time, the dhows of Arabia began to arrive in the Peninsula in greater numbers. With them came Islam. The Muslim traders did not have far to travel, for Marco Polo described Islam as firmly established at Perlak on the north coast of Sumatra in 1292, and when Ibn Battuta visited Pasai in 1345, he considered its inhabitants devout Muslims.

Then, within a single century, a fishing village at the narrowest point of the Malacca Straits rose to become the most powerful state in Southeast Asia: the Melaka Sultanate.

Of Melaka's founding, this much seems certain: A Sumatran prince named Parameswara landed one day at a village part way up the west side of the Malay Peninsula. He was fleeing corsairs loyal to the Majapahit Empire of Sumatra. Majapahit was an empire in decline, faced with trade rivalries with Siam, squabbles over the throne and

the malay melting pot

Some anthropologists believe the original home of the Malays was in the northwestern part of Yunnan, China. Indeed, in Chinese chronicles of the Tang period, around AD 900, a people called Jakun appear, famed as mariners. According to this theory, the Jakun reached coastal Borneo and intermarried with locals. Because they traversed the sea but not the rivers, they came to be called *Orang Selat* or "People of the Straits." Later, they expanded into Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula.

What is certain is that today's Malaysians have been influenced by the cultures of the Siamese, Javanese, Sumatrans, and Indians. Until the 15th century, most Malays were Hindus. Two thousand years of trade between the Malay Peninsula and India made for considerable intermarriage, most notably with Tamils from the Coromandel Coast and Gujaratis from far up India's west coast. In the northern Malaysian states of Perlis and Kedah, intermarriage with Thais was common. Melakan royalty might have had a more provincial character had it not been for the examples set by Sultan Muhammad Shah's marriage to a Tamil woman and Sultan Mansur Shah's Javanese, Chinese, and Siamese wives—the latter of whom bore two future sultans of Pahang state.

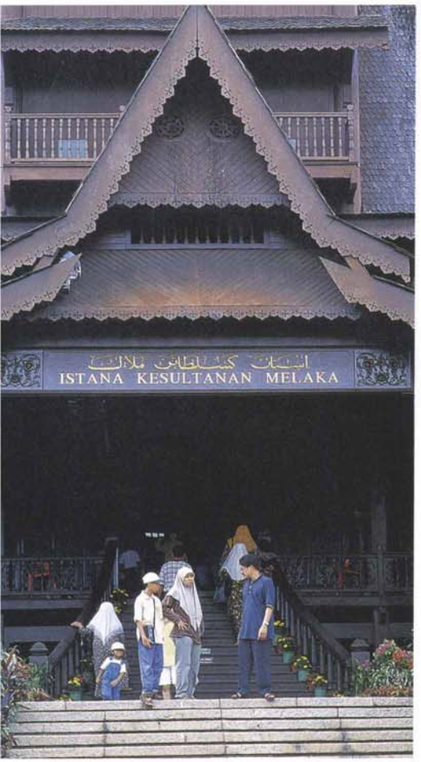
Previous spread, top left: **The *istana*, or palace, of the sultans of Melaka has been reconstructed as a historic site.** Top right: **A Malay boy wearing the traditional *songkok* hat.** Bottom left: **A memorial to the sultans of Melaka quotes a well-known statement by the Portuguese chronicler Tomé Pires on the city's strategic importance.** Bottom: **A branch of a *melaka* tree (*Phyllanthus emblica*), valued for its various medicinal properties, and said to be the origin of the city's name.**

Below and inset, opposite: **Mosques in Melaka meld elements of Malay and Chinese architecture with Islamic influences, as seen in the "pagoda" minarets of the Kampung Keling Mosque (below) and the Kampung Hulu Mosque.** Right: **The face of a young girl is framed by the traditional *tudung*.**

"THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT MELAKA IS OF SUCH IMPORTANCE AND PROFIT THAT ... IT HAS NO EQUAL IN THE WORLD."

—TOMÉ PIRES, CA. 1509

Opposite: **The *istana* or palace of Sultan Mansur Shah, built in 1465, displays seven gables in the indigenous *minang-kabau,* or water-buffalo–horn, shape. The swooping roofs were shingled in copper and zinc.** Above and below: **The modern reconstruction of the *istana* is now Melaka's Culture Museum, and its 17 rooms are filled with historical objects.**



the malay

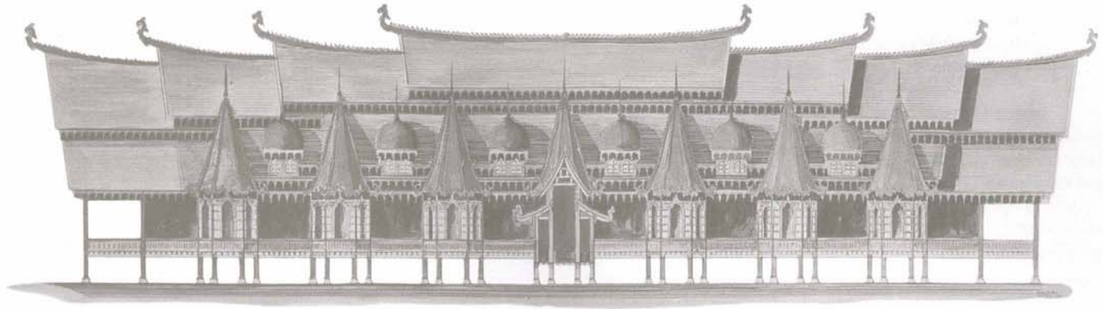
literary masterwork

The *Sejarah Malayu*, or *Malay Annals*, is the most distinctive work of Malay prose. It is a classic of Asian epic literature, yet one of the least known.

Although the *Sejarah Melayu* mentions only one specific date, the events it describes have been verified by other sources. It relates the founding of the Melakan sultanate and the course of its history over 600 years. Rather little space is devoted to the rest of the world. Royal ancestors, court life, and the loyal dignitaries through whom the sultans governed are floridly praised, and enemies are just as floridly vilified.

According to its own text, the *Sejarah Malayu* was commissioned by Sultan 'Ala'-ud-din Ri'ayat Shah of Johore on Sunday, May 13, 1612 in Pasai, Sumatra; its self-proclaimed author was Tun Seri Lanang—though some scholars believe he may have been not an author but an editor who reworked and built upon previous writings by others. The sultan was, at that moment, a prisoner of war: The sultan of Johore—successor of the Melakan sultans—was under attack by both the Portuguese and the Achehnese peoples at the far western tip of Sumatra. The sultan's capital in Johore city, south of Melaka, had been sacked many times and the court was forced from one refuge to another along the Strait. In such circumstances, some believe, the *Sejarah Melayu* represented the Johore sultan's attempt to salve the sores of the present with the balm of past glory.

Today, some of its passages are the only evidence historians have to reconstruct Melaka's activities as a pre-colonial political power.



PARAMESWARA, A PRINCE FROM SUMATRA, FOUNDED THE KINGDOM OF MELAKA IN 1402. WITHIN 50 YEARS, ITS LOCATION AND HIS POLICIES HAD MADE IT A HUB OF REGIONAL TRADE AND AN ESSENTIAL PORT OF CALL FOR MERCHANTS FROM INDIA, CHINA AND ARABIA.

secessionist states. When those corsairs let Parameswara slip away, they unwittingly sealed their masters' doom.

Parameswara's choice of location is attributed to a charming, possibly apocryphal tale that while he was resting on the shore his dog attacked a *kantjil*, or mouse deer, which fiercely returned the attack and gave the dog a most unexpected drubbing. Parameswara decided that this must be a propitious spot, where even the tiny mouse deer was fearless. He called the place Melaka, after the melaka tree (*Phyllathus emblica*) under which he was resting. Truth or none, the mouse deer today is a symbol of Melaka: Two of them flank the tree on the state flag, and a popular compact auto is named for it, as is one of the country's leading publishing houses.

More solid economic facts justified Parameswara in founding the kingdom of Melaka in approximately 1402. He knew that Melaka was at the narrowest point of the Strait, and he was not slow to see the political implications of controlling passing trade. More critically, he appears to have been the first non-mariner in Malaysia to have realized that a warehousing and transshipment center in the relatively placid waters of the Malacca Strait would be an attractive alternative to the facilities of the increasingly unreliable Majapahit Empire. His landing- and warehousing-fee policies quickly made Melaka the most attractive transshipment spot in this part of the world. Traders from Java, Sumatra, Borneo, the Celebes, the Moluccas, Burma, Siam, Cambodia, India, Arabia and China soon flocked to the new port.

Perhaps realizing that a change in economic practices would be reinforced by a change in leadership practices, Parameswara changed Malay court customs to a more hierarchical system. He also reshaped the administrative hierarchy along functional rather than hereditary lines, resulting in a government based more on economic purpose and less on personal fealty. Trade and commerce rapidly developed.

Parameswara was also astute enough to see that the Sukhotai kingdom to the north was no less ruthless than the Majapahits. Thus he promptly established relations with the one power the Sukhotai feared: China. In 1403 the first official Chinese trade envoy visited Melaka, and in 1409 Admiral Cheng Ho—a Muslim—arrived in Melaka with the Chinese fleet on the first of his seven voyages to the Indian Ocean. In 1411 Parameswara himself traveled with an entourage of 540 people to the court of the Ming Emperor Yung Lo.

Both the *Sejarah Malayu* and the Chinese *Imperial Chronicles* have it that Melaka's wealth was well known in the Chinese court during the reign of Yung Lo, who ascended the throne in 1403, just as the Melaka Sultanate was born. It was a time when China had grown isolated and weak because of Mongol incursions from the north. The overland Silk Road had succumbed to banditry; exports to Arabia and the Levant had withered. The solution, as the Chinese saw it, was trade by sea, and whom better to ally with than this promising new entity named Melaka?

The first official Chinese trade envoy arrived in Melaka in the same year Yung Lo took power. Six years later, Admiral Cheng Ho sailed into Melaka harbor leading what the chronicles, perhaps wishfully, record as 317 ships crewed by 37,000 officers and men. Between then and 1433, Cheng Ho made Melaka his headquarters for expeditions to Ceylon, the Maldives, Jiddah and Zanzibar, where his fleet came almost within sight of Portuguese explorers, who were likewise seeking a maritime alternative to the caravan route, but from the West. Such a massive fleet as Cheng Ho's could hardly fail to impress, and today in the town of Melaka there is a much-visited monument to the Chinese admiral.

The *Sejarah Melayu* also relates that during the rule of Sultan Mansur Shah (1456–1477), the emperor of China sent envoys bearing a shipload of needles. The letter accompanying this curious present said, "We hear that the raja of Melaka is a great raja and we desire accordingly to be on terms of amity with him. Certainly, however, there are no rajas in this world greater than ourselves, and there is no one

Kampong Mortem, a typical Malay village preserved in the heart of Melaka, is the site of Villa Sentosa (right and far right)**, a home converted into a private museum of Malay costumes, embroidery and furniture.** Lower right: **Colorful shutters adorn a house in Kampong Mortem.** Below: **One of the lavish rooms within the palace of the sultans.** Opposite: **The *minbar,* or pulpit, of the Tranquerah Mosque.**

"I CANNOT CONCEIVE ANY PLACE BETTER THAN MELAKA TO SOOTHE AND TRANQUILIZE THE MIND WHEN IT HAS BEEN FRETTED AND WORN...."

—R. J. LOGAN, 1845

who can count the number of our subjects. We have therefore asked for one needle from each house in our realm, and these are the needles with which the ship we send to Melaka is laden."

Mansur Shah ordered the emperor's ship cleared of the needles and filled with sago pellets, each the size of a sesame seed. His own letter to the emperor followed similar lines, and the emperor is said to have taken the riposte in good humor, saying "Great indeed must be this raja of Melaka! The multitude of his subjects must be as the multitude of our own. It would be well that I marry him to my daughter!"

And so it was that Princess Hang Li Po was married to the sultan of Melaka, beginning a decades-long political and mercantile alliance with China.

Islam's progress through Southeast Asia was not the sudden sweep that it had been across the Middle East and North Africa. Mostly it involved the gradual embrace of several ideas lateened over from the far side of the Arabian Peninsula. Paramount was the monotheism at the heart of the religion, a concept more sweeping, easier to understand and more satisfying than the notion of uncountable—and unaccountable—deities symbolizing random events, objects and emotions.

Hardly less important was the effect that *shari'a*—Islamic law—and the Qur'an had on Muslims' personal behavior. Where Muslim traders went, the religion grew. The main reason was that Islam's stress on collective prayer and reading the Qur'an and the Hadith (the recorded statements and practices of the Prophet) encouraged an ethos of collective responsibility that no other trading community possessed. In time, local converts became an economic nucleus influential enough to decide such matters as the just price for the transport or warehousing of goods.

Though it is not often regarded as such, honesty is an efficiency-enhancer. Muslim traders were more efficient, and could therefore offer the best prices. Trade conducted by men who lived according to the *shari'a* was more productive than trade organized by guesswork or opportunism.

Furthermore, the Muslim traders tended to be investors rather than profiteers. They were known for turning part of their profits into warehouses and docks, and for their encouragement of local shipbuilding and ship maintenance. This produced a broad prosperity that gave rise to a larger and more well-to-do middle class whose discretionary wealth in turn created a demand for luxuries. In modern terms, they created a "virtuous circle" and the first true commonwealth, in the literal sense of the word.

No less important was aristocratic alliance by marriage. As Javanese, Sumatran, Malay and other aristocracies from non-Muslim regions entered into diplomatic marriages with Muslim families, the non-Muslim spouses embraced the new Islamic faith, and everyday people eventually followed.

Malaysian Muslims have a less verifiable but certainly more colorful tale of their embrace of Islam in the *Sejarah Malayu*. The story is worth quoting:

> One night the king [Raja Tengah] had a dream that he saw clearly

our Prophet Muhammad, who said to Raja Tengah, "Recite: 'I testify that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is the Apostle of God.'" Raja Tengah repeated word for word what the Prophet had told him, whereupon the Prophet said to him, "Your name is Muhammad. Tomorrow, when it is the time for the afternoon prayer, there will come a ship from Jiddah; from that ship a man will land on this shore of Melaka. See to it that you do whatsoever he tells you." Raja Tengah answered "Very well," whereupon the Prophet disappeared.

When day broke, Raja Tengah awoke from sleep and saw that he had been circumcised. He kept continually reciting [in Arabic], "I testify that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is His Prophet." This astonished all the women attendants of the palace. The king's ministers said, "Is this raja of ours possessed by the devil, or is he mad?"

When it was the hour of *'asr* [afternoon prayer], a ship arrived from Jiddah and proceeded to anchor. And from this ship a man from Makkah disembarked, Sayyid 'Abd al-'Aziz by name, and prayed on the shore. There was a general scramble to see him, the people crowding together. There was such a disturbance that the noise of it came to the ears of the raja inside the royal apartments of the palace. Straightaway the raja set forth on his elephant, escorted by his chiefs, and he perceived that the Makkan's behavior in saying his prayers was exactly as in his dream. He said to the *bendahara* [prime minister] and the chiefs, "That is exactly how it happened in my dream!"

When Sayyid 'Abd al-'Aziz had finished his prayers, the raja made his elephant kneel and he mounted the Makkan on the elephant and took him to the palace. The *bendahara* and the chiefs embraced Islam. The raja received instruction in the Faith from Sayyid 'Abd al-'Aziz, and he took the name Sultan Muhammad Shah.

The conversion of Raja Tangah is said to have occurred in 1424. Gradually, in a confluence of religion and economics, the faces of Arab, Gujarati, Bengali, Malabar, Coromandel, Sumatran, Javanese and Chinese traders became familiar sights in Melaka. With hindsight, we can see how Melaka's three great sultans, Iskandar Shah, Muhammad Shah, and Mansur Shah, who ruled, collectively, from 1402 to 1477, accomplished the vast changes that characterized their reigns. First they changed the economy. Then they changed the laws. Then they changed people's ideas. They redefined Malayan life and culture so thoroughly that the effects survive to this day.

When Islam arrived in Melaka, it encountered a people with well-established behavioral codes of their own—a system called *adat*. From the earliest written accounts, three traits stand out as Malay hallmarks: *muafakat, mesyuarat*, and *gotong royong*, respectively translated as "consultation," "consensus" and "joint responsibility and cooperation." These are the foundations of Malay culture even today.

Alongside these, three loyalties also were—and still are—vital to the Malay people: loyalty to ruler, to religion, and to *adat*. In their respect for law's duty to society and society's reciprocal duty to law, Muslim and Malay had much in common.

Before the time of the sultans, an *adat perpateh* or community-law system, based on matriarchal clan lineage, existed in much of old Malaya. Land passed from mother to daughter. The clan and the community were responsible for the errors of an individual, and restitution for wrongs was made to the aggrieved clan.

Islam inspired the Melaka sultans to turn the *adat perpateh* into what they called *adat temenggong*, transferring responsibility from the collective to the individual. *Adat temenggong* replaced unwritten and mutable local ways with a codified legal architecture that rested on three pillars: fundamental order, clear process, and appropriateness to situation.

The change strengthened the nobility, because inheritance switched to the male line and sultans could thus designate their heirs. Economic development was fostered because individuals became responsible for the consequences of their own decisions. Fines for offenses were channeled to the coffers of the sultan rather than directly to offended families.

Less momentous, perhaps, but no less significant to the culture of Melaka was the way the Melakan sultans perfected the local *minangkabau* ("water-buffalo–horn") architectural style, with its upswept curved roofs. The *Sejarah Malayu* tells us that Sultan Mansur Shah, flush with the riches of mercantile success, wished to reside in an *istana*, or palace, like none ever seen before. His builders duly constructed a most imposing royal edifice: Its seven-gabled roof surmounted a sprawling floor plan divided into 17 chambers. The façade spread along as many colonnades, in which each column was so large a man could not encircle it with his arms. The building was profusely decorated with gilt spires and copper and zinc shingles in geometric patterns; the interior was illuminated using wooden wall panels jigsawed into elaborate arabesques, through which light and air streamed. It was crowned with a spire of red glass, and all 40 of its doors were gilded.

Sultan Mansur Shah and his family had barely moved in when a fire

THE CONVERSION OF PARAMESWARA'S SON TO ISLAM IS SAID TO HAVE BEEN INSPIRED BY A DREAM FORETELLING THE ARRIVAL OF A MAKKAN MUSLIM, WHO INSTRUCTED THE KING AND HIS COURT IN THE FAITH.

Upper: **Aboard a replica of the 16th-century ship *Flora de la Mar* at Melaka's Maritime Museum, a replica Portuguese sailor prepares to fire a cannon.** Far left: **Traditional Malay *kris penkaka* knives for sale at an antique shop. The kris served not only as a weapon, but has great social and symbolic importance.** Left: **Masjid Negeri, the State Mosque of Melaka.**

Melaka in History

- 1400
  - 1402 — Parameswara founds Melaka.
  - 1409 — Admiral Cheng Ho of China arrives.
  - 1414
  - 1424 — Parameswara embraces Islam and changes his name to Raja Iskandar Shah.
  - 1446
  - 1456 — Raja Iskandar Shah's son becomes sultan and takes the title Muhammad Shah.
  - 1458
- 1500
  - 1509 — Sultan Muzaffar Shah declares Islam the state religion.
  - 1511 — Tun Perak becomes *bendahara* (prime minister). Serving under four sultans, he wields great influence during Melaka's rise to power.
- 1600
  - 1606 — Sultan Mansur Shah revises the Melakan legal system and builds and re-builds the *istana*, Melaka's greatest architectural work.
  - 1641 — Portuguese trading expedition arrives and 20 Portuguese are taken prisoner.
- 1700
  - Alfonso d'Albuquerque's fleet attacks and Melaka falls under colonial rule.
  - Allied with the sultan of Johore, the Dutch unsuccessfully besiege Melaka.
  - Melaka falls following a second Dutch siege.
  - The British East India Company takes over Melaka.
  - 1795 — Melaka is restored to Dutch rule.
- 1800
  - 1818
  - 1819 — Sultan Husin Mohamad Shah relinquishes Singapore to the British East India Company.
  - 1824
  - 1826 — The Anglo-Dutch Treaty gives Bencoolen in Sumatra to the Dutch and Melaka to the English.
  - Melaka, Penang, and Singapore are incorporated as the Straits Settlements of the British administration in India.
- 1900
  - Melaka is occupied by Japan.
  - 1942–1945
  - 1957 — Malaysia achieves independence from Britain on August 31.
  - The Petronas Twin Towers, the two tallest buildings in the world, are dedicated in Kuala Lumpur.
  - 1998
- 2000

broke out and destroyed the *istana* completely. Yet so spirited was Melakan trade that within a month, a new *istana* was under construction that surpassed the first.

