

TOWARDS A NATIONAL PUPPET CENTRE FOR THE LEBANON

MONA KNIO

**SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTORATE OF PHILOSOPHY, THE UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS, SCHOOL OF ENGLISH
(THE WORKSHOP THEATRE)**

February 1994

**I CONFIRM THAT THE WORK SUBMITTED IS MY OWN AND THAT APPROPRIATE CREDIT
HAS BEEN GIVEN WHERE REFERENCE HAS BEEN MADE TO THE WORK OF OTHERS**

ABSTRACT

The impression that Arabs did not attempt to express themselves through the medium of dramatic arts till recently echoes a simultaneous conviction which prevailed concerning visual arts expression. Early in the second half of this century, researchers started questioning whether Arabs could have expressed themselves in visual or dramatic representations under the auspices of Islam. Meanwhile, we have been rediscovering our visual, oral and dramatic art heritage through a Western cultural perspective.

The aim of this research is to examine the sources of inspiration which have been shaping the visual and dramatic art traditions in the Arab Middle East region over the past five thousand years. Little attention has been given to the interplay between the various forms of artistic expression in the Middle East. Besides, much less concern has been articulated about the performance arts interpretation of the notion of abstraction which characterises the artistic expressions of the region.

One performance art form that has gone a long way in the direction towards abstraction is puppetry. From the times of the Pharaohs and Mesopotamians, puppets and masked actors communicated myths and legends in religious rituals and festivals. Later, puppets continued under Islam to communicate secular themes and narratives.

Puppets, by their nature, involve the concept of alienation and enable the modern Arab to present ideas in a manner consistent with his intellectual, cultural and aesthetic predilections.

In its search for forms of dramatic expression the Lebanese theatre might profitably look into its own cultural heritage, try to learn from and experiment with the various types of oral and performance traditions especially puppetry which has been long forgotten.

To the Beloved Memory of Renée Berlioz Knio

And

To Abdul Hafiz Knio

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I should like to express my gratitude to Professor Martin Banham for his invaluable advise and encouragement over the years I have been preparing for this thesis.

I am indebted to many friends who have kindly placed their varied expertise at my disposal. In this context I acknowledge with gratitude the assistance and enthusiastic support of all the following: Judith Greenwood for offering constructive comments on the text; Laila Debs for generously sharing her computer expertise and time; Randa Mazzawi for her tireless search for bibliographical material; Nadim Shehadeh, Mahmud Shurayh, Mona Nsouli, Leila Knio, for their bibliographical suggestions; Huda Debs and Verity Mallin for their helpful discussions; and Noura Sakkaf, Martine Mortada and Mahmud Hallablab for offering technical assistance.

Special thanks are owing to Diana Stimson for the care and seemingly boundless energy she has put into word processing this thesis.

During the preparation of this thesis I was fortunate to receive every encouragement from my colleagues at the Hariri Foundation and Saudi Oger Services. I am thankful to all of them. Likewise, I am thankful to all the Hariri Foundation graduates in the U.K. for being a great source of inspiration.

The final but certainly not least word of appreciation goes to my family for their continued support and inspiration.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
PREFACE		10
CHAPTER 1	HISTORY OF THEATRE AND PUPPET ARTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST	20
1.1	Introduction	
1.2	Early references to theatrical performances	
1.3	Literature covering theatre and puppet arts 1950 to date	
1.4	Theatre Manifestations in the Middle East	
1.4.1	Egypt before the Christian era	
1.4.2	Mesopotamia before the Christian era	
1.4.3	Arabia before Islam	
1.4.4	Arabs under Islam	
1.5	The priest, poet, narrator role	
1.6	Religious rituals or religious drama	
CHAPTER 2	THE EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PUPPET TRADITION	57
2.1	Introduction	
2.2	The universality of the puppet tradition	
2.3	Traversing through space and time	
2.4	The antiquity of the puppet	
2.4.1	Controversial data on birthplace	
2.4.2	Controversial data on birth date	
2.5	Legends concerning the antiquity and birthplace of puppets	
2.5.1	Motifs underlined in the legends	
2.5.2	Death motif	
2.5.3	Life/divine creation motif	
2.5.4	Propagation motif	
2.6	The nature and craftsmanship behind the puppet tradition	

- 2.6.1 Exploring man's image
- 2.6.2 The primitive stage
- 2.6.3 Ritual
- 2.6.4 Visual sign language
- 2.6.5 Dance
- 2.6.6 Acrobatics
- 2.6.7 Images in motion
- 2.6.8 Archaic technical development
- 2.6.9 Mechanical figures and moving pictures
- 2.6.10 Drama
- 2.6.11 Puppet, the mask complete
- 2.6.12 The puppeteer as an icon image
- 2.6.13 Phases of Development

CHAPTER 3

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF IMAGES IN VISUAL AND VERBAL EXPRESSION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

133

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 The origin of the peoples of the ancient Middle East
 - 3.2.1 Geographical features
 - 3.2.2 Population movement and its cultural consequence
 - 3.2.3 The farmer-shepherd culture
- 3.3 The significance of visual images to the peoples of the ancient Middle East
 - 3.3.1 From linear description to inscription
 - 3.3.2 Artistic and technical features
 - 3.3.3 Visual images as the focus of community life
 - 3.3.4 The farmer-shepherd motif
- 3.4 The significance of visual images to the peoples of the Middle East in the present era
 - 3.4.1 Historical background
 - 3.4.2 The sociopolitical dimension of Islam
 - 3.4.3 The religious and linguistic dimension of Islam
 - 3.4.4 The visual dimension of the Islamic culture
 - 3.4.4.1 The Ka'ba, a visual and spiritual focal point
 - 3.4.4.2 A dream vision, a sign from God

- 3.4.4.3 The Dome of the Rock, a complex politicoreligious visual message
- 3.4.5 A field of vision, the Arabesque
- 3.4.6 Abstraction, denaturalisation and narration
- 3.5 Image orientation in visual and verbal languages in the Middle East
 - 3.5.1 Interrelationship between sign and verbal language
 - 3.5.2 Stylistic features developing from ancient oral traditions
 - 3.5.3 The contribution of the Qur'an to artistic verbal expression
 - 3.5.4 Weaving literal visual images based on the Qur'an
 - 3.5.5 The *maqamat*: verbal acrobatics
- 3.6 Alienation

CHAPTER 4 DEVELOPMENT OF PUPPETRY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

209

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 The emergence of figurative images
- 4.3 Interplay between figurative images in socioreligious contexts
 - 4.3.1 Grave dolls
 - 4.3.2 Images as focus for religious rituals
 - 4.3.3 Masks and articulated figures
 - 4.3.4 Image, magic and effigies
 - 4.3.5 Coptic images
 - 4.3.6 Pilgrimages and pageants
 - 4.3.7 Toy dolls and social games
 - 4.3.8 Animated figures of folk tales and scientific treatises
 - 4.3.9 Figure images for promotion
 - 4.3.10 Figure images in the service of the written word
 - 4.3.11 Arts of the book: *Maqamat al-Hariri*
 - 4.3.12 Arts of the object
 - 4.3.13 Oral traditional arts
- 4.4 *Khayal al-zill*
- 4.5 Ibn Daniyal

- 4.5.1 A brief historical background
- 4.5.2 Ophthalmologist, poet and playwright
- 4.5.3 Audience and subject matter
- 4.5.4 The oldest known dramatic texts in Arabic
- 4.5.5 *Tayf al-Khayal wa al-Amir Wisal*
 - 4.5.5.1 Technical direction
 - 4.5.5.2 Sequence of action
 - 4.5.5.3 Political and social satire
 - 4.5.5.4 The *maqamat* influence
 - 4.5.5.5 Music
 - 4.5.5.6 Unfolding conventions
- 4.5.6 The Amazing Preacher and the Stranger
- 4.5.7 The Love Stricken One and the Lost One
- 4.5.8 Independent modules with variant themes and structures
- 4.5.9 Underlying every shadow
a truth is to be found
- 4.5.10 Verbal and physical humour
- 4.5.11 A playwright indeed
- 4.6 Influence of *khayal al-zill*
on the theatre performance scene
 - 4.6.1 *Karagöz*
 - 4.6.1.1 Characteristic features
 - 4.6.1.2 A theatre of laughter
 - 4.6.2 *Qaragoz*
 - 4.6.2.1 Place of performance
 - 4.6.2.2 Language of performance
 - 4.6.2.3 Performance skills
 - 4.6.2.4 Traced hallmarks/endorsement
 - 4.6.2.5 Leather icons
 - 4.6.2.6 The Arasque impression
 - 4.6.3 *Aragoz*
 - 4.6.3.1 Features of the *Aragoz* show
 - 4.6.3.2 Circulation of *Aragoz*
 - 4.6.3.3 Puppets in a theatre house
 - 4.6.3.4 A last glimpse of the street
Aragoz
- 4.7 Popular performance and oral tradition:
a source of inspiration

4.8	A brief survey of puppetry in the Lebanon	
4.8.1	The period before 1975	
4.8.2	The period of civil war (1975-1990)	
4.8.3	Puppetry in peace time	
4.8.3.1	Puppetry in schools	
4.9	An overview of puppetry in the Middle East today	
CONCLUSION		371
APPENDIX I	SELECTED LITERATURE COVERING ARABIC THEATRE AND PUPPET ARTS 1950 TO DATE	377
APPENDIX II	LEGENDS CONCERNING THE BIRTH OF PUPPETS	390
APPENDIX III	THE 13TH <i>MAQAMA</i> : THE ENCOUNTER AT BAGHDAD	392
APPENDIX IV	<i>HIKAYAT ABI AL-QASIM AL-BAGHDADI</i>	395
APPENDIX V	CHRONOLOGICAL CHART OF ISLAM	397
BIBLIOGRAPHY		398

PREFACE

Introduction to the study

The present thesis is the outcome of my preoccupation with the significance of the art of puppetry in the Arab theatre performance scene. Equally significant is the relevance of extending the field of enquiry into Arabic theatre from the perspectives of fine and applied arts, as well as, oral traditional arts and not the usual Western dramatic text angle of view. By looking at theatre through these perspectives, we might be able to understand better the elements and the dynamics which have been shaping the theatre arts in the Arab world including Lebanon.

In particular, there were two outstanding motives to start this research. The first one is a question every person working in the Arab theatre field has asked himself at some stage of his career: why did not the Arab culture develop a theatre tradition independent from that of the West? Also, what is it about shadow theatre which made it acceptable and performable for the Arabs to have developed and enjoyed it, especially during the medieval Islamic period?

Research objectives

The aim of this thesis is to discuss and illustrate the nature, function and scope of puppetry in the visual, literary and social context of the Arab Middle Eastern culture. Puppet art which is often considered unworthy of study, constitutes a valuable commentary on the collaboration of various forms of expression to animate a dynamic narrative tradition.

It is also the aim of this thesis to generate a critical awareness of the interdependence of oral, literary and popular traditions along with visual arts and crafts in creating a performance art expressive of the culture. It also seeks to generate inquisitive attention to the importance of cultural convention in establishing meaning in systems of visual communication. It will be demonstrated that there exists a basic contextual framework between visual and verbal expressions in the Arab culture which the shadow play phenomenon echoes perfectly well. Viewed in perspective, one is bound to assume that unless we learn to interpret Arab performance arts in a manner that is consistent with the rest of Arab culture, it will not be possible to develop a theatre tradition expressive of this culture.

By illustrating that the art of puppetry has been a competent medium of expression in the Arab world, I would like to invite more attention and exploration of this medium. Experiments carried out with forms of oral traditions are contributing to a more comprehensive appreciation of these forms. Puppetry deserves the same attention oral traditional forms have been receiving, mainly because puppetry has a lot of potential to share with oral traditions and the human theatre at large. For this reason, I propose that a puppet centre be established in the Lebanon to promote performance, exploration and research in the field of puppetry.

Significance of the research

Examining the allegation that Arabs have not developed a theatre tradition expressive of their culture calls to mind Marshall Hodgson's comment that "Islamic culture is almost regularly characterised by what it did not have",⁽¹⁾ especially as we had similar queries in the field of Arabic fine arts. Not long ago some of the major works in the field of visual arts had to bring on board questions such as: "What does the word 'Islamic' mean when used as an adjective modifying the noun 'art'?"⁽²⁾ And "does Arab painting really exist?"⁽³⁾ However, today we are aware that these questions were genuine at a time when the message and the vocabulary of imagery of Arab visual arts had not yet been deciphered by art historians. A parallel discourse exploring the various arts which have contributed to the formation of existing performance traditions has persuaded researchers of the need to interpret Arabic theatre performance in a manner consistent with the conventions of the Arabic and not the Western culture. It is my aspiration that this research be part of an extensive process of understanding the dynamics which regulate the development of theatre performance arts in this part of the world.

Examining the significance of puppetry in the Arab theatre scene means that probing the two-way relationship between theatre and puppetry is essential. It is a relationship which is most vital in the development of performing arts practices. Besides, this remarkable relation is traceable in most cultures which have a prominent performance arts tradition. It is extremely difficult to draw a clear line between the areas of puppetry and of theatre as they are both deeply rooted in ritual. Traditional theatrical forms borrowed a lot from the art of puppetry and puppetry acquired a lot from the theatrical forms. The Arab shadow play phenomenon did not occur in a vacuum, cut off from the popular, oral, visual and

performance arts, or from the literary and intellectual currents that had fed the Islamic medieval tradition. On the contrary, shadow play reflects the harmonious fusion of various disciplines together on a fertile ground in an ideal time.

Oral tradition has always claimed a unique status among the artistic expressions known to the Arabs. The masterpieces of Arabic literature and poetry we read today were not always conceived of as written literature. It is in recent times, and increasingly so, that we realise our knowledge of literature is foremost acquired through the experience of reading in preference to hearing and seeing. Literature is no longer presented through a live organism but is recorded in an inanimate object. Mineke Schipper draws a clear picture of the relationship between oral literature and theatre. She tells us "It is unrealistic to make a clear division between oral literature and theatre. Oral literature is always theatre, because the way in which the subject matter is performed is an essential aspect of the art."(4) Oral tradition recreates literature every time it presents it, a process inherent in the theatre experience as well. In both events what is being recreated exists only during and within the performance time and space; beyond the performance time and space it perishes. Oral tradition performers, like traditional theatre actors, use common vehicles to present or represent their material, they both use space, objects, mimicry, gestures, voice modulation, body movement and improvisation. Moreover, the audience/participants in both oral tradition performance and theatre production can subtly redefine the meaning which emerges from the situation they are sharing.

That real theatre does not exist without a dramatic text is a prejudiced criterion the Western culture used in order to distinguish high art from popular art. It also used it against the 'other' cultures it believed to be beyond sharing the exclusive province of high Western cultural traditions. Today we have no excuse not to recognise the dramatic potential in any type of artistic expression, be it popular or otherwise.

Why study puppetry

My own theatre background has been dominated by the visual and technical aspects. The emphasis this places on presentation makes the performance aspect of puppetry relatively attractive to explore. Although by the time I carried out this research I practised little puppetry, I became aware that understanding its mechanism aided me greatly in appreciating it as a tool of communication. It

is basically from this perspective that I would like to view the art of puppetry in this thesis. Of course, puppetry is not just a communication tool, but we will not try to cover its endless potential as this is not within the scope of our exercise. I would rather concentrate on the aspect which will enable us to understand in particular the process of production and communication of visual and literary expressions in human societies through objects.

Puppets in their long history of unpretentious dramatic performance continuously used innovating narrative images that are expressive beyond any verbal language. During its long life the puppet never failed to adapt itself to new situations in a constantly changing world. Probably this is a result of puppetry being able to integrate many channels through which to communicate. The puppet's flexibility is the source of its life; however, this feature is acutely contrasted with the puppet being an icon image of the character or ideas it presents.

By using a puppet as a tool through which to communicate, a performer is extending and redistributing the boundaries of his physical being. This is in fact an act of transformation of reality. However, this act is the very soul of the art of puppetry, and the performer does not only transform his own physical boundaries but, at the same time, transforms the state of the lifeless puppet.

Effecting the transformation and extending the boundaries of reality are as a matter of fact also the underlying dynamism of the aesthetic expressions representative of the Arab culture. For instance, the visual art's most acclaimed objective is the transfiguration of the surfaces by ornamentation, stylisation and denaturalisation. A bent towards stylisation was carried forward into the Islamic period from ancient times when Pharaohs and Mesopotamians communicated their narratives mainly in stylised two-dimensional pictographs and reliefs. The elaborate dependence on presentational and abstract visual appeal in the consecutive cultures of the Middle East allows us to speculate that the abstract notion in puppetry makes it in theory the most appropriate amongst performance arts to express the Arab Middle Eastern culture. In practice, this seemed to be the case in the medieval Islamic period.

A brief history of Lebanon

Lebanon is a rather small country on the Mediterranean coast of the Middle East. Lebanon became an independent republic only fifty years ago, nonetheless for

the major part of its history it has been a crossroad where civilisations have overlapped. Around the 6th millennium B.C. Semitic tribes started arriving from Syria and Arabia. The Canaanites - some of whom were later called Phoenicians by the Greeks - settled in the land around 3000 B.C., and were involved mainly in trading. It is probably because of trading that the Phoenicians spread their civilisation throughout the ancient world and never had a unified state. Phoenicia extended far north from Ras Shamra (Ugarit) on the Syrian coast, and south to Mount Carmel in Palestine. The location of the main Phoenician city-states - Byblos, Sidon and Tyre - is on the coast around the ports which emphasises further the seafaring character of the Phoenicians. [fig 1]

The Phoenicians and the Ancient Egyptians had strong contacts through trade. It was mainly hardwood that the Egyptians were interested in. There are many items of furniture found in the Pyramids and in the burial site of Tutankhamun which are made from Lebanese cedar. At the beginning of the 16th Century B.C., invaders on horses and chariots from Central Asia conquered Syria and Egypt; they were known as the Hyksos. The Egyptians drove away the Hyksos within a century of their arrival, and established an Egyptian Kingdom which spread over the area of present-day Lebanon. This rule lived for two centuries and was interrupted by the arrival of the Hittites, an Indo European people from Asia Minor. The Hittites extended their rule over both Lebanon and Syria. In the mid 13th Century B.C., the Egyptians re-established their Kingdom in Phoenicia. However, the Egyptian Empire began to decline around the 12th Century B.C.; consequently the Phoenicians enjoyed around four and a half centuries of independence.

The Phoenicians' involvement in trade with the ancient world necessitated the development of a recording system. Hence, the most significant contribution of the Phoenicians is the alphabet. They borrowed it from neighbouring countries and developed it, then extended it with their goods to other ancient civilisations. The Phoenicians had many gods and goddesses and each city-state had its patron. Baal Gebel was the patron god of Byblos and Eshmun-Adonis was worshipped in Sidon. However, Astarte, the goddess of love and fertility, was worshipped by all.

Assyrian invaders arrived from Mesopotamia in the 9th Century B.C. They were followed by the Babylonians in the 7th Century B.C., the Persians in the 6th Century B.C., the Greeks under Alexander the Great in the 3rd Century B.C. and

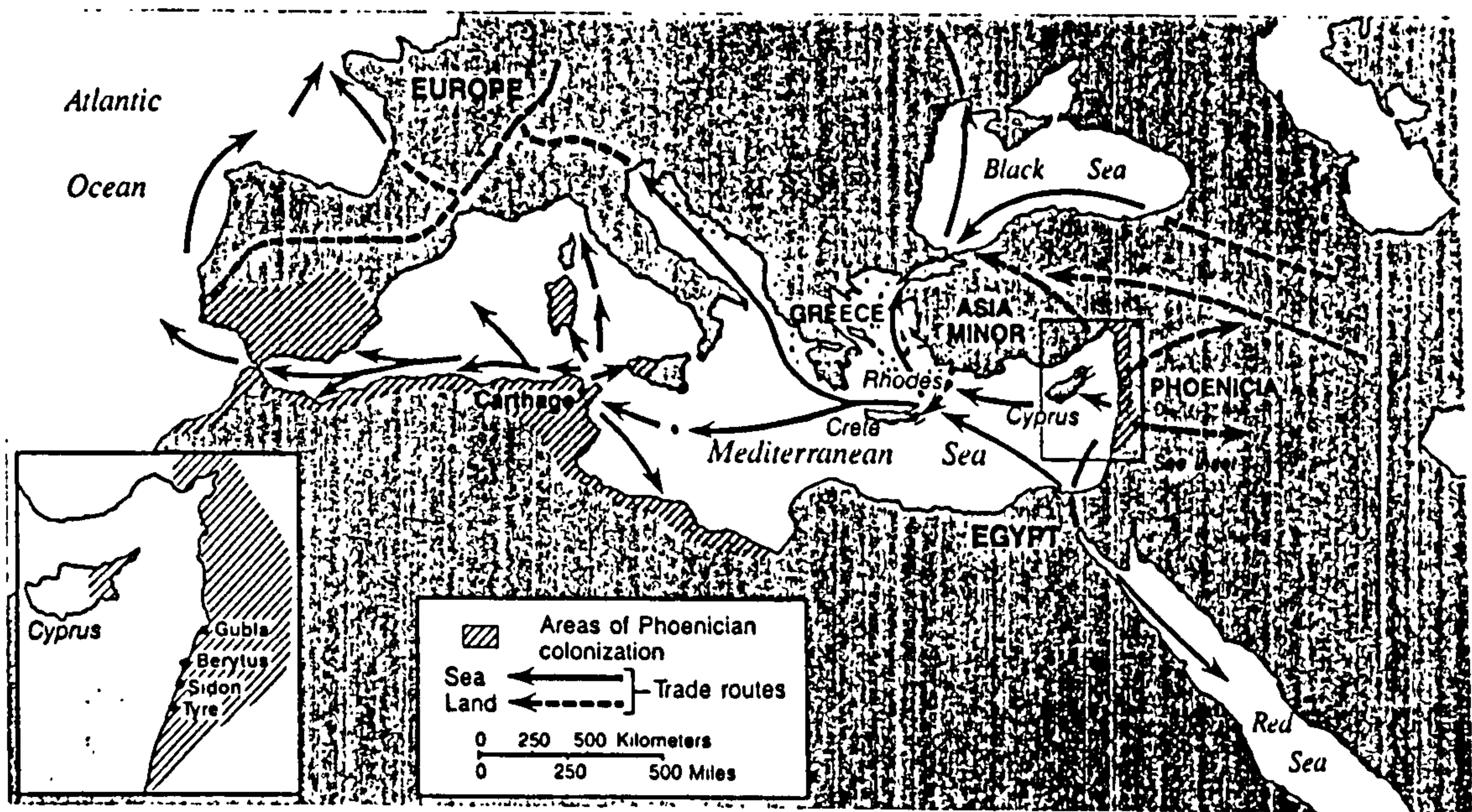


Fig 1. Phoenician colonisation and trade routes.

the Romans in the 1st Century B.C. The Romans ruled Lebanon and Syria as one unit till 636 A.D., when the Arab Muslim armies arrived from Arabia.

The Ummayyads gained control in 661 A.D. and ruled their Empire from Damascus until 750 A.D. With the weakening of the Ummayyads in Damascus, the Abassids took over from Baghdad till the invasion of the Mongols in 1258 A.D. Meanwhile, at the end of the 11th Century A.D., the Crusaders started arriving from Western Europe and they controlled Syria until the victory of Salah al-Din. The Crusaders recaptured Syria until the Egyptian Mamluk Sultan Baybars defeated them around the end of the 13th Century A.D. The Mamluks remained in power till 1517 A.D. when the Ottoman Turks took over. The Ottoman rule extended till the end of World War I when the region was divided up and occupied by France and Great Britain. Lebanon was declared an independent state after the end of the French Mandate, which lasted from 1920 to 1943.

The purpose of the above brief history of Lebanon is to point out that many civilisations have crossed and settled in the Lebanon over the past five thousand years. However, it is the Arab civilisation which in modern history has lasted longest and has the strongest roots. In examining the characteristic elements of the Lebanese culture, we have to study the Pharaonic, Mesopotamian and Phoenician in addition to the Arabic civilisation, as Lebanon was always incorporated under the overriding civilisation in the region of the Middle East.(5)

Research design

To achieve the aims of this thesis, I followed two distinct research activities. The first was to examine the existing studies in the field of theatre in the Arab world, in order to investigate and interpret the manifestations in the fields of visual and oral traditions expressive of ancient and medieval civilisations in the region. This investigation helped in forming a general understanding of the basic elements which characterise the artistic and cultural expressions of the people in the Middle East. Visual and oral illustrations had to be explored in this process.

Once a basic overall picture of the visual, oral and theatre arts was formed, the second type of activity commenced. This time contemporary live and material traditions were examined, also people and institutions which are active in the field of theatre and puppet arts were approached for interviews or for documentation of oral, visual and material culture available. This fieldwork took place in Autumn 1992 in Beirut, Damascus and Cairo. In Beirut, most of the

puppeteers who have contributed to the field in the past twenty five years were interviewed. Actors, directors and researchers in the Lebanese theatre scene were also approached for discussions and information. In addition, educational institutions in the area of Beirut were visited and teachers were interviewed concerning their experience of using puppets for educational purposes. Lots of effort was spent in trying to locate old puppeteers and *hakawati* (story teller), or their families in Beirut, Tripoli and Sidon, but I failed to locate such people in a country which has just come out of war. In Beirut I was assisted by Hala Masri to locate, visit and conduct interviews with around twenty-five people, including puppeteers, actors, music composers, directors, researchers and teachers.

In Damascus, a visit to the Adhim Palace was very enlightening, especially seeing the reconstruction of a coffee house with the shadow play screen set up along with shadow figures. This was followed by a visit to the nearby Coffee House of al-Nawfara, behind the Ummayyad mosque, where a *hakawati* was reciting the heroic narrative of Sultan Baybars.

In Cairo, Nadia and Mona Misbah played a key role in introducing me to contacts at the Centre of National Dramatic Arts, Cairo Puppet Theatre, Centre of Popular Arts and also to the *mulid* celebrations. Here too, interviews were conducted with administrators, designers, directors and technicians at the Cairo Puppet Theatre, and with theatre directors, researchers, puppeteers and critics. A long time was spent trying to locate two very old shadow players who recently started performing again, but unfortunately I failed because of the consequences of the earthquake which destroyed areas in old Cairo in October 1992. However, a glove puppeteer was tracked down and interviewed. I was also able to record his street performance. During my stay in Cairo, it was possible to attend an open rehearsal of storytelling sessions by al-Warsha troupe and to visit museums and institutions which have some ancient material culture on display.

Throughout this thesis, I am using basic transliteration for the Arabic terms. Certain foreign words are italicised followed by an explanation within brackets. I have tried to keep a standard spelling of Arabic terms and names, but it was not possible to keep it within quotations if the quoted author relied on a different spelling. The Turkish *Karagöz* and the Arabic *Qaragoz* are used to differentiate between the Ottoman shadow tradition in Turkey and Syria respectively. The term *Aragoz* designates Egyptian glove puppet, since shadow play in Egypt is always referred to as *Khayal al-zill*. Reproductions of visual examples will be used throughout the texts to clarify certain points. Some of these illustrations are

taken from books cited in the bibliography, photographs collected from performers or institutions concerned, and photographs which I have taken during my fieldwork.

The research effort that has been put into this thesis is in many ways a result of the dialogue with all the people interviewed and approached in Beirut, Damascus and Cairo. I extend my thanks to every one of them.

Chapter outline

This thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapter 1 will explore the terrain of existing records and research in the field of Arabic theatre with the aim of identifying its regional components. Following, it will examine the arguments of some writers and scholars who perceive the origin of the Middle Eastern theatre in the Pyramids and tomb chambers of the Pharaohs, specifically in the ancient Egyptian works identified as dramas or dramatic fragments. We will also consider the Islamic *ta'ziya* (condolence) ritual and try to highlight some of its features.

Chapter 2 will focus on the emergence and development of the puppet tradition in the world. Here we will study the background and the driving force behind this performance art in order to shed light on the link between the art of puppetry and theatrical and dramatic arts in different cultures. The variables related to puppetry's nature will be equally discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 3 will illustrate and analyse the significance of images in verbal and visual expressions in the Middle East. Consequently an overall picture of the visual artistic expressions most representative of the Middle Eastern civilisation will be drawn.

We will continue our exploration in interpreting the artistic vocabulary of the Middle East through its popular material and oral cultures in Chapter 4. Examples of the oldest shadow play dramatic texts will be analysed in the context of our previous findings. Then we will proceed to discuss the influence of shadow play on the Middle Eastern theatre scene, namely in the tradition of *Qaragoz* and also in the contemporary work productions.

I conclude this research with a proposal to plan a puppet centre in Lebanon where academic research and live performance skills can be explored in order to revive long forgotten traditions in using puppets as a tool of communication.

FOOTNOTES - PREFACE

- (1) Marshall Hodgson, "Islam and Image", *History of Religion*, Vol. 3 (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1964-1993), p.224.
- (2) Oleg Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art*, rev. ed. (1973; rpt. London: Yale University Press, 1987), p.1.
- (3) Richard Ettingshausen, *Arab Painting*, (1962; rpt. New York: Skira Rizzoli, 1977), p.11.
- (4) Mineke Schipper, *Theatre and Society in Africa*, Tran. Ampie Coetze, (Johannesberg: Raven Press, 1982), p.10.
- (5) On the history of Lebanon, see Philip Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 10th ed. (1937; rpt. Hong Kong: MacMillan, 1970).

CHAPTER 1

HISTORY OF THEATRE AND PUPPET ARTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter we shall explore the terrain of existing records and research in the field of Arabic theatre with the aim of identifying its regional components.

The first part will recount early examples of performance art found in Arabic literature and foreign travellers' notes. The second part will review briefly the main trends represented in selected publications between 1950 to date, a body of literature which reflects a kaleidoscopic image of Arabic theatre. We will continue to draw up the components of Arabic theatre in the following section where archaeological as well as literary records are consulted to reconstruct a more extensive image of major theatre manifestations. Consequently, we shall attempt to identify the main features of dramatic arts expression in the ancient Middle Eastern culture.

Long years of foreign rule and dependence have left most of the Arab people alienated from their own cultural heritage except that which is related to the word, the oral word in particular. The impact of the command *iqra'* (recite),(1) which represents the first revelation from Allah to his illiterate Prophet Muhammad, has been so powerful that Arabs, fourteen centuries later, still cherish and take pride in their literary product over any other sign of creativity displayed throughout their history.

With the exception of literature, Arabs in general have not developed a comprehensive appreciation of their artistic achievements in the areas of visual and performance arts. The word *fann* (art) for many centuries evolved into a taboo as it was associated with *lahu* (pastime)(2) which was interpreted as a distraction from religious practice and hence was denied existence.

Arabs slowly began to show an intuitive interest in their cultural heritage as a defensive reaction to the Western invasion of their physical and eventually intellectual space in the late 18th Century.(3) The West, none the less, did not waste any occasion to advance and, in certain cases, to impose its own cultural and artistic traditions on the peoples it ruled. One of the earliest Western

products with which Arabs were acquainted was dramatic art. Its introduction generated an awareness in both Arabs and non-Arabs of the existence, or rather absence, of dramatic heritage in Arabic literature.

On the following pages we will first glance over key references to performances in literature, then view the controversial standpoints of researchers on Arabic theatre during the second half of the 20th Century, and proceed to discuss particular theatre manifestations in the Middle East.

1.2 Early references to theatrical performances

Historical accounts in the field of Arabic theatre reflect the researcher's individual perception of the arts of theatre performance. Early records on the subject include references by Arab poets from the 8th Century onwards, Arab scholars, and later Orientalists including European merchants, travellers and diplomats.

Poetry in ancient Arabia and early during the Islamic era, assumed the present day role of the media. Poets during *Jahiliyya* (times of ignorance of Islam's message, i.e. before 610 A.D.) interacted with their desert environment, and boasted about their heroic experiences and their tribes in social gatherings as well as in fairs to audiences who memorised and in turn relayed the poems to a larger audience.(4) The earliest recorded reference to a theatrical art form in Arabic literature is attributed to Imam al-Shaf'i.(5) This prominent religious scholar and founder of one of the four judicial schools of Islam(6) lived in Egypt between 767 and 820 A.D. The following verse ascribed to him crystallises traditional dogma related to this art form:

I see the shadow play as the greatest admonition to those who
are advanced in the knowledge of Ultimate Reality

I see figures and ghosts passing and going, all perishing while
the Mover remains.

In the above verse Imam al-Shaf'i recounts his view of *khayal al-zill* (shadow play) as the greatest moral to those advanced in the knowledge of the absolute truth. Figures and ghosts all pass and perish while the puppeteer remains. This philosophical theme was often repeated by poets and *sufis* (mystics) to the extent that it dictated the mood for the propagation of this art form in the Arab Muslim world.

Another early reference to shadow play is attributed to the poet Abu Nawas (747-806 or 814 A.D.) who is a contemporary of Harun al-Rashid (763-809 A.D.). Here shadow play is seen as a form of entertainment accompanied by music and enjoyed in social gatherings:

The wine rises sparkling in the cup
Which is decorated with flawless drawings
Like the shadow player when he darkens
And plays with the string tune
While a kohl-eyed beauty
Is among young astute gentlemen
In an area which overlooks trees(7)

The bulk of Arabic literature between the 9th and 19th Centuries concerned with shadow play, comes from authors who work in various fields: Ibn Haytham (965-1039 A.D.), an eminent physicist, discusses in his book on optics *Kitab al-Manazir* the technicalities involved in *khayal al-zill*;(8) Ibn Hazm (994-1064 A.D.) a well known historian describes:

a system which gives the impression of a Chinese magic lantern. He likens this world to a shadow play in which images are mounted on a wooden wheel revolving rapidly, so that one group of images disappears as another appears, as generation follows generation in the world.(9)

Al-Ghazali (1059-1111 A.D.), a prominent theologian, emphasises the philosophical significance of *khayal al-zill* by drawing a parallel between God determining our movements as the presenter determines those of the puppets;(10) Abu al-Faraj al-Asfahani (1226-1286 A.D.), a literary historian, assembles humorous anecdotes about strolling players and clowns in a book titled *Daf' al-Hamm*, (Pushing Away Troublesome Thoughts);(11) moreover, 'Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti (died 1822 A.D.), who held a chair of astrology at al-Azhar University of Cairo mentions in his book *'Aja'ib al-Athar* (Marvels of Relics) the theatre built in 1800 A.D. especially for the performances of visiting French troupes.(12)

Eighteenth century European travellers to the Middle East also registered their impressions of performances which they witnessed mainly in the open air. These performances were carried out by shadow players, strolling players and story tellers during social and religious gatherings or feasts, in the markets, in coffee houses, and in courtyards.

A Danish traveller, Carsten Niebuhr, visited Egypt in 1780 A.D. In his *Voyage En Arabie*, he mentions a troupe of strolling players including Muslims, Christians and Jewish actors, who performed in the open using a courtyard as a performance area and changing their costume in a curtained-off corner.(13)

Another visitor to Egypt in 1815 A.D., Giovanni Belzoni, an Italian adventurer, relates seeing a performance at the end of a wedding followed by another short performance of a farce known then as *fasl mudhik* (comic skit).(14)

The English Orientalist, Edward Lane, describes a rural *fasl mudhik* in his book based on his years of residence in Cairo, 1825-8 and 1833-5 A.D. *Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*. He comments that these skits were performed by clowns at weddings and festivals and abounded in 'vulgar jests' and 'indecent actions'.(15)

Perhaps the earliest reference to shadow play as a form of dramatic art is in 1857 A.D. when Dr Johann Gottfried Wetzstein, the Prussian Consul in Damascus, invited a shadow play presenter to perform at the consulate. Later he wrote to his wife regarding his latest project and revealed that "it deals with the beginnings of dramatic art among the Arabs".(16) He adds that in this performance he:

found a treasure house of attractive folk songs, which astonished me. I had the text of the piece performed, 'The Lovers of Amasia', dictated to me next day (since the performer could not write).(17)

The work of German Orientalists and scholars constitutes the earliest and indeed the main core of research in the field of Arabic shadow play. This group of researchers particularly intended to "observe, collect and document a fast-vanishing form, especially in Cairo".(18) George Jacob, a university professor, visited Istanbul in 1892 A.D. to study Turkish folklore. This marked the beginning of his life-long involvement in shadow play in the East.(19) His student, Enno Littmann, carried on investigations into shadow play and *Qaragoz* (glove and shadow puppet shows) in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine.(20) Moreover, Paul Kahle, captured shadow figures and cut-outs in his photographs, while Curt Pruffer wrote down a full play text.(21) In addition, Joseph Horowitz took interest mainly in mime artists in the Arab and Muslim World and was the first to take notice, in 1906 A.D., of the three shadow play dramatic texts by the 13th Century puppeteer/poet Ibn Daniyal.(22)

Until the end of the 19th Century, literature by Europeans and Arabs regarding performances of shadow plays and strolling players did not examine the shows in connection with dramatic or theatre arts, but dealt with them simply as street performances. A change to this approach came about after 1798 A.D.

Napoleon's campaign to Egypt in 1798 transplanted the seed of European theatre to Cairo. The dramatic performances of the French companies are remembered in letters by foreigners, both actors and members of the audience.(23) It should be noted, however, that very few Egyptians were invited to these shows which were primarily aimed at entertaining diplomats and soldiers away from home.

Together with drama, the French campaign introduced printing technology for the first time in Egypt. Consequently, journalists took over the practice of documenting and popularising events including drama. Hence, we now read about Egyptian and Syrian acting troupes who ventured into the theatres of Cairo and experienced the revelation of live European theatre.

The exposure to European dramatic arts, namely French and Italian, made an impression not only on Arab performers but also on Arab audiences and critics. In light of this, most performances in Arabic came to be viewed through a European perspective in spite of the genuine growing interest in nationalistic productions aimed at opposing the extension of what came to be perceived as imperialist art.

In an issue of the *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* dated 1935-37 A.D., Nevil Barbour contributed an article entitled "The Arabic Theatre of Egypt", in which he comments on the national productions at the Ezbekia Garden Opera House and the Commedia theatre in Cairo. He asserts that this theatre "though still in its infancy, may claim to be sufficiently advanced to be judged by the artistic standards of the countries in which the drama is an old-established institution".(24) Barbour noticed that the Egyptian audience was "provided chiefly out of the Government employees and small bourgeoisie whose secondary education has given them a certain taste for things European".(25) The Egyptian aristocracy adopted a snobbish attitude towards this native theatre and hence neglected it while to the populace it was "still a Frankish innovation".(26)

In 1956, when the pioneer researcher on Arabic theatre art, Muhammad Yusuf Najm, dismissed popular theatre, he, in common with other authors, was under the spell of regularising Middle Eastern cultural phenomena in Western terms. This Western notion of "regularising the Orient"(27) was started by Napoleon almost two hundred years earlier. Najm began the fashion for identifying dramatic texts, although the texts he acknowledged of Y'aqub Sannu', the father of modern Egyptian theatre, and Abu Khalil al-Qabbani, the father of modern Syrian theatre, were popularised by the spontaneous improvisation of performance rather than their censored skeletal original. When Sannu' - "Moliere of Egypt" - was silenced, it was not on the basis of the texts he presented to the Government officials for approval but on the basis that in performance they became uncontrollable. Yet Najm was determined to look for a dramatic text because his terms of reference were derived from Western classical theatre, which gives primacy to the text, and not from an Arabic theatrical tradition which, to him did not exist.

1.3 Literature covering theatre and puppet arts 1950 to date

The present section is intended to highlight the main trends in the literature covering Arabic theatre tradition published during the past four decades. The reader is invited to refer to appendix I for a more detailed survey of selected publications presented chronologically in order to observe the direction in which research has evolved.(28) Given the largely undefined nature of the territory in view here, the body of literature deals primarily with the controversial issue regarding the actuality of a theatre tradition in the Arab culture. One of the substantial merits of this literature rests in its calling attention to the fact that no criteria relating to the internal articulation of the Arabic artistic expression has been developed yet to guide the investigation on this matter.

Some researchers set in motion the classical hypothesis stating that Arabs did not develop a theatre tradition representative of their culture. Authors proclaiming the absence of a theatre tradition put forward the following diversified assumptions:

- a. Arabs did not contact civilisations which enjoyed a developed dramatic tradition till Napoleon's conquest of Egypt in the late 18th century.
- b. The Arabs' pride in their own poetic legacy hindered their readiness to appreciate Aristotle's *Poetics* when they translated the Greek heritage in sciences and humanities.

- c. The nomadic life style of the Arabs interfered with establishing a stable social life .Likewise, the Islamic urban social structure had a fragmented and secretive quality. Therefore, the elements which make theatre a sociable art were not available.
- d. The unavailability of religious rites and rituals in pagan Arabia, in addition to the refraining from mythological tradition under Islam, carry part of the charges for negative contribution on this subject.
- e. Islam's antagonism to human and animal images is also blamed for inspiring an uncooperative attitude towards the advancement of theatre practice.
- f. In the same vein, women's role in Muslim societies and specifically their cumbersome dress are accountable for further hindrance of any kind of creative expression.
- g. The inconvenience of the classical Arabic language as a theatrical expression, especially as theologians protected fiercely the medium of the Islamic revelation.
- i. Islam demands man's total submission to God; this means that the notion of conflict between creature and Creator is non-existent. Any potential for dramatic expression in the Arabic culture is therefore still born.

An important aspect in the work of the authors who promote the above assumptions is that it exhibits most concern for dramatic text as the centre of dramatic performance. Significantly, these scholarly contributions assign the birth of drama in the Arab world to the performance or publication date of a dramatic text. On that account the date 1847 - when Marun al-Naqqash produced *The Miser* at his home in Beirut, is considered a decisive moment in the history of Arabic theatre (here a few writers believe that as al-Naqqash is a Christian, his contribution cannot be seen as altogether Arabic!).(29)

An alternative view is expressed by authors who are able to recognise certain popular performance traditions in the Middle East. In many instances these traditions are invoked as embryonic forms, pre-drama, theatre manifestations, dramatic elements, etc. This category of researchers put the accent on manifestations which contribute to the arts of the theatre, for example: they

review rituals, ceremonies, spectacles, festivals, social games, poetry contests, and solo performances of literary, religious, and popular stories, or comic mime and dance. Moreover, in this category of authors, there are some who shift the focus exclusively to the arts of shadow playing and story telling as the consequent product of the poet/narrator/solo performer/actor tradition deeply rooted in the Arab culture.

Hamada followed by Abu Shanab, al-Ra'î, Mubarak, Moreh and Badawi are the main researchers who consider shadow play a form of theatre worthy of investigation. Their work constitutes the corpus of literature on *khayal al-zill* in Egypt and Syria.

Khayal al-zill epitomises a climatic turning point away from the style of the narrator in one voice to an individual representational image of each character with its distinctive voice. However, the style of representation is consistent for narration in single voice and in voices of every description. In the view of some of these authors, studying the thematic and structural composition of an indigenous dramatic tradition such as *khayal al-zill* should help us appreciate certain features in modern Arabic drama.

The most recent publication regarding Arabic theatre, by Moreh, argues for the existence of an established dramatic literature, not just 'dramatic elements', alongside *khayal al-zill* in the medieval Arabic world. After decades of research concerning the controversial existence of an Arabic theatre tradition, the investigation is now critically deviated to resolve the question, why the dramatic tradition of the medieval Arabic world did not develop into high art?

1.4 Theatre Manifestations in the Middle East

The last section moved us nearer to understanding the different points of view concerning enquiries in the field of Arabic theatre arts. Obviously most of the early researchers focused on the reasons Arabs did not match Europeans in developing a theatre tradition. However, this trend has recently given way to researchers who realise the impotence of applying Arab culture to the scrutiny of Western or any other criteria. Researchers today are approaching the subject by establishing the existing dramatic 'potentials', 'elements', or 'manifestations' in the Arabic heritage, and henceforth proceed to studying their relevance to the

development of dramatic expression. In this vein, let us examine particular instances of cultural and dramatic significance which could enhance our appreciation of the complexities of theatre arts in the Arab world. In Chapters 3 and 4 we will discuss in more detail some of the religious and artistic expressions referred to below.

1.4.1 Egypt before Christ

Certain Egyptian and Arab writers and scholars(30) perceive the origins of Middle Eastern theatre in the pyramids and tomb chambers of the Pharaohs, specifically in the ancient Egyptian works identified as dramas or dramatic fragments.(31)

In the realm of the Ancient Egyptians, religious life was dominated by the belief in life after death.(32) This was exemplified in the creation myth of Osiris - Creator of Green Things. Osiris and Seth, sons of Geb, god of the earth, quarrel over the throne of Egypt, and Seth incarcerates his brother in a coffin which he throws into the Nile. Their sister, Isis, who is also the wife of Osiris, rescues the coffin when it is washed ashore at Byblos, Lebanon, but loses the body to Seth. After dismembering the corpse he buries the pieces throughout Egypt but Isis perseveres and helped by her son Horus she reassembles the body and Osiris is resurrected.

Osiris abdicates the throne in favour of his son Horus but retains the title of the living god of the realm of the Dead. Seth doggedly continues to dispute this arrangement but the gods interfere and at a court presided over by the sun god Re, Horus is confirmed as King of Egypt and as a consolation prize Seth is given the kingship of Nuba. Henceforward all kings of Egypt are called Horus and all deceased kings become known as Osiris.

The Pharaoh is the son of the sun god Re, the supreme deity, thus expressing both his divinity and impartiality in the realm of man. His kingship symbolises the political union of both Upper and Lower Egypt.

In Pharaonic Egypt all aspects of artistic, intellectual, spiritual, even daily existence are centred around, indeed determined by, religion, which in turn was an expression of the state. One of the oldest theological documents known as *The Memphite Theology*, published by Kurt Sethe under the title *Dramatische Texte zu altaegyptischen Mysterienspielen* in 1928, reveals three types of

dramatic scenes which deal with the notion of creation and reinforce the relationship of kingship and government.(33)

The first category, the "creation scenes" as they were known, were performed on the occasion of the King's birthday to demonstrate his divine genesis. The Heb Sed plays or the "coronation scenes", which are documented in the Ramesseum papyrus dated around 3300 B.C., are highly ceremonial performances. Apparently they took place in "halls" built specially for such purposes with miniature replicas of various edifices symbolising different locations in Egypt. In those performances, the new King himself would play the leading role and would, in front of his subjects, be "transformed" into Horus.(34) The coronation scenes are believed to have been performed every sunset and sunrise of a King's life(35) as well as at his coronation anniversary. The religious and political metaphor is transparently obvious.

The third variety of plays is the *Abydos Passion Plays* (2500 B.C.), also known as the "cycles", as they were regularly performed over a period of several days at *Abydos* where Osiris' head had been buried. They focus on the role of the sister/wife of Osiris, Isis, and her protection of their son Horus whilst grooming him for his rightful place on his father's throne.

The texts reveal eight consecutive scenes, each covering a period of one day. Starting at sunrise, events develop with and parallel the progress of the sun, culminating in a battle during the darkest hours of the night which ends in the triumph of light at dawn. Once again the Ancient Egyptian saw his life in relation to the sun(36) and is taught the triumph of Re and by implication that of the god/king.

In all the ritualistic scenes of the passion plays, the events are re-enacted with much spectacle including battles, processions and burial ceremonies designed specially to encourage the full participation of the audience/worshippers.(37) It is also clear from the texts and pictographs that both dialogue and mime were used.(38) Furthermore, the emphatic repetition throughout the Pharaonic wall paintings and reliefs reveals dance and music as the most vital expression of art. An interpretation of the hieroglyphics on a stone stele of the court official Ikhernofret seem to record the tasks of its donor vis-à-vis the temple at *Abydos* and his involvement in the "cycles". From this and the various pictographs on walls and papyrus, it is possible to reconstruct the following scenes:

Ikhernofret, a participant in these rituals, might have been the Master of Ceremonies, as these records seem to suggest stage directions. It begins with the words:

'I organise the departure of Wepwawet as he goes to the rescue of his father.' It seems clear, therefore, that the god Wepwawet, in the form of a jackal, opened the ceremonies. Immediately after the figure Wepwawet 'there appeared the god Osiris, in his full majesty, and after him his ennead - the nine gods of his entourage. Wepwawet was in front, clearing the way for him....'. In triumph Osiris travels along in his ship, the Neshmet bark, escorted by the participating worshippers in the mystery ceremonies. They are his comrades-in-arms in his fight against his enemy Seth.(39)

After this prelude, there follows a third scene of battles ending with the death of Osiris. Isis, his wife, leads the lamentation joined by a great number of the participants. The fourth scene introduces the god Thoth who arrives by ship and in the fifth scene he fetches the corpse which is prepared for the burial ceremony near *Abydos* in the sixth scene. Meanwhile, in a battle led by Horus, the enemies of Osiris are slain. Finally in scene eight, Osiris, risen to a new life, re-enters the temple as the ruler of the dead, in a great procession.(40)

Obviously the eight scenes were not all performed in full view of the audience; some required more audience participation than others. For example, scene six - the burial scene - consistent with the traditions of the time, could not have been performed outside the inner sanctum of the temple where the secrets of the process of mummification were zealously guarded beyond the grave. In the same manner, part of the final scene must have been performed in secret since the resurrection business was surrounded in mystery.

These scenes were recorded in hieroglyphics inscribed vertically across the papyrus or stone. Etienne Drioton notes that dramatic scenes are delineated by the notation, at the top of the line, of the name of the character delivering the line as well as the name of the recipient of the speech. Drioton cites another important feature which all the lines of the characters are preceded with: "he says". Some texts include stage directions or descriptions of the action accompanying the dialogue. Others illustrate the verbal description.(41) These dramatic scenes were constantly developing and reflecting the interests of the priests-directors who wrote, acted and produced them, for the clergy realised

what vast possibilities for mass suggestions the mystery play offered.(42) The Pharaohs were consistently assailed from both East and West, so there was an urgent need to keep the kingdom united under the firm rule of a benevolent god/king. Therefore episodes were reduced, increased, made more violent or spectacular, etc., depending upon the socio-political situation at the time.(43) In Chapter 3 it will be demonstrated how this style of constructing scenes for ceremonial performances is paralleled in the visual expression on the walls of tombs and dwellings of the ancient Egyptians.

Theatre historian Margot Berthold queries the dialogue form of the passion plays and suggests it is the result of a confusion between the first-person presentation and the invocation form in early translations;(44) in particular the scenes of priestly offerings and appeals to gods in the tomb chambers lack the presence of audience, a vital component of theatre. However, she asserts that the concept of the god who has become man and entered into the region of earthly suffering is akin to the role of Christ in medieval mystery plays and is a basic constituent of drama.(45) Moreover there is no tradition of tragedy in Ancient Egypt. Farouk Abdel Wahab refers to the fact that "gods do not die but, at worst, suffer transformation".(46)

Life in Ancient Egypt centred around the temple, thus it is natural to find that most dramatic texts relate to religious rituals. However, this was not a totally exclusive state of affairs. Abu Seif mentions in this context the use of drama as a therapeutic remedy in what is known as the "Medicine Show", (47) the Ancient Egyptian equivalent of psychiatric counselling. We are reminded of "The Moo-oo" histrions who specialised in performing funny dances and in mimicking people at funerals in order to rouse the mourning family from their misery. "The Bastet" festival, too, is known to reflect the fun loving spirit of the Egyptians. Here, a group of people, male and female, have a sailing party on the Nile, singing and dancing while the females exchange dirty jokes with land bound onlookers.(48) Last but not least, there was Pharaoh's dwarf who acted the fool and played the gnome-god Bes in religious ceremonies.(49)

Outstanding evidence remains of a wandering actor by the name of Emheb. He tells us that for three years he was relegated to playing the tom-tom all the time. "I it was", the actor brags, "who accompanied his master on all his journeyings and who did not grow tired of the declamations which he recited" and "I was the partner of my master in all his declamations. When he was a god, I was a prince; when he killed, I brought back to life."(50)

With so many diverse dramatic performances, the Ancient Egyptians must, inescapably, have developed certain staging techniques. Among these, Hiyam Abu al-Husayn mentions as examples the stage directions noted with the dialogue passages, the presence of the chorus and leader, the use of sound effects to denote wind, etc., as well as staging tricks of the ilk of Deus ex Machina, since many texts refer specifically to the ascension of a god.(51) Masks were invariably donned to represent various gods and animals. Appropriate stage properties were also in common use.

The debate questioning why Ancient Egyptian drama remained a religious function and did not develop in the direction of Greek drama is a matter for endless discussion. The human condition ensures that there will always be evocative effects, situations and even character stereotypes enjoyed by our ancestors as far back as five thousand years before Christ. The Osiris myth with its main four characters symbolising the elements: Osiris - water; Isis - the earth; Horus - air; and Seth - fire, will always evoke a vivid response, not only in its story of creation which is echoed in the Babylonian epic of Gilgamesh, but also in the story of jealousy and struggle for power between brothers exemplified in the Old Testament characters Cain and Abel.(52) Also as Bamber Gascoigne notes, the god Thot, finding Horus dead from a scorpion sting and bringing him back to life "is the ancestor of the Doctor who until very recently in many European countries has always been on hand each midwinter to revive a fallen hero in the mummers' plays".(53)

The Greek historian Herodotus (484-425 B.C.), after visiting Egypt (450 B.C.) returned home to Greece with the impression that Dionysus, in whose honour plays were presented in Athens, was another version of Osiris.

1.4.2 Mesopotamia before Christ

The Osiris myth is mirrored in other parts of the Middle East. In Syria we encounter Adonis or Tammuz, the god of fertility and vegetation and water, whereas, in Babylon the goddess Ishtar was deemed to be the deity of fertility. There are myths which join the two gods in a love story in which Tammuz dies every year and is banished to the underworld in winter. Then Ishtar bravely brings him back and he lives again in spring and summer. During the barren months of winter, Ishtar and the priests lament the death of the god. Later, in spring, the worshippers join in a procession to express joy in the resurrection of the god of fertility.(54)

In Mesopotamia around two thousand B.C., the kings of Ur and Isin derived a claim to divinity from the "Sacred Marriage", a ceremonial solemnised by the King and Queen after a symbolic ritual banquet. This religious drama was performed in the temple using pantomime, incantation and music. With the rule of the distinguished King Hammurabi (1728-1686 B.C.) this festival ceased as he promulgated a new ideal for Kingship projected in the image of the "humble, god-fearing prince".(55)

Alongside religious drama in Mesopotamia there existed secular drama known as the Sumerian dialogue and the epic dialogue. These possess a developed sense of humour and some are seen as a kind of clowning satire. The Sumerians also celebrated New Year festivals for twelve days with spectacular processions stopping at predetermined locales for performances of pantomime and recitations from the epic of creation.(56)

Music and musicians, both male and female, were highly esteemed both in temples and at courts. This high regard which translated into mythological significance is recorded in the images of the animal-headed musicians seen on reliefs and cylindrical seals. Berthold contends that in Mesopotamia "gods were coming down to earth, becoming partners in the rituals. And with the descent of gods comes the beginning of theatre".(57)

Dance and music are the most represented and therefore celebrated of the performing arts in the pictorial records of the Ancient Middle East - they are an intrinsic part of all ritual. References to dance and song are familiar throughout the Old Testament.(58) The Old Testament, like other contemporaneous literature, includes parts set in dialogue form: the Song of Solomon and the Book of Job are examples of long dramatic poems. Cheney Sheldon interprets the lines of the Book of Job as the story of:

an actor going through a series of events, in a drama that may seem in our energetic times to lack direct theatric action; but which has a well-stressed action of spiritual thought, even of motion.(59)

1.4.3 Arabia before Islam

Historical necessity has made ritualised processions the most widely practised theatrical performance form in the ancient Middle East. In the Arabian peninsula,

during the days before Islam - the *Jahiliyya* (ending 610 A.D.),⁽⁶⁰⁾ processions formed the basis for the most important of religious rituals, the annual pilgrimage to the Ka'ba in Makka and to worship at nearby stones which were considered gods. The Ka'ba itself is a cube-like structure of primitive simplicity which housed a sacred black stone and idols of whom the chief deity, *Hubal*, was represented in human form. The annual pilgrimage was scheduled to take place during the four months of *al-Haram* (holy truce) which specified the first three months for religious observances whilst during the fourth month trade was allowed. During the remainder of the year intertribal warfare was the norm but this was strictly forbidden during the holy truce.⁽⁶¹⁾

Tribes from all over Arabia converged upon Makka with their animals for sacrifice, goods to trade and *qasidah* (ode) to recite. They travelled from one location to another paying homage to different deities such as idols, *al-Llat* in al-Ta'if; stones, *Manah* in Qudayd; trees, *al-'Uzza* at Nakhlah; water springs, *Zamzam* and other natural or manmade phenomena.⁽⁶²⁾ At each place they would present their offerings accompanied by a tribute of music, song and dance; some songs form dialogue between the chorus and its leader, and certain poems tell us of incidents where naked female dancers circumnambulated idols. As a final gesture, some tribes shaved their heads to mark the completion of the ritual.⁽⁶³⁾

As a natural progression, fairs were organised en route for the purpose of trade and entertainment. A unique literary congress, *suq 'Ukaz*, (similar to the Welsh Eisteddfod) took place in al-Hijaz where the poets of Arabia through recitation of their *qasa'd* (odes) promulgated their art and their tribe. The winning *qasidah*, possibly inscribed in golden letters, would be suspended from the walls of the Ka'ba. Henceforth, the *qasidah* of the hero-poet is known as *mu'allaha* (literally suspended) - a masterpiece of poetical composition.⁽⁶⁴⁾

Religious dance was prevalent in Arabia; it was customary to dance around idols whether in houses, temples or the open air. Secular dance was also commonplace: *Jahiliyya* poetry is full of descriptions of sword dances accompanied by singers and musicians with percussion instruments.

Religious chants were composed by the tribal poets, hence every tribe had its own individual chants for its respective idols. At the fairs, secular singing was a major source of entertainment, particularly after all religious rites were completed.⁽⁶⁵⁾

Additionally, songs for minor religious events are recorded. A good example are those which accompany the drought ritual - prayers for rain - when sacrifices were made before idols. These rituals were conducted by a religious man and were performed in special costume.(66)

The Arabians of *Jahiliyya* took enormous pride in their oral tradition. During this "time of ignorance", a popular sport was the form of oral challenge known as *munafara* which took the form of dialogue of a "tit for tat" debate, most of the time usually witnessed by the public and refereed by a judge. Such early literary dialogue contained the seeds for the more complex poetry which flowered in the Umayyad period (661-750 A.D.) between the famous poets of the courts.(67)

Story telling, whether of heroic tribal wars, truces, the rise and fall of kings and kingdoms, characters from myth like the *jinn* (68) or of poetry competitions like 'Ukaz, is another form in which Arabians before and during Islam revelled in their language. Oral tradition was the sole means of communicating their cultural heritage and of learning about their language, history and environment. This aspect has so strongly affected the intellectual pattern of Arabia that even today it is still a major characteristic of Arab culture.

The oral traditions embodied in poetry remain a key activity in the recitation and story telling of Middle Eastern heritage both before and after Islam. Distinguished patriarchs of the tribal monarchy, whether living in the desert or an oasis, were naturally expert in telling a diversity of ancestral stories, supernatural beings, gods, kings, poets, tribal wars, fairs, competitions, places visited or adventures undertaken. Story telling to these tribes, inheritors of a literary rather than a literate culture, is the only effective manner of communicating a heritage which is itself largely oral.

Hitti evaluates the cultural scene in Arabia and asserts that "it was only in the field of poetical expression that the pre-Islamic Arabian excelled. Here his finest talents found a field. The Bedouin's love of poetry was his one cultural asset."(69) The poetry of this period is still regarded as "models of unapproachable excellence", (70) which were entrusted to memory, communicated orally and finally documented on paper much later during Islam.

Whereas the poets of Arabia were the sages, politicians and spokesmen of their tribes, the story tellers were the oral historians/scribes. As a way of illustration,

al-Muhalhil's *qasa'd* fanned the flames of the Basus war and his political exhortations were so successful that henceforth he became the *zir* (romantic hero) of the still popular romance *Qissat al-Zir* (the story of *Zir*) found in the repertoire of all Arab *hakawati* (story tellers).(71)

A famous story teller of *Jahiliyya* and early Islam is Tamim Ibn Ows who became the first story teller specialised in historical and religious stories in the mosque of the prophet Muhammad.(72) 'Arsan argues a certain commonality of theatrical features envisaged in narration sessions since ancient times:

- a. The subject matter uses historical material or *sira* (biography), depicting characters and plots rich with imagination and morals.
- b. The story teller's familiarity with his subject matter allows for improvisation and creativity; this renders him an actor, teacher and transmitter of experience.
- c. The audience seeks entertainment and enlightenment on contemporary and past events.
- d. The particular place in which the story teller meets his audience, be it indoors or in the open.(73)

1.4.4 Arabs under Islam

The death of the Prophet Muhammad prompted the beginning of the struggle for the leadership of the Muslims. Now the Muslim community split into two bitterly opposed factions, those who believed in the ancient Arabic practice of succession by election and those who supported inherited succession in the family of the Prophet. The result was two sects known as Sunnites (orthodox adherents of Islam) and Shi'ites. The term Shi'a means partisan, and the Shi'ites are the partisans of 'Ali the cousin and the son-in-law of Muhammad.

During the struggle for the Caliphate, 'Ali, Caliph at the time, was assassinated on his way to the mosque at Kufa (661 A.D.) and later his elder son, Hasan, was poisoned in Madina (669 A.D.). The headquarters of the Caliphate had already been moved by 'Ali's efforts from Arabia to Iraq and, after the death of 'Ali, to Damascus, Syria. 'Ali's second son, Husayn, who lived in Madina, refused to acknowledge the rule of Yazid, the Ummayyad Caliph in Damascus. After the death of his father and brother, the Iraqis invited Husayn to be the Caliph. Husayn therefore left Madina with a small escort of relatives and supporters, for Kufa in Iraq.

At the beginning of *Muharram* (holy truce month) 680 A.D., 'Umar Ibn Abi Waqqas besieged Husayn with his escort near Kufa, in the open field of *Karbala* and attacked them on the tenth day of *Muharram* after their refusal to surrender. Husayn received a mortal wound in the course of the battle and his body was decapitated by Shimr. The head was sent to Yazid in Damascus for display as a trophy and deterrent but was later buried with the body in *Karbala*. In retrospect the people of Kufa, the partisans of 'Ali, repented their failure to give Husayn their promised support.

Thus, in commemoration of Husayn's martyrdom, 'Ali's partisans, the Shi'ites annually observe the first ten days of *Muharram* as a period of mourning and lamentation. As an expression of grief, they have developed a passion play enacted in three interrelated complementary parts, opening with *majlis al-ta'ziya* (mourning assemblies), followed by *mawkib al-'aza'* (mourning procession) and culminating in *mashad 'ashura'* (presentation of the events of the tenth of *Muharram*), also known as *maqal* scenes (the killing scenes).(74)

The first function, *majlis al-ta'ziya*, is held throughout the first ten days of *Muharram* in a house or a hall. In this assembly a *qari'* (reciter) narrates the story of the Martyrdom of Husayn and his family and enhances his narration with poetry. On the tenth day or '*ashura*', the processions are performed in the streets leading to *Karbala*, or the place representing it. Here the mourners express their grief by wailing, sobbing and self-flagellation; they also enact in a pageant parts of the events of '*ashura*'. The climax which constitutes the core of *mashad 'ashura'* is the massacre of Husayn and his male family. This recreates and revives the tragedy by means of acting and miming. This is a case in point from the Arab culture where narrative expression using prose, poetry and movement is employed to recreate a significant moment in history for the purpose of remembering and learning.

The above ceremony came to be known as *ta'ziya* - condolence/consolation sessions. '*Aza*' (condolence) is originally an early Islamic social function of the gathering of the mourners at the death of a member of the community. The term *ta'ziya* later developed to embrace the dramatisation of the tragedy of *Ahl al-Bayt* (the family members of the house of the Prophet).

What started as a private expression of grief by Shi'ite communities in Iraq, Turkey and Persia, became a major public spectacle employed by the state for

political purposes.(75) Consequently, the Shi'ites used every opportunity, be it by over exaggerated re-enactments of the tragedy or straightforward slander, to undermine the established power of the Sunni rulers.

When Shiism became the state religion of Persia after the Safavids came to power in 1502 A.D.,(76) *ta'ziya* was endorsed and gained a previously undreamt of prominence. Political events were openly commented on and Sunni rulers, contemporary and historical, were ridiculed in public, binding the spectators closer together in their rejection of the (Sunni) oppressors.

Indeed, what started as a private commemorative ceremony with a poet who "gave expression to his own feelings while arousing the sympathies of the mourners", (77) has, as time passed and Shi'ites transformed into a more active community, developed to a full public spectacle performed in a purpose-built *takiyya* (*ta'ziya* hall in *sufi* quarters) or *hussayniyya* (public hall named after Husayn).

Unlike Persia, Iraq and Turkey, *ta'ziya* in Egypt was restricted to poets reciting elegies in mosques amidst the wailing and chanting of the crowd.(78)

Although *ta'ziya* is seen as an isolated instance of dramatic art in Islamic culture, it has very deep roots in the philosophical concepts debated by Muslim intellectuals and religious scholars of the time. It is important to remember at this stage that by the tenth century A.D., the Muslim community spread over vast conquered territories which constituted the homelands of various races, all of whom came to Islam with their different backgrounds. Arabs, as conquerors, were in a position to challenge non-Arab people on cultural grounds and at the same time learn from them.(79)

}

The cultural atmosphere in general was considerably fertile - groups of dialecticians and scholars from various fields engaged in theoretical discussions of religious beliefs, Islamic theology and philosophical trends. These scholars were divided between two differing parties, the *Mu'tazilites*(80) and the *Ash'arites*.(81) Followers of the Shi'ite and Sunnite sects respectively accepted their views as philosophical principles.(82)

Man's actions and responsibilities constituted the pivot of the argument of the *Mu'tazilite* and the *Ash'arite* theologians and scholars. The point at issue was

this: does man initiate action for which he is responsible, or are his deeds predetermined by divine providence? The *Ash'arites* and hence their Sunni followers stressed the omnipotence of God more intensely than His justice,(83) and supported fatalistic views which were seen to serve the interests of the Sunni Caliphate and to maintain their established power.(84)

The *Mu'tazilite* school of philosophy was based upon the principle that man possesses freedom of action and is therefore accountable for his behaviour, and deserves punishment or reward accordingly. The Shi'ite followers of the *Mu'tazilite* school considered *ta'ziya*:

to be an expression of the meaning of justice and was totally in opposition to the view of the scholars and official thinkers of the Caliphate.(85)

Complementary to the "free will" doctrine of the *Mu'tazila*, was another principle with a definitive role in the development and form of *ta'ziya*;(86) it is embodied in the notion of *tashabuh* (imitation, simulation). This *tashabuh* principle was based on a *hadith* (saying) by the Prophet meaning "whoever makes himself resemble a group is in the category of that group".(87) This *hadith* was used in the narrow context of motivating man to imitate good and reject evil behaviour. Applying *tashabuh* in this sense, Abu al-Qasim al-Zamakhshari (1074-1143 A.D.), a famous Persian theologian, was a pioneer in advocating that:

according to religious traditions anyone who weeps for Hussein is certainly destined to join him in eternity.(88)

In reality he is calling for the observance of the memory of *Karbala* events and thus the *ta'ziya* play became known as *shabih* (likeness, semblance, mimesis).

Every single Shi'ite is expected to promote the values of the Shi'ite community in his own profession. All members of society from religious scholars, *qadis* (judges), *imams* (religious leaders of divine authority), *mullas* (religious authorities), *shahs* (sovereigns) and ordinary people contribute to the development of *ta'ziya*. Their input is manifest in the vast *ta'ziya* corpus of poems, elegies and *maqats* (plays about martyrs); in religious laws which recognise *shabih* (drama/play) as free, lawful and among the noblest of religious works; in providing funds to erect *takiyya* or *hussayniyya* halls, as well as feeding and giving water to the audience, and compensating professional poets/actors and finally in joining with fellow members of the community to express grief over the martyrs in the *ta'ziya*.

This is the atmosphere in which *ta'ziya* was conceived and developed and indeed continues to express binding political and cultural standpoints. The momentousness which the spectacular performances and processions assumed will now be examined within the above religio-political and cultural perspective.

It is perhaps necessary to speculate on how a political power struggle snowballed into a vibrant, vociferous religious spectacle.

The victorious forces of the Ummayyad Caliph Yazid triumphantly bore back to Damascus the head of Husayn, accompanied by Shahrbanu and Zaynab, his wife and sister, with all the attendant women and children. In the Muslim world, this was a singular action signifying Ummayyad confusion over the threat posed by the family of 'Ali. Confusion, we assume, because almost no sooner had they arrived in Damascus than they were despatched back to Kufa without constraints.

The women, traumatised by their loss and suffering from the degradation of defeat and the humiliation of their endless wanderings, were finally confronted by the people of Kufa. Conscious of their betrayal, the Kufans would surely have over-compensated with an exaggerated display of emotion.

A combination of the trauma suffered by these degraded women and the guilt of the Kufans produced an extreme version of the 'aza' culminating in the inclusion of sado-masochistic rituals. The ultimate transition of Husayn's 'aza' into the annual ritual of *ta'ziya* can partially be attributed to the social status of the women and their relationship to the Prophet. The spontaneous whirlwind intensity of these events spurred on by the mellifluous tones and high artistic endeavour of the *qari'*.

The *qari'* or narrator is the key figure on such occasions. He determines the nature of the material with which he recreates events and builds up emotions:

Through choice of episodes and modulation of his voice, the narrator was able to excite and manipulate the emotions of his audience, to produce in them unity of feeling of great intensity.(89)

Evidently, community events such as *ta'ziya* offer an exquisite occasion for a narrator/poet to exercise his art surrounded by receptive worshippers longing to

hear "the dramatic deeds, suffering and death of Shi'ite martyrs".(90) The narration sessions usually commence on the first day of *Muharram* and warm up the worshippers to the climax - the mashad procession - which takes place on the tenth day of *Muharram*. During the procession, poets and rhapsodists recite elegies and chant praise to the family of 'Ali. *Sufi* poets, particularly in Turkey and Persia infiltrated and directed the mourners to the graves of mystics. Years later the entire ceremony of *Muharram* was held in *takiyya* - the *sufi* or dervish quarters.(91)

Religious personalities and preachers played active parts in the tableaux which unfold during the processions. The *sayyids* (descendants of Husayn) monopolise the prominent roles which gave them claim to gifts from patrons.(92) In the early stages of the development of *maqatal*, miming actors accompanied the recitals by preachers and rhapsodes; later on, professional actors were hired to deliver the words themselves.

Some of the most difficult roles to cast are those of the "villains", Yazid - the Umayyad Caliph, and Shimr, the military leader who beheaded Husayn, as they will always be associated with their *shabih*, the symbol of evil.(93)

As the plot develops and Shimr goes to cut off the head of Husayn,(94) no spectator is surprised to see Shimr in tears for the oppressed *Imam*, for it is clear it is not Shimr crying but the player. The *shabih* notion is quite controversial when put in the context of playing villains or even *imams*. Performers developed a representational style in which they recite the lines of the character but do not become one with the character. For this purpose the text, or the actors' lines, are read from a piece of paper even when the *ta'ziya* player/worshipper knows his lines by heart.(95)

The *ta'ziyeh* art of acting makes the performer-believer a role carrier Rollentraeger, not a character.(96)

Here is an example of an actor who became too involved and needed to remind the audience that he is Mr Sulaimani playing Abbas while reciting an ode that he himself composed. In the middle of it he emphasised the separation between himself and the character he was playing:

I am not Abbas; neither is this Kerbela
I am Sulaimani, the slave of the King of heavenly power.(97)

There are usually at least two very important female roles - Shahrbanu and Zaynab, Husayn's wife and sister. The above-mentioned representational style makes it highly convenient for the male worshipper/performer to accept such female roles.(98) In Chapter 4 we will see how the same representational style is a feature of the *hakawati* performance in the coffee house.

It has been argued that "the Shi'a dimension of the Islamic tradition has with time developed a more human, folk-Islamic, popular aspect preserved in the Husayn-Kerbela-'Ashura-Ta'ziyeh complex".(99) This aspect of Shi'a Islam has made it possible to expand the repertoire of plays which includes mainly stories with tragic references employing historical, scriptural and social plots. Examples from this repertoire include the Invasion of Tamerlane, the story of Adam and Eve, the story of Noah, the Sacrifice of Isma'il by Ibrahim, the story of Joseph and his brothers, the Wedding of Qasim (Husayn's son), as well as stories of mothers like Rachel and Mary showing understanding of Fatima's anguish:

Plays are continually reworked and added to by poets who actually appear at the beginning of the performance to introduce the dramatic spectacle with appropriate verses praising and lamenting the dead.(100)

The bulk of these plays was composed in verse and/or rhymed prose. Noble characters spoke only in verse form while the villains spoke in prose. This convention may be traced in the Arabic, Turkish and Persian languages. Interestingly enough, the episodes were performed in the language of the impersonator of Husayn. One would have expected religious matters to follow the universal language of the Qur'an. Further, these plays could not escape the influences of the various regional dialects and cultural features of the vast Islamic empire. Here is a good example of interplay of cultures and languages: in a free verse version attributed to the city of Kashan (Persia), Shimr, while mounting his horse to journey to *Karbala*, says:

It is time I make haste, Enshallah, (if God wills)
Stirrup the foot of high purpose, Enshallah,
Visit in Damascus the Great Sultan of the faithful,
Bearing wine, I am on my way, Enshallah.(101)

Enshallah is always associated with the principle of predestination. The Persian writer Nasr al-Din Shah makes reference to the principle of predestination which

is followed by the Sunnis who are the majority of Arabs here represented by Shimr. Also, association is made with the sin of drinking wine, thus underlining his wickedness.

The dialogue form in poetry which is known to both Persians and Arabs is used in the elegies of *Karbala*. Following is an interesting example of the dialogue form:

What rains down? Blood! Who? The eyes?
 How? Day and night! Why?
 From grief! What grief? The grief of the
 monarch of Kerbelah!
 What was his name? Hussein! Of what race? Ali's!
 Who was his mother? Fatima! Who was his grandsire?
 Mostapha!(102)

Early in the development of *ta'ziya*, music was introduced to accompany the mourners' chants; it consisted of a single monotonous beat. A drum and trumpet were prominent at the beginning, but as the episodes developed and special songs were written musical instruments became more varied, kettle drums, cymbals, horns and clarinets were used,(103) even sometimes large brass bands were located in a dominant corner of the hall.(104)

Staging conventions were slowly established to parallel the rich repertoire and their increasing expertise. The narrator starts the process by recounting the events at *Karbala*, then poets and rhapsodes accompany the audience to the graves of the martyrs where in a series of tableaux the main episodes of the battlefield are enacted culminating in the massacre of Husayn. The role of the participants-performers evolves within the procession and changes with each scenario, now as the enemies surrounding Husayn and his partisans - the battle scene, then as followers of Husayn - the wedding and mourning scenes.

A variety of dramatic elements are present in these pageants. A very early one is the use of an awning to represent the tent of Husayn and the camp at the battlefield of *Karbala*. Sometimes a platform is erected in a public place which may be a mosque, caravanserai, *takiyya* or a *hussayniyya*. The sand of the desert is often represented by a heap of straw and the Euphrates river by a copper basin full of water. Camels and horses take part in the performances. The appearance of a riderless horse is always a sign of the death of its master. Straw puppets representing corpses of martyrs are carried on wooden biers,

wounded actors and mutilated bodies also appear after battle scenes and they are usually covered with real blood, very often their own.(105)

Akin to the stage properties, the costumes and colours were used in a symbolic manner. 'Ali's family members are always costumed in white with a green shawl or turban, while the villains are always in red garments. The spectators also abide by the colour code. However, costumes, like the plays themselves, need not belong to any precise historical period. "The adherents of Yazid might wear sunglasses to mark them as bad characters."(106)

Masks are used in plays of Persian-pagan influence, especially those about the King of *jinn* (supernatural spirits) and his warriors.(107) This is the only case where masks are used, but, upon hearing the news of the death of Husayn, the face is smeared with dirt.

Audio-visual signs are present in abundance in the performances of *ta'ziya*. To name a few, there is the *kafan* (shroud), a visual symbol of martyrdom; red spots of blood signify wounds, green versus red representing good and evil; the distribution of water is a reminder of the thirst experienced by Husayn's family; the chanting of verse signifies a good character, whilst bad characters declaim their lines. Last but not least, all spectators/performers and actors join in chest-beating and wailing to form a unified expression of grief against the oppressors. "The flexibility of representation in *ta'ziyeh* through costumes, props and language serves to reinforce the connections between the action and the everyday lives of the spectators."(108) The performance tradition has an organic reality of its own which explains its survival in different geographical and political milieu in the Arab world, Persia, Turkey and India. In South Lebanon the Shi'ites of Jabal 'Amil (Mount 'Amil) coexist with a large Palestinian community with whom they share the common threat of the newly created state of Israel.

The assimilation between the 'Amilies and the Palestinians has reached a degree whereby, as a modern Lebanese sociologist put it (in French, of course!): "*Hussein, c'est la Palestine; Yazid n'est qu'une prefiguration du Zionism!*" It is a total identification of Hussein, the martyr of Kerbela, with the tragic fate of the Palestinians; and of the arch-enemy Yazid with the alien Zionist movement responsible for the tragedy.(109)

This comment might one day become outmoded, and with the rapid succession of political events in the area we see that the Shah who was Husayn became

Yazid and who knows if we will ever see other important figures of state become Yazid or Shimr.

1.5 The priest, poet, Narrator role

An historical review of the pattern in which these theatrical ceremonies have occurred in the Middle East reveals that in fact these manifestations constitute a unique reflection of civilisation at its height. Let us remind ourselves briefly of their historical significance:

- a. Osiris Passion Plays echo the struggle of a highly complex civilisation to develop and maintain its cultural integrity and physical unity against its inner and outer enemies. These dramatic fragments reveal the solid social, economic and political structure of the Pharaonic state. They communicate the clear perception of their priestly composers of a prosperous present followed by an everlasting future in the realm of the dead.
- b. The *qasidah* as a mode of expression, in both soliloquy and dialogue form, were developed during the latter years of *Jahiliyya*, a period significant for its cultural escalation towards the advent of Islam. At this time all the various dialects of Arabia were being blended into one language, Arabic. This climax reverberates in the oral traditions of the period, be it poetical expression or religious expression as articulated in the Qur'an.
- c. The oral tradition present in the story teller's repertoire, *ta'ziya*, *maqamat*, (110) and shadow plays is also a reflection of a pivotal period. It is the epoch when religious, social and political Islamic institutions were strengthening their foundations over a vast territory which stretched from the Middle East and parts of the Near and Far East to Africa and Europe.

Our précis of theatre manifestations has been restricted to the Middle East, a term which embraces an immense variety of geographical, anthropological and historical features, all of which have contributed and developed into a common heritage. A key element is the ritual aspect which is the backbone of the passion plays of Osiris and Husayn as well as of the sacred marriage and the pilgrimage to Ka'ba. Complementary to ritual is the seasonal recurrence which marks out time and contributes to continuity in human life. In all these manifestations it is obvious that the action is entwined and united with the cycle of life. Action contains a progressive force capable of initiating dynamic changes - resurrection as in the temple dramas of Osiris and Tammuz, metamorphosis to the eminence

of martyrdom as seen in Husayn's *ta'ziya*, and conversion to piety by visiting Makka, as in the example of shadow play characters which will be discussed in Chapter 4 of this thesis. The audience-worshippers are supposed to emerge purged after the performance.

All these manifestations feature processions, pageants or pilgrimage. Short or long, these journeys always schedule stops en route to elaborate further on the action. The plot is always known to the participants and so are the characters. Battles and violent scenes are another expected action in which the audience transforms into performers by taking part. Furthermore, the priest-author-mover-narrator role remains integral in all these theatrical manifestations.

1.6 Religious rituals or religious drama

Resulting from this bird's-eye view of selected Middle Eastern theatre happenings, it will be beneficial as an initial objective to examine, from a comparative perspective, the characteristics common to both Ancient Egyptian dramas and *ta'ziya*.

At first glance, the gulf in space and time between Osiris passion plays and *ta'ziya* is enormous. Yet it is this very difference which renders the comparison more thought-provoking. After all, both performances succeed in stimulating a sense of justice in the people, positively in the case of the triumph of the god-king, Horus, over his enemy Seth; and negatively in the case of the injustice imposed by the enemy, the Ummayyads, over the Prophet's family. Politics is the key incentive on both occasions, and in both cases the ultimate intention is to unite a group of people against a common enemy, through reliving its victories in Osiris dramas, or through reviving guilt and grief, in the *Muharram* processions.

Let us return to the role of the priest-author or the narrator-leader who is assuredly the driving force behind the action in *Abydos* and at *Karbala*. In both cases the activity of the procession centres around one focal point. On the Nile, Osiris' bark serves as the focal point, whilst on the battlefield of *Karbala*, Husayn's camp is always the centre, even in the episodes of Mary and Rachel recited by the narrator. From the very beginning, the roles are cast. The priests play the key roles of the drama, and the *sayyids* - descendants of the Prophet - recite the lines of their ancestors. In both cases, the text and the *maqal* are composed by high ranking priests and *mullas* who have evolved a style which

ensures that the texts are flexible in structure and may easily be modified to accommodate changing situations and new episodes.

It is processions, pageants and pilgrimages that feature in the Nile and the *Karbala* events; the first recurs in spring whilst the latter takes place in *Muharram* of every year. In both cases the participants-worshippers are aware of the plot and the stations en route. The participants are also fully versed in the visual and oral signs which prompt their metamorphosis into performers. The visual signs extend to the costumes and more significantly the colours used: Osiris - white, Horus - blue, Seth - black, Isis - green. On the other hand, Husayn's family is always in white and green, the Ummayyads in red, and Husayn's partisans - the audience in green ribbons. Masks are used by the priest to personify gods, while Husayn's partisans daub their faces with dirt upon seeing a riderless horse.

The metamorphosis from audience to participant and back to audience is orchestrated by a leader-priest or *mulla*. In both cases the audience changes into an enemy during a battle scene and transforms back to worshippers lamenting the dead on the field of battle. Battle scenes are the best device to unify the worshipper-performers against the enemy, and the more intense the conflict, the more purged the performers. In both instances actual death and wounds have been documented. At the end of the fight, Osiris is killed by Seth who dismembers him and buries the parts all over Egypt. Shimr, at *Karbala*, slays Husayn and despatches the head to Damascus. The dismembered bodies of Osiris and Husayn are lovingly assembled by Isis, wife-sister of Osiris, and by Shahrabanu and Zaynab, respectively the wife and sister of Husayn. The site of the interment of their heads, Osiris' in *Abydos* and Husayn's in *Karbala*, became centres for pilgrimage.

The most outstanding feature is the similarity of even the climax in both passion plays. In *Abydos*, the serious business of Osiris' actual resurrection happens out of sight of the worshippers, it is the exclusive province of the priests inside the temples. Afterwards when he leaves the temple as the god of the dead, the worshippers are once again admitted as participants. In *Karbala* the climax is reached when Husayn appears in his *kafan*: the metamorphosis from man to martyr is an open event celebrated with the lamenting audience. In life the protagonists are recognised as Horus and Husayn, in death Osiris and the martyr Imam. Osiris' resurrection is a joyous occasion to the Osiris cult worshippers, who know they will join him in the realm of the dead, and Husayn's transformation

into martyr brings the promise to the mourners (who have been through the act of *tashabuh*) that they will meet the martyr Imam on the day of judgement.

The passion plays of Osiris and Husayn have been denied the title drama because neither depart from the sphere of religion. Mandur states that the Osiris passion play literally did not leave the temple.(111) M.M. Badawi comments on the passion plays of *Karbala* that because of its undeveloped form and its strictly confined theme, the *ta'ziya* should more properly be viewed as an extension of religious ritual than as drama. However, its mere existence explodes the popular fallacy that "Islam as such, and not 'puritan' Islam, is incompatible with dramatic representation."(112)

The relationship between drama and religion in the Middle East becomes painfully evident when one inspects the role of the Ancient Egyptian priest and the role of the *mulla* vis-à-vis their community.

If one accepts that the priest of Ancient Egypt is in fact a magician, doctor, wise man and politician whose multi-faceted existence took place exclusively under the auspices of the temple, "the house of secrets", then the logical corollary must be that in his role as theatre director he would remain in the same venue.

If Ancient Egyptian priests did not leave the temple to join real life (sic), it is because they did not conceive of any need for life beyond their temples. The priests ruled Egypt in the name of the Pharaohs, the god-kings who were virtually under house arrest in these temples.

As for the *mullas*, *ta'ziya* could not exist outside the religious ritual, for Islam is an all-enveloping way of life. It is nonsense to perceive Islam as one parcel and life as another. *Ta'ziya* embodies the total Shi'ite conception of life during which they strive to emulate the life of Husayn.

For ritual to become drama in the Middle East would be like Horus assuming the role of Osiris. Let us embrace Horus, Osiris is but an animated corpse.

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER 1

- (1) The word *iqra'* meaning read, recite, convey, proclaim or collect the verse. The first five verses of the Clot *sura* (chapter) are universally admitted to be the first revelation which descended upon the prophet in Cave Hira in the month of Ramadan 610 A.D. The first five verses of this *sura* read as follows:
- Proclaim thou in the name of thy Lord who created, created man from a clot of blood. Proclaim! And thy Lord is the most Bounteous: -who taught by the pen, taught man what he knew not. The Qur'an, (96:1).
- (2) *Lahu* is defined as every idle talk or deed that diverts one from fulfilling ones obedience (duties) towards Allah. Ibn Manzur, *Lisan Al 'Arab*, Vol.12, (Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath, 1988), pp.347-348.
- (3) On this subject, see Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), in which he examines "Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient", p.3. This relationship was set in motion "by the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt in 1798, an invasion which was in many ways the very model of a truly scientific appropriation of one culture by another, apparently stronger one. For with Napoleon's occupation of Egypt, processes were set in motion between East and West that still dominate our contemporary cultural and political perspectives", p.42.
- (4) See on this subject 'Arfan Hamur, *Aswaq Al-'Arab: 'Ard Adabi Tarikhi L'il Aswaq Al-Mawsimiyya Al-'Amma 'Ind Al-'Arab* (The Fairs of the Arabs), (Beirut: Dar al-Shura, 1979), pp.95-131.
- (5) Faruq Sa'd, "Khayal Al-Zill Al-'Arabi" (Arabic Shadow Play), Vol II. Ph.D. Diss. University of St Joseph, Beirut, 1981, pp.426-432.
- (6) By the 9th Century, the whole Muslim community divided itself into four juridicial schools: Shafi'i, Maliki, Hanafi and Hanbali to which the Shiite Muslims adhere. See Philip Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 10th ed. (1937; rpt. London: Macmillan, 1970), pp.397-399.
- (7) Khalid al-Mubarak, *Arabic Drama: A Critical Introduction*, (Khartoum: Khartoum University Press, 1986), p.7.
- (8) Shmuel Moreh, "The Shadow Play in the Light of Arabic Literature", *Journal of Arabic Literature*, Vol. XVIII (1987), p.47.
- (9) Moreh, p.47.
- (10) Moreh, p.47.
- (11) Tamara Putentsiva, *Alf 'Am Wa 'Am 'Ala Al-Masrah Al-'Arabi* (A Thousand and One Years of Arabic Theatre), Trans. Toufiq al-Mu'azin (Beirut: Dar al-Farabi, 1981), p.61.

- (12) Muhammad Yusuf Najm, *Al-Masrahiyya Fi Al-Adab Al-'Arabi Al-Hadith 1847-1914* (Drama in Modern Arabic Literature 1847-1914), 3rd ed. (1956; rpt., Beirut: Dar al-Thaqafa, 1980), p.19.
- (13) Najm, p.73.
- (14) Putentsiva, p.78.
- (15) Leila Abu Saif, "Najib al-Rihani: From Buffoonery to Social Comedy", *Journal of Arabic Literature IV*, (1973), p.1.
- (16) Moreh, "The Shadow Play in the Light of Arabic Literature", pp.57-58.
- (17) Moreh, p.58.
- (18) Al-Mubarak, p.4.
- (19) Sa'd, V.II, pp.657-665.
- (20) Sa'd, pp.666-667
- (21) Al-Mubarak, p.4.
- (22) Sa'd, V.II, pp.497 & 669. See Sa'd for detailed bibliography of the works of the German researchers in the field of shadow play.
- (23) Najm, pp.19-20.
- (24) Nevil Barbour, "The Arabic Theatre in Egypt", *Bulletin of School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 8, (1935-37), p.179.
- (25) Barbour, p.186.
- (26) Barbour, p.186.
- (27) See Said on *Orientalism*.
- (28) In Appendix I the following publications are reviewed. Muhammad Yusuf Najm, *Al-Masrahiyya Fi Al-Adab Al-'Arabi Al-Hadith 1847-1914*. Jacob Landau, *Studies in the Arab Theatre and Cinema*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1958). Landau, "Shadow Plays in the Near East", *Edoth*, Vol. III, No. 1-2 (Oct 1947 and Jan 1948). Landau, "The Theatre in Egypt", *Middle Eastern Affairs*, Vol. IV, No. 1 (Jan 1953). Landau, "The Arab Theatre", *Middle Eastern Affairs*, Vol. IV, No. 1 (March 1953). Ibrahim Hamada, *Khayal Al-Zill Wa Tamthiliyyat Ibn Daniyal* (Shadow Play and the Works of Ibn Daniyal), (Cairo: Al-Muassasa al-Misriyya al-'Amma, 1963). Mohamad Mandur, *Al-Masrah* (The Theatre), 3rd Ed., (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, (1964)). 'Adil Abu Shanab, *Masrah 'Arabi Qadim: Qaragoz* (Ancient Arabic Theatre: Qaragoz), (Damascus: New Mufid Press, n.d.). Muhammad 'Aziza, *Al-Islam Wa Al-Masrah* (Theatre and Islam), trans. Rafiq Sabban, (Cairo: Kitab al-Hilal, 1971). Leila Abu Saif, "Najib al-Rihani: From Buffoonery to Social Comedy". Abu Saif, *Najib Al-Rihani Wa Tatawwur Al-Komidya Fi Misr* (Najib Al-Rihani And The Development of Comedy in Egypt), (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1972). A C Scott, *The Theatre in Asia*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972). 'Ali al-Ra'i, *Fann Al-Komidya: Min Khayal Al-Zill Ila Najib Al-Rihani* (The Art Of Comedy From Shadow Play to Najib Al-Rihani), (Cairo: Dar al-Hilal, 1970).

- Al-Ra'i, *Al-Masrah Fi Al-Watan Al-'Arabi* (Theatre in the Arab World), (Kuwait: 'Alam al-Ma'rifa, 1980). Tamara Putentsiva, *Alf 'Am Wa 'Am 'Ala Al-Masrah Al-'Arabi*. Roger 'Assaf, "Mas'alat Fann Al-Tamthil Fi Al-Mujtama' Al-Islami" (On the Issue of Acting in a Muslim Society), *Mawaqif*, No.46 (Spring 1983), Beirut. 'Assaf, *Al-Masraha: Aqni'at al-Madina* (Theatricalism: The City Masks), (Beirut: Dar al-Muthallath, 1984). Muhammad A. al-Khozai, *The Development of Early Arabic Drama 1847-1900*, (London: Longman, 1984). 'Abd al-Mu'ti Sha'rawi, *Al-Masrah al-Misri al-Mu'asir Usuluh wa Bidayatuh* (Contemporary Egyptian Theatre: Origin and Initiation), (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-'Amma Li'l Kitab, 1986). Khalid al-Mubarak, *Arabic Drama: A Critical Introduction*. M.M. Badawi in his *Early Arabic Drama*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). Badawi, "Medieval Arabic Drama: Ibn Daniyal", *Journal of Arabic Literature*, XIII (1982). Shmuel Moreh, "Live Theatre in Medieval Islam", *Studies in Islamic History and Civilization in Honour of Prof. David Ayalon*, ed. M. Sharon, (Leiden: Brill, 1986). Moreh, "The Shadow Play in the Light of Arabic Literature". Moreh, *Live Theatre and Dramatic Literature in the Medieval Arab World*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992).
- (29) When the young Lebanese merchant from Saidon named Marun al-Naqqash (1817-1855) turned his house in Beirut into a theatre to present *The Miser*, his select audience of notables and foreign consuls heard him introduce this art of literary drama presented as 'foreign gold in an Arabic mould'. See Najm, pp.33-36. Also, Landau, *Studies in Arab Theatre and Cinema*, p.78. *The Miser*, although possibly an original work and not an adaptation of Moliere's play, is clearly influenced by the French writer. See M.M. Badawi, *Modern Arabic Drama in Egypt*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p.7.
- (30) This trend is represented amongst others by Leila Abu Seif, Muhammad Mandur, 'Ali 'Uqla 'Arsan, Farouk Abdel Wahab, and Hiyam Abu al-Husayn, "Al-Masrah Al-Misri Al-Qadim Wa Masadiruh" (Ancient Egyptian Theatre: Its Origin), *Fusul*, Vol.12, No.3 (1982).
- (31) The credit for investigating and publishing these works goes to European archaeologists, in particular the German Kurt Sethe and the French Etienne Drioton whose explorations in the field of Egyptology were conducted early in this century.
- (32) 'Ali 'Uqla 'Arsan, *Al-Siyasa Fi Al-Masrah* (Politics in the Theatre), (Damascus: Manshurat Itihad al-Kitab al-'Arabi, 1978), p.40. And Zaki Tulaymat *Al-Tamthil, Al-Tamthiliyyat, Al-Fann Al-Tamthili 'Ind Al-'Arab* (Acting, Plays and Arabic Dramatic Arts), (Kuwait: Mu'assasat al-Masrah wa al-Fann, 1965), pp.90-93.
- (33) 'Arsan, *Al-Siyasa Fi Al-Masrah*, p.40. In addition, Abu Seif informs us that each king had at least three types of play in his "repertoire" (sic) designed purely to project and to propagate the image of the indivisibility of the god/king.
- (34) Farouk Abdel Wahab, *Modern Egyptian Drama: An Anthology*, (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1974), p.10.
- (35) Abu Seif, *Najib Al-Rihani Wa Tattawur Al-Komidya Fi Misr*, p.10.
- (36) 'Arsan, *Al-Siyasa Fi Al-Masrah*, p.43.

- (37) Etienne Drioton, *Al-Masrah Al-Misri Al-Qadim* (Ancient Egyptian Theatre), trans. Tharwat 'Ukasha (Cairo: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi, 1967), p.19.
- (38) In his article "Le Théâtre dans L'ancienne Egypte", *Revue d'Histoire du Théâtre*, I-II 6^{eme} annee, Les Press Literaires de France, 1954, Drioton quotes George Benedite "Le ceremonial funeraire comportait des parties mimees et dialoguees", p.7.
- (39) Margot Berthold, *A History of World Theater*, (New York: Fredrick Ungar, 1972), p.15. It is important to remember in this myth that the jackal is the symbol of Horus who represents the element air.
- (40) Berthold, pp.15-18. Also see Drioton, *Al-Masrah Al-Misri Al-Qadim*, pp.19-20.
- (41) Drioton, pp.68-78.
- (42) Berthold, p.15. Also 'Arzan, *Al-Siyasa Fi Al-Masrah*, pp.114-118 and Hiyam Abu al-Husayn, p.16.
- (43) 'Arzan, *Al-Siyasa Fi Al-Masrah*, pp.47-49. Also Drioton, *Al-Masrah Al-Misri Al-Qadim*, p.150.
- (44) Berthold, pp.12-14.
- (45) Berthold, p.14.
- (46) Abdel Wahab, p.11.
- (47) Abu Seif, *Najib Al-Rihani Wa Tattawur Al-Komidya Fi Misr*, p.11 and Berthold, p.10.
- (48) Abu Seif, pp.11-12.
- (49) Berthold, p.10.
- (50) Abdel Wahab, p.10.
- (51) Abu al-Husayn, pp.16-17.
- (52) Abu al-Husayn, p.15.
- (53) Bamber Gascoigne, *World Theatre: An Illustrated History*, (London: Ebury Press, 1968), p.21.
- (54) Tulaymat, p.93. Moreover, such was the universality of this theme that Milton mourns his passing in *Paradise Lost*, Book One:

Whose annual wound in Lebanon allur'd
The Syrian damsels to lament his fate
In onerous ditties all a summer's day
While smooth Adonis from his native rock
Ran purple to the sea.

- (55) Berthold p.21.

- (56) Berthold, pp.21-23.
- (57) Berthold, p.20.
- (58) For instance, Miriam and the Hebrew women celebrated with "timbrels and with dance" the drowning of Pharaoh. There are exhortations in the Psalms to "praise His name in dance", and there is, most infamously, Salome's dance before Herod. Cheney Sheldon, *The Theatre: Three Thousand Years of Drama, Acting & Stagecraft*, (London: Longmans, Green & Co, London, 1929), p.26.
- (59) Sheldon, pp.28-29.
- (60) The term *Jahiliyya* usually rendered 'time of ignorance' or 'barbarism' in reality means the period in which Arabia had no inspired prophet or revealed book, for ignorance and barbarism can hardly be applied to such cultural and lettered society as that developed by the South Arabians. See Hitti, p.87.
- (61) Hitti, p.102.
- (62) *Al-Llat*, *al-'Uzza* and *Manat* are the three daughters of Allah, the principal deity of Makka. Hitti, pp.98-100.
- (63) See 'Ali 'Uqla 'Arsan, *Al-Zawahir Al-Masrahiyya 'Ind Al-'Arab (Arabic Theatre Manifestations)*, Rev. 3rd ed. (1981 rpt. Damascus: Manshurat Itihad al-Kuttab al-Arab, 1985), pp.30-47.
- (64) We know of seven *mu'allaqat*, two of them are by the famous 'Antara and Imru-al-Qays. Hitti, pp.93-94.
- (65) 'Arsan, pp.43-47.
- (66) 'Arsan, pp.48-51. The drought ritual exists today albeit in different forms. Muslims appropriated the *Jahiliyya* ritual drought prayers which are now performed (with some alterations) in the mosque or in the open.
- (67) 'Arsan, pp.53-56.
- (68) A *jinn* or *djinn* is a spirit which inhabits the earth, assumes various forms, exercises supernatural power and serves whoever summons it.
- (69) Hitti, p.92.
- (70) Hitti, p.92.
- (71) Among the earliest poets known to us is al-Muhalhil (531 A.D.). He was a hero/poet from the tribe of Taghlib who was active in this capacity at the Basus War against the tribe of Bakr. This war was started by a conflict over a she-camel and lasted around forty years. Hitti, pp.88-90.
- (72) 'Arsan, *Al-Zawahir Al-Masrahiyya 'Ind Al-'Arab*, p.88.
- (73) 'Arsan, p.84.

- (74) Al-Khozai, pp.25-29, and on the historical aspect see Hitti, pp.182-191. Also Marshall G Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, Vol.I, (1961; rpt. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), p.222. M.M. Badawi in his *Early Arabic Drama*, p.8, describes *ta'ziya* (consolation/condolence) as a form closer to drama proper consisting of a cycle of plays or independent tableaux which commemorate the massacre of Husayn.
- (75) In 962 A.D. Sultan Mu'izz al-Dawla, "inaugurated his political opposition to the existing Caliphate by affixing manifestos to the facades of Baghdad's mosques condemning Mu'awiyah Ibn Abu Sufyan and the oppressors of the Prophet's family." Mayel Baktash, "Ta'ziyeh and its Philosophy", *Ta'ziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran*, Ed. Peter Chelkowski, (New York: New York University Press, 1979), p.96.
- (76) Shiism was already well established in Persia before the Safavid rule. Persia's intimate relationship with the house of 'Ali was a result of Husayn's marriage to the Iranian princess, Shahrbanu, daughter of the last Sassanian king. Besides, to the Persians, the idea of electing a spiritual successor to the Prophet Muhammad was seen as unnatural. Further the Persians took the side of the wronged house of 'Ali as they too had been overrun and their king dethroned by the order of the second Caliph Omar. See Mehdi Forough, *A Comparative Study of Abraham's Sacrifice in Persian Passion Plays and Western Mystery Plays*, (Tehran: Ministry of Culture and Arts Press, 1952), p.12 and pp.17-18.
- (77) Forough, p.17.
- (78) Forough, p.98.
- (79) Non-Arabs were willing to give priority to Muslim allegiance when met with controversial differences within their own cultural roots. See Hitti, pp.134-136.
- (80) *Mu'tazilah* school of thought was founded by Wasil Ibn-'Ata (died 748 A.D.) of Basrah. It is known as school of rationalism which held the doctrine of "free will" as its principal dogma. See Hitti, p.245 also p.429.
- (81) The *Ash'arites* are followers of 'Ali al-Ash'ari of Baghdad (935-6). He started as a pupil of the *Mu'tazilah* school but later in life changed fronts and defended the principle of "predestination". See Hitti, pp.430-431.
- (82) Baktash, p.99.
- (83) Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, Vol. I, p.438.
- (84) Baktash, p.99.
- (85) Baktash, p.100.
- (86) Baktash tells us how Nizam al-'Ulama, Muhammad Rafi' Tabataba'i, a famous Iranian religious scholar, expresses his view on this matter in his book *Majales-e Husseiniyeh* (Condolence Sessions), 1904-5 AD. He explains the doctrine of free will which God has granted to man, thus making him responsible for the good and evil of his actions, and considers "the discussion of the tragedy of *Kerbela* in the *ta'ziyeh* ceremony as means of demonstrating right and wrong ways". Baktash, p.118.
- (87) Baktash, p.101 and 98.

- (88) Baktash, p.101.
- (89) Peter Chelkowski, "Ta'ziyeh: Indigenous Avant-Garde Theatre in Iran", *Ta'ziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran*, p.4.
- (90) Chelkowski, p.3.
- (91) Samuel Peterson "The Ta'ziyeh and Related Arts", *Ta'ziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran*, pp.64-69.
- (92) R Strothman, "Ta'ziya", *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. VIII, (1927; rpt. Leiden: J. Brill, 1993), pp.711-712.
- (93) The following example is of Shimr confessing that he is a tyrant:

O Men, Shemr of the Coat of Mail
 Is my name. It is my deed
 To stamp my boot upon his chest.
 It is I who take his sister prisoner
 I do not fear the Great Creator
 That I would be ashamed before the Prophet!
 I do not desire that Hussein, who is my mediator
 Appear before my Creator (on my behalf)

Parviz Mamnoun, "Ta'ziyeh from the Viewpoint of Western Theatre", *Ta'ziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran*, p.162.

- (94) Here Shimr introduces himself:

I am the hard-hearted shameless Shemr,
 I have no fear of God
 I have no shame before the Prophet,
 I have no embarrassment before the cheek of Ali;
 I have no fear in my heart of Hassan,
 I am not afraid of the lamenting Fatimah
 I shall not cut off the head of her son;
 I shall cause her Zeinab to have a scratched face [from mourning].

Baktash, p.110.

