

ARAB WORLD TOURISM

SEPTEMBER 1968

MEMBER



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Mr. HASSAN EL HASAN
New director General
of Tourism Lebanon





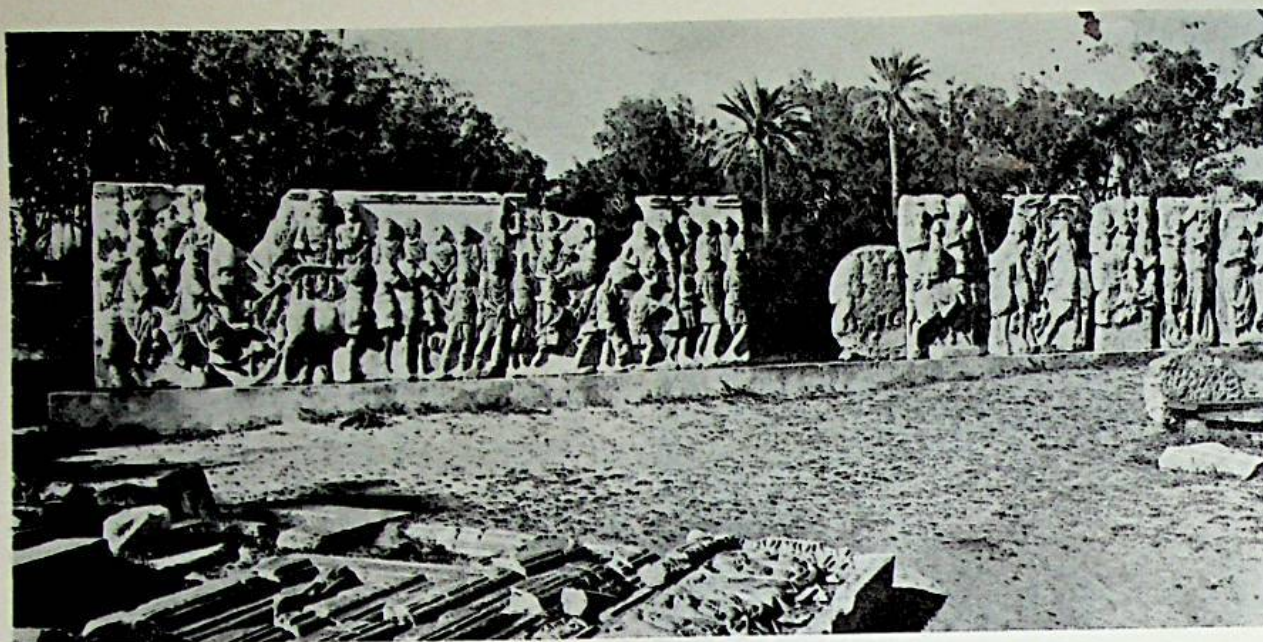
TRIPOLI — THE CLOCK TOWER

LIBYA'S tourist attractions consist in the strikingly different aspects of the nature of her land, the picturesque landscape, the customs of her inhabitants and the rich treasure of Greek, Roman and Arabs antiquities.

Indeed, the Libyan landscape offers a series of sharp contrasts between the magnificent scenery of the Jebel Akhdar, the Green Mountain of Cyrenaica, covered with woods and inset with impressive, steep valleys cutting into a wide steppe which turns into grasslands in the rainy season ; the wild desolation of deserts with their sand hills or moon landscape ; green oasis, sandy beaches along the blue Mediterranean and modern towns offering practically every comfort and amenity. All these various attractions in a country which retains its fascinating oriental character combined with a pleasant climate and fine weather almost all the year round, make Libya an ideal centre for visitors.

The relative closeness to Europe and the regular air and sea lines connecting the country with all parts of the world is an additional advantage for people wishing to visit this interesting country.

What To See In **L**ibya



LEPTIS MAGNA — MARBLE CARVINGS FROM THE ARCH OF SEPTIMUS SEVERUS

TRIPOLI — Few cities of the world offer a more picturesque scene than that which meets the traveller approaching Tripoli from the sea. The ancient castle and sea wall, feathery green palms, graceful minarets and, above all, the amazing visibility and brilliant colouring, make the first view of the city a remarkable one.

It was near the shores of Tripoli, that Odysseus, driven out of his course by the North wind landed to draw water in the country of the Lotus eaters.

He sent three men inland to find out what the inhabitants were like. The messengers were hospitably received and were offered «the honeyed food of the Lotus plant». They ate and forthwith forgot their shipmates and their homes. «All they now wished for was to stay where they were, with the Lotus-eaters» and when Odysseus arrived and dragged them away they wept. He put them in irons and pulled off at once from that alluring shore.

That was the tale of Herodotus, but other classical authors locate the island of the Lotus-eaters off the coast rather to the west of Tripoli on the island of Djerba, but it is all rather vague.

Tripoli, an oasis between the Mediterranean and the Sahara and considered by many travellers to be one of the cleanest cities in the Near East and North Africa, is a mingling of old and new.

The town lies on the site of the emporium (trade market) established by the Phœnicians about 1000 B.C. and called by them Macar Uiat.

Later in the centuries it became the Roman

Oea forming, with Leptis and Sabratha, the land of the three cities (treis polis) of Tripolitania. Successively the town became known as Tripoli of Barberia, to distinguish it from Tripoli of Syria.

The succeeding historical events in the Mediterranean influenced Tripoli's long history which in successive epochs saw the town rising to splendour or falling into decay.

