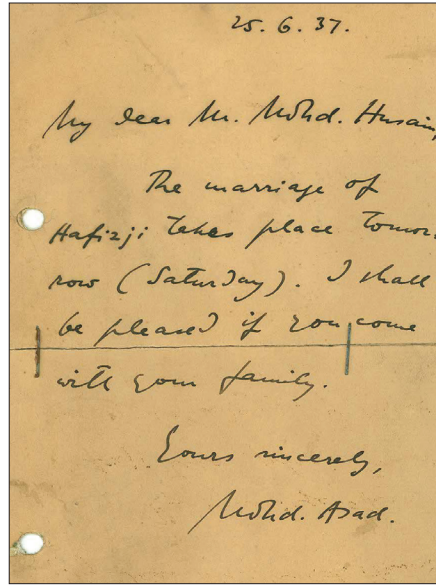




A LIFE IN LETTERS:
MUHAMMAD ASAD AND POLA HAMIDA ASAD
TO
MUHAMMAD HUSAIN BABRI
PART II: TWENTY-THREE LETTERS (1964-1985)

Collected and Annotated by
Muhammad Arshad

Muhammad Arshad, Chief Editor and Professor, Department of Urdu
Encyclopaedia of Islam, University of the Punjab, Allama Iqbal
Campus, Lahore, Pakistan. Email: arshad571@yahoo.com.

Islamic Sciences, Vol. 15 (Winter 2017) No. 2
ISSN 1929-9435 (Print); ISSN 1929-9443 (Online)
© 2017 by the Center for Islamic Sciences

This second installment of hitherto unpublished letters of Muhammad Asad and his wife Pola Hamida Asad to Muhammad Husain Babri, their sincere friend for almost half a century (1935-1985), sheds new light on the life and intellectual activities of Muhammad Asad over an extended period of twenty-one years (December 15, 1964—November 11, 1985). The first letter was written from Tangier, Morocco, by Pola Hamida and endorsed by Asad; the last by Muhammad Asad from Queluz, Portugal. Babri passed away soon after receiving the last letter and thus ended a significant chronicle of Asad's life.

Taken altogether, these letters provide a rare insight into Asad's personal and intellectual life, his relationship with family and friends, his restless style of life which took him from one country to another like an Arab Bedouin who keeps moving to new pastures, just as Asad had described himself "once a bedouin, always a bedouin". During these years Asad lived in Switzerland, Morocco, Portugal, and finally in Spain. These letters are also valuable source for a future biography of Asad. The letters are being published as they were written, without any changes to the text.

Keywords: Muhammad Asad; Pola Hamida Asad; Munira Asad; Talal Asad; Shaikh Zaki Yamani; Qur'ān translation; letters of Muhammad Asad; Pakistan; formative currents in twentieth century Islamic thought; politics and culture of the colonial era; British Raj; Islam, Muslims and the challenge of modernity.

(69)

Pola Hamida to Muhammad Husain

4 rue d' Ecosse,
Jamaa al-Mokra,
TANGIER, Morocco.
December 15, 1964

My dear Mohammad Hussain,
Asad has requested me to answer your postcard, sent from Lahore on the 27th November, which reached us here in Morocco only a few days ago.
Much has happened since we saw you last, in Switzerland; in June Asad had

an accident while walking in the evening and broke two bones on [sic, of] his foot. This postponed by a month his visit to Morocco, but he went in July and after his return we had not a moment to spare. We had to finish his first volume¹ for the printers and at the same time prepare for our big shift to Tangier. We left Switzerland early in October, after buying a new car (a Volkswagon station-wagon), and drove across France and Spain to Tangier. It was an extremely interesting trip because, although we already knew France from before, neither of us had ever been to Spain, which is enchanting. We spent several days in various places along the way, especially in Granada, which was wonderful. We hope to return again next year, after we have finally settled down here and Asad's next volume has progressed sufficiently.

The Qur'an translation came out of the press just a few days before we left Geneva. We gave instructions to the Islamic Center² to send a large number of complimentary copies to various friends in Pakistan and elsewhere, but we have recently learned that none of these copies has yet been received. We have written to the Center to remind them of this obligation, and I presume that they have finally been sent. Therefore, we hope, your copy is already on the way.

As for ourselves, we had several very difficult months preparing for our big shift, packing, etc. but thank God it is all over. A few days ago our furniture and other belongings arrived here in Tangier and we have placed them in storage until our own house is ready. We are presently living in a rented, furnished villa, and will have to remain thus for four to six months longer. Asad has purchased a beautiful property in the mountains above Tangier, only ten minutes drive to town. It is a huge garden filled with every kind of tree and a house, which must be completely transformed. But it was extremely inexpensive, as well as a very sound investment. Meanwhile, however, Asad is extremely busy trying to get the work on the house itself started; once it starts we will feel a great relief. We do hope that by May we shall be in our own house, with our own comfortable things around us, and that life will go smoothly from then on.

Tangier itself is a beautiful place; after only a month and a half of living here, I couldn't even dream of living anywhere else. The people are good, the climate is magnificent (and this is the rainy time of the year), the landscape

-
1. The first volume of the *The Message of the Qur'an*, consisting of the translation of the first 9 surahs of the Qur'an, without Arabic text, was published by the Islamic Centre Geneva (1964).
 2. Islamic Centre Geneva, founded (1961) and headed by Dr. Said Ramadan (1926-1995) the son-in-law of Hasan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt. Later it became the European office of The Muslim World League (*rabitat al-alam al-islami*) and it was funded and its activities were sponsored by the Saudi Government through the head office of Rabitah in Makkah al-Mukarramah.

beautiful, with the Mediterranean to one side and the Atlantic to the other. It is unfortunate that you could not bear Switzerland for a few months longer, because you would have liked it here very much indeed. However, I am sure you must be happier at home in Pakistan, with your family around you and life familiar and amusing.

