MAY 1997

THE UNESCO COURIER

Landscape with Figures

THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN PEOPLE AND PLACES

INTERVIEW
AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

HERITAGE
THE ISLAND OF MOZAMBIQUE

GREENWATCH
GARDENS OF THE FAR EAST

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We invite readers to send us photographs to be considered for publication in this feature. Your photo should show a painting, a sculpture, piece of architecture or any other subject which seems to be an example of cultural cross-fertilization. Alternatively, you could send us pictures of two works from different cultural backgrounds in which you see some striking connection or resemblance. Please add a short caption to all photographs.

TRIBUTE TO GERONIMO

1990
Photo by Roger Gangloff

This cross-cut from a tree uprooted by a storm reminded French photographer Roger Gangloff so strongly of the profile of the Apache leader Geronimo (1829-1908), that he photographed it as a tribute to the famous hero of Indian resistance in the American West.

© Roger Gangloff, Châtenay-Malabry

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Jean-Bernard Vernier © Sygma, Paris

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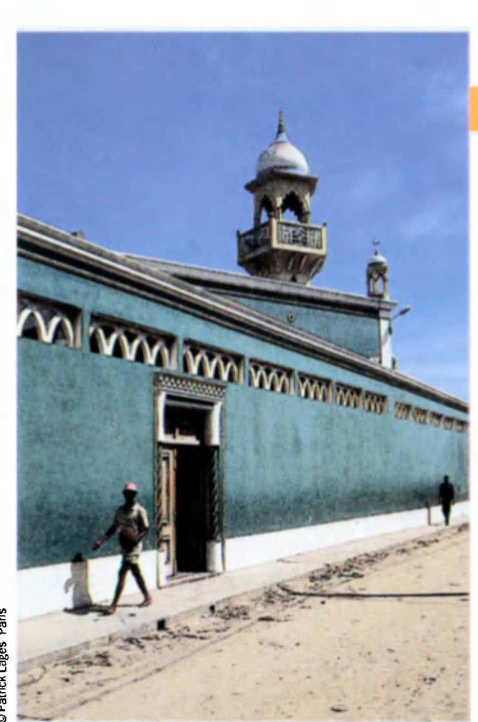

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LANDSCAPE WITH FIGURES

THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN PEOPLE AND PLACES

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Cover: At the feast of Kasada, held during the full moon, the people of the Tengger Mountains in Java (Indonesia) throw offerings into the crater of Bromo, an active volcano. © Joe Viesti / Ask, Paris

interview

Aimé Césaire

The liberating power of words

Aimé Césaire, who was born in Martinique in 1913, is one of this century's major writers. In his poetry, plays and political activities he has waged a lifelong struggle to restore dignity to colonized peoples. First and foremost a poet, here he talks to Annick Thebia Melsan about his faith in the power of words.

■ The usual way of trying to place you is by reference to various things such as time and place, writing, poetry and its different categories, political action and so on, but how would you place yourself?

Aimé Césaire: That's a terribly difficult question to answer but, well, I'm a man, a man from Martinique, a coloured man, a black, someone from a particular country, from a particular geographical background, someone with a history who has fought for a specific cause. It's not very original but, broadly speaking, my answer would be that history will say who I am.

■ You are from the north of Martinique....

A.C.: I've always had the feeling that I was on a quest to reconquer something, my name, my country or myself.

That is why my approach has in essence always been poetic.

Because it seems to me that in a way that's what poetry is.

The reconquest of the self by the self.

■ And what is your preferred instrument for that purpose?

A. C.: I think words are the essential instrument!

For a painter it would be painting! For a poet it is words!

I think it was Heidegger who said that words are the abode of being. There are many such quotations. I believe it was René Char, in his surrealist days, who said that words know much more about us than we know about them.

I too believe that words have a revealing as well as a creative function.

■ Revealing, creative ... exploratory, perhaps?

A.C.: Exploratory is very well put! It's the plummet dropped in the water, the homing device that brings the self back up to the surface.

■ You have often said that the black person's first words, after the long years of silence, are bound to be revolutionary words. Does that mean that poetry is "revolutionary" as well?

A.C.: Yes, it is revolutionary because it is the world turned upside down, ploughed up, transmuted.

When the review *Tropiques* came out in Martinique under the occupation in 1941, in the middle of the world war, like a plunge into the contradictory wellsprings of the West Indian soul, a stark glimpse into the depths of colonial alienation, it was truly a cultural revolution.

And when the Vichy censor banned *Tropiques* in 1944 with the comment that it was revolutionary, he showed himself to be a very good critic. It's true! It was a cultural revolution.

We were carrying out a kind of Copernican revolution. There was good reason to be surpised! And the Martiniquais were themselves surprised as they stood revealed to themselves. It was a strange encounter!

It modified quite a number of values.

■ Which ones?

A.C.: We are by definition complicated beings. That is the general rule for any society but one that is particularly applicable in the case of societies where complex layers of sediment have been laid down as a result of the inequalities of colonial life. Not everything was negative, far from it. The hybridization of which we are the outcome has achievements and positive values to its credit wherein the West and Europe also had their share. There was, as I say, a positive side, the effects of which were only belatedly felt by the non-Europeans but which are undeniable and in which we are simultaneously agents and partners—and, I should add, sometimes the beneficiaries as well. The Abbé Grégoire[1], Victor Schoelcher[2] and all those who spoke out and

Identity means having roots, but it is also a transition, a transition to the universal.

still speak out, who campaigned for human rights without distinction of race and against discrimination, these were my guides in life. They stand forever as representatives of the West's great outpouring of magnanimity and solidarity, an essential contribution to the advancement of the ideas of practical universality and human values, ideas without which the world of today would not be able to see its way forward. I am forever a brother to them, at one with them in their combat and in their hopes.

■ **You made an important speech in Geneva in 1978, at the event called "Geneva and the Black World", in which you said: "The effective power of poetry, with its two faces, one looking nostalgically backward, the other looking prophetically forward, with the redeeming feature of its ability to redeem the self, is the power of intensifying life". Was your *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, published in 1939, just such a primary utterance?**

A.C.: Yes, that is how I see it: a new starting-point, a real start—there are many false starts in life.

But I think that was, for me, the real start.

Disinterring memories, all that was buried, bringing it back, presenting it so that it bursts forth fully formed upon the world—I think this sends an important signal. To express, not suppress, the force of one's reaction, to wield reinvigorated words as a miraculous weapon against the silenced world, freeing it from gags that are often imposed from within.

Aimé Césaire in April 1994.

Jean Bernard Vernier © Sygma Paris

■ **How does one set about "ungagging" the world?**

A.C.: I simply believe in the redeeming power of words.

■ **Is that enough to deal with the human condition and the way it repeatedly slides out of control?**

A.C.: Probably not, not without love and humanism.

I really do believe in human beings. I find something of myself in all cultures, in that extraordinary effort that all people, everywhere, have made—and for what purpose?

Quite simply to make life livable!

It is no easy matter to put up with life and face up to death.

And this is what is so moving.

We are all taking part in the same great adventure.

That is what is meant by cultures, cultures that come together at some meeting-point.

■ **You invented the term "negritude", which has been the mortar holding together a historic movement. Does not the assertion of negritude carry with it the risk of separating you from others, from "non-blacks"?**

A.C.: We have never regarded our specificity as the opposite or antithesis of universality. It seemed to us—or at least to me—to be very important to go on searching for our identity but at the same time to reject narrow nationalism, to reject racism, even reverse racism.

Our concern has always been a humanist concern and we wanted it to have roots.

We wanted to have roots and at the same time to communicate.

I think it was in a passage in Hegel emphasizing the master-slave dialectic that we found this idea about specificity. He points out that the particular and the universal are not to be seen as opposites, that the universal is not the negation of the particular but is reached by a deeper exploration of the particular.

The West told us that in order to be universal we had to start by denying that we were black. I, on the contrary, said to myself that the more we were black, the more universal we would be.

It was a totally different approach. It was not a choice between alternatives, but an effort at reconciliation.

Not a cold reconciliation, but reconciliation in the heat of the fire, an alchemical reconciliation if you like.

1. Henri Grégoire (1750-1831), French ecclesiastic and politician, a leader of the movement in the Convention for the abolition of slavery. *Ed.*
2. French politician (1804-1893), campaigner for the abolition of slavery in the colonies, Deputy for Guadeloupe and Martinique. *Ed.*

Jean Bernard Verner © Sygma, Paris

The identity in question was an identity reconciled with the universal. For me there can never be any imprisonment within an identity.

Identity means having roots, but it is also a transition, a transition to the universal.

■ **Fire, one of the main life forces?**

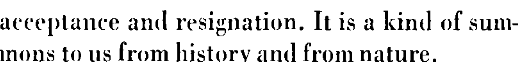
A.C.: Yes, as you say, fire.

There is an obvious fiery quality in my poetry, but why? I belong to this island. . . . Why this obsession in my poetry? It is not something that I deliberately seek. I am aware—everyone is aware—that the volcano is out there. It is earth and it is fire.

Fire is not destructive. The volcano is not destructive except in an indirect way. It is a cosmic anger, in other words, a creative anger, yes, creative!

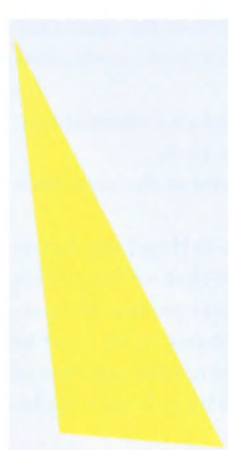
We are far removed from that romantic idyll beneath the calm sea. These are angry, exasperated lands, lands that spit and spew, that vomit forth life.

That is what we must live up to. We must draw upon the creativity of this plot of land! We must keep it going and not sink into a slumber of



I bent the French language to my purposes.

acceptance and resignation. It is a kind of summons to us from history and from nature.



■ **How, then, do you explain the fact that your "primary utterance" was expressed in the language of the colonial power, of colonialism?**

A.C.: I have no problem with that.

It was not something I wanted, but it happens that the language I used was the language I had learned at school. That didn't bother me in the slightest, it didn't in any way come between me and my existential rebellion and the outpouring of my innermost being. I bent the French language to my purposes.

Nature and history have placed us at the crossroads of two worlds, of two cultures if not more. There is the African culture, which I see as being below the surface; and precisely because it is below the surface, overlooked, treated with contempt, it needed to be expressed, to be brought out alive into the light.

But the other culture was the obvious one, the one we were conscious of from books and from school, and which was also ours, an integral part of our individual and collective destiny.

And so I have tried to reconcile those two worlds, because that was what had to be done. On the other hand, I feel just as relaxed about claiming kinship with the African griot and the African epic as about claiming kinship with Rimbaud and Lautréamont—and through them with Sophocles and Aeschylus!

■ **But what does the African griot think when he sees the tragic events unfolding in Rwanda or Zaire and the pall of hopelessness hanging over Africa, the Africa of which you dreamed so often while you campaigned for decolonization?**

A.C.: I have never harboured any illusions about the risks of history, be it in Africa, in Martinique, in the Americas or anywhere else. History is always dangerous, the world of history is a risky world; but it is up to us at any given moment to establish and readjust the hierarchy of dangers.

I saw that very clearly as early as 1966, at a time when great hopes had been aroused by the accession of many countries to independence. Indeed, I spoke out about this at the opening seminar of the World Festival of Black and African Arts in Dakar in April 1966, before an assembly of African dignitaries who were new to their jobs and, it must be admitted, unclear in their minds about the world and the power relationships in it, about themselves and about their irreversible responsibility.

I have the words of my speech of 6 April 1966 here in front of me. This is what I said:

"Africa is under threat, threatened by the impact of industrial civilization, threatened by the internal dynamism of Europe and America. You may ask why we should talk of threats when there is no European presence in Africa, when colonialism has disappeared and Africa has become independent.

"Unfortunately, Africa will not get off so lightly. The disappearance of colonialism does not mean that the danger of African culture disintegrating has also disappeared. The danger exists and everything contributes to it, whether the Europeans are there or not: economic development, modernization, political development, higher school attendance rates, education, urbanization, the integration of Africa into the world network of relationships, and so on and so forth. In short, just at the moment when Africa is truly being born into the world, it is in greater danger than ever of dying unto itself. That does not mean it should not be born into the world. It does mean that in opening itself up to the world it should keep its eyes wide open to the dangers and that, in any event, the shield of a merely political independence, political independence unaccompanied and unsupplemented by cultural independence, would in the long run prove to be the most unreliable of shields and the most untrustworthy of safeguards."

On top of that there has been political irresponsibility, and the whole gamut of cynicism has been run through! Fortunately, however, there have also been shining examples of the greatness of Africa, such as Nelson Mandela. Africa is experiencing the human adventure, and I am prepared to wager that the vital force of eternal Africa will once more inspire the song of the griot.

■ **What about the Marxist Utopia to which you subscribed in 1946 and which you condemned before the Budapest crisis in your *Letter to Maurice Thorez*, in**

which you set out your reasons for breaking with the Communist Party?

A.C.: It is true that, like so many of my contemporaries, I believed in what turned out to be a false Utopia. I am not at all ashamed about this. In the postwar context it expressed a heartfelt enthusiasm, a spiritual yearning.

But it was very soon followed by disappointment, a feeling of being manipulated, a conviction that one was being lied to and, as I said at the time, an unbearable awareness of "the collapse of an ideal and the poignant illustration of the failure of a whole generation". I felt an irresistible need not to keep silent and, regardless of the prevailing conformism, to break away at whatever risk to myself from the then all-powerful framework of the Marxist apparatus. It was part of my ontological choice as a human being aware of the non-negotiable responsibility that goes with a consciously accepted identity.

■ In *Discours sur le colonialisme* (1950), you said that "nobody can colonize with impunity, there is no innocent colonization. There will be a heavy price to pay for reducing humanity to a monologue".

A.C.: Yes, I am deeply convinced that universal civilization has a great deal to lose by reducing whole civilizations to silence.

I think it would greatly impoverish human civilization if the voices of African, Indian and other Asian cultures were to fall silent. If the globalization we are now being offered were to reduce the dialogue of cultures to a monologue, it would create a civilization doomed to languish and decline. I believe in the importance of exchange, and exchange can only take place on the basis of mutual respect.