- (95) Baktash, pp.158-159.
- (96) Andrzej Wirth, "Semiological Aspects of the Ta'ziyeh", *Ta'ziyeh: Ritual and Drama*, p.34.
- (97) Mamnoun, p.158.
- (98) Sayyid 'Ali Yazdi, in 1903-4 A.D., explained the point of view of Islam regarding the presentation of woman that it was not the case of a man impersonating a woman rather a man portraying a woman by wearing a dress and repeating her words in order to induce weeping. See Ehsan

- Yarshater, "Ta'ziyeh and Pre-Islamic Mourning Rites in Iran", *Ta'ziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran*, p.230.
- (99) Michel Mazzaoui, "Shiism and Ashura in South Lebanon", *Ta'ziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran*, p.230.
- (100) Badawi, *Early Arabic Drama*, p.8.
- (101) Anayatullah Shahidi, "Literary and Musical Development in Ta'ziyeh", *Ta'ziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran*, p.43.
- (102) Forough, p.83.
- (103) Forough, pp.42-43.
- (104) Forough, p.29.
- (105) See Berthold, p.27. Also Forough, pp.26-27.
- (106) William Beeman, "Cultural Dimensions of Performance Conventions in Iranian Ta'ziyeh", *Ta'ziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran*, p.28.
- (107) Berthold, p.28.
- (108) Beeman, p.28.
- (109) Mazzaoui, pp.234-235. Here Mazzaoui is quoting the sociologist Waddah Chrara.
- (110) The *maqamat*, which consist of short satirical stories edged with social criticism, is among the earliest examples of the Arabic belle-lettres tradition. The stories relate the escapades of Abu Zayd, a roguish hero whose linguistic abilities enable him to swindle people and evade punishment, and his friend, al-Harith, who narrates these picaresque episodes. About fifty two of these stories were compiled by al-Hamadhani around the year 1000. Later, fifty *maqamat* were composed by al-Hariri (1054-1122) whose work became the most widely copied and illustrated version in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. See James Monroe, *The Art of Badi az-Zaman al-Hamadhani as Picaresque Narrative*, (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1983).
- (111) Muhammad Mandur, *Al-Masrah (The Theatre)*, (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1965), pp.10-11.
- (112) Badawi, *Early Arabic Drama*, p.10.

CHAPTER 2

THE EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PUPPET TRADITION

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to study the emergence and driving force behind puppetry. In doing so, one hopes to shed light on the puppets' inexorable link with the theatrical and dramatic arts in different cultures in the world.

The puppet, both in substance and in concept, is as old as civilisation. The image representation and the notion it evokes have emerged along with man's earliest socio-religious awareness. Primitive man instinctively conceived and simulated the image of the image of the creator

2.2 The universality of the puppet tradition

The puppet, both in its physical and in its abstract forms, outlived primitive man, evolving through dull and lively times, and still breeds today. Through the history of mankind, the puppet figure represented unseen powers, demonstrated activities, illustrated ideas and entertained on social occasions. In all its performances, however, the puppet is a mouthpiece through which an actor/priest/prime mover communicates messages to the community.

The puppet as a performance art vehicle embraces more than one discipline: it presents itself in both three-dimensional and two-dimensional spaces; it is the product of both artistic intellect and artisanal application; it borrows skills and techniques from sculpture and painting; it depicts the psychological state of a character or just its external image; it succeeds in reflecting abstract ideas as much as actual happenings. The scope of media it employs to express the mind of the puppeteer is so multifaceted that it incorporates many more skills than a human being can master in a lifetime.(1)

Complex communities in big cities, in common with primitive tribes in remote regions, commit themselves to puppet performances involving distinct religious myths, science fictions, folktales, magic, complex technology, visual symbols, acrobatics, poetic language, music, etc. Puppet shows appeal to all people from any cultural background and they transcend the barrier of oral language.

2.3 Traversing through space and time

At a time when the geographical borders of nations are relentlessly being drawn and re drawn, the cultural boundaries are unequivocally overlapping owing to screen technology. Today, we live in a culturally invaded world where television screens simultaneously transmit live events to our homes from all around the earth. Consequently, puppeteers in a remote desert are adopting techniques and stories from any part of the world in a very short time, thus contributing to the blurred image of the cultural scene.

By contrast, we still cannot determine precisely when or why shadow play started the journey from the Far East in the direction of the Middle East. However, we are aware of its long journey, the state in which it reached us and the influences it embraced en route. That is why it is important to note here that the exercise in this chapter of looking at the roots of puppetry is not a call for us to fade into the past but to strengthen our roots in the present and to confidently project into the future.

2.4 The antiquity of the puppet

The hypothesis that puppetry preceded human theatre is alluring from many points of view. Foremost, puppetry is associated with disciplines rooted in very ancient communities, whereas human drama is a prodigy of developed and civilised communities. Puppetry unites objects and movement; on the other hand, drama correlates language and movement. Oral language, a very important aspect of human theatre, is a development beyond sign language which could well be satisfied by puppets. Moreover, the puppet is a tool and it is an accepted fact that humans made tools long before they were able to communicate their ideas through oral language. Tools belong to a sphere familiar to us, the three-dimensional, but language belongs to the intellectual domain which is rather abstract. The puppet belongs in the three-dimensional sphere which primitive man became familiar with at the time he was undergoing intellectual development.

Admittedly, these are conjectures in need of greater substantiation. It is almost impossible to prove that puppetry preceded human theatre because it is unlikely that we will ever learn further about the nature of puppets in performance in ancient times. Archaeology has already enlightened us about the multifaceted

ancestry of puppets - idols, fetishes, dolls, automata, toys, masks, magic, etc. However, it can only reveal the vehicle of the performance, not the nature of the live performance.

Writing nearly ninety years ago, Pischel pleaded that "it is not improbable that the puppet play is in reality everywhere the most ancient form of dramatic representation".(2) His argument is based on etymological data found in one of the most ancient texts which may date to the ninth century before Christ. He points to the word *Sutradhara* which means 'thread holder' and which "corresponds to the epithet *Sutraprota*, 'attached to threads', applied to puppets in the *Mahabharata*".(3) Pani, also basing her argument on the term *Sutradhar*, arrives at the conclusion that puppet theatre, "reached great heights and was very popular even before human theatre crystallised."(4)

A number of scholars take refuge in references to "puppet-like" gestures, postures, movements and make-up of human actors to support the hypothesis. Sergei Obraztsov cites the works of a Chinese scholar Sun Kai-ti in which he draws attention to expressive idioms borrowed from the Chinese puppet theatre, such as the asides to the audience upon the character's first appearance and the design of facial make-up which is necessary for a puppet, but not for a human actor.(5)

Another example of a similar proposal points to the influences in movement the human theatre has inherited from puppets. "In Eastern countries puppets appear to have preceded the human theatre. The curious sideways movements of the traditional dances of Java and Cambodia are accepted as being copies of puppet movements."(6)

Ridgeway rejects completely the proposal that puppets came first and claims that in the Far East, puppet plays and shadow plays "are cheap representations based upon the true drama".(7) He extends this view even to Greece where he believes the puppet show "came into favour with the decadent Athenians of the fourth century before our era".(8) Similarly, Speaight dismisses the idea that puppets preceded the human theatre as "romantic fancy".(9)

It will be a long time before one can support this hypothesis, or dismiss it as a complete fallacy, because there has not been enough appreciation of puppetry as a theatrical performance art worthy of scholarly attention.(10) There is also

the most unfortunate attitude towards children's art with which puppetry is usually classified and, therefore, underestimated. There is a genuine need to address puppetry as one of the oldest performance arts which, as early as the dawn of civilisation, influenced and interacted with other arts. I am persuaded by Malkin's notion stating "the idea that puppetry may be one of the roots as opposed to one of the branches of the theater is rarely given serious consideration".(11)

Both puppet theatre and human theatre are rooted in dance, movement and the creation of illusion. They must have naturally borrowed endlessly from one another as well as from related forms of expression. A case in point is the medieval Arabic shadow play tradition which will be discussed in Chapter 4. The status of puppetry today cannot be altered by our determining who gets the prize for primogeniture. It is more beneficial to study the ancestry of puppets in order to understand their development and to appreciate their contribution to, and their borrowing from, other performance arts.

2.4.1 Controversial date on birthplace

The question of which geographical region harboured the seminal puppets remains a controversial issue. Numerous researchers have attempted to establish whether the cradle of this genre of performance art is India, China, Egypt or Greece. To date there is no conclusive evidence which gives monopoly of the honour to one of the above regions.

Most of the investigation concerning the origin of puppetry is based on linguistic and archaeological testimony. Authors who put forward the argument that India has the oldest evidence refer to the term "*Sutradhara*"(12) and obviously covers string puppets. Others who recognise Greece as the source of drama and later puppetry, cite the improvisations of the Bacchanalian orgy and religious ritual where peasants in processions carried "the symbol of fertility upon which their lives depended, erect upon a pole, a gigantic phallus".(13)

Speaight consults a document from the fourth century B.C., *The Symposium of Xenophon*, which describes a dinner party in Athens the year 421 B.C., in which a Syracusan showman performed with puppets.(14) Speaight explains that even if the term puppets is used here metaphorically it reflects a fact that they were an accepted form of entertainment.(15)

There is a good probability that string puppets were the standard genre of puppets in ancient Greece, as the oldest Greek word for puppets is "*neurospastos*" and for puppetry "*neurospastomena*". The word is "derived from *neuron*, which means a cord made of sinew".(16) Plato makes an interesting reference to string puppets in an address to his disciples on the science of living and dying.(17)

For some other authors, it seems extraordinarily tempting to trace the origin of puppets to Egypt. Concerning this controversial issue, Speaight notes that we should recognise the existence of the puppet but not a puppet theatre in ancient Egypt.(18) On the other hand, Joseph infers that the oldest marionette theatre ever discovered is probably the one unearthed by archaeologists in the tomb of Khelmis, singer of Osiris. It is in the form of:

A little Nile galley or barge of wood with a cabin in the centre and two ivory doors that open to reveal a stage. A rod across the front of this stage is supported by two uprights and from this rod light wires were found still hanging. Other indications leave little doubt that this miniature theatre was used in a religious rite, possibly on the anniversary of the death of the god Osiris, whose father was Ra, the sun, as a sort of passion play performed by puppets before an audience of the initiated.(19)

Elaborating on the reference to Egyptian ancestry, some authors quote the famous records of the Greek historian Herodotus in which he describes his visit to Egypt, including the festivals of Osiris.(20) Herodotus reveals an old Egyptian custom that closely parallels the Dionysiac processions. "The women in their village festivals used to carry with them an image of the god of fertility about twenty inches high, fitted with a phallus of nearly the same length that could be erected by string."(21)

In this intricate contention over the birthplace of puppets, China presents evidence that its "bag" puppets, "portable booth", or glove puppets as we know them, are centuries older than the oldest reference in Europe.(22) "The perfection of their anatomical development and the exactness of proportions, which indicate a centuries old stage usage and an unbroken tradition chain"(23), convinces the famous puppeteer Sergei Obraztsov that glove puppets originated in China and later travelled west in the direction of Europe.

A proposal which reverses the direction of the journey from the Far East to Asia Minor bases the argument on the earliest name for puppet, *Kugutsu*, the

Japanese term which is also used in a Chinese Buddhist text. The word *Kugutsu*:

has been traced to a Chinese word for puppet, pronounced approximately *Kuai-Luai-tzu*, in the same period (18th C), or to *Kuki* or *Kukli*, gypsy words which some claim were probably the origin of both Chinese and Japanese terms. The Turkish *Kukla* and the late Greek *Koukla* have also been cited as proof of the transmission of the art of puppetry from Asia Minor across the vast Central Asian regions to China, Korea and eventually to Japan.(24)

2.4.2 Controversial date of birth

A parallel argument which assigns the emergence of the glove puppet before 500 B.C .to ancient Greece and not to the Far East, is introduced by Speaight. He explains that the Greek word *Koree*, which describes a long sleeve, is also used to indicate a small statue or figurine. He points to the connection as being "reasonable to suppose that the glove puppet, which is a small figure on the end of a long sleeve covering a man's hand, provides the missing link to connect these two completely dissimilar uses of the same word".(25)

It is not only the technique which defines the genre of puppets and their origin, but also the characters and their image. Here is an interesting illustration from Obratzsov who is captivated by the state of the art of the Chinese puppets. He remarks that the characters of the Chinese glove puppets display no common features with their suggested ancestor from Asia Minor and Europe in terms of form. The inherent physical idiosyncrasies of the major heroes from Asia Minor and Europe are the hunchback and long curved nose in the style of *Karagöz*, *Pulchinelle* and *Punch*. There is no character in the vast Chinese puppet theatre repertoire which exhibits any similarity to the suggested ancestors.(26)

It is normal for puppets to have two or more methods of articulation. Rod puppets often have strings and string puppets can accommodate rods to improve the control of their movements. The following examples from China clearly depict the combination of techniques and demonstrate a very ancient tradition which also enhances the evidence about the Chinese foundation of puppetry. After studying Chinese puppetry, Obratzsov comments on the genealogy of rod puppets saying that "in their external form, their construction and their repertoire, the tradition of centuries is perhaps evident to a greater degree than in that of glove puppets".(27)

The Chinese origin of rod puppets is demonstrated by the finding of burial figures in ancient Chinese tombs. Noble men were buried along with their slaves and material possessions to ensure comfort in the after life. As the tradition started to fade out, human sacrifices were replaced by effigies:

Such figures, called *yong*, were first made of straw and later of clay and wood. Some *yong* came to have moving parts; in condemning these moving funeral figures, Confucius said they were too much like humans and would cause people to treat human sacrifice lightly.(28)

A prototype of these wooden movable burial figures was excavated in 1979 in Laix County. The six foot two inch figure was found in a tomb dating 107 B.C. Roberta Stalberg recounts that it is:

constructed on thirteen main strips of wood, jointed to permit movement of knees, shoulders and waist, the figure could be made to sit, kneel or stand. The abdomen and legs had been drilled with many holes, which were either of use in attaching string to control movement or in tying on a costume. A very impressive figure, with long limbs and a solemn expression - with the addition of costume, it must have looked remarkably realistic, even majestic... However, a forty-five-inch long silver rod was also discovered near the figure, and Chinese experts speculate that this may have been used to control the figure's hands and feet.(29) [fig 1]

The tradition of shadow puppets must also withstand the complex investigation about its origin. Here, China and India again compete for this distinction. However, a "recent archaeological scholarship on a number of the cave amphitheatres in India suggest that these caves were used for theatrical performances. At least one, Sitabenga in Girnar, may have been used as a shadow puppet theater in the time of King Asoka (272-232 B.C.)."(30) Along with this archaeological proposition there exist ancient literary texts, which suggest that plays were especially written to be performed by shadow puppets.(31)

While some researchers accept that shadow theatre originated in India, others insist on probing for evidence in China. The reference often used to draw support is a legend which supposedly occurred in the year 120 B.C. The story tells us how Wu-ti, an emperor of the Han dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.), lost his wife and was comforted by his court shaman Shao-Weng. The shaman cast shadows on a screen which evoked the illusion of the wife's spirit.(32)

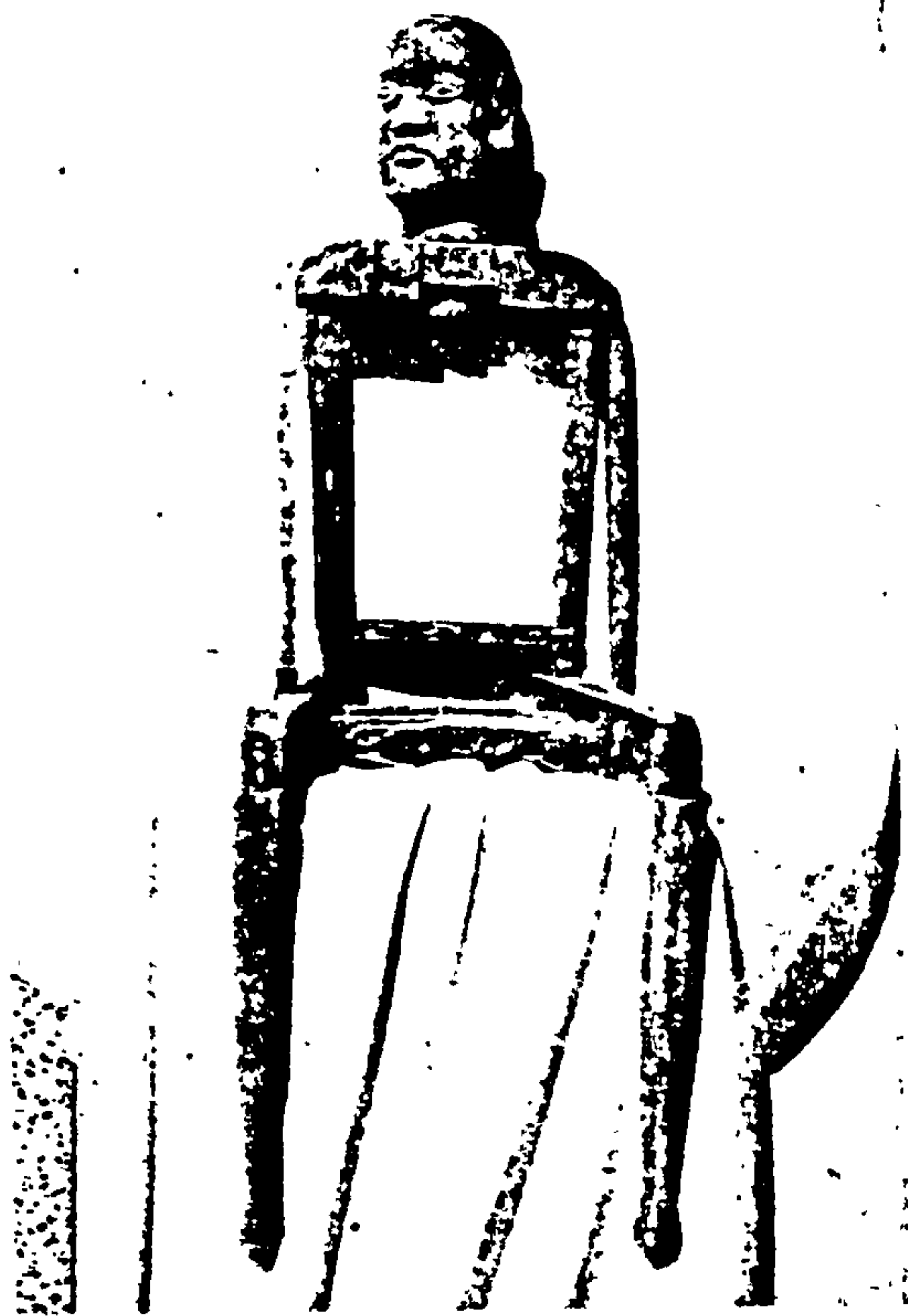


Fig 1. A replica of a puppet unearthed from a tomb from the middle period of the Western Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-24 A.D.)

It is a very curious coincidence that Shao-Weng, who possibly constructed one of the earliest Chinese shadow figures, comes from Shandong, the ancient state of Qi where the 2000-years-old funerary figure constructed of thirteen main strips of wood was unearthed in 1979. Stalberg adds that the state of Qi is "a region famous for its magicians, alchemists and woodworkers or carpenter-engineers".(33)

More concrete evidence is found in the Tang Dynasty (618-906 A.D.). Then, monks preached and popularised Buddhism by illustrating religious stories using shadow figures.(34) At this time, Chinese shadow figures were still made from oiled paper.(35) It seems that where a gap exists in the reference to shadows in the Chinese puppet theatre scene, it is because shadow play was functioning under the patronage of another performance art form, magic for example.(36) Obratzsov contributes further to the explanation about the difficulty of researching the origin of Chinese puppet theatre in that:

in the Chinese language, performances with masks and puppet performances are both referred to by one and the same name - *Kuei lei hsi*, and it is often impossible to determine whether any old document refers to people in masks or puppets.(37)

With all the options open for the puppet's country of origin; it seems reasonable to deduce that this genre of performance art has more than one birthplace, consequently more than one birth date. This conviction is not only based on the respective evidence, cited above, but also on the natural deep roots of puppetry in folk tradition. Adaptation to the local cultural and folk traditions has occurred even when techniques and styles have been borrowed. A case in point is the Japanese puppet theatre, Bunraku, which is said to have drawn on Chinese puppet techniques introduced to Japan from the beginning of the 14th century. Bunraku, which was known then as *Jururi*, came into existence in the 16th century.(38)

Puppet tradition is rooted in the religious beliefs, creative expressions and cultural traditions of the people and the regions from which they emerge. In spite of the evidence that puppetry is an archaic performance art form, records of performance do not exist. Puppet shows belong to oral traditions, and puppeteers in most parts of the ancient world were nomads or gypsies who had to bring shows to their audiences in villages in remote locations. Puppetry did not attract the attention of historians or travellers because it was basic and available, therefore taken for granted.

2.5 Legends concerning the antiquity and birthplace of puppets

Personally, I am more fascinated with the revelations of popular legends about the origin of puppets than with any of the abundant testimony documented by archaeologists and researchers. Legends reflect the imagination and aspirations of people; they also convey what the puppeteer wants us to believe to be the origin of the puppet.

The countless fictions from different parts of the world faultlessly invoke the conception of puppets in august palaces or temples, and either in a divine act of creation or supernatural deed. In fact, this comprehensive feature unveils a compulsion recognised by puppeteers from different corners of the earth: the need to project onto the humble puppet a certain prestige and dignity thereby enabling it to compete with existing performance artists, such as magicians, acrobats, dancers, storytellers, etc. In all likelihood, the authority invested in the puppet extends in kind to its creator, the puppeteer.

The puppeteer's imagination assigned palaces and temples for the home of the puppet. It is the palace the puppeteer could visit only in his dreams, and the temple which rejected him for being an outcast. In his illusion, the puppeteer invaded the palace and the temple for the sole purpose of bestowing a legitimate birth certificate on his creation.

It is well known historically that puppeteers in the Far East, Asia and Europe were mostly nomadic people, gypsies or wandering artists.(39) They were often viewed with suspicion because they were poor and socially disadvantaged. However, these puppeteers were gifted and skilled entertainers who set and spread the conventions and characteristics of puppetry which reflected their lifestyle. Tilakasiri recognises two distinguishing features relating to the gypsy way of life which are interwoven with the art of puppetry. These qualities are adaptability and improvisation.(40) This is the general background of the primitive puppeteer whose only pursuit remained the creation of illusion.

I invite the reader to refer to Appendix II which compiles examples of illusions the puppeteers created from the figments of their imagination. These illusions illustrate best the universal characteristic features of puppetry as well as its unique expressiveness.(41) This random sampling of myth on the subject of puppets' origin and propagation communicates a range of interesting points.

However, they all confirm one naked truth that the home of the puppet is the resourceful imagination of the puppeteer no matter what his background is - a shaman, magician, witch doctor, storyteller or entertainer.

2.5.1 Motifs underlined in the legends

The common aim of all the legends listed in Appendix II is to highlight the power of the puppet to generate change. Besides, the transformation the puppet brings about is always for a good cause. In order to emphasise the good cause, the plot needs to be established in an acceptable and powerful mise en scene, such as a shrine or a palace. Thus it is the ultimate aspiration of these legends to establish not only a linkage to a birthplace but also a linkage with power to generate change within influential circles.

Primitive communities always needed to create legends to explain the origin of circumstances and events around them, so it is not an affair uniquely related to puppets. The humble puppet has always been instrumental on the popular heritage level, although occasionally prestigious society took an interest in it. This explains further the credibility modest puppeteers acquired from the association of their profession with impressive places and personalities.

The exact dates of the origin of the legends is of no significance. The different versions of the same story reflect the scope of diffusion the story received and hence the familiarity of the listeners with the subject matter, puppetry.

The range of fiction involved with the antiquity and the substance of puppetry touches on simple human traits. The feeling of jealousy is exemplified in the Chinese story involving the woman warrior and the Emperor with his concubines. It also brings in the contribution of wise men, in this case a puppeteer, to the conduct of affairs in an Empire - such as we see in the story based in the Ottoman period where the puppeteer reveals the corrupt organisation of Pashas. The will of the gods to give life to puppets is also demonstrated in the Indian tales where Siva and Brahma are caught in the act of creation of puppets. There is also the example of the Chinese goddess Guanyin using puppets to illustrate her stories exactly in the fashion of a puppeteer.

A significant motif which recurs often in these legends is the evocation of the dead. Prototypes of this motif are found in the examples of the shadows of the

wife of Emperor Wu-ti in the Chinese legend, the executed Mamluk Sultan and the light-hearted masons in the Turkish tales, not losing sight of the ugly child, Hiriuk, from the Japanese fable. Communication with deceased ancestors is an initial religious function which influenced the development of puppetry and is best illustrated in the visit of the living man to the kingdom of the dead in the Nigerian legend.

Another vital motif appears in the Chinese tale of the jealous Emperor who orders the execution of the puppeteer for having one of his puppets wink at his concubines. Here the puppeteer insists on carrying out the order on his puppet first, claiming that it is his son. The theme of the puppet being the offspring of its creator stands parallel to the concept of God creating man in His image. Both motifs are unequivocally telling about the contradictory dual constitution of the puppet. Here life and death coexist in a real world, generating the life force of the puppet.

Man has always masked his fascination with death by exploiting his parallel enchantment with creation. He has freed his creative energies in forever making still and live images of life around him. Hence the puppeteer in ancient times came to represent the transfer of the act of creation from the sacred to the human, from a transcendent divine being to an individual human being.

The motif of divine creation which involves blowing life into a vessel is a recurring one, not only in the puppets' creation myth but time and again in established religious doctrines. Brahma, as the Indian mythology advances, breathed life into the first puppet and puppeteer, and Siva breathed life into his wife's beautiful doll. Likewise, the Bible and the Qur'an present God as breathing into a lump of clay which henceforth metamorphoses into a human being.

2.5.2 Death Motif

Let us look closer at the motif of the evocation of the dead. The interest in the dead must have been one of the earliest occupations of human beings. Primitive people were puzzled by the phenomenon of death.(42) Their inability to understand the mechanics and the cause of life and death led them probably to fear the dead and their return. Max von Boehn expands on this view and contributes "that the continued worship of the dead resulted from the practice of burying bodies first in dwelling caves and later in houses".(43) Death masks were taken of ancestors and were dressed realistically with hair and glass eyes,

also life-size images were produced and were occasionally carried in processions.(44) Replicas of the deceased in part or in full were perceived as "the seat of the souls of the departed"(45) or, like the African *korwar*, "designed to catch the spirit of the dead man".(46)

Ancient Egyptians championed this practice by using a portrait image of the deceased in the form of an enshrouded mummy or an *ushabtis* to serve as a substitute for the soul of the dead. This figure is called *ushabati*, and its function is to undertake any work requested of the dead man. This custom was carried on by Egyptians who embraced Christianity.(47)

Max von Boehn elaborates that the function of the ancestor image is to represent the dead, to form a substitute for the dead and to guarantee the deceased continuous involvement in the social life of the community. A stimulating illustration comes from an African tribe, the Pangwe, which uses ancestral images in festivals concerned with "the worship of the dead and employs them as marionettes, much as the figures in European puppet shows. The images have feather crests on their heads, and the lower part of their bodies is covered with cloth."(48)

Another intriguing ritual concerning performance of life after death is the example of the *unil*, object-actor of the funeral ceremony which is still observed in the region of Bassar, North of Togo in West Africa. People living there come from the same origin and consequently follow a rule of marrying from areas different to their village. The wife is the centre of this ritual which takes place after her death and burial in the husband's house. The end of the mourning period, one or two years later, marks the time when the wife should be symbolically returned to her native village during a rite called *Bi Kundi Unil*. *Unil* stands for 'human person'.

The *unil* is a figurine made of blackened raffia with the sex clearly indicated. [fig 2] It depicts the position of the dead woman in her tomb. One day before the rite is performed, a female neighbour traditionally plaits the figurine using raffia. On the day, the figure is placed inside a gourd and is taken to the house of the dead woman. All this time the *unil* is treated as if it is a new-born baby, the idea being to bring back the dead woman to the embryonic state in order to be born into the afterlife.

Meanwhile, men prepare a bier and it is brought into the house of the dead woman. There, the man who buried her earlier places the figurine on the bier and decorates it in a close copy of the original funeral. The bier is carried by the



Fig 2. *Unil.* The figurine of the dead woman in the tomb, sex clearly shown, blackened raphia threads, height 10 cms.

woman's sons-in-law who advance in the procession to the rhythm of drums. The *unil* directs the procession and chooses the houses of relatives it wishes to visit on its way and, finally, it picks the spot where it wishes to be buried. At this stage, a hole is dug and the burial is carried out as if it were a real body.(49)

Jacek Jan Pawlik, who witnessed in 1986 the rite of bringing the *unil* back home, discloses that:

the purpose of the *Bikundi Unil* rite is to incorporate the dead woman into the invisible world by bringing her back into her original space. The figurine is made from plant fibres to capture her spirit. Then great care is taken, as explained above, to transport her, hiding her completely, because if she escaped, she could threaten the living.(50)

In our exploration into the archaic ancestry of puppets, we do not only encounter visual images which are intended to represent the dead, but also images which substitute for the living. Sacrificial effigies played a resourceful role in antiquity. A case in point is the tradition of throwing a young virgin into the Nile river every year to appease the "male" river so that it does not flood its banks.(51) Eventually, a female dummy replaced the live young virgin intended for sacrifice and was known as "the bride of the Nile". In the same vein, the practice of human sacrifice was altered gradually to the burial of effigies of servants and attendants of the deceased to symbolise continued service in the life after.

Burial of living men is without doubt a practice known to many old civilisations, including the Chinese.(52) As a result of Buddhist teaching, figures called *yong*, referred to earlier in this chapter, were introduced to phase out the tradition of live human sacrifices in burials. The *yong* figurines were initially made of straw and later of clay, wood or metal. Some were designed to have moving parts or were fitted with a mechanism to move realistically during funeral processions.(53) The connection between puppets and funeral celebrations in China is reinforced by the above example.

At the root of the image tradition in Japan, we encounter the *Haniwa* figurines, which are simple hollow clay cylinders positioned around the burial place to separate the land of the living from that of the dead and to act as a fence for the spirits. It is suggested, with no conclusive evidence, that these figurines are also substitutes for the sacrifice of living persons. However, the word *Haniwa* stands

for *hani* (clay), and *wa* (circle). Consequently, we have cylindrical-shaped figures with circular bases placed in a circle around the burial mounds. Primitive communities associated the circle with magic.(54) The significance of the circle as the sign of life and cycle of nature distinctively combines with the three basic elements of the clay - earth, water and fire - to place the *Haniwa* figure on the borderline between magic image and death image.[fig 3]

Substitute images were used for magic purposes by many ancient communities. Possessing an image of a person or animal is sometimes viewed as equivalent to possessing power over the image; this power could simultaneously be transferred from the image to the living person.

Prehistoric man used substitute images in his hunting activities under two main circumstances. On one hand, a substitute image was employed to attract animals; in this context, the head, antlers or skin of a dead animal were used either separately or together, stuffed or worn by a hunter to mimic and thereby attract a similar animal. On the other hand, the prehistoric hunter depicted the image of an animal on the wall of a cave or carved it in wood, thus capturing the visual image of the animal in preparation for capturing the actual animal.(55)

Another example of the involvement of magic with images appears in prehistoric civilisations which believed in animism and used it in their magic rituals. Some authors believe shadow shows are a case in point; shadow shows were used to contact the ancestors of the tribe through the medium of shadow figures.(56)

Image magic is completely dependent upon figure images. Wax figurines from Egypt, wooden figures from India, paper dolls from China and straw dolls from Japan all carry colourful stories of resurrection, revenge and manipulation connected with magical rites. The notion that the theatre puppet presents the archaic mythical essence - the double of man - must be a product of such religious and magical backgrounds.(57)

In order to exemplify further the evocation of the dead motif in relation to puppets, let us review some names which refer to the screen used for casting shadows. In China, it is known as the "screen of death"; likewise in Turkey, it is called the "curtain of departing"; and in Arabia it is described as the "screen of dreams, veil of the omnipotent secret". The bond with the dead is indeed very strong, as the above designations reveal.(58) However, concern with death

reflects only one side of the puppet's existence and application, as the other side is, of course, prejudiced with creation and with life. There is no better example to emphasize the contradictory dual nature of puppetry than the following citation with reference to Malaysia where:

Shadow theatre is often as the universe in microcosm. The screen upon which the figures appear thus becomes the Wall of the World - a surface upon which gods, demons and men, natural and supernatural forces, interact. (1987)



Fig 3. *Haniwa* figure, baked clay, the cylindrical shape and perforated eyes and mouth are characteristic of the more sophisticated figures. Height 21 cms.

reflects only one side of the puppet's ancestors and application, as the other side is, of course, prejudiced with creation and with life. There is no better example to emphasise the contradictory dual nature of puppetry than the following citation with reference to Malaysia where:

shadow theatre is seen as the universe in microcosm. The screen upon which the figures appear thus becomes the Wall of the World - a surface upon which gods, demons and men, natural and supernatural forces, interact.(59)

2.5.3 Life/divine creation motif

The motif of the tradition of divine origin recurs in several legends. We have the examples of Brahma and Siva, two Indian gods who breathed to invoke life, the first in a puppeteer banished to earth, the second in a doll which metamorphosed into his mistress. In addition, there is the story of the Chinese Goddess of Mercy, Guanyin, who sets the example for puppeteers by using cut-outs from leaves to illustrate her stories. The Japanese tale of the ugly child Hiriuk is an important reference to the birth of puppetry in a temple. The attribution of the act of puppets' creation to divinity is used in these legends to mirror the image of the puppeteer creating his figure for animation. This mirror image is a cross reference found in many cultures.(60)

A telling illustration emanates from Java where the shadow screen is called *kelir* and the puppeteer *dalang*. Here the *dalang* sits within arm's reach of the *kelir*. At the base of the screen are set two banana stems which are considered to "symbolise the earth, the puppets symbolise men and the screen, heaven. The *dalang*, as activator and life-giver to puppet/man, is God."(61)

In India, the demi-God Visvakarma is celebrated as the 'Holder of Every Thread'. Helstein wrote that "by analogy, the puppeteer is cast in a role akin to that of a god who gives life to the puppets".(62) This justifies the Asian puppeteer's need to undergo a purification ceremony before indulging in the act of creating a new figure or 'duplicating the activity of the divine'. For the same reason, rituals and offerings always precede the erection of stages. In addition, invocation to the gods or ancestors methodically precedes any puppet show.(63) Despite the fact that the puppeteer is not always seen animating his puppets, he is visible in the same manner that God is visible to man - by virtue of his impression.

Archaic puppets, especially those of ancient Egypt, India and Greece, aspired to represent the lives and deeds of the gods and supernatural beings. There are records of an ancient Egyptian passion play, probably performed by puppets, which invokes the story of the God Osiris. Likewise, ancient Indian puppets recount stories based on the old epics of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* which portray the creation of the Indian people and the lives of native gods and heroes, mainly that of Rama the son of King Dasiadha. Moreover, in Homer's *Iliad*, we read a description of Vulcan, the god of fire, who excelled in all craftsmanship including mechanical tripods and figures.(64)

The story of interdependence between gods and puppets is perhaps as old as the first articulated image fabricated by man. Shamans and priests communicated and imposed the will of the gods through the use of articulated images of the gods. An amusing illustration is that Egyptian priests, during religious processions, carried on their shoulders the figure of a god whose simulated head movement darted lightning glances from his eyes over the crowd of believers.(65) Similarly, the statue of Jupiter Ammon gave its oracles only after being carried in a procession to a specific place it indicated by a gesture of the head.(66)

In ancient times, priests were often magicians as well as scientists and intellectuals. They made moving images and talking statues by the use of sand, quicksilver, water pressure, warmed air and steam and mechanical levers.(67) It is well documented that in Greece famous mathematicians were involved in perfecting the mechanism of self-articulated figures or automata.(68) No doubt, such items directly or indirectly assisted the priests in their manoeuvres.

During medieval times, mechanical figures of religious significance were used in churches. We hear of miracles in the Christian Church such as when one crucifix spoke, wept or shed blood. As a matter of course, the Church learned the advantages of moving images for communicating abstract ideas and teaching the principles of religion. A sound example is the *creches parlantes*, a tradition which also represents the earliest mysteries upon which today's drama is based.(69) Moving images related to the Church still have a strong role in the twentieth century religious scene.(70)

2.5.4 Propagation motif

Having considered the two dominant themes of death and life revealed by some myths on puppet genealogy, it is relevant to link to a third motif generated from

the above two, the motif of continuity. Puppets have communicated ideas and events over the past 2000 years at least. They have carried on performing in times of popularity and through times of obscurity. Supporting this tour de force is a phenomenon, clearly outlined in the legend of the puppet which winked at the Emperor's concubines. The story recounts how the puppeteer insisted the puppet was his son and therefore claimed the right to carry out the death sentence himself.

The mythical blood relationship between the puppeteer and his puppet obviously parallels God's relationship with man, his image. The relationship between the puppeteer and puppet goes beyond the initial physical creation to the eventual metamorphosis phase which is repeated in every performance. So it is a growing interdependence between two completely different entities. The contradictory nature of the two entities is duplicated in the dual nature of the puppet.

Kinship came about very early in the history of puppetry, as legends tell us. Moreover, this kinship is reflected in the etymological formation of the term 'puppet' in diverse languages. The Sanskrit language, a very old one indeed, brought forth the words *puttalika* or *puttika*, which are derived from *putra* and root *put* meaning 'son'. "The etymology thus suggests a 'life' contained in the puppet."(71)

In Japan, the doll has a strong and versatile presence in different stages of man's life cycle. The varied types of dolls have diverse functions: to heal, give health, fertility, help, etc. The Japanese puppet tradition gained tremendously from this unique cultural expression. The word for doll in Japanese is *ningyo*; it derives from the Chinese characters *nin* (human, person) and *gyo* (form, image).(72)

Variant cultures depict a different emphasis in the terminology concerning puppets. In ancient Greece we encounter *neurospastos*, the Greek word for puppet derived from *neuron* meaning cord referred to earlier in this chapter. Here, it is the technique that is emphasised, not the nature of the puppet's relation to the puppeteer. The same can be said of *koree*, a term which refers to hand puppets, as it means both a sleeve and a statue.

Marionette, the term of Italian-French origin, is used nowadays in most European languages to refer to puppets in general. It is derived from little Mary, a central figure in the medieval Christmas crib. Helen Joseph recounts another incident

linked to the name marionette based on the tenth century festivals of the Maries.(73)

As for the term 'puppet', it derives from *pupa*, "Latin for 'girl' or 'doll' or 'small creature'".(74) Max von Boehn notes that *pupas* or *pupa* is a new born child before it has been given a name.(75) Following this, it is useful to add that *pupa* also means "the intermediate usually inactive form of an insect that undergoes metamorphism".(76) In this context, it is the life cycle that is emphasised, and it describes best the state of the puppet; when not performing, the puppet obviously passes through metamorphism, recharging energy for life after death.

In Arabic, we encounter mainly two terms: *dumya* and *'arusa* which correspond to doll/puppet and bride. The first impression given by these terms is that they belong to the female gender. The word *dumya* derives from the root word *damm* meaning blood.(77) The word for blood is basically the same in all Semitic languages: *damm* or *damu*; the link with Adam, God's first creation, is obvious.(78)

Another very interesting derivative of *damm* is the word *dama* meaning 'to appear' and it is quoted as being used: take what appears, or is revealed, to you.(79)

As to the word *'arusa*, bride, it is derived from *'arisa*, which means to cling to, or become fatigued or incapacitated by copulation. *'Arus* is a term which refers to both bride and bridegroom during the period of copulation.(80) Hence, *'arusat al-Nil* refers to the bride effigy sacrificed or married to the river Nile.

In a word, most ancient cultures exhibit a strong will to incorporate the puppet into the human family. A puppet does not have a life of its own, it only exists within the character or description given to it by its creator/manipulator. We recall the characters Pinocchio, *Karagöz*, Punch, etc., not the vehicle/figure which speaks for them. In both cases, human and puppet, the body is mortal, the impression is not.(81)

This brings us to a characteristic feature crucial to the art of puppetry. In many aspects, puppetry constitutes an act of defiance to the living environment of man. It is an act which imposes the world of the dead on the world of the living; it is also an act which communicates through the dead to a live community; it is

foremost a duplication of an inimitable act - that of creation of a live entity. It is a disparaging mimic of the creator's most sacred action referred to by most religions as being His primary preoccupation. No wonder God breathing into a lump of mud is a powerful image exploited by ancient as well as later religions to introduce the creator to his creation.

The Chinese inform us that defiance of the world of the living is a characteristic feature of living and 'dead' puppets. A legend from the Ming and Qing dynasties around 3rd Century B.C. records cases in which dead or:

old puppets created havoc, dancing under the full moon and whispering as if in a performance. These old puppets were said to have come from old discarded cases which had been long forgotten, and having no master puppeteer to control them, they took on a life of their own. The Chinese believed that anything extremely old acquired its own special powers and was subject to possession by spirits.(82)

To maintain control, Chinese puppeteers designed the heads of all types of puppets independently and always kept the puppets locked in a stage case with the heads stored apart from the bodies.(83)

As for the defiance feature of the puppets, it is noteworthy to bear in mind that the puppet is a dead object which seems to come to life. The pretence that it does is acceptable to both the viewers and the manipulator. The puppet exists on multiple levels and is therefore surreal in nature. In reality it is dead, in full illusion it is alive; when frozen in space, it dies; and, if allowed to carry on moving, it lives.

2.6 The nature and craftsmanship behind the puppet tradition

To come to grips with what puppetry encompasses, we need to consider the many variables related to its nature. There are many areas to be explored in dealing with puppets, as we have to touch on their social, religious, magical and political context; we must also examine the influence of diverse production processes and articulation techniques on creativity. Despite the fact that we are quite aware of puppets being an effective medium of communication, we are less aware that the significance of puppetry is rooted in its frames of reference.

Our aesthetic response to puppetry embraces a wide range of cognitive, affective and kinaesthetic aspects. Eventually when the various disciplines which have been contributing to the evolution of puppets have been examined, it should be

possible to compose a comprehensive framework for its revival and promotion in the Middle East. In the course of this investigation it will be evident that the main areas which mark visible influence on puppetry are ritual, dance, acrobatics, motion, magic, storytelling and, last but not least, drama and popular theatre arts.

2.6.1 The primitive stage

From time immemorial, one of man's prime occupations has been to investigate and interpret experiences happening to him and around him. The learning process incorporates both conceptual and functional aspects of life. As the functional aspect is closely related to the physical survival of man, its manifestations register on a wide spectrum of his activities, in particular, those related to the mechanics of the human and animal bodies.

The long voyage which brought the robot image into reality must have started when prehistoric man projected his feelings and thoughts of himself onto a found object. There are endless possibilities as to the organic or inorganic nature of the objects: tree branches, pebbles, fossilised animals, shells, bones, skeletons of humans and animals, skulls, etc. At the same time, man painted his image and that of animals in his environs on the walls of the caves he inhabited using whatever colouring material found in nature. Primitive man also used his body as a tool to project his experiences and to imitate the movements of other humans and animals.(84) Through this long journey, over several thousands of years, man has been frustrated by acquiring increased control only on the mechanics of the body. But, alas, the central issue of how to capture the soul on a seat such as ancestor images, death masks, *ushabtis*, *korwars*, automata or even robots has yet to be solved. Fortunately, the idea of the soul roaming about bodiless does not scare humans any more; it only tantalises their curious minds to seek further comprehension about its nature. Meanwhile, some people today continue to find relief in carving wooden ancestral screen images known as *duein fubara*, or the forehead of the spirit, in order to invite the soul of the ancestors. [fig 4] To the Kalabari people of West Africa these carvings "are held to provide points of contact for otherwise free-moving spiritual entities".(85)

Let us go back in time to look closely at the early stages of civilisation when, as Max von Boehn explains, the living looked to their ancestor images for protection then gradually adored and idolised them.(86) Examining some of these images in structure, material and form should inform us about the lineage of the puppets

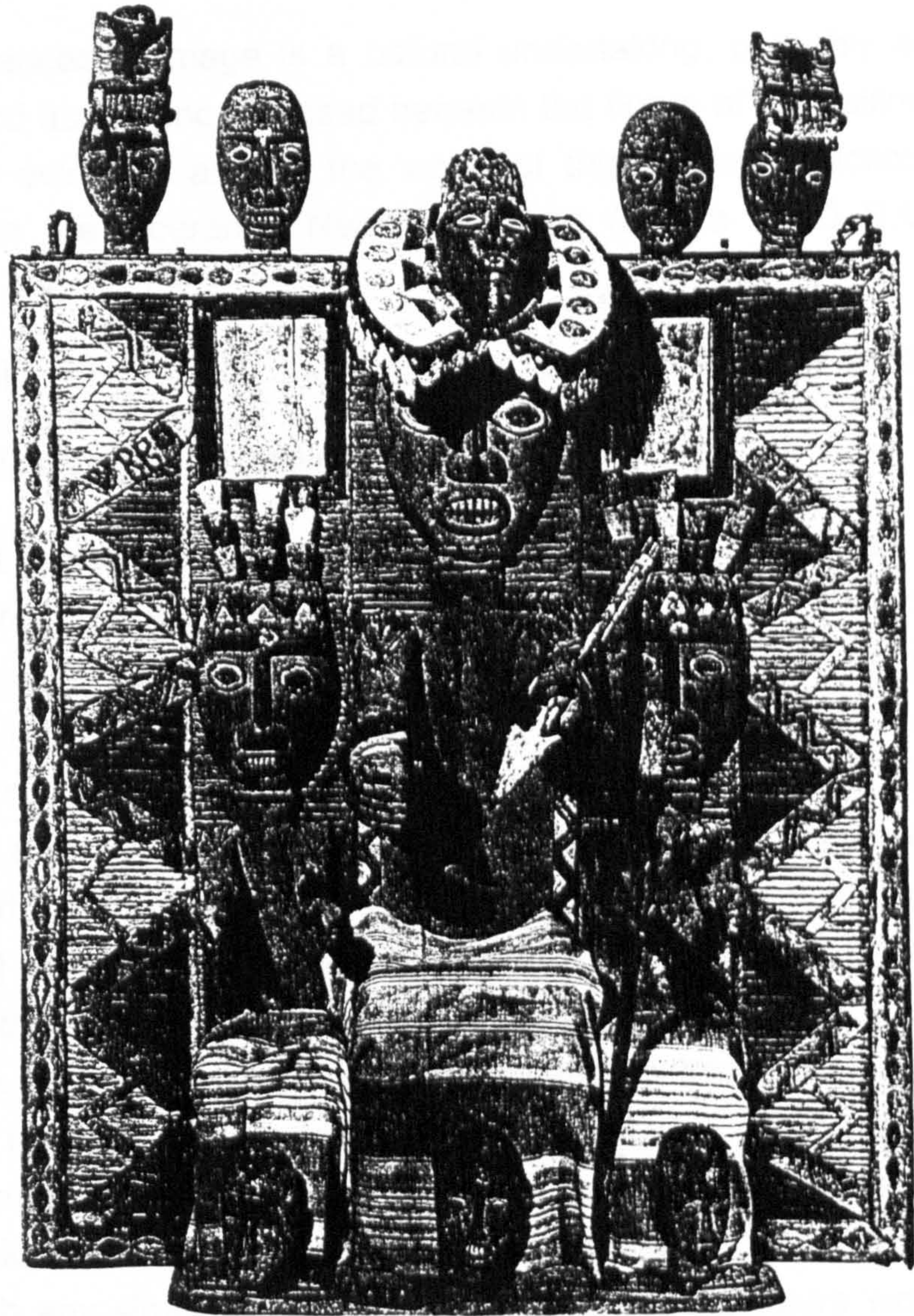


Fig 4. *Duein fabura*. Ancestral screen images, the forehead of the dead.

and about the nature and development of the human and animal figure as a performance object. One of the earliest usages of man's image is found in the nascent period of humanity when man devised rituals encompassing attitudes and myth associated with his survival both in life and in death.

Creating an ancestor image is a natural undertaking, probably as natural and straightforward as burying the dead beneath the floors of a dwelling area. There exists ample evidence around the world of this archaic practice. A relevant example from the Aceramic Neolithic period (before 7000 B.C.) at Jericho reveals:

skulls found under the floor had had their features modelled in plaster and the eye sockets filled with shells, sometimes bivalves and, in one case, cowrie shells.(87) [fig 5]

A skull must have been handled with reverence and of course fear, and was probably stored in a safe corner when it was not the focus of a ritual activity or taking part in an activity. The type of activities such skull images could have participated in are meals, sacrificial rites, rites of passage and rituals of all perceivable nature. It is vital to remember that the ancestor image not only represented a store of information and experience that is no longer accessible, but also portrayed a live object as it was believed the spirit had re inhabited it.(88) [fig 6] Speculation on how a skull was handled during social activities or religious and hunting rituals should be possible indeed. All we need to do is actually look at examples of African masks and sculpture pieces which are today still used in religious and secular festivals.(89) [fig 7] It is possible for a skull to be carried on a tree branch and to be given body by additional branches. A piece of animal skin or some form of vegetation could be used to give form to the frame. With any simple dressing up conceivable, the figure would still be fairly light to be carried over the shoulders or at the same height of the person handling it. It could also sit on top of the head like any animal head skin or head dress. When at the end of a ritual or social activity the skull is left to stand still in the corner of a cave, it will have acquired greater stature. It is the visual image of the skull in motion which reveals its hibernating powers of expression. For that expressive image to be revived, the skull is dependent on gesticulation and movement to be devised by an outside body.

2.6.2 Ritual

Beyond the surface of human life, the paradox of animal existence and spiritual aspiration presents a continuous ground for conflict in man's mind. Ritual, a



Fig 5. Skull with features modelled in plaster and the eye sockets filled with cowrie shells. Jericho around 7000 B.C.

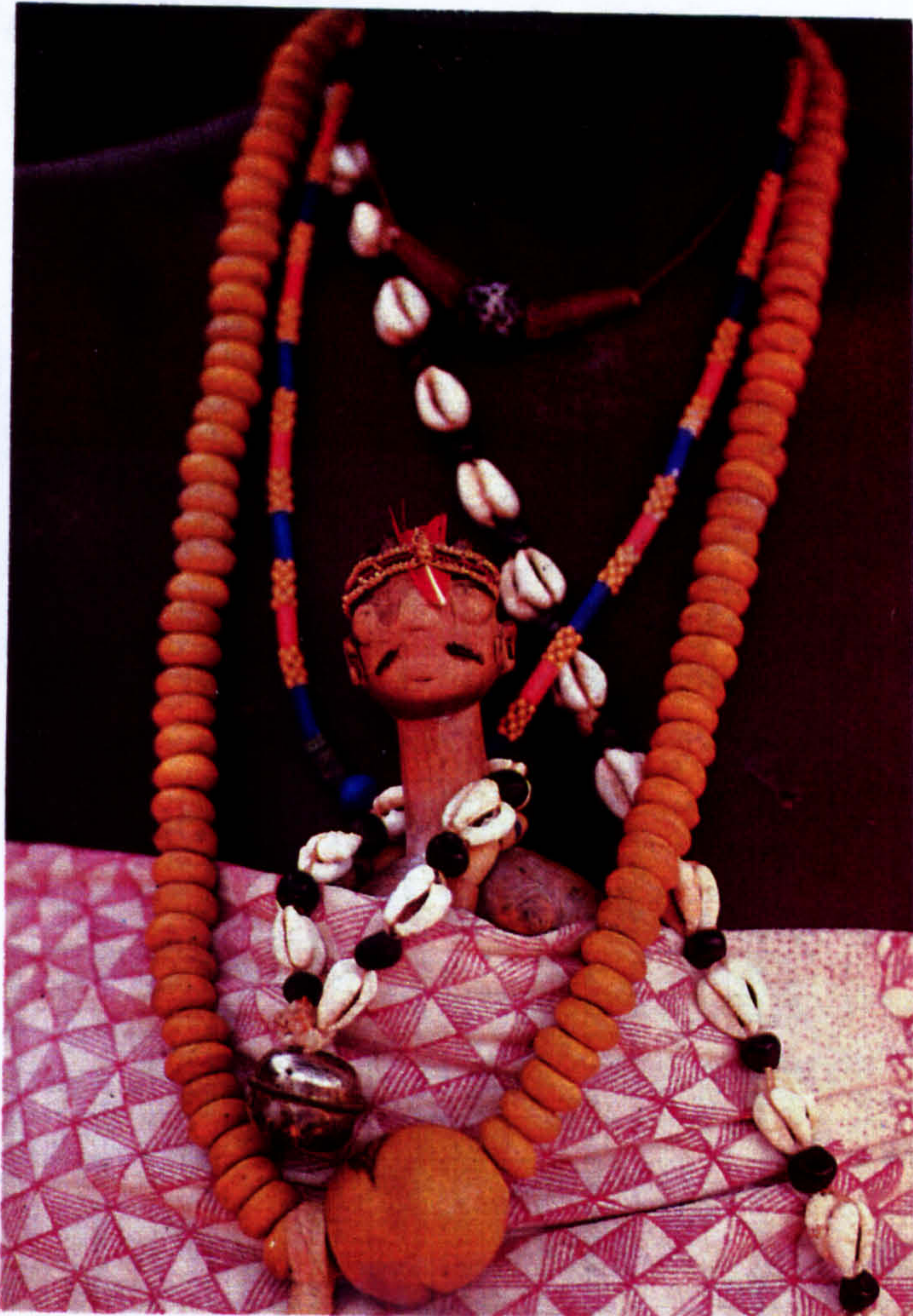


Fig 6. The wooden doll represents the woman's dead twin, she feeds and waters it.



Fig 7. Dancers with masks.

social behaviour which is marked by stylised and repetitive action, is perhaps one of the most archaic modes of expression cultivated to address, tame and channel the collective conflicts of the individuals onto the community. Body movements, gesture patterns, facial expressions and perhaps responsive sounds were the early means of communication developed to reveal visually and orally man's internal struggles. Schwimmer identifies ritual as "a traditional patterned action that may be either demonstrative or transformative".(90) It is worth noting that the richness and variety of rituals reflect the interpretative flow of the creative human mind in communicating complex behaviour patterns.

The relationship between ritual and performance is intriguing - as ritual involves doing, therefore it is a performance process. Schechner puts this concept very clearly. He equates the ritual process with the performance making process and proceeds to confirm that, "the ritual process was always part of the performance, as much at the beginning as now".(91) Schechner, moreover, describes the surviving Palaeolithic sculptures and paintings on cave walls as "action art", because they were not executed for display. He believes that "cave art was designed to accompany performances or was executed as performances".(92) Harwood also acknowledges the possible demonstrative function of the cave paintings.(93) And, he shares the view that cave paintings were not always an end in themselves. He interprets the cave paintings of primitive people as "not just a form of narrative art but in themselves part of a magic ritual".(94) The fact that such paintings are found in deep and very dark caves which are not easily accessible sheds some light on their function and their context vis-à-vis primitive man's everyday life.

Early rituals must have relied on sign language to a large extent. Rituals then were certainly concerned with themes focusing on survival skills, specifically hunting. The cave paintings of stone age man must have been the focus of rituals performed before and/or after hunting. A hunter taking cover under the skin of a dead animal and imitating its movements represents a development of the story told by the static image of the animal on the cave wall. In addition, having ancestor skulls, statuettes or death masks participate in the hunting rituals in the cave carries the ritual exercise to a more significant stage. Around activities of this nature, there must have generated a sign system of a rather complex and at times magical quality.

2.6.3 Visual sign language

When we speak of language, we are in fact referring to means of conveying ideas and emotions, that is means through which abstract notions are translated into visible and audible codes. Movement and sound evolved into complex patterns and motifs by which impulses can be seen and conceived. Gestures and movements contain inner visions of man which are sometimes too deep and obscure for any structured sounds to express. At the roots, gesture, movement and dance have always related to hunting, sacrificial rituals and religious ceremonies. Visual codes and mimed symbolism have great impact on experiences belonging to the realm of religion, be it primitive or highly complex. Visual signs are the fastest channel of communication and the human eye can catch more than one signal in a split second. Our senses of hearing and seeing are directly related to sound and light. Knowing that the light waves travel much faster than the sound waves helps us understand how the visual vocabulary has evolved considerably earlier than the oral vocabulary. Hence visual sign language was probably the earliest means of communication. Let us stop here to look at how images and signs related to the everyday life of prehistoric man. This relation must have set the basis for the visual sign language we still use today in masks and puppets performances.

The images of animals on the wall of a cave naturally acquired an independent presence in the living space of a community. They project not only the animal's image as visualised by the hunter/artist, but also the rapport developed between the hunter and the animal - namely fear and power. Most of the images in the caves are not of friendly and small animals but of strong and huge ones which challenge human life. Therefore, as long as the animal image holds to the wall, it transforms into an icon. An icon is a visual sign which resembles its referent,⁽⁹⁵⁾ and usually has a one-way sign communication system. It projects out to the viewer a message, the same one always. In this case in point, the animal's image transmits the message of defiance to man; it challenges the hunter's imagination to find the best way to capture it. Otherwise the hunter remains the potential game. Rituals focusing on the animal on the wall involved the realisation of the uncertainty of the identity of the next game. The icon image of the animal on the cave wall ensures that tension lives on in the hunter's mind and muscles.

Likewise, the skin and bones of a dead animal must have contributed in initiating tension and consequently in creating lively rituals in a variety of ways. An

obvious ritual would involve recreating a hunting scene by demonstrating the movements and habits of the animal to the community in the cave as if rehearsing the hunting assignment. By moving underneath or behind a piece of animal skin, also by using perhaps a tree branch or bones, the hunter could mime the animal's behaviour and movement. At this stage of the ritual exercise, the hunter is himself transformed into the animal, consequently he acts towards the community as if they were the hunters seeking him - the animal.

The visual sign language which evolves in the process of such an activity is of an interesting nature. The transformed image of the animal and the new hunters communicate on a different level of reality. The community members imitate the action of the hunter and the hunter imitates the reaction of the animal. They create a two-way sign system which grows out of a series of actions and responses in a cause and effect pattern. In the process of such an activity or ritual-miming a hunt scene, all the participants experience an act of transformation. Here tension is brought about by enhancing action and reaction, unlike the image of the animal on the wall which triggers tension by mere abstract means - association.

Rituals focusing on ancestor images should also enlighten us about the relationship between the image/object in question and the community. For example, in the case where a skull, statuette or death mask is used to ensure the ancestor's participation in a hunting ritual, the shaman or relative handling the seat of the spirit does not transform himself into this dead ancestor unless the ancestor image masks him completely. When a dressed skull or statuette is carried away from the body of the carrier, the carrier is simply recognised as a person acting as a medium or motor for the image. In this case, the ancestor image is an icon image. It triggers in the minds of the community members the same tensions they always associated with the particular ancestor. The community can react to it only in one manner: acknowledge the power, courage, knowledge, wisdom, warmth or any other quality it may have represented during its lifetime.

On the other hand, when a shaman or relative wears or masks himself completely under or behind the ancestor image, the outcome is of a less predictable nature. Obviously the two bodies and the two spirits are expected to unite in order to form a third body alien to both. The representation of this alien body is not an icon; because the community members react to it and in turn it responds to them.

2.6.4 Dance

Human life is centred around a basic exercise of building tension and flexing up on both mental and muscular levels. In the same manner that thoughts ferment and are expressed through oral, graphic or prototype images, muscles tense up and are released through projected gestures, movements and danced images. Dance is amongst the earliest stretching activities exercised by prehistoric man.(96) Dancers in animal masks, seen on the walls of prehistoric caves, in France and Algiers for example,(97) [fig 8] portray man's fascination with capturing animals. Painting the animals, then dancing their images and eventually hunting them, represent the different stages in which man's fascination with animals manifests itself. The first two stages are not without magic as the painted image is believed to give control over the animal; besides, dance "is a magical activity which empowers the dancer to transform human flesh into whatever he chooses: leopard, snake, boar, baboon."(98)

No wonder the skilled masked dancers of ancient tribes were mostly the shamans of the tribes. Dancing with an animal mask offered shamans a great opportunity to display their magical powers over the danced animal image. Disguise, by the use of the animal mask/skin, is a vital step which enables a shaman to metamorphose into the animal. This is a moment when the dancer and the prey join effectively in one body, hence the dance is the projection of the marriage of the shaman's and the animal's spirits.(99)

The dependence on animals in man's life for a source of food and eventually labour as well, is reflected in the primitive community's spiritual as well as social activities. Ancient entertainments were mostly performed in animal disguise; pictorial evidence reveals that in both dance and acrobatics animal images are prominent.(100) [fig 9]

Dance communicates emotions by mimicking motions related to many aspects of primitive man's life - hunting, courtship, fertility, initiation and, as a matter of course, death. Primitive Egyptian gods set the example by displaying their deep interest in life after death. Having Osiris as their symbol of divinity, ancient Egyptians thought they could inherit eternal life if their relatives treated their corpses in the way Isis treated Osiris'. So at death ceremonies, rituals performed by the jackal-headed Anubis and Horus over the dead god were copied in great detail. [fig 10]



Fig 8. Dancers in animal masks seen on the walls of prehistoric caves.



Fig 9. Tang Dynasty mural in an ancient palace in Tibet depicting the "Lion Dance".

As every human being was conscious of the divine mystery of rotating hands stirring the sun disk, by acrobatic offerings and manipulation the magical object was manipulated (101)

2.6.3 Acrobatics

Primitive societies developed means of expression coloured by their physical skills. While dance is one very important manifestation of physical skill common to primitive people world-wide, acrobatics is a particular example of physical skills which was developed into a fully integrated performance art form by the Chinese people and to a lesser extent by the Egyptians and Greeks. Primitive Chinese tribes around 700 B.C. developed the art of drawing creatures from hunting.



Fig 10. The picture shows a ritual performed by Jackal-headed Anubis over a deceased man. The tomb of Sennedjem.

At every human burial was reenacted the divine mystery of mourning friends attending the torn relics. By spells, offerings and manipulation the wrapped corpse was reanimated.(101)

2.6.5 Acrobatics

Primitive societies developed means of expression coloured by their physical skills. While dance is one very important manifestation of physical skill common to primitive people world-wide, acrobatics is a particular example of physical skills which was developed into a fairly integrated performance art form by the Chinese people and to a lesser extent by the Egyptians and Greeks. Primitive Chinese tribes around 700 B.C. developed this art by drawing examples from hunting, fighting, religious sacrifice and other aspects of every day labour. The skills performed included juggling, animal masquerades and singing.(102) With time, acrobatics covered other activities related to battle, games, vocal mimicry, and magic. Objects, masks, fighting tools, costumes and animals were conjured to demonstrate a wide variety of skills acquired.

Egyptians had professional acrobats along with their dancers who performed during social entertainments.(103) [fig 11] Lincoln Kirstein suggests that professional dancers and acrobats were difficult to differentiate as they were interchangeable.(104) The Greeks carried on the interest in acrobatics from the Egyptians, as they were fascinated by the human body.

Acrobats in China were very much part of the entertainment scene along with other performing arts. In ancient times, performing arts were not divided according to type, but overlapped to a great extent. For example in 6th Century China, popular puppet shows "centered around a jesting acrobat slapstick character".(105) These shows also preserved elements of dance and song. Earlier, during the Han dynasty in China (206 B.C. to 220 A.D.) common entertainment came to be called the 'Hundred Entertainments'. The variety and richness of the performances from which it was composed are documented on stone reliefs and in records of historians.[fig 12] Besides acrobats, the performers included singers, dancers, puppeteers, jugglers, actors and magicians. Animal masquerade shows were also an important part of the entertainments where both real animals and mythological animals were presented.(106)

Acrobatics and magic or 'supernatural art', the name preferred by the Chinese, were in some ways related to religious sacrificial ceremonies during the period of

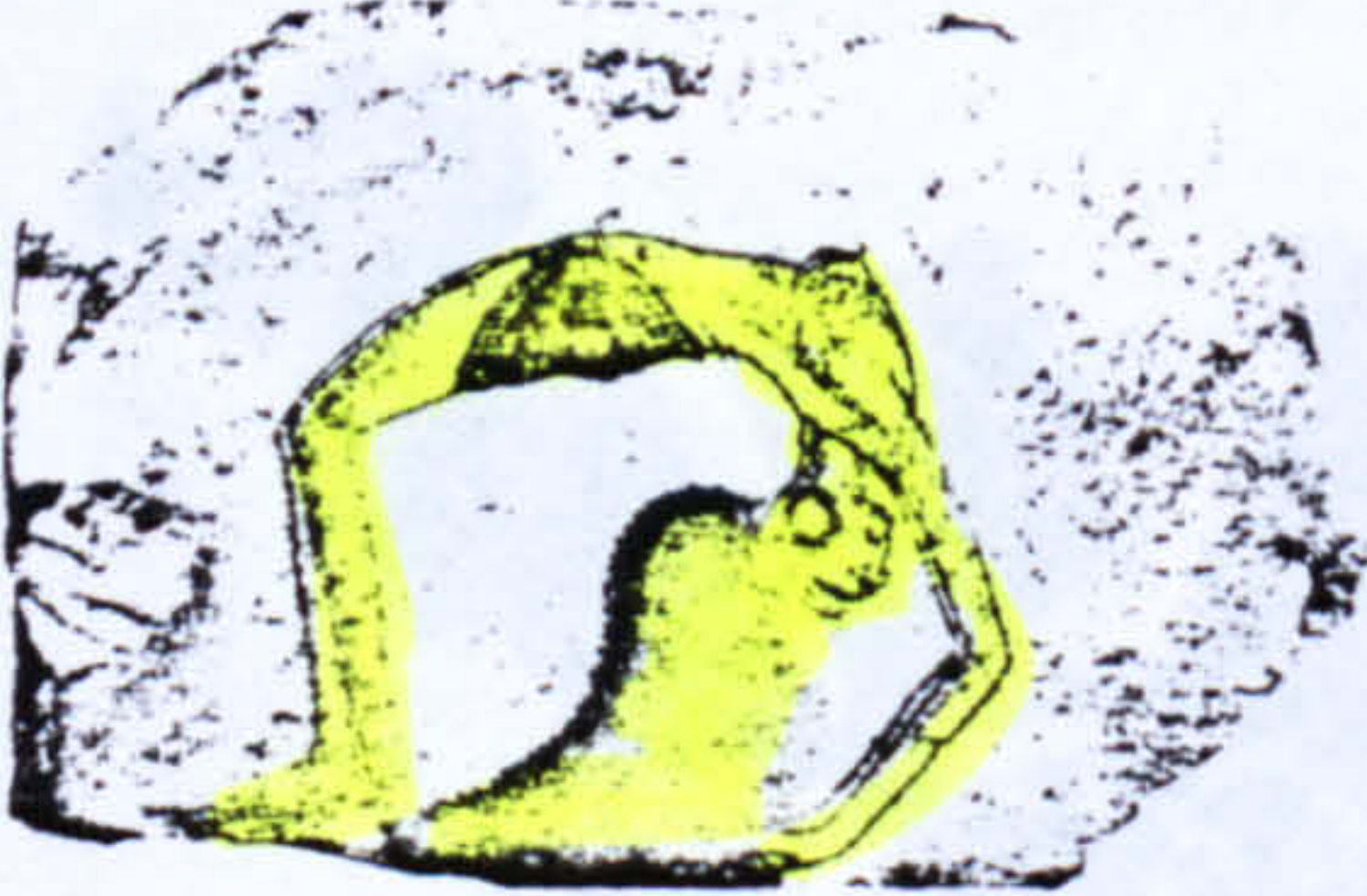
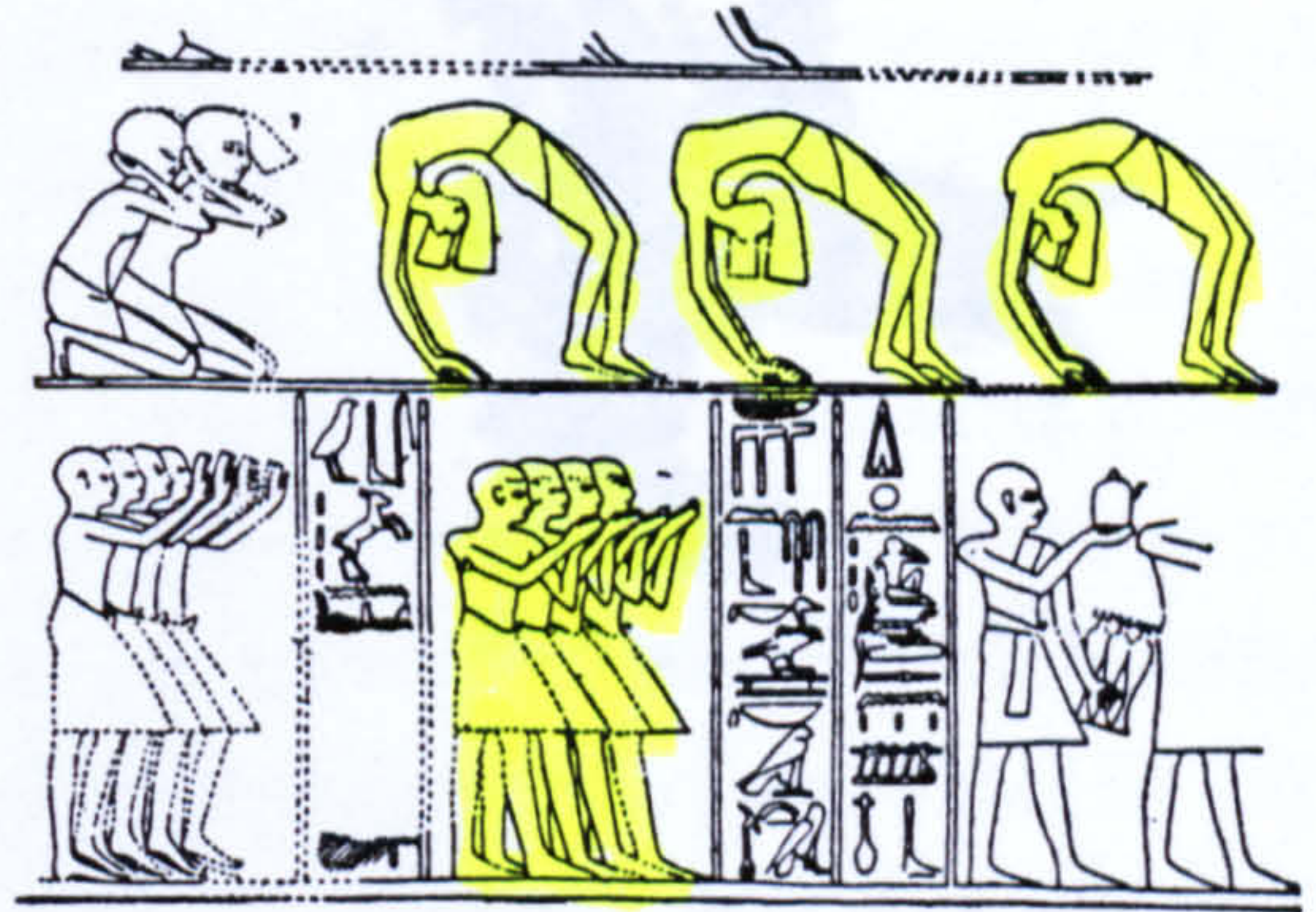


Fig 11. Ancient Egyptian entertainers: musicians, dancers, and acrobats.

their initiation. However, in China they were used to help advocate the doctrines of Buddhism and Taoism. They became an important entertainment element during temple fairs and in the strolling religious processions organised by monks (107). Acts performed with colourful costumes, props and music were introduced progressively until the spectacle became gigantic. Puppets were also used in acrobatic masquerade wrestling. A performer carrying a pair of puppets on his back bends down and his four limbs become the feet of the wrestling puppets (108). Lanterns with revolving paper cut figures of men and animals were also part of the magic show (109). Puppet shows on water became a part of the 'Hundred Entertainments'.

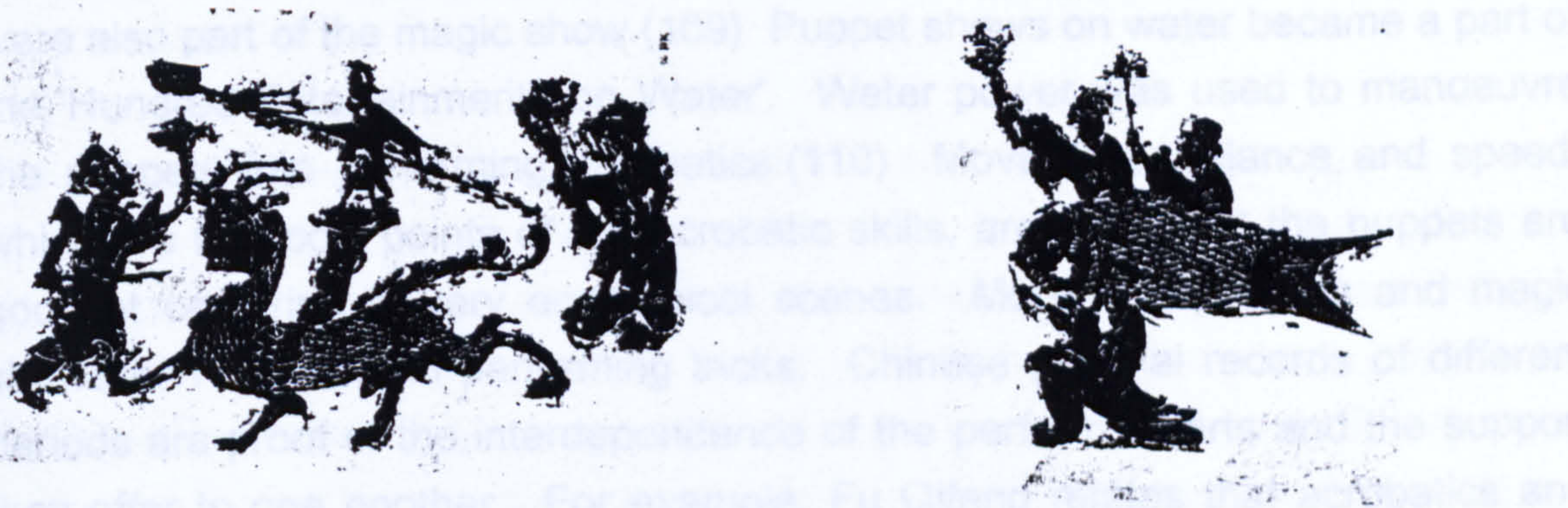


Fig 12. Pictures from the "Hundred Entertainments": bird show, leopard masquerade show, dragon masquerade show, and fish show.

their initiation. However, in China they were used to help advocate the doctrines of Buddhism and Taoism. They became an important entertainment element during temple fairs and in the strolling religious processions organised by monks.(107) Acts performed with colourful costume, props and music were introduced progressively until the spectacle became gigantic. Puppets were also used in acrobatic 'masquerade wrestling'. A performer carrying a pair of puppets on his back bends down and his four limbs become the feet of the wrestling puppets.(108) Lanterns with revolving paper cut figures of men and animals were also part of the magic show.(109) Puppet shows on water became a part of the 'Hundred Entertainments on Water'. Water power was used to manoeuvre the puppets into performing acrobatics.(110) Movement, balance and speed, which are the focal points of the acrobatic skills, are also what the puppets are good at capturing in very economical scenes. Moreover, puppets and magic shows can compete in performing tricks. Chinese pictorial records of different periods are proof of the interdependence of the performing arts and the support they offer to one another. For example, Fu Qifeng relates that acrobatics and magic were an integrated part of Chinese classical drama. Also that in the early stage of dramatic development there was no division between them, and in certain cases acrobatic skills were the main content of some theatrical items. A typical example of the borrowing from acrobatics is the striking of a pose on stage and acrobatic fighting used in Peking Opera as well as classical drama.(111)

2.6.6 Images in motion

Motion represents the spiritual power or motor power which renders an object alive. Whereas a human figure or sculpted form is a lifeless object, a mobile human figure represents a spiritual or magical power embodied in a character. Motion is a vigorous condition potentially prevailing in the most archaic of human representations as they housed the spirits of ancestors.

It is not possible to disagree with Dagan that in the case of a stationary two or three-dimensional artistic image, the visual statement is evident and not in need of any elaboration. Consequently, the creator of such a piece of art can survive independently from his creation. However, in the case of an animated image, the expressive powers of the "creator and creation, depend on one another and cannot be separated".(112) A relevant illustration of the expressive power manifested in the interdependent relationship of the creator and creation is in the

animation of an object which is initially designed to be stationary. Dagan observes this phenomenon in African fertility dolls which have an inherent visual message or "a magical power to evoke creation of life".(113) When these dolls are animated in front of an audience they "play a symbolic role and, in effect, also become puppets".(114) Conversely, an example from the opposite side of the spectrum illustrates transformation from a kinetic to a static image. For instance, an articulated object, separated from its motor power or creator, depresses the character it projects during its state of mobility and stands as a static visual representation.

Motion is visualised and comprehended with relation to time and space. Space correlates three possible levels of existence - spiritual, material and live - in which the first two states coexist. It is the juxtaposition of these possibilities of existence that determine the status of an organic or inorganic entity. For instance, a live being is a manifestation of the status of coexistence between a body and a spirit in one space and time, whereas their disengagement leads to a status in which we have two separate levels, that of a spirit and that of a corpse. The coexistence of the two levels in one entity cannot be recreated except in fiction, mainly by impersonating the character through telling its story in words or movement or together.

Neither time nor space can be duplicated in real life, but probably in fiction. A person miming a hunting scene is actually recreating a moment in time which happened in a specific space. When the hunter wears the animal skin and moves or dances in it, both occupy one space and move in the same time. However, if the hunter carries the animal skin away from his body, then both move, they occupy different spaces and move in different times. Dagan describes this relationship very clearly by referring to it as double space and time. "The puppeteer moves in his own space and his movement is the catalyst for the delayed movement of the puppet."(115) This distance between the creator and created is non-existent where, like the masked actor or dancer, they are a single entity moving in a single time and space.

The nature of the image projected is directly dictated by the space allowed between a hunter and his animal mask, a shaman and an ancestor image, a dancer and his costume, or an actor and his puppet. The size and the gravity of the individual mask, image, costume or puppet determine the space in which the movement takes place. This explains why:

The disproportion between the size of the puppet or mask and its movement can be exaggerated because the puppeteer is free to move it in disproportionately larger movements compared with its size. As a result, the vocabularies of movement and gesticulation of all the puppets and masks moving in double space and time differ from those dancers and puppeteers who perform in single space and time.(116)

The above context clarifies that the vocabulary of imagery and power of expression generated by movement rest on the space dynamics of the creator and the created. Hence it is possible to conceive of a masked dancer/actor/puppeteer transforming, and presenting his body as if it were a puppet. This is a very well known tradition in the Far East. Examples of dancers miming the mechanical movements of puppets are still performed nowadays. In Thailand, the shadow puppets known as *Nang Yai* are held in front of or behind the screen by "a puppeteer/dancer whose posture mimics those of the puppets".(117) In addition, the Japanese Kabuki includes a number of classical dances called *ningyo-buri* (puppet movement), in the *buyo* style where dancers imitate the movements of puppets.(118)

A mask by virtue of its function helps the dancer/actor/puppeteer disguise his personality and, in the same manner, a dancer/actor/puppeteer sheds himself behind an articulated object. In both cases where a mask or puppet is used a change of identity is observed. This "loss of self"(119) is at the very root of performance arts. Even without the use of a still or articulated object to disguise himself a dancer undergoes such experience through movement. Lonsdale informs us that "in dance man can lose himself, becoming momentarily whatever he wishes, buoyed up as he is above gravity, he is transported, etherealized".(120)

As dance defies gravity, so does the articulation of lifeless objects. Both dancers and puppets reflect this notion of defiance by directing their motion away from the centre of gravity. All articulated objects display this phenomenon, especially when performing in double space and time. "The puppet and masks which are gravity free are capable of exaggerating their movements to the point of absurdity."(121)

If we look closer at the process by which movement communicates our thoughts and emotions, we will notice that motion does not only convey a visual message from our internal world to the external world, but it also prompts responses within

us which result in a more intense experience of motion. In the case of aesthetically organised movement, or dance, we are involved in kinaesthetic communication.(122)

Kinaesthesia then refers to sensing the movement in our own body; however, 'visual kinesthesia' refers again to sensing movement in our own body when we see movement presented by another person.(123)

A masked dancer/actor/puppeteer/performer moving in double or single time and space experiences either kinaesthetic communication and/or visual kinesthesia. The community members participating in the event are also rewarded with visual kinaesthetic experience as the movements they are watching trigger memories of their own bodies' sense of particular spacio-temporal patterns of motion.

The notion of change is deeply associated with motion. The circumstance referred to by Peter Brook as 'a change of state'(124) is a common root to all performances including those of shamans, witch doctors, magicians, actors, dancers, puppeteers, etc. 'A change of state' involves as a first step losing a sense of oneself and then becoming possessed by a spirit. The whole process is very much one of juggling with space and time which then leads to transformation. In fact, multiple transformation could be reached by changing the devices which screen the self and project the metamorphosed state, as occurs when both puppets and masks are used together for instance.

2.6.7 Archaic technical development

Motion works magic in still images. It puts soul in them and therefore it has always symbolised life. Understanding the dynamics of movement gave man the power to control it. Man's most available tool for the study of movement is obviously the closest, his own body.

Early in history, man was able to appreciate the possibilities which render the human body a tool for expressing his personal emotions and ideas. However, when duplicating the human body in lifeless material, man transfers to it the qualities he associates with his own body. Hence the outcome is a tool which could possibly mimic his expressions.

Ancient human figures were mainly block-like, flat-shaped or stick-shaped without limbs or perhaps with only a suggested line indicating the limbs [fig 13].



Fig 13. Examples of early human figurines.

An indicative change came with the addition of limbs which hung from the flat and compact body. The addition of the limbs came about when primitive man deciphered the mechanism of joints, their construction and assemblage. It is certain that the making of joints represents an important step in man's technological and artistic advancement.

Egyptian figurines, Pharaonic as well as Coptic, represent the body in a compact form leaving the arms free and moveable. Kate Elderkin refers this phenomenon to the close-fitting garments of the Egyptians which render the lower limbs unimportant. The arms in this case are jointed with a fastening through the shoulders. [fig 14] This particular Egyptian jointed doll which dates from 2000-3000 B.C. is probably the oldest jointed doll found in the Middle East.(125)

Roman jointed dolls from the early Christian era reveal additional articulation at the hips and the elbows. [fig 15] The joints used here are "accurately adjusted tenons and mortises"(126), which is quite an advancement from the archaic Egyptian and Greek peg which passed through the shoulder and made the two arms move always together. A curious observation concerning the abnormal length of the hands of archaic articulated dolls brings to mind a similar exaggeration used in puppets to achieve a greater impact while performing movement.

It is not possible to look at these jointed dolls without perceiving them as a link between the block like sculpted statuettes and articulated figures or puppets. Egyptians and Greeks left us evidence that puppets were used during Isis ceremonies and for entertaining adult audiences during banquets in Athens. Among other researchers in the field, Paul McPharlin is not satisfied with this explanation. He sees these figures as models but he does not bother to examine their function.(127)

This viewpoint is not acceptable to a researcher like Speaight who recognises two possibilities which could be seen as starting points of the puppet history:

The first doll that moved its arms could have gradually developed into a domestic amateur puppet show, or the first statue of god that amazed its worshippers with movement could have gradually acquired more and more of a dramatic role in the priestly mysteries.(128)

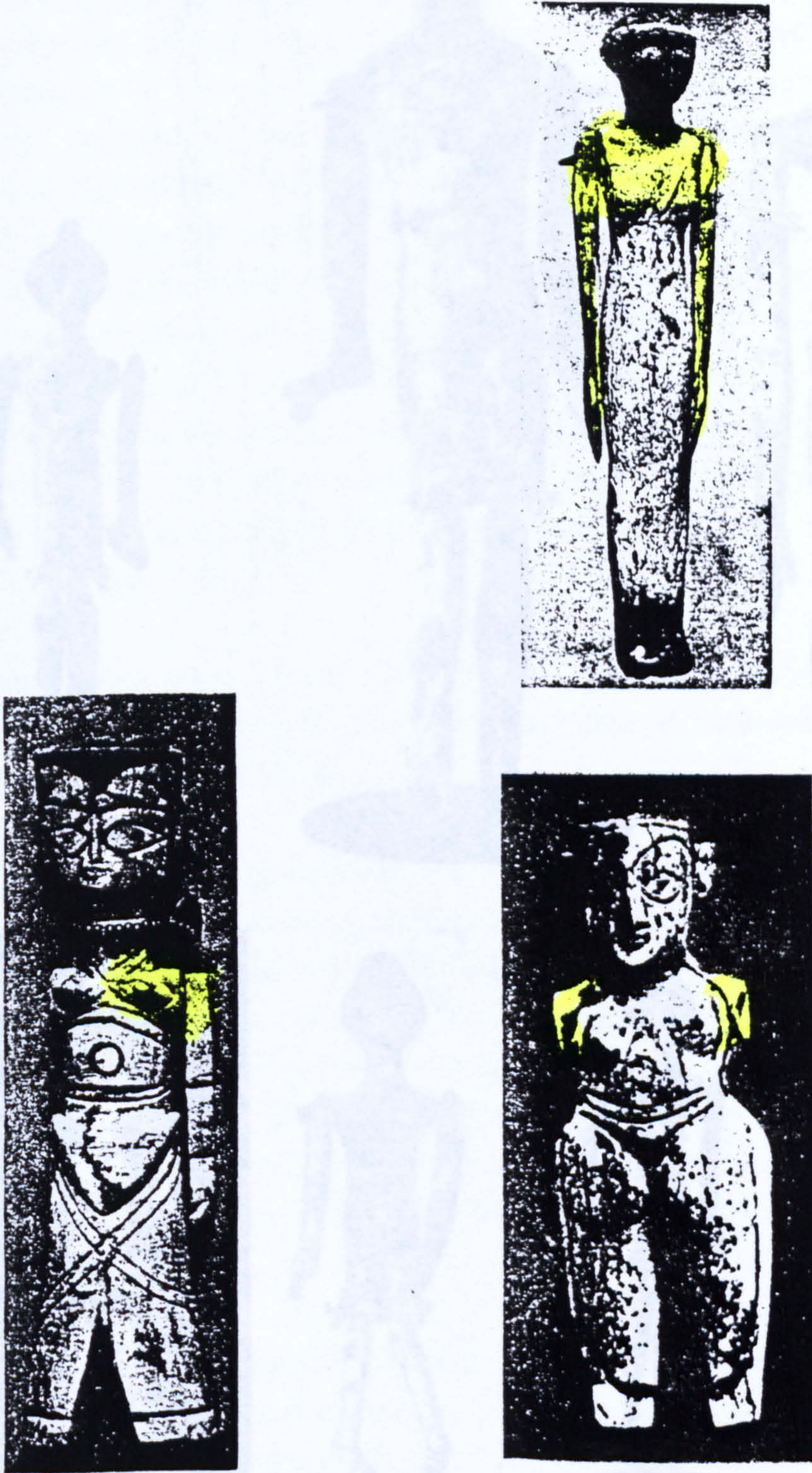


Fig 14. Examples of jointed figurines from ancient Egypt.

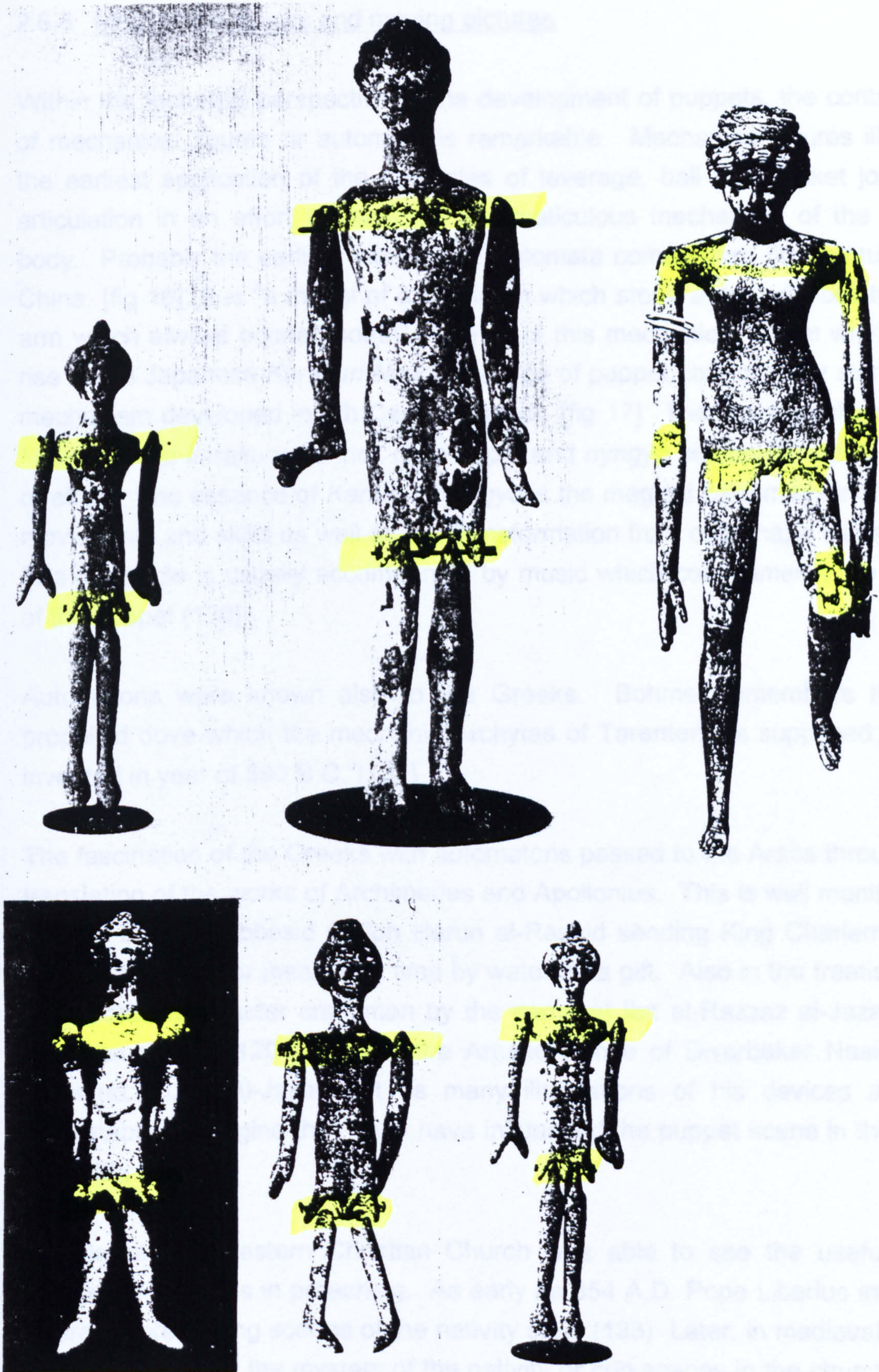


Fig 15. Examples of early jointed figurines.

2.6.8 Mechanical figures and moving pictures

Within the technical perspective of the development of puppets, the contribution of mechanical figures or automata is remarkable. Mechanical figures illustrate the earliest application of the principles of leverage, ball and socket joint and articulation in an effort to duplicate the meticulous mechanism of the human body. Probably the earliest example of automata comes from 5th Century B.C. China. [fig 16] It is "a model of a chariot in which stood a doll with outstretched arm which always pointed south".(129) It is this mechanical model which gave rise to the Japanese *Karakuri Nyngyo*, a type of puppet controlled by strings and mechanism developed in 7th Century Japan. [fig 17] The word *karakuri* comes from the verb *karakuru*, to trick or to dupe, and *nyngyo* stands for a doll, puppet or effigy. The essence of *Karakuri Nyngyo* is the magical performance of human movements and skills as well as the transformation from one shape into another. The spectacle is usually accompanied by music which complements the actions of the puppet.(130)

Automatons were known also to the Greeks. Bohmer remembers the "self propelled dove which the mechanic Archytas of Tarentem, is supposed to have invented in year of 390 B.C."(131)

The fascination of the Greeks with automatons passed to the Arabs through their translation of the works of Archimedes and Apollonius. This is well manifested in the 8th Century Abbasid Caliph Harun al-Rashid sending King Charlemagne of France a device for measuring time by water as a gift. Also in the treatise of the Mesopotamian master craftsman by the name of Ibn al-Razzaz al-Jazari which was compiled in 1206 A.D. for the Artuqid Prince of Diyarbakir Nasir ad-Din Mahmud.(132) Al-Jazari left us many illustrations of his devices and it is reasonable to imagine they must have influenced the puppet scene in the Middle East. [fig 18]

In Europe the Western Christian Church was able to see the usefulness of illusionary methods in preaching. As early as 354 A.D. Pope Liberius introduced figures representing scenes of the nativity story.(133) Later, in medieval Europe, representations of the mystery of the nativity or crib scenes in the churches were frequently animated by mechanical figures. These scenes known in France as *crèches parlantes* were composed of the Holy Family with some animals. Occasionally the figures of Jesus on the Cross or of the Virgin Mary:

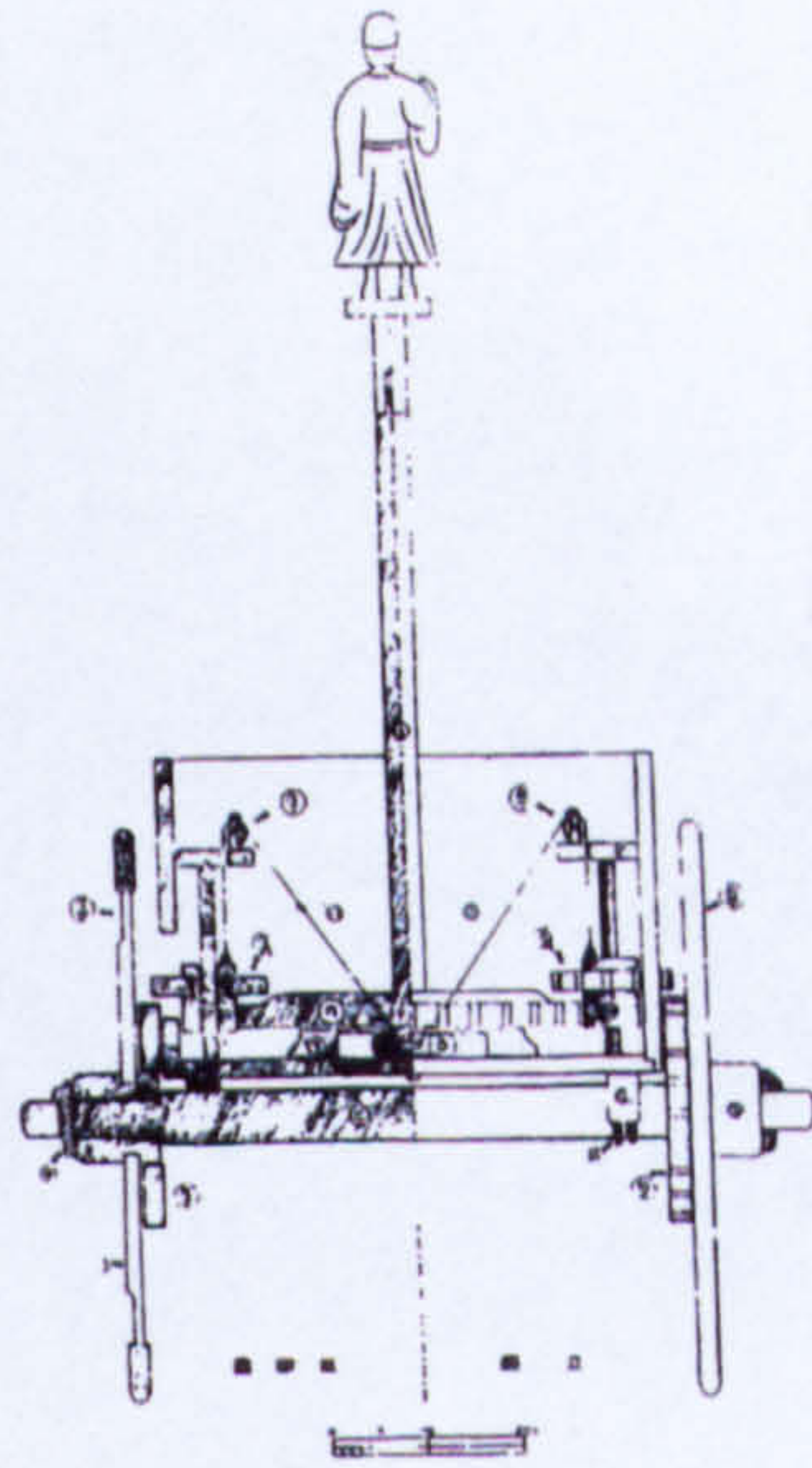
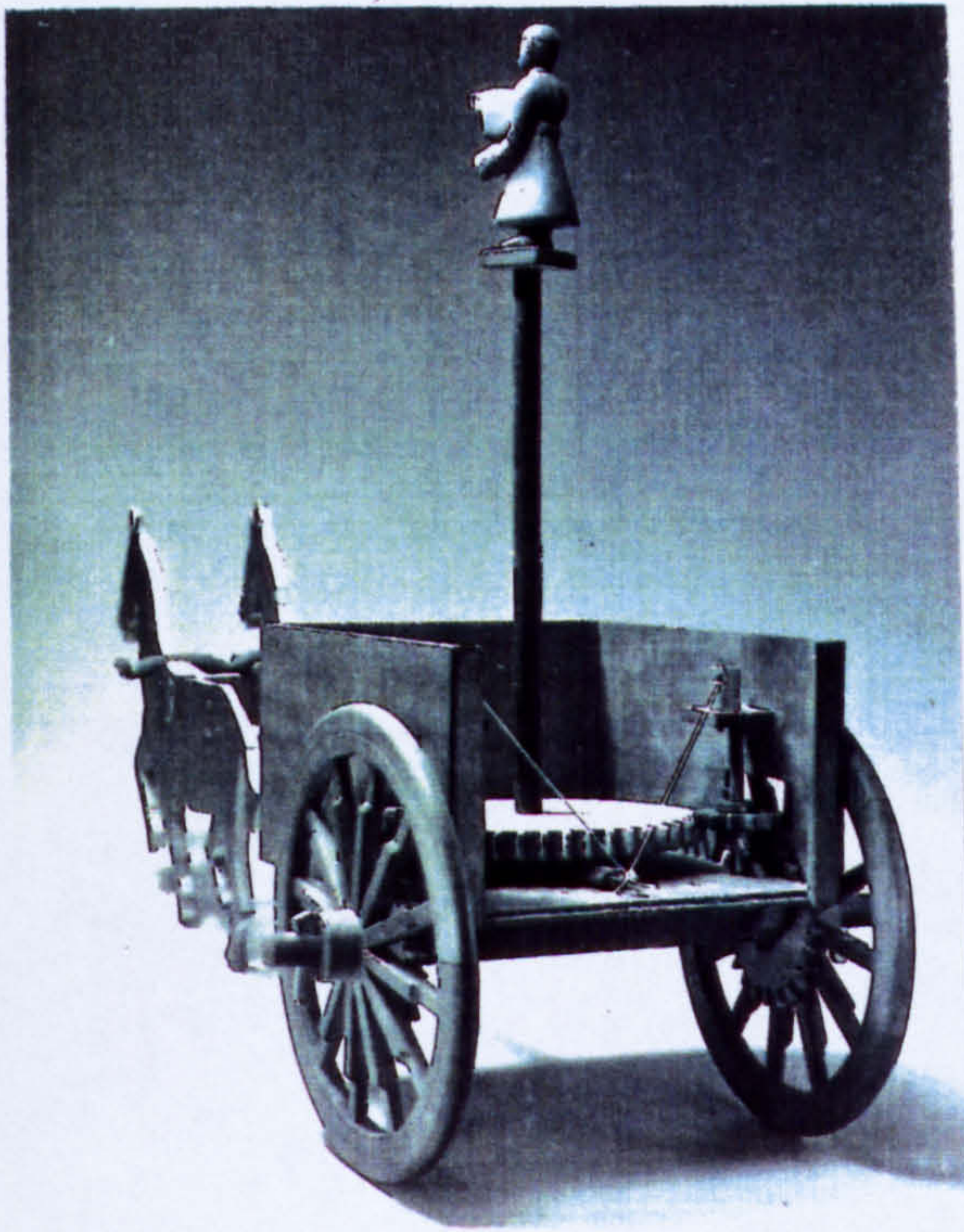


Fig 16. Earliest example of mechanical doll from China, 5th Century B.C.



Fig 17. Example of *Karakuri Ningyo* chariot.



