

Brochure of the UNESCO-Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture

10th Edition

Round Table Proceedings

Art and culture, instruments of peace

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Foreword

The tenth anniversary of the UNESCO-Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture is being celebrated this year. Ten years of effort and hard work in promoting Arab culture. Ten years during which the UNESCO-Sharjah Prize has charted a unique path between East and West, contributing to dialogue among peoples, cultures and continents. We owe this success to all Arab-culture enthusiasts – prize-winners, devotees and craftspeople alike – and to the dedicated generosity of a lover of culture, His Highness Sheikh Al-Qassimi, Ruler of Sharjah.

Apart from duly celebrating Arab culture, this Prize is, above all, a tribute to the dynamics of cultures that are enriched by mutual exchanges. Cultures are not closed introverted entities. They are constantly reinvented, enriched as they intermingle, and thus sustain fruitful intercultural dialogue. Arab culture, on both shores, sparks curiosity and prompts discovery. The emergence of new technologies and the globalization of ideas are quickening the pace of this millennia-old process. It is our responsibility, each in our own capacity, to help to keep cultural pluralism alive because our creative diversity is a force for peace, cohesion and social innovation. This is UNESCO's message.

The non-Arab winners of this Prize – artists, writers and musicians from China, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Spain, Bulgaria, India, Portugal, Poland, France, Brazil and the Vatican – all epitomise the extent to which Arab culture inspires and fascinates people all over the world. For their part, the winners from the four corners of the Arab world, from the Maghrib to the Mashriq, attest to the vibrancy of a culture that is continually renewed and enhanced.

The tenth anniversary of the Prize, in 2011, coincides with deep-seated year-long upheaval in the Arab world. Arab youth has given voice to peoples' aspiration for civic participation, dignity and equal rights. Culture both reveals and drives such changes, as evidenced by the texts collected in this brochure. Throughout the Arab world new forms of cultural expression are emerging in music, in literature and on the Internet. Culture is the beating heart of these societies and creative industries are vectors of innovation and solidarity. Now that the world is seeking new pathways to peace and development, creators are providing us with tools for rethinking the world and with the strength to change it. Let us help them to be heard. With this in mind I hope that the UNESCO-Sharjah Prize will continue to be sustained for a long time by the joint commitment of the Emirate of Sharjah and UNESCO to making culture a driving force for dialogue and progress.



Irina Bokova

Part One
Round Tables

“Art and culture, instruments of peace”

Preamble

His Excellency Mr Abdullah Al Owais

Director-General of the Department of Culture and Information, Government of Sharjah

Bismillāh ir-raḥmān ir-raḥīm (In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate),

Ladies and gentlemen,

As-salāmu ‘alaikum wa-raḥmatu llāhi wa-barakātuh (Peace and the mercy and blessings of God be upon you),

I am delighted that we are here together at this global cultural institution where the cultures of different nations interact to promote social progress and advance human thought. On this occasion I have the honour of offering my sincere thanks to UNESCO for its continual support for intellectuals all over the world. I would also like to welcome our guests to this cultural meeting; it is always a pleasure to meet in person those who make such important cultural contributions to their surroundings and societies. This evening I would like to convey to them the greetings of His Highness Dr Sheikh Sultan Bin Mohammed Al-Qassimi, Member of the Supreme Council of the United Arab Emirates and Emir of Sharjah, a champion of culture and its dissemination among peoples. This same message is echoed by the United Arab Emirates, which has used culture to build a sturdy bridge between nations and peoples for a future of cooperation, the right to difference, tolerance, a shared vision of major issues such as climate change, sustainable development, communication technology and human rights in general.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

1.1 Looking at the new forms of artistic expression in the Arab world

In recent years, the artistic scene, be it for the visual arts, music, literature or cinema, has undergone a major transformation that is becoming more pronounced as the contemporary creative experience takes hold. Young artists in particular are questioning their political, media and social and cultural environment in a constantly evolving and globalized world. Young people – often caught in the spiral of contemporary phenomena that can drive creativity – are the first to express the tension between the global and the local, but also between utopia and everyday life.

Introduction

by Ricardo Mbarkho

Several events that may be called historic have recently occurred in the Arab countries. These upheavals have not failed to challenge the truisms acquired by us since our young age. In the 1980s and 1990s, our generation thought that the geographical map of artistic creation was limited to Western Europe, Japan and the United States. This certainty, above all economic, about the geography of art has not been relevant for some years now. Until recently, it was all but impossible for the Arab world to participate in the international contemporary art scene other than through foreign artistic institutions.

At present, the eyes of the international community are turned towards the Arab world, with the desire to understand it better. Why such interest? A series of catalysts should be cited, starting with 9/11 up until the recent revolutions that followed each other in this region of the south, not to mention the multiple wars that succeeded one another – wars of the global on the local, as it were.

Rethinking this region, its religions, economy, politics, cultures and history, and its creative industries is one of the main concerns of the Arab world today. However, the international scene too is concerned by the movement of this Arab world in transition.

In this region, at a time when the search for utopian models is on the agenda, the young generation of artists does not balk at focusing on and probing its era in an effort to remain in tune with our communication society.

We live in times when the media reigns supreme in a media-centric society where art is forced to address political, social and identity issues at the speed the world is moving, without of course being immune from the tensions and danger surrounding the artist who is working in this context of a contemporary “battle”.

Young artists are faced with a somewhat paradoxical double challenge. Firstly, that of the personal aspiration for creation and innovation, together with an external aspiration driven by a local and international public on the lookout for novelty in this fledgling artistic affirmation. Secondly, the challenge of working in a climate of uncertainty over dissemination of their artistic production; an uncertainty related not only to questions about how the work will be received, but also to the very integrity of the artists themselves, from both the physical and media standpoints. I am thinking of the rise of popular music in some Arab countries; of the cartoons and video games criticizing the political issues at stake; of the cultural television programmes that reveal the absurdity of the current socio-political situation; of the video clips and films reflecting divergent attitudes to the body and its representation; and of the plays with their satirical treatment of the wars in the region.

This clash between artistic intention and the public also affects contemporary art. We question ourselves about the need to explain to our society and, above all, make it aware of, the multiple subjects tackled by young artists. Often, such subjects reflect the productive intent of the artist; however the innovative ideas demanded by the art world, where originality is the watchword, might irritate a great number of people.

Dear colleagues in art and culture, how do you view the artistic intention of young artists and its application in the creative industries which you have maintained and supported? How do you distinguish artistic propaganda affiliated with an established political orientation from an artistic practice which makes use of the same political, cultural and social scene, but with the intention of investing, questioning, exploring, asking, searching and manipulating the different layers of meaning? Of providing food for thought and a feel for the new, the alternative, the experimental, the disturbing and the unsparing, in short, the quintessence of all artistic creation? Equally, what

role are the organizations providing project assistance supposed to play in relation to the issues raised?

Let me now hand over to you.

Ricardo Mbarkho (Lebanon), born in 1974 in Beirut, is an artist and teacher based in Lebanon. After graduating from Beirut's Institut National Supérieur des Beaux-arts, he studied in the United States and France. His works have been displayed in numerous countries (Germany, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Spain, France, Italy, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia). In November 2010, he received the Lebanese Ministry of Culture Prize for contemporary arts at the Visual Art Forum 2010.

1.1.1 Literature and revolutions

Those who gave their voices¹

by *Elias Khoury*

I want to invite you to remember with me some names.

The first name is Samir Kassir. He was a Lebanese historian, journalist and university professor, who wrote a great book about the history of Beirut and an excellent entitled *Glances at Arab Distress*. As a historian, Samir Kassir did not do what historians normally do, that is to wait for the events to take place and then to write about them; he tried to write history the moment history was unfolding. This is why he was assassinated in Beirut with the Lebanese Intifada of 2005. And I consider his death and assassination as the price to be paid because Samir Kassir believed and worked profoundly for the independence of Lebanon, for democracy in Syria and for a free Palestine. He was a model intellectual who was Lebanese, Palestinian and Syrian. And he summarized in his work and engagement all the aspirations of this land that we call in Arabic *Bilad es-Shâm* (Lebanon, Syria and Palestine). Maybe he was the first martyr of the Syrian revolution.

I remember Omar Amiralay, the Syrian filmmaker, whose last movie *A Flood in Baath Country* (made six years ago) was really one of the first signs of the Arab revolutions taking place nowadays. Omar gave us an example of courage and great dreams, and he spent all his life attempting to understand and change his society.

I remember Abdul Rahman Munif, the Saudi writer. He wrote many major books, for example *Cities of Salt*. But he wrote also his major work *East-Mediterranean* in which he dared to describe the life in the prisons of the Arab world; he dared also to show that the prison's walls are very large to include all the Arab cities. When we think of literature and revolution, how can we overlook the works of Munif and not understand that his works made us realize the need for change.

I also wish to remember the late Nasr Hamid Abû Zayd. He was an innovator of Islamic thought. A kind of intellectual that made no compromises. He paid the price for that, an exile from his country, Egypt, and unfortunately he died before he could see Tahrir Place and this new generation of Egyptians who were able to raise their voices and to show that the people can change the situation.

I want to pay tribute to two other writers who are my friends and still alive. The first one is the Egyptian Sonallah Ibrahim. I refer to his novel *The Smell of It* (1966), which I suppose was the novel that opened what one can call "prison literature" in modern Arabic fiction. Sonallah Ibrahim is not associated only with this work but also with his major novel *Dhât*; once we read this book, we understand that revolution was inevitable. It's a book that pushes us to revolt because the situation described in the Egyptian context, in a very realistic, modernist, beautifully written way, and showing that the crises in the Egyptian society is so deep that we cannot end it without a major change and without revolution.

Last but not least, I wish to remember the Syrian writer Mustafa Khalifa, who wrote only one book, *Al-Qawqa'aa*. It is a powerful book that tells the story of a young Syrian whose name is Mustafa even if he is Christian (ed. Mustafa is one of the Prophet Muhammad's names) and who returned from his studies in Paris to his country; in the airport, he was taken to jail where he spent thirteen years and three months and thirteen days, because the Syrian Secret Services thought that he was a member of the Muslim Brotherhood. When he tried to tell them that he was Christian, they thought that he did so out of fear of being mistreated and put him in Tedmor, one of the worse

¹ This text was transcribed from an improvised speech by Elias Khoury.

prisons on Earth, with a Muslim Brother as a cellmate. So, actually, he was boycotted by the other prisoners, living in the terrible conditions of the Tedmor prison, that is living in a double prison. I think this novel-autobiography shows us how Syrian society was going through such huge oppression and that revolution was inevitable.

I have only mentioned a few names. Of course, we can speak a lot about modern Arabic literature and the ways this literature tried to face dictatorship. And, of course, I neglected to speak about names of intellectuals and even writers who were part of the regime apparatus, and here I think of this ideology that dominated, that we have to be with dictatorships because we are afraid of Muslim fundamentalism. I think this hypothesis leads to a catastrophic situation in the Arabic culture. And we can now see the traces of the catastrophe everywhere in the Arab world.

I speak about all this not to show that we have something to teach to these revolutions. Actually, the revolutions that are taking place now were a huge surprise even for those who began the revolutions. Nobody believed that this could happen, even those who wrote on Facebook asking people to join Tahrir Place; nobody thought that this would happen after Bouazizi burned himself in Sidi Bouzid, in Tunisia, but it happened. And the idea that it happened shows us a lot about the real suffering of Arab societies, suffering that pushed everybody to prefer to die than to continue to live under this oppression. And here I must point out that this is the first time in the history of the modern Arab world that the demonstrations from Tunisia to Syria had one slogan which was in classical Arabic: “*Achâab yourid isqat annidhâm*” (ed. “The people want to overthrow the regime”) which was everywhere and comes actually from a verse written by a Tunisian poet in 1920’s, Abul Kassem Chabbi: “*Idha achâabou yawman aradal’hayât*” (ed. “When one day the people aspire to live”). This teaches us much about how real culture can stay in the consciousness and can wake up when the moment comes and the people need it.

The major lessons of these revolutions are to be humble and learn from these young people. We are not their teachers; we hope that they will accept us as their students; we are not their fathers, we hope that they will accept us as their sons. Because in this relationship father-son, there is a moment when fathers must behave like sons, and when sons become fathers. In these revolutions, our sons became our fathers, and all what we try to tell them is that we want to stay with them, to learn from them and to rewrite our works according to their dreams.

Thank you.

Elias Khoury (Lebanon) is a winner of the 2011 UNESCO Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture. He was born in Beirut in 1948. He is a novelist, playwright and academic critic, and is considered one of today’s leading Arab intellectuals. Author of 11 novels translated into more than 13 languages, including Hebrew, his literary works draw on history and deal with basic questions of human existence. In his novels, literary and dialectal Arabic intertwine to deliver a testimony of the pride and injuries of the countries of the Arab world. His most celebrated novels are *Gate of the Sun* (1998), *Yalo* (2002) and *As Though She Were Sleeping* (2007).

For intergenerational solidarity

by *Bensalem Himmich*

In the great events of the Arab Spring, it is true that youth (cybernauts and young people without a future) played a key, driving role. To be able to topple four dictatorial Arab regimes in one year (2011) is a historic, unique and powerful feat.

Masses of young people and adults were able, through their dynamism, stamina and new technologies, to make fear change sides; that is to say make it leave the working classes to pervade the ranks and circles of predatory and dictatorial regimes. People who no longer fear these regimes express their outrage, rise up and show they are willing to sacrifice their lives to ensure the triumph of democracy and human rights; it is a new, energetic and active awareness, a tremendous turning point in recent history.

Yet, reason and vigilance are necessary to consolidate the gains and ensure proper follow-up. Reversals, corruption and confiscations are still possible. We hope that the Arab revolution (which is still only at the insurrectional stage) will not take a century to run its course (as in the case of the French Revolution of 1789), rather that it will be able to “shorten and lessen the birth-pangs”, as Marx put it. To do so, three conditions, among others, must be met:

1. Do not succumb to the illusion of the *tabula rasa*, which means not believing that the Arab Spring was born when Bouazizi, fed up with being poor and humiliated, set fire to himself (a suicide which, in this case, was an act of honour), but rather originated as a phenomenon whose preconditions and conditions are etched into the entire postcolonial history of the Arab region – a history marked by years of repression and turmoil, arbitrary detentions and convictions, struggles for freedom, justice and dignity and, on another plane, a history of literary, especially novelistic, creation. Elias Khoury has mentioned some names. I would add those of the great Naguib Mahfouz, recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature, of the Sudanese Tayeb Saleh, of the Algerian Tahar Wattar and of the Moroccan Mohamed Choukri.

All these writers, and others unfortunately less known, were the pioneers of novel writing which evokes misery, discontent and the ravages of tyranny. There comes a point when too much oppression necessarily leads to an explosion. That is what patently happened in 2011.

2. Advocate intergenerational solidarity. It is the only path which prevents us from succumbing to the fetishism of youth (youthism) or to some notion of old age as a shipwreck, good for the scrap yard. History does not end with the latter, nor does it start with the former. That is what Henri Estienne meant when he said: “If youth knew, if age could”. The dynamic and united alliance between the power of the young and the knowledge of the old is what creates great events and gives their positive and creative dimensions an enduring quality. For history is a vast construct where each generation does what it is able to, produces its value added and tries to give of its best.

It is in the name of this necessary intergenerational solidarity that Stéphane Hessel (this old-young man) provides in his celebrated pamphlet *Time for Outrage* the following useful historical reminder: “By saying still what, on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the programme of the National Council of the Resistance, we said on March 8th, 2004 – we veterans of the resistance movements and combat forces of Free France (1940-1945) – that certainly Nazism was conquered, thanks to the sacrifice of our brothers and sisters of the Resistance and the nations united against fascist barbarism. But this threat did not completely disappear, and our anger against injustice is ever intact.”

3. Without a cultural rebirth, every revolution can run out of steam and lose footing. For culture is what makes it possible to lift individual and collective consciousness to a level where each and

every person may become imbued with ethical and civic values and a sense of responsible freedom and human solidarity. It is the barometer of progress and the motor of human development, where the goals are innovative competitiveness, the elevation of tastes and language and the well-being of people and societies: these are the strong actions needed to rise to the challenge of making all revolutionary change blossom through the provision of the goods and services of urban citizenship and modernity, in other words culture.

That is what explains S. Hessel's call for "a truly peaceful insurrection against the means of mass communication that offer nothing but mass consumption for our youth, contempt for the least powerful in society and for culture, general amnesia and the outrageous competition of all against all. To you who will create the twenty-first century, we say, with affection: To create is to resist, to resist is to create."

Bensalem Himmich (Morocco) is a 2003 winner of the UNESCO-Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture. Former Minister of Culture, philosopher, novelist and scriptwriter, he is the author of numerous books (in Arabic and French). Five of his novels have been translated into several languages. His bilingual work has made a powerful contribution to the dissemination and influence of contemporary Arab literature.