■ Is it still relevant, in 1997, to think in terms of combat?

A.C.: We are always, all of us, warriors. The war takes different forms at different times, but there are always things to rebel against. One is always in rebellion against something, things that are unacceptable, things I will never accept. That is the inevitable way of the world, probably for everyone. There are things with which I cannot come to terms. I cannot accept that a people be stifled or that Africa be obliterated, I cannot resign myself to such things.

I desire—passionately—that peoples should exist as peoples, that they should prosper and make their contribution to universal civilization, because the world of colonization and its modern manifestations is a world that crushes, a world of awful silence.

■ At the age of eighty-four, Aimé Césaire, well over half a century after *Retour au pays natal*, are you still faithful to your belief in the urgent relevance of poetry?

A.C.: Of course I am. I no longer have the same elemental energy, or the same strength, but I stand by it, I have not reneged on it.

■ Is poetry still effective today? Will it always be?

A.C.: At any rate, it is for me the fundamental mode of expression, and the world's salvation depends on its ability to heed that voice. It is obvious that the voice of poetry has been less and less heeded during the century we have lived through, but it will come to be realized more and more that it is the only voice that can still be life-giving and that can provide a basis on which to build and reconstruct.

The voice of poetry is the only one that can still be life-giving and provide a basis on which to build and reconstruct.

■ Wouldn't you say that underlying the poetic dimension of your work there is always a purpose, an ethical aim?

A.C.: Yes indeed, there is an ethical aim underlying everything. From the time of the *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* onwards, a concern for humankind emerges, a searching for the self but also a searching for fellowship and universality, a searching for human dignity, which I believe to be the bases of ethics.

■ And yet this century has not been one where ethics has triumphed, has it?

A.C.: Certainly not, but one must speak out, whether one is heeded or not; we hold certain things to be fundamental, things that we cling to. Even if it means swimming against the tide, they must be upheld.

What we seek is reconciliation, to be in league with the cosmos, in league with history, to be in keeping with ourselves.

In other words, poetry is for me a searching after truth and sincerity, sincerity outside of the world, outside of alien times. We seek it deep within ourselves, often despite ourselves, despite what we seem to be, within our innermost selves.

Poetry wells up from the depths, with explosive force.

The volcano again.

No doubt I have reached the moment of crossing the great divide but I face it imperturbably in the knowledge of having put forward what I see as essential, in the knowledge, if you like, of having called out ahead of me and proclaimed the future aloud.

That is what I believe I have done; somewhat disoriented though I am to find the seasons going backwards, as it were, that is how it is and that is what I believe to be my vocation.

No resentments, none at all, no ill feelings but the inescapable solitude of the human condition. That is the most important thing. ■

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MONTH BY MONTH

landscape with figures

by Bahgat Elnadi and Adel Rifaat

An ancient stairway hewn from the rocky cliff leads to the Inca city of Pisac (Peru).

© Beatrice Petit, Bruxelles

The "crossroads cities" described in the *UNESCO Courier* earlier this year are places apart. They seem to stand aloof from their immediate surroundings and to concentrate their gaze on distant horizons. The world is their oyster.

In the present issue we see a totally different attitude to place, one in which towns and cities, buildings and works of art are dovetailed closely into their physical setting and bear witness to the two-way relationship between people and the places they live in. We see a tapestry in which the strands of geological time, historical time and eternity have been successfully woven.

The two themes are nevertheless bound by a common thread: the fluctuating relationship between societies and their environment, a relationship that at different times and in different cultures has given rise to a vast spectrum of sometimes contradictory attitudes—from the humility of the nomadic herder in the immensity of the desert to the arrogance of the industrialist who regards the whole planet as simply a productive resource.

Here, in a nutshell, is the whole range of human experience. ■

Deciphering an age-old language inscribed in the world around us

© Ch. Lionel Dupont, Vallauris

Terrace farming northwest of Sanaa (Yemen).

Reading the landscape

BY YVES BERGERET

There is always an interaction between people and the places where they live and move and have their being. Wherever you are, on familiar or unfamiliar ground, other people have been there before you or are there with you, silent or noisy companions. Wherever you go, there are signs of human presence. You are surrounded by an all-pervasive language, speaking with one or many voices, dead or alive. The physical sediment of that language, deposited on objects and scenery, constitutes what I mean when I use the word *landscape*.

Seashells in the sand

Looking down from the aircraft window as you cross the Atlantic coming from Europe, you see tiny islands and great white filaments of cloud stretched above the distant surface of the ocean, an abstract spectacle dreamlike in its ever-changing beauty. You land on a Caribbean island. Immediately you are enveloped by the sultry heat. You drive to a small town, not far from the sea. It is already dark, and the chorus of insects and frogs is in full swing. Eventually you drop off to sleep in this completely alien world. When you wake up early the next morning, the sun is already beating down with all its force. You walk around the town. The trees are quivering in the sea wind. Leaving behind the fish market and a knot of huts buried in the vegetation, you come to a cemetery at the sea's edge. You walk along rows of graves covered in white tiles. Suddenly the cemetery gives way to the near-black sand of volcanic islands. In a plot a few yards square there are a series of mounds, each the length of a human body, around which "lambis"—large conch-like seashells—have been driven into the sand, the pointed end downwards and the big, ochre-coloured end upwards and open to the air. Under these simple mounds some of the town's poorest people, penniless old sailors, have unceremoniously been laid to rest, naked, with only the sea and some of its creatures, and the black sand over them.

These unadorned graves speak volumes. The seashells are the loudhailers of the dead and the ear-trumpets with which they listen to the voices of the living and hear the sea wind. Until quite recently, the same kind of shells were used by fishermen as loudspeakers as they drew near to the shore at night. There is something admirable about these graves: the dead are respected and their spirits are addressed via one of the most beautiful and natural objects the landscape has to offer. You are on one of those groups of islands between English-speaking North America and Latin America, between the Old World which has left its colonial imprint, and the faint memory of pre-Columbian populations exterminated by settlers from the Old World, between a remembered past in Africa whence, because of the slave trade, most of the population is descended, and a present of ethnic intermingling. You are on a volcanic island subject to eruptions and cyclones. In this environment of chronic instability and general rootlessness, the landscape is a medium of human dialogue.

Waymarks in the mountains

I would like to cite mountains, supposedly the wildest of the world's wild places, as an extreme example of the human quality of the landscape. I have climbed many mountains, trekked across many wastelands, from Iceland to Chile, from Afghanistan to the Sahara, from the Troodos mountains of Cyprus to Mount Pelée in Martinique. Having had this practical experience and having got to know ▸

mountains as they really are, I have observed that a mountain is never virgin territory. Everywhere there are visible signs of human presence and human labour that were specifically designed to be visible—tracks, embankments, terraces, dwellings, markers of all kinds.

Even in barren desert uplands you will see where animals have grazed. You will come across a tent whose occupants will greet you and invite you to share their food or drink and join in their conversation. In another place, when you thought you were completely alone, you suddenly come upon a few piles of stones or a heap of round pebbles in a dry river bed put there as landmarks or boundary stones to show the limits of the grazing grounds. In desert regions and places where there is little agriculture, these practices still continue. In the mountainous regions of Europe they have a different function. The mounds of stones known as cairns now serve to show hill-walkers the way in the absence of a track. These "waymarks" are living things. If you remember, you add another stone to the pile for the benefit of the strangers who will come this way after you.

Sometimes landscape has religious rather than secular associations. Mount Sinai is the place where the God of the three great monotheistic religions spoke with a human voice to give humankind ten rules to live by. In this case we have a monologue rather than a dialogue: God issues commands. On some mountain tops there are small shrines, stupas, crosses or votive tablets. The summits of the Italian Alps provide a particularly vivid illustration of this. On many of them there is a small statue of the Virgin, affording protection from lightning and misfortune. The Christian traveller should thank her on reaching the summit.

I know some mountain peaks, not only those in the Italian Alps, where a recess is hollowed out of the great cairn surmounted by a religious statue. In the recess is a metal box inside which is a school exercise book or simply some scraps of paper, on which those who have made the ascent have jotted down their names, the date and a few comments. I always make a point of reading them, for however commonplace the ideas expressed, they have a merit of their own by virtue of the authors' long, exhausting climb, beneath a wild sky, to look out on this vast horizon. I feel as if I am shaking hands with the person who a week before wrote these perhaps naive words at the bottom of the final page, and I may even shake the hand of someone whose name has become almost illegible, who left the brief account of his or her ascent thirty years ago, and who

A statue of the Virgin Mary and votive offerings on a Corsican peak.

© Monique Pietri, Paris

Jouan/Rius © Hoa Qui, Paris

A cairn built by travellers marks the summit of a pass in northern India.

may now be dead and gone. In this way I have recovered from deep within the landscape a record of the weariness and the joy of strangers.

After days of trekking through the mountain wilderness of the Jbel Sarho in Morocco, I climbed one evening to the highest summit in the range, where I found cairns of all shapes and sizes scattered about. Three days later, a nomad explained to me that this was a holy place to which pilgrimage should be made once a year. The proliferation of cairns, as I understood it, represented individual prayers, or possibly quarrels between rival tribes. Above all, however, it bore witness to the survival of a pre-Islamic polytheism that has left many traces in Berber country. Here there was no question of an agreed religious significance; on the contrary, the principle of dispersal, of multiplication, was at work. A few months later I saw another of these, so to speak, decentralized shrines, at the top of one of the toughest mountains in the High Atlas, Jbel Anghomar. The ascent is difficult, involving, after days of walking, several hours of scrambling up a slope of orange-coloured scree. At the summit, buffeted by the wind and with a sweeping view over the Sahara and the High ▸

Atlas range, was a mass of cairns, "kerkours" as the local Berbers call them, and fresh traces of the blood of animal sacrifices.

Mountaineering is supposed to be a disinterested activity and as far as commercial gain is concerned so it is, certain media-oriented antics apart. But it too does not regard landscape as a blank backcloth devoid of human signs. The mountaineer, far from climbing a featureless slope, is engaged in reading a history book written in various "registers" of language. First comes the geological register: the climber has to use one kind of technique and equipment on limestone and others on granite, snow or ice. Then comes the register of sport: climbers "rehearse" a route already "opened" by some predecessor or other, work out a timetable and train to get themselves in shape for specific moves and specific feats of acrobatics. There is also an aesthetic register to what I call the "composition" of the ascent: climbers' senses and thought processes are attuned to savour a particular shape of mountain, a certain light at a certain time of day; thorough gymnastic preparation enables them to perform a kind of effortless-seeming dance in the middle of a rock face or even experience rapture up there in the sky. The boldest climbers of all, those who "open" new routes, are able, before starting out, to sight-read the signs of the rock face and their aim is to make the route as elegant and rigorous as possible. Thus, even an unconquered peak is first regarded and then scaled as a form of technical and ethical language in which the climber enters into a dialogue with his or her fellow human beings.

One of the finest acts of communion with landscape I ever saw took place in a small oasis in the Atacama desert of northern Chile. I had been trudging over those waterless high plateaux, some of the barest scenery I know. In the distance volcanoes rose to over five thousand metres. One afternoon I came upon a few houses huddled around a spring in a hollow of the plateau. An annual pre-Columbian rite for the purification of the irrigation channels was in progress. Three days of ceremonies were culminating in a meal which had to start with a glass of fiery corn spirit. Custom required that the first drops should be poured on the ground to salute Mother Earth, to quench her thirst and to make her fertile. After the libation and invocation, the drinking could begin, the ceremony could be brought to a close, and people could return to their daily work.

Thus, as we see, humans fulfil themselves by transforming the place where they live into landscape. They humanize it, first discovering and then creating signs of human life there. Landscape is a mirror in which people can see themselves, interacting with others of their kind through signs scattered about in town and country.

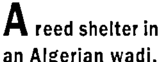
The heads of 4 American Presidents are carved from the granite cliff face of Mount Rushmore (U.S.A.). Left to right: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln. They measure up to 18 metres tall.

Larry Mayer © Liaison internationale/Hoa Qui, Paris

A sermon in stone

Drive through the wooded hills of Burgundy along winding roads that pilgrims in the Middle Ages travelled on foot, until you come to the little town of Vézelay. Climb the narrow main street along the backbone of the hill. Enter the dark narthex of the basilica, and suddenly there looms above you the great masterwork of anonymous medieval sculptors. They dragged limestone quarried from the surrounding hills to the top of the slope, chiselled patiently away at it until it took on the form of a Christ rather too big for the mandorla within which he sits enthroned, his knees pressed together and turned to one side in a kind of dancing posture, and of the apostles who are receiving from Him the gift of tongues. Pass through the door beneath the tympanum and into the full light of the nave.

This Pentecostal scene carved into the grey stone of Vézelay is a response by those who lived here to their landscape, a hard, unsmiling land where the dark woodlands, the succession of hills and the difficult communications make for a certain heaviness, a certain monotony. All this they accepted, but at the same time yearned for something else, an escape, a transformation.



A reed shelter in an Algerian wadi.

© Ch Lionel-Dupont, Vallauns

At the beginning of this century, Victor Segalen made a telling contribution to the establishment of this concept of landscape, especially in his essay with the tongue-in-cheek title of *Equipée* (Jaunting). He pretends to be making preparations for a voyage to China, which in fact he already knows well. He describes the country, travels down its rivers, visits its towns and presents a wonderful picture of a vast, inorganic natural landscape, when suddenly the description takes strange poetic wings. Two eyes are watching the narrator, the two eyes of a young girl about whom nothing else is known. The traveller observing the landscape is in fact being observed by the landscape. Further on in his essay, Segalen defines what he calls the "Esthétique du Divers", which entails recognizing the existence of a proliferation, a destabilizing turbulence, in the real world; landscape is indeed a proliferating human language.

