

# WILLIAM & MARY

THE ALUMNI GAZETTE MAGAZINE ■ SUMMER 1985





#### ON THE COVER

The cover illustration is an oil on canvas by George Romney and Studio (1734-1802). Titled "Portrait of the Marchioness of Townsend," it was a gift to the Muscarelle Museum of Art by Mr. and Mrs. Neil Sellin of New York City. The painting measures 49 1/2 inches x 39 1/4 inches.

Photo by Thomas L. Williams

#### ON THE BACK COVER

The scene on the back cover is a rear view of the Sir Christopher Wren Building photographed by C. James Gleason.

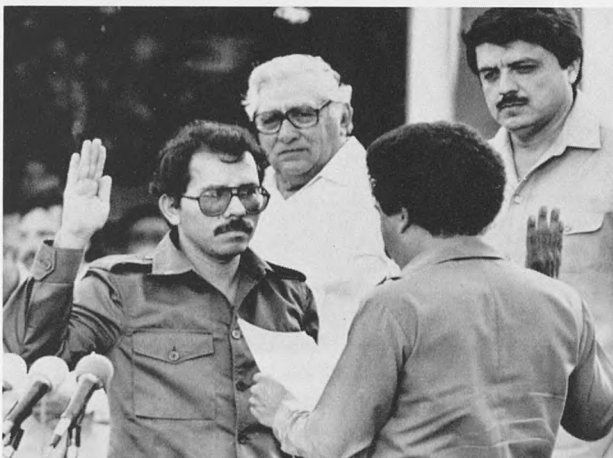
# WILLIAM & MARY

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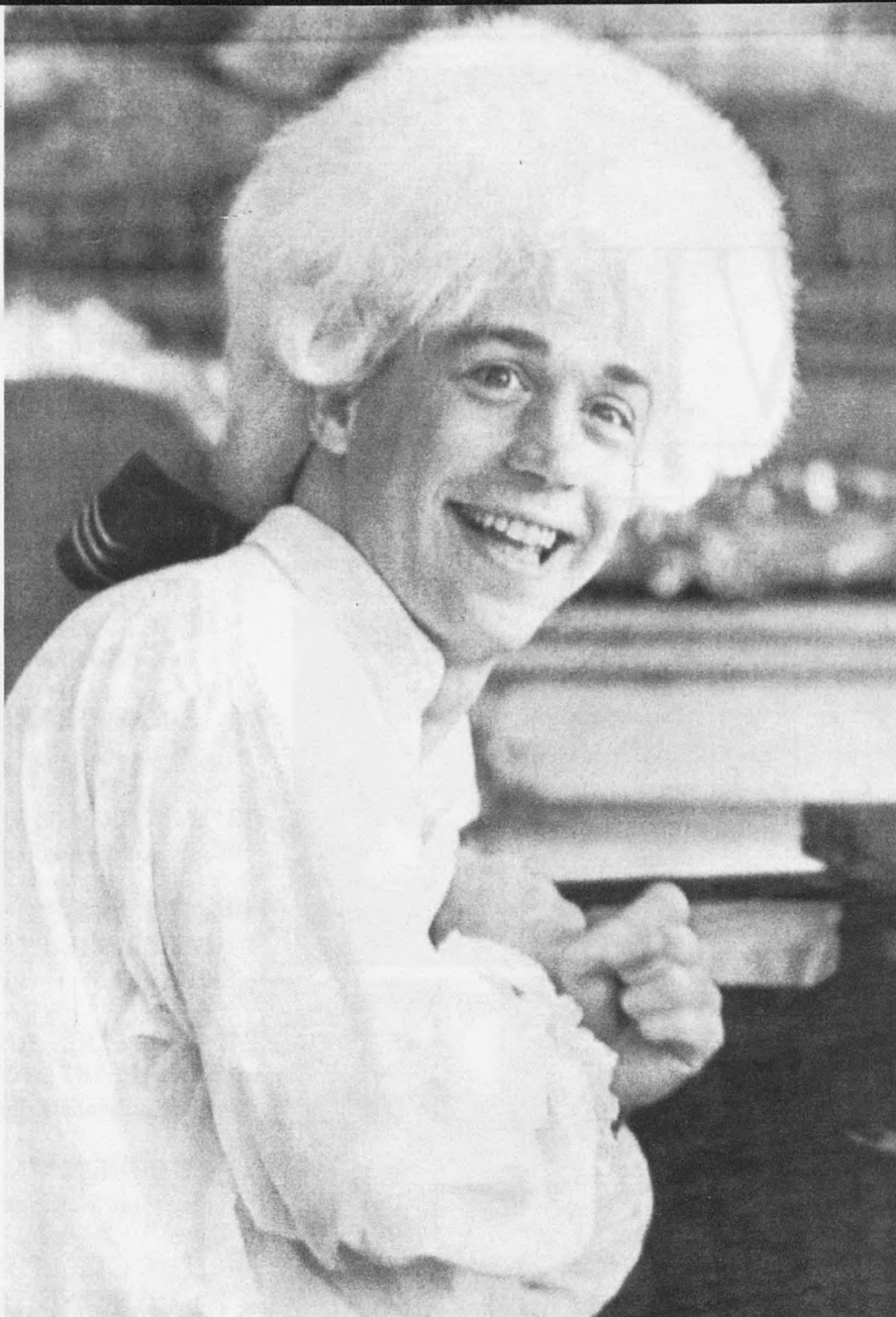
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**Mozart.** A name to conjure with — like Shakespeare, Michelangelo, Einstein — known even to those innocent of much study in music or literature, art history, or theoretical physics. But how much beyond the mere name can most of us go? Let's see, now — he lived way back (when?), wrote classical music, was some kind of German, right? Well, yes, in a general sort of way. And that would seem about the extent of any ordinary American's trivia points on the genius who was baptized in Salzburg Cathedral on January 28, 1756, Johann Chrysostum Wolfgang Theophil Mozart, and who, aged fourteen, renamed himself simply Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, the Amadeus being a Latin equivalent for the Greek Theophilus (Theophil or Gottlieb, in German), meaning "beloved of God."

That is, along with the possible association of a tune or two, until Milos Forman's film of Peter Shaffer's "Amadeus" began playing



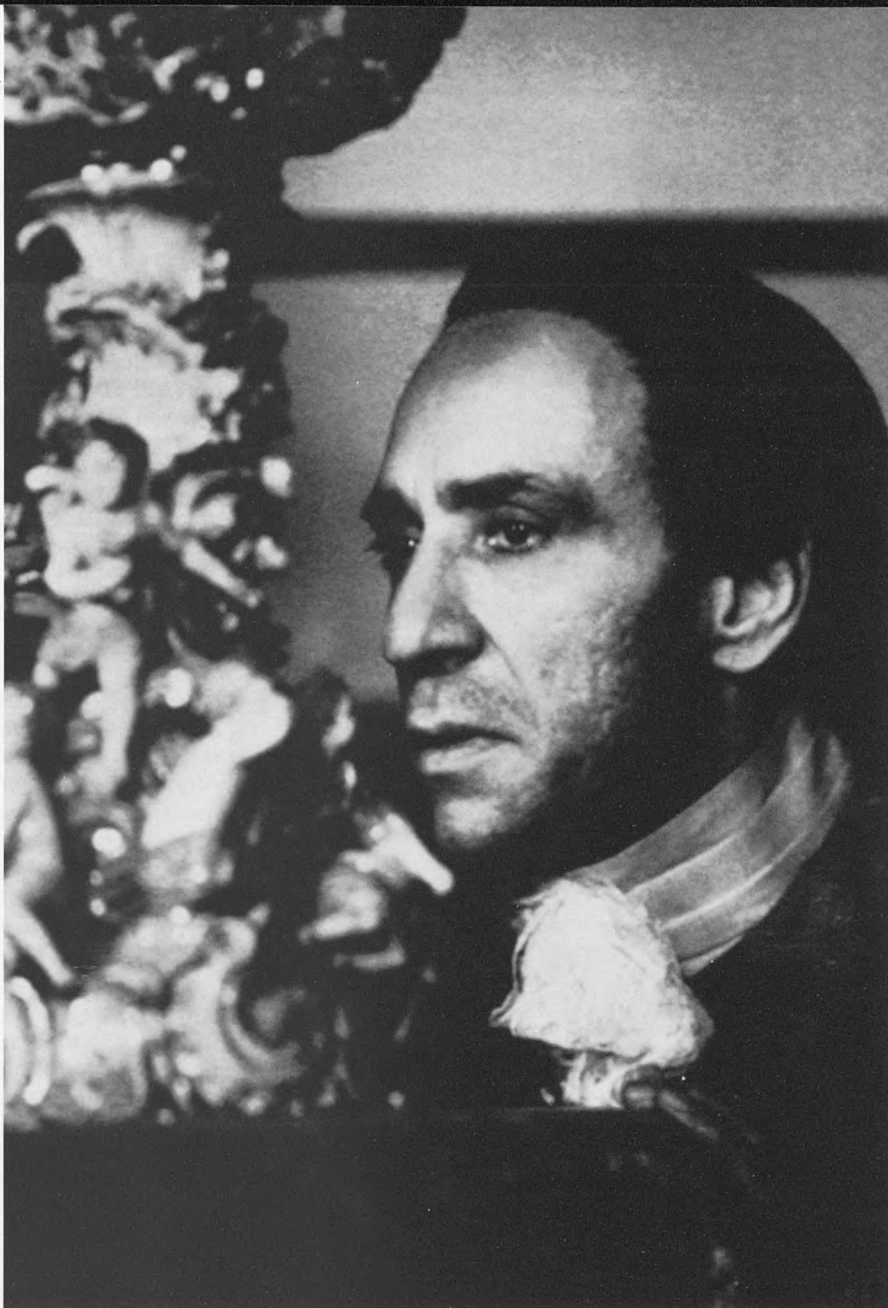
# MOZART AND "AMADEUS"

## Fact vs. Fancy

The Play and Movie "Amadeus" Made Mozart a Household Word —  
But What is the Real Story on the Famous Composer

By Carl Dolmetsch





Both Tom Hulce as Mozart (top left) and F. Murray Abraham (above) as Salieri received Academy Award nominations for Best Actor for their roles in "Amadeus." Abraham won the Oscar for his brilliant performance. According to the author, the characterizations of the two composers in the play and film were on the mark. Mozart, for instance, had a notorious horse-laugh which sometimes gushed forth at unexpected moments. He reputedly had a bizzare sense of humor, occasionally erupting in peals of laughter at things others did not find funny.

the local flicks. Since then, increasing numbers (especially after it garnered eight Oscars including "Best Picture" of 1984), know that Mozart lived in eighteenth-century Vienna, had a stern father, composed funny operas and stuff like that, and was a combination Huck Finn-Mick Jagger-Jerry Lewis of his day. And, oh yes, he was hassled without realizing it by that jealous Italian musician (now what was his name?). Ever since Shaffer's brilliant dramatic tour de force went from London to Broadway and the Continental stage in 1980 and thence to hinterland community theatres and particularly since release of Forman's film (for which Shaffer himself wrote a significantly different script), anyone presumed to know much about Mozart has been bombarded with questions like "Was he really such a clown?" and "How much of 'Amadeus' is just a good story and how much is fact?" There seems little doubt that "Amadeus" on stage or screen has done more to increase awareness of Mozart and his music than all the rock band or Moog synthesizer arrangements of bits from "Eine kleine Nachtmusik" or Symphony No. 40 or such films of the late '60s and early '70s as "Elvira Madigan" and "Sunday, Bloody Sunday" (which used passages from Mozart as mood music) put together.

Sorting fact from fancy in Shaffer's dramatic narrative, whether in its original or cinematic version, isn't easy. There is an essential truth in it even if many details are false. The story is not so much a biographical drama as a fantasia on certain events in the last

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Carl Dolmetsch has been on the faculty of the W&M English department since 1959. In addition to a specialty in American literature, in which he is an internationally recognized scholar with many publications, he is also a musicologist and serves as music critic-columnist for The Virginia Gazette and as a staff contributor to several opera magazines in this country, Canada and Europe. He spent the 1984-85 academic year on a faculty research assignment in Vienna in preparation of a book on Mark Twain's two-year residence in the Austrian capital, 1897-1899. He intends to write a book about Mozart some day "if there's anything left to say about him by then."

decade of Mozart's life embroidered with legend. Although the film and, to a lesser extent, the play focus a great deal of attention on Mozart, the subject of "Amadeus" in both its versions is not Mozart per se but Antonio Salieri (1750-1825) as a symbolic characterization of someone of estimable competence and talents who works his way to the top of his profession (in this instance, music, but it could be any business or sport or profession) only to see his achievements threatened or overshadowed by a brash upstart who happens to be a genius. The story asks the profoundly interesting if unanswerable question: "If all are indeed equal in the sight of God, why does He distribute His gifts of ability and talent so unevenly?" The playwright uses Mozart and Salieri as examples, the prime exhibits in what is something close to a morality play. To give the question dramatic embodiment he draws upon a legend, whispered around Vienna in the last days of Salieri's life and used in a story by the Russian poet Pushkin soon after, that Mozart was slowly poisoned by his Italian rival. Pushkin's "Mozart and Salieri" was adapted as an opera libretto in 1895 by Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov, but both Pushkin's story and Rimsky-Korsakov's opera fell into obscurity until Shaffer exploited the legend anew.

Nevertheless, the idea that Salieri might have killed Mozart seems to be just that — a legend. It apparently originated in the lunatic ravings and hallucinations of Salieri in the asylum where he spent his last years. It was rumored that Salieri "confessed" to someone that he had poisoned Mozart, and the explanation appealed to those romantics who worshiped Mozart and lamented his untimely death, at the age of thirty-five. The fact that the average life expectancy in Mozart's time was only about thirty-five years seemed insufficient to explain why a great musical genius was "taken before his time." Franz Schubert was but thirty-one and Frederic Chopin only thirty-nine when they died, but no one has suggested foul play in their cases, perhaps because both suffered notoriously from tuberculosis. But, until recently, the real cause of Mozart's death from what the St. Stephan's parish register called *hitziges Friesel Fieber* (a heated Purple Fever) remained medically mysterious, and the fact that he was hurried to an unmarked *Reihengrab* (paupers' trench grave) in St. Mark's

Cemetery lent an extra aura of mystery to his demise. It is now known that Mozart had long had a malfunctioning, diseased kidney, and that he died in an uremic coma. Poisoning, yes, uremic poisoning.

To his credit, Shaffer does not suggest that Salieri killed Mozart in anything more than a figurative sense — a psychological rather than a physical murder. By balking Mozart's efforts to obtain preferment and patronage in the Hapsburg court, according to Shaffer, Salieri forces Mozart in effect to work himself into an early grave by writing for money, simultaneously composing a commissioned Requiem (commissioned by the masked Salieri himself) and a *Singspiele*, "The Magic Flute," for the impresario-actor Schikaneder. In the film, though not in the play, Salieri is present at his rival's deathbed. In actuality, the only ones with Mozart when he expired at 12:55 a.m. on Dec. 5, 1791, were his wife, Constanze, her sister, Sophie, and the attending physician, Dr. Thomas Franz Closset. Sophie later wrote a detailed memoir of that dreadful night, which has since been pub-

lished. After the custom of the day, a death mask was made by pouring wet plaster over the corpse's face within minutes after death, but the mask disappeared not long afterward.

That Mozart may have weakened his constitution by overwork in his last months, and thereby hastened his death, seems altogether likely, although Salieri probably had nothing to do with that. Mozart composed an incredible amount during his last six months, but "Die Zauberflöte" (Magic Flute) was finished a full month before he received a commission from Count Franz Walsegg-Stopfisch for a Requiem in memory of the count's recently deceased wife. The commission was offered anonymously by an intermediary in July 1791, and Mozart worked on it sporadically while composing other things during the next six months. He had at the time a more prestigious, more lucrative commission for an opera, "La Clemenza di Tito," to be performed in Prague in September 1791 to celebrate the coronation there of the Austrian Emperor, Leopold II, as king of Bohemia. During the same period



Carl Dolmetsch

**This memorial exhibit in the sporting goods section on the fifth floor of Steffl's Department Store in Vienna marks the exact spot where Mozart died on Dec. 5, 1791. The room has been twice remodelled and several times re-decorated.**

(July-December 1791) he also wrote his last piano concerto (KV. 595), a clarinet concerto, the *Ave verum corpus*, a piano sonata, a rondo for a string quartet, and his so-called Masonic Music — cantatas for the dedication of new Masonic lodges (of which he was a member) in Prague and Vienna. At times, Mozart could be a workaholic, as we say today, but when he played, as he often did to the consternation of his father, he played hard, too.

The Requiem was almost complete at the time of Mozart's demise. The day before he died, in fact, he conducted an informal rehearsal of the still unfinished score from his bed, taking the alto part himself, while another man sang the soprano part in falsetto. After Mozart died, his pupil and close friend, Franz Xaver Süssmayr (1766-1803), completed the instrumentation of the Requiem's last two sections, and Count Walsegg-Stoppach had it performed as his own work. Ironically, Antonio Salieri conducted the premiere, perhaps even unaware that Mozart was its real composer.

Sympathy lavished on "poor Mozart" since the mid-nineteenth century for his presumed "penniless" condition that forced him to a pauper's grave is somewhat misplaced. According to the latest research of scholars such as Erich Schenk and Fritz Oeser, Mozart had a decent income in his last years, and, had he been more prudent in its management, he might have spared himself such ignominy. But he was a profligate and compulsive gambler who could not bear to pass a gaming table without taking a hand and betting extravagantly — a not unusual eighteenth-century vice. He borrowed to pay gambling debts, and, as a result he left Constanze and their two small sons (one an infant of five months) virtually destitute. She did the best she could for him under the circumstances, giving him a proper funeral in St. Stephan's Cathedral before sending his corpse to its *Reihengrab* at a total cost of 11 florins, 56 kroner, or about the equivalent of \$250 today.

While it is certainly possible, even likely that Salieri did whatever he could to obstruct Mozart's career in Vienna, there is no tangible evidence that he did so. The authoritative compilation by Joseph Heinz Eibl, *Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Chronik eines Lebens*, a documented record of each of the 13,097 days in the composer's life, indicates that Salieri and



Carl Dolmetsch

At left is the Haus des Deutsch-Ritter-Ordens (Teutonic Knights) in Vienna, which was Mozart's first dwelling place in the city when he moved there in February 1781. On right is the "Figaro House" in Vienna where Mozart and Constanze lived happily from 1784 to 1787, his longest residence in one place in Vienna.