At the time of the Emperor Augustus, Tripoli had reached such a high degree of wealth that he declared it a free city. Under Emperor Septimius Severus, who was a native of Tripolitania, the town was granted the same rights (Jus Italicum) as any other Roman province.

In the IV Century A.D. it was stormed by the Austurians, a marauding native tribe of the interior, as a result of which it fell into a state of decay and anarchy which increased under the Vandal domination.

With the arrival of the Byzantines an effort was made to rehabilitate the city, but a new epoch in the history of Tripoli began with the coming of the Moslem faith, custom and culture, in 643, when the town was conquered by the Arabs who called it Madinat Tarabulus.

As a maritime town Tripoli played a considerable role in the struggle between the Christians and Moslems. It was the starting point for the pirate corsair activities and, at the same time, the outlet of the trade with the interior of Africa, which brought a relative prosperity to the town.

In the last decades Tripoli has expanded consi-

derably and, from a small typical Arab city, has become today one of the most modern and important towns of North Africa.

Multi-storied apartments and villas with every modern comfort stand beside old style houses. Wide avenues are intersected by winding lanes of the old city so narrow that two camels can barely pass each other. Men dressed in western fashion brush shoulders with others in turbans and rich flowing robes.

All the multi-coloured, picturesque, and fascinating charm of the Arab world, emphasized by the mystery of latticed windows, high walled courtyards, and shrouded women, is to be found in Tripoli.

Known in Arabic as « Tarabulus Al-Gharb » (Tripoli of the West) to distinguish it from Tripoli of the Lebanon, it is built on a promontory called Ras El Zur on the site of the ancient Oea at approximately 33° N latitude and 13° E longitude. The old city is surrounded by a wall dating back in part to the Spanish occupation in 1510 and in part to Darghut Pasha and the early Turkish period, but the modern town has expanded, mainly within the last four decades, into the oasis.

The fertile irrigated soil of these gardens which encircle the town produce abundant fruit and vegetables to supply the markets of the city and the fragrance of orange blossom and other flowers, pervades the air in the spring.

The urban agglomeration is composed of two sections adjoining each other : the old town, intersected by tortuous, narrow streets and the new one which offers the aspect of a modern town with

large avenues becoming increasingly crowded with automobile traffic.

The centre of the town consists of a large square, Maidan Ashuhada, from which fan out the main thoroughfares in all directions.

Sharia Adrian Pelt is named after the United Nations Commissioner who supervised the implementation of Libyan independence. Lined with palms, oleanders and other trees, it follows the splendid curve of the sea front and commands a view of busy Tripoli Port. Giaddad Omar Mukhtar, named in honour of the Libyan hero, is a broad double carriageway which runs from Castle Square towards Tunis to the West.

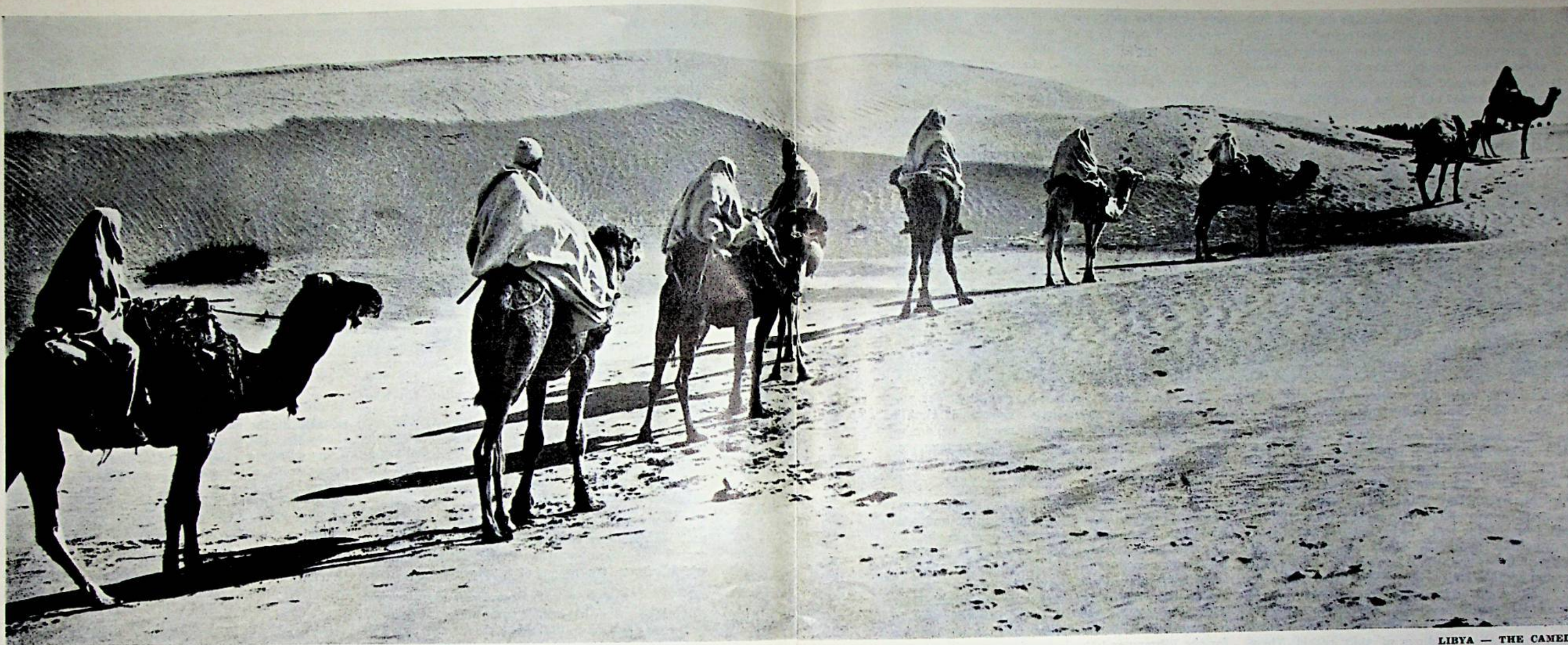
Most of the buildings in the new town are of modern Italian architecture ; those of the Old City of Turkish-Arab style. The most noteworthy of the latter are the Hammam (Turkish bath) of Sidi Darghut (1605), the house of Ali Pasha Karamanli (1780) in Shara Arba Arsat and the old Mosque of An-Nga (Xth Century A.D.).