As the ancient Greeks could hear the oracular pronouncements of Zeus in the rustle of the great oak groves of Dodona, so we for our part can read the meaning of the gnomon's shadow on the face of a sundial. ■

Symbolic gateways in the Japanese landscape mark the boundary between the realm of human experience and the world of the gods

Sylvain Grandadam © Hoa Qui, Paris

Thresholds of divinity

BY MASAYUKI NINOMIYA

No visitor to Japan can fail to be impressed by the many *torii*—simple yet highly remarkable gateways—which adorn the landscape in town and country, in field and forest, on riverbanks and even in the sea. Although unmistakably gateways, they consist simply of two pillars set in the ground, surmounted by two horizontal beams, one just above the other. A number of variations on this basic form may be encountered, but the principle of construction remains the same. Virtually devoid of decorative elements, the gateways are characterized by austerity and purity of line. Constructed of wood, stone, porcelain, metal or even reinforced concrete, they may be left bare or be painted red and black. The height and width of the gateway may vary from one metre up to twenty or more.

Composed of a few elegant strokes, the *torii* resembles an ideogram, a signature affixed to nature by human hand. A gateway without a gate, it cannot be closed nor does it form an

opening onto an otherwise closed space. However, its very presence carries meaning. It is an emblem of faith. The *torii* stands as a clear pointer to the essential relationship between humanity and nature which has existed since ancient times. It forms a symbolic boundary between two realms which are fundamentally different in human experience: the sacred province of the gods (*kami*) and the profane sphere of everyday human activity.

The *torrii* constitutes an almost intangible threshold across which nature and humanity may communicate. A thirteenth-century painting depicts a sacred mountain at the foot of which one of these gateways may be seen. The mountain is the sanctuary, and the *torii* is the only visible sign of human presence.

Sacred pillars

In addition to their aesthetic qualities, *torii* also have an ethical significance which extends far beyond the doctrinal framework of Shinto, which is the foundation of religious belief in Japan. In Shinto belief, the gods are neither omniscient nor omnipotent. These far-from-perfect entities are natural forces which bear a striking resemblance to human beings, although their behaviour sometimes defies human understanding. It is only by their works that the gods differ from mere mortals. As if to stress this proximity, Shinto conceives of the link between heaven and earth in a very concrete manner, as the "August Celestial Pillar" on the island of Onogoro. In a more general sense, the pillar plays an important role in Japanese mythology. The architecture and rituals of Shinto consider some pillars to be sacred. Anyone may pass through a *torii* at will, it is always open to wind, light and sound, and to animals and humans alike.

The Suwa trail

To escape from the oppressive summer heat of Tokyo, I spent a few days in a mountainous region in the centre of Japan, staying in a small house situated in a forest of pine trees, silver birches and lacquer trees, the sap of which is an irritant to the skin.

At the point where the path to the house departs from the main road stands a *torii* built of grey stone. The rectangular plaque hanging from the centre of the horizontal beams is inscribed with a name of great resonance: Suwa Jinja. The Suwa sanctuary, situated near the Suwa lake on Honshu island, is particularly renowned for the four sacred pillars (tree trunks stripped of their bark) set at its four corners.

But this roadside *torii* does not lead directly to the sanctuary. The three or four-metre-high stone gateway, in perfect keeping with its natural surroundings, simply marks the entrance of the path leading to one of the subsidiary areas of Suwa Jinja. The feet of the pillars sprout from a clump of miniature bamboo, while maple leaves brush the tips of the beams. As I make my daily passage through the *torii*, the structure makes no particular impression on me; I perceive it as I ▶

This immense *torii* arch stands between the little island of Itsukushima and the coastline of Hiroshima Bay. At high tide its feet are in the water.

At the Ise Shinto shrine, in the south of Honshu island, young women perform a dance symbolizing the creation of Japan.

M MacIntyre © ANA, Paris

Carl Rosenstein © Ask, Paris

Snow-capped *torii* arches at Takayama, on Honshu Island.

perceive the surrounding vegetation. It is like a guardian spirit, discreetly preparing the visitor for the realms beyond.

Leaving the house, I may choose to descend towards this first portal, or to climb a fairly steep path and move deeper into the forest. On summer days, a continuous flow of nightingale song accompanies my footsteps like a meditative chant, occasionally punctuated by the repeated tapping of a woodpecker. Nature is bursting with life. A few hundred metres on, this winding path comes to a clearing where stands another *torii*, this time set apart from the vegetation. There is no central plaque, no decoration of any kind. The bark has been roughly stripped away to leave the bare pine, dappled with irregular knots. In spite of its state, it perfectly commands the surrounding space, undoubtedly marking the entrance to a special domain. Built by human hand, it signifies a space that may be described as "sacred". Its massive pillars can be seen as evoking the "August celestial pillar."

The surprisingly small scale of the central shrine, hardly bigger than a postbox, makes this "sanctuary" all the more intriguing. In comparison to the size of this building, the space created by the *torii* appears immense. A sizeable bottle of rice wine sits, half-empty, along with a few small coins, before the miniature temple. The divine spirit obviously enjoys a drink and needs money. The modesty of this sacred dwelling reminds one of the humorous touches in some of the more down-to-earth passages of the *Kojiki*[1] (Chronicle of Ancient Times) and the naivetyof the gods who created this world.

The 'cloak' on the pillar

Japan boasts far more spectacular *torii*; at the entrance to the Itsukushima sanctuary in the bay of Hiroshima, for example. Here, the rising tide laps at the feet of the red pillars, while the main buildings—also standing in the water—are fleetingly reflected in the undulating swell. This sanctuary is a perfect example of harmony between sky, sea and mountains, which form an ideal stage for the appearance of the deities. It seems as if all these elements were infused with a single breath of life.

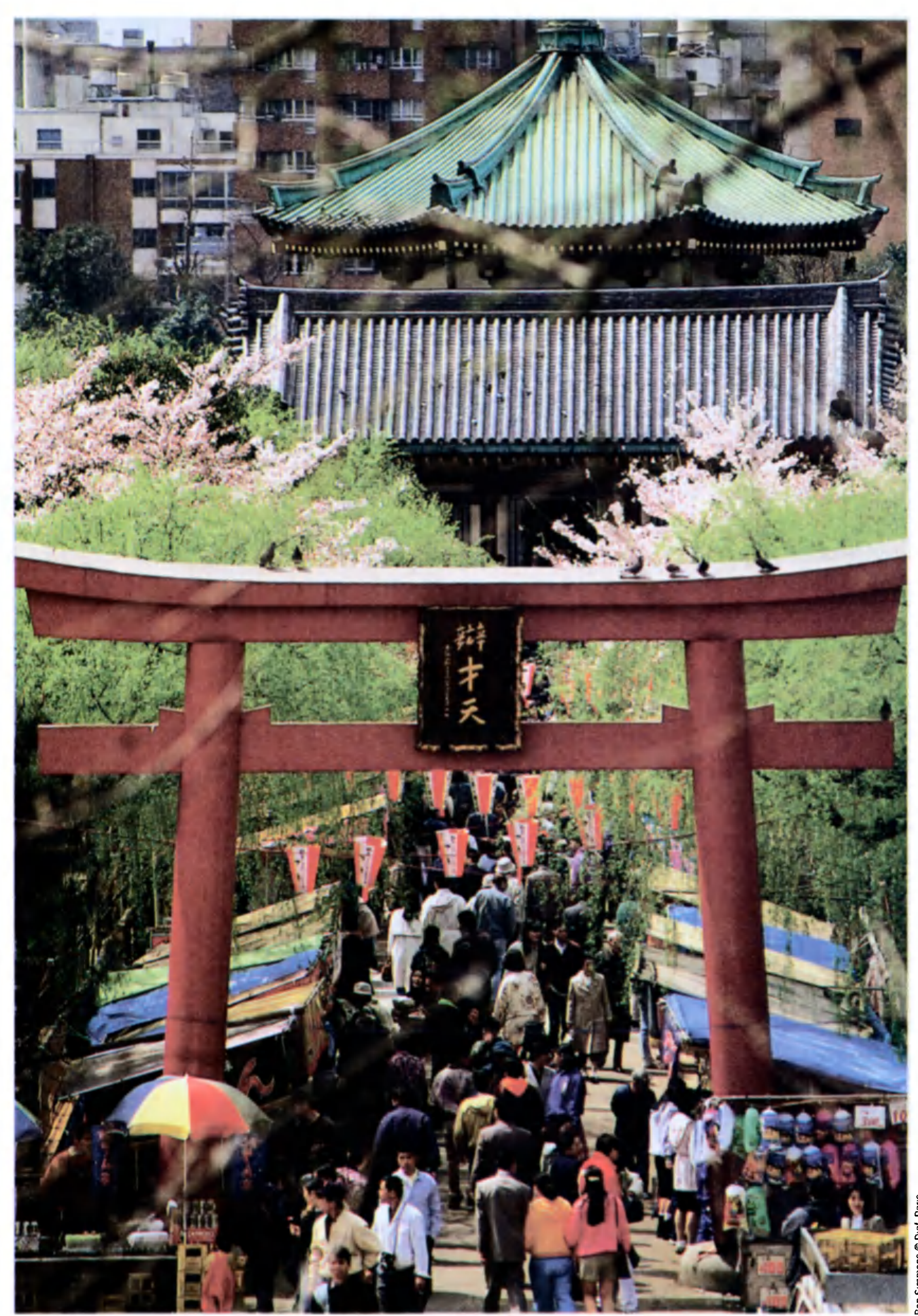
Also worthy of special note are a number of white wood *torii* at the Ise sanctuary, in the

south of Honshu island. The pure, uncluttered forms, the exceptional quality of the wood and the sheer size of these *torii* are such that they deserve an article all to themselves.

However, I have chosen to evoke my personal *torii* which, in their own modest way, represent a fundamental aspect of Shinto philosophy. Through them, I may understand—in the midst of a forest or on the side of a mountain—how humanity has entered into a relationship with nature in order to escape the bounds of a "natural" animal existence.

Out for a walk one morning, I discovered on one of the pillars the discarded skin of a cicada that had moulted. Perhaps the deity had left behind its diaphanous cloak, and had hopped off to return momentarily to its celestial home. ■

1. This collection compiled in 712 A.D. is considered the first classic of Japanese literature, and is a reference work of the Shinto religion. *Ed.*



Ben Simmons © Diaf, Paris

A Shinto shrine in Tokyo's Ueno Park.

Sicilian *Flights*

BY JEAN-FRANÇOIS PATRICOLA

In Sicily the eye is constantly drawn upwards by natural and man-made stairways that etch the urban and rural landscape

Pantalica in Sicily's Iblei mountains, its necropolis and troglodytic villages with their thousands of niches hewn from the rock long ago like so many irregular steps.

Caltagirone (Qal'at al-Gîran in Arabic) and its flight of a hundred and forty-two steps finely adorned with majolica which leads up to the church and exemplifies the tradition of ascent that has been transmitted from generation to generation in Sicily. For the festival of San Giacomo in July it is illuminated by thousands of candles and lanterns, nocturnal sentinels on the sculpted mountain, which very small children light when they hear a signal—a whistle—from the *capomastro*.

Greek and Roman theatres at Syracuse and Taormina, their broad terraces still thronged with spectators who come to watch and listen to operas and tragedies, with purple velvet cushions which they hire at the entrance when paying for their seats.

Richly ornate churches reflected in their gleaming steps, inviting pilgrims and tourists to climb painfully upwards beneath the cruel sun.

Alleys whose every doorfront has one step, sometimes two, where people sit out on their chairs to enjoy the cool evening air and chat with their neighbours. Alleys with tiny staircases which might conceal an assassin or a couple of timid lovers.

© Patrick Somelet / Diaf, Paris

Left, the fountain on Piazza Pretoria in Palermo (Sicily). It was built between 1555 and 1575.

Right, alley steps in Taormina, on Sicily's east coast.

Opposite page above, a flight of steps in Taormina, which for 25 centuries has overlooked the Ionian Sea from the foot of Mount Etna.

© Jean Paul Garcin / Diaf, Paris

© Jean-François Patricola Sainte Menehould

The sculpted walls of the Alcàntara gorges, like monochromatic piano keys, overlapping like so many steps that Orpheus might have taken to reach his beloved.

The Gorges of Tiberio, also known as the Proserpine abyss, with their rocky sides chiselled out like a titanic natural staircase leading down into the bowels of the earth.

In Sicily, everything climbs upwards.

The silence of ascent

The baroque cathedrals of Noto and Ragusa, with polished steps so imposing that they give a foretaste of the divine, so wide that they overwhelm the religious building to which they lead. The Latomian quarries with steps eaten away by the centuries; catacombs with seeping moss-covered steps. All these steps captivate walkers who, once they have set foot on them, can no longer resist the temptation to ascend or descend.

A mysterious power of attraction emanates from these stone platforms, which are, because of their size and width, an extension of the marketplace where people meet, stare or gaze longingly at one another. A real-life theatre of mime, of *smòrfia*—the art of the grimace and facial sign-language—and *opera* ▸

dei pupi, the puppet theatre that retraces the history of the Sicilian people, from the lordly paladin who stood out against the invader, to the labourer exploited by rich land-owners.

People sit on the steps and stare at the passers-by who walk theatrically to and fro beneath them, in long noisy processions, iridescent with a thousand colours. A never-changing ballet. Silence descends. The suffering of pilgrims literally sweats blood as they climb the steps on their knees, one after the other, leaving there a little of themselves that the tired and thirsty stone sucks in greedily. Eyes cast down, the bearers of the sacred relics of San Corrado Confalonieri and of other patron saints of large communities—Sant' Agata, Santa Lucia, San Sebastiano—strain with the effort of walking with eight hundred kilos of silver on their shoulders.

Dry stone walls streak fields with pumice and obsidian, vineyards, Etna's black and fertile slopes, fields of Barbary fig trees, columns of olive and almond trees transfixed in eternal poses. Like life-lines across the palm of the hand they bear witness to life gone by and mark its stages. Sometimes, in their rectitude, they caress the contours of a hill, holding back roots and water, snatching from the unproductive soil a few strips of farm-land and forming terraces, huge steps across the hillside for invisible cyclops to climb.

Steps inlaid with majolica leading up to the church of Santa Maria del Monte in Caltagirone (Sicily).

© Jean-François Patricola Sainte-Menehould

Church steps

Past and present are expressed through these steps hewn in limestone, lava and obsidian, and through all the cultures that meet there.