That's about all I can tell you. Azdar and Afreet are very well and have great freedom. We have an enclosed garden in our present house as well, and so there is no longer any need to walk them on the lead. In our own garden they can run as much as they like; it is enormous, really a small estate.

We were very sorry to learn of your illness and hope that you are better by now and will take good care of yourself. Now I shall close and let Asad add a few lines of his own when he returns home.

With kind regards to your wife and family,

Yours sincerely,
Hamida

My dear Mohammad Husain,

I do hope that this will find you in good health and spirits. What is past is past, and one should not worry about it.

With all the best wishes,

Yours,
Asad

(70)

"Al-Asadiyya"

Jamaa al-Mokra,

TANGIER, Morocco

February 20, 1966.

Dear Muhammad Hussain,

Your letter has reached us here, at our permanent address in Tangier, where we have been settled during the last two months. Before that we had rented several houses, waiting for our own house to be completed and ready. Now, after a serious illness, Asad has gone to Saudi Arabia, where he will remain for another two weeks or so, not more, insha-Allah. Naturally I am very lonely in his absence, but have Azdar and Afreet to keep me company and a large garden to work in. However, ever since he left the weather has been rainy, and I am forced to sit down and to answer many, long neglected letters.

I had been planning to accompany him this trip. He went to the Islamic Conference in Mecca³ last April, at which time I was also invited, but I couldn't go because someone had to look after the building of the house in his absence. The ticket remained for my use, but this time I couldn't go because the servants who had been with us for the past year left us (we had to send them away because the wife was good but the husband lazier than we could bear), and I had nobody to leave the house and dogs with. Next time, insha-Allah.

The past year has been a difficult one for us, as for many, many other people. My sister (I had only two and this was the closest to me) died suddenly last year in January, leaving behind her husband, two young children and my mother, who had been living with her very since the death of my father thirteen years ago - a few months before I met and married Asad. It is a terrible tragedy for us all; I couldn't be there in time for the funeral, but visited America for three weeks in August. Needless to say, it was a very sad visit, and I was very glad to come back to Morocco.

I hope this letter finds you and your family in good health and that this year will be a better one for you, as well as for ourselves. We now have a very beautiful home of our own here in Tangier, on a hillside overlooking the town and the sea. The climate is one of the most beautiful in the world; it is never cold in winter, although there is a lot of rain for some months. From April or May onwards, however, continual sunshine and never really hot. There are all kinds of flowers, vegetables and fruits and we have an enormous garden, which I enjoy particularly because I like such work. Let us hope that Asad will enjoy better health and that, then he returns from Arabia, he will be able to concentrate entirely on the work which God has entrusted him to complete.

With best regards to your family and yourself,

Yours as ever,
Hamida

P.S. We were very anxious for you and all our friends in Pakistan during the recent conflict with India. Of course we realize that the fight has only begun. May God bring victory to our side not because it is our but because it is so just.

P. H. A.

3. During that period two leading conferences on Islamic Unity were held in Makkah al-Mukarramah (May 1962 and April 1965). These conferences were the part of the Saudi initiatives to fight communism. The initiatives led to the establishment of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. (see Banafsheh Keynoush, *Saudi Arabia and Iran: Friends or Foes?* (New York: Palgrav Macmillan, 2016), Ch. 6 "Epoch of Saudi-Iranian Cooperation and Rivalry", pp. 85-105, esp. p. 85; Joseph Mann, "King Faisal and the Challenge of Nasser's Revolutionary Ideology", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 48:5 (2012), pp. 749-764.

(71)

“Al-Asadiyya”

Jamaa al-Mokra,

TANGIER, Morocco

February 26, 1967

My dear Muhammad Hussain,

Of course we have not forgotten you. But since coming here to Morocco we have been so preoccupied with many problems that all of my correspondence has suffered almost beyond repair. I have been writing regularly to almost no one except my mother and remaining sister. Of course, the death of my dearest sister two years ago has been a great blow to me from which I have not really recovered, despite great mental and moral effort.

Asad is hard at work trying to complete the second of his three volumes of the Qur'an translation and tafsir⁴, of which you have received a copy of the first and only so far published. We hope that after two or three months of intensive work, the second will be completed and he will go on the last. It has taken him some time to get back into this work after our major shift to Morocco and building of our house (which took almost a year, during which he produced nothing). Now we are finally beginning to enjoy our house and garden, because at the beginning we were so tired we couldn't take pleasure in it. I am in charge of the garden and have developed a passion for garden work. However, I am thinking of starting to write myself soon. Particularly after we received a visit yesterday from the American publisher of “The Road to Mecca”, who not only pressed Asad for the second volume of his memoirs, but insisted that I should write for publication as well.⁵

Asad's health is much better now, and has been for some months. He is always better when he is working. I have suffered from some liver trouble almost since we came to Morocco but it now seems to be better. Except for a serious eye attack a few weeks ago (during which I was in great pain and couldn't read or write for a long time), I have been well, too. Today, fortunately, we are having some much hoped for rain, and that is why I have finally settled down to write a few letters. When the sun is out (which is practically always), I am always tempted to be outside and to work in the garden. As a result, my correspondence and all other indoor work is neglected.