The Karamanli Mosque, better known as Jama Ahmed Pasha or more simply the Jama el-Pasha is situated at the entrance of the Old City past Suk el Mushir Gate. It is a Moorish style building with a line of columns supporting arches, and a roof of domes from which springs a minaret commanding a view of the narrow streets. Over the entrance are three fine Arabic inscriptions carved in marble praising its founder Ahmed Pasha Karamanli and recording that this Prince began the building in the year 1736.

The courtyard of the Karamanli mosque forms

LEPTIS MAGNA





LIBYA — THE CAMELS

a burial ground for some of the members of the family, together with the adjoining, larger graveyard where there are many tombs including those of Ahmed Pasha, of Hassan Bey who was murdered by his younger brother Yussef Pasha, and also of the murderer himself.

To the right of the courtyard is a line of small stone ablution basins and an entrance to the Madrasa, the religious school recently transferred to a modern building outside. The interior of the mosque is truly magnificent, with its main hall containing sixteen marble columns supporting the dome-shaped ceiling which has fine stucco work in the Moorish style. The stone floor is carpet covered. The walls are covered with fine Arabic tiles of geometric design, blue, green, and bright yellow in colour. On these are scripture writings and above them are decorations in stucco.

The Mihrab, on the eastern side, faces Mecca. It is a small arch cut into the wall where daily the

Imam stands when leading prayer. Beside this is the Minbar or pulpit from which the same official delivers his sermon every Friday. The western wall holds wooden enclosures, all beautifully carved and decorated, where special prayers may be said by the congregation.

Throughout the mosque the stucco work is of the North African style while the whole of the decoration belongs to the South Mediterranean school, a type of ornament believed to have been brought to Africa by the Andalusian craftsmen who found shelter in Tunisia after being driven out of Spain by the Christians when they reconquered the Iberian peninsula.

The Gurgi Mosque is considered to be one of the most beautiful Moslem temples in Tripoli. It was built in 1833 by Youssef Gurgi, a Tripoli merchant originating from the Caucasus. The Mosque, situated on a hill, has two balconies and the highest minaret in Tripoli, from which the finest panorama of

the Old City may be obtained.

The interior is similar to that of Ahmed Pasha Mosque in shape tiles, stucco, etc.

The Mosque of the An-Naga is the oldest and most interesting Mosque of the town. According to a local tradition it was founded in the place where the female camel of Omar Ibn-Al As fell exhausted when the Khalif arrived from Egypt in 912.

The Mosque was destroyed by fire in 1510 when the Spaniards under the command of Don Pedro de Navarra stormed and took Tripoli. The defenders fighting back yard by yard against the attackers took refuge in the temple where they put up their last resistance. In 1611 the Mosque was rebuilt by Safar, the Day (Governor) of Tripoli.

The building is simple and without ornaments. The courtyard is surrounded by an arcade, the columns of which are believed to be of Roman origin.

A splendid Roman monument, the Arch of Marcus Aurelius erected in 164 A.D., still stands on the edge of the Old City near the Port. Throughout the centuries this outstanding monument has been put to a number of various uses and at one time, towards the end of the Turkish epoch it became a cinema room. Later, however, it was isolated from the adjoining constructions so that its architectural ornaments, still well preserved, may once again be seen in their full magnificence.

The most outstanding monument in Tripoli is the Castle, once the Citadel of the City. The building was erected on the foundations of a Roman Castrum. It has witnessed all the historical events of Tripoli during the last five hundred years, and in it the political life of the town was centred.

It was stormed and taken in 1510 by the troops of Ferdinand the Catholic who restored it before handing over to the Knights of Malta. The Turks opened a breach in one of its bastions and captured

it in 1551. The building was heavily battered. The Turks rebuilt it and for centuries made it the seat of their government. Very recently the building has been excavated and several ancient parts have come to light. The work of improvement and redecoration has been carried out by the Antiquities Department, and now the Castle houses the Offices of this Department, the Museums of Ethnography and Natural History.

There are two main entrances to the building, the western and the southern. The Western gate used to be the main access to the castle ; it leads to the St. George bastion which is now occupied by Government offices. Formerly the entrance was approached by a bridge across the ditch. Passing through the covered passage, the full width of the rampart, on top of which the guns were placed, is crossed. Its level platform, which extended right round the castle, is partly carried on the roofs of vaulted chambers, which themselves housed a lower line of guns, but this is no longer continuous as it would once have been. Towards the end of the passage on the left a doorway leads to the mosque, the oldest building inside the castle walls, which the Knights of Malta used as their church.