Many admiring things have been said of the sultan's palace—the rhythm of its roofs, the geometry of its proportions, its restraint in decoration serving restraint in shape. Yet on careful examination, Mansur Shah's *istana* is composed of but two simple visual elements: one straight line and one complex curve. Alone they accomplish nothing; together, they are an incomparable mix of strength and beauty.

The same could be said of Islam's broader effects on Malaysia. "The Melaka Sultanate established a set of traditions which crystallized into what may be justifiably termed the 'political culture' of the Peninsular Malays," says Khoo Kay Kim, professor of Malaysian history at the University of Malaya in Kuala umpur."Colonial administration introduced some significant changes, but there has been no total break with the 15th century, even today."

Despite their alliance with the Chinese, the Melaka sultans still had to contend with the Thais, their powerful neighbors to the north. After the Cheng Ho era ended in 1433, the Thais attempted to invade Melaka by land in 1445 and by sea 11 years later. The second invasion was repulsed using a Malay quality called *cherdek* ("cleverness") that the *Sejarah Malayu* extols:

> Tun 'Umar was sent by the *bendahara* Paduka Raja to reconnoiter. He set forth with a single boat, now edging forward, now coming back. When he encountered the Siamese fleet, he straightaway attacked and sank two or three Siamese ships, then shot off to their flank. Then he returned and attacked other ships, again sinking two or three, after which he withdrew. The Siamese were astounded.
>
> When night fell Awi Dichu [the Thai commander] advanced. *Bendahara* Paduka Raja ordered firebrands to be fastened to mangrove and other trees growing along the shore. When the Siamese saw these lights, so many that no man could number them, their war-chiefs said, "What a vast fleet these Malays must have, no man can count their ships! If they attack us, how shall we fare? Even one of their ships just now was more than a match for us!" And Awi Dichu replied, "You are right, let us return home!"

Modern Melaka continues to be a prosperous trading center, providing modern transportation (left) **and markets** (opposite) **full of goods both domestic and foreign.**

Muafakat, *mesyuarat* and *gotong royong*—consultation, consensus, and joint responsibility and cooperation—are the foundations of *adat*, the ancient Malay code of behavior. With the advent of Islam, however, the principle of individual responsibility came to the fore.

Sultan Mansur took advantage of the breathing room he had won and gradually, through diplomacy, established good relations between the Thais and Melaka.

Would that all Melaka's rivals could have been won over by bluff followed by an olive branch! Unfortunately, a greater threat was to come from the West.

In September, 1509 European contact with the Malay Peninsula was established when a Portuguese squadron sailed into Melaka. They were considered oddities at first: The Malays called them *Bengali putih*, meaning "white Bengalis."

Melaka's Indian merchants are said to have pressured the sultan into attacking the Portuguese both because the merchants feared trade rivals and because word had reached them that the Portuguese were cruel to Muslims. The small squadron was duly driven off, leaving behind 20 Portuguese prisoners. (Curiously, one of the men who escaped was Ferdinand Magellan, whose fleet was later to become the first to circumnavigate the world.)

On July 1, 1511 Alphonso d'Albuquerque arrived with 19 ships and 800 Portuguese and 600 Malabar seamen. He demanded the return of the prisoners, with compensation. The sultan erected stockades decked with war flags and made a show of his fleet of river-boats. Albuquerque responded with cannon, destroying the royal *istana* and setting fires in much of the town.

The sultan surrendered the prisoners and agreed to some of the demands for compensation, but Albuquerque knew that "he who is lord of Melaka has his hand on the throat of Venice"—then the dominant European power in trade with Asia. Albuquerque was after more than the prisoners: He wanted the port.

Over the next 130 years, Portuguese policy in Melaka was one of maritime trade control, not one of religious conversion, and the Portuguese showed little interest in expanding either their economic or religious influence inland. The Portuguese *modus operandi* was to bombard a principal port into submission, build a fort, and use fort and fleet to control regional trade. Melaka was never occupied by more than 600 Portuguese at any one time.

In 1641, the Dutch captured Melaka after an eight-month siege—the Dutch legacy in today's Melaka includes the Stadthuys ("Government House") and Dutch Square—but to them Melaka was never much more than a military outpost.

In 1824, Melaka became a possession of the British East India Company, but Penang and Singapore eclipsed Melaka as the main entrepôt on the Strait. The shallow waters that had made waves so gentle in the days of shallow-draft dhows and junks presented an impossible dredging problem when deep-draft iron ships came along.

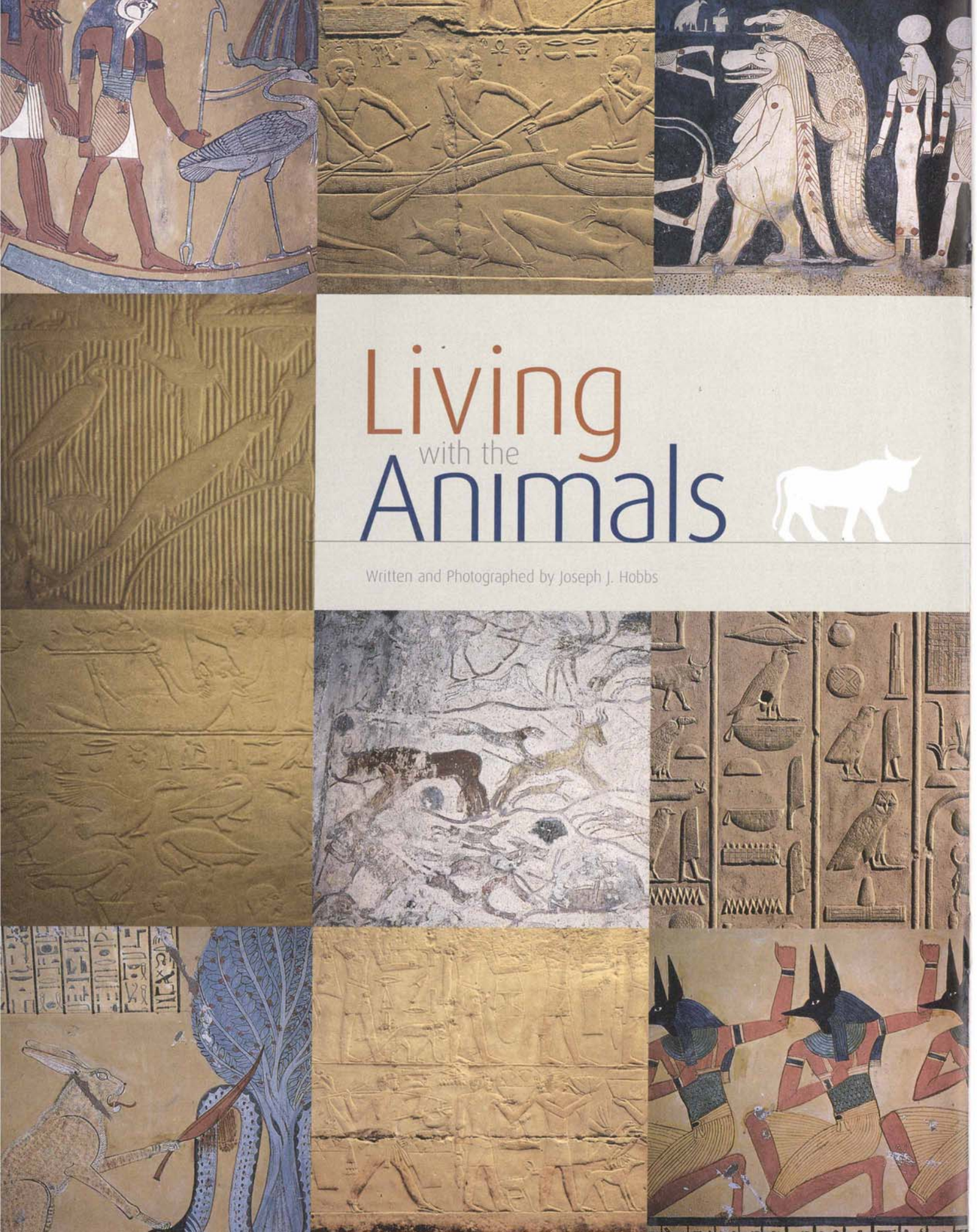
Then, in the middle of the 19th century, another minor village, this one at the confluence of the Gombek and Kelang Rivers, grew almost as swiftly as Melaka had in its heyday to become the great metropolis and present national capital, Kuala Lumpur. More recently, Malaysia has become one of the world's leading "value-adding" economies, specializing in electronics assembly and garment making. Sea trade is still an economic mainstay, though today it is managed more efficiently at the state-of-the-art container entrepôt at Port Kelang, only some 100 kilometers (60 mi) from Melaka, where the Kelang River's flow into the sea has scoured a channel deep enough to dredge into a harbor.

Melaka's great significance was not in its military prowess or its prosperity and riches, now faded. Rather, its glory was in the flowering of Malay culture and literature, and the creation of the first true national identity of the Malay peoples. Melaka was a remarkably cosmopolitan society, and the influence of its golden days has endured more than 500 years.

Douglas Bullis, a specialist in the economic development of Asia, divides his time between Southeast Asia and India. His 1996 book *A Soul You Can See*, published in Singapore by Times Editions, analyzed the modern transformation of Sarawak, in Borneo, from a largely agrarian economy into a regional power, much as Melaka was transformed by Parameswara. He can be contacted at atelierbks@hotmail.com. **Kevin Bubriski** (bubriski@sover.net) is a frequent contributor to *Saudi Aramco World*.

Related articles have appeared in these past issues of *Aramco World* and *Saudi Aramco World*:

Minangkabau: July/August 1991



Living with the Animals

Written and Photographed by Joseph J. Hobbs

Human torsos with the heads of hawks, ibises and jackals. A beetle pushing the sun across the sky. An alphabet that looks like a menagerie. In the legacy that has come down to us through painted papyri and carved monument walls, one thing stands out about the early Egyptian world: It was full of animals.

We know this from more than depictions. Not far from Cairo, beneath the sands of the Saqqara necropolis, underground tomb galleries run for kilometers and contain no less than several *million* animal mummies. Swaddled for eternity are an estimated four million ibises, as well as uncounted hawks, baboons, cats and more, and in other necropolises there are as many as a dozen more species. Also at Saqqara is the Serapeum, a vaulted underground avenue flanked by massive granite sarcophagi for the mummified remains of sacred cattle. And travelers' journals tell of priests propitiating sacred crocodiles with food and bedecking them with jewels.

In the fifth century BC, the Greek historian Herodotus wrote, "The Egyptians have animals living with them, while all other men pass their lives separate from animals." Indeed, no other culture seems to have incorporated the natural world so richly into its writing, religions and art. But why did animals mean so much to the Egyptians of thousands of years ago, and what can we learn about the natural environment that humans and animals shared in those times?

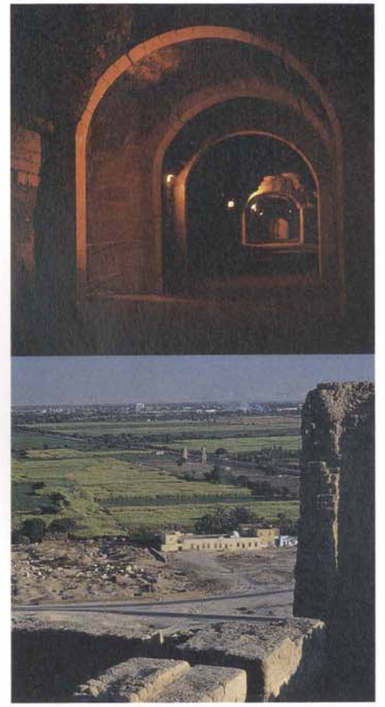
From the decorated tombs of Saqqara, Bani Hassan and Luxor to the pages of *The Book of the Dead* and the galleries of world museums, the records show that, as one might expect, their natural setting profoundly influenced how Egyptians perceived both this world and the hereafter. But more surprisingly, they also show that—far from being dominated by nature—the Egyptians put their considerable energies to work reshaping and taming it in ways that seem quite familiar to us today.

A razor-thin, fertile river valley bisecting a vast and uncompromising desert was the land that the ancient Egyptians knew, but it had not always been so. The hyper-arid climate of today settled in around the turn of the third millennium BC; before that, conditions had been more like those of modern Kenya. The Mesolithic hunters and early food-producers of 10,000 to 5000 BC, as well as the Neolithic food producers who succeeded them, inhabited a savanna in what are now the Eastern and Western Deserts.

We know this because Neolithic artists depicted themselves in rock-carvings and rock-paintings as hunters armed with large, C-shaped bows: In the east, they hunted the African elephant; in the west, the giraffe. The annual rainfall needed to sustain giraffes—about 500 millimeters (20") a year—may have fallen in the Gilf Kebir and Uweinat uplands of the Western Desert until as recently as 4000 BC, as evidenced by the "Cave of the Swimmers," found there in 1932 by the Hungarian Laszlo Edward de Almasy. (It was reproduced for the film "The English Patient.") It contains paintings of the people of Gilf Kebir, who apparently tended cattle and kept company with giraffes between 6000 and 4000 BC.

The late Neolithic hunters developed an impressive armory of flint tools, snares, and traps, however, and their gradually improving hunting techniques apparently took an increasing toll on wildlife. At the same time, the area was growing more arid, making it harder for savanna animals to survive. As a result, the giraffe was gone from Egypt by 3600 BC, and the elephant by 3000 BC. Within a few hundred years, most of the people, too, had gone from the lands outside the Nile Valley. The desert had come.

Even before this great drying out, the Nile was the chief magnet for human activity. Around 5000 BC, Neolithic people of the Faiyum, a lush depression linked to the Nile Valley, hunted hippo, elephant, hartebeest and crocodile; they fished with harpoons, and trapped resident and migratory birds. Before the Egypt of the pharaohs, they also domesticated animals and plants, including sheep, goat, pig, cattle, emmer wheat and barley. They probably farmed only a small portion of the river's floodplain, most of which was a wilderness of savanna, wetlands and



Opposite: **Whether cut in stone or painted on tomb walls or papyrus, whether religious, secular or astronomical, Egyptian art reflects the astonishingly close interplay between the animal and human kingdoms.** Top: **Twenty-four sacred Apis bulls were interred in vaults lining the gallery of the Serapeum at Saqqara.** Above: **The verdant Nile Valley teemed with wildlife not only above ground but also below, in vast necropolises of mummified animals.**

Line in one hand, club in the other, a fisherman in a papyrus canoe awaits his chance in a scene from the tomb of Princess Seshseshet Idut, Saqqara, ca. 2300 BC.

The sporting fisherman favored the spear, but fishermen catching for food used hook and line, bownet and dragnet.

lagoons. Between 3600 and 3400 BC, the Middle Predynastic people of Maadi, now a southern suburb of Cairo, hunted ibex, hippo and turtles and gathered mollusks, and were the last Nile dwellers to have a diversified hunting-and-gathering component of their economy that supplemented their farming.

Egyptians from then on relied on irrigated crops and domesticated livestock. But despite people's advancing imprint on the land, pockets and ribbons of wilderness persisted along the Nile for thousands of years. The hippopotamus did not disappear from the Nile Delta until 1815.

Although they often look like an alphabet zoo, the meanings of many Egyptian hieroglyphs relate to what they depict in a way that seems quite sensible to our minds today. The sign following the verb "to be angry" is a baboon with teeth bared and tail arched in rage. The leopard's head means "strength." The tadpole stands for 100,000. (Have you ever seen just one tadpole?) The hippo sign means "heavy." The crocodile hieroglyph means "to be greedy, aggressive or angry"—and also "sovereign."

Poetry, prose and mortuary texts embellish these connections further. The crocodile, for example, appears frequently as both marauder and king. An inscription of the pharaoh Seti I at Karnak reads: "I have caused them to see thy majesty as a crocodile, terrible on the shore, unapproachable." The Tenth Dynasty instruction to King Merikare equates the crocodile with detested foreigners: "The Asian is a crocodile on its shore, it snatches from a lonely road, it cannot seize from a populous town." A Thirteenth Dynasty peasant is reproached: "Thou hast not reckoned how many of the beasts thou dost lose by the crocodile, that violator of places of refuge, who attacks the district of the Entire Land." Vulnerability to such natural catastrophe eventually became one measure of socio-economic status in Egypt. The lower classes lampooned in the second millennium BC *Satire of the Trades* were always having a bad day in the boondocks:

I'll speak of the fisherman also,
His is the worst of all the jobs;
He labors on the river,
Mingling with crocodiles.
When his time of reckoning comes,
He is full of lamentations;
He does not say, "There's a crocodile,"
Fear has made him blind.
Coming from the flowing water
He says, "Mighty god!"

Likewise the Egyptian pantheon is filled with deities whose attributes reflect the powers and personalities ascribed to animals—brave, noble, wise, strong, cruel and so on—and the gods were often depicted as animals or as animal-human hybrids. The most powerful lioness deity was Sekhmet, whose name came from the root meaning "to be strong, mighty, violent." Not surprisingly, the crocodile surfaces in *The Book of the Dead* as Sobek: "I am the owner of seed who takes women from their husbands whenever he wishes, according to his desire. I am Sobek, within whom terror of him dwells; I am Sobek, who carries off by violence."

We know from other writings that the early Egyptians took words quite literally, to the point that they could often substitute for the thing or action they represented. Thus people had to be very careful about how they referred

Egyptians brought oryx to the stage of "proto-domestication," but did fully domesticate cattle.

King Apophis of the Hyksos Dynasty complained that the hippopotamuses in the sacred pool at Thebes kept him awake with their snoring.

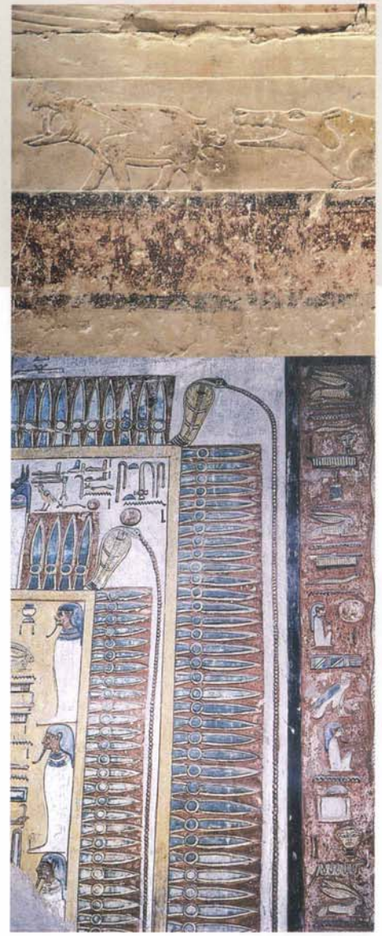
to animals, especially fierce ones, in tomb inscriptions, where words would live forever. Although animal hieroglyphs are present in the earliest versions of the Pyramid Texts, a series of formulae for the resurrection of the deceased king which date from 2350 BC, they are later omitted entirely, or they are shown deprived of their dangerous portions: The scorpion is shown without its tail, and the lion is often truncated, with just the head and foreparts of the torso showing, lest the beast come alive and harm the deceased.

Despite such preventive measures, the afterlife was still filled with unsavory creatures. In *The Book of the Dead*, the New Kingdom successor of the Pyramid Text, there is a spell for driving off the crocodiles of the north, south, east and west who "eat the dead and live on magic," "live on the tireless stars," dine on "dung and choking smoke" and "eject fiery venom." Snakes posed no less a threat, and one king attempted to ward them off with this imprecation: "If you bite me, I will cause you to be alone; if you only look at me, I will permit you to have your companion....O you expectoration of a wall, you vomit of a brick, what comes from your mouth is turned back against yourself."

But the most fearsome animals of the afterlife were the humble decomposers and subterranean detritus feeders that, in sufficient numbers, could spoil a deceased's physical fitness for eternity. "Keep away from me, lips of crookedness," the deceased warns a cockroach. No matter how well preserved a body was, it was vulnerable to a beetle the Egyptians knew had a taste for mummies. Chapter 36 of *The Book of the Dead* mentions a kind of beetle called Apshait—likely a dermestid beetle—and in one vignette the deceased is shown threatening it with a knife. Dermestids have been found among the bandages of poorly made mummies, and papyri buried with the dead often contained spells to ward off such creepy-crawlies.