Azdar and Afreet send you their love. We think of you often and with great

4. It was not published until 1980 but in a single volume by Dar al-Andalus, Gibraltar, Spain.

5. The end result is *The Home-Coming of the Heart* (By Asad and Pola Hamida Asad) published several decades later as a sequel volume to *The Road to Mecca* in Pakistan (Edited by M Ikram Chaghatai, Lahore: The Truth Society, 2012).

affection. We do hope that this letter finds you all in good health.

With warmest regards from us both,

Yours,
Hamida

(72)

Villa Asadiyya,
Jamaa al-Mokra,
TANGIER, Morocco.
[1967]

Dear Muhammad Hussain

Although it is difficult for me to do so, I am writing to you at Asad's instance, because he is too lazy for letter writing or else too busy with his own work.

Since our coming to Morocco a little over three years ago, I have had nothing but personal tragedies, so there didn't seem much point to writing. Three year ago my sister died, suddenly, of a stroke, and three weeks ago my remaining sister died, the same way. What else is there to say? There are only my mother and myself left in our family. I went to America two years ago to see her, but I don't think of bringing her here to live because she is too old to adjust to such a different life and would have no familiar surroundings, language, religion, old friends, nothing, not even good hospitals. And if something should happen to me, it would be all the more difficult. She is now living in Boston with another widow of her own age and in contact with her friends of youth as well as within visiting distance of her two grand-children, with whom she lived since their birth, but who now have a new "mother".

As for ourselves here in Tangier, Asad is in reasonably good health, but the climate is tiring and hard for work. Still, he is working regularly on his Qur'an translation and tafsir, and pray God that within two or three years the whole work will be completed. Perhaps, God willing, after that he will write the sequel to his "Road to Mecca".

How is life in Pakistan? We both hope you are healthy and happy and that all your children and your wife are well. Please convey to them and all other real friends our affectionate regards.

Yours sincerely,
Hamida

(73)

Villa Asadiyya,
Jamaa al-Mokra,
Tangier, Morocco
September 10, 1970

My dear Muhammad Hussain,

Please forgive me for not writing to you for so long a time. I have been away in Algeria at the invitation of the Algerian Government and have returned only recently.

Both Hamida and I are fairly well, thanks to God. I shall be most grateful to you if you will convey my and Hamida's warm regards to Rana Jahandad, Syed Nazir Niazi, Mian Shafi (whose lovely letter has given me very great pleasure), Hafiz Lal Din, and all other dear friends who still remember us. And, of course, all the best to yourself and your family.

At the end of this month we will be going, insha-Allah, to Saudi Arabia, where I expect to conclude my discussions with the Rabitah about the distribution of my Qur'an translation. So far the first volume has not been properly distributed by them owing to some differences of opinion between me and certain members of the Rabitah council. I hope that this difference will be resolved.⁶

With all the best from both of us,

Yours as always,
Asad

P.S. I have written separately to Qazi Abdul Baqi at his address in England and hope that my letter will reach him there. In any case, do please mention this to him when you see him again.

6. In his interpretation Asad emerged as a rationalist, and he heavily borrowed from Mu'tazilis such as al-Zamakhsharī (467-538/ca.1074-1143), Abū Muslim al-Aṣḥānī (254-322/868-934), and neo-Mu'tazilis such as Muḥammad 'Abduh (1265-1323/1849-1905) and his Syrian student Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā (1282-1354/1865-1935). *The Message of the Qur'an* was warmly welcomed by the modernists [see Rashid Ahmad Jallundhri, "The Message of the Qur'an: A New Translation with Explanatory Notes", *Islamic Quarterly*, XII:3 (1968), pp. 174-180], but the external reviews received by the Rabitah, which had sponsored the work, from various scholars, including Sayyid Abūl-'Alā' Mawdūdī and Sayyid Abūl-Ḥasan 'Alī Nadwī, expressed serious reservations about the work. The differences between Asad and the Rabitah could not be resolved, and the Rabitah did not allow its distribution [See Asad and Pola, *Home-Coming of the Heart*, p. 249; Arshad, *Islami riyasat ki tashkil-i jadid* (Lahore: Al-Faisal, 2011), pp. 176-178].

(74)

Villa Asadiyya,
Jamaa al-Mokra,
Tangier, Morocco
April 18, 1972

My dear Muhammad Hussain,

We were pleased to receive your letter of March 28th and to learn that you all are well. It is indeed a very long time since either of us wrote, but you see the past year or more have been very difficult ones for us. Now, just two months ago, we have lost our beloved Azdar. She died after a long treatment of a sore in her mouth, which proved to be cancer, and she has left us very, very sad after twelve years together. We still have Afreet, but he misses her also – so none of us are very happy.

In a few days we are leaving for a month's holiday in Spain, which we badly need, and are taking Afreet with us. Asad's health is excellent, and it is hard to believe that next July he will be as old as the century. I am not bad except that since almost two years I have been suffering from a duodenal ulcer, which is not a pleasant thing to have and seems to be very rare in women. However, I don't think it's dangerous, only a nuisance, especially with my very nervous and active temperament.

Yes, Asad is almost finished with his monumental and very demanding work and we shall let you know when it is available, of course. We have suffered terribly from what has been (and is still) happening in Pakistan. It's almost worse to be viewing it from a distance and more objectively than one can possibly be there, God help us all.