Fig 18. An example of al-Jazari's automata: the Elephant Clock.

were made to move a head or gesticulate. And here we find the earliest beginning of the mysteries which were later to come out from the churches and monasteries as precursors not only of our puppet shows but of practically all drama.(134)

Helen Joseph goes further to point out that mechanical figures and human actors frequently shared the same platform to present sacred plays inside medieval churches and even later when in 1563 A.D. the decree of the Council of Trent forced them out. Association with supernatural forces, idols and magic of course created an atmosphere of discomfort for the protectors of morality in the Church.(135)

Speaight draws our attention to the use of the term *motion* which "seem to have been applied to all moving figures", (136) actuated by clockwork, water-power or on a barrel-organ. *Motion* is the term used to describe all sorts of 'pictorial entertainment', dependent or not on moving mechanism, including puppet shows, automata and peep shows in Elizabethan England. *Motions* relied on an 'interpreter' to describe the action to the audience as he watched in front of the box or booth.(137)

With the advent of industry in Europe, the availability of cardboard and paper contributed to the promotion of paper puppets and the coming about of the *Theatrum Mundi* show.(138) *Theatrum Mundi* became popular around 1700 A.D. and continued till early this century. However, it is notable that it adapted many of the mechanical devices of the automatons. [fig 19] The main function of the show was to present the epilogue of the travelling theatres and also, "to fill in the intervals between scenes the showmen introduced the so called 'Metamorphoses'."(139)

Paper theatre flourished along with silhouette-cutting which was better known as *Ombres Chinoises*. The combination of animated pictures and mechanical figures stimulated the imagination of many artists in 18th Century France and Germany and prepared the way for the art of the film.(140)

2.6.9 Drama

Currell talks of puppetry as "a visual and dramatic art, which has continued for thousands of years"(141) The connection of puppetry and drama, although ancient, is not always recognised with ease, especially by those who do not

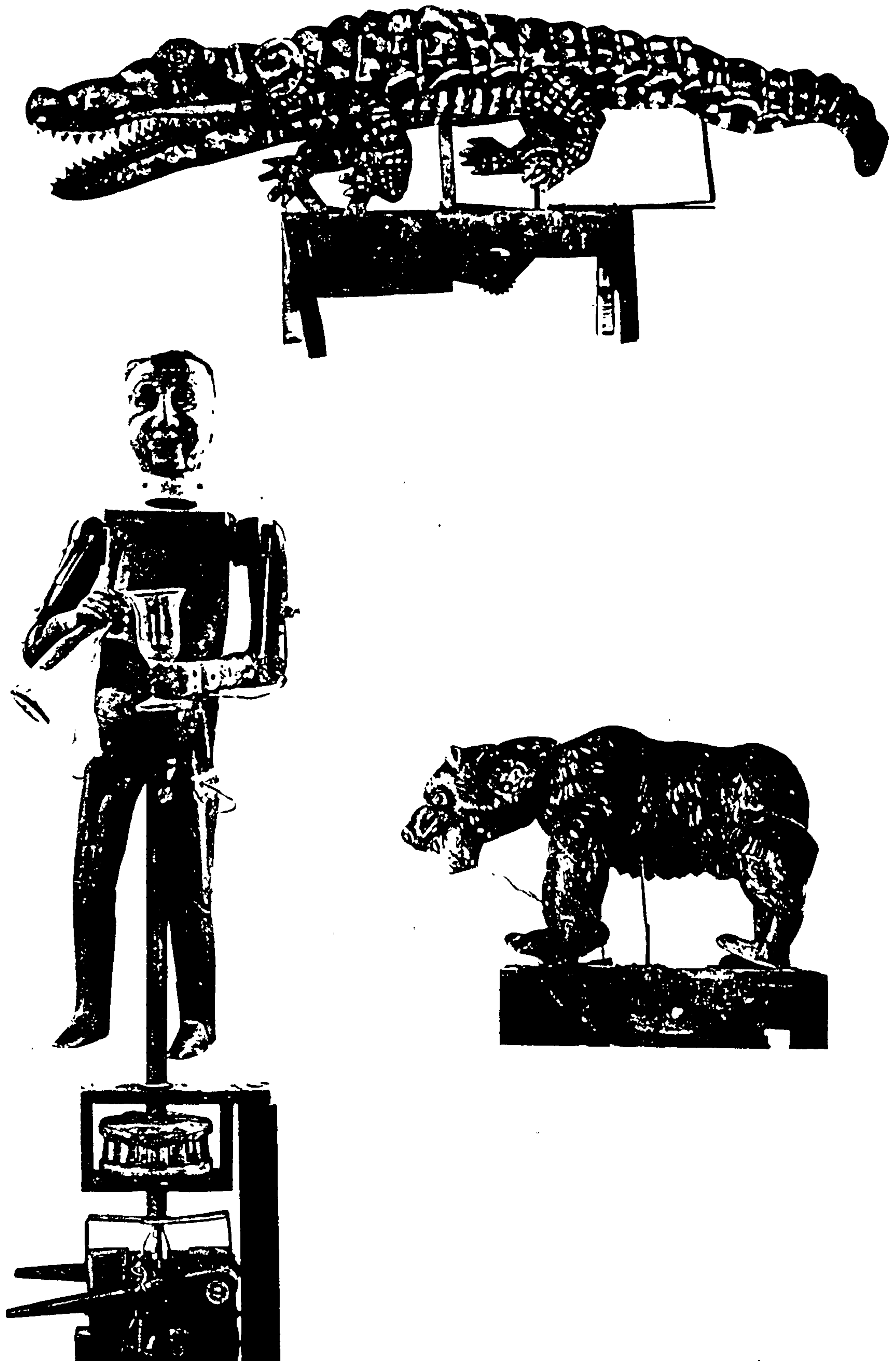


Fig 19. Examples from *Theatrum Mundi*, first half of the 19th Century.

appreciate the non-literary dimensions of drama. The boundaries of the term drama have always been influenced by the ever-changing cultural, social and technical settings. However, drama has had a central concept basic to all its multi-faceted manifestations and that is the enactment of fiction. Esslin's reference to the nature of drama communicates well the multi-dimensional aspects of the term. He says that drama is a:

mimetic action unfolding itself in the present, and the presence, before the very eyes, of an audience, re-enacting fictional or real past events' is unique in that it combines the characteristics of narrative poetry and of visual arts: it has both a spatial and a time dimension. It is a narrative made visible, a picture given the power to move in time.(142)

A narrative expanded in the dimensions of space and time is distinguished as performance and is therefore in a full sense drama. However, "a dramatic text, unperformed, is literature".(143)

The relationship between drama and performance has always been a subject for discussion, and possibly an obscure puzzle as dramatic and performance arts are but two sides of one coin.(144) A performer functions with the realisation that he has to address the dialectical interplay between form and meaning. This tension has guided all modes of performances, from the pure religious to the extreme secular, ever since human beings recognised the need to communicate.

As we set out to explore the nature of the relationship between puppetry and drama, one must remember the many layers of dichotomous patterns that shape a performer and consequently his art. Body and spirit, life and death, dark and light, emotion and intellect are but a few motifs which sharpen the performer's sense of permutation affecting the different aspects of his work. My intention here is to look at the changing patterns of interdependence which have been influencing puppetry and drama over the ages and in different geographical areas. A particular performance object, the mask, which has strong affinity with both drama and puppetry, will be conjured as a frame of reference in order to enable us to appreciate this association from as many viewpoints as possible:

The use of masks, puppets and performing objects is probably the one consistent element in performance tradition all over the world, beginning with the first time humans attempted to recreate for each other an event that took place or should have taken place.(145)

This characteristic feature of using various modes of performance art to convey a message did not lose its appeal in Western cultures till the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. It was the eventual categorisation of the arts as "low" or "high" culture which brought about its decline.(146) Until then, what Bell calls the "multiple stream" approach received all theatre forms as equally valid and was a tradition widely known and practised. However, with time, the dramatic text earned prominence by isolating itself from performance traditions which depended less on framed literary texts than on non-literary and oral literature. In contrast with the West, Eastern cultures have continued to embrace all practicable performance skills to communicate dramatic texts as well as non-literary and oral traditions.

2.6.10 Puppet, the mask complete

The significant bond between puppets and masks is in fact a reflection of the formidable interfacing and overlapping of performance arts and skills over such a long period of time. Indeed, the inception of masks and puppets could have taken place at the same time and must have translated the same need of primitive man to create myth and to establish contact with supernatural powers. Pani believes that "deep in the prehistoric past each primitive society developed its own masks to minimize the feeling of vulnerability".(147) Besides, she recognises the impersonality of the puppet 'actors', and, using the words of Speaight, she argues that:

Puppet is, in fact, the mask complete, from which the human actor has withdrawn, not to be disassociated but to be united with subtler objectivity for exploring yet another dimension of theatre - yet another plane of reality.(148)

Malkin is also of the view that "beyond the mask is the puppet. The puppet is both perceived and presented at a more abstract level than the mask".(149) The essence of both the mask and the puppet is the potential to generate change: they are both instruments for metamorphosis. In some ancient cultures the same name has been used for performances with puppets as well as for performances with masks.(150)

Linguistic details confirm that in ancient civilisations, entertainment skills overlapped on both the content and the performing artistic levels.(151) One

would attribute this to the very old days when in archaic societies a performer, whether of a religious background or otherwise, had to depend solely on his individual resources. He had to imagine a story and decide how, where and when to share it with an audience. Once these decisions were made, he had to improvise with various visual and oral signs which would best carry forward his story. It is from this wide scope of the individual performer's storehouse that performance arts and theories developed into what became recognised as specialised performance areas.

With time, performers specialised in performing genres in which they displayed higher quality skills and hence were accepted and labelled as actors, dancers, storytellers, singers, etc. Consequently the material for performance was categorised. Poets and writers produced stories and literature to accommodate the needs of specific performers. The Dramatic literature tradition concerned itself mainly with live actors, while the non-literary or non-written theatre continued to provide all types of performers, including actors of course, with scenes and stories. Puppeteers continued their tradition of employing subject matter from both written and oral literature. However, puppeteers were not shy about addressing dramatic literature whenever feasible. This practice provided them with great flexibility and a wide scope from which to choose their material.

It is worth noting that among performing objects, masks appealed to the literary dimension of drama, but puppets remained closely associated with the performance dimension. The gap between the performance object/mask and the performance object/puppet has widened along the ages although both originate from and share the same concept. Ancient Greek playwrights composed their tragedies and comedies not with the actor but specifically the masked actor in mind.(152) The concept of an actor without a mask almost did not prevail in Greek and Roman antiquity. The Greek word for mask *prosopon* and the Latin *persona* came to be used in the sense of a character.(153) Hence "to wear a mask is a way of drastically changing one's persona".(154) It is rather significant that the ancient Greek actor did not only use a head mask with an elaborate head-dress as a physical aid towards the loss of self, but he also wore high-heeled boots or stilts, and a sleeved robe which covered him completely.(155) Most probably, extensions for the hands were also used in order to have the whole body of the actor enlarged proportionately.(156) Henceforth the impersonality projected by the image of the ancient Greek and Roman actor can be described using the words of Speaight and Pani: a mask complete into which the human actor has withdrawn.

Ancient Greek and Roman actors can be conceived of as live puppets - or live actors completely masked - as much as the English actor and dramatist Samuel Foote (1720-77 A.D.) who performed along with puppets at his theatre in the Haymarket described himself as "three-quarters a man but one-quarter (his wooden leg) a puppet".(157) Foote's notion of live puppets is reflected in his reference to "the ancient Roman theatre, with its masked actors, in effect a great puppet show".(158) Speaight agrees with Foote's view and adds that the Greek theatre is almost a puppet theatre and that "few forms of drama lend themselves more readily to the stilted dignity of puppet actors than does the Greek".(159)

In spite of the fact that there exists vital correspondence between the visual signs an actor projects by communicating through a mask and an actor communicating through a puppet, one notices a certain discursiveness in the identification of the actor's function in each case. A performer animating a mask is called a masked actor; on the other hand the same performer animating a puppet is known as a puppeteer. In the first example, the human contribution is acknowledged and therefore emphasised, while in the latter the human contribution is masked, hence the object of performance is set in focus. The point to note here is that animating a mask or a puppet are perceived from totally opposed angles although they share astounding common grounds from inception to performance and reception by an audience. Stephen Brecht elaborates on the incongruous background to this issue by reminding us that while a puppet to a great extent takes on its animator's life, a mask gives its lack of life and its identity to its wearer. A worn mask becomes a face, but only when animated does a puppet become a puppet. The transformation which occurs in each case plays itself out conversely: "In the puppet we see life in death, in the masked performer, death in life."(160)

This analogy does not give us a full picture about the dichotomous relationship between life and death in both masks and puppets. It only describes a split second in the life of a mask and a puppet. A mask put on becomes a face for only a very short period of time, after which if it is not animated it becomes a dead face or a death mask. The same principle applies to a puppet moving continuously: it focuses our attention on its dependency on the motor power borrowed from its animator. Both masks and puppets have in them the potential to imitate death and to imitate life. It is up to a live actor to cause the metamorphosis of the object/mask/puppet into a subject/character.

Puppetry being a visual and dramatic art parallels its object and subject dual existence. The puppet as a visual art object is actually a representation or a transformation of reality. It picks specific elements of reality to duplicate, exaggerate or completely omit. If the puppet is to represent a character, then it portrays a compact or iconic expression of the character. It is the sort of expression we see in our photographs but cannot recognise in reality because we cannot conceive what we look like in a fraction of a second. We are used to seeing ourselves in consecutive frames not in a still frame. A puppet is like a character seen in a split-second representation or in one frame; in this respect a mask has very much the same quality. The object mask or puppet is a still frame - a still picture in space - and that is the visual aspect. The dramatic aspect is the moving picture which has a spatial and a time dimension - it is a picture given power to move in time, hence a narrative is made visible.

Dagan's *Emotions in Motion: Theatrical Puppets and Masks from Black Africa*, is one of the few documents which treats masks and puppets on equal standing. Of course, this is a true reflection of the performance tradition in Africa - very much a "multiple stream" tradition which makes use of all sorts of performance objects and performance skills with no inhibition. Dagan says of the masks and puppets of Africa: "both are sculpture and theatrical objects, linked to the spiritual/religious and realistic/secular worlds, and embody the visualization of a dramatic image in motion".(161) She further explains that puppets as well as masks have a double function "that of influencing and stimulating their manipulator and the viewer at the same time".(162) The first phase is related to the identity transformation which an actor/dancer/puppeteer undergoes in order to lend a physical image to the character he is playing, or to objectify a state of emotion or a state of mind. However, without the input of viewers, any simulated object, be it puppet or mask, becomes a toy or just an art object.

As a tool of communication, the puppet and indeed the mask emerge only in a performance situation, of dramatic or religious nature, where they are objects/signs to be interpreted simultaneously by an actor and an audience. It is this mimetic action, the central core of drama, which involves performance objects in actions and interactions of human beings. And which, for human beings, forms historic and generic perspectives for a basic understanding of the complementary association of puppetry and drama. While the scope and breadth of this relationship cannot be encompassed in one research, let us carry on highlighting distinct layers of the past which are interwoven with the concerns and development of contemporary drama and puppetry.

2.6.11 The puppeteer as an icon image

It is evident that puppets have always re-enacted stories depicted from the cultural environment of the performer/puppeteer. Much before there was a distinct genre known as dramatic text and performance, the puppeteer/shaman presented his mediation between the supernatural powers and his community, the puppeteer/narrator illustrated myths about creation, ancestors and cosmic forces, and the puppeteer/actor entertained audiences with down to earth human affairs. In all his roles through history, the puppeteer appears mainly as a medium presenting characters and stories of his characters, but he does not usually become a character in the story he is presenting. A puppeteer tries to keep a privileged distance from which to control events and characters. However, when he chooses to take part in the story, it is usually of his very role: the puppeteer. Hence the puppeteer's icon image as the story teller using visual aids remains historically and universally a predominant one. However, reading Martin Esslin's analogy concerning the difference between the narrative and dramatic mode, casts some light on the development of the role of the puppeteer/narrator over the ages. He says that:

the narrative when read is perceived as lying in the past, the dramatic, as Goethe and Schiller pointed out in their classic discussion of the matter, creates an eternal present: in this case a narrator present in the room telling his story here and now becomes - re-enacts himself as - a character.(163)

Viewed in perspective, the historical narrator/puppeteer figure has evolved over the years as a character re-enacting the dramatic role of the narrator/puppeteer presenting ancestor images, stories, songs, etc. much before drama proper seems to have originated and developed in ancient Greece. Thus puppetry was already within the boundaries of the dramatic even when the concept of drama was still in the early process of formation.

Indeed, as performing skills and arts developed much before dramatic art was established, drama, today, is present in practically all the performing arts and media. Esslin examines the boundaries of the field of drama and whether opera, ballet, puppet theatre, etc. are drama. He is convinced that all these are essentially drama, although he regards drama as "unique among the representational arts in that it represents 'reality' by using real human beings and often also real objects, to create its fictional universe".(164) A live actor

appearing on stage is first himself, then the transformed or disguised character, and thirdly the fiction itself.(165) A puppet playing the same character is the fictional representation of a fictional character, and it is an actor. For:

even the marionettes of the puppet or shadow theatre, the moving drawings or model figures of animated films, are actors, iconic signs that stand for people or humanised animals and they have, of course, also the voices of human actors.(166)

Furthermore, Esslin believes that the "actor himself is an icon - a human being acting as a sign for a human being".(167) It is of interest to add here that to Jurkowski even the puppet itself is an iconic sign of a character, it is designed to be so, and with the addition of the puppeteer's animation and words the puppet is a living scenic character.(168)

This brings us back to the acknowledged close relationship between drama and masks. In the process of forming their dramatic theory and literature, the ancient Greeks realised the fact that the actor is himself an icon image of the character, and that the complete mask has the potential to surpass human beings in theatricality. Obratzsov explains that "on the stage a man may portray another man but he cannot portray man in general because he is himself a man".(169) The complete mask/puppet on the other hand is a plastic and dynamic generalisation of a living being and in this sense it is seen as an allegory of man.(170)

It follows that an actor, whether live and masked, a puppet or a performing object, is recognised in performance as an iconic sign which stands for, but is not itself, the character, idea or mental state. This distance between the sign/character and the actual actor allows the audience to feel comfortable observing the character. In the particular case of the human actor, the audience willingly suspends its disbelief that the actor is not in reality the character but actually a theatrical abstraction in service of drama. The more the actor is aware of the distance between himself and the character/icon, the more flexible and objective is his projection of the character. This distance depersonalises the actor and helps the audience respond to the iconic image rather objectively.

In addition to the iconic sign feature of an actor which helps in keeping a distance for objective observation, there is the element of stylisation which could remarkably serve the same purpose. However, examining the natural potentials

of actors, it is reasonable to note that "the puppet has an indisputable advantage over all other actors: its innate and unlimited possibilities for stylization."(171) Pani advocates the importance of stylisation in the theatre. She claims that stylisation too brings about an atmosphere of freedom to observe a character objectively through a sort of aesthetic barrier between the actor and the audience.(172) It is this aspect, alienation, which renders a dramatic experience more theatrical.

Stylisation in the theatre is achieved by the use of different devices. Ancient Eastern as well as Western civilisations were aware of the need to minimise man's feeling of vulnerability. Partial or complete masking is the most common form used by people of various dramatic traditions to establish some sort of aesthetic barrier between actors and audiences. As civilisation progressed towards the age of industry and realism, the Western theatre discredited man's fears and the images associated with them. The rational approach sought to remove all the aesthetic barriers used by the actor, with the result that instead of distancing just the actor, the whole dramatic event needed to become distanced from the audience. Hence, the concept of the "fourth wall" evolved and the theatre house confined the actor to a stage which uses various technologies as a mask. In fact the process of unmasking the actor led to the masking of the dramatic performance because the need to depersonalise the characters and the dramatic event is central to the theatre experience.

2.6.12 Phases of development

Puppetry, like human theatre, evolved through various phases during its life. Charles Magnin elaborates on this point and takes it even further by claiming that in the history of the *comédien de bois* we encounter identical phases in development to that of veritable drama.

C'est qu'en effet l'humble domaine des marionnettes est comme une sorte de microcosme théâtral, dans lequel se concentre et se reflète en raccourci l'histoire due drame entier, et où l'oeil de la critique peut embrasser, avec une netteté parfaite, l'ensemble des lois qui règlent la marche du génie dramatique universel.(173)

The puppet, like the human actor, was initiated in the service of rituals of all kinds and communicated religious and social messages; they both shared platforms and overlapped in functions. With the human actor in the West moving

to theatre houses, and with the dramatic text gaining dominance over other performance elements, the puppet was isolated from the human actor. This corresponded with the church chasing out the puppeteers for associating with magic, and making sure they remained mute.(174) Henceforth, the visual or plastic element became the dominant feature of the puppets. When the puppets started to speak again, it was through interpreters who described the action of the puppets and disguised their voices in order to distinguish them from human actors.(175) The gap between the human actor and the puppet actor was getting wider till gradually puppets started to parody the theatre of live actors.(176) Whenever social or political problems arose, the puppets were employed to perform instead of live actors.(177) As a result, live actors accepted to share once again the platform with puppets, either side by side or by performing interludes when the main play was performed by puppets.(178) Eventually, human actors took over the stage completely while puppets continued on the side to adapt the repertoire of the live theatre along with the repertoire of oral and non-literary traditions.

In reviewing the history of live and puppet actors in the West, Jurkowski notes that over the centuries, puppets have related to diverse sign systems:

This was proved by the use of puppets in antiquity and the Middle Ages: in live theatre, the puppet was a copy of an actor; in jugglers' presentations, a copy of human beings; in the storytellers' system, an illustration; and in the embryonic puppet theatre, a real theatrical puppet.(179)

In each of the systems the puppets performed, they carried forward with them the signs they have developed. The richness of the signs we recognise today is the accumulation of ages of interplay with the different arts of communication. We know that in ancient times puppet shows were mostly improvised and were probably recorded only when a puppeteer memorised his actual performance and wanted to make sure he could repeat it perfectly.(180) Western dramatic texts which appear to have been written especially for puppets go back only to the 17th Century.(181) However, adaptations from existing dramatic texts written for human actors, constituted the majority of the puppet productions.(182) For this reason, Jurkowski claims that the rapport between puppets and texts evolved through three major phases: mime/mute, followed by narration, and last came the dramatic text phase.(183) The 17th Century references to puppet shows reflect well the phase in which narration constituted an important element, as is

documented in Cervante's and Ben Jonson's texts. Both examples of puppet shows have an interpreter in direct contact with both the spectators and the puppets; introducing the characters, describing the action, and reciting the dialogue.

Theatre artists in the early 20th Century were fascinated with the earliest sign system of puppets and used it to communicate the last phase, drama. The theatricality of the puppet is what attracted the 'theatre theorists' - Gordon Craig and von Kleist as well as the Bauhaus movement:

The disintegration of classical dramatic structure accelerated the puppet theatres' withdrawal from the position of substitute for the actors' theatre and encouraged a return to its natural function as a vehicle of visual art.(184)

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER 2

- (1) David Currell in *The Complete Book of Puppet Theatre*, (1974; rpt. London: A & C Black, 1985), p.1, points to some of these skills. "The puppeteer is an artist, a unique combination of sculptor, modeller, painter, needleworker, electrician, carpenter, actor, writer, producer, designer and inventor, who in the course of preparing a show calls upon a host of diverse skills."

In addition, René Simmen in *The World of Puppets* (London: Phaidon Press Ltd, 1975), p.104, describes the *dalang*, puppeteer, in Malaysia as "a complete artist: he has to excel in a great number of things. He must know all his figures (from one hundred to one hundred and fifty), their nature and symbolic importance, and be able to guide them enough through the prescribed movements (graceful, careless, rude) in the proper sequence. He has to be able to repeat the many texts word by word and have such vocal capability as to give each of the figures its proper tone, and at times create the illusion of conversations. He has to compose and sing songs, as well as direct the orchestra that accompanies him. Besides all this, he is a poet, and to satisfy the public taste, has to improvise entire interludes, which range from common jokes to philosophical conversations; in his recital he shares new wisdom and comments on every day happenings."

- (2) Richard Pischel, *The Home of the Puppet Play*, Trans. Mildred Tawney (London: Luzac & Co, 1902), p.5.
- (3) Pischel, p.9. Other scholars also deduce from ancient texts by the Sanskrit grammarians Panini (fourth century B.C.) and Patanjali (second century B.C.) that the term *Sutradhar* refers to a puppeteer". *Asian Puppets: Wall of the World*, Ed. Mel Helstien. (Los Angeles: University of California, 1976), p.11.
- (4) Jiwan Pani, *Living Dolls: Story of Indian Puppets*, (Calcutta: Publication Division - Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, 1986), pp.3-4.
- (5) Sergei Obraztsov, *The Chinese Puppet Theatre*, Trans. J T MacDermott (London: Faber & Faber, 1961), pp.28-30.
- (6) *Performing Arts, A Guide to Practice & Appreciation*, Ed. Michael Billington (1980; rpt. London: New Burlington Books, 1988), pp.158-159. The editor goes on to confirm that there is "an Indian phrase for a stage producer, '*Sutra Dhan*', which literally means the 'puller of strings'. So the puppets came first", p.159.
- (7) William Ridgeway, *Dramas and Dramatic Dances of Non European Races*, (London: Cambridge University. Press, 1915), p.164.
- (8) Ridgeway, p.159.
- (9) George Speaight, *The History of the English Puppet Theatre*, 2nd ed., (1955; rpt. London: Robert Hale, 1990), p.1.
- (10) Donald Keene wrote introducing Barbara C Adachi's *Backstage at Bunraku*, (New York: Weatherhill, 1985), p.vii, "Histories of theatre in

Europe and America are generally written with hardly a mention of the art of puppetry".

- (11) Michael Malkin, *Traditional & Folk Puppets of the World*, (USA: Barnes & Co Inc., 1977), p.11.
- (12) Amongst authors who use this reference: Pischel, Pani and E A Dagan, *Emotions in Motion: Theatrical Puppets and Masks from Black Africa*, (Canada: Galerie Amrad, 1990).
- (13) Speaight, p.12.
- (14) During this occasion, Socrates questioned a Syracusan showman on the source of his pride, to which the showman replied: "Fools, in faith. For they give me a livelihood by coming to view my puppets", Speaight, p.25.
- (15) Speaight, p.25.
- (16) Speaight, p.26, also on, p.345, the author brings our attention to Dr Hans Purchke's claims that "the 'string pulled' puppets (*neurospasta*) were not marionettes but mechanical figures activated by strings leading downwards into a box, on which the figures stood, and from there, through holes in the side of the box, to the fingers of the manipulator. Shows of this kind are known from much later Chinese and Egyptian engravings."
- (17) Yorick, "A History of Puppets: Ancient Puppets in the Temple", *The Mask*, Ed. E G Craig, Vol.5, No 2, Oct 1912, (New York: Benjamin Blom Inc., 1967), pp.131-132. Plato addresses his disciples, saying:

Let us imagine, my friends, that we are each one of us, an animated figure, that has issued from the office of the Gods... The passions that move us are like so many strings, drawing us this or that way; opposite motions draw us in opposite directions. Thus we have the difference between vice and virtue. Good sense teaches us that we must obey only one of these strings, following its impulse with meekness and pertinaciously rejecting all the others. That one string is the golden cord of reason and of law, the others are of iron and are inflexible. That one alone lends itself to all motions because it is of gold; that one alone has a constant form, while the others assume all configurations. All the strings should be submissive to that single one of law, because reason, excellent in itself would be weak if the law did not strengthen the composition of the thread of gold, which is destined to govern all the others.

- (18) Speaight, p.24.
- (19) Helen Haiman Joseph, *A Book of Marionettes*, Rev.2nd ed. (1922; rpt. London: George Allan & Unwin Ltd, 1931), pp.16-17.
- (20) The Herodotus records are referred to by Yorick, von Boehn, Speaight, Joseph and Ridgeway amongst others.
- (21) Speaight, p.24.

- (22) Obrastsov, pp.16-19 and 25-26. On this subject, the author refers to *The Book of Music* by Chen Yuan of the Sung Dynasty (A.D. 960-1279) who in turn refers to a legend about a puppet master, Yang Shih, who lived during the 10th century before Christ.
- (23) Obrastsov, p.17.
- (24) Donald Keene, *Bunraku: The Art of the Japanese Puppet Theatre*, (Palo Alto: Kondasha International Press, 1965), p.19. Also on the same subject see Berthold Lanfer, *Oriental Theatricals*, (Chicago: Field Museum of National History, 1923), pp.38-39.
- (25) Speaight, pp.26-27.
- (26) Obrastsov, p.16.
- (27) Obrastsov, p.23.
- (28) Roberta Helmer Stalberg, *China's Puppets*, (San Francisco: China Books, 1984), p.17.
- (29) Stalberg, p.18.
- (30) Helstein, p.11. The same reference is cited by René Simmen, *The World of Puppets*, (1972; rpt. London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1975), p.80.
- (31) There is a reference to a shadow play in the Tamil epic *Silapadikaram* which is believed to have been written between second century B.C. and first century A.D. Pischel and Luders are of the opinion that the famous Sanskrit drama *Mahanataka* was originally written as a play for shadow theatre, Pani, p.30.
- (32) Reference to this legend is made by authors such as: Simmen, p.79; Pani, p.30; Helstein, p.101; Malkin, p.100; Stalberg, p.86.
- (33) Stalberg, p.18.
- (34) Stalberg, p.86, and Helstein, p.101.
- (35) Jacques Pimpaneau, "Théâtre d'Orient: Le Théâtre d'Ombre en Chine", *Bouffonneries*, No.12 Also see Liu Jilin, *Chinese Shadow Puppetry*, (Beijing: Morning Glory Publishers, 1988).
- (36) *Marionnettes et Ombre d'Asie*, Ed. Nathalie Narisckine, (Paris: Le Louvre des Antiquaires, 1985), p.18. Also see Fu Qifeng, *Chinese Acrobatics Through The Ages*, (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1985), pp.18-19.
- (37) Obrastsov, p.27.
- (38) Helstein, p.143; Malkin, p.136.
- (39) Among other authors, J. Tilakasiri, *The Puppet Theatre of Asia*, (Cylon: Dpt of Cultural Affairs, 1969), pp.14-15 and Pischel, p.12 expands on this point.
- (40) Both Pischel and Tilakasiri, p.14, elaborate on this point.

- (41) For different versions of these legends, see Tilakasiri, Obratzsov, Joseph, Malkin, Stalberg, Jilin, Helstein, Pischel, Simmen, and Malutama Duma-Ngo, "The Religious Origins of Animated Objects and Puppets in Black Africa", *Unima Informations, Special: L'Afrique Noire En Marionnettes*, (Charleville-Mezieres, 1988).
- (42) Steven Lonsdale, in his book *Animals and the Origin of Dance*, (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1982), p.117, clarifies that "the inexplicable phenomenon of death arouses responses that are far from rational. Irrational attitudes are heightened by two main things: loss of the loved one, and fear that the disembodied spirit will return. Fear of the rotting corpse and its spirit is virtually universal. Until the corpse is properly disposed of, the vagabond spirit runs wild, confused and lost; or worse, it may return to wreak vengeance on the living, like an appeased spirit of the hunted game. To avoid these disastrous consequences, the soul must be captured or driven away and directed towards the land of the dead, as distinct from the land of the living."
- (43) Max von Boehn, *Dolls and Puppets*, Trans. Josephine Nicole, (1932; rpt. New York: Dover Publications Inc, 1972), p.38.
- (44) Von Boehn, p.39.
- (45) Von Boehn, p.39.
- (46) Von Boehn, p.42.
- (47) Von Boehn, p.80.
- (48) Von Boehn, pp.42-43.
- (49) Jacek Jan Pawlik, "Performance of life after death, the *Unil*, object-actor of the funeral ceremony", *Unima Informations, Special: L'Afrique Noire en Marionnettes*, pp.16-23.
- (50) Pawlik, p.24.
- (51) Jill Kamil, *The Ancient Egyptians: A Popular Introduction to Life in the Pyramid Age*, (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1976), p.129.
- (52) Von Boehn cites examples from Assyria, pre-historic Germany, Greece, Peru, Egypt, Congo, etc., pp.76-79.
- (53) See Helstein, p.110; Stalberg, pp.17-18; and Max von Boehn, pp.76-78.
- (54) Lea Baten, *The Image and the Motif: Japanese Dolls* (Tokyo: Shufunotomo Co Ltd, 1986), p.15, also pp.28-29.
- (55) Ronald Harwood, *All the World A Stage*, (London: Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd., 1984), pp.16-18.
- (56) James R Brandon, *Theatre in South East Asia* (USA: Harvard University Press, 1967), pp.10-11.
- (57) Malutama Duma-Ngo, pp.12-13.

- (58) Simmen, p.80.
- (59) Helstein, p.1.
- (60) An old Indian poem, *Srimad Bhagavata*, associates God with "a puppeteer who with three strings - Sattva, Rajas and Tamas - manipulates all the beings in the created universe", Pani, p.4.
- (61) Helstein, p.48.
- (62) Helstein, p.11.
- (63) Helstein, pp.8-11.
- (64) When the immortal mother of Achilles, visits the workshop of Vulcan, the Cripple, to fetch the armour of her son:
- She found him in a sweat
 About his bellows, and in haste had twenty tripods beat
 To set for stools about the sides of his well builded hall,
 To whose feet little wheels of gold he put, to go withal,
 And enter his rich dining-room, alone, their motion free,
 And back again go out alone, miraculous to see.
- Yorick, p.111. Also see Mary Hillier, *Automata and Mechanical Toys*, (London: Bloomsbury Books, 1988), p.13.
- (65) Yorick, p.112.
- (66) Yorick, p.112.
- (67) Hillier, pp.12-13. Also see von Boehn, p.255.
- (68) Joseph, p.18.
- (69) Both Joseph (p.23 and pp.82-83) and von Boehn (p.245) advance the use of the doll/puppet in the production of the mystery plays on the medieval stage.
- (70) Recently, an English newspaper printed the story of a weeping icon in New York. The story entitled *Tearful Tale* relates that:
- Thousands of people are flocking to a Greek Orthodox Church to view an icon that reportedly began shedding tears last month after a special prayer session for peace in the Middle East. The icon has drawn 100,000 viewers to the St Irene Chrysovalantou Cathedral, in the Greek neighbourhood of Astoria in New York. The Church's Bishop Vikentios of Avlon says he believes the icon of St Irene - whose name means "peace" in Greek - is weeping for the Gulf.
- The Independent*, 16 November 1990, p.12, Col.7.
- (71) Pani, p.4. A similar example is found in Africa where in different regions the puppet is called "*mone mot* - little man - which may be translated by 'son of man' also, implying thus a double physiological and manipulatory aspect. The puppet is creation, a son in the hands of man." Meyong Bekate, "A Glimpse of the Puppet in Central Africa", *Unima Informations, Special: L'Afrique Noire en Marionnettes*, p.43. Further, the African puppet

is also called *eve'ela' a mot* meaning the image of man, Also on this subject see Tilakasiri, p.1, and von Boehn, p.203.

- (72) Baten informs us that, "the same characters in their earliest interpretation read *hitogata* or divine shape.", pp.10-11. Dolls theatre or *ningyo-shibai* rivalled the famous Kabuki, and a specific type called *ningyo-jururi* developed to what is known today as Bunraku - in which puppets are manipulated by three visible operators, Baten, pp.130-131.
- (73) The story tells of a bridal procession, during which twelve virgins were raped and later avenged by Venetian youth. Henceforth the event was to be celebrated annually with elaborately dressed figurines, marionetti or little Maries, Joseph, p.55.
- (74) Paul McPharlin, *The Puppet Theatre in America*, (1949; rpt. Boston: Plays Inc. 1969), p.5. It was known in the 14th century and was used by Chaucer once as *popet* for puppet, another *popelote* for pretty little thing, Speaight, p.52.
- (75) Von Boehn, p.108.
- (76) Longmans Concise Dictionary, (1982; rpt. Great Britain: Miriam Webster Inc., and Longman Ltd, 1985).
- (77) Lane, in his *Arabic-English Lexicons* explains the usage of the word *dumya* as follows: an image or effigy, of ivory, marble or the like, "variegated, decorated, embellished, or coloured, in which is redness like blood".... and "any beautiful female is likened thereto, because adorned". It is also said to be so called "because of the shedding of blood at the place thereof for the purpose of propitiation"...And *la wa al-duma* is an oath of the Pagan Arabs, meaning No, by the idols or, as some relate, it is *la wa al-dima'*, meaning No, by the blood of what is sacrificed upon the stones set up to be worshipped". Therefore *dumya* was used to mean idols, Edward W Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, (London: William Norgate, 1874), p.917.
- (78) *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, Ed. J Botterweek and H Ringress (Michigan: W Eerdmans, 1975), pp.234-235.
- (79) Al-Zubaydi, *Taj al-'Arus*, (The Bride's Tiara), Vol.10. (Beirut: Dar-Sader, 1966), p.131.
- (80) Lane, p.70. George Speaight, p.280, spells out that the nearest description of a marionette he has encountered "is a reference linking a man who fails to respond to a woman's lovemaking to 'dead motions moving upon wires' in Beaumont and Fletcher, *The Woman Hater* (c. 1606), Act III, Scene I".
- (81) Lea Baten wrote an unusual comment about the link between image and immortality: "The image is the symbol of a reality and its role is to remind us what it stands for: religious, concrete or spiritual, it permits a passage, a communication between this world, the human, and a higher dimension, the divine. Human, it is a link between the world of the past and the present moment. It is a condensed memory of all that has existed during the ascent of man. Remembrance is the only immortality we know and can pass on to others", p.13.

- (82) Stalberg, pp.47-48.
- (83) Stalberg, p.47.
- (84) Harwood points to the example of the goat dance where men dance disguised as goats. This ritual has been practised on the Greek island of Skyros since B.C. to celebrate the coming of spring. Through these animal images, men "identify with a life force broader than the human animal alone", p.18.
- (85) Nigel Barley, *Forehead of the Dead: An Anthropological View of Kalabari Ancestral Screens*, (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988), p.21 and p.15.
- (86) Von Boehn, pp.37-38. Also on this subject see Michael Roaf, *Cultural Atlas of Mesopotamia and the Ancient Near East*, (Oxford: Facts on File, 1990), p.33, where he suggests that the dead ancestors "probably exercised a powerful influence over their descendants and had to be pacified by prayer and sacrifice".
- (87) Roaf, p.32. It was the practice to remove the cranium of the deceased ancestor after the flesh had decomposed, leaving the lower jaw along with the rest of the skeleton.
- (88) To understand better this fascination with the subject of spirits, it is helpful to look at some primitive African societies who to date make and handle ancestor images for different purposes. In *Marie Claire* magazine, Oct 91, pp.10-18, an article on voodoo in Togo, West Africa offers a visual example of a Togalise woman who carries a wooden image of her dead twin sister in her dress (between her breasts) (see fig 6). She feeds and waters the wooden doll regularly as she believes it houses the spirit of her sister. Many West African tribes have a strong established voodoo tradition whereby animal skulls and dolls are used for magical purposes and are on sale at Fetish Markets.
- (89) Dagan's, *Emotions in Motion* is full of visual examples on how a mask or piece of sculpture can be handled as a puppet. See also Ladislav Segy, *Masks of Black Africa*, (New York: Dover Books, 1976).
- (90) E. Schwimmer, "Religious Culture", *People in Culture*, Ed. I.Rossi, (New York: Bergin & Gravey, 1980), p.513.
- (91) Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory*, (1977; rpt. New York: Routledge, 1988), p.285.
- (92) Schechner, p.215.
- (93) Harwood, p.18.
- (94) Harwood, p.17.
- (95) *Longman Concise English Dictionary*.
- (96) Lonsdale highlights the relation of the word dance in different languages like French - *danse*; German - *tanz*; Danish - *dands*, and "to the sanskrit *tan*, which means 'stretching', and to the greek *tenion* ('to stretch') and Latin *tenco*", p.8. Also see Lincoln Kirstein, *Dance: A Short History of*

Classical Theatrical Dance, (1935; rpt. Princeton: Princeton Book Company, 1987), p.1. In addition, Kirstein reveals the background of the word dance with reference to the ancient Egyptians. "What is often translated from hieroglyphs by the word 'dancing' would perhaps read more accurately if understood as meaning 'bearing' or 'posture'. There is, for example, an inscription preserved detailing how a newly appointed minister of state should, on his reception greet the King: He should enter the Audience Chamber dancing, so that from his gestures, poses and mimicry could be seen devotion, loyalty, grace, tenderness and energy". p.12.

- (97) The tradition of dancing with animal masks is still alive in many parts of the world and especially in Africa. A great number of the masks are of animals and birds and are used in ritual dance. Dagan and Segy provide plenty of visual examples on the subject.
- (98) Lonsdale, p.11.
- (99) In his book *UR-Drama: The Origins of Theatre*, (New York: New York University Press, 1975), E.T. Kirby identifies the shaman as a 'master of spirits', and adds that shamanism is identical with spirit mediumship. Primitive peoples, worldwide, have practised shamanism and it still exists today as a function of developed religion. Kirby believes further that shamanism is "the antecedent of established theatre forms", pp.1-2.
- (100) See Fu Qifeng, *Chinese Acrobatics Through the Ages*, Trans. O. Caiwei and R. Stockwell, (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1985)
- (101) Kirstein, p.8. In addition, professional mourners acted the roles of the sisters Isis and Nephthys and the rest of the holy hierarchy while the corpse was addressed as Osiris during the ceremony. Furthermore, in China, until around 220 A.D., moveable wooden mortuary figures were made to perform song and dance as if the deceased were summoned back from death by the skills of the shaman, Roberta Helmer Stalberg, *China's Puppets*, (San Francisco: China Books, 1984), p.5. Closely related to this tradition, we know of many tribes who still honour their dead with a last dance. For instance, in Nigeria, "the Yoruba fashion striking likeness of the dead man's head out of wood, and a relative wearing this portrait mask animates a last time the character of the deceased for the survivors," Lonsdale, p.115. Also see Segy p.243, and Margaret Thompson Drewal, *Yoruba Ritual: Performers, Play, Agency*, (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1992), pp.41-52. Another example comes from the Batak of Sumatra who use a puppet to represent their departed in the last dance, Lonsdale, p.115. In this situation, the dancer and the puppet representing the deceased do not unite either in body or in spirit. Visible medium ship is an acceptable and practicable solution in rituals of this kind. In the Yoruba example however, we notice that, like the hunter and his prey, the live dancer's spirit and body unite with the spirit and mask of the deceased person for as long as the dance lasts. Dances and movements which lead into a trance are very telling about the adventures of spirits and mediums.
- (102) Fu Qifeng, p.1.
- (103) Kirstein, p.12.
- (104) Kirstein, p.15.

- (105) Stalberg, p.20.
- (106) Qifeng, p.13-28. The lion dance for example was originally a sacrificial rite which became part of the acrobatic scenes. The masquerade lion continues today to demonstrate acrobatic skills, shaking its head and wagging its ears while teased by performers in festivals, dramas and operas. Other animals like dragons and birds are used in performances drawn from ancient Chinese mythological stories.
- (107) Qifeng, p.36-38.
- (108) Qifeng, p.69.
- (109) Qifeng, p.74.
- (110) Qifeng, p.70.
- (111) Qifeng, p.10.
- (112) Dagan, p.10
- (113) Dagan, p.56.
- (114) Dagan, p.56.
- (115) Dagan, p.12.
- (116) Dagan, p.64. Whether a puppeteer/dancer/actor is performing in a double or in a single space and time, the creator and created are expected to "become fused in the process". Stalberg tells us that in China students of this performing art are "taught to move with the same defined gait and precise stance as their puppets," in order to achieve certain unity during performance, Stalberg, p.44.
- (117) Helstien, p.80. Also see Dhaninvat Bridhya Korn, *The Nang*, (Bangkok: The National Cultural Institute, 1954) which refers to the mask-like lack of expression in the dancers' faces, and their poses in which they try to imitate the carved leather puppets and their movement in two dimensional directions, p.16.
- (118) Laurence R Kominz, "Puppet language, Human body", *The Language of the Puppet*, Ed. Laurence Kominz and Mark Levenson. (Washington: Pacific Puppetry Center Press, 1990), pp.63-64, and p.132. Kominz observes that this tradition is also depicted in Western ballets like *Coppelia*, *Petruschka* and the *Nutcracker* where dancers mimic puppets who magically come to life. This phenomenon is also common in African societies where masks and puppets do not only coexist and keep blurred boundaries, but are also designed, executed and eventually maintained by one and the same carver.
- (119) On the notion of "loss of self" see Harwood, p.18, 20, and 49; also Lonsdale, p.12.
- (120) Lonsdale, p.12
- (121) Dagan, p.64.

- (122) Mary M. Smyth explains that, "the word 'kinesthesia' was coined to refer to the sense of movement (*kinein* = to move, *aesthesia* = perception) of one's own body, which is derived from movement information provided by receptors in joints, muscles, tendons and skin. In this context it means 'sense of one's own movement', and the receptors which provide the information can be indicated. The orthodox five senses of seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting also relate to particular kinds of receptors, Mary M. Smyth, "Kinesthetic Communication in Dance", *Dance Research Journal*, No.16/2 (Fall, 1984), p.19.
- (123) Smyth, p.19.
- (124) Harwood, p.16, quotes Peter Brook on this subject.
- (125) Kate Elderkin, "Jointed Dolls in Antiquity", *American Journal of Archeology*, (Oct. 1930), pp.456-457. Contrary to the Egyptian articulated dolls, both the arms and the legs of some Greek dolls are moveable. The legs are jointed usually above or under the knees. This detail is definitely dictated by the Greek tunic dress typical of the age, p. 138.
- (126) Elderkin, p.472.
- (127) "Little jointed figures of sun-baked clay, some of them with loops on the head to suspend them by, have been dug up in Greece and Italy; if they were puppets they were only children's toys. The ancient Egyptian string operated figures which have come to light from tombs were probably models of workmen." McPharlin, p.2.
- (128) Speaight, p.23. Magnin refers to the antique mobile statues found in the temples of Egypt, Greece and Italy as ancestors of the puppets which eventually performed stories from the Bible in medieval churches, Charles Magnin, *Histoire de Marionette en Europe: Depuis l'Antiquite jusqu'a nos jour*, (1862; rpt. Paris: Slatkine, 1990), p.52. Yorick adds his voice for this argument as he asserts that the marionettes originated in the ancient Egyptian great idols which "moved their hands and opened their mouths, inspiring worshipful terror in the hearts of the beholders", Joseph, p.16.
- (129) *Karakuri Nyngyo*, Exhibition Catalogue (London: Barbican Art Gallery, 1985), p.11. *Shinen-sha* is the Chinese name of this south-pointing compass which functioned by means of shifting gears. This model or mechanical compass was always used by Chinese emperors who had to face south all the time.
- (130) *Karakuri Nyngyo*, pp.6-9.
- (131) Gunter Bohmer, *Puppets*, Trans. Gerald Morice (London: Macdonald, 1969), p.40. Hillier points to the achievements of Hero of Alexandria who lived in the 2nd Century B.C., "in an actual treatise on Automata Hero described a mechanical theatre and explained that it was a small size to anticipate the suggestion that a man was hidden inside!" Mary Hillier, *Automata and Mechanical Toys*, (1976; rpt. London: Bloomsbury Books, 1988), p.14.
- (132) Hillier, p.14 and 15. Also Donald Hill, "Mechanical Technology", *The Genius of Arab Civilization: Source of Renaissance*, Ed J.R. Hayes, 2nd

- ed. (London: Eurabia, 1983), pp.205-207, and Philip Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 10th ed. (1937; rpt. London: MacMillan, 1970), p.298.
- (133) René Simmen, *The World of Puppets*, (1972; rpt. London: Elsevir. Phaidon, 1976), p.4.
- (134) Joseph, p.23.
- (135) In opposition to the advances in technical knowledge during the Middle Ages, Frazer brings to light an interesting example of a rather grotesque quality, "the religious fervour of the Middle Ages, which led to these charming cribs, may be contrasted favourably with the crude sense of humour expressed in the comic figures fashioned in Nuremburg. These were built to contain live birds inside them whose panic gave life to the figures in a series of jerky movements," Antonia Frazer, *A History of Toys*, (1966; rpt. London: Spring Books, 1972), p.71.
- (136) Speaight, p.55.
- (137) Speaight, pp.56-58. Shakespeare's words in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Act II, Scene I, document best the state of affairs then: "O excellent motion! O exceeding puppet! Now will he interpret to her".
- (138) Bohmer describes the *Theatrum Mundi* show as follows: "It consisted of a magnificently illuminated stage setting, populated by great quantities of figures of cardboard or tin, fixed on runners on which they could be propelled across the stage in one direction or another. By means of a system of wheels and the use of simple but ingenious machinery, the figures were made to move in a most life-like manner.", p.4. And he remarks that it was customary to end a popular marionette program with such an item until early this century.
- (139) "These were flat cardboard trick figures on strings, hinged and jointed, consisting of several sections, which could be instantly drawn up or let down so that in a flash they changed from one subject to another. The Metamorphoses often had the purpose, sometimes humorous but more generally moral, of unmasking dubious characters." Bohmer, p.41.
- (140) Bohmer, pp.49-56.
- (141) Currell, p.7.
- (142) Martin Esslin, *The Field of Drama. How the Signs of Drama Create Meanings on Stage and Screen*, (London: Methuen, 1987), p.36.
- (143) Esslin, p.24.
- (144) James Peacock touches on the simplicity and straightforwardness of the relationship as follows: "If a performance is an action which attempts to communicate meaning, then it is never purely 'form'. As I write (which is one kind of performance), I do not merely typewrite; if I did so, I could attend to form rather than meaning, as a typist could do in perfectly replicating a manuscript in a foreign language the typist does not understand. But as a would-be writer, I must struggle to ignite form with meaning which is writing as opposed to typewriting." James Peacock, "Ethnographic Notes on Sacred and Profane Performance", *By Means of Performance: Intercultural Studies of Theatre and Ritual*, Ed. Richard

- Schechner and Willa Appel, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.208.
- (145) John Bell, "Bread and Puppet Theatre and the Rediscovery of Performing Objects", *Bread and Puppet Museum*, (Glover: Bread and Puppet Theatre Press, 1989), p.12.
- (146) Bell, pp.12-13.
- (147) Jivan Pani, *World of Other Faces: Indian Masks*, (India: Publications Division Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1986), p.1.
- (148) Pani, *Living Dolls: Story of Indian Puppets*, p.1. Also, Speaight describes the puppet as the complete mask from which the human actor has withdrawn, p.11.
- (149) Malkin, p.12.
- (150) Obraztov, *The Chinese Theatre*, p.27. The Chinese term *Kuei Lei hsi*, used in old documents refers to either puppets or masked actors. Also *Xi* is another Chinese term which has also been used to embrace a variety of theatrical entertainments including plays, games, acrobatics and puppets. Martin Banham, Ed., *A Cambridge Guide to the World Theatre*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1988), pp.181-182.
- (151) This phenomenon is obvious in the Indian theatre tradition. For example in *Indian Theatre: Traditions of Performance*, Ed. F. Richmond, D. Swann & P. Zarrilli, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), pp.1-9, the editors explain that when dealing with Indian theatre, words like 'theatre' and 'performance' are used interchangeably because in all Indian performance traditions there is a synthesis of music, dance and drama, all in varying degrees. The intermingling of the arts makes it difficult to look at the Indian theatre with the Western categories in mind. For this reason, the editors follow categories of rather interlocking spheres of influence: the classical, the ritual, the devotional, the folk-popular, and the modern. In spite of the breadth of each of the categories, a particular genre could combine features from two or more spheres of influence. On this subject, see also J. Tilakasiri, "Dramaturgy and the Asian Puppet Theatre", *Present Trends in Research of the World Puppetry*, Ed. Marek Waszkiel (Warsaw: Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Science, 1992), pp.53-56.
- (152) David Napier quotes John Jones' argument, *On Aristotle and Greek Tragedy*, that Aristotle assumes masks to be a permanent feature of drama and any mature drama is bound to be masked. Napier also quotes F.B. Jevons "Masks and the Origin of Greek Drama" *Folk-lore*, proposing, "there was no acting without masks and there were no masks without acting". Napier, *Masks Transformation and Paradox*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p.9 & p.10.
- (153) Napier elaborates on the terms *prosopon* and *persona* saying "to suggest, however, that *prosopon* and 'mask' are entirely equatable would be inaccurate; *prosopon* is a much more complex term. *Prosopon* properly referred to a manifestation, a figure, such a primary meaning implies that masks were conceived of as belonging to a much broader class of phenomena than the mere object (mask) *prosopon* is usually taken to mean. The word *prosopon* could mean the mask, the dramatic part, the

person, and the face; likewise, *persona*, being not only (and some suggest even secondarily) a mask used by a player, could also refer to one who plays a part or to characters acted, e.g., as in *dramatic personae*.", p.8.

- (154) Harwood, p.49.
- (155) Harwood, p.49 & 59. Also, Banham, p.412.
- (156) One of the earliest theatre historians, Magnin, described ancient Greek actors as half wooden. "*Lorsqu'on se rappelle que les acteurs d'Eschyle, de Sophocle et d'Euripide étaient eux-mêmes à moitié de bois, montés sur des espèces d'échasses, ayant des avant-bras postiches et les mains agrandies par des rallonges, on est un peu moins surpris de voir des comédiens xylogènes si facilement acceptés en un lieu où l'on avait applaudi naguères tant et de si admirables chefs-d'oeuvre,*" p.32.
- (157) Speaight, p.113.
- (158) Speaight, p.112.
- (159) Speaight, p.26. The trend of using masks, puppets and performing objects in quite a similar approach to that of ancient Greeks and Romans can be traced in the visual style of the contemporary Bread and Puppet Theatre productions. The similarity between the ancient Greek and Roman live masked actor and a live masked actor from the Bread and Puppet Theatre to puppet/actors: "Would lie in the illusion produced that we were seeing the movement of these suggested bodies other than the performers', and would be strengthened by the sculpural quality of the masks (giving them perceptual independence from the performers' heads) and by the ceremonial and abstractly gestural quality of the movements (enhancing their perceptual independence from the movements of the performers)," Stefan Brecht, "The Puppet and the Mask. The Power of the Mask, the Dependency of the Puppet. Schumann's Theatre Alienates Masked Performance By the Form of Puppetry", *The Bread and Puppet Museum*, (Glover, Bread and Puppet Theatre Press, 1989), p.16.
- (160) Brecht, p. 17.
- (161) Dagan, p.2.
- (162) Dagan, p.62.
- (163) Esslin, p.25.
- (164) Esslin, p.29.
- (165) Esslin, p.58.
- (166) Esslin, p.59.
- (167) Esslin, p.61.
- (168) Henryk Jurkowski, *Aspects of Puppet Theatre*, (London: Puppet Centre Trust, 1988), p.41.
- (169) Sergei Obraztsov, "Some Considerations on the Puppet Theatre", *The Puppet Theatre of the Modern World*, p.19.

- (170) Obrastsov, p.19 & 20.
- (171) Stantscho Gerdjikov, "A New Art is Born", *The Puppet Theatre in the Modern World*, Ed. UNIMA & Margareta Niculescu, Trans. E. Osers & E. Stick, (London: George Harrap & Co., 1967), p.43.
- (172) Pani, *World of Other Faces: Indian Masks*, pp.3-5.
- (173) Magnin, p.9.
- (174) Jurkowski, *Aspects of Puppet Theatre*, p.73.
- (175) Jurkowski, p.73 and Dagan, p.62, and George Speaight "The Voice of the Puppet", *The Language of the Puppet*, (Washington: Pacific Puppetry Center Press, 1990), pp.43-45.
- (176) Jurkowski, *Aspects of Puppet Theatre*, pp.47 & 73.
- (177) Jurkowski, pp.72, 74 & 76.
- (178) Jurkowski, pp.71, 73 & 75.
- (179) Jurkowski, p.71.
- (180) Henryk Jurkowski, *Ecrivains et Marionnette: Quatre Siècle de Litterature Dramatique*, Trans. Max Blusztajn, (Charleville-Mezieres: Institute International de la Marionnette, 1991), p.3.
- (181) Jurkowski, pp.4 & 13. Cervante's *Don Quixote* and Ben Johnson's *Bartholomew Fair* both describe puppet shows which are included in the events of the novel.
- (182) Jurkowski, pp.4-8.
- (183) Jurkowski, p.4.
- (184) Jurkowski, *Aspects of Puppet Theatre*, p.49.

CHAPTER 3

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF IMAGES IN VISUAL AND VERBAL EXPRESSION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

3.1 Introduction

From this chapter onwards we will be directing our attention to the region of the Middle East. I would like to illustrate and at the same time move towards the position from which the argument of this thesis originates. In what follows we will be concerned with lending specific focus to selected problems in visual and verbal image representation. Aspects such as two dimensionality, abstraction, narration and repetition constitute the basic vocabulary around which Middle Eastern artistic expression has evolved. Comprehension of these aspects is indeed essential to any attempt at defining the theatrical performance dimension in the Arab culture.

Imagery is at the core of theatrical expression. Interpreting complementary literary and visual images is one of the central purposes of theatrical performance. Hence appreciating the nature of image craftsmanship in a culture facilitates studying the scope of its contextual application; in our case it is puppetry.

This chapter is devoted to surveying the nature and evolution of visual and verbal images in the Middle East. This exercise should give us insight into the emergence and development of the art of puppetry which will be covered in the next chapter. In taking this direction I want to stimulate an unconventional approach of dealing with the issue of theatre arts in the Middle East. In fact, if we can put aside our preconceptions about dramatic texts being a prerequisite to dramatic arts, then we shall have advanced a little in the process of the unlearning of present ideas about the absence of theatre art forms from the Arab, or other culture.

3.2 The origin of the peoples of the ancient Middle East

As will be directing our attention to the region of the Middle East, let us first describe briefly the geographical area of our investigation along with the people who have been inhabiting it. Then we will seek to form an overall picture of the

visual artistic expression most representative of the peoples of the Middle East. Over the past five thousand years characteristic features of the region's modes of visual expression have been emerging. When these features are underlined, we will be able to trace them in other types of artistic expression such as literature and music, all of which contribute to the performance arts. Earlier in Chapter 2 we have pursued a bird's eye view of the circumstances in which puppetry evolved in various ancient cultures. In what follows we will explore the background in which puppetry has been developing and functioning as a traditional creative expression representative of the Middle Eastern culture.

3.2.1 Geographical features

It does help to look at the map of the ancient Middle East to realise the size of the area we are concerned with [fig 1]. For our purpose, we will concentrate on the Arabian Peninsula extending northwards and forking to include the Fertile Crescent and the north eastern corner of Africa, Egypt. This large area comprises both desert and fertile land. The desert which constitutes the main body has numerous oases and is sparsely inhabited in comparison with the smaller fertile land which is heavily populated. Whereas in the Arabian Peninsula the fertile lands spread around the periphery of the island with the main deserts al-Nufud, al-Dahna' and al-Rab' al-Khali in the middle, in Egypt the fertile lands alongside the Nile river cut through the barren deserts starting in the south and continuing to the Mediterranean Sea in the north. Equally, the Tigris and Euphrates rivers leave the mountains of eastern Anatolia and flow southwards through the Mesopotamian plains and to the Gulf sea.

A few significant civilisations have developed in this region mainly in the vicinity of the fertile grounds: the Mesopotamian civilisation prospered around the fruitful plains watered by the Tigris and Euphrates rivers; the Pharaonic creative accomplishments progressed along the land of the river Nile; the Phoenician alphabetic enlightenment spread out to the trading centres and chief ports of the Mediterranean Sea; and the Arabian culture was nourished in al-Yaman, 'Arabia Felix', a fertile land in the south west corner of the Arabian peninsula, most probably the cradle and distribution centre of the Semitic race which inhabits the region till this very day.(1)

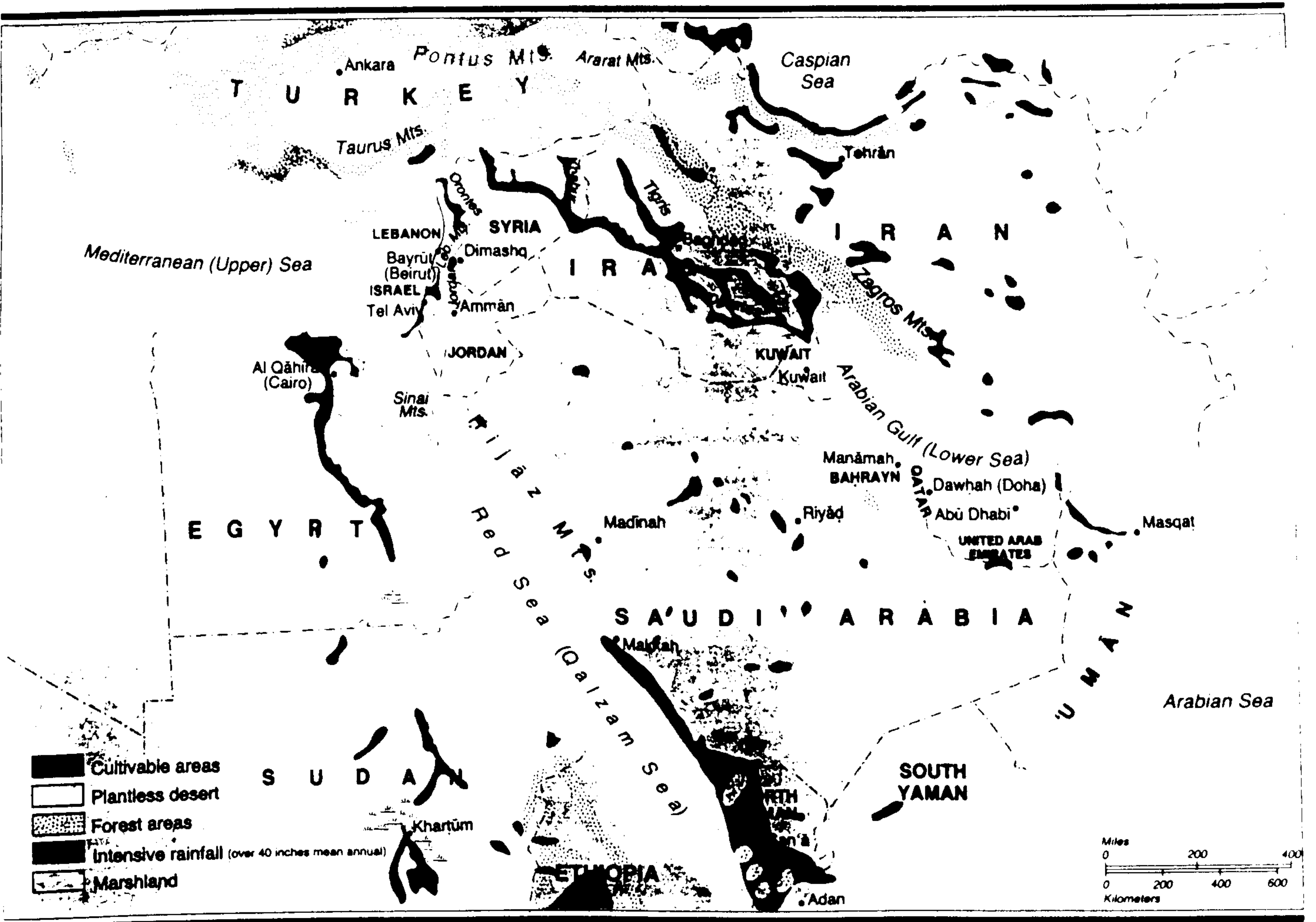


Fig 1. The Arabian theatre, physical features and modern states.

3.2.2 Population movement and its cultural consequence

Population movement within the above-described region played a very important role in the composition of the communities and hence the civilisations of the ancient Middle East. The Semitic family of the Arabian peninsula "are those people who later migrated into the Fertile Crescent and subsequently became the Babylonians, the Assyrians, the Phoenicians and the Hebrews of history".(2)

In the Arabian peninsula where most of the land is desert, overpopulation would naturally lead to migration towards greener lands which spread on the peripheries of the peninsula and in the northern end of it, the Fertile Crescent. The inhabitants of the desert were mainly shepherds. Moving to fertile ground meant they had to acquire the skills of farming amongst other things. However, these shepherds carried with them distinctive characteristics developed as a result of living in the scarcity enforced by the strict lifestyle of the desert.

The self-discipline required to keep one's instincts under ascetic control, the raising of generosity and hospitality to the rank of cardinal virtue, observance of the most cohesive group loyalty, preoccupation with precision in description and depth in self-analysis, the predilection of contemplation, for self-transport by appeal to the imagination through language - these and many more distinctive characteristics owe their intensive development in Arabia partly to the conditions of life the desert imposes.(3)

The linguistic map of the area in ancient history reflects many striking points of similarity. Hitti notes that in almost every region in which immigrants of Semitic origin settled, the Semitic tongue survived. For instance, in the case of Assyro-Babylonian, Hebrew, Aramaic, Arabic and Ethiopian tongues, it was found that "the verbal stem is triconsonantal; the tense has only two forms, perfect and imperfect, the conjugation of the verb follows the same model".(4) The ancient Egyptian language is the exception to the rule as the hieroglyphic inscriptions represent a "mixture of North African and Semitic elements, suggesting that it had developed from many strains before it was written down".(5) Language peculiarities along with comparable social institutions, religious beliefs and physical features, all point to the general unity of type of the peoples who inhabited this region.

It is significant for us to look at the demographic movement in ancient Arabia and to highlight the patterns of interpenetration among the inhabitants as it could

enlighten us about the civilisations they produced. In this context, it is important to notice that as a general rule migrations in ancient times took place within the peripheries of the region and not from or to the outside of the region except under the Phoenicians and later on a much wider scale under Islam.

A second important general rule is that migration waves always headed towards the direction of fertile land. In extreme cases where it was the other way round, from settled farming to desert nomadism, it followed that the migrants had to run away from a natural catastrophe or different ideologies, or particularly to seek the superior quality of life the desert offered.(6)

Among the early fruitful travellings of the Arabian nomads, around 3500 B.C., some tribes reached the valley of the Nile where they mixed with the native Hamitic population of Egypt, while other tribes reached the Tigo-Euphrates valley where they cohabited with the native Sumerians, hence bringing forth the Babylonians. About 2500 B.C., another wave of migrants brought about to the Fertile Crescent the Amorites, of whom the Canaanites and also the Phoenicians are component elements. Then around 1500 B.C. the Hebrews made their way to southern Syria and Palestine.(7)

3.2.3 The farmer shepherd culture

The Arabian migrants must have travelled lightly across the deserts, for they had no significant material culture, it was mainly the mental traits they carried to their new homes. And it is obvious that they have deeply influenced certain aspects of the cultures of the native peoples. The languages mentioned earlier are a good example, as is also the introduction of the concept of one God manifested by the three monotheistic religions. A case in point which illustrates the blending of the immigrants with the natives is brought to our attention by the al-Faruqis. The flow of humans from the desert into the farmland was responsible for a wide tradition of literature depicting relations between farmer and shepherd. The most famous account is the story of *Dumuzi* and *Enkimdu* which dates back to earliest Sumerian times and which comes to us as a love story of two Gods seeking the hand of the same goddess.(8) Goddess Innana at the beginning is not at all impressed by Dumuzi, the shepherd, and refuses him for the esteemed farmer Enkimdu. But Dumuzi and Enkimdu challenge one another by each listing his good qualities. As a result, Dumuzi's eloquence wins him Innana's heart and Enkimdu's friendship.

A fiction which depicts a parallel relationship between farmer and shepherd comes from Pharaonic Egypt. It is the same Osiris myth we have discussed in Chapter 1 and which underwent many changes with time. In one form it is believed that Osiris was probably a leader in the fertile land, the delta of lower Egypt. Osiris became associated with water and the annual death and rebirth of the land. His brother Seth, jealous of Osiris' legendary success, decides to trick him into a coffin, but when the coffin is found by Osiris' wife Isis, Seth cuts the corpse into fourteen pieces and scatters them throughout the land. Isis does not give up. She finds the pieces and reassembles them. Jill Kamil reasons that:

It is probable that the concept of Osiris falling victim to Seth was a comprehensible explanation of the fertile land (with which Osiris was associated) falling victim to the relentless desert (of which Seth was the chief deity). The mutilation of the body of Osiris, the corn God, and the scattering of parts up and down the Nile Valley, is believed to illustrate the concept of grain sowing, following which, with necessary incantations, or rural festivals, the stalks of corn would grow again.(9)

The major civilisations in the ancient Middle East were not isolated from the civilisations surrounding them. The Persians and the Anatolians as well as the Romans and the Greeks all tried to conquer Mesopotamia, the Arabian Peninsula and Egypt and sometimes they succeeded. Parts of Arabia were spared the humiliation thanks to the difficulty of crossing the desert. With the advent of Islam a major population movement took place in the direction of the Fertile Crescent, Egypt and beyond it to the north western coast of Africa, Persia, Anatolia and further into parts of Europe. This time some of the population movements took the form of military expeditions to spread the message of Islam.

3.3 The significance of visual images to the peoples of the ancient Middle East

In the light of the above, let us review the modes of visual expression our ancient Middle Eastern ancestors developed in order to communicate their thoughts and feelings about life and the universe. Along the great rivers of the Nile and the Tigris and Euphrates the earliest visual communication systems advanced concurrently through image representation and inscription.

3.3.1 From linear description to inscription

Inscription in its various forms is a prominent component of the visual expressions of the Middle East. Accompanying bands of scripts are found on

seals, reliefs, statues and paintings of the Sumerians, Babylonians, Assyrians and Egyptians of ancient history. Al-Faruqis explain that in these ancient civilisations the function of "calligraphic inclusions, was, however, primarily discursive. Writing was used as a logical accompaniment to explain the meaning of a visual representation."(10) Proceeding from scripted to represented visual image or vice versa is accepted as a matter of course, especially since it fits well within the style of visual expression where autonomous scenes run parallel on different registers and where there is no particular emphasis on the beginning or the ending of a composition. However, the narration or description of the outward nature of human life and action sustain a unity throughout the repeated sequences of the visual phrase. [fig 2]

Writing systems developed concurrently with the use of seals to fulfil the needs of administration. The Sumerians experimented with cuneiform during the fourth millennium, while the Egyptians developed hieroglyphic scripts and the Phoenicians spread the use of the alphabet.(11) Early hieroglyph and cuneiform pictographic signs were derived from identifiable pictures of real objects but developed with time towards abstraction. Stamp and cylinder seals were used by people in power to authenticate documents and perhaps to document events in pictorial representations. The cylinder seals, a Mesopotamian invention, depicted cuneiform script as well as human and animal representation to illustrate the role of the ruler and protect property; further "they came to be associated with the protection of their owner and were used in rituals against sickness, miscarriage, black magic and slander".(12) The cylinder seals are of particular significance to us as they reflect a great deal of interest in narratives - a feature which will continue to shape all the arts in the region for a long time. Almost all cylindrical seals tell a story with very economical signs. [fig 3] Most seals are fabricated in a manner which leaves an impression in low relief.

Most of the information we have about the Middle Eastern ancient civilisations is actually based on the seal impressions and the wall decorations they have left us. Palaces, temples and burial chambers provide ample surfaces for reliefs and paintings depicting episodes from everyday life, hunting and banqueting scenes, mythological tales, stories about creation, etc. Like the impressions of the cylindrical seals, the reliefs and paintings generally sought to illustrate

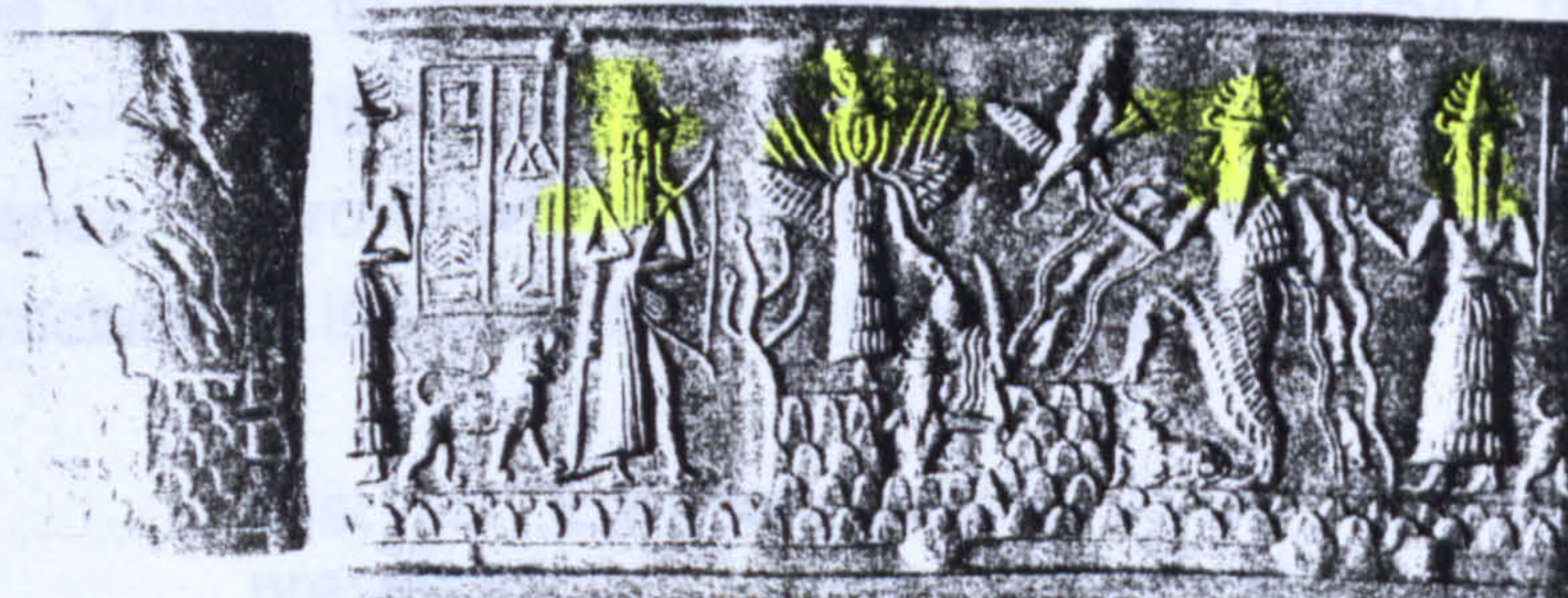


Fig 2. Plaque of King Urnanshe and his family. A stone square with a legible King's name, probably part of a dedication ritual of starting a building.

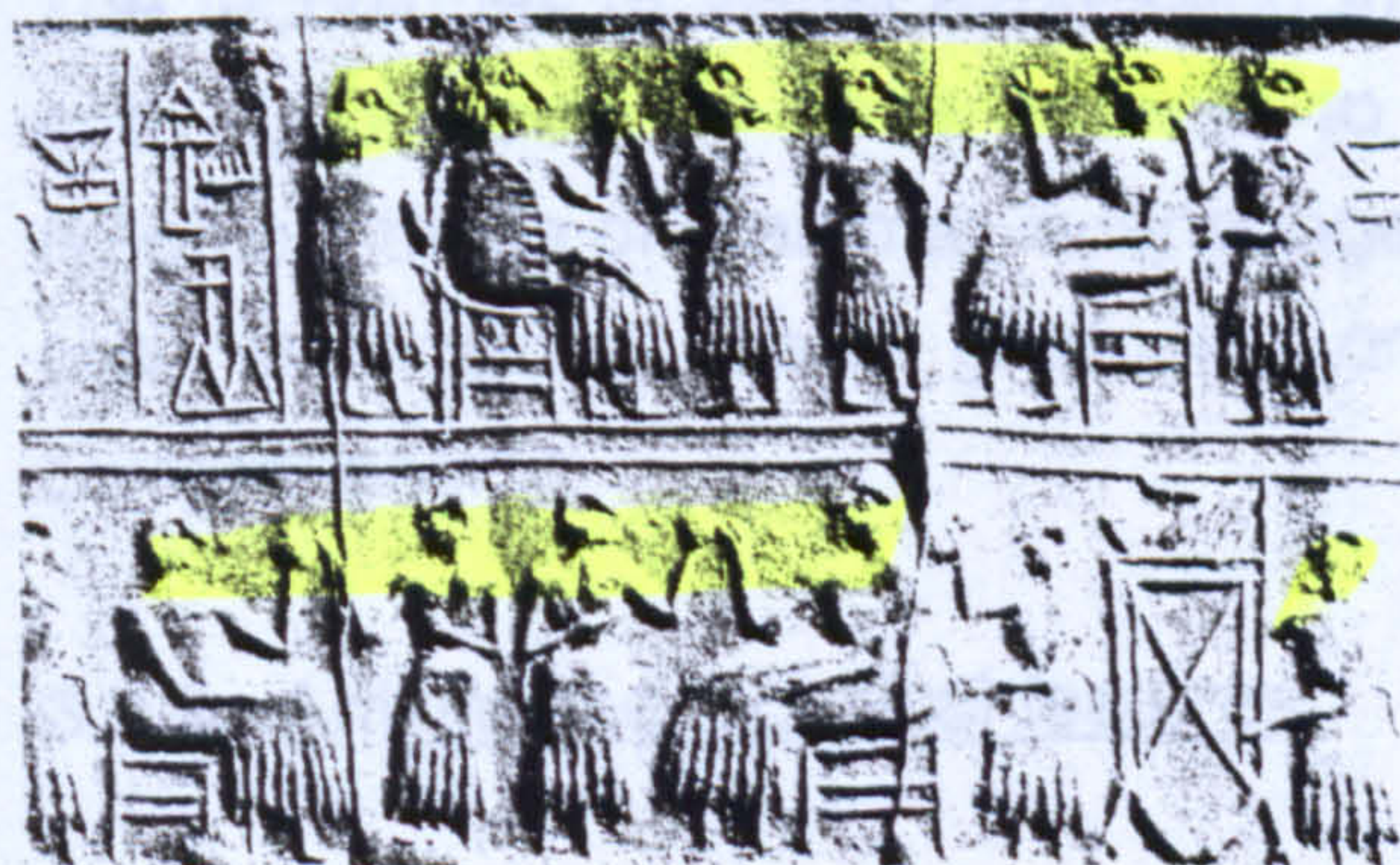
information and ideas through a narrative. Pictorial records in the Nile valley and in the Tigris-Euphrates plains rarely depict a figure of a man or an animal in isolation. They rather depict situations which tell the viewer something about the characters. On the whole, the individual is distinctly appreciated within the group to which he belongs. For this reason, individual portraits are not a favourite style



The iconography used in mural scenes is usually comprehensible to the members of the community. Posture of the figures, costumes, colours, accessories and the spatial distribution within the composition, all are signs for the viewer. For example, a pharaoh wearing a double crown is understood as one who rules both upper and lower fertile Egypt. A crook is read as a signal



By pictorial, pictorial messages, the scenes so carefully drawn and sculptured by the Egyptians are to be read as much as contemplated. (13)



Extensive examples of visual representation in the ancient civilisations of Mesopotamia are known from an extent where "pictorial relationships" are clearly visible. (14) Visual statements, like written and pictorial, are organised in order to achieve clearer

Extensive examples of visual representation on every imaginable two-dimensional surface bear evidence to the development of a certain style of expression partially dictated by the medium itself, nonetheless, became the hallmark of the visual products of the region forever. The most obvious

Fig 3. Modern impressions of Akkadian and early Dynastic cylinder seals (c. 2400 B.C.)

profiled edge of view, as well as in a three quarter angle of view. The full facing

information and ideas through a narrative. Pictorial records in the Nile valley and in the Tigris-Euphrates plains rarely depict a figure of a man or an animal in isolation. They rather depict situations which tell the viewer something about the characters. On the whole, the individual is distinctly appreciated within the group to which he belongs. For this reason, individual portraits are not a favourite style of representation. We learn more about somebody by relating him to a context. The pictorial records should tell us clearly what the context is, and it should be possible for the viewer to read the pictorial representation on the walls as one reads the cuneiform scripts, hieroglyphics or the alphabets. This is probably the starting point from which iconographical images have been employed as a featuristic visual communication system in the region.

The iconography used in mural scenes is usually comprehensible to the members of the community. Posture of the figures, costumes, colours, accessories and the spatial distribution within the composition, all are signs for the viewer to read. For example, a Pharaoh wearing a double crown is understood to combine the traditions of barren upper and lower fertile Egypt, hence the crown with double plumes and the shepherd's crook is read as a signal proclaiming the unification of Egypt. [fig 4]

Just as Egyptian writing itself is largely pictorial, pictorial presentations might themselves contain specific written messages, the scenes so carefully drawn and sculptured by the Egyptians are to be read as much as contemplated.(13)

The techniques of visual expression in the ancient civilisations of Mesopotamia and Egypt seem to have evolved to an extent where "pictorial relationships resemble those of grammar in language".(14) Visual statements, like written and oral statements, were gradually organised in order to achieve clearer comprehension.

3.3.2 Artistic and technical features

Extensive examples of visual representation on every imaginable two-dimensional surface bear evidence to the development of a certain style of expression partially dictated by the medium itself, nonetheless, became the hallmark of the visual products of the region forever. The most obvious characteristic is the depiction of figures of humans, animals and objects in a profile angle of view as well as in a three quarter angle of view. The full facing

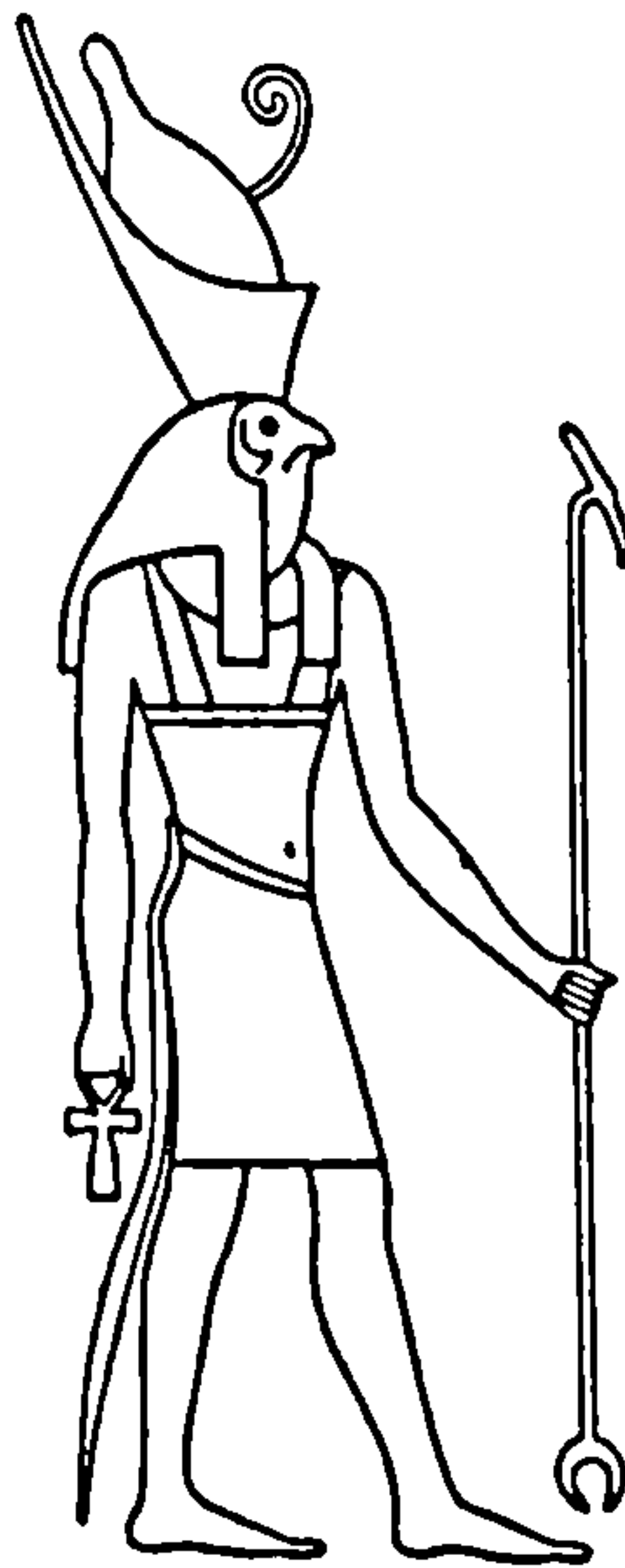


Fig 4. Horus the Elder. And the Palette of King Narmer (c. 3100 B.C.) showing the Pharaoh wearing the white crown on one side and the red crown on the other.

angle of view is not as effective on a two-dimensional surface where the rendering does not concern itself with the complex problem of depth. However, an artist working in a profile angle of view could not afford to lose a very important graphic sign and spiritual feature, the eye. So the artist always produced a front view eye on a face depicted in a profile view.

The eye motif is a very important one in this part of the world. Since time immemorial, it was believed that the eye is a window to the soul. There exist ample examples in painting, relief and sculpture from Mesopotamia and Egypt where the eyes are so prominent that they cover a large proportion of the face. [fig 5]

Even when the artist is duplicating nature, the eye is rendered much larger than the natural size. This characteristic also applies to three-dimensional pieces where we can see the eyes produced larger than life size; in many cases, the cavities of the eyes are inlaid with stones or shells and the eyebrows extend to meet in the middle, thus emphasising the eyes further. [fig 6]

The depiction of the faces in profile view while the eye is in full face view is a trademark sustained across all human and animal figures painted or carved in relief, no matter what the medium is. The body is usually also depicted in profile view although sometimes the shoulders are featured in full facing view while the trunk and legs are in side view. Pictorial and sculpted examples of ancient Egyptian standing figures consistently show the left foot forward, as it is said to be a more comfortable position for somebody standing for a long time. [fig 7] Middle Eastern shadow play figures display the above features distinctly, see Chapter 4 [fig 31,32,33,38,41,44, and 45].

This variation of angles of view featuring in the same painted or carved unit, be it an animal, bird, human body, plant or even an object, projects a certain dynamic flow in the two-dimensional static image. Further, as most pictorial communication seems to be realised in the form of a narrative, the subject is presented in relation to a number of figures, and the same multiple angle of view style of rendering is applied to every unit in the composition. As a result, the scene's static state is actually paralleled by the underlying movement arrested by the artist in each of the individual figures as well as by their gestures and by the spatial relationship of the units to one another in the composition. [fig 8a & 8b]



Fig 5. Sumerian statues representing worshippers. The eyes are the most prominent features.



Fig 6. Miniature stone figurines heavily emphasising the eyes from a temple at Tell Brak, Mesopotamia.



Fig 7. An Assyrian winged eagle-headed being from the temple of Ninurta. And a relief showing lion-headed god Apedemak and the deities Horus and Amun.

Fig 8. Painted cast of scenes on a wall in the temple of Beit el-Wali in NUBIA



Fig 8 a. Painted cast of scenes on a wall in the temple of Beit el-Wali in Nubia.

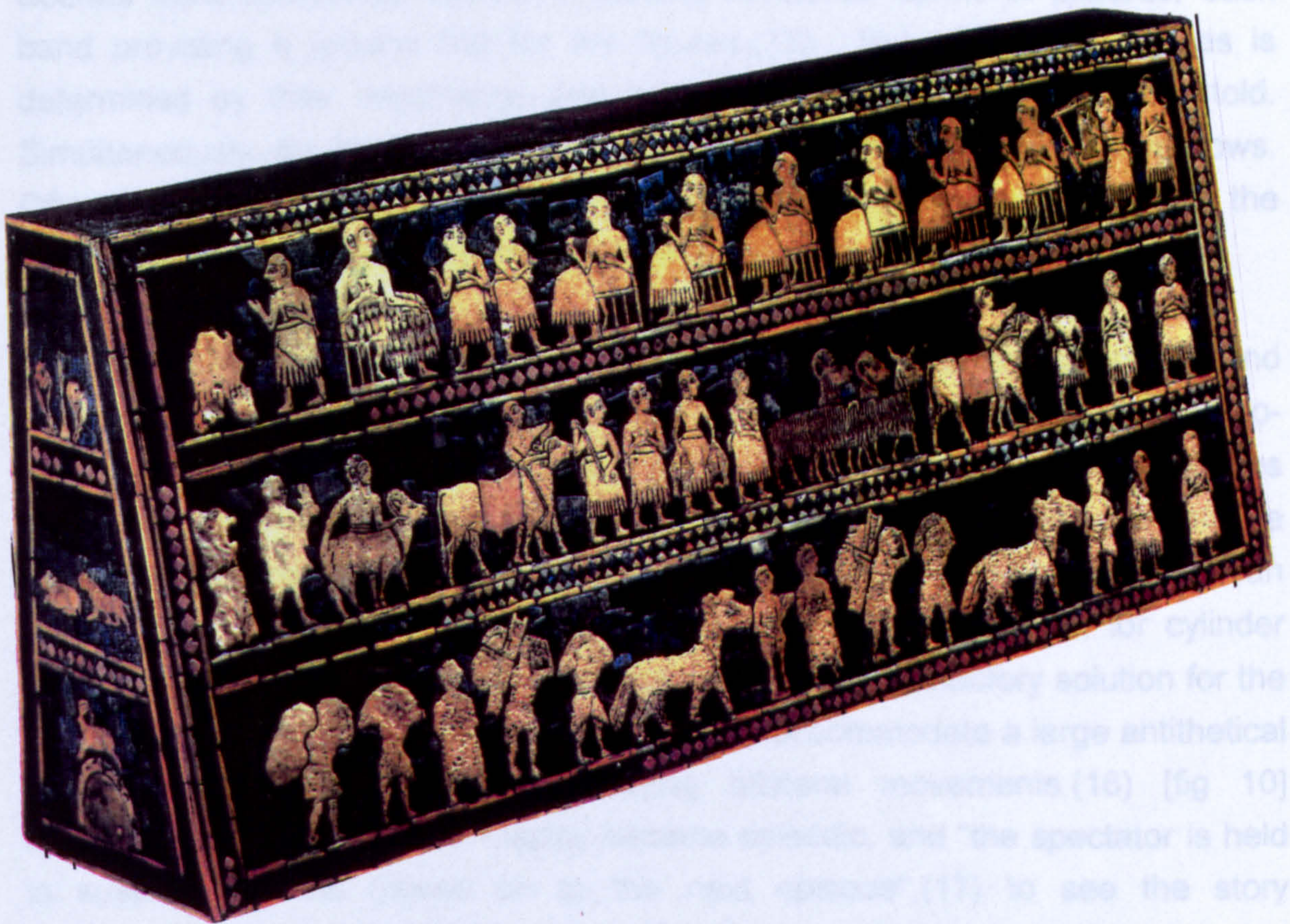


Fig 8 b. The so called Standard of Ur, about 2600 B.C., Mesopotamia.

The sizes of individual units has nothing to do with reality. For instance, a bird could be depicted much larger than a cow standing next to it. The sense of proportion between the units is relative; however, it is of the utmost importance within the unit itself. For this effect, a grid system is used to control the proportions of a unit. To the ancient Egyptian artist a standing human figure for instance would occupy eighteen vertical squares whereas a seated figure would occupy fifteen vertical squares.

Scenes were sometimes formed in parallel horizontal bands of pictures, each band providing a ground line for the figures.(15) The size of the figures is determined by their importance and contribution to the narrative being told. Simultaneously, the bands are used to classify different activities in distinct rows. Often this creates the impression that what is being represented visually on the two-dimensional surfaces is in fact an everlasting procession. [fig 9]

The narrative usually unfolds by casting of scenes which spread horizontally and vertically across parallel planes. The perception of depth in these two-dimensional scenes is irrelevant to the narrative's purpose. Successive images depicting rhythmic repetition and progression along a line is one of the fundamental artistic traits of the ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian pictographs. This is best illustrated in the aesthetic predilection for cylinder seals and continuous friezes which turned out to be a satisfactory solution for the Mesopotamian artists, especially those trying to accommodate a large antithetical group of figures or animals displaying bilateral movements.(16) [fig 10] Eventually, the narratives on display became episodic, and "the spectator is held in suspense till he moves on to the next episode", (17) to see the story completed. Battles and hunting pictorial epics are rendered perfectly well in this style.

3.3.3 Visual images as the focus of community life

It is crucial to remember that these pictographs had a very important role to play in the social and religious life of the communities. Some of these scenes communicate concepts of good leadership, or recount historical events, while others are part of burial rituals. Pictorial statements and written documents of ancient times often reveal explicitly and implicitly a certain concern for order, measure and relation, basic to the attempts at regulating human life in its socio-political and religious aspects.

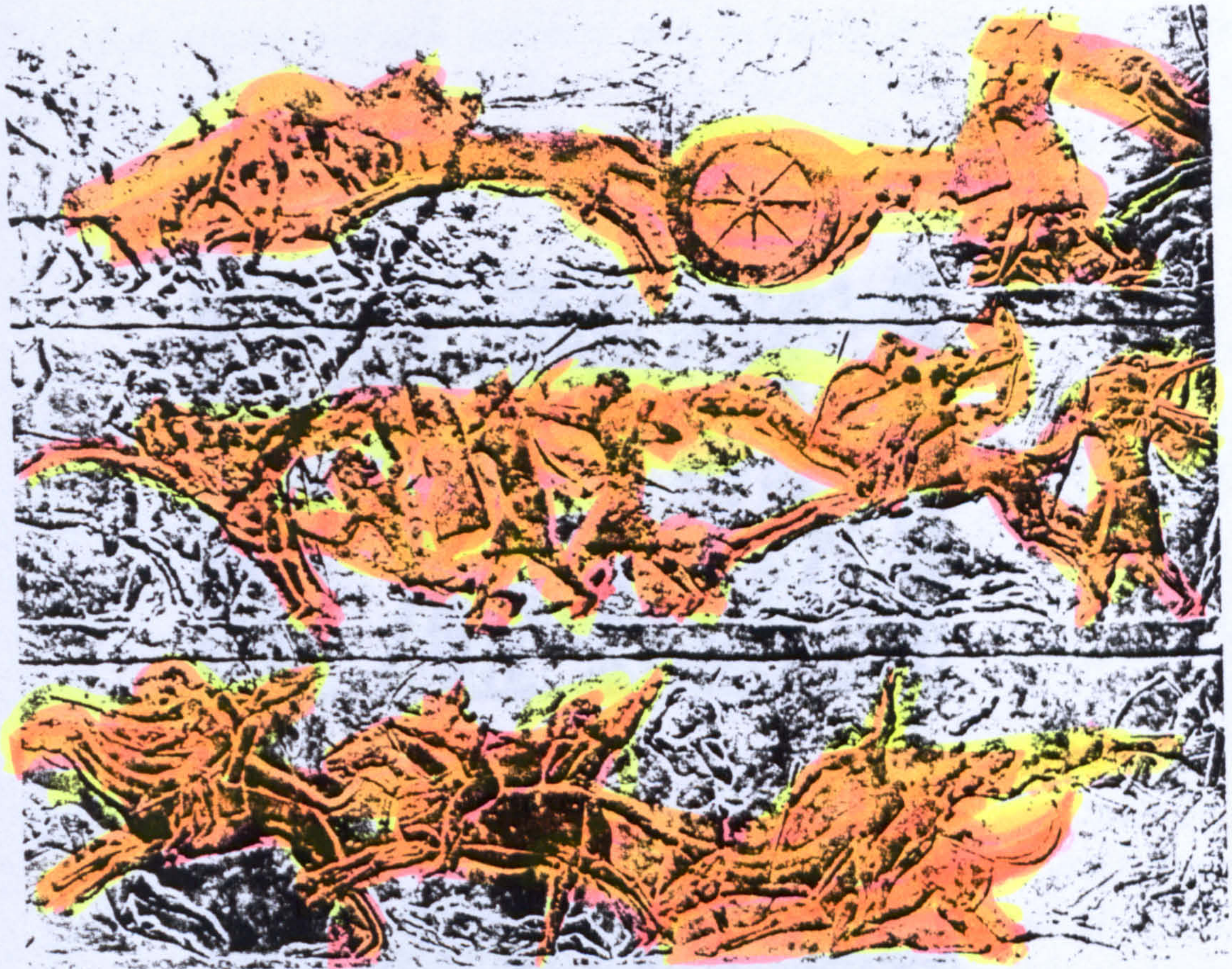


Fig 9. - Cattle fording stream; tribute bearers, Tomb of Ti, Egypt.

- A chariot battle in one of the reliefs from Ashurbanipal's palace in Nineveh.

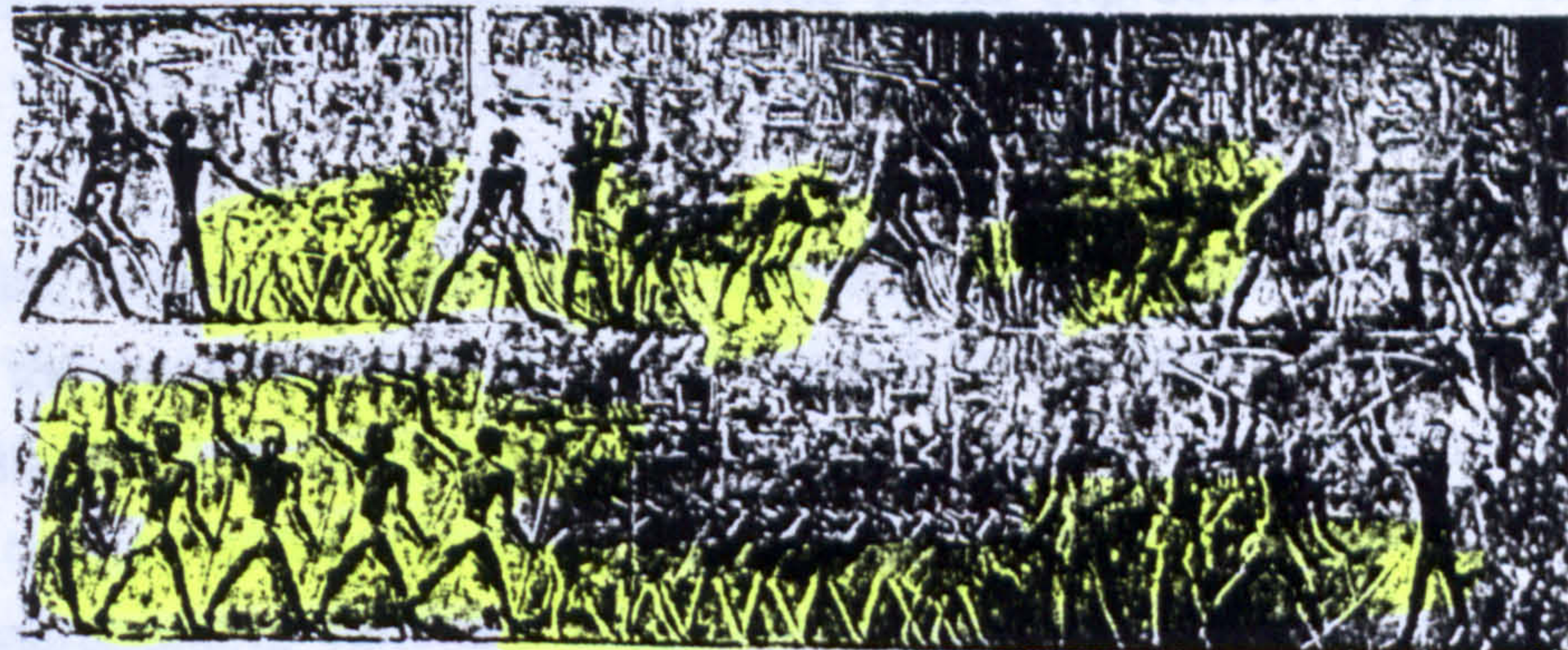


Fig 10. - Early Dynastic and Akkadian seal impressions.
 - Agricultural scene, Tomb of Ti, Egypt.

In Mesopotamia complex religious and mythological issues were expressed through visual images. Early on the Mesopotamians worshipped natural phenomena, then these forces were imagined in animal and later human forms. The temples of the Gods became the centre of city life built on top of ziggurats. Gradually kingship interpreted the divine will to men. In ceremonies of the sacred marriage, the priest-king impersonated the god of the sky, *An*, in a holy marriage with the chief priestess who represented mother earth, *Ki*. [fig 11] The temples housed the image representations of the gods and related the stories of their struggles, rituals and ceremonies. They also housed statues of worshippers. The adventures of King Gilgamesh with the gods is among the stories represented visually in image and inscription on tablets and seals. [fig 12] Steles documented important historic events like battles or the Law Code of Hammurabi which dealt with commercial, family, property, slavery laws, etc.

Most Egyptian scenes aim at promoting the concept of immortality by making sure the several elements that comprised human life survived after death. Ancient Egyptians believed that "the *ka* (represented by a pair of upraised arms over a human figure) was a spirit double created by Khnum, the creator god, on a potter's wheel. It resembled the owner physically".(18) And "the *ba* (represented by a human-headed bird sometimes with arms as well as wings), was the impersonal life force of the person and thus only left the body at the same time of death".(19) The preservation of the human body was needed for the *ka* to identify and for the *ba* bird to perch on. [fig 13] In fact, this explains the functional vitality attached to the images not as a representational art expression but as the potential preserver of life. The visual expression in this case serves best as a vehicle for the ideology of ultimate continuity.

The familiar scenes of daily life on the walls of Egyptian tombs suggest that probably the necessities of life still mattered to the dead. But there exist texts which state that the dead person is actually 'watching' the trivialities of everyday life, and not, as some interpret, looking at his own life's activities. Panoramic murals representing funerary rites often show the dead man surrounded by activity, yet the contrast with:

his inactivity should be considered the clue to his status as one of the glorified dead; his watching, the tenuous link with life - not without a vague magical purpose - and the *raison d'être* of the scenes.(20)

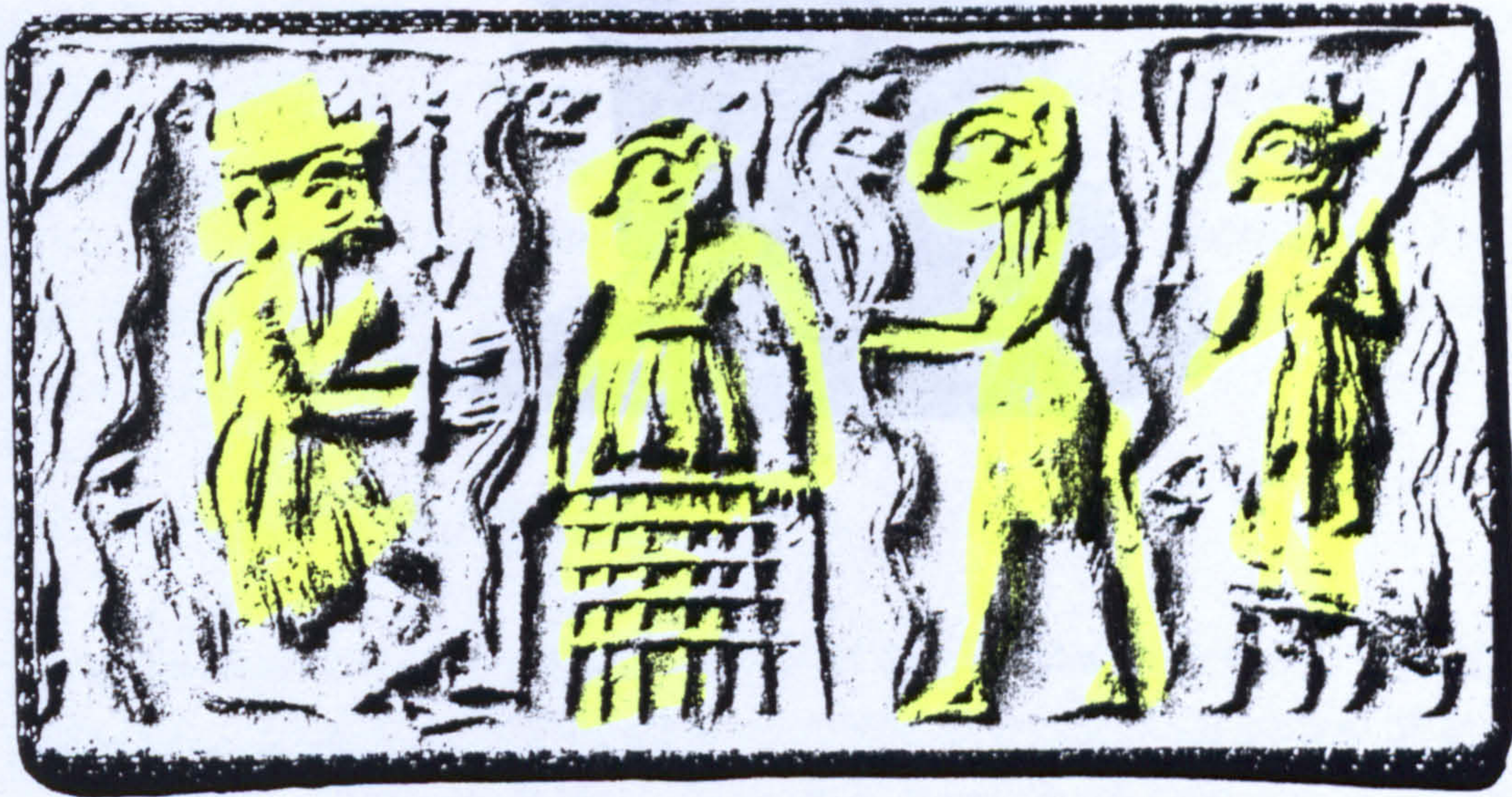
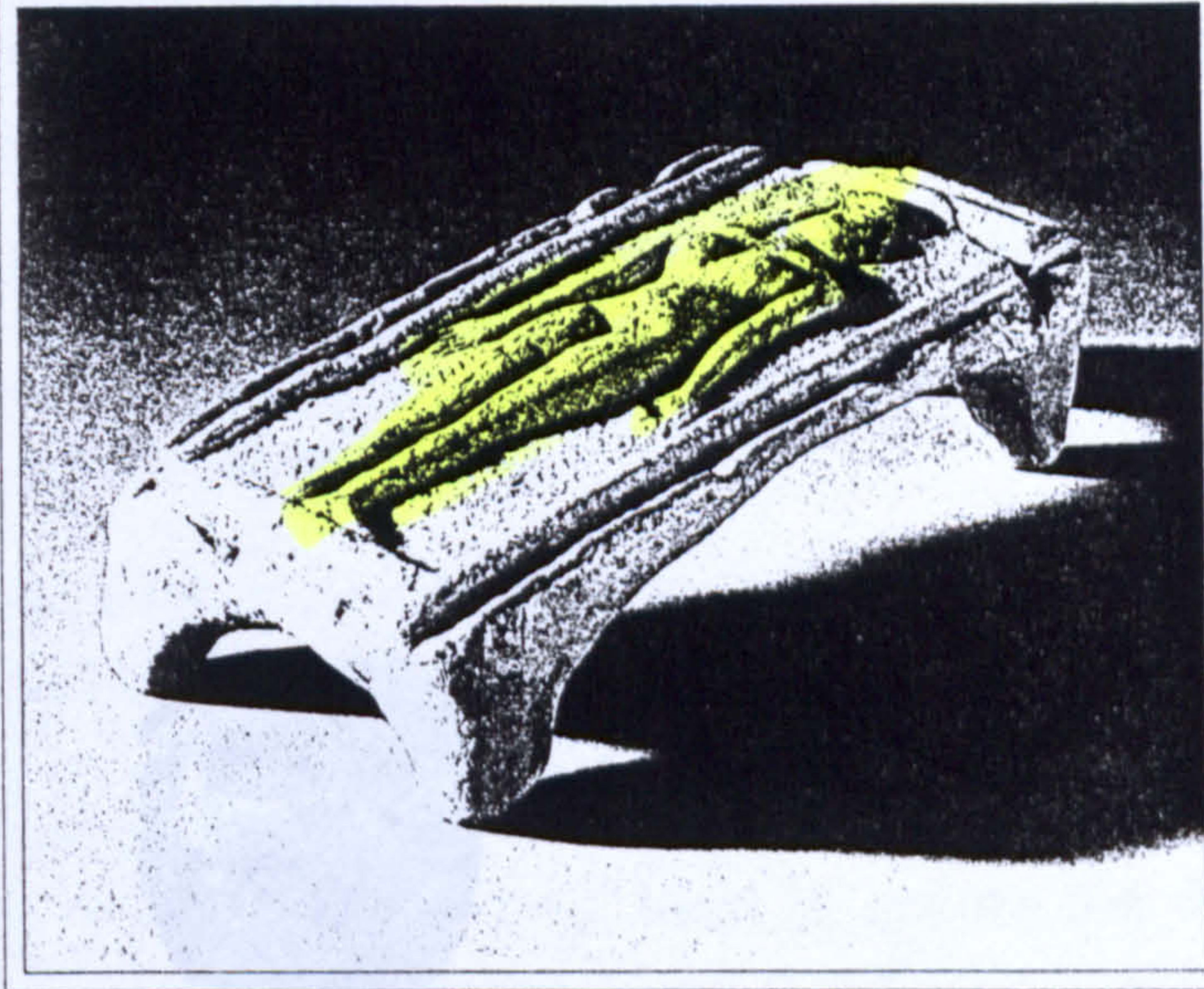


Fig 11. Figure of a naked woman on a bed associated with a sacred marriage ceremony, 1750 B.C.