The central part of the Castle as it now stands was built during the 18th century when it became the family residence of the Karamanli rulers as well as the seat of the government. Courtyards were added one to another until they occupied most of the space. Across the open court just inside the main door are the twin Harim courts, reserved for the women of the family. Like other houses of the 18th century in Tripoli, they are two storied and have an arcaded gallery on the first floor; formerly they had painted ceilings like those to be seen in some of the Tripoli mosques of the period. The walls have been decorated with old glazed tiles which came from other buildings of that period. These two courts are occupied by the Ethnography Museum.

The marble fountains in the gardens, here and elsewhere, come from the courtyards of various old buildings in Tripoli ; one has octagonal basins dated in Arabic to the 17th century, others are of the 18th or early 19th centuries.

Along the left of the garden runs the rampart, some of whose gun ports may be seen from inside the « Gallery of Inscriptions ». This is entered at the far corner of the garden, through a doorway of Turkish style from a house in the old town and re-erected.

Next, going across the garden and through a covered passage, the Karamanli court is reached ; this is the largest of all the courts, the one which formerly adjoined the audience chamber in which foreign consuls and other distinguished visitors were received by the Karamanli pashas. This was entered from the upper storey by going along the left hand gallery and through the ornamental door-

way at the far end, now closed because the hall has been pulled down to make way for the modern road below. Seventy-five years ago visitors were shown the «Mint of Yussef Pasha, the Court of Justice of the Beys, the Government Pharmacy, and the establishment of the Chief of the Treasury », and, of course, the prison.

To the right, or south, of the Karamanli court lay two other courts which were removed to make room for the roadway and the new building on the near side of it, the Museum of Antiquities.

The fundamental purpose of the Tripoli Museum is to collect, preserve and present to the people a complete picture of the country's natural history resources, for their cultural and scientific edification. In recent times there have been numerous scientific expeditions but the fruits of their labours have usually left the country with them, to the benefit of European museums and scientific institutions.

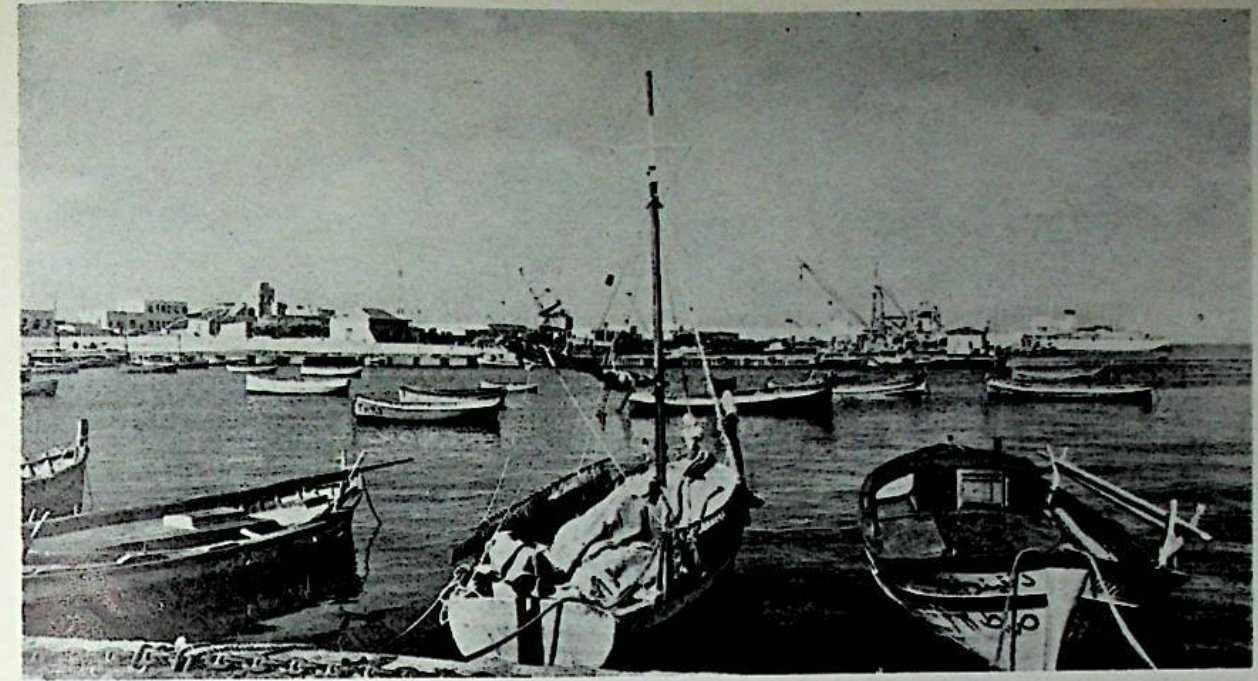
Some of the museum collections in Europe fifty years ago were like the contents of a boy's pocket : multiferous but incomprehensible. The modern concept of a naturalistic museum is that it should give a comprehensive picture of a particular region. Only the largest and wealthiest of museums can afford to offer the visitor a picture of the world's resources.

