



In Memory of SAIF GHOBASH

The Saif Ghobash Banipal Prize for Arabic Literary Translation is wholly sponsored by the Saif Ghobash family in memory of Saif Ghobash, husband and father, who was passionate about the literature of the Arab world and the literatures of other countries. Saif Ghobash was a self-made man with a broad knowledge of culture and world affairs, “an international intellectual” as his friends called him. He loved the world of books, and had his own collection in many different languages, which his family inherited on his untimely death in 1977.



Saif Ghobash was born in 1932 in Ras Al Khaimah. When he was 12 his father died and just three months later he lost his mother. He moved to live with his aunt in Dubai for the next three years. In 1949, aged 17, he left his home country and began a journey, which was to last twenty years, in search of knowledge. First, he travelled to Bahrain to continue his studies and, in 1953, after graduating from The Eastern School in Manama, he travelled to Iraq to study engineering at the University of Baghdad. In 1956 he moved to Egypt after receiving a scholarship from the Organisation of the Islamic

Conference in Cairo. However, the College of Engineering in Cairo did not recognise his Baghdad studies, and so he travelled to Kuwait, where he worked as an assistant engineer in the Kuwaiti Public Works Department.

In 1959, Saif Ghobash left Kuwait for Austria, working in Graz and learning German. He then moved to Germany, working for a construction company in Düsseldorf, still determined to save enough to continue his studies. He worked also in Switzerland, from where he made frequent visits to Italy, and in 1963 travelled to Paris, working, learning French and studying literature and philosophy, before receiving a scholarship from the Soviet Union, enabling him, at last, to continue his studies at Leningrad University.

In 1969, after twenty years working and studying abroad, Saif Ghobash returned to his home town in Ras al-Khaimah. He began to work in the field of diplomacy and, on 25 December 1973, he became the First Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the recently federated United Arab Emirates.

The prize was established in 2006, the first prize in the world to award a published book of literary translation from Arabic to English. In 2007 the prize was renamed the Saif Ghobash Banipal Prize for Arabic Literary Translation when Omar Saif Ghobash and the Ghobash family took on its sponsorship. To mark the prize's tenth successful year of awards, the Saif Ghobash family extended their sponsorship to the establishment of an annual Lecture, the inaugural lecture being held at the British Library, London, on 14 October 2016. For all information about the prize, go to www.banipaltrust.org.uk.