Fig 12. Cylinder seal portraying Dumuzi retained in the under world.



Fig 13. *Ba* statue of a woman height 46 cms.

Certain features of Pharaonic and Mesopotamian visual expression tradition stand out very clearly: stylisation, rhythmic repetition, overlapping, multiple viewpoints and consecutive scenes expanding on various registers. All these are strong traits of the ancient Middle Eastern visual creation. In so far as can be traced, it is fair to observe that:

the narrative scheme of consecutive scenes in fairly narrow strips has nowhere been abandoned in favour of one which would allow for a dramatic climax, a summing-up of complex event in one pregnant situation.(21)

The stories carry on discursively in one or more scenic spaces with no intention of putting emphasis on the beginning or ending of the narrative.

As mentioned above, stylisation, repetition, multiple viewpoints and overlapping were among the spatial rendering techniques used to ensure the flow of the narrative without resolving the conflict between the three-dimensional object to be portrayed and the two-dimensional surface available. In spite of the fact that the illusion of depth in pictorial narratives is not attempted, the illusion of recession has been achieved to some extent with superimposed figures or elements sometimes sharing the same ground line or inserted on a separate ground line, but looking as if "the higher ones are conceived receding in space".(22) [fig 14] Some of these features will be recurring in the Middle Eastern visual products of later periods. We will try to trace these characteristic patterns of visual expression as we come across them, not only to highlight the underlying continuity, but also to understand better our position today vis-à-vis this cultural inheritance.

3.3.4 The farmer-shepherd motif

As we glance at the visual expression of the Pharaohs and the Mesopotamians, it is helpful to remember that we are looking at a historical period of around 3500 years before our present era. This is a duration of time long enough to have developed a corpus of patterns and modes of expression representative of the civilisations generating them.

In particular, the farmer-shepherd motifs have been shaping the cultural products of the peoples of the Middle East since the dawn of history. The desert and the fertile land have tuned the temperament and the intellect of their inhabitants. In what concerns us here, there is a need to underline the fact that the notions of

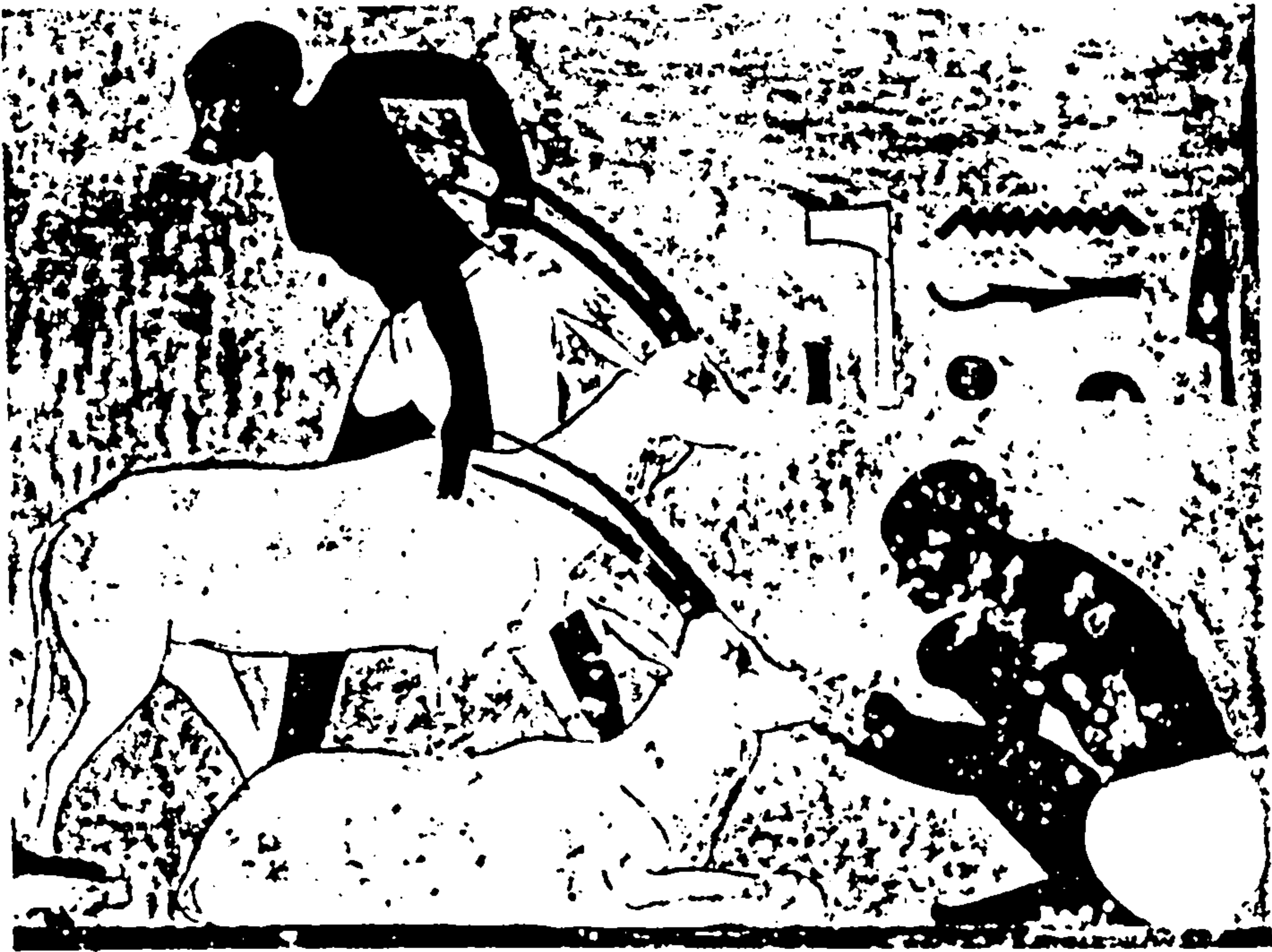


Fig 14. Antelopes and their keepers, Tomb of Khnumhotep.

space and time are different for those living in the desert to those living on fertile land. The variety in the constitution of the land and hence the people is actually the very force which consolidates the distinct geographical areas and the diverse communities. Fertile land demands labour which can be delivered best when the farmer's land is a circumscribed property. To the shepherd in the desert, property and space are beyond his requisition and indeed comprehension. The farmer needs to divide and plan what to do with his land. The shepherd needs to have his options of moving across the land invariably open. Time, likewise, prompts the activity of the farmer around the year but is of little consequence to the shepherd. The farmer's space and time are defined and structured; the shepherd's, boundless and eternal.

The shepherd and the farmer, like the desert and the fertile land, are elements of the same composition. Each has his account which contributes to the overall narrative. In the field of visual expression this is not only reflected in the use of modular structures but also by contrasting these structured space divisions with infinite repetition of compositional elements. In the time dimension, there is contrast between the precision of the fixed moment depicted in certain organic elements and the need for the viewer to move along a line of successive snapshot-like drawings with various viewpoints in order to follow the narrative. The paradox in depicting the ephemeral only to have it framed in timelessness echoes preoccupation in bridging the material and the ethereal in this world. Hence the call for stylisation, even abstraction, in expression is so compelling in portraying the human and physical environment. This notion of abstraction has remained the dominant aspect of all the Middle Eastern visual expression till our time.

3.4 The significance of visual images to the peoples of the Middle East in the present era

3.4.1 Historical background

Viewed in perspective, stylised intimation, not realistic imitation, is the underlying mode of expression generally observed by the people of the ancient Middle East. However, this inclination outlived the ancient peoples of the Middle East and is seen to have prevailed in the artistic expression of the present era in spite of the many layers of influence arriving with the Persian, Anatolian, Greek, Roman, Mongol and European invasions. With the advent of Islam in Arabia, and its

spreading to the Middle Eastern regions which were then part of the Byzantine and Persian Empires, the last considerable population movement from the Arabian Peninsula in the direction of the Fertile Crescent took place, and with it the consolidation of the Arabic language and Muslim faith over this geographical area. The presence of the Persians and the Greeks in the Fertile Crescent and Egypt at the time of the Islamic conquests meant that parts of these territories were already united under one administration, a factor which probably contributed to a smoother transmission of power. However, it also meant competing with the existing institutionalised religions, mainly Christianity, Judaism and Zoroastrian Mazdian.

Whereas the Byzantine and Persian Empires fought over the control of the Fertile Crescent and Egypt, the powerful tribes and clans of the central part of the Arabian Peninsula were busy with inter-tribal wars. In the southern corner of al-Yaman, the Sabaeo-Himyarite Kingdom came to an end with the introduction of Christianity and Judaism which entered the population in the rivalry between the two satellites of Persia and Byzantium. Thus in the early years of the seventh century the area of the Middle East was divided under diverse political powers, various religions, multiple cultures and languages all competing over the trade routes and hence the economy of the region.(23)

3.4.2 The Socio-political dimension of Islam

The Prophetic Revelation of Islam was received early in the seventh century of the present era in the town of Makka in western Arabia. Muhammad's prophetic mission had been to restore monotheism taught by the earlier religions of Judaism and Christianity, to abolish idolatry and to teach the divine laws of Islam. The central feature of the Muslim message is that of *tawhid*,(24) the act of affirming Allah to be the one, absolute, transcendent Creator. *Tawhid* is seen as the first determining principle which united the various civilisations and the people who entered Islam in the lands stretching from Morocco to India. We will examine the notion of *tawhid* and its impact on the artistic expressions later in this chapter.

The utterance of *tawhid* guarantees one acceptance into the Muslim universal brotherhood of man, the *umma*. *Umma* originates from *umm* meaning mother. The concept of *umma* is a natural sequel to that of *tawhid*, where all believers in the one God stand equal in responsibility and rights to God and to the community

of the faithful. "The *umma* is a universal order comprehending even those who are not believers."(25) This universal brotherhood categorically rejects colour and ethnic identity. Hence, the *umma* constitutes the basic humanitarian, socio-political and artistic vision of the Islamic civilisation. Together the principle of *tawhid* and the concept of *umma* unified the Muslim artists' outlook to God as the only transcendent being - "nothing in creation can be a likeness or symbol of God, nothing can represent him".(26)

When the Muslims of the Arabian Peninsula conquered neighbouring countries with the aim of spreading their new faith, they encountered established cultures which already had developed social systems, technologies, arts and ideologies. The Arabians absorbed the impact of the existing civilisations they came in contact with by reordering the different features along with their own experience and knowledge in order to fit the principle of *tawhid*. Surveying the Muslim visual artistic products, Oleg Grabar comments that "in its creative phases the art of the Muslim world was the creation of a new syntax and of new semantic order for an older visual structure".(27)

Of course, the older visual structure referred to here is that of the Hellenistic civilisation which itself spread by the political power of the Roman, Parthian and Sasanian empires,(28) not forgetting its Byzantine offshoot with which the Muslims came into direct contact. Unfortunately, scholars in the field of Islamic arts have given almost no attention to the visual heritage of the ancient civilisations of the region before the spread of the Hellenistic civilisation, nor indeed to the inevitable influence of these ancient civilisations on the Hellenistic visual arts in the region.

‘Afif al-Bahnasi looks at the issue regarding the continuous interrelationship of the visual arts in the Middle East from a slightly different angle. He explains that the artistic creations of the Arab people and their ancestors long before Islam carry a certain uninterrupted progression in the attitude and the manner of expression. In particular, he draws our attention to the Semitic trait of asserting the intuitions concerned with the oneness of the universe and its phenomena which often overpowers the interest in isolated sensations experienced during a lifetime. In this context the ultimate aspiration of the artist is to blend into the essence of the world and not to duplicate the matter in the world. Through stylisation and denaturation the artists express their awareness of the limited lifetime of matter and the eternal essence of life-force. Abstraction as a main

feature of the Middle Eastern visual expression was not introduced by the Islamic faith but has been a genuine mode of expression which the peoples of the region including the Arabs have employed during *Jahiliyya* then more regularly under Islam.(29)

3.4.3 Religious and linguistic dimensions of Islam

The concept of one God was not completely foreign to the Arabians of *Jahiliyya* as they had contacts with the Jewish and Christian immigrants to the desert. These communities were welcomed by the Arabians who upheld the Mesopotamian-Abrahamic tradition. Together they came to be known as the *Hanifs*.(30) In fact, it is interesting to note in this connection that "Yahu (Yahweh, Jehovah) was apparently a Midianite or North Arabian tribal deity. He was a desert god, simple and austere."(31) Moses' Arabian wife was the daughter of a Midianite priest who worshipped Yahu. The Abrahamic monotheistic faith reached many tribes in the Peninsula like Ad, Thamud and Shu'ayb whose calls were not successful.(32)

Moreover, from time immemorial, 'Allah' was acknowledged in the Arabian Peninsula as 'the creator of all', whose functions were assumed by minor deities. The best known of these are the daughters of Allah: *Manat*, *Al-Llat* and *Al-'Uzza*, probably related to the old Semitic triad and corresponding to the three states of the moon: dark, light and the two states together. Otherwise, *Manat* which represents fate and death is a black stone: *Al-Llat* which is identified with the sun, Venus or the moon is a square stone, and *Al-'Uzza* which represents life is a triad of three trees, a house and an idol, also associated with Venus.(33)

As a consequence of this socioreligious atmosphere, the process of conversion to the new monotheistic faith was effectively quite fast - it took almost fifteen years for the Arabian Peninsula, the Fertile Crescent and Persia to be brought within the widening circle of Islam.(34)

Furthermore, as the language of Islam is Arabic, it became the language of the people who converted to Islam. In the process of assimilation and Arabization all other ancient languages in the region disappeared except for Hebrew. From the 7th Century A.D. onwards, the Arabic language became the medium not only of religion but also of administration, trade, learning, science and arts across the vast Muslim Empire. The vast spread of Islam was assisted crucially by the fact

that Muslim cadres were available and ready to move anywhere. Hodgson adds that the Islamic law, *shari'a*, was designed to place any fitting Muslim into any niche in Islamic society anywhere in the world as "Islam was freely open to all, whatever background; and that once a Muslim in an Islamic context, a man could rise to almost any height that special merit might win for him."(35)

3.4.4 The visual dimension of Islamic culture

At this juncture, let us investigate the visual dimension of the Islamic culture. We will start by accessing three examples of visual symbolisation from the early Islamic era which have been exerting a great impact on the Muslim *umma* over the past one thousand three hundred and seventy years. The three symbols we are about to survey reflect in a curious manner the communicative supremacy which images, of mental or physical nature, enjoy in the region of the Middle East. And on a different level, they reveal the pattern of assimilation artists have been practising to ensure communication and continuity with past and contemporary civilisations which became part of the *umma*.

3.4.4.1 The ka'ba

It is essential to remember that we have little evidence to inform us about the visual arts of the ancient inhabitants of the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula. Probably the only significant visual specimen left to us is the actual house of worship believed to have been built initially in Makka by Isma'il, the son of Abraham, long before Islam or Judaism were established. The Ka'ba is a monument built in the shape of a cube, hence the name, with one aperture. However, it has become a tradition to dress the cubic room with embroidered fabric since the early days of Islam. [fig 15] Late in his life, the Prophet assigned this monument to serve as a focal point for all the members of the Muslim *umma* on two religious functions: in their daily prayers, and during the once per lifetime pilgrimage ritual. Before Islam, the Ka'ba housed numerous idols, some were of a three-dimensional form, others were two-dimensional pictures such as the one representing Mary and Jesus.(36)

The three-dimensional idols, some of which were in the shape of human statues, inside the Ka'ba do not represent a traditional idolatry form widespread in the Arabian desert. On the contrary, they are exceptional among the other more common idols depicted in the shape of a black stone, a tree or even a water

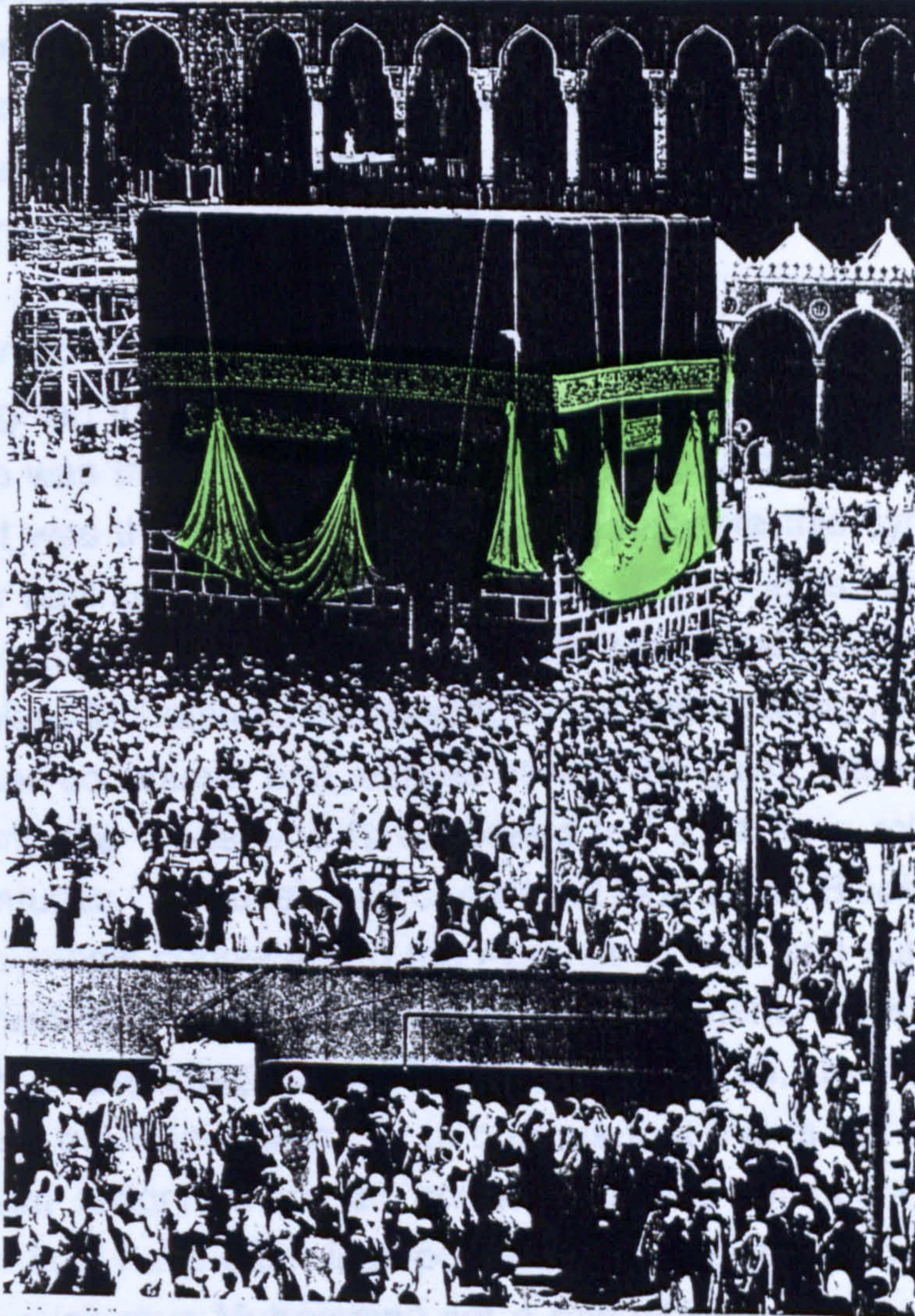


Fig 15. The Ka'ba, a cubic room dressed in embroidered fabric.

source such as that of *Zamzam*. *Hubal*, the chief deity of the Ka'ba, "was represented in human form. Beside him stood arrows used for divination by the soothsayer (*kahin*, from Aramaic) who draws lots by means of them."(37) Most probably *Hubal* along with other statues was imported by traders from Mesopotamia, Syria or Alexandria where they were manufactured by Byzantine Christian artisans.(38) It must be emphasised here that the Arabian deities were not depicted in human shape before the Arabian traders came in regular contact with the Byzantine civilisation. Traditionally, ancient Arabs saw their gods as quite abstract and in fact distant from any human or animal forms. Furthermore, the tendency to avoid plastic imagery for devotional purposes has marked the Semitic and Persian traditions from the time that Zoroastrianism and Judaism became major influences in the region.(39)

It is assumed that the Ka'ba was initially built to house a block of black stone believed given to Isma'il by the angel Gabriel. The *Black Stone* and therefore the Ka'ba was the centre for pilgrimage during *Jahiliyya* and remained so after Islam. It was the Prophet's decision to assimilate this symbol into the Muslim faith after having destroyed the hundreds of other idols kept in the Ka'ba. It is the connection of the *Black Stone* with the Abrahamic faith which saved it. Nevertheless Muhammad recognised the economical significance of the Ka'ba to the Mekkan community and realised as well the gains Islam could cultivate by not disorienting the tribes who have looked to Ka'ba as a religious focal point for many centuries. However, one cannot but look at the *Black Stone* and the Ka'ba as safe symbols connected to the Abrahamic faith and surviving from *Jahiliyya*. By assimilating a very important Semitic monument, the Ka'ba, and the Semitic institution of pilgrimage associated with the Ka'ba, the Prophet guaranteed to have more tribes join Islam. It is obvious that this is not an isolated incident in the Muslim history where an ancient religious symbol as well as an ancient religious ritual have been incorporated to fit into the model of the new faith. In taking this initiative Muhammad set a rule which encourages the assimilation of any cultural phenomena capable of enhancing the principles of *tawhid* and *umma*. The process of assimilation is in many aspects complementary of the principle of *tawhid*. This will be clearly demonstrated as we discuss the Dome of the Rock on the following pages.

3.4.4.2 A dream vision

Before incorporating the Ka'ba as the focus of the new faith, Muhammad experienced a dramatic journey in which he is said to have been transported from

the Ka'ba in Makka to Jerusalem before his *mī'raj* (ascent) , to the seventh heaven on his winged horse, *Buraq*.(40) The *isra'* (nocturnal journey), is the only miraculous happening, in addition to the Qur'anic revelation of course, in the life of the Prophet. To this day, the *isra'* and *mī'raj* still constitute a popular theme for mystics as well as story tellers and visual artists in the Muslim world. Some Muslims conceive this journey as full of mystical symbols, others view it as a physical actuality. [fig 16]

It was some time before any artist tried to recreate on any material his interpretation of the miraculous journey. However, the earliest representation is probably the illustrations of the script describing in detail the successive stages of the journey. This fifteenth century manuscript is a translation into Turkish by the poet Mir Haydar, and is illustrated in sixty one illuminations which take us through heavenly sphere and infernal world. These illuminations were produced in the workshops of Herat, Khurasan. They are very brightly coloured and use of gold and silver is prominent.(41) [fig 17] The episodes of this journey will be discussed later in this chapter.

3.4.4.3 The Dome of the Rock, A complex politico religious visual image

A third very important symbol from the early Islamic period is a reminder of Muhammad's night journey: it is the mosque known as the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. The story goes that the mosque was built to house the rock on which *Buraq* stood and Muhammad prayed before their ascension to heaven. However, it is possible that the Ummayyad Caliph 'Abd al-Malik was keen to create a new monument in order to divert the pilgrimage from Makka which was then held by Ibn al-Zubayr, his rival.(42) In 691 A.D. the mosque was built on the site of a Jewish Solomonic Temple. Probably the only references to the *isra'* and *mī'raj* miracle in this monument are the rock and the dome which always symbolised heaven in the ancient visual arts of Mesopotamia. In addition to the *isra'* references, the Dome of the Rock is perhaps the best example of how the Arabian Muslim culture translated into visual phrases some complex political and religious messages by accommodating pictorial vocabulary from the various contemporary cultures. [fig 18]

The visual communiqué on the walls of the mosque is of quite a sensitive nature



Fig 16. Buraq, winged horse with a female head.



Fig 17. An Illustration from the manuscript of *Mi'raj Nameh*: Muhammad meets the Prophet Adam.

as it is intended to set up the relationship between the conquering new faith and the multiple contemporary civilisations, as well as to share its views on certain contemporary issues. Here, the Prophet's strategy of assimilating traditions which could reinforce the principle of *tawhid* was well endorsed. Hence, visual signs and iconography from other civilisations were appropriated to communicate the message of Islam. For instance, a band of Qur'anic inscription is seen next to a colourful mosaic composition typical of a Byzantine visual product. The mosaic compositions display floral motifs in the Sassanian manner combined with a Byzantine variety of realistic vegetal motifs interspersed with vases. [fig 19] In addition there are examples of rich jewellery designs and crowns of Byzantine and Iranian origin.(43) The jewellery can be identified as royal and imperial ornaments or even as ornaments worn by the Virgin, Christ and saints in Byzantine icons. "The choice of Byzantine and Sassanian royal symbols was dedicated by the desire to demonstrate that the 'unbelievers' had been defeated and brought into the fold of the true faith."(44)

On a parallel level, the erection of the mosque in Jerusalem, where Jewish and Christian groups were competing to control the sacred city, is itself a political statement. The new faith taking possession of a very sacred spot to both the Jews and the Christians by claiming a blood relationship with Abraham serves as a reminder that Islam is there to restore the beliefs of the older people of the Book. This latest message is magnified in the unusually rich inscriptions of Qur'anic passages which describe the position of the prophet Muhammad and Mary and Jesus, beside common verses dealing with faith. The inscriptions are there to assert the superiority of the new faith, and also to invite the people of the Book to submit to the new faith.(45) Besides, Ettinghausen remarks "the use of purely vegetal forms to the exclusion of animated figures shows a conformity, even in this early sacred building, to the newly emerging, artistically restrictive attitude of Islam".(46)

This remark is a sample of the scholarly fixation concerning the subject of figural images and Islam. Traditional Muslim culture, as Grabar explains, did not have a doctrine about the arts but there existed attitudes which directed artistic activities only in the limited area of the representation of living things and not in any other aspect of the arts.(47) Nevertheless, the attitude Islam has developed towards figurative representation cannot be attributed mainly to the religious aim of completely abolishing idols. There are also political, social and aesthetic levels at which the representation of figures was adopted and practised or rejected.



Fig 19. Examples of mosaics in the Dome of the Rock.

On the political level for example, not assimilating figurative representation associated with a certain culture is a sign of rejecting these symbols of this specific culture. A case in point is the Ummayyad palaces and baths which display human nude figures in mosaics, paintings, frescos, sculptures and reliefs,(48) while simultaneously Ummayyad Caliphs were keen on having a monument like the Dome of the Rock communicate very important messages without using human representation usually associated with icons symbolising the non-Semitic Byzantine Church interpretation of Christianity. The exclusion of human representation in a public place should be interpreted politically, for in a private palace or bath there was no problem with human figures being aesthetically appreciated. [fig 20a & 20b]

Moreover, on the social level, the difference between public and private spaces is of great importance. What is suitable for display in a private place is not necessarily acceptable in a public place like a mosque where humility and piety as central themes in Islamic teaching are being communicated all the time visually and verbally.

It is reasonable to claim that the three religious references mentioned above have been the most visually projected across the Muslim world. Most Muslims recognise the visual images of the three symbols of the Ka'ba, *Buraq* and the Dome of the Rock. The Ka'ba and the Dome are architectural monuments which serve as focal points for Muslims, the first carries the austerity of the desert, the second reflects the colourfulness of fertile land. Both house a stone and a rock respectively and both symbolise the continuity of contemporary civilisation in Islamic visual vocabulary. The *Black Stone* and the *Rock* have an established connection with Abraham the father of monotheism which makes them a marketable signal to the people of the Book. What is most amazing is the various religious symbols the two monuments have been associated with. The Ka'ba housed idols for the pagans, the pictures of Mary and Jesus for the Christians as well as the Black stone for the *Hanifs*. On the other hand, the Dome of the Rock was built on the site of a Jewish temple which turned later into a heathen sanctuary in the holy Christian city along the model of a church, and houses a rock on which the Prophet Muhammad and his winged horse *Buraq* landed on their way to visit heaven. The levels of religious and socio-political meanings the two monuments communicate visually is intriguing, especially when we know that both monuments allow for circumambulation rituals as they are built on the sacred enclosures of the *Haram* in Makka and Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem.



Fig 20a. Examples of human figures, Qusayr 'Amra, bath painting of a nude and clothed dancers, 8th Century.

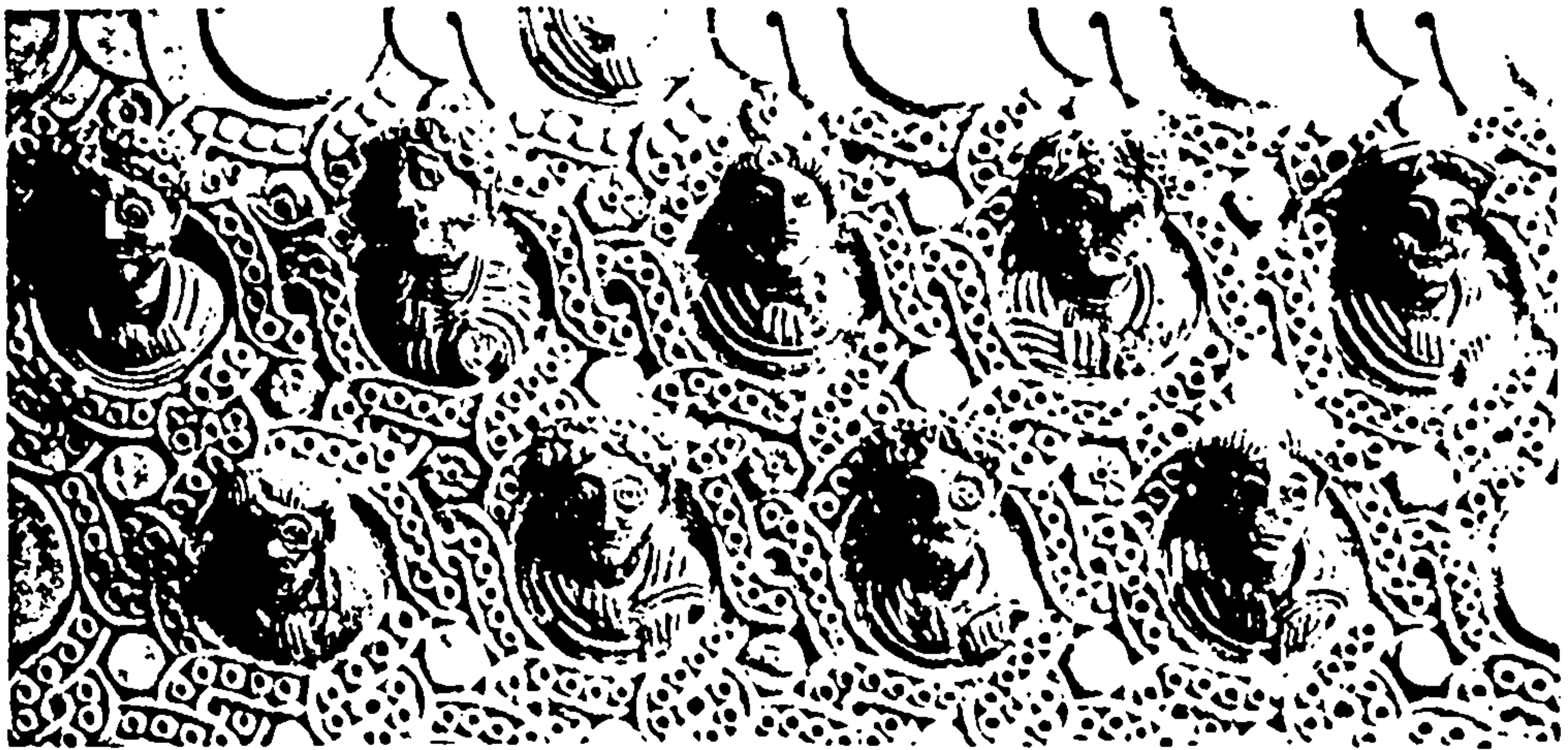


Fig 20b. Sculpture and relief examples from a bath in Khirbat al-Mafjar.

3.4.5 A field of vision, the Arabesque

The simple cubic room in Makka and the sophisticated octagonal mosque in Jerusalem have one aesthetic feature which can be recognised as purely Islamic. This feature is seen on the walls of the two monuments. The Dome of the Rock is covered with mosaics and scriptures on the inside and the outside walls of the building. The Ka'ba gets dressed year after year in a *kiswa* (a fabric embroidered with gold inscriptions). The dressing of the walls, and indeed every two-dimensional surface, is the visual expression the Muslims have developed to unify the different forms they have assimilated from the different cultures across the world.

To understand better this genuine visual mode of expression applicable to all surfaces, let us now examine the principle which brought together peoples of different races and aspirations in one *umma* and influenced their expressions in all its forms. The principle of *tawhid* has many dimensions as it touches on the various aspects of life: metaphysical, ethical, political, social, aesthetic, etc. The aesthetic dimension to the *tawhid* principle is the one we are concerned with at this moment, as it contributes to our understanding of the visual language developed by the Muslim artist of Persian, Turkish, Arabic, Chinese, Indian or European origin. Al-Faruqis remind us that the Muslim premise 'there is no God but God' persuades the artist that nothing in nature may represent or express God. However:

His creative breakthrough came when it dawned on him that to express God in a figure of nature is one thing and to express His inexpressibility in such a figure is another. To realize that God - may He be glorified in His transcendence - is visually inexpressible, is the highest aesthetic objective possible for man. God is the absolute, the sublime. To judge Him unrepresentable by anything in creation is to hold His absoluteness and sublimeness seriously. To behold Him in one's imagination as unlike all that is in creation is to behold Him as 'beautiful - unlike any other object that is beautiful'. Divine inexpressibility is a divine attribute, whose meaning is infinity, absoluteness, ultimacy or nonconditionedness, limitlessness. The infinite is in every sense the inexpressible.(49)

The Muslim artist/artisan pursued an interpretation of his environment within the challenging concepts of the new faith. The Qur'anic text is full of literal visual images relating to the floral and vegetal world, especially in verses describing

Paradise. The notion of Paradise being the ultimate reward to the pious and good Muslims is an eternal theme in the Qur'an. Therefore, the most natural gesture of a Muslim artisan is to represent floral and vegetal motifs from the gardens of Paradise promised to him. The infinitely complex geometric compositions on the other hand reflect the eagerness for order and control which the new faith has installed in its followers. Hence experimentation with calligraphy, denaturalised vegetal motifs, and infinite geometric patterns is probably the earliest mode of artistic expression recognised as purely Islamic. Such experiments were the artist's attempts to express visually the message of *tawhid* through intimating the impression of infinity and transcendence. Indeed, this expressive artistic manifestation, known as *arabesque*, is the creation of the Arab spirit, and with the rise of Arabic craftsmen it was "transmitted to foreign countries, so that the programmatic attitude in artistic creations has, in spite of the diversity of tongues, a unified character".(50)

Ernst Kühnel, one of the earliest researchers in the field of Islamic art who studied *arabesque*, realised that it was not spiritual poverty or any other deficiency which regulated this system of visual expression. "Doubtless, it was foremost the artist who carried in himself the Islamic world view to plunge into linear speculations of an abstract nature."(51) (sic) Although it was the Arab artists who developed the *arabesque* range of ornamentation which combined the geometric and vegetal form, Muslim artists of different regions experimented with new variants keeping in perspective two aesthetic requirements: "the rhythmic change of the movements, which should balance themselves harmoniously, and the principle of complete coverage", (52) not forgetting, of course, the renunciation of plastic effect. A look at [fig 21 & fig 22] gives us an idea about the vast possibilities of using the *arabesque* design. The medium in which it is applied is of no significance because the prime aim of *arabesque* is to transfigure the object of nature "into a weightless, transparent, floating pattern extending infinitely in all directions. It has become only a field of vision."(53)

Oleg Grabar describes the process of the transformation of objects of daily use into rich works of art by lending them their visual value which is "like clothing, it can be removed and replaced without affecting the integrity of the object which wears it".(54) Grabar calls this "an art of impermanent surfaces", as it allows the display of different interpretations without touching the internal meaning. This probably underlines the Islamic notion that nothing in nature is infinite, all will vanish excepting God.



Fig 21. Insert of a door with relief carving of a horse within an arabesque decoration.

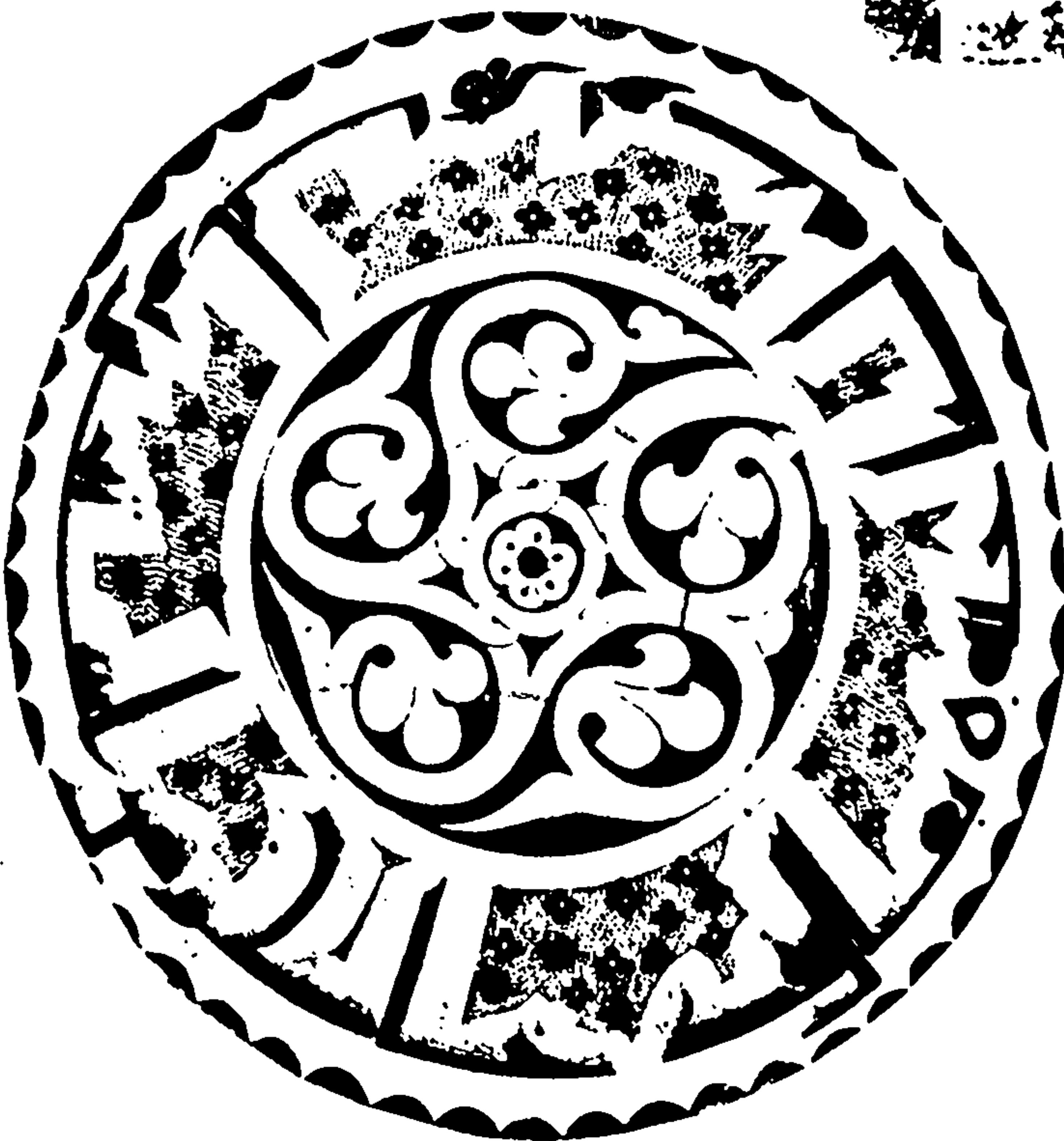
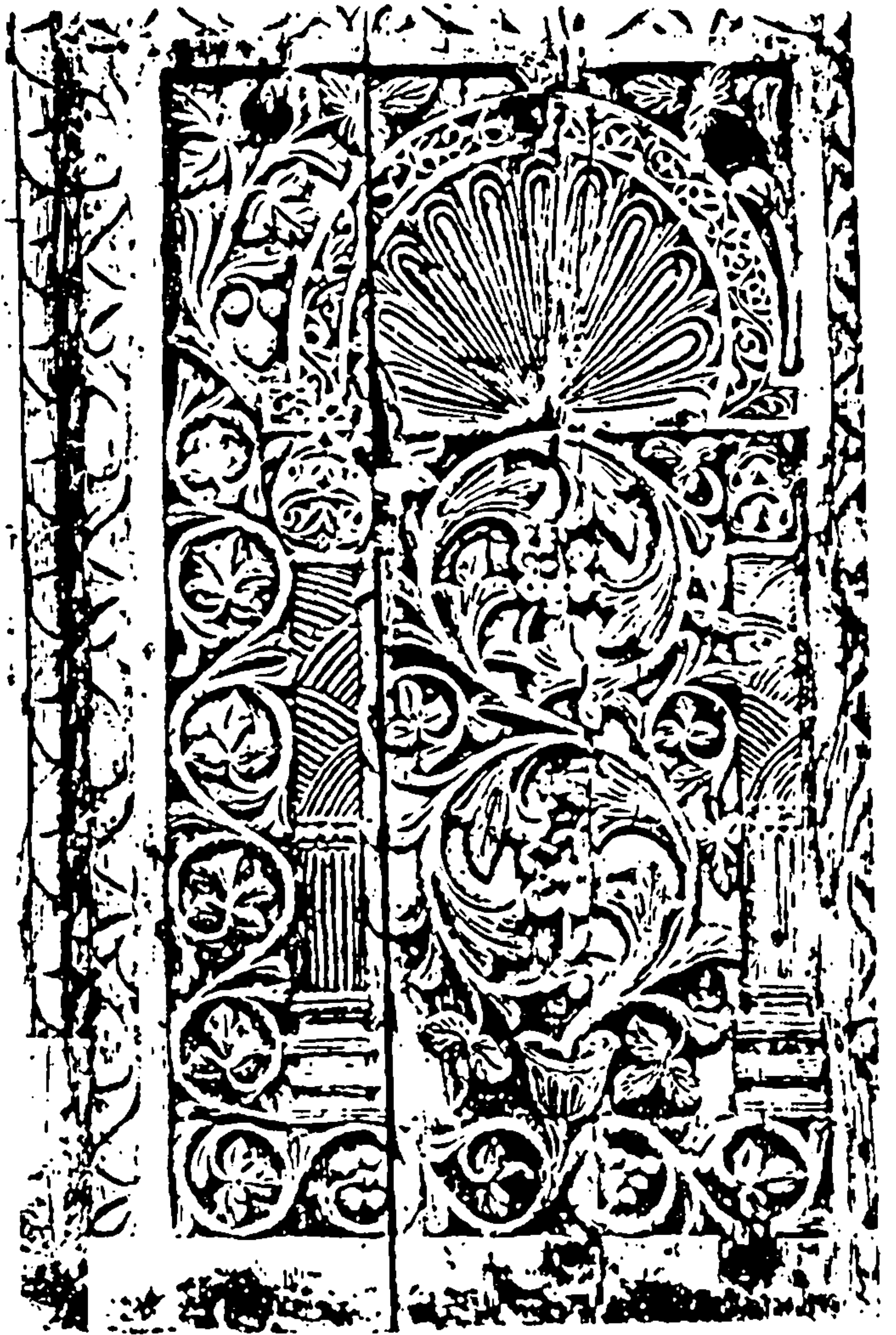


Fig 22. Examples of Islamic ornamentation on different surfaces.

Much before *arabesque* developed as the main visual manner of expression, artists in the Middle East have been treating writing and painting as two branches of the same art which are also visually complementary. Both painting and writing in the Middle East region are simply exercises in delineation. This is not surprising as the early attempts at writing, like hieroglyphs for example, were offshoots from pictorial representations. Furthermore, "Writing was used for millennia in the pre-Islamic Mesopotamian cultures as a component of the visual arts".(55) The same phenomenon is seen in Ancient Egypt, for also there "writing was used as a logical accompaniment to explain the meaning of a visual representation."(56) For this old cohabitation to continue and even to metamorphose into a unique visual language during the Islamic era, is a particularly normal progression.(57) [fig 23]

The pre-eminence of outline in the Islamic visual expression, even where human figures, animals and plants are portrayed, allows it to interweave with the discursive styles of Arabic script in order to produce a harmonious decorative effect. However, it is of interest to us to remember that the term painting which emphasises the act of spreading colour is actually referred to in Arabic as *naqsh* which actually means design figurative or abstract.(58)

If one looks at the *arabesque* design closely, one realises that it is made up of abstract motifs which as individual units look very static indeed, but when they are arranged in a continuous sequence, the design looks growing and dynamic. Oleg Grabar suggests that instead of understanding *arabesque* as a form perhaps we may almost consider it as an idea. He explains further that the uniqueness of the *arabesque* "was almost never in the radical invention of new forms, but rather in a way of treating forms which itself may have been the result of a way of seeing man's creation. It is therefore more of an idea, a "structure", or a mode than it is a style."(59)

As the present chapter is concerned with highlighting the peculiarities of visual expression which lend specific focus to the performance arts of the Middle East, let us recapitulate the characteristics which have been transposed from the visual to other mediums of expression. The most important approach to two-dimensional surfaces is obviously abstraction and denaturalisation, not only of the natural shapes to be used in a composition, but also in the application of this composition to any object in order to cause transformation to the surface of this object. A composition is usually formed by rhythmic repetition and successive



Fig 23. Examples of Islamic ornamentation using calligraphy.

combination of motifs and modules in a manner which generates the quality of infinity, of that which is beyond space-time. In fact, such a composition is bound to be dynamic, for the eye of the viewer has to follow the evolving ornamental patterns through their several foci leading to no distinguishable beginning or conclusive end in order to comprehend the art work. The process of viewing and comprehending serially and cumulatively an Islamic visual creation reflects the complex temporal and spatial nature of this art.

It is reasonable to conclude that visual images in the Middle East over the past five thousand years have always been used as a vehicle for ideology and continuity. This is equally true of the ancient Egyptian, Mesopotamian and Islamic cultures as they all communicated their important messages visually.

3.4.6 Abstraction, denaturalisation and narration

I have attempted to highlight the varieties of historical, intellectual, functional and aesthetic components which appear to have contributed to the performance arts of the Middle East. The tremendous range in time and geographical space under discussion has a valid reason: basically, abstraction is the nature of artistic creativity and aesthetic sensibility which transcend time and place of its germination. This nature has survived in the cultural materials and aesthetic creativity of the region in its visual and verbal expressions as we have tried to outline above.

It would be presumptuous to claim that this is the most comprehensive way of looking at the ingredients which constitute the Middle Eastern performing arts today. In setting down some of the comprehensive features of the visual and verbal modes of expression which evolved over the past five millennia, I am trying to sense the possible direction in which modes of expression in the Middle East could be expanding in the future. Over the past five thousand years the people of the region have encountered great historical upheavals: waves of immigration, new ideologies, wars, new geographical areas, mixing with different ethnic communities, etc. However, all this did not change the basic artistic turn of mind towards abstraction, denaturalisation and narration. One is bound to believe that the space and time the Arabs are living in today will not prove to be drastically different from what they have experienced before. Probably it is just another phase in which the peoples of the region are acclimatising and assimilating the industrial, intellectual and artistic products arriving from the West

and will eventually select only the features which are more suitable for them. Of course, the range of influence and change is accelerating day by day. However, the fundamental question remains: will this phase be more effective in bringing a decisive change to the 5000 year old artistic and cultural inclinations which have forged the visual and verbal forms that identify the products of the region?

Western cultural products are a component of the Middle Eastern contemporary reality. The Hellenistic cultural products and before them the Persian amongst others were also at the time contemporary realities. Therefore one questions further - are the historical circumstances today so basically different as to allow this phase to influence the underlying structures of the ecological setting in the region?

Every time the peoples in the region were faced with references from a new culture they attempted to reformulate the dynamics from which their culture is constructed. When we discuss the visual and verbal representations of a culture, certainly we are talking about something which is dynamically constructing and reconstructing itself all the time. However, in the process it is always selecting elements which are true to the aesthetic and moral values of the peoples involved.

An eminent feature of the visual arts of the Middle Eastern region is the limited interest in and not the absence of three-dimensional figure representation. Authorities in the field of Islamic art put forward explanations such as "it is apparent that Muhammad linked statues with pagan idols",⁽⁶⁰⁾ or that it is "a reaction against the naturalism and verisimilitude of Hellenic art".⁽⁶¹⁾

There are many good religious and cultural reasons for Middle Eastern artists not to seek fulfilment of expression in plastic arts except through architecture. However, a telling argument is the one we find in the Qur'an where Allah refers to Himself as a *Mussawir*, the fashioner, for "He it is who shapes you in the womb as he pleases".^(Qur'an: 3:5) A Muslim artist or craftsman does not contemplate imitating the creation of God and by avoiding three dimensional representation he is safe from such venture. The depth dimension is associated with the illusion of life, while the two dimensional impression is alien to life. And if there is one thing the Middle Eastern artist has realised long ago in antiquity, it is that he cannot create life, enjoying it is the most he hopes to achieve.

The attempts to explain why artists over the last 5000 years did not express themselves through the three-dimensional medium of sculpture are unsatisfactory. They ignore those individuals and groups of artists and poets who broke the rules of the Book and continued to be productive and creative. However, one must question what is it that sculpture does not express but which the Middle Eastern artist has been able to articulate in painting or any other two-dimensional media? Perhaps we should consider here the limitations of the plastic image and the sort of ideas one can express in a piece of sculpture.

Both types of expression, two and three-dimensional, deal with space and time. A three-dimensional form is crystallised in space and embodies an image or a statement arrested in time, it is often the moment the artist declares it ready for display. In a parallel manner, a two-dimensional representation is static in both space and time the minute it is committed to a two-dimensional surface. What is it then that renders the three-dimensional medium unfulfilling to the Middle Eastern artist? Could there be a conflict somewhere between the form of expression and the content to be articulated which renders sculpture a less appropriate vehicle for communicating the artist's mind?

Having surveyed a mass of visual images representative of the artefacts of the Middle Eastern region over the past five millennia, it is possible to suggest that however the vocabulary of visual presentation varied and differed, it almost always articulates a narrative. The outline or the events of the narrative are constructed or organised by means of lines and colour. To express a narrative in mass and colour could prove to be problematic on many levels such as the light angles, weight, space availability, etc.

In prehistoric times, man intuitively knew that the images he created on the walls of his cave were on a parallel plane to the mental images he formed in his mind of the three-dimensional forms outside the cave. Two-dimensional images are always on a parallel plane to our mental abstract images; however three-dimensional images correspond to the different dimensions of all our senses united.

The decisive element then is not in the form of expression but in the nature of the content which is to be articulated. When the content's nature is multi-faceted/multi-phasic, there is a story line to be followed. The narrative unfolds itself through dots, lines, motifs and colours. Had the content been simpler in

nature or mono-faceted, probably it would have been more suitably expressed in mass and colour.

I propose that the nature of the content is the element which has been determining the mode of visual communication artists have been employing. For the past five thousand years artists in the Middle East have been narrating all sorts of stories and events on every two-dimensional surface within their reach. Their vision of the world and of life is constructed through a wide angle lens, they like to keep a distance from events in order to study the relationships between the elements. A close-up shot could serve as one of the sequences or episodes but it is never a substitute for the whole.

The narrative approach to interpreting life does not manifest itself only on the two-dimensional surfaces in images and scriptures, but is also present in oral verbal traditions as well as in music. A narrative statement, whether expressed in images, scripture or sound demonstrates an underlying dynamic performance. This is because it takes for granted the involvement of a viewer, reader, or listener and between them the narration unfolds. Simultaneously, they display a dynamic interaction which controls the unfolding of the sequences of the story.

Let us look again at the mosaics of the Dome of the Rock. [figs 18 and 19] What we notice at a first glance is only that which we recognise. Every time we identify a clue another level in the narrative unfolds itself. Sometimes we jump to the next motif if we feel frustrated, or we may altogether stop looking at the pictures if we cannot respond to what we see. Nevertheless, the visual narrative in all its dimensions is actually there. It is only the interplay with the viewer which will determine the levels at which it could unfold and extend. Perception is the soul of narrative. The Pharaohs learned long ago that unless the ka recognises the ba they would never meet for the journey of life after death.

It is basically the dialogic nature of narrative which allows a mutual display of power between the textual fabric on view and the viewer, the music and the listener, the scripture and the reader. Signs in a picture are motivated by our recognition of them, the sequences of the narration unfold only if the viewer responds by reading the signs. The relationship is hence of a spiral nature, its curves flow as a result of the ongoing dialogue between the partners, but it freezes if one of the partners wills it.

Artists and performers in the Middle East region from ancient times to date have always enjoyed sharing their interpretations about creation and creator, life and death, as well as everyday life, through chronicled compositions. This mode of communication seems to have fulfilled their aesthetic need for continuous reaction and interaction. The visual and verbal arts in the Middle East aim beyond putting various levels of information and interpretations into shape, they seek to initiate interaction and participation from the viewers and audiences.

3.5 The significance of images in the verbal languages of the people of the Middle East

3.5.1 Interrelationship between sign and verbal language

The art of writing and the tradition of literary excellence had been developed by the Semitic peoples of the Middle East since ancient times. In the same manner in which inscription and representational images complemented one another in unfolding the meaning of an artistic visual production, so imagery and vocabulary supplemented one another in cultivating a literary production. The power of images to communicate ideas is equally intricate in visual and verbal language. The structure of Semitic languages is naturally related to thought processes and visual expression; they display a dynamic interrelationship between language and meaning on one hand, and images and imagination on the other.

We have good reasons to believe that sign language and gesture were the earliest modes of expression Man developed to communicate his thoughts and emotions. Visual signs, by their nature, impose certain clarity, precision and economy which verbal language aspires to match.

A sign expressing an idea has to be distinctly visible, but words expressing the same idea may not be as conspicuous because the relationship between the words and the idea is not observable in sight. The depiction of gestures and visual signs as a precise form of vocabulary is evident in Pharaonic and Mesopotamian two-dimensional visual representations. This same precision is also depicted in a later period in Islamic paintings and book illustrations as we shall see in the next chapter. Gesture, to this very day, is a significant component of the oral language of the peoples of the Middle East.

In their effort to match the clarity and precision of sign language, Semitic languages have developed profuse vocabulary which allows composers in prose

or poetry a great choice. Al-Faruqis tell us that Semitic languages show precision and distinctness which contribute considerably to brevity of expression. Arabic in particular has generated connotative shades of meaning to an ultimate degree, giving a different name for each detailed change in a situation, for example, every hour of the day and night has an individual name.(62)

3.5.2 Stylistic features developing from ancient oral tradition

The artistic nature of ancient Semites found expression through the oral medium of communication. Speech in both Arabic and Hebrew, for example, constitutes the finest mode of self-expression and probably the most rewarding. Through oral communication ancient Semites expressed forcefully and elegantly words of wisdom, thoughts about life, death, love, beauty, war, legends and myths. Fortunately, the clay tablets which survived from Mesopotamia give us an idea about the structure of the literary works which are committed to clay in cuneiform. The existence of various versions of the same work reflect wide transmission through oral communication, the *Epic of Gilgamesh* being a case in point where Sumerian and Akkadian tablets uncover different episodes or versions belonging to the same epic.(63)

The literary heritage of Mesopotamia is varied and rich, it also demonstrates certain dominant trends which can be traced for a long time to come in the literary product of the region. A particular Sumerian literary tradition which has survived is the *Dialogue Text*. Henrietta McCall describes it as a:

form of popular entertainment, which may even have been enacted or recited at court, whereby opposing points of view were put forward by two personified contestants who argued their respective merits, e.g. The Tamarisk and the Palm, the grain and the wheat, the Ox and the Horse, Summer and Winter. These texts followed a stereotyped form; after an introduction saying who the disputants were and how they fitted into the great cosmological order, the grounds of their particular argument were established. Then came the contest proper, during which each side extolled its own merits while pointing out the failings of its adversary.(64)

Of course, refereeing such arguments was best performed by the gods. This style can also be traced in parts of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* as well as in the *Babylonian Theodicy Texts* where a sceptic and a pious man present their views

on life. The same type of dialogue is known to have been transmitted in the Arabian Peninsula since *Jahiliyya* between poets of different tribes,(65) then between poets of rival courts during the early Islamic era; it continues today in the shape of *zajal* whereby poets contest with one another verbally in live performances in a public place, on radio or television.

The *Epic of Gilgamesh* also carries some characteristic features in its structure which can be traced in later literary work. An outstanding peculiarity may be detected in the episodic construction of the narrative poems where the individual compositions are of a non-developmental nature. Each episode gives the parallel impression of its own infinity, it is not determined by the one before and it does not define the one after. Each story has to bring out a moral, for it is from this aspect that the treasured value of literature extends. Surely when we are talking about literature in these old times we are not referring to a written work, for most probably the tablets are only a later documentation of stories which existed for a long time in oral form and were transmitted and developed across the Fertile Crescent by skilled narrators.

Some representative stylistic techniques can be outlined in the ancient poems. For instance, we have devices such as punning and word play, alliteration, rhetorical questions, building up of tension through repetition with slight variation and use of formulaic lines.(66) Most of these techniques are to continue later in the oral traditions of the region. For instance, the *Thousand and One Nights*, the *Tale of Buluqiya*, and *Sindibad the Sailor* use not only similar stylistic techniques but also "show clearly that traditional tales are re-used and adapted for different ethnic and geographical settings by ancient and medieval story-tellers".(67)

At the centre of the earliest epic in history, we have Gilgamesh the cult hero and his perilous journeys. The journey motif constitutes an inspirational framework in the Middle Eastern oral tradition. It has been developed into a most popular narrative form where accounts of events and adventures, often of a dramatic nature, are constructed in units which express an imaginary, contemporary or historical situation, in the underworld or on land beyond reality, and allows morals to be drawn consistently in every version or nuance of the story. The journey motif allows for an open-ended structure where stops and characters can be improvised en route to accommodate a specific occasion or to introduce a new concept.

Rhymed speech, it is agreed, is much easier to commit to memory. Hence, the best known oral literature of the ancient Semites is found in the form of psalms and odes which were often sung with musical accompaniment. The ancient Semites realised early on that to carry one's ideas, tradition and culture in the mind across the desert and fertile land is much more practical than to commit it to any material. Probably it was the nomadic lifestyle in ancient times that pushed the Semites to concentrate on developing their language and memory skills long before they got involved in developing writing skills when they settled with other people and were exposed to new cultures.

Pre-Islamic Arabia believed the beauty of man lies in the eloquence of his tongue. The *Jahiliyya* literature is full of odes which are quite complex in construction and elaborate in description. Poets were considered the heroes of their tribes, they documented in their poetical compositions their tribes' genealogies, battles, raids, courage, hospitality and love songs all from the poet's point of view. However, the poet expressing his thoughts and emotions about an event in the past for example, "does not try to evoke a real past but only its shadowy memory, elaborating it with bubbling fantasy and by stressing it with brilliant but fleeting executed descriptions the mere ephemeral aspects of the event".(68) (sic) Ancient Bedouin poetry was restricted to few genre, such as praise, lament of the dead, insult-poem of enemy tribes, etc. The *qasidah* is the most famous of these genre and it is structured to cover a fixed series of subjects. It opens with regrets over a past love affair and the traces of the beloved's encampment in the desert, followed by description of the desert environment and the poet's mount, leading to some verses on self-praise and may round up with praise of the poet's patron.

Poets were the tribes' propaganda machine at the fairs and during pilgrimage. Pre-Islamic Arabs nurtured no other art above the rhymed magic of words, therefore it is in the field of poetical expression that they excelled. Poets were rewarded generously by the courts, patrons or the tribes they represented, and often professional reciters were hired to carry the poems throughout Arabia.(69) These narrators of poetry were eventually accepted as independent performers and living references of literary style and poetic usage.(70) Providing a platform for poetic performances in the ancient tribal fairs contributed greatly to the advancement of the Arabic language during *Jahiliyya*. This contribution was made in both the power of expression and the grammatical structure of the Arabic language. In addition, it also contributed a lot to unifying the different Arabian dialects.

3.5.3 The contribution of the Qur'an to artistic verbal expression

With the advent of Islam,(71) it was obvious that the language of the Arabians had already reached a high level of complexity. When the Prophet Muhammad recited verses from the Qur'an, he was accused of being a poet who used rhymed magic. And to prove that the verses were a revelation from God, Muhammad had to challenge the most celebrated poets of Arabia to deliver compatible utterances. The Prophet was aware of the eminence of oral communication to the people of Arabia, he even resorted to the *Fair of 'Ukaz* where the hero-poets recited their odes.(72) The miraculous feature of the compositional style and powerful rhetoric known as *ījaz* (the power to incapacitate), is what Muhammad argued for at the literary congress 'Ukaz. Hitti comments in this context that the "triumph of Islam was to a certain extent the triumph of a language, more particularly of a book".(73)

The Qur'an after all is not composed in poetry as defined by the ancient Arab poetic technical sense, rather it takes the form of *saġ* (rhyming prose). Poets of ancient Arabia followed fixed types of rhythmic patterns, or meters in constructing their poems. As the major fine art of the region, poetry "was the one great art adopted from pre-Islamic Arabia".(74) For the rhyming prose of the Qur'an to impress the most sophisticated poets of Arabia as magic, it must have offered a challenge in construction and meaning beyond their imagination. The Qur'an makes the best use of a characteristic feature in the Arabic language, the tri consonant root of words, to produce words which can echo each other, thus displaying how parallelism of sense very readily produces parallelism of sound.(75) As a result, this quality was henceforth reinforced in Arabic literature.

The *ījaz* style of the Qur'an is not only in the structure of phrases and the sense and sound of its words. Sayyid Qutb claims that the Qur'an's power of expression is based on its use of artistic imagery.(76) It is the expression through artistic images which appealed as rhymed magic to the Arabians and made an equal impression on those who came to believe it as well as on those who did not. The images in the Qur'an stimulate the intellect in addition to the senses and therefore the impact is always overwhelming on the reader or the listener.

Isma'il al-Faruqi labels the Qur'anic revelation as "the first Work of Art in Islam".(77) Essentially the Qur'an is devised in a manner to be appreciated both

on an intellectual and a sonorous level, as it combines stylistic prose and interspersed rhyme. The Qur'an is arranged in *suwar* (chapters), which are composed of *ayat* (verses). There is no rhyme or reason which decides the sequence of the *ayat* or *suwar*. Each verse is autonomous in its own concept and construction. Repeating the pattern of the individually integral verses generates the momentum for infinity. The Qur'an,(78) in spite of the chapter division, is not read or indeed recited from beginning to end, on the contrary the reader is guided by chance to recite whatever section, *ma tayassara*, (what transpires).(79) The enjoyment of hearing the Qur'an intensifies with hearing verses one after another of different length and in different metric patterns. The flow is parallel to that of the *taqasim* (musical solo pieces) in Arabian music and the *arabesque* in Islamic visual art, and like them it is not developmental in its narrative and its units are not arranged topically or chronologically. Each chapter, *sura*, begins with a *bismilla*, a set formula which carries the pronouncement: "In the name of Allah the Merciful the Compassionate". This formula is also used by Muslims to start any work or project.

In the Qur'an we find reference to stories from various cultures and times. However, the purpose of using stories in the Qur'an is not narrative but plainly didactic and moralistic. Hodgson tells us that the stories recounted in the Qur'an

come not as consecutive narratives but rather in the form of reminders of episodes which are often presumed to be known to the audience - reminders which point up the implications of the episode for faith with little concern otherwise for continuity.(80)

Also references to certain events or concepts are not treated in one segment of the Qur'an but appear in more than one verse as if the reference is repeated. The structure of *ayat* and *suwar*, literary modules, repeats to form *ushr*, or ten *ayat*, series of the *ushr* make *rub*, a quarter; four successive quarters constitute a *hizb*, and two *ahzab* form a section or *juz'*. The Qur'an is a perfect example of infinite patterning as it is the cumulative sum of thirty successive *juz'*.(81) This infinite patterning was to influence all future creations in the literary arts, the visual arts and even the arts of sound and movement.(82)

The Qur'an consists of powerful moving images which describe the moral responsibilities of human beings and paints both reward and punishment in the most vivid colours. Also by using vigorous images, the Qur'an informs us about God's signs mainly as a supernaturally pure light which can suggest a genuine mystical experience:

God is the light of the heavens and the earth;
 the likeness of His Light is as a niche
 wherein is a lamp
 (the lamp in a glass,
 the glass as it were a glittering star)
 Kindled from a Blessed Tree,
 an olive that is neither of the East nor of the West,
 whose oil nigh well would shine, even if no fire touched it;
 Light upon Light;
 (God guides to His Light whom He will). (Qur'an 24:35)

This most lyrical description of divine luminosity is used to remind those who have lost divine guidance of the bad destination awaiting them in Hell, so that they may know the difference, and know what to expect as a result of their choice. As the Qur'an itself is a sign of the unseen divine who describes himself as the light of heavens and the earth, this divine image has been translated visually in the mosques, "the divine presence is symbolised by the hanging lamp, a powerful image invoked by the Koranic verses".(83)

In this discussion it is important to underline the continuing inclination for abstraction even in verbal construction. The Qur'an's literary structure demonstrates rejection of chronicle account development, refers to events segmentally in a didactic and moralistic tone, and has its *suwar* arranged with the longer, more prose-like near the beginning, and the shorter, strongly poetic *suwar* towards the end. The Qur'an is a model for using modules of different lengths and combinations which give an impression of infinity. Refrain phrases and lines recur to enforce a message or merely an aesthetic pattern of speech. A full appreciation of the Qur'an may result from a serial process of perception, no one can grasp it all at once.(84)

The content of the Qur'an uncovers a further inherent abstract quality. Ishtiaq Qureshi explains that "Islam claims neither the monopoly of truth nor originality, but it does claim to be the essence of truth and religion".(85) According to the Qur'an, men have reached or been given insight into some of the manifold facets of truth, but Islam has found the common elements and incorporated them in its teachings. This is an "effort at abstraction, going from so many particulars to a common element".(86)

3.5.4 Weaving literal visual images based on the Qur'an

The *isra'* and *mir'raj* story has developed as a symbol of a dual nature, verbal and visual. The first reference to the night journey is found in the Qur'an in the

chapter bearing that title. "Glorified be He who carried His servant (Muhammad) by night from the *masjid al-haram* (Makka) to the *masjid al-aqsa* (the farthest place of worship)." (Qur'an: 17.1) This is a meagre reference to an event intended to create an astounding shock to the Prophet who needed reassurance from God.(87) Only the *isra'* part of the journey is mentioned in the Qur'an, however; our literal visual images of the Ascension are actually based on the descriptions found in the Prophet's biographies.

The Prophet's night journey to Jerusalem and ascent to heaven is thought to have taken place during the first decade of the Prophet receiving the Qur'anic revelation. Muslim theologians are divided between two positions: some believe the night journey to be purely an abstract and transcendental reference, while others believe it is concrete and imminent. The fact that the Qur'an just hinted at it in one single verse, triggered the imagination of biographers, artists and story tellers to weave the details in a textual fabric acceptable within the *tawhid* principle. Of course the characters, the imagery and the motifs were selected mainly from the Qur'an, the *hadith* (tradition), the life of the Prophet Muhammad and earlier prophets, and also historical characters mentioned in the Qur'an. The story of the Ascension is woven in a manner to emphasise the aim God set for this journey "so that We might show him Our signs".(Qur'an: 17:1) Hence, it was these 'signs' which were interpreted by the imagination of the writers and the collectors of the Prophet's biographies. To start we have *Buraq*, a sort of mythological creature with wings and face of a woman to carry the Prophet from Makka to Jerusalem, then on to heaven and back. The Archangel Gabriel is introduced as the guide in the Ascension journey to heaven. The description of the different levels in heaven is inspired from the detailed descriptions in the Qur'an of paradise and hell. All human and prophetic characters Muhammad meets are familiar to us also from the Qur'an, and so are the various angels and the devils.(88)

As mentioned above, Gabriel accompanies Muhammad on his journey to heaven and introduces him to the different levels and places in heaven as well as to the different characters present there. Muhammad is portrayed as curious to know who is who and why certain characters are behaving in a certain manner, while Gabriel is presented as the knowledgeable guide who is always ready to explain. The story is constructed in units parallel to the levels of heaven and to particular places where they stop to meet a character or contemplate some miraculous scenery. All the time we are following in detail what they see and who they meet

through their dialogue and the comments of the characters when they are introduced to the Prophet. Here is of course an occasion to put words in the mouth of the important characters praising the Prophet and his message.

The last episode in this long journey in heaven is when the Prophet meets God who announces that he values Muhammad above all other prophets. God also sets the main religious obligations of a Muslim including fifty prayers every day. On his way back Muhammad relates to Moses his meeting with God, and Moses convinces Muhammad to appeal to God to have the number of the daily prayers reduced, and after referring to God a few times the number of prayers is reduced to five per day.

To conclude the journey Muhammad is carried by *Buraq* back to Jerusalem, and from there, *Buraq* delivers him to Makka. The journey from Makka to Jerusalem and back is not as elaborate as the one to heaven, but there we have a full circle. The episodes of the *isra'* and *mi'raj* have developed as an oral tradition, and later were written and illustrated in many versions. The stories are a mixture of folk imagination from the various extremes of the Muslim world, learned interpretation based on the Prophet's sayings, and Qur'anic verbal images on the different subjects concerned. The Muslim *sufis* took great interest in the journey as a transcendental reference. And many painters mainly from Persia and Anatolia illustrated the text with figure representations of *Buraq*, Gabriel and all the Prophets including Muhammad.

In our context, the significance of the *isra'* and *mi'raj* story rests in its form. It has been constructed using episodes of different length, with various characters, and different settings. They all have one thread connecting them: the 'signs' God is showing to His Prophet. Each sign or story has its own moral. We are learning all the time from the characters or from Gabriel about what they have done to deserve being in Hell or in Paradise. The cumulative sum of all these morals constitutes the impact these 'signs' are intended to have on the Prophet and hence the readers, audience or viewers.

An important feature concerning these episodes is that they have no cause and effect line of progression. They are units constructed one after the other, we could drop one or add some and it would not change the general storyline. We are aware from the beginning that the storyline can develop in any direction, the sequence of the units is not what keeps them together; besides, they do not

build up towards a climax. Even though the meeting with God is towards the end, it is not a peak which enhances change, in fact by the time we get to it it is just one more unit - rather, sign. It has the same dialogic structure, the same vocabulary of imagery, and it confirms the special status assigned to Muhammad in comparison with all God's creatures. The structure of the episodes is very much in the style of ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian narrative tradition which has no dramatic climax but a flow of consecutive scenes expanding on different registers.

3.5.5 The *Maqamat*: Verbal Acrobatics

Maqamat is the plural of *maqama* which means a literary session or assembly whereby a man of letters comments on events, or relates stories to a group of people. Eventually *maqama* came to signify a characteristic form of Arabic literary and dramatic prose composition in which the author uses rhymed prose and flowery diction to display his linguistic ability, learning and eloquence. Poetry always remained the highest means of expression for Arabic speaking peoples. For this reason, Pellat explains, as more authors and scribes became engaged in prose writing, they tended to introduce devices associated with poetry in order to give prose a literary character. They used poetic ornaments like introducing rhymes between phrases of diverse length, and by resorting to the tropes which are abundant in Arabic. Hence, ornamental and rhyming prose became the norm in all literary domains and it even extended to works on technical subjects. However, at the time the *maqamat* were enjoyed by all, a simple prose story known as *hikaya*, meaning representation of reality, seems to have evolved without much notice; its subject matter was centred around the life of city dwellers.(89)

The *maqama* as a literary genre started evolving in the 9th Century with al-Jahiz, (died 868 or 869 A.D.), who delighted in telling, in prose, anecdotes about misers in order to illustrate technical points of good style. Then Ibn Durayd (died in 933 A.D.) also used rhymed prose for a compilation of stories based on Bedouin life style.(90)

However, Badi' al-Zaman al-Hamadhani, (968-1008 A.D.), is the one considered to be the originator of the genre. In form, the *maqama* evolved, at least in part, as a response to several noble genre of Arabic literature, among which James Monroe singles out prophetic *hadith* (traditions), and *sira* (epic/romance).(91) Of

al-Hamadhani's four hundred *maqamat* only fifty two have reached us.(92) These *maqamat* can be viewed conveniently as an open-ended composition to which new episodes can be added without disturbing the overall structure, as each episode is completely independent in its space, events and moral. The two main characters are the link between all the *maqamat*.

The material of the *maqamat* is taken from the stories of vagabonds and beggars, which became very popular starting from the second half of the 9th Century. The *maqamat* are centred around two main characters: the narrator 'Isa Ibn Hisham and the hero Abu al-Fatih al-Iskandari. al-Hamadhani evokes the traditional structure of the *hadith* by starting the *maqamat* with "Isa Ibn Hisham related to us/me and said..." In imitation of the *hadith* tradition, al-Hamadhani names the transmitter Ibn Hisham and proceeds to the message.(93) Monroe points out to us that in providing a transmission that parodies the *hadith* form, al-Hamadhani "designed to put us on our guard against accepting without question its claims to moral authority or historical veracity".(94) Following the opening formula of the narrator, we move to the setting where the story takes place, then we have an encounter of the two characters Ibn Hisham with the disguised rogue al-Iskandari. In this part, Iskandari's recounting of his deceitful adventures allows him to display his literary wit. With the discovery of the truth and the justification of the rogue the *maqama* comes to an end and the group departs only to meet again in a different setting, mosque, public bath, etc., where Iskandari feigns another role. In the last *maqama* Iskandari has grown old and decides to repent in spite of his awareness of the absurdity of his last minute repentance. It is clear that al-Hamadhani designed to have us distanced from the very beginning so that we listen objectively to what this rogue is saying.

In al-Hamadhani's *maqamat* there are references to controversial contemporary issues pertaining to literary, social, religious and philosophical aspects of Middle Eastern life in the 10th Century. Some *maqamat* parody the heroic epics and romance tradition of Arabs and Persians. In the opening *maqama* a conference on Arabic literature is held. The arguments about the philosophical doctrines of determinism and divine justice are implied in some discussion in the *maqamat*. Islam's charitable attitude towards beggars is what Iskandari takes advantage of, forgetting the moral views against begging. He even blames his misery on Fate, hence pointing further to the paradox of predestination versus free will. Shiite and Sunnite customs are also a theme for disputation between the characters.

After al-Hamadhani, many writers set forth to imitate the *maqamat*. However, they did not simply take notice of their picaresque narrative form: but they also realised they are an effective means to put on a display of verbal acrobatics for the teaching of Arabic vocabulary. Al-Hariri, 1054-1122 A.D., composed his fifty *maqamat* with the sole aim of demonstrating his virtuosity in both prose and poetry. Like al-Hamadhani, al-Hariri depicts two main characters, a narrator al-Harith Ibn Hammam and a trickster-hero Abu Zayd al-Suruji. The fifty *maqamat* are built around stories of dubious characters who live on the margin of society and use all sorts of tricks imaginable to misrepresent reality for the sake of earning a living. Al-Hariri's *maqamat* are composed along the same lines of al-Hamadhani's, in that the narrator always happens to be in the same place as the hero, and for a while is convinced by the character, but only after he receives charity is his real identity discovered. Again, here the setting changes with every *maqama* and so does the character of the hero. It is through the narrator that we learn about the place and the characters involved and are told the story of how the hero impresses the crowd and tricks them into giving him some charity. Al-Harith, in al-Hariri's *maqamat*, is to a certain extent a passive narrator, unlike al-Hamadhani's Ibn Hisham who takes part in the events of some of the *maqamat*, for instance in the Baghdadian *maqama* Ibn Hisham emulates al-Suruji by turning into a beggar himself.

Like al-Hamadhani, al-Hariri's *maqamat* take their name from the place or the city in which the events occur; otherwise, they refer to the subject which the hero chooses to deal with. Al-Harith opens a *maqama* by telling us where he happens to be, or that he just reached Morocco, Wasit or Samarkand with no indication or sense of purpose for the journey. Besides, we have examples such as the dinar *maqama* in which the hero praises then insults the piece of money known as the dinar. All the *maqamat* heroes indulge in mendacity of all shades and colours, they use wit and learning to attract their victims only to seek their help out of whatever problems they make up. By choosing heroes who seem cultured and articulate but would seek trickery and mendacity for a living, al-Hamadhani and al-Hariri probably aimed to parody the status of most of the men of letters who by working in the Caliph's or prince's courts had to play hypocrites to ensure their income. We can also sense the same attitude towards preachers, judges and qadis whose words and deeds are not quite complementary. The theme of repentance was popular in those days, therefore no hero/rogue could escape it. (see Appendix III)

The *maqamat* are very good commentaries on the society in the medieval Muslim world. We have a procession of two dimensional characters who represent types of people one is likely to meet in places such as a courtroom, asylum, cemetery, mosque, etc. Even the heroes of the *maqamat* remain representatives of craftiness and deceit without revealing any other dimension to their own character. A *maqama* ranges in length from one page to a few pages and it has a very fast tempo which is a result of very precise choice of words and very tight sentence structure.

Time and space in the *maqamat* appear incoherent and atomistic. Moreover, the episodes are not arranged in a chronological sequence which reflect development in the general story, in fact the transposition of events in time and space is very chaotic.

The circular composition of the *maqamat* is a characteristic feature, and in this it seems consistently parallel to the structure of the *arabesque* modules and the structure of *muwashshah* songs (a strophic poem performed with music and comprising repeated rondo-like returns to a musical refrain). On the general thematic level, the reference to appearance as opposed to reality is very reminiscent of the visibly unreal quality evoked by the *arabesque* design on any surface. Many scholars in the field of Arabic performance arts believe the *maqamat* were narrated rather than performed, and that the narrators of *maqamat* naturally used devices such as gestures and changing tones of voice.(95)

Al-Hariri's *maqamat* have attracted artists to illustrate the stories, the best known among them being al-Wasiti. Speaking is the most common action in the *maqamat*, and he cleverly depicted the characters making vivacious gestures and poses. The setting is also emphasised, as it helps to clarify the relationship of the figures and their gestures. The illustrations, like the *maqamat*, serve as a description of social life in the 10th Century. The use of images is strong verbally and visually and is one of the stylisation forms typical of the Middle East way of expression. In Chapter 4 we will have a further look at the generating power behind these images in various mediums.

3.6 Alienation

Abstraction as a mode of expression is a basic and recurrent quality in Middle Eastern art. In the case of the visual arts, for example, the choice of artists and

artisans to highly stylise the elements of their compositions quite consistently over a long period of time reflects distinct recognition on one hand of natural elements as found in reality or as created by the gods or God, and on the other man's interpretation of these elements of nature. It also reflects great sensibility to the various levels of existence in life and consequently to the multiple possibilities of interpretation of life.

As we have seen earlier in this chapter, the choice to stylise elements of natural and human forms instead of duplicating naturalistically such forms indicates a position in which the artist prefers to keep some distance, not in a spatial sense, in order to be able to depict objectively the distinguishable properties ingrained in the object. In fact, since the times of the Pharaohs and Mesopotamians, visual artists chose to depict the generalised concept of the category of the object or the human form being represented. Hence the human or object is associated with the category of abstract qualities it carries; it is depersonalised and its individual existence is denied. A representation in this style is more of a visual parallel to the artist's concept of the category not of the individual sample. And to form such a concept and apply it to material, the artist keeps some distance from his work so as not to confuse it with reality at any stage. Naturally, the artist's departure point vis-à-vis his work is consequently adopted by the viewers.

With abstraction there is obviously no attempt at imitation of natural forms. Instead there exists an acknowledgement of the laws and the qualities inherent in the real form which allows for a conscious decision to make the representation visibly unreal.

As we have discussed earlier, this manner of interpreting visual images started as far back as the Ancient Egyptians. Egyptian graphic representations show us that "the artist painted what he knew was there not necessarily as it appeared to him".(96) Some compositions show elements presented from a bird's eye view next to a figure presented in both frontal and profile views. The artist is representing his subject conceptually rather than visually.

Fascination with abstraction as an approach to representation grew stronger with time, especially as the relation between a living form and its representation became clearer. In very early civilisations there existed no comprehensible differentiation between a living creature and its image. The power artists have over the images they create has lost its magic, and the process of making

images has developed into a conscious need to create harmony between the intellectual and the aesthetic. As we approach the present era, this trend has become more prominent. Under Islam, abstraction evolved as the rule to approaching all visual representation in all fields of science, astrology, religion and art because Islam allows no borders in the different activities of man's life. All aspects of man's life are regulated under Islam, therefore the notion of abstraction touches all fields.

As a result of Islamic teachings, the Middle Eastern obsession with abstraction has been confirmed further in all artistic expressions. The Islamic civilisation chose as a primary medium of visual communication calligraphy, a purely abstract mode of expression. This preoccupation with calligraphy is matched with fascination in simple geometrical patterns and conventional floral motifs, both of which reduce the forms and shapes found in nature to combinations of curves and straight lines in order to articulate their essence. The same rule of abstraction is applied to the drawing of human figures. Sometimes the body is treated like a pattern but with a distinctive face and hands. With everything reduced to its essence or to an abstract motif, every unit needs to be seen clearly, hence the enchantment with light which defines all the motifs and details equally well.

The notion of abstraction approaches the three dimensional masses in the same manner it deals with the two dimensional forms. Isma'il al-Faruqi explains to us that any mass can be made invisible by covering it with a screen of design, colour and form. Applying an *arabesque* design to a mass imparts "to the spectator an aesthetic intuition of infinity, of 'otherness' or transcendence".(97) Hence, it is possible to challenge the impact of weight and gravity by eliminating the mass through transforming it to something invisible and weightless. But the essence of the mass does not change with this exercise, the mass might look invisible but it is not invisible, the transformation of the surfaces is not permanent but visibly unreal.

I am proposing that puppetry is the kind of theatrical expression the people of the Middle East are bound to find distinctly rewarding on the visual, verbal, musical and movement levels because the puppet as an object/image is the ultimate example of abstraction. In performance a puppet represents a visual component of a character which on one level presents a specific character and on another level is a generalisation rather than a "living portrayal of man in general".(98)

Stantsko Gerdjikov argues that the puppet "has an undisputable advantage over all other actors: its innate and unlimited possibilities for stylization".(99) The puppet-artist has the choice of consciously investing the puppet with all sorts of abstracted signs of life. The possibilities here are boundless. The creative process can be bold, as any mental images are translatable to objects or onto flat planes.

The Middle Eastern artist, and particularly under Islam, is not fascinated by the impact of individual artistic creation, he is rather moved by expressions which are shaped by using imagination and which at the same time bring forth the inherent laws and qualities in the object or figure represented. The interplay between reality and the visibly unreal awakens his inherent sensitivity to abstraction which transcends time and space.

There are a few genuine aspects of puppetry which specifically enable it to appeal to the Middle Eastern mind. Transcending time and space which was just mentioned is a particularly engaging one. Pani asserts that "a highly stylized theatre creates an atmosphere which transcends time and space".(100) It is this transcendental quality puppets can achieve which enhances their appeal to the Middle Easterners who appreciate this quality in all the Islamic fine and applied arts. Equally moving to the Middle Easterner is the quality of transfiguration inherent in the puppet. By watching a puppet in the process of personifying a character, the spectator participates in an act of transfiguration in which the metamorphosis of the object/puppet into a character/actor is visibly unreal for the duration of the performance. Pani, however, reminds us of one more quality which a highly stylised theatre promotes through the use of devices such as puppets or masks and which creates "a sort of aesthetic barrier between the spectator and actor. The spectator is discouraged, indeed he is not permitted to identify with the character."(101) The puppet as an abstract image presenting the visibly unreal allows the puppeteer and the spectator to be free to observe objectively and experience deeply a selected interpretation of life, hence a sort of alienation effect is achieved.

A state of critical detachment from a visual, verbal or musical piece of work is a normal consequence of the aesthetic distance the artist imposes on his treatment of his subject. No confusion with reality is encouraged, imitation of reality is not even considered, rather, interpretation of reality is commended. The further away from reality, the more stylised the interpretation, the better it is appreciated.

This way both the artist and viewer/audience have no queries about where they stand vis-à-vis any work of art, an aesthetic distance makes sure they recognise the state of critical detachment they are in.

To conclude this chapter, I would like to underline certain points in the visual expression of the Middle East which contribute to the creation of the effect of alienation. Here again I will take the visual arts as an example because they influence in structure and relationship all the other modes of expression.

As we have seen earlier, the majority of the visual representation exercises are actually committed to two dimensional surfaces, which means the artists have been dismissing the three dimensional world altogether by representing it on a flat surface through the simple means of delineation. No one can disagree that, technically speaking, interpreting the three dimensional world on a two dimensional surface is the most violent exercise in alienation one may come across.

The artist's choice to represent real life with lines is a distinct statement against imitation of real life. The lines tell us that this is a mental image of life, not a sensory image of life. More particularly it is a mental image which has a sole outlet which is the eye, and which can be received only through one channel - that of sight. Relying on one sense only for a very important vehicle of communication is ultimately the most frustrating illustration in alienation for the rest of the senses. No wonder the eye motif gets the most reverent attention in all the visual representations in the Middle East.

Abstraction in degrees is a disorienting experience for the eye which is trained to enjoy detailed reality all the time. Representing the real world in abstract motifs and prototypes is also an alien experience to the mind and eye which see no two things alike, let alone symmetrically, in the concrete world. Concurrently denying individual life with its nuances and shades is alien to the very individual mind which concocts and practises the whole notion of abstraction and absence of the dimension of depth and consequently shadows.

Using a two dimensional abstract design to transfigure a surface or a mass is a shocking exercise to the eyes and to man's intellectual faculty. Transfiguring a plain surface to a field of vision through which the mind can transcend space and time - in fact reality - is not exactly a routine experience in which the body allows

the mind, lead by the eyes, to travel a long way. The same can be said about dematerialising a mass by applying to it an abstract design which makes it seem weightless. This is also alien and contradictory to all the rules of gravity the body and the mind are aware of.

Let us turn to figural representations as seen on two dimensional surfaces in temples, palaces and in book illustrations. They are all represented as motifs. The body is static, the face is expressionless, but the hands are doing all the communication. The very expressive pair of hands tells us the story and establishes the relations in space and time with the other characters or motifs. Gesture and facial expression in real life are very communicative but they work together. To concentrate on making gestures alone in order to illustrate action and thought is another example of an alienating form of expression.

These are the main points that come to mind concerning the alienation notion inherent the Middle Eastern visual expression. There are many examples found in verbal and musical expressions, but it is easier to imagine the overall composition from a module of a few motifs. In the Middle East, to weave a carpet, we need only repeat infinitely the modules and their motifs.

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER 3

- (1) There are different hypotheses concerning the original homeland of the Semitic race. Some scholars see that east Africa was the original home of the Semites and Hamites, others believe Mesopotamia to be the home suggested by the Old Testament traditions. However, more arguments support the Arabian Peninsula as a plausible home and distribution centre of the Semitic peoples because of the assumption that migrations through history are more likely to take the direction of fertile lands. On this subject see Philip Hitti *History of the Arabs*, 10th ed. (London: MacMillan, 1970), pp.10-13, Isma'il and Lois al-Faruqi *The Cultural Atlas of Islam*, (New York: MacMillan., 1986), pp.10-11, and Kamal Salibi, *The Bible came from Arabia*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1985).
- (2) Hitti, p.3.
- (3) Al-Faruqi, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam*, p.10.
- (4) Hitti, p.9, also see p.12.
- (5) Christine Hobson, *Exploring the World of Pharaohs: A Complete Guide to Ancient Egypt* (Great Britain: Thames and Hudson, 1987), p.158.
- (6) Al-Faruqi, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam*, pp.11-12.
- (7) On the subject of Arabia being the cradle of the Semitic race and their migration in the region, see Hitti and al-Faruqi.
- (8) Al-Faruqi, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam*, pp.10-11.
- (9) Jill Kamil, *The Ancient Egyptians: A Popular Introduction to Life in the Pyramid Age* (1976; rpt. Cairo: The American University Press, 1984), p.18.
- (10) Al-Faruqi, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam*, p.173.
- (11) Hitti informs us that the Sinaitic Peninsula yielded probably the oldest alphabetic inscriptions ever found in about 1850 B.C., i.e. eight centuries before the Phoenician inscriptions of Byblos. "This newly discovered script is clearly alphabetic and Semitic". The Sinaitic alphabet is thought to bridge the gap between the Egyptian hieroglyphs and the Phoenician alphabetic system, pp.7071.
- (12) Michael Roaf, *Cultural Atlas of Mesopotamia and the Ancient Near East* (Oxford: Facts on File, 1990), p.73.
- (13) Lise Manniche, *Music and Musicians in Ancient Egypt* (London: British Museum, 1991), p.15.
- (14) Robert Layton, *The Anthropology of Art*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p.137.
- (15) Hobson, p.148.

- (16) H A Groenewegen-Frankfort, *Arrest and Movement: Space and Time in the Art of the Ancient Near East*, (1951; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), p.161.
- (17) Frankfort, p.173.
- (18) Hobson, p.152.
- (19) Hobson, p.152.
- (20) Frankfort, p.35.
- (21) Frankfort, p.174.
- (22) Frankfort, p.5, also see p.7 and p.177.
- (23) On this period in the Middle East, see Hitti, pp.56-66.
- (24) The word *tawhid* originates from the root *wahid* meaning one. The concept of *tawhid* however is expressed in the pronouncement of faith: there is no God but God. "All that diversity, wealth and history, culture and learning, wisdom and civilization of Islam is compressed in this shortest of sentences." Al-Faruqi, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam*, pp.73-74.
- (25) Al-Faruqi, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam*, p.84. Also see Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, Vol.1 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), p.73.
- (26) Al-Faruqi, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam*, p.85.
- (27) Oleg Grabar, "Introduction", *Treasures of Islam* (London: Sotheby's/Philip Wilson Publishers, 1985), p.16.
- (28) Grabar, pp.16-17. Grabar, however, recognises the need to study the influence of the ancient visual arts of the region, but he does not go into detail.
- (29) 'Afif al-Bahanasi, *Theoretical Studies in Arab Arts*, (Cairo: Egyptian General Book Association, 1974), pp.5-20 and 34. On the same point of view also see Abu Salih al-Ilfi, *Al-Fann Al-Islami* (Islamic Arts), (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, n.d.), pp.74-76. In this context it is of interest to quote Oleg Grabar on the subject of the difficulty of determining what is Islamic about a piece of art. "Archaeologically speaking, it has so far proved impossible to distinguish late Byzantine from early Islamic ceramics in Syria and Palestine, the Soviet archaeologists tend to consider the material culture of Central Asia from the sixth to the tenth century as an entity." *The Formation of Islamic Art*, (1973; rpt. London: Yale University Press, 1987), p.10.
- (30) The *Hanifs* resisted every association of other gods with God. Al-Faruqi, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam*, p.61.
- (31) Hitti, p.40.
- (32) Al-Faruqi, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam*, p.62.

- (33) Al-Faruqi, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam*, pp.65-67, Hitti, pp.98-101; Hodgson, Vol.1, pp.156 and 166; also Mahmud Salim al-Hut, *The Mythology of the Arabs*, (1955; rpt. Beirut: Dar al-Nahar, 1979), pp.65-97. The three daughters of God are at the basis of a controversial issue in Islamic scholarship. The tribe of Quraysh used to circumscribe the Ka'ba singing to the three daughters: "They are the exalted birds, and their intercession is desired indeed". It is argued that the Prophet, at the beginning, accommodated the three daughters of Allah as intermediaries but then announced the verses as satanic. The controversial issue of the satanic verses concerned with the three daughters of Allah has been revived recently in a novel by Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses*, (Great Britain: Viking, 1988), pp.111-124.
- (34) It is believed that the Prophet Muhammad received his call towards the end of Ramadan 610 A.D. He migrated with his followers to Madina in 622 A.D. which became the *hijra* year or the starting point of the Muslim era. Ten years later, 632 A.D., Muhammad visited Makka to perform *Hajj* and declared it his new religious capital. A few months later he died in Madina on June 8, 632 A.D. The period of Muslim expansion came straight after the Prophet's death, and by the year 637 A.D. Islam reached Persia, the year 643 A.D. brought the Arab Muslims to the borders of India and in 645 A.D. all of Egypt was under the Muslim rule. Finally in 732 A.D. - the first centenary of the Prophet's death, the Arab-Berber Army advanced to Tours and Poitier. Hitti, pp.111-167; also see Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, Vol.1, pp.200-230.
- (35) Marshall G S Hodgson, "Islam and Image", *History of Religions*, Vol.3, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1964-93), p.232.
- (36) Arnold, *Painting in Islam: The Study of Place of Pictorial Art in Muslim Culture*, (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1965), p.7; also see al-Faruqi, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam*, pp.62-63.
- (37) Hitti, p.100. *Kahin* means a priest. And *Hubal* is probably the Syrian god, Baal.
- (38) Hitti, pp.100-101, al-Faruqi, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam*, p.63, Said al-Afghani, *Aswaq Al-'Arab Fi Al-Jahiliyya Wa Al-Islam* (Arab Fairs During Jahiliyya and Islam), p.110, also Tharwat 'Ukasha, *Miraj Nameh: Athar Islami Musawwar* (Mi'raj-Nameh: An Islamic Painted Manuscript), (Beirut: Dar-al-Mustakbal al-'Arabi, 1987), pp.14-15.
- (39) Hodgson, "Islam and Image", pp.226-227.
- (40) *Buraq* means the little flash of lightning; here it refers to the animal being as swift as lightning. *Buraq* is represented having the body of a mule but the face of a woman.
- (41) Marie-Rose Séguy, *The Miraculous Journey of Mahomet: Miraj Nameh*, (New York: George Brazillier, 1977).
- (42) Hitti, p.220; and Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art*, p.47.
- (43) Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art*, pp.53-60, and Richard Ettinghausen, *Arab Painting*, (1962: rpt. New York: Skira, 1977), p.20.
- (44) Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art*, p.58.

- (45) Grabar, p.61.
- (46) Ettinghausen, *Arab Painting*, p.20.
- (47) Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art*, pp.74-94.
- (48) Khirbat al Mafjar, Qusayr Amr and Qasr al-Hayr West are good examples, see Grabar.
- (49) Al-Faruqi, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam*, p.88.
- (50) Ernest Kühnel, *The Arabesque: Meaning and Transformation of an Ornament*, Trans. Richard Ettingham, (1949, rpt. Austria: Verlag fur Sammler Graz, 1976), p.10.
- (51) Kühnel, p.6.
- (52) Kühnel, p.8.
- (53) Al-Faruqi, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam*, p.89.
- (54) Oleg Grabar, "Introduction", p.19.
- (55) Al-Faruqi, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam*, p.173.
- (56) Al-Faruqi, p.173.
- (57) In this context it is interesting to observe that only the Arabs under Islam "developed the alphabet for aesthetic as well as pragmatic reasons, and thus rendering writing into the worthiest of all arts", al-Faruqi, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam*, p.25.
- (58) Melikian-Chivvani, "The Aesthetics of Islam", *Treasures of Islam*, p.22
- (59) Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art*, p.193. Also see on this subject Sandra Naddaff, *Arabesque: Narrative Structure and the Aesthetics of Repetition in 1001 Nights*, (Illinois: North Western University Press, 1991).
- (60) Richard Ettinghausen, "The Man Made Setting", *The World of Islam: Faith, People, Culture*, Ed. Bernard Lewis, (1976, rpt. London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), p.57. Also see Arnold, p.91.
- (61) Arnold, p.10
- (62) Al-Faruqi, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam*, pp.25-26.
- (63) Henrietta McCall, *Mesopotamian Myth*, (London: British Museum Publications Ltd, 1990), pp.38-51.
- (64) McCall, p.22.
- (65) 'Ali 'Uqla 'Arsan, *Arab Theatre Manifestations*, Rev. 3rd ed. (1981; rpt. Damascus: Itihad al-Kuttab al-'Arab, 1985), pp.53-67.
- (66) *Myths From Mesopotamia: Creation, The Flood, Gilgamesh and Others*, Trans. Stephanie Dalley, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) p.xvii

- (67) *Myths from Mesopotamia*, p.48. The tale of *Buluqiya* is based on the Sumerian *Bilgamesh*, i.e. *Gilgamesh*. The story is used to foretell the coming of the Prophet Muhammad.
- (68) Kühnel, p.9.
- (69) Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, Vol.1, p.154.
- (70) A.C. Scott, *The Theatre in Asia*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972), p.82.
- (71) The word *Islam* comes from a root literally implying submission to the divine will.
- (72) Hitti, p.116.
- (73) Hitti, p.91.
- (74) Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, Vol. 1, p.458.
- (75) Hodgson, p.468.
- (76) Sayyid Qutb, *Artistic Imagery in the Qur'an*, (Beirut, Dar al-Shuruq, 1980), p.9.
- (77) Ismail al-Faruqi, "Islam and Art", *Studia Islamica*, Ex fasciculo XXXVII, (Paris: Maisonneuve - Larose, n.d.), p.97.
- (78) The Qur'an is the collective message of Islam, it means recitation as it comes from the root recite: *iqra'*.
- (79) Al-Faruqi, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam*, p.171.
- (80) Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, Vol.1, p.184; and al-Faruqi, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam*, pp.170-171.
- (81) Al-Faruqi, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam*, p.169.
- (82) Al-Faruqi, p.169.
- (83) *Images of Paradise in Islamic Art*, Ed. Sheila S. Blair and Jonathan M. Bloom (Hanover: Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, 1991) p.37.
- (84) Al-Faruqi, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam*, pp.169-171.
- (85) Ishtiaq H. Qureshi, "Muslim Art", *Fine Arts in Islamic Civilization*, Ed. M.A.J. Beg, 2nd ed. (1977; rpt. Malaysia: The University of Malaya Press, 1981)
- (86) Qureshi, p.88.
- (87) Muhammad was facing serious problems in spreading the message of Islam in Makka when about 619 A.D. his protector, Abu-Talib, died followed by his wife Khadija who had been a major spiritual support. See Hitti and Hodgson.

- (88) The episodes referred to here are those of *Mi'raj Nameh* which were originally compiled in Arabic and translated into Eastern Turkish during the 15th Century by Mir Haydar - a poet and man of letters known for his irresistible mystical bent. The manuscript was calligraphed in Uighur script by Malik Bakshi of Herat and was illustrated by several artists from the studios attached to the court of Shah Rokh. For details on the journey see Marie-Rose Séguy, *The Miraculous Journey of Mohamet: Mi'raj Nameh*, (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1977) pp.31-154 and Tharwat 'Ukasha, *Mi'raj Nameh: An Islamic Painted Manuscript*, Text Analysis pp.90-111.
- (89) Charles Pellat, "Jewellers with Words", *The World of Islam: Faith, People, Culture*, p.149.
- (90) Pellat, p.149 and Tharwat 'Ukasha, *Fann Al-Wasiti Min Khilal Maqamat Al-Hariri* (The Art of Wasiti: Through Maqamat of al-Hariri), (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 1992), p.10.
- (91) James T Monroe, *The Art of Badi' az-Zaman al-Hamadhani as Picaresque Narrative* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1983), p.20. The *sira* is essentially an oral genre which existed for a long time before it was committed to writing. Amongst the earliest *sira* is that of 'Antara and 'Abla the Bedouin hero and his beloved. The *sira* usually has a sequential type of plot.
- (92) In one of his letters, al-Hamadhani mentions that he dictated four hundred *maqamat* on mendicity, but four hundred could be just a cliché for 'a large number'. al-Hariri, who lived after him, was aware of fifty two only. However, one *maqama* is usually dropped from most editions because of its large degree of obscenity. For more details, see Monroe, pp.61-63.
- (93) See Faruq Sa'd, Ed., *Maqamat Badi' Al-Zaman Al-Hamadhani* (Maqamat of Badi' al-Zaman al-Hamadhani), (Beirut: Dar al-Afaq al-Jadida, 1982).
- (94) Monroe, p.21. *Hadith* literature is established through a chain of transmitters and it is a must that one evaluates the reliability of each transmitter.
- (95) See 'Ali al-Ra'i, *Al-Masrah Fi Al-Watan Al-'Arabi* (Theatre in the Arab World), (Kuwait: 'Alam al-Ma'rifa, 1980), and Shmuel Moreh, *Live Theatre and Dramatic Literature in the Medieval Arabic World*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992).
- (96) T G James, *Egyptian Painting* (London: The British Museum Press, 1991), p.18.
- (97) Isma'il al-Faruqi, "Islam and Architecture", *Fine Arts in Islamic Civilization*, p.116
- (98) Sergej. Obraztsov, "Some Considerations on the Puppet Theatre", *The Puppet Theatre of the Modern World*, Ed. UNIMA and M. Niculescu, Trans. E. Osers and E. Stick, (London: George Harrap & Co., 1967), p.19.
- (99) Stantsko Gerdjikov, "A New Art is Born", *The Puppet Theatre of the Modern World.*, p.43.

(100) Pani, *World of Other Faces: Indian Masks*, (India: Publication Division Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1986), p.5.

(101) Pani, p.5.