By 2500 BC, about the middle of the Old Kingdom, the bureaucracy included provincial officials who decorated their tombs with carved reliefs showing not supernatural landscapes but earthly ones, as well as the equally earthly pursuits they hoped to enjoy in the afterlife: shipbuilding, wrestling, hunting in the desert, and fishing and fowling in the marshes. It is from these desert and marsh scenes, especially those in the Fifth and Sixth Dynasty tombs at Saqqara, that we find the most skilled and naturalistic representations of animals in all of Egyptian art. In these paintings, almost every animal is recognizable as a particular species, and the artist often included a short text giving its name. The scenes are often good enough for a natural history museum, depicting the creatures' habitat, mating, nesting and predation. Even the environments are sometimes labeled on the murals: "papyrus lands" of delta lagoons, swamps and cutoff meanders; *ta*, or fertile floodplain; *khaset*, or desert mountains; and "land of gazelles," the flat desert.

In the desert, a lion is shown attacking an aurochs (a wild bull) which defecates in terror; leopards are mating, jerboas are jumping, hedgehogs are emerging from burrows to feed on grasshoppers and root in anthills; and white oryx and dorcas gazelles nurse their young. In the papyrus land a hippo gives birth while a crocodile advances to devour the infant; other crocodiles mate and lay



Top: **The cycle of life and death is clear in this tomb relief from Saqqara, showing a crocodile waiting to devour a newborn hippo.** Above: **The cobra symbolized the goddess Wadjet, guardian of Lower Egypt and an emblem of royalty.**

eggs. Sacred ibis, little egret, hoopoe and turtledove nest peacefully while parent kingfishers and Egyptian geese ward off carnivorous relatives of the mongoose called genets.

Mostly these scenes are backdrops for human activity. A favorite theme is sport hunting, in which the hunter was said to have been protected by the goddess Sekhet ("Meadow"), to whom belonged the fishes and birds. The pharaohs of the Old Kingdom had their "master of the hunt," the district chief of the desert who organized the

royal huntsman's retinue. Beaters and even a kitchen staff joined the king and the wealthy nobleman on hunting excursions. The quarry depicted at Saqqara are mainly hoofed animals; only occasionally, it seems, did people hunt predators such as striped hyena, lion and leopard. Hunting with bow and arrow was common, but ingenious trapping devices like palm wheel traps and nets were deployed in the narrows of wadis bordering the Nile. The saluki was the hunter's best friend, and many scenes show these dogs attacking ibexes and other game.

The sportsman's favorite habitat was not the desert, but the marshes of the Nile Valley and Delta. A nobleman of the Middle Kingdom dreams of plucking papyrus where "waterfowl will rise by the thousand as he passes by. When he directs his throw-stick against them a thousand will fall through the rush of air—geese, duck, and many other kinds of fowl." A New Kingdom description of a teacher's mansion boasts that "its west side is a pond for snaring geese of all kinds, a resort for hunters from the very beginning. One of its ponds has more fish than a lake. Its '*h*-birds' are like marsh birds. Fish abound in their basins: *bulti* fish [probably *Tilapia nilotica*], *sn*-fish, *dss*-fish. The fish are more plentiful than the sands on the shore; one cannot reach the end of them."

The most productive season for both fishing and fowling was the Nile's flood season, from late summer into early fall, when migratory birds would have been on the wing. The sports fisherman, it appears, favored the spear, but fishermen catching for food used hook and line, bownet and dragnet. Most fish were considered palatable, and they were cooked fresh or dried and salted, but the names of some—such as *bou* ("disgusting") and *shep* ("regret") suggest exceptions.

The nobleman felled marsh birds with a throw-stick, often adorned with a serpent's head. New Kingdom paintings show a tame bird perched in the prow of the hunter's boat or carried in his hand to attract other waterfowl. Many of the resident and migratory fowl intended for the dinner table were actually netted, as some still are today in the northern reaches of the Nile Delta. More domestically, Saqqara reliefs also show gray and demoiselle cranes and white-fronted and greylag geese being force-fed specially prepared pellets to fatten them up for festival banquets. Geese were often salted and stored in pottery jars. Favorite ducks included pintail, tufted duck, Egyptian goose, teal, mallard, shelduck, pochard and wigeon. Naturally fatty quail were eaten raw and pickled, a practice recalled in a second-century BC couplet by Hipparchus of Nicaea: "The Egyptian way of life I cannot follow: they pluck the *chennia* [quail], which they salt and swallow."

Old and Middle Kingdom aristocrats used harpoons in sport fishing and for hunting hippos, while nets of various types were employed to catch perch, catfish, and eel. This Sixth Dynasty tomb relief is at Saqqara.

We learn further from the tombs of the uses animals had beyond food: gazelle leather for loincloths and water bags, hippo hide for whips, and ostrich feathers for fans. The fat and entrails of gazelle, ibex, snake, crocodile, hippo and goose all had medicinal value. For entertainment, the elite kept exotic animals in special enclosures, and royal women sometimes kept dorcas gazelles as pets.

The ancient Egyptians thus used animals much as we do: hunting and trapping them for food and sport, for clothing and other practical needs, and to keep as pets. But there are some great differences, too. For example, cats in the New Kingdom were trained to jump from a hunter's skiff into the marshy thicket to retrieve waterfowl struck down by a throw-stick. In the Saqqara reliefs and in Middle Kingdom scenes at Bani Hassan, the mongoose appears as the fowler's friend, sallying forth to retrieve birds from the marsh. Another Bani Hassan painting shows monkeys helping in the fig harvest. Saqqara murals suggest that lions may have been trained to hunt antelope and wild cattle in the desert, and New Kingdom pharaohs apparently took them into battle—surely fearful apparitions to an enemy.

Perhaps the most extraordinary partnership, though, was between people and hyenas, as depicted in Sixth Dynasty tombs in Saqqara. In one scene, men roll a hyena onto its back and stuff prepared strips of fish and waterfowl into the maw of the apparently compliant beast. In another, leashed hyenas are led to a desert hunting field and released in pursuit of oryx. Jean Phillipe Lauer, a French archeologist who excavated at Saqqara, puzzled over the force-feeding and concluded that this may have been an effort to suppress the animal's tendency to begin devouring its prey immediately after seizing it. In the fourth century BC, Aristotle related that "the wolves near Lake Mareotis cooperate with the fishermen by driving the fish into their nets; when, however, the fishermen do not share their catch with them, the wolves tear the nets, when those are on the land for drying."

Old Kingdom Egyptians also had very close associations with the wild ungulates they captured on the hunting field, especially ibex, addax and oryx, as well as gazelles. In the Saqqara reliefs, the animals are shown tethered and fed, often by hand, in the same paddocks as domestic cattle, sheep and goats, and in fact they are labeled "young cattle" in these murals. Next to each animal is written a name common to most members of its species, but females sometimes have a different title. Certain individuals have unique names, like the ibex in the Tomb of Ti called "the dancer."

Such intimate relationships between people and wild herd animals had come into being in the Middle East beginning about 6000 years before the Saqqara murals were made, and led to the domestication of cattle, sheep, goats, pigs and donkeys, changing their behavior and appearance almost beyond recognition. In the Saqqara reliefs we are offered a unique glimpse of that process—but, interestingly, only up to a point: Efforts to domesticate ungulates stopped, either by choice, because of characteristics of the animals themselves, or both, at a stage known as "proto-domestication," which involves captive management but not selective breeding.

The Egyptians did not go on to full domestication in part because they had other plans for those animals. Many were to be killed as mortuary and temple feast oblations. A deceased person was believed to possess a *ka* or "double," a spirit that could return to the tomb and take part in the earthly pursuits depicted there. At Saqqara, presumably for many years following a noble person's death, the servants of his *ka* tied up "young cattle," including gazelles, antelopes and ibex, slaughtered them ritually, and cooked and ate them with the deceased's relatives. The great rings on the floor of the tomb of Mereruka, son-in-law of King Teti (2340 BC), were likely used to tether the animals.

Above: **Nubians lead a monkey, a baboon, and a giraffe with a monkey climbing up its neck. They are carrying an elephant tusk and what may be a box of hippopotamus teeth, also valued as ivory. The scene is from the 18th Dynasty tomb of the vizier Rekhmire.** Below: **Slim skiffs are still the best craft for navigating the "papyrus lands."**

Around 5000 BC, Neolithic people hunted hippo, elephant, hartebeest and crocodile; they fished with harpoons, and trapped resident and migratory birds.

New Kingdom cats were trained to jump from a hunter's skiff into a marshy thicket to retrieve waterfowl struck down by a throw-stick.

Animals captured alive in the wild were the basis of Egyptians' domestication efforts.

"A balanced relationship between people and beasts was seen by the ancient Egyptians as one element in the eternal global and cosmic order....

During annual and special ceremonial occasions, temple priests supervised the ritual slaying of domestic and wild captive beasts to propitiate the *ba*, or divine soul, of principal gods and the deceased pharaoh. Crowds of up to 100,000 people attended some of these celebrations. Ramses III endowed the temples of Thebes, Heliopolis and Memphis with a reported 500,386 "small cattle" and oxen and 426,395 waterfowl and small birds. He also donated 82 gazelles and 54 oryxes for the "new feast" at the Theban temple of Amon.

Yet at other tombs, the slaughter was likely rhetorical, for words were identical to the objects they symbolized. Some small tombs have copious but much more general listings, such as "Offerings: thousands of bread, of beer, of oxen, of geese, of yarn, and of cloth"—all made real by the depiction of one of each and the sign meaning "one thousand."

"I have given bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, clothing to the naked; I have given food to the ibis, the hawk, the cat and the jackal," reads a Fifth Dynasty stela. "I have buried them according to the ritual, anointing them with oil and wrapping them in cloth." Of all the Egyptians' relationships with nature, perhaps none intrigues us more than mummification. Entire birds, especially white-fronted and greylag geese, ducks and quail, and joints of meat of wild and domestic hoofed animals, were all mummified, placed in wooden coffins or pottery dishes, and interred in tombs as victuals. There were also pets mummified as companions for eternity, but by far the greatest number and widest range of animal mummies are attributable to the animal cults.

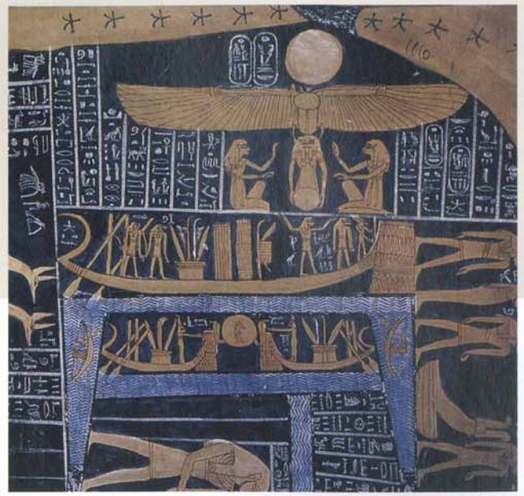
Animal cults existed prior to the arrival of a series of foreign conquerors beginning around 1000 BC, but were rather limited in number and influence. One of the largest and most enduring was the cult of Apis, whose adherents believed that a living bull was the abode of the *ba* of the god Osiris. The animal was merely the temple in which the spirit dwelled, and people worshipped the spirit. When the animal died, it was reverently mummified and interred in the Serapeum, and the *ba* went on to occupy another individual of the species.

Religious doctrines changed during the centuries of subjugation by Nubians, Assyrians, Persians, Greeks and Romans. No longer was the cult animal seen as the mere house of a god's spirit, but the animal *was* the god. Thus all-out animal worship began during the Saite Period, about 600 BC, and by Greek and Roman times it played a central role in religious beliefs. These belief systems were for the most part fragmented and localized, and they were managed by priests and political leaders to advance regional interests; they probably competed for adherents. At Crocodilopolis in the Faiyum, Sobek the crocodile reigned. In Bubastis it was the cat Bast; in Lycopolis the wolves or jackals Anubis and Wepwawet; in Hermopolis the ibis and baboon of

The *mastaba* or tomb of the vizier Mereruka at Saqqara. Birds and ibex are among the millions of animals mummified by the Egyptians.

...[They] saw themselves as children of nature, members of a single, remarkable whole along with animals and plants."

Eugen Strouhal
Life of the Ancient Egyptians



A winged scarab beetle, associated with the life-giving sun, appears on the painted ceiling of the burial chamber of pharaohs Ramesses V and VI.

Thoth. The improbable list of cult animals, all of them mummified, includes monkeys, baboons, wildcats, jackals, foxes, hyenas, mongooses, shrews, rats and hares; gazelles, hartebeests and ibexes; numerous birds of prey, including owls; vultures, quail, geese, ducks and ibises; cobras, vipers, skinks, crocodiles, fishes and scarab beetles. Yet to be found is the lion necropolis described by Greek travelers to Saqqara.

Priests lavished great care on their incarnate god-animals. Herodotus reported that Faiyum's sacred crocodile wore gold earrings and bracelets. Nearly 500 years later, the Greek geographer Strabo wrote that

> the animal is kept by himself in a lake; it is tame, and gentle to the priests. It is fed with bread, flesh and wine, which strangers who come to see it always present. Our host, a distinguished person, who was our guide in examining what was curious, accompanied us to the lake, and brought from the supper table a small cake, dressed meat, and a small vessel containing a mixture of honey and milk. We found the animal lying at the edge of the lake. The priests went up to it; some of them opened its mouth, another put the cake into it, then the meat, and afterwards poured down the honey and milk. The animal then leaped into the lake, and crossed to the other side.

When the god-animal died, another of its species, known to be the god's reincarnation by virtue of certain distinguishing physical characteristics, was installed in the holy of holies of the temple compound—or, in the case of the crocodile, in the sacred lake. The deceased animal was mummified and interred with all the rites suitable for a god. Although the Serapeum at Saqqara is the most breathtaking of the animal cemeteries, other nearby mummy galleries, including those of ibises and birds of prey, are far more extensive. Here are found animals of the same species as the deity animal, but which were themselves not divine.

Ordinary people, probably including large numbers of peasants, traveled to such cult centers and there purchased the mummies as votive offerings to be interred in the galleries. The intentions behind these literally millions of buried offerings are unclear: The supplicant may have been seeking a cure for some ailment, praying for the fulfillment of a wish or offering thanks. It has been suggested that animals were also mummified in reverence for the souls of deceased relatives, at the encouragement of a class of priests who specialized in announcing into which animal the soul of a deceased had entered. The priests charged for their services.

It is clear that animal cults were a big business. Salima Ikram, an Egyptologist at the American University in Cairo who has had years of hands-on experience with animal mummies, sees assembly-line efficiency behind the operation. The staff of animal cult centers, she maintains, almost certainly bred ibises and other birds on the premises and harvested them expeditiously. After an animal's sale to a pilgrim, the staff waited for additional customers and put three or four birds in a jar before placing them together in the catacombs. More than 10,000 birds —and some clearly fake remains made of cloth, feathers and bone, which may have been passed off to unsuspecting pilgrims as birds—were thus interred each year.

As strange as this may seem to readers today, in some ways it's not entirely unfamiliar. A World Wide Web search under "pet mummification" yields quite similar modern-day services. One website, found under "pet cemetery," offers the following words of comfort: "You don't have to say goodbye! There is an alternative to burial or cremation. Preserving your pet in a restful and peaceful manner is coming of age. Let us help you keep that faithful friend in your presence." Perhaps some of us have more in common with those ancient Egyptians than we thought.

Joseph J. Hobbs is professor of geography at the University of Missouri Columbia. He is studying the human uses of caves worldwide, while continuing research on the Bedouin relationship to the natural environment of Egypt's deserts.

The Musical Pulse of Tunisia

Written and Photographed by Thorne Anderson

Al-Andalus. Even without an appreciation of the region's place in history, it's a beautiful word, an evocative word. In Tunisia, mere mention of the name stirs potent nostalgia for a time, now five centuries lost, when the artistic creativity of Al-Andalus—Muslim Spain—nourished tastes so refined that the mere memories of them drive creative arts today and shape present-day Tunisia's national identity. And nothing conjures up this nostalgia more powerfully and mysteriously than the musical offspring of Al-Andalus, the Tunisian *maluf*.

Juking up tradition for Ramadan, the sounds of violinist Habib Bouallegue and his Al Jazira ensemble fill the vaulted halls of the Hatters' Market in Tunis. "I believe this is still the real *maluf*," Bouallegue says. "We bring people the classical Tunisian songs in a way that brings them to their feet."

Bouncing in the back seat of a taxi driving fast from the airport into the heart of Tunis, historical memories of Al-Andalus seem far from the chaotic currents of the present. It's a warm late-December day, but the car's faulty heater continues to blast from the dashboard, making open windows a necessity. A medallion spins from the rear-view mirror in the swirling streams of competing gusts. The car's stereo speakers buzz under the stress of Europop dance music turned all the way up.

But the taxi driver's face brightens when I mention *maluf*. "Of course I listen to the *maluf*," he chimes as he slides in a cassette tape of the Rashidiyya Orchestra, the premier performers and preservers of the art. "We are Tunisians. We must love the *maluf*. There are the stories of our people, stories of love, everything is there. *Maluf* is sweet music," he says, and we roll up the windows and endure the heat in order to hear better. "We Tunisians may be tough on the outside," he says, "but you scratch our skin and the *maluf* is there."

Among Salah el-Mahdi's more than 700 compositions are four monumentally complex classical *maluf* pieces—and the Tunisian national anthem. Behind him hangs a portrait of himself taken shortly after he became the second director of the Rashidiyya Institute, founded in 1934. There, el-Mahdi led the *maluf* revival with the collection, distillation, notation and publication of the genre's 13 remaining canonical *nubat*, and the establishment of national music curricula based on *maluf*. "If *maluf* survives," he says, "then we Tunisians will remain Tunisian."

In the maluf, we see to what extent Tunisia has been a crossroads of cultures, incorporating into her heritage that which suits her people, and enriching that heritage by what her sons produce. SALAH EL-MAHDI

Since 1934 the Rashidiyya Institute's hall has served as the premier venue for *maluf* preservation. Left: In the early 20th century, Baron Rudolfe d'Erlanger commissioned Ahmed al-Wafi, the last master of *maluf* as an oral tradition, to collect and transcribe what remained of a once-vast repertory: The 20-year project saved *maluf* from extinction. The portrait of al-Wafi is by d'Erlanger.

Maluf (pronounced mah-LOOF) survives today in public and private performances and at weddings and circumcision ceremonies because of a determined effort of preservation on the part of the Tunisian government, private patrons and dedicated musicians young and old. Although but a small part of a much larger, evolving contemporary musical-arts scene—indeed, it can be difficult to find *maluf* recordings except in specialized music shops—the history of the *maluf* is so enmeshed with that of Tunisia that *maluf* has become a sort of emblem of national identity, and its influence is ever-present and fiercely guarded.

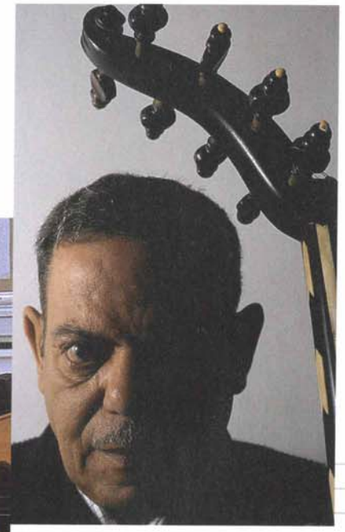
Amjed Kilifi, a carpet dealer in Tunis, is all business, and he doesn't appear to be the kind of guy to take "high culture" too seriously. He says he rarely listens to *maluf*, but it's clear he holds the music in the highest esteem nonetheless. "Those who like the *maluf* tend to be more intellectual," he says. "Most people don't prefer *maluf* these days, but it was born with us and we'll never let it go."

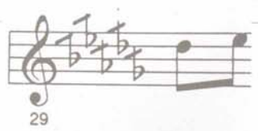
"Young people really do love *maluf*," says Latifa Fkiri, a journalist and actor, "but they don't listen to it often. *Maluf* really takes patience, but those with patience will discover that the *maluf* is in our blood, our pulse, our breath."

"We must sing the maluf," insists Rim Fehri, a voice student at the Institut Superieur, Tunis's leading music school. "We must love the *maluf*; we *are* the *maluf*."