Towards a new generation of Arab writers¹

by Isabella Camera d’Afflitto

It is still too early to speak of any literary production born from the Arab Spring. To have good literature, events must first unfold. However, there is still unfinished business, as we can see from what is happening right now, before our very eyes, in Egypt and elsewhere. Events must have the time to sediment, so that we may subsequently draw the relevant conclusions and understand what is happening in the world.

This was clearly true of the great events of the past. The greatest accounts of Palestine, for example, were written decades after the *Nakba*. I should mention *Gate of the Sun* by Elias Khoury, who is here today, who had to take the time to reflect about these events in order to make literature out of them. I should also mention the great Palestinian writer Ghassan Kanafani, who always spoke from the perspective of the *Nakba*, but only did so more than ten years after the events. One should allow enough time for time to do its work, as it were.

This was also true of the Lebanese civil war. The great novels about it were written by authors – including Elias Khoury, Rachid El-Daïf and Hoda Barakat – only ten years or so after the end of the war, because they had taken the time to understand what had happened, to recollect, to speak with people, to read. That is why it is necessary to distinguish an everyday account from what subsequently becomes a novel.

The year before, I was in the 2011 Jury of the Arab Booker Prize. I was highly surprised to see that several books spoke of the consequences of the events of 9/11, ten years after they took place. Therefore, once again, to have good results, to understand what is happening and has happened, what is taking place right now in Libya, Syria, and elsewhere, we must wait.

I should also very much like to speak about Abdul-Rahman Mounif, who may not be young but who is in the hearts of all young people. We were talking about the sufferings of intellectuals, and I remember what Mounif said about a lecture that he had given in a North African country about his novel *East of the Mediterranean*, the story of a character who has a very violent experience in a large prison east of the Mediterranean, when someone from the audience said to him: “But, master, you are describing what happened to me! Because the experience you have described in the prison of this unmentionable country, east of the Mediterranean, is my experience here in North Africa!” The upshot of this is that there are common elements throughout the Arab world, be they prisons or the dictatorships to which many people have fallen victim.

I could almost say that, if the Americans had read *East of the Mediterranean* a dozen years before going into Iraq, for instance, they might have found out much earlier that Saddam Hussein was a dictator. As it turns out, we understood only later what Mounif was speaking of.

Elias Khoury mentioned Sonallah Ibrahim. This great Egyptian writer is the author of a novel which tells of another revolution we Westerners know nothing about and are wrong not to be interested in. This novel is *Warda, The Rose*, which is also the name of the main character. It is the story of a revolution in Oman. Perhaps Oman is too far away to interest us, although an entire generation of young Yemenis from Aden, as well as Egyptians, went to make this revolution in Oman.

We cannot therefore speak of revolution today without recalling the books that spoke of earlier revolutions. And without forgetting the many men and women writers of today fighting for freedom in Yemen or their efforts to publish their books, or at least get them out of their country. That is what we are attempting to do. Personally, I am trying to publish Yemeni stories in Italy, for example, but the publishers are not a bit interested, asking instead for Syrian novels since we are

¹ This text was transcribed from an improvised speech by Isabella Camera d’Afflitto.

seeing pictures of Syria every day. The publishers are asking for something that echoes what we see on television, just as they did during the Libyan revolution when they sought only Libyan authors. That however did not last long as one no longer speaks of Libya.

Young people must be given the time to write their novels. Nevertheless, it is necessary to distinguish between good literature and what is inspired by blogs, for example, or the graphic novels that are so much in vogue. Albeit very important, it remains to be seen whether these new forms will be capable of delivering the strength to live and to resist for decades, like the books of Kanafani, Mounif and Ibrahim.

I do hope there will be a new generation of great Arab writers. We await them, but they must be given time. They must give themselves time.

Isabella Camera d'Afflitto (Italy) is translator and Arabist, and professor of Arabic language and literature at the Sapienza University of Rome. She is a member of the editorial board of the academic journal *Oriente Moderno*, the European Meeting of Teachers of Arabic Literature and the European Union of Arabists and Islamicists. She has received various prestigious Italian awards, in particular for her translations from the Arabic. Her best-known works are *Letteratura araba contemporanea dalla nahdah a oggi* (Carocci, Rome, 1999) and *Cento anni di cultura palestinese* (Carocci, Rome, 2007). In 2011, she was a member of the Jury of the Arab Booker Prize.

1.1.2 Youth, creativity and revolution

The historic refusal of Tunisian youth

by Abdelwahab Bouhdiba

Arab youth are today starting a major historic shift in attitudes.

They are saying and doing what almost all their fear-stricken elders never dared. My main concern, which leads me to this analysis, is that, as one hijacking of the movement follows another, the Arab Spring could still be made to fail, as has been the case so often in the past.

Henri Focillon long ago remarked that revolutions do not make art that changes content but art that continues to serve forms that are already present. This was as true of 1789 as it was of 1917. It is not revolutions that make art, but art that makes revolutions.

Hence the tremendously subversive force unleashed by the liberation of the word, as spoken, written, sung, mimed or drawn by Arab youth, especially of my country, a youth I have frequented for so long and spent my entire life serving.

The homage we pay to it today in the prestigious setting of UNESCO is merely the fulfilment of a simple duty to understand and assist. A first remark comes to mind: these young people are simultaneously the object of external exclusion and global integration. An infernal yet fundamental contradiction, lived with joy and pain day after day, exacerbated until the “situation” – in the most Sartrean sense of the word – lived by our young explodes. We have armed them with knowledge and educated them over a long period of time. We have devoted to them a good portion of our energy and the bulk of our meagre financial resources. But we have not been able to give them the means to achieve their great, noble and legitimate aspiration: to work for a decent wage and contribute to building tomorrow's society, after the example of their elders. These young people, whom I loved, seen from so close, with and for whom I have lived, now find themselves with their backs to the wall, trapped in a dead end, its exits well and truly blocked. They wander around aimlessly, although they had dreamt of building the country. They hoped for much but got nothing. Neither before nor after January 2011. Their only way of participating in *Tunisianness*, in Arabness, in globality, and goodness knows what else, is quite simply to assert themselves, express their revolt and reject injustice. What is important is not what they say, but that they are able to say it, since those who have arrogated to themselves the power to manage their business and prevent them from speaking out cruelly lack the clear sightedness to understand and the daring to force destiny.

We have recently experienced the extraordinary liberation of artistic expression, positively strengthened by online access to a unique genre: the polished, even ironic, artistic message that is changing, through art, the routine of our society. On the Web, satire and caricature, poems and songs circulate around the country, and even the world. It is they who ridiculed the dictatorship in my country and expelled those who thought power was theirs for life. Without understanding what had happened to them, these people were firmly pushed towards the exit.

The content of the message from our young people has therefore been considerably renewed due to the user-friendliness and popularity of this tool. This somewhat “raw” form of creativity does not demand a substantial investment like cinema, theatre, or even the novel. It thrives on the immediate forms of a raised and forceful tone, as an old drum, a cobbled up lute or panpipes are enough to formulate and convey a message. It channels the exasperation of young people, who liberate themselves by liberating others but are also spokespersons for another, wider exasperation in society, in the Arab world and, indeed, across the globe – at little cost.

Let us not be demanding about the quality or severe about the execution. What matters above all is that one has been able to speak out, that one can speak out, denounce the facts and take up positions. The Internet has given a second wind to commitment. That is the nub of the matter. The future alone will keep works that deserve to survive on account of their quality.

The society around us has completely changed. Our young people, who barely half a century ago were rural and illiterate, are today literate and qualified. Yet they remain uprooted. Alongside the diverse forms of sociability dear to sociologists (mass-community-communion) and which I myself have long taught, another form has been put in place: the distant mass which breaks the isolation of the young even when they are alone in front of their computer. They can receive hundreds of messages and send as many. Mobilization can be organized without fear, through a simple appeal on Facebook, around a watchword and a collective action put in place in the twinkling of an eye. There is a twofold commitment here: one issued online, followed by one on the ground. Contrary to what many continue to think, this dialectic of exclusion and integration with which I began my address has unexpected ramifications, opening the way to ever more universal changes where the final word has not been said. That hardly prevents large local and international interests from attempting to hijack this youth movement in order to sink it, as in Europe in May 1968. Our young people must not and will not be taken over. The fledgling yet ongoing revolution that has been set in motion is powerfully supported by a real creative will which, though groping for direction and clearly awkward, will not fail to mark our destiny. While it is premature to pass judgement, a break has well and truly occurred in a history positively on the move.

The meeting today pays tribute to and supports these young people, and I am delighted that you thought of associating me with it.

Abdelwahab Bouhdiba (Tunisia) is a winner of the 2004 UNESCO-Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture. Professor of sociology at the University of Tunis, Agrégé in Philosophy and Doctor of Letters, Abdelwahab Bouhdiba was born in 1932 in Kairouan. He has presided for many years over the Tunisian Academy of Sciences, Letters and Arts, Beït al-Hikma, in Carthage. His most renowned work, *Sexuality in Islam*, has been translated into English, Arabic, Bosnian, Spanish, Italian, Japanese and Portuguese.

From the *Nahda* to the Arab Spring

by *Chérif Khaznadar*

Without going back in time to the Crusades and to the cultural influences and exchanges between the Arab world and the West, let us note, as a matter of interest, this period known as the *nahda*, loosely translated as renaissance, and the concern at the time with adapting to modernity through the adoption a European model of democracy. We now know that these attempts petered out. We also know that today part of the Arab world is seeing history repeat itself in a fresh attempt to resort to the Western model of democracy.

At the time of the *nahda* the spearheads of the movement were theologians and intellectuals, at least as far as historical records are concerned. Today, in what is commonly called “the Arab Spring”, the key figures are technological processes and programmes. This is a considerable difference, and one to which we will return.

What in fact has been happening for the last hundred years on the cultural scene of the Arab world, the subject of our discussion today? Without further ado my first question is: Which cultural scene – that of the masses or that of the urban intelligentsia?

The culture of the masses was fed on the material accessible to it; material served to it by the media, namely radio, then television.

Radio helped to spread a vernacular language – perhaps simplistic but common to the entire Arab world – and was pivotal in the dissemination of a Western-influenced mix of music that perfectly reflected the aspiration for modernity while remaining close to one’s original roots. An example, anecdotal yet significant, that springs to mind is that of a musician in tails playing on a European violin music learned by oral transmission, while pretending to read a score carefully placed on a music stand before him. As a matter of fact Arab music discovered, almost a century earlier, the musical mixes that are now called “world music”.

Television, which appeared concomitantly with the overthrow of nascent democracies by military regimes, would essentially serve as an instrument of propaganda and indoctrination for these regimes one dares at long last to call dictatorial.

The urban intelligentsia sought to find its place in this system usually through compromises that became so commonplace that they no longer even appeared reprehensible. This intelligentsia fostered a culture in which the West was taken as a model: Western classical music at the expense of classical Arabic music, imported drama, painting on canvas.

After a long separation between artists and the public, new forms emerged reconciling the two essentially through new forms of communication.

Western music reached the masses not through classical concerts but through its most recent forms of rhythmic and light music – jazz, pop, rap and slam.

Theatre found an outlet through televised soap operas and the plastic arts found an audience through cartoon art and caricature. All these elements come together on the Internet, Facebook and Twitter.

We know the role played by Facebook and Twitter in the political upheavals of the Arab world. Let us, however, focus on the role they and their inseparable companion YouTube are playing, as they switch from transmitter to creator, in shaping the cultural life of this part of the world.

They are now the mediums and witnesses of a creative spirit which, long bullied into submission through the curtailment of free expression, has ultimately exploded in the face of the world. Like a

bolt of lightning, in the space of a few days or weeks, the imagination of an entire young generation expressed itself in total freedom before this freedom was threatened anew by the State security apparatus. Photos, drawings, quotes and videos bear witness to a thirst for talking, speaking and communicating. New styles cropped up spontaneously using the technologies and means available.

Literature discovered through Twitter the brevity of Japanese haiku: no more long speeches, the “mandatory” economy of words making for sharper thinking.

Images reigned supreme with humour never absent, as if to show the joy of those who could finally express themselves without being forced to choose exile, an exile a number of artists and intellectuals had been forced into when they refused silence or sycophancy.

The new technologies have restored life to a creativity steadily depleted by respect for the established order and power. The spirit of revolt which had been limited to Lebanon – a land of welcome to all oppositions – and exile, breathed afresh wherever creativity found a means of expression. And again thanks to this technology – an open door to the world and a gate of communication – a new cinema is breaking free from the conformism of the State-sponsored and chloroformed cinemas of Egypt and elsewhere, and numerous talents are emerging as fast as the flames of a fire whose embers have been smouldering too long. Plastic artists are springing up and making their presence felt in international art galleries and auction houses, while clothes designers are being snapped up by the world’s biggest fashion houses.

The Gulf countries show a special interest in culture and are behind an unprecedented experiment, whose reach only the future will tell, namely opening itself to the world of cutting-edge Western modernity while affirming an attachment to the most traditional and identity-conscious values of their own citizens. This is a real challenge which, if the outcome is successful, will not fail to have global repercussions: But how is it possible to reconcile two essentially antinomic worlds?

Already the outlines of an answer are forming. It is indeed significant to note that a number of Western cultural creations and events – be it in the field of drama, cinema, television, plastic arts, literature, fashion or gastronomy – already incorporate features that make them compatible with the requirements of the traditional culture of the Muslim societies they seek to approach.

Only time will enable a distinction to be made between what stems from a burgeoning creative activism today and what will remain of it once the aspirations for freedom of these artists have been satisfied. Will creativity endure in regimes that are still taking shape? Will it resist the perception of the public it addresses when the interest it evokes in Western media today has died? Will it find its legitimate place in its original context? At the same time, will the infatuation of Western designers and producers for this part of the world last if the financial windfalls to which they aspire dry up once the blueprint of Western modernity has been assimilated and integrated? Such then are the questions we may rightfully pose but which remain for the moment without an answer.

I thank you for your attention.

Chérif Khaznadar (France) is a winner of the 2010 UNESCO-Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture. He is a stage director, writer and poet whose invaluable contribution to promoting dialogue, in particular between Arab culture and other cultures, for nearly 50 years has been internationally acknowledged. Named the “culture smuggler”, he set out to promote Arab theatre then music, building a full-fledged cultural bridge between Arab countries and France, in particular. As President of the *Maison des cultures du monde*, he gave Arab cultural events pride of place. His commitment to boost exchanges led to the creation, some 15 years ago, of the *Festival de l’imaginaire*, an interdisciplinary cultural event entirely dedicated to intercultural dialogue.

1. 2. Arab heritage and cultural diversity

In the spatial dynamics of relations between the East and the West since the twentieth century, the expression of a plural culture is emerging between the two shores. It is therefore on the art and cultural scene that a collective identity forged in a cultural mosaic may take shape. Each people has its heritage and cultural specificities; yet, while the nations of the Arab world are united by a common language and cultural history and strong creative force, Arab culture is simultaneously unique and diverse. Between tradition and modernity, between Arab “uniqueness” and regional artistic experiences, what influences has this culture exerted on other geocultural regions? What roles do Arab heritage and contemporary artistic creativity play in contemporary cultural sphere? How does the “Other” make sense of the heritage of the East and its current cultural vitality?

1 2.1 The marks of Arab immigration in America

Introduction

by Leyla Bartet

I do not have enough time to address such a vast subject. Therefore, I shall refer only to two important moments in the history of relations uniting Latin America and the Arab world: firstly, the *Conquista* and the legacy Spain, heir to the rich al-Andalus civilization, bequeathed to us; then, the wave of immigration which, towards the end of second half of the nineteenth century, reached this continent.

Arabness in South American literary discourse

Hispano-American culture was born “intercultural” in a process of crossing, assimilation, superimposition and synthesis of indigenous and European elements. The texts of chroniclers of the Discovery and the gradual occupation of American territory reflect a degree of astonishment when faced with the existence of “the other”. It is however important to point out that the Europeans (Spanish and Portuguese essentially) introduced an idea of otherness marked by a specific historical experience. Their culture was a product of mixed heritage, stemming from a relation of eight centuries with the civilization of al-Andalus. Their recent history bore the stamp of the re-conquest of Granada. This relation to Arabness is confirmed, for example, by the chronicler Pedro Cieza de León (see *The Lordship of the Incas*) who described Indian temples as “mosques”. In the same vein, Bernal Díaz del Castillo (*The Truthful History of the Conquest of New Spain*) held that the expeditionary Francisco Hernández de Córdoba described the first large Aztec city encountered in the Conquest of Mexico as “Great Cairo”. Another Spanish chronicler, González de Nájera, who appreciated the courage of the *Araucanos* warriors in Chile, said that they fought “like Moors”. The “other outsider”, that is to say the Indian, is described by an expression used in the Iberian Peninsula at the start of the sixteenth century to speak of the other (local) insider, the Arab, the infidel.