With our warmest regards to all of you, and don't forget us,

Yours,
Hamida

P. S. Talal, as you may know, is lecturer in social anthropology at the University of Hull (England) and is married to an English woman (no children, perhaps just as well in this kind of world!). He is at present visiting professor at the American University in Cairo for one year and then will return to England, I suppose. They visited us here in Tangier last year at just this time. His mother lives with her family in Saudi Arabia.

(75)

Villa Asadiyya,
Jamaa al-Mokra,
Tangier, Morocco.
June 21, 1972

My dear Muhammad Hussain,

Both Hamida and I were extremely shocked and sorry at the news of Lal Din's death. He was a truly good man and we understand what a loss this is to you and your family. But because he was so good a man, it is certain that God will reward him for a lifetime well spent.

Please convey to your wife our heartfelt sympathy and may God console you all for the loss, which you have suffered.

With love,

Yours,
Asad.

(76)

Villa Asadiyya
Jamaa al-Mokra
TANGIER, Morocco
October 14, 1973

My dear Muhammad Hussain,

We have been away from Tangier for over a week and found on our return your letter informing us of the demise of your dear wife. You must know that we were deeply affected by this sad news and we realize how hard it must be for you to bear this loss after so many years of companionship. It is difficult to express one's feeling on such an occasion – but be rest assured that we feel the death of your wife as if it were in our own family. May God keep her soul in His care and give you and your children the comfort you so badly need at this time. Our hearts are with you.

Yours affectionately,
Asad & Hamida

(77)

Villa Asadiyya
Jamaa al-Mokra
TANGEIR, Morocco
April 25, 1974

Dear Muhammad Hussain,

Thank you so much for remembering my birthday, as you do every year. Frankly speaking, the more I have the more I would like forget them, although I must confess that I don't feel so very old yet.

We both are reasonably well, in fact, Asad is very well, as active as always and working very, very hard completing his enormous work on the Qur'an, which should be ready in a matter of months, insha-Allah. After that, of course, there will still be much work, polishing, typing, re-typing, getting it ready for the press, etc, and I am very much looking forward to this.

Life goes on the same as always, although the social changes are enormous here, as everywhere else. We go over to Spain several times a year, just for the change, and love it there. We know practically the whole country as we always drive and we already speak the language a bit.

Afreet is well. He will be twelve years old, insha-Allah, in June. We have a new companion for him, another Saluki, this time a male because Afreet is too old to have an exciting young female around. The new dog is named Farouk [?] and he looks so much like our beloved Azdar that he might have been her son. He is the same color and type and is very, very lively. He is a little over a year old now and is already slightly taller than Afreet. He brings some much-needed new life into our household and is a good companion for Afreet, whom he worships.

And that's about all our "news". As I say, life is quiet here and devotedly almost entirely to Asad's work. I am busy as always with the house and our enormous garden, and so the years go by.

Do write us one of these days and tell us about your life. You must miss your wife very, very much, but I presume that you always have someone of your numerous family about you, and that is a great blessing. We both send you all our warmest wishes and love.

Yours affectionately,
Hamida

7. Asad named one of his dogs as Farouk. He has not only mentioned this name in several letters but also in his biographical work (see Asad and Pola Hamida, *Home-Coming of the Heart*, p. 254, 255, 256, 259, 265, 276).

(78)

Villa Asadiyya
La Montagne
TANGIER, Morocco
February 5, 1976

Dearest Mohammad Hussain,

Your letter of the 29th January arrived only fifteen minutes ago and I am hastening to answer it immediately, even though I shall not have an opportunity to mail it before two or three days, or whenever Asad returns from Libya. He has been attending a conference there since last Friday and I do hope that he will be able to return as soon as possible, especially as when he left he was in very poor health, not yet recovered from a very debilitating bout of influenza. I am in the same condition and I am simply dreaming of spending one whole day in bed, but that will have to wait until Asad returns because I have to eat, look after the dogs, etc. We do have a kind of maid and a gardener here, but they are both too immature and irresponsible to be of much help in such a situation.

In spite of his advancing years (he is as old as the century), Asad remains in good health, except that for the past two years he has several very bad attacks of flu each winter, which take a lot out of him. He has been travelling a lot since his completion of his Qur'an translation, in fact so much that we have not yet been able to complete the manuscript for the printers. Also, there is a great problem as to where to have it printed because the costs in all European countries, including England, are outrageous. However, somehow or other we shall have to solve this problem, and I have yet to complete the final typing of the manuscripts of both volumes.⁸ It is an enormous work and at times I despair that I will never be able to finish it – and there is no one else except me that can do it.

Last spring Asad was in London for a week; then, in August he was in Sarawak (Malaya) for several weeks at the invitation of the Chief Minister there. He enjoyed this latter visit very much and held a symposium for young people, giving many informal talks; he found it much more useful and stimulating than any of the many costly international conferences which lead to nothing. He was away for five weeks, because on the way out and back he stayed in Saudi Arabia for a week or more each time, visiting with old friends, paying a call on

8. Ultimately it was published in a single volume in 1980 by Asad's own publishing house Dar al-Andalus, which he established in Gibraltar (Spain).

the new king, etc. the death of King Faysal⁹ was a terrible shock to both of us and an irreplaceable loss¹⁰; may God reward him for all the good that he has done for his country and the whole Muslim world.

On the 19th of this month it will be four years since Azdar died; I haven't got over the loss because she was inexpressibly dear to me and the last year of her life was a hard one. Now Afreet is growing old (he is over thirteen and a half years old) and his health is declining. He's still remarkably well for his age, but Farouk [?] ¹¹ will be three at the end of this month; he is extremely lively and very tall, taller than Afreet. He resembles Azdar very much and could have been her son.

