



Special Edition
"Out of Cordoba"

Institute of Medieval and Post -Medieval Studies

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Mission Statement

The mission of IMPMS is to make people aware of the great contributions of Islamic civilization to the West, and indeed to the whole world, by presentations and dissemination of written and audio-visual materials, and also through participation in academic conferences as well as by organizing events on this subject.

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THOUGHT OF THE DAY

Build America as a homogenous community where people of all faiths and ethnicities live together

How the Institute of Medieval and Post-Medieval Studies Came into Being

In 2001, the late professor Dilnawaz Siddiqui, past president of the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS), visited Dallas to explore the possibility of organizing regional conferences for AMSS in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. Between 2001 and 2005 four annual regional conferences were organized under the leadership of Ambassador Syed Ahsani, Dr. Basheer Ahmed, Dr. Yusuf Zia Kavakci and Dr. Siddiqui. These conferences, which highlighted the contributions to the whole world of Islamic civilization in sciences, medicine and many other fields, especially in the medieval era, were well attended and favorably received. Some of the organizers mentioned above also made presentations at the annual International Congress on Medieval Studies at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo in 2003, 2004, 2005. Around that time they began meeting together with the aim of establishing an organization devoted to spreading information about the important contributions of Islamic civilization, especially during the medieval period. It was then that the name Institute of Medieval and Post-Medieval Studies (IMPMS) began to be used informally, but it was not incorporated as a formal entity until 2007. Ambassador Ahsani became the first president of the newly incorporated organization. Our current president, Mr. Edward Thomas, who succeeded Dr. Basheer Ahmed, became a founding member of IMPMS since 2007 and has been actively involved in the organization's activities ever since.

Goal and Objectives of IMPMS. The essential goal of the Institute of Medieval & Post-Medieval Studies (IMPMS) is to help generate a climate of mutual understanding and respect among people generally, and especially between Muslims and people of other faiths and cultures. In this way we aim to quell what has been labeled as a clash between Islamic and Western civilizations. In pursuit of this goal, IMPMS seeks to reach people of all ages above kindergarten with information about the great contributions and contributors of the Islamic world in many fields of knowledge and art. This is done by giving talks to varied audiences, including students and teachers at schools and universities, congregations at churches, mosques, synagogues and other places of worship, and organizations promoting peace and non-violence, etc. We also circulate written materials including a monthly Newsletter, try to find opportunities to publish articles in newspapers and journals, and take part in conferences.

Some Noteworthy IMPMS Activities

Between 2007 and 2009, IMPMS board member Edward Thomas taught a Continuing Education course at Southern Methodist University entitled "Great Thinkers of the Islamic World."

In December 2009, Michael Hamilton Morgan, author of *Lost History: The Enduring Legacy of Muslim Scientists, Thinkers, and Artists*, gave the keynote address to a large gathering at the IMPMS annual dinner.

In September 2010, IMPMS board members Basheer Ahmed, Edward Thomas and Muhsin Shaheed presented papers in an IMPMS session at the Texas Medieval Association (TEMA) annual conference at Southern Methodist University, and board member Reem Elghonimi gave a presentation in another session there.

In November 2010, Basheer Ahmed and Edward Thomas gave presentations at Texas A&M University as members of a panel on "Contributions on History of Science from Islamic Civilization."

In September 2011, Basheer Ahmed, Edward Thomas, Yushau Sadiq and Muhsin Shaheed gave presentations in an IMPMS session at that year's TEMA conference, held at Baylor University.

In the last two months of 2011, IMPMS conducted an essay contest for high school juniors and seniors, who had to write about a scholar or writer who lived in the part of the world where Islamic civilization prevailed between the 8th and 16th centuries and who made an important contribution to the world. Winners were announced at an Award Ceremony held at SMU on March 4, 2012. The top three prizes went to students who wrote on, respectively, Jalal al-Din Rumi, Omar Khayyam, and Al-Kindi..

Published Books: Dr. Basheer Ahmed, the past president, edited two books, "Muslim Contributions to World Civilization" published by Association of Muslim Social Scientists & IIIT; "The Islamic Intellectual Heritage and its Impact on the West" published by Institute of Medieval and Post -Medieval Studies.

IMPMS Event coming up! June 16, 2012, 12:30 p.m. at FunAsia, Richardson, Texas:

Screening of award-winning documentary film "**Out of Cordoba**": Averroes and Maimonides in Their time and Ours, followed by a talk by the Director/Producer, Mr. Jacob Bender, and Q&A with the audience.