Yet, for a very long time, there was a tendency to perceive an American mix where the Iberian contribution was unitary. However, Spain of the Conquest was deeply marked by its relations with the Arab-Muslim world. We have inherited technology, know-how and scientific and artistic knowledge of Arab origin. Above all, we have inherited a language, Spanish, with nearly 5,000 terms of Arabic origin. For comparative purposes, it is interesting to note that, after Arabic, the second biggest influence on Castilian is exercised by the Germanic language, brought to Spain by the Visigoths; yet, there are only 700 terms of Germanic origin. Moreover, the Castilian vernacular spoken during the first half of the sixteenth century in the south of Spain was still strongly influenced by *al-garabiyya*, the interlanguage spoken in Andalusia. The Peruvian linguist and semiologist Lydia Fossa, in her essay “Arabisms used by the chronicler Juan de Betanzos. A sociolinguistic approach” (2) remarks that, even in the mid-sixteenth century, the more cultured a writer (one having undergone an education in Latin), the less he used Arabisms. In the works of Juan de Betanzos, there are over 50 terms of Semitic origin (Arabic and Mozarabic) in 153 sheets.

This spontaneous interculturality gradually diminished and became increasingly conflictual. While difficult relations with “the-other-different-from-oneself” date back to the period of the Discovery, Conquest and Evangelization, they do not stop there. These relations survive and have undergone innumerable changes throughout our history.

I would like to jump forward a few centuries to recall a more direct and recent Arab presence on our continent.

One of the factors behind a significant change in the perception of otherness among Latin Americans in the nineteenth century was undoubtedly their encounter with waves of immigrants of various origins arriving on the continent to “make America” at a time when the newly independent young States of the continent were realizing the importance of occupying and populating the territory. That is why the nineteenth century was an age of laws encouraging or limiting (according to the cases, historical periods and type of migration sought) the arrival of foreigners seeking work and prosperity in these lands.

In this context, from the second half of the nineteenth century, numerous Europeans and Levant Arabs arrived in Latin America. Between 1860 and 1890, some 600,000 Arabs left the Middle East to settle in America. It is interesting to note that these pioneers were, for the most part, Orthodox or Maronite Christians. It was only slightly later in the early twentieth century that South America witnessed large-scale Muslim immigration.

This flow of Arab immigration continued to increase between 1900 and the eve of the First World War which brought an end to the Ottoman Empire. What were then called “the Arab provinces”, that is, Lebanon, Syria and Palestine, subsequently passed under British and French mandates.

Accordingly, the Latin American Creoles extended their conception of otherness to the foreigners born on the other side of the ocean, in particular Arabs.

Large-scale Arab immigration, which continued throughout the twentieth century, left a considerable mark on the daily lives and the history of our peoples. The experience of this cultural encounter is widely reflected in literary discourse. That is quite natural as the elements brought by newcomers were added to the interculturality of each host country. Literary discourse was, in this sense, a mirror and projection of our diverse and multi-faceted identity. Thus, even when looking only at contemporary prose, numerous works refer to the Arab presence in Latin America from two different perspectives.

Literary discourse of narrators not belonging to the Arab world

The texts in question discuss a different subject or universe from that of the writer. For example, to cite only authors everyone knows, Gabriel García Márquez, in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, described the first inhabitants of Macondo as Arab gypsies who arrived with their earrings and babouches to sell just about everything and anything. So, when the village of Macondo starts to organize itself, one of the first shopping streets is named “Turk Street”. In *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, another novel by the Colombian Nobel Prize-winner, the main character (the victim) is none other than the young Santiago Nasar, the mixed-heritage son of an Arab father and a Colombian mother.

The Brazilian author Jorge Amado also introduced characters of Arab origin in his novels, such as *Gabriela, Clove and Cinnamon* (Nacif, the wealthy Lebanese spouse, in love with his beautiful Gabriela), *Showdown* (Fadul Abdala, protagonist of the cocoa boom in Amazonia) and *The Discovery of America by the Turks* (the latter in actual fact Arabs from Ottoman *wilayas* arriving in America on Turkish passports, hence the confusion).

Similarly, João Guimarães Rosa, the Brazilian James Joyce, depicted Seó Assis Wababa as an Oriental businessman settled on the fringes of the Great Sertao.

Also, the great Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges draws in *Ficciones* characters that move in a Middle East full of metaphysical concerns. Usually they are learned readers of the *One Thousand and One Nights*, a book particularly appreciated by the Argentine writer, whose narrative technique of short stories within short stories fits very well into the structure of Arabic storytelling.

Closer to us and in the context of cosmopolitan, contemporary Parisian life, the Colombian author Santiago Gamboa, in his novel *The Ulysses Syndrome*, presents, alongside Latin Americans,

Moroccan and Iraqi writers overwhelmed by their struggles for survival as immigrants in the difficult and at times hostile universe of European capitals.

One last example is *Eva Luna*, by Chilean novelist Isabel Allende, in which Zulema, the wife of Riad Halabi and her nephew Kamal both embody all the clichés of exoticism and Oriental sensuality.

**Literary discourse of narrators of Arab descent or directly coming from the Arab world
(children of the *Faliya*, the community settled in South America).**

Examples of the literary form describing the difference lived “from within”, in an almost ethno-literary manner, are the works, published in Chile, of Syrian writer Benedicto Chuaqui (*Memoirs of an Immigrant*), who learnt Spanish in Chile (and chose to write in this language like all those mentioned here), of Palestinian novelist Roberto Sarah (*Turks*), of José Auil (*The White Village*) and of Edith Chain (*Nahima*).

As well as these autobiographical texts, there is a style more in harmony with the canonical forms of Western literature. In other words, an imaginary construction based on the recollection – always subjective – of a past experience, but one related to the life of the author. Included here are novels and short stories written by the descendants of Arab immigrants, such as Walter Garib (*The traveller on the magic carpet*) Miguel Littín, Chilean writer, film maker and author of *Byzantine traveller* and of *The bandit with transparent eyes*, Argentine novelist Jorge Asís who wrote *Don Abdel Zalim*, *El burlador de Domínico*, Brazilian writers Milton Hatoum and Raduan Nassar, Argentine writer of Syrian origin Juan Jose Saer, Ecuadorian novelist Jorge Enrique Adoum, both recently deceased, and Colombian writer of Lebanese origin Luis Fayad.

But there also exists literary production in Arabic known as exile (*mahyar*) literature. While virtually unknown by the Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking public, this literature has enjoyed considerable success in the countries of origin of these writers and poets. The researcher Jorge Saidah is probably the first to have studied, at length, this exile literature. He refers to some 85 Arab intellectuals who, having decided to go into exile, settle in Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela, Ecuador, and so on. In São Paulo they formed the *al-Andalus circle* (*al-usqba al-andalusiyya*) with, among others, the Maalouf brothers, who are renowned poets, as well as Rachid Al Khouri who, in the 1930s, published the journal *al-Ushbah* in São Paulo. But I think we have right beside us someone who will be able to speak about the Arab presence in Brazil better than I can.

Leyla Bartet (Peru) is a journalist and sociologist. Very early she was interested in Arab roots in South America and undertook research in this field. In most of her works – articles, scientific books, literature – she explores history and the socio-anthropological traces present on the ground that reveal the long tradition of migration flows and their impact on today’s Latin-American culture. Her most recent book, *Las fronteras disueltas. Voces árabes en el Perú ss. XIX y XX* (Fondo Editorial del Congreso del Perú), was published in Lima in 2011.

Arab Integration in Brazil

by João Baptista de Medeiros Vargens

Ladies and gentlemen,

As-salāmu ‘alaikum (Peace be upon you).

In this session I would like to present some examples of Arab integration in Brazilian society.

The Arabic language and Islamic culture arrived in Brazil before the Arabs, with the black Muslims who led some of the uprisings in the city of Salvador, Muslims who wanted freedom. This part of Brazilian history took place at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Nowadays, the situation has changed. We are talking about Arabs in Brazilian society, and I can tell you that the Arab population in my country is around 12 million, which is 8 per cent of the population of Brazil. When I say “Arab”, of course, I am referring to Arabs and their descendants.

Arabs began to arrive in Brazil in the mid-nineteenth century. At that time Pedro II, the emperor of Brazil, visited the Middle East, travelling to Egypt, Syria, Palestine and Lebanon. The emperor of Brazil liked the Arab countries and their people so he invited people from the region to go and live in his country in South America.

Most of the Arabs who came to Brazil were Lebanese and Syrian. At first they worked as travelling merchants, entering the country from the north and soon moving south. Nowadays there are Arabs in all of Brazil's large cities, such as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, and even in villages in the Amazon.

Integration through literature

One example of Arab integration in Brazil is the integration of Arabic-language literature in the whole country.

There are books by al-Qarawi and Nasr Semaan about the Carnival and books by Nabih Salameh about King Momo, king of the Carnival.

Others have written about Brazilian cities: Santos, Curitiba, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo.

Today, we also have renowned Brazilian writers of Arab origin such as Milton Hatoum, Raduan Nassar and Alberto Mussa.

Integration through cuisine

We must not forget Levantine cuisine, well known among Brazilians. Arab food can be found in every restaurant. Who in my country hasn't heard of *kibbeh*, *tabouleh* and *sfiyah*?

Integration through words

Brazilian vocabulary includes 3,000 words of Arabic origin, most of which entered the language when the Muslims were present in al-Andalus, while others were brought in via Brazil by black Muslims, Lebanese and Syrians.

What do you think? Can there be integration without food and words?

Integration through politics

At this point I must mention the involvement of people of Arab origin in Brazilian political life.

Michel Temer, the current Vice-President of Brazil [BBC News], is the Brazilian-born son of Lebanese parents. We also have governors and mayors, such as in the state and capital of São Paulo.

Integration through football and the Carnival

Brazil is world-famous for football, the Carnival and samba schools.

Last week the world witnessed a televised display by samba schools, many of which are run by people of Arab origin. The first samba school, founded by Ismael Silva in Rio de Janeiro in 1929, had two Arab members: Saad and Othmani.

For years, official Carnival celebrations were held at the Syrian-Lebanese Mount Lebanon club in Rio de Janeiro. In addition to the Carnival, Arabs are also present in the world of Brazilian popular music; there are a number of famous composers and singers of Arab origin.

Lastly, I must point out the presence of Arabs in major football clubs such as Flamengo in Rio de Janeiro and Santos and Corinthians in São Paulo.

These facts demonstrate integration between Arabs and Brazilians in my country.

Thank you very much.

João Baptista de Medeiros Vargens (Brazil) is a winner of the 2011 UNESCO-Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture. He is a publisher, author, translator, lexicologist and professor of Arabic language and civilization. Primarily interested in the influence of Arabic on Portuguese, J. B. de Medeiros has devoted himself to highlighting the presence of the Arab-Muslim civilization in Brazil and in Portuguese-speaking countries at large.

Arabs and Arab Identity in American Life

by R. Stephen Humphreys

Arabs and persons of Arab descent have been a significant part of American life for more than a century. At least 1.5 million persons claim Arab origin or descent; of these half a million – i.e., one-third of the total – are descended from the great migration of Lebanese Christians to the Americas during the three decades from 1890 to 1920. As a group, however, they have never been especially prominent in American society, and they have never had a major role in defining American identity and culture – nothing like that played by other immigrant groups.

One can hardly claim that Arab Americans have done badly in their adoptive home. They form a quite prosperous group; they are significantly better educated than the United States population as a whole (some 40% have the BA or higher, as opposed to 25% of the overall population), and their household incomes are a bit higher (5%) than the average. In addition Arab-American families seem rather more stable than the norm. There are many shopkeepers and factory workers among them, but for the most part Arab-Americans are clustered in management positions and the learned professions. They are especially visible in the engineering and medical faculties of United States universities. There are even a number of prominent actors and entertainers among them, although these almost never stress or even mention their Arab heritage. To repeat a point made at the beginning of my remarks, Arabs and Arab-Americans do not define the public profile and character of any of the fields in which they work. True, if you visit suburban Detroit (especially Dearborn, the headquarters of Ford Motor Co.) or parts of west Los Angeles and its suburbs, you might well think otherwise. About one-third of Dearborn's population of 98,000 identifies itself as Arab-American, and one-third of these – 10% overall – speak Arabic rather than English as their first language. The Los Angeles area has a much larger and probably wealthier Arab-American population, but its percentage of the total is of course much smaller. In any case, this sort of social and cultural prominence is a very localized phenomenon.

The Arab-American community has been changing shape rapidly during the last three decades. Neither numerically nor culturally is it any longer defined by the Lebanese Christian diaspora of the early 20th century. There is of course a continuing flow of Christian immigrants from many Arab countries, for reasons that are sadly obvious, but my impression is that most newcomers over the past three decades have been Muslim. (I cannot be very precise on this point, since the United States Census Bureau does not collect data on religious affiliation. However, it is a reasonable estimate that about one-quarter of Arab-Americans are Muslim.) Many of these more recent immigrants, perhaps most, have been educated professionals, but quite a number seem to be from much poorer backgrounds, and these cling to the margins of American life. Whatever their economic circumstances, no Arab Muslims have emerged as prominent public figures or can claim to be widely recognized spokesmen for their community. Over time that will no doubt happen, but right now Arab Muslims are too few and too new, too busy finding a place for themselves in American society, to take this step.

The real problem for these newcomers, however, is simply that so many are Muslims in an era when that identity is profoundly suspect among Americans at large, and when certain politicians and provocateurs are doing all in their considerable power to whip up fear and anxiety about Islam. Quite frankly, the situation is not helped when a few (and it is only a very few) Arab-American Muslims aim at notoriety by overt violence or by spewing contempt for America and its entire works. The names of Anwar al-Awlaqi and Maj. Hasan Nidal spring to mind. Sadly but inevitably, the general American ignorance and suspicion of all things Arab and Muslim have begun to seep into and affect attitudes toward even the well-integrated Lebanese Christian community.

In this context, what can we say about the impact of Arab immigrants, and more broadly persons of Arab origin, on American culture? I have already suggested that as a group their impact has not been great. But are there individuals who, in spite of the community's effort not to call too much

attention to itself, have defined themselves in terms of their ethnicity, and who thus represent a conscious effort to play a role in American life as Arabs? There are in fact a few, and I will mention three of them: the Lebanese Jibran Khalil Jibran, the Palestinian (albeit Egyptian by birth and early education) Edward Said, and the Lebanese-American Anthony Shadid, very recently deceased. They were very different men and they played very different roles in American culture, but they share a few things in common. All three were writers – a poet, an academic literary critic and public intellectual, and a journalist. All three were Christians (by social background if not personal belief). As such they could not speak directly, out of personal experience, to the ways in which Arab and Islamic identities have been woven together over the centuries. Finally, two of them belonged to the early 20th-century Lebanese diaspora. Only one represents a later generation of immigrants, and even he had been living in the United States since the 1960s. Note that in this group I do not include Ralph Nader, who may well be the most visible and influential Arab-American of all, simply because he has never connected his political causes with his ethnic origins.

Jibran Khalil Jibran – Kahlil Gibran as he ultimately called himself – was of course one of the best-known poets and writers of the first Mahjar. He came to New York in 1895 with his mother and siblings at the age of twelve, but went back to Lebanon a few years later to develop his knowledge of Arabic. He returned permanently to the United States in 1902. His earlier work was written largely in Arabic, but among Americans in general these writings are known only to specialists. After World War I he turned entirely to English, and by far his most popular work – still in print – was a small book composed in English, *The Prophet* (1923), a collection of meditations, a sort of prose poem. In *The Prophet*, however, Gibran speaks in the voice not of an Arab, but of an Eastern sage. The book communicates a generalized spirituality that has been immensely appealing to many millions of Americans (though not all of them) since its first publication. For Gibran himself, *The Prophet* no doubt represented an effort to transcend the experience of migration, of belonging both to New York and Lebanon even while fully belonging to neither.

Edward Christian Said's approach to the immigrant experience was obviously radically different; he was always "out of place," always in a kind of spiritual exile, and he consciously defined himself in just that way. His earlier publications dealt with English literature, and he held an endowed chair in that subject at Columbia University. He might have remained simply a professor, esteemed among his colleagues but known to no one else, had he not written *Orientalism* (1976). The ideas in it were not entirely new, and his arguments sometimes descended to mere polemic. But whatever its shortcomings, it overturned the field of Middle Eastern and Islamic studies, and we still deal with the challenges it created. Edward Said is beyond all question the most influential Arab-American intellectual of my lifetime. He is perhaps the only writer on the Middle East whose arguments have had a major impact on debates outside the realm of Middle Eastern studies. However, that statement also identifies the limits of Said's influence; his impact among academics and intellectuals across many fields has been very great, but I do not think his ideas have done much to change American cultural consciousness or public discourse. One might ascribe this to the wilful ignorance of American politicians and journalists, but it is a fact all the same.