Ever since Asad left for Tripoli it has been raining and it is very depressing here alone, in spite of the loving company of the salukis. I can't express how lonely I feel without him; perhaps it is my own mistake for having been always so close to him that now I am entirely dependent. What a price to pay for loving someone too much!

I was very much pleased to read of various old friends that you mentioned in your letter. Would you convey our warmest, warmest affection to them all, and assure them that neither of us has ever forgotten our friends or Pakistan. Chaudhri Niaz Ali Khan¹² is especially dear to us, as you know, and as a matter of fact we have both been hesitating to write to him because we feared that he might be dead. What an astonishing man he is and what a lovely one! He treated me like his own daughter when I was in Pakistan – as did you – and I can never forget it.

9. 25 On 25th March 1975, King Faisal was assassinated by his nephew Faisal bin Musaid bin Abdu al-Aziz (1944-1975), who had just come back from the United States.

10. Asad had known King Faisal (1964-1975) since 1927 and over the years their friendship had remained intact. Asad was one of the Faisal's most fervent enthusiasts, seeing in him a vast improvement over Ibn Saud (Asad, *The Road to Mecca*, Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus, 1980), "Postscript", p. 376-378. Asad was greatly shocked by the assassination of King Faisal, as Pola narrates: "At noon on the twenty-fifth of March, 1975, we turned on the news broadcast of the BBC, as was our wont, and were shocked to learn of the assassination of that great man just a few minutes earlier. It was the first and last that I ever saw Muhammad Asad cry". (see Asad and Pola, *Home-coming of the Heart*, pp. 256-57.

11. see note no. 77.

12. Chaudhry Niaz Ali Khan was one of Asad's dearest and most sincere friend (For details, see Asad and Pola, *Home-coming of the Heart*, pp. 90-91, 221; Muhammad Arshad (ed.), "A Life in Letters: Muhammad Asad and Pola Hamida Asad to Muhammad Husain Babri", Part 1: Sixty Eight Letters (1937-1963), *Islamic Sciences* 15:1 (Summer 2017), p. 34, ff 34.

Back to Asad and his travels. He is supposed to go to London at the beginning of March for a few days, to pre-view the films to be shown at the World of Islam Festival.¹³ I don't know whether he will be able to make it. Also, he is supposed to give a talk in connection with the Festival during the first week in April, again in London.¹⁴ The thought of his being away from me again fills me with dread, but I suppose he must do these things or else be entirely forgotten by this fickle world. We are really very much "out of the way" here in Tangier; there is no cultural or intellectual life here whatever and the Moroccans, for all their strict Ramadan fasting and ritual slaughtering of sheep at 'Id (even the beggars manage to buy one at enormous cost!), is devoid of a deeper religious spirit. The North Africans are a very strange people, with none of the charm and directness of the Arabs (however good or bad Muslims they may be), nor of the various "Ajamis", including Pakistanis, who have other virtues and a far higher mental development. All in all, Pakistanis are still probably the best of the Muslims, in spite of their lapses and the difficult times we live in, of all. The Malaysians are also very enthusiastic and, at the same time, modest; Asad was very much taken by them. In short, the farther from the West people are in distance, apparently the better they are. European – Western – civilization is definitely in its death throes, there is no question about it. The tragedy is that it seems to be dragging all the rest of the world down to hell with it. I am not at all optimistic about the future and it is almost better not to think about it, if one can manage; I can't.

On his occasional trips to England, Asad always meets Talal and his wife Tanya; but when he was there in August for a few days, they were both

13. For details on World of Islam Festival (London 1976), see Anneka Lenssen, "Muslims to Take over Institute for Contemporary Art: The 1976 World of Islam Festival", *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin*, 42:1-2 (Summer/Winter 2008), pp. 40-47; *Review of Middle East Studies*, 42:1-2 (Summer/Winter 2008), pp. 40-47; Harold Beeley, "The World of Islam Festival London 1976", *Museum International*, 30:1 (January-December 1978), pp. 10-11; John Sabini, "The World of Islam, Its Festival", *ARAMCO WORLD: Islamic Cultures, and Connections*, 27:3 (May-June 1976).

14. During the second half of 1970s, Asad was invited several times to various conferences in London, many of his visits were sponsored by the Islamic Council of Europe, a brain-child of Salem Azzam (1924-2008) (the Secretary General of the Council), the younger brother of Asad's great friend Dr. Abd al-Wahhab Azzam (Asad and Pola, *Home-coming of the Heart*, p. 258). Asad delivered several talks in London on such occasions. Two of these ("The Meaning and the Significance of Hijrah" given in London on November 1979, and "The Message of the Qur'an", given on April 1980), have been included in his monograph, *This Law of Ours and other Essays* (Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus, 1987).

away. They seem to be quite contented together and he loves his teaching and research, but it is a pity that they had no children because she, in particular, wanted them. She is a very nice woman; modest and perhaps too considerate of Talal, who is a bit self-centered. He rarely writes his father (perhaps once a year or so), although I believe he has as much affection for him as he has for anyone, except his wife. He is simply self-centered. His mother is in Saudi Arabia with her family. I believe that Talal was planning to visit her some months ago when he was in Sudan for a teaching course. As you know, he couldn't stand living with her, either, and she was apparently very bad to his wife who, as I say, is very modest and patient. Such is life; people can't – or won't change.