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Mozart were together on only five occasions, each of them apparently amicable. If Salieri received from royal patronage exactly double the sums paid Mozart for comparable services to the Emperor, that was a natural consequence of the Italian's official position as "Hofkomponist" (court composer).

Thanks to the hospitable climate for musical artists of all sorts in the court of the "Enlightenment Emperor," Josef II, and his successor, Leopold II, Vienna was teeming with composers and performers, and Salieri had rivals in every street. When Shaffer has Councillor van Swieten warn, "Herr Mozart, you're not the only composer in Vienna" (to which Mozart responds: "No, just the best one."), he

is understating the situation. In addition to the venerable Gluck, who died in 1787, and Haydn, who was in the employ of Prince Esterhazy, the composers who hovered around the Hapsburg court during the decade Mozart was there included such luminaries as Domenico Cimarosa, Muzio Clementi (Beethoven's teacher), Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf, Vicente Martin y Soler, Giovanni Paisiello, and a dozen others of lesser renown. The competition among them was fierce and sometimes vicious. Then as now, the Viennese musical world thrived on gossip, intrigue and downright character assassination, and neither Salieri nor Mozart (whose contempt for many of these rivals he freely expressed with obscenities) stood above the battle. Fortunately, the Austrian nobility aped their Emperor, vying with one another for imperial favor by commissioning works to be performed when the monarch came calling, so there was a good deal of work to be had for composers and musicians outside the court, and Mozart cadged his full share of this.

Mozart's relationship with his wife, Constanze (née) Weber (1762-1842), was also not exactly the way Shaffer depicts it. The Weber and Mozart families had known each other in Salzburg, and when Mozart settled in Vienna in March 1781, he lived for two months in the Haus des Deutsch-Ritter-Ordens and then moved to a room in the home of the recently widowed Frau Caecilia Weber behind St. Peter's Church. The Webers were a musical family (the composer, Carl

Maria von Weber, was Constanze's first cousin), and both Leopold and Wolfgang Mozart had often performed with Fridolin Weber, Constanze's late father, and her two older sisters, Josepha and Aloisia, the latter a celebrated singer. Constanze herself was a singer of more than ordinary abilities who often performed with her husband in Vienna and elsewhere. There are numerous indications that Wolfgang Mozart was actually in love with Aloisia and perhaps remained so even after he married her sister. But she had already married the Viennese actor Joseph Lange in 1780, so Mozart had to make do with a second choice among "les filles Weber," as he called them. He and Constanze married on August 4, 1782, in St. Stephan's, and all indications are that it was a happy marriage. She bore him six children in eight years, only two of whom survived infancy: Carl Thomas (1784-1858) and Franz Xaver Wolfgang, later called Wolfgang Amadeus, Jr. (1791-

1844). Some doubt, however, has been cast on the paternity of the last-named by allegations that he was actually Franz Xaver Suessmayr's child. Whatever the case, Mozart and Constanze do not ever seem to have parted in the way Shaffer depicts the penultimate episode in the film. She did leave him for a while in 1791 to go to the nearby health resort, Baden bei Wien, for medical reasons, but he went to Baden to fetch her home a month before his final illness.

After Mozart's death, "Stansi" married a Danish diplomat, Georg Nikolaus Nissen, but she remained true to the memory of her beloved "Wolferl" and helped her second husband prepare a biography of Mozart which was published in 1828, two years after Nissen's death. Constanze and Nissen had moved back, to Salzburg in 1820, and it was there, blind and infirm at the age of 80, that she died, attended by the younger sis-

ter, Sophie, who had been at Wolfgang's deathbed more than a half-century earlier.

The happiest interval in Wolfgang and Constanze's married life were the years between September 1784 and May 1787 when they lived in a commodious apartment on the second floor of the house in Schulerstrasse (which now has its entrance behind at Domgasse 5) and where Mozart composed, among many other works, his operatic masterpiece, "Le Nozze di Figaro" (The Marriage of Figaro). Now called the "Figaro House," it is a museum devoted to Mozart's Viennese life, and it contains some interesting memorabilia. This is apparently the dwelling being portrayed in the film (made in Prague), although the resemblance is slight, and the implication one gets is that the couple lived there throughout their marriage. Actually, Wolfgang and Constanze had twelve different addresses in Vienna

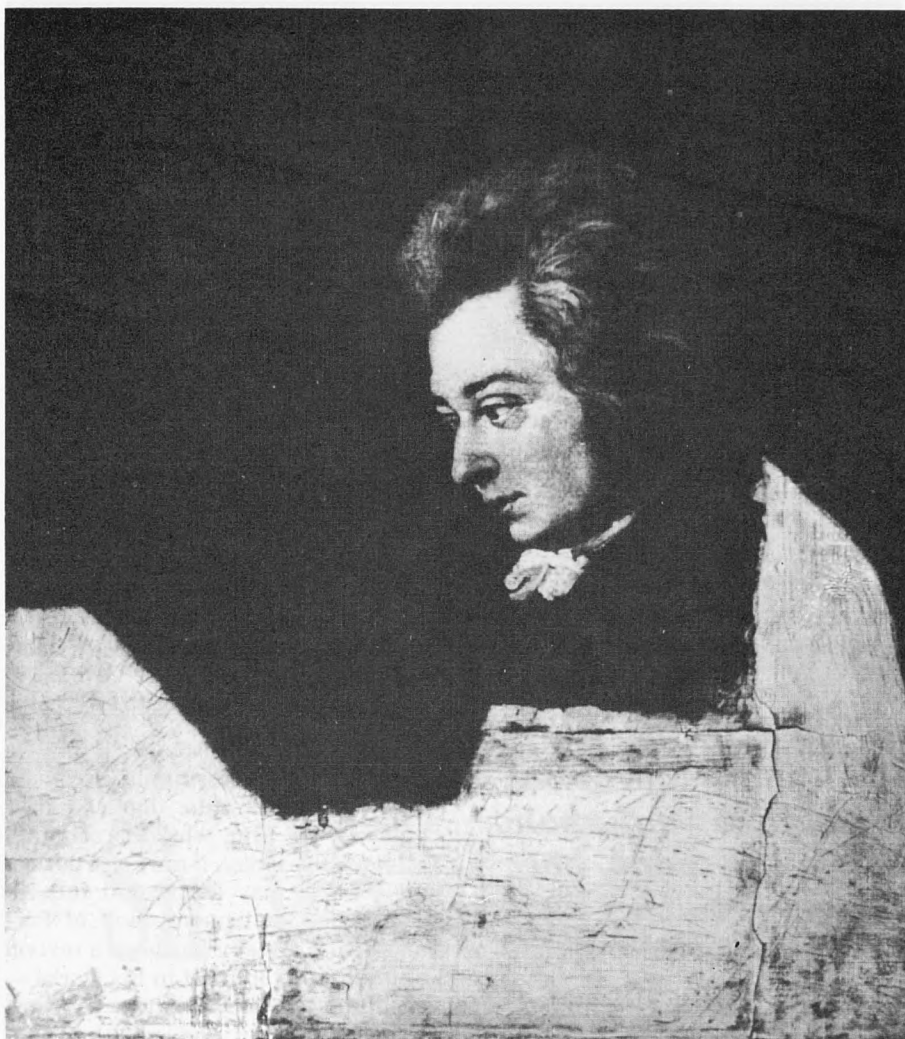


After Mozart's death, his wife "Stansi" married a Danish diplomat, but she remained true to the memory of her beloved "Wolferl" and helped her second husband prepare a biography of Mozart which was published in 1828. This rendering of "Stansi" is from a lithograph published in the Mozart biography.

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within nine years, and while still a bachelor Mozart had already had three Viennese addresses. All but two of these fifteen dwelling places were within a few blocks, sometimes even a few yards, of each other in the oldest part of Vienna, the district now referred to as the "Innerstadt" (inner city). Someone visiting these addresses today may be disappointed to find only three of the original buildings standing: the "Figaro House," the Haus des Deutsch-Ritter-Ordens (Singerstrasse 7) and a house on Judgenplatz now gutted and undergoing complete historic restoration. The actual spot where Mozart died in Rauhensteingasse is now located in the sporting goods section on the fifth floor of Steffl's department store, where a virtually unnoticed





An unfinished portrait of Mozart, painted by his brother-in-law Joseph Lange, 1789-90, in which Mozart is shown composing at the keyboard.

*Gedenkstaette* (memorial exhibit) marks the place in the much-remodelled building! Such markers are missing from most of the other Mozart addresses where modern office buildings and, in one case, a popular Pension now stand.

More perplexing than such matters of authenticity in locale and event to many who have seen "Amadeus" is the question of fidelity in Shaffer's characterizations. We don't like our idols to have clay feet, and to a great many people, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart is indeed an idol, almost a demigod, and those who shared or touched his life get a bit of the idolatry, too, by association. Did Shaffer personify Mozart and his circle accurately and fairly?

By and large, yes. He does not debunk and, if there are a few distortions here and there, they are neither deliberate nor destructive. The characters in "Amadeus," in such supporting

roles as those of Mozart's father, Leopold, and Emperor Josef II, seem most faithfully drawn from what we know of biographical fact, which always depends, of course, on the biographer. Between good casting and superior cosmetic artistry, the actors who portray those roles on the screen look uncannily like the oft-reproduced portraits of the historic personages come to life, and they exhibit traits and quirks more than one biographer has recorded. Leopold Mozart was indeed a dour autocrat whom his son both worshiped and deeply feared, and he never completely approved of Wolfgang's marriage or his profligate ways. Josef II was a despot, if an "enlightened" one who liberalized several aspects of Austrian life. He was also a musical dilettante who was highly opinionated about all the arts, although it is doubtful he relied as heavily on his councillors for words to express his opinions as Shaffer would

have one believe when the emperor repeats as his own Count Orsini-Rosenberg's idiotic condemnation of "The Abduction from the Seraglio" as having "too many notes."

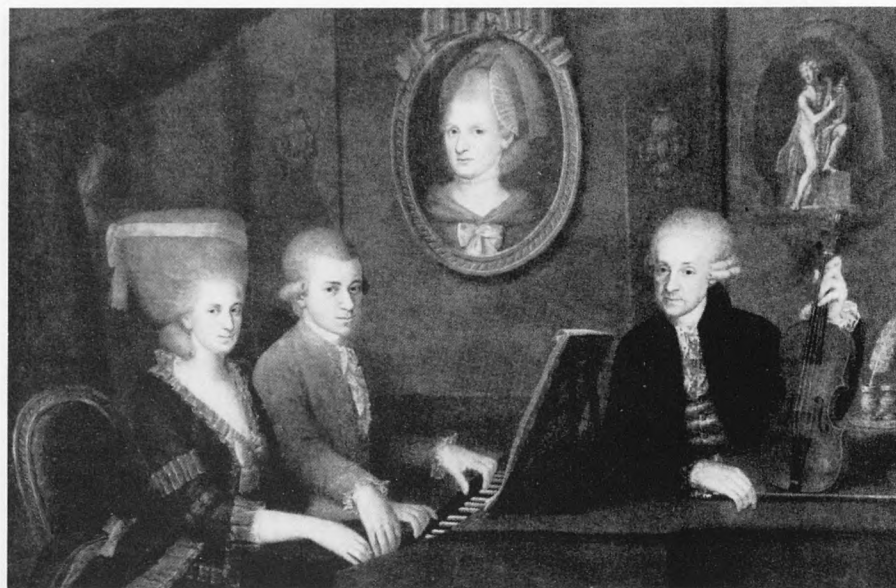
Constanze was probably a more stable, less giddy character than she appears in either the play or film. A key scene in the play that Shaffer wisely altered for the film is that in which Constanze visits Salieri bearing her husband's manuscript scores in a pathetic effort to solicit the Hofkomponist's aid for Mozart. In the play (though not the film), she hikes her skirts and offers herself to Salieri, who is embarrassed, even a bit humiliated by her blatancy. Good dramaturgy, no doubt, to make the point of her sacrificial devotion to "Wolferl," but highly debatable fact.

But what of Amadeus — "God's beloved" — himself? Would Mozart, restored to life, recognize his own cinematic portrait? Undoubtedly he would recognize, perhaps with amusement, Shaffer's burlesque (maybe that's too strong a word) of Mozart's notorious horse-laugh, which sometimes gushed forth at unexpected moments. He reputedly had a bizzare sense of humor, occasionally erupting in peals of laughter at things others did not find funny. He would certainly think the vulgarity, profanity, and obscenity in the lines Shaffer gives him rather tame, if one may judge from the evidence in his letters to "Mon cher Papa" and to other family members and intimates. They are full of what Mark Twain has Huck Finn euphemistically refer to as "all the hottest kind of language." That this genius could also swear like a trooper and freely employ the German, French, and Italian (he was fluent in all three) equivalents of our English four-letter words may shock those who are unaware that before the Victorian Age "polite" conversation everywhere was considerably coarser than it is today. Few, if any, great composers have been known for their modesty and, in this respect, Mozart was probably only slightly less egocentric and undiplomatic in his dealings with rivals and patrons than were those notorious egomaniacs, Beethoven and Wagner. He did not suffer fools gladly, though it's quite unlikely he ever showed his *derrière*, as depicted in "Amadeus," to his quondam employer, the Prince-Elector Archbishop of Salzburg, who reportedly kicked Mozart down the

stairs of his palace when he fired him.

That Mozart was not even more neurotic than he appears in Shaffer's characterization is amazing in view of the upbringing he had. Papa Leopold Mozart, a violinist in the archepiscopal orchestra in Salzburg, exploited his two greatly gifted children, "Wolferl" and his older sister, "Nannerl" (Maria Anna, who became Baroness von Berchtold zu Sonnenburg) [1750-1829], for his own as well as their advancement. He eventually became Kappellmeister and Hofkomponist in Salzburg. At age three "Wolferl" had mastered violin and harpsichord, and Papa Leopold was aware that his son had that rare combination, perfect pitch and a photographic-phonographic mind (He could retain perfectly anything he had once played or heard!) together with extraordinary creative gifts. When "Wolferl" was five and "Nannerl" ten, their father began trotting them all over Europe — London, Paris, Munich, Milan, Rome, and, of course, Vienna — to perform for royalty and princes of the church (even the pope) like a pair of trained monkeys. Leopold so dominated his children's lives that they were never allowed a thought of their own before adulthood and few thereafter until he went to his grave in 1787.

Except, that is, in the creation of music. There Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart had virtually complete freedom. He began composing at an astounding early age because composition provided an escape from tyranny, an outlet for frustrations, and a way of asserting his own identity. He early became as obsessive and compulsive a composer as he was later a gambler — obsessions that continued to the end. The complete catalog numbers nearly 650 compositions, more than twenty per year of varying length and complexity throughout his composing life. He took up every kind of musical form then existing — songs, individual instrumental pieces, pieces for various combinations of instruments, symphonies, operas, cantatas, masses and other liturgical music — and composed in each genre at least as well as anyone before or since and better than most. He also rescored works by earlier composers he admired, notably Handel and various members of the Bach Family. If he was not a rebellious innovator like Richard Wagner or Arnold Schoenberg, preferring instead to employ the musical vocabulary and conventions of his day, he took that vocabulary and those conventions to



Papa Leopold Mozart exploited his two greatly gifted children, "Nannerl" and "Wolferl," trotting them all over Europe to perform for royalty and princes of the church (and even the pope) like a pair of trained monkeys. In this portrait by J. N. della Croce, the children are at the keyboard while Leopold is holding the violin. Behind them is a portrait of Mozart's mother.

***At times, Mozart could be a workaholic, as we say today, but when he played, as he often did to the consternation of his father, he played hard, too.***

the limits of expressive possibility.

Finally, what of Antonio Salieri, the pathetic protagonist of Shaffer's and Forman's work? What was he really like, and why is he so little known to us despite his importance in Mozart's world? That his life is much less fully documented than Mozart's bears out what "Amadeus" tells us of the obscurity into which he fell even while still alive. Nevertheless, Salieri was no slouch as a composer — not at all the "mediocrity" Shaffer has him label himself in play and film, a self-appraisal that is probably out of character. Salieri's misfortune was not only to have been Mozart's (and Haydn's) contemporary, but also to have lived on into the heyday of Beethoven, Rossini, and Schubert, whose achievements overshadowed him long before his retirement and his decline into madness. Yet, his compositions, like those of another overshadowed contemporary in Vienna, the Spaniard Martin y Soler, deserve respectful attention. Among his twenty-five

operas, for instance, is a "Semiramide" (Rossini also wrote an opera with that title, depicted in a scene in the film, which is certainly stageworthy today, if only as a curiosity.) Salieri may be beyond full rehabilitation, but one spinoff of Forman's film already has been a revival of performing interest in his works — an ironic fate they might never have enjoyed without the popularity of "Amadeus."

Whatever fly specks we may pick on its giant silver screen, then, "Amadeus" succeeds in humanizing Mozart without demeaning either his art or the real flesh and blood person he was. To that extent, Peter Shaffer and Milos Forman must be reckoned public benefactors. It seems likely they will induce many who had not before been attracted to such things to enter an opera house or concert hall or church where the magic of Mozart's music will fill them with the pleasure and insight into the human condition that all great art inspires. In a culture continuously exhausted by being levelled to the lowest common denominators and in dire need of renewal and refreshment, theirs is no small achievement. In general, what is popular in our age is indeed execrable, but the popularity of "Amadeus" in the boondocks as well as in suburbia — the astonishing box-office run it chalked up even before the Academy Awards — is a pleasant reminder that the axiom does, after all, have exceptions.



# Sir Walter Raleigh's America

— Or, Why the English, and Not the Chinese, Came to America

By Dale Hoak

**T**he voyage of the *Godspeed* in 1985, meant to commemorate another journey in 1607, coincidentally marks the 400th anniversary of the planting, on 27 July 1585, of the first English colony in the New World. This experimental community of a hundred soldiers, scientists, and craftsmen was organized and financed by one of the most remarkable men of the sixteenth century, Sir Walter Raleigh, who in 1584 had formally laid claim to "Virginia," then a vast and only very crudely charted coastal domain between the Hudson River and Spanish Florida. Although his colony lasted less than a year and subsequent, similar efforts either misfired or failed — witness the legendary "Lost Colony" of 1587 — Raleigh's ventures produced invaluable information about the American land and people, as well as the experience necessary for the successful settlement of Jamestown.