CHAPTER 4

Development of Puppetry in the Middle East

4.1 Introduction

On the following pages we will look at the features which have contributed to the engagement of puppetry as a tool of communication, entertainment and artistic expression in the region of the Middle East. Traditional performing arts identify profoundly with the oral and visual arts and crafts which constitute the creative vocabulary of any community. An investigation into the nature and style of traditional performing arts has to survey the basic vocabulary of which it is composed. For this reason let us focus now on the significance of figurative images and their function within the socioreligious life of the Middle Eastern communities in order to be able to identify those elements which have influenced the form and expression of Middle Eastern puppetry. Following that, we will consider the modes of oral tradition, entertainment and literary genres which express foremost the culture. These modes will be seen to have inspired puppetry hence making it a particularly comprehensive expression of this culture. In light of the above, we will proceed to look at the three dramatic pieces of the thirteenth century poet/puppeteer Ibn Daniyal, followed by *Karagoz* shows in their variant forms.

The dynamics of the representative samples of Middle Eastern puppet tradition will unfold as we reconstruct their distinct vigorous features in a cultural context. Following that, the obvious impressions the thousand year old puppet tradition has extended to the modern Arabic theatre scene will be briefly touched upon. Finally we will have a swift glimpse at the status of puppetry in the Lebanon today.

4.2 The emergence of figurative images

Man's fascination with images for functional and aesthetic purposes is certainly a complex matter. Nonetheless, it is a matter which is most telling about the human mind and the various thought processes involved in its development. The complementary nature of visual and verbal articulation of images forms the essence

of human communication. We tend to forget that only recently in man's history artistic images have assumed a status distant from our everyday life. Images and artefacts were more at the centre stage of magic, religion and temples. They were also within reachable distance as they were handled and used for multiple functions. E.H. Gombrich comments on this basic change in the status of images saying "We may have made quite a good bargain when we exchanged the archaic magic of image-making for the more subtle magic we call 'art' ".(1)

Image-making does not always entail a process of making, drawing or modelling, for sometimes it could involve simple recognition or isolation of associated shapes in nature which could serve as an image of something similar. A proposition discussed by Gombrich, and before him by Leon Alberti, suggests that projection was one of the roots of art. (2) The idea that man by observing nature was able to point to shapes which he recognised, then modelled in order to initiate further similarity, is prior to him imitating nature from scratch. [fig 1] However, this process is actually not limited to the primitive hunter who is better trained in finding. This is also seen practised today by famous artists who use found objects of manufactured or organic nature in their artistic creations. Moreover, the specimen of a skull with cowrie shell eyes found in Jericho, belonging to 6000 B.C., is an example of archaic practice whereby "the living man becomes an image after his death".(3) On a parallel level, a priest or a witch doctor turns himself into the face of the living dead, a living image of a god or a supernatural power by remodelling himself to suit the image he wishes to project.

Finding, making and projecting images has been the preoccupation of man for as long as he has lived. Once a mental image or idea is ready for communication, there is no problem finding material through which to express it. Drawing, painting, modelling, miming, describing with verbal language or sounds are all means used in making and communicating images. The communicative potential of an image is tested by the responses it receives, and its life span is directly related to its ability to encompass the visual language requirements in a context of action related to a certain society.

4.3 Interplay between figurative images in socioreligious contexts

Among the earliest examples of human plastic images are the female figurines found all around the world where prehistoric cultural communities focused around

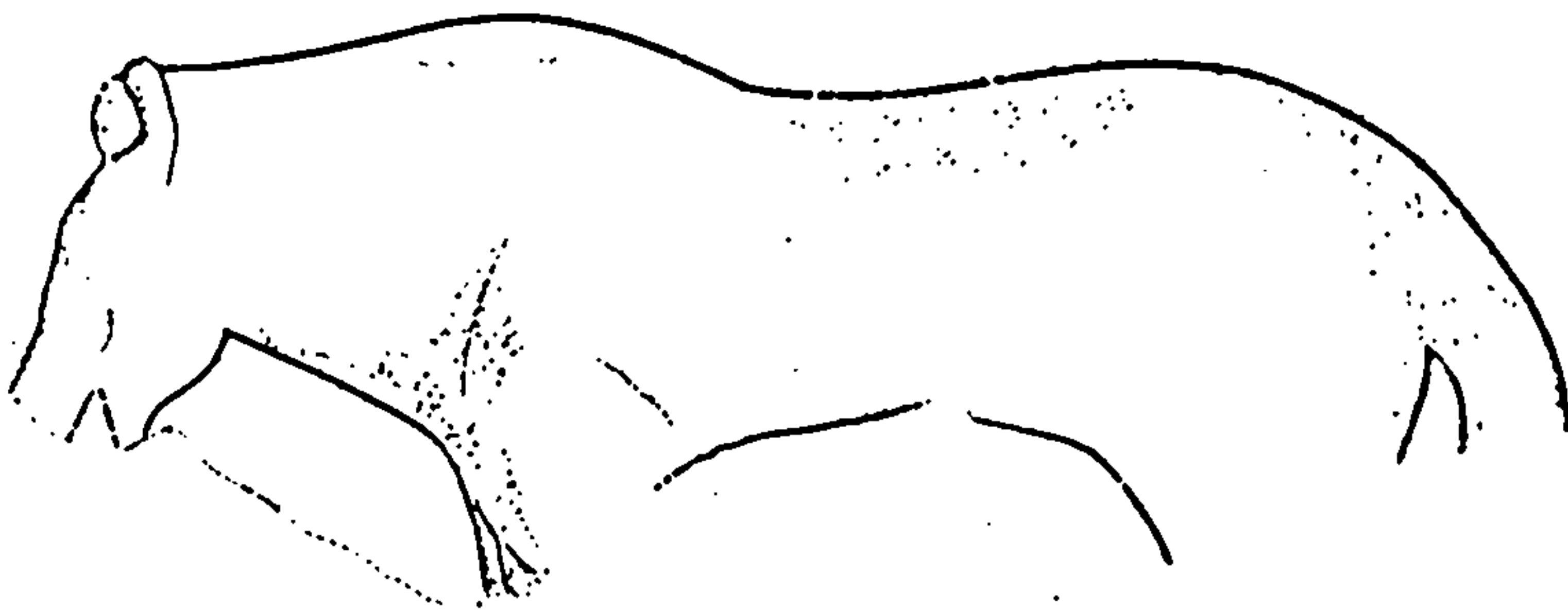


Fig 1. Horse, prehistoric, from Cap Blanc near Les Eyzies (Dordogne).

the life giver, fertility goddesses, the mother figure. Ancient Middle Easterners, like people in other ancient civilisations, have developed their own repertoire of human images: female statuettes, ancestor images, death masks, image magic, grave dolls, toy dolls, idols, automata and animated images. We have discussed earlier how ancient Egyptians and Mesopotamians have used the walls of their palaces, temples and tomb chambers to narrate and register events related to human life and death in painting and relief. However, we are now going to survey how they also represented human and animal images in mass in various media like clay, wood, ivory, bone and stone both in miniature and life size. In this section we will look at some of the artefacts which focus on the figurative forms in order to evaluate their contribution to the conceptual and visual features of animated images, including puppets, in the Middle East region. It is self-evident that such artefacts constitute a very important part of popular folk culture particularly folk religion.

4.3.1. Grave dolls

Since the dawn of history, miniature figurines have been known to the ancient Egyptians and Mesopotamians who made doll-like figures in the shape of a female-mother, wife or dancer, for the purpose of keeping the company of a corpse or to serve as attendants upon the dead during its lonely journey in the afterlife.(4) Egyptians used mostly bone and ivory to make figurines of standing females with the hands fixed to their sides. In Egypt, grave dolls have survived since the early Pharaonic times, through the Greek and Roman periods, continued on to the Coptic era and later on to the Muslim days. To accompany or entertain the dead remains the sole function of this grave doll over thousands of years in spite of the dramatic changes in religious beliefs. The Arabic name of the grave doll is *mu'anisa* (female companion). Here, it is important to remember that such a figure is referred to in Arabic as *'arusa* (bride) or *dumya* (dummy), hence the *mu'anisa* is not a toy doll but a dummy or a bride whose function is of a rather psychological nature. Artisans involved in making grave dolls have been respecting its traditional compact shape, simplicity, decoration and of course the highly stylised representational features of the human female figure. The size of these dolls is normally between five and thirty centimetres. [fig 2]

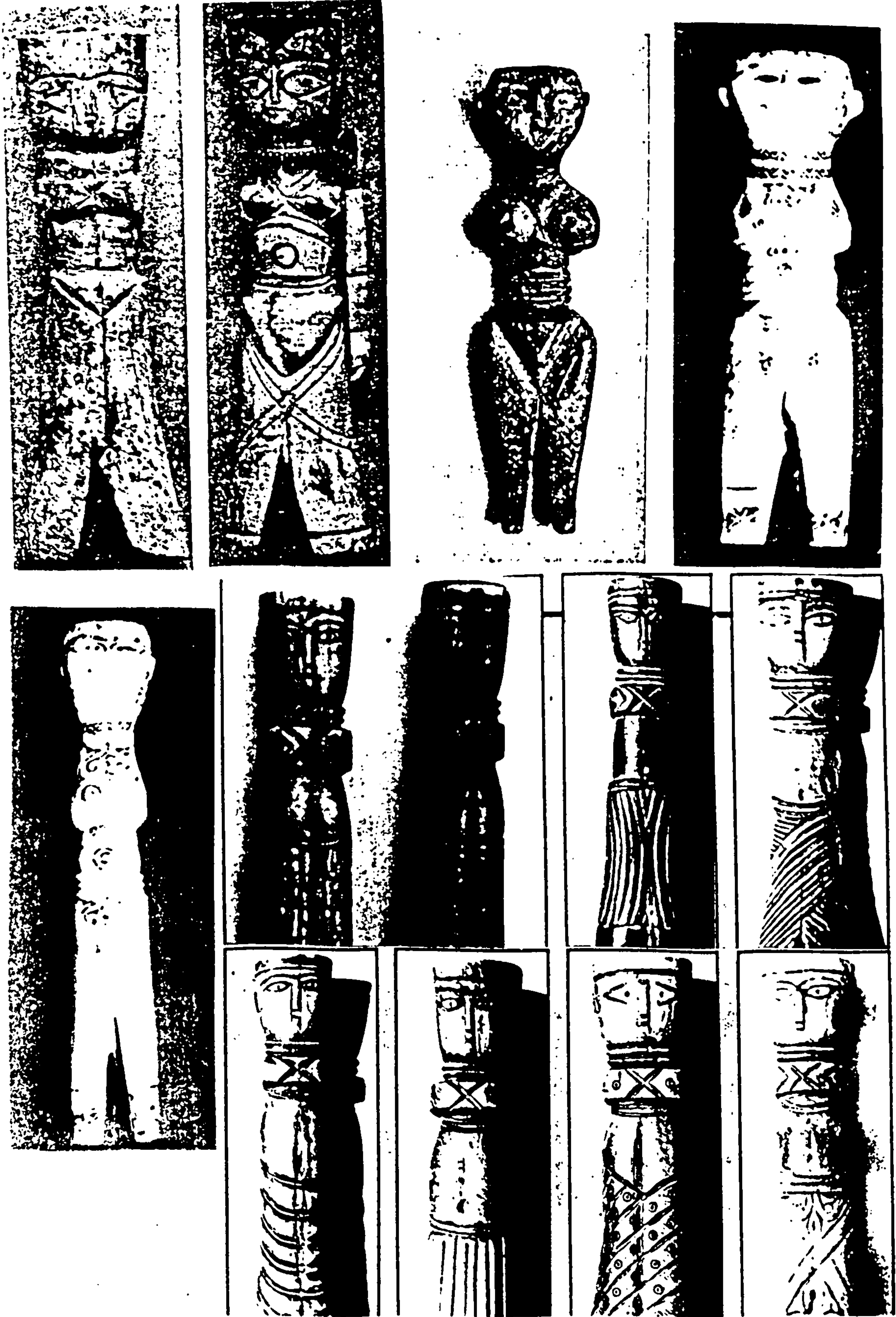


Fig 2. Examples of *mu'anisa* figurines from the Coptic and Fatimid periods.

Along with the female companion, Egyptians and Mesopotamians had in their tombs models of workers and entertainers at work .[fig 3] Children's toys were also found in tombs, like the famous tiger and crocodile wooden toys with movable lower jaws, articulated simply by pulling a thread.(5) [fig 4]

4.3.2. Images as focus for religious rituals

Max von Boehn points in the direction of the Mesopotamian nail-goddess which in the time of Ur-Nina of Lagash, about 3200 B.C., was used in the foundation of temples as a kind of documentary attestation. Also driving the nail figure into the ground probably formed part of a purification ceremony of the site of the temple. "The little figures, made of copper with thick hair on the head and clasped hands, were preserved in brick cases and placed on the foundation stone". (6) [fig 5] This brings to mind the plastic representations of the sacred marriage ritual of ancient Mesopotamia where marriage between deities like Dumuzi and Inana are one way of explaining creation. The Mesopotamian cultures have left us many examples of baked clay models of a ceremonial bed with loving couple or with just a nude female figure. (7) We are not sure how these figures were handled or what sort of role they played during the ceremonies and the processions on the occasions of temple building or sacred marriage. But it is reasonable to imagine they were modelled by a priest/artisan in order to serve as the focus to a certain part of the ceremonies or the processions. Also because of their small size and because processions were an important element in religious ceremonies one is bound to speculate that these figures were carried in dramatic pageants into the temple. Song and dance would have been employed too.

4.3.3. Masks and articulated figures

Articulated figures were often used in Egypt especially by priests to imply the presence of a supernatural power. Priests have also used head masks to take on the character of gods. Most of the Pharaonic and Mesopotamian gods are represented in human bodies with the heads of animals or birds. There are plenty of visual examples of masked gods in reliefs, paintings and sculpture. A close look at the images of gods shows humans wearing conventional masks stabilised by straps over their shoulders. (8) [fig 6] Clearly the masks have acted as an instrument of

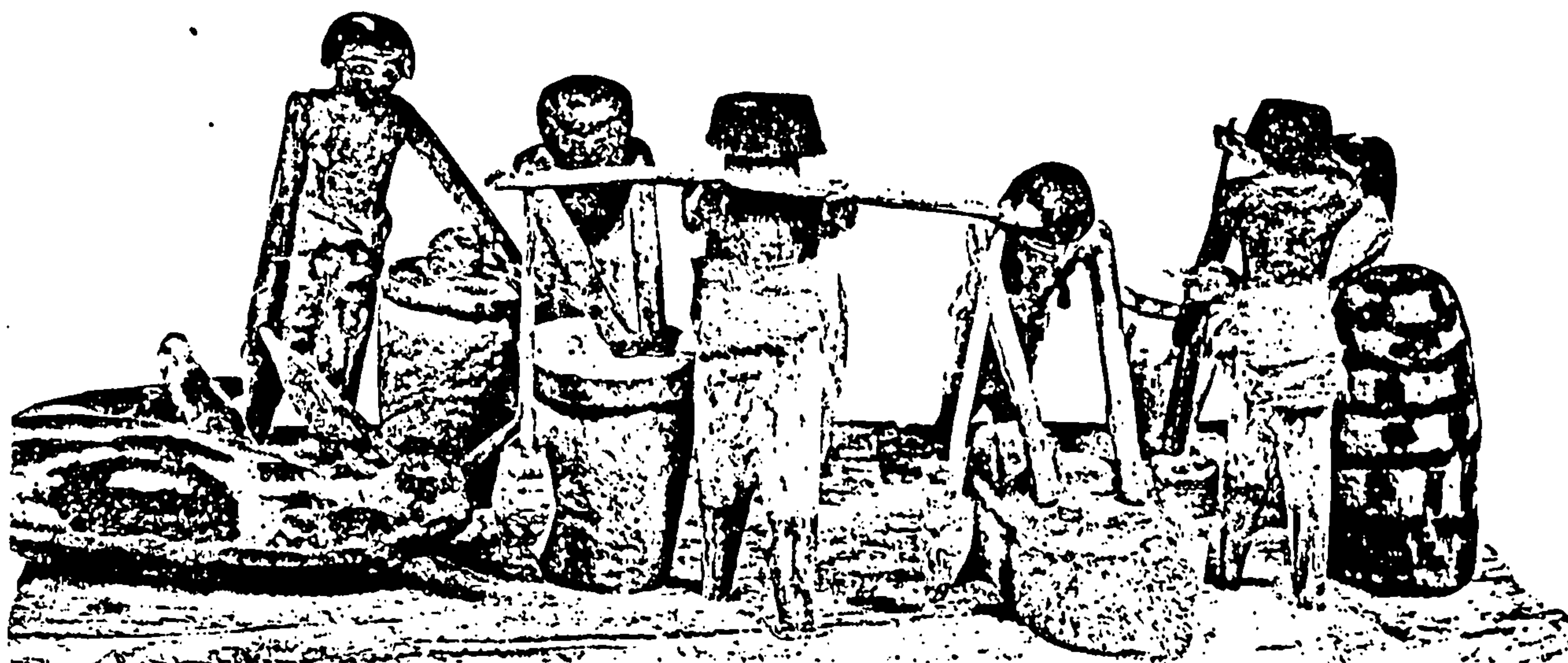
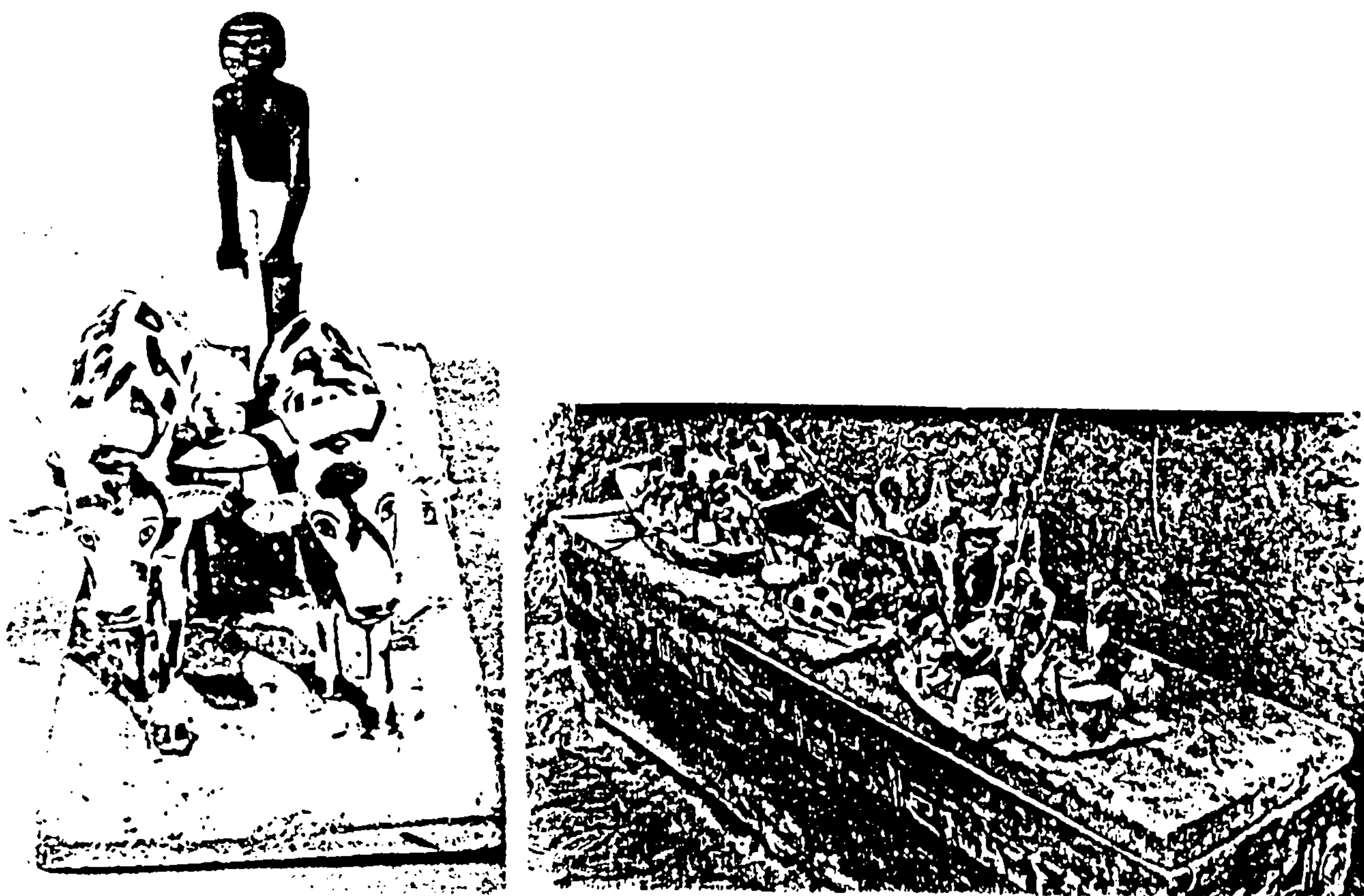


Fig 3. Wooden models of a peasant and workers from the Middle Kingdom, Egypt.

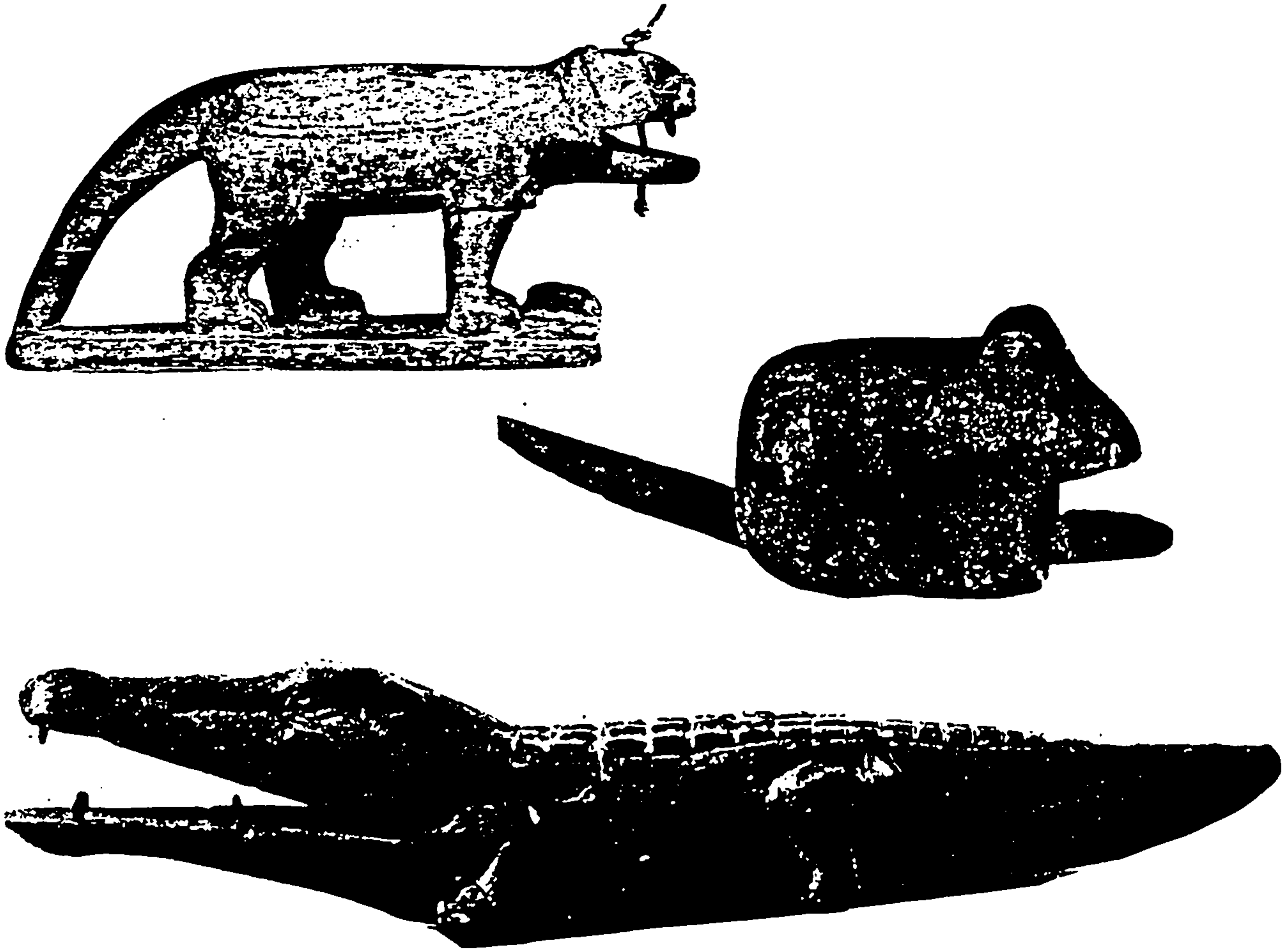


Fig 4. Wooden Egyptian toys, tiger with moveable jaw, mouse with moveable tail and a crocodile.



Fig 5. Nail-goddess was made for burial in the foundations of a temple at Uruk. 18th Century B.C. Mesopotamia.

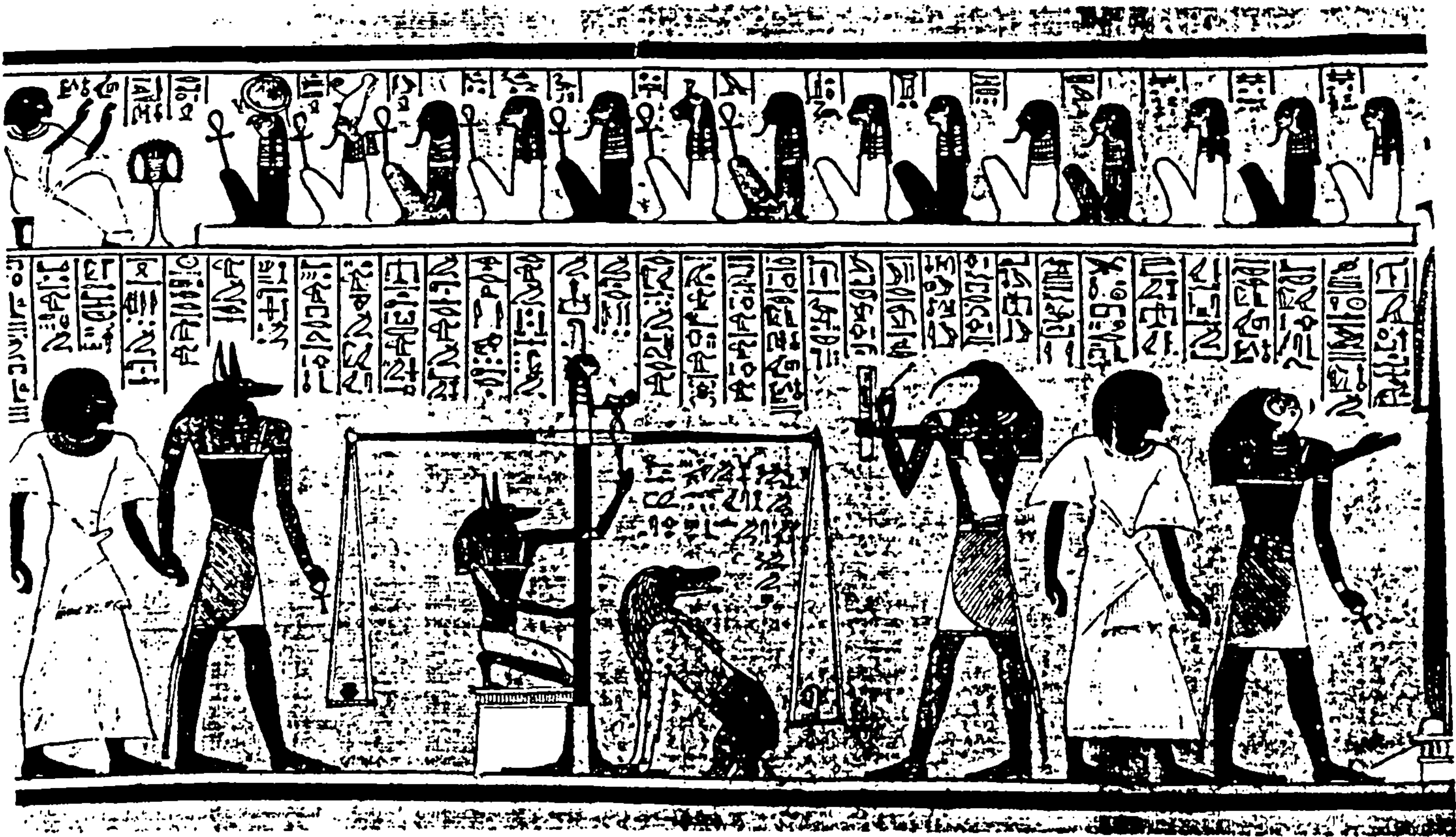
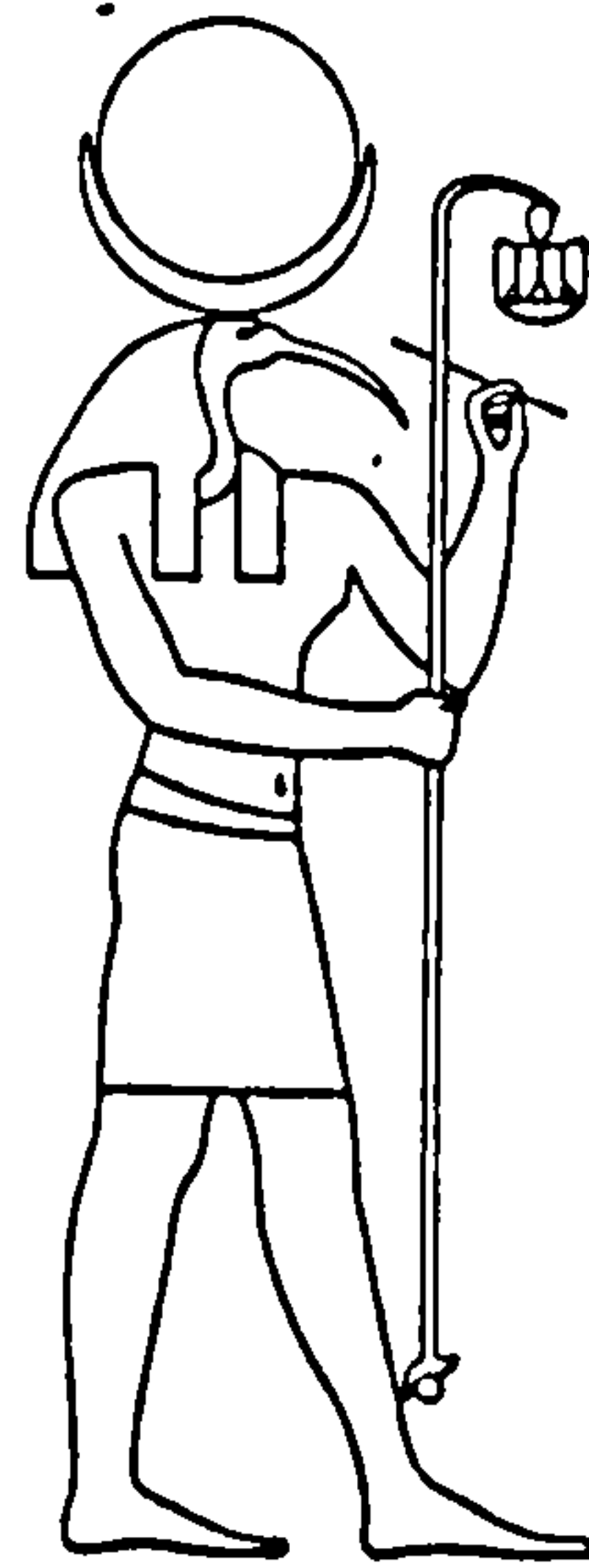


Fig 6. A panel showing a falcon-headed horse and Anubis - masks seen to be stabilised by straps over the shoulders.

metamorphosis used by the priests to disguise their human faces and project that of the gods. Probably the earliest available example of a jointed figure in the Middle East is a wooden figure of a female dancer wearing a mask with lion's ears. (9) [fig 7] We also have the famous jackal mask which has the bottom jaw designed to be articulated. [fig 8] Moreover, there is plenty of documented evidence which tells us how the processions of masked gods used to be enjoyed by the participating audience/pilgrims during the Pharaonic annual religious festivals at Abydos. The climax of this festival was the dramatic re-enactment of the life, battles, death and rebirth of Osiris. On such occasions animated images in the shape of masks, mobile figures, various props and theatrical machinery were employed to represent the myths.(10) Processions included singers, musicians and dancers besides the ordinary pilgrims of course.

4.3.4. Image, magic and effigies

Figurines in the image of humans were also used by the ancient people of the Middle East for image magic. It is believed that one could transfer the pain or the humiliation inflicted on a figurine to the living person it represents. It is known that the wives of the Pharaoh were involved in some sort of black magic in their competition for power.(11) From very early times image magic has also been associated with the sexual life of women, particularly with fertility. These images usually represent a simple human figure without much detail because the focus is actually on the pantomimic suggestion of the result to be brought about. The Egyptians as well as the Mesopotamians were clever in using wax for making their magic images. (12) In magic sessions music and incantation are vital elements of the performance.

Human plastic images also served as a substitute for human sacrifice not only in tombs in the shape of companions and servants, but also in religious festivals. We have the example of the bridal effigy which is thrown into the Nile River for the purpose of conciliating its fury usually manifested in the annual flooding. We also know of ceremonies through the 5th Century B.C. historian, Herodotus, who reported seeing at the religious festival of Osiris sterile women carrying images of male fertility gods which are animated by strings.(13) In the context of religious ceremonies, the Egyptians used puppets to enact the myth of Isis and Osiris for



Fig 7. Wooden figure of a female dancer wearing a mask with lion's ears. Egypt, XII Dynasty. Height 20.2 cms.

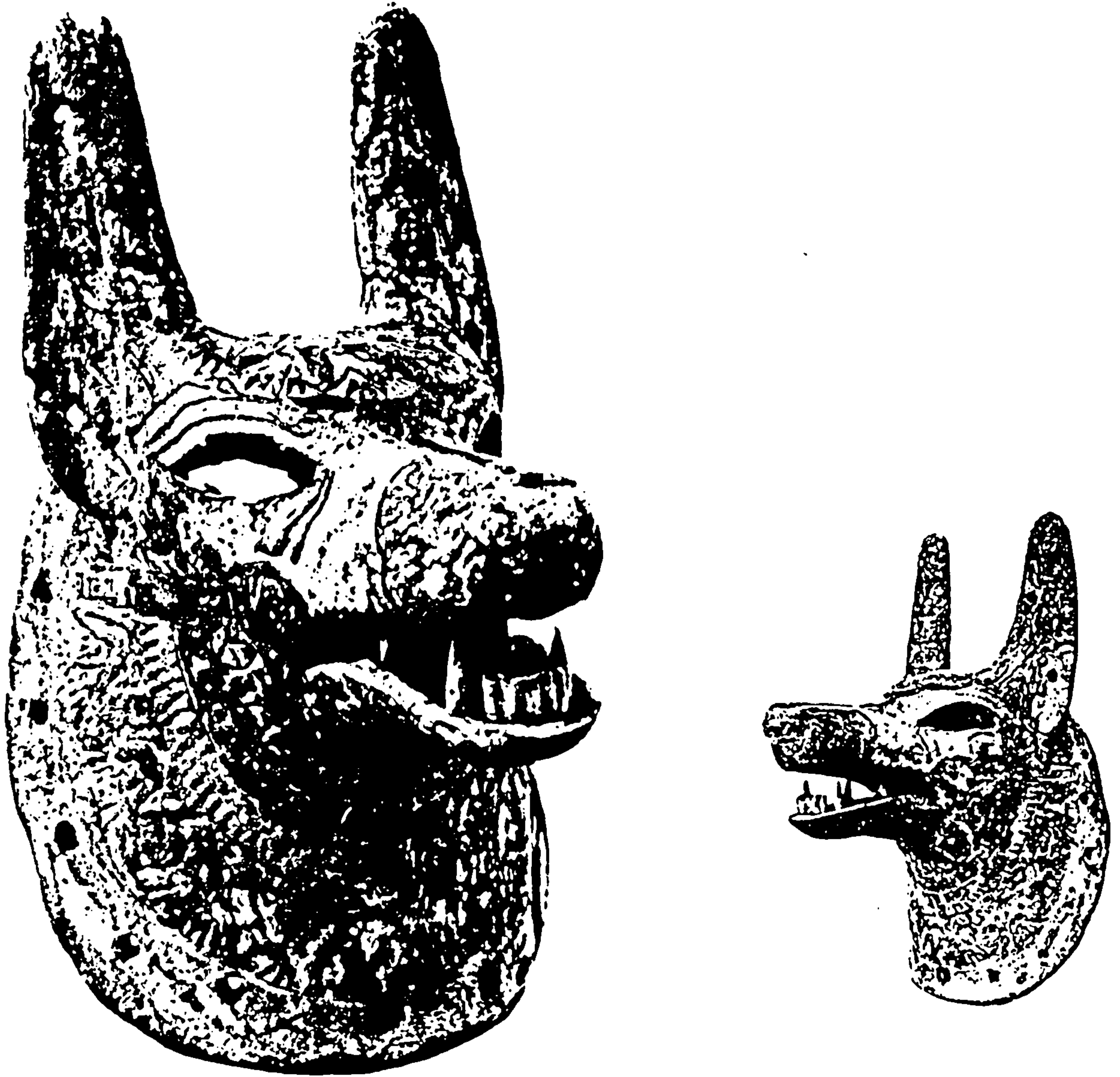


Fig 8. Jackal mask with articulated bottom jaw.

which the puppets were made in wood and ivory. ... (14)

4.3.5. Coptic images

During the early Christian era in Egypt, the Copts borrowed Pharaonic images to express their new beliefs. For instance, the '*ankh* or the hieroglyphic sign for the word 'life' was adopted as the cross. The borrowing is also obvious in what is described as the "Holy Spirit shown descending in the form of a winged bird, like the soul of the deceased, the *ba*, in ancient Egypt".(15) Icons, panel carvings, paintings, textiles and ivory work were very important artistic expressions related to monasteries. Representation of human figures on these two dimensional surfaces is crude and of strange proportions, the most obvious being the head is large in relation to the body. Most important, early Copts did not encourage the production of statuary in the round, probably as a reaction to the paganism of the Greeks and ancient Egyptians. However, two dimensional human figures were represented from the front with serene faces and idealised expressions with outlined almond-shaped eyes.(16) [fig 9] The large head and eyes are among the features that have survived in all figurative representations and particularly in the animated images of the Middle East region as we shall see below.

4.3.6. Pilgrimages and pageants

A particularly interesting feature common to the ancient civilisations of the Middle East is the performance of *hajj* (pilgrimage) which involves marching in processions and participating in religious rituals. Ancient Egyptian pilgrims travelled from all over the country to attend the religious festivals at Abydos where they marched in processions and took part in the battles and in the lively celebrations for the resurrection of Osiris.(17) Pilgrims had to visit certain sites in order to re-enact specific events. Likewise, Coptic pilgrims have been visiting the sites where the Holy Family rested under a tree or on the banks of the Nile. One of the most important Coptic pilgrimages is the one to *Jabal al-Tayr* (Mount of Birds) where Mary feared for Jesus's life as a rock was about to fall on their boat from the mountain overlooking the river.(18) Pilgrimages to the tombs of Coptic saints and martyrs during *mulids*, have been also a common tradition.

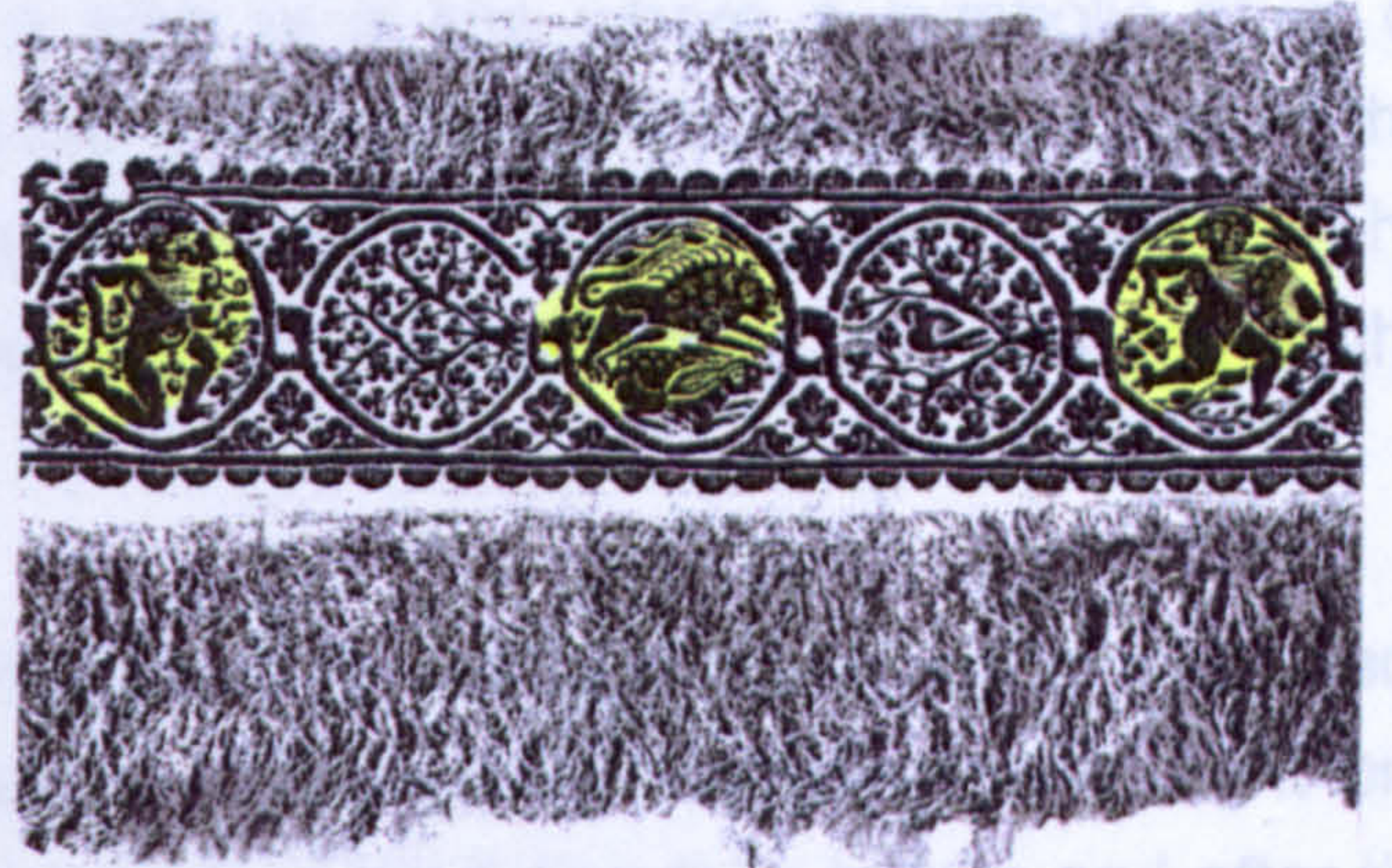


Fig 9. Coptic images: bone figurine, and tapestry with hunting scene, Egypt.

In ancient Arabia, tribes arrived in organised pageants from all around the peninsula to Makka especially to visit the Ka'ba, circumscribe the cubic structure and offer their presents to the gods. On their way to Makka the pilgrims usually stopped en route to pay tribute to special gods in the shape of a tree or a rock, they also sang and danced in the nude around some of these gods.(19) The pilgrimage to Makka during Islam has assimilated some of the ancient rituals such as circumambulation seven times around the Ka'ba. This is usually preceded by the re-enactment of the *sa'i* (jogging), also seven times, between two hills and to *Zamzam's* well where Hajar found water for her son Isma'il; followed by climbing Mount 'Arafat and the offering of an animal sacrifice; then a stop at a site where a symbolic ritual of throwing stones at a pillar symbolising the devil is performed; finally a repeat of the circumambulation of the ka'ba which is the last station in this ritualistic journey. The *hajj* ritual to Ka'ba is performed in simple white clothes which are changed at the end of the ritual.(20)

The Pilgrimage to Makka was very important to *Jahiliyya* Arabs as it took place during the three months of truce. During these months no tribes are to fight one another. As a result it became a good time for scheduling fairs before and after the pilgrimage to Ka'ba. This tradition also survived for sometime at the beginning of the Islamic era.

An interesting ritual which has survived from the *Jahiliyya* till our times is the pageants carrying presents to the gods housed in the Ka'ba. During Islam this ritual has been performed with a little variation. The pageants carry the *kuswa*, (dress/cloth) of the Ka'ba from whichever country it is made. For a long time the Egyptians embroidered the *kuswa* and carried it through the deserts on camels accompanied by the pilgrims. The leading camel carries the *mahmil* (an embroidered tent). Performers and musicians entertain the pilgrim's procession as they take off on their journey. These performers came to be known in Egypt as *'afarit al-mahmil* (the *mahmil* demons).(21)

We do not seem to know much about the shape of figure images in the southern part of Arabia. But we know that they were carried to the battle fields in tents for hope of protection.(22) The only thing we can refer to is that most of their presentations of supernatural powers are of an abstract or organic nature. They did

not have figurative representations till the introduction of statues made in Syria or Alexandria to the Ka'ba before Islam.

Jahiliyya poetry records that poets at fairs, especially that of 'Ukaz, and knights in crowded places used masks. Unfortunately, they left us no clue about the nature or shape of these masks. We also know that handsome knights and poets protected themselves in important fairs and gatherings against female admirers by wearing masks. In addition it is reported that some wealthy men used masks in order to avoid being kidnapped and traded for ransom.(23) Moreover, annual celebrations in Mesopotamia and Egypt during the Persian *Nawruz*, or Arabicised *Neyruz* festivals, which also happen to fall on the first day of the Coptic year, included processions in which old rituals persisted. Ugly masks, noises and music were means of keeping evil spirits at a distance.(24) A masked person is called in Arabic *muqanna'* (masked), and *mutawajjih* or *wajh mu'ar* implying a borrowed face.(25)

4.3.7. Toy dolls and social games

During the early Islamic period in Arabia, we know that Muhammad and his companions must have destroyed all idols and figure representations on display. However, we learn from an incident which took place in the Prophet's quarters that it was normal for young girls to have dolls. There is a famous incident in which the Prophet saw his very young wife, 'Aisha, playing with her dolls which she called daughters. One of the so-called dolls she described as being Solomon's horse with wings.(26) This image was most probably imported from Mesopotamia or Persia where winged animals were common. Fortunately, this incident prompted "theologians to allow little girls to keep their dolls".(27) Moreover, the educational aspect of dolls was appreciated to the extent that doll and toy fairs flourished in Arabia.(28)

During social gatherings, games were played which were also associated with song and dance. *Kurraj* (hobby horse play) which entailed miming attack and withdrawal was very popular. Females performed songs and dances with the hobby horse during weddings, also players simulated duels and battles on a hobby horse. The *kurraj* hobby horse was also known as *faras al-'ud* (the horse headed stick), or *afra al-khayal* (the hobby horse of acting), also referred to as *qasaba Farisiyya* (Persian

reed).(29) Moreh is of the opinion "that the use of the *kurraj* and *qasaba* throughout the early Islamic period might be a vestige of pre-Islamic dramatic rites practised not only in Arabia, but mainly in Persia and Central Asia".(30)

The Arabic word for play is *li'b* and for a player is *la'ib*. Moreh gives us plenty of examples of the use of the term *li'b* which points to its relation to performance, mime, dance and acting.(31)

4.3.8. Animated figures of folk tales and scientific treaties

Many popular tales, poems and illustrations refer to animated three dimensional images in the shape of animals and humans. In popular stories these folk animated images are usually described in detail as a proof of the supernatural performance of the statue. Probably the references we have in oral literature are exaggerated descriptions of the mobile statues which existed in courts and palaces then. A telling example is the legendary twenty stories citadel of Ghumdan in San'a, al-Yaman. Two geographers al-Hamadani and Yaqut left us detailed descriptions of the citadel with the four lions who stood on the corners of the top floor and roared whenever the wind blew. Arab story tellers still recite in cafes the *sira* (biography) of *Sayf Ibn-Dhi- Yazan* who lived in the 6th century A.D. and took up his residence in the ancient citadel of Ghumdan which was in ruins then.(32)

Popular biographies and fables also carry stories of imaginary creatures and phenomena like giants hiding in jars, *jinn*, flying carpets and magic horses, etc., all of which are also found in various stories of the *Thousand and One Nights*.

The palaces of the Ummayyad Caliphs (661-750 A.D.) in the Syrian desert, and especially the baths rooms, were full of frescos and paintings with figurative images some of which are nude figures, "some of them men engaged in gymnastic exercises, dancers, flute players, and other musicians; various animals, particularly gazelles and antelopes, together with hunting scenes."(33) [fig 10] Also the Ummayyad palaces in Spain (929-1031 A.D.) are famous for the statues of human beings and animals; lions being especially favoured for plastic representations. The statues in palaces are usually placed at the gates or around fountains.(34)



Fig 10. Figural wall painting, hunting scene and dancing girls. Jausaq Palace al-Samarra, 833-41 A.D.

In Baghdad the Abbasids Caliphs (750-1258 A.D.) too had various statues in their palaces and gardens. We read about manufactured trees in gold and silver with birds which produce all sorts of bird sounds using automatic devices, and about mobile knights on their horses dressed up in silk costumes which move in harmony.(35) Water power, mirrors, levers and clockwork, as well as many other mechanical devices, were used to produce motion; it was left to the wind to produce noise through inbuilt whistles.

Scientists and mathematicians were recruited by the courts to contribute to the invention of automata and gadgets which would do the unexpected, and to produce illusions of jugglery. Isma'il al-Jazari produced in 1205 A.D. an elaborate compendium of beautifully illustrated automata displaying mechanical ingenuity. Examples of his work include a device for measuring the amount of blood taken from a patient during blood letting, a hydraulic pump, and a mechanical washstand.(36) [fig 11] Al-Jazari designed devices which could be useful as well as devices for aesthetic pleasure. The inclusion of human and animal images in these automata was delicately handled. Human figures are almost always menials: musicians, stewards performing their roles. Animals too are depicted in their natural roles. The intricate plans al-Jazari left us for water clocks and amusing machines include images of a robot serving girl which could place a drinking glass in the ruler's hand.(37)

4.3.9 Figure images for promotion

With the Fatimids ruling Egypt during the period (969-1171 A.D.) a basic change swept the cultural atmosphere in the cities. The Fatimids are Shiites who came to Egypt from Tunisia and Morocco and were able to take over from its Sunnites rulers. The Fatimid rule was very concerned about creating and marketing a brilliant image of itself. This was sought by encouraging all sorts of festivals which kept the population involved and happy. One of the most important festivals was the celebration of *mulid*. In general the Islamic *mulid* celebrations are similar to Pharaonic and Coptic festivities in that they include processions and pageants which make a journey to the shrines and temples.(38)

Of course, at the top of the list deserving of such celebration are the Prophet

Muhammad and his descendants such as his daughter Fatima, her sons Hasan and Husayn, also the saints and the Caliphs. One of the features of such celebrations was food, since many rich people would use the occasion to distribute food to the needy. In the cause of making an impression on the masses, and using the abundant sugar product of Egypt, sweetmeats were fashioned in the shape of statues representing birds, animals and human beings.(39) [fig 12] From these celebrations the *mulid* sugar dolls have grown popular mainly in the shape of a bride, a knight on his horse or a barque.

The Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt tried very hard to challenge the religious leadership of the Islamic Empire represented by the Abbasids of Baghdad. During the Fatimid reign, Cairo was founded as the capital. Palaces, mosques and centres of learning were erected to impress their rivals and to continue propagating the Shiite doctrine. The Fatimids could not attract scientists and men of letters. However, their endeavours in the fields of art, architecture and crafts were highly successful. In these areas images of living creatures became more common and suggest borrowing from Persia. The Caliphs took part in the popular celebrations and were always brightly dressed, with a great coloured umbrella in the background reminiscent of the pre-Islamic rulers of Morocco who used bird's feathers, especially peacocks, for their umbrellas. The *mulid* doll/bride has a big paper umbrella which is part of the colourful costume certainly inspired by the Caliph's image.(40) [fig 13]

The *mulid* traditional celebration is still alive today. Although the *mulid* was celebrated with a little less enthusiasm during the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods (1250-1518 A.D.), it picked up again with the Ottoman rule starting 1518 A.D. 'Abd al-Ghani al-Nabawi al-Shal believes the *mulid* dolls carry in them the simplicity of Pharaonic *ushabti* figures, mainly in the compactness and stiffness of the body in contrast with the more life-like face which needs to be identified by the *Ka*. Whereas the face of the *mulid* bride is given outline features after it is brought out of the mould, the body remains a conic mass with no details. Moreover, the *mulid* bride is dressed up in colourful paper which covers all except the face.(41) [fig 14] The *mulid* bride is related, at least in concept, to the traditional fertility dolls, to the Nile bride effigy, and in a curious manner to the *mu'anisa* too.

The *mulid* celebrations are a feature of Egyptian socioreligious traditions to date.



Fig 12. Ottoman miniature showing a dining table procession with food and candy figures of various types of animals.



Fig 13. *Mulid* doll, Egypt.



Fig 14. *Mulid* doll, *Ushabti*, and *Mu'anisa* reflect a simple basic structure.

No other country celebrates them with such zeal and spectacle. On each occasion, and they are many in Egypt, the celebrations go on for a few days and culminate in *al-Layla al-Kabira* (the great night). The *mulid* celebrations in Egypt have been at the centre stage of popular folk festivals for most of the past thousand years. There are still in Cairo small factories which work for the duration of one month every year just before the Prophet's birth anniversary in order to produce enough *mulid* dolls for the celebrations. These shops are in the most popular areas of Cairo as the *mulid* festivities take place around these areas too. [fig 15]

On the occasion of *al-Layla al-Kabira*, guilds and wealthy shop owners sponsor carts on which a sort of tableaux vivant_z of scenes are staged by jesters, buffoons, giant puppets, acrobats and actors. The pageants move in the afternoon in a procession towards the *mulid* fairground accompanied by musicians, singers and all types of performers. When they reach the fair ground the performers resort to their corners or tents to continue with their own performances. [fig 16a & 16b]

During the *mulid* celebrations performers vendors and pilgrims mingle together on the fairgrounds, in the pavilions specified for performances and during the *dhikr* sessions held in the mosques. During the *dhikr* (remembrance session) mystical ritual, chanting praises for god and the Prophet for the attainment of spiritual effect are the main activity. Some *dhikr* sessions incorporate physical movement such as the dance of the whirling dervishes.

Participants in the *mulid* are always on the move, journeying from one location and activity to the next over a period of a few days. The *mulid* celebrations provide the participants with a very special experience. The celebrations are open to all and every member of the society, Muslims and Copts, participate in each other's *mulids*, rich and poor find something to please them, men and women mix in most activities with little or no restrictions. Nobody who has been to a *mulid* is not touched by the external social dimension experienced mainly in mixing and sharing with a great number of people of various backgrounds. The internal spiritual aspect centres inevitably on focusing prayers and thoughts on the holy personage whose birthday is being celebrated. Pilgrimage, journeying and social communication with people are the main themes of the *mulid* tradition. These same themes are also dominant in the pilgrimage to Makka which none the less has purely a religious purpose. The



Fig 15. *Mulid* doll and mould.

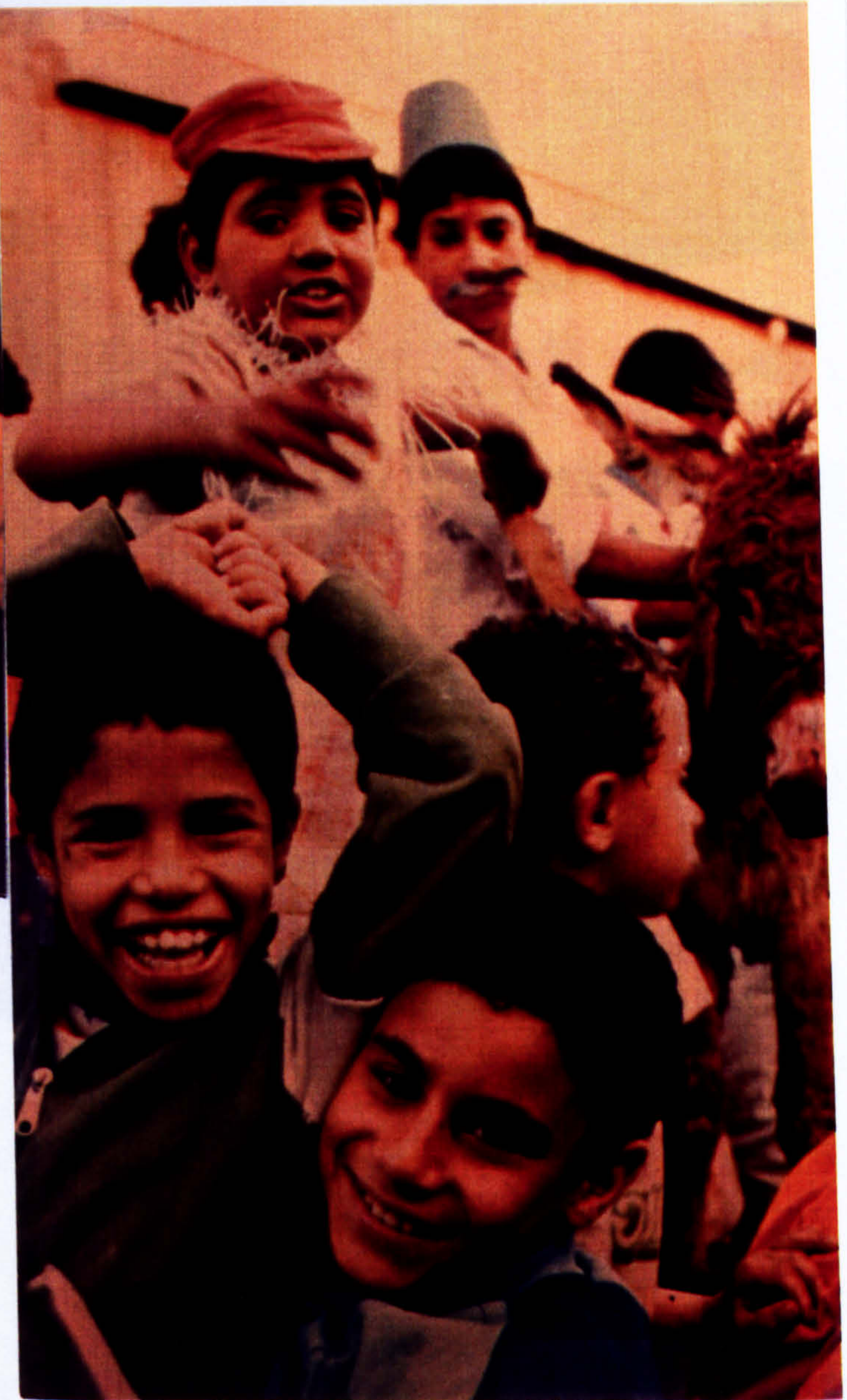


Fig 16a. *Mulid* procession and pageants. Photographs by Khalid Goweilly



Fig 16b. *Mulid* procession. Photographs by Khalid Goweilly.

religious aspect of the *mulid* is confined to activities inside the mosques. Activities in the fairground are purely secular, although there exist many *munshidin* (singers) who sing praises for the Prophet and his family all around the pavilions. Today the *mulid* fairground has shooting games, lots of food, street performers, popular singers and puppet shows.

4.3.10. Figure Images in the service of the written word

At the same time as Fatimids were increasingly sponsoring the display of figurative images in all the crafts, and providing popular entertainment and festivities on the streets of Cairo, the courts of the Abbasids (750-1258 A.D.) in Baghdad were encouraging the artists in their lands to produce rich and colourful book-illustrations and miniatures. The new literary genre of *maqamat* was flourishing and transporting its audience and readers in imagination to the underground world of learned and clever beggars. Besides, texts on scientific material were being illustrated to instruct carefully and precisely on the world of chivalry, botany, biology, medicine, animal life, mechanical tricks, etc. In music, musicians and singers were similarly booming and their activities were recorded and illustrated in *Kitab al Aghani*, (The Book of Songs) which was compiled by Abu al-Faraj al-Asfahani in 1219 A.D. [fig 17] Also the translation of the book of fables which dealt with a collection of animal stories, *Kalila Wa Dimna*, was continually being copied and illustrated although the work was published during the life of its translator Ibn al-Muqaffa' (died 759 A.D.).(42) The fables were originally written by the Indian philosopher Bidpai as a guide to rulers and were translated into Pahlavi, Syriac and Arabic and later to all languages. The fables have been very popular for their political and moral messages and for their various possible levels of meanings aimed at all Kings, in courts and jungles.

The earliest illustrated manuscript still available of *Kalila Wa Dimna* is a copy from Syria judged to date around 1200 A.D. It is obvious this copy was executed with great confidence. In these illustrations the compositions are very simple with a few figures of animals placed in a suggestive landscape with plants or simple architectural elements.[fig 18] The illustrations are rendered in the typical free flowing line style of the early 13th Century and are bold in colour. The pictures depict interesting moments in the stories, and reveal the animals in natural poses



Fig 17. Book illustrations, miniature from *The Book of Songs*, Iraq 13th Century.



Fig 18. Illustrations from Kalila wa Dimna, 13th Century.

which emphasise the action in the narrative. The vegetal or architectural landscape as well as the garments are usually treated as a decorative element. The animals are to a certain extent depicted as characters in a scene and not just a prototype of the animal. Their posture is often reflective of their attitudes or status vis-à-vis other animals. In a way the animals' posture is as communicative as the human gestures usually used to imply conversation. Very much in the ancient Mesopotamian and Egyptian painting tradition, also with obvious similarities to shadow play figures, depth is not reproduced, the profile point of view is prominent, figures in a group share the same ground line and whenever more than one activity is taking place at the same time the artist uses parallel registers and compartments. Moreover, an interesting detail reminiscent of ancient practice is the inscription of the name of the character above each figure, but often with no reference at all to the artist/scribe/illustrator.(43)

4.3.11 Arts of the book : *Maqamat al-Hariri*

Maqamat al-Hariri is among the books which were frequently illustrated during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Because the *maqamat* were very popular and communicate lively stories in colourful language, artists were tempted to illustrate them. There exist around thirteen different manuscripts of these *maqamat*. Among the better known ones are the copy in Leningrad, produced around 1225-35 A.D., a copy in Istanbul, produced around 1242-58 A.D. and a third copy in the Bibliotheque Nationale. This manuscript is the most famous for its illustrations which are executed by the Iraqi Yahya Mahmud al-Wasiti who also copied them in 1237 A.D. Al-Wasiti captures the atmosphere and the characters of the *maqamat* in a very subtle manner. The fifty *maqamat* take us on a journey around different countries in the Islamic Empire: Holwan, Ma'arra, Alexandria, Shiraz, etc., and stops at places such as courts, mosques, libraries, desert camps, taverns, pilgrim caravans, slave markets, etc. (44) [fig 19 & fig 20]

Al-Wasiti, consistent with the conventions of the period, indicates settings by using isolated architectural elements, natural motifs, or objects; he also depicts the characters gesticulating, although with expressionless faces. [fig 21] Some of the illustrations focus on a simple scene with one or two characters, while others combine more than one scene on the same page by designing intricate registers - a technique used earlier by the ancient Egyptians



Fig 19. Illustrations of *Maqamat al-Hariri* by al-Wasiti. Inside a mosque with the *Imam* preaching, and the public library of Hilwan.



Fig 20. Illustrations of *Maqamat al-Hariri* by al-Wasiti. An elementary school and a barber's shop.



Fig 21. *Maqamat al-Hariri*. Abu Zayd before the Governor of Rahba.

and Mesopotamians. [fig 22] The illustrations are essentially two dimensional; the figures are depicted in outline and filled in colours. Sometimes depth is suggested using the ancient convention of successive parallel outlined figures on the same ground lines, the figures, none the less, retaining their individual features.

Oleg Grabar suggests that al-Wasiti does not only illustrate the *maqamat* but he sometimes interprets them as well by a characteristic choice of incidents or even words to present in visual images. The representation of a drove of camels with an old woman guarding them, is an example which reveals how "a very minor point was picked up by al-Wasiti and illustrated in a curious way, since the main hero of the story is not even present".(45) This particular *maqama* is about Abu Zayd, the picaresque hero, giving all sorts of legal advice to a Bedouin, of course using ornamented language. The Bedouin rewards Abu Zayd with a drove of camels along with a slave girl who is referred to in the text as a *qayna* (a female singer). Grabar believes that the singing girl being represented as an old hag is a case of the painter exercising his satirical wit at the expense of Abu Zayd.(46) Such practices by al-Wasiti add visual commentary to the literary text. [fig 23]

The various illustrations of al-Hariri's *maqamat* display an effort to create an iconographic vocabulary which is not yet quite developed. For instance in the Vienna manuscript the two heroes carry the same physical characteristics throughout the fifty *maqamat*; "the rogue always wears a light grey coat and the narrator always has a red beard."(47) In most of the manuscript when a character of authority is depicted, the full facing representational mode is adapted, this style belonging to the princely iconographic cycle common then.(48) Young men and attendants are usually depicted beardless. Although female characters are few, their representations reflect their profession or class. For example we have female mourners with big gestures in a graveyard in one illustration, and a singer/prostitute in a tavern wearing revealing clothes in another. [fig 24] A number of the illustrations try to use some kind of iconography in order to help identify the hero in the crowds, for that is the setting for most of the *maqamat*. Abu Zayd's turban serves to identify him in certain illustrations, but being the rogue Abu Zayd's head gear changes with his disguise as a mendicant. Al-Harith, the narrator, has no identifiable features, and in many crowd scenes we are not sure whether he is there at all. Gestures are very expressive:



Fig 22. *Maqamat al-Hariri*. Travellers arrive at a village.



Fig 23. *Maqamat al-Hariri* by al-Wasiti, a drove of camels, the 23rd *maqama*.



Fig 24. Maqamat al-Hariri, tavern scene and graveyard scene.

extended hands, pointing fingers, fingers at the mouth are used to indicate a narrator or an observer. In addition, gestures are often used for pure compositional purposes.(49) [figs 19-24]

In the same manner landscape and architectural motifs are used to frame figures in a scene. Certain congregation scenes employ the actual crowd mass itself as the framing motif in the picture. [fig 24 & fig 25] Huge and minute vegetal motifs are often used to set the background or outdoor scenes. Grabar, Ettinghausen and Arnold trace some of the iconographic elements in the illustrations to prototypes derived from Byzantine, Persian, Syriac and Coptic manuscripts, and try to emphasise the synthetical character of these illustrations.(50)

The *maqamat* will always be appreciated for being a rich satirical social commentary on the emerging merchant and artisan middle class of the medieval Islamic city. However, the various illustrations of the *maqamat* manuscripts should be seen in the perspective of the book industry. Grabar explains that

at best we may consider them as metaphors, as part of a system of visual signs parallel to the text, with its own set of rules, but which did not seek to illustrate so much as to provide pleasure, joy or excitement as one read the book. Wasiti's creation would have been the exception, a unique attempt by one talented artist to give more specific interpretation to the text. (51)

4.3.12 Arts of the Object

The significance of the *maqamat* illustrations as well as the other illustrated manuscripts of the Islamic medieval period is that they belong to a category of secular narrative images produced simultaneously in the main urban centres of the Islamic Empire: Baghdad, Musil, Cairo and Damascus. They reflect "the explosion of representation that was going on all over the Muslim world, from Egypt to Anatolia to Central Asia".(52) Figurative visual expression spread across the range of contemporary arts and crafts - ceramics, metal work, woodwork, glass and fabric are all heavily decorated with representations of animal and human figures.

To this middle period of Islamic history the liveliest and finest artistic products are attributed. Figural compositions, inscriptions, floral and geometric motifs

developed to an outstanding level. The metal works of the Mamluks (1250-1517 A.D.) exhibit a wide range of courtly repertoire of warriors and hunters, musicians and dancers, drinkers and revellers. The decorative vocabulary and techniques of metalwork include basins, ewers, cups and jugs, neighbouring countries and transitory scenes. For example (53) [fig 26]. Metalwork techniques where metals like silver and bronze. Perforated metal objects and animals. [fig 27]

The enamelled and gilded glass vessels displays highly developed techniques employing narrative figural compositions and inscriptions which parallel the traditional bowls, basins, vases and lamps for courts and mosques, and in simpler variety for the general public. (54) Lamps for mosques, of course did not have any of the figural compositions. An interesting



Fig 25. *Maqamat al-Hariri*. The road to Makka and horsemen waiting to participate in a parade.

developed to an outstanding level. The metal works of the Mamluks (1250-1517 A.D.) exhibit a wide range or courtly repertoire of warriors and hunters, musicians and dancers, drinkers and revellers, real and fantastic animals etc. The decorative vocabulary and techniques developed on metal work in the shape of basins, ewers, cups and jugs, flasks and lunch boxes, were imitated in neighbouring countries and transported to other medium such as ceramics for example.(53) [fig 26] Metalwork in the middle period focused mainly on inlay techniques where metals like silver, gold and copper were used on brass or bronze. Perforated metal objects were also produced in the shapes of a lamp or animals. [fig 27]

The enamelled and gilded glass industry which flourished in Egypt and Syria displays highly developed techniques and an extensive decorative vocabulary employing narrative figural compositions and *arabesque* floral motifs as well as inscriptions which parallel the tradition of metal work. Beakers, cups, bottles, bowls, basins, vases and lamps all were manufactured as show pieces for the courts and mosques, and in simpler variety for the general public.(54) Lamps for mosques, of course did not have any of the figural compositions. An interesting example which reminds us of the book illustration approach to narrative images specifically where figures are framed in an architectural and vegetal setting is featured on a rare pair of beakers manufactured during the Ayyubid dynasty, around 1260 A.D., most probably in Aleppo.(55) [fig 28] The scenes on the beakers appear to represent personages and architectural structures of a Christian community; bands of inscriptions and floral scrolls enclose the scenes following the conventions of the period. Although the setting looks like a monastery and the figures like priests there is nothing religious about the narrative. The top band of inscription on both beakers carries the words "Glory to our master, the Sultan, the royal, the learned....", and "Glory to our master.... the just"(56) This convention is also to be noticed on metal and on objects in other mediums.

Potters and glass makers used similar techniques in colour enamels and overglaze painting. And like craftsmen working in other materials, potters used the same repertoire of figural compositions, floral and geometric motifs to decorate their pieces. Bowls, jars, jugs and tiles all display a range of decoration in the style of lustre painting and blue and white Chinese porcelain. Animals and birds are favourite motifs enclosed in panelled divisions, and sometimes depicted



Fig 26. Examples of inlaid metal work with courtly scenes, hunting, music making, etc., Musil 13th Century.

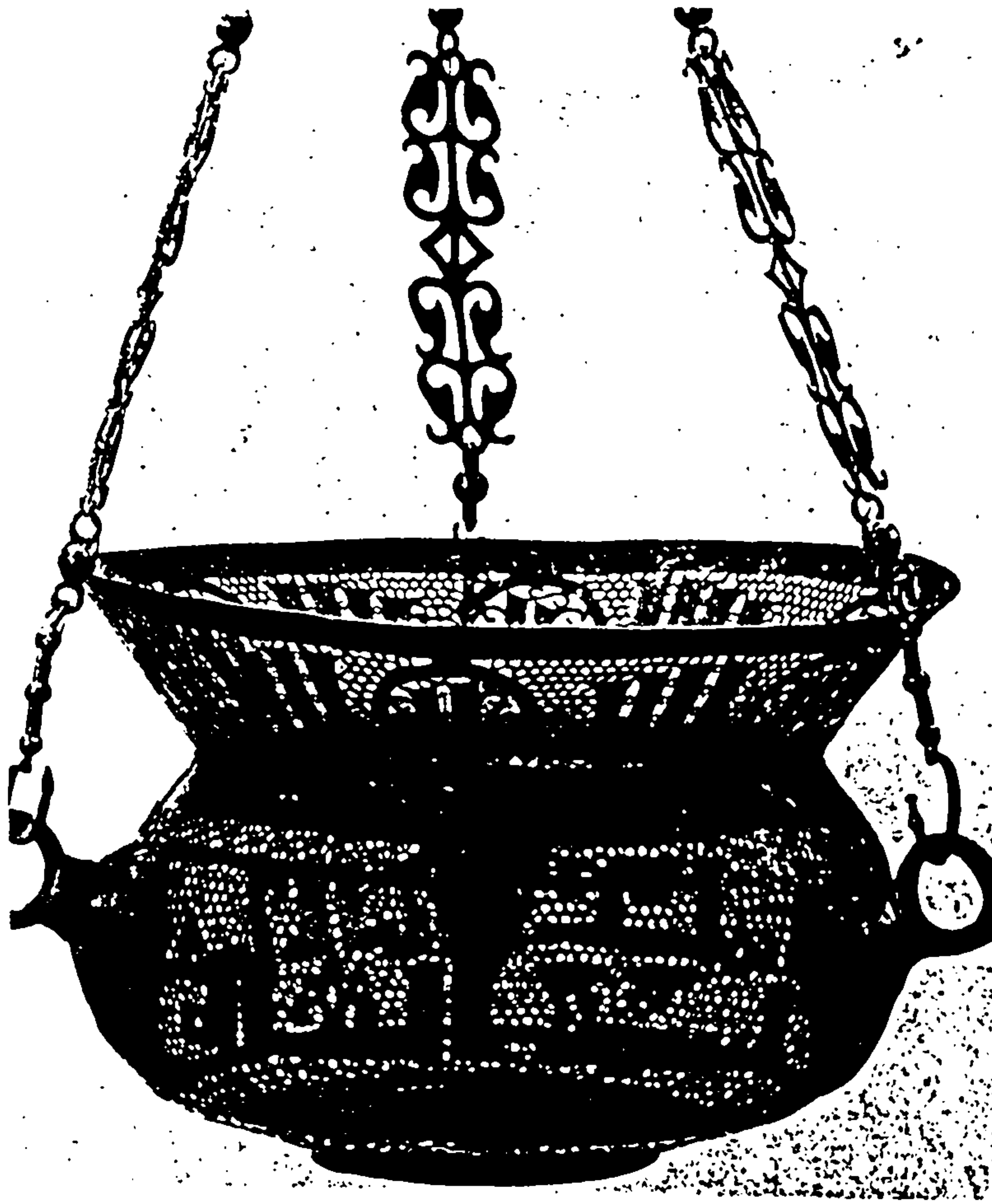


Fig 27. Examples of perforated metal objects.



Fig 28. Beaker gilded glass enamelled in green, blue, yellow, red and white. c. 1260 Aleppo.

in silhouette. [fig 29a] Another type of ware directly influenced by techniques used in metal work is the group of incised wares using white en globe on coarse red body. The design is incised through the en globe creating an effect similar to that of incised metalwork.(57)

Woodwork and ivory also display variations on the same theme. However, the woodwork should be seen within its architectural context, such as doors, window shutters, intricate screens called *mashrabiyya*, domes, etc. Some of the surfaces are inlaid with different woods, ivory or mother of pearl using geometric and floral motifs. Structures using wood panels allowed space for figural composition carved in wood or ivory plaques.(58) [fig 29b]

A feature common to all the crafts produced during the Mamluk period (1250-1517 A.D.) is the use of blazon which indicates the patron who is usually of a high rank. The blazon could be inscription, figurative representation or a composite of both. Blazons found on objects made for the court consist of designs of a circular shield, crescent, cup, pen box, sword, axe, bow etc.

From this brief survey of the art of objects - books, cups, beakers, swords, etc. in the Islamic medieval metropolis, we should be able to highlight a few characteristic elements of urban taste which grew out of the world of merchants and artisans. The first point to remark is the richness in forms and design of colours in all the various mediums, which also display great technical knowledge and inventiveness. The ornamental aspect is one that is omnipresent across all the range of the manufactured objects. The elaborate designs on the humble material aim to dematerialise the external facade and to beautify it with a variety of visual narratives, motifs and compositions of abstract nature. Grabar comments that "the growth of an art devoted to the creation of individualized, personal objects, as opposed to huge paintings and sculptures, indicates the emphasis the Muslim culture placed on the private world".(59) He also remarks that art objects were made accessible to many levels of society by producing them inexpensively, "a deeply democratic aspect of the creativity of Islamic art".(60) These aspects of artistic creativity apply also to the various forms of performance arts of the period and we shall see later how this is specifically reflected in *khayal al-zill*.



Fig 29a. Ceramic pieces showing the repertoire of figural compositions, 10th-12th Century.



Fig 29b. Ivory plaques showing performers: a dancer and a musician gathering in a private house. Egypt 10th-11th Century.

4.3.13 Oral Traditional arts

The market place in any Medieval Islamic City must have witnessed the emergence of popular entertainment forms as well as forms of public oral communication. Conjurors, animal trainers, acrobats, dancers musicians must have been a common sight in cities. On the other hand, there are *qas* (story teller of pious or heroic tales), *khatib* (preacher), *sira* poet, *hakawati* (story teller), *munshid* (singer), who earned their living in coffee houses, mosque yards, weddings etc.

Early Islamic cities flourished around centres of religious institutions - *masjid jami'* type mosque (congregational mosque), *madrassa* (theological school), and trade centres - open *suq*, *wakala* or *khan* (ware houses) and *caravanserai*. These are the main components of the Islamic urban complex. Since the time of the Prophet the mosque has been the focal point of information about religious, political and social matters. From the time the Prophet built the first mosque in Madina, the Friday *khutba* (sermon) has been a reflection of the latest in the political scene. Marnissi remarks "in the case of war, one learns what is happening at the front by listening; the name of the sovereign that is mentioned is the one who currently controls the territory by military means."(61) However, the mosque is not intended to be just a "place for worship, it is also a place where dialogue between the leader and the people could take place".(62) No wonder the main forms of oral tradition in the Islamic community were generated inside and around mosques. The *qari'* who recites Qur'an verses, and the *mu'azin* who calls for prayers, have formed the nucleus of an oral public communication system propagated among all Muslim communities in the world.

"The Mosque became the most lively, and certainly the most cosmopolitan, center of all activities. Popular story-tellers (*qussas*) held forth there upon the wonders of the prophets and the Biblical and Talmudic tales, all conceived within an Islamic framework".(63) The *qas* framework is probably the most effective public communication system associated with Islam. The *qas* found his audience in the mosques after prayers exactly as poets and *rawi* (narrator) found their audience in fairs during *Jahiliyya*. From the *qas* tradition evolved the propagandist of social code, the journalist, and eventually the entertainer in the courtyards of mosques and in the nearby coffee houses.

Outside the scope of narrative propagating *hadith*, religious themes and examples, the recounter of stories is not called *qas*. *Hakawati* is the name used for a performer whose anecdotes are based on historical or contemporary social events and gossip. The *hakawati* is the person who recounts an *hikaya* (story). The root *haka* means to give voice or utterance, speak, on the other hand, the word *haka* means to imitate. However, the term *hikaya* has evolved to mean "imitation impersonation and aping, as well as a story or tale".(64)

Epic traditions or *sira* narratives and poems were among the favourite oral tradition entertainment. The *rawi* or *sha'ir* (poet) perform the *sira* accompanied with a *rababa* (one stringed viol) .(65) Along with *rawis* and *shu'ara* , we have the *maddah*, *qawwal* and *muhaddith* who are rhapsodists and improvisers of oral traditions. The *sira* narrative follows an episodic structure which allows the performers to spread it over a few sessions. Performances of *sira* belong to the province of folk culture, either in the form of vernacular narrative tradition or as oral poetic story telling. Written texts of *sira* are the result of fixing the oral tradition on paper. However, it does not follow that *sira* is now also fixed in performance, because it is still a living, fluid tradition. *Sira* tradition still exists in the Middle East where coffee house owners commission "a glass painting to celebrate the particularly beautiful rendition of the epic song on their premises".(66) Among the living *siyar*, *Sirat Bani Hilal*, *Sirat 'Antara* and *Sirat Baybars* are still recounted today in coffee houses across a vast expanse of Arabic speaking lands.(67) Also folk paintings and prints are still produced to give visual expression to the characters. [fig 30] The *siyar* are made further alive by associating the heroes with contemporary cultural and political situations.

Specialisation in forms of oral traditions was a normal consequence of the great demand for this type of entertainment. The *maddah* sings praises of the Prophet and his family accompanied with a *daff* (small tambourine). *Mawwal* singers depict their themes from romantic epics and sing dramatically the verses accompanied by a *mizmar* (flute) or a single string *rababa*. (68)

The *maddah* performs mainly during *mulids*, an occasion to recount the *sira* of the Prophet and the story of the *Isra' Wa Al-Mi'raj*, along with chants of praise.



Fig 30. Examples of popular painting on glass. *Sirat 'Antara*.

'Arsan states this tradition was started in Iraq in 1233 A.D. by the Prince Mudhfer al-Din.(69) But it is certain that accounts of the life of the Prophet and the story of the *Isra' Wa Al-Mi'raj* were the main material of the *qas* in the mosques as early as the eighth century.

Among the *haki* (storyteller/impersonator) in the medieval market-place, there emerged many with an acutely developed sense of mimicry. Al-Jahiz tells us in *Al-Bayan Wa Al-Tabyyin* about an impersonator who is capable of imitating people so well that he seems to be more natural than them. If he imitates a blind man he synthesises the peculiar features of all blind men in one character.(70) Moreh argues that some of the *rasa'il* (treaties) and *hikaya* of the 9th and 10th centuries were composed in a drama form; some included dialogue material although sequences of monologues are prevalent. The *hikaya*, whether acted or recited, is an example of how "live plays influenced highbrow literature", (71) such as the *maqamat*. Moreh points to similarities between dramatic material and the repertoire of buffoons and mimes in *Hikayat Abu Al-Qasim Al-Baghdadi*, (see Appendix IV), the *maqamat* of al-Hamadhani and al-Hariri also the *babat* of Ibn Daniyal. He further argues that the *hikaya* served as a model for the narrative of the *maqamat* and *babat khayal al-zill*.(72) Moreh adds that "from the eleventh century onward the terms *khayal*, *maqama*, *risala*, *hikaya*, *muhawara* [dialogue], *munazara* [disputation] and *hadith* were applied to dramatic literature intended for either recitation or live actors. These terms did not then denote distinct and separate genres, for they all encompassed reading, recitation and performance".(73)

The work of all the above mentioned performers appealed to a broad section of the general public. But some researchers remark that the *maqamat* appealed more to the educated and sophisticated audience as it has a highly stylised literary form. This is not necessarily true, because in spite of the fact that the language of the *maqamat* is tightly constructed and greatly ornamented, the storyline is very simple and based on scenes from everyday life. The possibilities of animating the text are enormous. However, we know that it is usual for a performer of oral traditions to stop and explain the text or even to comment on it whenever he felt it is needed. The main thing to remember is that the reciter, *muhaddith*, *hakawati*, *qas*, etc. know their audiences pretty well. There is no distance between the performer and the audience, no fourth wall as such. Wherever the assembly takes place the performer and the audience are close together in a ring. To the audience, the performer is a familiar person, and when

he recounts for instance the story of Abu Zayd, he might imitate Abu Zayd in the disguise of a preacher. Walking in to a character and out of it is done in full knowledge of the audience, so there is no mistaking the performer for the character. The audience feels free to comment to the performer about the character while the performer too interprets the character to the audience. Therefore, the skill of the performer of oral traditions lies in not losing his identity for the character which he impersonates, even when he brings into play props or costume. This characteristic approach to performance and acting has impregnated all the forms of performance arts in the Middle East. Moreover, at the very roots the presentation technique in which a performer does not lose his identity as a performer mirrors the characteristic approach of the visual arts of the Middle East, that of the visibly unreal. The above reinforces a central argument in this thesis, that of the existence of a comprehensive mode of aesthetic expression which is articulated in the visual, verbal, oral and performance arts of the Middle East.

In the market place of a medieval Islamic city oral traditions were transmitted through forms which focus on a performer as we have discussed above, and through creative formations which summon objects and performers concurrently. These forms are the peep show, magic lantern and shadow play. Both the peep show and the magic lantern address a very small audience in each session. However, the shows are most probably short in order to ensure frequent presentations. Both shows rely on two dimensional images to illustrate the story recounted by the performer. Sometimes the peep show performer animates a glove puppet to suggest that it is telling the story. Both forms are suitable for presenting historical events, battles as well as popular love stories. The audience in this case sees delineated forms and hears the narration of the story without much dialogue.(74)

4.4 Khayal al-Zill

Khayal al-zill, the Arabic for shadow play, attracted lots of attention in the Middle Ages as it proved to be a very flexible medium which employs the arts of objects with the arts of oral tradition. Performers of shadow play are known as *sunna' khayal al-zill*, *sun'a* comes from the root *sina'a* meaning to manufacture. It is the enterprising aspect which is emphasised here, thus focusing on the objects which project the shadows. The form of shadow play probably arrived in the Middle East with the traders who visited the Far East, especially China and India.

Trading between the Middle East and the Far East was strongly established long before Islam, in effect, the Silk Road traders must have provided a few things besides silk. Nonetheless it is reasonable to believe that the art of shadow play was introduced around the 8th century with visiting or returning merchants and sailors.(75) By the 10th century Abbasid and Fatimid courts were enjoying the narration of pious and heroic tales supplemented by moving shadows on a screen. From the early days of shadow play, *sufis* developed interest in the analogy between the oneness of the Creator and the mover of the many objects behind the screen.

However, *khayal al-zill* appreciation stretched across the courts on to the streets of Cairo, Baghdad and Damascus. The themes then evolved to encompass buffoonery and socio-political satire which pleases the audience of the marketplace. The impact of shadow play is quite significant in the Middle Ages as we can deduce from the reaction of two Mamluk Sultans to *khayal al-zill*. The first, Sultan Shaban who was a great fan of shadow shows, invited the players to join him on his pilgrimage journey to Makka in 1390 A.D. However, in 1477 A.D., Sultan Jaqmaq ordered the burning of all the shadow figures and made the shadow players sign a deal never to take it up again. In contrast, long before its widespread during the Mamluk period, the Fatimid rulers (973-1171 AD) employed *khayal al-zill* shows to entertain soldiers in barracks, and the sick in hospitals. In addition they invited people to open house celebrations in which *khayal al-zill* was performed. (76)

Scenes performed in *khayal al-zill* are known in Egypt as *babat* (singular *baba*), a term known to have been used since 1001 A.D.(77) Moreh remarks that the term *baba* is also used for live plays (78) and is interchangeable with *maqama*, *hikaya* and *khayal*.(79) The shadow scenes in Syria are not known as *babat* but as *fusul* (singular *fasl*). *Baba* comes from the root *bab* which means door or a chapter in a book. *Fasl* means season or section, and it is also used in the sense of a chapter in a book. *Fasl mudhik* (comic scene) came to be used later on, in Egypt and in Syria, to indicate live farcical scenes which were inserts to add to the show time. *Li'ba* is also used in Egypt for shadow play scenes. *Li'ba* comes from root *Li'b* meaning play. Moreh informs us that *Li'ba* also stands for live theatrical performances.

The term *khayal al-zill* has caused lots of confusion for scholars in the field of Arabic performance art and literature. The word *khayal* in particular caused lots

of misunderstanding. *Khayal* means figure, statue, phantom, image and shadow. However, the term *zill* also means shadow. The problem lies with the term *khayal* which is often used on its own to refer to a live performance, or combined such as in *arbab al-khayal*, to mean live performers. Early scholars in the field, both Arabs and Orientalists, interpreted *khayal* automatically as *khayal al-zill*. This caused great confusion as all live performances were now interpreted as shadow performances. Thus asserting incorrectly the notion of the absence of live performance in the Middle East .(80)

Furthermore, the combination in the term *khayal al-zill* is said to be linguistically incorrect. The linguistically correct term should read *zill al-khayal*. However, it is explained that for rather aesthetic and musical reasons, *khayal al-zill* came to be used regularly.(81) My interpretation of this discord is based on technical and performance judgement and not on linguistics. It is enough to highlight the difference in focus in each of the combinations to understand their particular dynamics.

As we know, the *zill* (shadow) of the *khayal* (figure) is cast on the screen from a light source behind the screen. From a performance point of view, the puppeteer handles and sees the *khayal* which he manipulates, whereas the audience sees the shadows of the figures which the puppeteer is projecting. So it is natural for each of them to put in focus that which is in his field of vision. The puppeteer sees the *khayal* which projects the *zill*, and the audience sees the *zill* projected by the *khayal*. Of course, both terms are correct depending on which side of the screen one happens to be.

This point is significant in the context that it clarifies another technical aspect of *khayal al-zill* which needs to be underlined. This aspect connects with the comprehensive aesthetic expression in the Middle East. The shadow projected on the screen from the puppeteer's side, is the same image seen on the screen from the audience side. The act of penetration of the image from the puppeteer's side to the audience's side of the screen has an effect which plays up the visibly unreal leitmotiv. No exercise can stretch out further than shadows the interplay between the visible and the unreal. Indeed all the arabesque designs put together cannot challenge any shadows in this aspect.

Khayal al-zill is probably the superlative illustration of the visibly unreal impulse which has survived through the visual, vocal, musical and literary arts of the

Middle East over a long period of time. Yet it has been dismissed as a marginal performance art. Let us have a good look at the Mamluk shadow figures discovered by Paul Kahle in Egypt at the beginning of the century. They should be able to show for themselves their visibly real Middle Eastern aesthetic identity. [figs 31, 32, 33]

The shadow figures found by Kahle represent the oldest and only Mamluk collection known to us. Kahle believes that they belong to the late Mamluk period which is early 16th century. However, some figures have been repaired and different parts were sewn together by later puppeteers who manipulated them. The range of motifs used on the figures provides a visual continuance of the arts and crafts of the period. In fact looking at these figures, we can see how various forms of visual expression have been borrowed by this performance art genre. Features from contemporary book illustrations, metal work, ceramics etc. are quite obvious. The figures display a strong sense of composition in organising effectively multiple decorative elements in both the individual and the composite pieces. This variety between individual characters/figures, and scenes which include characters within the setting is quite reminiscent of the illustrations of al-Wasiti. The scenes of ships are good examples of this category. Most composite scenes have strong indications of a setting such as the light house piece. [fig 33] In addition all characters have strong suggestion of activity, for example the riders on camel, elephant or horse, and man with falcon or peacock. Whereas individual human and animal figures have joints to promote movement, composite forms are static for they are designed to move all in one block across the screen and therefore they have no joints. Each figure is in itself an iconographic image of the character it represents. The figure of the woman wearing the *qubqab* (high bath wooden clogs) can only mean she is on her way to the public bath, and the man carrying a basket can only be on his way to or from the market. The hands are very important features and gestures of speech represent telling aspects of the narrative. The faces are represented in profile and facing angles, however, in both cases the major concern in the delineation of the human face is with eyes, and beards. These leather figures reflect compositional awareness in their use of light, shade and colour. Both opaque

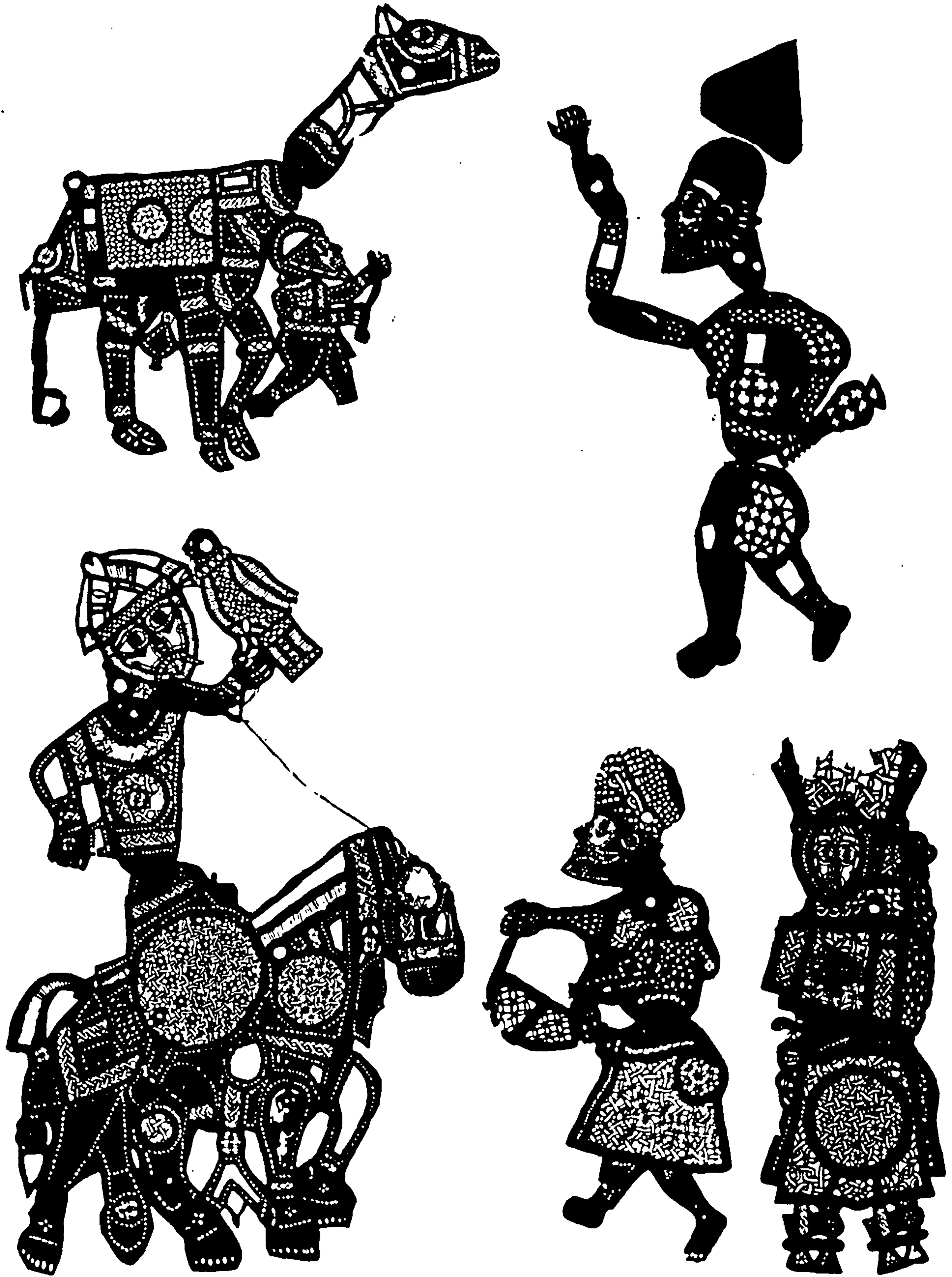


Fig. 31. Shadow figures from the late Mamluk period discovered by Paul Kahle.

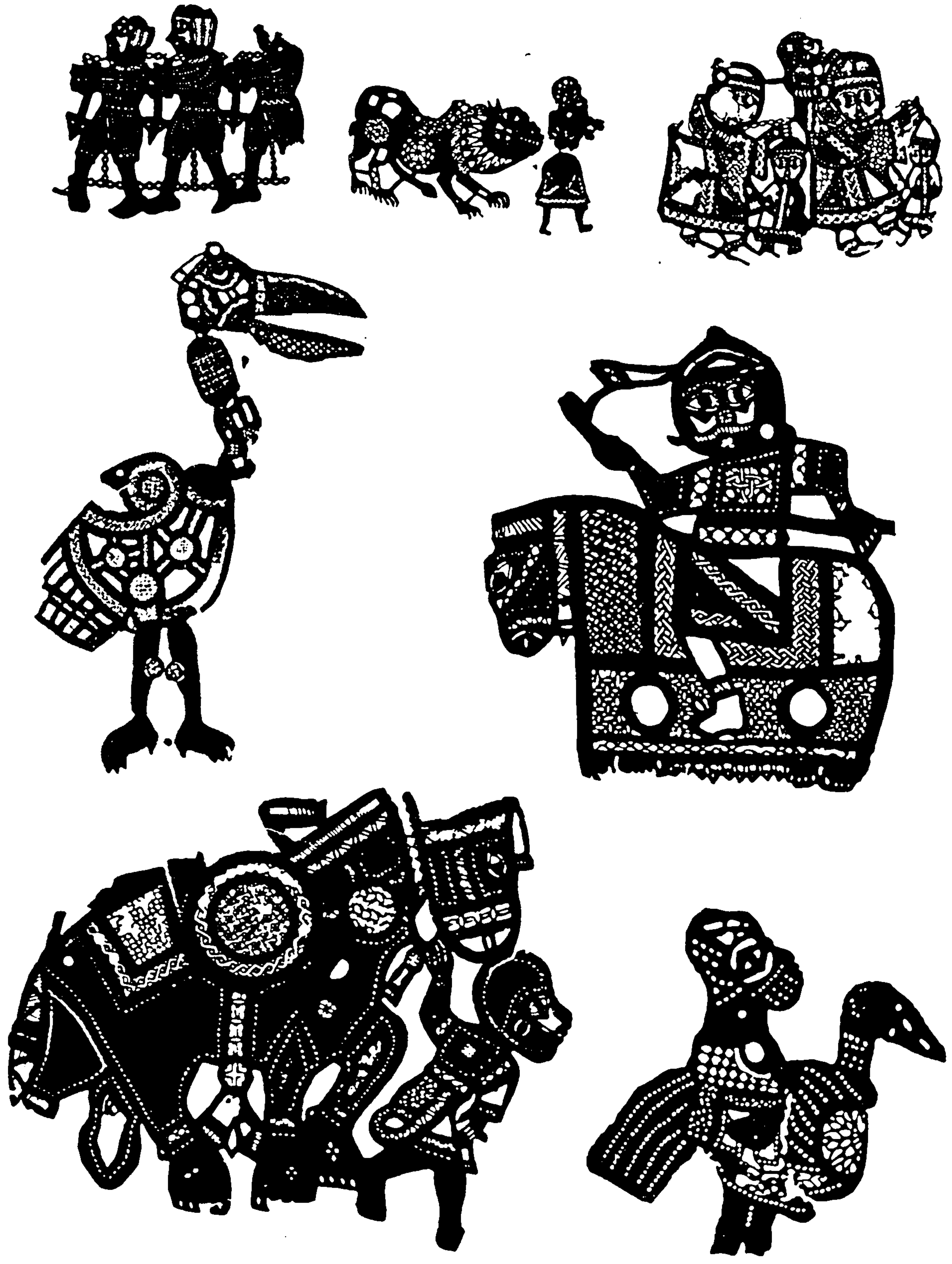


Fig 32. Late Mamluk Shadow figures.

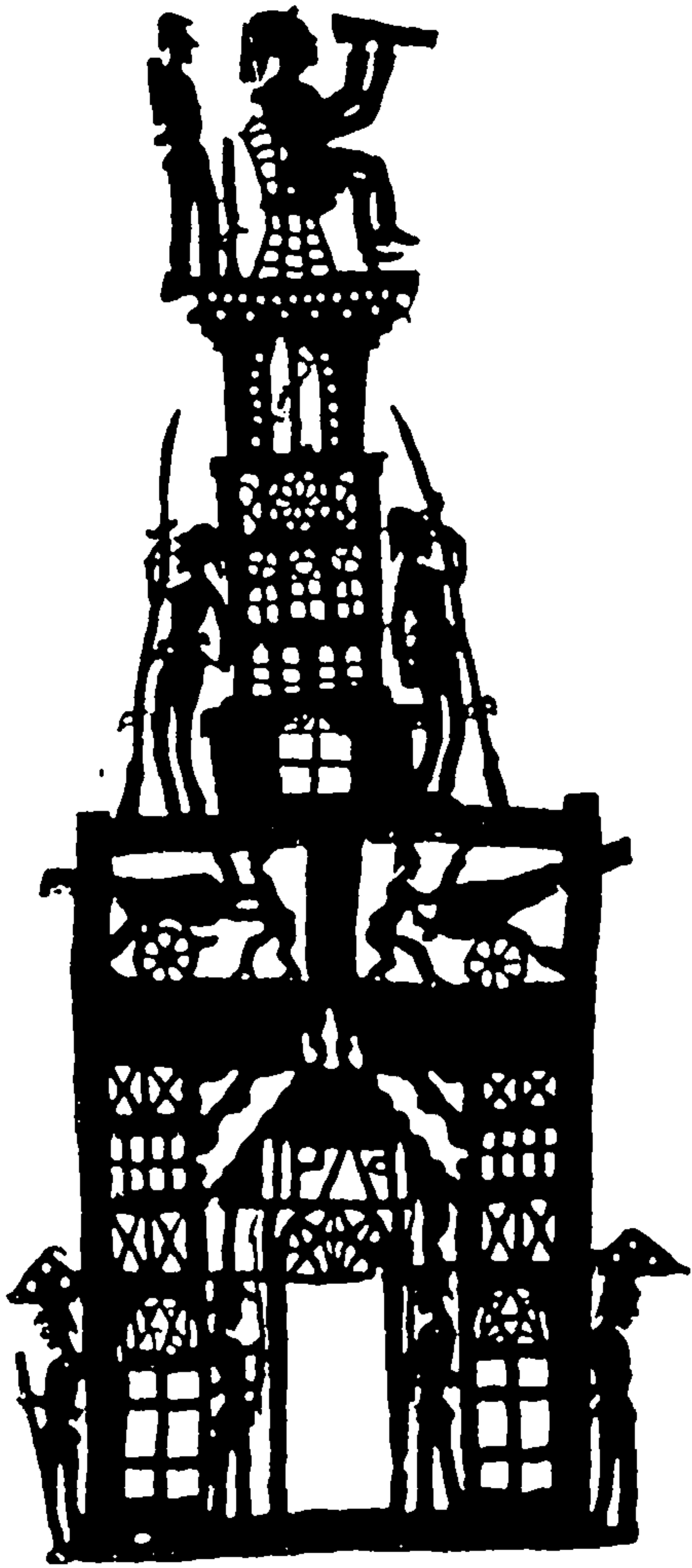


Fig. 2.