Clergy and notables, vine and grape, pagans and fervent believers, clusters of scarlet and black, mingle on the steps of churches. All let their feelings show when the sacred relics pass by. On church steps on feast-day evenings, the *camminanti*, the travelling people, so special in Sicily, are loquaciously present, begging or selling, with their unique form of speech, immense candles for the procession. On the waxy or mossy steps people move like little children afraid of falling. They sway like fishermen scourging the wine-dark sea by order of the *rais*, the chief, and harpooning the tuna imprisoned in the *almazraba*—the net—the scene of another tragedy in which the fish come to die. On church steps people take stock of the world, seek a reply when fate hounds their families, when neither clerical cloth nor talisman can cure the wounds of heart and soul.

First and last steps

Platforms, terraces and stairways are the veins of Sicily through which flow tiny trickles of sand and water. Life and death. They are the first furrows of the field ploughed, the first verses written, the first steps taken in life, as the family standing on steps after the wedding sows unspoken love, mingling with the grains

© Rosine Mazin / Diaf, Paris

The Roman theatre of Segesta. It was hewn from the rock on top of Mount Barbaro during the Hellenistic period (3rd century B.C.).

of rice. But they are also life's last steps, the steps leading to the tiered cemetery whose hundreds of terraced crypts must be scaled, step by step, for the last time.

Those who come to visit the dead in the early morning, to avoid the heat of the day, climb upwards as did the first inhabitants—the Sicani and the Siculi—and then the first invaders. Stage after stage, step after step, penetrating inland, settling there and recommencing the eternal task without ever looking backwards, until the stone steps are swallowed up, as they were at Netum—the once-splendid city of Noto, destroyed by a terrible earthquake in 1693—by brambles, Barbary fig trees, and heady jasmin. ■

Colourful

In the Dominican Republic, vivid colour schemes enliven everyday life with a host of political and sporting allusions

Stefano Amantini © ANA Paris

For the people of the Dominican Republic creating colourful surroundings is almost second nature.

The dominant colours they use are the primary colours: blue, red and yellow, with a few others thrown in—green, sky blue, purple and pink. Black is excluded from their palette and white is used to separate other colours or to create a neutral area. These colours are used to beautify dwellings and their surroundings. If the doors are blue, for example, the main structure will be red, green or yellow. The aim is to create a colour scheme for a whole neighbourhood or village, not for each individual house. Variety is the keynote. Doors and windows may be the same colour, separated by white from the dominant colour of the house. Few houses are painted in more than three colours—one at least of the four main tones is always missing—but no house sports only one. The whole effect shows an intuitive knowledge of the art of using colour.

A symbolic attachment

The predominance of blue is a way of bringing the sea into everyday life. There is a paradox here, for the Dominicans turn their backs on the sea, which they regard as the origin of all their misfortunes, of both natural and human origin. They fear and shun it. The only thing they like about it is its colour. On other Caribbean islands gardens are decorated with conches, sea-shells and starfish, but not here. Dominicans believe that conches bring bad luck. And blue is always accompanied by white, like foam on the crest of a wave. "In its desire to become sky, the sea makes clouds of foam," Domini-

BY GUILLERMO PIÑA-CONTRERAS

can writer Rubén Suro has written of this bond between the two colours.

The main structural element of the traditional Dominican rural dwelling is the trunk of a palm, the island's symbolic tree. It is a more developed form of the Taino Indian hut and the African cabin of the early colonial days. The roof is usually made of leaves from the royal palm and fibre from another local variety, the cane palm.

The dialogue with the environment is not limited to dwellings; it also extends to artistic tastes and religious beliefs, the latter of which blend aesthetics with superstition. Many gardens contain an altar surmounted by a picture of the Virgin Mary of Altagracia (the country's patron saint) at the end of a path of white stones. The niche housing the image of the Virgin is usually painted white, setting off the blue and red of her robes. Houses where there is no altar are protected by crosses placed at the edges of court- ▶

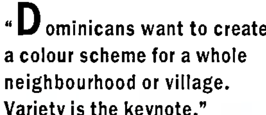
A palissade on the shore at Samana, on the northern coast.

© Rosine Mazin / Diaf Paris

yard or garden. These crosses are also painted white, for white is the colour of faith. (In the mountainous north, tresses of garlic are hung on the door to keep the devil out.) Roads, parks and other public places are decorated in a similar manner. It is not uncommon to see roadside shrines at places where accidents have occurred, and altars in public squares. These practices are illegal, but they are tolerated by the authorities and are part and parcel of the Dominican Republic's magical-religious landscape.

People have also modified the appearance of the urban landscape. Trees, especially palm trees, and electricity poles are often painted in a single colour to head height. For someone who knows nothing about Dominican political life, a row of palm trees or electric power poles painted in alternating reds, blues, greens, whites, purples and yellows is simply an eye-catching sight, a way of enhancing the environment. In fact, each colour represents an ideology. The colour of the party that won the presidential election recurs at regular intervals, and so does that of the party that won the local elections. This way of marking out political turf goes back to the early days of independence, when colours were used to designate the main parties in order to overcome the obstacle of illiteracy: red for the conservatives, and blue—like the sea—for the liberals.

"Few houses are painted in more than three colours, but no house sports only one."


"Dominicans want to create a colour scheme for a whole neighbourhood or village. Variety is the keynote."

G Guittard © Hoa Qui, Paris

© Rosine Mazin/Dial Paris

Politics and sport

Today the custom of painting pillars and posts has become widespread, but it still has political and sometimes sporting overtones. Some people even paint the front door of their house the colour of the party they support. Colours can express sporting rivalry as well as ideological conflict, since each of the

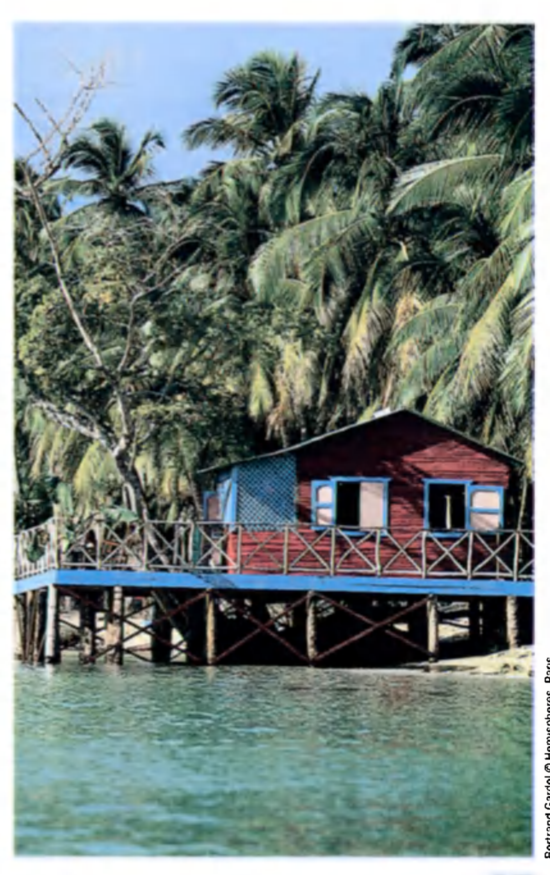
big Dominican baseball teams has its own colour: red, blue, green and yellow. Politics and sport are ever-present in daily life.

Poverty also plays a role in this unending dialogue with the environment. In the slums poverty has given rise to a specific architectural style. Lacking the funds to buy construction materials, slum-dwellers use tin cans, crates and all kinds of trash with great imagination to cover the walls of their homes in the shanty towns that sprawl around the edges of the big cities, along river banks and near the sea shore. To create an effect of uniformity, some people use cans of a single brand as walls for their dwellings, or paint them with distinctive naive murals. The variety of colours used to decorate large abandoned public buildings reveals the number of families living there. Each family uses colour to mark off its living area.

Bars where people gather to drink and dance are one focal point of community life. The back wall behind the dance floor is usually covered with an evocative painting of a sugar cane plantation or a seascape. The style is usually naive and the country's dominant colours—blue, red, green and yellow—are used. Even the colours of the chairs are significant. Their variety is enough to satisfy all tastes and tendencies, reflecting the colours of the country's political and sporting teams.

The visual landscape is backed up by a landscape of sound. Music blares from every corner. In bars, in houses, at every level of society, the traditional beat of the *merengue* explodes. On the breakwater, a long promenade on the edge of the Caribbean, the noise soon becomes intolerable for anyone who has failed to understand that deafening music is a component of Dominican life. It's as if the people were trying to struggle against their environment, to drown out the hissing of the waves, the moaning of the sea winds and the shouts and din of the street. Music is as aggressive as the colours that mark the landscape. The climate and the habit of living in the open air sharpens the senses, especially sight and hearing. The elements here are part of human nature. The Dominicans' dialogue with their surroundings is also a dialogue with themselves. ■

"The traditional Dominican dwelling reveals an intuitive knowledge of the art of using colour. For example, if the doors are blue, the main structure will be red, green or yellow."



Bertrand Gardel © Hemispheres, Paris

SAY IT WITH FLOWERS

BY YANNIS E. IOANNOU

The first-time visitor to Cyprus is likely to be struck by the way in which the natural world—with all its contrasts, wisdom and perfection—is recreated inside the islanders' houses. The microcosm of the Cypriot house—traditional or modern, in the mountains, lowlands or towns—is engaged in a constant dialogue with the macrocosm of nature: with what the Greek poet Odysseus Elytis has called "the universe, the infinitely small, the unfathomable".

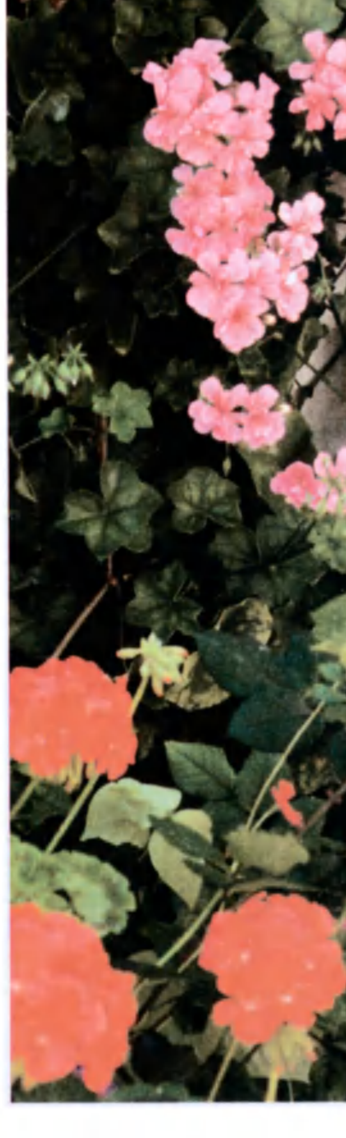
The language of this dialogue is a miscellaneous and multicoloured assortment of pots of flowers, arranged in rows or placed at random around the entrance door, along walls and windows, on makeshift shelves or old tables, suspended from trees or outer walls, as if to welcome the thirsty traveller. The pots of flowers strike a friendly note which might otherwise be excluded from homes and gardens by utilitarian and often thoughtless human intervention, to say nothing of the intensely arid climate of a land where summer lasts nearly six months.

A tradition of symbolism

A geranium in a huge container stands harmoniously among daffodils, and all around flowers growing in a conglomeration of pots of all shapes and sizes create a vast coloured landscape. To enter a house ungraced by pots of flowers is to experience a foretaste of death.

But let's take a closer look at these clusters of pots. All kinds of receptacles, irrespective of colour, size or material, are pressed into service and used for planting cuttings. Buckets, metal or plastic drums, tin cans or margarine containers, milk and yoghurt pots all form part of this astonishing miscellany. They are not arranged according to any set order but moved around depending on the space available. There is no preordained aesthetic pattern, as one might tend to think.

This is a world of its own, loaded—overloaded even—with affection, love and respect. It continually breaks the rules that govern the decorative approach and stylization of Western gardens. This is not mere decoration, but a world in a state of flux, in the throes of constant creation and recreation, ordained by standards of raw beauty based on an original law which obeys no human model and in my opinion achieves perfection. "Nature



"The pots of flowers are there as if to welcome the thirsty traveller". Below, an outdoor café in Athna, eastern Cyprus.

Chito © ANA, Paris

In Cyprus no home is complete without a 'garden' of potted plants

itself", Elytis tells us, "is neither good nor bad, beautiful nor ugly. It simply *is*."[1] It exists in simplicity, humility and disorder, in a beauty that is both elusive and familiar.

Symbolism, often dating back to Antiquity, is associated with this strange world whose "inhabitants" are closely linked to traditional life in Cyprus. The lily is associated with purity. Certain cacti ward off the evil eye. A vine inside the house would climb, and sometimes still does, up the walls of the living room, twining round and clinging to beautiful traditional plates hung as ornaments—but its two ends must never meet because that would bring bad luck. This is why in the past nobody was called Manolis (the plant's common name).

The therapeutic uses and virtues of some plants are also important. The mushy juice of the aloe was once used as an ointment for treating wounds and burns. Basil and geraniums are placed near doors or windows where their powerful smell wards off mosquitoes—and of course basil leaves whet the appetite of the Cypriots, who sprinkle them over salads. Sprigs of mint are systematically put in the folds, made for this very purpose, of the traditional *halloumi* cheese. Lavender leaves in a cupboard keep the moths at bay. The heady aroma of Spanish jasmine leaves and marjoram is inseparable from crystallized fruit, especially in the island's rural areas. Walnuts are regarded as a gastronomic luxury. They used to be served when the object of a visit was an engagement.

"Geraniums are placed near doors or windows where their powerful smell wards off mosquitoes."

A woman's perfume

Love is associated, perhaps even identified, with certain plants which have a distinctive odour and colour, such as jasmine flowers hand-plaited with thread to make a necklace which women used to wear for want of more sophisticated perfumes or hide discreetly in their blouses (especially on Sundays and ▸

G Guittard © Hoa Qui, Paris

A flower market in Limassol in southern Cyprus.

holidays). In traditional society, before the days of the sexual revolution, a woman who was desired was inaccessible. Only her perfume—that wonderful blend of the flower's smell with that of her body—could be fleetingly captured. Desire could be fulfilled only in song, dance and amorous daydreams, as is suggested by this couplet from a traditional Cypriot song:

Jasmine at your door, oh my jasmine
I came to prune it
and your mother thought
I had come to carry you away.