Finally we come to Anthony Shadid, who recently died while covering the struggle in Syria. He was only forty-three and ought to have been at the beginning of his career. However, he was already the best foreign correspondent we had in the Middle East, with a remarkable capacity to capture the human reality behind the news. In some ways he represents the Arab-American community – or at least the Syro-Lebanese wing of it – better than either Gibran or Said. Anthony Shadid was a third-generation Lebanese-American (his grandparents came to the United States about 1920), born and raised in Oklahoma in an English-speaking family. The decision to go to Cairo to learn Arabic, and to pursue a journalistic career reporting on the Middle East, was a personal one. He was not in any sense a man in exile from his homeland, but rather someone who was deeply curious about his family's origins and found himself entangled in a period of exceptional turmoil and violence. He set himself apart from his peers by focusing on the lives of ordinary people in the region rather than the doings of soldiers and policy-makers (especially American ones). Unlike many reporters, he had real literary skills, manifested in his fine book on the occupation of Iraq (*Night Draws Near*, 1975). He followed this with a something radically different, *House of Stone*

(2012), a very personal memoir of his effort to rebuild the ruined house of his grandfather in the half-abandoned village of Marjayoun, Lebanon. It is a profoundly American story of a man who feels fully at home in the United States even as he is driven to seek out his roots. Shadid's place in my account of America's interaction with its Arab immigrants and their children is in some ways a melancholy one, because he died too soon to have had a major impact on the way Americans think about the Arab countries and their people. But his life and work also suggests the possibility that a distinctively Arab experience might yet be woven into the fabric of American consciousness in the way that writers of Jewish and Irish origin have done that for their forebears.

Stephen Humphreys (USA) is a member of the International Jury of the UNESCO-Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture. He holds a PhD from the University of Michigan (1969) and is Professor of Islamic History and Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He has been Distinguished Visiting Professor at the American University in Cairo and at the École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris, as well as visiting fellow of All Souls College at Oxford University. He was also President of the Middle East Studies Association of North America in 2001. He is the author of several books on Islamic history, among which is his most important geopolitical publication entitled *Between Memory and Desire: The Middle East in a Troubled Age* (Univ. of California Pr., 1999, 2005).

1.2.2 Diversity in the lands of Islam

Arab-Muslim culture in Poland

by Anna Parzymies

The publication of *Aristote au mont Saint-Michel* by Sylvain Gouguenheim, a few years ago in France, has sparked a stormy debate. In the book, the author minimizes the scope and importance of medieval Europe's debt to Arabs in the field of science. The ripples from this debate reached as far as Poland. It was a good opportunity to remind people – especially the young generation – that the riches of Antiquity came to Europe largely thanks to Arab scholars, who safeguarded and enriched them across the centuries.

Geographically distant from the Arab world, Poland began to be marked by Arab culture relatively late in the age of Romantic Orientalism which came from Western Europe at the start of the nineteenth century. One should not forget, however, the Slavs' relations with Turkish Muslims who had already provided them with some information on the Arab-Muslim world. We find these references in the works of great figures of Polish literature such as Juliusz Słowacki who, after his long travels in the Near East (1836-1838) – in Egypt he was received by Muhammad Ali – wrote the poetic novel *Szanfari* in reference to al-Shanfarā, author of the ode *Lamiyat al-'Arab* dating back to the sixth century. Then, in the works of Adam Mickiewicz, the courageous Bedouin warrior on his white horse is presented as example for Poles to follow in their struggle for independence. Another Pole, the polyglot Sękowski, following a series of stays in various Arab countries, set up an Arabic language learning centre in Saint Petersburg.

Polish Muslims of Tartar origin enabled their Christian co-citizens to acquire important knowledge about the Arab world, especially Islam. Themselves Slavicised from a linguistic point of view, these Muslims often obtained their information through European languages, primarily French. Even translations of the Koran into Polish (moreover incomplete) were made from the French. However, Muslim Tartar scholars used the Arabic alphabet to write comments on the Koran in Polish or Belarusian. Wacław Rzewuski (1784-1831), also known as the Emir, was a passionate admirer of Arab culture, daily Bedouin life and Arab horses; he left us the first book written by a Pole about the Arab world in the early nineteenth century: *On Oriental Horses and Those Descended from Eastern Breeds*. The book has attracted the attention of the Emir of Qatar, Hamad ibn Khalif at-Thani, on whose suggestion the Qatar Museums Authority has undertaken to support the production and publication in Arabic of the three-volume manuscript currently held in the Polish National Library.

The greatest upsurge of interest in Arab culture was in Poland after the Second World War. The anti-colonial struggle for independence was well appreciated and supported by Poland which could testify to a similar experience. Arab countries, once independent, formed extremely close ties with Poland. This led to an impressive number of literary translations from Arabic into Polish. The highlight in this field was the publication of the Koran in 1986, translated directly from the Arabic by Professor Józef Bielawski, founder of the Department of Arab and Islamic Studies at the University of Warsaw. The translations of works of great figures of Arab literature, such as Alaa al-Aswany, Yusuf Idris, Mahmoud Taymour, Majid Tubya, Gamal el-Ghitani, Tawfiq al-Hakim, Taha Hussein, Zakaria Tamer, Naguib Mahfouz and many others, have enjoyed wide popularity in Poland.

There was also an active student exchange programme with Arab countries. Poland received a large number of Arab students who were perfectly integrated into the university environment. Some even remained in the country once their studies were completed. Among those Arabs who became Polish citizens are poets and writers, such as Iraqi-born Hatif al-Janabi and Syrian-born George Kass, who have translated their own works into Polish.

On the other hand, the number of Polish students in Arab countries was smaller. Most of these students were Arabists who went there to further their knowledge of Arabic language and culture.

After the end of the cold war and the democratic transformation in Poland, political, economic and cultural relations with Arab countries lost a great deal of their vibrancy. On the one hand, higher education in the Arab countries could already meet internal demand; on the other there was no dearth of specialists in the various fields. The Poles, for their part, were dazzled by the possibility of knowing the West, something they had lacked in the past. This was especially true during the first few years after the transformation, when their attention was mainly focused on Western values.

Subsequently, Western propaganda, which as we all know confuses Islam with terrorism, caused great damage to the public image of Arabs, their religion and their culture in Poland too. Opposing this was no easy task. It meant taking on publications full of prejudices attempting to prove preconceived theories, such as Huntington's about the clash of civilizations. Considerable efforts were made by Arabists and other Arab world specialists to provide correct information on events. Despite the difficulties, especially financial, we managed to publish a vast number of books presenting opposite views, emphasizing in particular the significance of cultural diversity, the values of mutual respect between civilizations, and the true image of Arab society and culture.

The situation began to change during the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and, recently, the intervention in Libya. Huntington's thesis is often seen as a justification for neocolonial policies by circles with a vested interest in conflicts between civilizations.

There is now a clear trend towards a serious revision of negative views on the Arab world and a revival of interest in the culture of that part of the world. In Polish universities, new centres and departments of Arab studies have opened. I am personally involved, along with some of my Arabist colleagues, in a project to create an institution like the Bayt ul-Hikma (the famous ninth century House of Wisdom founded in Baghdad which brought together scientists, philosophers and translators) for the spread of Arab culture, although the task remains a difficult one.

Nonetheless, I believe in the future and am aware that much remains to be done in this connection, both from our side and from that of our Arab friends, because we remain convinced that the two cultures must coexist intelligently while inspiring each other.

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Arabness and Islam in the Balkans

by Yordan Peev

Relations between the Arab world and the Balkan peoples, in the main Orthodox, have in the course of history been marked by a number of important events involving the Cross and the Crescent. After repelling in 717-718, under the walls of Constantinople, Arab-Muslim expansion towards Europe (between the eighth and eleventh centuries), the Byzantine Empire remained the main contact for the Arab caliphates.

The invasion of the Near East by Turkic peoples (eleventh to thirteenth centuries) triggered considerable ethno-political changes. Born in Asia Minor, the Ottoman State (1299-1922) seized the Balkans before spreading to the Arab territories and, in two centuries, became an empire at one and the same time European, Asian and African. The Balkans were transformed into an area of direct contact for mutual exchanges and influences between the Christian and Muslim civilizations. Their inhabitants lived separated by religious and linguistic barriers, but the old cohabitation created a material and spiritual osmosis that marked life in the Balkans at several levels.

This osmosis is visible, among other things, in the presence in the lexicon of the Balkan languages of “oriental” words, a great many of which are of Arabic origin, introduced with phonetic and semantic changes. A glimpse of their linguistic emergence, usage and evolution leads to interesting conclusions regarding the influence of Arab-Muslim culture on the peoples of the Balkans.

These words were adopted under Ottoman domination. The administrative and judicial authority, together with the intellectual elite of the Empire, used Osmanli Turkish (a mixture of Turkish, Arabic and Persian). Arabic was the language of Islam, the State religion. Consequently, one finds in the Balkan languages a certain administrative, political and religious vocabulary: *sultan*, *vezir*, *valiya*, *aga*, *divan*, *kadiya*, *djamiya*, *imam*, *vakaf*, *muftiya*, *gyaour*, *esnaf*. There are also numerous terms used more widely in the European languages: *algebra*, *almanach*, *admiral*, *hazard*.

Parallel to this “official” influence is the massive penetration caused by the fact that, in some regions of the Balkans, Muslims gradually formed a large community of the population. The majority of them spoke a Turkish vernacular, which also includes words of Arabic origin. This language, derived from daily contact between two religious communities, facilitated the entry of that vocabulary into the lexicon of Balkan languages. This is seen at several levels, including:

- the state and behaviour of human beings: *djoudje* (dwarf), *bekyar*, (single), *erbap* (capable and self-confident man), *adjamiya* (man without professional experience), *foukara* (poor), *ahmak* (naive, stupid man).
- objects of everyday life (house, clothes, food): *tebechir* (chalk), *aba* (garment), *gaytan* (stripe), *djob* (pocket), *duchek* (mattress), *halwa* (halva), *lokoum* (Turkish delight).

The inhabitants of the Peninsula consider these words “Turkish”, and their use depends on the fluctuating appreciations one may have of the Ottoman past and its heritage. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the nationalist “wave” preferred to neglect, even eliminate, this lexicon in the name of a somewhat chauvinistic purism. The words were replaced by synonyms derived from the languages of ethnic majorities now governing the Balkan States appearing on the political map of the Peninsula. The trend became stronger, since those linguistic imprints recall the “oriental” past and “dark centuries” of Ottoman rule deemed oppressive towards the Christians and the cause of the backwardness of the Balkans compared to the West. For several decades, writers, intellectuals and academics, as well as the press and mass media, avoided using this category of words, borrowing equivalents from close foreign languages (Russian, French, Italian, English, etc.) more

in keeping with modernity. In the Bulgarian language, *bereket* was replaced by *urojai* and *récolta, kat* by *etazh* (floor), *djins* by *proizhod* (origin); and, later, *djezve* by *kafevarka* (coffee machine), *douchek* by *matrak* (derived from *mattress*), etc.

However, during the last few decades, an opposite trend has been emerging. Words of Arabic and “oriental” origin (Turkish and Persian), deeply rooted as they are, have been making a comeback. At first sight, these words act as a “spice”, making spoken and written public language livelier, more explicit and closer to the popular language. The problem of their use shows a nostalgic attitude towards the traditional past of patriarchal values in the face of a materialistic modernity. This re-evaluation of the past and its effects on present day life has also included discussions on the “clash of civilizations”.

Bakalnitsa finds its place again, together with *magazine* and *soupermarket*. In the opinion of today’s “purist Bulgarian camp”, the majority of Arabic words form an integral part of national linguistic authenticity perceived to be under threat from the invasion of “Western” terms. They suggest using *kasmet* in place of *chance*, for example. Each year, the Army Theatre in Sofia awards Drama Prizes, considered the most prestigious in this field, called “*Askeer*”, a clever combination of “Oscars” and the Arabic word *asker* (army).

Here, moreover, are some observations on a widely used name in Ottoman and post-Ottoman Balkan society.

This term is *hajji* which confers on its bearers – Muslims who have completed the pilgrimage (*hajj*) to Mecca – a moral and social prestige. The respect enjoyed by these “genuine” *hajjis* drove their Christian neighbours fairly quickly to appropriate and assimilate the title as a means of gaining recognition in society and in their dealings with Ottoman power. Between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, *hatzis* in Greek and *hadji* in Slavonic replaced *proskynitis* and *poklonnik*. The term’s application is analogous, this time, to a pilgrimage in the Holy Land, with which Christian conscience has always been obsessed. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the right given by a Christian pilgrimage (*hadjilak*) was confirmed by the Patriarchate of Jerusalem subject to certain conditions. The Armenians and Jews of the Balkans also appropriated this title, the latter particularly after completing the pilgrimage to Jerusalem according to the prescriptions of their religion.

Documents show that during this period the *hajjis*, other than religious figures, were for the most part well-off nobles. The title thus also confirmed their privileged and respectable status, as noted by the nineteenth-century diplomat Mikhael Madjarov: “[...] the titles *hajji* and *hajiika* (fem.) were not only a sign of a sacred feat, but also a sign of nobility.” The distinction could also make it easier to do business, as a rich Bulgarian shopkeeper noted: “The Arab from Cairo and the man from Bukhara know nothing of my origins, or nationality. When they hear of the name *hajji*, they look at me with a different eye.” Trusted servants of the rulers and adept intermediaries, the *hajjis* were also ardent patriots, even indomitable revolutionaries.

The word was included in Balkan language dictionaries, whose publication in the nineteenth century marked the national awakening of the peoples of the Peninsula.

The *Lexicon serbico-germanico-latinum* (1851) indicated that *hadjija* meant “*peregrinus religionis ergo*”, “the Christian who has gone to Jerusalem and the Turk who has gone to Mecca are called *hadjija* until the end of their lives.” The term is placed before the first name, for example *hajji Prodan*, *hajji Osman*, and when the first name is not mentioned, only *hajji* is used. In the *Dictionnaire roumain-français* published in 1862, one reads: “*hacialîcu*, pl. *uri* – *pèlerinage* and *hagiu* – *pelerine*. The word takes its rightful place in dictionaries published in the twentieth century. It is explained that *hagiu* (pl. *hagii*) is “he who has undertaken a journey to holy places for meditation (Jerusalem for Christians and Mecca for Muslims).” *The Dictionary of the Bulgarian Language with explanations in Bulgarian and Russian*, compiled in the 1860s and 1870s, explained that *Hadjiya* was the pilgrim to the Holy Land and the Muslim who had visited Mecca.

The Dictionary of Greek Neologisms mentioned the term indirectly; it first explained that *proskynitria* (peregrine) was an old term related to ecclesiastical usage and that its popular synonym was *hadzidena* which comes from the masculine *proskynitis* or *hatzis*.

From the second half of the nineteenth century, the modernization of Balkan society led to a marked reduction in the number of pilgrims. Be that as it may, the term *hajji* became firmly rooted in Balkan mores, so much so that it was adopted as a patronymic (proving the seniority of the family) and as a name for localities, among other things.

The pilgrimage to Jerusalem was the opportunity for Balkan Christians to meet the Arab population. Among the gifts they brought back for their loved ones were embroidered fabrics which distinctly influenced the taste in dress. Another interesting example is the fate of the word *arabiya* (from *harabi*, big, indeed huge, man). This word has acquired its full meaning during the last few decades, as *arabiya* now refers to a confident, benevolent and generous man – very often this word is a synonym for the ethnic term “Arab”.

During the second half of the twentieth century, contact between Bulgarian and Arabs intensified in all fields. Today Bulgaria has about 20,000 inhabitants of Arab origin, including several who were naturalized and have been able to attain a privileged status in society (business, the professions, etc.), and even in government. Well received and quickly integrated, the majority say they feel “at home”, as do the Bulgarians in Arab countries – an attitude resulting from resemblances in the manner of living and similarities in national character. This is also reflected in a surge of interest in contemporary Arab literature, whose works are regularly translated. The tales of *The One Thousand and One Nights*, long an integral part of popular folklore, have been presented in a prestigious publication which ranks them among the masterpieces of world literature.

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Religious diversity in Jordan: a model for peace in the Middle East

by Jamal al-Shalabi

“There are two kinds of people: your brother in religion and your brother in humanity” – Ali ibn Abi Talib, the fourth caliph of Islam. May peace be upon him.

If you follow what is happening in the Middle East through the various media, you will find that most States in the region are suffering from varying degrees of ethnic, religious and political conflict, with the exception of Jordan. This is down to Jordan’s geographical location; it is surrounded by powerful states with a wide range of ideologies, which has compelled Jordan’s leaders to strive to be moderate, balanced and flexible. All of this has therefore had an impact on Jordan’s domestic policy; its religious and political diversity is a rare sight in the region. Jordan, located at the heart of the Middle East, has over 6 million inhabitants of whom 4 per cent are Christian. It was founded in 1921 as the Emirate of Transjordan and since then has managed to maintain a policy of religious tolerance and harmony which it has defended between the country’s various groups.