Raleigh's Virginia voyages — there were six between 1584 and 1590 — are but one episode in the larger story of the permanent overseas expansion of the European peoples, itself the most important development in world history before the coming of the Space Age. In fact, English attempts to colonize Virginia actually came

rather late in the era of Renaissance exploration — towards the end of the second century of long-distance, deep-water sailing. During the first century, from 1434 to 1535, the Portuguese rounded the Cape of Good Hope and pushed past Madagascar to India, Burma, and the quays of Canton. In the Americas, the Spanish, following Columbus's four voyages, conquered the Aztecs and Incas and sighted California before circling the globe (1519-1522). Indeed, when Raleigh's first ships finally found Virginia on the fourth of July 1584 (an obviously providential date in American history!), the burgeoning cities of New Spain already boasted cathedrals of stone and universities modeled on those in Castile.

Moreover, on the eve of the great exploits of the Iberian mariners, it was the Chinese and not the Europeans who seemed to be set on a permanent

course of overseas expansion. In the years between 1405 and 1433 the Ming emperor of China committed bigger ships, more money, and more men to a systematic exploration of the western seas (the Indian Ocean). Under the great eunuch admiral Cheng Ho, Chinese squadrons reached the Red Sea in gigantic, multi-decked junks which dwarfed the Portuguese vessels then making tentative forays down the coast of West Africa. Quite suddenly, however, Chinese exploration came to a halt. Perhaps distrustful of his merchants, the Ming emperor seemed less interested in the profits of trade than the tribute worshipful Western barbarians might pay him.

The Christian world was driven by a different dynamic, and by 1500 it had set in motion the engines of an irreversible process of maritime expansion. Although Portugal and Spain initiated this historic conquest of the world's oceans, the motives and methods of the Tudor mariners, especially those whom Raleigh had organized in the 1580s, well illustrate why the Europeans, and not the Chinese, colonized much of the globe and laid the economic foundations of the modern world during the three centuries after Cheng Ho called at Aden. Christianity, Western-style capitalism, and the Europeans' cannon-bearing ships together help explain why the West won.

Among the world's religions, Christianity is extraordinary for its emphasis upon action and history. Like Islam, it is a creed well suited to soldiers. But if death in battle provided the ultimate test of the Moslem's faith, the soldier of Christ preferred to live and fight another day. The true Moslem renounced the material comforts of this life; the God of the Christians created a world for His children to enjoy. This being so, it remained for the people of Renaissance Europe to discover, by way of Aristotle, that the merchant-adventurer's acquisition of wealth might be virtuous.

Moreover, since God had created Time and History (history being the purposeful passage of time), it behooved Christians to discover and fulfill His purpose. Christianity bequeathed to the faithful a historically-driven sense of a manifest destiny, and Christians acted on it. To the non-Christian world, this attitude bred both arrogance and folly, but for men like Raleigh, conquest and discovery simply promoted their own understanding of God's truth in history.

Now, it is true that gold hunger and

the profits of the so-called spice trade motivated Western capitalists, but commercial capitalism as such cannot explain the difference between East and West at this time, since Arabic bankers and Malaysian merchants, as well as Chinese and Japanese entrepreneurs, exhibited economic behavior every bit as sophisticated and aggressive as did the English and the Dutch. The difference lay in the attitudes of princes toward merchants or, as we would say, between the state and capitalists. In non-Christian societies, the ruling castes snubbed merchants as if they were creatures of a different, inferior order. Oriental potentates often confiscated a merchant's accumulated wealth or prevented its inheritance.

***Raleigh's Virginia voyages  
— and there were six between  
1584 and 1590 — are but one  
episode in the larger story of  
the permanent overseas ex-  
pansion of the European  
peoples, itself the most impor-  
tant development in world his-  
tory before the coming of the  
Space Age.***

By contrast, the Tudors virtually embraced bourgeois bankers and traders (as had European kings for hundreds of years), borrowing their money to pay for new-fangled guns and mercenary armies and utilizing their professional skills and advice in the expanding court bureaucracies. Mercantile families intermarried with the landed elite who were allied to courts and kings. And European inheritance laws, unique in the world's civilizations, allowed the wealth of merchant families to grow through the generations, underscoring the sociolegal importance of merchants' daughters and widows!

As well as lacking mercantile laws like those of the West, the Chinese did not possess maps or ships the equal of the Europeans' — those deep-keeled sailing machines that were so much more maneuverable in high seas than flat-bottomed, rudderless junks. Guns defined another difference between East and West by this time; even the Chinese recognized that shipboard cannons had given the Europeans absolute superiority on the surface of the earth's waters. The advent of such arms is reason enough to mark

Raleigh's era as a final great turning point in world history.

Ultimately, however, two things strike one about the culture and society of sixteenth-century Europe that together must explain its peculiar, extraordinary tendency toward overseas expansion: the commercial competition (literally state-piracy) of warring princes, and the belief that in this competition, colonies represented not only a path to further wealth and power, but also a means of advancing one's state religion. In Raleigh's case, of course, this latter was the cause of English protestantism. What manner of man was Raleigh? What shaped his vision of an Anglicized Virginia?

The portraits of Raleigh in London, Edinburgh, and Williamsburg confirm the impression of the archetypal Renaissance man. The visage is that of the soldier-poet, the courtier, commander, and merciless man of power; ambitious, vain, and accomplished; proud of his intelligence, bearing, wealth and wit; prouder still to be a queen's favorite.

Born about 1554, the son of a South Devon gentleman farmer, Raleigh grew to manhood in a world inflamed by the hatreds of religious warfare. From his well-connected Protestant West Country kinsmen, Raleigh inherited the free-booting zeal of the swordsman-crusader. At fourteen he volunteered for action in France, fighting alongside the Huguenots against the factious Guise and what he and his countrymen believed to be a threat to the survival of God's England. They perceived this threat as a papally inspired international Catholic conspiracy everywhere backed by the tyrannical might of Hapsburg Spain whose king, Philip II, had branded England's queen a heretic fit for the fires of the Inquisition.

Four years of soldiering in the French Civil Wars was followed by two at Oriel College, Oxford (Raleigh took no degree), and another year or so at the Middle Temple in London, one of the Inns of Court and a training-ground for well-born Englishmen seeking careers in law or at court. In London Raleigh found the court connection that catapulted him into Elizabeth's favor and a succession of royally bestowed offices and gifts. One such gift was Durham House, the former London residence of the bishops of Durham. Raleigh plowed the wealth derived from most of these grants into his Virginia ventures.

During these early London years his mentor was his half-brother, Hum-

phrey Gilbert, the central figure in a group of restless ex-soldiers — veterans of the religious wars in France and Ireland who now sought to make their fortunes in piracy or trade. Gilbert was initially interested in finding a northwest passage to Cathay (China), and in 1576 he published a tract arguing that Englishmen, not Spaniards, were destined to reap the fabled riches of the Orient.

Richard Hakluyt the elder, a lawyer in Gilbert's circle, became convinced that England's road to gain lay in American colonies. Raleigh and Gilbert were natural converts to Hakluyt's dream of an English colonial empire. By this time (about 1582-1583) both had fought in Ireland against Spanish mercenaries flying the papal standard. There Raleigh had witnessed the first attempts to plant English colonies overseas. These Irish plantations offered the ambitious younger sons of English gentlemen the prospect of acquiring land that could be worked by cheap native labor. Although the Irish settlements came to very little in the 1580s, Ireland proved to be crucial to the development of Raleigh's American plans: it familiarized Englishmen, and particularly the West Countrymen who dominated Gilbert's London group, with the possibility of colonizing foreign territory for the purposes of furthering trade and replicating English society.

For Gilbert and Raleigh, America offered a different advantage. Geographically, it lay close to the Caribbean sea-lanes traversed by Spanish treasure ships. Raleigh's crusading pirates, fresh from their self-sustaining colonial American bases, could attack Philip's gold-laden galleons without having to cross the Atlantic. As first conceived, Raleigh's Virginia was thus designed to serve a prime objective of English national policy — the defeat of Catholic Spain.

However, there was a problem. Spain already controlled part of the North American Atlantic flank, from Florida northward to what is now Port Royal Sound, South Carolina. Raleigh's colonial bases would, therefore, have to be placed in the part of America that lay just beyond the reach of Philip's armed patrols — that is, on the central coastline to the north of Spanish Florida.

But where, in a part of the world no Englishman had ever seen, could suitable havens be found? To answer this question Raleigh gathered at Durham House a group of specialists — cartog-

raphers, merchants, navigators, pilots, propagandists, engineers — whom he now charged with the task of mapping out and executing the exploration, invasion, and the ultimate settlement of that central North American shore.

After Raleigh, perhaps the key individual at Durham House was Richard Hakluyt the younger, a cousin of the elder Hakluyt from whom the younger man confessed that he had acquired a passion for cosmography. A map of the world in his cousin's chambers initially sparked this interest, and as a boy, he had decided to devote himself to the new science of geographic exploration. To read the relevant literature, he taught himself at least eight languages while still an Oxford undergraduate, making himself the most learned European on the subject of

***As well as lacking mercantile laws like those of the West, the Chinese did not possess maps or ships the equal of the Europeans' — those deep-keeled sailing machines that were so much more maneuverable in high seas than flat-bottomed, rudderless junks.***

oceanic voyaging. At Oxford he also delivered the first lectures in any European university on "the new lately reformed Maps, Globes, Spheres, and other instruments" of the cartographic art. Formally an ordained cleric, Hakluyt was really a professional geographer and political economist. A formidable scholar, he ransacked continental bookstores for every scrap of information, in print or manuscript, on the subject of the exploration of North America. Much of this material he translated and published in 1582 as *Divers Voyages touching the Discoveries of America*, including a 1524 description of the coastline north of Spanish Florida. This was the description by Giovanni da Verrazzano, the great Florentine navigator who actually set foot on the Outer Banks at a spot not far from where Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, is presently located.

But as early as 1572-1573, Hakluyt learned something about this coastline that Verrazzano had not known. Somewhere in the middle of it lay a huge, well-protected bay, the perfect site for

the bases for Raleigh's colonial corsairs. Finding this bay became the object of intense geographic research at Durham House. For this work Hakluyt needed the skills of mathematicians versed in cartographic theory and analysis and experienced navigators or pilots. In Simon Fernandez, Hakluyt and Raleigh found their pilot, and in Dr. John Dee and Thomas Hariot, they discovered the foremost mathematicians and mapmakers of the day.

Between 1568 and 1572, while in the service of Spain, the Portuguese Fernandez, following Verrazzano's route northward along the Outer Banks, discovered Chesapeake Bay, though he had no notion then of its extent. In 1572 Fernandez turned his political and religious coats and hired himself out to some merchants in London who put him in touch with Hakluyt. Thus quite by chance did Hakluyt find the only European who had actually steered a ship towards the sort of American bay that might harbor Raleigh's projected colonies.

In 1580 Dr. John Dee prepared for Hakluyt and Raleigh a mariner's chart of the eastern coast of North America based on Fernandez's eye-witness description. In a career stretching back to the 1550s, Dee had acquired perhaps the most comprehensive knowledge of cartography in his day. In the mathematics of navigation, his specialty, Dee was well in advance of anything then being taught in the European universities. (Like Hakluyt, Dee too delivered original lectures at Oxford, the first anywhere on navigation.) His book, *The British Complement of Perfect Navigation* (consider the nationalism of the title!), completed in 1575 after twenty-five years of calculations, successfully solved the problem of the nautical triangle by trigonometrical means for both great circle and paradoxal navigation. Dee also traveled throughout Europe collecting the latest navigational instruments, learning both to use and manufacture them.

Dee's map was but the first of a number of increasingly more accurate charts produced at Durham House after 1583 in collaboration with a resident staff of cartographers. Chief among these men was Thomas Hariot (B.A., Oxford, 1580), named by Raleigh (on Dee's advice) a teacher of "the mathematical sciences" to the Durham House team. For twelve years, 1583-1595, Hariot held for Raleigh's pilots what were essentially private



### John White's map:

For his 1590 edition of Hariot's *Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*, de Bry produced this engraving of John White's schematically drawn map showing, as Richard Hakluyt labeled it, "the arrival of the Englishmen in Virginia" in 1585. Having anchored their barks off the Outer Banks, — the masts of some ill-fated predecessors advertise the treacherous inlets — the English set out in an oared pinnace (seen in the center here, flying the cross of St. George) across Pimlico Sound towards an Algonkian village on Roanoke Island. Their Captain-General, Sir Richard Grenville, is standing in the bow, holding up an Anglican crucifix in greeting. And the natives' reaction? "The inhabitants, as soon as they saw us," said Hariot, "began to make a great and horrible cry. . . like wild beasts or men out of their wits. . . as people which never before had seen men appavelled like us."

seminars in celestial and terrestrial navigation. Hariot finally applied his knowledge by traveling to Virginia, where, as a member of Raleigh's first colony (1585-1586), he minutely described almost everything he saw, from the flora and fauna to the Indians' appearance. (He had taught himself the Algonkian dialect!) His *Brief and True Report* of this experience served as the scientific basis for the next hundred years of British penetration into that part of America.

To realize his colonial plans, Raleigh also needed a business agent. William Sanderson, a wealthy London merchant married to Raleigh's niece, filled this vital role at Durham House.

Sanderson was supposed to attract to Raleigh's scheme men with enough money to invest in America's future.

What lay in that future? Early in 1584 Hakluyt circulated at court and in Parliament the Durham House prospectus for Raleigh's great enterprise, "A Discourse Concerning Western Planting." The "Discourse" detailed all the reasons why England should attempt to bridge the Atlantic with American colonies. A prominent argument was that English colonist-crusaders would be geographically well placed to inflict death-dealing body blows to the Spanish Empire. But there was more here than patriotic, anti-Spanish piracy. More fundamentally, Hakluyt envisioned an economic revolution based on the creation in America of a society of consumers whose demand for English textiles would eventually enrich the producers and shippers of cloth in the mother country.

Certainly no one in the Chinese world projected such a dynamic view of the economic rationale of overseas exploration. For this reason, Hakluyt's "Discourse" should properly be set in a global historical context. Hakluyt himself, ever conscious of the Durham House mission, certainly intended Raleigh's colonial endeavors to be read in this way.

In 1589 Hakluyt published his monumental *Principal Navigations*, regarded by some as the prose epic of the English nation. In it, Hakluyt recounted, through original sources, the early history of Raleigh's Virginia voyages, and in 1590 he persuaded the great Dutch engraver, Theodor de Bry, to publish at Frankfurt, in four European languages, the first volume of *America*, containing Hariot's *Brief and True Report* of Raleigh's colony of 1585-1586, together with engraved reproductions of John White's masterful drawings of Virginia Indian life.

Raleigh's Virginia, as well as native American society, had become a part of world history.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dale Hoak (Ph.D., Clare College, University of Cambridge) is professor of history at the College, where he teaches courses in Tudor-Stuart England and Renaissance-Reformation Europe. Professor Hoak's research comprehends sixteenth-century English government and politics as well as the social and cultural setting of German Renaissance art. In December 1984, in recognition of his published scholarship in both fields, he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society.

UNITED STATES

ATLANTIC OCEAN

# NICARAGUA: A Battleground Once Again

Foreign Intrusion and Political Strife Are Nothing New  
for This Central American Nation

By Judith Ewell

MEXICO

BELIZE

GUATEMALA

HONDURAS

EL SALVADOR

NICARAGUA

COSTA RICA

PACIFIC OCEAN

CARIBBEAN SEA

PANAMA

VENEZUELA

COLUMBIA

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Judith Ewell, professor of history, is a Virginian who has taught at the College since 1971. She has lived and traveled extensively in Latin America and held a Fulbright lectureship in Venezuela in 1979-80. Her publications on Latin American contemporary history include *The Indictment of a Dictator: The Extradition and Trial of Marcos Pérez Jiménez* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1981), *Venezuela: A Century of Change* (Stanford University Press, 1984) and a number of articles. She is a member of Phi Beta Kappa and is currently serving as President of the Middle Atlantic Council of Latin American Studies.

**W**elcome to Nicaragua Libre — Free Nicaragua,” the Aeronica stewardess said as the flight landed in Managua. This trip, in January 1985, was my first to Nicaragua. I was traveling with a group of eighteen artists, filmmakers, students, and teachers. We had each paid our own way and hoped that the ten days of briefings from government ministries, visits to agricultural cooperatives, attendance at the presidential inauguration of Daniel Ortega, and talking with people would help us to sort out contradictory impressions of Nicaragua. Had Anastasio Somoza's dictatorship been replaced

by a totalitarian one, as President Ronald Reagan claims? Or was the Sandinista government a popular and relatively pluralistic and responsible one, as so many scholars of Latin American studies have argued? A ten-day whirlwind trip, even with extensive conversations with many people, can hardly provide a final answer to such troubling questions. Both errors and successes proved easy to find. Many of us came to believe that Miriam Lazo of the Nicaraguan Social Security Institute best summed up the complex situation, “You know we are humans who are carrying out the revolution, and we have to overcome our limitations.”

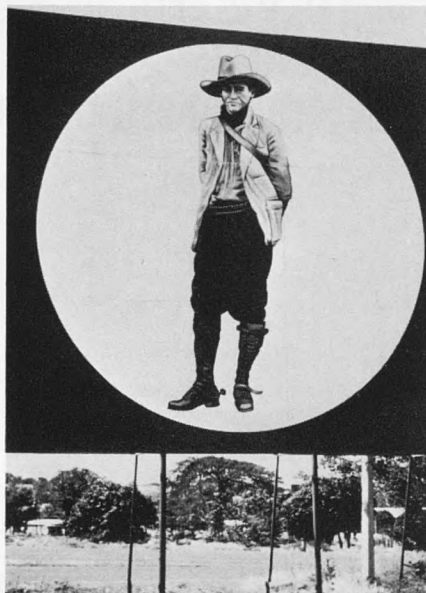
Nicaraguans and Central Americans have had considerable occasion to

muse about human limitations during their troubled national histories. Freed from Spain in 1821 and from Mexico in 1823, the Central American nations tried to form a political union. Regional differences and the rivalries of dictators, however, doomed the confederation to failure, and by the mid-nineteenth century, the five nations of the isthmus went their separate ways. Central America's history became even more violent as the region became the focus for United States, British, and French competition for control of an interoceanic canal route.