Maluf, which means "familiar" or "customary," bears the auditory traces of music brought to North Africa by Muslims fleeing the Christian *reconquista* of Spain and Portugal between the 12th and 15th centuries. In Morocco, this genre is known as *Andalusi* or *ala* music; in Algeria it is *gharnata*. In Libya, as in Tunisia, it is *maluf*, with the Libyan *maluf* distinguished mostly by dialect differences in the lyrics. More subtly, these Maghrebian, or North African, genres also differ in the tuning of melodic modes and the articulation of rhythmic patterns. Those differences, at times scarcely perceptible to an outsider, are the musical equivalents of dialects.

The *maluf* idiom comprises all forms of Tunisian classical singing, which themselves are based on the classical Arabic poetry form known as the *qasidah*, or ode. The *maluf* forms include *muwashshah*, a "post-classical" form not rigidly governed by the *qasidah*; *zajal*, a newer poetic genre using special dialectical forms; and *shgul*, a traditional singing which is





Left: **Amid the studious cacophony of hallway rehearsals, Mohammed Zoghlami practices his *'ud* at the Institut Superieur. Although young musicians train here in both eastern and western classics, the curriculum is built around *maluf*, imbuing graduates with a distinctly Tunisian style they often carry into other genres.** Center: **Master musician and preeminent custodian of the *maluf*, Tahar Gharsa is lead *'ud* player of the Rashidiyya Orchestra and director of its vocal ensemble. His recent discovery of a book of lost *maluf* lyrics is expanding the classical canon.** Right: **Bars on the flat signs indicate the quarter-tones of *maluf*'s Arab musical scale.** Opposite: **In the 1940's, outdoor recording sessions by Baron d'Erlanger's foundation captured what was then the largely improvised character of *maluf*.**

OPPOSITE: CENTER FOR ARAB AND MEDITERRANEAN MUSIC / BARON D'ERLANGER COLLECTION

Maluf Glossary

Fergah: instrumental section of a *nuba*; literally, "empty" in Arabic

Iqa (plural: *iqaat*): rhythmic patterns, often based on the rhythms of *qasidah* poetry

Maqam (plural: *maqamat*): mode; an Arab system of pitch organization which allows for the construction of melodies and improvisation within a scale. The *maqam* determines the opening, final and prominent notes, as well as characteristic phrases and melodic flow, of a *nuba*

Muwashshah: a "post-classical" singing form not rigidly governed by the *qasidah*, thought to have originated in the Middle East and the Maghreb, and integrated into the music of Al-Andalus in the 10th century

Nuba (plural: *nubat*): a two-part "musical suite" in a single mode or *maqam*. Thirteen *nubat* make up the core repertory of the Tunisian *maluf*

Qasidah: classical Arabic poetry form found in *nuba* lyrics

Shgul: traditional singing, "elaborate," as the name implies

Taqsim: non-metric improvisational *fergah*; each *nuba* contains one *taqsim* played, by tradition, in a *maqam* which differs from the *maqam* of the rest of the *nuba*

Tarab: the intense connection between audience and performer in an ideal musical performance

Zajal: a newer poetic genre using special dialectical forms found in *maluf* lyrics

ARAB INSTRUMENTS

Bandir: hand-held round frame drum with snares lining the underside of the drum skin

Darbukka: goblet-shaped drum known elsewhere in the world as *durbekki*, *dumbek*, or *tarambukka*

Gimbri: a banjo-like instrument which disappeared from *maluf* in the 20th century

Naqqarat: small kettle drums attached in pairs, used less in modern times

Nay: airy-sounding diagonal bamboo flute, open at each end, with seven holes; the only wind instrument in Arab "art music"

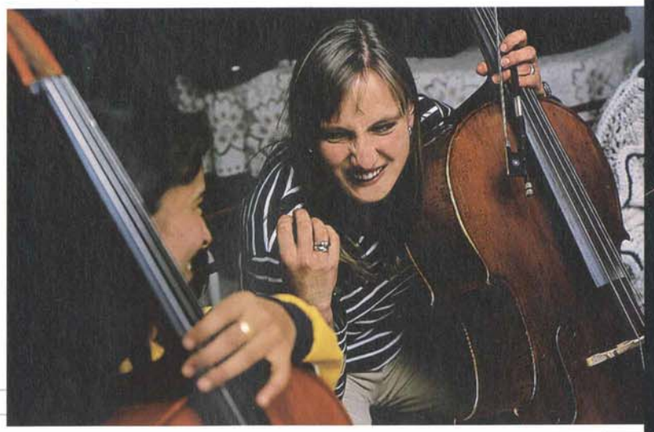
Qanun (pronounced kan-NOON): trapezoidal zither with 26 rows of triple strings whose pitch may be modulated by flipping up or down one of dozens of tiny bridges, called *orab*, which effectively lengthen or shorten the vibrating portion of the string. Once almost extinct in Tunisia, the *qanun* is undergoing a revival

Rabab: two-stringed upright fiddle, all but vanished from Tunisian music, thought by some to have been the precursor of the European violin

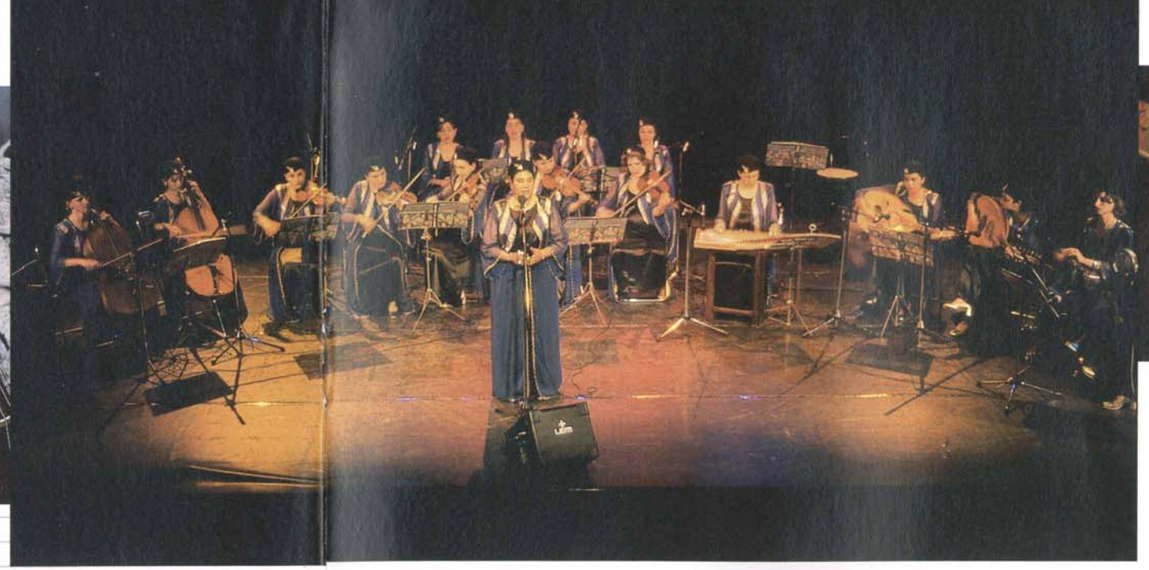
Tar: tambourine

'Ud 'arbi (pronounced ood): fretless lute with four doubled strings, sometimes called the "Tunisian lute"

'Ud sharqi: fretless, pear-shaped Arab lute with six doubled strings, sometimes called the "oriental lute"



Right: **Emma Lundgren of Sweden, a student of Arabic in Tunis, has played with the Taqasim Orchestra for nearly two years. "Western music is easy to enjoy. This music is constantly challenging," she says.** Center: **The non-professional Taqasim is one of three women's orchestras in Tunis, and it has played *maluf* and related Arab classical music for audiences in Egypt, Lebanon and Europe.**



Soloist Leila Haggege Gouzia of the Farabi Club, another non-professional ensemble, enjoys one of the moments of celebrity that come often to top classical musicians as she speaks in a post-performance television interview.

"elaborate," as the Arabic name implies. But the most important form, the structural heart of *maluf,* is the *nuba*.

A *nuba* might be described as a two-movement "musical suite" in a single mode or *maqam*, an Arab system of pitch organization by quarter-tones that allows for the construction of melodies and improvisation within a scale. Each nuba lasts about an hour, and contains varied instrumental and a dozen or so vocal pieces in a traditional sequence. The rhythmic patterns *(iqaat)* of each *nuba* are complex, but they are similar from one *nuba* to the next, and they generally progress from slower to faster rhythms within each movement. The first movement of a nuba is dominated by binary, or base-2, rhythms while the second is dominated by base-3 rhythms.

Legend holds that there was once a different *nuba* for every day, every major event and every holiday of the year, hundreds of *nubat* in all. About two-thirds of the way through a *nuba*, one improvisational section would be played in the *maqam* of the *nuba* of the following evening. "It's beautiful to think about," says Jamel Abid, an instructor at the Institut Superieur. "So fine were the listeners' ears that they needed tuning for the upcoming evening."

Only 13 *nubat* remain in the traditional repertory, each in a different *maqam*. But if they are few in number, they are epic in scope, addressing the natural and the divine, love and loss, joy and regret, simultaneously at home and in exile. The breadth of experience covered by the music is immense.

"*Maluf* touches the center of the identity of all Tunisians; it is the vessel of the *maqamat*, the modes that define us as a people," says Becher Soussi, director of the annual International Festival of Arab Music in Testour, Tunisia. "If a Tunisian really listens to a fine performance of the *maluf* then he or she will feel something like ecstasy—the experience of *tarab*," he says. "*Tarab* is the relationship between the performers and the audience. To understand it you must experience it. It's not concrete. It's connected with the emotions. It's the binding force that connects people with music."

The birth of the *maluf* may be traced back to Ziryab, a court musician whose expulsion from Baghdad in 830 sent him westward on a journey that became notable for discovery and artistic innovation. Across the Maghreb he stopped in Kairouan, in the heart of the region then called Ifriqiyya, now Tunisia. Kairouan, the first major Islamic city in Africa, had been founded 150 years earlier by the Arab leader 'Uqba bin Nafi' al-Fihri, some 50 years before the Arab conquest of Al-Andalus on the Iberian Peninsula. At the time of Ziryab's visit, Kairouan was the capital of the powerful Aghlabite dynasty and the heart of Maghrebian culture.

Ziryab collected the melodies and rhythms of the Maghreb as he traveled on to Cordoba. He arrived at the beginning of a brilliant cultural flowering in Al-Andalus that drew nourishment from all its distant roots and the diversity of its polyglot inhabitants. In this climate, Ziryab, newly re-established as a court musician, combined his Middle Eastern musical education with the influences of the Maghreb to create a distinctively Andalusian type of music. Ziryab's rhythms, modes and melodies marked out the boundaries of new genre which, like most Arab music, was highly improvisational in structure and spiritual in temperament. "Improvisation is the offspring of your feeling and a reflection of your soul," says Rashidiyya Orchestra *'ud* player Mohammed Nabid Saied. "If your soul is good and clean, so will be your music."

In the13th century, Tunis saw its first wave of 8000 refugees from the Christian *reconquista*. This influx peaked at the end of the 15th century, when Granada fell to Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand. Andalusian music took root in the urban centers of the Maghreb, then, through centuries of transmission, repetition, memorization and adaptation, acquired its unique melodic, rhythmic, and dialectic character wherever it grew. "*Maluf* became a distinctly Tunisian pocket of culture," says Lassad Gria, director of the Tunisian National Center of Music and Popular Arts. "Tunisians are, of course, open to the world's influences, but an Egyptian person, for example, can't really sing *maluf*."

Tunisian (and Libyan) *maluf* was further distinguished from the music of the western Maghreb by the sway of the Ottoman Empire, which took Tunisia as a colony in 1574, ushering in new influences from its vibrant musical centers: Aleppo, Damascus, Cairo, and, of course, Istanbul. In the mid-18th century Tunisia's Ottoman governor, Muhammad al-Rashid, a virtuoso musician, fixed the structure of the *nuba*, adding Turkish-inspired instrumental pieces of his own composition. In the absence of a written notation system, his melodies passed from instrument to ear to instrument, through generations, so that the composition of most instrumental parts of the *nubat* as they exist today may be attributed to him. Al-Rashid ultimately abdicated his political post to devote himself entirely to music, and today the Rashidiyya Institute, the center of *maluf* preservation, bears his name.

When the Ottoman Empire crumbled, France established a "protectorate" in Tunisia based on her claim at the 1878 Congress of Berlin, and the *maluf*, then in decline, underwent a dramatic transformation. In an effort to save it from extinction, the French-naturalized Baron Rudolfe d'Erlanger, an amateur musician of Bavarian birth who had settled near Tunis, commissioned Ali al-Darwish of Aleppo to produce the first collection of this ancient repertory in written musical notation, a 20-year project. Together, d'Erlanger and Darwish undertook one of the first academic studies of Arab music theory and assembled Tunisia's presentation at the groundbreaking 1932 International Congress of Arabic Music, hosted in Cairo by King Fuad I. Hungarian composer Béla Bartók, one of the many renowned participants, supervised the Gramophone company in recording 360 performances by the musician delegations; most of the recordings have survived in the National Sound Archives of Paris, and some are available to the public on compact disk.

D'Erlanger died a few months after the Cairo congress, but the momentum of the event helped inspire the founding of the Rashidiyya Institute in 1934 for the preservation of the *maluf* through radio performances, musical training programs, and public concerts.

The institute immediately introduced radical alterations with the goal of promoting popularity and raising prestige: Lyrics considered "profane" were revised, and two spectacular rehearsal and performance spaces were constructed in the heart of the walled *madina*, or old city, of Tunis.

The music itself was also changed. Earlier, the *maluf* had been performed in small folk ensembles with simple instrumentation: usually an *'ud 'arbi* (four-stringed lute) and a *rabab* (two-stringed fiddle) accompanied by a *bandir* (frame drum), *tar* (tambourine), *darbukka* (goblet-shaped drum) and *naqqarat* (small kettle drums). Lyrics were sung by soloists or in small groups. Through the efforts of the Rashidiyya, however, hybrids of Western symphony orchestras and Egyptian ensembles arose that performed *maluf* in a hybrid of traditional and modern musical styles using mixed traditional and modern instrumentation.

Led by the cosmopolitan Tunisian violinist Muhammad Triki, the Rashidiyya Orchestra arranged the *nuba* for a large, seated chorus and orchestra including the *'ud sharqi* (six-string lute), *nay* (bamboo flute), and *qanun* (zither). Most of the rest of the orchestra comprised Western string sections: violin, cello and contrabass. (Western stringed instruments are adaptable to the Arab *maqamat* because they are fretless and can thus easily render the characteristic fractional tones, though the Rashidiyya sometimes included even fixed-pitch instruments like the piano or mandolin.)

Equally—perhaps even more—radical was the orchestra's adherence to written musical notation and the comprehensive Arab music theory introduced by the Rashidiyya Institute

Left: Hamadi Fehd, a first-year student at the Institut Superieur, plays the *nay*, a seven-holed, open diagonal flute with a three-octave range, a traditional instrument for the *maluf* and the only wind instrument in classical Arab music. Center: In the 15th century, exiled Andalusians settled thickly in the town of Testour, which is today considered *maluf*'s "home town." There, children learn the *maqamat* from the violin of Maher Hammami in a youth center dedicated to *maluf*. Right: Though still a student of the *'ud* at the Institut Superieur, rising star Mohammed Nabil Saied, 24, has achieved prominence with the Rashidiyya Orchestra. Here, he gives a lesson to Amel Ben Salah at the music conservatory of Tahar Gharsa.

under the leadership of Salah el-Mahdi, Triki's successor. All 13 of the surviving *nubat* were painstakingly collected and distilled from the various, often quite divergent, interpretations of the Tunisian masters of the time. The orchestra chose to use western musical notation, modified to record the Arab *maqamat*. The difficulty of printing right-to-left Arabic lyrics on left-to-right musical staffs was overcome by printing lyrics left-to-right, word by word or syllable by syllable.

The use of notation brought fundamental changes in the formerly improvisational character of *maluf*. Whereas the unnotated *maluf* of the past had involved improvisation throughout a performance in reaction to audience responses, the Rashidiyya's notated *maluf* left only one instrumental section of each *nuba* open to extensive improvisation. But times were changing in other ways, too: The popularization of the phonograph record militated against the spontaneity of improvisation and favored an agreed-upon performance standard—a demand addressed in part by adherence to musical notation.

The Rashidiyya's transformation of the *maluf*, though frowned at by some, did succeed in elevating the *maluf* to the prestigious level of "art music" and repopularizing the genre by broadcasting it beyond the urban centers. Moreover, the Rashidiyya simultaneously became the most important musical training center in the country, due in large part to el-Mahdi's Arab music theory and curriculum.

"The Rashidiyya is the mother of all musical arts in Tunisia," says Youssef Malouche, administrative director and professor of the *qanun* at the still-lively Rashidiyya Institute. "Even if a musician hasn't studied here, his teacher has studied here."

It's easy to get lost looking for the Rashidiyya Institute, tucked away deep in the Tunis medina. Narrow alleyways not much wider than a donkey-cart wind in organic, millennium-old patterns. There are black-and-white checkered arches, passageways covered by vaulted ceilings and a jumble of densely crowded suqs, interrupted from time to time by the calm of mosque entrances.

The metal-studded blue door of the Rashidiyya is set inconspicuously in the cracked plaster wall of a quiet street just around the corner from nothing in particular. Inside, the building opens to a large sky-lit performance hall covered floor to ceiling in Andalusian tile. Five days a week, the walls ring with the sounds of the Rashidiyya chorus rehearsing. In a nod to tradition, the vocal chorus, unlike the instrumentalists, rehearses without written music, following the lead of a *maluf* master, Tahar Gharsa, on *'ud*. Apprentice musicians sit in on rehearsals for as long as two years before they are allowed to join the chorus.

Vocalist Chakri Hannachi, known throughout the Arab world for his recordings *Ba Younek* (1993) and *La La Wallah* (1994), studied for 10 years at the Rashidiyya and sang in the chorus. Though he is more likely to be heard singing international Arab classical music, he locates the source of his art close to home. "The *maluf* is the source for all Tunisian artists," he says. "And the Rashidiyya provided the basis of my art."

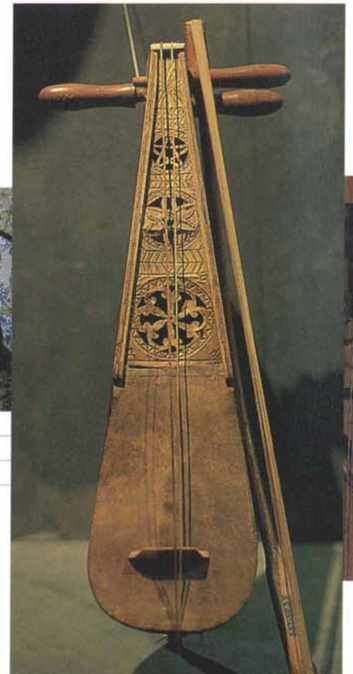
The impact of the Rashidiyya has gone far beyond simple preservation of the *maluf*. In the period surrounding Tunisian independence in 1957, the nation was eagerly searching for symbols of common identity. Habib Bourguiba, Tunisia's recently deceased first president, recognized the unifying potential of the *maluf* and was quick to support and expand the work of the Rashidiyya.

Salah el-Mahdi, by then director of the Rashidiyya Orchestra, was selected to compose the Tunisian national anthem. El-Mahdi's music theory likewise became the cornerstone of the curriculum of the newly formed national conservatory as well as its successor, the Institut Superieur, which is now part of the national university. For 18 years el-Mahdi also led a department of music and popular arts in the fledgling Ministry of Cultural Affairs, which featured programs to spread the teaching of the *maluf* through an extensive network of youth centers, cultural centers, and popular-arts schools. And professional musicians were—and still are—required to obtain a "qualifying card," which in turn requires a test of the musicians' knowledge of *maluf*.

The card does not, however, require that musicians feature or incorporate *maluf* into their own work. On the contrary, most musicians these days are drawn to popular forms from elsewhere in the Arab world—especially Egypt. And when the *maluf* surfaces, it may differ greatly from the "official" *maluf* of the Rashidiyya.