The Libyan Museum of Natural History was founded some twenty-five years ago, and was housed in S. Maria degli Angeli Square, in the Old City. As the museum's collections grew, the building became overcrowded, and a few years ago the museum began to move piecemeal to new quarters in the Castle. The top two storeys in the North-West wing have been adapted to house the collections in nine spacious halls. In addition there is ample room for the Library and the Laboratories, including one devoted to Taxidermy, a most important adjunct to any Natural History Museum.

The halls devoted to the mammals of Libya are very interesting with familiar groups of the various species arranged in their natural surroundings in a most life-like manner. Two great rarities exhibited are the Kau-Kau, (*Procavia*), which lives exclusively in the mountains near Ghat, and the baboon (*Cinocéfalo*) from the Tibesti mountains.

Three halls contain the Bird collection, the migrants being especially well represented. There are two very good groups of sea and wading-birds, shown in their natural environment. One interesting rarity is a newly hatched ostrich, found quite recently although the species became extinct in Libya in the last century.

In the Reptile and Amphibian Hall are found examples of the lizards, snakes and turtles of the country, including the two poisonous snakes common to the area, the horned viper (locally *Lefah*) and *Cleopatra's Asp* (locally *Naja*).



TRIPOLI — THE HARBOUR

The Sea Life hall is comprehensive and diverse, with fine examples of the sponges and coral to be found off Libya's shores.

The Botany hall shows examples of the country's flora ; particularly interesting is a cross section of the trunk of a cypress tree from Wadi El Kuf, many centuries old.

The Geology hall contains an impressive relief map illustrating the geological structure of the country. There are also a number of exhibits from the famous fossil beds of Sahabi in Cyrenaica, including the skull and part of the skeleton of a mammoth.

Another hall is given over to a collection of the insect life of Libya and includes some 20,000 specimens.

The Archaeological Museum which has just been completed after three years of intensive work, contains a wide collection of antiquities from ancient times to the present day. It is divided in various sections, according to the various ages. One section is dedicated to the neo-Punic inscription (the neo-Punic language was in use by the carthaginians in the last phase of their rule and in Tripolitania Carthaginian dialects were spoken until the arrival of the Arabs). The neo-Punic and Roman inscriptions shown are those found near Tarhuna, Bu Gem, Ghariat, Ghadames and Ghirza. The Christian inscriptions include a good series of monograms of the Byzantine age originating from the ancient Oea. Then follows a large section devoted to Arab inscriptions which includes the most ancient inscription in Arabic in the whole of North Africa, that

of Bayan, son of Al-Haitam who died on the 3rd of June 862 A.D.

There is also a very important collection of tomb plates of the IX and X Century inscribed with fine Kufic characters and which constitutes perhaps the only historic documentation in Tripolitania of the first period of the Arab occupation.

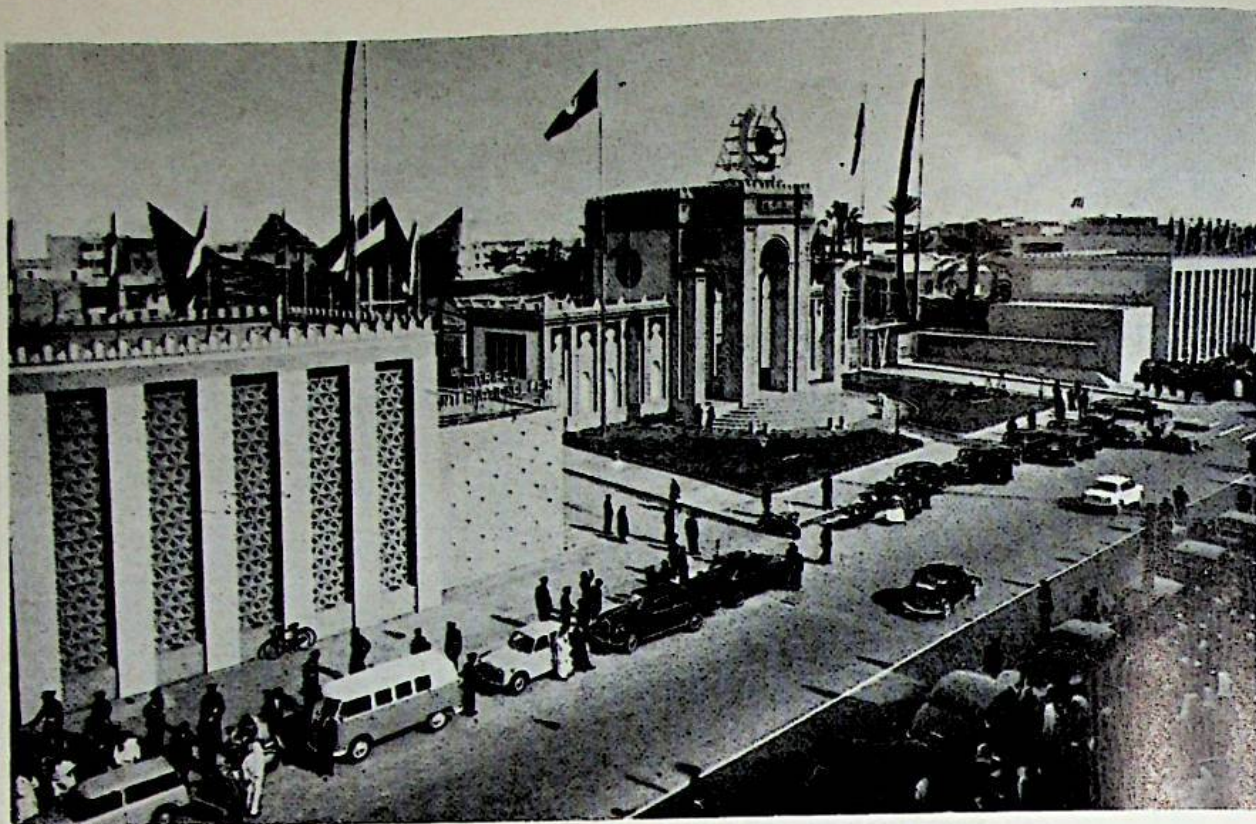
This section continues with inscriptions in the Turkish language, after the Ottoman conquest of Tripoli, some of which include fine emblems of the various Ottoman Sultans. Of modern history there is the inscription removed from the Town Hall building recording the sanctions adopted by the League of Nations against Italy in 1936, and other from the monument of Mussolini which was erected in Castle square in 1937.