Nicaragua, as one of the favored routes for a canal, suffered the most from foreign intrusions. Cornelius Vanderbilt established a transportation network from the Atlantic Coast to the Pacific through the San Juan River and Lake Nicaragua after the California gold rush created a demand for rapid passage to the west. Tennessee native William Walker a few years later encouraged one Nicaraguan political faction to name him as president of the country. Defeated, Walker was captured by Hondurans who also resented his activities and was executed in 1860. Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast was a British protectorate. The British dominated the area through alliance with the Miskito Indians, who spoke English and also had become Protestant through contact with Moravian missionaries. Despite the strong British influence, the U.S. came very close to choosing Nicaragua over Panama as the site for a canal. Finally deterred by volcanic activity and by the nationalistic Nicaraguan dictator, José Santos Zelaya, Washington turned to Panama, but continued to maintain an active interest in the internal politics of Nicaragua.

In the twentieth century, *caudillos*, or strongmen, dominated Central American politics in alliance with a small economic elite and bands of loyal militarists who passed for an army. Strife and disorder still prevailed. U.S. troops occupied Nicaragua between 1912 and 1925 and again from 1926 to 1933. In this latter period, a young guerrilla Augusto César Sandino gained fame and martyrdom by resisting the U.S. occupation until he was assassinated by one of Anastasio Somoza's henchmen. Somoza with the blessing of the U.S. government rose to political power along with the *Guardia Nacional* (National Guard) that he commanded. A talented politician but heavy-handed and corrupt when the situation called

for it, Somoza ruled Nicaragua from 1937 to 1956, when he was assassinated. His older son, Luis, continued the family dynasty until 1967 and showed some of the political skill that his father had employed in conciliating the opposition. Unfortunately Luis's younger brother, Anastasio Somoza, Jr., known as Tachito, had none of the acumen of his father and brother. Still loyal to the U.S. government and an implacable foe of communism, Tachito preferred the use of force rather than persuasion to bring opponents to heel. He found that he had to use increasing levels of force to quell the riots that rose against him.



**Billboard of Augusto César Sandino in downtown Managua. Sandino became a national hero because of his resistance to occupation by U.S. troops in the late 1920s.**

More serious, the businessmen and farmers who had benefited from and had supported his father's and brother's regimes saw that Somoza was less willing to share with them the slight wealth that Nicaragua had. Between the assassination of newspaper editor Pedro Joaquín Chamorro on January 10, 1978, and Somoza's departure from the country on July 17, 1979, it had become clear that the dictator's only constituency in Nicaragua was the brutal and corrupt National Guard.

The new government in Nicaragua, was dominated quickly by the well-disciplined and organized Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional — FSLN or Sandinistas. This guerrilla band had formed in 1962 to spearhead the resistance to Somoza and had

taken the name of the 1930s nationalistic hero, Augusto César Sandino. The Sandinistas began anew but also felt the weight of history pressing upon them. On the international scene they had to express a strong, reformist nationalism without disturbing U.S. confidence in its unchallenged hegemony over the strategically important region. Domestically, there were no real political parties or civil institutions on which to build. The economy was in shambles, and the nation deeply in debt from the last years of the civil conflict and from Somoza's personal appropriation of international loans that had been extended to the nation. The conflict had left over 50,000 dead, more than 100,000 wounded, over 40,000 children orphaned, and one-fifth of the population homeless. Investments in the health, education, and well-being of the majority of the population had not been high priorities of the dictatorship in its best years. After July 1979 the Nicaraguan government turned its hand to reconstruction of the nation and the lives of its people.

Nearly all visitors to Managua since 1979 have remarked upon the dilapidated character of the center of the city. The imposing Intercontinental Hotel stands in the midst of what look like open fields. Much of the center of Managua has not been rebuilt since the earthquake of 1972. Somoza had not even rebuilt the Cathedral, our guide, Sandra, pointed out to us. The Sandinistas are beginning to rebuild the Cathedral, but there are so many demands on scarce national funds that progress is slow.

Yet the physical reconstruction of the country only needs resources. The political, social, and economic rebuilding requires hard thought, debate, willingness to experiment, and a degree of consensus. There is no monolithic view even within the Sandinistas, who range from the relatively moderate and pluralistic Daniel Ortega to the more hard-line marxist, Tomás Borge. Since 1979 the government has borrowed ideas from a variety of sources. The 1984 electoral law, for example, was based in part on the Swedish system and written with the help of Swedish consultants. One item on which nearly all Nicaraguans can agree, however, is that their nation should walk its own path, free from the dictates and interventions they have suffered in the past. The spirit is



affirmative, nationalistic, and proud without being xenophobic.

One of the highlights of our visit was the opportunity to attend President Daniel Ortega's inauguration. We were seated with the official delegations of over sixty nations who witnessed the simple and dignified ceremony. The day was one of celebration and pride for the Sandinistas but also for all of the nations that had observed and aided with the elections. Ortega began his address by giving homage to Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, editor of *La Prensa* whose assassination on January 10, 1978, had convinced many Nicaraguans that the government of Anastasio Somoza was truly corrupt and brutal. Ortega also paid tribute to other people who had died in the fighting against Somoza's National Guard, including his own brother and most of the founders of the FSLN, and those who had died more recently fighting against guerrillas known as counter-revolutionaries, or *contras*. A large group of women who sat near the front during the ceremony were "Mothers of Heroes and Martyrs," an organization that honors the sacrifices made by the living and the dead in the last ten years of Nicaraguan history. Yet Ortega also offered the guerrillas who currently are responsible for death and devastation in the north of the country — the *contras* — the opportunity to rejoin the Nicaraguan family. Any of

them who wished to receive full amnesty could surrender their arms to officials in Honduras or in Costa Rica and return to Nicaragua without fear of reprisal. Cheers from the audience greeted the offer of amnesty.

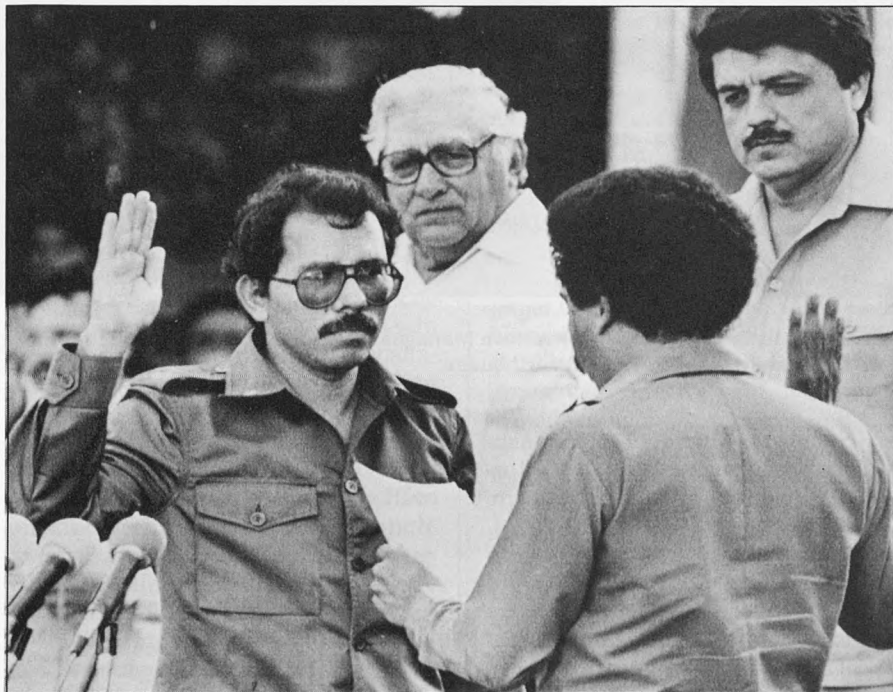
In our travels within Nicaragua from Matagalpa in the north to Granada in the south, the overwhelming impression was one of support for the government. I spoke in Spanish with people in markets, in the streets, in poor neighborhoods, on state-run farms, in churches, in a middle-class home, at a photography exhibit, and at the crowded popular fiesta that followed Ortega's inauguration. People frequently expressed irritation and frustration at shortages of many items, caused principally by a lack of foreign exchange and by diversion of resources to fight the *contras*. One woman vendor in the market grumbled about price controls, but she was operating from the Eastern Market where free market prices prevail. In spite of the shortages, we saw very few beggars in Nicaragua. The most poignant request we received from small children who approached us was for a *lápiz*, a pencil. The director of an agricultural cooperative we visited also asked if we had brought crayons and pencils for the school at the co-op, for none are to be had in Nicaragua. In talking with the board of directors of the cooperative, I also

came to recognize the farreaching impact of the literacy campaign that the Sandinistas had conducted in 1980. One of the directors noted that the cooperative had to keep records of how much work each member did and to allocate profits accordingly after the crops were sold. Pencils and paper were also primary tools for agrarian reform. In spite of the problems, I heard no one — with the exception of a spokesman for *La Prensa* — express even a veiled preference for a *contra* victory.

Our group did see signs that the recent election of November 4 had been strongly contested. Many walls had political slogans as well as posters explaining the electoral process. Some areas like the poor, but militant, town of Monimbó had slogans that called for the support of parties that fall to the ideological left of the Sandinistas, such as the Marxist-Leninist Popular Action Movement (MAP-ML). One slogan in Matagalpa read "Communism, no; Christianity, yes," while another in Managua said "Eden, traitor," referring to Eden Pastora who had been one of the most popular Sandinistas in 1979 but who left to mount a guerrilla attack against the government.

The Latin American Studies Association (LASA), an organization of scholars and teachers in the U.S., had sent a team of observers to Nicaragua during the elections. They concluded that the election had indeed been a fair and honest one. Nearly 94 percent of the eligible population had registered to vote, as required by law. Voting was not compulsory, as it is in much of Latin America, however, and only 75 percent of the registered voters, or 70 percent of the adult population actually voted. In contrast 53 percent of the U.S. adult population, voted in the U.S. presidential elections in 1984. Daniel Ortega won the votes of 44 percent of the voting age population in Nicaragua, while Ronald Reagan received the votes of only 31 percent of the U.S. adult population two days later.

Seven parties contended in the Nicaraguan election, which also chose the 96 members of a new National Assembly whose first task will be to write a new constitution. Three parties were more conservative than the Sandinistas, and three were more leftist. Position on the ballot was chosen by lot. The Sandinistas did not win first place on the ballot, but fell in the middle. Each of the seven parties received



Daniel Ortega takes the oath of office as Nicaragua's new president on January 10, 1985, in Managua.

forty-five minutes of free radio time and thirty minutes of free television time per week. They all received a campaign fund from the government. Voting was absolutely secret and was supervised both by hundreds of foreign observers and by the contending political parties. In spite of the guarantees, Arturo Cruz and his conservative coalition, the Coordinadora, refused to participate. Even his strongest supporters, however, forbore from speculating that Cruz would have won the election or even have come in second if he had participated.

The electoral law guaranteed a political opposition. If U.S. electoral laws had been used as a model, the Sandinistas would have won every seat in the Assembly. By the system of proportional representation, however, they won only 61 of the 96 seats in the Assembly.

Few, if any, totalitarian governments guarantee a voice to the political opposition or see the opposition control one third of the seats in the National Assembly. Are there signs nonetheless that Sandinista Nicaragua is presently a marxist-leninist state? All sources seem to agree that from 60 to 65 percent of the economy remains in private hands. Most of the land that was nationalized had belonged to Somoza and his close allies as had a number of industries. Our group had an opportunity to speak with several private landowners. The most articulate was Samuel Amador whom we met in his palatial home near Sébaco, complete with swimming pool and a Mercedes in the garage. Señor Amador, a rice planter and rancher with 3,750 acres of land, said that he was making more money now than he had under Somoza. He is not a member of the FSLN but he receives government credit and help, and he is allowed to retain or reinvest the profits he makes after taxation. (The tax on agricultural profits is set at 35 percent.) The Sandinista government, he asserted, does not threaten productive farmers as long as they obey the laws and do not support the *contras*. Other farmers with whom we spoke confirmed what Amador had said.

Our group also talked with Sister Mary Hartman, of the order of the Sisters of St. Agnes and originally from Wisconsin, who had been in Nicaragua since 1962. She currently is on the Nicaraguan Human Rights Commission and answered our questions about political persecution in Nicaragua. Unlike conditions under



Nearly all visitors to Managua since 1979 have remarked upon the dilapidated character of the center of the city. The imposing Intercontinental Hotel stands in the midst of what looks like open fields.



Cathedral in central plaza in downtown Managua. The roof and many of the interior walls were destroyed by the 1972 earthquake.

Photos by author

the Somoza government, Hartman said, there had been no systematic torture or violation of rights since the Sandinistas came to power in 1979. The death penalty was abolished by the Sandinistas, and they have sought to develop more regular methods of trial and imprisonment. The "regularity" of the judicial process frequently would not pass muster in the United States, but in the context of Latin America where formal indictments

and charges often follow the arrest by several years, Nicaragua's system falls well within the normal and acceptable limits. There are also prisoners who may be termed political prisoners. At least some of them are also guilty of encouraging acts of terrorism or were guilty of crimes or corruption in the last years of Somoza's regime. All in all, most human rights organizations have found no violations on a scale that would qualify the nation as a totalitarian dictatorship.

Sister Mary Hartman spoke movingly of the atrocities committed by the *contras* in the north of Nicaragua. They do not seek to do battle with the FSLN army. It has been their policy to terrorize the population and to wreck the economy by bombing and burning health centers, schools, and agricultural cooperatives. In 1984 over 300 children were killed by *contra* attacks.

Finally, what of freedom of speech and dissent in Nicaragua? Our group visited the offices of *La Prensa* and talked with one of the senior editors. We were given a file of articles that had been censored, and most seemed no more critical than other articles that had been printed. At the same time, the paper's spokesman asserted that they had no intention of printing things that might be construed as favorable to the Sandinistas. Such a display of partisanship is not unusual in Latin America and might be seen to

***The conflict had left over 50,000 dead, more than 100,000 wounded, over 40,000 children orphaned, and one-fifth of the population homeless.***

balance the views of the official newspaper, *Barricada*. Indeed, it is difficult to see why the Sandinistas insist on harassment of *La Prensa*. They face the dilemma of many moderate governments in Latin America where a tradition of objective journalism is less strong than is partisanship: what to do when an opposition paper prints rumors, speculations, misrepresentations, sometimes deliberate lies? The government is faced with the no-win proposition of threatening the recalcitrant paper or of tolerating strident criticism, sometimes maliciously false, which may heighten or precipitate a crisis. To date, the Sandinistas have chosen the "moderate" position of allowing *La Prensa* to continue publication, but with constant monitoring. Not an ideal solution, but hardly a totalitarian one either.

If Nicaragua is a legitimate, non-totalitarian government, is it nonetheless a military threat to its neighbors? This is a different question, of course, from whether neighboring countries consider Nicaragua to be a threat.



Children in front of their house in a poor neighborhood in Managua. Half of the Nicaraguan population is under the age of fifteen, and the Sandinistas find it difficult to ensure that all children have access to food, shelter, education, and health care.


From none of the official or nonofficial persons that I spoke with in Nicaragua did I receive any impression of belligerence toward Honduras or Costa Rica. Neither did I receive any impression from the press, from conversations, nor from President Ortega's inaugural speech that Nicaragua wanted war with its neighbors. The overwhelming impression was that of people who had been fighting and dying since at least 1972 who wanted peace above all. The well-publicized resistance of young men to the draft further bespeaks war weariness. The frustration of the leaders of the Social Security Institute who cannot find the funds to replace schools and health clinics that have been destroyed by terrorists matches that of young photographers who lack the film and the paper to devote themselves to their art. Nicaragua does not seem to be a nation thirsting for conquest. Sources and figures vary greatly, but Nicaragua's armed strength and materiel appear to be just what they claim: primarily defensive. It simply defies logic to believe that Nicaragua would move against its neighbors, even with the extreme provocation that Honduras and Costa Rica have given by tolerating the activities of the anti-Sandinista *contras* within their borders.

I returned from Nicaragua, continued reading about the Sandinistas, and concluded that the only threat Nicaragua presents to the Caribbean

region is what Sandinista Tomás Borge has termed the "threat of a good example." If elections have any correlation to legitimacy, the government of Daniel Ortega is more "legitimate" than many in Latin America. There are marxists in the government, but the government itself is not a totalitarian one. Limitations on freedom of the press and judicial irregularities are arguably less than in other governments lauded for progress toward democracy such as Uruguay, El Salvador, Guatemala. On the positive side, the government has delivered on its promises of agrarian reform while retaining private property, literacy campaigns and new schools, expanded health care, and other services. Human experiments do not achieve perfection. What if — there were no *contra* attacks, made stronger by outside funding? What if — there were no trade embargo to alienate further the business classes? What if — *La Prensa* gave the Sandinistas credit as well as blame in news stories? What if — Nicaragua were not located in a geographic region deemed strategically and psychologically vital to the greatest power on earth?

President Reagan has compared the opponents of the Sandinistas with the U.S. founding fathers. I believe that the spirits of Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, Patrick Henry and our other founding fathers would be with Daniel Ortega and his colleagues rather than with the *contras*.





# THE OLDEST AND CHEAPEST COLLEGE IN THE SOUTH

How William and Mary Became a Selective University

By John R. Thelin and Karen C. Schoenberger '66

**M**arketing," now a familiar word in organizational strategy, is not altogether new at William and Mary. In 1892 the College attempted to stake a position in the academic marketplace by advertising itself as, "The Oldest and Cheapest College in the South." This truth in advertising today strikes us as inappropriate. It lacks the style we have come to associate with William and Mary's national stature as an academically prestigious college. Certainly the announcement from a century ago clashes with the refined brochures, the restored buildings, and the bumper stickers that conjure the confident image of the "Alma Mater of a Nation." And, it suggests an approach to student enrollments incongruous with our present-day notion of selective admissions.