When Pope Benedict XVI came to Jordan in 2009, his visit conveyed multifaceted political and social messages spanning the whole religious sphere. He came not only to consolidate the path of the Christian pilgrimage through Jordan, but also to highlight and understand the “Jordanian model” of religious coexistence in general, particularly with regard to diversity.

To understand the Jordanian model of diversity, we will first examine the roots and identity of Christianity in Jordan and then look at what the Hashemite rulers have done to protect Christians. Thirdly and lastly, we will move on to the future of Jordan’s social make-up, particularly in the light of the “Arab Spring”.

I. The roots and identity of Christianity in Jordan

Christianity in Jordan, as in the other countries of the Levant, was not brought by missionaries; it is the original version, which later spread to the Western world. Christianity was never a gift from the white man from the West. In the modern state of Jordan, which was born in 1921, Christians were originally not the “minority” but part of the Arab majority, recognized as such by Jordan itself in Article 1 of its 1952 Constitution. When the Constitution says “Islam is the religion of the State” in Article 2, this is not a sectarian statement to alienate them, because Islam is a culture, a civilization and a key component of Christian Arab character.

The first Muslim conquests in the seventh century CE came through Mu’tah and Yarmouk in Jordan, bringing together Christian and Muslim Arabs in 732 CE, then arrived in Jerusalem in 736. Following this, one of the most important documents on Islamic-Christian tolerance and coexistence in history, “The Pact of Umar”, was written.

When the Arab Muslim caliph ‘Umar Ibn Al-Khattab entered Jerusalem and was greeted by the Arab Patriarch Sophronius, he issued a pact for Christians stating that “[Christians] shall have protection for their persons, their property, temples and crosses, (...) the temples shall not be occupied, nor destroyed; and no one shall harm them or their religion.” Ibn al-Khattab also refused to pray in the Al-Qiyamah church so as not to provoke future conflict between Christians and Muslims.

Jordanian Christianity is a distinctively Middle-Eastern mosaic; its roots lie in villages in the valleys of Karak, Ajloun, Madaba, Al-Mafraq and Salt, and also in cities and rural areas in Palestine, Lebanon and Syria. This diversity is another example of the country’s strength; people have a mixed national identity that transcends religions and sects, redefining people without denying them their identity.

In social terms, Jordanian Christians are no different from their Jordanian Muslim cousins, and Jordanian Christians are clearly not an independent religious sect. They do not view themselves as a sect and they are defined not by which church they go to but by their rural or semi-rural semi-Bedouin tribes, just like other Jordanian tribes. According to Fr. Rif'at Bader, a member of the International Catholic Union of the Press, "Until the beginning of the twentieth century, Christians in the Transjordan were divided into tribes that identified themselves with the Orthodox sect, part of the Roman Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which considered itself according to tribal customs to be the sister and neighbour of the Arab Muslim tribes. When the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan was established in 1946, traditional tribal Christian Jordanian society began to modernize with the introduction of schools and missions from other churches including the Roman Catholic church of Damascus and Haifa, the church of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, and Protestant churches mainly from Palestine, which meant that a number of Orthodox tribes converted to new sects."

In any case, according to the Christian Jordanian columnist Nahed Hatar, "descendants of Christian tribes hate it when they are referred to as pure Arabs or the original Jordanians. They are averse to talk of "coexistence", "pluralism", "tolerance" and other liberal terms such as these that fail to comprehend or reflect the reality of the Jordanian social structure, which revolves around tribes or tribal groups and forms a single national identity with no place for any other, an Arab Jordanian identity that stretches right back through history and geography, from the Ghassanid Phylarchs and their Omayyad heirs right up to the creation of the modern state of Jordan".

In a nutshell, Jordanian Christianity can be viewed as a "model of flourishing subcultures" within an open Islamic cultural framework which designated the Pope's holy visit to Jordan in 2009 as a national holiday for all Jordanians, not because of its sacred nature alone but out of respect for Jordanian Christianity as an integral part of the country's social fabric.

II. The King's ongoing measures for Christians

Christians in Jordan, it can be unequivocally stated, have special status at all levels, which many Jordanian Christians credit to the ruling Hashemite family, which is descended from the Prophet Mohammed (God bless him and grant him salvation) and has been in power in Jordan since 1921. This situation has been consolidated by the following notable royal initiatives, speeches, legislation and policies implemented on the ground:

(a) The King's current initiatives

Since Abdullah II took the throne in 2009, three prominent initiatives have been launched to call for religious coexistence, tolerance and fraternity, not only between the Islamic and Christian components of Jordan as a state and society but also between this Islamic society and the international community, or the West. The three initiatives are:

- (1) The Amman Message. Following the events of 11 September 2001, the Amman Message of 2004 was considered the most significant initiative directed by the Arab world towards the "other", i.e. Christianity and the West. The Amman Message was pronounced at one of Amman's mosques by King Abdullah II of Jordan in front of a large audience of prominent Arab and Muslim scholars on *Laylat al-Qadr* of Ramadan, which fell on 9 November 2004. The purpose of this message was to distinguish the actions that represent Islam from those that do not and to clarify the true nature of Islam and its values based on goodwill, moderation and peace.
- (2) A Common Word Between Us and You began as an open letter written by 38 Islamic scholars to the leading Christian authorities on 13 October 2006, one month after Pope Benedict XVI's address to Jordan, which had been seen by Muslims as not having shown the appropriate level of respect between Islam and Christianity. This gave rise to the initiative, sponsored by the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought in Jordan, to call for peace and coexistence between Muslims and Christians and identify

common ground based on two principles: love of God and love of the neighbour. Regular meetings are now held to facilitate dialogue between Muslims and Christians and the document has been signed by 138 prominent Muslim religious and political figures.

- (3) World Interfaith Harmony Week was proposed by King Abdullah II at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2010. It was unanimously adopted, so now the first week of February every year is dedicated to fostering harmony between the followers of different religions. According to Fr. Nabil Haddad, executive director of the Jordanian Interfaith Coexistence Research Center in Amman, the aim of this initiative was to “counter violence and hatred and call for positive dialogue and the establishment of a culture of mutual respect and acceptance of the unfamiliar, which is especially important in the light of the current sectarian violence and lack of religious tolerance in many societies.”

These initiatives are made all the more significant by the fact they were instigated by King Abdullah II, a member of the Hashemite family whose lineage goes back to the Prophet of Islam, Mohammed Ibn Abdullah. Furthermore, the fact that Islamic-Christian live side by side in Jordan, where 4 per cent of the population is Christian, means that the ideas contained in this initiative are much more likely to be genuinely implemented. Jordan’s image in the West undoubtedly lends these initiatives more credibility, especially given that Jordan is striving to lead a form of “Arab democracy” that puts forward Arab perspectives to an international audience, either in political terms as the “peace process” with Israel or in religious terms, particularly with the “Amman message”, which attempts to create a new “human contract” between the Arab-Islamic world and the Christian West.

(b) The Hashemite family between religious discourse and the policy of diversity

Because of the overlap between the political and religious spheres in Middle Eastern systems of government, including in Jordan, the Jordanian government makes no secret of its desire to play “some sort of role” in relations between Islam and other religions, in particular with Christianity. In his correspondence with the British diplomat Henry McMahon, Hussein bin Ali, Sharif of Mecca and leader of the Great Arab Revolt of 1916, maintained that the provinces, or wilāyāt, of Aleppo and Beirut were Arab, saying, “these are purely Arab wilāyāt, there is no difference between Arab Christians and Arab Muslims because they have the same ancestors.” His son, Faisal I, King of Syria, reaffirmed this in his speech in Aleppo on 8 November 1918, saying, “I repeat the position I have always taken, that Arabs came before Moses, Christ and Mohammed, and that the religions tell us that on earth we should follow truth and our brothers, therefore those who try to drive a wedge between Muslims, Christians and Jews are not Arabs.”

When the Emirate of Transjordan was founded in 1921 by Emir Abdullah I, he succeeded in building a foundation for relations with Transjordanian people, including Christians, Muslims and members of their various sects. The Emirate pledged to build churches and increase the number of schools belonging to Christian sects, pointing to a policy of tolerance, moderation and compromise, as had been called for during the Great Arab Revolt. The policy of moderation and compromise was “officially” established when it was enshrined in the 1952 Jordanian Constitution, which was promulgated by King Talal Bin Abdullah and is still in effect to the present day. This Constitution was an overt display of democracy, equality, justice and respect for human rights. Paragraph (i), article 6 of the Constitution stipulates that “Jordanians shall be equal before the law. There shall be no discrimination between them as regards to their rights and duties on grounds of race, language or religion.” The National Charter, issued in 1991, reaffirmed this, saying, “Jordanian men and women are equal under the law. There shall be no distinction between them in rights and obligations regardless of difference in race, language or religion.” The Constitution did not deprive ethnic or religious minorities of rights and privileges but rather ensured that they were provided with the necessary protection. Furthermore, article 14 of the Constitution stipulates that, “The State shall safeguard the free exercise of all forms of worship and religious rites in accordance with the

customs observed in the Kingdom” This sentiment was echoed by the 1991 National Charter which called for the establishment of “the traits of tolerance and objectivity [and] respect for the beliefs of others”. Furthermore, article 19 of the Constitution affirmed that “congregations shall have the right to establish and maintain their own schools for the education of their own members”.

The late King Hussein Bin Talal adopted a policy based on the principles of “moderation and compromise”, establishing this model on an Arab and a global level. Hussein enshrined his ideas with the establishment of the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, in 1980, which has held conferences on “Islamic-Christian dialogue” in Amman for a quarter of a century, as a way to reconcile ideas and bring together followers of different religions. He also established the Royal Institute for Interfaith Studies in Amman in 1987, which published books in this field to deepen mutual understanding and respect for the values of others. To crown his enlightening achievements, King Hussein founded Al al-Bayt University in 1993 to encourage interaction between Islamic sects and bring together religious and general science.

It is worth reading the thought of Prince El Hassan bin Talal, who set out his interpretation of this concept of moderation and compromise in his exceptional book, *Christianity in the Arab World*, which was published in English in London in 1995 and translated into Arabic. At the end of the book, Prince Hassan addresses Arab Christians saying, “The Christian Arabs are in grave error if they are apprehensive about future developments in the Arab World, and also in error are those who express fears which could threaten their future.”

As a result of this political and religious discourse in favour of pluralism, Jordan was able to escape the “cycle of violence” in the Middle East during the 1970s and 1980s, which reached its peak when the “floodgates” of 11 September 2001 were opened, marking the beginning of a new era in international relations characterized by violence, terrorism and senseless pre-emptive wars.

(c) The role of Christians in national politics

To understand the political reality in Jordan, we need look no further than its constitutional system where Christians are allocated nine of the 120 seats in the Jordanian parliament, despite representing no more than 4 per cent of the population. In addition to their seats in parliament, Christians have maintained their influence in national politics, reaching prominent positions such as Deputy Prime Minister, Royal Court Minister and Foreign Minister and holding important posts in political parties and trade unions. Christians have economic clout in companies and banks and intellectual influence in universities and the press. They also have a prominent role in the cultural sphere; His Highness King Hussein Bin Talal has, over some decades, set up international dialogues on religious coexistence, and his studies are viewed as some of the most significant documents on Arab Christians. Another recent move that shows continued efforts to promote Christianity was the opening of the American University of Madba in 2010, sponsored by the Catholic Church.

At this point, it is worth mentioning some figures who have made significant contributions to their fields:

- (1) **Science:** Four of the most widely read science writers of the 1970s and 1980s were Christian. These were Fahd Al-Fanik, Tariq Masarweh, the late George Haddad and Fakhri Kawar.
- (2) **Culture:** Jordanians still remember the eminent scholar Rex bin Zaid al-Azizi and his companion the historian Suleiman al-Mousa, the writer Ghalib Halsal, and Hisham Ghasib, to name but a few. In the arts world there have been more Christian names than Muslim, for example, the El-Mashini and Sawalha families, the duo Jamil and Juliette Awad, Abir Aissa and Musa Hijazeen.

- (3) **Politics:** Christians played a leading role in modernizing Jordanian political power as ministers, such as Dr Kamel Abu Jaber, Rajai Muasher and Marwan al-Muasher among others. They have also played no small part in left wing and nationalist parties, for instance Dr Kamal al-Shaar in the Baath party, Nayef Hawatmeh, General Secretary of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and Fahmi al-Salfiti in the Jordanian Communist Party.

Jordanian Christians, having lost influence in the Middle East and faced with the outbreak of conflict on all sides, now need to carefully read the situation to understand the depth of the roots of Islamic culture and the sort of model of coexistence and integration societies adopt when they put the bonds of citizenship first.

III. What lies ahead for the Jordanian “model of diversity” in the Middle East?

The Middle East has gone through a number of political, social and military upheavals in modern history, and Jordan is no exception; from the occupation of Palestine in 1948 to the USA’s occupation of Iraq in 2003, not to mention coups, civil wars, the Arab-Israeli conflict with its eight wars to date, right up to 2010 and the Arab Spring.

This instability, added to the rise of Islamist powers over nationalist and secular forces after the Arab defeat in the 1967 war, caused many Christian Arabs to emigrate from the Middle East, causing a historical “two-way split” between Muslims and their Christian Arab brothers, whereby Christians were eradicated by various means, as if the entire Arab Middle East were trying to “purge” itself of Christians!

Whether Christians emigrated to the West for psychological reasons or because of the real situation on the ground, the result, the journalist Hussein Al-Rawashida notes, was “particularly striking”; the proportion of Christians in Palestine, for example, dropped from 21 per cent after the Nakba in 1948 to 8 per cent in 2008, and in Lebanon the proportion of Christians has fallen from around 55 per cent in 1932 to 40 per cent today. The same has occurred in Egypt, Iraq and other countries in the Arab Middle East. Some statistics even indicate that the size of the Christian population in the Arab region, currently between 12 and 15 million, is expected to drop to around 6 million by 2020.

Although Jordan’s rate of Christian emigration has been lower than that of its neighbours, reports nevertheless show that the number of Christians has decreased from 4 per cent to 3 per cent of a total population of 6 million, which is equal to around 250,000 people, of whom between 60,000 and 70,000 live abroad. According to Fr. Hanna Kaldani, secretary of the Council of Heads of Churches in Jordan, “There is no flight of Christians from Jordan, but there is emigration at a reasonable rate and based on employment opportunities, whether these be in Arab or Western countries.” Dr Amir al-Hafi, professor of religious studies at Aal al-Bayt University, agrees with Fr. Kaldani, saying, “young Jordanians, both Christian and Muslim, are emigrating in search of improved job opportunities; this emigration is not forced or sponsored by the State of Jordan.”

Indeed, there is no reason for Jordanian Christians to leave the country, especially given the stable and respectful situation that Christians enjoy in Jordan. Fr. Kaldani agrees, “Christian Jordanian citizens have complete freedom of worship to perform rituals, prayers and celebrate religious festivals, which are designated national holidays for all Jordanians, particularly Christmas.” Christians in Jordan, he says, “are not an emergency case; they live with their Muslim brothers, they have similar concerns and share the same customs and traditions at all social occasions.” In addition, Fr. Bader affirms that, “King Abdullah II and successive Jordanian governments have taken great care to preserve our Christian holy sites in Jordan, notably the site of the prophet Moses in Mount Nebo, the site of the prophet Elijah, the site of John the Baptist’s execution in Mukawer and the site of Christ’s baptism, where the government has kindly donated land to a number of churches on which to build churches and monasteries.”

In any case, regardless of the scale or rate of Christian emigration from Jordan in particular and the Middle East as a whole, at this point Arabs absolutely must take a stand to defend an indispensable part of their society, namely the positive and active presence of Arab Christians in the area. There has been no bigger champion of this cause than King Abdullah II, who welcomed the Maronite Patriarch Bechara al-Rahi on 12 March 2012 saying, “Arab Christians are an integral part of Arab Islamic culture. We need to work together to preserve and reinforce the presence of Christians and prevent their emigration, especially from Palestine and other Arab states going through periods of instability.”

Despite Jordan’s exemplary model of religious relations and Christian-Islamic diversity, the United States Department of State published a report in 2010 criticizing religious freedoms in Jordan, which angered Jordanian Christians. A statement was subsequently released by the Council of Heads of Churches in Jordan, led by Patriarch Theophilos III, the Orthodox patriarch of Jordan and Palestine, and made up of the heads of Jordan's 14 recognized churches. The statement condemned the report, saying that it had, “studied certain isolated cases which cannot be used to measure the atmosphere of brotherhood and coexistence in our country.” It also said that, “the State of Jordan has always guaranteed religious freedoms for its citizens, whatever religion they follow, without prejudice or discrimination,” and warning against, “those who talk in such a way about religious and political freedoms, freedom of conscience, freedom of opinion and freedom of expression”, saying that they are, “incapable of understanding Jordan’s unique brand of coexistence”. The statement emphasized that “Jordanian Christians do not need their rights to be explained to them.”