On both sides of Tripoli lies an area of extensive and populous oasis : from east to west — Tagiura, Suk el Juma, Sokra, Gurgi and Gargaresh. This belt consists of cultivated gardens with nearly three hundred thousand palm trees. The rest of the vegetation consists of olive groves, orange and various other fruit trees. Under the shade of these trees, barley, wheat, corn and a large variety of vegetables are cultivated.

The gardens are traversed by picturesque and twisting sandy lanes edged by walls of beaten earth.

Tagiura and Suk el Juma are market centres, where villagers converge from the surrounding countryside once a week to sell their produce and to purchase their requirements.

Traditionally, these markets are divided into sections, grouping together all the shops, stalls or



TRIPOLI INTERNATIONAL FAIR

carts selling a particular product. Thus all the gain sellers will be in one section, all the butchers in another, the wool merchants in a third, the tinsmiths in a fourth and so on.

The most prominent building in Tagiura is the mosque of Murad Agha, who was the first Turkish Governor of Tripoli in 1551. According to tradition, the temple was erected by Christian slaves. The inner part of the building is sustained by forty-eight granite columns, said to have been brought from the ruins of Leptis Magna. Despite the absence of architectural decoration, the mosque offers a striking appearance in the half light which filters through the green glazed upper windows.

THE JEBEL OF TRIPOLITANIA

The Jebel, or hilly region of Tripolitania is a large escarpment which runs in the form of a huge curve from Fonduk an-Naggaza near the coast at Homs to the Tunisian border from which it falls gradually towards the sea at Matmata ridge. It constitutes a natural barrier between the great Sahara and the coastal belt, but from the tourists' point of view, this plateau area is important for the strange customs of its inhabitants, the wildness of its scenery and the presence in it of ancient monuments.

During the Roman period, strongholds were constructed at the southern edge of the Jebel to form a line of defence against the attacks from the

nomadic tribes of the hinterland. The Jebel land itself was widely cultivated and reminders of a prosperous past are still visible today. The eastern part of the curve, the Mesellata and Tarhuna area, receives a fair amount of rainfall and hence the terrain is fertile with extensive olive groves scattered on rolling hills which resemble certain areas of Southern Europe, while towards the centre, at Garian, and further west, the countryside becomes more and more wild and broken by steep valleys.

The main road leading up to the mountains runs from Tripoli to Garian through the Jefara plain.

Suani Ben Adem (24 km. from Tripoli) is the centre of a fertile area in which water is available from both common and artesian wells. From Suani the road runs straight towards Azizia through cultivated farmlands and is lined on both sides by eucalyptus trees.

Azizia (42 km.) is the main centre of the eastern Jefara, an important centre of communication, which is named after the Ottoman Sultan Abdel el-Aziz (1961-76).

Azizia is a market-place which, in years of good harvest, is most active with trade in cereals and herds of sheep and camels. The road that lies ahead, facing directly the escarpment is a thin ribbon running out across a large plain which in spring is an extensive grassland. However, the plain is, at cer-

tain intervals, cut by gentle depressions such as Wadi Hira (55 km.).

Beyond Azizia, the flat land rises gradually as it nears the Jebel, whose splendid view now spreads out grey along the horizon. At Bu-Gheilán (360 metres above sea level) the escarpment begins to rise in a series of hairpin bends. Looking down one has a magnificent view of the Jefara stretching away as far as the eye can see.

Arriving at the top, the road runs through a hilly area of the plateau itself, scattered with olive plantations where some of the trees date back to the Roman era. Driving through the hills, the shining summit of a mountain is visible on the right hand side. This is the extinct volcano of Caf Tekut.

Garian (88 km.) is a pleasant little town, consisting, as almost all Tripolitanian small towns do, of a group of flat buildings around a main square.

The Jebel Hotel is possibly the most important feature of Garian for visitors. Accommodation with running water, a restaurant and bar are available.

The population of Garian, which is of Arab stock, lives mainly in troglodyte dwellings, which are scattered all over the area.

The cave dwellings are to be found in various parts of the Jebel, but those at Garian are world renowned, having been described in such publications as the American National Geographic and the British Geographic magazines.

Other famous troglodyte villages are those of Riaina and Zintan, near Jiado, southwest of Garian and Yefren.

The troglodytes of Tripolitania are far removed from the semi-barbarous tribes described by Strabo, Aristotle and Herodotus. Their caves are sometimes cleaner, better cared for and better furnished than the conventional houses of the district. A few are even carpeted and hung with attractive drapings, though the great majority are bare and undecorated. Nevertheless, the troglodytes represent a substantial community who have contributed to the economy and welfare of this district.