"Selective admissions" means that a college has the luxury of choice in deciding to whom it will offer admissions. It is a serious business in which a handful of institutions compete for the "brightest and the best." To gain this enviable position, a selective college must be committed to a number of related efforts: cultivation and projection of a distinctive image, allocation of resources for student financial aid, active and widespread recruitment, and the fortitude to reject, as well as to attract, highly qualified students. Such pressures and aspirations have transformed admissions into a demanding, sophisticated profession, which requires that staff members analyze a prodigious amount of information from high school transcripts, S.A.T. scores, and reference letters to make prompt, difficult decisions about the composition of the class. Selectivity also calls for energy and skill to persuade outstanding ap-

plicants that "alma mater" is, indeed, the right place to go to college.

Perhaps we are spoiled by success, taking for granted that each autumn excellent students will choose to enroll and that the College will have a first-chair cellist as well as an articulate, strong-armed quarterback. The unpolished recruitment announcement from 1892 reminds us that not too long ago most colleges, including William and Mary, had to struggle for survival each year in a scramble to enroll paying students. We are left with the question, "How did William and Mary acquire the policies and practices of selective admissions?" Here we resurrect some key episodes between 1890 and World War II, which are prelude to the familiar images and admissions associated with the College by the 1960s.

The William and Mary admissions saga has national significance because it challenges the conventional wisdom about how types of colleges are expected to behave. Consider, for example, the following commentary by two Harvard sociologists, Christopher Jencks and David Riesman, in their 1968 work, *The Academic Revolution*: "There are no public Amhersts, Oberlins, or Reeds. Indeed, small distinguished institutions have to be private even if they do have graduate schools. There are no public Cal Techs or Princetons. The only small public institutions are those that cannot get more applicants." (p. 288)

Well, perhaps not always so! The College of William and Mary may well stand as "The Great Exception" to Jencks's and Riesman's claim. William and Mary's twentieth-century history hinges on resolving a fundamental identity crisis — namely, wrestling to counter the orthodoxy that one cannot (or should not) cultivate a small, academically selective campus in the public sector. The images projected by the admissions office provide the public a glimpse of this institutional drama.

The obvious temptation is to divide the College's changing admissions images into periods aligned with the various presidential administrations. According to this scheme, each president is depicted as either an "ancient" or a "modern," and the pendulum of the College image swings back and forth from one administration to the next. For example, the J.A.C. Chandler Administration (1919-1934) stands as an "era of modernization" characterized by growth and expansion as a "poor

boys' school." In marked contrast, the subsequent administration of John Stewart Bryan (1934-1942) is remembered as a period of refinement and contraction with emphasis on the liberal arts and national prestige. On close inspection one finds within each presidential administration a creative tension in which both the "ancient" and "modern" impulses coexist. It is more accurate to see the admissions saga as an extended family quarrel in which factions within the College community earnestly grapple with perennial questions about William and Mary's size, affiliation, and identity.

***The first complication in the William and Mary story since 1890 is that reliance on heritage has not always been a successful strategy for promoting the College's welfare.***

The first complication in the William and Mary story since 1890 is that reliance on heritage has not always been a successful strategy for promoting the College's welfare. Today William and Mary's historic images and symbols are so strong and attractive to prospective students and donors that we assume this has always been so. In fact, President Tyler (1888-1919) faced numerous disappointments in which neither private foundations nor the state legislature showed much interest in providing funds for restoring the historic buildings or the spirit of the College's colonial past. Ironically the first success the College had in using publications and brochures to project a strong historic image came during the allegedly "modern" Chandler era. The elaborate 1924 pamphlet, *The Romance and Renaissance of the College of William and Mary in Virginia*, combined rosters of famous alumni with testimonials of modern statesmen and photographs of old (and eroding) campus buildings to make a compelling plea for financial contributions. In many ways its graphics and texts suggested a forerunner to the now familiar admissions "view book," but in the 1920s its attention was directed to potential donors, not to under-

graduate applicants. Therefore, the College's institutional image was not synchronized with either its admissions efforts or its curriculum. When enrollments dwindled (125 men in 1919) the College did make a bold, thoroughly "modern" innovation: it decided to admit women. William and Mary's admission coup was that it became the first public coeducational college in Virginia — a move which raised both enrollments and academic standards.

But even by 1930 there were few signs that William and Mary had adopted a conscious program of selective admissions and recruitment. The College continued with "business as usual" by enrolling those students who seemed to be able to do college work and pay their bills. To gain an idea of how the College lagged in developing a systematic admissions strategy, consider the innovations among the New England colleges. The historic Eastern colleges created admissions offices in the 1920s both to expand and control student recruitment. Dartmouth and Amherst, for example, pioneered a three-pronged plan: first, each placed a ceiling on the size of the entering freshman class; second, prospective students were ranked and selected on the basis of an elaborate application form, high school record, reference letters, and interviews; third, admissions offices distributed to schools and libraries informational brochures geared to high school students. It was a plan that simultaneously encouraged desirable students while allowing the admissions office to reject applicants who were neither serious nor academically well prepared. And, as was the case at Harvard and Columbia, the selective admissions apparatus could be misused to exclude academically able applicants whose parents were Eastern European immigrants.

At the same time, the prestigious colleges were self-conscious about moving too aggressively into recruitment. One prominent headmaster warned the dean at Brown University that "anything like 'direct sales' activities among prep schools on the part of colleges were distasteful and unlikely to succeed." Dartmouth's admission staff and editors heeded similar warnings and made special efforts not to "rival the literature of hotels and health resorts" in their college brochures. Presidents and deans took special care to curb the inflated promises and recruitment abuses associated

# WILLIAM AND MARY COLLEGE,

WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA.

Session Begins First Thursday in October, Closes  
June 28th.

The Oldest and Cheapest College in the South.

Provides a thorough Normal and  
Academic Training. Historical  
Surroundings. Healthy climate.  
Forty-eight miles from Richmond,  
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(Tuition, board, fuel, lights and washing) . . . \$10 per month,  
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SEND FOR CATALOGUE.

LYON G. TYLER, President.

In 1892 William and Mary tried to stake a position in the academic marketplace by advertising itself as, "The Oldest and Cheapest College in the South."

College Archives

with zealous alumni. Thus, in the 1930s the state of the art in admissions involved a handful of historic colleges that viewed college recruitment as a "talent hunt" in which the rules of the chase demanded appropriate dignity in projecting images and casting an admissions net.

Meanwhile, at William and Mary, President Chandler had been faulted for having favored enrollment growth with little attention to raising academic standards. Furthermore, his support of such "new" fields as library

science, journalism, commerce, engineering, and social work was criticized for moving the College far afield from its liberal arts heritage. However, Chandler's critics tended to overlook his important (albeit indirect) contribution to "selective admissions": namely, for the first time there were more applicants than places for the College's limited facilities. Between 1920 and 1933 enrollment increased almost ten-fold — from 125 to 1200. Thanks to the surplus of applicants, the College had the option to be

selective. In fact, during the last year of Chandler's tenure, the administration introduced the first step in selective admissions: enrollment was limited to those who had graduated in the top half of their high school class. Thus, when John Stewart Bryan was inaugurated as president in 1934 he inherited the delightful "problem" of having to turn away some qualified students. Now William and Mary was in a position to formulate a true admissions policy — as opposed to drifting along from year to year with fragmented, isolated practices.

The years 1934 to 1941 stand as the "take off" period for selective admissions at William and Mary. During that time the administration and faculty gradually pieced together a comprehensive proposal, which intended to connect student recruitment with fundraising, curricular innovation, financial aid programs, architectural renovation, campus landscaping, and projection of a distinctive college image. Much of the effort was premature and unsuccessful, but at least various groups within the College were cooperating to pursue a coherent plan for making William and Mary an academically prestigious and financially sound institution.

The best made plans for admissions did not work as expected. In 1934 President Bryan scored a major public relations victory when the *Boston Transcript* gave prominent attention to William and Mary's potential to be the "Harvard of the South." The article noted that Bryan's vision for the College called for the Marshall-Wythe School to be revived as a special place for the education of young men who were future public leaders and statesmen. The aim was to connect the heritage of Jefferson, Madison, and Marshall with the contemporary curriculum of history, economics, government, and the social sciences. Unfortunately, this favorable press was tainted by sloppy editing; the accompanying photograph featured "The Famous William and Mary Rotunda, at Williamsburg." Mr. Jefferson would have been confused; President Bryan was merely receiving the first bit of bad news for his bold plan.

Having inherited Chandler's 1933 policy to admit only those students who had graduated in the top half of their high school class, Bryan, between 1934 and 1941, enlisted numerous faculty committees to take additional steps toward a truly selective admissions policy. For example, the College adopted the so-called

"Dartmouth Plan" which required applicants to take prescribed college preparatory courses, to submit reference letters, and to show evidence of superior scholarship and participation in extracurricular activities. The unexpected consequence was that the number and percentage of male applicants who qualified for admission dropped drastically. William and Mary was learning marketing's harsh lesson: one could not alter one part of the institution without introducing changes in other parts. To raise admission standards without devoting attention to recruitment was a formula for enrollment disaster. Hence, between 1938 and 1940 a special faculty committee chaired by the bursar, Charles J. Duke, Jr., addressed the problem of how to increase the number and quality of male students. Their reports and recommendations to the Board of Visitors stand as the College's first comprehensive plan for recruitment and selective admissions.

This "Committee to Prepare an Organized Plan to Increase the Male Enrollment of the College" revolutionized the notion of admissions at William and Mary. The College had become serious about developing a number of interrelated programs that would foster interest in William and Mary as an academically prestigious campus in the eyes of high school students and guidance counselors. The College cooperated with the Colonial Williamsburg Restoration to host campus visits by school groups, and faculty members sponsored a variety of academic contests and exhibits on campus for the benefit of prospective students. Alumni were enlisted to interview applicants in hometowns away from Williamsburg, and the College established some special scholarships designed to attract male students to the sciences. These disparate elements were bound together by a conscious effort to "compose, publish, and distribute an illustrated booklet which will present the College attractively, fairly and . . . completely." The Committee's 1940 report went on to say that such brochures were "an effective form of publicity:"

It would seem that the College of William and Mary is peculiarly qualified to take advantage of this means of publishing itself. Its physical beauty and the unique charm of its surroundings, the richness of its tradition; the advantages of a medium-sized, co-educational, Lib-

eral Arts college — these lend themselves to the kinds of exposition and illustration which should be unmistakably attractive.

Did this mean William and Mary was imitating the Ivy League institutions in its belated attempt to become a distinctive and selective college? Not completely. The committee chaired by Duke added a novel wrinkle: the recommendation that William and Mary should focus its recruitment activities and distribution of brochures not only in the obvious fifty famous prep schools of New England, but also in the relatively untapped high schools of the South. If William and Mary were to gain distinction for the education of future (male) leaders, the admissions office ought to concentrate on the talent pool in Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, and Alabama. Whereas such Ivy League institutions as Harvard and Penn had established nationwide merit scholarship funds for applicants from each region of the country, William and Mary restricted its new scholarships to male students from the southern states.

This vision of greatness received a setback of sorts with publication of a 1940 report on the condition of the College, prepared by Dean George Works of the University of Chicago and sponsored by the General Education Board. The report gave modest praise to William and Mary's curriculum and administration, but did little to encourage the idea of educating a leadership elite in the Marshall-Wythe School. Instead, the Works Report recommended that the College add adult extension courses, training programs in Richmond and Norfolk, and undergraduate programs in some vocational field. Rather than aspire to be the "Harvard of the South," the Works Report urged William and Mary to be a comprehensive, service-oriented state college. The one area in which it did encourage a program of advanced scholarship was colonial history.

At the same time William and Mary faced yet another disappointment in its attempt to become a prestigious "national" institution: failure to gain substantial private funding. In 1934 President Bryan had tied his plans for the education of future leaders and the College's heritage with prospects for securing a private endowment. Indeed, records of his conversations and correspondence with John D. Rockefeller, Jr., show Rockefeller agreeing

that William and Mary could best fulfill its historic mission as a private institution. Yet Rockefeller's agreement did not mean a pledge of financial support. Although Bryan himself was careful to note this distinction, by 1939 rumors circulated through Williamsburg that Rockefeller was going to donate up to ten million dollars to the College so that it could move from "state ownership and control" to a new era of "private ownership and independence." Rumor, however, was not reality, and William and Mary continued as a public institution.

By 1940 many recommendations made by Charles Duke's committee on organization for enrolling male students had been implemented. Recruitment brochures were published and distributed; scholarship competitions in the sciences were offered; and male enrollments increased to 605, about 47 percent of the student body. In 1942 men constituted over 52 percent of the total enrollment. For the first time in over a decade, men outnumbered women students. So, there was some evidence that targeted recruitment strategies were working, but with equivocal success. For example, the effort to attract top students from the South amounted to little, as William and Mary continued to be most attractive to out-of-state applicants from the Northeast and Middle Atlantic states. Setbacks in fundraising, the failure of the Marshall-Wythe School to flourish, the recommendations of the Works Report, and the start of World War II combined to reduce the effectiveness of William and Mary's initial venture into comprehensive selective admissions. The roots of selective admissions from the 1930s and 1940s would flower in the decades after World War II. However, this success story would not be without its complications.

#### Postscript

In 1968 Russell Kirk devoted a nationally syndicated news column to the "Desirability of William and Mary." Here was an admissions dean's dream come true — an endorsement which projected an image of heritage and academic excellence to a widespread public. Kirk exclaimed, "What a contrast this college, to Behemoth State University, with its grim utilitarian campus and its unhappy student multitudes who mutter, 'Don't fold or spindle us!'" He concluded his campus visit with the note: "Any genuine



college of liberal arts and sciences should be a place of dignity, tradition, quiet and academic leisure. . . . In these matters the advantages of William and Mary are great. Had I to make the choice, I had rather dwell in Williamsburg than in Cambridge, Mass."

This image of placid prestige was deceptive because it obscured the controversies that were central to institutional life at William and Mary in the three decades after World War II. Russell Kirk might have been surprised to learn that between 1950 and 1970 the College was the site of intense debates over the size and composition of the student body. Most certainly he would have been shocked to find that this dignified liberal arts campus had been the source of a major football scandal. And, for a few years William and Mary even edged toward being a large multi-campus institution known as The Colleges of William and Mary. Even the eventual decision to resist expansion caused problems in the early 1960s when several state legislators protested that William and Mary's relatively small size unfairly excluded Virginia students from a first-rate undergraduate education. And, the 1973-1974 self-study submitted to the Southern Association of Colleges and Universities advanced the novel identity of William and Mary as the "mini-university" — an interesting challenge to Clark Kerr's profile of the University of California as the prototype of the American "multi-versity."

Yes, William and Mary had succeeded in acquiring a prestigious image. And, data from the admissions office indicated that entering undergraduates were academically excellent. Year after year the enrolling freshmen showed mean S.A.T. scores of about 1200 (1600 is the highest possible score); their high school grade point averages in college preparatory subjects were exceptional with well over half the students graduating in the top one-tenth of their class. Whether this meant William and Mary was a selective college is less easily answered.

Discussions about selective admissions usually focus on the plight of the applicant. In fact, the trauma is equally great for a dean of admissions as it is for prospective students. In early April high school seniors (and their parents) wait anxiously for the letters from college admissions offices. The other side of the coin is that in May the deans of admissions also wait anxiously — to find out which admitted students choose to enroll, and which choose to

go elsewhere. The rule of thumb in the admissions world is this: a selective college is one that enrolls at least a majority of the applicants to whom it has offered admission. In the jargon of the admissions profession, a selective college has a "yield" of over 50 percent. Today there are only about sixty colleges which can claim such status,

***Meanwhile at William and Mary, President Chandler had been faulted for having favored enrollment growth with little attention to raising academic standards. Furthermore, his support of such "new" fields as library science, journalism, commerce, engineering, and social work was criticized for moving the College far afield from its liberal arts heritage.***

and by this standard, William and Mary fares well. According to data in the 1984 admissions brochure, about 51 percent of those offered admission actually chose to enroll at the College.

Prestige and selectivity certainly warrant celebration within the College. However, a residual message from demographic and admissions data is that competition among selective colleges for outstanding students will become increasingly severe. Second, virtually every selective college in the United States will face difficult choices about connections between admissions policy and financial aid policy as college prices rise while federal resources of student aid erode. Third, William and Mary's aggregate data for applications, admissions, and enrollment mask some imbalances by gender and geography, which will warrant attention in the future.

Thus, even in the late 1980s one finds that William and Mary must address once again some situations that faculty and administrators encountered in the 1930s: the so-called "Virginia Male" problem — competition for a relatively few number of college-bound men from within the Commonwealth. And, the volatile question persists: "How ought the College accomo-

date both in-state and out-of-state applicants in its attempt to reconcile national reputation with state service?" The College must also consider issues of equity and access in its attempts to enroll black students. And William and Mary has yet to reach consensus on which institutions are its benchmarks, i.e., those campuses with which it wishes to compete and be compared.

In sum, the historic pride and academic excellence which Russell Kirk discovered in 1968 show that William and Mary's prolonged quest for an image as a selective college has blossomed, but along with that blossom there are as many perennial thorns of controversy over the mission and character of the College in 1985, as there were in 1935 and 1895.

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The 1892 College announcement is reproduced by courtesy of the Archives, Swem Library, The College of William and Mary.



Scott's sheer size may have convinced him that great things lay in his destiny: by the time he was nineteen, he stood six feet four inches and would fill out his frame until he weighed 230 pounds. He once retired to a private chamber, pushed back the furniture, placed long mirrors in opposite corners, and admired himself for two solid hours.

General Winfield Scott was a great warrior of his time, but he never realized his one primary objective — the Presidency.