The question that remains is, will the current political and social transitions in the Arab world, known as the “Arab Spring”, weaken or strengthen religious diversity, particularly with regard to the arrival in power of Islamists in most of these countries? Will Jordan be able to preserve the existence and stability of its model of religious diversity as it has done in the face of the turbulent Arab Spring?

Jamal al-Shalabi (Jordan) is a professor of political science at the Hashemite University in Jordan. He obtained a PhD in political science at the law school of Pantheon-Assas Paris II University and was awarded the UNESCO-Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture in 2006. He has written seven books, translated three books and published 30 research papers on dialogue between Arabs and Europeans, particularly Muslims and Christians, as well as on Middle Eastern issues in general.

1.2.3 Conclusion

Arab cultural heritage and diversity faced with the questions of the future

by Mohammed Berrada

The cultural heritage of a people is the product of its practices, customs and expressions which, over the course of history, have developed a firm set of values and sense of identity. This means that heritage is constructed by the forms of production and innovation that have predominated because they are based on human values that manage to interact with other cultures and civilizations. In other words, heritage is the part of culture that has characteristics and properties that can stand the test of time and engage with human issues in modern times. Cultural diversity is a natural phenomenon, a feature of all cultures that enriches forms and modes of expression. Diversity is a characteristic related to identity and the collective memory of human societies.

That said, over the course of history of culture and civilizations there has been a tendency to select, or rather impose, a “model” of a global culture which “sums up” human values. This, however, is always based on the assumed superiority of one civilization over another, or associated with Europe’s own view of itself as a model culture built on what we know of ancient Greek culture, which inspired the renaissance in Europe during the Age of Enlightenment in the eighteenth century. Colonialists similarly attempted to justify settlement and exploitation by claiming that they were “bringing civilization” to uncivilized peoples. This tendency to eradicate cultural diversity and historical characteristics can be seen today in the hollow, superficial culture that comes with profit-making globalization.

Based on the above remarks, the conundrum that Arab culture is faced with today is, what does the future hold for cultural diversity and heritage in the context of technological and economic globalization?

To go some way in answering this question, I will say briefly that heritage is an integral part of Arab culture and its diversity; it is deeply-rooted and has traced the path of life and civilization over a wide geographical area covering the Arab countries. This heritage, intertwined with Greek heritage, helped to generate knowledge during a particular period in history. Furthermore, it has produced a rich, ever evolving language used by around 300 million people. However, Arab heritage has also gone through “periods of decay” and been suppressed and distorted by ruthless ideological outbursts, such as attempts by the Pharaohs, Assyrians, Phoenicians and Berbers to disregard the true value of this cultural diversity, stamping out some vital components of Arab heritage and culture in the process. This suppression undoubtedly hampered Arab cultural diversity because ethnic minorities were continually marginalized and persecuted by undemocratic regimes in Arab countries. Nowadays, when we ask ourselves about the future of Arab heritage and cultural diversity, we inevitably relate it to the current context: what new culture will be born out of the uprisings and movements against those dictatorships that have always been so desperately stubborn and ignorant towards the rights of their citizens? In other words, now it is time for Arab people to begin asking themselves the questions that, for so long, had been shelved, questions about progress and how to build a solid platform from which to engage with modernity and construct a culture based on human values dedicated to the fight for democracy, the promotion of rational thought and knowledge and the struggle for equality and justice among people and cultures, a culture capable of interacting with the emerging universal culture. This time, I think, Arab culture has a bright future ahead of it, thanks to the uprisings that have been calling for change since December 2010. These have drawn the battle lines of an irreversible conflict pitting a process of change that welcomes the future with open arms against a process that is stuck in the past, clinging on to tyranny and backwards thinking. However long the conflict between these two movements lasts, the movement for change will inevitably emerge triumphant and, as a result, minorities will be liberated, Arab cultural trends in diversity will be reassessed, bridges will be built

with the post-colonial universal culture, and there will be a constructive dialectic between culture and politics.

Mohammed Berrada (Morocco) is a member of the International Jury of the UNESCO-Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture. Born in Rabat in 1938, he is an Arabic-speaking novelist and a lecturer at the University of Rabat. He is considered the leading exponent of the Moroccan modern novel. From 1976 to 1983, he presided over the Moroccan Writers Union. He is a member of the Scientific Editorial Board of the North African literary magazine Prologue. He belonged to the literary movement *Attajrib (L' experimentation)* which investigated new techniques of writing. His main publications include *Like a Summer Never to Be Repeated* (American University in Cairo Press, 2009), *Le théâtre au Maroc: tradition, expérimentation et perspectives* (Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 1998), *Fugitive Light* (Syracuse University Press, 2002), and *The Game of Forgetting* (Interlink Pub Group Inc., 1998).

Part Two

Tenth award ceremony of the UNESCO-Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture

2.1 Opening addresses

Ms Irina Bokova
Director-General of UNESCO

Excellency Mr Abdullah Alneaimi, Permanent Delegate of the United Arab Emirates to UNESCO,
Director-General of the Department of Culture and Information of the Government of Sharjah
Madam President of the International Jury,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen prizewinners,
Ladies and Gentlemen, dear colleagues,

I should like to welcome you all to UNESCO on the occasion of this exceptional ceremony.

The ceremony is exceptional on several counts. First of all, we are celebrating the tenth anniversary of this prize for Arab culture. In one decade, it has established itself as a major event on the world cultural calendar. We owe this to the generosity and ambition of His Highness Sheikh Sultan bin Mohammed al-Qasimi, Governor of the Emirate of Sharjah and founder of the Prize. We also owe it to the high standards of the International Jury, which I salute.

This evening, I am thinking of all the writers, translators, philosophers, sociologists, historians, artists, publishers and theatre directors from different backgrounds who have stepped up to this stage to bear witness to the vitality and diversity of Arab culture. Each winner, by exploring in their manner a singular aspect of this culture, in fact emphasizes what binds cultures together in a universal dialogue.

This event also coincides with the first anniversary of the early days of the Arab Spring. We must remember that the slightest aspiration for a better life, for dignity, freedom and the emancipation of peoples is embodied by a culture and a language. Culture, literature and the arts do not distance us from the world; they help us to understand and forge it as we wish. A cultural renewal accompanies civic renewal. This message concerns all of humanity and drives us forward.

UNESCO is a meeting place for all such cultures, and I am delighted at this lively exchange between confirmed artists and new forms of artistic expression in the Arab world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a an honour to present this evening the UNESCO-Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture to two eminent personalities – Mr Elias Khoury, from Lebanon, and Mr João Baptista de Medeiros Vargens, from Brazil. Both will come on stage in a few moments, but I think we can already give them a round of applause.

Elias Khoury is an intellectual and writer of global renown, whose work has touched women and men across the world. His novel, *Gate of the Sun*, about the fate of Palestinian refugees, has been translated into Hebrew and reflects his deep commitment to fight all stereotypes, to show that the “Other” is but a reflection of “I”. His work is imbued with the profoundly humanist sense of the inherent dignity of every individual. Comfortable in many cultures without being a prisoner of any single one, Elias Khoury is always seeking to defend the human rights of all and to show the importance of experience and memory for all cultures. It has guided his work to protect the great cultural heritage of his native city, Beirut. He is today one of the wisest observer of events taking place in the Arab world.

The work of João Baptista de Medeiros Vargens is guided by similar aspirations. His work has shed important, and I would say fascinating, light on the ties that link Brazilian, lusophone society with the Arab world. The result is a new map of linguistic interweaving, of deep exchange and of mutual enrichment between two cultural areas. This is the first time the UNESCO-Sharjah Prize rewards a personality from Latin America. I see this as further proof that intercultural dialogue

knows no borders and that this dialogue is nourished by the tireless efforts of what we may call “travellers of the mind”.

In a world that seems to move more quickly every day, we need new forms of dialogue between cultures, we need new bridges of respect and understanding between peoples. Our diversity is a great strength and a foundation for peace – but this calls on us to work every day against forces that fragment humanity and to do everything to strengthen the values and ties we hold in common.

The UNESCO-Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture is a major step in this effort.

I wish to thank once again Elias Khoury and João Baptista de Medeiros Vargens for their commitment to these goals.

I wish everyone here a wonderful evening.

Mr Abdullah Al-Owais

**Director-General of the Department of Culture and Information
of the Government of Sharjah**

Ladies and gentlemen,

As-salāmu ‘alaikum wa-rahmatu llāhi wa-barakātuh (Peace and the mercy and blessings of God be upon you),

It is a great pleasure to speak to you on the occasion of the tenth award ceremony of the UNESCO Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture, kindly sponsored by Dr Sheikh Sultan Bin Mohammed Al-Qassimi, Member of the Supreme Council of the United Arab Emirates, both the Governor of Sharjah and the man responsible for its cultural revival, and to convey to you his greetings and best wishes for your success.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Prize reflects the profound relationship between the Arab world and the humanities all over the globe and continues to play the same key role today as it has always played, to strengthen the cultural bonds that are vital to this relationship.

The Prize is all the more significant because it represents a valuable meeting point between UNESCO and the United Arab Emirates in the form of the sponsor and guardian of the Prize, the intellectual man of culture His Highness Dr Sheikh Sultan Bin Mohammed Al-Qassimi.

Over the past few years, the Prize has come a long way. It has been awarded to cultural innovators in a variety of countries and gone on to set lasting standards thanks to the exceptional attention and follow-up of UNESCO and the Department of Culture and Information of Sharjah. It has also improved its working mechanisms throughout the year through effective promotion, using careful judgement and diligently following literary works, names and exceptional individuals in the field of intellectual thought and innovation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Nothing I can say can fully express my desire and hope to help this Prize to develop and advance its goals.

This is the fascinating purpose that brings us together, the devotion that leads us to turn to this distinguished Prize as a cultural project born out of the desire to acknowledge and continually support acts of creative innovation.

On a related note, the Prize also acknowledges Orientalists working in the field of Arab studies, who have always made and continue to make a significant contribution to the enrichment of Arab history and heritage. They have contributed substantially to consolidating Arab culture, through both translation and writing in Arabic, so that Arab cultural and linguistic studies are now an important branch of ancient and modern Arab culture.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The scene is set and the way is paved to turn the ideas behind this Prize into a reality, by looking back on what the Prize has achieved over the past few years and continuing to help it improve and evolve in days to come.

May God help you all to serve knowledge and culture, with God's permission tomorrow will be brighter and more beautiful. *As-salāmu 'alaikum wa-rahmatu llāhi wa-barakātuh* (Peace and the mercy and blessings of God be upon you).

His Excellency Mr Abdullah Alneaimi

Permanent Delegate of the United Arab Emirates to UNESCO

Your Excellency Ms Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO,
Ambassadors, Permanent Delegates to UNESCO,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As-salāmu ‘alaikum wa-rahmatu llāhi wa-barakātuh (Peace and the mercy and blessings of God be upon you),

We are here today to celebrate the tenth award ceremony of the UNESCO-Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture. This exceptional meeting, bringing together leading members of diplomatic, cultural and creative spheres from all over the world, reflects the excellent work of the Emirate of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates to build bridges, engage in intercultural dialogue and broaden the horizons of interaction and debate. This noble cause and its cultural legitimacy are ever more clearly visible in the splendour of its masterpieces and the abundance of its literary works, despite how wide distances may seem, how much sensitivities may vary, how conflicting and incompatible interests may be. At this unique junction between the cultural project in Sharjah and the choices and priorities of UNESCO, the meaning of this fruitful partnership is fulfilled with the presentation of this Prize to Arab and international innovators who have helped to build bridges of communication between their people, their customs, their views and the vast world around them.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is no doubt that these ways of crossing cultural divides respond precisely to the views and aspirations of His Highness Dr Sheikh Sultan Bin Mohammed Al-Qassimi, Member of the Supreme Council of the United Arab Emirates and Emir of Sharjah, who throughout his life has been a real champion of innovation and innovators, wherever they may come from. He has turned his Emirate into a pioneering laboratory of literature, poetry, theatre, linguistic research and experimentation. He leads by example because he himself is an outstanding writer, historian, and man of theatre and geo strategic researcher. Many of his books are viewed as cornerstones in their intellectual fields by scholars and other interested parties, who rely on them as a reference for their own work. His love of words has placed Sharjah firmly on the Arab and international intellectual map, and it is no exaggeration to say that in Sharjah, Sheikh Sultan has brought al-Andalus back to life. Sharjah is well integrated with its six fellow emirates with which it forms the United Arab Emirates, which it has turned into a festival of culture open to creativity, cinema, translation and publishing, exhibitions, museums, the arts, diversity, innovation and knowledge in all their ecumenical and human dimensions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The UNESCO-Sharjah Prize has made great progress over its first ten years and accumulated many signs of success. It has become an institution with its own annual budget, awards and governing body made up of credible, influential personalities from the world's cultural platforms. It now has its own wide audience of educated followers. At its tenth session, which we are celebrating here, the Prize is being awarded to two innovators. The first is the Lebanese novelist, critic and playwright Elias Khoury, author of many books, some of which have been translated into 13 languages, including Arabic. The second is the Brazilian João Baptista de Medeiros Vargens, a famous writer, publisher, lexicographer and lecturer in Arabic language and thought, who plays a significant role in defining Arab-Islamic civilization in Portuguese-speaking countries. There is undoubtedly a deep connection between the literature of the Arab world and that of Latin America when it comes to their concerns and interests, literary fabric and ideological perspectives. Arab immigrants in Latin America, most of whom came from Syria, Palestine and Lebanon, have helped to construct the great Arab-Latin American bridge that has been crossed in both directions by

talents from literary, poetic, critical spheres, enriching the harmonious yet varied cultural space between the Arab world and the continent of South America.

Friends,

The United Arab Emirates has a long history of religious and cultural diversity that dates from the fourteenth century, a time of prosperity in the Gulf region, the kingdom of Hormuz and the civilizations of Julfar, Dibba and Khor Fakkan, up to the birth of the country on 2 December 1971 and lasting to the present day. This is not a story simply scribbled on a scrap of paper, or told as a tale. It is engraved in the stone of human dignity. That is to say that we believe in one culture that consists of a group of varied and evolving cultures inextricably bonded to their fundamental existence and unique characteristics. There are, of course, cultural, intellectual and sociological differences. But these, rather than being rifts or gaping chasms, are spaces in which to communicate and interact, outlets that allow us to escape narrow minded, monochrome stereotypes. As Antoine de Saint-Exupéry said, “If you differ from me, far from hurting me, you enrich me”. Edgar Morin also said to French society, “Dialogue requires much more than different parties gathering around a table, it requires people to step out of themselves to understand the Other and how he or she is different.” This tendency has also been observed by Régis Debray who has said that dialogue is meaningless unless it leads to communication between people who think differently.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

These are our convictions and guiding principles at a time when great changes are happening around us. They are the compass that guides us to reach our goals, the seed of peace that grows in ourselves before it grows into reality, our contribution to the dialogue of civilizations that brings stable and prosperous societies. I therefore offer my warmest congratulations to the two new winners of the Prize. They now belong to a collection of 18 Arab and international innovators who have been awarded the prize for their intellectual talent over the last nine years. At this point I would like to invite nominations of Arab and international innovators, whatever their intellectual or artistic field, to the UNESCO Secretariat as candidates for the Sharjah Prize, which embraces all types of human innovation. We must combine all our efforts and determination to advance through our world from uncertainty to certainty, from darkness and obscurity to a time of enlightened dialogue, cooperation, harmony and peace. Thank you

2. 2 Presentation of the winners

by Isabella Camera d’Afflitto,

President of the International Jury

**Isabella Camera d’Afflitto,
President of the International Jury**

Madam Director-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As President of the International Jury of the tenth UNESCO-Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture, I have the pleasure of presenting our two winners to you this evening, both of them highly distinguished intellectual figures.

It is always with renewed enthusiasm that, year after year, we receive nominations for this Prize whose values are so noble. As a Jury, we make so many beautiful discoveries when looking through the nominations, and while we cannot unfortunately award a prize to everyone, we have the satisfaction of seeing that Arab culture is opening its horizons, not only by offering us a less complex and more homogeneous image, but also by becoming a bridge of dialogue between East and West. Today, more than ever, Arab culture reminds us of the depth and richness of its heritage, as well as of its promised future.

This year we received more than 20 nominations from the National Commissions to UNESCO, from all disciplines and nationalities, significant both in quantity and quality. It must be said the task of picking a winner was not easy. The International Jury therefore met on 12 January 2012, at UNESCO, and, after a full day of gripping discussions, submitted its proposed list of winners to Ms Irina Bokova, here with us today, who did not fail to confirm our favourites.