On a cool evening during Ramadan, most of the Tunis *madina* is transformed as the festival-like daytime crush of people slows to an erratic trickle of residents making solitary darts from one door to the next. But from the Hatters' Market come the sounds of a party, and there waiters in round, flat red hats and striped, collarless shirts pick their way through a dense crowd of people at round tables who are smoking fruit tobacco from water pipes and drinking tea laced with almonds or pine nuts. At the far end, hemmed in

Left: Hide drumheads of *bandirs* are "tuned" with a charcoal brazier before an outdoor performance. Center: The two-stringed *rabab*, now almost entirely replaced by the cello, has but one remaining master player: Tahar Gharsa's son Zied. Right: With 84 strings and dozens of tonal switches, the *qanun* is an instrument of intimidating complexity—and cost. A decade ago, there were only five master *qanun* players and about 10 students. Today, thanks to a new instruction book and affordable student instruments, this staple of modern *maluf* is coming back. Standard-bearer for this revival, 24-year-old Khadija El Afrit is a student and children's instructor at the Institut Superieur, as well as a player with the Rashidiyya and Taqasim orchestras. "I feel a heavy responsibility as one of a new generation," she says. "I am dedicated not only to music but to my instrument."



by a crowd of dancing men, the group Al Jazira floats the sound of an urgent violin on a turbulent current of *tar*, *darbukka* and *bandir* pulsing in double-time. The dancers close their eyes, open their arms, and enter the current. "I believe this is still the real *maluf*," says Habib Boullegue, the violin player for the group, all of whom have studied at the Rashidiyya. "We play right out of the 13 *nubat*," he says. "We bring people the classical Tunisian songs in a way that brings them to their feet."

Salah el-Mahdi might frown on identifying such performances with the *maluf*. Still, though he's now retired from all official positions, he remains focused on his lifelong mission to expand and popularize the *maluf*. In addition to maintaining a busy private teaching schedule with more than 20 students in his own conservatory, el-Mahdi stays in close contact with governmental as well as art and intellectual circles, and his message is undiluted. "We're at a low point in *maluf* preservation now," el-Mahdi insists as he shuffles through stacks of paper, music, and appointment books on the desk in his studio office, searching for a lost note. The walls are crammed with awards, honors, and an international collection of photographs showing him with presidents, prime ministers and kings. "If we care for the survival of the *maluf*, then we must create musical troupes in our high schools." To this end, el-Mahdi has proposed to the Ministry of Education that four hours a week be set aside each Friday for compulsory *maluf* education in the schools. "We must not underestimate the importance of this," he says, pausing in his paper shuffle to make eye contact. "If *maluf* survives, then we Tunisians will remain Tunisians."

As a legacy, el-Mahdi has composed four modern *nubat*, each a monumental undertaking, to add to the traditional repertory of 13. Each year in July he attends the International Festival of Arab Music in Testour, where he urges composers to continue to add to the repertory—but to date, only two others have tackled the task of composing a complete *nuba*. "Many have tried and failed," he says, "but it is essential to the life of the tradition that we keep trying."

These days most of Tunisia's classical musicians use the *maluf* as a stepping stone to the exploration of the wider world of Arab or western music, but it remains a solid, universal first step. The cultural centers and schools of popular arts all also teach other forms of Arab classical music now, but the curricula still begin with a foundation in the *maluf*, beginning with singing the *maqamat*, progressing to playing the *iqaat* on the *tar*, and finally learning excerpts from the *maluf* on stringed instruments. Amateur classical-music clubs, like the Farabi Club and the all-woman Taqasim Orchestra, abound, and they tour to festivals around the world, playing *maluf* as a small part of a much wider Arab repertoire.

"I like *maluf*. I teach *maluf*. I understand *maluf*. When I play with the Rashidiyya I have a feeling of national pride—but my interests are much broader," says Khadija El Afrit, a star *qanun* student at the Institut Superieur and a member of the Taqasim Ensemble and the Rashidiyya Orchestra. "There are not so many new things for me to discover there. The *maluf* must grow. It needs new compositions and interpretations. Part of the problem is the small audience for *maluf*."

El Afrit is a serious musician. When not distracted by teaching or rehearsing she devotes up to eight hours of the day to her instrument. Like many of her peers at the Institut, El Afrit looks to the Sorbonne as her next educational step. She says she is intrigued by what's new in *maluf*, such as the experimental compositions of Nassar Samoud, who composes in the Tunisian *maqamat* but includes pop *iqaat* along with the traditional, orthodox ones.

On the street, young people echo the desire for innovation. "The problem with the *maluf* is that it hasn't kept up with modern life," says Muhammad Laribi, a student from Tozeur in southern Tunisia. "Modern life is complicated. All life's rhythms are changing—our environments, our clothes, our hairstyles. I like the rhythms of the *maluf*. It's calm. But young people are looking for musical rhythms that keep up with the beat of modern times."

Rabiaa Zammouri, a graduate of the Institut Superieur, is a young composer for television, radio, and stage who works to bring traditional music into modern times. Seated at a large wooden desk in his home studio, Zammouri, surrounded by a museum-like collection of string and percussion instruments, moves back and forth between the key-boards of his Intel 75 PC and his Korg X5 synthesizer. The two are connected in a haphazard-looking crisscross of wires through an Ensoniq ASR 10 Sampler, some microphones, and a large Roland amplifier at his feet. "And this still isn't enough to make the music in my mind," he says.

Zammouri has the slow-burning fire of the rebel in his eyes as he dims the lights and plays one of his compositions. It's the soundtrack for a promotional television piece for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), one of Zammouri's clients. He turns up the volume. Out of the silence rises the beat of a *darbukka* in the *btaihi iqa*. It's joined a few seconds later by a solo violin in the *sika maqam*. A few moments later the pair is confronted with a percussive piano in counterpoint to both the rhythm and the mode. The effect is seamless, innovative, and decidedly modern—distinctly Tunisian, traditional, and, at the same time, cosmopolitan.

"Those who understand the *maluf* know that it is very rich," Zammouri says. "But the classical *maluf* is related to a special period in history when people could only play the *maluf*; now we must open up to other forms of music. We cannot confine our inspiration to the past." The benefits, he says, go both ways. "I extract from the *maluf* that which blends with western music. In this way I think I can bring innovation to the West through my music."

Another of Zammouri's *maluf*-inspired compositions was commissioned by Sihem Belkhoja, Tunis's premier modern-dance choreographer. Belkhoja used the composition for a piece called "Iqa," which she says was intended to "touch the underlying rhythms of our Arab culture, and *maluf* is a faithful language of translation for our Arab culture."

Dance is not traditionally associated with *maluf*, so any choreography represents a startling innovation in the genre. "Our Muslim arts are rooted in music, architecture and poetry," Belkhoja says. "The concept of dance doesn't fit into old Arab traditions. For a strong foundation for dance, as a modern art, we must turn to music."

Belkhoja's dancers are carefully costumed and lit. They jump, turn, roll, crawl and stomp their way around the stage in the international freeform style of modern dance. It's a long way from the Rashidiyya. "I use *maluf* because a contemporary art must reach into tradition for a faithful approach to modern society," Belkhoja says. Artistic growth begins at the roots, but the ultimate survival of the art depends on the growth. "Music and dance," she says, "these are living arts. Innovation is preservation."

That is the lifelong story of the *maluf*, evolving through centuries of migration and cultural influences into a nation's binding musical vocabulary. In the early years of independence, when the freshly notated *nubat* were at last gathered for publication, Salah el-Mahdi wrote that, in the *maluf*, "we see to what extent Tunisia has been a crossroads of cultures and of schools, retaining and incorporating into her venerable heritage that which suits the disposition of her people, and enriching that heritage by what her sons produce. Thus there is a beneficial give and take, and this is the way of God with creation."

Thorne Anderson is an American free-lance journalist and closet musician based in the Balkans. His recent projects include youth culture in Belgrade and Chinese immigration in Serbia. He can be reached at thorneanderson@hotmail.com.

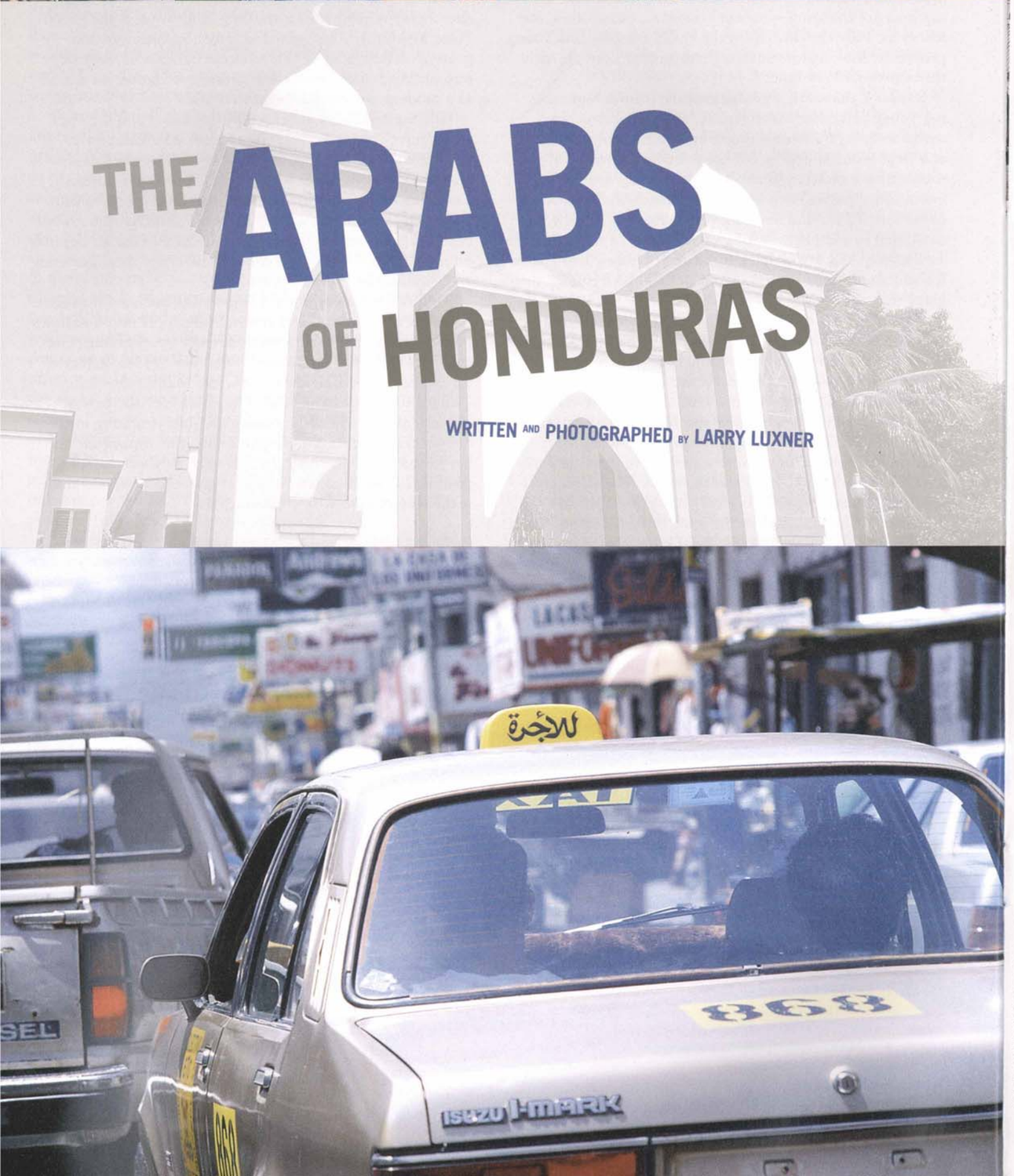
Related articles have appeared in these past issues of *Aramco World* and *Saudi Aramco World*:

Refugees from Al-Andalus: J/A 91
Culturing Flowering of Al-Andalus: S/O 92, J/F 93

Far left: **Composer Rabiaa Zammouri uses a computer to go beyond orchestral instrumentation. "Now we must open up to other forms of music," he says. "We must find the point that includes the *maluf* and the music of the outside world. For example, how can we bring Americans to the *maluf*? We must understand American music in order to make a bridge."** Left: **A seated chorus, such that of the Farabi Club, is integral to much Arab classical music, including *maluf*.** Right: **Sihem Belkhoja draws on *maluf* to choreograph a piece by Zammouri. "I use *maluf* because a contemporary art must reach into tradition for a faithful approach to modern society," she says. "Innovation is preservation."** Far right: **Mohammed Jehri concentrates on notation at the state-sponsored Center for Music and Popular Arts in Tunis, where some 500 children and adults attend extracurricular music classes for nominal fees.**

THE ARABS OF HONDURAS

WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY LARRY LUXNER



OPPOSITE, TOP LEFT: GEORGE BRIDGES / AFP / CORBIS

In a small, brightly decorated classroom at the Escuela Trilingüe San Juan Bautista in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, 18 boys and girls gaze intently at the blackboard as their teacher, Bethlehem-born Buthaina de Bandy, writes out the morning's Arabic lesson.

School rector George Faraj peeks in, exchanges a "sabah al-khayr" ("good morning") with de Bandy and the class, and walks on to his office, which is dominated by a framed map titled "Palestine" and a large blue-and-white Honduran flag.

"This is the only trilingual school of its kind in Central America," Faraj says proudly. "We have 155 students from kindergarten through ninth grade, and all of them learn English, Spanish and Arabic."

Although there are no official statistics, it's generally agreed that between 150,000 and 200,000 of Honduras' six million inhabitants are of Arab descent, and of these, the great majority are Palestinian. No other country in the Western Hemisphere has a higher proportion of Arab immigrants and, in absolute numbers, Honduras ranks fourth after the United States, Canada and Chile.

And though three percent is a small minority of the Honduran population, it includes a good many of the country's political and business leaders, among them the country's president, Carlos Roberto Flores Facussé. His mother, like many of the early settlers, hailed from Bethlehem. In business, the names of free-trade–zone and textile entrepreneur Juan Canahuati, mattress-maker George Elias Mitri and shoe manufacturer Roberto Handal are all well known.

Coffee exporter Oscar Kafati recently became minister of industry and commerce. "My grandfather Gabriel was one of the first Arabs in Honduras," he says, describing Gabriel's journey at the end of the 19th century from Beit Jala, a village on the outskirts of Jerusalem.

"He was heading for Colombia, where he had a very rich friend. But he didn't like it there, so he decided to visit friends from Beit Jala who were already living in Honduras. I admire those first immigrants like my grandfather, because they arrived in the country without speaking the language."

Kafati's family has been in the coffee business since 1933, and today the company named for his grandfather, Gabriel Kafati SA, is the principal coffee roaster of Honduras.

"I grew up in the business," says Kafati, who is now 71. He served as ambassador to Egypt for three years; after that, he was appointed ambassador to Italy, but resigned in 1999 following Hurricane Mitch, because of business losses and "the psychological damage our family suffered." Then, in March of last year, President Flores offered him the post at the head of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce. As a young man, he says, he never expected to end up in government, and indeed, until a few decades ago, there were no elected officials of Arab origin in Honduras.

These days, of course, things are different. Besides Flores and Kafati, government officials of Palestinian origin also include Vice President William Handal; Central Bank President Victoria Asfoura; Minister-at-Large Juan Bendeck; and some half dozen of the 120 deputies in the Honduran parliament.

How Arabs came to succeed so dramatically in Honduras is a story that reflects the best of the Arab immigrant experience in the Americas as a whole.

Honduras's yeasty three-percent Arab minority has risen to prominence in industry, agribusiness, education and government. Above, **Buthaina de Bandy teaches her class the days of the week in Arabic.** Opposite, from left: **Honduran President Carlos Flores Facussé, trained in the US as an engineer; businessman José Segebre, whose family came from Beit Jala, near Jerusalem; Juan and Selim Canahuati, whose family owns a hardware store, a supermarket, a tobacco company and a garment factory; farm-equipment manufacturer António Jacobo Saybe; Oscar Kafati, coffee exporter and now minister of industry and commerce; Elías Larach, whose family came to Honduras in 1900; and George Faraj of the Escuela Trilingüe San Juan Bautista.** Below: **San Pedro Sula, with a population of some 450,000, is the second city of Honduras and the country's industrial capital.**

PROMINENT LATIN-AMERICAN ARABS

Scholars estimate that well over seven million Arabs—the majority of Syrian, Lebanese or Palestinian origin—live in Latin America and the Caribbean, with the biggest communities in Brazil (1.5 million) and Argentina (1 million).

Prominent leaders of Arab descent include two former Ecuadoran presidents, the present prime minister of Belize, and the minister of education of El Salvador.

But it's in business that Arabs have really made their marks. Paraguay's leading retailer is Lebanese-born Faisal Hammoud. A Palestinian, Mohammed El Amal, owns one of Puerto Rico's largest drug-store chains. In Panama, Lebanese-born Abdul Waked oversees the largest duty-free business in the Colón Free Zone. And in Mexico, Carlos Slim Helú—of Lebanese origin —is Latin America's richest man.

As the region's Muslim population continues to grow, mosques have begun sprouting up from Caracas to Curaçao. In Mexico City, the Centro Cultural Islámico de México is both a mosque and a translation center, while the Buenos Aires-based Islamic Organization of Latin America has been active in sending young Muslims on the pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia.

Arab names appear occasionally on signs and storefronts, but the immigrants are well-integrated in Honduran society. Below: **Arab-Honduran children dress up in the costumes of their parents' or grandparents' Palestinian home towns.**

Honduras received its first Arab immigrant in 1893, recounts António Jacobo Saybe, who at 68 still works every day at his farm-equipment factory, Fundidora del Norte SA. The immigrant's name was Constantino Nini, and he was a merchant who peddled dry goods door-to-door in the little towns along the northern Honduran coast. Later on, Nini established a mop and broom factory in the coastal town of La Ceiba.

Another early settler was Rosa Handal, who arrived on December 22, 1898 from Bethlehem. Other Palestinians who came at that time included Elías Yuja, Juan Kawas and Jacobo Saybe, Antonio's father.

But what really brought a wave of immigrants—to all of the Americas—was World War I, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the delay of the Arab drive for independence from colonial rule.

"Many of our fathers and grandfathers in Palestine were saving their money to go to America," says Saybe. "They bought third-class tickets, which were all they could afford. They weren't too smart geographically. The first stop was either the Caribbean or Central America. They didn't speak English, and they didn't speak Spanish. So they came without any papers, and without a penny in their pockets, and were admitted to a country that really opened its arms to them." Hardware-store owner Elías Larach, whose family came to Honduras in 1900, adds that "our fathers and grandfathers were very innocent, simple people. They worked hard and eventually became successful."

Indeed: By 1918, according to a local survey, Arab immigrants owned just more than 41 percent of the businesses in San Pedro Sula, the country's second-largest city. On June 27, 1936, in commemoration of the 400th anniversary of the death of the Honduran warrior Lempira, the city's Arab community expressed its gratitude to its adopted home by dedicating a statue of him.

Immigration picked up again after World War II and the Middle East war of 1948. "My father, Bishara, was forced to come to Honduras because of the war," says Selim B. Canahuati, who was born in Bethlehem in 1949 and arrived in San Pedro Sula two years later. Canahuati's father already had relatives here, so establishing a business wasn't difficult. The family opened a hardware store in Puerto Cortés, and they run it to this day—along with a San Pedro Sula garment factory that employs 150 workers and assembles shirts on contract for Macy's, Burdine's and other US-based department-store chains. A cousin, Nawal Canahuati de Burbara, owns Comisariato Los Andes, a major Honduran supermarket. Other members of the family own the Elías Canahuati y Hermanos tobacco company in San Pedro Sula, founded in 1931.

José Segebre, whose family also came from Beit Jala, recalls Palestinians swarming to Marseille, France, where "we'd see a ship in the harbor and ask where it was going. If we were told it was going to America, that was enough for us. We hurried to get on, and we got off wherever it went."

In Honduras, he says, "a friend gave me yarn and clothes, and I opened a store in downtown San Pedro Sula, though I had no experience." He adds that he did well nonetheless, and his parents joined him shortly thereafter.

One major expression of Arab community identity came in 1968, when a local group founded the Centro Social Hondureño-Arabe in the suburbs above San Pedro Sula. From a single swimming pool, it has grown into a $15-million complex with an Olympic-sized pool, tennis courts, a gym, three restaurants and three ballrooms—named Palestina, Jerusalem and Belén. Some 1600 families are members. The restaurants offer both Palestinian dishes—*falafil, kibbe* and *baba ghanoush*—and Honduran dishes such as beef filet with rice, beans, plantains and tortillas. A recent New Year's Eve party attracted more than 1000 people.

All this is a long way from the 1930's and 1940's, when Arabs and other Honduran immigrant minorities—mostly Chinese and Jews—were often denied entrance to the country's top restaurants and clubs.

"There wasn't hate against the Palestinians, but there was jealousy, because we worked hard and made money. This was the only way," says Tewfik Canahuati, 70. "Today we have no more such social problems in Honduras. There are always some people who don't understand us, just as there are some people who tell Americans, 'Yankee, go home.' But we are integrated in all aspects of life here."