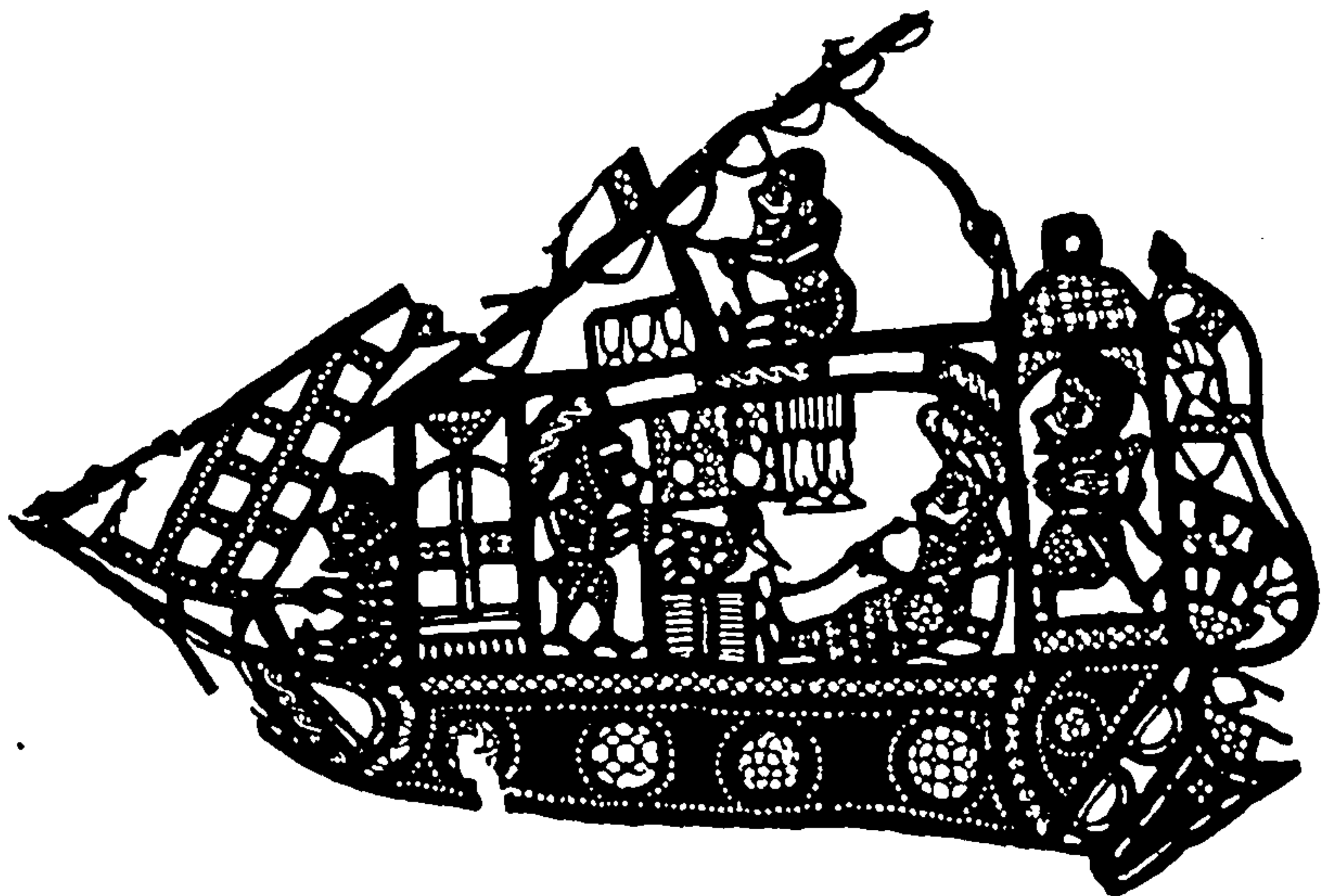
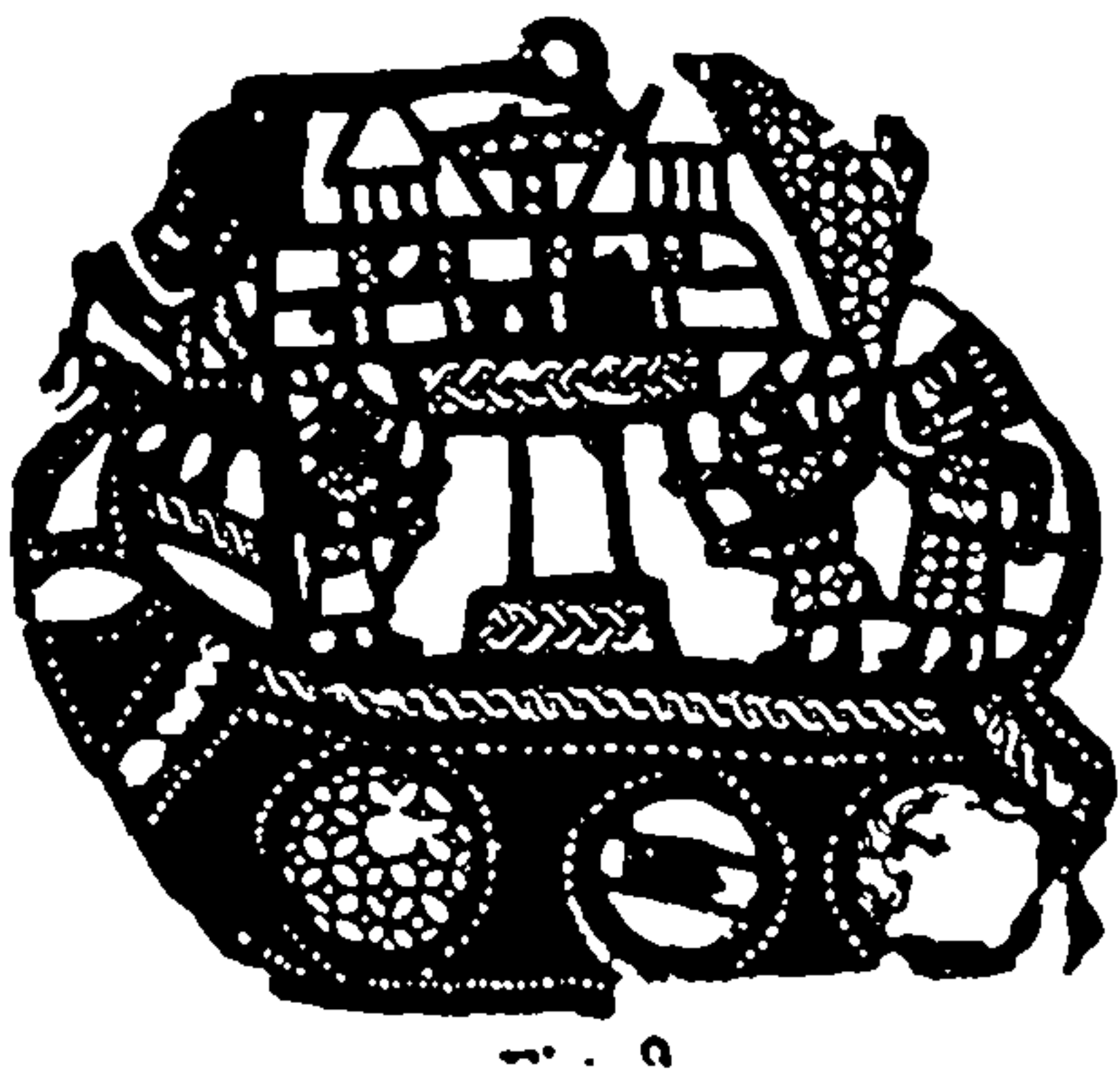
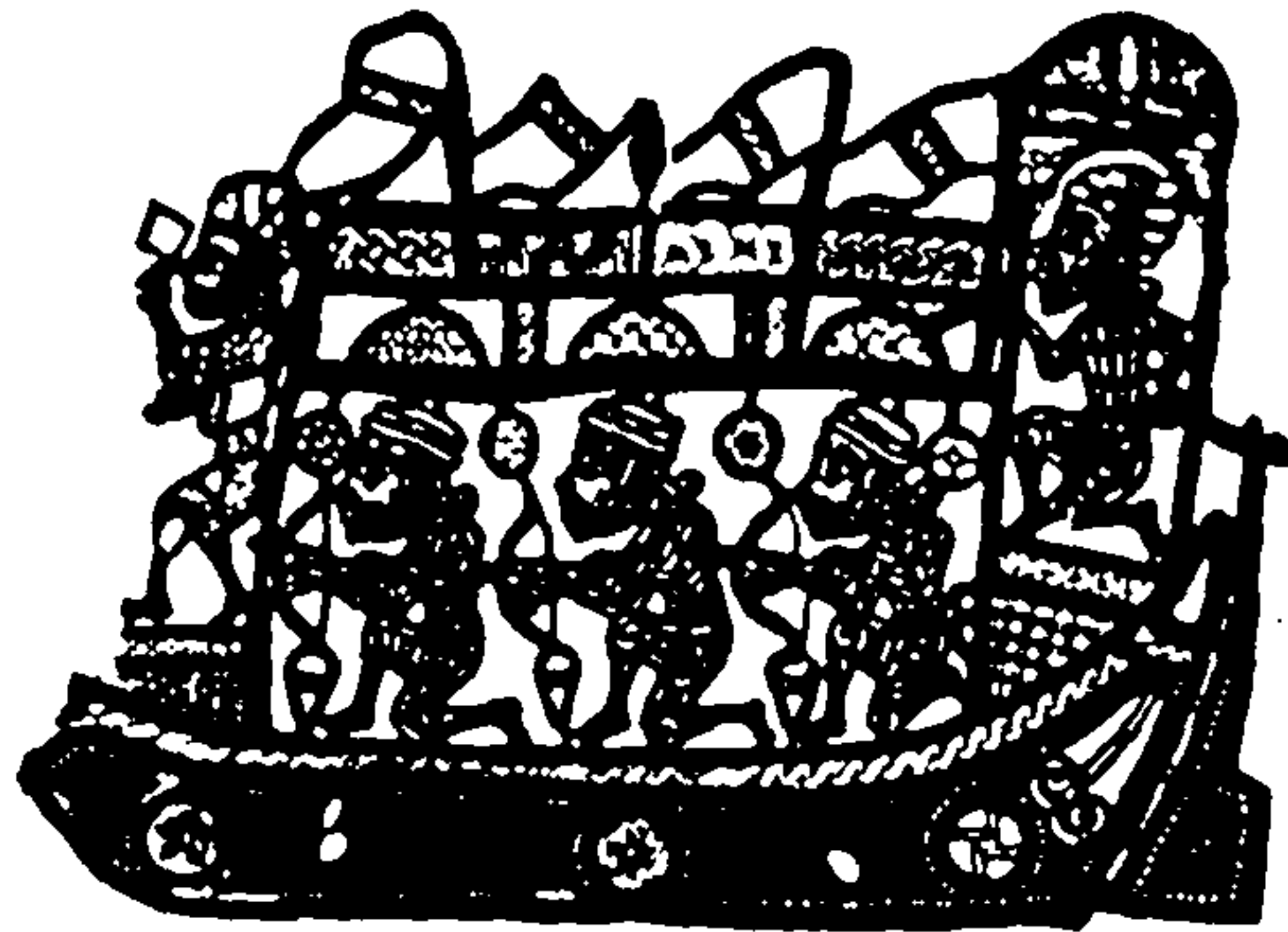
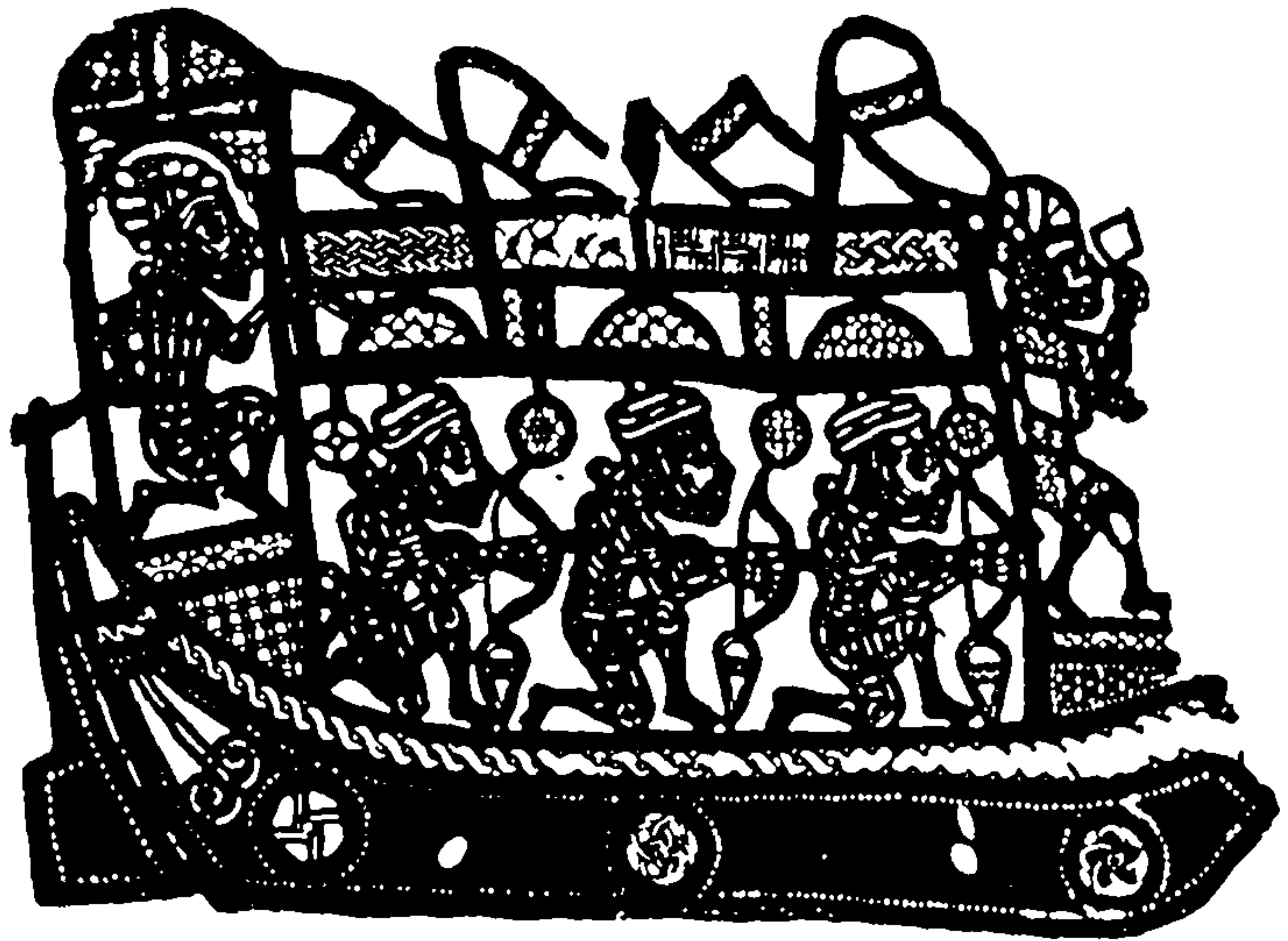


Fig 33. Late Mamluk shadow figures, they probably belong to the *Light House Baba*.

and translucent leather are used, and bold green and yellow colours can still be seen through the translucent sections. (82)

Khayal al-zill tradition must have had such a great impact on the visual arts of the Middle East, because Islamic art experts recognise the influence of shadow play on the production of book illustrations such as that of the *maqamat*:

The influence of shadow figures on our illustrations is both compositional and formal. For instance, several of the extent fragments of building interiors and boats made for shadow plays emphasize the frames, with the figures appearing to be glued to them, and divide space into superimposed registers - both features typical of *Maqamat* illustrations. The jerky gestures of so many of the figures, especially in Paris 3929, [fig 34] with their waists that serve almost as pivots and their thin, bare legs and long thin arms, find parallels in several shadow puppets where these very features fulfilled the practical requirement of articulation. Even groups of figures, especially children, are arranged in the shadow plays in the additive fashion so typical of the linear arrangements of crowds found in some of the *Maqamat* illustrations. (83)

Grabar further points out that any relation between the *maqamat* illustrations and shadow play "is more likely to have gone from play to illustration rather than the other way around because shadow theatre existed before the *Maqamat* were composed".(84) It is quite impressive indeed to realise the impact shadow play had on another visual art form. However, I much prefer to have a panoramic view of the visual products of the period, because one can trace many similarities in expression in the various mediums like metal, wood, ivory, ceramics, glass, fabric etc. and not only between the *maqamat* illustrations and shadow play. The different products reflect the employment of commanding visual vocabulary which must have evolved across a much wider scope of activities and not just shadow play as we have illustrated earlier. Furthermore, theatre and performance arts are usually synthesisers of other existing art expressions. So even if it is true that the illustrations were influenced by shadow play we should look further to see what else shadow plays borrowed from the visual traditions of the Middle East to influence the illustrations.

The main aim of this study is to show that shadow play emerged in the Islamic Middle Ages as a result of the interaction of the diverse oral traditions with the newly formed institutions. Moreover, this venture came to light as a result of their practitioners embracing a common cultural and aesthetic vocabulary. The current debate has been receptive to the development of such artistic, artisanal and theatrical forms as a performance art form described by Khalid al-Mubarak as "the most important theatrical expression in Arabic-speaking countries" (85).

3.1.1. The Mamluks

The Mamluk shadow figures found by Kahle are the primary representatives of the art, the three shadow plays composed by Ibn al-Dabbas (1270-1320) and the *Maqamat al-Hariri* (1100-1165).



Abu Zayd al-Hariri (d. 1165) and al-Dabbas (d. 1320) were both from the city of Hariri, a city renowned then for its high culture in both the Islamic and Christian worlds. Baghdad, at that time, held the seat of the Abbasid caliphate, which ended in 750 A.D. and came to an end with the Mongol invasion in 1258 A.D. The Mongol invasion of Iraq, which followed on to Syria, caused the massive migration of material and cultural life in the main cities, and many people fled to neighbouring regions for safety and work. Ibn al-Dabbas was among the many artists, scholars and intellectuals who fled from Mosul, Baghdad and Damascus to the city of Cairo (Kahle, 1980). This influx of people from different backgrounds led to the steady flourishing artistic productivity in both the fields of literature and entertainment. This artistic atmosphere marked the golden age of the Mamluks and the crowded streets of Cairo. Here we may find the Mamluk shadow play, which "breathed the cosmopolitanism of the Mamluk era" (Kahle, 1980). Not only its Mamluk rulers were foreigners;

Fig 34. *Maqamat al-Hariri*. Abu Zayd leaves al-Hariri during pilgrimage. (M.S. Arab 3929).

One of the aims of this thesis is to show that shadow play emerged in the Islamic Middle Ages as a result of the interaction of the diverse oral traditions with the visual figural art expressions. Moreover this venture came to light as a result of these expressions articulating a common cultural and aesthetic vocabulary. The cultural climate was fully receptive to the development of such artistic, artisanal and oral expression into a performance art form described by Khalid al-Mubarak as "the most mature theatrical expression in Arabic-speaking countries".(85)

4.5 Ibn Daniyal

In the same manner the late Mamluk shadow figures found by Kahle are the solitary representatives of this art, the three shadow plays composed by Ibn Daniyal in the early Mamluk period are a unique example of medieval Arabic dramatic texts. Interestingly enough, both reflect clearly contemporary techniques and modes of expression of the period. We have seen above how the shadow figures express the general interest in figure images developed during the medieval Islamic period, now we will look at Ibn Daniyal's dramatic texts to see to what degree they reflect the oral and literary traditions of their period.

4.5.1 A brief historical background

Shams al-Din Muhammad Ibn Daniyal Ibn Yusuf al-Khuza'i, 1238-1310 A.D., was born in Musil, the northern Iraqi city renowned then for its high culture in both sciences and literature. Baghdad, at that time, held the seat of the Abbassid Caliphates which started in 750 A.D. and came to an end with the Mongol invasion in 1258 A.D. The Mongol invasion of Iraq, which followed on to Syria, caused the complete destruction of material and cultural life in the main cities. The Mongol conquest drove some of the population away to neighbouring countries in search of peace and work. Ibn Daniyal was among the many artists, artisans and men of letters who fled from Musil, Baghdad and Damascus to the haven of the Mamluks in Egypt.(86) This influx of people from different backgrounds added to the already flourishing artistic productivity in both the industrial arts and the arts of entertainment. This artistic atmosphere marked the life of courts, palaces, taverns and the crowded streets of Cairo. Here we may note in passing that the capital of the Mamluks "breathed the cosmopolitanism and mobility of Islamicate society. Not only its Mamluk rulers were foreigners; often enough its great merchants and its scholars, even its judges, like Ibn-Khaldun, were foreigners too."(87)

4.5.2 Ophthalmologist, poet and playwright

Ibn Daniyal settled in Cairo where he continued his training in literature and also in ophthalmology, a scientific discipline already developed by the Arabs in Syria and Egypt.(88) At the end of his studies, Ibn Daniyal practised as a *kahhal* (ophthalmic surgeon), in a shop in one of the most popular and crowded areas in Cairo known to this day as Bab al-Futuh (Futuh Gate). At the same time Ibn Daniyal carried on with his involvement in literature and composed poems as well as pieces of dramatic poetry which he specifically intended to have produced in shadow puppet shows. The three shadow texts of Ibn Daniyal are the only intact dramatic pieces available to us from the Islamic Middle Ages.(89) Although the three plays are the only texts we know of by Ibn Daniyal, there is no reason to believe these are the only ones written by him. The confidence Ibn Daniyal projects in addressing his shadow player friend, *Rayyis* (leader) 'Ali Bin Mawlahum, implies that he had been practising shadow play for a while, and that he was also aware of the recent disappointment communicated by the audience concerning the repetitive and base quality of shadow performances.(90)

We have some documented literary evidence which informs us that shadow shows were known in the Islamic world at least since the 10th Century. For instance, Ibn al-Haytham who was born in 965 A.D. explicitly refers to it.(91) In addition, we have the famous story of Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi and his vizier al-Qadi al-Fadil enjoying a shadow show which dated around 1171 A.D. By the time Ibn Daniyal set to write and produce his shadow plays there was already a large amount of experience available to build on. He must have been aware of both the serious shadow shows centred around religious and historical themes, and the farcical shows which, however, also pointed to a moral.

When Ibn Daniyal arrived in Cairo around 1266 A.D., Sultan Baybars I of Egypt, a military slave of Turkish origin, had just taken over and was resolved to put the Egyptian house in order. Egyptians were facing famine and a tight economic situation because of the military campaigns against the Crusaders and the Mongols. Baybars proved to be a good statesman who worked on strengthening and restoring the state and the economy. However, to do this he also banned all sorts of illegal entertainment including wine, drugs, unlawful sex and homosexuality. Ibn Daniyal complains about these unbearable restrictions in the first of his plays, *The Shadow Spirit and Prince Wisal*. He puts the words in the

mouths of his characters who describe how social life in Cairo has changed drastically to those who enjoy drinking, drugs and unlawful sexual affairs.

In an introduction to the collection of the three *babat* entitled *Tayf al-Khayal* (The Shadow Spirit), the author addresses a shadow player and friend saying that upon his request the three *babat* texts were composed in the genre of buffoonery. However, he clarifies that the *babat* are meant to be classified with *al-adab al-'ali* (high culture literature), and not with inferior literature. For the aim of these *babat* is precisely to revive interest in *khayal al-zill* since audiences were complaining about their lack of originality.

Adab 'ali, or refined literature, in the age of Ibn Daniyal could only have been associated with well composed poetry, *maqamat* and belles lettres. In fact, the original meaning of *adab*, as Pellat reminds us:

is a 'way of acting, of behaving' according to a tradition norm, and even today it has retained the sense of 'good education, politeness, good manners' which it has always implied, since education tends to inculcate a fixed form of conduct.(92)

After all, to the medieval Arab world, verse was the characteristic means of literary expression, and the second best was rhyming and ornamental prose. Ibn Daniyal's *babat* are written in the style of the *maqamat* where both poetry and rhyming prose are used. However, Ibn Daniyal did not only write in classical verse and rhymed prose, but he also introduced some colloquial vocabulary whenever he found it fit and meaningful. In addition, Ibn Daniyal's characters shift with most ease and spontaneity from a well constructed *qasidah* poem, to a folk *zajal* and sometimes mix the two to create a style agreeable to a wider range of audience.(93) It is probable that the only reason these *babat* are documented in manuscripts is because they are a sample of literature which on the linguistic and structural levels respects the traditional norm. However, on the moral and social levels they cause some problems because of the obscene sexual references. The reason we do not have documents of other *babat* by other authors is because they were composed in colloquial Arabic which was not thought worthy of inscription. The *babat* composed in colloquial Arabic were seen as part of the oral tradition, therefore, the only thing to have reached us is a few thin scenarios.

4.5.3 Audience and subject matter

Ibn Daniyal is an established poet, and although there are contemporary references to his collection of poems very little has reached us. His *babat* are based on the *maqamat* form.(94) And, like the *maqamat*, they communicate popular themes and stories in a language which delights a cultured audience as well as the common man on the street.(95)

With the closure of taverns, brothels and other ill-reputed places, it is safe to assume that the *babat* were composed with the aim of entertaining the deprived Cairian male society. Ibn Daniyal knew very well his audience was likely to include a scholar from al-Azhar, a merchant from the surrounding markets, a traveller, a *qadi*, a vendor, a drug dealer, a *haji*, a poet, etc. All of them are representative samples of the male population who are bound to be found outdoors in the evening at the time when *khayal al-zill* is performed. Thus the three *babat* of Ibn Daniyal are definitely composed with a male audience in mind. And it is a normal tradition to view the outdoor areas in a Muslim city as a public place, whereas the indoor space is private. The female population belong in the private space, and when found in a public area they take to the privacy of the veil.(96) Ibn Daniyal must have treated lots of women during the day in his capacity as a *kahhal* in Bab al-Futuh, but it is most unlikely that they flocked back to enjoy his shows at night. Having said that, it does not mean that the female population did not enjoy shadow play. On the contrary, they watched censored versions of the same plays performed during weddings, circumcision and on other social occasions.(97)

Ibn Daniyal was therefore uninhibited in choosing the wildest of subjects and characters from the surrounding Bab al-Futuh area of medieval Cairo. He set out to create his *babat* with great skill and sharp humour starting with himself: "I, therefore, ranged widely in the field of my wit, levity and buffoonery (*khala'ati*) and set about answering your request".(98) Here Ibn Daniyal admits to his fellow shadow player being himself a *Khali'*, that is somebody who conforms to some measure of freedom from moral or social restraints. However, he emphasises the fact that all his shadow characters are based on real characters by saying through the Presenter of his *babat*: "Underlying every shadow (i.e. character) a truth is to be found".(99) Hence from the medieval Egyptian social city life, Ibn Daniyal has picked his themes and personalities for the three *babat* as we shall see.

4.5.4 The oldest known dramatic texts in Arabic

The *babat* are given the following titles: *Tayf Al Khayal Wa Al-Amir Wisal* (The Shadow Spirit and Prince Wisal); *'Ajib Wa-Gharib* (The Amazing Preacher and the Stranger); and *Al-Mutayyam Wa Al-Yutayyim* (The Love Stricken One and the Lost One). The collection of the three *babat* opens with an introduction in which Ibn Daniyal states his commitment to compositions of a cultured distinction. However, the opening sentences in which he addresses his friend *Rayyis 'Ali* reveal the sort of friend Ibn Daniyal has and consequently the sort of *adab 'ali* he is about to present.

You have written to me, ingenious master, wit, buffoon and uninhibited wag (*al-majin al-khali'*), may God continue to protect you and maintain your lofty station, complaining that people have grown tired of shadow plays (*khayal al-zill*) and have been put off by their repetitive character, and asking me to compose for you in that genre works with well-drawn characters of the mean and despicable variety. I have composed for you pieces (*babat*) in the genre of buffoonery, pertaining to good literature (*al-adab al-'ali*) and not to cheap or inferior writing (*al-dun*). (100)

From the very beginning Ibn Daniyal declares his aim of double entendre. He informs us that his *babat* are about characters and situations which belong to the lowest strata of society, nevertheless presented, rather sugar-coated, as cultured literature. The irony remains in the use of classical Arabic language and form to illustrate stories concerning the life of the unconforming types of people in Cairo. After all do not al-Hamadhani and al-Hariri use the same device to present anecdotes concerning the underworld of beggars and bandits in their *maqamat*? Do they not also employ an excessive elaboration of style to amuse and instruct? And don't they use learned style and language to actually satirise and draw attention to the emptiness of the elegant discourse? The point of using extravagant diction always serves to draw attention to the ironic contrast between what the characters say and do. The linguistic framework of the *babat*, like that of the *maqamat*, allows "an ever-present tension between appearance and reality". (101)

4.5.5 Tayf Al-Khayal Wa Al Amir Wisal

The plots of the three *babat* are very simple in structure. The first and longest of the three *Tayf Al-Khayal Wa Al-Amir Wisal* opens with a prologue in which the

Rayyis or master of ceremonies presents the show and calls upon the characters. Singing the verse of the prologue, the *Rayyis* boasts of his *khayal* being performed to the best of people and to the literate who are capable of appreciating the seriousness in the drollery. He goes on to distinguish his art as one which projects a distinct voice for each of the characters. The *Rayyis* then proceeds to call *Tayf al-Khayal*, a deformed hunchback. They exchange greetings, then the *Rayyis* delivers a witty poem in praise of the 'one and only prince of hunchbacks', along with everything which has a protrusion. *Tayf al-Khayal* returns the praise, performs a dance and sings verse welcoming the audience. Consequently he offers prayers to God and the Prophet and good wishes to the Sultan. Next, he discloses to the audience that he came expressly to recount to them what he has seen. He goes ahead using rhymed prose mixed with colloquial set phrases and describes his background in sinful living before having parted with his friend *Amir Wisal*. Since his return from Musil, he discovered that life in Cairo has changed. The Sultan's orders have conquered Satan's army, and a drunk's punishment is now crucifixion, no more just a few lashes. As Master Satan is declared dead, *Tayf* recites a long poem lamenting Satan and the forbidden pleasures of his time. Then suddenly *Tayf* remembers his long missed friend *Amir Wisal* who is duly called upon by a messenger.

When *Amir Wisal* appears, he greets the audience and introduces himself in *saja'* (rhymed prose) of very short sentences reminiscent of the *maqamat* style. *Amir Wisal* is someone who leads a loose lifestyle. He happily reminisces and sings the frankest details of his past love affairs with both sexes. After a long poem *Wisal* asks *Tayf* to call his secretary *Taj Babuj*, the Copt, who as soon as he arrives kisses the hand of *Wisal* and complains about the bad times. *Tayf* requests *Taj Babuj* to recite a composition by the court poet in praise of *Amir Wisal*, but he reads a piece of prose. When *Tayf* insists, he goes on to read a poem which turns out to be unflattering to the Prince. *Wisal* calls for the *Rayyis* and the poet *Su'r Ba'ar* and soon after he receives an apology from the poet. This is followed by a string of anecdotes at the end of each of which *Amir Wisal* casts a query which brings about a further story in both prose and poetry. True to his character, the poet kisses the feet of *Amir Wisal* and takes leave.

Now *Amir Wisal* turns to *Tayf* and reveals that he is determined to leave behind the life of unlawful physical pleasures, repent to God, get married and bring forth children. For this purpose *Tayf* calls *Umm Rashid* the marriage broker. She knows *Wisal* very well and sings a *muwashshah* (a literary musical form). Then

she reminds *Wisal* that only recently he was an illustrious homosexual. But he explains that when a man becomes rich he reforms and seeks a beautiful bride. *Umm Rashid* has been long in the business and knows exactly what is right for him, so she sings him the praises of the bride to be. They agree, and bring in a marriage clerk who delivers a sermon reminding the audience of the advantages of marriage and of the duties of a good wife. After this he asks *Wisal* to state the amount of his *mahr* (dowry) to the bride. At this moment *Wisal* declares himself completely bankrupt and sings his losses and misery in a series of long poems. Notwithstanding, the marriage celebrations continue till at the end *Wisal* discovers that the bride is the ugliest monster *Umm Rashid* could find. *Wisal* asks for *Umm Rashid* to be brought along with her husband *Shaykh 'Aflaq*. But *Shaykh 'Aflaq* is already there and announces his happiness at witnessing *Wisal* in trouble. *Tayf* asks the *Shaykh* where he could find *Umm Rashid*, so he informs him of her death. *Hakim Yaqtaynus* (doctor Yaqtaynus) is brought in for questioning. He confirms seeing *Umm Rashid* on her deathbed in the brothel where she pleaded with him to look after her girls. *Hakim Yaqtaynus* laments *Umm Rashid* and recites an elegy in which he opens with compliments to her achievements and closes with mockery and rejoices at her death.

Tayf is moved, asks God for forgiveness and reminds us that we will all eventually die, but the happy ones are those who would see clearly the path to maturity. Finally, *Wisal* announces to *Tayf* that he has decided to leave for Hijaz (the Holy land) where he intends to wash his sinful past with the water of *Zamzam* and visit the Prophet's tomb. He asks *Tayf* to remember him as they are to depart for good.

4.5.5.1 Technical directions

This is a brief outline of the first *baba* which has eleven speaking characters, at least five walk-ons and a horse. Ibn Daniyal does not give any clue about the setting of this *baba*. In fact, stage directions before the entrance of each of the characters is strictly the remark: *yakhruju* (exits) onto the screen, as if the screen is the outside and the wings the inside.(102) In one instance we have a stage direction which mentions: *fa yadkhul wa yakhruj fi zaffa*.(103) meaning he enters towards the wings, then exists on screen in a bridegroom procession. This is when *Amir Wisal* is carried on horseback to meet his bride. So 'enters', in the technical language of Ibn Daniyal's *babat*, is actually directed towards the wings or backstage while 'exits' is in the direction of the screen to meet the audience.

Moreh examines the use of the term *kharaja* in different texts and deduces that clearly in a theatrical context it means "to go and perform". In connection with shadow plays, it could mean "appear on the screen or when used in *khuruj* and *dukhul* it denotes starting and ending a shadow play".(104) Another stage direction found in the text is the use of the term *yaqul* (he says) preceding the lines of each character. There are no stage directions otherwise, and there is no mention of aspects such as time or place. In a few cases pieces of costume are indicated such as the head dress of *Amir Wisal* and the bride's veil. Also musical instruments are mentioned in *Wisal's* wedding procession.

4.5.5.2 Sequence of action

There is very little action happening in the first half of the *baba* except for the characters appearing, introducing themselves and disappearing. First we meet the *Rayyis* who introduces *Tayf* who welcomes the audience with a song and a dance, then he calls upon *Amir Wisal* who in turn asks *Tayf* to call *Taj Babuji*; *Amir Wisal* calls for the *Rayyis* and the poet *Su'r Ba'ar*, and all this time the characters tell us, and one another, about themselves and about their past great sexual adventures. *Amir Wisal* then decides to reform and marry, so he asks *Tayf* to call for *Umm Rashid* who happens to have a bride and a marriage clerk ready at hand. So after the signing of the contract, *Amir Wisal* 'enters' the back stage and then 'exits' onto the screen on a horse surrounded by singers and musicians and goes to meet his bride. When he unveils the bride and discovers her monstrous ugliness, *Wisal* faints but is awakened by the bride's grandson singing. *Amir Wisal* then beats and chases out everybody. *Tayf* appears, *Wisal* wants revenge, *Shaykh 'Aflaq* appears, but *Umm Rashid* is dead. The doctor confirms the death. *Tayf* and *Wisal* decide to repent. Thus most of the animated action in the *baba* takes place in the second part with the wedding procession followed by a shocking discovery leading to the beating of the characters involved. The *baba* otherwise is packed with vivid verbal description of drinking scenes and sexual activities which have taken place earlier off the screen.

4.5.5.3 Political and social satire

The picture Ibn Daniyal draws of the medieval Egyptian world is basically satirical. It is suspected that the author was critical of an invitation extended by Sultan Baybars to a so-called Abbassid Prince Abi al-'Abbas Bin Khalifa of Baghdad.(105) The *baba* Ibn Daniyal composed is a caricature of the life in the

courts with characters such as a mock prince, a mock secretary and a mock court poet.(106) The princely land covers the ruins and tombs in the old section of Cairo. And the Prince's responsibilities include generating happiness and conquering sorrow using whatever means this duty calls for. Ibn Daniyal's picture of *Amir Wisal* is probably a hint at the defeated Abbassid Prince, for *Wisal* is actually a soldier wearing a three-cornered hat and with bristle moustache; in a way he is also a mock soldier, completely lost.

In the style of the *maqamat*, the audience is invited to be cautious from the very beginning of the *baba*. We hear the *Rayyis* introduce *Tayf al-Khayal* as the one who has a perfectly proportioned figure. Yet the visual image projected on the screen is exactly contrary to the verbal image established, for *Tayf* has a hunchback. However, the *Rayyis* goes on praising humps and all the crooked shapes which come to mind including camels, lutes and ships. Moreover, when the anti-hero *Amir Wisal* appears, we realise that we are "in the presence of a supreme clown".(107) The Prince's name is *Wisal* which means 'sexual union', his secretary is called *Taj Babuj*, meaning 'crown-sandal', *Su'r Ba'ar*, the poet's name, refers to the father of a poet who lived in the 12th Century.(108) Furthermore, the bride's name, *Dabba Bint Miftah*, means 'Lock Daughter of Key'. In using such comical names, Ibn Daniyal is not only implying the attributes of the characters, but is also continuing with his mock allusion approach with which he has introduced the first character, *Tayf*.

This *baba* is composed around a series of paradoxical characters and circumstances. On one level, the literary form claiming to belong to high culture actually deals with a content of low culture, e.g. the *Rayyis* mocking perfection by calling a hunchback body perfect. Characters reunite in a city where all physical pleasures are forbidden to evoke their glorious sensual past in order to sublimate their present deprivation. The paradise of these pleasures is nowhere but the ruins and tombs of old Cairo. In richness a variety of physical pleasures are sought, in poverty marriage is the answer. In seeking marriage, a *halal* (lawful act), an agent of *haram* (unlawful act) is consulted. Expectations of salvation in marriage and happiness with a beautiful bride turn to a nightmare with a monster of a grandmother.

Furthermore, when it comes to dealing with death a paradoxical view is expressed as we are presented with examples from the opposite end of the spectrum. In facing death, *Umm Rashid* does not contemplate repentance, on

the contrary she is defiant and states her wish that great effort should be made in ensuring lovers are brought together and made happy. While *Umm Rashid* chooses to die where she belongs, in a brothel, the prince of 'sexual union' decides to wash his sins at the spring of *Zamzam* for he wishes to face death in the holy lands.

The title of this *baba*, *Tayf Al-Khayal Wa Al-Amir Wisal* (The Shadow Spirit and Prince of 'sexual union'), hints at the ironic illusions to follow, mainly concerning the spiritual and the physical, the fantastic and the real. In the first part of the play, fantasy rules and the characters are living in an imaginative court life with fake riches and mock titles. In the second part, reality uncovers their poverty and their basic human fear of death and punishment. Therefore it becomes apparent that repentance is the answer, not marriage.

The flowery and heroic *adab 'ali* style of the *babat* is not just an external *arabesque*. In fact it helps emphasise a deeper meaning, namely the conflict between appearance and reality. In the present *baba*, this visibly unreal conflict manifests itself on both the levels of word and deed demonstrated by the anti-hero, the mock Prince of social corruption, who hopes to erase his sins by undertaking pilgrimage. As a soldier, his fear of death and therefore his repentance is comically contrasted with *Umm Rashid*, defying death by confirming in words her wishes for someone to carry on with her life's deeds. The satire is more esoteric in a popular culture where the man is expected to defend his deeds more fiercely than a woman.

4.5.5.4 The *maqamat* influence

The authority of the *maqamat* is not confined to the linguistic framework of Ibn Daniyal's *babat* although this is most obvious as both try to emulate contemporary familiar structures of Arabic poetic and prose forms. The *maqamat* are not a literary tradition which was created in a vacuum, cut off from the intellectual and socio-political currents that have fed the growing Islamic medieval city life tradition.(109) On the contrary, the *maqamat* genre developed as a result of the linguistic and socio-political cultural grounds of the cosmopolitan city life in which oral tradition in its various expressions was the effective medium of communication. 'Abd al Hamid Yunis takes the matter further by stressing that the *maqama* has its origin in dramatic literature composed as early as the pre-Islamic or *Jahiliyya* period, and that it consisted of a continuous acting

performance by a single actor.(110) Therefore, the *maqama* is very much dependent on the existence of an audience. Long before it was fixed as a literary genre, the *maqama* developed in halls of courts, palaces, *madrassa* (schools) and wherever there was an audience willing to share dramatic anecdotes and simple news.

Of profound significance is the fact that the *maqamat* are basically not composed for a lone reader to enjoy, but were actually recited in public as al-Hariri himself describes in one of his *maqamat*.(111) This feature is paralleled as the *babat* are composed especially for shadow performances. The dialogue in both *maqamat* and *babat* is also of great relevance although the *maqamat* are traditionally projected in one voice, that of the presenter/performer. Furthermore, in the *baba*, each of the figures/characters has a distinct voice even when there is only one puppeteer/actor behind the screen.

Both the *maqamat* and *babat* are collections of dramatic anecdotes of a purely secular nature. However, both are framed in religious verbal ritual, in imitation of the oral traditions of the period. Storytellers, poets and preachers, as well as all public orators, opened with prayers and thanks to God. In addition, the *maqamat* and *babat* close with declaration of repentance and intention to perform pilgrimage which is an act that takes on deep religious meaning for Muslims. This religious frame, however, does not infiltrate the purely secular nature of the anecdotes in spite of the fact that reference to death is a recurring motif.

The construction of the *maqamat* in short independent episodes is paralleled in a way in the *babat*, and in both the presence of the same main characters generates continuity. Both genres depict the adventures of some marginal elements of society who lead a life of wandering, and live on their wits, trickery and deception, but who are verbally eloquent under all circumstances.

In the *baba* the names of individual characters are always constructs of a twofold combination. And parallel to the names, the characters are conceived in pairs: *Amir Wisal* and *Tayf al-Khayal*, *Taj Babuj* and *Su'r Ba'ar*, *Umm Rashid* and *Shaykh 'Aflaq*, *Dabba Bint Miftah* and grandson, the marriage clerk and two witnesses, and *Hakim Yaqtaynus* and the whores. Only the *Rayyis* is not paired in this play, but he appears twice, at the beginning to introduce *Tayf* and towards the end when he is asked to summon *Hakim Yaqtaynus* to verify the death of *Umm Rashid*.

The convention of paired characters is certainly consistent with the *maqama* tradition.(112) Following the same tradition, we have *Amir Wisal* appear promptly at the right place in the right time to fantasise with his friend *Tayf al-Khayal*. Then we have *Tayf al-Khayal* discover his friend's poverty and later on witness *Wisal's* humiliation by the marriage arranged through *Umm Rashid*. Like the *maqamat*, repentance at the end is necessary to complete the circular pattern of the episodes.

Ibn Daniyal enjoys displaying how conversant he is with the knowledge of literary and poetic genres of his age as well as with that of pre-Islamic times. The *maqamat* structure is indeed the most obvious in his *babat*, especially when he includes many long and short poems in the style of the pre-Islamic *qasidah*. But, unlike them, he also composes colloquial verses in the contemporary *zajal* style. Some of Ibn Daniyal's poems are composed as a parody of a famous *qasidah* and by changing the words of a well known poem, another device taken from the *maqamat*. He also boasts of his acquaintance with the names of the most famous horses of *Jahiliyya* and early Islam in a poem mocking the old tradition of panegyric verse, on the occasion when *Wisal* thanks a Vizier for offering him a horse.

More elaborate still is Ibn Daniyal's display of contempt for the old tradition of apologetic verse. In this genre, *Su'r Ba'ar* recites a poem to *Amir Wisal* and receives rewards for it after kissing the feet of the Prince. However, the poet's job as the Prince's jester is also well demonstrated as scornful when *Su'r Ba'ar*, to make up with the Prince, recounts a series of very funny short anecdotes full of allusions to bodily functions. To ensure a continuous sequence to these independent anecdotes, *Amir Wisal* queries a certain detail parodying the style of *Kalila and Dimna* where each episode ends with: "and how was that?". So the following episode bears the answer and material to initiate the next question. However, the imitation of the style of *Kalila and Dimna* here is not only on the literary style level. The story of the book takes place in court where an adviser to the King recounts the fables for the purpose of guidance. Like the *maqamat*, but not as successful, the *baba* attempts to instruct through displaying the acquaintance of the author with literary styles and verbal pyrotechnics as well as through dealing with contemporary social issues.

Ibn Daniyal is an extremely articulate poet and this is reflected in the witty and humorous portrayal of his characters exploiting verbal images. For example his

use of rich idiomatic phrases pertaining to a certain career or type of people is very expressive. *Hakim Yaqtaynus*, for example, uses medical jargon in the first few sentences he utters. *Umm Rashid*, likewise, unveils her skills by employing sexual imagery. *Taj Babuj* uses Coptic references in his speech to reveal his background. And *Amir Wisal* introduces himself as *sahib al-dabbous*, the master of the phallus.

4.5.5.5 Music

It is obvious how important music is for the performance of the *babat*. The participation of some musicians is vital to the shadow show. Music is conceived in the structure of the *baba* and is not a later addition to the performance of the *baba*. Therefore, acquaintance with musical scales, songs and dance is also a basic part of Ibn Daniyal's background. To every poem in his *baba* he assigns the accompanying musical tune. His use of the *muwashshah* for *Umm Rashid*, for instance, is a very sensible ruling as the *muwashshah* comprises repeated rondo-like returns to a musical refrain which could be evocatively enchanting. The *Rayyis*' introduction song is the first sound we hear from behind, or in front of the screen, and for it Ibn Daniyal suggests the fast tune. Then for *Tayf al-Khayal*'s welcoming song and dance, a different tune is suggested and for every one of the sung poems that follow Ibn Daniyal names a tune.(113) Music, song and dance are a complementary part of Ibn Daniyal's *babat*. However, this feature will remain with all the Egyptian shadow play tradition to date. Hence, assimilating music and song in shadow play tradition is among the few conventions introduced by the oldest *babat*.

4.5.5.6 Unfolding conventions

At this stage I would like to list some conventions used in Ibn Daniyal's first *baba* which have survived in later *babat*. Of course, we start with a screen stretched across a frame in a dark space. Probably we hear some music just before the *Rayyis* is seen. Ibn Daniyal includes specific instructions to *Rayyis* 'Ali saying that when invited to a session bring *Tayf al-Khayal* out to the round opening, *ikhruj Tayf al-Khayal makana al-qur*. Here it is difficult to tell whether there was actually any 'opening' on the side of the screen or whether he meant bring out the figure on to the screen itself. There is also a possibility that if an opening actually existed then perhaps the character *Rayyis* was a glove puppet which could perform the prologue in front of the screen and from this position call upon *Tayf*

to appear on the screen and then proceed to sing praises of *Tayf's* hump. The *Rayyis* disappears after that and only towards the end of the *baba Wisal* requests of the *Rayyis* to call upon the Doctor for which he does not need to appear on the screen. This is just a speculation as we are not sure about the shape or the interpretation of the term *qur* (opening). Moreover, there is a third possibility as al-Ra'í and Sa'd suggest: the *Rayyis* could be a person - probably the shadow puppeteer himself and not necessarily a puppet.(114) In fact this possibility gives the *Rayyis* a chance to have a direct contact with his audience before he retires behind the screen. Whatever the case may be, the first convention which follows in front of the screen or behind the screen is the sung prologue in which the *Rayyis* announces the aim of the show and then calls the first character.

The second convention is the welcoming song and dance by the first character which follows prayers to God and the Prophet and good wishes to the Sultan. Then he states his intentions of recounting what he has seen, and proceeds to introduce himself. A third convention is the direct discourse between the characters and the audience where each character introduces himself to the audience in the most straightforward manner. Another convention, respected except in very rare cases, is that each character appears upon being called. Dialogue is not always a few sentences exchanged between characters, instead it could be exchanges of long lyrical poems or long passages of rhyming prose. There is also the significance of each character's lines being delivered in his distinct voice. The presence of musicians is essential, especially since in Ibn Daniyal's *baba* there are many poems which are sung. Always poetry, *zajal*, *muwashshah* and rhymed prose are used in different proportions. Particularly appreciated by the audience are the episodes full of spectacle. Dance, acrobatic games, religious and secular processions, or even fights, all are of utmost prestige to a *baba* in order to attract audiences. Finally, it is necessary to create situations allowing for announcements by the characters to encourage the audience to pay towards the cost of the show, as this is a convention no *baba* could afford to miss.

4.5.6 The Amazing Preacher and the Stranger

'*Ajib wa-Gharib* (The Amazing Preacher and the Stranger) is Ibn Daniyal's second shadow play. Following the style of the first *baba*, we have an introduction addressed to 'Ali Bin Mawlahum, the shadow player friend, in which he states the aim of the *baba*. This one is concerned with tricksters and strangers who speak the language of Sasan.(115)

The *baba* opens with the *Rayyis* as usual praising the audience. Next, a man by the name of *Gharib* (stranger) appears and introduces himself as a member of the Banu Sasan tricksters who live by their wits, begging and deception. *Gharib* recounts to the *Rayyis* the many different tricks he could use for deceiving people. Following *Gharib's* brief explanation we encounter a "procession of grotesque figures".(116) Some twenty five characters with their assistants and animals parade one after the other as if in a procession, introducing themselves and displaying their skills.

The first character is called '*Ajib* (amazing) a preacher who goes ahead and delivers a mock sermon from a *minbar* (pulpit) instructing the members of Banu Sasan about their trade. After '*Ajib's* sermon the following characters appear in turn as if in a procession and without any interaction or relation between themselves: a snake-charmer, a quack-doctor, a vendor of medicinal herbs, an ophthalmic surgeon, an acrobat, a juggler, an astrologer, a trader of amulets, a lion tamer, an elephant man, a goat-trainer, a prostitute, a trainer of cats and mice, a dog trainer, a tamer of beasts, a Sudanese clown, a sword swallower, a monkey-trainer, a rope dancer, a conjuror with self-inflicted wounds, a torch-bearer and, finally, before '*Ajib* reappears, a camel driver. With the torch-bearer of the *mahmal*, a splendidly decorated litter carried on a camel leading the caravan to the holy land of Makka, we have the first reference to the subject of repentance. The camel driver takes it a step further in praising the Prophet. The parade of the strange and amazing representatives of Banu Sasan is brought to an end as the first character, *Gharib* (the stranger) reappears to ask *Rayyis* 'Ali how he rates the latest *baba* Ibn Daniyal has composed especially for him.(117) And of course to apologise for the lengthy *baba* and the short apology.

After all the successive variety of deceit, the pleasures of drinking and of sex, repentance is needed to restore the sense of morality; this usually means a visit to the holy places. The witty Ibn Daniyal has one of the members of the confraternity of tricksters explain how they have given up hope of the generosity of people and therefore they have no choice but to find alternative and creative ways to earn a living. However, in his lively style, Ibn Daniyal gives each and every one of the twenty-five characters descriptive and humorous names, and he pairs the leading characters '*Ajib* and *Gharib*. As always, he also uses poetry, *zajal* and rhymed prose to have them recount their anecdotes.

The lively parade of these astonishing characters gives the impression of being in a *mulid* fairground. This *baba* has no plot, it simply displays great delight in the sort of spectacle enjoyed on the streets of 13th Century Cairo. Badawi suggests that most of the characters are actually various aspects of the same character, *Gharib*.(118) Ibn Daniyal, being himself a stranger in Cairo, he might have met a number of foreigners who, like the members of Banu Sasan, had to take on all sorts of different characters and skills to trick people into giving them charity. All the characters in the *baba* except *Gharib* address the audience directly as there is no dialogue or need to interact with any other character. Only *Gharib* addresses the *Rayyis* at the beginning and again at the end of the *baba*. 'Ajib on the other hand addresses the audience directly in the manner of *khutbah* (oration) of the Friday communal prayers.(119) 'Ajib asks for the *muqri* (reciter of Qur'an) and for a *minbar* (pulpit) to be brought in. He then climbs the minbar and recites the opening *surah* of the Qur'an, *al-Fatiha*, after which he proceeds with his sermon 'Ajib addresses the *khutbah* from the *minbar* straight to the audience as though they are the members of the Sasan confraternity longing to learn more tricks from him. Nonetheless, he closes his number asking for charity, a gesture that will be repeated by the following twenty four characters.

The literary background of all these tricksters is one thing Ibn Daniyal is quite sure to employ as best he could; he especially identifies the strangers from Sasan as *udaba* (men of letters). All of the characters speak in beautifully structured verse, *zajal* and rhymed prose, carefully composed to project their personality and trade. Music as usual accompanies some of the poems and the *muwashshahat* and Ibn Daniyal makes sure to assign a specific tune for each.

4.5.7 The Love Stricken One and The Lost One

The third *baba* is called al-Mutayyam wal-Da'i al-Yutayyim (The Love Stricken One and The Lost One). Here again, we have a note from the author to the presenter *Rayyis* 'Ali stating that the theme of the following *baba* revolves around conditions of lovers, a little ghazal (love poetry), a few games and some 'decent' buffoonery. The *Rayyis* opens as usual with an introductory verse which he sings. Following that an excited lover appears and recites a comical love poem. Then he introduces himself as the poor lover from Musil, describes his male lover and the many admirers his lover has in the *hammam* (public bath). As soon as he finishes singing a *muwashshah* which he composed for his new lover, a short ugly man appears, who turns out to be the old lover. The old lover displays

jealousy and praises everything small for he belongs to this category unlike the new lover who is huge. But *Mutayyam* is not moved, he describes to him at length his meeting with his new beloved *Yutayyim* and his servant boy *Bayram* in a public bath, and how he fell on the floor and was helped by *Yutayyim*. At this stage, *Mutayyam* asks *Bayram* to mention him to *Yutayyim* which he does.

Soon the lovers are engaged in their favourite sport, animal fighting, which parallels the debate going on between them. It starts with a cock fight followed by rams and ends with a bull fight, all refereed by *Zayhun* who praises in turn each category of animals and the fighting as a great sport. However, the fighting rounds end with *Mutayyam's* bull losing. So *Mutayyam* asks *Rayyis 'Ali* to have the bull slaughtered and prepared for a banquet as all the lovers are invited to a party. The party is attended by pervert lovers, and *Mutayyam* listens to ten of them, one following the other, explain about their sexual activities and individual interests in short speeches. Then *Mutayyam* supplies them all with lots of wine and they go to sleep. As all the lovers are enjoying their sleep, *Mutayyam* is called upon by the Angel of Death who gives him just enough time to repent and pray before he dies. The *baba* ends with the funeral of *Mutayyam*, hence morality is restored.

In this *baba* there are sixteen characters, fifteen men and one women, and six animals, two cocks, two rams and two bulls whose fighting provides scenes full of animated spectacle. The party scene at the end where ten lovers in turn present descriptions of their perverted love life reminds us of the parade in the previous *baba* of '*Ajib Wa-Gharib* where twenty-five characters in turn describe and present their trades to the audience in the most straightforward and vivacious manner.

4.5.8 Independent modules with variant themes and structures

These are the outlines of Ibn Daniyal's three *babat* which were composed in the last quarter of the 13th Century. Each *baba* is an accomplished module which has its own structure, theme or storyline and characters. The first *baba* *Tayf Al-Khayal Wa All-Amir Wisal* has a clear structure which could be broken down into exposition, crisis and resolution. The first part of the play, full of fantasy and reminiscence, exposes the characters' outrageous moral and sexual background. The moment of confrontation comes with the unveiling of a monster dressed in a bride's outfit by the poverty-stricken *Amir Wisal* and consequently his beating the

party. The confirmation of *Umm Rashid's* death brings about *Amir Wisal's* realisation of the need to repent and the consequent decision to visit the Prophet's tomb.

In the first part of the play the characters, one following the other, display their past by remembering it to the audience. By remembering the past they are rejecting the present, and this becomes a comment on the strict measures taken against loose living. Ibn Daniyal has chosen the safe realm of memories to deal with a most sensitive subject. The obscenity described is exactly what the government's measures are trying to put an end to. But as long as these experiences are being related as something which belongs to the past, Ibn Daniyal is safe. However, all this does not distract us from realising the author's personal criticism of the whole issue concerning the strict measures taken against the people of Egypt. Nor does it confuse us about the implication of his disenchantment with the political situation whereby a Mamluk Sultan has appropriated a doubtful Abbassid prince and confirmed him as a Caliph in order to derive from him in return false religious authority. Of course, the portrayal of *Amir Wisal* as a corrupt Mamluk soldier is also a hint at the mock Abbassid prince representing a political entity badly defeated by the Mongols.

Faruq Sa'd highlights Ibn Daniyal's awareness of the continuous variant manoeuvres Mamluk rulers undertook to control the population. The real aim of the strict measures against certain public entertainment is to limit and dictate the extent of the citizen's participation in the criticism of their Sultan's false authority.(120) The people were burdened with heavy taxes to their rulers who enjoyed luxurious living and were engaged in wars. The Mamluk period is described as "dominated by a regime of blood and iron", (121) which at the same time is paralleled with a period of high architectural and artistic productivity. Furthermore, Ibn Daniyal in his satirical style demonstrates how crucial issues could be expressed indirectly but effectively. To amuse the audience with the story of a deceitful marriage of a mock prince must have more to it than the eyes can see on the screen.

The structure of *'Ajib Wa-Gharib* is completely different from that of the above *baba*. Here we have no crisis which generates a resolution. Instead we have a continuous exposition of twenty-five types one is likely to meet in the back streets of the *mulid* fairgrounds of medieval Cairo. The parade of an assortment of twenty-five characters displaying their different skills, verbally and physically, is

quite stretched but not tedious. The range of persona and professions presented is very amusing indeed. All the characters belong to the confraternity of tricksters whose leader advises them how to disguise in order to earn a living. In the last sample of trickery we have a charlatan praying and requesting God that whoever gives him charity should, the very same year, be granted a visit to the holy lands. But that is not the end, for in this *baba* we have a circular structure and *Gharib* who appeared at the beginning returns to enquire whether *Rayyis* 'Ali is satisfied with Ibn Daniyal's compositions and to ask forgiveness from God for himself and for Ibn Daniyal as well.

The indirect presentation of poverty and the consequent need to fall back on craftiness for a living is the theme of this *baba*. The irony is that repentance at the end is believed to be the answer for erasing all the sins one has to commit in order to provide for oneself. Probably the request for forgiveness does not only apply to the *baba's* amazing and strange characters including Ibn Daniyal, himself a foreigner, but also to the Mamluks at the top of the hierarchy who are also foreigners and take some of the responsibility for the poverty of the people. The social and political criticism in this *baba* are as blunt as the sermon delivered from a pulpit at the beginning by 'Ajib the preacher in which he recommends diversified styles of artful scheming.

The third *baba* is again different in structure from the first two. For here we open with a crisis, then we get to know about the characters which is followed by a solution. *Mutayyam* survives his homosexual love affairs and a fall in the public bath, but when too many sins have accumulated he accepts the invitation of the Angel of Death, so he repents. This *baba* is loosely episodic in structure, and it is strung by *Mutayyam*, the anti-hero. The three main episodes are obvious: the first is concerned with *Mutayyam* meeting and getting along with his new lover; the second is about their common sport, animal fighting; and in the third episode we have the party, which signals an excuse for a new cycle of recounting pervert adventures by characters from *Mutayyam's* entourage. Death, however, is the price one pays for leading such a lifestyle. Ibn Daniyal, nonetheless, makes sure the hero repents before his death, a last act which reflects a note of optimism.

This *baba* is the shortest of Ibn Daniyal's although it has around twenty-two characters and animals. The animal-fighting rounds extend great possibilities for lively improvisation by the *Rayyis* and for the audience to participate by taking sides as they are used to doing in real life cock fighting common on the streets

and in fairgrounds. The referee informs us that this sport is enjoyed by the royalty as well as common people.

4.5.9 Underlying every shadow a truth is to be found

This is a famous line by *Tayf al-Khayal* addressing the audience at the beginning of the first *baba*.(122) Ibn Daniyal cleverly picked his characters, themes, settings and spectacle numbers from everyday life of medieval Egypt. It is obvious that the conmen, sexual perverts, poets, intoxicated characters, prostitutes, etc. are representatives of the types Ibn Daniyal is acquainted with as he admits in his introductory note to *Rayyis 'Ali*.(123) This explains how realistic his portrayal of the characters in the *babat* is. The composite names he has given them as well as the vocabulary and style of language used for each type is so telling about their backgrounds.

Ibn Daniyal composes his characters with great insight. In his first *baba* he pairs his characters as we have seen. The deformed shape of *Tayf al-Khayal* and the implication of his name, the shadow spirit, makes him a foil to the impressive anti-hero in a costume of a soldier, *Amir Wisal*. Moreover, as a hunchback, *Tayf* is an outcast in his community, therefore he can very well play witness to a character who is supposed to have a leading role in the community, the soldier. The contrast between *Tayf* and *Wisal* is actually superficial, it is only implied by their names and their physiognomy. However, both have shared a very immoral past which they are happy to evoke together. *Tayf* repented before his return to Cairo. This puts him a step ahead of *Wisal* in order to witness his friend go through repentance after being disgraced by *Umm Rashid's* choice of bride. Another interesting contrast is *Umm Rashid*, the matchmaker manageress/whore, herself very much an outcast since she represents an illegal institution, who humiliates the soldier Prince, a representative of a respectable institution. In a way *Umm Rashid* is the female foil of *Wisal*, they are both degenerate. But while she is cleverer and stands by her convictions even on her death bed, *Wisal* is a vanquished soldier and his repentance is simply his way of admitting further defeat.

As important are the contemporary settings Ibn Daniyal has chosen for the different scenes, for instance a court, market place, public bath, etc. These places represent settings of contemporary features which Ibn Daniyal employs as grounds for his characters to meet. The *babat* are a panorama of the market

place life, and the characters are members of the urban social structure. The social fabric of the market place with its stock characters is reflected further in the few numbers of women represented. The type of women who share the outdoor space are those professionals who render services to the male population in the market place. Also because of the segregation of the sexes in this metropolitan society, sex is openly discussed. Even intimate areas of homosexuality and lesbianism providing material for the *babat*.

4.5.10 Verbal and physical humour

George Jacob and Paul Kahle, the German Orientalists, were among the earliest researchers to consider Ibn Daniyal the most ingenious and humorous poet in the Arabic language.(124) Indeed, the *babat* are witty and exploit verbal humour at its best. In addition, each *baba* allows a considerable space for physical buffoonery and slapstick. Badawi believes that buffoonery was one of the conventions of the medieval shadow theatre.(125) The *babat* also demonstrate clever use of comic devices which are resourceful for humorous portrayal: Ibn Daniyal relies on occupational, social and ethnic stereotypes to amplify the comic effects in his *babat*. He also relies on the discord between verbal images and visual images to create a further appeal for drollery. Additionally, he introduces sexuality, bodily functions and obscenity to increase the comic exploitation of his writings. It seems that Ibn Daniyal was fully aware of the fact that allusions to bodily functions do create humorous representations in the minds of the audience even when they are not represented visually, as such allusions indirectly imply that shadow puppets possess human qualities.

It is true that Ibn Daniyal's main intention is for his *babat* to be accepted as a literary art but, in practical terms, it is up to *Rayyis* 'Ali or any other shadow player to add to the show other dimensions. The *babat* could very easily become a caricature of eroticism as there is no better medium than puppetry to project obscene scenes and at the same time lend them distance by transforming realism to something comic. Probably Ibn Daniyal was aware of this fact when he composed long poems or stretches of rhymed prose which include detailed descriptions with no plot visually translatable onto the screen. The audience enjoying the poetry, *zajal* and humorous verbal imagery are bound to use their imagination when little action is happening on the screen. It is important to remember that the audiences of these *babat* are heavily involved in the tradition of listening to the narratives of the *khatib*, *hakawati*, *sira* poet, *qas*, *maqamat* reader, etc., as we have seen earlier.

Ibn Daniyal does not only play with and manipulate words and language, but he also juxtaposes fantasy and reality in the same scene in order to build up social and political critical satire. In the style of the *maqamat*, Ibn Daniyal uses *tawriya*, which is a "figure of speech that blurs the distinction between the (false) surface of meaning of a word, and its (true) hidden meaning".(126) In the same manner in which Ibn Daniyal uses *tawriya* with words, he transposes this feature to be used with scenes, thus creating a visibly unreal situation. For instance, the court scene with the mock *Amir Wisal* falls in this category. Also, we do not realise straight away the qualities of the Prince, or even the contemporary references of this soldier playing Prince, till we remember that the Mamluks were themselves highly trained slaves who took up important military offices and eventually became Princes and Sultan.

Amir Wisal is among the few characters who have their costume and looks briefly described. Probably this is because of the serious and important implications a soldier's outfit projects, and also to contrast the destitution of the character in it. This is paralleled with the bride who is dressed in a beautiful costume but when *Wisal* removes her veil she has a huge nose, protruding teeth and produces noises like a donkey. Furthermore, the name of the character *Tayf al-Khayal* (the Shadow Spirit) suggests somebody with light physical presence, but we are shocked to see a clumsy shaped humpback. Ibn Daniyal brings into play disproportionate physical features to heighten the farcical moments. Although there is no way to prove it, it seems only natural that vocal dramatisation, especially contrasting the timbre of the voice with the character, is another aspect which was used to add to the humorous effects. A case in point is when the frightful bride utters a sound like the braying of a donkey, causing the shocked bridegroom to faint. However, just as *Wisal* unveils the bride and faints, the bride complains to *Umm Rashid* that the Prince frightened her and her eldest son. At this moment the bride's grandson appears and after looking at the fainted Prince he sings that even a monkey has better looks.

In selecting meters for the verse, tunes for the *muwashshah* or the words for the *zajal* and *saja'* prose, Ibn Daniyal reconstructs the sociolinguistic structure of speech of Cairo's medieval market place community. His selection of course strikes a farcical note. For instance when *Umm Rashid*, the matchmaker, appears to help *Wisal* find a bride she sings a *muwashshah* which is considered very feminine. *Mutayyam* also sings a *muwashshah* describing his beloved

Yutayyim in the last *baba*. Both *Mutayyam* and *Umm Rashid* salute the audience using the same coquettish formula *Musiytum bi al-Sa'adah* (may your evening be happy).

4.5.11 A playwright indeed

It is essential to remember that Ibn Daniyal is, as far as the available historical documentation reveals the first Arab playwright with a comprehensive understanding of the literary and performance dimension of drama. His *babat* reveal not only a witty playwright, but also a *metteur en scène* who has experienced live performance. His approach to theatre corresponds with that of total theatre where various elements of performance arts are employed in the service of communicating the *babat*. In the *babat* we have dialogue, song, dance, acrobatics, spectacle and live music. In addition, Ibn Daniyal tries to involve the audience by making *Tayf* have them repeat with him:

Tayf - I pray to our forgiving Lord
And ask him to prolong the life
of the members of our audience,
May they forever live in happiness
Repeat with me my friends: Amen

In another instance, Ibn Daniyal has *Umm Rashid* return to the scene, uncalled by anybody, to announce to *Amir Wisal*, and of course to the audience, that all the preparations for the wedding are in progress. She then adds that he ought to have ready on him some money to tip the musicians, singers and coiffeuse otherwise he could receive a beating. It is a very critical moment to choose to collect money from the audience as this is just when they are eager to know what stratagem *Umm Rashid* has concocted. Moreover, it is possible that either an actor dressed as *Umm Rashid* or one of the musicians goes around collecting the money from the audience while the *zafa* procession goes on. Making the audience pay during the performance, not before or after, is a convention of the middle ages which Ibn Daniyal incorporates well in his *babat* by choosing the right timing to relate directly to the action on the screen.

In the second *baba* '*Ajib wa-Gharib* when all the characters are actually disguised as beggars and each asks the audience for charity, there is a possibility that the shadow puppeteers come out with their puppets to ask the

audience for charity or a tip. Al-Ra'î, who speculates around this possibility, goes further to suggest that some of the characters in this *baba* could have been live actors who would establish direct contact with the audience in the middle of the show to collect money. The astrologer *Hilal* could well address the audience and invite them to participate in making the show then ask them for a tip.(127)

The three *babat* are particularly significant as social documents of life and characters in medieval Egypt. Ibn Daniyal does not only capture the atmosphere of the period and the environment to which he belongs, but he also produces a poignant socio-political satire of what he witnessed in Cairo. He is very much like *Tayf al-Khayal*, a *rawi* (narrator) of what he has seen and lived. But he is too clever to criticise openly the rule of the Mamluks, he only holds a mirror to the poverty and immoral decadence of the people, including himself. Probably it was thanks to his witty satirical style, in which he kept reminding of the old bad times when no restrictions were imposed, that he was saved from the Sultan's anger. Ibn Daniyal, like his characters, has a chameleonic nature. For not only did he take cover by praising through his characters the Mamluk's restrictions on the pleasures of life, but he also went as far as declaring repentance towards the end of his life.

It is obvious that Ibn Daniyal's work is worthy of more attention than it has received to date. Whilst some may be put off by the obscenity, which is a very important part of the *babat*, we cannot dismiss the fact that Ibn Daniyal's *babat* reveal the author as a clever playwright. This revelation is even more significant if we are to remember that the three *babat* of Ibn Daniyal are considered rare pieces in Arabic dramatic literature. It is therefore very sad indeed that even when researchers, like George Jacob and Paul Kahle, acknowledge the *babat* as "by far the oldest known to us and the only dramatic pieces that have come down to us from the Islamic Middle Ages", (128) they refer to the author not as a playwright but a poet and for that "the most ingenious and humorous poet in Arabic language". (129) Ibn Daniyal's collection of poetry, unfortunately, did not reach us, we only know of it through other contemporary writers. With the publishing of the *babat* in full, at last, we should hope that more scholars will discover and enjoy what Badawi calls "a sophisticated form of drama". (130)

4.6 Influence of *khayal al-zill* on the theatre performance scene

As mentioned earlier *khayal al-zill* developed in an environment where popular oral traditions were very rich and versatile. The main forms were *hikaya*,

maqama, *khutba* and *sira*, all of which involve a performer who is skilful in using his voice, body, gestures and possibly a musical instrument. A recounter of a *hikaya* could also be a performer of any other genre of oral tradition. This explains the transposition of conventions from one genre to another. However, we should not underestimate the fact that the oral tradition to which all these forms belong is well rooted in the popular folk culture of the Middle East region. The oral tradition to which they belong has its historical roots in the oral literary fairs of *Jahiliyya* where poetry was recited by the poets themselves or by orators who in turn broadcast it to the whole of Arabia.

Ibn Daniyal's *babat* are not valued for their inherent visual tradition, unfortunately we have no documentation on the performance aspect of his work. Their literary and dramatic performance qualities however have continued to mark the Middle Eastern theatre performance tradition over the past seven hundred years.

Shadow plays continued to flourish in Egypt after Ibn Daniyal, but they were composed and presented in the Egyptian colloquial dialect, therefore they had no literary reputation to justify their documentation. Like all popular oral traditions, they were transmitted by mouth over generations. We are aware of very few scenarios for shadow shows, and they are of different length and themes. Around eighteen scenarios have been collected by Ahmad Taymur and published in his book on *khayal al-zill* in 1957. However, we realise that even the humblest shadow player should know at least some twenty eight different scenarios to perform during the month of Ramadan.

Almost every researcher concerned with shadow play in the Middle East remarks on the event of 1517 A.D. in which the Ottoman Sultan Selim I enjoyed watching the re-enactment of the hanging of the defeated Mamluk Sultan Tuman Bey II on a shadow screen. (131) Sultan Selim invited the puppeteer to return with him to Istanbul. Later in 1612 A.D. some more Egyptian shadow players were invited on the occasion of the Sultan's sister's wedding. (132) Al-Suwayfi believes both incidents brought about the loss of some skilled Egyptian shadow puppeteers to the Turkish audience, and with this a different type of puppets, the glove puppets, came to be used more regularly in Egypt. (133) Unfortunately, we still do not have much information about how glove puppets came to be popular in Egypt and whether glove puppets co-existed or were already in use before shadow puppets.

I tend to speculate that during the Fatimid period, and with all the encouragement towards festivities and use of images in all forms, there must have developed some glove puppet shows in the popular *suq* and possibly promoted by vendors of the *mulid* dolls. Besides, a mime actor, acrobat, *muqallid*, singer, or even a story teller could have been employed to draw the attention of shoppers in the *suq* to a specific brand of sugar dolls. Furthermore, these same performers are usually involved in the processions, pageants and performances in the fair grounds of the *mulid* for which the dolls are on sale. The electric atmosphere on the streets of Cairo, especially the *mulid* fairgrounds, presented infinite possibilities for imaginative performers to exercise their crafts for little money and with a lot of encouragement from the authorities. Glove puppets are much easier to manufacture and manipulate than shadow puppets, and they have many advantages over shadow puppets. Glove puppets can be played any time, day or night, they can be made cheaply and do not need special technical requirements for the performance like a screen, a lamp and a dark space. Only two glove puppets can be animated by a puppeteer at one time, and the general simplicity of the show would not call for musicians. I believe glove puppets were used to perform popular songs, *zajal*, a short dialogue, imitations and probably jokes, but nothing more complicated than that. Even today glove puppets on the streets of Cairo perform mainly songs and a short dialogue as we shall see later in this chapter.

Let us go back to *khayal al-zill* in Egypt as Ibn Daniyal's *babat* do not indicate the end, but rather an important phase of this popular performance art. During his research in Egypt, around the turn of the century, Paul Kahle not only discovered the shadow figures which are believed to belong to a late Mamluk period, but he also found a manuscript which includes famous plays such as *Līb Al-Manar* (The Light House) of Alexandria which he published in 1930, and *Līb Al-Timsah* (The Crocodile Play).

Kahle bought in 1907 A.D. the manuscript from the son of a shadow puppeteer by the name of Hasan al-Qashshash. Kahle came to the conclusion that the manuscript he bought in Cairo, and some of the figures he discovered in the village of Menzaleh, belong to the same period and probably the same puppeteer. 1707 A.D. is the date of the manuscript, but the *lība* could have been composed long before then and by several people.(134) The manuscript's title is *Diwan Kedes* (shadow play collection), it consists of poetry by Shaykh Sa'ud, Shaykh 'Ali al-Nahle and Dawud al-Manawwi. Kahle reckons that Rayyis

Dawud was among the shadow players who visited Istanbul in 1612 A.D. on the occasion of the wedding of Sultan Ahmad's sister.(135)

The puppeteer Hasan al-Qashshash discovered the manuscript of *Diwan Kedes* around 1900 A.D. He then decided to revive the *Li'ba of The Light House* of Alexandria in order to give a boost to the shadow performance business in Cairo. This *li'ba*, Hallaq and Sad inform us, is concerned with an attack on Alexandria which took place during the Ayyubid period (1171-1250 A.D.). The attack was led by Guillume II the King of Sicily, and on the Egyptian side it was Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi who led the defending army and won. They remark further that it could have been this *Li'ba of The Light House* that Salah al-Din invited al-Qadi al-Fadil to watch with him. Fortunately the *Qadi* enjoyed the show and approved of this serious type of performance art.(136) [fig 33]

The Light House is composed of a series of extensive *zajal* pieces known to the Egyptians as *balliq*. The old light house of Alexandria is described in detail through the *li'ba*. There are also poems which describe the boats in the sea, long heroic verse encouraging the Muslim fighters against the Crusaders, reports on the progress of battles and finally the news about the defeat of the Crusaders is announced. In the manner of the Egyptian shadow plays a good number of the poems are sung to tunes assigned in the text.

The Light House, is an example of the serious *li'b* typical of court entertainment during the Fatimid and Ayyubid periods. This type of shadow play was acceptable to the more pious members of the community and probably this was the only type of show seen in the courts. But this could not have been the favourite type of shadow show for the ordinary man on the street. Other types of *li'b* emerged and there exist many scenarios which deal with social themes. These scenarios have been popular for a long time now but we do not know about their origin. However, their main features are simplicity in storyline and of course humour all through. In these scenarios, obscenity is almost non-existent although having said that, we know that where it was required improvisation is an acceptable feature.

As mentioned earlier, Taymur collected some eighteen scenarios which fit in this category.(137) The main title of these *li'b* include '*Alam and Ta'adir*, which is performed over seven nights, *The Crocodile, The Boat, The Pilgrimage, The*

Public Bath, The Teatro, Abu Ja'far, Shaykh Sumsum, The Sudanese War, The Coffeehouse, and The Stranger's Li'ba.

'*Alam Wa Ta'adir* is a seven night long performance which could be edited to one night on the occasion of weddings. Like the remaining titles, we only have a short scenario of these *li'ab*. '*Alam Wa Ta'adir* has around one hundred and sixty characters/figures including animals and plants. The story revolves around *Ta'adir*, a Muslim merchant from Baghdad, who on a trip to Syria falls in love with '*Alam*, a Christian girl who lives in a monastery with her priest father and young brother *Bulus*. *Ta'adir* tries every trick imaginable to see '*Alam* and spend time with her but there are many obstacles. *Ta'adir* returns day after day disguised as a vendor of a different product such as water melons and chicken. On one occasion '*Alam* invites the disguised vendor into the monastery, but *Ta'adir* is discovered and sent to jail. A few years later when he is released from jail, *Ta'adir* returns to the monastery and learns of the priest's death. He convinces '*Alam* to convert to Islam; consequently they get married, go on a pilgrimage to Makka, build a palace in the place of the monastery, and live happily ever after.

The above scenario is actually performed over seven nights. This is made possible by the great amount of spectacle, *zajal* pieces and games interjected in the episodes. The wedding version drops most of the games and some *zajal* but keeps the *ghazal* (love poems), and the *Hammam* scene (public bath scene), as every bride has to endure this ritual. However, the structure of the *li'ba* is typically episodic, which makes it possible for the *Rayyis* to reconstruct the sequences according to the occasion of the performance and the mood of the audience. The *Rayyis* and his assistant, *al-Rakhim*, have plenty of chances to show off their skills and pick up the right selection from their stock of *zajal*, songs, games and tricky repertoire.

Fortunately, some of the figures belonging to this *li'ba* are on show at the Geographical Society in Cairo. They are probably pieces which were made and used in the past hundred years. Recently, these figures along with figures belonging to *The Crocodile Li'ba* came to the attention of Alfred Mikhael who reconstructed the shadow show using their duplicates. Mikhael was involved in a piece of research on shadow play in Egypt and spent a long time locating people in this field. In 1985 he was able to find two very old men who started their career life as shadow puppeteers but for the past forty years they had to take up other careers to be able to survive. With Mikhael they put together a shadow

show consisting of two scenes, '*Alam and Ta'adir* and *The Crocodile*, using the duplicates of the figures on display at the Geographical Society in Cairo.(138) [fig 35 & fig 36]

The Goethe Institute in Cairo housed the first performance in 1986. Then the French Cultural Institute of Cairo presented the same show again in 1990, and lately, in June 1992, the American University of Cairo invited the performers for a third showing.(139) The three Western institutions attracted a good audience to see this 'dead' performance art. It is a paradox that a German, Paul Kahle and before him George Jacob and a long list of German and European travellers, drew our attention to the Egyptian shadow texts and figures. So many years after their discovery, foreign institutions in Cairo are seen to encourage the reconstruction of old shadow shows. It should be added that the shadow figures on display at the Geographical Society are in fact the only collection available in all Egypt!

The outcome of the reconstructions of the two shadow plays is quite interesting. An Egyptian director, Hasan el-Gretley, has reworked his production, *Dayer Ma Yadur*, which is based on *Ubu Roi*, to recount the story through the two shadow players who were initially discovered by Mikhael. The set incorporates a very large screen and the *Rayyis* with his assistant are seen in full action with their figures against the screen. [fig 37] Probably *Rayyis* Ahmad al-Kumi and Hasan Hanufa are the only shadow puppeteers in Egypt today. They are both old and unfortunately, have not trained anybody in this trade.

4.6. 1 Karagöz

At the end of the thirteenth century shadow puppet theatre arrived in Turkey from Egypt as a result of the invitation extended by the Ottoman Sultan Selim I to a shadow puppeteer to return home with him. Some Turkish scholars argue that the Turks in fact only learnt the shadow techniques from the Egyptian players but

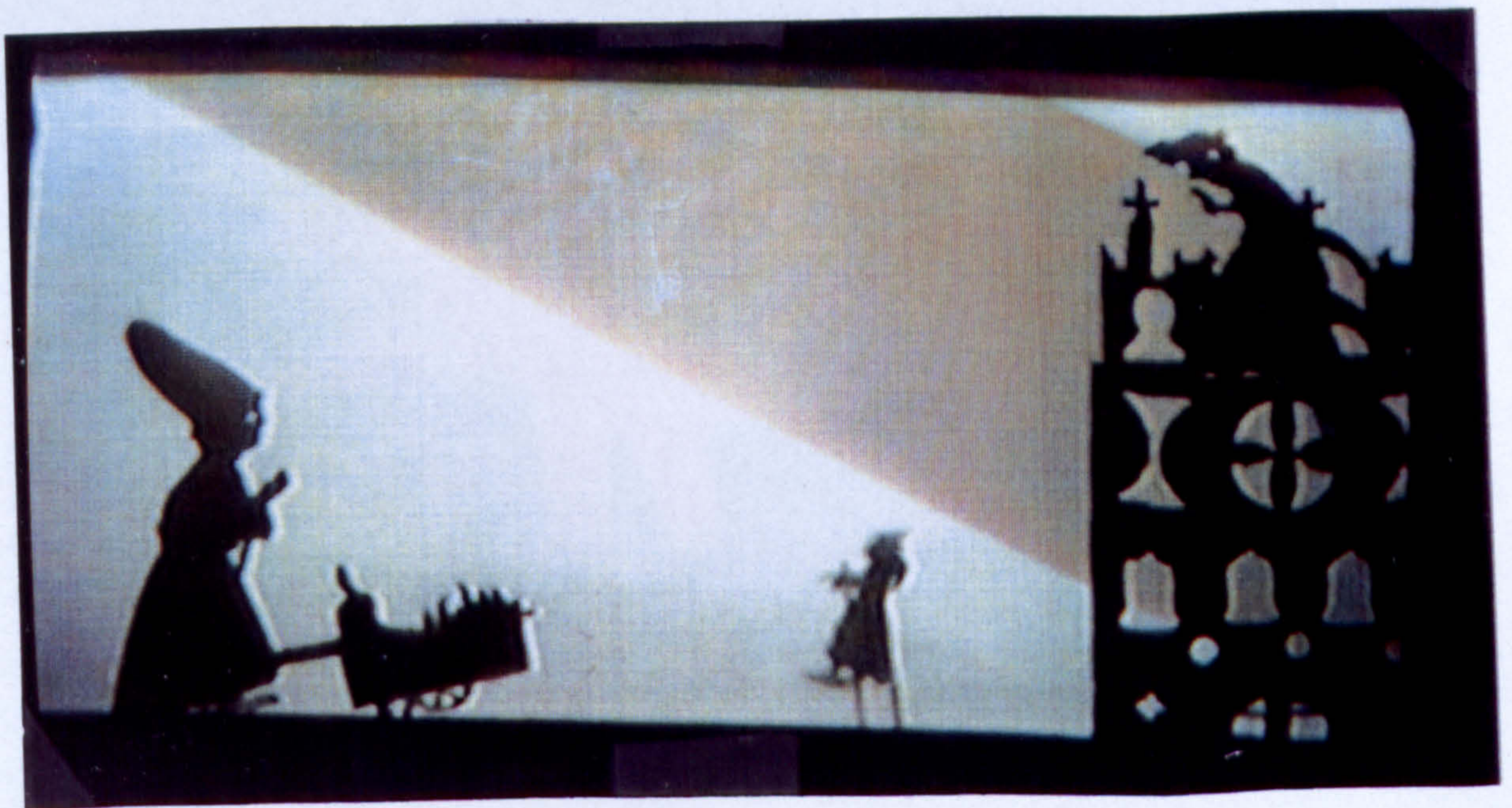
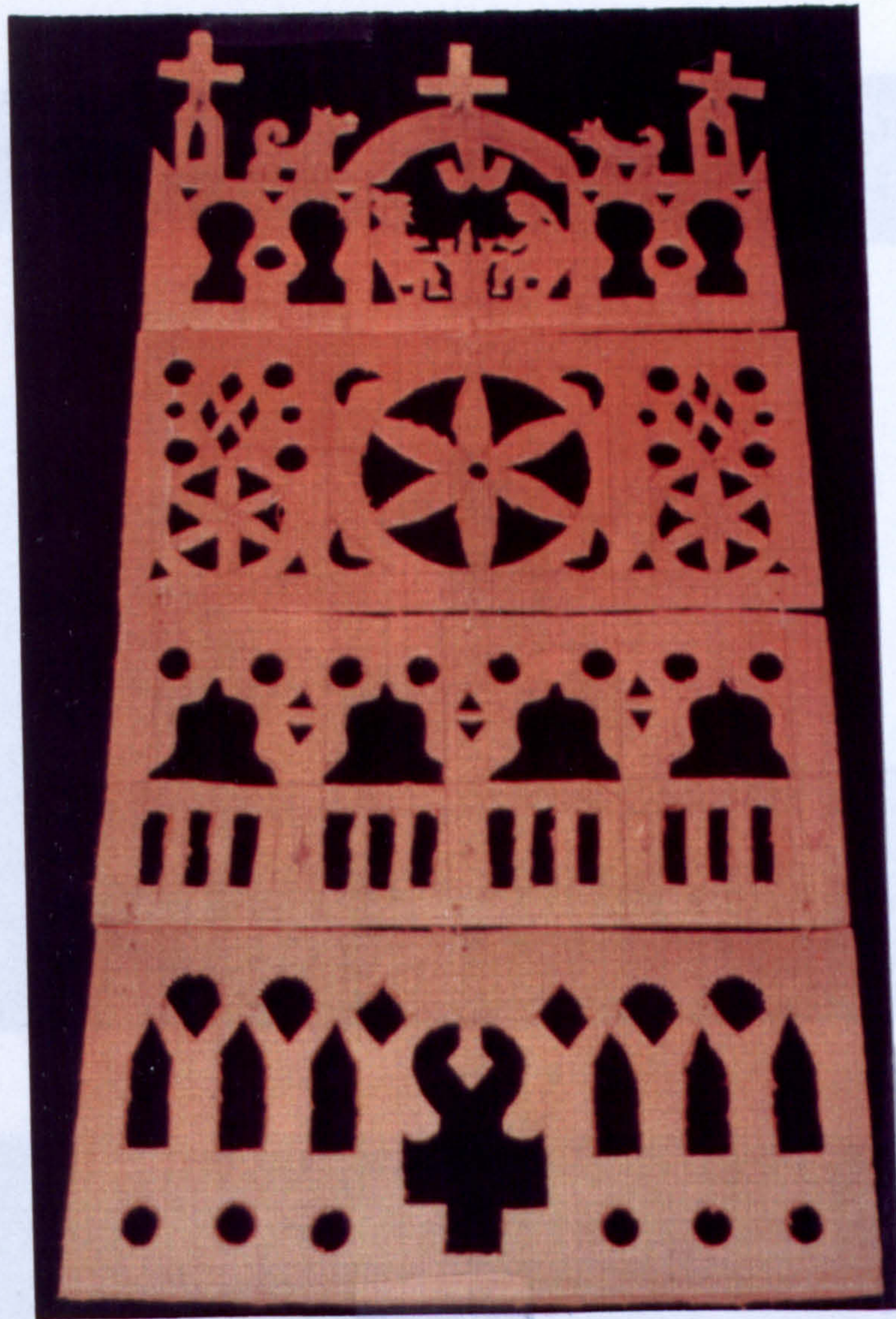


Fig 35. Shadow figures 'Alam al-Ta'adir, replicas of the figures on display at the Geographical Society in Cairo.

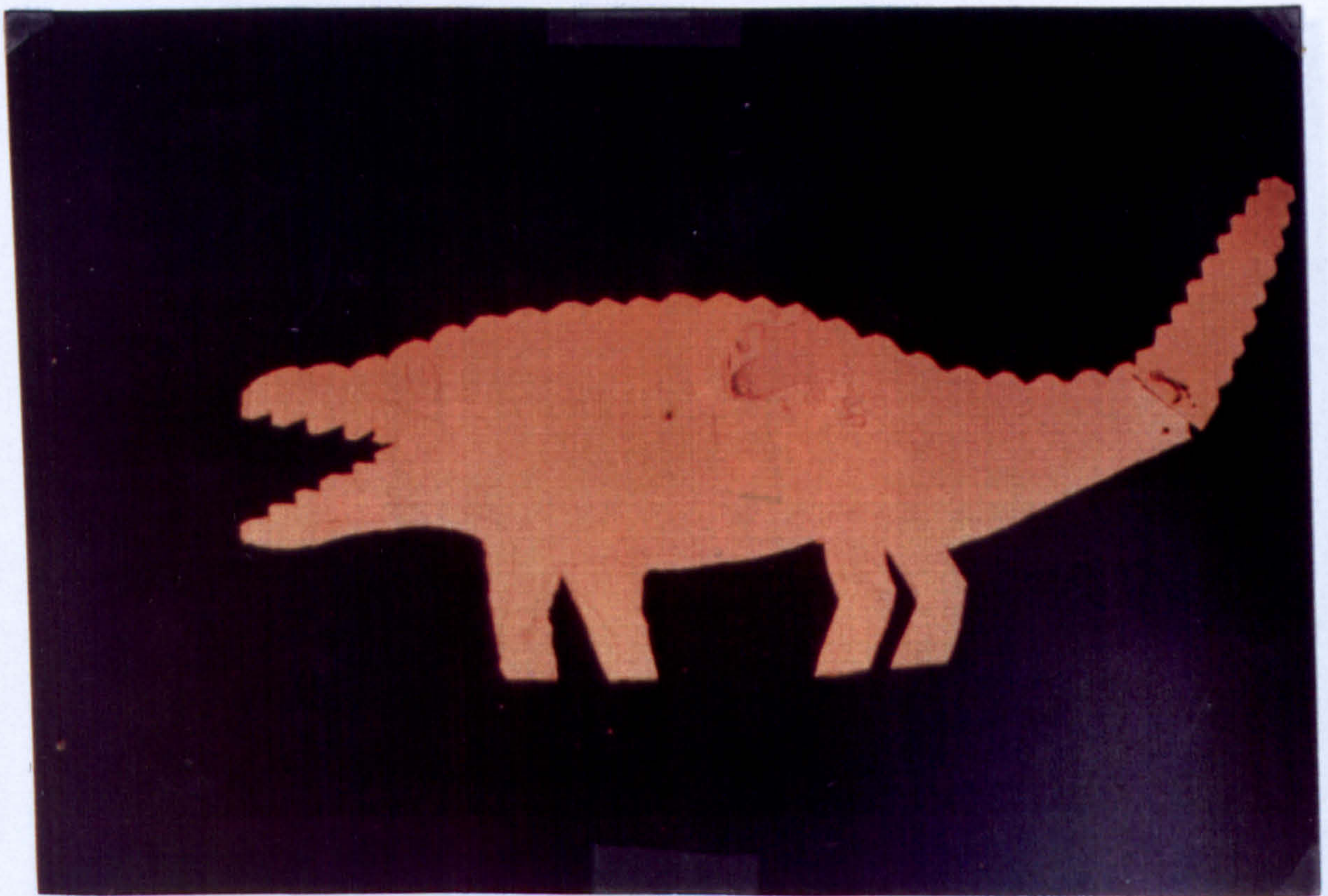
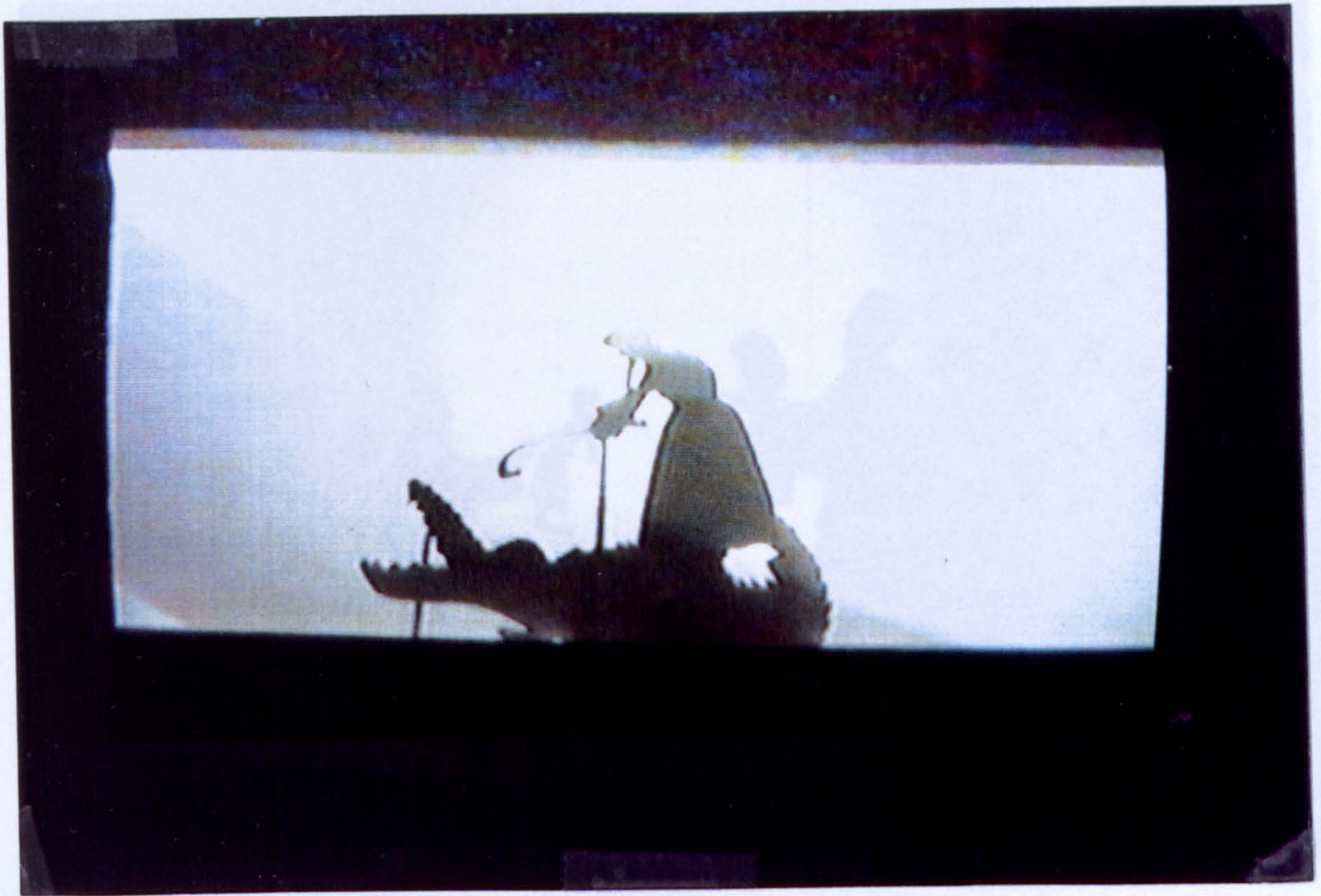


Fig 36. *The Crocodile*, replicas of the figures at the Geographical Society in Cairo. *Ma' Yedou*, photographs by Khaled al-Gowhary



the thirteenth century, that consolidated mime, Sufi and theatrical influences to create the stable form that developed into *Karagoz*. (142)



Fig 37. *Dayir Ma Yadur*, photographs by Khalid al-Goweilly.

they composed their own *fasil* (scenes) based on contemporary Ottoman entertainments.(140) Nancy Berliner refreshes our memory of the legend concerning the origin of Ottoman shadow play in which two mason workers are resurrected in shadows to please the Sultan. This legend, she argues, is quite untelling about the reality of Ottoman shadow theatre because it indirectly propagates the belief that shadow theatre was introduced to the Middle East from China. She goes further to assert that there is no other reference in the Middle Eastern shadow theatre where figures represent shadows or indeed souls of the departed except a reference to a spirit teasing *Karagöz* or to *jinn* in some Turkish and Syrian scenes.(141) By contrast Myrsiades informs us that Turkish shadow puppetry was:

designed both to entertain and to achieve religious experience, based on the *Sufi* Islam doctrine that man is but a shadow manipulated by his Creator. Shades or shadows, used earlier in Central Asia in conjunction with ancestor worship or funeral rites, influenced Turkish shadow performances, but it was the arrival of shadow puppet theatre from Egypt, apparently at the end of the thirteenth century, that consolidated mime, *Sufi* and theatrical influences to create the stable form that developed into *Karagoz*.(142)

Apparently it is the Ottoman mime and free-form of buffoonery that marked the shadow theatre and its specialised off shoot, *Karagöz* (black eye). With the Ottomans taking over the command in the Middle East in the early sixteenth century, *Karagöz* shadow theatre travelled back to Egypt and also to Syria as a genuine Ottoman entertainment with shadows. In the occupied Arab countries, *karagöz* shadow performances, parallel to their function in Turkey, were designated in the view of Matin And as agit prop in the Ottoman Empire, hence explaining their political *raison d'être* .(143)

4.6.1.1 Characteristic features

Indeed, the Turkish shadow players adopted the technique and structure of the Egyptian *khayal al-zill*. This is apparent in the composition of the *fasil*. Tietze and Matin And tell us that every shadow play, down to our own time, starts with a prologue. However, the relation of shadow play tradition with the *sufi* orders resulted in fixing the prologue words to the *Sufi Poem of the Curtain*, as the shadow screen is also called curtain or veil. This poem evokes a certain Shaykh Kushteri said to be the patron protector of the guild of puppeteers in Turkey. It is

believed Kushteri is the person who in the Ottoman legend was responsible for resurrecting the two masons in order to console Sultan Ohran (1326-1359 A.D.).(144) Similar to the *baba*, the poem of the *mukaddeme* (presenter), is literary in style and advises the spectators to consider, not the superficial but, the deep and symbolic meaning of the *fasil*. It also reminds us that "the phantasmal character of the images on the screen symbolizes the transitory, illusory state of the things in this world as opposed to the ever-lasting reality of a level of consciousness transcending physical death".(145) After the poems, a short rhymed prose monologue follows in which blessings are entreated on the audience and the Sultan. The prologue's mystical aspect, like the religious frame of the *baba*, does not extend into the play itself.

The shadow show is "subdivided into a sequence of individual scenes by the songs which announce the appearance of each person on stage".(146) This confirms to us the use of music and songs, and also the convention of calling the characters in order to appear. After a *fasil* or two which are called *muhawara* (dialogue), we have an epilogue. The four basic units of the show are thematically unconnected, also the prologue and epilogue scenes "are highly stylized and do not allow of much change".(147) The puppeteer himself chooses which selection of *fasil* to present together. And he can expand or contract a *fasil* by adding from his repertoire of set speeches and standard scenes.(148) The main paired characters, *karagöz* and *Hajivat*, are the unifying element in all the units. [fig 38]

The screen displays an immobile show piece of an ornamental nature which is removed at the beginning of the show. [fig 39] *Hajivat* usually enters screen left and *Karagöz* from the right, this is the side where they supposedly have their houses, the rest of the screen is the street. *Hajivat* is the learned type who is looking for a friend, but he only finds *Karagöz*, a poor and uneducated clown. *Taqlid* (imitation) and the farcical dimension constitute the main features of the *fasil*. The epilogue includes an apology for all the 'slips of the tongue', followed by the announcement of the title of the next show.(149)

4.6.1.2 A theatre of laughter

^e
Matin And describes *Karagöz* as basically:



Fig 38. Turkish shadow figures: *Karagoz* (The Black Eye) and *Hacivat*.

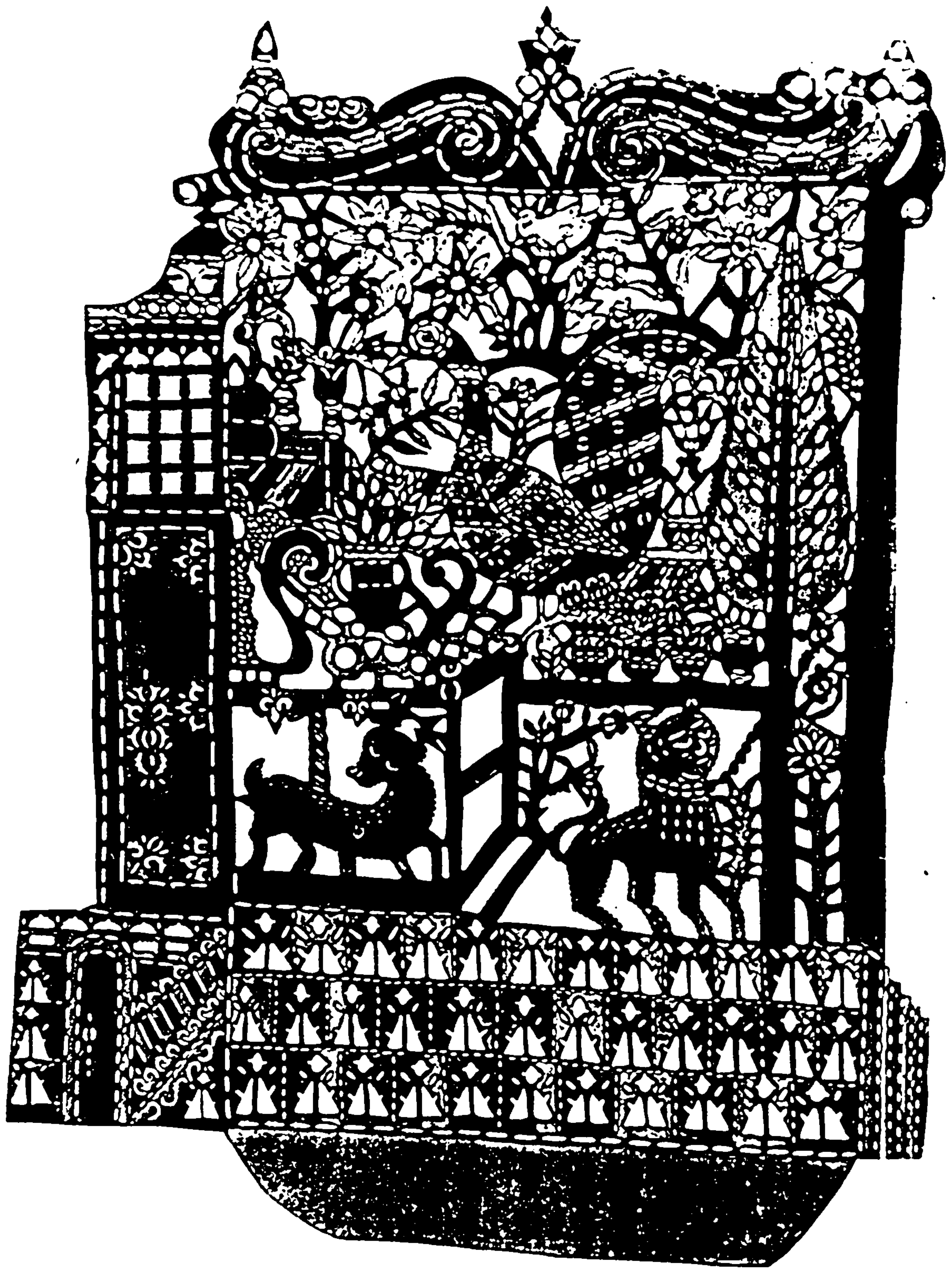


Fig 39. Gostermelik: Shadow ornamental piece, a palace garden.

a theatre of laughter. Verbal and non-verbal quips continuously call forth peals of mirth. At its most elementary level, this is achieved by the mere repetition of a gesture, a movement or an episode which previously earned a laugh. Identical scenes, repeated with different characters, are essential elements to the action and nearly all the *Karagöz* plots are based on that. Repetition of an episode by the same character with subtle variations is also used.(150)

Matin And remarks further that repetition takes another form, which is when a character appears in duplicate. Image duplication is paralleled in verbal repetition either by repeating a cliché or by introducing the same word into every sentence uttered. Disguise and concealment are also used to produce laughter.(151)

As we can see there are a few technical conventions which have permeated from the Egyptian *babat* to the Ottoman *fasil*. However, the Turks composed their own *fasil* which are based on dialogue and assigned two characters to be at the centre of all the shows. The Turkish shadow play is even known by the name *Karagöz* as they have become synonymous.