Elias Khoury is an intellectual the likes of whom are rare today. He has played a key role in promoting Arab culture both within and beyond the borders of the Arab world. As editor-in-chief of the cultural supplement of the Lebanese daily *An-Nahar*, he promoted the emergence of new literary waves in Lebanon and across the Arab world in general. His duties as head of the Beirut Theatre and the Ayloul Festival for Contemporary Art saw him take part in efforts to restore Beirut as a key cultural centre.

But it is as a writer, critic and academic that Elias Khoury is known across the world. His literary work, crafted book after book (novels, plays, essays) with the skill of a goldsmith, is a steady achievement where his political sensibilities are in perfect harmony with his literary quest, in the stylistic and artistic sense of the term. He works ceaselessly on the Arabic language, breathing new life into it, adapting it to the voice of his characters, modernizing it and bringing it up to date so that it serves as the testimony of an era. It can safely be said that Elias Khoury’s novels are well on the way to becoming classics.

But he is also a committed and courageous intellectual as witnessed by his efforts on behalf of the Palestinians and now in support of the Samir Kassir Foundation.

From the other side of the globe, Brazil – where moreover the Lebanese are legion – comes João Baptista de Medeiros Vargens, who claims no kinship with the Arab world. It is his own interest in Arabic language and culture that drove him to study them at university. His studies and subsequent linguistic research also led him to broaden this interest from an anthropological and sociological perspective. While he searches for Arabic roots in the Portuguese language of today so as to acquire a wider knowledge of, as it were, the “cultural” etymology of words, he also continues to shed light on whole areas of influence of Arab-Muslim civilization across the world. What is more surprising, and more obvious, than the intermixing of Arabic and Portuguese not only as a result of the migration flows to South America from the countries of the Near East, but above all since Andalusian times?

Dr Vargens' impressive resumé reflects in full the involvement and commitment of this prize-winner who, throughout his career, has ceaselessly striven to make a *positive contribution* to building bridges between the Arab world and Brazil, indeed the Portuguese-speaking countries in general. He has done this by giving lectures and conferences in many countries, by publishing articles in Arabic-language magazines, and teaching cross-linguistics and, for instance, Portuguese to Palestinian immigrants under important humanitarian programmes proposed by the United Nations, among others.

It is a great joy for us this evening to find ourselves at the crossroads of East and West, on these bridges of culture, language and humanity built by our two winners. Let us say, it is an apogee for this, the tenth anniversary of the Prize.

Thank you all and have a wonderful evening.

2. 3. Interviews with the prizewinners

Elias Khoury

Elias Khoury is the author of a dozen stories, the most celebrated of which, *Gate of the Sun* and *As Though She Were Sleeping*, confirm his talent as an Arab writer firmly anchored in his time; one whose struggle, both ideological and aesthetic, is directed towards updating the image of Arab culture around the globe. Having received the UNESCO-Sharjah Prize, crowning his achievements as a writer, intellectual, man of culture and academic, Elias Khoury in this interview casts a critical yet optimistic glance on the current state of the Arab world.

“Every genre of writing is committed”

The UNESCO-Sharjah Prize is an award for Arab culture. What value does it hold for you, given the state of the Arab world today?

Receiving a prize as a servant of Arab culture is a great honour for me. It is a tribute to my life, which I have dedicated to opening a path of change in Arab culture, to its reinterpretation, to historical change. What is more, this consecration coincides with the inclusion of Palestine as a Member State of UNESCO. This event is of great importance to me, as I still believe that freedom always begins in Palestine, and it is only from there that global change will be possible. My work as an intellectual is to interact with this change, to be an activist among the thousands of others who are fighting for justice.

What is a twenty-first century writer in your view?

One is only a writer when others acknowledge it. But, in a sense, anybody can be a writer. Yet the “professional writer” is, may I say, one who listens to the voice of others and can reinvent the world with the tools of that same world. Most importantly, too, history can be rewritten with the readers. Every genre of writing is committed. My commitment is deep because it is the continuation of the feminine path of Arab culture. I am thinking of Scheherazade, of course, who fought for her survival by telling stories. We are fighting against power and giving a voice to the voiceless. It is a way to take back, to seize speech by giving it a meaning. And meaning is produced by human emotion. Meaning comes from something deep, which is love.

From the reception your books receive in the world, do you notice a change in the interest taken by the West in the Arab world?

I notice a growing and more obvious interest in the Arab world because it has become a battleground. The interest is more socio-anthropological than cultural, though, which is annoying as Arab literature indeed has its own place in what Goethe called the “literature of the world”. Authors are changing their novelistic approach to storytelling. And, little by little, in the Arab world, there is growing interest in our stylistic interpretation of the world. This invalidates the fantasies with which Arab culture has been besieged, all the prejudices of Orientalism the theory of which was brilliantly analysed by Edward Saïd.

Do you think that we are confronted with a new form of Orientalism?

Indeed, and that is not acceptable. Orientalism continues in other forms, and the fight is also taking new forms, as it should. It is not about fighting those who created this image of the Arab world which pursues us relentlessly, or the newcomers. The Orientalist arguments should not be taken personally. The Islamist fundamentalists, for example, are entangled in it. The level of change depends on us alone. We have a long history of oppression and lethargy which has meant that the land has lain fallow. We must find new concepts to give Arab culture back its noble credentials.

Acceptance address by Elias Khoury

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you very much. To be able to serve Arab culture is the greatest of honours. I want nothing more than to be the word that adds to the dictionary the idea that intellectuals create new mirrors, allowing reality to see itself reflected in the horizons of change.

This honour is all the more significant because it coincides with the admission of Palestine as a full member of UNESCO. As we know, signs of freedom appear in culture before anywhere else, and Palestine's freedom is just one of many aspirations for freedom that together have formed the voice that is now reverberating through the entire Arab world.

My generation has long fought for the values of freedom and justice, using words to fight the sword, words that are our weapon against weapons. Many friends have fallen bloody victims, others have gone in to exile and some have spent long nights in prison. However, we have always had the promise of freedom, drenched in the blood of Samir Kassir and his companions, and we have been waiting for this promise, which began to take shape with the cry for freedom resounding from Sidi Bouzid to Homs, where people are invading the sky, people whose blood washes through the water of the Assi river, people whose own death is a triumph over death itself because it gives us our freedom.

Today I can say that our conscience is being reborn and that these revolutions are teaching us the wisdom of bravery and the humility of heroism. Culture is the child of freedom, its blooming flower, therefore all that I can do in front of this great cultural celebration is to ask you for solidarity with the blood being spilled in Baba Amr and to bow down in front of the sight that is unfolding before my eyes, the sight of Arab peoples breaking free of their shackles and recovering their freedom, weaving new cultural horizons from the fabric of their revolutions.

João Baptista de Medeiros Vargens

On being awarded the 2011 UNESCO-Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture, João Baptista de Medeiros Vargens expressed his delight at this event, which he saw as “an expression of appreciation for [his] role as a bridge between cultures”. He set out his views on how best to build on everything that Arabs and South Americans have in common, emphasizing the “cultural bridge” that must be built between both sides and recognizing the UNESCO-Sharjah Prize as a window of opportunity through which Arab culture can view the world, with all its aesthetic and creative merits and characteristics. Here is what he said.

“Translation: an axis of communication and interaction between the Arab world and Latin America”

This is the first time that the Sharjah UNESCO Prize for Arab culture has been awarded to a Brazilian, or to any Latin American. How did this make you feel, and how did you react to receiving this special award for Arab culture?

I was overcome with joy and happiness. As I said at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris when I received the award, the Prize was not only for me, but also for all the Brazilian Orientalists who work in the Arabic department at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro and in the Arabic department at São Paulo University. For me, the Prize is a bridge between two cultures and civilizations.

This Arab cultural bridge must inevitably focus on the sizeable Arab diaspora in Latin America, which forms a cultured elite capable of playing a role in the cultural sphere through its associations, local groups and civil society organizations, which are frequented by the citizens themselves and which have a good understanding of artistic and literary tastes and ideologies. This diaspora could be used to organize a series of artistic caravans that roam through urban and rural areas to make direct contact with local public opinion. Some people have launched new initiatives, ideas and innovations to bring the two continents closer together. A common focal point is translation, which is used as an avenue to discover new things, understand people and communicate in the fields of literature, science, heritage, sociology and sport. The government recently commissioned a committee made up of two teams of experts to compile a list of the top books that they recommended should be translated by professionals. Portuguese, Spanish and Arabic language institutes and research centres have also been established, producing studies and publications on Latino and Arab history and finding out the facts on economics, development and the changes and advances in these fields. Most Orientalists have agreed that language is an important factor in interaction and communication, which has opened the door to further suggestions and initiatives such as cooperative production in the deaf and blind sector, the art sector, cinema and the theatre. Arab cuisine has even been used as a common denominator, given that many Brazilian dishes are in fact based on Arab cuisine. It also became clear that Arab countries, such as the United Arab Emirates, had already made this link between tourism, Arab cuisine, visual spectacles and cultural tourism.

Both Spanish and Arab culture are obviously influenced by their Andalusian past. It is unanimously agreed that Spain is an important gateway to the countries of Latin America, just as the Moroccan city of Tangiers forms a link between the Latin and Arab worlds, and that there are currently five important languages: English, Spanish, Portuguese, French and Arabic. Culture and education are the cornerstone of all sustainable development. This is why the UNESCO-Sharjah Prize was created as a milestone on a long road which, with regular follow-up, will help to set up a structure of coordination and communication to activate cultural relations through a designated programme of exchange activities, in the knowledge that the peoples of Latin America support Arab just causes.

Orientalists unanimously agree that translation is an important way of fostering openness between Arab and Latin American culture. Where does this translation movement stand at the moment and what are its main achievements and focuses?

The translation movement is key. It starts with the translation of books by Latin American winners of the Nobel Prize (such as *The Autumn of the Patriarch* and *One Hundred Years of Solitude*), candidates for the “Arab Nobel” or famous authors such as Naguib Mahfouz, Mahmoud Darwish, Badr Shakir al-Sayyab, Abou el Kacem Chebbi or Khalil Gibran. Using these as a starting point, books seen as literary references are compiled into a priority list by the committee of experts.

From a theoretical perspective, translation is an axis of interaction and communication between Arabs and South America, from both similar and divergent cultural viewpoints. Excellent translations have been produced of the works of some authors, such as the Argentinian writer Ernesto Sabato who passed away on 1 May 2011, the Mexican poet José Emilio Pacheco and the Uruguayan writer Juan Carlos Onetti. And how could we forget Jorge Luis Borges, Luis Fayad and the author of *100 Years of Solitude* and *The Autumn of the Patriarch*? In addition to translation itself, there are also research centres that attract experts and academics who are drawing up a sort of “roadmap” with which to navigate the many routes between Arabs and Latin Americans. For example, at the university where I lecture, one of the biggest Federal universities in Brazil, the department of Arab studies has been running for over four decades, during which time it has enriched interaction between cultures and civilizations through hundreds of studies, proposals, reports, translations and biographies.

What sort of relationship do universities have with Brazilian society? Do Brazilians rely on academic research to understand their heritage and pick up on the Arab influences that are woven into the fabric of their intellectual life, traditions and customs?

Some educated people are aware of the Arab influence on Brazilian heritage. The majority of Brazilians are black, and they are not in touch with university work or academic research. I wrote a book on the history of the Portuguese language, *Portuguese words of Arabic origin*, to contribute to the study of philology (how words are derived). This book undoubtedly helped to shed light on some aspects of Brazilian history and civilization from the perspective of linguistic and language research. Nowadays, some Brazilians are aware of the periods of their history and the path of their past. They know, for example, that the Arabs resided in al-Andalus for eight centuries and that Arab culture was brought to Brazil by the Portuguese. In my appreciation of Arabs, their history, their signs and symbols, I named my son, who was born in Damascus, Tareq, after one of the great conquerors of Arab and Islamic history.

To what extent will the UNESCO-Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture help you to strengthen and improve knowledge exchange between the Arab world and Latin America?

The Prize opens a new door between these two worlds, cultures and civilizations. I would particularly like to show my gratitude and appreciation to the governor of Sharjah, Sheikh Sultan Al-Qassimi, who sponsors this Prize and who appreciates intellectual thought, literature, novels and perspectives. I would also like to thank UNESCO in particular because, through its joint participation in this prize with the Emirate of Sharjah of the United Arab Emirates, it has built a strong bridge between cultures and civilizations.

Annexes

Annex I

I. Sharjah and its Prize

1. A prize inspired and funded by the Emirate of Sharjah¹

In order to commemorate the designation of the city of Sharjah as Cultural Capital of the Arab Region in 1998, the Government of the Emirate of Sharjah and His Highness Sheikh Sultan bin Mohammed Al-Qasimi proposed the establishment of a prize to UNESCO. By mutual agreement, it rewarded two individuals from within and beyond the Arab world who, through their work and outstanding achievements, endeavour to disseminate greater knowledge of Arab art and culture.

Established under these favourable circumstances for a cause that had become urgent, the UNESCO-Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture has, since 2001, crowned the efforts of 16 outstanding individuals from across the world. They have been honoured either in recognition of their contribution – in their respective disciplines – to Arab art and culture, or for participating in the dissemination of the latter outside the Arab world. Together, the prizewinners have come to represent a new generation of researchers, artists, philosophers, authors and translators with a profound desire to achieve a genuine dialogue between Arab culture and other cultures [...].

2. The patron ruler²

The Emirate of Sharjah may appear to be a small dot on the map, but thanks to its ruler it has played and still plays a cultural role worthy of the world's envy. Sheikh Al-Qasimi is more than the Ruler of Sharjah: he is an extremely cultured man who holds two Ph.Ds (in history and in the political geography of the Gulf) from British universities. He is the author of several historical and literary publications. Through his publications, His Highness has greatly contributed to the spread of Arab culture [...]. His vast knowledge of the history of French orientalism, manifest in his acceptance speech upon being named Commander of the Order of Arts and Letters, has enriched research in the history of ideas, inherited from the Renaissance: Arabic printing, introduced to France by Savary de Brèves, Herbelot de Molainville's *Bibliothèque orientale*, the *Description de l'Égypte* commissioned by Napoleon Bonaparte, Volney's *Voyage en Syrie et en Égypte*, etc.

The Sheikh, a man enamoured with words and books, unhesitatingly made Sharjah a shining cultural centre – at the regional and then international levels, notably by creating, with UNESCO, this Prize dedicated to developing the prestige of civilization in which he was born and raised and his determination to chart and bring to life its history in the spirit of al-Andalus and in full respect for the written word.

3. Sharjah, the Emirate where culture is queen³

Bordered on the west by the Arabian Gulf and on the east by the Sea of Oman, the Emirate of Sharjah has been able to affirm its unique character thanks to a subtle alliance between economic development and the desire to preserve its authentic culture. [...]

Take the cultural heritage for a start. Significant investment has permitted the establishment of museums and heritage centres. Historical sites and monuments have been preserved or restored throughout the city. [...] Similarly, the city enjoys significant artistic and educational activity. The Sharjah Biennial is an event which attracts artists from the four corners of the world. Moreover, the

¹ Excerpt from the address by Francesco Bandarin, UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Culture, on the occasion of the eighth award of the Prize (2009).

² From a presentation by the Permanent Delegation of the United Arab Emirates at the official ceremony of the eighth award of the Prize.

³ Excerpts from the June 2003 issue of the magazine *Le Message des Émirats*.

Emirate's Department of Information holds, each year, several cultural events, including the Book Fair which takes place in November. It also plans various instructive and technical festivals for children. [...]

To understand better what Sharjah is all about, you should visit the arts and heritage districts.

The former is located just off the Corniche and on the north side of Burj Avenue (Bank Road). [...] Here you will find the Sharjah Art Museum, the Sharjah Art Centre, art galleries and the Emirates Fine Arts Society. The Art Centre is a discreetly restored building and the former residence of the British Commissioner for the coast of Oman, which was later turned into the missionary hospital. The Centre offers classes by qualified art teachers for all ages and abilities. Nearby is the Art Cafe, a meeting place for artists interested in local issues. At the far end of the area, numerous art studios provide artists a place to work. On the opposite side of the square is the Sharjah Art Museum. It has a total of 32 exhibition rooms, of which eight are dedicated to the private collection of the Ruler who has donated them to the museum. [...]

On the other side of Burj Avenue is the heritage district with its collection of local markets, meeting places and small museums. This area is an example of Sharjah's commitment to heritage and culture that was instrumental in earning it the UNESCO title of cultural capital of the Arab world. It is home to the Museum of Islamic Civilization which contains a collection of rare Islamic manuscripts as well as items of Arab art. [...]