So integrated, in fact, that marriages recently announced in the community's bimonthly bulletin *Marhaba* (*Hello*) included Sakhel–Morales, Handal–Rodríguez and Castelain–Nasralla.

Today, as many as 25 percent of the city's 800,000 inhabitants are at least related to someone Arab, according to Nancie González, author of a 1992 study *Dollar, Dove and Eagle: One Hundred Years of Palestinian Migration to Honduras.* In other Honduran cities, from the capital, Tegucigalpa, to San Lorenzo, Comayagua, Puerto Cortés and El Progreso, the numbers are much smaller. In San Pedro Sula, González notes, some 75 percent of the stores in the six-square-block downtown area are Arab-owned, but because the Arabs are neither residentially segregated nor very distinct physically from other Hondurans, "they tend to fade into the general fabric of Honduran life when viewed casually by outsiders."

Beyond political service, Honduras's Arab community has lately embarked on a number of charitable enterprises. After the devastation of Hurricane Mitch in late 1998, the Association of Arab Orthodox Women and the Honduran-Arab Ladies' Association worked hard to help hurricane victims.

In addition, the local chamber of commerce has established Fundación Mhotivo, a school on the outskirts of San Pedro Sula where 320 children from the poorest sections of the city receive free education in both Spanish and English. Funding for the $2-million school comes from local businesses, and while the Arab community isn't supporting the project alone, a good many of the names on the plaque at the school's entrance have a distinctly Arab flavor.

"We are conscious that only through education can we provide the tools people need to search for new opportunities," says foundation president Mario Canahuati. "We make sure the parents participate, and we're getting pretty good results. We're seeing some changes almost immediately. The parents realize that something different is happening in their lives."

Ventures such as these weave the Arabs of San Pedro Sula ever more tightly into the warp and weft of their adopted country. "This has taken a long time. It didn't happen overnight," says Selim Canahuati. "But I don't think we're going to disappear, because the people would like us to keep our way of life. We Hondurans, whether or not we are Arabs, have a traditional way of life, with strong family traditions. We're a small country and this has helped to keep things normal."

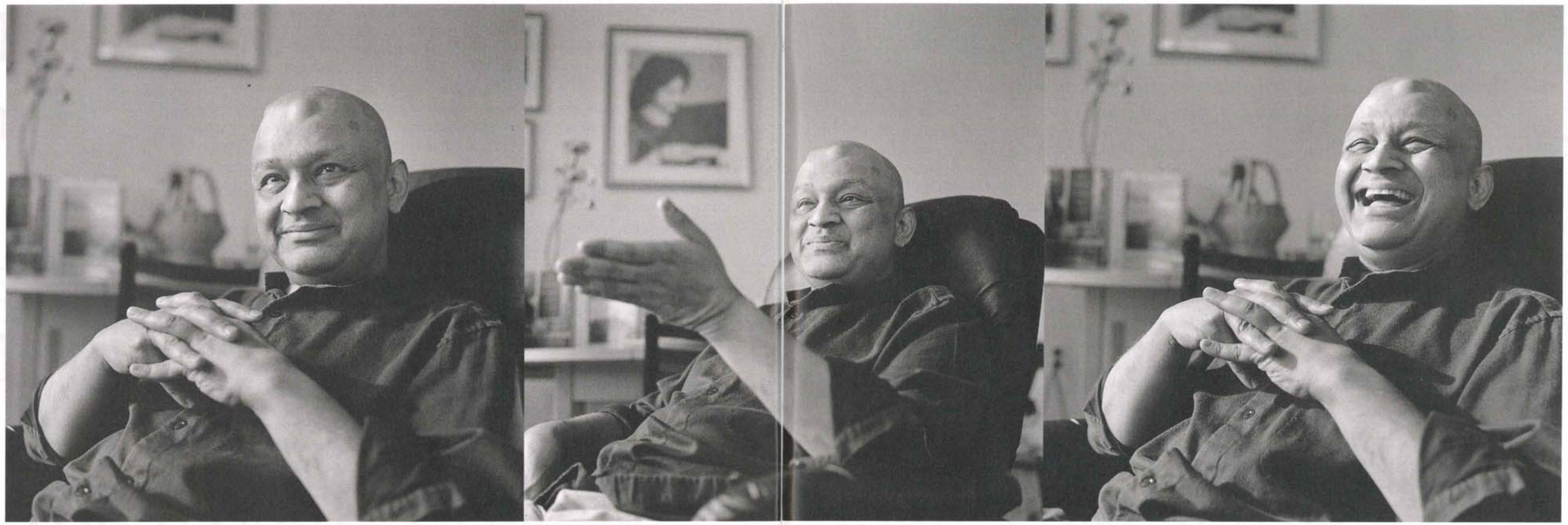
Paying homage to the Lenca chief Lempira, who led the resistance to Spanish conquest in the 16th century, was understood as a respectful "thank you" on the part of Honduras's Arab immigrants to the country that took them in.

Larry Luxner (www.luxner.com) is a Washington-based freelance journalist and photographer who specializes in Latin America and the Middle East. He thanks Fanny Hawit of the Hotel Real Inter-Continental San Pedro Sula for her assistance in that city.

Related articles have appeared in these past issues of *Aramco World* and *Saudi Aramco World*:

Muslims in the Carribean: N/D 87
Arabs in Cuba: M/A 95

A Gift of Ghazals



Written by Louis Werner Photographed by Kevin Bubriski

When Agha Shahid Ali starts to write a poem, he chooses between two entirely different approaches. At times, he selects a pattern-breaking individualism that roams among prose-like lines, elliptical epigrams and quotations; at others, he cleaves hard to tradition by taking up archaic and technically demanding forms such as the villanelle, sestina, canzone and the like. Then, as if to repudiate all such polarities, he may also plunge into a *ghazal*, an Eastern poetic structure whose "formal disunity" he first heard from his Urdu-speaking mother in his native Kashmir.

"For me," says Ali, "*ghazal*s are first and foremost about my feelings, whether from the distant past or from yesterday, that I need to put into a form with special meaning to me. I want to contain those feelings in a singular way, where I can revisit them again and again. *Ghazal*s were the first poems I ever heard, and the form itself returns so much to me."

The late poet James Merrill once compared Ali's poetic works to "Mughal palace ceilings, whose countless mirrored convexities at once reduce, multiply, scatter, and enchant." W. S. Merwin has found in them "our own lost but inalienable homeland." To John Ashberry, Ali is simply "one of America's finest younger poets." Ali earned the accolades of these three Pulitzer Prize winners before even bringing out what he considers his best *ghazals*, a collection of which he hopes to publish under the title *Call Me Ishmael Tonight*.

Although the form is an old and extremely disciplined one, Ali says, *ghazal*s "do not demand long elaborations and consistency of thought. In that respect they match the inclinations of the young. But to be good requires years and years of distillation. I am only now getting to that point."

Ali's first two collections, published in Calcutta in the early 1970's, are testimonials to what is for him an ambivalent modernism. A poem from that time called "Dear Editor," written when he was in his early 20's, contains ironic verses that are still useful for understanding a poet who straddles different worlds: "I am a dealer in words / that mix cultures / and leave me rootless: / This is an excellent trade" and "I swear / Dear Editor / I have my hopes / Hopes which assume shapes in / Alien territories."

In this time he often foregrounded treasured childhood memories of his mother's recitations, which in these early poems became inexorably entwined with the ongoing strife in Kashmir: "*Ghazal*, that death-sustaining widow, / sobs in dingy archives, hooked to you. / She wears her grief, a moon-soaked white, / corners the sky in disbelief."

In the poem "Learning Urdu," he speaks of his mother tongue as if it were itself a contested land, pressured between the cultures of India and Pakistan: "Across the line

ACROSS THE LINE OF BLOOD MY FRIENDS DISSOLVED / INTO BITTER STANZAS OF SOME DEAD POET.
I COULDN'T SYMPATHIZE / I ONLY WANTED THE BITTER COUPLETS EXPLAINED.

of blood my friends dissolved / Into bitter stanzas of some dead poet. / I couldn't sympathize / I only wanted the bitter couplets explained."

In 1975, he came to the United States to complete his doctorate at Pennsylvania State University. He still regards the move with characteristic ambiguity, one that both acknowledges opportunity and recognizes the cost of leaving behind both his language and his landscape. *The Half-Inch Himalayas*, his first American collection, published in the prestigious Wesleyan University Press New Poets series, begins with the bittersweetly nostalgic "Postcard from Kashmir":

> Kashmir shrinks in my mailbox,
> My home a neat four by six inches.
>
> I always loved neatness. Now I hold
> the half-inch Himalayas in my hand.
>
> This is home. And this the closest
> I'll ever be to home....

Now on the faculty of the University of Utah, Ali considers himself a Kashmiri-American and an English-language poet. "Someone of two nearly equal loyalties," he wrote about the two languages, English and Urdu, "must lend them, almost give them, to each other, and hope that sooner or later the loan will be forgiven and they will become each other's."

He reconciled this split personality most determinedly in his 1995 translations of the late Urdu-language poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz (1911–1984), published under the title *The Rebel's Silhouette* by the University of Massachusetts Press. Faiz was a family friend and a landmark literary figure whose work Ali felt obligated to make known in America, and because he delved into Faiz's *ghazal*s and other poems, Ali feels that "the loan is not only forgiven, but now forgotten."

But by his own estimation, Ali's translations of Faiz's *ghazal*s are unsatisfying. He chides himself for taking too many liberties with structure in order to clarify meaning, sacrificing a *ghazal*'s signature reticence, ellipsis, and abbreviated metaphor to fill gaps of meaning with words. When he realized this, he set himself the task of finding the *ghazal*'s proper English language formulae, not by translating from the Urdu masters, but by writing original poems, in English.

Even though its roots are in the Arabian Peninsula and it is arguably the oldest poetic form still in use today, nowhere does the modern *ghazal* excite more pride than among Urdu-speakers across the Indian subcontinent. Its most common subject, love and longing, was first invoked by the pre-Islamic Arab poets, who created the *ghazal*—the word means "flirtation"—as a stand-alone poem by spinning off the amatory opening lines, or *nasib*, from the more elaborate Arabic *qasidah*, or ode. The *ghazal*'s rhyme, meter, and structure were later codified by the Persian masters Hafiz, Jami and Sana'i.

In Urdu, *ghazal*s reached their literary heights in the 18th and 19th centuries in the Mughal court, having been first established and nurtured in the court of the Qutb Shahi sultans in Hyderabad. Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib (1797–1864), widely acknowledged as the greatest of all *ghazal* poets, was translated into English only recently and with some success by Adrienne Rich, who went on to pioneering experiments with the form on her own. *Ghazal*-like poems appeared along with Middle Eastern-styled quatrains, odes and elegies in Goethe's 1819 *West-Östlicher Diwan* (*West-Eastern Divan*), which tried to capture the spirit of the Persian poets. *Ghazal*s were taken up a century later in Spanish by Federico García Lorca, in a form he called *gacela*—though his poems actually showed little similarity to the conventional form except in the theme of love, and even in that he took a surrealist direction that leaned away from traditional forms.

Today, Agha Shahid Ali is virtually a one-man champion of what he calls the "true *ghazal*." Through writing, teaching and collecting the English-language *ghazal*, he is aiming to put it on the same popular footing as that other Asian poetic form that has jumped the East-West divide, the haiku. And just as others had to do for the haiku, Ali now has to fight for the *ghazal*'s structural integrity—its rules and regulations, so to speak—as it passes into English. To do this he must undo impressions built in the 1960's and 1970's, when the form first came to attention in English and when, in general, rules of form were being thrown to the wind.

"That was unfortunate, because the *ghazal* is nothing if not about rules," notes Ali. "Western poets were then aiming wildly at the exotic, so they wrote the poems they would have written anyway and just called them *ghazal*s."

According to Urdu convention, a *ghazal* should written in couplets, and it must maintain a meter. It has both an end-line refrain word (*radif*), which occurs without variation in both lines of the first couplet and on the second line of all following couplets, and a mid-line rhyme (*qafiya*) which immediately precedes the refrain. Each couplet contains its own atomized meaning, with many varied sentiments. It is often voiced in the first person. The last couplet, called a *makhta*, names the poet directly in the second or third person, often using his pen name, or *takhallus*. Because of this structure, *ghazals* can speak to universal truths in a veiled voice and end with a personal calling card.

Thus the *ghazal* is at once unified by rhyme and refrain yet disjointed both by its stand-alone, seemingly randomly ordered couplets and by its shift in voice. Ali compares the self-sufficiency of the couplets to "stones in a necklace that continue to shine in vivid isolation." The rhyme and refrain words are still points around which the couplets spin. When it works well, the poem creates "a profound and complex cultural unity, built on association and memory and expectation," Ali says.

Yale University critic Sara Suleri Goodyear calls the *ghazal*'s refrain word "an astonishment," startling the listener as it returns home again at the end of each couplet from a new and unexpected direction, completing the sentences and thoughts often in wildly different ways. Ali detects desire as well as surprise in the *radif*, saying that a *ghazal* creates "a constant sense of longing" for the reappearance of its refrain.

Take these examples from his own couplets, noting both the refrain and the rhyme that precedes it.

> Where are you now? Who lies beneath your spell tonight
> before you agonize him in farewell tonight?
>
> Pale hands that once loved me beside the Shalimar:
> Whom else from rapture's road will you expel tonight?
>
> Those "Fabrics of Cashmere–" "to make Me beautiful–"
> "Trinket"–to gem–"Me to adorn–How–tell"–tonight?
>
> I beg for haven: Prisons, let open your gates
> A refugee from Belief seeks a cell tonight.
> ...
>
> And I, Shahid, only am escaped to tell thee
> God sobs in my arms. Call me Ishmael tonight.

Postcard from Kashmir

Kashmir shrinks into my mailbox,
my home a neat four by six inches.

I always loved neatness. Now I hold
the half-inch Himalayas in my hand.

This is home. And this the closest
I'll ever be to home. When I return,
the colors won't be so brilliant,
the Jhelum's waters so clean,
so ultramarine. My love
so overexposed.

And my memory will be a little
out of focus, in it
a giant negative, black
and white, still undeveloped.

(for Pavan Sahgal)

A Call

I close my eyes. It doesn"t leave me,
the cold moon of Kashmir which breaks
into my house

and steals my parents' love.

I open my hands:
empty, empty. This cry is foreign.

"When will you come home?"
Father asks, then asks again.

The ocean moves into the wires.

I shout, "Are you all happy?"
The line goes dead.

The waters leave the wires.

The sea is quiet, and over it
the cold, full moon of Kashmir.

Most translations of classical Urdu *ghazals* have failed because the simultaneous demands of meter, rhyme and meaning are simply overwhelming, and translators are forced to abandon at least one of the first two goals in order to achieve the third. In English, however, the otherwise often stilted language of the Victorians turned out to lend itself well to the *ghazal*. Translations of Persian *ghazals* in the 18th and 19th centuries by Sir William Jones and E. G. Browne managed to maintain the essential conventions. More recently, the contemporary poet Andrew McCord has translated Ghalib with an even finer ear.

Beyond translation, it is Ali who has led the development of English *ghazals* in a form faithful in both spirit and letter to the Urdu model. He adheres to the rules of line length as well as meter, rhyme and refrain, and to the thematic conventions of the first and last couplets. Most important, he captures the *ghazal*'s essential emotion, the slippery ground, as he sees it, between love and melancholy, "an occasion for genuine grief."

The strictness of these conventions, he says, make him feel "gratefully shackled." Poet John Hollander, in a *ghazal* about *ghazals*, has called the form "inaccessible, vibrant, sublime at the end" and its couplets "two frail arms of delicate form." Ali has referred to *ghazals* as "Kashmiri paisleys tied into the golden hair of Arabic."

Because the expression of genius within tight boundaries can become a theatrical enterprise, *ghazal* poets were historically a social lot. They gathered often to recite before their fellows in competitive symposia called *musha'arahs*, which reached their peak in the Mughal court, although they are still held today wherever Urdu poets are active. In these sophisticated and ceremonial occasions, the poets in attendance were given a *misra'-i tara*, a half-line in the meter and rhyme in which each then had to compose his *ghazal*. In order, from the lesser poets to the masters, each participant recited his work for the appreciation of his peers and the audience. A lighted candle was placed before the poet whose turn it was to recite.

"The Last Candle of Delhi," by Farhatullah Beg, is a semi-historical account of a royal *musha'arah* attended by 59 poets, including the masters Ustad Zauq, Mirza Ghalib and Momin Khan, and their student followers. Zauq was court poet of the last Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah II, who himself wrote fine *ghazals* and under whose auspices the *musha'arah* convened. Farhatullah's account was based on an actual 1845 *musha'arah* recorded by Karim-ud-Din Maghfoor, who collected the *ghazals* recited that night in a volume called a *guldastah* ("bouquet").

Agha Shahid Ali's next book, *Rooms Are Never Finished*, will be published this fall by W.W. Norton. Below, **he poses with his sister, Hena Ahmad, and his brother, Agha Iqbal Ali. The poet is presently being treated for brain cancer.**

Stationery

The moon did not become the sun.
It just fell on the desert
in great sheets, reams
of silver handmade by you.
The night is your cottage industry now,
the day is your brisk emporium.
The world is full of paper.

Write to me.

Chandni Chowk, Delhi

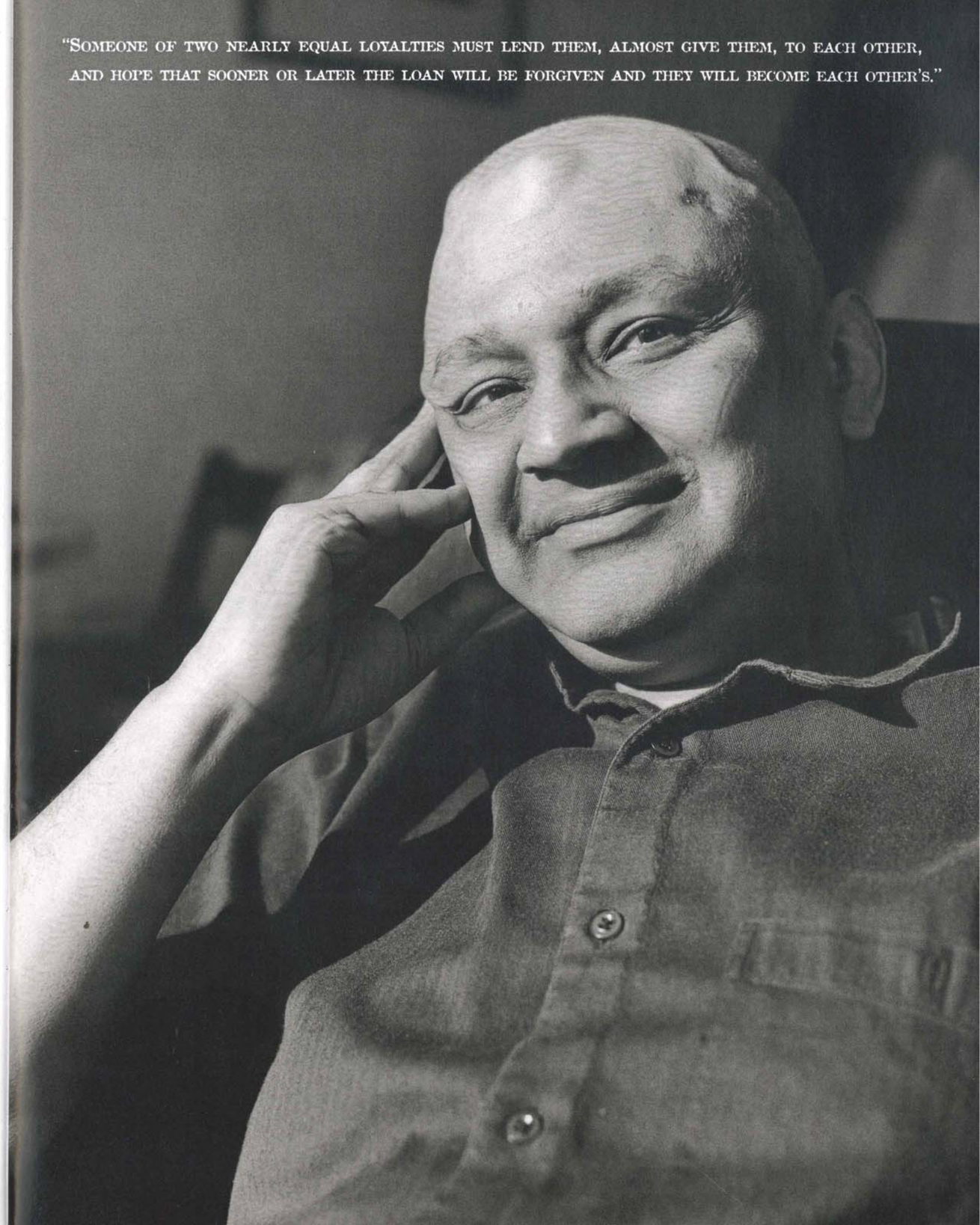
Swallow this summer street,
then wait for the monsoon.
Needles of rain