I will close now and leave a little bit of room so that Asad can add a few words to mine when he returns from Libya and we send this off. No, we have neither forgotten you nor ceased to love you; it is simply that one has too much to do and too little time in which to do it...

Yours affectionately,
Hamida

(79)

Villa Asadiyya
La Montagne
TANGIER, Morocco
September 8, 1976

My dear Mohammed Hussain,

Many thanks, although much delayed, for your kind birthday wishes. I am taking this opportunity to wish you and your family a very happy 'Id from both of us.

If you have any English copies of "Islam at the Crossroads", would you please send me two immediately? I need them very urgently and I don't know where else to turn. If you do have them, even only one, and send them to me, please do inform me by letter so that I may know whether I can expect them. The packet should be sent registered.

I do hope that the years are kind to you, as they are, thanks to God, to Hamida and myself. Several months ago we lost our Afreet under tragic circumstances. Now we have two young dogs, one a Saluki and the other an Afghan puppy not quite six months old. Our Saluki (three and a half years old) is named "Farouk" [?] and the Afghan "Shimshir".

The first volume of my Qur'an translation and commentary is now in the

press in Ireland and will be ready, insha-Allah, by the end of this year. As soon as it is out, I will, of course, send you a copy. There will be two volumes in all.

With our warmest, warmest regards and wishes,

Yours as always,
Asad

(80)

Villa Asadiyya
La Montagne
TANGIER, Morocco
January 3, 1978

Dearest Mohammad Husain,

Many, many thanks for your card wishing us a happy new year. It is needless to say that we reciprocate your wishes and feelings. Neither of us has ever forgotten you, nor ever will.

My work on the Qur'an is finished and in the press for the last year. It will be two large volumes which, we hope, will be ready in the coming summer. You will, of course, receive a set immediately on publication.

Please let us have some first-hand news about Pakistan. For a long time I have not heard from Chaudhri Nazir Ahmad Khan (92 Gulberg). Can you let me know how he and his wife are? I would write myself, but I am almost afraid to do so; so many old friends have gone in the last few years.

We have a very good Pakistani Ambassador in Morocco – General Malik Abd al-Majid – who has become quite a friend of ours. We are happy that Pakistan is still producing such people.

Please write about yourself and your family. Both of us send you our warmest, most affectionate regards.

Yours,
Asad

(81)

Villa Asadiyya
La Montagne
TANGIER, Morocco
March 29, 1978

My dear Mohammad Hussain,

I have just received your letter of March 18 containing a copy of a letter from Begum Aisha Bawany Wakf addressed to you. I shall be grateful if you will immediately write to them and give them my address. I would have done so myself, but you have not communicated to me the exact address of that Wakf.

In future please give my address to anybody who asks about it. I cannot remember having instructed you to the contrary.

As regards my work on the Qur'an, it is out of the question for me to give the distribution rights for Pakistan to you or anybody else. All the distribution will be handled by a firm of publishers in London. In any case, it is too big and costly a work to be handled by people who are not professionals on a large scale.

We both are all right and hope that this letter will find you, too, in the best of health.

With warmest regards from both of us,

Yours,
Asad

P. S. Please write immediately to Bawany Wakf, giving them my address.

(82)

Villa Asadiyya
La Montagne
Tangier, Morocco
June 5, 1978

My dear Mohammad Hussain,

Some months ago you informed me that the Begum Aisha Bawany Wakf asked for my address but that you did not give it to them. Instead, you sent me a copy of their letter. I wrote to them at the only address indicated to me, and the result is that the letter – which is herewith enclosed – has been returned as “address incomplete”. Would you be so kind as to see to it that this letter reaches

the addressee immediately?

In future, please give my address to any respectable person who inquires about it.

With the best regards from both of us,

Yours as ever,
Asad

(83)

Villa Asadiyya
La Montagne
Tangier, Morocco

Mr. Mohammad Hussain Babri
51 Umar Din Road
Wasanpura
Lahore, Pakistan

My dear Mohammad Hussain,

This is a very belated letter, to thank you from both of us for your kind wishes which we always received on the occasion of our birthdays. We are glad to know that you are well, and we never forget you.

As you know, we have established a small publishing company in Gibraltar in order to reissue all my books. I now intend to print a new, revised edition of “Islam at the Crossroads”, bringing it up to date. While going through a copy of your 1969 reprint, we have found innumerable mistakes and even changes in the text which makes it impossible to understand the book correctly. Also, the production is a very cheap, “bazaari” affair, which is not proper. Therefore, I shall be most grateful if you will immediately stop distributing this unauthorized edition¹⁵ in any form whatsoever. Also, if you have any stocks left over, kindly destroy them so as not to allow them to be circulated. I count on you to fulfil this request faithfully because, as it stands, the book – which is very famous – is damaging to my literary reputation. I shall, of course, send you a copy of the new edition as soon as it is printed. But under no circumstances may it be reprinted in Pakistan.

We do hope and pray that you and all your family are well. As for ourselves, after my second operation on my hip-bone, I am fairly well, although, as you know, I have just passed my 81st birthday. God has been good to me!

15. This was not an unauthorized edition, as Asad himself had already authorized Babri for its reprinting. See Muhammad Arshad (ed.), “A Life in Letters: Asad and Pola Hamida Asad”, *Islamic Sciences*, Vol. 15 (Summer 2017), No. 1, p. 22.

With warm affection from both of us, I am,

Yours as always,
Muhammad Asad

[Received in Lahore on August 26, 1981]

(84)

Villa Asadiyya
La Montagne
Tangier, Morocco
September 23, 1981

My dear Muhammad Husain,

I have just received your registered letter containing a power of attorney which I had long ago forgotten about; it wasn't necessary to return it to me, but thank you very much.