The women tend the flower pots and are perfectly familiar with the qualities and needs of each plant. To keep jasmine perfectly fresh, they plant it in metal or terracotta pots or, better still, in wooden containers.

Water is a serious problem in Cyprus. Planting flowers in pots rather than in a garden saves a great deal of water, especially in the arid plains, since just the right amount of water can be sprinkled over a flower pot. There is no water shortage in the mountains, but water is hard to transport, and access to houses is almost always difficult. What is more, plots of land suitable for cultivation are so small that, to save space, pots are pressed close together—there are houses whose balconies overflow with flowers. The sparse soil available is used to grow vegetables for subsistence but also for the joy of gardening and swapping one's produce with that of one's neighbour.

Divine protection

My wife was the first person I questioned about the origins of the custom of growing plants in pots. "Can't you see," she said, "that these are poor people's plants? To begin with, they have no money to buy pots and they never buy plants. Friends and neighbours swap cuttings. . . . The pots don't count. It's the plants that matter and the whole nexus of affection that grows around them. . . ."

I was struck by her words. I had been living with these pots for as long as I could remember without paying any attention to this practice whose ceremonial, functional and symbolic connotations can only be explained by wisdom born of long tradition. When women plant flowers (planting trees is a man's job), arrange and rearrange flower pots to make sure that each plant is in its right place in the sun or shade, caress the plants, feel the joy of watching them blos-

som, and tenderly water them, they are acting within a long tradition of hospitality under divine protection. It would be a violation of this tradition if strangers had to knock at the door of a house without pot plants—they are an umbilical cord between the domestic microcosm and the natural macrocosm.

Pot plants perform the same function in the monasteries that dot the hills and mountains of Cyprus, whose inner courtyards are oases of human warmth and fresh air. They restore to passing guests the peace and serenity they lost on their journey. The visitor's first contact with the spiritual and artistic world of the Byzantine monastery is made through this miniature universe that seems to be in a state of rapture. Worship of God blends with the worship of nature, while the echo of the psalms intoned by the deep voices of the monks or in the sensuous tones of the nuns, accompanied by the song of the cicadas outside, infuses the senses and the spirit.

These pots brimming with scent and colour are imbued with sanctity. They celebrate the inexhaustible totality of man and the world, the joys and beauty of the earth and the monastic austerity which leads to union with God. These intimate gardens where everything is within reach provide the mass of flowers which on Good Friday night accompany Christ to His tomb in a voluptuous blend of classical sensuality and Byzantine spirituality.

The geometrical order and perfection of Western gardens are a far cry from this simple beauty whose every feature prolongs the stirrings of the soul. Here the law of analogies between people and their landscape seems to function to perfection. As Elytis says, "a line a painter draws is not limited to itself alone, but has an 'analogy' in the world of spiritual values. Seeing the mountains shaped this way or that way must have an effect on the human spirit, must have its analogy."[2] ■

1. Interview with Odysseus Elytis by Ivar Ivask in *Books Abroad*, vol. 49, Norman, Oklahoma, autumn 1975.
2. Ibid

"The natural world is recreated inside the islanders' houses."

Michel Setboun © Rapho, Paris

What's in a name?

J N de Soye © Rapho, Paris

BY LUIS MIZÓN

Early European explorers to Chile's south coast symbolically annexed the places they discovered by giving them European names

Above, a glacier flows down to Beagle Channel on the coast of Tierra del Fuego.

The Yahgan were a people living in Tierra del Fuego ("land of fire") who used to ply up and down the coast in their small boats and build themselves makeshift shelters on islands or on the banks of inlets. The last of them, a woman who was born in 1887 and died in 1983, wrote, "I am the last survivor of the Wollaston islanders. There used to be five Yahgan tribes, each from a different place but all speaking the same language. Before I could walk, I had been as far as Cape Horn, strapped to my mother's back. Everybody called me Rosa, because that was how I was christened by the English missionaries, but my real name is Lakutia the *kipa*. Lakutia is the name of a bird and *kipa* means woman.

All Yahgans are named after the place where they were born, and my mother gave birth to me near Lakutia Bay. That's how it is done among our people: we are given the name of the place that welcomes us to the world."

It is several centuries, however, in Chile and elsewhere in Latin America, since geographical names told the simple tale of people living in symbiosis with their environment. Instead they speak of the clash of two peoples and two cultures fighting over the same territory. Indigenous names and European names of coastal features and mountains are associated with different memories. Today these names intermingle in a landscape into which the indigenous population wanted to melt while the Europeans simply wanted to take possession of it.

Leaving their mark

For the explorer who comes from afar, the land is like a new-born baby, as yet nameless. The names bestowed on places by the European navigators and explorers who began arriving on the southern coast of Chile in the sixteenth century have political or religious connotations, or else express a sense of beauty or were even inspired by passionate love. Only seldom did the newcomers keep the indigenous name.

The annexation of the Araucan lands, followed by their exploration by naturalists and their colonization, gave rise to a new series of terms and appellations. The vast territory inhabited by the Indians who provided Alonso de Ercilla, in the sixteenth century, with the inspiration for his epic of the conquest, *La Araucana*, lay roughly between the Pacific, the Andes and two rivers, the Bío-Bío (or Malleco) to the north and the Toltén (or Calle-Calle) to the south. These lands were gradually integrated into the territory of Chile in the nineteenth century, the process being completed by 1883. There are still many Araucans today, but the indigenous populations of the clusters of islands that stretch from the Isla de Chiloé to Cape Horn have become almost entirely extinct.

Between Cape Horn and the main island of Tierra del Fuego, the place-names are sometimes English (the Wollaston, Picton, Lennox, Button, Gordon King and Scott Islands), sometimes French (the Hermite and Bertrand Islands and the Pasteur Peninsula), or Spanish (Caleta Hernández, Santa Rosa or Mejillones), with a few Yahgan Indian names thrown in, such as Bahia Tekenika, Canasaca or Wulaia. Thus, one name may be concealed behind another. Onashaga was the Yahgan name of the Beagle Channel and Yakashaka was that of the Murray Channel, at the mouth of the Strait of Magellan.

As for Valparaiso, the leading port on the Pacific side of the continent before the construction of the Panama Canal, its Spanish name means "Vale of Paradise". This was the ▸

Pawel Wysocki © Hemisphères, Paris

The village of Castro on Chiloe Island (Chile).

J N de Soye © Rapho, Paris

Torres del Paine, in Chilean Patagonia.

place where, in the great days of sail, mariners who had passed the Strait of Magellan or rounded the Horn making for the Pacific coast of South America dreamed of dropping anchor.

Acts of possession

History sometimes seems to have hesitated over the choice of a name, even to the point of rejecting the one proposed by the discoverer. Magellan, for instance, having entered the strait that was to bear his name on the first day of November, decided to call it All Saints' Strait, but it subsequently became known by other names—Straits of Patagonia, Victoria and the Moluccas, or again Dragon's Tail Strait—but in common parlance it remained the "Strait of Magellan".

A similar process is associated with the naming of Cape Horn. Although the first person to have mentioned it seems to have been Sir Francis Drake, who entered the Strait of Magellan on 20 August 1578, the first sailors to round the Cape, on 29 January 1616, thus connecting the two great oceans, were the Dutchmen Jacques Le Maire and Willem C. Schouten. They named it Cape Hoorn after the village where Schouten was born. Spanish captains later wanted to rename it San Ildefonso, but Spanish sailors were content to change "Hoorn" to "Hornos" (Spanish for "ovens"), perhaps in the hope of lending a little imaginary warmth to cliffs that are forbidding and icy, despite forming part of the "Land of Fire".

The naming of a place is both an individ-

Cape Horn, at the southern extremity of Chile.

Xavier Desmier © Rapho, Paris

ual and a collective act. To name is to possess. Every newcomer thus leaves the imprint of his language and the signs of his passage. Alonso de Ercilla, one of the discoverers of Chiloé, an island with an Indian name, expressed very well the keen powers of observation and the underlying sense of pride of the discoverer who leaves his mark upon a place. In Part Three, Canto XXVI of *La Araucana*, he dwells at length on the exploration of Chiloé and some of the neighbouring islands, inhabited by Indians. The Indians, he tells us, "were filled with amazement and wonder at the sight of these strangers [white-skinned, fair, hairy and bearded] with a different language and different clothing".

Before returning, Ercilla left behind a tangible memento of his visit. "I walked for half a mile. Then, wishing to leave a visible, written sign of my having been there, in the bark of the greatest tree that I saw I engraved with the point of my knife these words, 'Don Alonso de Ercilla came here, before any other. He was the first to cross the channel, in a small boat, with only ten men, this last day of February in the year 1558, at two o'clock of the afternoon, as he was making his way back to join his companions'."

An echo of past voyages

Other names bear witness either to the ordeals undergone by their discoverers—Cape Desolation, Land of Desolation, Deceitful Island, Island of Anger, Hunger Harbour, Vain Bay, Gulf of Torments—or to their hopes: Eden Harbour, Future Harbour, Cape Welcome, Land of Springs.

An echo of the adventures they went through, of the dangers they encountered and their miraculous escapes, may sometimes be heard, and then the names sound like votive offerings. Hernando Alonso, pilot of the flagship of a famous Spanish expedition led by Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa, tells how, running into a terrible storm in the Strait of Magellan, "... as we commended our souls to the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, and to the Blessed Mother of God, there came suddenly, by their mercy, a little light and gentle wind which rescued us from that peril, and soon thereafter we rounded the headland of the island of Santa Inés, which we named the Cape of the Holy Spirit in recognition of the grace it had accorded us."

In fact the Cape of the Holy Spirit already had a name, by which it is known to this day: Cabo de Pilares (Cape of the Pillars), because of its supposed similarity to the ruins of a Greek or Roman theatre or to the megaliths of Stonehenge. The other names given to it never caught on, as if what had most appealed to the imagination of seamen was the strange shape of the rocks eroded by the violence of the elements.

Other places are even today still unnamed. The southern coast of Chile, down to its very tip, is formed of one enormous, shattered mountain range of which all that remains to be seen are thousands of mountain-tops, in other words, thousands of islands. Between Cape Horn and Chiloé, more than 3,000 islands, channels, promontories and rocks are still waiting to be named. ■

Isla Róbinson Crusoe (Nearer Land Island) in the Juan Fernández Islands, some 600 km west of Valparaiso (Chile).

Serraillier © Rapho, Paris

FACT FILE the world network

Biosphere Reserves are geographical areas considered typical of the balanced relationship between people and nature. As of April 1997, 337 Reserves, located in 85 different countries, have met the required criteria for this designation laid down within UNESCO's "Man and the Biosphere" (MAB) Programme. They combine three functions:

- species and genetic variation;
- a development function — fostering economic development that is ecologically and culturally sustainable;
- a logistic function — providing support for research, monitoring, training and education related to local, regional, national and global conservation and sustainable development issues.

The Reserves form a World Network within which exchanges of information, experience and personnel are encouraged. They contribute to meeting the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity and Agenda 21 that resulted from the 1992 United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro.

What are Biosphere Reserves for?

Human pressures on natural resources are drastically reducing the diversity of the earth's plant and animal species, ecosystems and landscapes. Biosphere Reserves safeguard samples of biodiversity, landscapes and ecosystems and contribute to the maintenance of the earth's life-support systems which serve to prevent soil erosion, maintain soil fertility, regulate river flow, replenish aquifers, recycle nutrients and absorb air and water pollutants.

Research may be conducted on the dynamics of the natural systems in the core areas of Biosphere Reserves, which have remained relatively unaffected by human activity. This research can be compared with the functioning of human-affected landscapes in the buffer and transition areas.

Sharing knowledge of practices that improve human well-being without degrading the environment is a central purpose of Biosphere Reserves. They are places where issues can be debated by all the stakeholders concerned: scientists, local farmers, fishermen, politicians, private enterprises and nature conservation associations.

How are Biosphere Reserves selected?

To qualify for designation as a Biosphere Reserve an area should normally:

— be representative of a major biogeographic region, including a gradation of existing human intervention;

— contain landscapes, ecosystems or animal and plant species or varieties which need protecting;

— provide an opportunity to explore and demonstrate approaches to sustainable development within the larger region where the Reserves are located;

— have an appropriate zoning system, with a legally constituted core area or areas devoted to long-term protection, a clearly identified buffer zone or zones, and an outer transition area.

How are Biosphere Reserves organized?

The core area needs to be legally established and give long-term protection to the landscape, ecosystem and species it contains.

A buffer zone must be clearly delineated. Human activities in this area should not hinder the conservation objectives of the core area but rather help to protect it. It may, for example, be an area for experimental research into ways of managing the ecosystem.

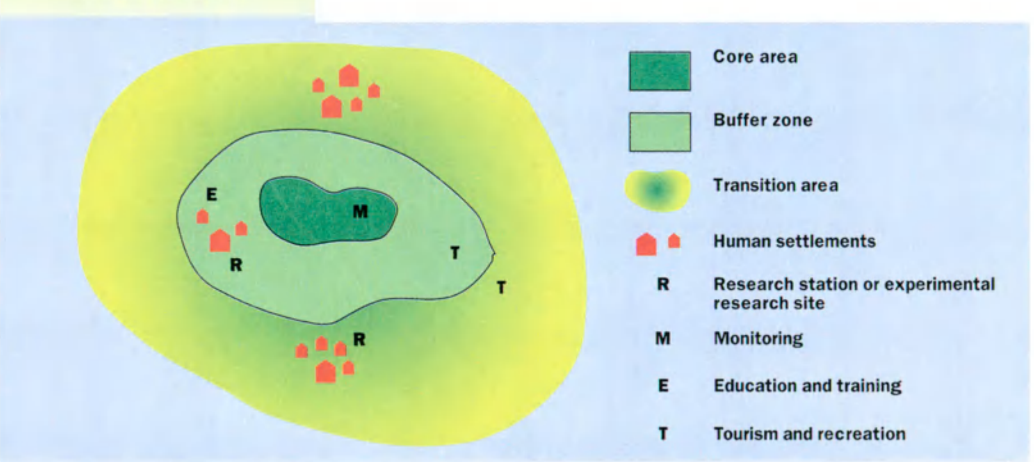
The transition area, or area of co-operation, extends outwards from the Reserve. It is here that local communities and other stakeholders must agree to work together to manage and sustainably develop the area's resources.