4.6.2 Qaragoz

Characteristic Turkish shadow plays were transported to Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine with the Ottoman expansion (1517-1924 A.D.). To date the Syrian and Lebanese *fusul* (scenes) reveal a strong Ottoman influence. The Syrian and Lebanese shadow plays are also named after the main characters in the *fusul*, *Qaragoz* and 'Aiwaz. When we use the term *Qaragoz* or *Karagöz* in this part of the Middle East we can only mean shadow play. The *fusul* differ in length from very long to very short. However, to increase the showing time of the short *fusul* the puppeteer presents *gharzah* (stitch) a very short story based on a *fasl*; *li'ba* (game) between *Qaragoz* and 'Aiwaz, presented before or after the *fasl*; *manam* (dream) presented at the beginning, which usually involves *Qaragoz*, and *niktah* (joke) often a very obscene one.(152) These units comprise short episodes used to stretch the allocated show time of the shadow show session.

The Syrian and Lebanese *fusul* which came to us are based on stories which go back to the Ottoman period. The *fasl* of *al-Hammam* (public bath scene) is a favourite as is the *fasl* of the wedding of *Qaragoz*, and the *fasl* about the origin of

Qaragoz which is known as the *Two Qaragoz and the Two 'Aiwaz*. All the *fusul* incorporate poetry, folk songs, proverbs, and sayings. In addition, music is an integral part of the performance. The Syrian and Lebanese *Qaragoz* and *'Aiwaz* are very much like the Ottoman pair in that *'Aiwaz* is the informed fellow and *Qaragoz* the poor blockhead. Moreover, the episodes mainly revolve around their intrigues which provide fitting material for visible satires on town or village life.

There are few female characters in the *fusul*. The female types, however, are restricted to the traditional roles of mother, wife, and prostitute. The *fusul* like the *babat* were composed with a male audience in mind. Since coffee was introduced from al-Yaman in the mid fifteenth century,(153) shadow plays were performed in coffee houses where male customers attended regularly to converse, play games, smoke, drink coffee and participate in any of the various popular entertainments available. [fig 40 & fig 41]

4.6.2.1 Place of performance

The shadow play as an entertainment associated with the Muslim communities of the Ottoman Middle East is probably a result of *khayal al-zill* being associated with the coffee house which "was essentially a Muslim institution".(154) It is worth remembering that the tavern is an institution which provides wine, a forbidden substance. Therefore, taverns were mainly run by non-Muslims although the clientele could be of a heterogeneous religious background. Since pre-Islamic times music and song were the standard style of entertainment in the taverns. During the 16th century, coffee houses embraced, along with music, all types of oral popular entertainments which themselves add to the main activity of the clients: conversation. In retrospect, coffee houses in the Middle East added a new dimension to the social, economic and cultural practices of urban life. Particularly, they provided a platform for the major performance art traditions, and provided a space to house audiences from the different walks of life. This ready audience is sought by the performers, not the other way round. Furthermore, the coffee houses contributed to the interaction of the existing oral and performance traditions under the same roof. At the same time, it generated a critical audience enlightened about the different potentials of each of the existing performance arts.

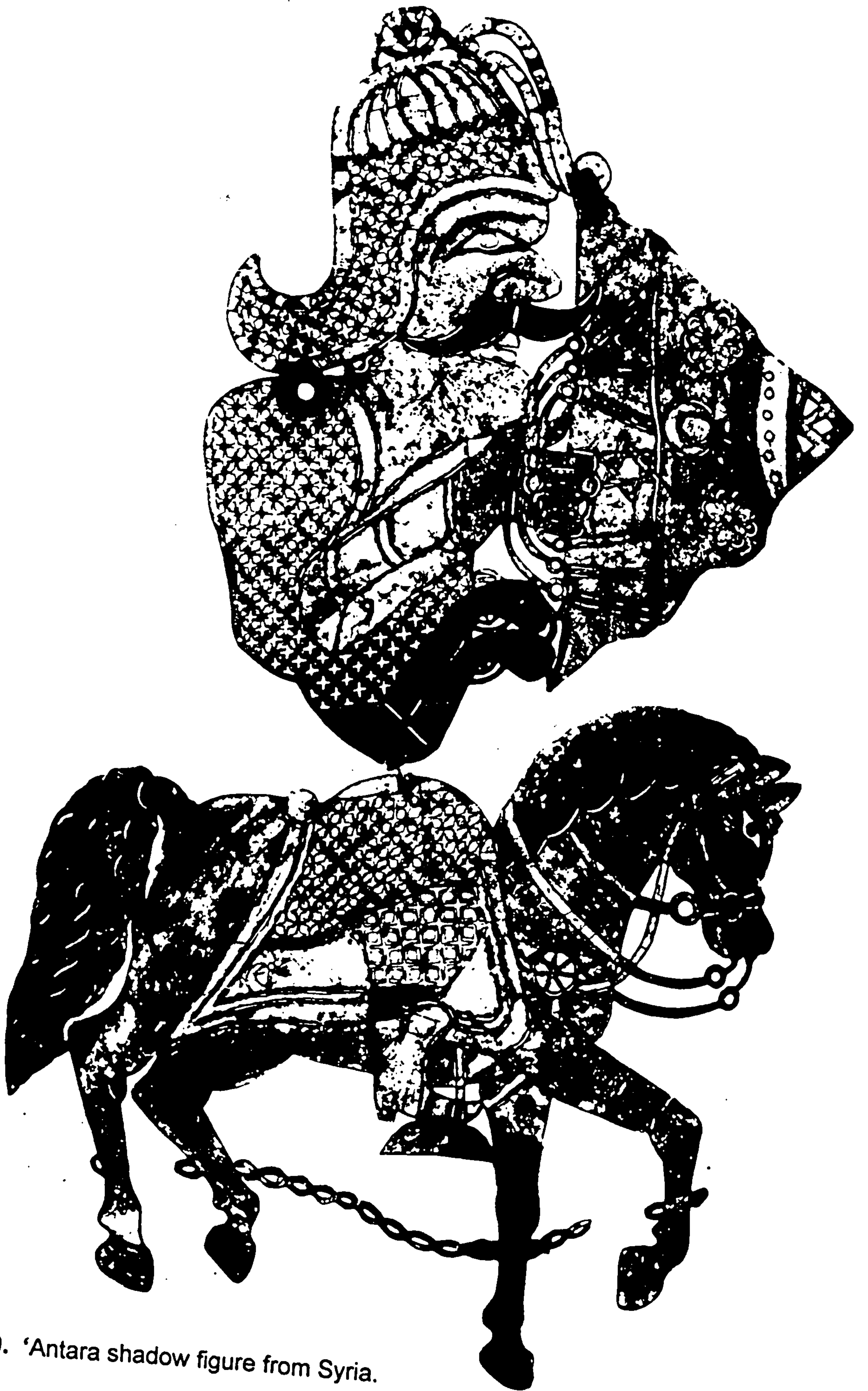


Fig 40. 'Antara shadow figure from Syria.



Fig 41. Shadow figures from Syria.

Nizar Aswad informs us that the shadow theatre repertoire in the Syrian coffee houses extended beyond *Qaragoz* and 'Aiwaz to include some popular *sira* characters like that of 'Antara and 'Abla which the audience were naturally well acquainted with from the *hakawati* or *sira* poets performances.(155) Hijazi, in addition, informs us of a series of war scenes adapted from different *sira* episodes covering wars of pre-and Islamic times.(156) One of these war scenes is usually presented as the final episode of the evening before ending with the epilogue. This should give us an idea about the flexible episodic composition of the shadow show. Certain occasions require episodes of a particular nature and it is up to the puppeteer to present what he sees fit from his repertoire. [fig 42]

The competing coffee houses used live entertainment as an attraction. They scheduled performers to present their work on certain religious occasions, especially in the month of Ramadan. For Ramadan, a story teller or a shadow puppeteer selects a work which has episodes suitable for performance over twenty nine evening sessions. Performers also travelled around different towns to celebrate specific occasions. For instance some performers would not miss performing during certain harvest season so as to be paid in produce. Also they would not miss occasions such as weddings and circumcisions where the hosts are generous and the audience is mixed. On such family occasions special scenes with no obscene language are performed. Nonetheless, Aswad relates the existence of *fusul* especially composed for the young audience, for instance the *fasl of Qashu* which could be performed during circumcision celebrations.

4.6.2.2 Language of performance

Under the Ottoman rule (1517-1924 A.D.), the Syrian and Lebanese *fusul* do not match the literary calibre of Ibn Daniyal's *babat*, nor do they touch on obscene subjects in the manner of the *babat*. The language of *Qaragoz* and 'Aiwaz certainly reflects the region in which the show is performed. A Beiruti *qaragozati*, (performer of *Qaragoz*) performing in a coffee house in Beirut would use the Beiruti vernacular, while a *qaragozati* in Aleppo would speak in the accent of Aleppo. However, both *qaragozati* will recite in classical Arabic 'Antara's Odes. The character *Qaragoz* is very much down to each and every one of the people, and therefore he uses the language and dialect of the people and mirrors the socio-political problems of his people. A good number of the *fusul* include a Turkish soldier who is always ridiculed and made fun of for his accent.(157) Also

all the *fuzul* with no economic situation which

Let us look further at the there existed a few generations. Probably the last one in used to perform in the century (158). The show dependent on the individual on the reception of the from Thousand and One enjoy *fuzul* in classical Arabic probably are used to perform in Arabic a less pleasant experience equally to all the theatre has to put on before performers use the collective larger audience. More normally use classical Arabic which do not include dramatic

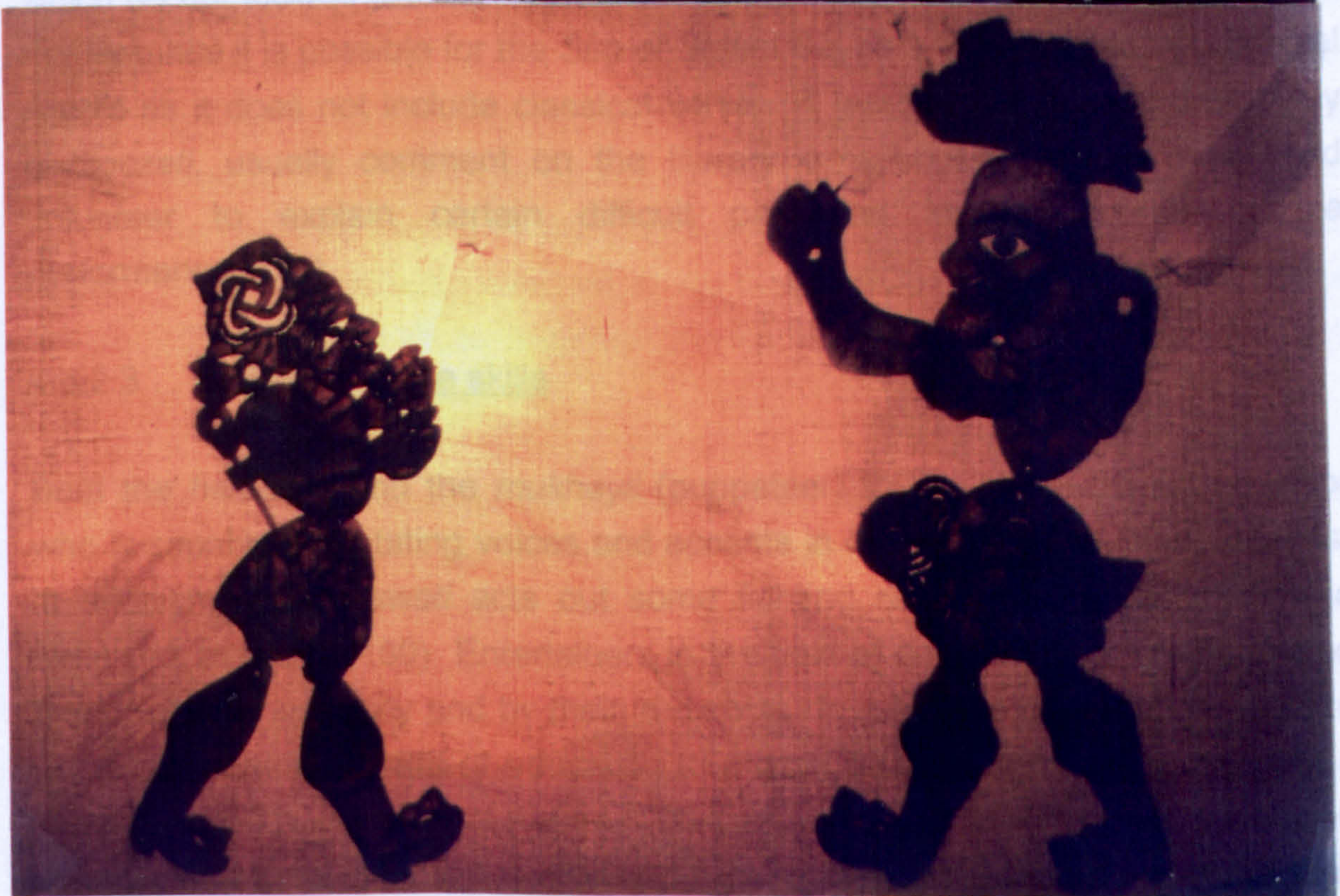
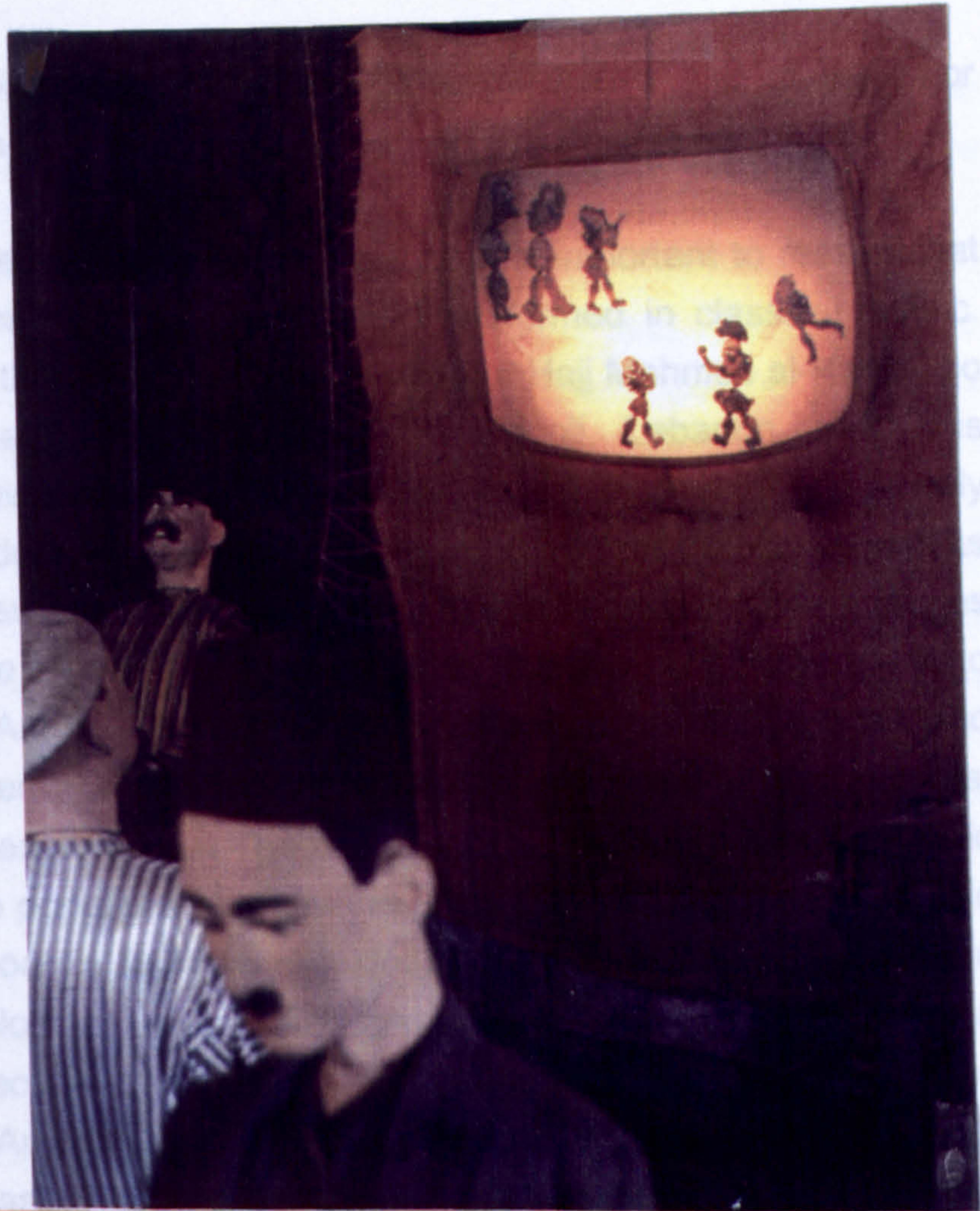


Fig 42. Al-'Adhim Palace, reconstruction of a coffee house with a shadow tent and *Karagoz* and *'Aiwaz*.

all the *fusul* with no exception are critical of social issues and of the poor economic situation which the Ottoman rule was held responsible for.

Let us look further at the language of the *fusul* as it is important to remark that there existed a few *qaragozati* who sometimes performed in classical Arabic. Probably the last one in this category is the puppeteer Hajj Mahmud al-Haris who used to perform in the Tell Coffee House in Tripoli, Lebanon, early this century.(158) The choice of using classical or colloquial Arabic is definitely dependent on the individual educational background of the puppeteer, as well as on the reception of the audience. An audience used to hearing *siyar* and stories from *Thousand and One Nights* recited in classical Arabic would be prepared to enjoy *fusul* in classical Arabic. But audiences in remote areas and villages who probably are used to performers of lesser education will certainly find classical Arabic a less pleasant experience. The issue of classical and colloquial Arabic applies equally to all the popular oral traditions. It is also an issue modern Arabic theatre has to put on board. As we move closer to the twentieth century, more performers use the colloquial or simplified classical Arabic in order to reach a larger audience. Moreover, texts which are ornamented with classical verse normally use classical Arabic prose, such as the *Sira of 'Antara*. But the *siyar* which do not include classical verse can possibly be related in colloquial Arabic. For instance it is possible for the *Sira of Sultan Baybars* to be recited in colloquial Arabic as it does not include classical verse. A learned *hakawati* and probably *qaragozati*, usually comment on the literary excellence of the material, and volunteer to explain certain difficult passages in the course of the performance.(159)

4.6.2.3 Performance skills

Both the *hakawati* and the *mukhayil* (puppeteer) trades require a skilled actor who is capable of imitating voices and accents in order to play multifarious roles. In addition, the *hakawati* acts out some fighting sequences, and the climatic events in the story.(160) Entertainers in the field of oral traditions are respected among their community and by their audience. In principle, they are expected to acquire a certain amount of education to enable them to deal with material of a literary, poetic and historical nature. They are also expected to have developed a certain maturity and sensitiveness to the social and political issues of their community and the *umma* at large. The *hakawati*, in particular, believes that by telling the story of a certain hero he is encouraging the audience to emulate this

hero. For instance, the Syrian *hakawati* Abu Mahmud disclosed to Aswad that in relating the *Sira of Sultan Baybers* of Egypt who defended Syria against the Crusaders, we are defining our responsibility towards Palestine.(161)

The audience in the coffee house are not by any means passive listeners. On the contrary, they are quite active and take the side of the appealing characters or issues. Especially during episodes which include spectacle or fights, the audience become part of the show. This tradition is carried on whenever there is room for competition in any of the popular oral entertainments. An amusing anecdote is unvaryingly told about some members of a coffee house audience in 1955, in Tripoli, who walked at the end of the evening to the *hakawati's* house complaining about his return to the comforts of his home having left behind 'Antara to spend the night in prison. They insisted he should carry on with his recitation of 'Antara's *Sira* till the hero is free again.(162)

Today the few entertainers in the field of oral tradition cannot afford to dedicate all their time to this trade. A good number have other careers during the day while in the evening they play *hakawati* or puppeteer. The *hakawati* Rashid al-Hallaq at the Nawfara Coffee House in Damascus runs a shop in the nearby *suq* of Hamidiyya. In the evening he recites the hand written *sira* books which he borrows from the owner of the coffee house. His audience constitutes other vendors and artisans from the surrounding *suq*. He knows most of the members of his audience and they know him as well. Al-Hallaq is in his forties, he started playing the *hakawati* two years ago. The only qualification he has is having been himself a regular audience member to the previous *hakawati* in the same coffee house. There are no more *hakawati* around, so he is learning the trade in the presence of a live audience.

The time for oral entertainment performances in coffee houses in any Middle Eastern city is always after the evening prayers, a convenient time to comment on the activities of the day. Aswad remarks that in Aleppo shadow players proceed after the prologue, with a discussion between *Qaragoz* and 'Aiwaz in which the first inquires about the day's events, so 'Aiwaz recounts what he has seen and experienced.(163) Interestingly enough, not long ago the Lebanese *qaragozati* Hajj Mahmud of Tripoli used the same approach to comment on the day's events. However, Hajj Mahmud was clever to use this episode in his show to advertise for certain products and shops in town.(164) I was fortunate to hear the Tripolitan actor Majid Afyuni - during an interview in Beirut in September

1992, recount from his memory in the voice of the *qaragozati* Hajj Mahmud, how the strained yoghurt on display in a certain shop tasted delicious, while the oriental sweets from the next shop made him sick. Those shops who paid their respects to the *qaragozati* by offering him food from their stock received praise of their products, those who did not suffered his revenge in kind. Afyuni also mimicked the different voices used for *Qaragoz*, 'Aiwaz and other characters, as he explained that the audience/clients in the coffee house did not need to see the images in order to know who the character was. Each character had a distinct voice which was recreated by the *mukhayil* time after time with great skill. Hajj Mahmud was not only a skilled actor, and artisan who probably made his own shadow figures, but he was also expected to compose new material for his daily shows and to comment on the events in town in order to please his audience, otherwise he loses them to another coffee house and another *mukhayil*.

There are still a few coffee houses in Damascus, Aleppo, and probably Tripoli where a *hakawati* is occasionally seen in his costume and props, consisting of the 'abaya (big coat), *tarbush* (red cylindrical hat), shield and sword as he recites from a book the *Sira of 'Antara* or *Sultan Baybars*. [fig 43] However, shadow shows disappeared completely from the coffee house scene some years ago. It is argued that shadow puppetry is an especially demanding performance and that not many performers would dare take it up. The very rare instances of shadow shows today are those performed for the foreign media. The Syrian *mukhayil* 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Zahabi, mounted a shadow show in 1982 at the Darwishiya Coffee House in Damascus for the B B C and the Syrian television.(165) Unfortunately, this parallels the little interest displayed in this popular entertainment in general after the introduction of cinema and television.

4.6.2.4 Traced endorsement

This is not the end of story of the Syrian and Lebanese *fusul*, for even if we have not seen them over the past twenty years on the shadow screen in coffee houses, we have certainly seen their hallmark in plots, themes, episodic structure and characters used in farces produced for the television screen. They are also a great inspiration for live theatre performances. The famous actor/director Durayd Lahham of Syria regularly uses the *fusul* plots for his theatre and television shows. He also follows the technique of pairing of characters, technique as his main television and theatre work revolves around two characters, the dim-witted character *Ghawwar al-Tawsha* and his clever



Fig 43. Al-Nawfara coffee house and the *hakawati*, Damascus.

companion *Husni al-Barazan*. The *Hammam al-Hana* scene is basically an inspiration from the *Hammam fasl* (public bath).

In Lebanon, the Tripolitan *Abu Salim al-Tabl* and his troupe were inspired by the plots and themes of the *fusul* for their television programmes and later for farces performed live on stage. *Abu Salim*, the clever guy and *Fahman*, the blockhead, are the focus of all the episodes which are quite critical of the social and economic situation in the city. Disguise is of course sought for its humorous consequences. Therefore, we have many instances in which a character tries to be somebody else but fails and is discovered but in between funny incidents take place. The prologue of *khayal al-zill*, however, is not completely lost, for *Abu Salim* opens with a song in which he introduces the programme and his troupe. The episodes are full of stock characters from every day life in a city. The stock characters change all the time but the paired wit and blockhead ensure continuity.

The language used by these contemporary Lebanese and Syrian troupes is of course colloquial like the earlier *fusul*. However, like the *fusul*, language remains very important, and word play is as important as any of the action in the show. Verbal humour and witticism are chief devices of producing laughter. Metaphors, similes, repetition, learned twaddle, peculiar dialects, puns and vulgar and obscene allusion all serve the humorous nature of the *fasl*. In addition songs and *zajal* are also used and they are usually chosen from the regional folk repertoire as is indeed the selection of proverbs and sayings of wise men.

4.6.2.5 Leather icons

Unfortunately, no one has been able to locate yet any of the shadow figures used by Lebanese puppeteers. But we have no reason not to believe that they looked the same as the Syrian shadow figures as both are off-shoots of the Ottoman shadow theatre and share its repertoire. In fact we know of many Lebanese puppeteers who performed in Syria, and vice versa.(166) Of course they performed the same repertoire of *fusul* and stock characters. Examples of Syrian shadow figures which are around a hundred years old, are on display at the 'Adhim Palace in Damascus, [fig 44] and in the Museum of Popular Traditions in Aleppo. [fig 45] These figures are similar in design, size and colour to those of Ottoman origin. They are in general of a rather small size, between twenty and forty centimetres. Most of the figures have more than one joint, a few have up to



Fig 44. Al-'Adhim Palace, shadow figures from the Syrian repertoire.



Fig 45. Shadow figures from the repertoire of Aleppo.

four joints, depending on the action the figure is expected to perform. Figures performing tricks may need even more joints. The most common joints are those at the knee, waist and elbow. Some characters have a long arm and have two joints on the arm .

The identity and personality of a shadow figure/character is reflected in the visual image in leather. The characters become one with their visual ideal, therefore, the puppet should communicate their physical traits at least. *Qaragoz* for instance is a hunchback who has a very long arm, a rounded beard and a bald head hidden under a huge turban which is made to slip from time to time. *Qaragoz* is usually dressed humbly to reflect his background but quite often he is disguised in a different costume and head dress. *Qaragoz* also has an enormous phallus for particular obscene *fusul*.

The figure of 'Aiwaz on the other hand, reflects the image of a more respectable character. He has a turban which is fixed and his beard is pointed. His hand is not particularly long because he usually receives the beating, and he is in general a little smaller in size than *Qaragoz*. Like all the figures the proportions of the body are not respected and this is used as a source of humour. The heads of the characters are usually large and the head dress or cover emphasises this feature further. The figures are mainly projected in profile or three quarter angle, although there exist a very few figures which are in a full facing angle. The head's main feature, the eye, is always in a facing angle of view. All the figures are outlined in a dark colour and have line designs also in dark colour. The rest of the figure is filled in rather bright colours which can be seen through the screen. It is obvious how the visual features of the above puppets reflect the visual aesthetic practices of the region.

A *mukhayil* usually keeps one set of figures of the main characters which he uses in all the *fusul*. However, *Qaragoz* in his frequent disguises would sometimes require independent figures. The figures have holes or sockets in them to enable the *mukhayil* to control their movement. These sockets are mostly positioned in the shoulder area of the figure. Movement is controlled by fitting a rod into the socket; the rod is held perpendicular to the screen, and is not attached to the figure. The *mukhayil* keeps few rods of different lengths for specific manipulation exercises. (167) [fig 46]

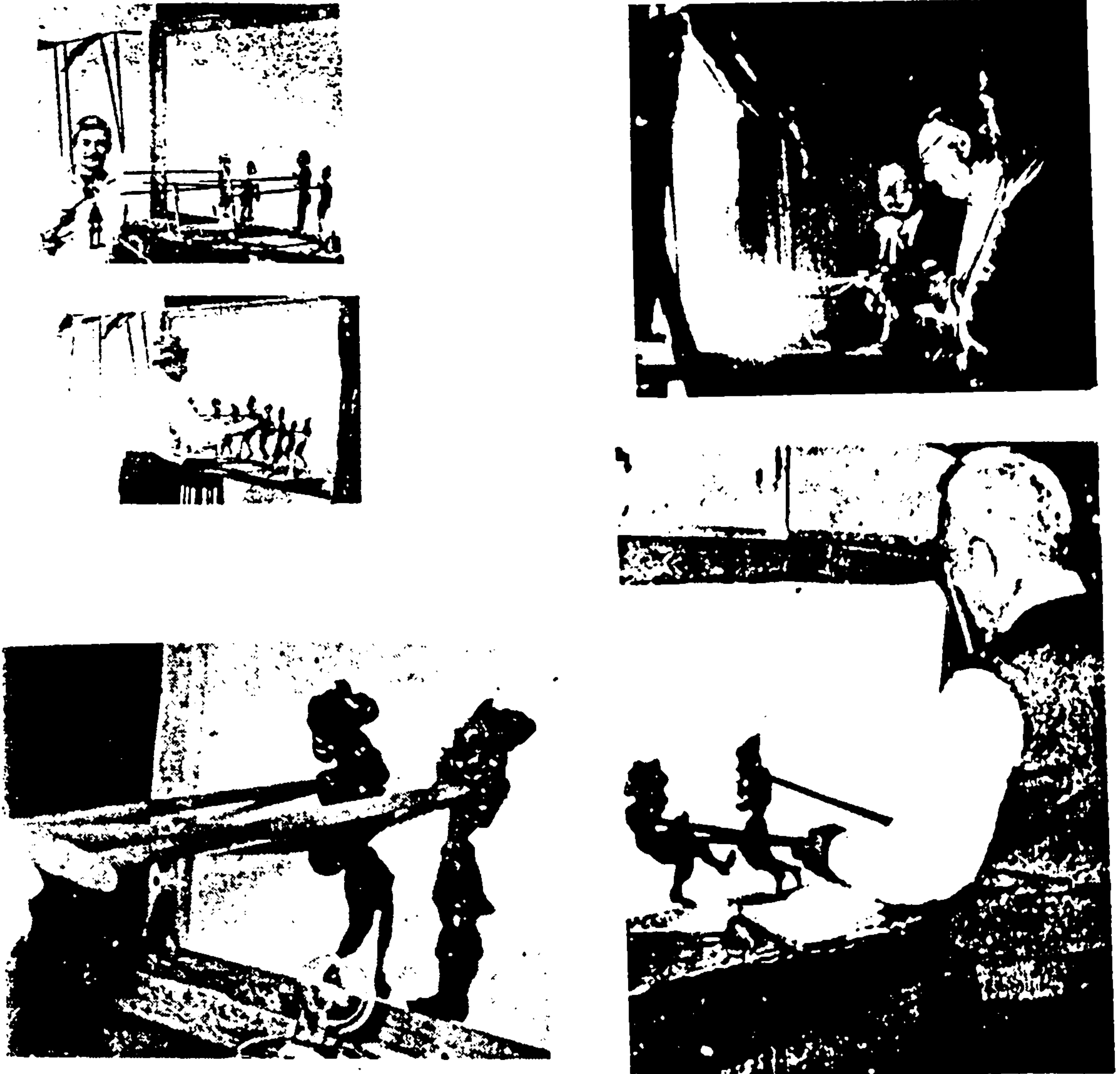


Fig 46. Shadow players in performance.

In Syria and Lebanon the screen against which the shadow figures are played is known as *khaymat Qaragoz* (tent of Qaragoz). Reference to [fig 47] illustrates why the association with a tent is made. The screen is made-up of thin cotton fabric or oiled paper. It is sewn in an opening of a thicker piece of cloth so that light can penetrate only through the thin cotton piece in the shape of a window. The puppeteer works his figures along with his assistant from behind this piece of cloth. The Musicians would usually sit on one side of the tent to take their cues from the *qaragozati*. Most of the Syrian *fusul* begin with music and woodblock beating to attract the attention of the audience. (168)

4.6.2.6 Arabesque impression

The open framework of Middle Eastern shadow shows which brings into play independent *babat*, *fasil* or *fusul*, prologue and epilogue, calls to mind on a certain level the compositional features of an *arabesque* design. An *arabesque* designer selects from his repertoire geometrical and vegetal motifs to compose his work. The *mukhayil* likewise chooses from a number of *fusul* or episodes, which ones to present within the two permanent motifs: the prologue and epilogue. He can enjoy playing variations of a theme in the middle section as long as the fixed frame is respected. The diversity in the length and subject matter of the different *fusul*, as well as the very short scenes which are used to fill in for time, provide the *mukhayil* with a reasonable selection to choose from. In addition, the individual unit or *fasl* can be expanded or contracted by adding songs or dropping some characters for instance. Whatever composition the *mukhayil* settles on, there will still be room for improvisation once he meets the audience. Furthermore within each *fasl* we have fixed elements and elements which are variant. The two main characters *Qaragoz* and 'Aiwaz are always present; however, the story of the *fasl* determines which other characters are participating in order to be brought in. 'Aiwaz himself always plays a learned character, whereas *Qaragoz* is always trying to disguise himself in other characters in order to cover up for his crudeness. In a rare *fasl* both 'Aiwaz and *Qaragoz* turn into animals, a goat and a donkey respectively.(169) Thus, the shadow show composition constitutes constant fixed elements which frame changing elements, and the composition can be repeated indefinitely. At least during Ramadan we know for sure that this composition is repeated at least twenty eight times, year after year.

The notion of arabesque is present also in the physical and technical levels of the performance where a screen and figures are employed. The screen and the source of light are fixed elements while the variants come in the shape of leather figures. Demarcating the surface of the screen by having the shadow images penetrate and move on the screen brings to mind the similar effect arabesque design has on surfaces.

4.3.2.2.2



The very simple turtur consists of a few lines on a ball-shaped head piece, very similar to the simple form of the toy horse figure and the mullah doll. However, the one who plays the role of the turtur in Qaragoz is the red turtur (a long conical cap) on his head. The turtur's simple voice complements this most abbreviated signifier. The simple sign of the Middle East has been associated with clowns and fools. Many children's stories show such characters wearing conical caps. The turtur's simple voice complements this most abbreviated signifier.

The turtur's simple voice was a voice destined for execution was granted through the turtur on a camel wearing the conical cap and a white veil with a yellow garter around his neck like a

Fig 47. Reconstruction of Qaragoz tent.

The notion of *arabesque* is present also in the physical and technical levels of the performance where a screen and figures are employed. The screen and the source of light are fixed elements while the variants come in the shape of leather figures. Dematerialising the surface of the screen by having the shadow images penetrate and move on the screen brings to mind the similar effect *arabesque* design has on surfaces.

4.6.3 Aragoz

Aragoz is the Egyptian vernacular of the Turkish *Karagöz* and the Syrian-Lebanese *Qaragoz*. *Aragoz*, however, does not belong to the shadow play tradition as the name implies. *Aragoz* is the name used in Egypt to refer to the glove puppet theatre which has the character *Aragoz* as its hero. So in Egypt for an unknown reason *Aragoz* means glove puppets while shadow play is always known as *khayal al-zill*. The characters *karagöz* and *Hacivat* from the Turkish shadow theatre did not find their way to the Egyptian shadow puppet scene as they did to the Syrian and Lebanese. However, *Qaragoz* and *Aragoz* have some features in common as we shall see.

4.6.3.1 Features of the Aragoz Show

The *Aragoz* glove puppet show had already made an impact in seventeenth century Egypt.(170) *Aragoz* the character is a witty clown and a survivor. Nonetheless, the puppet *Aragoz* has no human physical characteristics depicted like *Qaragoz*, who has a large almond shaped eye and a big rounded beard carved in leather. *Aragoz's* head is not carved or modelled. Here the features are very simply suggested with just a few lines on a ball-shaped head piece, very much in the minimal style of the *mu'anisa* figure and the *mulid* doll. However, the one and only visual motif particular to *Aragoz* is the red *turtur* (a long conical cap) on his head. The squeaking metallic voice complements this most abbreviated sign object. The conical cap in the Middle East has been associated with clowns and fools. Many Ottoman miniatures show such characters wearing conical caps. But it must be a much older association since:

in eleventh century Iraq a vizier destined for execution was paraded through the streets on a camel wearing the conical cap of a clown and with a leather garland around his neck 'like a buffoon'. (171)

Of course we should not forget to point to the hands with which to hold the stick, for otherwise what is *Aragoz* but a sparkling blockhead and a long hand, since the rest of *Aragoz* is an unexaggerated piece of cloth. [fig 48]

From very early on in its history, *Aragoz* disliked the Ottoman soldier, every foreign soldier and eventually policemen, thus giving a good excuse for the extended use of slapstick. The improvisatory nature of *Aragoz* as a popular comedy form is the reason for not having any written script or even reputable scenarios. The performance is built around mimicry and play on words. Songs, not music, play a distinct role. The subjects *Aragoz* performances touch on are in direct relation to everyday social life and that is what makes this performance so close to the roots of Egyptian living.

The *Aragoz* performance is operated by one puppeteer who manipulates the puppets, and speaks in the voice of each of his characters. The stock characters of the *Aragoz* repertoire include mainly a wife, a figure of authority - soldier, policeman, shaykh or a doctor - and a number of tricksters who try to play clever with *Aragoz*, but when dialogue does not get him anywhere his big stick does.

The *Aragoz* puppeteer usually carries his booth and puppets to wherever he thinks there is a potential audience. *Mulid* fairgrounds, *suq*, weddings and circumcision festivities, all are occasions for *Aragoz* to speak his mind about social and domestic matters, and to poke fun at all sorts of institutions. *Aragoz* shows are mainly aimed at a family audience, therefore a mixed audience, unlike *khayal al-zill* whose audience is mainly the coffee house male clients. The *Aragoz* did not rely on the coffee house audience for its performances. The mobility factor and the facility to perform any time of day gave the *Aragoz* shows flexibility which *khayal al-zill* could not have.

Egyptians like to think of *Aragoz* as *fakihat al-mulid* (the fruit of the *mulid*). (172) *Aragoz* shows could not miss the chance of performing around the clock during *mulids*. In the *mulid* fairground where families and individuals flock from all over Egypt to dance, sing, pray, eat and play games over a period of a week, no one would want to miss the latest jokes, songs and critical social comments of *Aragoz*, the clever clown who knows everything, criticizes everybody, and solves all problems with his stick. [fig 49]



Fig 48. *Aragoz and his wife on display at the Geographical Society, Cairo.*



Fig 49. The *Mulid Aragoz*.

We have no idea when *Aragoz*, the character, started speaking in a squeaked voice, but this is certainly a feature especially associated with *Aragoz*. However, it is reasonable to speculate that the bitter-sweet criticism *Aragoz* is likely to have articulated against the Turkish soldiers and the Ottoman domination in general on the streets of Cairo, made it necessary for the puppeteer to deform his voice and play on words even further. The squeaked voice, moreover, gives a license to the puppeteer to say things about any subject he would not dare say otherwise. Comments on the performance of institutions and individuals in authority are often made using offensive language which might be excused only because it is not projected in a clear human voice. At the same time, this technique increases the distance between the *Aragoz* puppet and the *Aragoz* puppeteer. The term *Aragoz* is always used to designate the glove puppet show, the title role and the puppeteer.

4.6.3.2 Circulation of *Aragoz*

Around the turn of this century many *khayal al-zill* puppeteers in Egypt moved on to perform *Aragoz*. *Khayal-al-zill* was not doing well at a time when *Aragoz* shows were much easier and more flexible to perform. In addition, the *Aragoz* show costs much less to mount. The basic repertoire of glove puppets is very simple to make with found objects, and most importantly it does not require the complicated skills needed for preparing, carving, colouring and manipulating the leather puppets of *khayal al-zill*. (173)

Al-Ra'î draws our attention to similarities between the themes of the Syrian *Qaragoz fusul* and some of the skits of the Egyptian *Aragoz*. The similarity is apparent in the inventory of stock characters and scenes, in particular those specialised in mimicking famous singers and dancers. The Syrian stock characters and scenes were introduced to the Egyptian theatre domain by the Syrian actors who came to work in Egypt during the first decades of this century. George Dakhul is one of those actors who transposed features of the Syrian *Qaragoz fusul* onto the live stage in Cairo, and consequently some features of this live theatre reached *Aragoz*. (174) This interaction between live and puppet actors is not of a one way direction, as we shall see later.

The *Aragoz* hand puppet is not paired with a friend like 'Aiwaz, for *Aragoz* is in fact a blend of both characters. *Aragoz* is as clever as 'Aiwaz but wittier than

Qaragoz; added to that is the dimension of sarcasm which the Syrian characters do not have but the Egyptian *Aragoz* thrives on.

The school *Aragoz* as opposed to the fairground *Aragoz* is a recent occurrence in the history of *Aragoz*. It was early this century that a puppeteer by the name of 'Ali Shukri was able to convince the Ministry of Culture in Egypt to originate an *Aragoz* section in the Department of Theatre Activities. 'Ali Shukri fixed a title and a costume for his newly - founded job: he became the *Aragoz* Officer in a green and white *tarbush* (cylinder shaped hat). (175) 'Ali Shukri contacted schools all over Egypt and scheduled his one man show without any help. He also composed his scenes which were of educational orientation. Although he was known as the *Aragoz* Officer, *Aragoz* was not one of his characters. Instead, he created a similar character which he called *Kharaj al-Najaf*. This character represents the average Egyptian man who speaks his mind concerning everyday problems. The burning issues of the times were concerned with politics, namely imperialism, pan-Arabism, sectarianism, etc., which formed the themes of his hand puppet shows. School children, teachers and those working in the administration were all very pleased with the ideas he communicated, but he worked on his own, performing in schools all over Egypt.

Whereas Shukri was taking his puppet shows around to schools, stage actors in Cairo took notice of the character *Aragoz*. This resulted in a metamorphosis of the puppet character to a live stage character. The two actors who initiated this fashion are 'Ali al-Kassar and Mahmud Shukuku. Both al-Kassar and Shukuku took on the licence *Aragoz* has in criticising individuals, social habits and institutions. In addition, both actors relied on telling jokes, improvising prolonged monologues and on making fun of the audience, all in the genuine style of the puppet *Aragoz*. Al-Kassar's stage character, the kind-hearted simple man who always speaks the truth, wears a black mask. Shukuku started by wearing the comic red *turtur* of *Aragoz*, and later developed his act to include a puppet *Aragoz* along with himself, the human *Aragoz*. Shukuku's *Aragoz* characters were very popular and well received because they were deeply associated with the popular folk traditions of Egypt. (176) Features of the *Aragoz* puppet character continue to influence comedians on the Egyptian live stage today.(177)

4.6.3.3 Puppets at the theatre house

With *Aragoz* now centre stage, the Egyptian government could not avoid noticing the importance of puppetry as a communication tool. The socialist government

grasped the educational benefits of this art. In 1958, two visiting Romanian and Czechoslovakian puppet companies confirmed this view and consequently two Romanian puppeteers were invited to stay and start organising workshops for Egyptian puppeteers and students. (178) The National Puppet Theatre of Cairo opened on the stage of the College of Arabic Music in 1959 with its first marionette production *The Clever Hasan* which was aimed at a family audience. Over the past ~~... years~~ years the National Puppet Theatre of Cairo has been a very active centre for puppet theatre productions. There are three companies of puppeteers who take the productions, which open in Cairo, to tour around Egypt and beyond to the Arab World. (179) The puppeteers have been experimenting with different types of masks along with string, hand, rod, shadow puppetry and also with black light techniques. Their repertoire includes plays composed by Egyptian playwrights/poets and translations of classical plays. Some of the puppeteers who trained at the National Puppet Theatre moved to work for the Egyptian television on programmes aimed especially at children.

Probably the most popular production in the repertoire of the National Puppet Theatre of Cairo is the string puppet production called operetta *al-Layla al-Kabira* (the great night). *Al-Layla al-Kabira* is about the last night of celebrations of the *mulid* festivities. But it is the habit in Egypt, since the days of the Pharaohs, to start the celebrations up to ten days before, and build up to the actual birth anniversary date. The operetta of *al-Layla al-Kabira* reproduces the atmosphere and some characteristic events in the *mulid* fairground on the great night.

The structure of the show is very simple, and of course, very episodic. It takes us from one corner of the fairground to another, passing by vendors, an animal trainer, game counters, a coffee house, a circumcision procession, a mother looking for her lost child, a singer, belly dancers, *Aragoz*, a photographer etc. In short, its structure can be described as a series of snapshots with no climax or distinct beginning or ending. It is very much in the style of '*Ajib wa-Gharib*, the *baba* of Ibn Daniyal, where we have a parade of characters presenting their trades using song, dance and mime. In both '*Ajib wa-Gharib* and *al-Layla al-Kabira* we do not miss a storyline which takes us systematically through an introduction, problem and resolution. We know that we would like to go through each and every episode in order to appreciate the whole. It is the cumulative effect of all the episodes that gives the full sense of the show, although each unit is also meaningful on its own. It is worth noting that the medieval poet/playwright Ibn Daniyal followed, or probably set, the conventions of the day in framing the

open-ended episodic structure. He opens with a prologue, and closes with an epilogue which strikes a moralistic tune. In the same style, the twentieth century poet/playwright Salah Jahin and the music composer Sayyid Mikkawi, choose to open with lively music, carry on from one song to the next and close with a disturbing chant asking how many children got themselves lost during the *mulid* festivities? Accordingly ending with a note on a grave moral issue implying that entertainment should not be allowed to distract from responsibilities. For like the *baba*, the operetta's power of artistic images, whether verbal or visual, is in some sense moral.

The seven hundred year's distance between the *baba* and the operetta does not reveal a proportional difference in elements or methods of composition and presentation. On the contrary it reveals that the characteristic vocabulary of Middle Eastern traditional artistic expression is still competent in communicating ideas of modern times. The operetta and the *baba* have both made use of traditional features such as: loose string of episodes, repetition of the structure of a single episode with a different content, strong sense of location and occasions, realistic setting, contemporary social issues, stock characters, characters who do not interact with one another but directly address the audience, and the inclination towards enjoying music, poetry, song, *zajal*, dialogue, dance and mime as an integral part of the work. These are the main elements and methods used in projecting the characters and the narratives of the *baba* and the operetta. The elements, the structure and the style of presentation are all independently and collectively abstract. Had it not been for the term operetta we could have, alas, forgotten that we have behind us two hundred years of acclimatisation to Western theatre traditions.

Let us pause to ask: had Salah Jahin named his composition the *baba* of *al-Layla al-Kabira* would it still have been received with great acclaim not only in Egypt but in the Arab world at large? Would it still have been playing in the repertoire of the National Puppet theatre of Cairo thirty three years after its opening? Or would audiences still acquire it on tape and video for their private enjoyment? Of course it is not for us to answer these questions; probably in a few hundred years somebody will evaluate how far a culture which for the past five thousand years expressed itself in abstract terms is willing or indeed capable of basic change. I would argue that it will not go far beyond dropping the archaic Arabic term *baba* for a European term operetta.

4.6.3.4 A last glimpse of the street *Aragoz*

Let us go back to *Aragoz*, the sharp-tongued, truthful clown who today is presented on the streets of Cairo by a rare species of puppeteer, the sort who still believes in and lives from the happiness and the pennies received from the children on the streets, the sort who walks miles around the city carrying their booth and puppets to meet some young friends who are delighted to watch the same scenes again and again. The performances take place on the street, in a fairground, in a public garden, or inside a house where a birthday celebration is going on. Grown-ups show very little interest in these puppeteers and their shows. This species of puppeteer will disappear before long unless another Ibn Daniyal or his *tayf* (spirit) 'exits' onto the scene.

Muhammad Karim is one of the puppeteers who roam the streets of Cairo regularly looking for a young audience. [fig 50] He also performs occasionally during weddings and birthday parties. In December 1992, I accompanied Karim to a coffee house in the area of Al-Darb al-Ahmar, in the old quarters of Cairo. It was very late in the evening and we did not expect any children to join us. But the performance was in the open, and before we knew it children in their pyjamas joined the audience of the nearby coffee house. Karim carries his puppets in a folding frame which is turned into a booth.

As soon as Karim entered his booth, *Aragoz* started making all sorts of noises. Apparently this is his manner of calling the children. *Aragoz* then started singing parts of well known contemporary Egyptian songs. This is the opening scene which also just gives the children time to run to the scene. After the song sequence, we have a sequence of three skits which are separated by songs too. The last skit ends also with a sequence of songs as *Aragoz* and a character compete in selecting the songs which start with the last word of the previous song. Hence, Karim's *Aragoz* show is framed by songs, and the skits in the middle are prompted by songs too.

The skits have a very simple storyline and have a maximum of three characters each. The first scene is a classic in which a respectable old man complains about the noise *Aragoz* is making as it could also disturb the policeman who lives

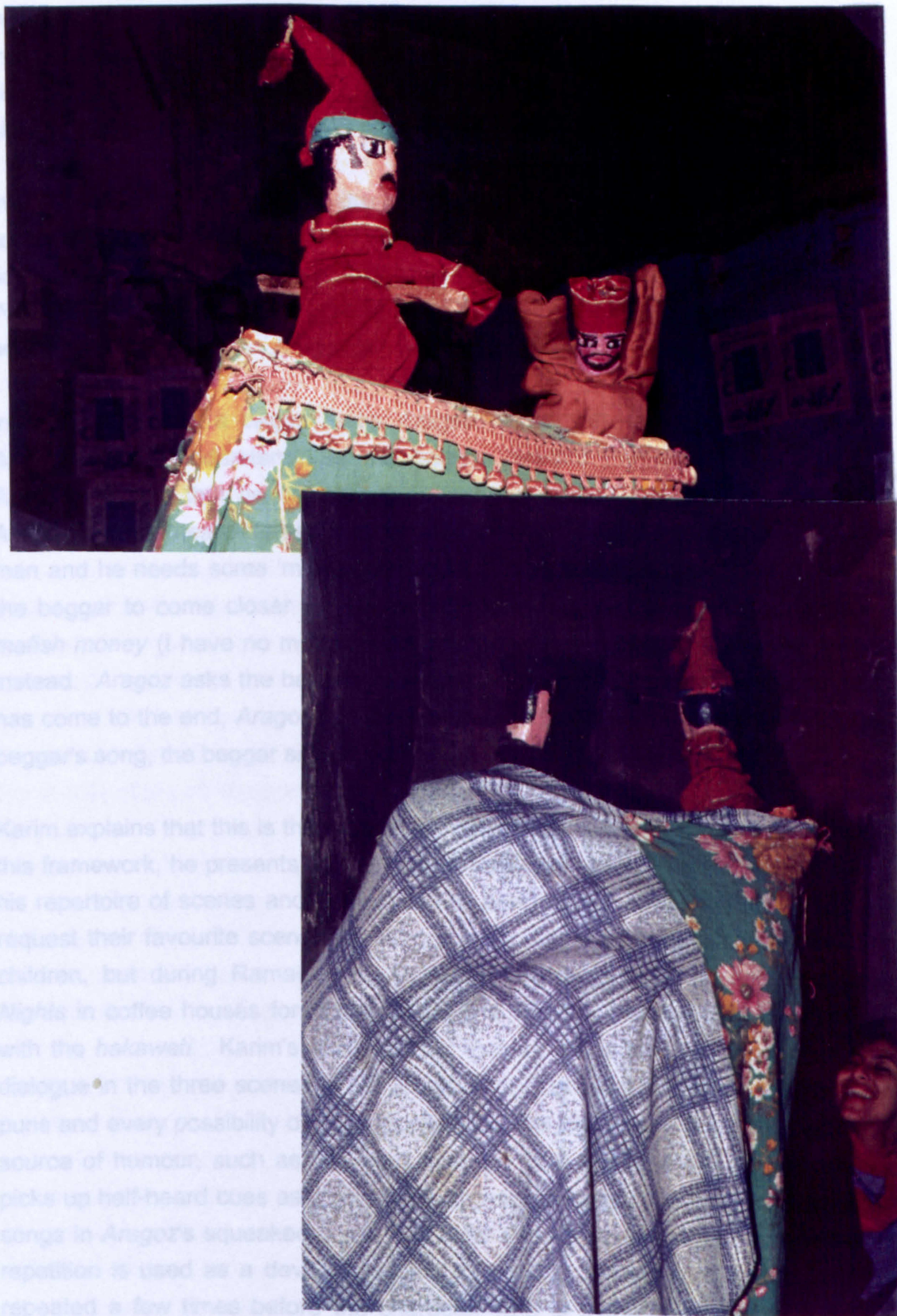


Fig 50. Aragoz performance on the street in Cairo.

in the neighbourhood. *Aragoz* is offended and will not leave. The old man threatens to give him a beating if he does not move. But *Aragoz* is only too pleased to be given an excuse to beat the old man and get rid of him. So he gives him a beating, is happy with himself and sings a song again.

In the second scene *Aragoz* is already beating a boy and makes up all sorts of lies to continue slapping him. A policeman arrives and separates them, then he advises *Aragoz* not to get in trouble again with such bad boys for his own good. When the policeman leaves, *Aragoz* is amused, he laughs and thanks the policeman for his advice. *Aragoz* is so happy he sings.

In the final scene, a beggar asks *Aragoz*, in English, if he speaks English. *Aragoz* doesn't understand, so the beggar repeats the question in Arabic. *Aragoz* answers that he can speak French as well. Then the beggar asks *Aragoz* to come nearer to him and he whispers in his ear that he is an old poor man and he needs some 'money' in English. *Aragoz* jumps back, then he asks the beggar to come closer to him, and he whispers in the ear of the beggar: *mafish money* (I have no money). At this stage they agree to exchange songs instead. *Aragoz* asks the beggar for a specific song and as soon as the beggar has come to the end, *Aragoz* picks a song which starts with the last word of the beggar's song, the beggar sings back, and it goes on for a few rounds.

Karim explains that this is the general framework of his performance. And within this framework, he presents a variety of scenes and songs. Karim chooses from his repertoire of scenes and songs what to perform, but sometimes the children request their favourite scenes and songs. His audience is composed mainly of children, but during Ramadan he performs scenes from *Thousand and One Nights* in coffee houses for adults. This is a very old tradition which is shared with the *hakawati*. Karim's show did not include any offensive language. The dialogue in the three scenes is full of verbal nonsensical cross-talk, it also uses puns and every possibility of play upon words. Foreign words are also used as a source of humour, such as the word money in the last scene. *Aragoz* always picks up half-heard cues as it gives him an excuse to be nasty. Singing popular songs in *Aragoz's* squeaked voice is in itself a great source of humour. Finally, repetition is used as a device to clarify the words of *Aragoz*: a word could be repeated a few times before the character who is trying to understand gets it right.(180)

4.7 Popular Performance and Oral Tradition: A Source of inspiration

As we saw in this and the previous chapters, oral traditions have long been fulfilling certain functions within the social structure of the Middle East. Since *Jahiliyya*, they have effectively assumed the role of media as we know it today. Although in recent decades radio and television have taken over the function of informing and educating the people on general matters, the role of the mosque as a centre for communication on religious and sometimes political issues is still prevalent in this part of the world. The Friday sermon is broadcast on radio and television, and in Egypt sermons are even made available on audio tapes. Most mosques organise lectures and *dhikr* sessions all around the year and particularly during the month of Ramadan. However, the oral tradition aspect in secular entertainment has been disappearing slowly but surely from the marketplace, and the coffee house as well as from social ceremonies such as weddings. To date on the very few instances when they are performed they are themselves rituals of affirmation of a dying tradition. The *mulid* fairground popular performances in Cairo are a living example where *khayal al-zill* has no presence; *Aragoz* shows are of a very marginal standard, but songs of praise, folk songs and music are quite lively and flourishing. In Damascus and Beirut, *khayal al-zill* has disappeared too from the coffee houses; however, the traditional *hakawati* is still struggling to survive in an odd coffee house or two in the middle of the old market areas.

Indigenous performance traditions did not wither suddenly as a result of the French campaign to Egypt, or even after the frank adoption of Marun al-Naqqash to European dramatic forms. Al-Naqqash stated clearly in 1847 that his aim is to present dramatic literature and foreign gold in an Arabic mould. He further specified that it is the European operatic genre he has chosen to reproduce.(181)

Al-Naqqash, a merchant from Saidon who settled in Beirut, travelled to Italy on a business trip and returned home fascinated with European drama, probably he had never heard of Ibn Daniyal. But al-Naqqash, like Ibn Daniyal, is a poet who understood the logic of *al-adab al-'ali*: his first play *Al-Bakhil* (The Miser) is composed in a mixture of *zajal* and *muwashshahat*, and, in both classical and colloquial Arabic. Moreover, al-Naqqash assigns oriental musical tunes for each part as it was all meant to be sung. Furthermore, al-Naqqash continued to introduce his plays himself. In 1851, when he presented his third play *Al-Hasud al-Salit* (The Envious and Imposing One) on the first official stage, he sang

verses requesting god to save the glorious Ottoman Sultan 'Abd al Majid, for under his patronage science flourished and a theatre house was established by al-Naqqash in Beirut. (182)

'Isam Mahfuz argues that al-Naqqash's three plays set the direction of Arabic drama for the hundred years to follow. *The Miser* is an operetta, *Abu Hasan the Fool* is based on a tale from *Thousand and One Nights*, and *The Envious and Imposing One* is a realistic comedy in prose. These three productions, along with translated tragedies, constitute the general scope within which Arab dramatists ventured after al-Naqqash. (183)

Since the fifties of this century the trend of translating and transplanting contemporary European dramatic literature has been the main stream. However, recently the tradition of *hakawati* has intrigued some stage directors and performers. The Lebanese Company al-Hakawati has been experimenting with traditional oral performance techniques over the past decade under the direction of Roger 'Assaf. 'Assaf is one of the leading theatre directors who in the sixties and well into the seventies presented plays in the European theatre tradition as he was initially trained in France. With the beginning of the Lebanese civil war, 'Assaf felt the need to dig for roots. Working as one team, the director and actors compiled real stories from old and young villagers in South Lebanon, and reconstructed with these *hikayat* events which took place along the Lebanese Israeli borders. *Al-Jarass* (The Bell), is the latest production of the company; It is a one man show based on the *hakawati* who is also *Abu 'Isa*, a shepherd from South Lebanon. Rafiq 'Ali Ahmad, the actor/*hakawati*/shepherd recounts stories of a number of characters whom he impersonates over two hours. He walks into one character after the other, men, women, young and old, in full view of the audience using some stage props and wooden frames. 'Ali Ahmad comments to the audience on the stories of *Abu 'Isa* and the characters he impersonates; he also jokes with the audience and invites them to remark on the episodes with which he tries to recreate the atmosphere and tensions prevailing in South Lebanon over the past four decades. Whereas the traditional *hakawati* of the coffee house reads or recounts from memory epics about super heroes who lived long ago, today *Abu 'Isa* narrates stories of ordinary men and women who are significant within their small circle. (184)

In Cairo too some directors are experimenting with story telling traditions. The al-Warsha theatre company which incorporated recently *khayal al-zill* in its latest

production, *Dayer Ma Yadur*, are now rehearsing story telling for sessions entitled *Hikayat from Dihaqliya*. The actors selected stories from the *Dihaqliya* region in Egypt and intend to recount them to audiences in small halls. (185)

Today, after almost a hundred and fifty years, since al-Naqqash started experimenting with European dramatic arts, most of the experiments seem to be ornamented with motifs from indigenous popular theatre and oral traditions. But the Middle Eastern theatre today is in general an elitist form of expression. It appeals to the few who are educated to appreciate the European forms of dramatic arts.

In retrospect, introducing some plots, characters and conventions from popular performance and oral traditions into a European dramatic framework, only extends the boundaries established by the elitist European theatre productions in Arabic. However, no contemporary Middle Eastern theatre tradition has been confirmed as a result of these experiments.

In the past decade a few researchers focused their studies on the traditional theatrical scene in the Middle East. The outcome has been most enlightening. At last we read "The problem is not why drama was absent, but why it was present without developing into a high art", and "there is no doubt that the medieval Arab world was far richer in theatrical culture than has so far been assumed". (186) Khalid al-Mubarak is absolutely right in saying:

what is sad and tragic about the achievement of the nineteenth century transplanters is that they voluntarily abandoned one thousand years of dramatic heritage on which they could have based their work. They started from scratch, and as a consequence spent a whole century wrestling with a new form, eschewing the treasure in their own backyard". (187)

4.8 A Brief Survey of Puppetry in Lebanon

In all likelihood, the last shadow play performance took place in Tripoli in 1969. Apparently Hajj Mahmud had stopped playing long before then, but this was a special single performance in a cultural festival.(188) The last shows in Beirut and Saidon were probably in the mid fifties. It is still possible to find old people who as regular members of the coffee house audience enjoyed shadow play. However, there are more people who remember the *hakawati* as the tradition

lingered on for a little longer. More importantly, none of the puppeteers working today in Lebanon have seen a traditional shadow show and very few know anything about it.

4.8.1 The Period Before 1975

The oldest living known puppeteer Joseph Fakhoury is now in his seventies and still active. Fakhoury's background is in music and song writing; he started his career composing songs for children. With the help of his family he started working on glove puppet shows. In 1960 the Lebanese television invited him to present his songs for children, so he presented his songs through puppets. Fakhoury's puppets were manufactured in Czechoslovakia: he sent details of the characters and received the puppets ready made in wood and latex. His wife and children helped with costumes, scenery and manipulation. Between 1960 and 1975 the Fakhoury troupe performed regularly on television, in schools and in cultural clubs in Beirut. All their puppet productions focus on family issues, as they were composed with a child audience in mind.

Fakhoury remembers very well that his source of inspiration was a Czechoslovakian puppet company which performed in Beirut in 1958 - the same one which toured in Cairo and Damascus in the same year. He was also inspired by an Egyptian company which visited Beirut in 1961, the Cairo Puppet Theatre company with their production of *al-Layla al Kabira*. Although both companies work with string puppets, that was not Fakhoury's interest, as he preferred glove puppets for all his shows. Fakhoury remembers that all through his career before 1975 he was the only puppeteer in Beirut, and he often organized workshops for training teachers in schools. He also completed a manual on how to produce puppet shows, based on his own experience in writing plays, composing music and directing puppets.(189)

4.8.2 The Period of the Civil War (1975 - 1990)

With the beginning of the Civil War children started spending less time at schools and more time at home and specifically in shelters. The need to entertain, educate and communicate with the frightened children in some awkward places - shelters or in the open between rounds of fighting - resulted in the formation of some groups of

hardworking amateurs. Two of the troupes started as early as 1976-77, and three were formed later. The first two groups had no experience in the field of puppetry or theatre and had to spend lots of time learning on their own.

Ghazi Mikdashi, a music composer and an architect, had been working with The Popular Chorus company before 1975. When in 1976 Mikdashi decided to direct his attention towards children and venture with puppets most of the members in the chorus joined him and together they formed Al-Sanabil troupe. The members of this group are mostly school teachers. This company has been putting on shows for children in shelters, parks, schools and theatre houses since 1977. However, not all their work is presented with puppets, as they have produced some live theatre shows, some of which were later transferred to puppets. The puppets they use are very primitive indeed, and they only work with glove puppets. The issues they tackle are mainly sociopolitical, and without fail all the shows are built around songs. The words and music are the most significant elements in the shows.

Mikdashi is quite conscious of the fact that the city of Beirut has been losing its characteristic features and traditions. He tries to revive some the city's persona and activities by recreating them on stage. The most significant work of this company is *The Pomegranate Fruit* which was produced after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. A pomegranate tree is the focus of this piece, and it is a symbol of Beirut. This tree is in one of the old popular quarters of the city which has to be demolished in order to construct a boulevard in its place. The children of this quarter sing their stories within stories around the tree. Their narratives depict historical characters from the past, and traditional celebrations from the past. Reviving visual and verbal images of old Beirut, as the pomegranate tree faces the bulldozer and the inhabitants face the unknown, is the theme of this show.(190) Traditional songs, music, vendors' chants, children's games, all are used to reconstruct an image of the city based on the sounds heard and activities seen in this quarter. As one would expect, the structure of the narrative is very episodic. We are introduced to characters and activities of every day life through songs and by travelling in time to witness events and celebrations which interweave the present with the past. By the time we get to the end where the bulldozer pulls down the tree, it is just another episode. True to the traditional Middle Eastern artistic mode of expression, which we have elaborated on earlier, the cumulative effect of the episodes communicates

the message of the show. The language used is colloquial, with great emphasis on the Beirut dialect. This piece was first produced with live actors and much later with puppets. The audio tape of this play turned out to be a great success due to its quality as a musical. Hence, demonstrating further that together episodic narrative, music and song are still appreciated by Middle Easterners as a mode of expression.

The second troupe which started working in 1977 on puppet shows is al-Ghadir troupe which is part of the Women's Rights Society. Again teachers and trainers in the educational field constituted the core of the troupe. Together they wrote their scenes and manufactured their glove puppets sometimes by simply adding a sleeve to an emptied doll. This troupe also sought the children in shelters with the help of volunteers from the civil defence. They also visited schools and clubs in remote villages. The bulk of their repertoire uses animal stories projected through music and songs. In 1990 they produced a show with live actors and performed to large audiences in theatres. Now they are doubtful whether performing again with puppets might be a step in the wrong direction! [fig 51]

At the Arab Cultural Club the need to communicate with children was sensed strongly. But at the club the children became involved in all aspects of the production. Maha Nehme, Najla Jaysati, and Salim Sahhab together with the children composed the narratives, songs and music, and manufactured the scenery and puppets during workshops. Nehme and Jaysati are both teachers specialized in creative work while Sahhab is a music conductor. This puppet project came as a result of an exhibition organized by the club in 1978 concerned with popular toys and games. The aim was to bring attention to the various possibilities of making toys and games cheaply. The children who took part in the club's workshops and shows know that they are very fortunate to have been through such an enriching experience.(191) The shows used a mixture of glove and rod puppets along with live masked actors.

Meanwhile, Najla Jaysati formed her own troupe Sanduq al-Furja (peep show). With the members of the troupe she designed puppet shows using tales from the Arabic cultural heritage. The work of the troupe covered a wider range than already known to the Lebanese audience, as they experimented with glove, rod and shadow puppets. Jaysati is still actively teaching and training students at colleges and

training centres, but she has not produced any shows in the past three years. She is aware that most of the puppeteers and troupes who were active during the fighting have now slowed down over the last three relatively peaceful years, this is especially true of the Western part of Beirut which is still struggling to recover from the civil war. (1992) [fig 52]

4.5.3 Puppetry in Peace Time



Puppets were exhibited in the workshop of the Company by a Lebanese puppeteer, and the stage director is the Lebanese mime artist Fayiq Hmayzi. The Company caters for school children and therefore it can secure audiences over a period of around three months for each production. [fig 53]

The experience of the Lebanese Puppet Company in the 1990 is quite similar to that of the Cairo Puppet Theatre in 1990 and to that of the Damascus Puppet Theatre. Training performers professionally should bring forth positive results at least in creating a group of puppeteers with a common working background and a common technical vocabulary. The members of the company are young and possess great

Fig 51. Al-Ghadir Troupe, glove puppet show on the street in Beirut, 1986.

training centres, but she has not produced any shows in the past three years. She is aware that most of the puppeteers and troupes who were active during the fighting have now slowed down over the last three relatively peaceful years, this is especially true of the Western part of Beirut which is still struggling to recover from the civil war.(192) [fig 52]

4.8.3 Puppetry in Peace Time

Since 1990, new troupes have been formed. The most significant is the Lebanese Puppet Company which is based at the Russian Cultural Centre and is to a certain extent technically sponsored by the Krasendar Puppet Theatre. So far twelve members of the Lebanese Company have received training at the Krasendar Puppet Theatre. Russian puppet artists, designers and directors have been visiting Lebanon to work with the company on the puppet productions. The members of the company are mainly university students who were auditioned in early 1990 then sent to be trained at the Krasendar Puppet Theatre. This group of students returned home before the end of the same year with the production of *Cinderella*. In 1991 the company rehearsed and presented *Uncle Pinocchio*. However, the puppets and the masks were designed and manufactured at the Krasendar Puppet Theatre. The show was co-directed by Vladimir Eskolokov and Butros Rouhana, and was presented at The Puppet Festival in Tunisia, February 1992. During Summer 1992, the company started rehearsing their third production *The Shoes of Tanburi*, which is based on a scenario by Faruq Sa'd. The designs of the puppets and masks are a result of the collaboration of a Lebanese and Soviet designers. However, the puppets were executed in the workshop of the company by a Lebanese puppeteer, and the stage director is the Lebanese mime artist Fayiq Hmaysi. The Company caters for school children and therefore it can secure audiences over a period of around three months for each production. [fig 53]

The experience of the Lebanese Puppet Company in the 1990 is quite similar to that of the Cairo Puppet Theatre in 1960 and to that of the Damascus Puppet Theatre. Training performers professionally should bring forth positive results at least in creating a group of puppeteers with a common working background and a common technical vocabulary. The members of the company are young and possess great



Fig 51. The Lebanese Puppet Theatre Company rehearsing *The Shoes of Tanbari*.

Fig 52. Sanduq al-Furja Troupe in rehearsal, 1983.



Fig 53. The Lebanese Puppet Theatre Company rehearsing *The Shoes of Tanburi*, Autumn 1992.

potential. With more experience and training they will one day be able to produce their shows independently. Moreover, this is the first commercial puppet company in the Lebanon. For the first time we have full-time puppeteers who do not have to rush to their jobs and who do not have to use their living rooms to rehearse and make the puppets. The company is housed at the well equipped theatre of the Russian Centre and has access to a rehearsal space and a proper workshop. In comparison to the companies which started during the civil war this one is working under luxurious conditions.

The work of the above six puppet troupes forms the core of achievements in the field of puppetry in the Lebanon. It is obvious that puppetry in Lebanon is still at an early stage of development. All the troupes seem to have focused their attention on communicating mainly with children. The five troupes which emerged during the war will always be remembered for having taken the initiative and the risk to reach their audiences during difficult times and in the most unusual places. Moreover, they did not receive any support or encouragement from the government or any public institution. On the contrary many times they provided training services for educational institutions as most of the members of these troupes are teachers or trainers themselves. The troupes also exchanged expertise whenever possible; some members performed with more than one troupe in various capacities. It is obvious that whilst the visual and technical aspects of most of the productions were not strong, the text and music were in general quite good. Eventually a balance was reached between the oral and the visual content. Most of the productions rely on pre-recorded audio tracks because of the difficulties besetting performances in the open, or in schools, remote villages, shelters, theatres, indeed in a country which had no electrical power.

The technical facilities and support the Lebanese Puppet Company receives from Krasendar puppet theatre and the Russian Cultural Centre is so great that it intimidates the older groups. This might have serious and sad consequences. To my mind the quality of the simple productions of the troupes who survived the civil war without any support is very commendable and in certain cases displays a finer cultural integrity than the technically superior productions of peace time.

4.8.3.1 Puppetry in Schools

Puppetry in schools has also picked up in the past two years. Almost every nursery has glove puppets and a small puppet booth in every class room. Nursery teachers in theory receive some sort of training in making and using puppets. The teachers use the puppets mainly as a visual aid to story telling sessions, and to initiate a dialogue with the children. Most teachers agree that it is much easier to teach discipline to the young through puppets since it addresses the child as a friend and not as a figure of authority.

The Maqasid nursery school has around eight hundred students between the ages of three and six. Each classroom has a little puppet booth. The school also has a spacious hall where every Saturday the teachers perform puppet shows for up to two hundred students at a time. All the teachers are trained in using puppets and some of them have performed with al-Sanabil and al-Ghadir troupes. The teachers write the scenes and the songs and have already built up a reasonable repertoire. Even when a classical story like *Little Red Riding Hood* is adapted, the characters, songs, music and setting become Lebanese. The shows are always loaded with a moral for the aim is clearly educational entertainment.

The Saturday shows are always presented by one of the teachers who is known as Umm Sa'id (the mother of the Sa'id). This is actually her name to teachers and family outside the classroom, for otherwise she is Mrs. Hanan Hariri. On Saturdays, teacher Hariri walks into her role as Umm Sa'id by walking from behind the puppet booth towards the children with a red tarbush on her head. [fig 54] She asks the children, who are seated on the floor, if they remember her and of course they all remember Umm Sa'id. Having established which role she is playing she starts conversing with the children about different matters. Then she announces the title of the show and asks them to tell her what they know about the story and characters. Once she is sure they all know the story line and who is who she retires and the show begins. [fig 55] At the end of the show Umm Sa'id comes out again and reinforces the messages in the show by asking questions. Helped by the other



Fig 54. Umm Sa'id talking to the children before the show.



Fig 55. Teachers/puppeteers in performance.

teachers/puppeteers Umm Sa'id teaches the children the songs of the show. At the end of the session Umm Sa'id takes off her *tarbush*, and the children follow Mrs. Hariri and the other teachers to their class rooms. (194)

The character of *muqaddim* (presenter) from *khayal al-zill* is present here in the school show. The paradox is that Mrs. Hariri impersonates Umm Sa'id by wearing the *tarbush* of the *hakawati*. The *tarbush* is a male headdress which was in fashion during the Ottoman period but has recently disappeared except in the case of the *hakawati*. It is interesting that Mrs. Hariri resorts to a male sign to assert her female character Umm Sa'id playing *muqadim*, a strictly male character.

At Mabarrat al-Imam al-khu'i, a nursery school for orphans, we find puppet booths in each of the classrooms and in the room of the *hikaya* (story telling). All teachers are trained to use glove puppets as a practical audio visual aid during story telling sessions and for communicating discipline in the classroom. (195)

At the International College elementary school, puppets are not used in classrooms. However, teachers try to include puppet shows in the extra curricular activities which take place probably once a year. The students take part in mounting shows, including writing the script and acting out the parts. The teachers expressed great interest to develop their skills in using puppets in and outside the classroom.(196)

A visit to a school in a Palestinian camp brought to light how well puppets can be used in education. Thanks to the support of UNICEF, the school has a small puppet theatre and a workshop to make glove puppets, shadow puppets and boxes for peep shows. All the three types are used for educational and entertainment programmes. The peep show box is redesigned to make it possible for the children to see the show from their seats, and for the teacher to control the speed of the running pictures and the cassette player at the same time. The teacher can go fast or slow backward or forward, to reinforce certain points.[fig 56] Shadow shows are also used in the form of large transparencies and figures. All the programmes are designed by the teachers and executed in the workshop. The workshop also provides puppets to be used by schools in Palestinian camps all over Lebanon.(197)

In an interview with Najla Bashur from the American University of Beirut and a

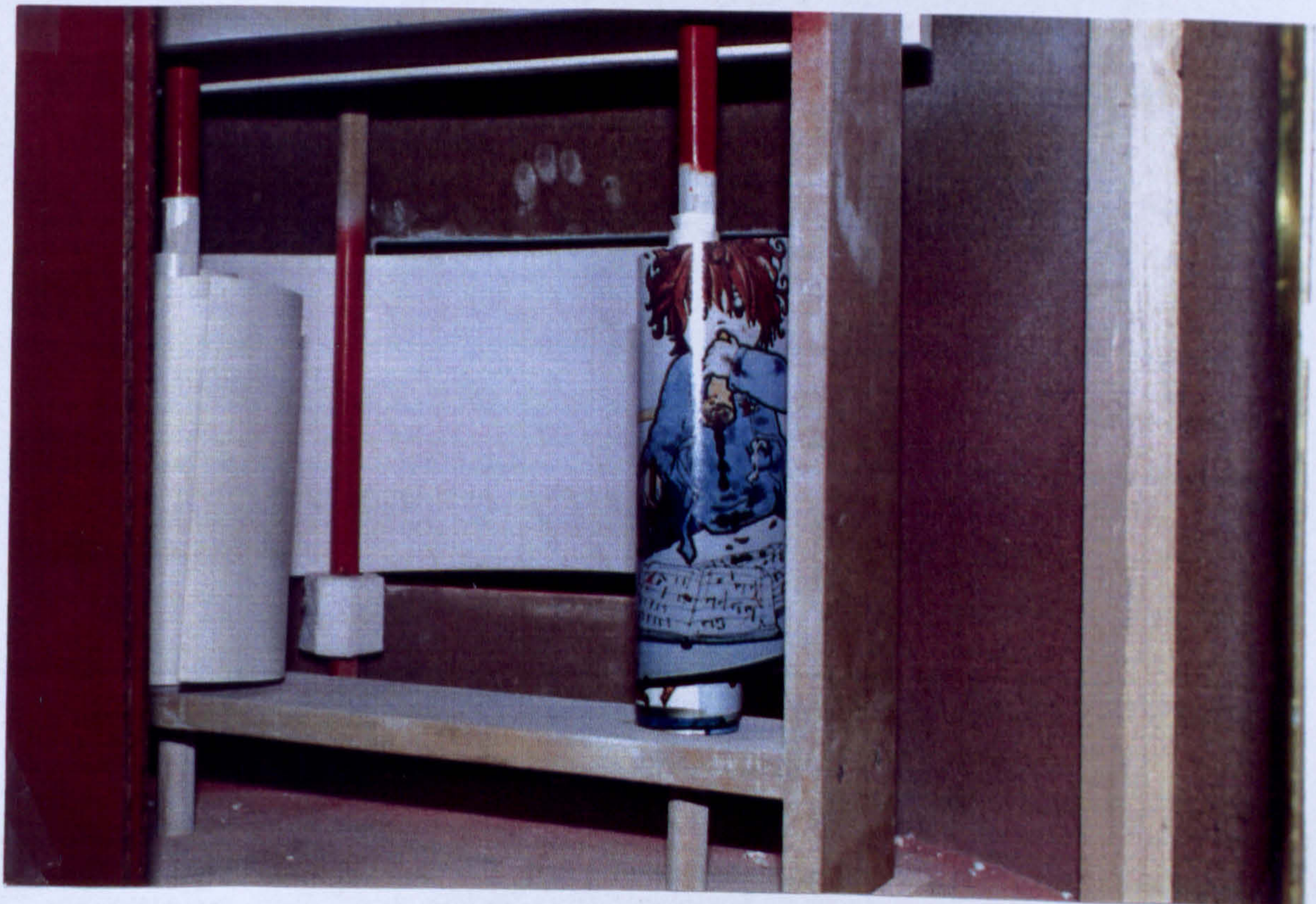
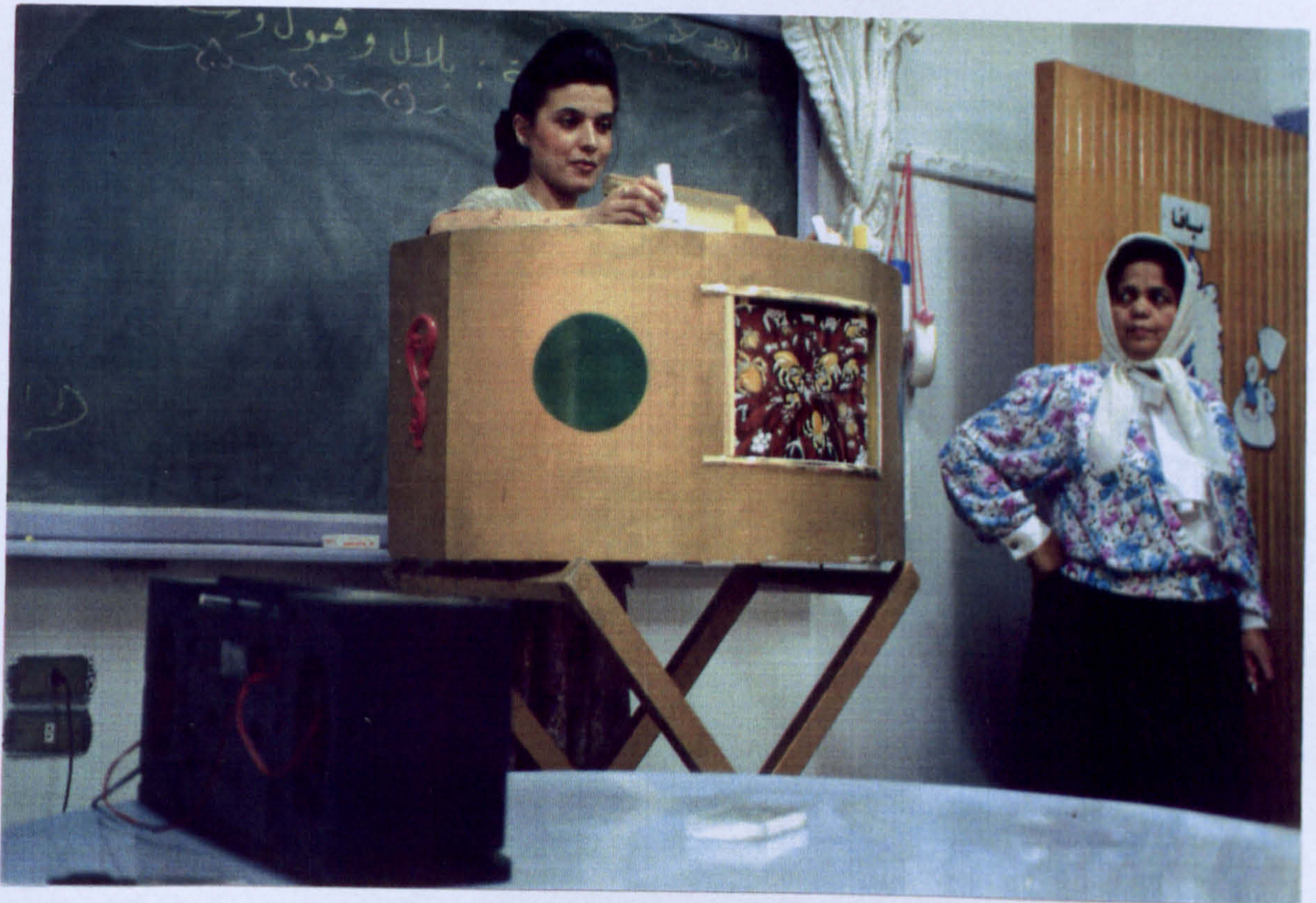


Fig 56. Peep show in a classroom.

publisher in the field of children educational entertainment, we learn that educational institutions in Lebanon have expressed interest in employing puppetry as an educational and therapeutical tool in and outside the classroom. However, in most schools there is a lack of expertise in this specific field. Most nursery teachers have been through short workshops on how to make and use glove puppets but the general orientation of their work remains in the category of extra curricular activities rather than class teaching activities. And the use of puppets has been mostly restricted to nursery schools and specifically to story telling sessions.(198) Nonetheless, there are a few exceptions: Ahmad Qa'bur, a composer and music teacher, uses puppets to explain music scales to his students in elementary classes.(199) Yet such an exercise is totally dependent on individual teacher initiative. In the same vein, Hasan Dahir, a playwright and teacher, designed a package which includes a booth with puppets, scripts and a manual to be used at home or in a classroom. This puppet programme is based on the folk epic *Sirat Sayf Bin Zi-Yazan*.

It is evident from the above brief survey that there exists today in Lebanon individual and group performers, teachers and institutions who are aware of the relevance of the art of puppetry, and recognise the various merits of this performance art form. Most of the people I have interviewed in Beirut expressed interest in using puppetry to entertain both adults and children. However, most of the interviewees emphasised the urgency for training programmes which promote investigation and exchange of skills in the field of puppetry.

Having established in this research the significance of the puppet tradition in the Arabic culture, leads me to believe that re-exploring the potentials of puppets as a communication tool is a worthwhile venture.

4.9 An overview of puppetry in the Middle East today

Lebanon's geographical position on a cross roads of trade has always marked its cultural identity. Like their ancient ancestors, the Phoenicians, the Lebanese people always thrive on communicating and learning from the nearest and farthest neighbours they can reach. It is in this spirit of cultural borrowing and blending that the process of updating the knowledge and the practice of puppetry will be

achieved. For this reason let us examine fleetingly some of the prominent puppet activities in the closest neighbourhood, the Arab world.

The preceding section on puppetry in Lebanon reveals that the modest experimentations in this medium of expression have been distinctly addressed to children's entertainment and education. In what follows it will be apparent that this is actually the orientation modern Arab puppeteers have adopted throughout their own productions and their choice of visiting shows.

Lebanon's nearest neighbour is Syria, a country with which it shares a common cultural heritage. It was mentioned earlier in this chapter that Syria has its National Puppet Company, and that some of its members were originally trained in the East European tradition. This company which is based in Damascus, does not have a reputation for continuity of tradition, considering that only occasionally it produces puppet shows for children at al-Hamra theatre, and at times participates in puppet or children's theatre festivals.

However, there are two special attractions in the Syrian puppetry scene. The first one, is the traditional shadow puppeteer, 'Abd al-Razaq al-Zahabi, who sometimes gives workshops and seminars to drama students at the University of Damascus. Al-Zahabi is probably the only shadow puppeteer working in Syria today. His practice of shadow play is very traditional indeed: he composes his play texts, designs and carves his figures, and performs the shadow shows himself. Al-Zahabi is the living example of an accomplished Middle Eastern playwright/craftsman/puppeteer. His aspiration is to reintroduce shadow play tradition to the young generations of the Syrian community.(200)

The second attraction is the displays of traditional shadow figures in two well known museums in Damascus and Aleppo. Through these exhibitions, the educational, cultural and aesthetic value of the leather icon figures is brought to the attention of the puppeteers and the population at large. I am aware of extremely little published literature regarding the subject of these figures, nonetheless, they are definitely worth researching, and are of equal importance to both Syrian and Lebanese shadow play tradition.

The next neighbouring country, the state of Israel with which Lebanon has no relations of any sort, has some established puppet companies which are of no interest to us at this stage since they do not represent any particular puppet tradition but are a mixture of various traditions carried by the Zionist puppeteers from their original home-lands all over the world. On the other hand, we can benefit from looking into the Palestinian heritage with which we share, amongst many other features, the shadow play tradition. Palestinian puppeteers are working under extremely difficult circumstances especially in regard to text censorship, knowing that all the shows are designed for very young children.

It was brought to my attention that there exist, in the store rooms of the Islamic department of the Israeli museum in Jerusalem, boxes containing Palestinian shadow figures which have not received yet any scholarly attention or maintenance.(201) These shadow figures could be of great significance to any future research in the field of Arab Middle Eastern puppetry since collections of Arabic shadow play figures and scenery pieces are indeed very rare.

In Jordan, there is not much happening in the field of practical puppetry except for Wafa Qusous, a puppeteer who has for the past four years been performing her table top puppet show, besides organising training sessions in puppetry for teachers and students in schools and colleges.(202)

Cairo is the home of the oldest established puppet theatre group in the modern Arab world. This national puppet company is distinguished for its uninterrupted work since 1960. All the productions of this company are designed, executed rehearsed and performed under the same roof. They are also the work of puppeteers/actors who have received similar training in the East European puppet tradition. The members of this group participate in organising workshop sessions to puppeteers in the countries they visit to perform. Puppetry students in the Gulf states as well as other Arab countries have been benefiting from their expertise.

Many talented puppeteers move on to produce puppet programmes for the Egyptian television after having completed their training at the National Puppet Theatre of Cairo. One of the programmes I have seen is based on the stories of *Kalila Wa Dimna* and directed by Alfred Mikhail, whose interest and expertise in shadows play techniques gives the production a distinct style.(203)

On a parallel level, I would like to point to the active educational function, in addition to the rich archival material, at the Centre of Popular Arts in Cairo. The centre concentrates on the collection, documentation and examination of oral, verbal, visual expressions and material culture. It is also a recognised government institution which offers its services to all students in related fields of education. The centre has its own library, audio-visual data and a gallery which has on permanent display relevant items of material culture. Although the need for developed equipment and research methods is most obvious, the centre is probably one of two of its kind in the whole Arab world, moreover, it is trying very hard to cope with its multiple functions and its much needed services.(204)

Equally important in the context of the Egyptian puppet tradition, is the collection of shadow play figures, *Aragoz* figures and popular toys on display at the Geographical Society in Cairo which are in need of much more attention, maintenance, and investigation. However, some of these shadow figures have been very useful in the reconstruction of old shows, furthermore, they were also used by an experimental theatre group in a play for adults. This is an extremely rare instance in which puppeteers have performed to a distinctly adult audience. In al-Warsha Company production of *Dayer Ma Yadur*, two old Egyptian shadow puppeteers take part in presenting the events of the story on a screen.

Some Egyptian colleges which have applied arts and art education departments include in their curriculum courses covering design and execution aspects of puppets. Departments of education also trains student/teachers to use puppets as a visual aid in the class room. I have seen pictures of shadow shows, written and produced completely by intermediate school students in a history class, which aimed at exploring the Crusaders' expedition and wars in the Middle East.(205)

The Arab Gulf states have no local puppet theatre companies of their own. Alternatively, they organise regular visits for foreign and Arab companies to perform and train teachers in puppetry skills. Companies specialised in children theatre are the ones invited regularly to return with new shows.

Turkey is the one non Arab Middle Eastern neighbour with whom Arabs share a common puppet tradition. Consulting the Ottoman *karagöz* or shadow play tradition

helps in appreciating further its Arabic offshoot. Today, there are in Turkey few shadow puppeteers who still perform *karagöz* on social occasions such as circumcisions, weddings or during foreign festivals. A young puppeteer who is also a traditional master shadow player explained to the present author his reservations regarding the process of modernisation of the Ottoman *karagöz*. To his mind, some puppeteers should hold fast to this form as a museum piece for educational and cultural preservation purposes, while other puppeteers should be encouraged to carry on with their experimentation. As his shows are especially designed for children, Haluk Yuce decided to use the traditional Ottoman framework consisting of multiple episodes of different length and orientation. His first episode is always a traditional *karagöz* shadow piece, followed by an episode performed by a clown, then a glove puppet show, and closes with a live actor performing games and songs. Of course, this is a one man show which also includes music and songs designed for performance in a class room setting.(206)

Of a particular educational value to all Arab puppeteers are the specialised journals on theatre and folk culture which are published in Arabic. *Fusul* and *al-Masrah* are published in Syria and have often issued articles on shadow play tradition, and shadow play texts. From Egypt we have the *al-Funun al-Sha'biyyah* journal which has also published material on shadow play and *Aragoz* shows. Furthermore, the Folklore Centre, in the Gulf state of Qatar, publishes *al-Ma'thurat al-Sha'biyyah* (folklore), which is also attentive to research in various aspects of popular culture such as oral, verbal, musical and performance traditions in the Arab world.

The above constitutes examples of the main activities in the field of puppetry and related areas in the Arab Middle East. In fact these isolated examples are the potential source of inspiration to Lebanese puppeteers in the eventual phase of building up their arts and crafts.

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER 4

- (1) E.H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (1960; rpt. London: Phaidon, 1992) p.98.
- (2) Gombrich pp.89-92.
- (3) Gombrich, p.93.
- (4) Mahmud Sulayman Hasan, "al-Sulala al-'Admiya Min al-'Ara'is al-Sha'abiyya fi Misr" (Bone and Ivory Toys and Dolls in Egypt), *Al-Ma'thurat Al-Sha'biyyah*, No.27, (July 1992), p.56.
- (5) Antonia Fraiser, *A History of Toys*, (London; Spring Books, 1966), p.31.
- (6) Max von Boehn, *Dolls and Puppets*, (London: George G. Harrap & Co Ltd, 1932), p. 46, and Michael Roaf, *Cultural Atlas of Mesopotamia* (Oxford: Facts on File, 1990), p 74.
- (7) Jeremy Black and Anthony Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia*, (London: British Museum Press, 1992), pp. 157-159, and Roaf, p.130.
- (8) Bamber Gascoigne, *World Theatre: An Illustrated History*, (London: Ebury Press, 1968), p.19, and Sa'd al-Khadim, *Al-Duma al-Mutahanika 'Ind al-'Arab*, (Arab Animated Puppets) (Cairo: al-Dar al-Qawmiya l'l Tiba'a wa al-Nashr, nd.), p p.8-9
- (9) Mary Hillier, *Automata and Mechanical Toys* (1976; rpt. London: Bloomsbury Books, 1988), p.11.
- (10) Gascoigne pp.18-21.
- (11) 'Ali Ibrahim Abu Zayd, *Tamthiliyat Khayal al-Zill* (Shadowplay Texts), (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1983), p p.193-194.
- (12) Von Boehn, p. 59; also Black and Green p p 125-128.
- (13) Von Boehn p.252; David Currell, *The Complete Book of Puppet Theatre* (1976; rpt. London: A & Black, 1985) p.27, and Mukhtar al-Suwayfi, *Khayal al-Zill wa al-Ara'iss fi al-'Alam* (World Shadow Play and Puppets), (Cairo: al-Katib al-Arabi, 1976), pp.149-151.
- (14) Suwayfi, p.151.

- (15) Jill Kamil, *Coptic Egypt: History and Guide*, (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1990), p.62.
- (16) Kamil, p.65.
- (17) Jill Kamil, *The Ancient Egyptians*, pp.136-137.
- (18) Kamil, *Coptic Egypt: History and Guide*, pp.51-55.
- (19) Yahya Shami, *Al-Shirk al-Jahili wa Alihat al-'Arab al-Ma'abuda Qabl al-Islam*. (Paganism and Arab gods Before Islam), (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr al-Lubnani, 1986), pp.77-80.
- (20) Isma'il al-Faruqi and Lois L. al-Faruqi, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam*, (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., 1986), pp.147-149.
- (21) Muhammad Qandil al-Baqli, *Suwar Min Adabuna al-Sha'bi*. (Images From Our Folk Literature) (Cairo: Anglo Egyptian Bookshop, nd), pp.148-149. Al-Baqli describes how the tradition of the *mahmil* procession and performers flourished since the Fatimid and Mamluk periods and continued till early this century. See also Boaz Shoshan, *Popular Culture in Medieval Cairo*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp.71-72.
- (22) Shami, pp.118-119.
- (23) 'Arfan M. Hammur, *Aswaq al-'Arab: 'Ard Adab Tarikhi: li'l Aswaq al-Mawsammiyya al-'Amma 'Ind al-'Arab*, (Arab Fairs, Literary and Historical Survey of Seasonal Arab Fairs), (Beirut, Dar Al-Shura, 1979), p.55 and pp.130-132.
- (24) 'Ali 'Uqla 'Arsan, *Al-Zawahir al-Masrahiyya 'And al-'Arab*. (Arab Theatre Manifestations), rev.ed. (1981; rpt. Damascus: Ithad al-Kuttab al-'Arab), pp.672-673, and Shmuel Moreh, *Live Theatre and Dramatic Literature In the Medieval Arabic World*, (Edinburgh University Press, 1992), p.10.
- (25) Moreh, p.52.
- (26) Ahmad Taymur, *Khayal al-Zill wa al-Li'b wa al-Tamathil al-Musawwara 'Ind al-'Arab*, (Arab Shadow Play, Dolls and Statues), (Cairo: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi bi-Misr, 1957), p. 33; also Moreh, p.22.
- (27) Thomas Arnold, *Painting in Islam*, rev. ed. (New York: Dover Publication, 1965), p.13, and Taymur, p.33.

- (28) Philip Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 10th ed. (1937; rpt. London: MacMillan, 1970), pp.619-621.
- (29) Moreh, p.23 and pp.32-34.
- (30) Moreh, pp.37.
- (31) Moreh, p.21-24.
- (32) Hitti, p.57, 65 and 66. The citadel according to these geographers had twenty floors, each ten cubits high - the first skyscraper in recorded history! Hitti p.57.
- (33) Arnold, p.29 and 85, also Hitti, pp.267-272.
- (34) Arnold, p p.22-23.
- (35) Hitti, p.303.
- (36) Taymur, p.32; also Marshall Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, Vol. II, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), p.166.
- (37) Donald Hill, "Mechanical Technology", *The Genius of Arab Civilization*, Ed. John Hayes, 2nd ed. (1975; rpt. London: Eurabia, 1983), p p.205-207 and p.216.
- (38) Kamil, *The Ancient Egyptians*, p.42 and 136; also 'Abd al-Ghani al-Shal, '*Arusat al-Mulid* (The *Mulid* Doll) (Cairo: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi, 1967) p. 53; and Kamil, *Coptic Egypt*, p.56.
- (39) Al-Shal, p. 36, and Raja' Rashid, "Al-'Ara'is wa al-Li'ab al-Sha'biyya fi Misr", (Dolls and Popular Games in Egypt), *Al Ma'thurat al-Sha'abiyya*, No.19, (July 1990), pp.50-51.
- (40) Al-Shal, p.5.
- (41) Al-Shal, pp 55 and 65.
- (42) Illustrated manuscripts of *Kalila and Dimna* from various art centres and periods are found in many museums. There is a 14th century copy in the Bodleian Library at Oxford and another copy in the Cambridge University Library. The earliest copy dated in the 13th Century is at the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris.

- (43) See Esin Atil, *Kalila wa Dimna: Fables from a Fourteenth Century Arabic Manuscript*, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1981). And Richard Ettinghausen, *Arab Painting*, (1962; rpt. New York: Skira Rizzoli, 1977).
- (44) See *Maqamat al-Hariri*, (Beirut: Dar Beirut l'il Tiba'a wa al-Nashr, 1985), and Amina Shah, (retold by), *The Assemblies of al-Hariri: fifty Encounters with the Shaykh Abu Zayd of Serug*, (London: The Octagon Press, 1980).
- (45) Oleg Grabar "Pictures or commentaries: The Illustrations of Maqamat al-Hariri", *Studies in art and Literature in the Near East*, Ed. Peter Chelkowski, (Utah: New York University Press, 1974), p.87.
- (46) Grabar, p.99.
- (47) Grabar, p.100.
- (48) Grabar, *The Illustation of the Maqamat*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp.116-117.
- (49) Grabar, pp.110-111.
- (50) Gragar, pp.144-149 and 177-179, Arnold, pp. 52-64, and Ettinghausen, *Arab Painting*, p.124.
- (51) Grabar, "Pictures or commentaries: The Illustration of Maqamat of al-Hariri", p.103.
- (52) Grabar, *The Illustration of the Maqamat*, p.4.
- (53) Esin Atil, *Renaissance of Islam: Arts of the Mamluks*, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1981), p.50-50.
- (54) Atil, pp.118-123.
- (55) Atil, pp.125-127 and p.144.
- (56) Atil, pp.126-127.
- (57) Atil, pp.147-151.
- (58) Atil, pp.195-197.
- (59) Oleg Grabar, "Architecture and Art", *The Genius of Arab Civilization*, p.101.
- (60) Grabar, p.100.

- (61) Fatima Mernissi, *The Forgotten Queens of Islam*, Trans. Mary Jo Lakeland, (1990; rpt. Oxford; Polity Press, 1993) p.73.
- (62) Mernissi, p.76.
- (63) Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, Vol. I. p.305.
- (64) Moreh, p.88 also see pp.31-32 and pp.52 and 53.
- (65) See 'Abd al-Hamid Yunis, "Al-Sha'ir Wa al-Rababa". (The Poet and The Viol), *Al-Majala*, No. 3 (Feb. 1960), pp.22-29.
- (66) Bridget Connelly, *Arab Folk Epic and Identity*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), pp.24-25.
- (67) *The Bani Hilal Epic* or the *Abu Zayd Epic* is a story of a black hero and of the legendary migration of his tribe; 'Antara is also a black hero who fell in love with his cousin 'Abla and fought fiercely for his tribe; Moreover, Baybars is the Mamluk Sultan who fought the Crusaders.
- (68) Faruq Sa'd, "Al-Masrah fi al-Turath al-Sha'bi" (Theatre in Folk Tradition), *Al-Adab*, No.1-3 (Jan-March 1987), pp.7-8. Also on this subject see 'Ali Jihad al-Racy, "Music", *The Genius of Arab Civilization*, pp.136-141.
- (69) 'Arsan, p.664 and pp.515-516.
- (70) Moreh, p.87.
- (71) Moreh, p.99.
- (72) Moreh, pp.95-99.
- (73) Moreh, p.118.
- (74) Abu Zayd, pp.39-41 and 'Abd al Hamid Yunis, *Khayal al-Zill*. (Shadowplay), (Cairo: al Dar al-Misriyya l'il Ta'lif wa al- Tarjama, 1965), pp.10-11.
- (75) ^e Martin And suggests the origin of Egyptian shadow play to be from Java - Arabs borrowed this art on their trading and raiding expeditions long before the famous traveller Ibn Batuta visited Java in 1345 A.D. Muslim traders, And adds, were probably responsible for the abstration and distraction of the Javanese shadow puppets. *Karagöz: Turkish Shadow Theatre*, rev. ed. (1975; rpt. Istanbul: A Dost Publication 1979), p.29-30.
- (76) Ahmad al-'Ulabi, "Awal Katib Masrah 'Arabi" (The First Arab Playwright), *Dirasat 'Arabiya*, (Sept. 1966), p 40. And Midhat al-Jayyar, "Al-Masrah fi al-

- 'Usur al Islamiyya al-Wusta'.(Theatre During Islamic Middle Ages), *Fusul*, Vol.2, No.3, (1982), p.21.
- (77) Faruq Sa'd, "Khayal al-Zill al-'Arabi" (Arabic Shadow Play), *Al-Nashir al-'Arabi*, (Feb. 1984), p.3.
- (78) Moreh, p.138.
- (79) Moreh, p.114.
- (80) On the subject of the interpretation of the terms *khayal* and *khayal al-zill* see al-Ra'i, 'Arsan, Sa'd, Yunis, Moreh, and Landau.
- (81) Yunis, Sa'd, Abu Zayd, Hamada and Moreh all attribute the use of the incorrect term *khayal al-zill* to linguistic and aesthetic reasons.
- (82) Paul Kahle found these figures in an Egyptian Village called Menzaleh. The blazon on some of the figures are the proof that they belong to a late Mamluk period, ie. early sixteenth century. "The Arabic Shadow Play in Medieval Egypt", *Journal of Pakistan Historical Society*, 2 (1954), pp.85-97; and Paul Kahle, "Islamische Schatten spiel figures aus Egypten ",(Islamic shadow play figures from Egypt), *Der Islam: Zeitschrift Fur Geschicchte and Kultur Des Islamischen Orient*, Vol.1, (Strasburg 1910), p.264-299.
- (83) Grabar, *The Illustrations of the Maqamat*, p.142.
- (84) Grabar p.142. There are other scholars in the field of Islamic art like Arnold, p.15; Barbara Brend, *Islamic Art*, (London: British Museum Press, 1991), p.116, and Ettinghausen, *Arab Painting*, pp.81-83, who put forward the argument that some of the *maqamat* illustrations were influenced by shadow shows.
- (85) Khalid al-Mubarak, *Arabic Drama: A Critical Introduction*, (Khartoum: Khartoum University. Press, 1986), p.20
- (86) Mamluk is the Arabic for possessed. Slavery, an old Semitic institution which Islam inherited, was blooming everywhere in the Islamic world. However, the Mamluks were a disciplined military formation, created by the Ayyubid al-Salih Ayyubi as the corps d'elite of his army. The recruits were usually Turks brought into Islamic territory as heathens from beyond the frontiers. The purchased Mamluks were segregated in an island, rigorously trained and converted to Islam. When the training ended they were emancipated, and formed the Sultan's military household. From there on, they seized power and became Sultans themselves. See Peter Thoran, *The Lion of Egypt: Sultan Baybars I and the Middle East in the Thirteenth Century*, Trans. P.M.

Holt, (London: Longman, 1987), pp.6 & 17. Also on this subject see Hodgson and Hitti.