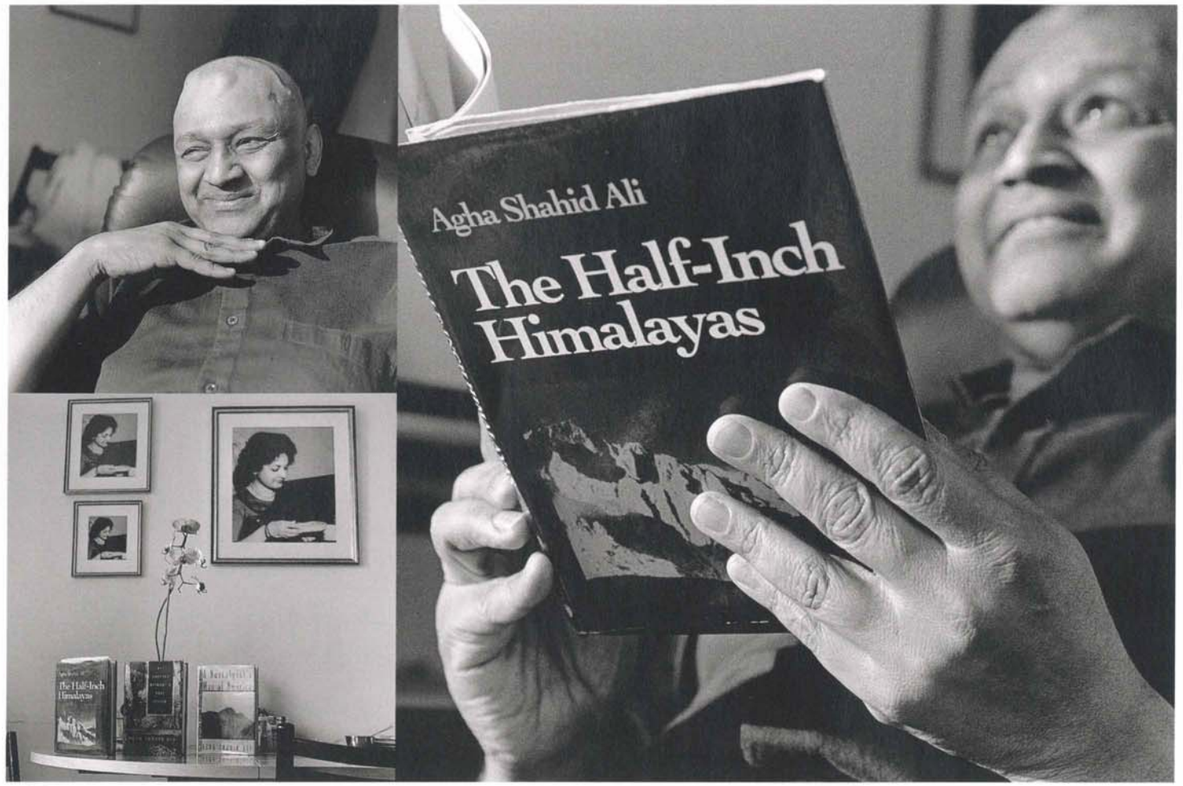
melt on the tongue. Will you go
farther? A memory of drought
holds you: you remember

the taste of hungry words
and you chew syllables of salt.

Can you rinse away this city that lasts
like blood on the bitten tongue?

"SOMEONE OF TWO NEARLY EQUAL LOYALTIES MUST LEND THEM, ALMOST GIVE THEM, TO EACH OTHER, AND HOPE THAT SOONER OR LATER THE LOAN WILL BE FORGIVEN AND THEY WILL BECOME EACH OTHER'S."





A WOMAN COMBS—AT NOON—THE RUINS FOR HER DAUGHTER. / CHECHNYA IS GONE. WHAT ROSES WILL YOU BRING— / PLUCKED FROM SHAWLS AT DUSK—TO WREATHE THE SLAUGHTER?

Early in Bahadur's reign, *musha'arah*s were held twice monthly at the Red Fort in the Diwan-e-'Am, or Public Hall. They lasted from 9:00 in the evening until dawn—a time known as "the aristocratic hour." Invitations specified the *tarah*, or meter-and-rhyme pattern, for each evening's *ghazals*.

"At the word of the heralds," the account begins, "all present settled down on folded knees and lowered their heads. The Emperor's page took out Bahadur's *ghazal* from a silk cloth, kissed it, touched it to his eyes and began reciting in a resonant melodious voice. The audience was too entranced to applaud. They swayed in rapture of delight at every couplet. Occasionally phrases like *Subhan Allah! Subhan Allah!* ["Glory to God!"] escaped underbreath from their lips. Otherwise the room remained silent, spellbound and completely lost in itself."

More worldly moments occurred as well: Although one recitation was gem-like, it was considered out of place, for it was recited in Persian, and this *musha'arah* was a celebration of Urdu. A *ghazal* by Indian Army Captain Alexander Heatherly, born of an English father and Indian mother and attending that night's performance in uniform, was roundly applauded. A failure by an otherwise senior poet is doubly mocked, first by the thunderous silence of masters, and then by the inane cheering of sycophants.

The account goes on to follow the highs and lows of both magisterial and pedestrian versifying in *ghazals*, and all of it—from grudge matches and artistic slights to the flare-ups of past feuds, tactical alliances between rivals and catty asides—speak to the passionate vitality of the form. It is the master Ustad Zauq who ends the *musha'arah* as dawn breaks: His recitation of a wistful elegy—pointedly *not* a *ghazal*—serves to bring the evening to a close and with it, unbeknownst to him, an era.

To introduce the *ghazal* to a wide audience in English, Ali has relied not so much on his own work as on an another kind of bouquet, an intercultural collaboration, *Ravishing Dis-Unities: Real Ghazals in English*, published last fall by University Press of New England. It is a collection of *ghazals* written in English by 105 poets, as well as two *ghazals* by Ghalib and Faiz in translation. Although it contains none by Ali, each poem observes Ali's code of the *ghazal*'s basic rules in English. The writers are a diverse lot, including South Asians, the occasional Irishman and Englishman, some of Ali's best students, and US masters such as William Matthews, John Hollander and John Edgar Wideman. In his introduction, Ali has created a *ghazal*-writing primer for first-timers. Poet Christopher Merrill calls the collection "a marvelous gift to the literary world," and speculates that "nothing will ever be quite the same in our poetry."

The weightiness of Ali's original poetry is a long way from the brevity of sentiment required of *ghazal*s. His 1997 collection, *The Country Without a Post Office*, opens apocalyptically with the first verse of Sura 54 of the Qur'an: "The hour draws nigh and the moon is rent asunder"; the second epigraph is from Tacitus: "They make a desolation and call it peace."

The post office in the title poem—"that archive for letters with doomed / addresses, each house buried or empty. / Empty? Because so many fled, ran away, / and became refugees there, in the plains,"—is an example of the personal experience with strife that brings him into communion with so many other places of suppressed nationhood: "A woman combs—at noon—the ruins for her daughter. / Chechnya is gone. What roses will you bring— / Plucked from shawls at dusk—to wreathe the slaughter?"

The Kashmiri shawl becomes a metaphorical touchstone for Ali, and he self-consciously imagines himself as a weaver aiming for a tight warp in words as delicate as pashmina. "When the ibex rubs itself against the rocks, who collects / its fallen fleece from the slopes? / O Weaver whose seams perfectly vanished, who weighs the / hairs on the jeweler's balance?" Poems taken as textiles have a long history in the Middle East and Asia; Ibn Khaldun was not the first to compare poets to weavers.

Of the three *ghazal*s in this collection, one acts as a beacon, calling the *ghazal* back to Arabia and Arabic, the land and language of its birth:

> The only language of loss left in the world is Arabic—
> These words were said to me in a language not Arabic.
>
> Ancestors, you've left me a plot in the family graveyard—
> Why must I look, in your eyes, for prayers in Arabic?
>
> Majnoon, his clothes ripped, still weeps for his Laila.
> O, this is the madness of the desert, his crazy Arabic.
>
> Who listens to Ishmael? Even now he cries out:
> Abraham, throw away your knives, recite a psalm in Arabic.
> ...
>
> They ask me to tell them what Shahid means—
> Listen: It means "The Beloved" in Persian, "witness" in Arabic.

The Dacca Gauzes

...for a whole year he sought
to accumulate the most exquisite
Dacca gauzes.
—Oscar Wilde/*The Picture of Dorian Gray*

Those transparent Dacca gauzes
known as woven air, running
water, evening dew:

a dead art now, dead over
a hundred years. "No one
now knows," my grandmother says,

"what it was to wear
or touch that cloth." She wore
it once, an heirloom sari from

her mother's dowry, proved
genuine when it was pulled, all
six yards, through a ring.

Years later when it tore,
many handkerchiefs embroidered
with gold-thread paisleys

were distributed among
the nieces and daughters-in-law.
Those too now lost.

In history we learned: the hands
of weavers were amputated,
the looms of Bengal silenced,

and the cotton shipped raw
by the British to England.
History of little use to her,

my grandmother just says
how the muslins of today
seem so coarse and that only

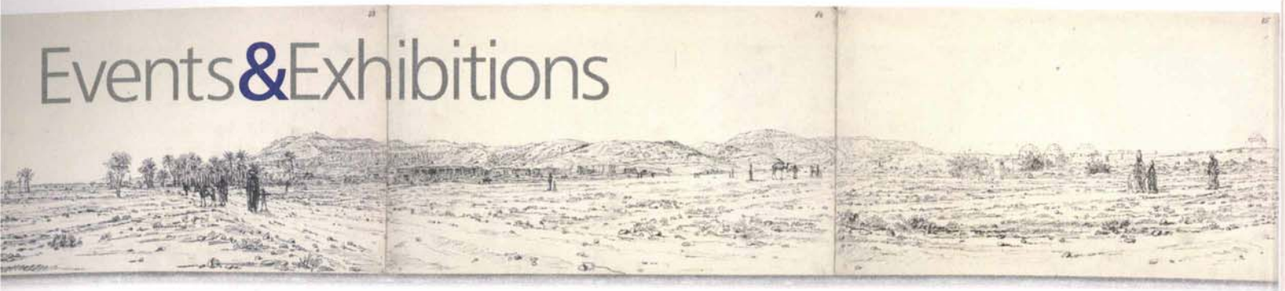
in autumn, should one wake up
at dawn to pray, can one
feel that same texture again.

One morning, she says, the air
was dew-starched: she pulled
it absently through her ring.

Poems reprinted from *The Half-Inch Himalayas* with permission of Wesleyan University Press. Copyright 1987 by Agha Shahid Ali.

Louis Werner is a filmmaker and writer living in New York. **Kevin Bubriski**'s photographs have frequently been published in *Saudi Aramco World* and are widely exhibited and collected. He lives in Vermont.

Events&Exhibitions



Robert Hay, 'View of Qurna,' 1826

Qurna Discovery: *Life on the Theban Hills 1826* is a unique record of the village of Qurna and of the Theban necropolis that has long supported the village economy. The exhibit includes copies of two stunning 360-degree panoramic drawings made by British artist and explorer Robert Hay in 1826 with the aid of a *camera lucida,* a portable device that projects the image of a scene onto paper, where it can be traced to produce extremely precise drawings. Robert Hay was a Scotsman who arrived in Egypt in 1824 and lived and worked in Qurna for extended periods over many years, residing at various times in a vaulted granary in the Ramesseum, in rooms in the temple at Medinet Habu, and in a tomb in the Valley of the Kings. His many drawings, paintings, plans, notebooks and diaries are now in the British Library and have never been published. The panorama copies, a gift of the British Museum, show tombs, tomb dwellings and the richness of Qurnawi life; they are housed in the old Omda (mayor's) House, which has been renovated by local craftsmen using traditional materials and techniques. Information: www.sepcom.demon.co.uk/Hay/main.html. **Qurna, Egypt**, permanently.

July

50 Years of *Aramco World* presents 76 photographs that reflect both the magazine's own history as well as the cultural and geographical diversity of its coverage. Information: 806-742-2974. Arab Cultural Festival, **Seattle** Center, July 13–20. University of Washington, **Seattle**, July 27 through August 3.

Asia: The Steppe Route: From Alexander the Great to Genghis Khan displays masterworks of gold and silk traded along the 7000-kilometer length of the Silk Road and preserved in two important collections at either end of the great trade route: the Hermitage in St. Petersburg and the Academy of Sciences in Ulan Bator—including recently excavated items from Inner Mongolia. The exhibition demonstrates the diversity and richness of the Silk Road civilizations, the interactions among them, and the fruitful diffusion of art among European and Asian peoples from the second century BC to the eighth century of our era. Fundación La Caixa, **Madrid**, through July 15.

Strokes of Genius: Contemporary Iraqi Art shows 55 works in varied media, selected by an intercultural curatorial panel and created by 34 Iraqi artists living in that country and in more than a dozen countries abroad. The 34 are among 150 artists, many of them young, who have contributed over five years to produce a book, website and traveling exhibition that highlights both historical roots and contemporary experiences. The book (of the same title) will use reproductions, interviews, essays and biographical sketches to impart a broad understanding of Iraqi art in recent decades. It will be published before year's end by Saqi Books (ISBN 0-86356-563-8, £17.95 hb). Information: www.strokes-of-genius.com. Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, **Exeter** University, through July 20; Hotbath Galleries, **Bath**, August 8 through September 13; Egee Art Consultancy, **London**, October 17 through November 3.

The Desert is a journey to deserts around the globe, as shown in the works of ten contemporary artists, vintage pictures, photographs and films. Centro Andaluz de Arte Comtemporáneo, **Sevilla**, through July 22.

Egyptian Art in the Time of the Pharaohs displays 56 important works from the Louvre's Egyptological collection, including a replica of the tomb of the craftsman Sennejen, selected because of the quality of its paintings and its perfect state of preservation. A background exhibition at the FAAP University presents general information on costumes, art, religion and daily life; the Louvre's objects are at the Museum of Brazilian Art, and have been selected for their significance and to show the materials and techniques used at the time they were produced. Museum of Brazilian Art and FAAP University, **São Paulo, Brazil**, through July 22.

The Strange and the Wonderful in the Lands of Islam evokes the creations of the imagination in the Islamic world, sometimes shared with the West or with China: cosmography, fabulous beasts, fantasy literature, divination and magic. Musée du Louvre, **Paris**, through July 23.

Teaching About the Arab World and Islam is the theme of teacher workshops co-sponsored by the Middle East Policy Council in Washington, D.C. and conducted by Arab World and Islamic Resources and School Services (AWAIR) of Berkeley, California. The program is fully funded and workshops can be requested by any school, district office of education or university. Scheduled sites and dates include: **Jackson, Mississippi**, July 27; **Berkeley, California**, August 2; **Maple Grove, Minnesota**, August 9 and 10; **Monterey, California**, September 28 and 29; **Houston**, October 13; **Dallas**, October 25; **Hattiesburg, Mississippi**, October 26 and 27; **Santa Clara, California**, November 3; **Princeton, West Virginia**, November 10; **New York City**, November 17. Information: 202-296-6767 or 284-495-9742; awair@igc.apc.org.

Empire of the Sultans: Ottoman Art from the Khalili Collection explores the influence of the Ottoman sultans over affairs of state and religion with displays of calligraphy, Qur'ans, manuscripts, arms and armor, metalwork, ceramics, textiles and scientific instruments from the Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art. Catalogue. Asian Art Museum of **San Francisco**, July 28 through October 7; Bruce Museum, **Greenwich, Connecticut**, October 27 through January 27.

The Gods of Ancient Memphis showcases 118 works of Egyptian art including metal and stone statues and statuettes, reliefs, stelae, amulets and jewelry, some never before publicly displayed, some excavated at the site of the ancient Egyptian capital, Memphis. The exhibition presents a lively and multifaceted image of the sacred art of the Egyptians, and includes among its outreach programs a "scribe's school" that teaches hieroglyphic writing, children's workshops and public lectures. Art Museum of the University of **Memphis, Tennessee**, July 28 through October 4.

Gold: The Mystery of the Sarmatians and the Scythians. Between 1986 and 1990 superb gold and silver objects dating from the fifth to the fourth century BC were excavated from burial mounds at Filippovka, a village on the open steppe in the southern Ural Mountains. The Eurasian steppes were inhabited by nomadic tribes during the first millennium BC, and this rich exhibition displays the zoomorphic archaeological treasures from Filippovka in their proper historical and cultural context. The finds, all on loan from St. Petersburg's Hermitage Museum, constitute a new chapter in the history of nomadic art of the steppes. Palazzo Reale, **Milan**, and Scuderie del Castello di Miramare, **Trieste**, through July 29.

From Head to Toe: Selections from the Costume Collection features garments from around the globe: Indian saris and *chadors*, Chinese robes, Indonesian sarongs, Central Asian *ikat* robes, as well as three centuries of Japanese kimonos contrasted with four centuries of fashionable Western dress. **Boston** Museum of Fine Arts, through July 29.

Siberia reconstructs the culture of the Siberian Scythians through a selection of 280 objects from the Hermitage covering the seventh through the fourth century BC. Scuderie del Castello di Miramare, **Trieste**, through July 29.

August

The Glory of Ancient Egypt's Civilization displays more than 123 objects selected from the inexhaustible collection of the Egyptian Museum of Cairo and the Luxor Museum. Matsuzakaya Arts Museum, **Nagoya**, August through September 9; **Niigata** Prefectural Museum, September 18 through October 23; Sogo Art Museum, **Yokohama**, November 8 through December 10.

Gold of the Nomads: Scythian Treasures from Ancient Ukraine presents 165 of the finest gold objects from Scythian graves and burial mounds, many in the "animal style" associated with the Central Asian steppes, and many excavated since 1975 and thus never before exhibited in the United States. The Scythians were a nomadic people who originated in Central Asia in the early first millennium BC and flourished in what is now Ukraine from the fifth to the third century BC. Their arms, horse trappings and other artifacts show Near Eastern and Greek influence, and recently excavated items are causing a reevaluation of the interrelationships among the Aegean world, the Near East, and Central Asia as far east as Mongolia. Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, **Kansas City, Missouri**, through August 11; Grand Palais, **Paris**, September 25 through December 31.

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From Egypt to Prussia: History, Discovery and Fascination of the Pyramids Museum Schloss Neu-Augustusburg, **Weissenfels, Germany**, through August 12.

On the Surface: Late Nineteenth Century Decorative Arts reveals the influence of Orientalism on the surface ornamentation that was so important to the late Victorian era, the aesthetic movement and the early arts-and-crafts movement in America. Designers drew inspiration from Persian, Islamic, Japanese and Greek traditions. On display are tables, chairs and other furniture items, wallpaper, carpets, upholstery, ceramics, porcelain and silverwork—all covered with intricate arabesque marquetry and inlays or embellished with floral or neo-pharaonic patterns. Catalogue. Mint Museum of Art, **Charlotte, North Carolina**, through August 12.

The Arabs: An American Story highlights the history and culture of Atlanta's Arab-American community—more than 15,000 strong—through cultural artifacts and works of art from the local community. **Atlanta** International Museum of Art and Design, through August 24.

Agatha Christie and the East: Criminology and Archeology traces those two strands in the life of the "Queen of Crime," displaying diaries; hitherto unpublished photographs of Christie and her husband, archeologist Max Mallowan; more than 200 artifacts from his excavations in Iraq and Syria; and a compartment from the Orient Express. The exhibition emphasizes Christie's participation in the digs as restorer and photographer. Vorderasiatisches Museum, **Berlin**, through August 26.

Cleopatra of Egypt: From History to Myth looks at the real-life reign of Cleopatra VII, last of the Ptolemaic line to rule in Egypt, whose liaisons with Julius Caesar and Mark Antony, and her suicide in 30 BC upon Octavia's capture of Egypt, have made her an object of fascination ever since. Of Macedonian descent, she was the only ruler of her house to learn the Egyptian language and sacred iconography, and she used them skillfully to political advantage. The exhibit traces representations of her from her own time to the present day. British Museum, **London** through August 26; Field Museum, **Chicago**, October 20 through March 3.