Some of the troglodyte caves are hollowed out of the large dome-shaped rocks which dot the hillside. Others are built into the rocky sides of cliffs. Yet others are at the bottom of artificial wells, fifty feet deep and fifty feet in diameter. These cave houses are dug out of the sides of the wells and are reported to be cooler in summer and warmer in winter than any conventional house.

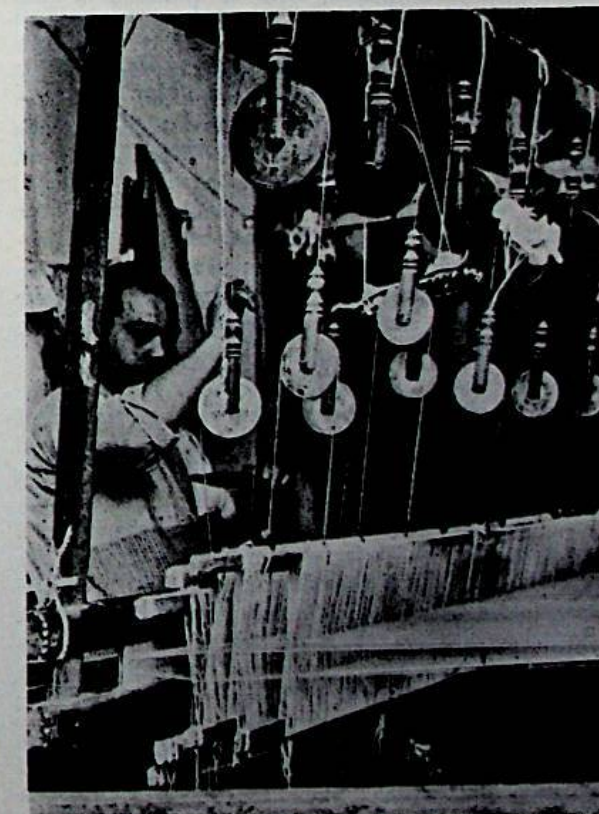
There are two major types of troglodyte homes. The simplest caves consist of a one-room chamber with bare walls, ceiling and floor of natural stone. Cut into the walls are niches to serve as cupboards for household articles, which are of the most simple

type. Furnishings in such a cave generally consist of clay water jugs, a few cooking utensils, and a hand-operated grindstone for grinding grain. Straw mats are laid on the floor for sleeping, and a box or low table is used for serving tea. There is usually no other furniture. A cord strung from side to side at the back of the cave serves to hold extra barracans and other clothing. Cooking is done outside the cave on charcoal braziers.

The most prosperous type of cave dweller may have an entire private well with up to six white-washed rooms, some of which have raised platform for sleeping and which are occupied by several generations of the family. Another room is used for food storage, yet another as a sitting room and one as a kitchen. A few caves are built around a well but for many the nearest water supply may be half an hour away.

From Garian the road continues along the Jebel through an area of rolling hills, descending and climbing until it reaches the fertile plain of Asabaa, an interesting area both from the agricultural and the archaeological point of view.

In years of good rain, the hills and wadis are green as they have probably been in the past, when the area was intensely cultivated and on many hill-tops are the ruins of old Roman and Berber strongholds erected for the defence of the crops against tribal raids.



A WEAVER AT WORK



BENGHAZI
AUTOSTRADE

A Christian church is on the right of the Murdiria, the administration building, dating from the IVth century, once a three-aisled building, with two lines of columns many of which still lie scattered in the area together with a few sculptured stones.

The mausoleum of Suffit is also worth seeing whilst in the vicinity is a good example of the fortified Roman farm-houses, once so common in this area.

After crossing a wild countryside of cliffs comparable to the scenery of the American West of Arizona and Utah, alternated by scrub-covered hills, the road leads up towards the Berber village of Yefren.

The soil of the Jebel is generally suitable for cultivation, especially in the valleys, but the problem is and will probably always remain, the absence of a sufficient and reliable rainfall together with erosion of the sand to expose here and there the bare limestone.

Especially to the west, the hills become gradually arid and the olive groves scarce. Because of the slight amount of rainfall, cultivation is confined to the wadi beds which are terraced with earth walls to hold back the water when the rain falls. After the olive, the fig tree is next in importance, especially west of Garian and in Yefren. In fact the dry cultivation of olive and fig trees constitutes the fundamental activity of the Jebel population which is largely sedentary although some become seasonally semi-nomads descending the wadis to plough and harvest their crops at the appropriate seasons.

The palm does not grow on the Jebel, but there are small palm oases at its foot, the villages of Gasr-el-Hag, Scecsciuk, Jiosc and smaller ones like Rabta in the Wadi Zaret; indeed, wherever there are perennial springs in sheltered gullies, such as

Ain Zerga. In certain wadis palm trees are protected by little circular walls from the force of flood waters.

Yefren is a typical Berber centre. Stone built houses, some of which are in a state of decay, form the newer part of the town. The old village nearby is in a state of ruin and is abandoned. The Rumia Hotel of Yefren, perched on the edge of a high and precipitous escarpment, is pleasant and comfortable. The restaurant, bar and verandah, standing just on the lip of the mountain, offer an extensive view of the Jefara plain falling in a series of precipices, intersected by wadis of which one is quite visible, Wadi al Etal.