- (87) Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, V.2, p.530. 'Abd-al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406 A.D.), a North African historian who was appointed chief Malikite qadi of Cairo. His fame rests on his *Muqaddimah* in which he presented his theory of historical development. See Hitti, pp.568-56.
- (88) Hitti speculates that Ibn Daniyal was a Muslim of possibly Jewish or Christian origin. However, there is no evidence of this. p.690.
- (89) There exist four manuscripts of Ibn Daniyal's *babat*; one at the Escorial, another in Constantinople and two in libraries in Cairo. Ibrahim Hamada was the first to present in 1963 the three *babat* in a bowdlerised version, omitting the so-called obscene passages. Only recently the three *babat* were published in full, edited by Paul Kahle and prepared for publication by Derek Hopwood and Mustapha Badawi under the title *Three Shadow Plays by Muhammad Ibn Daniyal*, (Cambridge: Gibb Memorial Trust, 1992).
- (90) Muhamad Ibn Daniyal, "*Tayf al-Khayal: Thalath Babat Min Khayal-al-zill*", in Derek Hopwood Ed., *Three Shadow Plays by Muhamad Ibn Daniyal*, p.1. On the original meaning of *Rayyis* Grabar informs us "The sharif and the ra'is (or *muqaddam*) are perhaps the most consistent terms for leaders of quarters". A system of administration on the level of quarters developed whereby a *Rayyis* is helped by a sort of paramilitary force (*futuwwa*) who policed against thieves and brigands. See Oleg Grabar, "Cities and Citizens", *The World of Islam*, Ed. Edward Lewis, (1976; rpt. London: Thames & Hudson, 1992), pp.93 & 96.
- (91) Mustapha Badawi, "Medieval Arabic Drama: Ibn Daniyal", *Three Shadow Plays by Muhamad Ibn Daniyal*, p.6.
- (92) Charles Pellat, "Jewellers with Words", *The World of Islam*, Ed. Bernard Lewis, (1976; rpt. London: Thames & Hudson, 1992), p.141.
- (93) 'Abd al Hamid Yunis, *Khayal al-Zill* (Shadow Play), (Cairo: al-Dar al-Misriyya l'il-Ta'lif wa al-Tarjama, 1965), pp.57-58.
- (94) Yunis, p.60 and Badawi, "Medieval Arabic Drama: Ibn Daniyal", p.13.
- (95) Some scholars suggest that the language of the *babat* is similar to that of *Thousand and One Nights*, in that it communicates to all members of the society.

- (96) On the notion of public and private in Islam, see Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamic in a Muslim Society*, rev. ed. (1975; rpt. London: al-Saqi Books, 1985).
- (97) Yunis, *Khayal al-Zill*, p.47.
- (98) Badawi, "Medieval Arabic Drama: Ibn Daniyal", p.13.
- (99) Badawi, p.13.
- (100) Badawi, pp.11-12.
- (101) James Monroe, *The Art of Badi' az-Zaman al-Hamadhani as Picaresque Narrative*, (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1983), p.97.
- (102) When the *Rayyis* calls upon *Tayf*, or when *Tayf* calls upon *Amir Wisal* the term *fa yakhruju* (exits) is used. See play text in Hopwood, pp.1, 6 & 13.
- (103) Hopwood, Play Text, p.40.
- (104) Moreh, *Live Theatre and Dramatic Art*, p.135.
- (105) Yunis, *Khayal al-Zill*, p.63.
- (106) Badawi, "Medieval Arabic Drama: Ibn Daniyal", p.15.
- (107) Badawi, p.15.
- (108) Shawki 'Abd al-Hakim, *Mawsu'at al-Folklore wa al-Mytholojya 'Ind al-'Arab*, (Encyclopaedia of Arab Folklore and Mythology) (Beirut: Dar al-'Awda, 1982), p.290.
- (109) Monroe examines the different contemporary burning issues which are implicit in the *maqamat* of al-Hamadhani. For instance, the doctrine of divine justice and human free will which then distinguished Shiism from Sunnism is a prominent motif in al-Hamadhani's *maqamat*.
- (110) Yunis, p.60.
- (111) Moreh, *Live Theatre and Dramatic Literature*, pp.107-109.
- (112) al-Hamadhani's and al-Hariri's *maqamat* are centred around a narrator and a rogue who have developed a sort of student-teacher relationship of most importance to the genre. See Monroe, p.24. This student-teacher relationship will eventually disappear in the Egyptian *babat*. However, it will continue in the Syrian *fusul*.

- (113) Hopwood, Play Text, pp.1-54.
- (114) Faruq Sa'd, "Khayal al-Zill al-'Arabi", (Arab Shadow Play), Vol. 2, Diss. St. Joseph University, 1982-83, p.758.
- (115) Banu Sassan is a name used to call tricksters and beggars who appeared in the Islamic world in the 10th Century. The name refers to the Persian Banu Sassan stronghold which was defeated by the Muslims causing its Royal Family to roam around as beggars. To add insult to injury, Arabs called every beggar a member of the Sassan family. The catch is that the members of the Royal family were well educated and therefore they employed their wit to enliven an otherwise dull trade. See Salman Qataya, *Al-Masrah al-'Arabi Min Ayn wa Ila Ayn*, (Arab Theatre: Where From and Where to), (Damascus: Mu' ssasat al-Kuttab al-'Arab, 1972), pp.52-53.
- (116) Badawi, "Medieval Arabic Drama: Ibn Daniyal", p.22.
- (117) See Hopwood, Play Text, p.89. The *Rayyis* who requested Ibn Daniyal to write these *babat* is called 'Ali Bin Mawlahum.
- (118) Badawi, "Medieval Arabic Drama: Ibn Daniyal", p.23.
- (119) *Khutbah* (oration) is one of the literary genre of Islamic literature. It was the medium of communication between the Muslim leaders and the masses to persuade them to support their political cause. Al-Faruqis tell us that "the practice of weaving Qur'anic material into the *Khutbah* fabric became the prime method of achieving literary strength and appeal". *The Cultural Atlas of Islam*, p.345.
- (120) Sa'd, "Khayal al-Zill al-'Arabi", Vol. 2, pp.661 & 665.
- (121) Hitti, p.691.
- (122) Hopwood, Play Text, p.4.
- (123) Hopwood, Play Text, p.1.
- (124) Paul Kahle, "Introduction", *Three Shadow Plays by Ibn Daniyal*, Ed. Hopwood, p.1.
- (125) Badawi, "Medieval Arabic Drama: Ibn Daniyal", p.13
- (126) Monroe, p.97.

- (127) 'Ali al-Ra'i, *Masrah al-Sha'b*, (The Theatre of the Poeples), (Cairo, Dar Sharqiyyat, 1993), pp.187-189.
- (128) Kahle, "Introduction", p.1.
- (129) Kahle, p.1.
- (130) M.M. Badawi, *Early Arabic Drama*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p.6.
- (131) On this subject see And, Tietze, al-Ra'i and Suwayfi.
- (132) And, *Karagöz* p.25.
- (133) Mukhtar al-Suwayfi, (Aragoz al-Misri wa Karagiozi's al-Yunani" (The Egyptian Aragoz and the Greek Karagiozis), *Al-Masrah*, No.27 (March 1966), p.13.
- (134) Paul Kahle, "The Arabic Shadow Play in Medieval Egypt", pp.85-115.
- (135) Kahle p.95.
- (136) Oussama el-Hallak "Le Théâtre D'Ombres Arabe Et Sa Musique", Diss. Universite Dela Sorbonne Nouvelle - Paris III, 1988 pp. 318-323 and Sa'd, "*Khayal al-Zill al-'Arabi'*", Vol.1, pp.511-514.
- (137) Taymur, pp.22-28.
- (138) Interview with researcher, television director and puppeteer, Alfred Mikhael, Cairo, Nov 1992.
- (139) Interview with stage director Hasan el-Gretely, Cairo, Nov 92; and with researcher at the American University of Cairo Mark Pittgrew, Cairo, Nov 92.
- (140) Andreas Tietze, *The Turkish Shadow Theatre and the Puppet Collection of the L.A. Memorial Foundation*, (Berlin: Gebr. mann Verlag, 1977), p.17.
- (141) Nancy Zeng Berliner, *Chinese Folk Art: The Small Skills of Carving Insects*, (Boston: Little Brown and Co, 1986 p. 128.
- (142) Linda Myrsiades, *The Karagiozis Heroic Performance In Greek Shadow Theatre*, (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1988), p.2.

- (143) And, *Karagöz*, p.86.
- (144) Muhammad 'Aziza, *Les Formes Traditionnelles du Spectacle*, (Tunis: Societe Tunisienne de Diffusion, 1975), p.49. Also see chapter 3 section 3.5 of this thesis concerning the Ottoman legend.
- (145) Tietze, p.19.
- (146) Tietze, p.22.
- (147) Tietze, p.23.
- (148) Metin And, "Turkish Shadow Theatre: Karagöz, " *East Asian Cultural Studies*, Vol.XV, Nos.1-4 (March 1976), p.80.
- (149) Tietze, pp.21-24.
- (150) And, *Karagöz* p.47.
- (151) And, pp.47-48.
- (152) Husayn Hijazi, "*Masrah khayal al-zill wa Tahawulatuh: khayal al-zill fi al-Sahil al-Suri wa Fasl al-'Ars*" (Shadow Theatre and its Development: Shadow Play on the Syrian coast and the Wedding *fasl*) *Al-Hayat al-Masrahiyya*, No.9 (1979) pp.24-32.
- (153) Ralph Hattox, *Coffee and Coffee Houses; The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1985), p.11.
- (154) Hattox, p. 96. In Makka, in 1511 A.D., already there existed a place for consuming coffee, p.77. Many Shari'a men got involved in legal discussions concerning the lawfulness of consuming coffee and coffee houses, p.41.
- (155) Nizar Aswad, "*khayal al-zill fi Suriyya*" (khayal al-zill in Syria), *Al-Ma'thurat al-Sha'biyya*, No 13 (Jan. 1989), p.47.
- (156) Husayn Hijazi, "*khayal al-zill fi al-Sahil al-Suri wa fasl Qaragozan wa 'Aiwazan*" (Shadow Play on the Syrian Coast and the Scenes of Two

Qaragoz and Two 'Aiwaz), *Al-Hayat al Masrahiyya*, No.11 and 12 (Winter and Spring 1980), p.19.

- (157) Hijazi, p.50.
- (158) Husayn Hijazi, "*Khayal al-zill fi al-Masrah al-Suri wa fasl Shalalub*" (Khayal al-Zill in the Syrian Theatre and *Fasl Shalalub*), *Al-Hayat al Masrahiyya*, No.14, (Autumn 1980), p.25.
- (159) Nizar Aswad, "*Al-Hakawati fi Dimashq*" (The *Hakawati* of Damascus), *Al-Ma'thur al-Sha'biyya*, No.18 (April 1990) p.57.
- (160) Aswad, p.60.
- (161) Aswad, p.60.
- (162) Aswad, p.59.
- (163) Aswad, "*Khayal al-zill fi Suriyya*", p.46.
- (164) Muhammad Nur al-Din Miqati, *Trablus Fi al-Nisf al-Awal Min al-Qarn al-'Ishrin*, (Tripoli In the First Half of the 20th Century), (Beirut, n.p., 1978), p.40.
- (165) 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Zahabi, "*Tajriba Jadida fi Ihya' Khayal al-Zill*" (A Recent Experiment in Reviving Shadow Play), *Al-Hayat al-Masrahiyya*, No.19 (1982), p.56.
- (166) See Hijazi and Aswad.
- (167) See Sa'd, And, and Hijazi.
- (168) Salman Qataya *Nussus Min Khayal al-Zill* (Shadow Play Texts), (Damascus: Itihad al-Kuttab al-'Arab, 1977), p.26. See also Hijazi and Aswad on Syrian *fusul* texts.
- (169) This reminds us of the *maqamat* of al-Hamadhani, when the narrator after having observed the rogue trickster in many disguises falls into the habit himself.
- (170) Al-Suwayfi, p.169.

- (171) Moreh, p.75.
- (172) *Fakihat al mulid* is an expression used by Egyptians to state their fondness for Aragoz.
- (173) 'Ali al-Ra'i, *Masrah al Sha'b*, p.199 also see on this subject al-Khadim.
- (174) Al-Ra'i, *Masrah al Sha'b*, pp.201-202.
- (175) Al-Suwayfi, p.175. Green and White are the colours of the Egyptian flag.
- (176) Al-Ra'i, *Masrah al Sha'b*, p.202-203. And interview with director of Public Relations at A.U.C. Louis Grace, Cairo, Nov 92.
- (177) Recently a feature film called *Aragoz* was produced with Omar al-Sharif in the title role. It is a story about an Egyptian *Aragozati* living and performing in the countryside.
- (178) In an interview with Salah al-Saqqa, director of the National Puppet Theatre of Cairo 1967-1992, he remarked that it was President 'Abd al-Nasser who made the decision to establish a National Puppet Theatre after watching the Romanian Puppet Company perform in Cairo. Interview, Cairo, Dec.1992.
- (179) Since 1961 Egyptian puppet shows have been touring in Lebanon and Syria. They also tour in all the Arabic speaking countries.
- (180) Interview with the puppeteer Muhammad Karim, and the *Aragoz* performance took place in Cairo, Dec 92.
- (181) Isam Mahfuz, *Sinaryo al-Masrah al-'Arabi fi Mi'at 'Aam* (The Scenario of Hundred Years of Arabic Theatre), (Beirut: Dar al Bahith, 1981) p.16.
- (182) Mahfuz, p.28.
- (183) Mahfuz, p.31-32 and p.43.
- (184) Interview with stage and film actor Rafiq 'Ali Ahmad, Beirut, Oct 92. Also see Roger 'Assaf, *Al-Massraha: Aqni'at al-Madina* (Theatre: The City Masks), (Beirut: Dar al-Muthallath, 1984).

- (185) Interview with stage director Hasan el-Gretely, Cairo Nov. 92, and the story telling rehearsal, Dec 92.
- (186) Moreh, p.163.
- (187) Al-Mubarak, p.21.
- (188) Fayiq Hmaysi, a stage director and mime actor, mentioned during an interview, Beirut Nov. 1992, that he saw this shadow show in Tripoli in 1969 and believes the family of the puppeteer must have the figures. But the family does not want to hear anything concerning this matter.
- (189) Interview with the music composer and puppeteer Joseph Fakhoury, Beirut, Sept.92.
- (190) Interview with architect and head of al-Sanabil troupe Ghazi Mikdashi, Beirut, Sept. 92 and with the playwright Hasan Dahir, Beirut, Oct 92.
- (191) Interview with Nada and Marwan Sahhab who as children were members of the Arab Cultural Club and took part in the puppet theater projects. Beirut, Nov. 92.
- (192) Interview with trainer and puppeteer Najla Jraysati, Beirut, Oct. 92.
- (193) Interviews with the Manager of the Lebanese Puppet troupe Tariq Shuman, Beirut, Sept. 92, technical director Karim Dakrub, Beirut, Oct. 92, and director Fayiq Hmaysi, Beirut, Dec 92.
- (194) *Leila and the Fox*. a puppet show at Bayt al-Atfal, al-Maqasid School, Beirut, Nov. 92.
- (195) Visit to the School of Mabarrat al-Imam al-Khu'i, 'Aramun, Oct 92.
- (196) Visit to the International College, Elementary School, Beirut, Oct. 92.
- (197) Visit to a school in a Palestinian Camp, Beirut, Nov. 92.
- (198) Interview with Najla Bashur, Beirut, Oct 92.

- (199) Interview with song writer, music composer and teacher Ahmad Qa'bur, Beirut, Oct 92.
- (200) Al-Zahabi, p.56-59.
- (201) This information was given by Mario Kotliar, Director General of The Train Theatre Association in Jerusalem, during The International Bilbao Puppet Festival, Bilbao, Dec. 93.
- (202) Interview with Jordanian puppeteer Wafa Qusous, Bilbao, Dec.93.
- (203) Interview with Alfred Mikhail, Cairo, Nov. 92.
- (204) Interview with Hasan Lutfi, Director of The Centre Of Popular Arts in Cairo, Cairo, Nov. 92.
- (205) Interview with Said Abu Raya, Lecturer at The College Of Applied Arts in Zamalek, Cairo Dec. 92.
- (206) Interview with Turkish puppeteer Haluk Yuce, Bilbao, Dec. 93.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis we first reviewed the various arguments on the issue of the actuality or absence of theatre tradition in the Arab world. To comprehend better the arguments, we looked at examples from ancient Egyptian, Mesopotamian and Arabian civilisations and identified regional components and manifestations which exhibit dramatic potential. Following that, we examined the origin and development of the art of puppetry in different old civilisations around the world, then we reflected on the interdependence between dramatic arts and the art of puppetry. The variables related to the nature of puppetry were also considered. Having formulated a basic picture about puppetry as a universal communication tool, it was reasonable to proceed and examine the significance of puppetry in the Arab Middle Eastern culture. In order to appreciate puppetry in a civilisation which has often been condemned for not allowing figurative expression or indeed dramatic arts to flourish, it seemed necessary to interpret the vocabulary of imagery and the forms of expression of this civilisation.

To achieve this, the visual and verbal arts most representative of ancient Egyptian, Mesopotamian and Arab civilisations were explored within their socioreligious, political and aesthetic contexts. Consequently we looked at characteristic prototypes of popular and traditional arts which have contributed to the medieval Islamic shadow puppet art *khayal al-zill*. The notion of the visibly unreal which characterises *khayal al-zill* performances was considered as the force which renders this performance art expressive of a culture bent towards narration and abstraction.

Having seen that the practicable model of theatre arts in the Middle East is that of total theatre represented by the medieval Islamic prototype of *khayal al-zill*, one may speculate that the process of learning to read our traditional image vocabulary and forms of expression is likely to help us visualise the nature of performance arts we are bound to develop. The contemporary experiments referred to in the field of live theatre in Cairo and Beirut support my findings, based on the above analysis of popular and traditional performance models.

The major aim of this thesis is not only to highlight the fact that Middle Easterners have enjoyed for a long time a variety of popular forms of performance, music and oral traditions, but that these activities have been

consistently expressive of the artistic, intellectual, popular and cultural predilections of the peoples of the region since ancient times. Puppetry has existed side by side with live performance and oral traditions. It certainly employed features from other expressions to develop its own. In return, live theatre acknowledged puppetry's achievements by borrowing some of its scenes, characters and conventions. The positive interplay between the various forms of expression displayed in the medieval Islamic period is naturally the sort of relationship we would like to see recur as we work at developing a tradition capable of articulating the vocabulary of imagery, mental traits and aspirations of the Arab people.

To work on developing a creative puppet tradition in the Lebanon should become our immediate objective. Not only because it is a performance art form which has proved in the past to be appropriate and assertive of the narrative and abstract notions prevalent in our artistic and cultural expressions, but also for the reason that it can stretch out to support the individual forms of expressions it borrows from. So, in fact, our aim is two-fold: to re-establish a performance art tradition using contemporary and conventional elements of expression, and to see that this performance art in turn supports the forms of expression it borrows from. This is not the sort of aim one can meticulously design and schedule to achieve in a life time. On the contrary, this will take generations before any results are visible. However, we should begin somewhere. Therefore, I propose that we start by planning a puppet centre in the Lebanon.

It would not be too bold to assume that a centre where diverse categories of activity and a variety of resources collaborate to support the advancement of a puppet art tradition, is advantageous to the Lebanon as well as to the Arab world at large. The proposal to initiate a centre for puppetry in Lebanon is enhanced by the knowledge that there exists nothing comparable in the Arab world today. There are certainly random projects worthy of credit and imitation, however there is not a single organisation with a comprehensive strategy which meets the corresponding demands and aspects of puppetry, and allows its various elements to stimulate one another in a creative atmosphere under one roof.

A centre for puppetry in the Lebanon will probably have to fulfil several operations. To sharpen our focus, I would like to classify the functions under

two main headings. The first is concerned with training and performance, the second with academic research including documentation of activities affecting puppetry as well as related arts, crafts, music, folk and oral traditions.

The justification for the two categories is based on needs articulated by most of the puppeteers, teachers, actors and students I interviewed in Beirut during Autumn 1992. Almost every single person who works with puppets in the field of education or entertainment mentioned the need for training, updating background on technical skills, and communicating experiences in the field of puppetry. Some of the puppeteers also brought up the issue of space needed for experimentation and rehearsals, especially in the face of the economic crisis in Lebanon today.

The centre should have a strong relationship with the community by addressing needs such as the ones specified above. Moreover, puppetry as an art expression should fulfil a worthwhile function in today's project of reconstructing Lebanon after the long years of civil war. As we know too well, wars do not only leave marks on the buildings and the infrastructures, but also shatter the social structure on the levels of communities, families and individuals. In the field of cultivating imaginative and creative citizens, puppetry should prove to be very effective. It is equally efficient in the scope of special education and therapy. These prospects are not limited to the young Lebanese but should also include the adults as audience and participants.

Puppets are foremost a tool of communication, and in this capacity we should be able to use puppets in educational projects concerning our culture, history, language, literary, musical and visual heritage, as well as about contemporary environmental issues and scientific discoveries. The scope of subjects puppetry is capable of dealing with is limitless; and the possibility of delivering such concerns through live puppet performances or on the screen are significantly infinite.

As to the academic research and documentation function of the centre, I firmly believe that there exists an urgent need to understand better and eventually redress the picture of performance and dramatic arts in the Middle East. The unbalanced picture we have been living with is not only the result of foreign scholars applying European dramatic art conventions where they do not belong, but also the contribution of Middle Eastern scholars who have been undergoing

a systematic process of alienation from their own popular performance and oral tradition heritage. In addition, we need to learn the theory and practice of our performance heritage, and we should develop awareness concerning the relevance of puppetry in relation to our popular performance tradition. This significance especially manifested in *khayal al-zill* being an example of a performance art which encompasses relevant existing arts and crafts. Furthermore, we need to unlearn something we have acquired from the European tradition regarding puppetry addressing children only. For in the Middle East this was never the case before the contact with the West. Puppetry in the coffee house addressed the male adults; in weddings, *mulids*, circumcisions and other social ceremonies, puppetry addressed a mixed family audience. Today, puppetry it is not taken seriously because it is thought of as a crude and simple project, just for children.

Narration remains centre stage in all Middle Eastern performance art forms. In addition to communicating his ideas through words, the storyteller has introduced dialogue, imitation, miming or impersonation of characters, song and music. Last but not least, he uses props and objects to help project the characters and events of his narratives. Throughout this development the storyteller maintained his initial relationship with the simple word, and throughout, specialised performers kept an eye on the storyteller and his presentation techniques for inspiration. It is quite vital for artists at the puppet centre to do the same.

Researching and documenting the arts of popular performance in the Lebanon and the region is a vital task. We should not spare the few surviving traditions, and indeed, we should record the memories of the older generation who enjoyed some of these traditions. The collected information should be open for all to use and build on. For without understanding the dynamics of our performance arts heritage, we will not be able to establish a strong foundation for the future.

The puppet centre should provide training workshops for all those who are interested in and work with puppets. Foremost it should bring together the individuals and troupes who have been working for the past twenty years using their own initiative and resources during a very taxing period. It is vital to acknowledge and document their past productions as well as encourage them to carry on with their efforts which have slowed down recently for different reasons.

A centre which has to address the needs of the puppeteers, the community at large, researchers and performance art students will best be situated in an academic institution which has the facilities and concerns a puppet centre can benefit from. This centre has in return to complement the needs of the educational institution in question. The centre can benefit from resources and facilities such as a library, rehearsal space, workshops, performance space and audio-visual studios. It will also benefit from contacts with other forms of performing arts and media in general, as well as with people in the fields of literature, journalism, fine arts, music and education. Such facilities are only available in a university which has performance and fine arts, music, literature and education departments. In the Lebanon there are at least three universities which could offer such facilities to the centre, and at the same time allow the puppet centre to complement their communication and performance arts programmes. It is my intention to present to these institutions a proposal concerning a puppet centre.

The judgement that the puppet centre should be part of an existing educational institution resolves some basic issues of a financial, performance and educational nature. A country coming out of war can not be expected to provide for a project which is not vital to the very simple essentials for its survival, particularly when the project in question is not cost effective. For this reason the centre has to exist within and make use of available resources in an institution which has corresponding interests.

On the performance level, the centre should not be expected to direct its efforts to producing shows which are commercially successful, but should be able to function with an exploratory attitude without fearing the critics or financial loss. This cannot be possible except in an academic context.

Furthermore, in an academic institution which offers courses in related fields there is no need to introduce new courses related to puppetry. It should be possible to channel relevant academic substance through more than one existing course. It should also be possible to encourage both lecturers and students to work on theoretical and practical projects relating to puppetry. For example, it is conceivable that a course which deals with acting could explore the Middle Eastern style of representation in addition to the other styles on the syllabus. Similarly courses covering material on technical stagecraft could

include projects on puppet design, execution and manipulation. Film, radio and journalism students could be invited to document or produce programmes on the subject of puppetry. Complimentary to course projects, established Arab and foreign puppeteers could be invited to perform, exhibit and share their experiences through workshops and seminars covering theoretical as well as practical aspects of puppetry.

This is the manner in which I would like to introduce puppetry to an academic institution which has a performance art programme, and make it appreciated and accepted as one of the roots of dramatic expression. With no worries about financial backing, the puppet centre can benefit a lot from a pool of educational resources at any university in Lebanon.

Appendix I: Selected Literature covering theatre and puppet arts 1950 to date

1. Muhammad Yusuf Najm is the pioneer Arab researcher in the field of Arabic drama. He embarked on the subject after having completed in 1952 a similar research regarding the novel in modern Arabic Literature in which he discovered that most novelists have also attempted writing plays.

Najm's *Al-Masrah Fi Al-Adab Al-'Arabi al-Hadith 1847-1914* (Drama in Modern Arabic Literature 1847-1914) was published in Beirut, 1956. He makes the observation that drama is an art form newly introduced to the Arab culture during the literary renaissance which followed the French campaign in Egypt.

As a literature-orientated researcher, he naturally looks for dramatic texts but finds none before 1847, the date of the first Arabic theatrical event, *The Miser*, which took place in the house of Marun al-Naqqash in Beirut. As a point of departure he renounces the popular forms of entertainment such as *Aragoz*, shadow play, mime and popular poetry as modes of expression unrelated to dramatic art in spite of the vague dramatic potential they embrace. Najm confirmed to the present author, in July 1988, that he maintains this assessment of popular Arabic theatre.

Najm's research grew out of a determination to dismiss all popular performances. Instead he focuses on documenting dramatic performances and activities of the performers involved. He leads his investigation with shows especially imported to entertain Napoleon's soldiers, follows the Lebanese and Syrian performing troupes in Egypt, considers farces by Y'aqub Sannu' and other Egyptian playwrights then concludes that drama in the Arab world is still undergoing a phase of copying of Western theatre forms.

2. Jacob Landau's panoramic survey on Arabic Theatre and Cinema was preceded by an article in 1948 on "Shadow Plays in the Near East" in which he tried to call attention to shadow theatre, "the artistic level of which is not high". In this article, he quotes largely the works of the German scholars in the field of shadow play like Jacob, Littman, Horovitz, Pruffer, Kahle and Brockelmann. Like them, Landau recognised that this popular amusement is on the point of becoming extinct under the influence of Western Culture,

Ten years later, in his *Studies in the Arabic Theatre and Cinema*, Landau confirms the necessity to study the popular theatre background of modern Arab theatre in order to understand the absence of traditional dramatic arts in the Arab world. He explains this phenomenon in view of two factors: Arabs did not contact people with developed theatre arts, and women were forbidden on stage.

In this book Landau establishes the production of Marun al-Naqqash *The Miser* as the real birth of modern Arab theatre, and *Abu al Hasan the Fool* as the first dramatic text in Arabic. However, in the article published ten years earlier, he recognises the three shadow plays of Ibn Daniyal as the only recorded representation of "dramaturgical creation by the Arabs in the Middle Ages". Yet behind this divergence of opinion, Landau maintains his argument that shadow

theatre contributed a great service to the history of Arab civilisation. Shadow theatre prepared the ground helped by the story teller's mimicry and the passion player's *ta'ziya* (Shi'ite passion play) performances, for the arrival and acceptance of theatre and cinema in the Arab world. Landau argues that from an artistic point of view, Shadow Play has, "roots in the very existence of the Theatre such as: painting and movement, imitation in various forms, and songs as well as music generally."

In ancient as well as in modern times, Arab dramatic manifestations resulted from contact with cultures which enjoyed established theatre traditions. Landau remarks further in his article on "Shadow Plays in the Near East", that, "Only the Eastern influence was able to create and develop the Arabic Shadow Theatre; and a period rich with Eastern influences was that of Seljuks."

Shadow theatre was naturally influenced by art forms which preceded it such as the art of the popular tale teller, the Turkish *maddah* (praise singer) and the Arabic *hakawati* (story teller), all full of mimicry. Similarly shadow plays contributed to the development of its "side-splitting successors", farces and burlesques thoroughly enjoyed by peasant audiences in Egypt.

Although very early in the history of the scholarship of modern Arab theatre, Landau concludes an article dated 1953 with a most intriguing observation that more development has been achieved in the field of play writing than in direction and acting. Obviously the issue at stake for Arab theatre remains, "its complete emancipation from the bonds of the European theatre and the discovery of its own mode of expression, both in playwriting and acting."

3. In 1963, the Egyptian critic, Ibrahim Hamada, shifts the focus unreservedly to shadow plays. His *Khayal al-Zill wa Tamthiliyyat Ibn Daniyal* (Study of the Shadow Play and the Play Texts of Ibn Daniyal) is the first comprehensive work in Arabic on this subject, consequently representing the earliest recognition of shadow play as drama by an Arab.

Hamada's research examines the history of puppetry and the origins of shadow play beginning with its migration from the Far East to the Middle East and ultimately Europe. He then concentrates on Ibn Daniyal, a shadow puppeteer who improvised *babat* (scenes) in Cairo during the middle of the 13th Century. He comments on the interaction between acting and literature and the influence of the *maqamat* (short satirical stories) on shadow play. Finally, Hamada includes the three play texts by Ibn Daniyal, published for the first time together and suitably bowdlerised.

The major significance of Hamada's pioneering study is its examination of Arabic theatre through the perspective of acting which he sees as the catalyst for literature and its emergence as dramatic art.

Hamada challenges the reader to consider whether the shadow play phenomenon may be considered within the art of acting or if it belongs to the so-called embryonic category which includes mime, clowning and buffoonery. The

common factors should become clear by a simple comparison: the shadow play puppeteer projects the self-created image of the characters being portrayed by manipulating a puppet, in the same manner that the actor uses his body to project such an image. Both puppeteer and actor use their imagination, voices and bodies to create a character.

In addition to creating all the characters, the Arab shadow puppeteer had to write the text, make the puppets and above all present and play every single character of his story. Such a puppeteer is actually a *playwright, craftsman and actor, if not also a poet and a singer.*

Ibn Daniyal's *babat* were composed in a mixture of classical Arabic and dialect, verse and prose, to be performed rather than recited or read. Hamada wishes us to consider why Ibn Daniyal's scenes have always been categorised as literature when we are aware that their sole purpose was dramaturgical.

4. In his book on *Al-Masrah* (The Theatre), Cairo 1964, the Egyptian drama critic Muhammad Mandur looks at Arab theatre through two principal features. First, that neither the Pharaohs nor the ancient Arabs experienced dramatic arts in order to transmit them to the Arabs. He argues that in spite of the prevailing dramatic elements, mainly conflict in the rituals of the Pharaohs, they were performed only in the temples where they belonged, and never ventured to become independent from religion. Mandur also observes that contrary to the anthropomorphic nature of the Hellenistic religion, ancient Egyptians, like most Orientals, have perceived their gods as distant supernatural powers which control the universe. This attitude, he assumes, hindered the Pharaonic rituals from developing into full dramatic expression. On the other hand he points to the unsuitability of ancient Arabic poetry to generate drama predominantly because it was restricted to declamatory and descriptive characteristics with the individual poet as a centre. Consequently the Arabs did not know epic poetry.

The second point Mandur emphasises is concerned with history. He suggests that we differentiate between general and literary history when dealing with the history of Arab dramatic arts. He categorises dramatic texts with literary history, and theatrical performances with general history. He reiterates Landau in maintaining that popular entertainment such as shadow play, *Aragoz*, the magic lantern and mimicry did not mark literary history except in preparing the Arab audience for the dramatic art experience to evolve from contact with the West. However, in Mandur's view this category of entertainment overruns to include the theatre performances in Beirut of Marun al-Naqqash which he describes as 'acting performance'.

Accordingly, he registers 1927, the year 'The Prince of Poets' Ahmad Shawqi published his poetic drama *The Death of Cleopatra* as the first dramatic art creation in the Arab world.

5. Shortly after Hamada published his book in Egypt, 'Adil Abu Shanab, published his study *Masrah 'Arabi Qadim: Qaragoz* (Ancient Arabic Theatre: *Qaragoz*), in Damascus, 1965. Abu Shanab echoes Hamada's interest in

shadow plays and considers it the maturest form of theatre arts in the Arab world. The author concentrates on the folkloric and popular forms which existed alongside shadow play, being the *hakawati*, *Qaragoz* (shadow and glove puppet) and *sandug al-dunya* (peep show).

The shadow play's subject matter and characters are popular stereotypes from the market place, the mosques and the public baths. Their format is burlesque and their comments on the social and political situation were so effective in criticising the Sultan and the state that puppets in Egypt were ordered to be destroyed and burned in 1451 A.D. Indeed, even as recently as the last century, the French in Algeria banned shadow plays because of their political criticism.

Like Hamada, Abu Shanab concludes with two shadow play scenes (author unknown) published for the first time. *The Turkish Bath* scene was recorded in 1928 by a French Orientalist using the Syrian dialect. And the scene known as *Crocodile Play* was recorded in classical Arabic by the Orientalist Paul Kahle in 1909.

Abu Shanab states that he considers shadow play to be not only the most mature and complete theatrical manifestation, but also the nearest to theatre in its present form. He adds that it is also the first Arab attempt at writing for the theatre.

6. *Al-Islam wa al-Masrah* (Theatre and Islam) by Muhammad 'Aziza, published in 1971, generates some interesting hypotheses concerning the absence of dramatic arts in Arab culture. He obviously approaches the subject from a religious point of view, and specifies that the Arab mind ignored the dramatic phenomenon even when it communicated with two cultures, the Indian and the Hellenic which have prominent dramatic traditions. This ignorance took place as a result of the following:

- a) Muslims have no experience with what is thoroughly essential to the dramatic phenomenon: conflict. The traditional Muslim mind has no room for conflict in everyday life or with God. In a religion which calls for total submission to God and his will, it is impossible to encounter conflict.

Muslims' attitude to conflict with God can best be understood in the example of the *sufi's* belief in total harmony between the creator and his creation: man is part of a whole which is God. Man's will is complementary to that of God, hence a Muslim could not experience the aspects of conflict essential to the inception of drama.

- b) Arabs had great pride in their own literary product which is mainly poetic in genre. As a result they could not interest themselves in the product of other cultures. In addition, Aristotle's *Poetics* was misinterpreted to mean poetry, likewise tragedy was translated as *madih* (panegyric), and comedy as *hija'* (satire).

Furthermore, the Arabs' pride in their classical language resulted in its inflexibility to deal with the dramatic needs of expression. Dramatic expression, he explains, feeds on spontaneity and flexibility which is closer to the nature of colloquial rather than classical language.

'Aziza goes on to argue that Muslims on two occasions were confronted with disorder and chaos. These confrontations lead them to experience conflict and the necessity for its expression. The first occasion relates to the struggle for the Caliphate which violated the consensus of the Muslim *Umma* (nation) as well as introducing aspects of isolation and guilt to a group of Muslims. This group, henceforth, became known as Shiites and expresses its suffering for not having helped Husayn at Karbala in a dramatic ritual called *ta'ziya*.

The second occasion is when the Arab world was politically and militarily penetrated by the West during the 19th Century. The desire to express anxiety and frustration coincided with the urge to utilise the Western art form to which they had recently been introduced.

So Arabs experienced dramatic art in Western terms when they were in conflict. However, 'Aziza displays awareness of immature theatrical activities which he labels as "pre-drama" and presents them in three categories:

- a) The performed action pertains to dervish dances, *hakawati* performances, etc.
- b) Theatrical manifestations related to religion: here he includes rituals like prayers in time of drought, *istisqa'*.
- c) Abortive theatrical forms which comprise shadow play, *Aragoz*, and the *maqamat*.

'Aziza acknowledges that the Arabs' first experience in theatre is provided by al-Naqqash's translation of Moliere's *Miser*. This brings up an important question whether in this case we should be discussing Arabic theatre or theatre in Arabic Language.

7. In *Najib Al-Rihani Wa Tatawwur Al-Komidya Fi Misr* (Najib Al-Rihani And The Development of Comedy in Egypt), Leila Abu Saif traces the universally recognised comic spirit of the Egyptian people as far back as Ancient Egypt. The Pharaohs, she asserts, were acquainted with farce and developed suitable characters who were responsible for comic relief in religious dramas. She further quotes that at funerals, as well as hiring professional mourners, clowns called "The Moo-oo" were brought in whose function was to dance and imitate the mourners with the aim of provoking laughter among the family of the deceased. Comic traits are also present in many papyrus paintings depicting animal scenes.

With the onset of Islam, drama vanished, a situation which was later to be paralleled by the effect of puritanism on the Western theatre. In the author's opinion, the Islamic opposition to acting, coupled with a monotheistic loathing of pagan mythological subjects, accounts for the absence of the dramatic arts in Egypt. Additionally, Islam affects the status of women, thus contributing to the limited development of Egyptian dramatic arts.

Abu Saif recognises that successive waves of foreign conquerors, the Turk, the French and the English, hindered the emergence of a national culture. The conservative attitude of society is reflected in the use of classical Arabic language in the theatre and the neglect of dialect resulting in the decline of comedy.

Najib al-Rihani (1892-1949) is described by Abu Saif as an actor and playwright who brought about the evolution of Egyptian comedy from the level of the improvised skit to a sophisticated comedy of serious moral and social significance. To better understand the work of Najib al-Rihani, Abu Saif glances at some primitive forms of comic entertainment which were presented in Egyptian dialect. She selects comedians such as Ahmad Fahim al-Far, who imitated the vocal sounds of animals and birds, and Muhammad Iskandarani, a circus actor/clown.

After looking at the development of the improvised *fasl mudhik* (comic skits) which revolved around series of stock characters at the turn of the century, she believes she can identify the influence of commedia dell'arte. This took place when *fasl mudhik* was being introduced to the circus, and the Italian circus managers plagiarised the scenarios from the plays of Beaumarchais, Rossini and Goldoni with which they were familiar. Al-Rihani's farces were a natural development of the *fasl mudhik*. Later in his career he moved towards realism, and to achieve that he had to work against shadow theatre, literal translation of French farce, operettas and the constant use of music.

8. A C Scott examines theatre in the Islamic world as part of *The Theatre in Asia*, published in London, 1972. He remarks that in comparison with other Asian civilisations the Arab contribution to theatre has been meagre indeed. Scott associates this with Islam, "where total submission to the will of God is demanded the idea of conflict, which was so central to Greek drama, perforce remains stillborn."

Scott underlines the Arab fondness for verbal display and traces the art of shadow puppeteer and story teller to ancestral links with the performers at the ancient intertribal fairs. However, their command of classical language became an introverted and obsessive pursuit excluding even the scope of the puppeteers and the street entertainers.

Like Landau and Abu Saif, Scott maintains that the absence of women was another obstacle and was caused by the Islamic attitude to women. In addition he states that, "even women's costume became a cumbersome accessory of physical segregation."

One more factor in Islam which had a negative contribution to the development of theatre is the fragmented and secretive character of Islamic urban life. "There was no recognition of a unified collectivity nor means for its expression. The factors which make theatre a sociable art were lacking."

Music provided the greatest stimulation to the Arab intellect and satisfied a sense of mysticism and a taste for rhythm. Music and oral literature were closely related in Islam, hence both singers and story tellers have been treated with great respect. Early shadow shows, which took place in coffee houses, were conducted by musicians and a story teller. Scott remarks that the Arab national character responds spontaneously to mimicry and humour and "that music exerts a collective magic without which no attempt at a popular theatre can succeed."

Al-Naqqash, a Syrian, who was exposed to the influence of missionary infiltration which is "directly responsible for the rise of a modern Arab theatre", was the first to venture into the field of play writing. However, al-Naqqash "was a Christian, so that in one sense the dramatic impulse could not strictly be called Arabic".

9. In one of his earlier books, *Fann al-Komidya Min Khayal al-Zill Ila Najib al-Rihani* (The Art of Comedy: From Shadow Play to Najib al-Rihani), Cairo, 1971, al-Ra'î demonstrates an interest in the study of comedy since the times of the Mamluks. His driving force is the realisation that ignorance of our comedy heritage is the main cause for the sterility of ideas in "sophisticated" modern comedies.

Indeed, this leads him to argue that modern comedy will only fully establish itself by learning from and interacting with its popular roots in the *maqama*, *khayal al-zill*, *Aragoz*, mime and other forms of popular street theatre.

In 1980 al-Ra'î published his study on *Al-Masrah fi al-Watan al-'Arabi* (Theatre in the Arab World) in Kuwait. Here he peruses key theatre productions in major Arab countries over the last fifty years. Al-Ra'î's ironic commentary includes the observation that after decades of experimentation in the field of theatre, Arabs have succeeded in establishing a Western theatre in an Arabic setting. This success is obvious in cities and specifically among the educated elite.

The generation of Marun al-Naqqash was so impressed with European drama and opera productions that as a consequence they were quite unable to appreciate the live performances of song, music, dance and mimicry which surrounded them. These performances al-Ra'î asserts have influenced, even shaped, the development of Arabic theatre in general and popular comedy in particular. Furthermore he lauds Ibn Daniyal's 13th century recording of the theatrical illusion as the most important landmark in the history of the Arabic theatre.

Ibn Daniyal's shadow shows represent a turning point away from the previously unquestioned style of the recitation by the story teller of the *maqama* to an individual representational image of each character with its distinctive voice.

10. The significance of *Alf 'Am wa 'Am 'ala al-Masrah al-'Arabi* (A Thousand and One Years of Arabic Theatre) by Tamara Putentsiva lies in the author's awareness of the shortcomings which result from assigning a date to mark the beginning of Arabic theatre. Freed from these constraints she is at liberty to apply herself to early manifestations of theatrical performances known to the Arab world.

Putentsiva arrives at this thought-provoking position having dismissed as unconvincing all the classical hypotheses which attempt to explain the lack of Arabic theatrical tradition. Principal amongst these assumptions is the misunderstanding of *The Poetics*, Arabs' pride in their poetry, a nomadic lifestyle, Islam's antagonism to human and animal images, women's role in Muslim society, and lastly the inconvenience of the classical Arabic language. She also points out the frailty of 'Aziza's thesis which blames this absence on the lack of 'conflict' in Islam until the Arabs were confronted with imperialism during the 19th Century.

The author gives explicit attention to the analysis of the attitude of Islam vis-à-vis images. She reminds the reader that there is no reference in the Qur'an to the banning of images. However, early Muslims needed to safeguard against a return to idol worship which is heavily condemned by Islam. Meanwhile, theologians provided a number of rules enforcing this ban which were ultimately ineffective, as proclaimed by the Islamic arts product world-wide.

In the same manner, the explicit Qur'anic prohibition of drinking alcohol did not deter poets from chanting their verse in praise of wine. Contradictions between the way of life set by Islam and the Muslim's everyday life are ample. Consequently, it is difficult to comprehend how this contradiction did not extend to include dramatic arts.

The classical Arabic language problem also appears to be quite superficial. Here the author refers us to the use of Latin in early Medieval European performances which did not hinder the development of European dramatic arts. Classical Arabic to Arabs is less alien than Latin to Europeans.

Following the evidence that such factors could not have hindered the development of Arabic theatre, Putentsiva uses the medium of excessive speculation to advance her assumption that the tradition has always existed, as early as the actor/narrator who enjoyed close contact with audiences in fairs, markets, houses, etc. These audiences obviously enjoyed stories deeply rooted in popular imagination such as *A Thousand and One Nights*, and *'Antara*. Moreover, authentic Arabic theatre developed from the comic scenes based on popular stories and the type-characters involved in them. This long phase in the development of Arabic theatre bore the seeds of farce and comedy which blossomed into Arabic theatre.

11. Roger 'Assaf's working knowledge of Western acting and staging techniques has enabled him to look for parallels in his own culture. And as a result of his

disappointment with the limited success of the Westernised theatre in the Lebanon to reach a wide Lebanese audience, he recently reviewed his position vis-à-vis Western theatrical forms.

'Assaf explains his concepts and experiments in articles and lectures, some of which were collected in a book entitled: *Al-Masraha: Aqnā'at al-Madina* (Theatricalism: The City Masks), which was published in Beirut, 1984. Here he describes how with a group of actors he started investigating traditional and folkloric modes of self expression in South Lebanon. It soon became evident to him that the Western theatre is far from acceptable to Muslim society. The departure point of Western theatre is the Greek tradition which reflects the concept of the centralised state, and whose ideal is the authority of reason over life and of institutions over society. Greek plays echo the conflict of Man with the gods, fates and the supernatural powers which symbolise the chaos outside the centralised state. Here actors mask their god-created individuality in order to project a man-made reality.

This practice is totally absent from and indeed incomprehensible to the Islamic scene where the individual performer remains the person identified by his society especially during the process of sharing fiction or reality with the audience. Such performers, as story tellers, poets and clowns, have always played themselves in communicating with audiences. 'Assaf is still investigating the possibility of theatre without masks.

12. *The Development of Early Arabic Drama 1847-1900*, by Muhammad al-Khozai, published in 1984, deals with a number of the classic arguments explaining the absence of drama in the Arab culture. Here Muhammad al-Khozai examines and categorises factors under mental, aesthetic, religious, environmental, and historical. He refutes such points as the abstract constitution of the Arab mind, the sense of superiority in their poetry, the nomadic way of life, and the prohibitions of Islam. Nevertheless, he supports the following consequent consideration: the non-existence of a writing tradition - oral transmission was the practice of the *Jahiliyya* (before Islam) Arabs; the absence of religious rites and rituals in pagan Arabia and later mythology in Islam; the lack of interest by Christian Syriac translators in pagan literature; and the feeling of hostility to drama as the art of the French conquerors in Egypt.

Two forms of expression are identified in this study as embryonic forms: *khayal al-zill* and *ta'ziya*. Shadow play al-Khozai recognises as "originally an imported art", whereas *ta'ziya* or passion play is more associated with Persia. In addition, shadow plays "grew up separate from religion and were not related to its rites in any form"; on the other hand *ta'ziya* is "confined to religion" and indeed to a particular sect. Further, shadow play contributed to preparing Arabs for the arrival and acceptance of drama contrary to the *ta'ziya* which had no influence on the development of drama in Arabic.

Consistently Arabs imported drama, as al-Khozai maintains that "it was through the first-hand knowledge of Arab playwrights studying in Europe that drama in Arabia came to be conceived". Thus the birth certificate of drama in Arabic was

issued in the year 1847 when Marun al-Naqqash made an innovative attempt at writing and producing a play based on a European model.

13. In *Al-Masrah al-Misri al-Mu'asir Usuluh wa Bidayatuh* (Contemporary Egyptian Theatre: Origin and Initiation), (Cairo, 1986), 'Abd al-Mu'ti Sha'rawi examines the origin of the Egyptian theatre and remarks that there does not exist any Egyptian/Pharaonic, or Arab/Islamic influence in contemporary theatre.

This he proves by establishing that the Pharaohs as well as the ancient Arabs had no dramatic tradition. The notion that the Pharaonic funerary texts are actually dramatic texts has been promoted by researchers who are impressed with the element of conflict which constitutes the heart of both Greek and Pharaonic myths. In fact, since no evidence exists that these texts were ever performed, it is inconceivable to suggest a performance either outside the temple context or before an audience.

Arabs too both before and after the advent of Islam, did not cultivate any dramatic expression that could have influenced contemporary theatre production in Egypt. However, the Egyptian strolling players of the late 18th and early 19th Centuries who performed in the streets of Cairo as well as in houses of the rich during weddings and feasts, present the only authentically Egyptian manifestations of performance art. All dramatic performances hereafter are directly influenced by the Western model.

14. Khalid al-Mubarak, in *Arabic Drama: A Critical Introduction*, Khartoum, 1986, presents a detailed and profound study which places shadow play in its rightful position, as an art form worthy of the highest regard.

Najm and Mandur, the two major detractors of this "underrated genre", did not appreciate the significance of popular entertainment as a phase in the development of theatre and hence must shoulder the blame for its underestimation.

His belief in the intrinsic vitality and merit of the Arabic shadow play leads al-Mubarak to conclude that drama in Arabic-speaking countries lost its way severely when a European style theatre was established in 1847. The change of course to 'human theatre' without any continuity and completely neglecting centuries of valuable know-how in dramatic heritage resulted in a great loss.

In the second Chapter, 'Theatre and Nationalism', al-Mubarak explores how theatre was inextricably bound up with cultural events during the period of *Al-Nahda* (Arab awakening). In the melting pot that was Egypt, Syrians, Lebanese and Egyptians all experimented with the various mediums of self expression and were "in a position to challenge the hitherto unquestionable supremacy of poetry".

In the third Chapter, 'In Search for Form', the author investigates the attempts to reconcile the European theatrical forms with the indigenous Arabic forms and assesses their relative success and failure. He draws our attention to forms

which existed alongside the shadow play starting with Ancient Egyptian mystery plays which are significant but have no coherent cultural continuity. Next, he looks at the narrator who used the mosques as a forum for stories with political implications; mock battles on wooden horseback were the most popular entertainment in palaces, as were the widespread one-man comic performances. Even poets such as Abu Nawas were engaged in 'dramatic poetry' or long dialogues in verse with fellow poets. Most remarkable is the introduction of dramatic entertainment in a teaching hospital in Mamluk Egypt for the treatment of resident patients.

Although an unbiased assessment of these is distorted by the European ideal initiated by al-Naqqash, it is still possible to trace a tendency towards a search for identity in all the Arabic-speaking theatrical movements. A similar examination is also true in Sudan where the scope comprises Pre-Islamic Nubian rituals and Islamic *sufi* rituals. Finally, al-Mubarak's conclusion constitutes an exhortation to continue experimentation with our indigenous forms whilst maintaining an open mind.

15. Muhammad Badawi became interested in *khayal al-zill* through his study of classical Arabic poetry. His paper on "Medieval Arabic Drama: Ibn Daniyal" which is published in the *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 1982, gives long overdue attention to these much neglected texts. In particular, he corrects the dismissive attitude of previous scholars and reasserts their importance both artistically and sociologically.

Through examination of contemporary literary sources Badawi proves that shadow plays were already well-established by the time of Ibn Daniyal. Hence the three plays of Ibn Daniyal available to us are "a rather late stage in the development of a form of dramatic entertainment".

In 1171 A.D. Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi (Saladin) invited the judge and celebrated man of letters al-Qadi al-Fadil to view a shadow show by a group of players in the Fatimid court. Shadow drama was already a socially acceptable form of entertainment exhibiting literary value and dealing with moral themes as well as farce. The moral lessons in such entertainment reveal the medieval mind's love of allegory.

Shadow play, then, was appreciated by a socially diverse audience including even mystic poets of the calibre of Ibn al-Farid (1182-1235 A.D.) who went to the extent of demonstrating his fascination by referring to them in a lengthy mystical poem known as *Nazm al-Suluk* (Poem of the Way). In this mystical allegory, Ibn al-Farid describes not only the running scenes but also the audience reaction and makes an in depth analysis of the dramatic illusion, as the following illustrates:

And be thou not all heedless of the play:
The sport of playthings is the earnestness
Of a right earnest soul. Beware: turn not
Thy back on every tinselled form or state
Illogical: for in illusion's sleep

The shadow-phantom's spectre brings to thee
 That the translucent curtains do reveal.
 Thou seest forms of things in every garb
 Displayed before thee from behind the veil
 Of ambiguity: the opposites
 In them united for a purpose wise:
 Their shapes appear in each and every guise
 Silent, they utter speech: though still, they move:
 Themselves unluminous, they scatter light.

Badawi points out that the analogy Ibn al-Farid draws between "illusion's sleep" and dream "is not far from theories of dramatic illusion which began to appear in eighteenth century Europe, starting with Lord Kames' theory of 'ideal presence' and culminating with Coleridge's famous principle of 'the willing suspension of disbelief'".

Consequently, Badawi highlights the passage addressed by Ibn Daniyal to a fellow puppeteer in his preface to his play *Tayf al-Khayal* (The Shadow Spirit) describing his craft thus:

I have composed for you pieces (*babat*) in the genre of buffoonery, pertaining to good literature (*al-adab al-'ali*) and not to cheap or inferior writing (*al-dun*). They are of such quality that when you have portrayed their characters and put together their disparate parts, (projecting them) on a wax-polished screen before your assembled audiences you will see that they are splendid instances of their art, excelling in truth all other shadow plays.

By reference to the above as well as the texts of Ibn Daniyal's plays, Badawi gleans a set of conventions. Buffoonery was one of the earliest of these conventions and was used as a means to an end; the end being a performance of high calibre literature although its characters are drawn from the lowest strata of society. This constitutes another convention for shadow drama.

Each of the three plays has an unmistakable structure, an organised plot and a number of characters who wait to be summoned into the action or are introduced by the presenter. Brutality both physical and sexual is characteristic of these plays despite the characters' seemingly contradictory final act of repentance. Singing, music and dancing are an integral feature and the language of the text, including even the stage directions, is a mixture of verse and rhyming prose. Badawi finally concludes that, what gives the plays their value is the literary aspect, which relates to the particular language employed by the author.

In a recently published book *Early Arabic Drama*, 1988, Badawi's declared aim is to focus critical attention upon indigenous dramatic tradition not only to complete the picture but also to provide an historical background which explains certain characteristics of modern Arabic drama, both on the structural and thematic levels. He continues that imported dramatic art was in determined by the existing

local histrionic or theatrical tradition, which continued to exist along with the new form for a considerable period of time.

In addition to Ibn Daniyal's shadow plays, Badawi points to a few other forms which were known to medieval Arabs such as the dramatic recitations by the rhapsodes, *ta'ziya*, the religious passion plays which are virtually the only Muslim dramatic spectacle of a tragic nature, puppet shows, both *Aragoz* and shadow play which are basically satirical in purpose and farcical in nature and also the improvised scenes by clowns and players known as *muhabbizin* which are farcical in content.

These forms of dramatic tradition share certain characteristics. They are essentially popular entertainment although Ibn Daniyal's work is classed as serious literature and except for *ta'ziya* they are basically comic with a tendency towards the obscene. Thirdly the plays often consist of a series of tableaux or pageants featuring stereotyped characters. Last but not least their language is a mixture of verse and prose.

16. Shmuel Moreh calls on his expertise in the field of Arabic language and literature to challenge the common view concerning the absence of dramatic art in Arabic. Moreh builds on the work of Arab researchers starting with Ahmad Taymur, Hamada, al-Ra'i, 'Abd al-Hamid Yunis, 'Arzan, Sa'd and others who have been trying to point to dramatic elements in social and religious rituals and popular performances, or have identified some events and performances modestly as 'theatre manifestations'. Moreh boldly tries to prove in his paper "Live Theatre in Medieval Islam" published in 1986, that Arabs enjoyed a secular live theatre along with the medieval shadow plays and marionette production. Live actors performing dialogue as well as miming action for entertainment purposes are analysed in depth, and the meaning of technical terms such as *akhraja* (to produce), and the distinction between *Khayal* (image/statue/actor) and *khayal al-zill* are examined. In 1992 Moreh published a far-reaching research *Live Theatre and Dramatic Literature in the Medieval Arab World*, in which he highlights the existence of dramatic texts and live dramatic presentations to prove that "the medieval Arab world was far richer in theatrical culture than has so far been assumed". Moreh restates the point at issue as follows: why drama which was present in the medieval Arab world did not develop into high art?

Appendix II: Legends concerning the birth of puppets

Chinese legends are very colourful indeed. The most acclaimed is the story of a craftsman named Yan who lived around 1000 B.C. Yan performed before the Emperor Mu-Wang who was enraged at seeing one of the puppets wink provocatively at his concubines. The Emperor ordered that the puppeteer and his puppet be put to death. In reaction, the puppeteer insisted on carrying out the execution of the puppet himself because it was his own son, so he dismembered the puppet in the presence of the Emperor. The Emperor, seeing the offending figure was only a puppet, then reprieved the puppeteer. Following this incident, the Emperor decreed that women were not to see puppet performances thereafter.

Another fable tells a story of an emperor of the Han dynasty (around 262 B.C.) who was besieged in the city of Pinchen by the warrior-wife of Mao-Tun. The emperor was advised by one of his counsellors, who knew of the jealous nature of the wife, to place beautifully dressed female puppet dancers around the city walls. This prompted the wife to raise the siege and withdraw her armies, fearing her husband would fall in love with one of the dancers.

Still another Chinese legend links the origin of the shadow play to the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy, Guanyin, who is also the patron deity of the profession of puppetry. It was related that she illustrated her stories about Buddhist doctrines with figures cut out of bamboo leaves.

A Japanese fable which relies heavily on supernatural powers tells of an ugly child, Hiriuk, who was left by his parents adrift in a boat. The boat took him to Nishinomiya where he lived till his death. Now his restless spirit caused storms to rise and the fishermen's livelihood was disrupted until a man called Dokun built a temple to the gods. Then the sea became smooth again till Dokun's death and the subsequent neglect of the temple. With the gales rising again, a man called Haikudaiyu made a doll, brought it to the temple and, hiding himself behind it, announced that he was Dokun and wished to greet Hiriuk. Again the sea was smooth and the emperor summoned Haikudaiyu to perform in the court, then granted him office to perform in shrines across the country.

Indian legends, too, carry illuminating messages about the provenance of puppetry. An ancient fable informs us that the first Rajasthani puppeteer was born out of the mouth of the creator of the world, Brahma. To please his wife Sarasvati, the Goddess of Learning, Brahma breathed twice and produced the first puppeteer and the first puppet whose role was to beguile Sarasvati. The puppeteer intrigued the wife so completely that he was banished to earth.

A most popular legend is about the doll of Parvati, the wife of the creator and destroyer of the world, Siva. Apparently, the doll was so beautiful and lifelike that Parvati hid it from Siva's sight. But Siva saw it and was fascinated by its beauty, so he gave it life and it became his mistress.

From Africa, we have an example of a Nigerian legend which informs us how Akpan Etuk Uyo from the Ibibio tribe, as a living man, visited the kingdom of the dead. There he saw a puppet show, a recreation reserved for the dead. Upon his return to the world of the living, Akpan Etuk Uyo demonstrated to his fellow men the art of puppetry. Unfortunately he did not live long after the incident.

Legends from the Middle East do not try to claim early heritage; they are set in medieval times. However, their plots are always related to a ruler's court or to a sultan's palace. The following story is told of the Ottoman period (1517-1924 A.D.) when a Turkish Sultan, Selim I, conquered Egypt in 1517 A.D., captured the last Mamluk Sultan Tuman Bey and ordered that he be hanged. Upon seeing the scene reproduced with shadows, he invited the puppeteer to join him in Istanbul to present the scene to his son Sulayman.

Another Ottoman Sultan, Ochan, had two light-hearted masons among the workers constructing a mosque in Bursa. They were known as *Hacivat* and *Karagöz*. Their jokes caused delay in construction, so they were executed upon the orders of the Sultan. Later, the Sultan terribly missed the jokes of the clownish masons and, thanks to a Persian dervish, he was able to enjoy again their cheerfulness on a shadow screen.

The setting of the next story is Istanbul, the capital of the Ottoman Empire. Here lived a good man who was profoundly conscious of the misrule of the governing Pashas. After considering how to make the Sultan aware of the terrible situation, he decided to produce a shadow show whose fame might attract the Sultan's attention. His *Karagöz* succeeded in drawing in the people till one day the Sultan was amongst the audience. For this specific show, *Karagöz* had serious matters on display, the Pashas' malpractices. The Sultan swiftly removed and punished the Pashas and replaced them. The good man, founder of the *Karagöz* play, was assigned a vizier.

Appendix III: Maqamat al-Hariri

The Thirteenth Maqama

THE ENCOUNTER AT BAGHDAD

I was in company with some Shayks of the poets, on the banks of the Zowra, the Tigris, in the neighbourhood of Baghdad, and they were such that no rival could keep up with their dust.

We flowed in a discourse together till we had halved the day. Now, when we were finding our thoughts failing, and we were thinking of rest, we caught sight of an old woman, who approached from the distance. She was leading some children, as thin as spindles, and as weak as doves. When she saw us, she began to make towards us, and standing before us, said "Know, O you who are the refuge of the hoping, the stay of the widowed, that I am of the Princes of the tribes, the ladies who are kept jealously. My people and my husband were wont to settle on the Breast, and to journey at the Heart, to burden the Back, to advance the Hand; but when Fortune destroyed the Arms, and pained the Liver by means of the Limbs, and turned about till back was Belly, and the Eyeball grew dim, and the Eyebrow restless, and the Eye went forth, and the Palm was lost, and Forearm grew dry, and the Right Hand broke, and the Elbows departed, and there remained to us neither Front Tooth nor Eye Tooth. Since the Green Life has become Dust-Coloured, my White Day has been made Black, and even the Greek, the Blue-Eyed enemy, has pitied me, and now I welcome the Red Death!"

Knowing that she spoke in the poetic sense, I understood that what she was saying was that her people and her husband were wont to sit in the first place in the assembly, to march at the centre or at the head of the army; they conferred favours; but when Fortune destroyed those who helped them, and afflicted them by taking away their children and their servants, who laboured for them and brought them gain; and when their state was overthrown, then whoever looked on them with respect withdrew, their attendants were insolent, the coin was withdrawn, their quiet was lost, so was their power, and even the Greeks, the Blue-eyed enemy, pitied her, and she now wanted death in battle (the Red Death); and so we stopped to question her. I said "I am amazed at your beauty of metaphor, your prose has certainly enchanted us! How is your poetry?"

"Without a boast," said she, "it would make a rock gush forth water." She uncovered her crafty old face, and standing there in her well-worn smock, recited to us:

"I complain to God, with the complaining of the sick
Against the trouble of the unjust, the hateful time.
O, friends, I am of people who prospered long ago,
while the eyelid of fortune was cast down before them;
Their glory then was remarkable,

And their fame was spread abroad among men!
 When foraging failed in the ashy year (the year of drought)
 they were a goodly meadow;
 Their fires were kindled to the travellers, and they
 fed the guest with fresh meat;
 Their neighbour passed not his night in hunger, not
 through fear did he say 'Choking hinders me'.
 But the changes of destruction have made their seas
 of bounty to sink away from them, which I thought
 would not ever sink;
 And put away from among them, into the bowels of
 the earth, those that were lions of guarding, healers
 of the sick.
 That on which I carry is now my back, after being
 my beast, and my home is in the hollow, after being
 on the height.
 My little ones fail not to mourn their misery,
 of which there is some each day,
 When the pious man prays to his Lord by night,
 they also call to Him with gushing tears.
 O You who feed the young raven in the nest, and set
 the bone which is broken, and again broken;
 Appoint to us, O God, one whose honour is pure
 and washed from the filth of blame;
 Who will quench for us the fire of hunger, though
 only with a mess of sour milk,
 For, by Him to whom the forelocks shall bow down
 in the Day when the faces of the assemblage shall be
 black and white (the Believers white with joy and
 infidels black with despair).
 Were it not for these, my cheek would not expose
 itself, nor would I assay to the stringing of verse."

How she cleft our hearts with her verses, and called forward the gifts of our
 wallets. And when her sleeve was filled full with gold, and each of us had shown
 bounty to her, she retreated, the little ones following after her, and her mouth was
 wide with their thanks.

But after she was gone, the company was all agog to know where she might
 have gone, and they wondered how to fathom her history.

So I decided to go in search of the old woman, to find out for them, and to see
 where the little family were living, and to find out if we might help them more.

I found her tracks, and finally came into a street choked with people, thronging in
 several directions. There she drew away from the simple children and, leaving
 them behind, went into the shadow of a ruined mosque.

Through a chink in the door I spied her throw aside the veil, toss the woman's
 cloak into a corner, and reveal the act and figure of Abu Zayd.

Meaning to rush in upon him and rebuke him, I made as if to upbraid him. But at that moment he began to sing a strange song, the words of which I will always remember:

"O, would that I knew whether the time had got
 knowledge of my power,
 Whether or not it had learnt the real truth of how
 deep I go in deceiving;
 How many of its sons have I won by my wile and
 my fraud!
 How often I have sallied forth in my known form
 and disguise,
 To catch one set by preaching; another by poetry;
 To excite one mind by vinegar, and another by wine.
 Now if I had followed the frequented path all
 the length of my life,
 My fire and portion would have failed, my need
 and my loss would have lasted.
 So say to him who blames: 'Here is my excuse -
 take it'."

When this was ended, and the clearness of his case came to me, I knew that Abu Zayd's devil was a rebellious one, who would not listen to rebuke, and would do nothing but what he willed. So I turned back without speaking to him, and left him to the counting of his gold. I told my companions when they questioned me about what I had seen, and they became sullen at the loss of their money, and vowed to one another that they would in future deny all old women, but I pondered long and deeply upon what I had heard him sing.

The Assemblies of al-Hariri, Retold by Amina Shah, (London: The Octagon Press, 1980), p. 54-57

Appendix IV: Hikayat Abi'l-Qasim al-Baghdadi

Hikayat Abi'l-Qasim al-Baghdadi was composed by Muhamad b. Ahmed Abu'l-Muttaher al-Azadi around 1009-10 A.D for recitation by a live performer. The author also defines his work as a risala (treatise), a qissa (tale), a hadith (story) and a samar (conversation at an evening gathering). The text is constructed as a continuous dialogue between Abu'l-Qasim and the guests at the party with Abu'l-Qasim doing most of the talking. The text leaves chance for improvisation on several occasions. The plot of the hikaya is very simple. Following is Moreh's resume of it:

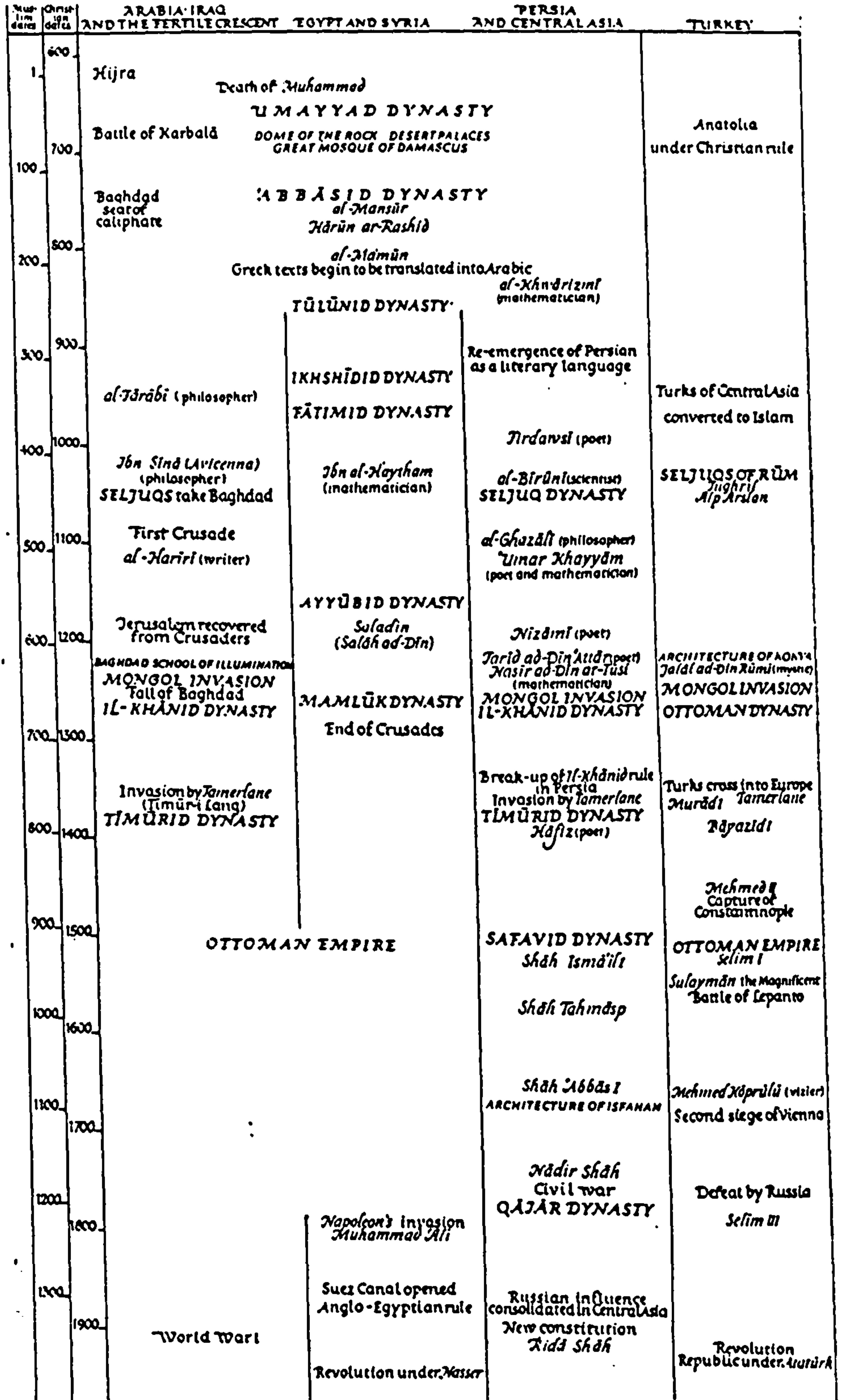
Abu'l-Qasim enters the house of a person of rank for a party, pretending to be a pious man and wearing a garment (taylasan) to go with the pretense. On meeting notable persons, he recites the Qur'an and scolds those who smile with reference to the fact that Husayn was killed at Karbala'. reciting some verses on his martyrdom. He continues in this vein until somebody tells him not to worry: here everyone drinks and fornicates. Only then does he start his performance. He begins by asking the host who the guests might be, and, on learning the answer, responds by uttering insulting remarks on the name and the profession. His remarks are full of ugly, dirty, morbid and pessimistic ideas and jokes, with a strong inclination towards obscenity, scatology and exceedingly vulgar language. When he is reprimanded for these remarks, he responds by uttering more revolting abuse and nasty verses, provoking anger in some of those present, and causing others to join in. Whereas other people's remarks are short, Abu 'l-Qasim's are long and decorated with verses. If anyone laughs at him, he gets furious and emits a barrage of rude answers and blasphemies against the Qur'an, the Prophet and all the sacred things of Islam, boasting about his blasphemies in a manner reminiscent of Amir Wisal in Ibn Daniyal's shadow-play Tayf al-Khayal. When Isfahan is mentioned, he starts comparing it with Baghdad, praising the latter as Paradise and denigrating Isfahan as an inferior city in the well-known style of mufakhara and munazara. He dwells on this subject for a long time, comparing the quarters, people, professions, horses, clothes, names, foods, wines and singers of the two cities, until eventually he asks for food. He recites a long poem on the kind of food he would like to eat, and when told that he is too demanding, adds further kinds of food to the list, describing how they are prepared. After he has eaten, he plays chess and makes full use of his repertoire of rude remarks while so doing, commenting on every move made by his opponent. Next he begins to satirise Baghdad, enumerating terms relating to swimming, boats and ships, as well as sailors' expressions in the process, and goes on to praise the people of Isfahan in a reversal of the first mufakhara. Next he turns to the players of mandoline (tumburi) and lute ('awwad) and flirts with the singing girl, reciting amorous verses to her and dirty verses to two men who approach her. He then farts in her presence and, when reprimanded by her, recites verses on farting in a manner reminiscent of the darratun at the Abbasid court. The guests eventually get tired of Abu 'l-Qasim's fooling around and decide to get him drunk. He notices their intentions and starts cursing every single one of them. After being scolded for his

rudeness, he asks the singer to sing and starts dancing and reciting verses until he falls to the ground. He curses the singer, using musical terms and a long poem of impudence. At last he falls into a drunken stupor. When he gets up the next morning at the call of prayer, he starts reproving the guests for their impudence, and calls upon them to repent. He once more recites verses from the Qur'an and pious verses in praise of Husayn with which he started his performance. He then puts on his garment as before and leaves the house.

Shmuel Moreh, *Live Theatre and Dramatic Literature in The Medieval Arabic World*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1988) pp. 95-99.

APPENDIX V

CHRONOLOGICAL CHART OF ISLAM



Select Bibliography

- 'Abdel-Wahab, Farouk. *Modern Egyptian Drama: An Anthology*. Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1974.
- Abu al-Hasan, Hiyam. "Al-Masrah Al-Misri Al-Qadim Wa Masadiruh". *Fusul*. Vol.12.No.3 (1982).
- Abu Saif, Leila. "Najib Al-Rihani: From Buffoonery To Social Comedy". *Journal Of Arabic Literature*. Vol.IV (1973).
- . *Najib Al-Rihani Wa Tatawwur Al-Kumidya Fi Misr*. Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1972.
- Abu Shanab, 'Adil. *Masrah 'Arabi Qadim: Qaragoz*. Damascus: Wizarat al-Thaqafa Mudiriyyat al-Ta'lif wa al-Tarjama, nd.
- Abu Zayd, 'Ali Ibrahim. *Khayal Al-Zill*. 2nd ed. Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1983.
- Adachi, Barbara. *Back Stage At Bunraku*. New York; Weatherhill, 1985.
- Al-Afghani, Sa'id. *Aswaq Al-'Arab Fi Al-Jahiliyya Wa Al-Islam*. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1974.
- And, M^etin. *Karagöz: Turkish Shadow Theatre*. Istanbul: rev. ed. 1975; rpt., A Dost Publication, 1979.
- . "Turkish Shadow Theatre: Karagöz". *East Asian Cultural Studies*. Vol.XV, No.1-4 (March 1976).
- Arnold, Thomas. *Painting In Islam: The Study Of Place Of Pictorial Art In Muslim Culture*. rev.ed. 1928;rpt. New York: Dover Publication, 1965.
- 'Arzan, 'Ali 'Uqla. *Al-Siyasa Fi Al-Masrah*. Damascus: Itihad al-Katib al-'Arabi, 1978.
- . *Al-Zawahir Al-Masrahiyya 'Ind Al-'Arab*. rev. 3rd ed. 1981; rpt., Damascus: Mansurat Itihad al-Kuttab al-'Arab, 1985.
- The Art Of Islam*. The Arts Council Of Great Britain. England: Westerham Press Ltd, 1976.
- 'Assaf, Roger. *Al-Masrah: Aqni'at Al-Madina*. Beirut: Dar al-Muthallath, 1984.
- . "Mas'alat Al-Tamthil Fi Al-Mujtama' Al-Islami". *Mawaqif*. No.46 (Spring 1983).
- Aswad, Nizar. "Al-Hakawati Fi Dimashq". *Al-Ma'thurat Al-Sha'biyyah*. No.18 (April 1990).

- . "Khayal Al-Zill Fi Surya". *Al-Ma'thurat Al-Sha'biyyah*. No.13 (Jan.1989).
- Atil, Esin. *Kalila Wa Dimna: Fables From A Fourteenth-Century Arabic Manuscript*. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1981.
- . *Renaissance Of Islam: Art Of The Mamluks*. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1981.
- 'Aziza, Muhammad. *Al-Islam Wa Al-Masrah*. Trans. Rafiq al-Sabban. Cairo: Dar al-Hilal, 1971.
- . *Les Formes Traditionnelles Du Spectacle*. Tunis: Societe Tunisienne de Diffusion, 1975.
- Badawi, M. M. *Early Arabic Drama*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1988.
- . "Medieval Arabic Drama: Ibn Daniyal". *Journal Of Arabic Literature*. XIII (1982)
- . *Modern Arabic Drama In Egypt*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- Baktash, Mayel. "Ta'ziyeh And Its Philosophy". *Ta'ziyeh: Ritual And Drama In Iran*. Ed. Peter Chelkowski. New York: New York university Press, 1979.
- Al-Baqli, Muhammad Qandil. *Suwar Min Adabuna Al-Sha'bi*. Cairo: Anglo Egyptian Bookshop, n.d.
- Banham, Martin. Ed. *The Cambridge Guide To World Theatre*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- Barbour, Navil. "The Arabic Theatre In Egypt". *Bulletin Of School Of Oriental And African Studies*. Vol.8 (1935-37).
- Barley, Nigel. *Foreheads Of The Dead: An Anthropological View Of Kalabari Ancestral Screens*. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988.
- Baten, Lea. *The Image And The Motif: Japanese Dolls*. Japan: Shufunotomo Co., Ltd., 1986.
- Beeman, William. "Cultural Dimension Of Performance Conventions In Iranian Ta'ziyeh". *Ta'ziyeh: Ritual And Drama In Iran*. New York: New York University Press, 1979.
- Bekate, Meyong. "A Glimpse of the Puppet in Central Africa". *UNIMA Information Special: L'Afrique Noire en Marionnettes*. Charlevilles - Mezieres, 1988.
- Al-Bahnasi, 'Afif. *Dirasat Nazariyya Fi Al-Fann Al-'Arabi*. Cairo: Al-Hay'a al-Misriyya al-'Amma li'l-Kitab, 1974.

- Bell, John. "Bread and Puppet Theatre and the Discovery of Performing Objects". *Bread And Puppet Museum*. Glover: Bread and Puppet Theatre Press, 1989.
- Berliner, Nancy Zeng. *Chinese Folk Art: The Small Skills Of Carving Insects*. New York: Little Brown And Company, 1986.
- Berthold, Margot. *A History Of World Theater*. New York: Fredrick Ungar, 1972.
- Billington, Michael, Ed. *Performing Arts: A Guide To Practice And Appreciation*. 1980;rpt. London: New Burlington Books, 1988.
- Black, Jeremy and Anthony Green,. *Gods Demons And Symbols Of Ancient Mesopotamia: An Illustrated Dictionary*. London: British Museum, 1992.
- Blair, Shiela S.and Jonathan M. Bloom. Ed. *Images Of Paradise In Islamic Art*. Hanover: Darmouth College, 1991.
- Boehn, Max von. *Dolls And Puppets*. Trans. Josephine Nicole. 1932;rpt. New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1972.
- Bohmer, Gunter. *Puppets Through The Ages: An Illustrated History*. Trans. Gerald Morice. 1969; rpt. London: Macdonald, 1971.
- Botterweek, J.and H. Ringress. *Theological Dictionary Of The Old Testament*. Michigan: W.Eerdmans, 1975.
- Brandon, James. *Theater In South East Asia*. USA: Harvard University Press, 1967.
- Brecht, Stefen. *Peter Schumann's Bread And Puppet Theatre*. 2 vols. New York: Routlege, Chapman & Hall, 1988.
- BridhyaKorn, Dhaninivat. *The Nang*. Bangkok: The National Cultural Institute, 1954.
- Caiger-Smith, Alan. *Lustre Pottery: Technique, Tradition And Innovation In Islam And The Western World*. London: Faber & Faber, 1985.
- Chelkowski, Peter. "Ta'ziyeh: Indigenous Avant-Garde Theatre In Iran". *Ta'ziyeh: Ritual And Drama In Iran*. New York: New York University Press, 1979.
- Connelly, Bridget. *Arab Folk Epic And Identity*. Berkely: University Of Press, 1986.
- Currell, David. *The Complete Book Of Puppet Theatre*. 1974;rpt. London: A & C Black, 1985.

- Dalley, Stephanie. Trans. *Myth From Mesopotamia: Creation, The Flood, Gilgamesh And Others*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- David, James. *Arab Painting*. Bombay: Tata Press, 1978.
- . *Islamic Art: An Introduction*. London: Hamlyn, 1974.
- Dégan, E.A. *Emotions In Motion: Theatrical Puppets And Masks From Black Africa*. Montreal: Galerie Amrad African Arts, 1990.
- Drewal, Thompson Margaret. *Yoruba Ritual: Performers, Play, Agency*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992.
- Drioton, Etienne. *Al-Masrah al-Misri al-Qadim*. Trans. Tharwat 'Ukasha. Cairo: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi, 1967.
- . "Le Theatre Dan L'Ancienne Egypt". *Revue D'Histoire Du Theatre*. No. I-II (1954).
- Duma-Ngo, Malutama. "The Religious Origins Of The Animated Objects And Puppets In Black Africa". *UNIMA Informations, Special: Afrique Noire En Marionnettes*. Charleville-Mezieres, 1988.
- Elderkin, Kate. "Jointed Dolls In Antiquity". *American Journal Of Archeology*. (Oct., 1930).
- Esslin, Martin. *The Field Of Drama: How The Signs Of Drama Create Meanings On Stage And Screen*. London: Methuen, 1987.
- Ettinghausen, Richard. "The Man Made Setting". *The World Of Islam: Faith, People, Culture*. Ed. Bernard Lewis. 1976; rpt. London: Thames And Hudson, 1992.
- . *Treasures Of Asia: Arab Painting*. 1962; rpt. New York: Rizzoli International, 1977.
- Ettinghausen, Richard And Grabar, Oleg. *The Art And Architecture Of Islam*. Middlesex: Penguin, 1987.
- Al-Faruqi, Ismail. "Islam And Architecture". *Fine Arts In Islamic Civilization*. Ed. Muhammad A.J. Beg. 2nd Ed. 1977; rpt. Malaysia: the University Of Malaya Press, 1981.
- . "Islam And Art". *Studia Islamica*. Ex fasciculo XXXVII. Paris: Maisonneuve Larose, n.d.
- Al-Faruqi, Ismail and Lamyia. Lois Faruqi. *The Cultural Atlas Of Islam*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1986.

- Folk, Toby, Ed. *Treasures Of Islam*. London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 1985.
- Forough, Mehdi. *A Comparative Study Of Abraham's Sacrifice In Persian Passion Plays And Western Mystery Plays*. Tehran: Ministry Of Culture And Arts Press, 1952.
- Frankfort, Groenewegen H. A. *Arrest And Movement: Space And Time In The Art Of The Ancient Middle East*. 1951; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987.
- Fraser, Antonia. *A History Of Toys*. London: Spring Book, 1966.
- Gascoigne, Bamber. *World Theatre: An Illustrated History*. London: Ebury Press, 1968.
- Gerdjikov, Stantscho. "A New Art Is Born". *The Puppet Theatre In The Modern World*. Ed. UNIMA And Margareta Niculescu. Trans. E. Osers & E. Stick. London: George Harrap & Co., 1967.
- Gombrich, E.H. *Art And Illusion: A Study In The Psychology Of Pictorial Representation*. 5th ed. 1960 ; rpt. London: Phaidon, 1992.
- Grabar, Oleg. " Architecture And Art". *The Genius Of Arab Civilization*. Ed. John Hayes. 2nd ed. 1975; rpt. London: Eurabia, 1983.
- . "Cities and Citizens". *The World Of Islam: Faith, People, Culture*. Ed. Bernard Lewis. 1976; rpt. London: Thames and Hudson 1992.
- . *The Formation Of Islamic Art*. 1973; rpt. London: Yale University Press, 1987.
- . *The Illustrations Of The Maqamat*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1984.
- . "Introduction". *Treasures Of Islam*. London: Sotheby's / Philip Wilson Publishers, 1985.
- . " Pictures Or Commentaries: The Illustrations Of Maqamat Al-Hariri". *Studies In Art And Literature In The Near East*. Utah: New York University Press, 1974.
- El-Hallaq, Ousama. "Le Theatre D'Ombres Arabe Et Sa Musique". Diss. Universite De La Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris III, 1988.
- Hamada, Ibrahim. *Khayal Al-Zill Wa-Tamthiliyat Ibn Daniyal*. Cairo: al-Mu'assasa al-Misriyya al-'Amma, 1963.
- Hammur, 'Arfan. *Aswaq Al-'Arab: 'Ard Adabi Tarikhi Li'l-Aswaq Al-Mawsammiyya Al-'Amma 'Ind Al-'Arab*. Beirut: Dar al-Shura, 1979.
- Hart, George. *Egyptian Myths*. London: British Museum Publication, 1990.

- Harwood, Ronald. *All The World's A Stage*. London: Secker And Warburg, 1984.
- Al-Hasan, Mahmud Sulayman. "Al-Sulala Al-'Admiya Min Al-'Ara'is Al-Sha'biyya Fi Misr". *Al-Ma'thurat Al-Sha'biyyah*. 27 (July 1992).
- Hattox, Ralph. *Coffee And Coffeeshouses: The Origin Of A Social Beverage In The Medieval Near East*. Seattle: University Of Washington, 1985.
- Helstien, Mel, Ed. *Asian Puppets: Wall Of The World*. Los Angeles: University of California, 1979.
- Al-Hijazi, Husayn. "Khayal Al-Zill Fi Al-Masrah Al-Suri Wa Fasl Shalalub". *Al-Hayat Al-Masrahiya*. No.14 (Autumn 1980).
- . "Khayal Al-Zill Fi Al-Sahil Al-Suri Wa Fasl Qaragozan Wa 'Aiwazan". *Al-Hayat Al-Masrahiya*. No.s11 & 12 (winter and Spring 1980).
- . "Masrah Khayal Al-Zill Wa Tahawulatuh: Khayal Al-Zill Fi Al-Sahil Al-Suri Wa Fasl Al-'Ars". *Al-Hayat Al-Masrahiya*. No.9 (1979).
- Hill, Donald. "Mechanical Technology". *The Genius Of Arab Civilisation: Source of Renaissance*. Ed. John Hayes. 2nd ed. 1975; rpt. London: Eurobia, 1983.
- Hillier, Mary. *Automata And Mechanical Toys*. 1976; rpt. London: Bloomsbury Books .1988.
- Hitti, Philip. *History Of The Arabs*. 1937; rpt. London: Macmillan ,1986.
- Hobson, Christine. *Exploring The World Of The Pharaohs*. 1987; rpt. London: Thames And Hudson, 1990.
- Hodgson, G.S. Marshall. "Islam And Image". *History Of Religions*. 32 Vols. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1964-1993).
- . *The Venture Of Islam: Conscience And History In A World Civilization*. 3 Vols. Chicago: The University Of Chicago Press, 1974.
- The Holy Qur'an: Translation And Commentary*. Trans. and Commentary 'Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali. n.p.: Islamic Propagation Centre International, n.d.
- Hopwood, Derek, Ed. *Three Shadow Plays By Muhammad Ibn Daniyal*. Cambridge: Trustees Of The "E.J.W. Gibb Memorial", 1992.
- Al-Hut, Salim. *Al-Mitholojya 'Ind Al-'Arab*. Beirut: Dar al-Nahar, 1979.
- Ibn Manzur. *Lisan Al-'Arab*. 18 Vols. Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath, 1988.
- Al-Ilfi, Abu Salih. *Al-Fann Al-Islami*. Cairo: Dar al-Ma'rif, n.d.

- James, T.G.H. *Egyptian Painting*. London: British Museum Press, 1985.
- Al-Jayyar, Midhat. "Al-Masrah Fi Al-'Usur Al-Islamiyya Al-Wusta". *Fusul*. Vol.2.No.3 (1982).
- Jilin, Liu. *Chinese Shadow Puppet Plays*. Beijing: Morning Glory Publishers, 1988.
- Joseph, Haimen Helen. *A Book Of Marionettes*. London: George Allen And Unwin Ltd, 1931.
- Jurkowski, Henryk. *The Aspects Of Puppet Theatre*. London: Puppet Centre Trust, 1988.
- . *Ecrivains Et Marionnettes: Quatre Siecle De Litterature Dramatique*. Trans. Max Blusztajn. Charleville-Mezieres: Institute International De La Marionnettes, 1991.
- Kahle, Paul. "The Arabic Shadow Play In Medieval Egypt". *Journal Of Pakistan Historical Society*. No.2 (1954).
- . "Ismishe Schattenspielfiguren Aus Egypten". *Der Islam : Zeitschrift Fur Geschihte Und Kultur Des Islamischen Orients*. Vol. 1. Strsburg: Verlag Von Karl J. Trubner, 1910.
- Kamil, Jill. *Coptic Egypt: History And Guide*. 1987;rpt. Cairo: American University Of Cairo Press, 1990.
- Kamil, Jill. *The Ancient Egyptians*. 1976;rpt. Cairo: American University Of Cairo Press, 1984.
- Karakuri Ningyo: An Exhibition Of Ancient Festival Robots From Japan*. London: Barbican Art Gallery, 1985.
- Keen, Donald. *Bunraki: The Art Of The Japanese Puppet Theatre*. Palo Alto: Kondasha International Press, 1965.
- Al-Khadim, Sa'd. *Al-Duma Al-Mutaharika 'Ind Al-'Arab*. Cairo: Al-Dar al-Qawmiyya li'l-Tiba'a wa al-Nashr, n.d.
- Khaznadar, Fransoise Et Cherif. *Le Theatre D'Ombres*. Rennes: Maison De La Culture, 1978.
- Al-Khozai, M.A. *The Development Of The Early Arabic Drama 1847-1900*. London: Longman, 1984.
- Kirby, E.T. *UR-Drama: The Origins Of Theatre*. New York: New York University Press, 1975.

- Kominz, Laurence R. "Puppet Language, Human Body". *The Language Of The Puppet*. Ed. L. Kominz and M. Levenson. Washington: Pacific Puppetry Center Press, 1990.
- Kühnel, Ernst. *The Arabesque: Meaning And Transformation Of An Ornamentation*. Trans. Richard Ettinghausen. Austria: Verlag Fur Sammler, 1949.
- Landau, Jacob M. "The Arab Theatre". *Middle East Affairs*. Vol.IV.No.1 (1953).
- . "Shadow Plays In The Near East". *Edoth*. Vol.III. No.1-2 (Oct 1947 & Jan 1948).
- . *Studies In The Arab Theatre And Cinema*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1958.
- . "The Theatre In Egypt". *Middle East Affairs*. Vol.IV.No.1 (Jan 1953).
- Lane, E.W. *Arabic-English Lexicon*. London: William Norgate, 1874.
- Layton, Robert. *The Anthropology Of Art*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Longmans Concise Dictionary*. 1982; rpt. Great Britain: Miriam Webster Inc. & Longman Ltd, 1985.
- Lonsdale, Steven. *Animals And The Origins Of Dance*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1981.
- Malkin, Michael. *Traditional And Folk Puppets Of The World*. New York: Barnes And Co., 1977.
- Mamnoun, Perviz. "Ta'ziyeh From The Viewpoint Of Western Theatre". *Ta'ziyeh: Ritual And Drama*. New York: New York University Press, 1979.
- Mandur, Muhammad. *Al-Masrah*. Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1963
- Manin, Charles. *Histoire des Marionnettes en Europe: Depuis l'Antiquite' jusqu'a'Nos Jours*. Paris: Slatkine Ressources, 1981.
- Manniche, Lise. *Music And Musicians In Ancient Egypt*. London: British Museum Press, 1991.
- Mazzaoui, Michel. "Shi'ism And Ashura In South Lebanon". *Ta'ziyeh: Ritual And Drama In Iran*. New York: New York University Press, 1979.
- McCall, Henrieta. *Mesopotamian Myths*. London: British Museum Publication, 1990.

- McPhér^alin, Paul. *The Puppet Theatre In America*. 1949; rpt. Boston: Plays Inc., 1969.
- Mahfuz, Isam. *Sinaryo 'Ala Al-Masrah Al-'Arabi Fi Mi'at 'Aam*. Beirut: Dar al-Bahith, 1981.
- Melikian-Chivani, A.S. "The Aesthetics Of Islam". *Treasures Of Islam*. London: Sotheby's / Philip Wilson Publishers, 1985.
- Mernissi, Fatima. *Beyond The Veil: Male-Female Dynamics In A Muslim Society*. rev. ed. 1975; rpt. London: al-Saqi Books, 1985.
- . *The Forgotten Queens Of Islam*. Trans. Mary Jo Lakeland. 1990; rpt. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993.
- Al-Miqati, Muhammad Nur Al-Din. *Trablus Fi Al-Nisf Al-Awal Min Al-Qarn Al-'Ishrin*. Beirut: n.p., 1978.
- Monroe, James. *The Art Of Badi' az-Zaman al-Hamadhani As Picaresque Narrative*. Beirut: American University Of Beirut, 1983.
- Moreh, Shmuel. *Live Theatre And Dramatic Literature In The Arab World*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992.
- . "Live Theatre In Medieval Islam". *Studies In Islamic History And Civilization In Honour Of Prof. David Ayalon*. Ed. M. Sharon. Leiden: Brill, 1986.
- . "The Shadow Play In The Light Of Arabic Literature". *Journal Of Arabic Literature*. Vol. XVIII (1987).
- . *Studies In Modern Arabic Prose And Poetry*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988.
- Al-Mubarak, Khalid. *Arabic Drama: A Critical Introduction*. Khartoum: Khartoum University Press, 1986.
- Murray, J. A. *New English Dictionary On Historical Principles*. 13 Vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897.
- Myrsiades, Linda. *The Karagiozis Heroic Performance In Greek Shadow Theater*. Trans. Kostas Myrsiades. Hanover: University Press Of New England, 1988.
- Naddaf, Sandra. *Arabesque: Negative Structure And Aesthetics Of Repetition In 1001 Nights*. Illinois: North Western University Press, 1991.
- Najm, Muhammad Yusuf. *Al-Masrahiyya Fi Al-Adab Al-'Arabi Al-Hadith 1847-1914*. 3rd ed. Beirut: Dar al-Thaqafa, 1956.

- Napier, David. *Masks Transformation And Paradox*. Berkeley: University Of California Press, 1986.
- Narisckine, Nathalie. Ed. *Marionnettes Et Ombre D'Asie*. Paris: Le Louvre Des Antiquaires, 1985.
- Obraztsov, Sergei. *The Chinese Puppet Theatre*. Trans. J.T. MacDermott . London: Faber and Faber, 1961.
- . *My Profession*. Trans. Doris Bradbury. Moscow: Raduga Publishers, 1985.
- . "Some Considerations On The Puppet Theatre". *The Puppet Theatre Of The Modern World*. Ed. UNIMA And Niculescu, Margareta. Trans. E. Osers & E. Stick. London: George Harrap & Co., 1967.
- Pani, Jiwan. *Living Dolls: Story Of Indian Puppets*. India: Publication Division Ministry Of Information And Broadcasting, 1986.
- . *World Of Other Faces: Indian Masks*. India: Publication Division Ministry Of Information And Broadcasting, 1986.
- Pawlik, Jacek Jan. "Performance Of Life After Death, The Unil, Object-Actor Of The Funeral Ceremony. *UNIMA Information Special: L'Afrique Noire En Marionnettes*. Charleville-Mezieres, 1988.
- Peacock, James. "Graphic Notes on Sacred and Profane Performance". *By Means Of Performance: Intercultural Studies Of Theatre And Ritual*. Ed. Richard Schechner and Willa Appel. Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1990.
- Pellat, Charles. "Jewellers With Words". *The World Of Islam: Faith, People, Culture*. Ed. Bernard Lewis. 1976; rpt. London: Thames and Hudson, 1992.
- Pimpaneau, Jacques. "Theatre D'Orient: Le Theatre D'Ombres En Chine". *Bouffonneries*. No. 12.
- Pischel, Richard. *The Home Of The Puppet Play*. Trans. Mildred Tawney. London: Luzac & Co., 1902.
- Putentsiva, Tamara. *Alf 'Aam wa- 'Aam 'Ala al- Masrah al-'Arabi*. Trans. Tawfiq al-Mu'adhin. Beirut: Dar al-Farabi, 1981.
- Qataya, Salman. *Al-Masrah Al-'Arabi Min Ayn Wa Ila Ayn*. Damascus: Mu'assasat al-Kuttab al-'Arab, 1972.
- . *Nusus Min Khayal Al-Zill*. Damascus: Itihad al-Kuttab al-'Arab, 1977
- Qifeng, Fu. *Chinese Acrobatic Through The Ages*. Trans. Ouyang Caiwei And Rhoda Stock. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1985.

- Qureshi, Ishtiaq H. "Muslim Art". *Fine Arts In Islamic Civilization*. Ed. Muhammad A.J. Beg. 2nd Ed. 1977; rpt. Malasia: The University Of Malaya, 1981.
- Qutb, Sayyid. *Al-Taswir Al-Fanni Fi Al-Qur'an*. Beirut: Dar al-Shuruq, 1980.
- Al-Ra'i, 'Ali. *Fann Al-Kumidya: Min Khayal Al-Zill Ila Najib Al-Rihani*. Cairo: Dar al-Hilal, 1971.
- . *Al-Masrah Fi Al-Watan Al-'Arabi*. Kuwait: 'Alam al-Ma'rifa, 1980.
- . *Masrah Al-Sha'b*. Cairo: Dar Sharqiyyat, 1993.
- Raof, Michael. *Cultural Atlas Of Mesopotamia And The Ancient Near East*. Oxford: Facts On File, 1990.
- Rashid, Raja'. "Al-'Ara'is Wa Al-Lu'b Al-Sha'biyya Fi Misr". *Al-Ma'thurat Al-Sha'biyyah*. No. 19 (July 1990).
- Reade, Julian. *Mesopotamia*. London: British Museum Press, 1991.
- Rice, David Talbot. *Islamic Art*. rev.ed. 1965; rpt. Singapore: Thames And Hudson, 1993.
- Richmond, F, D. Swann, and P. Zarrilli. *Indian Theatre: Traditions Of Performance*. Honolulu: University Hawaii Press, 1990.
- Ridgeway, William. *Drama's And Dramatic Dances Of Non European Races*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1915.
- Rushdie, Salman. *The Satanic Verses*. New York: Pen Group, 1988.
- Sa'd, Faruq. "Khayal Al-Zill Al-'Arabi". Diss. 3 vols. University Of Saint Joseph, Beirut, 1981-82.
- . "Khayal Al-Zill Al-'Arabi". *Al-Naashir Al-'Arabi*. (Feb. 1984).
- . Ed. *Maqamat Badi' AL-Zaman Al-Hamadhani*. Beirut: Dar al-Afaq al-Jadida, 1982.
- . "Al-Masrah Fi Al-Turath Al-Sha'bi". *Al-Adaab*. No. 1-3 (Jan-March 1987).
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.
- Salibi, Kamal. *The Bible Came From Arabia*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1985.
- Schechner, Richard. *Performance Theory*. 1977; rpt. New York: Routledge, 1988.

- Schipper, Mineke. *Theatre And Society In Africa*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1982.
- Schwimmer, E. "Religious Culture". *People In Culture*. Ed. I. Rossi. New York: Bergin & Gravey, 1980.
- Scott, A. C. *The Theatre In Asia*. London: Weidenfeld And Nicolson, 1972.
- Seguy, Marie-Rose. *The Miraculous Journey Of Mohamet: Miraj Nameh*. Trans. Richard Pevear. New York: George Braziller, 1977.
- Segy, Ladislas. *Masks Of Black Africa*. New York: Dover Books, 1976.
- Shah, Amina. Retold by. *The Assemblies Of Al-Hariri: Fifty Encounters With The Shaykh Abu Zayd Of Serug*. London The Octagon Press, 1980.
- Shahidi, Anayatullah. "Literary And Musical Development In Ta'ziyeh". *Ta'ziyeh: Ritual And Drama In Iran*. New York: New York University Press, 1979.
- Al-Shal, 'Abd Al-Ghani. *'Arusat Al-Mulid*. Cairo: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi, 1967.
- Al-Shami, Yahya. *Al-Shirk Al-Jahili Wa Alihat Al-'Arab Al-Ma'buda Qabl Al-Islam*. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr al-Lubnani, 1986.
- Al-Sha'rawi, 'Abd al-Mu'ti. *Al-Masrah Al-Misri Al-Mu'asir: Asluh Wa Bidayatuh*. Cairo: Al-Hay'a al-'Amma Li'l Kitab, 1986.
- Sheldon, Cheney. *The Theatre: Thousand Years Of Drama, Acting And Stagecraft*. London: Longmans Green & Co., 1929.
- Sherzer, Dina And Joel Sherzer. Eds. *Humor And Comedy In Puppetry: Celebration In Popular Culture*. Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1987.
- Shoshan, Boaz. *Popular Culture In Medieval Cairo*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Simmen, Renè. *The World Of Puppets*. 1972;rpt. London: Phaidon Press Ltd, 1975.
- Smyth, Mary. "Kinesthetic Communication In Dance". *Dance Research Journal*. No.16/2 (Fall, 1984).
- Speaight, George. *The History Of The English Puppet Theatre*. 2nd ed., 1955;rpt. London: Robert Hale, 1990.
- . "The Voice Of The Puppet". *The Language Of The Puppet*. Washington: Pacific Puppetry Center Press, 1990.

- Stalburg, Helmer Roberta. *China's Puppets*. San Francisco: China Books, 1984.
- Stocchi, Sergio. *L'Islam Nelle Stampe*. Milano: Itinerari D'immagini, 1988.
- Strotham, R. "Ta'ziya". *Encyclopaedia Of Islam*. 9 Vols. 1927; rpt. Leiden: J.Brill, 1993.
- Al-Suwayfi, Mukhtar. *Khayal Al-Zill Wa Al-Ara'is Fi Al-'Alam*. Cairo: al-Katib al-'Arabi, 1976.
- . "Al-Aragoz Al-Misri Wa Karagiozis Al-Yunani". *Al-Masrah*. No.27 (March 1966).
- Taylor, John. *Egypt And Nubia*. London: British Museum Press, 1991.
- Taymur, Ahmad. *Khayal Al-Zill Wa Al-Li'b Wa Al-Tamathil Al-Musawwara 'Ind Al-'Arab*. Cairo: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi bi Misr, 1957.
- Thorau, Peter. *The Lion Of Egypt: Sulatn Baybars I And The Middle East In The Thirteenth Century*. Trans. P.M. Holt. London: Longman, 1987.
- Tietze, Andreas. *The Turkish Shadow Theatre And The Puppet Collection Of The L.A. Mayer Memorial Foudation*. Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1977.
- Tilakasiri, J. "Dramaturgy And The Asian Puppet Theatre". *Present Trends in Research Of The World Puppetry*. Ed. Marek Waszkiel. Warsaw: Institute Of Art Of The Polish Academy Of Science, 1992.
- . *The Puppet Theatre Of Asia*. Cylon: Department Of Cultural Affairs, 1969.
- Tulaymat, Zaki. *Al-Tamthil, Al-Tamthiliyyat, Al-Fann Al-Tamthili 'Ind Al-'Arab*. Kuwait: Mu'assasat al-Masrah wa al-Fann , 1965.
- 'Ukasha, Tharwat. *Fann Al-Wasiti: Min Khilal Maqamat Al-Hariri*. Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 1992.
- . *Mi'raj-Nameh: Athar Islami Musawar*. 2 Vols. Beirut: Dar al-Mustaqbal al-'Arabi, 1987.
- Al-'Ulabi, Ahmad. "Awwal Katib Masrah 'Arabi". *Dirasat 'Arabiyya*. No.11 (Sept. 1966).
- Waszkiel, Marek, Ed. *Present Trends In Research Of The World Puppetry*. Warsaw: Institute Of The Polish Academy of Sciences, UNIMA-Poland, 1992.
- Wirth, Andrzej. "Semiological Aspects Of The Ta'ziyeh ". *Ta'ziyeh: Ritual And Drama*. New York: New York University Press, 1979.

Yarshater, Ehsan. Ta'ziyeh And Pre-Islamic Mourning Rites In Iran". *Ta'ziyeh: Ritual And Drama In Iran*. New York: New York University Press, 1979.

Yorick. "A History Of Puppets: Ancient Puppets In The Temple". *The Mask*. Ed.E.G. Craig. Vol.5.No.2 ,1912.New York: Benjamin Blom Inc., 1967.

Yunis, 'Abd al-Hamid. *Khayal Al-Zill*. Cairo: al-Dar al-Misriyya li'l-Ta'lif wa al-Tarjama, 1963.

---. "Al-Sha'ir Wa Al-Rababa". *Al-Majalah*. No.3 (Feb. 1960).

Al-Zahabi, 'Abd Al-Razaq."Tajriba Jadida Fi Ihya' Khayal Al-Zill". *Al-Hayat Al-Masrahiya*. No.19 (Autumn 1982).

Al-Zubaydi. *Taj al-'Arus*. 10 Vols.Beirut Dar Sadir, 1966.