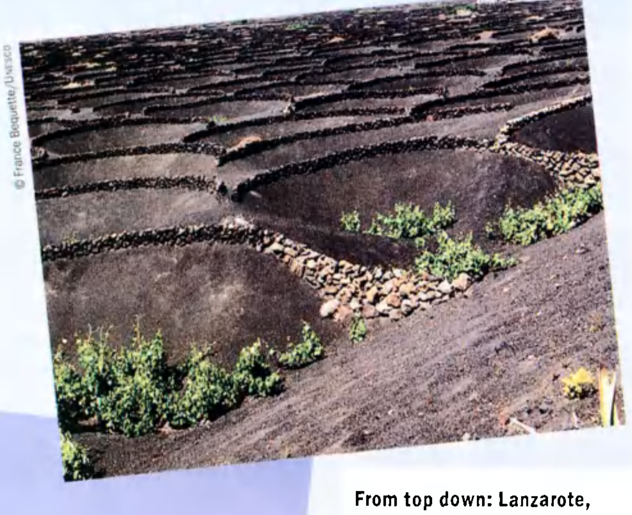
Why a world network?

Biosphere Reserves have a common interest in seeking concrete solutions to reconcile the conservation of biodiversity with the sustainable use of natural resources for the benefit of local people. The World Network is supported by regional networks or thematic networks (e.g. for studying biodiversity). Co-operation can take the form of exchanges of information material, articles in the *Biosphere Reserves Bulletin*, co-operative projects, twinning arrangements, exchanges of personnel or organized visits.

The World Network is governed by a Statutory Framework formally adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO at its 28th session. This framework defines the functioning of the Network and foresees a periodic review of Biosphere Reserves.

BIOSPHERE RESERVE ZONATION





From top down: Lanzarote, Canary Islands (Spain), Amboseli (Kenya), Huascarán (Peru) and Mananara (Madagascar).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

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A list of contacts for Biosphere Reserves and the guiding documents for Biosphere Reserves are available on the Internet URL:
http://www.unesco.org:80//mab/themabnet.html

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InfoMAB

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"Biosphere Reserves: linking conservation and development" (No. 69, May 1995).

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Unesco/Gil Jacques, Montréal

COMMENTARY **Federico Mayor**

Science and society (3)

The responsibility of scientists

Knowledge is always good: it is its applications that can be harmful or even evil. A hammer can be used improperly as an instrument of aggression; so at another level can atomic energy. But we must be careful not to allow only the negative aspects of science to be emphasized. These are usually described in exaggeratedly dark colours, while the good aspects are not news.

The scientific and technological community has a duty to remind people of the enormous benefits science has brought. Some years ago, the Green Revolution, which has transformed the future prospects of millions of people in Asia, came under criticism from environmentalists because it had tended to favour richer farmers, who could afford the pesticides and fertilizers on which the new varieties of wheat and rice depended. The critics behaved as if this discredited the entire enterprise, whereas their criticisms were far outweighed by its highly positive aspects.

There are plenty of other examples. Does anybody think about poliomyelitis any more? Or of the way we have been able to reduce pain and even eliminate it with the help of analgesics or modern anaesthetics? Or of the transport and telecommunications systems that enable us to be citizens and witnesses of the whole world,

even though they compel us to assume the responsibilities this entails?

We cannot shirk our moral responsibilities. We must admit that there have been a considerable number of silent scientists in the twentieth century. The possession of knowledge carries with it a moral obligation. What would we think of a meteorologist who did not warn us that a storm was coming? Or of clinical analysts who failed to alert us to the urgent nature of their findings? Scientists have to transcend the walls of their laboratories, their departments, their faculties, and their industries. To say that the scientific life is simply a matter of "publishing or perishing" is both disparaging and wrong. A scientist who chooses to remain silent, particularly when irreversible consequences may follow, is behaving both unprofessionally and immorally.

Genetics and ethics

In no field of science are the issues more complex than in genetics, nor is there any other area of science in which the discriminatory use of the information would be more scandalous. The whole subject of bioethics, far from being a luxury, should be the preserve of the entire human community, since the advances made by the few are a battle won for the whole human race.

Bioethics came into being, rightly, at the moment when techniques of genetic manipulation first emerged in the 1970s, and questions began to be asked about the influence of molecular biology on the future of humanity. Far from simply being concerned with an investigation of the relations between science and society, it is concerned with the relation between man and nature in its biological diversity. The development of bioethics illustrates, I believe, a proper and appropriate response by scientists and philosophers to the social questions raised by science.

These are many. Genetic diagnosis and screening make it possible to give reassurance to members of families with a history of genetically transmitted illnesses. However, should these tests be conducted only after the disease appears? Should genetic testing be restricted to hereditary, incurable, fatal or incapacitating diseases? How can the confidentiality of information be guaranteed over time, especially when they could be of enormous interest to employers and insurance companies?

For the time being, the scientific community has agreed that there should be no use of gene therapy on the germ cells—those that would transmit the changes to the next generation—and that the cloning of human beings should be banned. But is this agreement based on ethical principles, or does it merely reflect current fears of the possible associated risks?

Moral dilemmas

Behind the first series of questions looms the spectre of eugenic selection, with its attendant host of violations of human rights and individual freedom.

The temptation for couples to use the results of screening in selecting their potential offspring is understandable, but it is difficult to draw the line between the legitimate desire not to pass on serious genetic diseases and the illusory quest for the "perfect child". At another level, it is not impossible to envisage entire societies being tempted to practise eugenic selection on entire populations that it might consider genetically vulnerable or as presenting "risks".

Each society must work out for itself a route through this moral maze, but there is also a role for the international community. National rules may vary from country to country, which could encourage a form of "genetic tourism", in which people would be tempted to take advantage of laxer regulations abroad. The first stirrings of this have been seen in the use of techniques of in vitro fertilization which allow women past menopause to become pregnant. In Italy there are no rules or conventions prohibiting the use of this technique for women in their late fifties or even sixties, so that women from the United Kingdom have travelled there to take advantage of a treatment they would be denied at home because of their age.

Without acting as judge and jury in such cases, it is nevertheless clear that some international standards are desirable. Similar arguments apply to the even more vexed question of the patenting of the human genome, where so far different countries have adopted different approaches. For these very reasons, UNESCO has created a World Committee on Bioethics*; perhaps it would be wise to extend its scope to include every impact of science on human life. ■

* See the September 1994 issue of the *UNESCO Courier*, "A code for living." *Ed.*

THE ISLAND OF MOZAMBIQUE

by Patrick Lagès

Arab, Indian and Portuguese architectural influences are blended in the port of Mozambique. Once a trading post on the sea route from Europe to the East Indies, this island harbour was placed on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1991.

The church of Our Lady of Mercy (17th century) is the only one still used for worship on the island.

© Patrick Lagès Paris

The little island of Mozambique, which lies four kilometres off the coast of Africa just opposite Madagascar, was for hundreds of years a major centre of intercontinental maritime trade. It was occupied by Arab merchants from the tenth century until the end of the fifteenth, and in the sixteenth century became a port of call on the route from Europe to the East Indies opened by the Portuguese navigator Vasco da Gama. In 1507, the Portuguese built a fortress on the island where the Customs House stands today. A later fortification that has survived is the fort of St. Sebastian, which was built between 1558 and 1620 and is inspired by Italian Renaissance military architecture.

Mozambique harbour grew rapidly during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Its business houses stood on the sea front, along a rocky belt where boats with a shallow draught could land at high tide. Over the years a town of twisting streets lined with flat-roofed houses took shape around a central square.

The town as it appears today has a strong architectural homogeneity which is largely due to the use over

© Patrick Lagès, Paris

Fishermen on Mozambique Island.

the centuries of the same building materials, mainly limestone from quarries in the south of the island, and wood for beams and framework. The decorative style of the façades, with their cornices, high rectangular framed windows and rows of pilasters, is equally homogeneous. The flat roofs, designed to collect rainwater and compensate for the island's lack of freshwater springs, and a rectangular ground plan in which space is divided into six square rooms also uphold a general impression of unity which encompasses the smallest houses roofed with palm leaves—the *macuti* that constitute around a quarter of the city—as well as the most luxurious residences. The preponderant architectural influence is that of southern Portugal, although there are undeniable Arab and Indian elements.

THE COLONIAL TOWN

After crossing the three-kilometre-long bridge that links the island to the mainland, the visitor comes to a cemetery surrounded by white walls. There is a white chapel, and a child's white tomb in the form of a sailing ship stands out among the other funerary monuments, notably the Muslim tombs, which are more unobtrusive. Some distance away, a nineteenth-century Hindu temple and crematorium illustrate the island's cultural pluralism.

Arab and later Portuguese, Mozambique island was visited by such exceptional men as the traveller Fernão Mendes Pinto, who stopped off there in 1537, and the poet Luís de Camões, who lived there between 1567 and 1570 while completing his epic, *The Lusiads*, a hymn to the great Portuguese explorers of his time. His statue stands in a small square by the sea. But Mozambique's colonial splendour, victim of the vicissitudes of time and history, is today no more than a memory. The abolition of slavery, which gradually brought a lucrative trade to an end, then the opening of the Suez Canal, which moved the East India route northwards, inevitably condemned the town to decline.

Apart from the ancient fortifications, only half of the town is stone-built. The visitor's eye is immediately drawn to the hospital, ▸

In the old town.

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St. Paul's palace, built in the 17th century. Once the governor-general's residence, it is now a museum.

a majestic neo-classical building constructed in 1877 and recently repainted white, with a garden decorated with ponds and fountains. For many years it was the biggest hospital south of the Sahara.

VANISHED SPLENDOUR

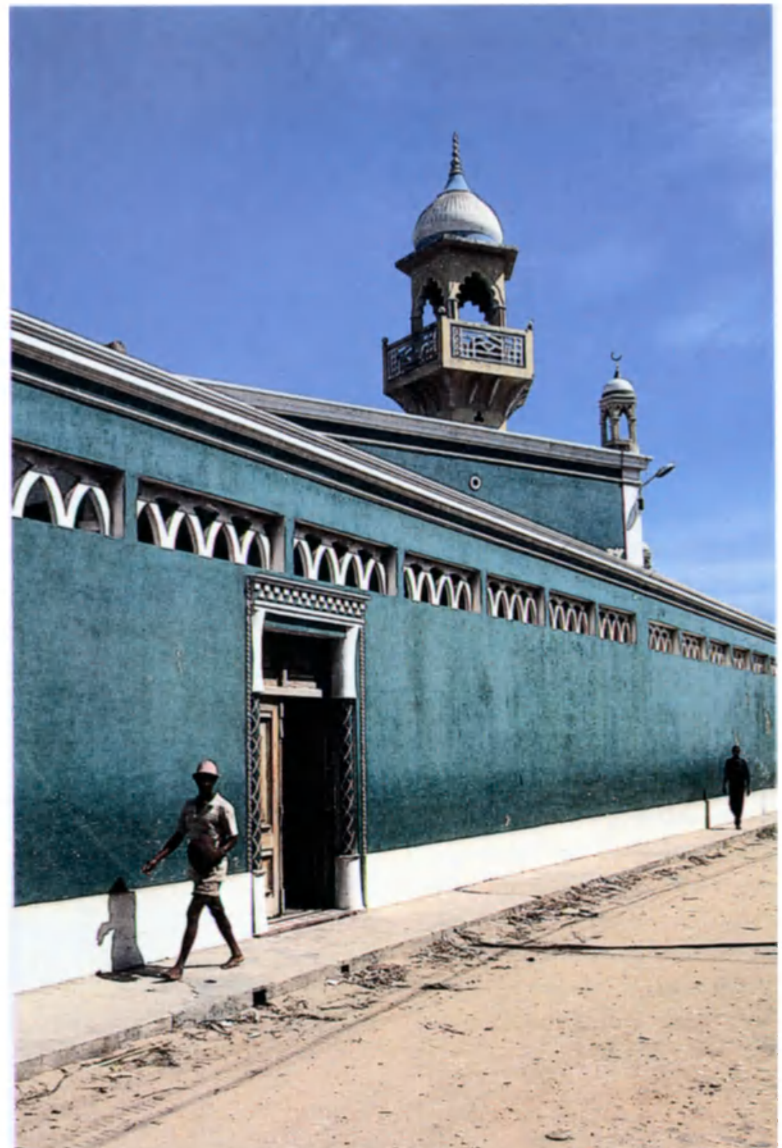
Behind the half-open doors of prosperous town houses can be seen neglected but once well-tended gardens. In a Mediterranean-style café with chequerboard floor tiles, superannuated fans churn the air in a vast room where a handful of customers sit around tables with inlaid chessboards. The menu, painted on the wall by a local artist, never varies: fish, mixed grill, salad. Opposite, the church of Our Lady of Mercy offers its immaculate façade to the sun. Built in 1635 on the ruins of an earlier church destroyed by a Dutch bombardment in 1607, it is one of the oldest buildings on the island. It houses a small museum of sacred art, and during the services the singing of the faithful is punctuated by the insistent beating of tom-toms.

The perfectly preserved St. Paul's palace, with its walls of red ochre with white edging, has claims to be the island's most beautiful monument. A Jesuit school founded in 1610, it was destroyed by fire sixty years later and rebuilt in 1674. From 1763 until 1935 it was used as the residence of the island's governors. It was converted into a museum in 1969 and today houses a fine collection of European and Indian furniture of different periods so that it looks for all the world like a royal dwelling. It is connected to the sea front by a small square with Art Nouveau street-lamps where two-coloured paving stones evoke the undulations of the ocean swell.

A MICROCOSM OF HUMANITY

On the sea front, the colonial town slowly gives way to fishermen's houses. On the shore the people from the poorer neighbourhoods go about their business. Women and girls queue beside a fountain for a little fresh water. Children run around and always end their games by diving into the sea shouting with joy. Mozambique's population has increased by over 50 per cent since 1968, largely because of the war and the refugees displaced by it. The town market is one of the island's liveliest spots. A rigorously symmetrical quadrilateral, with small towers rising at each corner, it was built in 1887. Its wares are mainly fruit and small fish set out on trestle tables. Under the shady porches of houses a century old, street vendors sell individual cigarettes, biscuits, sweets and fizzy drinks to passers-by.