# OLD FUSS AND FEATHERS:

## William and Mary's Greatest Soldier

By Ludwell H. Johnson III

**O**n February 29, 1856, Secretary of War Jefferson Davis wrote to Lieutenant-General Winfield Scott, General in Chief of the United States Army:

*Your petulance, characteristic egotism and recklessness of accusation have imposed upon me the task of revealing some of your deformities. . . . You have declared your purpose to make my part of this correspondence a memorable example to be shunned by my successors. What application you will make of your share in it, you have not informed me. If it be designed to commend your example to your successors, I trust the means you have chosen will not contribute to the end, as it is sincerely to be hoped that those who follow you in the honorable profession in which you have been eminent, notwithstanding your fame has been clouded by grovelling vices, will select for their imitation some other model than one whose military career has been marked by querulousness, insubordination, greed of lucre and want of truth.*

On March 28, 1865, General Robert E. Lee wrote to his wife:

*I have put in the bag General Scott's autobiography, which I thought you might like to read. The General, of course, stands out prominently, and does not hide his light under a bushel, but he appears the bold, sagacious, truthful man that he is.*

These violently opposing estimates of General Scott by such distinguished men of affairs as Lee and Davis vividly illustrate some of the salient characteristics of all three. It is Scott, however, who is the subject of this sketch.

The rather emphatic "of course" in

Lee's letter offers a good point of departure. To stand out prominently was indeed the breath of life to Winfield Scott, and there was no bushel big enough to hide his light, even if he had been inclined to use one. Perhaps Scott's sheer size convinced him that

great things lay in his destiny: by the time he was nineteen, he stood six feet four inches and would fill out his frame until he weighed 230 pounds. Whatever the reason, there is no doubt that he was intensely ambitious. Scott's family history exemplified two of the favorite avenues to fame open to Virginians in the early nineteenth century. His grandfather came to Virginia in 1746 as a Scottish refugee from the disaster at Culloden and made his mark as a lawyer. His father soldiered in the Revolution, but for the remainder of his life was a prosperous farmer located not far from Petersburg. Winfield, born in 1786, received the usual miscellaneous preparatory education of his day and in 1805 went to William and Mary, then presided over by Bishop James Madison and numbering among its faculty H. St. George Tucker. Scott's studies included chemistry and natural philosophy, but leaned heavily toward law, which was, as he said in his memoirs, "looked to as a profession, and, at the same time the usual road to political advancement."

As it happened, the law was not to lead him to the success he craved. Instead the country's difficulties with Great Britain offered a shortcut. Even though Scott's prior military experience consisted of a brief term as a militia corporal, in 1808 he solicited and received from President Thomas Jefferson a commission as captain of artillery. Immediately a prominent Richmond tailor was engaged to make a resplendent full-dress uniform. As he so disarmingly told a young aide de camp years later, Scott then retired to a private chamber, pushed back the furniture, placed long mirrors in opposite corners of the room, and admired himself for two solid hours. For the rest of his career he would always dress to the nines, with all the gold braid and plumes the regulations allowed and maybe somewhat more. "Old Fuss and Feathers," he came to be called.

A mere fledgling military peacock, one might think; yet within seven years he had risen from captain to brevet major general. The events of these years forecast his subsequent career and revealed his personality and character in full: he fought a duel (and had his pericranium furrowed), was court-martialed and suspended from the army for a year for vilifying his commanding officer, was captured after a gallant foray into Canada in October 1812, and, upon being exchanged, distinguished himself on the

Niagara frontier as the Steuben of this war and as an accomplished field commander at the battles of Chippewa and Lundy's Lane, where he was badly wounded. The country had a new military hero.

Scott spent a year abroad after the war, enjoyed a warm reception in France and England, and upon his return savored a succession of ovations and "splendid entertainments." "The simple truth," said one who knew him well, "is that Scott regarded himself as the most able general of American history." To top it all, after a long courtship Scott married a beautiful and talented daughter of a prominent Richmond family, Maria Mayo, a lady who had been a favorite of Dolly Madison and who was said to have refused more than a hundred honorable proposals. The service was that of the Episcopal Church, of which Scott was a dutiful communicant throughout his adult life. One wonders about this marriage. The Scotts were frequently separated, sometimes by necessity, more often by Mrs. Scott's preference for European society. Although the general spoke fondly of her, and there were seven children, he also habitually made disparaging comments, ostensibly facetious, about matrimony in general. Yet he was a faithful husband; his worst enemy never suggested that he strayed even while the ladies swarmed around him.

Scott was very sociable, although preferring the society of his own sex. He especially loved the company of learned men and was himself something of a scholar. He was fond of reading law (international law in particular), Shakespeare, the English authors of the eighteenth century, and was well acquainted with military history. Scott loved chess and fancied himself a strong player. He hated to lose. Once when in New Orleans the general was invited to play the young Paul Morphy, who later would be world champion. When Scott saw that his opponent was a diminutive eight-year-old boy, he was outraged. The towering general was soon left "trembling with amazement and indignation" when he was beaten twice in a few moves. Although it was no disgrace to lose to Morphy even then, one suspects that, like Napoleon, Scott was pretty much of a "wood-pusher." Whist was another favorite game, and Scott continued to play regularly until a few days before his death.

Chess and whist were fine, but the general's greatest recreational en-



**After a long courtship Scott married a beautiful and talented daughter of a prominent Richmond family, Maria Mayo, a lady who had been a favorite of Dolly Madison and who was said to have refused more than a hundred honorable proposals.**

thusiasm was cuisine; he was, with respect to food, an epicure. "I know of no flesh of beasts," wrote his long-time aide, Erasmus D. Keyes, "or edible fishes, or fowl, or herb, or root, or grain, the preparation of which for food was not many times the subject of conversation." Bread and pork, especially Virginia ham, provided "prolific" topics of discussion. Scott was also fond of fish, which he always had for dinner and often for breakfast. Somewhat unusual was his great admiration for the Swedish turnip — if cooked just so. He ate more fowl than flesh, his favorites being canvasback duck, woodcock, and turkey, but terrapin he proclaimed to be "the best food vouchsafed by Providence to man!" He was as strict about eating as he was about military protocol, and to cut one's lettuce instead of rolling it around the fork so as not to bruise it, was to invite rebuke; as a junior officer remarked, the general was "easily vexed." His fastidious palate and ruthless candor made hostesses tremble as they awaited his verdict at table.

The general's least attractive quality was his jealousy of famous rivals, a function of his relentless ambition, and his deadliest enemies continued to be his loose tongue and unbridled pen. The former nearly involved him in a duel with the steely eyed Andrew Jackson in 1817, and he challenged New York's Governor De Witt Clinton for allegedly repeating his unwelcome remarks to Old Hickory. In the early 'twenties he engaged in unseemly public controversies with fellow officers

over relative rank that gave rise to a lifelong enmity with General Edmund P. Gaines and nearly led to his being dropped from the army for refusing to acknowledge the authority of General in Chief Alexander Macomb. At about the same time he began to dabble in politics, trying to promote the presidential prospects of John C. Calhoun and revealing his utter lack of talent for that line of work. None of this reflects credit on Scott, but he was by no means unique. Many of his fellow officers, Andrew Jackson for example, could match him in jealousy, political and military ambition, and quarrelsomeness. Scott was truly a man of his professional generation.

Fortunately, there was another side to the years between the War of 1812 and the Mexican War. The general acquitted himself well in dealing with the Creek and Seminole troubles in the 1830s and, strangely enough, proved that he possessed undoubted skill as a diplomat and negotiator. During the Nullification Crisis he managed to reinforce federal installations in Charleston Harbor without precipitating hostilities, mingling easily with Charlestonians and exerting himself with great tact to prevent a collision. Six years later President Van Buren sent him to the Canadian frontier, first to settle the *Caroline* affair, which threatened to develop into serious violence, and then to Maine, where similar trouble was brewing because of a long-standing dispute over the boundary between Maine and the Canadian province of New Brunswick. Scott brought matters under control in 1838-39 and paved the way for the Webster-Ashburton treaty of 1842. The general now could claim honors in a new role: "the pacificator," as persuasive in peace as he was formidable in war. By the late 1830s, Scott began to be mentioned by some Whig leaders as a possible candidate for the presidency, a development that would eventually bring him much grief. Their choice fell on another soldier, however, William Henry Harrison. Scott would be passed by twice more and then nominated in 1852 by a disintegrating party doomed to defeat — as everyone but the general realized.

Meanwhile his clear identification as a Whig contender created difficulties in the military sphere. The syllogism was simple. Scott at last became general in chief in 1841 upon the death of Alexander Macomb. Three years later a dyed-in-the-wool Jacksonian Democrat, James K. Polk,

defeated Henry Clay for the presidency and then in 1846 presided over the declaration of war on Mexico. Immediately Polk found himself facing a dilemma. To lose the war would be politically fatal to the Democrats, yet for Scott to be the general who won it would probably mean his election on the Whig ticket in 1848. Unfortunately for Polk the other generals were inferior in ability to Scott and were themselves either avowed or suspected Whigs. Thus the president used Scott, but also tried various expedients to make sure that a failure could be blamed on the general and at the same time attempted to put Democrats in a position to take credit for success. One scheme was to make Senator Thomas Hart Benton, the Missouri politician and Democratic notable, general in chief over Scott. This bizarre project fell through, but Polk did give generalships to other Democratic politicians (including his former law partner, Gideon Pillow) so they could lead volunteer divisions and thus seek political reputation at the cannon's mouth.

Scott quickly smelled the aroma of Polk's efforts to turn the war into a political cook-out. A crisis came only

a week after the declaration of war on May 19, 1846, when Scott was told to rush off to the front instead of working at Washington to organize the campaign. His departure then, Scott surmised, would facilitate Polk's political machinations. Thereupon, as a biographer has commented, the general came near "committing suicide with a goose quill." In one of his extraordinary letters, Scott accused the administration of putting him "in the most perilous of all positions — a fire upon my rear, from Washington, and the fire, in front, from the Mexicans." Fully believing in his indispensability, he haughtily suggested that someone else should lead the army against Mexico. Thereupon Polk accepted. Scott received this bombshell as he sat down "to take a hasty plate of soup." Those expressions, "fire upon my rear" and "hasty plate of soup" would return to haunt Scott for years to come.

Then began the most embarrassing episode in the general's career. He back-tracked, he explained, he told of his respect for Polk — it was awful. At last he was redeemed because a quick end to the war was politically essential to Polk. The best way to get that seemed to be a bold stroke against

the Mexican capital by way of Vera Cruz, and Scott was the only general fit for the task.

Here was Scott's greatest opportunity. He took command of the Vera Cruz expedition and began the most remarkable and daring campaign in American military history. Vera Cruz fell to Scott on March 26, 1847, after a skillful and nearly bloodless (for the Americans) siege. Then he turned inland, left the dreaded yellow fever season of the *tierra caliente*, and marched into the heart of the enemy's country, heavily outnumbered and far from help in case of disaster. At last on August 10 while descending the western slope of the Rio Frio Mountains, Scott suddenly saw, as Cortes had seen more than three centuries before, "the object of all our dreams and hopes — toils and dangers . . . once the gorgeous seat of the Montezumas, now the capital of a great Republic. . . The close surrounding lakes, sparkling under a bright sun, seemed, in the distance, pendant diamonds. The numerous steeples of great beauty and elevation, with Popocatepetl, ten thousand feet higher, . . . filled the mind with religious awe. Recovering from the sublime trance, probably not a man in the col-



After a brilliant campaign, Scott reached the pinnacle of his career on September 14, 1847, when he rode into Mexico City as the bands played "Hail Columbia" and other patriot airs, dismounted, and strode up the broad stairs of the National Palace of Mexico.

umn failed to say to his neighbor or himself: *That splendid city soon shall be ours!*"

And after a brilliant campaign, it was. Scott reached the pinnacle of his career on September 14, when, with plumes nodding and gold braid glittering in the sunlight, he rode into the grand plaza as the bands played "Hail Columbia" and other patriotic airs, dismounted, and strode up the broad stairs of the National Palace of Mexico. It was the spectacular culmination of a masterful campaign. Furthermore, as a conqueror Scott won the profound respect of many Mexicans. Serious proposals were made to him to stay on as their *presidente*.

Imagine the shock of his admirers when they heard that Scott had been summarily relieved of command. In the full flush of complete success, acclaimed even by the defeated enemy, the victorious general had been humiliated by his own government! As usual, Scott had been, in part, the author of his own troubles. He had quarreled bitterly with Nicholas Trist, the state department agent sent to accompany the army and negotiate a treaty. Outraged at stories planted in the newspapers unjustly exalting some generals at the expense of others, he then placed several suspected officers under arrest, including General Pillow, Polk's pet protege. In retaliation Polk released the officers from arrest, relieved Scott of his command, and sent him before a court of inquiry. It was a miserable business that fizzled out inconclusively in the aftermath of the war. Scott could have avoided these difficulties by controlling his hair-trigger pen; but when all is said and done, he was treated shabbily by Polk, who was not unwilling to blight the laurels of a Whig war hero.

The sting left by the court of inquiry had scarcely begun to fade when the Whig party picked Zachary Taylor instead of Scott as their nominee for 1848. Old Zack was a rough-hewn Jackson type without a political past, without, indeed, the liability of any political ideas whatever, who had won great fame early in the war by his victories in northern Mexico. Thus Scott had the teeth-grinding experience of seeing his subordinate of thirty years become his commander in chief. He did not attend the inauguration. This was as nothing to the year 1852 when, with Taylor dead, Scott got the nomination and was badly defeated by Franklin Pierce, one of the political generals who had followed him to Mexico. Furthermore, Secretary of

War Jefferson Davis, made no attempt to conceal his virulent dislike for Scott. It was almost more than a man could bear, and the general maintained his headquarters in New York, well removed from that den of political vindictiveness on the Potomac.

The decade of the fifties was not without its rewards. In 1855 Congress at last raised him to the coveted rank of brevet lieutenant general; only Washington had risen so high. Four years later the aging soldier was sent on another peace-making mission, this time to the northwest coast where con-

***The general's least attractive quality was his jealousy of famous rivals, a function of his relentless ambition, and his deadliest enemies continued to be his loose tongue and unbridled pen.***

flicting territorial claims in Puget Sound had created a volatile situation along that part of the Canadian border. He effected a temporary settlement that was to last until the final resolution of the problem by treaty in 1871, receiving for his expert diplomacy the thanks of President James Buchanan.

Not long before Scott returned to New York in December 1859, John Brown was hanged by the Commonwealth of Virginia as he so richly deserved. Bells were tolled all across the North; the South prepared for new invasions. The impending presidential campaign made the fires of sectional discord burn even hotter. What could save the country from the threat of disunion and war? Incredible though it may seem, the old political innocent now seventy-three years of age, thought that he might be picked to rescue the nation in this dangerous hour. Needless to say, he was no one's nominee, but merely a spectator as the new Republican Party put Abraham Lincoln in the White House.

By early February the Deep South had seceded, and then in April, after Lincoln's call for 75,000 militia to invade the South, Scott's own Virginia left the Union. Fond as he was of his native state, as many warm friends as he had there, no question arose in the

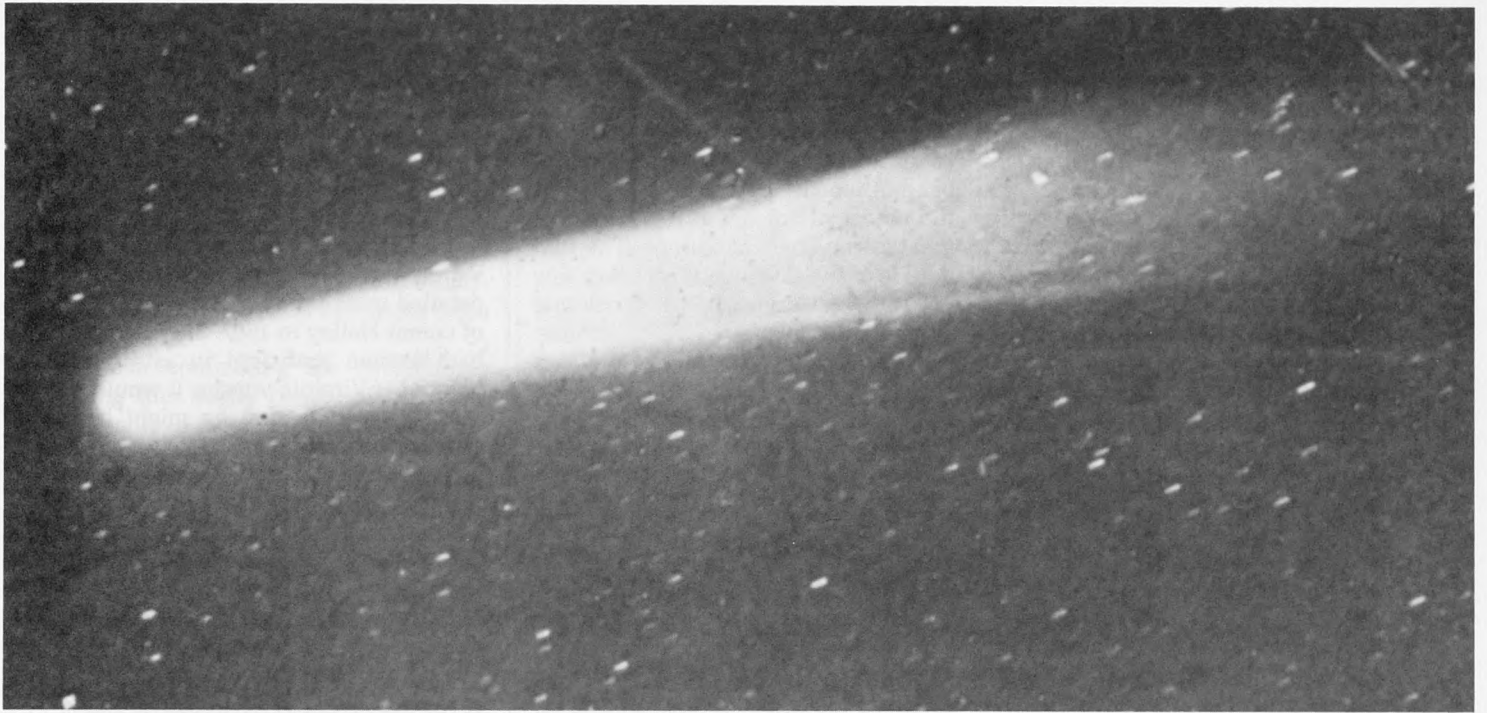
general's mind as to his primary allegiance. It had been fifty-three years since he paraded before the mirrors in his new captain's uniform. Born almost simultaneously with the Constitution, older than the capital he was now to defend, distinguished leader in two major wars, Scott was devoted to the Union. On the other hand, when confronted by the prospect of a war that he knew would be bloody beyond the experience or imagination of Americans, he was willing to acquiesce in separation. However, once the policy of the government had been decided upon, once Lincoln revealed his determination to crush the Confederacy by force if necessary, Scott gave up his views and loyally supported his commander in chief.