I am glad to know that you are in good health and we both always are happy to hear from you. That we ourselves do not write as often as we would like is due to the fact that we are extremely busy with our publishing business, not having any outside office help. We do everything ourselves and this consumes our entire time and energy.

"Islam at the Crossroads" will be revised, with the addition of other material. Therefore, it will be a considerably larger book than before. We hope to get it to the press this winter, insha-Allah, and of course you will be sent a copy.

As regards "The Message of the Qur'an", I have finally, after months of drawn-out negotiations, concluded an agreement with Ferozsons of Lahore as distributors for Pakistan. The first consignment of books is now on the way to Pakistan. We have considerably reduced the price only for Pakistan. And will benefit very little from the sales. But we wanted the book to be available in Pakistan. The price agreed upon with Ferozsons is 12 Pounds per copy. Please let me know after some months whether they really keep to this price.

With love to you and your family from both of us, and with our best wishes for your health and long life, I am,

Yours as always,
Asad

(85)

DAR AL-ANDALUS
AL-ASADIYYA
LA MONTAGNE
TANGIER (Morocco)
Tel. (09)398-71
Registered Office:

Dar al-Andalus Limited, 3 Library Ramp, Gibraltar
November, 1, 1982
Mr. Mohammad Husain Babri
51 Umar Din Road
Wasanpura
LAHORE, Pakistan

My dear Mohammad Husain,

I have just now received your letter of October 25 and am very grateful for your watching over our interests. Yes, we have already heard about the theft and have entrusted Mr. Nasim Hasan, Senior Advocate, Lahore (whom you undoubtedly know) to take all necessary legal steps to protect us. This publication¹⁶ is absolutely unauthorized and must be stopped at all costs. "The Road to Mecca" is in print in an authorized edition and can be bought honestly by anyone who wants to have a copy. The same holds good for all my other books.

If you hear of any other theft or attempted theft, please contact Mr. Nasim Hasan immediately; he has power of Attorney to act on our behalf in any matter concerning our publications in Pakistan.

On November 4th we are leaving for Portugal and London and expect to be back, insha-Allah, in the first week of December. We both send you our warmest love and thanks. By the way, today is the 30th anniversary of our marriage!

Yours as always,
M. Asad

16. During 1980s, a pirated edition of *The Road to Mecca* was issued by Islamic Book Service, Lahore.

(86)

Villa Asadiyya
La Montagne
Tangier, Morocco
February 28, 1983

Mr. Muhammad Hussain Babri
51 Umar Din Road
Wassampura
LAHORE, Pakistan

My dear Muhammad Hussain,

I see that you have a telephone – what a pity that one cannot use it from here and hear once again your very dear voice!

Do, please, accept Hamida's and my congratulations on having achieved the age of 81 (I shall be 83, as you know, on July 2, insha-Allah). Like you, my health is all right, thanks to God, in spite of the two operations on my hip-bone, the second of which (made in London in 1979) was a thorough success.

Will you be surprised to learn that once more we are planning to change our domicile: this time we intend to shift to Portugal, probably at the beginning of June. Before leaving, I shall, of course, send you our new address. This, I expect, will be our last major shift because it gets more and more difficult, not to say expensive, for an old beduin like me to keep moving to new pastures. But, really, we both desperately need a new environment to give us a new lease of life. In Portugal, unlike much of the rest of the world, one encounters not a trace of either racial or religious prejudice; this is a very rare thing in our poor world. As a matter of fact, there already exists quite a large Muslim community in Lisbon, mostly of Indian or Pakistani origin (from East Africa).

Mr. Sadiq Quraishi¹⁷ has written to me telling me that he had the pleasure of visiting you and exchanging "information" about me. I cannot tell you how many letters I have been receiving as a result of his series of articles; it is really touching not to be completely forgotten in Pakistan after all these years of exile.

Hamida joins me in wishing you, especially, as well as all your family, the very best of health and happiness. We never forget you.

Yours as always,
Muhammad Asad

17. Asad and Sadiq Quraishi corresponded regarding the pirated edition of *The Road to Mecca*. Eventually the proprietors of the Islamic Book Service were prohibited to sell it. They also paid royalty to Asad. For Asad's letters to M. Sadiq Qureshi, see *Islamic Sciences* Vol. 14 (Winter 2016) No. 2, pp. 179-186.

(87)

Casa Caravela
Carregueira (Belas)
2745 QUELUZ
Portugal
May 13, 1984

My dear Mohammad Husain,

Although we never forget you, we have been thinking a lot about you lately. Your birthday remembrance to Hamida has given us both great pleasure.

How are you going on? Neither of us is getting any younger, but thanks to God I am keeping good health and hoping that the same goes for you. Hamida is very depressed these days because she lost her mother a few weeks ago. It was to be expected, because she was very old and ailing for a long time, but such things come always as a shock.

We have been invited by Shaikh Zaki Yamani¹⁸ to spend Ramadan, or most of it, with him in Saudi Arabia, as we did last year. This will be good for both of us, and we shall remember you while praying at the Kaabah.

Please convey our warm regards to all our friends in Lahore. We never forget any of you.