At the other end of the island, between two beaches of white sand, the fort of St. Sebastian now only defies imaginary fleets. Its high dark walls, built on the coral of the island, plunge sheer into the sea. The wind is the only guest in this desolate spot, sweeping the white terraces, groaning in the gigantic reservoirs of rainwater dug in the basement and whistling through



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The island's main mosque, built in the 19th century. A Koranic school was added to it in the early 20th century.

© Patrick Lagès, Paris

The fortress of St. Sebastian (1558-1620). Its design was inspired by Italian Renaissance military architecture.

the old church. Birds nest in the muzzles of cannon which still point to the horizon. At the sheerest point, on a bastion of the fortress, is the chapel of Our Lady of the Ramparts. Built in 1522, it is thought to be the oldest European building south of the equator. Be that as it may, it is certainly the oldest in Mozambique and is thought to be the only building outside Portugal built in the early sixteenth-century Manueline style.

In the musty interior, the prevailing obscurity is barely dissipated by dim rays of light that penetrate through cross-shaped openings in the walls and cast a grey light on tombs that have been sealed to the floor and contain the remains of travellers and conquerors who died of fever and wounds. The muffled sound of waves beating on distant rocks can be heard, as if the sea were trying to efface all trace of human life. In vain. These bodies mingled with the land of Africa are forever part of the history and life of the island of Mozambique. ■

A TIDE OF EVENTS

10th century: First mention of the island of Mozambique in Arab written sources.
10th-15th centuries: Arab trading posts.
1498: Vasco da Gama lands on the island.
1502: Vasco da Gama's second voyage. Portugal's first trading station on Mozambique is founded.
1507-1508: The fort of St. Gabriel is constructed.
1522: The chapel of Our Lady of the Ramparts is built.
1558-1620: The fort of St. Sebastian is built to guard against possible Turkish attack.
1607: The island is unsuccessfully attacked by the Dutch.
1750-1810: The slave trade period.
1762: The island ceases to be administered by the Viceroy of Goa and comes directly under the Portuguese crown.
1869: The opening of the Suez Canal makes it possible to reach India from Europe without passing the Cape of Good Hope and Mozambique.
1898: The capital of Mozambique is transferred to Lourenço Marques (today Maputo). The island becomes a simple provincial capital.
1947: The construction of the port of Nacala, a little further north, deals a death blow to the island's economy.
1975: The independence of Mozambique is proclaimed on 25 June.
1991: The island of Mozambique is placed on UNESCO's World Heritage List. ■

A child's grave in the island's cemetery.

© Patrick Lagès, Paris

Gardens of the Far East

by France Bequette

Bruno Barbier © Hémisphères Paris

The Park of the Jade Spring in Lijiang, Yunnan province (China).

In the early eighteenth century English landscape gardeners began to rebel against the straitjacket of French classicism. They were weary of gardens divided into symmetrical blocks by rectilinear paths punctuated with statues and fountains, gardens where no plant had a right to grow outside its appointed place. When the fashion for informal landscaped gardens appeared in England, the hand of Chinese influence was widely felt. "Everyone knows that English gardens are nothing more than imitations of Chinese gardens," wrote Georges Le Rouge in 1774 of the fashion for what were known as "Anglo-Chinese" gardens, which later spread to many parts of Europe. In point of fact, Chinese influence went no further than a pagoda or pavilion placed at the edge of a stream in the middle of a park.

The gardens of the Far East are small enclosed worlds that awaken the senses and calm the mind. Everything in them seems designed to encourage meditation: murmuring water, birdsong, the sound of frogs and crickets, wind rustling in bamboo leaves, the delicate smell given off by lotus leaves after a summer shower, and succulent fruit ripening on the stem.

CHINA: ROOMS WITH A VIEW

"In Chinese," writes Antoine Gournay, assistant curator of the Cernuschi Museum in Paris, "the word *yuan* (garden) means not so much an area set apart from built architecture and mainly used for growing plants, as a specific way of distributing and arranging the space of a dwelling." He goes on to say that "House and garden in China are more often dovetailed together than juxtaposed; what's more, the vegetation that decorates this ensemble is considered as secondary to rocks and water." The regularity of architecture contrasts with the irregularity of the garden with its twisted rocks and ponds in a variety of shapes.

Rocks symbolize mountains, the place where sky and earth meet. They are chosen carefully. The more unusual their shape, the more they are worth. Their size depends on their creator's resources and ambitions. In the 11th century, the Northern Sung dynasty emperor Hui Tsung spent twelve years creating the Lake of Golden Clarity, Longevity Mountain (5,000 m^2) and Gen Yu rockery (150 metres high) in the imperial city of Bian Liang. In his book *Classic Chinese Gardens*, Qiao Yun tells how the emperor "did not hesitate to knock down bridges or destroy roads and canals to transport these rocks." In China, where mountains are worshipped (e.g. Kunlun shan, the residence of Tai ji, the

J. Boland © Apparence, Paris

Below, part of the Chuo Cheng (Zhou Zeng) Yuan garden in Suzhou (China). The garden is in 3 parts, divided by walls. The central and western sections have been composed around a winding lake for 1,000 years. The eastern part has been laid out in a modern, Western-inspired style.

Ben Simmons © Diaf, Paris

The Ryoan-ji Zen garden in Kyoto (Japan) is considered to be the earliest example of pure *kare-sansui* or dry stone-work garden.

"immensely great one"), there are no gardens without rocks.

Water is as essential as rocks, to which it is a complement, since water and rocks are *yin* and *yang*. Sun-drenched, angular and hard, rocks are *yang*. Cold and dark but also free, pure and regenerative, water is *yin*. Liu Bang, *Gaozu* (founding emperor) of the Han dynasty in the third century B.C., created three artificial islands in Tai Yi Lake, to symbolize paradise. From that time on all imperial gardens used this symbol.

The first private gardens are recorded in the year 900, the finest examples being in the city of Suzhou in Jiangsu province. Many men of letters went to live in the city in isolation from the world, and there they practised gardening and painting on silk. The format of traditional painting on hand scrolls, which is read either vertically or horizontally, is said to correspond perfectly with the thought processes of the lover of gardens.

Enclosed by walls, which provide a neutral background, the Chinese garden contains buildings for various leisure activities. The landscape is arranged according to the rooms from which it is viewed. No single point affords an overall view. Natural compositions are framed by open-work, round, rectangular or fan-shaped windows, and doors shaped like full moons or vases. Non-structural walls are replaced by moveable partitions. Covered walkways meander through the garden so that it can be enjoyed in all weathers. The fusion between the inside and outside areas is complete.

Galleries, pathways and bridges shun rectilinearity, for straight lines are used by evil spirits. Garden design is regulated by the science known as *fengshui*, which literally means "wind and water" and is expressed via geomancy. For 2,000 years it was inconceivable to build a house without first consulting a geomancer. "If you induce harmony of place," says the *Book of Rites* (Li ji), "then sky and earth will assume their rightful places and everything will prosper." Antoine Gournay explains: "The site, orientation and shape of buildings are chosen so as to use to maximum effect the breaths of the life force (*qiyun*) that appear in this place, capture their beneficial effects and take precautions against their baneful influences." The ideal site faces south, turns its back to a mountain and is near a stream flowing from northwest to southeast. The garden should be entered from the south.

JAPAN: PUTTING THE WORLD IN ORDER

Japanese garden design is also governed by *fengshui*, and as early as the sixth century it was drawing inspiration from Buddhism and Chinese practices. But Chinese and Japanese thinking about gardens went different ways. "By means of the most ordinary things gardens enable us to grasp the secret of nature and its real essence," wrote Soami, a sixteenth-century monk and aesthete who wrote a book on gardens.

"The shadow of the bamboo
sweeps the steps
but not a speck of dust moves.
The moon plunges to the bottom
of the fountain
but the water is unruffled,"

reads an entry in the *Zenrin Kushu*, an anthology of quotations compiled in the fifteenth century. The garden is a place conducive to meditation. Rigour, purity and asymmetry preside over its composition. Nothing is left to chance. Its architecture is as codified as calligraphy, the tea ceremony or the art of flower arrangement. In fact gardening was done by monks, painters or masters of the tea ceremony until professional horticulturists came on the scene. As a way of putting the world in order, it expresses a religion or a philosophy with as much precision as a cathedral or a treatise. Its size is of no importance. It can be miniaturized and even be contained in a small porcelain cup.

Japanese gardeners were poets and philosophers. While resting ▶

The Nanzen-ji sand garden in Kyoto (Japan).

Ben Simmons © Diaf, Paris

from their labours, they composed haiku, 17-syllable poems celebrating nature. "The dead leaves flutter down one on the other. The rain falls on the rain." Their studies lasted for up to ten years. Their favourite trees were pine, plum, cherry and maple. Irises, peonies, azaleas and chrysanthemums could be used to add notes of colour. Everything was arranged according to immutable principles. A tree, for example, should never be planted in the centre of the garden, for it would resemble the *kumaru* ideogram which means "to have problems". Stones and plants must be arranged according to the magical *yang* odd numbers: three, five or seven.

The *kare-sansui*, a dry stonework garden that would be inconceivable in China, appeared around the middle of the fourteenth century under the influence of Zen philosophy. To achieve inner illumination, *satori*, the sage creates an inner void by silently contemplating a rectangle of raked white sand from which deeply buried and carefully placed stones protrude. Waterfalls, rivers and waves are suggested by furrows made by the rake. In the most famous of these gardens, the Ryoan-ji in Kyoto, which dates from the Muromachi period (fourteenth to sixteenth centuries), fifteen rocks emerge from a bed of white gravel. The crowds that visit the garden every day see in it islands, constellations, clouds or even a tigress with her cubs.

Later, when the tea ceremony had been institutionalized, a garden was designed to provide it with a setting. This "tea garden" is divided in two: an inner garden and an outer garden. The tea house must seem isolated from the rest of the world. The tall trees that surround it are untouched by shears.

In places where hot springs shoot out of volcanic soil, the garden designer creates a pond for bathing and relaxation. In this setting all kinds of shapes and objects become symbols. In the garden of the Silver Pavilion (Ginkaku-ji, fifteenth century) in Kyoto, an ordinary pile of sand meant for the garden's upkeep caught the gardener's eye. Shaped like a truncated cone, its flat top reflected the moon so well that it immediately became an altar to the glory of the moon and a protected monument. ■

Stone lantern and arched footbridge in the Zen garden of Kenko-ji Temple at Tsurumi, Yokohama (Japan).

Ben Simmons © Diaf, Paris

FURTHER READING:

✓ **CHINOISERIES**
by Dawn Jacobson, Phaidon Press, London, 1993

✓ **LES JARDINS CLASSIQUES CHINOIS**
by Qiao Yun, Hayot publishers, Paris, 1988

✓ **THE CHINESE GARDEN,**
by Maggie Keswick, Academy Editions, London, 1986

initiatives

The water hyacinth: an aquatic pest

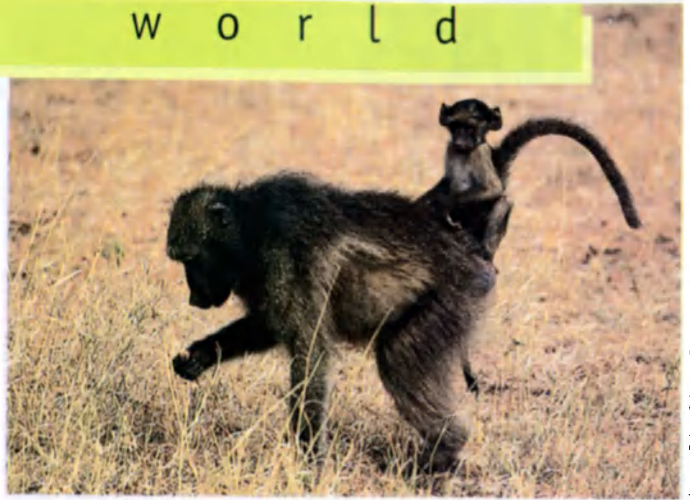
The water hyacinth is a thick-leaved freshwater plant with a pale blue flower. Imported into Asia and Africa from South America because of its beauty, it proliferated unchecked in the silty, mineral-rich water of lakes and rivers. When it is well established, it consumes the oxygen fish need to survive, hinders fishing and navigation and slows water flow to a trickle so that hydroelectric power plants become useless. The economies of some Asian and African countries, especially the nations bordering Lake Victoria, Africa's biggest lake (some 70,000 km^2), have been so hard hit by this persistent parasite that they have declared war on it. The World Bank and the Global Environment Facility have committed several million dollars to the struggle.

The opening moves in the battle, conducted using chemical herbicides, were not very successful, partly because the range of usable products was severely limited by a concern to preserve aquatic life and maintain water quality. Eventually the idea of introducing a natural predator was adopted and is now being tried out experimentally by the Kenyan Institute of Agricultural Research, which imported nearly 35,000 weevil larvae from Australia and put them into the lake.

Since then, however, international experts meeting in Namibia for a symposium held under the United Nations University's Zero Emission Research Initiative[1] (ZERI) have expressed scepticism about the weevil's effectiveness and are afraid that the introduction of this new insect into the lake's ecosystem may have unpredictable consequences. On the other hand, they showed interest in a proposal from a working group of experts, endorsed by Prof. S. T. Chang, a world famous Chinese expert on mushroom growing, which suggests that if the hyacinths are harvested, dried and mixed with other waste, they could make a useful substrate for the cultivation of mushrooms. Seven African and Asian nations have agreed to take part in this experiment.