There was to be no third field of glory for Scott. Old and feeble, treated with impatience, if not worse, by younger men with ambitions to match his own, the general in chief retired at his own request on November 1, 1861. On that occasion the president and his cabinet called on him to express, for the country, their gratitude for his "important public services" and his "faithful devotion to the Constitution."

A trip abroad somewhat revived Scott's health. When he returned home he was able to begin work on his memoirs, a task he completed in 1864. The general lived to see the supreme tragedy of his former and much-admired staff officer Robert Lee, whom he had urged to take command of Union armies when the war began. By now the end of his own long battle was drawing near, and at West Point on May 29, 1866, the trumpet at last sounded retreat. A few months before, when forced to decline an invitation to attend the presentation of his portrait to Ulysses S. Grant, he had closed his letter to the hero of Appomattox with the words, "From the oldest to the Greatest General!" Coming from Scott, this was a mighty concession. Of course, he was only half right, and he doubtless knew it.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

*A professor of history at the College of William and Mary, Dr. Johnson has served on the faculty since 1955, with the exception of the years from 1956 through 1958 when he was on the faculty of Florida State University. He holds his B.A. and Ph.D. degrees in history from the Johns Hopkins University. His special field is 19th century United States history, particularly the War of Northern Aggression.*



This photograph of Comet Halley was taken by the Lick Observatory in 1910.

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# THE RETURN OF HALLEY'S COMET

## A Famous Celestial Phenomenon Returns After a 76-year Absence

By John McKnight and Hans von Baeyer

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**I**f, on some cloudless evening early in December of this year, you can get away from the glare of city lights, look up at the sky, high in the south. With good eyesight and a bit of luck you'll find a faint, fuzzy object, like a tiny ball of cotton among the point-like stars. With binoculars, you'd see that it is elongated like a tadpole with a short luminous tail that points away from the place where the sun has set earlier. You will have re-discovered Halley's comet, or comet Halley as the astronomers call it, which has not been seen by unaided human eyes since the fifth of July of 1910.

Every night it will appear in almost the same spot, rising in the east and setting in the west along with its surrounding stars. By mid-December the moon's bright light will make it hard to find, and then it will dip below the horizon. On its grand journey around the sun the comet will then remain invisible for a few weeks, reappearing in late February 1986 shortly before sunrise. Its tail will be longer, and its head brighter, but unfortunately for us in the Northern Hemisphere it will remain low in the southeastern sky. By April it will be gone.

Residents of the Southern Hemisphere will be luckier. Halley will appear high overhead, and on 24 April 1986 the impressive spectacle of

### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

*The authors are professors of physics at the College. They have collaborated in the re-creation of an eighteenth century science lecture which has led to a film on colonial science, produced by Colonial Williamsburg and entitled "A Glorious System of Things." Mr. McKnight, who specializes in history and philosophy of science, as well as in the foundation of quantum theory, came to William and Mary in 1957. Mr. von Baeyer's field is elementary particle theory. He joined the faculty in 1968. His book for non-scientists, Rainbows, Snowflakes, and Quarks — Physics and the World Around Us was published in 1984.*

a comet near an eclipsed moon will delight observers in the South Pacific and Southern Asia.

Comet Halley is not only a splendid celestial phenomenon, but also a timely reminder of the power of science to dispel superstition and fear. In this age, when the scientific enterprise is charged with creating so many new fears, it is wise to recall how many ancient worries it has succeeded in removing. Comets have throughout history been endowed with portentous significance. Unlike meteors, or shooting stars, which owing to their familiarity have been associated with friendly fairies and angels that bring good luck, comets, rare and unpredictable, have been considered omens of all sorts of ill fortune. Floods, fires, droughts, storms, earthquakes, wars, epidemics, the death of rulers and the fall of empires have all been foretold at one time or another by comets. But even while the common people trembled, the astronomers computed, in an effort to understand this strange phenomenon.

Long before it was named, and long before it was recognized to be the same object that reappears at intervals of approximately 76 years, the comet was seen and recorded. Beginning with 240 B.C., every passage has been noted in the literature of some language, be it western European, Russian, Arabic, Chinese or Japanese. The only exception was the apparition of 164 B.C., but the Washington Post on April 19 carried a tiny announcement that Babylonian clay tablets in the British Museum have been found to carry clear references to that event. So the appearance this winter will mark the thirtieth time on record that people have worried, and astronomers wondered, and both have marvelled at comet Halley. In terms of Halleyan years, which last about as long as a human life expectancy in the U.S., the comet will celebrate its twenty-ninth documented birthday. No one knows how old it really is.

Forty-nine years before Edmond Halley was born, his comet witnessed the arrival of English settlers in America. The "Godspeed" under Captain John Smith landed in Jamestown in May of 1607, and comet Halley appeared from September through November. If the settlers, plagued by famine, disease, and loneliness, noticed it, they may well have taken it as a terrible warning. Indeed, in December Smith was ambushed by Powhatan Indians, but it must also be

remembered that his life was saved by Pocahontas and that his colony eventually grew into the U.S.A.

Even while comet Halley, in its return of 1607, stood over that forlorn band of pioneers in Jamestown, it was the object of intense scrutiny by the great astronomers of Europe. The first decade of the seventeenth century saw not only the birth of British colonial America, but also of modern science. Galileo Galilei in Italy, Johannes Kepler in Germany, and William Gilbert in England were laying the foundations for the scientific revolution, which would flourish with the work of Isaac Newton. Unfortunately for science, comet Halley arrived just a little bit too soon that time, for it wasn't until 1609 that Galileo first turned his telescope toward the sky and ushered in the modern era of astronomy. Nevertheless, Kepler observed the comet of 1607 in Prague, computed its path and speculated on its nature. The separation between such scientific study and the beliefs of

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***Comet Halley is not only splendid celestial phenomenon, but also a timely reminder of the power of science to dispel superstition and fear.***

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the common people of the time is at least as great as the vast distance between Prague and Jamestown.

Although the settlers did not have leisure for scientific pursuits, perhaps a mere historical accident prevented them from counting among their number one of the greatest of the scientists of that exciting period. Thomas Harriot, for whom the little observatory on the roof of the William Small Physical Laboratory at the College of William and Mary is named, is just now emerging from an undeserved obscurity as physicist, mathematician, and astronomer. In 1585-86, twenty years before Jamestown, he had spent a year helping to establish a colony on Roanoke Island in the Outer Banks of what was then Virginia. His

geographical explorations had taken him north as far as the mouth of the James River, but a series of minor mishaps terminated the colony prematurely and forced Harriot to return to England. His many subsequent contributions to science included the use of a telescope for astronomical observation before Galileo, and a series of detailed measurements of the position of comet Halley in 1607. Since Harriot had become proficient in astronomy before his Virginia voyage, it would be fair to speculate that he might have observed the comet of 1607 even if he had stayed here. But that's rewriting history . . .

The man who made the comet famous was Edmond Halley (1656-1743). Born to a prosperous merchant family of London, he soon developed a wide range of interests, even measured by the demanding standards of a seventeenth-century scholar. He wrote articles and letters on a variety of subjects including archeology, biology, geology, geography, physics, engineering, mathematics and astronomy. Furthermore, he is credited with first showing how mortality tables can be used as a basis for calculating annuities. His close association with Newton led to his financing the publication of the *Principia Mathematica*, a service for which the scientific world should be forever grateful.

In 1695 Halley began to study the problem of the paths of the comets. He was in constant correspondence with Newton, to whom he wrote on September 28, 1695: "I must entreat you to provide for me of Mr. Flamsteed what he has observed of the comett of 1682 particularly in the month of September, for I am more and more confirmed that we have seen that Comett now three times, since ye Yeare 1531, he will not deny it you, though I know he will me." The difficulty of the problem stems from the brevity of time during which cometary motion can be studied. By contrast, the paths of planets, which Kepler had determined to be elliptical, can be investigated for centuries without interruption. The simplest assumption with regard to comets, common at the time and partially endorsed even by Kepler, was that they come from far away and speed through our solar system in a straight line. Their complicated apparent paths among the stars would then be a consequence of the daily and yearly motions of the earth. But Newton's *Principia* had demonstrated that only conic sections, i.e. circles,



ellipses, parabolas and hyperbolas are allowed by the laws of nature as orbits of objects in the vicinity of the sun. Newton had set out rules for determining cometary orbits from sets of observations and had given detailed examples of their use. Halley decided to apply those rules to the comets he suspected of having elongated elliptical orbits with the sun as a focus close to one end.

Upon completing his calculations using this happy choice of orbits he was able to report to the Royal Society in 1696 that the bright comets of 1531 and 1607, as well as the recent one of 1682, which he had witnessed himself, were in fact one and the same. Later, using historical records, he identified the object with the comets of 1301, 1378 and 1456. Even digging up such documentation is extremely difficult owing to uncertainties of calendar, translation and identification of astronomical events and to the problems of finding sources which in some cases predate the invention of the printing press.

The proof of Halley's hypothesis, as all proofs in science, had to involve a prediction. Accordingly, he calculated forward and predicted that the comet would return in 1758. A little later he refined the date, carefully taking into account the influence of Jupiter in disturbing the elliptical path, to "about the end of the year 1758, or the beginning of the next." What a bold prediction of events half a century in the future, and what irony of fate that Halley could not possibly live to see his theory confirmed and his fame



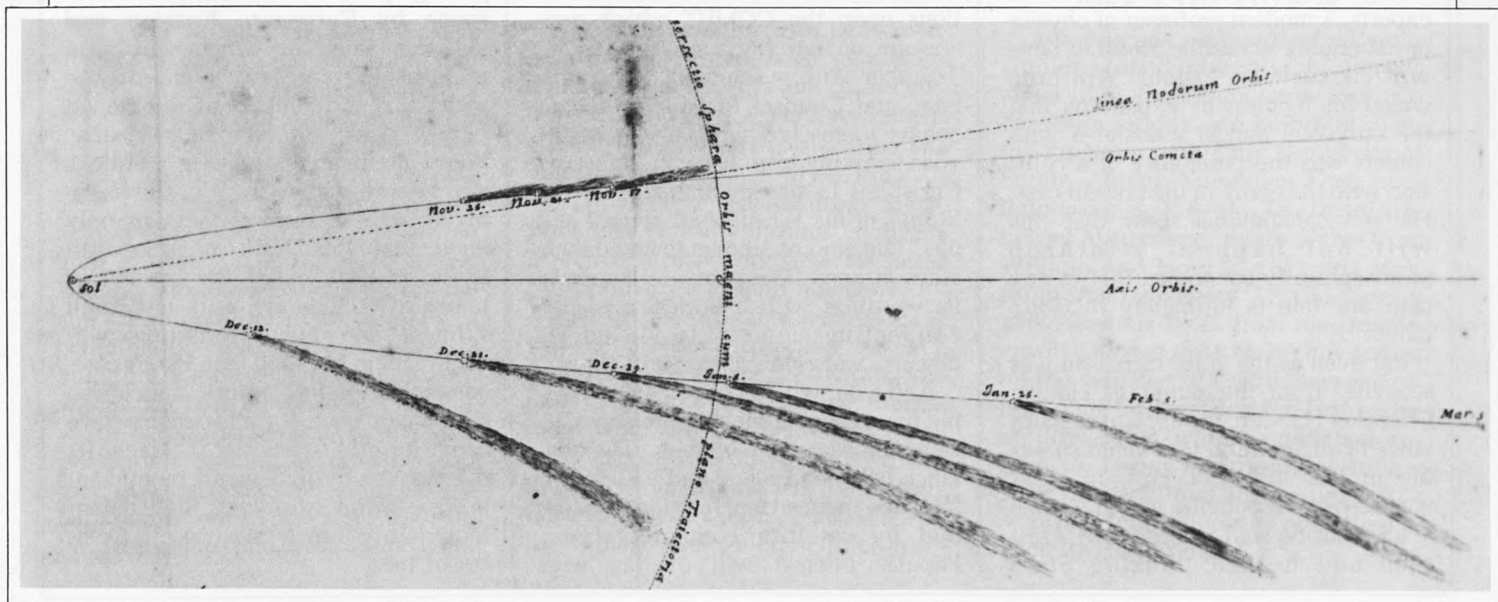
Edmond Halley (1656-1743)

***The "Godspeed"  
under Captain John  
Smith landed in James-  
town in May 1607 and  
Comet Halley ap-  
peared from Sep-  
tember through  
November.***

celebrated! After 1607, the New World and the new science had matured rapidly. The 1682 appearance of comet Halley (not yet so called) was observed not only in Europe by Flamsteed, Halley and others but also by Arthur Storer in Maryland who wrote about it, complete with diagram, to the reigning monarch of science, Sir Isaac Newton. Then after Halley's prediction in 1705, the whole educated world waited with keen anticipation for 1758. Halley's reputation, and with it the Newtonian doctrine of universal gravitation, faced a severe test. Newton died in '27, Halley in '43, and still the world waited. Finally, on Christmas night in 1758 Johann Georg Palitzsch, a "Saxon peasant" and amateur scientist living near Dresden, found the comet. Newtonian philosophy scored a resounding triumph. Comets were demoted to the status of predictable natural phenomena. In May of 1759 the French astronomer De La Caille suggested that the comet of that year be named for Halley. Had its recurrence not been predicted by the standard convention of naming comets for the first person to observe them, it would now be known as comet Palitzsch.

By the mid-eighteenth century Newtonian physics was taught routinely at William and Mary and the other colonial colleges. In Boston John Winthrop, Hollis Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy at Harvard, delivered two lectures on the comet even while it shone overhead. A printed copy of his lectures is in the rare book collection of Swem Library

Orbit of the great comet of 1680-81 from the first edition of Newton's *Principia Mathematica* shows the position of the comet's tail at successive positions in its orbit. (Rare Book Collection, Earl Gregg Swem Library.)



**Popular interest will overlap with scientific concerns as beautiful new photographs are beamed back from space by European, Russian and Japanese satellites, which will even attempt to intercept some of the material of the comet's tail.**

— and what a wonderful tract it is. Its erudition, clarity and elegance, comparable to anything published in Europe, attest to the emerging intellectual stature of the New World. In just two Halleyan years colonial America had reached the frontier of scientific knowledge. Winthrop began his lectures by recalling that the word comet derived from the Greek for "hairy star," described the phenomenon in detail, distinguished comets from meteors, and then methodically dismissed a number of fanciful speculations about comets dating back to the Greeks. Had they studied comets the way they studied planets, he wrote, instead of imbuing them with all sorts of magical properties, the true nature of comets would have appeared long before Halley. And then Winthrop explained the Newtonian theory in terms simple enough for laymen, but with enough details to be of value to experts. A modern professor of physics or astronomy would be proud to have written such an article. Winthrop ended his lectures by explaining that the only real danger associated with comets was the possibility of a collision with the earth. In the present case, Halley's calculations show that this will not happen. Winthrop philosophically concluded that in any case our fate is ultimately in God's hands.

But even as the voice of reason was speaking from the pulpit of Holden Chapel at Harvard, the ancient raucous voice of superstition was heard shouting in the streets. Typical of what appeared in the colonies and in Europe is a broadside sold in Boston in April 1759 and headed: *Blazing Stars*

*Messengers of God's Wrath.* It consists of "a few serious and solemn meditations upon the COMET which now appears on our horizon, April, 1759; Together with a solemn Call to Sinners, and Counsel to Saints; how to behave themselves when God is in this wise speaking from Heaven." It warns Christians to stay indoors "till all the Storms of his Wrath shall be past and o'er" and enjoins sinners to mend their ways at once. The pamphlet supports its warnings with historical evidence connecting comets to disasters, plagues, wars etc.

And what will happen in 1986? People have become much more sophisticated in scientific matters. The distance between Prague and Jamestown has been reduced to a fraction of a second by satellite communications. Popular interest will overlap with

scientific concerns as beautiful new photographs are beamed back from space by European, Russian and Japanese satellites which will even attempt to intercept some of the material of the comet's tail. But human nature does not change radically. Weird predictions and dire warnings will be spread abroad again, and hoary myths will re-surface. We can only hope that this time, on the fifth Halleyan birthday of the landing in Jamestown, science will outweigh silliness, and dire forewarnings will inspire more fun than fear. In any case, comet Halley will return undeterred by human bustle. Astronomers have been quietly tracking it since its rediscovery by that grand monument to New World astronomy, the Palomar Mountain 200-inch telescope, in October of 1982.

TWO  
LECTURES  
ON  
COMETS,

Read in the Chapel of HARVARD-COLLEGE, in CAMBRIDGE, NEW-ENGLAND, in April 1759.

On Occasion of the COMET which appear'd in that Month.

With an APPENDIX, concerning the Revolutions of that Comet, and of some others.

By JOHN WINTHROP, Esq.

Hollisian Professor of the Mathematics and Philosophy at CAMBRIDGE.

Published by the general Desire of the Hearers.

B O S T O N :

Printed and Sold by GREEN & RUSSELL, at their Printing-Office in Queen-Street.

Sold also by D. HENCHMAN, at his Shop in Cornhill. M.DCC.LIX.

Title page of Winthrop's book of lectures.  
(Rare Book Collection, Earl Gregg Swem Library.)

# THE GREAT INDONESIAN QUR'AN CHANTING TOURNAMENT

God Sent Down His Word in the Form  
of Qur'an, a "Recitation," Which Has Been Preserved  
Both in the Hearts and Books of the Muslim Faithful

Frederick M. Denny '61

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*An associate professor of religious studies at the University of Colorado since 1978, Dr. Denny wrote this article while serving as a Fulbright Visiting Professor at Islamic University of Sunan Ampel, Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia, in 1984-85. Dr. Denny received his undergraduate degree from William and Mary in 1961, his M.A. from the University of Chicago in 1969, and his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 1974. He has served on the faculties of Colby-Sawyer College, Yale College, and the University of Virginia. A widely published author, Dr. Denny is currently writing a book on Islam and the nature of the Muslim community to be published in 1986 by Harper and Row.*

**N**ot until the Small Fokker jet was off the ground and headed north over the Java Sea did I relax and enjoy the prospect of what I was to witness in the coming days. As a field worker in comparative religion, I had had to conquer my fear of flying years before, whether through sheer will power, desire for promotion, ritual trance or a combination of all three. But fear of bumping is a more persistent anxiety, which can only be cured by clout.