Egyptian Antiquities presents elegant statuettes, rare bas-reliefs and twelve papyri from richly illustrated funeral tracts dating back to the first millennium BC. The materials are on loan from the Bodmeriana, one of the most important private libraries in the world, located in the Swiss village of Cologny, and comprising some 160,000 works, including 270 incunabula, Greek and Coptic papyri and a Gutenberg Bible. Musées d'art et d'histoire, **Geneva**, through August 26.

September

The Legacy of Lord Carnarvon explores the contributions of the Fifth Earl of Carnarvon, a participant in and funder of Howard Carter's explorations that led to the discovery of the tomb of King Tutankhamun. Carnarvon died shortly after this discovery, so his work with Carter is not well known. The exhibition presents objects from the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the British Museum along with Carnarvon's own photographs from his explorations in Egypt, which have never been shown in America. University of **Wyoming** Art Museum, **Laramie**, through September 1.

Traditions in the Middle East is a hands-on exhibition for families and children centered on children's art from Egypt, Iran, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates acquired through the museum's International Youth Art Exchange Program. Children can also enter a Bedouin tent, explore a replica of an Egyptian tomb, bargain in a bazaar, try their hands at Arabic calligraphy and geometric art, knot carpets, play musical instruments and try on traditional clothing from the Middle East. Various regional exhibitions, selected from an archive of 5000 pieces of children's artwork from some four dozen countries, are available for loan. Information: 518-793-2773 or www.worldchildrensmuseum.org. World Awareness Children's Museum, **Glens Falls, New York**, through September 1.

Syria, Land of Civilizations assembles more than 400 cultural treasures—some never before seen abroad—to present one of the world's oldest cultural centers and explore some of the seminal events that took place there. Mesopotamia, the palace of Mari, the most ancient forms of writing and the earliest evidence of farming, Queen Zenobia and her oasis city of Palmyra, the first great Islamic dynasty in Damascus—all are parts of Syria's legacy. The exhibition also highlights the West's intellectual and scientific ties to Syria. Catalogue. A concurrent exhibition, **Contemporary Syria**, explores everyday life, particularly from the perspective of young people. Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum and Planetarium, **San Jose, California**, through September 2; American Museum of Natural History, **New York**, October 10 through January 6, 2002.

Bollywood Satirized and **Memories of India:** The first of these displays Annu Palakunnathu Matthew's digitally collaged photo-posters, which use Bollywood imagery to humorously challenge Indian society. The small black and white prints in "Memories of India" evoke her binational background in lyrical, almost fragile images. DeCordova Museum, **Lincoln, Massachusetts**, through September 3.

Story in Stone—Story of Sacredness shows watercolors by Bill Doughty inspired by the religious monuments of the three monotheistic faiths that regard Jerusalem as sacred. Light of the Word Gallery, **Techny, Illinois**, September 4 through November 30.

Hejira: Recent Paintings presents the work of American visual artist, painter and photographer Christopher Kuhl, including subjects from his recent travels in the Arabian Peninsula and elsewhere. "The impact is highly graphic," wrote critic Richard Vine, "making works virtual signs for the artist's vivid experience of viewing and recollecting a foreign milieu." Swissotel **Atlanta, Georgia**, September 7–26.

From the Amu Darya to the Potomac: Central Asian Bags from Area Collections features pile bags dating from the 19th century and earlier from the Turkmen, Baluch, Uzbek, and Kyrgyz ethnic groups. The bags are beautiful, yet fully functional objects for everyday use both in the yurt home and on pack animals. Styles include *chuval* (a large storage bag hung on the wall), *torba* (a long, narrow storage bag), *boche* (an envelope-style square storage bag), *mafresh* (a small storage bag for personal items), *khorjin* (saddlebag), *ok bash* (a tent-pole cover), *chinakap* (a cylindrical bag used to hold household utensils), and *namakdan* (a salt bag). The exhibition takes its name from the Amu Darya River, the ancient Oxus, which flows northward from Afghanistan to the Aral Sea. Textile Museum, **Washington, D.C.**, September 7 through February 24, 2002.

Traders to Tartary uses maps, artifacts, life-size dioramas and a recreated Bukhara market stall to trace the footsteps of the traders who traveled back and forth from Germany and Poland to the Caspian Sea from the Middle Ages to the 19th century, exchanging European woolens, amber and silver for Central Asian silks, furs, horses, carpets and gems. Yeshiva University Museum, **New York**, September 9 through July, 2002.

The Jewelled Arts of India in the Age of the Mughals shows some 300 pieces dating from the mid-16th to the early 18th century from the al-Sabah Collection of Kuwait. In addition to earrings, pendants and bracelets, the show also features a superb collection of daggers with jewel-encrusted scabbards and hilts (including the famous Ruby Dagger), as well as jewelled boxes, cups and gaming pieces. British Museum, **London**, through September 9.

"Struck on Gold": Money of the Mughal Emperors highlights the ways in which religion, poetry and calligraphy were reflected in the coinage of the different currencies used in Mughal India. The Mughal emperors included portraits of themselves as well as signs of the zodiac on their coins—unusual for Muslim rulers—and minted enormous, beautiful presentation coins. The exhibition examines the origins of the emperors and explores the spread of their empire and its later fragmentation. British Museum, **London**, through September 9.

Along the Nile: Photographs of Egypt 1850–1870 showcases approximately 45 19th-century photographs of Egypt and includes some of the earliest camera images of Egypt's dramatic landscapes, inhabitants, and imposing monuments. The pyramids of Giza, the temples of Karnak, Luxor, and Abu Simbel, the mosques of Cairo, and the cataracts of the Nile are depicted in exceptionally fine prints by the first generation of photographers working in Egypt, including Maxime du Camp, Félix Teynard, John Beasley Greene, Ernest Benecke, Gustave Le Gray, Francis Firth, Felice Beato, and W. Hammerschmidt. Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York**, September 11 through December 30.

The Pharaoh's Photographer: Harry Burton, Tutankhamun, and the Metropolitan's Egyptian Expedition displays some 60 photographs taken between 1906 and 1936 by members of the Metropolitan Museum's Egyptian Expedition. The exhibition presents these images both in their context as records of the museum's excavations and as works of artistic merit that deserve a place in the history of photography. Most are by Harry Burton (1879–1940), the outstanding archeological photographer of his day, who was hired by the museum to photograph the monuments at Thebes. After the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922, his services were shared with Howard Carter and Lord Carnarvon. The exhibition covers all phases of Burton's work in Egypt, including selections from his Tutankhamun portfolio and film footage dating to the early 1920's. Metropolitan Museum of Art, **New York**, September 11 through December 30.

Antioch: The Lost Ancient City will present a great ancient city enlivened with the sights and activities of daily life in the second through sixth centuries of our era, revealing the inhabitants' public and private lives. Approximately 160 objects, including some of the finest examples of mosaics from Antioch, sculpture, frescoes, glass, metalwork, pottery, coins and weights, are displayed in their architectural and cultural contexts. The exhibition evokes the luxury of the domestic settings of the elite and the street life of a polyglot metropolis. Catalogue. **Baltimore** Museum of Art, September 16 through December 30.

Reeds & Wool: Patterned Screens of Central Asia features 19th- and 20th-century screens made by nomadic Kyrgyz women as traditional furnishings for a yurt dwelling. The motifs of Kyrgyz reed screens are similar to patterns seen on flatwoven *kilims*, mosaic felt rugs, and silk *ikat* fabrics, but are made by wrapping unspun dyed wool around the long stems of *chiy*, a slender, stiff grass native to Central Asia. Headley-Whitney Museum, **Lexington, Kentucky**, through September 16.

Continued from previous page

Exploring Ancient Egypt features over 100 objects spanning 4,000 years of history in ancient Egypt from pre-dynastic times to the Roman era. Dennos Museum Center, **Traverse City, Michigan,** through September 19.

Women of the Nile explores the essential role of women and their variety of responsibilities in the four primary aspects of Egyptian life: in the home, the temple, the palace and the afterlife. Dennos Museum Center, **Traverse City, Michigan** through September 19; Muscarelle Museum of Art, William and Mary, **Williamsburg, Virginia,** October 13 through January 13.

Glass in the Ancient Mediterranean: The Eugene Schaefer Collection of Ancient Glass traces the use of glass from its beginnings as a rare and magical medium in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, through the colorful perfume containers of ancient Greece to its mass production under the Romans. Ancient Roman sculpture, pottery and metalwork display other aspects of daily life in the Roman world. Glass in jewelry and women's vanity items will also be shown, as will video clips of master glassmaker Bill Gudenrath demonstrating ancient glass-making techniques. **Newark [New Jersey]** Museum, opens September 21.

Ancient Egyptian Records: A Study at Christ's College, Cambridge is a series of four lectures on early rock art, pyramid texts, tomb reliefs and Coptic manuscripts in aid of the Coptic Manuscripts Conservation Project. Cambridge University, **England,** September 22.

The Fabric of Everyday Life: Historic Textiles from Karanis, Egypt features 3500 Roman-era textiles found during excavations in the 1920's and 1930's in Karanis, in the Fayoum Basin near Cairo. Fabric from antiquity rarely survives, but the desert of Egypt preserved cloth well. This exhibit displays a variety of everyday textiles, most spanning the time from the first century BC to the third century of our era, and helps bring to life a Roman town in Egypt. Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, **Ann Arbor, Michigan,** September 28 through December 23.

Gold from Africa presents Ashanti royal gold jewelry, insignia and ceremonial objects, as well as everyday jewelry, from Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. The clarity, simplicity and elegance of the pieces, from a private collection, show a surprising affinity to modern jewelry design, though most of the more than 200 objects on display were created in the last 150 years and one piece dates back 400 years. Photos, cultural material and audiovisual aids provide context. Neue Galerie der Stadt **Linz, Austria,** through September 30.

Pearl and Mother-of-Pearl explores the nature, origin and use of the "tears of the Naiads" from antiquity to today through etchings on mother-of-pearl, rare pearls and curiosities. Abbazia di San Fruttuoso, **Camogli (Genova), Italy,** through September 30.

October >>

Glass of the Sultans presents approximately 150 of the most spectacular glass objects from the Islamic period, ranging from products inspired by the late antique tradition in the seventh century to 19th-century Persian and Indian glass. Also included will be European glass made for the Oriental market or directly inspired by Islamic glass, dating from the 13th to the 20th century, as well as a selection of high-quality glass found in archaeological sites. Catalogue. **New York,** Metropolitan Museum of Art, October 2 through January 13.

The New Egyptian Galleries unveil the most significant collection of Egyptian funerary art to be purchased by a museum in the last 50 years. Among the 150 objects are ten painted coffins, including a rare complete nesting set, nine mummies, canopic jars, amulets, jewelry, *shawabtis* and reliefs. Catalogue. Michael C. Carlos Museum, **Atlanta,** opens October 6.

Exploring the Holy Land: The Prints of David Roberts and Beyond focuses on the past two centuries, documenting the changes that have occurred in the physical landscape, in the relationships between ancient and contemporary cultures, and in human geography. The exhibition presents lithographs by David Roberts, early photographs by the École Biblique et Archéologique Française de Jérusalem, modern color photographs of the same locales, and artifacts. Bowers Museum of Cultural Art, **Santa Ana, California,** October 6 through January 9, 2002.

Monks and Merchants: Silk Road Treasures From Northwest China, 4th–7th Century includes more than 120 spectacular artifacts—metalwork, textiles, glass, funerary furniture and ceramics—excavated in Gansu Province and Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, at the eastern end of the Silk Roads. Most have never been seen before in the West. The 400 years between the fall of the Han dynasty and the rise of the Tang empire was a tumultuous period of disunity in China, but also a time of economic and cultural ferment and artistic achievement comparable to the present period of transnational trade and cultural globalization. The exhibition tells the story of intercultural contacts through trade and religion rather than military conquest, and reveals the impact of the new religious, ethnic and cultural influences that penetrated and transformed China during this time. Among the artifacts are some important "exotic" items, either imports from Central or Western Asia—including a Sasanian sword and glass bowl—or Chinese-made objects influenced by foreign styles. The exhibition asks, and attempts to answer, questions of ethnic identity: What is and what is not Chinese, then and now? It is the inaugural exhibition of the Asia Society's renovated and enlarged museum galleries. Asia Society, **New York,** October 13 through January 6.

Ali Omar Ermes, 'The Seventh Ode,' 1993, 250 x 225 cm, acrylic and ink on paper, tied to canvas

Recent Work of 12 Arab Artists:
The Egee Art Gallery Selection

offers a survey of some of the foremost Arab artists at work in the world today. The paintings and ceramics on display reflect the national and international cultural climates from which the artists draw their inspiration, and show a diverse array of styles, techniques and topics. The traditional Islamic art of calligraphy influences some of the artists while other works are inspired by political events; some defy attribution to a specific cultural heritage. The artists are Mohammed Bennani (Morocco), Jamal Abdulrahim (Bahrain), Rachid Diab (Sudan), Ali Omar Ermes (Libya), Maysaloun Faraj (Iraq), Abdelkrim Kebir (Algeria), Rachid Koraichi (Algeria), Sami Mohamad (Kuwait), Khairat Al Saleh (Syria), Laila Shawa (Palestine), Awad Al Shimy (Egypt), Faisal Samra (Saudi Arabia), Dia Azzawi (Iraq). Nearly 50 works are exhibited, all on loan from the influential Egee Art Gallery in London. Catalogue. Wereldmuseum, **Rotterdam,** July 6 through March 24, 2002.

Dia Azzawi, 'The Crane by Halim Barakat: Red Face with Heart', 1991, 39 x 55 cm, litho

WERELD MUSEUM ROTTERDAM

Conversations With Traditions: Nilima Sheikh and Shahzia Sikander explores the work of two contemporary South Asian women artists in a dialogue with their traditional sources: Indian miniature paintings. Asia Society, **New York,** opens October 13.

London and the Orient is an exhibition of watercolor and oil paintings by artist Caroline Lees, a former resident of Saudi Arabia, featuring views of Oman, Libya, Tunisia, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Yemen and India as well as views of London. Rafael Valls Gallery, **London,** October 16–27.

Along the Nile / Threads From the Nile displays some 170 objects which trace the history of Coptic art from the second to the 14th century of our era. The art of weaving is the thematic thread that runs through the exhibition, but other objects shed light on daily life of this era, and also illuminate stylistic currents in Coptic art and Albert Gayet's famous excavation at Antinoë. Musée Dobrée, **Nantes, France,** October 19 through January 20.

The Spirit of Islam: Experiencing Islam Through Calligraphy is the first major Canadian exhibition to address the arts and beliefs of Islam. Through the time-honored art of calligraphy, visitors will be introduced to the aesthetics, spirituality and principles of education of the Muslim world. Educational programs will be included. Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia, **Vancouver,** opens October 20.

Earthen Architecture: Constructive Cultures and Sustainable Development is the theme of six separate, intensive courses in project design, building techniques and conservation techniques, many of which are drawn from traditional methods of the Middle East. Course lengths vary from four days to four weeks, and all instruction is in French. Information: www.craterre.archi.fr. CRATerre-EAG, **Grenoble, France,** through October 26.

Roman Egypt: Life According to the Numismatic Sources. Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde, Residenzschloss, **Munich,** through October 29.

Islamic Moorish Spain: Its Legacy to Europe and the West explores the brilliant age of Muslim rule in Spain and Portugal from the eighth to the 15th century, when an extraordinary mixture of Muslim, Christian and Jewish peoples and cultures flourished in such centers of art and learning as Córdoba and Granada. Islamic Spain's vibrant legacy of tolerance and intellectual achievement is examined through a variety of media: film, art, architectural design, portraiture, maps, agricultural displays and music. International Museum of Muslim Cultures, **Jackson, Mississippi,** through October 31.

Traditional Iran displays paintings—ethnographic portraits, street scenes and cartoons of daily life—along with textiles, brassware, wooden figures and replicas of monuments. Nance Museum, **Lone Jack, Missouri,** through October 31.

November >>

Fabulous Creatures From the Desert Sands presents unique woolen tapestries, made some 2000 years ago in Central Asia and notable for their intense colors and mysterious designs. Motifs on these textiles include reindeer-like winged creatures with enormous antlers and modern-looking patterns of stylized plants. Little is known about the significance of these designs or the society that produced them, but obviously textiles were of great importance in their creators' cultural and artistic traditions. The objects in the exhibition were found during excavations in the Taklamakan Desert of northwest China and are presented here to the public for the first time. Abegg-Stiftung, **Riggisberg, Switzerland,** through November 4.

The Astronomy of the Pharaohs explores the mythology and science of ancient Egypt. Planétarium de **Montreal,** through November 18.

Hunted and Deified: The Animal in Ancient Egypt presents one of the most attractive themes of Egyptian life in paintings, reliefs and sculpture, and makes it clear that a walk through the world of Egyptian animals is also a walk through more than 3000 years of cultural history. The first part of the exhibition takes the visitor into Egypt's papyrus thickets (fishes, birds and hippos); the second presents desert creatures: ibex and antelope, hunted by salukis and lions—and a unique porcupine. Representations of domestic animals, including monkeys, make up the third segment. A fourth presents animals as symbols: falcons, baboons, lions as embodiments of virtues or powers, cats and crocodiles as embodiments of deities. Staatliche Sammlung Ägytischer Kunst, Schloss Seefeld, **Munich,** through November 25.

Nubia: Land of Gold of the Pharaohs shows 250 objects from 5000 BC to AD 1000, illustrating the history of the ancient cultures of Sudan, from its beginnings, through the kingdom of Kerma, the Napata empire and the Meroë empire, down to the Berlin Egyptian Museum's most recent excavations of the town of Naga, which seem to show that the "Land of Kush" may have been the original source from which Egyptian civilization developed. Staatliche Sammlung Ägytischer Kunst, Schloss Seefeld, **Munich,** through November 25.

Later >>

The Stibbert Museum houses the collection of English expatriate Frederick Stibbert (1830–1906), and features European and Oriental weapons—including rare examples of Near and Middle-Eastern Muslim military equipment—civil and military costumes from the 16th through the 19th century, tapestries, period paintings, ceramics, textiles, porcelain and furniture. **Florence, Italy,** through December 1.

New Department of Egyptian Antiquities is devoted to ancient, Ptolemaic and Coptic Egypt and brings together pieces from private and public collections and objects on loan from the British Museum. For the first time under one roof in German-speaking Switzerland, Ancient Egypt is united with Greece, the Etruscans and Rome at the **Basel** Museum of Ancient Arts, through December.

The Collector's Eye: Masterpieces of Egyptian Art from the Thalassic Collections, Ltd. showcases over 175 relics of pharaonic civilization from the collection of Theodore Halkedis, one of the finest private collections of ancient Egyptian art in the world. Dates of the objects on display range from pre-dynastic Egypt, around 3500 BC, to the Roman era of the first century. The collection features a rare statue of the Middle Kingdom pharaoh Amenemhet IV, a red granite bust of an 18th-dynasty queen, jewels, inlays, architectural decorations and objects of everyday use. Catalogue. Carlos Museum, **Atlanta,** through January 6, 2002.

Whem Ankh: The Cycle of Life in Ancient Egypt explores daily life in Ptolemaic Egypt (323 BC–AD 30), a time when the great classical civilizations of the Mediterranean, North Africa and South Asia came together and eventually clashed in the aftermath of the conquests of Alexander the Great. The exhibition follows the life, death and afterlife of a known individual, Nes-Hor, one of two mummies in the exhibit. Examination of his mummy and detailed readings of the icons and text on his coffin have provided a great deal of information on Nes-Hor's life history, family relationships and his place in society as a priest in the Temple of Min in Akhmim. More than 200 artifacts illuminate the domestic life, economy, religion, politics and preparations for the afterlife of a "middle class" Egyptian family of about 2200 years ago. **Buffalo [New York]** Museum of Science, through September 2003.

Saudi Bedouin Jewelry displays more than 100 pieces donated recently by Lewis Hatch and Marie Kukuk that has doubled the collection of the Nance Museum. Information: 816-697-2526. **Lone Jack, Missouri,** permanent.

The Saudi Aramco Exhibit, newly renovated, relates the heritage of Arab-Islamic scientists and scholars of the past to the technology of today's petroleum exploration, production and transportation, set against the background of the natural history of Saudi Arabia. **Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.**

Information is correct at press time, but please reconfirm dates and times before traveling. Most institutions listed have further information available on the World Wide Web. Readers are welcome to submit information for possible inclusion in this listing.

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