If the results are conclusive, the mushrooms could provide participating countries with a foodstuff that would be nutritionally appreciable since it would contain iodine if seaweed residue were to be added to the culture substrate. This is important since 30% of the population of southern Africa and 20% of the people living in the highlands of Southeast Asia suffer from chronic iodine deficiency. There is also a possibility that the substrate could be recycled by earthworms, which would convert it into chicken feed and a rich compost for enhancing soil fertility. The first findings will be examined at the third international congress of the ZERI Programme to be held this June in Jakarta (Indonesia). ■

1. See the Greenwatch feature, "Waste-free manufacturing—feasible goal or wild goose chase?" in the March 1996 issue of the *UNESCO Courier*.—*Ed.*


Jacques Robert © Jacana, Paris

BARK-LOVING BABOONS

Since 1992, when drought forced them to change their diet of small mammals, birds, insects and plants, the 8,000 baboons of Manicaland, a province in eastern Zimbabwe, have taken a shine to the bark of young pines. Now their healthy appetite is causing $5 million damage a year in the plantations. Timber merchants, for whom this damage represents considerable loss of income, want to get rid of the baboons, but traditional chiefs and environmentalists are hostile to the idea. ■

THE WORLD'S OLDEST TEA TREE

A 2,700-year-old tea tree has recently been discovered in China's Yunnan province, not far from a plant only 200 years younger. The tree, which is 1.2 metres in diameter and 25.5 metres tall, is growing in virgin forest at an altitude of 2,500 metres. The discovery is surprising because normally wild tea shrubs do not grow more than 10 metres tall. It tends to support the theory that tea may have originated in Yunnan province. ■

MEDITERRANEAN BLUES

Some 130 million people live around the Mediterranean and each year, mostly in summer, they are joined by 100 million or more tourists. Each year some 1.7 x 10^9 cubic metres of municipal waste water are discharged directly into the sea, three-quarters of it untreated, as well as 66 x 10^9 cubic metres of industrial waste water, 120,000 tons of mineral oils, 60,000 tons of detergents, heavy metals, phosphates and nitrates in excess of admissible or desirable levels. These figures are quoted in a recent report by the United Nations Environment Programme (MAP Technical Reports Series No. 100) which notes that pollution in the Mediterranean is serious and that the overall picture is discouraging. And yet the legislative framework needed to apply vital safeguards exists. What is required is political determination to tackle the problem vigorously. ■

UNDERGROUND DAMS

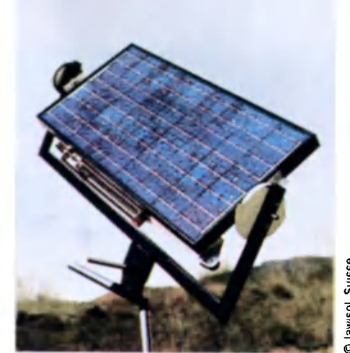
While damming rivers provokes lively debate (see "Greenwatch", March 1997), damming underground streams where they come to the surface is much less controversial. The Chinese have created large underground reservoirs in karst (limestone) by using this "bottling up" technique. During floods, river water collects in underground cavities, where it is stored until needed in the dry season. Not all types of rock lend themselves to this kind of scheme, however. ■

OASES UNDER THE SEA

"Undersea oases" are extraordinary ecosystems associated with hydrothermal springs that well up from the ocean floor at temperatures higher than 350°C. The springs are usually rich in metal sulphides, which are generally toxic for marine life. Unable to carry out photosynthesis for lack of sunlight, creatures living in these ecosystems depend on chemosynthesis for their survival. A team of European and American scientists have explored the East Pacific Rise between the Gulf of California and the Galapagos Islands where the oases were discovered in the 1970s. Among the samples of animal life they took from 2,600 metres in depth were amazing 2-metre-long worms whose metabolism has features in common with both plants and animals. To study them under optimal conditions, pressurized aquariums simulating their natural living conditions have been developed. ■

THE SUNFLOWER WAY TO SOLAR POWER

By observing the movement of sunflowers, Swiss inventor Emile Jansen has found a simple way of maximizing the yield of panels of photovoltaic cells, which convert solar energy directly into electricity. He set out to design a system that would turn the panels to follow the sun without using either electricity or harmful gases (such as Freon or the CFCs), and at a cost that would be absorbed by the increase in energy production. He came up with the "Jawisol" system, which uses the principle of dilating fluids. Powered by the sun's heat, a jack filled with fluid turns the photovoltaic panels mechanically by a system of cables and pulleys. The system has been proved effective after two years of tests by a Swiss engineering school. Unfortunately solar energy is not as popular as it might be. ■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BOUNTIFUL BAMBOO

Bamboo throve all round the equator, from Indonesia to Tanzania and Costa Rica, until colonizers arrived and cut it down to make room for farmland. Its qualities have long been underestimated. It has a higher tensile strength than steel, grows quickly (taking only 5 years to reach maturity) and is an excellent building material. In the province of Caldas (Colombia) 3-storey bamboo buildings more than a century old are still being used. Bamboo can also be used as drainage piping and as a basis for renewable fuels, and bamboo shoots are delicacies in Chinese and Japanese cooking. With some 1,500 varieties in Africa alone, bamboo is the renewable plant of the future. ■

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ETHIOPIA'S azmari minstrels

BY ISABELLE LEYMARIE

© Maison des cultures du monde Paris

The *azmaris* are minstrels who belong to Ethiopia's Christian majority, the Amhara. Their repertoire, whose origins are lost in the mists of time, consists largely of light poetry, much of it extemporized. They use traditional instruments such as the *krar*, a lyre with similarities to those used in ancient Egypt, the *masenqo* (a single-string spike fiddle) and double-skinned drums. Women performers wear long white dresses with scarlet bands, and the men, white shirts and trousers and a kind of cloak with a wide golden-brown sash. Three exponents of this Amharic tradition, singer Ejigayehu Shibabaw (at centre of photo) and her accompanists, (on her right in photo) Fantahun Shewakochew Mekonnen (*krar*, percussion and vocals) and (on her left) Weres G. Egeziaber (*masenqo* and vocals), recently gave a series of recitals in Paris. During their visit, they talked to Isabelle Leymarie.

■ **Are all three of you genuine *azmaris*?**

Ejigayehu Shibabaw: No, the only *azmari* is Weres Egeziaber. He only performs traditional music, whereas Fantahun Shewakochew Mekonnen and I sing and play other kinds as well. A real *azmari* has to play the *masenqo*, an instrument Weres Egeziaber specializes in.

■ **It is said that the meaning of the word azmari has changed. Whereas it once meant "praise-singers" it has supposedly come to mean "those who criticize", or even "those who denigrate".**

E. S.: A few centuries ago the *azmaris* performed religious functions at the courts of sovereigns. They celebrated liturgies and officiated at certain ceremonies. Their repertoire only gradually became more secular. They began as praise-singers, then they sang love poetry and eventually began to invent humorous or satirical verse in which they poked fun at their own protectors.

■ **In some regions, the griots, who are also praise-singers and heirs to a long tradition, are not allowed to criticize or abuse anyone directly, although sometimes they allow themselves to make a few veiled allusions.**

E. S.: In Ethiopia we are absolutely free to do this. The *azmaris* in particular and traditional singers in general excel in the art of improvisation. They have a particular liking for humour, alliteration, puns and satire. No one really takes exception to their mockery. Love songs are still by far the most popular part of their repertoire, however.

■ **Ethnological studies of Ethiopia say that the *azmaris* are despised by the rest of society.**

E. S.: That is true of musicians in general, not just the *azmaris*. My father, for example, is a businessman, and is very hostile to the fact that I am a singer. I had to run away from home to follow my vocation.

■ **Yet you give concerts outside Ethiopia and you are just about to make your first recording. Isn't this success a point in your favour?**

E. S.: Not at all. He believes that it is shameful to perform in public. Even if I became a big star, he wouldn't change his mind.

Weres Egeziaber: I must be an exception because my family was overjoyed that I became a musician. My parents are farmers, and when I was eighteen I learned to play the *masenqo* in my village from small groups of itinerant musicians.

■ **Ejigayehu Shibabaw, you are not from a family of musicians, how did you learn the traditional repertoire?**

E. S.: By ear. But that is very easy, because in Ethiopia, even in Addis Ababa, everyone knows the old songs. Tradition is still very much alive. I didn't need recordings or any special training. I speak two Ethiopian

languages: Amharic, my mother tongue, and Ago, which is a very rhythmic language. And if I have to sing songs in other languages, I learn them phonetically. Fantahun Shewakochew Mekonnen studied music for four years in a school where they taught both classical Western music and Ethiopian music. He often does arrangements.

■ **How did you form your trio?**

E. S.: We met at a puppet show at the Addis Ababa National Theatre, a big employer of singers, dancers and musicians.

■ **How do you improvise?**

E. S.: We usually improvise words to a given melody. Even during a concert I sometimes invent new couplets when I feel inspired.

■ **Do the musicians improvise too?**

F. S. K.: Yes, but according to certain rules. Ethiopian music—Amharic music in particular—is based on pentatonic scales. There are a lot of them and each one expresses a specific mood. We mainly use four. Improvisation is traditionally done inside this modal framework. Our instruments, especially the *masenqo*, are adapted to this form of music. I also play the trumpet and the piano. As well as the traditional repertoire, I play pop music, Ethiopian pop, using brass and keyboards but with words sung in Amharic. We also listen to foreign music, but our inspiration is mostly local, although we are not locked in to the old modes. Sometimes we mix several modes or African modes and Western scales.

■ **Ejigayehu Shibabaw, do you sing more modern music?**

E. S.: Yes, I'm currently preparing to make my first record, also using brass and keyboard instruments. It will include a blend of reggae and West African and Ethiopian beats. I'm calling it *Tsahay*, "sun" in Amharic. Our country is rich in rhythms—often unknown outside Ethiopia—so I doubt I'll ever be short of inspiration. ■

ALEKO KONSTANTINOV

(1863-1897)

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Happy and glorious

BY GEORGI DANAÏLOV

Still going strong a century after his creator's death, a hero of Bulgarian literature who stepped out of the pages of fiction into real life.

It is a rare occurrence for a hero of literature to leap off the page, turn his back on the writer who created him, and go off and live his own life.

I only know of one such case in Bulgarian literature. His progenitor was Aleko Konstantinov, who was born in Svishtov in 1863 and met his end on the road between Peshtera and Pazardhzik in 1897. Konstantinov was a lawyer, publicist and journalist, who signed his works with the pen name "Happy". Democrat, musician, nature-lover, mountaineer, traveller and bohemian, he was an intellectual aristocrat and perhaps Bulgaria's most brilliant writer.

After producing a travel book about America, *Do Chicago i nazad* ("To Chicago and Back", 1894) Konstantinov used a blend of love, hate and satire to create a character of a type we come across every day of our lives, a character we thoroughly detest and with whom at the same time we feel a secret complicity. Ostensibly we expel him from ourselves but at the same time we leave the back door wide open for him, because when we are in a tight spot we need his inventiveness and his extraordinary adaptability. We loathe his impudence and braggadocio, his crudeness and lack of sophistication, but we know that we have the same intolerable quirks as he does.

Aleko Konstantinov created his character effortlessly, with aristocratic nonchalance. He gave him the name Ganyu, that of a merchant ▸

of attar of roses he had met in Chicago, to which he added the name Balkanski, meaning "Balkan"—a bold yet justified generalization—and made him the central character of a series of short stories.

The Bulgarian public has taken Ganyu Balkanski so much to heart that it has virtually forgotten his origin as a fictional character. This earthy, authentic figure is so successful, active and alive that he is at home in all kinds of settings and plots. He crops up in Prague and Vienna, in Switzerland and Russia, where he has picked up the secrets of journalism, the principles of unprincipled politics, election-winning tactics.

Some critics have seen Ganyu Balkanski as the archetype of the Bulgarian petty bourgeoisie which was to be almost squeezed out of existence by half a century of socialism. To the amazement of the Marxists, however, Aleko's hero did not go under with the bourgeoisie but continued on his sprightly way, marching at the side of demonstrators brandishing the red flag.

In the popular imagination, Ganyu has acquired a heroic dimension. He has become a man worth two, a sexual titan, a lively mind who can find original solutions to all kinds of problems. Like many undying heroes of world literature, Bai Ganyu has a strong sense of humour and the capacity to laugh at himself.

Someone once asked Aleko Konstantinov what was the happiest day of his life. "The day when I had the idea of writing *Bai Ganyu*," was his answer. Ganyu Balkanski's creator was murdered by hired assassins on 21 May 1897. There is a theory that he was killed by mistake and that the bullets were intended for his friend, the politician Takev, with whom he was travelling in a coach. They had changed places a few minutes before the coach reached the spot where it was ambushed. Many years later, the Bulgarian artist Ilya Bechkov drew a widely applauded cartoon of the scene. Aleko Konstantinov is shown lying on the ground riddled with bullets and saying to Ganyu Balkanski, who is leaning over him, "Did you do it, Bai Ganyu? You've shut my trap, eh?"

In spite of that, I refuse to think of Ganyu Balkanski as a parricide. In spite of all his faults and odious characteristics, I regard him as an extremely resourceful man and do not see why he should always be pilloried. He was a great survivor, and that's all. Perhaps the Bulgarians would not have survived several centuries of domination without the vitality, powers of endurance and flexibility of Aleko Konstantinov's hero.

And so Mr. Balkanski is still going strong. As for his creator, all that survives of him in the house where he was born is his heart—a hard piece of yellowish muscle patched up by pathologists and preserved in alcohol—exhibited in a glass case. As well as this relic visitors can see the clothes Konstantinov was wearing when he was killed. His shirt bears rust-coloured bloodstains. Imprints of his killers' footsteps are moulded in plaster.

A superb bust of Konstantinov by Jeko Spiridonov can be seen in the municipal gardens at Svishtov. Aleko is holding a cigarette and a hint of a smile plays about his features as he gazes transfixed at some wonderful sight. "To Aleko!" says an affectionate inscription engraved beneath the bust. What writer, politician or public man could boast of being so close to the people?

In 1995, Chicago University also decided to erect a bust to Aleko Konstantinov. A copy was made of Jeko Spiridonov's work—but without the hands! It was said that moulding the hands would have made the reproduction too expensive. And perhaps that cigarette would have made a bad impression. So only Aleko's smile made the journey to America. ■

AUTHORS

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GEORGI DANAÏLOV is a Bulgarian writer and playwright.

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15 July 1997.

THE JURY:

An international jury will meet in Paris and choose the winning entry from among 120 portfolios short-listed by a preselection committee. Short-listing and jury deliberations will take place at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris.

A "*UNESCO Courier*- Nikon Prize" of

50,000 French francs

will be awarded to the winning entry. Prize-winning photos will be published in the *UNESCO Courier*.

For further information, contact:
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