The cabin was packed, mostly with prosperous looking Indonesians, the men in smartly tailored safari suits of batik shirts with solid tone trousers, the women in chic, custom-designed

"Islamic" ensembles with hair-covering. Two or three Arab gentlemen could be seen in robes and color-coordinated burnouses. Several passengers moved about, heartily salaaming and embracing each other. My seatmate, a Malay language teacher from Singapore, was tactfully curious about my presence in that company. He jotted things down in a small notebook.

One of the principal events that I was to observe during my research year in Indonesia was the biennial, national-level Qur'an chanting tournament. Only two days before, my travel agent had hurried out to our suburban Surabaya house to inform me that my Garuda reservation had been peremptorily cancelled in order to ac-

commodate an important Muslim group on the crucial flight from Jakarta. I could fly the following day, but my colleagues at the Islamic University of Sunan Ampel in Surabaya had warned me that if I failed to attend the opening ceremonies I would miss the full impact of the competition as a mass event. To be bumped from my flight, then, would have serious consequences for a portion of my field work on Qur'an recitation in Indonesia. But my agent proved to be a resourceful person. He somehow came up with a numbered code that permitted me to breeze through the Garuda check-in with the Muslim group. Clout.

After a while, the plane descended and flew for some time over unbroken tracts of giant trees until the pilot set her down on a lonely runway at the edge of the rain forest. We had arrived at Pontianak, the capital of the Indonesian province of West Kalimantan, on the island that, in my youth of faithful reading of the *National Geographic*, I had learned to call "Borneo." There were flags, banners and posters everywhere welcoming visitors to "MTQ 14," the abbreviation for "The Fourteenth Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an" ("Contest of Chanting the Qur'an"). "Made it," I muttered.

I was met at the terminal by a smiling Dayak couple, who were to become good friends during my days in Pontianak. They had no trouble spotting me, because I was one of very few Westerners in thousands of square miles. As we reached Pontianak proper, a big parade was about to begin. I had not known until I arrived that the opening ceremonies were not to be held until the following day, but that the people of Pontianak were mounting a preliminary celebration the afternoon of my arrival. Trucks, jeeps and floats sponsored by religious, educational and civic organizations as well as businesses passed by, maybe a hundred in all. The Qur'an was the most common theme, and so there were displays of large open scripture representations, calligraphy, mosques on wheels, complete with papier-mâché minarets, and trucks carrying recitation teams from the twenty-six provinces of Indonesia, all in native costume. One float was sponsored by a Catholic school and featured Gregorian chant with a tableau of Chinese Christians dressed as monks. Another display featured a large black-and-white photo of Brooke Shields. The youth of Pontianak had evidently been granted some leeway in their planning

for this auspicious occasion when, for the first time, Pontianak was to enjoy a few days of limelight on national TV.

Indonesia is the world's fifth most populous nation, with about 165 million inhabitants, 90 percent of whom are Muslim. This makes Indonesia the largest Islamic national community in the world. From Irian Jaya (the western half of New Guinea) to Sabang, off the northern tip of Sumatra, is about 3,000 miles, roughly equal to the distance from Bermuda to Seattle. With more than 250 languages, of which 150 are mutually unintelligible, Indonesia's

***The Qur'an is believed by Muslims to have been revealed verbatim by God to the Prophet Muhammad through the archangel Gabriel. The message contains a theology and an ethic that are similar to the doctrines of Jews and Christians.***

strong national identity and sense of unity are a sort of miracle. All Indonesians speak Bahasa Indonesian, the national language based on Malay. Many Muslims also know at least a little Arabic, especially those who have been educated in traditional Islamic boarding schools — *pondok pesantrens* — which flourish in the heavily populated areas of East Java, Madura, and parts of Sumatra. All Muslim communities of Indonesia make strenuous efforts to ensure Qur'anic literacy, which means as high a standard of recitation-chanting as can be achieved.

The Qur'an is believed by Muslims to have been revealed verbatim by God to the Prophet Muhammad through the archangel Gabriel. The message contains a theology and an ethic that are similar to the doctrines of the Jews and Christians. Central emphasis is placed on the absolute oneness and sovereignty of God, who has created the world and humankind for just purposes. If, in the Christian view, classically proclaimed in the Gospel of John, God came down in the form of a human life, in the Qur'anic view of Islam, God sent down his Word in the form of a *qur'an*, a "recitation," which henceforth has been preserved both in the hearts and books of the Muslim faithful. Christ as Word and Qur'an as

Word are thus structural and functional analogues.

The central sacrament of Christianity is the Lord's Supper or Eucharist, through which believers commune with their Lord by means of consecrated bread and wine. It can be said that Muslims also commune with God, not through a sacrament in the Christian sense, but by means of participation in the Word through recitation of the Qur'an. So holy is the Qur'an that one should neither handle the written text nor recite its contents without being in a state of ritual purity. When the Qur'an is recited correctly, it is believed that God's "tranquility" (*sakina*; cf. Hebrew *schechina*) descends as a protecting and guiding grace.

The Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said, "He is not one of us who does not chant the Qur'an." Everywhere Muslims strive to master the basic rules and techniques of *ilm al-tajwid*, "the science of euphonious recitation," embracing phonetics, rhythms, melodic modes and related matters of ritual and etiquette. The Qur'an must be recited in the original Arabic, a requirement that has done much to unite Muslims, regardless of their cultural, ethnic and linguistic differences.

When learning recitation, Arabic speaking Muslims have an obvious initial advantage. The Egyptians have a high reputation as chanters, which derives from something other than mastery of the difficult Arabic language. There is a certain Egyptian *qāri*, ("reciter"), Shaikh Abdul Basit Abdul Samad, whose resonant voice and virtuoso chanting style are instantly recognized throughout the Muslim world. I have seen that great *qāri*'s cassettes for sale in bazaars and airports in such widely separated places as London, Surabaya, Kuala Lumpur, Dhaka, San'a, Baluchistan, Jerusalem, Bukittinggi and Boulder. Abdul Basit's chanting is heard on radio, television, in cafés, schools, homes, taxis and music shops. Would the voices of Frank Sinatra, Michael Jackson or the Beatles ("We are more popular than Jesus Christ") be able to command such an audience? Some *qāri*'s attract "groupies," who follow them from performance to performance, whether at funerals, weddings, openings of schools and businesses, or other auspicious functions when Qur'an recitation is provided as blessing and celebration.

Muslims in Southeast Asia, specifi-

cally Malaysia and Indonesia, have in recent decades developed competitions in Qur'anic recitation and knowledge. In Indonesia, where a national level contest is mounted every two years, there is a long, arduous process of local and regional eliminations. The basic divisions, open to both sexes (who compete only within their sex groups), are children and youth, handicapped (especially blind), and adults. The youth and adult recitation competitions are judged according to quality of technical performance, mastery of musical modes, and comportment. Handicapped reciters are judged especially on excellence of memorization, although aficionados pack the blind contests expecting to hear stirring artistic performances, too, which are rewarded by spontaneous applause. (Muslims would not normally applaud Qur'an chanting any more than Christians would clap after hearing an anthem during worship.)

There are also contests of Qur'anic knowledge, which remind me of the old "College Bowl" quiz show on American television. Three teams of three persons each, usually mixed sexes, are given questions that must be answered within a brief time limit, with the first correct response carrying the field on a graded scale from 1 to 100. An electronic board tots up the scores, and the audience supports its favorites with clapping and shouting. Often someone can be heard anticipating the correct answer by a muttered phrase. Audiences for this unique form of sport tend to include good players, some of whom were once themselves contestants. Questions include identification of Qur'anic passages and musical modes, Arabic phonetics, and even details about Qur'anic education in Indonesia. A premier *qāri'a*, (woman reciter) was on hand to demonstrate styles and musical modes for identification. (I had met Maria Ulfa several years before in Jakarta and can testify that she is also a crack Arabist, exegete and legal expert. She is a bona fide celebrity, and photographers from TV and the print media are always swarming around her. She won the world chanting championship in Kuala Lumpur several years ago, and her creamy contralto is widely recognized and loved. About thirty, Maria Ulfa is dignified and handsome, a kind of Javanese Islamic royalty.)

President Soeharto opened the Fourteenth Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an on May 3, 1985. The program included prayers, recitations by the



Two Muslim gentlemen examine a display representation at a special exhibition of Qur'ans and related objects.

man and woman who had won the previous tournament, speeches by the minister of religion and the governor of West Kalimantan, and special entertainment. A drill team of young men and women received the MTQ flag from the president and solemnly raised it alongside the flag of the Republic of Indonesia. This opening event was held in a large sports stadium, with seats only for invited guests, which included a sizeable presidential party of government officials and diplomatic corps, as well as several thousand others. Multitudes of townspeople crowded around the perimeter fences.

The special entertainment was introduced by a huge brass band, which, dressed in white duck trousers and batik skirt-sash, rounded the track performing the jaunty MTQ march at full volume. Some industrious music man from North Sulawesi had formed this pride of Pontianak years ago. It was the first time outside the movies that I have actually seen and heard seventy-six trombones blast away the blues as thousands broke into applause and laughter under a full moon in the magical Borneo night. After the band finished its circuit of the stadium an ominous sound of blowing wind emanated from the pub-

lic address system, accompanied by words of Allah's witnessing intoned in a deep voice. That brief, lugubrious interlude was soon relieved by 1,100 brightly costumed men and women dancers who spilled onto the field and went through a series of energetic routines, with the sexes separated into several major groups. The dance started with a representation of prayer postures, but then gave way to exuberant turning and swaying, with the women shaking their hips and the men performing more acrobatic moves on the sides. Many of the female dancers played tambourines. The climax came with the precision formation of the logo MTQ over a circle with superimposed arrow, symbol of the equator, which passes through Pontianak. Music was provided by a 500-piece symphony orchestra and a 4,000-voice mixed Chinese-Catholic choir. Four thousand little kids in school uniforms sat massed at the goal ends of the soccer field and waved white pom-poms on cue. I imagined at one point that I was at the Colorado-Nebraska Homecoming football game back in Boulder, except that I knew the ending would be happier.

Every evening during the ten-day tournament there was a nationally televised recap of the day's events, a

half-hour slot between the news and "Starsky and Hutch" or some other popular series. The newspapers ran daily reports and team and individual standings, which the attentive public absorbed along with the sports pages. One TV report showed the physical training that the reciters go through, like jogging and calisthenics. Another covered a showing of new Islamic clothing designs. On the final gala evening, the teams once again marched around the stadium in review, and there were again special music and dance performances. The winners in all classes and competitions were presented with trophies and other symbols of victory, while the nation watched on live television. The overall best team was Jawa Timur, "East Java," my own research field. I had been with that group in its preliminary training, and I was at Surabaya's Juanda Airport when it returned to a heroes' welcome, with women's chorus, men drummers, and a police motorcade, with silver trophies and beaming reciters borne on decorated pickup trucks to the governor's mansion. Banners were hanging over the main streets proclaiming Jawa Timur as reigning MTQ champs.

The Indonesian government continues to be firmly committed to the "Five Principles," Panca Sila, which Sukarno, the father of Indonesia, set forth in 1945: 1) belief in God, 2) pluralistic nationalism (i.e., making one nation without giving up the rich diversity of Indonesian peoples), 3) democracy (especially at the local level), 4) humanitarianism and, 5) social justice. Within this scheme the religions of Islam, Christianity (Catholicism and Protestantism are regarded as separate religions), Hinduism and Buddhism are officially recognized and represented in a central department of religion. Islam, as the creed of the vast majority, has a privileged position, but is far from dominating either the governmental or legal systems, which are quasi-secular.

Throughout the days of the Qur'an recitation tournament frequent reference was made to Panca Sila by the president, the minister of religion, the governor of West Kalimantan, and other officials. Posters, billboards and banners celebrated Panca Sila all over Pontianak, often in conjunction with MTQ. In recent months, under strong pressure, all political, social, service and religious organizations in Indonesia have begun to pledge formal allegiance to Panca Sila as the governing ideology for their activities and



A leading teacher of Qur'an recitation is H. M. Basori Alwi (holding the microphone) shown here at his special religious boarding school in Singosari, East Java, Mr. Alwi was a judge at the chanting tournament in Pontianak, the capital of the Indonesia province of West Kalimantan on Borneo.



Muslim students watch the Qur'an quiz show at the Pontianak tournament.

goals. No one comments when a group like Rotary International in Indonesia announces its support of Panca Sila; it won't make an appreciable difference. But it was a different matter when the large and powerful conservative Islamic organization Nahdlatul Ulama ("Renaissance of the Religious

Scholars") came out early this year with an official declaration of support for Panca Sila. A significant minority of vigorously orthodox Muslims in Indonesia want an Islamic state based on the Shariah, the Holy Law. To support Panca Sila is in effect to certify that one is not attempting to establish

an Islamic or any other particularist system.

The religious minorities, especially the Christians, have a big stake in Panca Sila, because it guarantees relative freedom of belief and action and preserves them from the (to them) intolerable burden of living under the Shariah. Thus the many evidences of support for the Qur'an chanting contest within the context of Panca Sila in strongly Christian Pontianak — posters, a parade with floats, choristers and instrumentalists — can be interpreted as more than ecumenical good will. The people of Pontianak went on record as strong supporters of the central government's Islamic games. The government, in turn, depends on the religious minorities, especially the vastly influential Christians, for support of its secularist and pluralistic policies.

In a way, the recitation of the Qur'an in the Opening MTQ ceremony was more the occasion for the evening than its main focus, except perhaps for the participants and their constituencies. Only two short portions of the Qur'an were recited, from a glassed-in "pulpit of recitation" (*minbar al-tilawa*) that extended into the middle of the field from a representation of a Dayak long house, with five steep gables facing the audience. Above the highest gable was the name "Allah" in green neon Arabic script, while floating above the pulpit, at a lower level, was "Muhammad." The gables themselves resembled church steeples. Their number could be understood to represent either the five "pillars" of Islam (the unity of God and the apostlehood of Muhammad, prayer, legal alms, fasting in Ramadan, pilgrimage to Mecca) or Panca Sila; ideally, from the government's viewpoint, both.

There is something disembodied about Qur'an chanting in a large stadium, carried by a public address system. It lacks the warmth, intimacy and spontaneity of recitation in a mosque, classroom or home. On the evenings after the opening, when the agenda was adult recitation broken only once by a brief intermission of music and folk dance, people milled around on the running track, hawkers sold their snacks and souvenirs, and families with small children enjoyed the evening air. The smaller daily contests stuck exclusively to the business of recitation and judging. There were stirring moments when reciter and audience were lifted to a high spiritual plane. At such times, Qur'an recitation

and all that it implies, was both occasion and focus.

Recitation of the Qur'an in Indonesia, Malaysia, and other places, constitutes a genre of cultural performance. Although it is carried on within the five carefully regulated daily prayer services, it is also capable of incorporation into numerous other contexts. The mosque prayer service is dominated by men. Across the Muslim world it is unusual for women to be in attendance. When they are, they are often separated from the men by a screen or special partition. Otherwise, they occupy a row or two at the rear,

***The climax of the evening was a procession in which the twenty-six provincial teams, averaging about fifteen persons, marched in review past the president.***

well separated from the ranks of male worshipers. Women may never serve as prayer leaders for men or a mixed congregation.

However, in the Qur'an competition, females are very prominent as equal participants with men, even though they compete in their own sex group. Women recite before the entire assembly — a rare if not unheard of occurrence in the Middle East, except on television — they participate equally in the MTQ flag ceremony, and they express themselves most energetically through dance. Perhaps even more significantly is the "un-Islamic" mixed seating in the stadium. That assembly was neither a mosque gathering nor a wholly secular affair: it was an expression of Indonesian civil religion, dominated by and expressed through core Islamic symbols, but supported and jointly celebrated by representatives of the religious minorities.

Islam is the most community and consensus-minded of the world's religions. Indonesia, as a Javanese colleague keeps reminding me, is a society in which "togetherness" is a way of life. Indonesians do not believe in democracy if by that is meant the tyranny of the majority. At all times they seek to discuss and compromise, so as to distribute benefits and responsibilities as evenly as possible through the system. Islam and Indonesia are a good fit. But there is much of spiritual excellence in contemporary Indonesia that can be traced back to the pre-Islamic

Javanese, Malay, Hindu and Buddhist past.

Islam in Indonesia is not a thin veneer of nominal monotheism spread over an essentially mystical and animist population, as some outside observers have asserted. Neither is Indonesian Islam a monolithic, austere puritanism bent on securing a Southeast Asian fortress of the faith, linked by history and ritual with some sort of Islamic "crescent" that curves up through Asia, around through the Middle East and down deep into Africa. There is genuine pride among Indonesian Muslims about being part of the worldwide Islamic revival of today. But there is also a discriminating attitude toward fellow Muslim countries and movements. The Iranian revolution is generally regarded as misguided and extremist; Pakistan's efforts at achieving an Islamic state are respected but not considered by most to be duplicable in Southeast Asia; and Saudi Arabia's lofty ways are endured with a characteristic Indonesian smile.

The great majority of Indonesians want a genuinely Islamic way of life in their country, but they appear to prefer to sustain it in an Indonesian manner, through courtesy, tolerance, and consensus-seeking. "Bung ('brother') Karno," as the late President Sukarno was known to his countrymen, knew the hearts and minds of his people well when, during a long imprisonment under the Dutch, he contrived the wonderfully woolly Panca Sila formula of belief in God, humanism, democracy, nationalism and social justice. Panca Sila has kept Indonesia's politicians, bureaucrats, religious leaders, journalists and intellectuals occupied for forty years now, twisting it this way and that for their purposes. It was only fitting that when the twenty-six regional Qur'an recitation teams passed in review at both the opening and closing ceremonies of MTQ 14 in Pontianak, the Panca Sila March was what kept them in step.

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