No sooner have you left the old souks, restored buildings and tourist sites than you come across new Arab-style constructions. They are surrounded by parks and gardens which have sprung up lately in this desert region. You also find there luxury hotels, restaurants and numerous green spaces catering to tourists. Sharjah has 27 gardens. Trees have been planted on some 729,000 m² by the municipality under a two-pronged initiative concerned with both the environment and beautification-. To fight heat, wind, storms and humidity, the municipality is actively seeking to surround the city with green belts. The vegetation is perfectly suited to the desert climate. It is selected for its resistance to high temperatures and the high levels of water and soil salinity. Three kilometres from the international airport lies the Sharjah National Park, covering an area of more than 600,000 m². [...]

Exploring these immense green spaces one might forget that this ancient city is built in the desert. [...] As exploration is within everyone's reach, the landscapes and heritage of Sharjah will always have something to reveal to us.

Annex II

Profiles of the 2011 prizewinners

1. Elias Khoury

I believe that our modern culture is a living culture. The values of freedom, civil society and democracy are an integral part of it. Serving the Arab culture is for me a way to insist on the universality of these values.

Elias KHOURY

Main achievements

Novelist, playwright, essayist and defender of human rights, he is also Global Distinguished Professor at the University of New York and co-editor of the Arabic version of the *Journal of Palestine Studies Quarterly*.

As editor-in-chief of the weekly literary supplement of the newspaper *An-Nahar* (1992-2009), the prizewinner contributed to the birth of new waves in the world of Lebanese and Arab literature. Furthermore, his work as Director of the Beirut Theatre (1992-1998) and Co-Director of the Ayloul Festival for Contemporary Art (1997-2001) went a long way to reviving the Lebanese capital as a cultural centre in the Arab world.

He is the author of 12 novels, which have been translated into more than 13 languages. His works dealing with the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990) are meant to reflect human nature. These novels are not content to relate developments in the war, rather they narrate human disaster stories in which men and women fight for survival by reinventing life.

Resumé

– **Professional experience**

- 1973-1990: Member of the editorial committee of the quarterly literary journal *Mawaqif* (Beirut)
- 1975-1979: Editorial Director of the monthly newspaper *Shu'un Falastiniyya* (Beirut)
- 1980-1985: Editor of the literary series *Memory of Peoples*
- 1981-1982: Editorial Director of the monthly *Al-Karmel* (Beirut)

- 1983-1991: Literary editor-in-chief of the daily *Al-Safir* (Beirut)
- 1992-1998: Artistic Director of the Beirut Theatre
- 1997-2001: Co-Director of the Ayloul Contemporary Art Festival (Beirut)
- 1992-2009: Editor-in-chief of the weekly literary supplement of the daily *An-Nahar* (Beirut)
- 2010: Editor of the *Journal of Palestine Studies* (Beirut)

– **Positions**

- 1981-1982: Visiting Professor at Columbia University (New York)
- 1982. Assistant Professor at the Institute of Arab Studies (Boston, MA)
- 2001-2004: Visiting Professor of Comparative Literature at New York University
- 2005: Emeritus Professor at New York University, Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies

Main publications

– **Novels**

- *The Little Mountain*, Beirut, 1977
- *The Gates of the City*, Beirut, 1981
- *White Masks*, Beirut
- *The Journey of Little Gandhi*, Beirut, 1989, 2000
- *The Kingdom of Strangers*, Beirut, 1993
- *Majma' al-Asrar*, Beirut, 1994
- *Gate of the Sun*, Beirut, 1998
- *Yalo*, Beirut, 2002
- *As Though She Were Sleeping*, Beirut, 2007

– **Co-author**

- *Le Liban second*, Edition Babel, Paris: Maison de la Culture du Monde, 1996
- *Pour Rushdie*, Paris: Editions la Découverte, 1993
- *La mémoire des déchets*, Québec: Edition Nota Bene, 1999

– **Plays**

- *Mémoires de Job*, Beirut, 1993
- *La Prison d'Al-Raml*, Beirut, 1995

- *Three Posters*, Beirut, 2000

– **Film scripts**

- Co-author of the script for *Out of Life*, a 1992 French film directed by the Lebanese film maker Maroun Baghdadi – Jury Special Prize at the Cannes Film Festival, 1993
- Co-author of the script for *Gate of the Sun*, inspired by the novel of the same name, directed by the Egyptian film maker Yousry Nasrallah and produced by ARTE, France

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2. João Baptista de Medeiros Vargens

I have tried to convey an image of the Arab world beyond all Manichaeism so as to foster a deeper understanding of it.

J. B de MEDEIROS VARGENS

Main achievements

Dr João Baptista de Medeiros Vargens has devoted his entire career to the study of the Arabic and Portuguese languages and to the social, cultural, political and religious aspects of the presence of Arab peoples in Latin America. He is Director General of the *Instituto de Cooperação Portugal-Países Árabes* (Institute for Cooperation between Portugal-Arab Countries) in Rio de Janeiro. He has also, at the request of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), coordinated qualification workshops for teachers of Portuguese to Palestinian immigrants in Brazil.

Dr Vargens is the founder of Almádena, the only publishing house dedicated to the dissemination of knowledge of Arabic and Portuguese-language cultures. He has published and contributed to the publication of several dictionaries, and translated from Arabic to Portuguese several great novels (including those by Naguib Mahfouz) and short stories.

The works of Dr João Baptista Vargens seeking to promote understanding of Arab culture have received various awards, including the *Medalha de Mérito Cultural* (Medal of Cultural Merit) awarded by the Institute for Luso-Arab Cooperation (*Instituto Luso-Árabe para a Cooperação*).

Main publications

– **Books**

- Arabic-Portuguese dictionary, Alphonse Nagib Sabbagh (editorial coordinator). Rio de Janeiro/Rio Bonito, Fundação Biblioteca Nacional/Almádena, 2011
- *Contos marroquinos modernos* (Organizer) (*Modern Moroccan Stories*), 2nd ed. Rio Bonito (RJ), Almádena, 2009
- *Dicionário Aurélio Buarque de Hollanda* (Collaborator-Arabisms), 6th ed. Curitiba: Editora Positivo, 2008
- *Léxico português de origem árabe : subsídios para os estudos de fiologia portuguesa* (Portuguese for Arabic Speakers), Almádena, Rio Bonito (RJ), 2007
- *Islamismo e Negritude* (*Islamism and Negritude*), Arab Studies Section of UFRJ, Rio de Janeiro, 1982, co-author Nei Lopes

– **Articles**

- “A Critical Analysis of Eastern Influences on the Portuguese Language”. 2nd ed., Edusp, São Paulo, 2005, in Tiraz, *Revista de estudos árabes e das culturas do Oriente Médio*, USP, 2006
- “Le crépuscule de l’Andalousie” (The Andalusian Twilight): the subject of a Brazilian play (sic.): in the series Recherches et Colloques, 1, *La Civilisation d’Al-Andalus dans le temps et dans l’espace*, Hassan II University, Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Mohammedia, Morocco, April 1993
- “A Critical Analysis of Paulo Portela: Outline of the Marriage of Two Cultures”, FUNARTE, 1979 ; in *Revista Tempo Brasileiro*, No.61, Rio de Janeiro, 1980

– **Translations**

- *Muhammad Ben Ammar, the Andalusian*, translated from the Arabic original Ammar Al-Andalusi by Dr. Salah Khalis, Al-Huda, Baghdad, 1957; in collaboration with Professors Alphonse Nagib Sabbagh and Suely Ferreiro Lima Teixeira for the Praxis Project, Lisbon, 1999
- *Modern Moroccan Stories* in collaboration with the faculty of the Arab Studies Section of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. Ministry of Culture of Morocco, Rabat, 1999
- *Autumn Quail*, from the Arabic original *As-summan ua al-kharif* by Nagib Mahfuz, Espaço e Tempo, Rio de Janeiro, 1989, in collaboration with Alphonse Nagib Sabbagh

– **Journals**

- *Modern Arabic Grammar*. Tiraz, FFLECH/USP, São Paulo, 2007
- *Eastern Influences on the Portuguese Language*. Tiraz, FFLECH/USP, São Paulo, 2007

Annex III

The International Jury

The International Jury for the Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture is composed of five eminent persons of international renown.

Mohammed Berrada (Morocco) is a novelist writing in Arabic and teacher at the University of Rabat. He is considered to be the figurehead of the modern Moroccan novel. He was a member of the literary movement *Attajrib* and, from 1976 to 1983, President of the Union of Moroccan Writers. He is a member of the advisory board of the North African literary magazine *Prologue*.

Isabella Camera d’Afflitto (Italy), translator and Arabist, is Professor of Arabic Language and Literature at the University of Rome La Sapienza. She is on the editorial board of the academic journal *Oriente Moderno* and member of the European Meeting of Teachers of Arabic Literature and the European Union of Arabists and Islamicists. She has been awarded various prestigious Italian prizes, in particular for her translations from Arabic.

Assia Djebbar (Algeria, absent) is a French-language Algerian writer. She has written several novels, essays and dramas that are translated into more than twenty languages. Her fight for causes such as women’s emancipation, etc., makes her one of the most important and influential authors in the Maghreb. She entered the “Académie française” in 2005. She lives between France, Algeria and the United States where she teaches French literature in the University of New York.

R. Stephen Humphreys (USA) is Professor of History and Islamic Studies at the University of California at Santa Barbara. He has taught internationally (e.g., American University in Cairo, École des hautes études en sciences sociales in Paris, and Oxford University) and has published numerous works on the history of Islam. Prof. Humphreys is the author of the acclaimed geopolitical analysis entitled *Between Memory and Desire: The Middle East in a Troubled Age* (1999, revised 2005), which explores major challenges facing Middle Easterners at the end of the 20th century.

Youssou N’Dour (Senegal) is a composer, performer and musician of world renown. He has worked with internationally famous performers. A politically committed singer, he has organized concerts for Amnesty International, the humanitarian organization. His album *Egypt*, reflecting his in-depth knowledge of Arab music, won him a Grammy Award (USA) in the best contemporary world music album category.

Annex IV

List of winners of the UNESCO-Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture 2001-2011

2001

- Professor Abdulaziz El Makaleh (Yemen)
- Professor Abdul Rahman Na Zhong (People's Republic of China)

2003

- Professor Bensalem Himmich (Morocco)
- Professor Esad Duraković (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

2004

- Professor Abdelwahab Bouhdiba (Tunisia)
- Professor Juan Vernet Ginés (Spain, deceased)

2005

- Professor Tahar Ouettar (Algeria, deceased)
- Father Michel Lagarde (France-Holy See)

2006

- Dr Jamal Al-Shalabi (Jordan)
- Professor Yordan Peev (Bulgaria)

2007

- Professor Aladine Lolah (Syrian Arab Republic)
- Professor Shah Abdus Salam (India)

2008

- Dr Gaber Asfour (Egypt)
- Dr José Adalberto Coelho Alves (Portugal)

2009

- Ghani Alani (Iraq)
- Anna Parzymies (Poland)

2010

- Ali Mahdi Nouri (Sudan)
- Chérif Khaznadar (France)

2011

- Elisa Khoury (Lebanon)
- João Baptista de Medeiros Vargens (Brazil)

For more information on all UNESCO-Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture Laureates, please visit <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/events/prizes-celebrations/prizes/sharjah-prize/>.

Annex V

Statutes of the UNESCO Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture according to the overall review of UNESCO Prizes (171 EX/19)

Article 1 – Purpose

The purpose of the UNESCO-Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture is to reward the efforts of a national of an Arab country and a national of any other country who have contributed through their artistic, intellectual or promotional work, to the development and diffusion of Arab Culture in the world. The objective of the Prize is in conformity with the second and sixth preambular paragraphs and with Article I paragraph 2 (c) of the Constitution of UNESCO according to which the Organization is assigned the task of promoting the mutual understanding of peoples through activities that encourage greater knowledge of the cultures of different peoples and international exchange between the different peoples and between the different cultures. The objectives of the Prize are in conformity with UNESCO's policies/priorities related to the Major Programme IV, Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue.

Article 2 – Designation, Amount and Periodicity of the Prize

2.1 The Prize shall be entitled “*The UNESCO - Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture*”.

2.2 (b) The Prize shall be funded by the Government of Sharjah (United Arab Emirates) and shall consist of a recurrent payment of US\$ 135,101 annually. The amount of the recurrent payment will be reviewed every two years. The contribution from the donor shall be received at the beginning of each year, no later than 15 January, in order to ensure that funds are available well in time before incurring expenditure for the administration of the Prize and for the Prize itself. The amount of the Prize is US\$ 60,000, which will be divided into equal parts between two prize-winners (US\$30,000 each).

2.3 All funds received and the interest accrued thereon shall be kept in a special interest bearing account for the Prize.

2.4 The full staff support and operating/management costs of the Prize, including all costs related to the award ceremony and public information activities, estimated at the sum of US\$59,558, shall be fully covered by the Government of Sharjah (United Arab Emirates). To this end, the Director-General will determine a mandatory overhead cost amount to be applied and charged against the funds in the special account, which is to be established under the financial regulations for the prize.

2.5 The Prize shall be awarded once a year, on an initial basis of US\$60,000 per year, and shall be shared between two prizewinners in equal parts, (US\$30,000 each).

Article 3 – Conditions/Qualifications of candidates

Candidates shall be eminent persons, groups or institutions that have made a significant contribution to the development, the diffusion and the promotion of Arab culture throughout the world. They should have acquired an international reputation in this field and distinguished themselves by meritorious actions extending over several years. Also, they should have contributed to promoting cultural dialogue and revitalization of the Arab culture.

Article 4 – Designation/Selection of the prizewinners

The prizewinners shall be selected by the Director-General of UNESCO on the basis of the assessments and recommendations made to him by a jury.

Article 5 – Jury

5.1 The Jury shall consist of a number of five independent members of different nationalities and gender, appointed by the Director-General for a period of four years, eligible for re-election. Representatives and alternatives of Members of the Executive Board cannot be appointed as jurors. Jurors involved in a real or potential conflict of interest shall recuse themselves from further deliberations or be asked by the Director-General to do so. The Director-General may replace members of the Jury if deemed appropriate.

5.2 The Jury shall elect its own Chair and Deputy Chair. Members shall receive no remuneration for their work, but will receive allowances for travel and accommodation, where required. A quorum of three jurors present will be required for jury deliberations to proceed. The working languages for deliberations by the Jury shall be English, French and Arabic.

5.3 The Jury shall conduct its business and deliberations in conformity with these Statutes and shall be assisted in the performance of its task by a member of the UNESCO Secretariat designated by the Director-General. Decisions shall be taken by consensus to the extent possible and otherwise by secret ballot until a simple majority is obtained. A member shall not take part in a vote concerning a nomination from his or her country.

5.4 The Jury shall meet once a year.

5.5 The Jury shall send an assessment on nominations and accompanying recommendations to the Director-General of UNESCO no later than one week after the annual Jury meeting.

Article 6 – Nomination of candidates

6.1 When UNESCO has received the funding of the Prize as indicated in Article 2 above, the Director-General of UNESCO shall officially invite the submission of nominations to the Secretariat of the Prize, by March of the following year, from the governments of Member States, in consultation with their National Commissions, as well as from non-governmental organizations maintaining formal consultative relations with the Organization and active in relevant fields covered by the prize.

6.2 Nominations shall be submitted to the Director-General by the governments of Member States, in consultation with their National Commissions, and by non-governmental organizations maintaining formal relations with UNESCO. A self-nomination cannot be considered.

6.3 Each nomination shall be accompanied by a written recommendation, which shall include, in English or French, *inter alia*:

- (a) A description of the candidate's background and achievements;
- (b) A summary of the work or the results of the work, publications and other supporting documents of major importance, submitted for consideration;
- (c) A definition of the candidate's contribution to the Prize's objectives.

Article 7 – Procedure for the awarding of the Prize

7.1 The Prize shall be awarded by the Director-General at an official ceremony held for that purpose at UNESCO Headquarters at a date fixed by the Director-General. UNESCO shall present to the prizewinners a check for the amount of the Prize, as well as a diploma. UNESCO shall officially announce the names of the prizewinners.

7.2 If a work being rewarded has been produced by two or three persons, the prize shall be awarded to them jointly.

7.3 The prizewinners, if possible, shall give a brief speech on a subject relevant to the work for which the Prize has been awarded. Such a lecture shall be organized during or in connection with the Prize ceremony.

7.4 The work produced by a person since deceased shall not be considered for the Prize. If, however, a prizewinner dies before he or she has received the Prize, then the Prize may be presented posthumously.

7.5 Should a prizewinner decline the Prize, the jury shall submit a new proposal to the Director-General.

Article 8 – Sunset clause – mandatory renewal of the Prize

After a period of six years, the Director-General of UNESCO together with the donor will undertake a review of all aspects of the Prize and decide about its continuation or termination. The Director-General will inform the Executive Board of UNESCO about the results of this review.

Article 9 – Appeals

No appeals shall be allowed against the decision of UNESCO with regard to the award for the Prize. Proposals received for the award of a Prize may not be divulged.

Article 10 – Amendments to the Statutes of the Prize

Any amendment to the present Statutes shall be submitted to the Executive Board for approval.