With great affection,
Yours,
Asad

18. Sheikh Ahmed Zaki Yamani (b. 1930), the former Saudi Minister for Petroleum and Mineral Resources, as well as Saudi Minister to OPEC (1962-1986), is the founder of Centre for Global Energy Studies (London 1990) and Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation (London 1998). He is the author of *Islamic Law and Contemporary Issues* (Honolulu, Hawaii, USA: University of Pacific Press, 2006); *The House of Khadeejah bint Khuwaylid in Makkah al-Mukarramah: A Historical Study of its Location, Building, and Architecture* (London: Al-Furqan, 2013).

(88)

Casa Caravela
Carregueira (Belas)
2745 QUELUZ
Portugal
October 15, 1984

Dear Mohammad Hussein,

I have to apologise for not having written to you earlier, but I have been extremely preoccupied and, in addition, Hamida has been entirely taken up by household and other chores. She just found a new couple for the house and garden, and now she may take it a bit easier. She is exhausted, indeed, although she doesn't show it.

As regards "Islam at the Crossroads", the one that is being sold by Ferozsons is printed by us and has been sold to them, so it is authorized. As you know, we have a small publishing company¹⁹ in Gibraltar for my books only. I cannot send you a copy from here because I have already given away the few copies I possessed. But you know the book so very well already.

Thank you for sending us the old photograph of myself and Hamida with Lal Shah Bukhari²⁰; it is a nice keepsake. And thank you even more for the photograph of yourself, which decorates my writing desk. Unfortunately, we have no recent photographs of ourselves; we never go to a photographer, but sooner or later we shall arrange a picture for you, insha-Allah.

With our warmest love to yourself and your family and best regards to all our friends in Lahore, I am,

Yours as always,
Asad

(89)

Casa Caravela
Carregueira (Belas)
2745 QUELUZ
Portugal
April 19, 1985

My beloved friend,

I have just received your birthday greetings and cannot describe to you how deeply touched I am by your never forgetting my – or Asad's – birthday.

19. Namely Dar al-Andalus (Gibraltar, Spain).

20. Lal Shah Bukhari, Asad's colleague at Pakistani Mission, New York.

Except for one another, you are the only person who remembers our birthdays, year after year, and it is an obvious sign of your love for us. Needless to say, we love and esteem you equally, and always.

We returned a week ago from a visit to Riyadh, as guests of Shaikh Zaki Yamani.²¹ We are very tired of travelling, but unfortunately on April 29 we will have to go to London, where Asad has to have an operation of his prostate. It is not dangerous, insha-Allah, but it has been recommended by the best specialist in London and is wiser to do it now while Asad is still in reasonably good health. Please pray for us. I will stay in the hospital with him and profit by having a complete check-up, which I badly need.

If God so wills, we will be going again to Saudi Arabia for the second half of Ramadan, as guest of our beloved friend Shaikh Zaki Yamani. This will be the third Ramadan spent with him and his family, that is, if Asad recovers fully in time to make the trip.

However, he really is in extraordinary good health for his age (insha-Allah, he will be 85 on July 2), and I pray to God that it will continue for many, many more years to come because I cannot contemplate life without him. This you will understand completely because you know how close we are and have always been. Please pray to God that he not only recovers completely, but that he will be able to continue his writing activities, for that is the secret of his long and useful life. We have two small books²² practically ready for the press, but he still want to undertake a much larger task; it is all in the hands of God. . . .

We both send you and your family our warmest, warmest love, which never changes with distance and time. May God bless you and keep you healthy for many more years.

Yours as always,
Hamida Asad

Dear Mohammad Husain,
I cannot say more than Pola (Hamida) has said above – yours as always,
Asad

21. For details on Asad's friendship with Ahmed Zaki Yamani see: Asad and Pola, *Home-coming of the Heart*, pp. 273-276.

22. One of these monographs was Asad's *This Law of Ours and other Essays* (Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus, 1987). Asad's other works were also reprinted by Dar al-Andalus; these include *The Principles of State of Government in Islam* (1980), *Sahih al-Bukhari: The Early Years of Islam* (1981), and *Islam at the Crossroads* (1982).

(90)

Casa Caravela
Carregueira (Belas)
2745 QUELUZ
Portugal
October 15, 1985

Dearest Mohammad Husain,

Today we received your letter of October 10 and were deeply distressed by the news of the demise of your daughter at so early an age. Our hearts are with you. May God keep you all in His care.

As for ourselves, Hamida has been seriously ill for the past few months and is under constant medical treatment (very inferior in Portugal). Please pray for her.

It is almost certain that if God so wills, we will leave this country in the not too distant future and will certainly let you know well in advance where we decide to settle. Once again on the move . . . ! And at the age of eighty-five. Once a beduin, always a beduin, it would seem. But it is hard on Hamida because she must at least be in a safe and stable place if she should survive me. As you know, she has no one else in the world.

With warmest, warmest love from both of us, I am,

Yours,
M. Asad

P.S. I had not the slightest idea of Talal's visit to Pakistan. He never writes to me.

P.P.S. Insh-Allah, on the coming 1st November Hamida and I will have been married for 33 years. Where have they gone? – All these years?

(91)

Casa Caravela
Carregueira (Belas)
2745 QUELUZ
Portugal

November 11, 1985

Our dearest brother,

Your letter dated October 27 reached us a few days ago and touched us both, very, very deeply. We, too, feel you very close to us, in spite of all distance in time and space, and this will never change, insha-Allah.

As for our projected change of residence, this will take place after some time because Hamida has not yet fully recovered from her illness, although she is very much improved. And your letter has contributed to her good feeling. As you realize, she bears, quite independently from me, the same love for you as I do. May God allow us all to meet again sooner or later.

Yours with great affection,
Asad