One road descends in a series of twists down the valley to reach the plain beneath. It then runs almost parallel to the Jebel in steppe country cut at many points by small wadis which are dry during most of the year. The road from Yefren twists down the arid western area of the Jefara plain and returns to Azizia passing through Bir Ganem (the well of the sheep) on the way.

A secondary road leads to Jado, another typical Berber centre. The Jado hill has generally been regarded by drivers as the most dangerous of the Jebel ascents, but now that it has been newly surfaced and provided with parapets in the worst places, it is far less alarming and perhaps less interesting.

The Berber town of Jado is full of ruins of Italian barracks. It is in the centre of a large and ancient olive growing district. In 1953 the remains of a Roman olive press were found a few miles further west, but in Jado itself there is little of antiquarian interest.

A few kilometres to the west is the lovely

little perennial spring of Ain Zerga, one of Libya's beauty spots.

The road from Jado to Zintan swings down far to the south, to avoid the broken ground of the approaches to the Wadi Rogeban and other wadis, and some idea of the semi-arid steppe of the pre-desert is obtained. The road turns north towards another area of olive cultivation. This is the district of Zintan where there are many remains of Roman olive farms.

Just before the right-angled turn near kilometre 182 there is a track leading towards Henshir el-Kebir the ruins of a large farm. Another ruin is just west of kilometre 179 where a slight hillock in the field to the right marks the site called Csur Ar-Roman. This site contains the remains of a Roman farm which was once protected by a deep circular ditch. The building was square and strong, and among the debris are fragments of columns, a piece of a capital and parts of an olive press.

The road towards Nalut which is cut at intervals by several wadis, runs through wild steppe country, one of the most arid parts of Tripolitania. The only village to be seen is El-Josh, where an ancient Berber community lives.

Nalut (284 km. from Tripoli) stands on the top of a not easily accessible hill. The town is pleasant and attractive. The old part of the urban centre is uninhabited and in a state of decay but nevertheless offers the typical aspect of a Berber village. Irregular and rough stone buildings, divided by narrow lanes, give the impression of a primitive survival. One outstanding feature is the Berber Castle standing like an eagle's nest on the edge of a steep cliff. This was the citadel and food store of the people of Nalut in past centuries when they were subject to the raids of the Tuaregs, the Nomads of the far south, and other foes.

Each family had its cell in the castle in which to conserve its food supplies, and this tradition still survives.

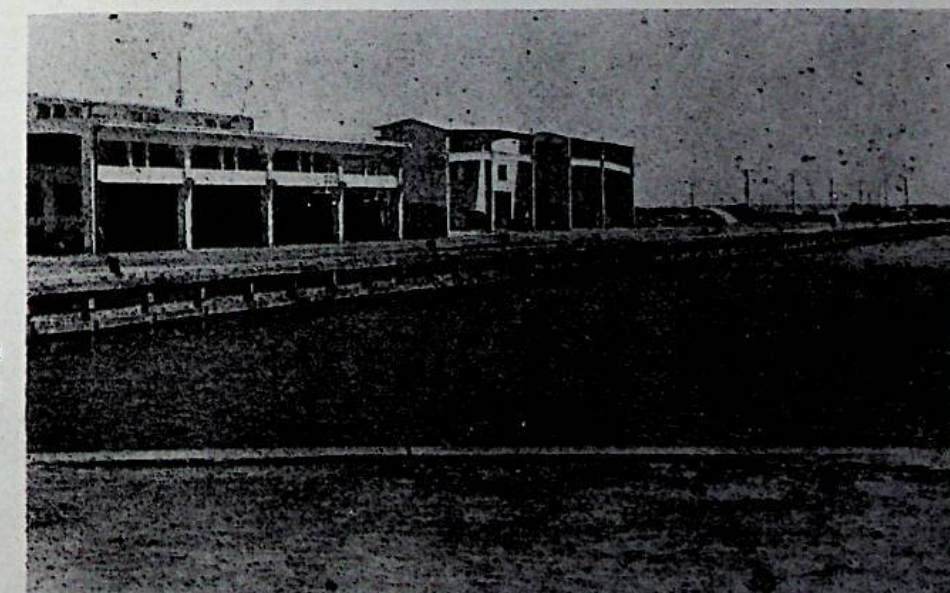
This communal granary is a building which from the outside recalls the keep of a medieval castle, but from the inside its walls are seen to be honeycombed with innumerable cells, all barred by stout wooden doors.

There are several splendidly preserved granaries in the Jebel, notably those of Nalut and Cabao, and below, on the threshold of the Jebel, the granary of Gasr-el-Hag.

A track from Nalut leads south to Ghadames through a rocky and sandy terrain. Ghadames, the so-called « Peal of the Sahara » is an ancient caravan trading centre, which in Roman days was known as Cydamus.

The picture which the town now offers is one of charm with its impressive buildings of Saharan architecture. Some streets are roofed and carry passages reserved for the women to protect their privacy. They thus pass from one house to another over the intercommunicating roofs and very seldom appear at street level.

The town has a hotel built beside a celebrated spring, Ain al Fras (the spring of the mare) which, according to tradition, received its name when the Arab conqueror Okba Ibn Nafa, in the 7th century A.D., arrived there exhausted by the intense heat, looking for water to refresh himself. The mare which he was riding beat the earth with her feet and opened a miraculous spring. The water originating in this spring flows through a series of canals and irrigates the fields of the oasis, where barley, wheat and vegetables grow in the shade of a luxuriant vegetation of palm groves.



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