Interfaith Collaboration in the 12th Century CE: A Christian Scholar for a Muslim Caliph,

a Muslim Scholar for a Christian King

By Edward Thomas

In the 7th century CE, when Muslim Arab armies overthrew the Sasanian Empire ruling Iran, the majority of the people there were Zoroastrian, but there were several minority religions, including Christianity. The largest Christian branch was the Nestorians. Their native language was Syriac, which was quite close to Arabic, and many of them also knew Greek. In the 9th century, the Caliph al-Ma‘mun made a Nestorian, Hunayn ibn Ishaq, director of language translation at the House of Knowledge, where scientific works in Greek and other languages were translated and studied. A respected doctor as well, Hunayn al-Ishaq also became the caliph’s physician. This started a pattern of fruitful cooperation between Muslim rulers and Nestorians scholars and doctors.

Ibn al-Tilmid, son of an eminent Nestorian physician, was born in Baghdad about 1073. He became director of the most famed Baghdad hospital and eventually head of all the physicians of Baghdad. He also taught medicine. In addition he became the leader of Baghdad’s Christian community.

Ibn al-Tilmid’s written works included commentaries on the works of the greatest medical scholars, including the Greek Galen and the Muslims al-Razi and Ibn Sina, as well as his Nestorian predecessor Hunayn ibn Ishaq. His most famous book is undoubtedly *The Dispensatory of Ibn al-Tilmid*. This work became the standard pharmacological work in the hospitals and apothecaries of Baghdad and the wider Arab East. In 2007 Brill published the Arabic text together with an annotated English translation, an introductory study, and two-way glossaries, all by Oliver Kahl. Ibn al-Tilmid died about 1165 at about age 92.

Far to the west of Baghdad, Muhammad **al-Idrisi** was born about 1099 in the Moroccan port city of Sabta (today the Spanish enclave Ceuta). That year is famous as the year Crusaders conquered Jerusalem and established a Christian kingdom there. That was not an immediate concern for the Muslim rulers of the southern Spain, who belonged to a Moroccan dynasty based in Marrakech. Al-Idrisi pursued studies in the great city of Cordoba. He traveled widely in Europe and won a reputation as a superior geographer and cartographer. He was a logical choice to head an ambitious project in Sicily.

In 1091 a Christian and French-speaking Norman knight, Roger of Hauteville, established himself as King Roger I of Sicily, which had been under Muslim rule for about two centuries. When he died in 1101, his youngest son, Roger II, was only about six years old. After coming of age, he was engaged in a long power struggle with various relatives and others until at last he was crowned King Roger II in 1130. He was not only a successful warrior but also a man with broad intellectual interests. He was fluent in Arabic, written and spoken, which had become the principal language in Sicily. The project he asked al-Idrisi to head was to produce a map and geographic description of the entire known world that would be the most complete and accurate ever made.

Al-Idrisi arrived in Sicily in 1138 and spent the next fifteen years on this project. He was aided by other scholars, most of them Muslims, but his most important colleague was the king himself. Finally, in 1153, the great geography book was completed. It contained descriptions of many places in Europe, Asia and Africa. There was also a world map, 71 part maps and 70 sectional itinerary maps. The work has become known as “Roger’s Book.” That honored man, King Roger II, died the next year.

Al-Idrisi also did important work in botany. He studied medicinal plants and wrote authoritative works on them, notably one whose title in Arabic has been translated as “Compendium of the Properties of Diverse Plants and Various Kinds of Simple Drugs.”

Al-Idrisi stayed in Sicily under Roger II’s successor, King William I, then fled to North Africa because of a rebellion against William. Al-Idrisi died about 1166 – about a year after Ibn al-Tilmid had died in Baghdad.

A Medieval Muslim Scholar's Influence on European Renaissance— Ibn Rushd (Averroes) - 1128-1198 C.E.

By M. Basheer Ahmed, M.D.

Ibn Rushd (Averroes), a Muslim philosopher, was born in 1128 in Cordoba, Spain. His masterpiece was the commentary on Aristotle's philosophy and emphasis on reasoning and rational thinking, which made a considerable impact on Medieval European intellectuals.

While Europe was in the Dark Ages, in Muslim Spain the city of Cordoba was the most advanced city in the entire European continent. Scholars of different faiths found Andalusia (Spain) a tolerant center, an intellectual common ground, leading to scientific discoveries in medieval Islamic civilization. Ibn Rushd did his major philosophical work during this period and is regarded as the central link between Ancient Greece and the European Renaissance. While he was working as a chief judge in Cordoba, he translated Aristotle's book "**de Anima**" and wrote commentaries on other works of Aristotle. He wrote 3 books on systematic philosophy- *Fasl al Maqal*, *Kitab al Kashf*, and *Tahafut al Tahafut*:

In his book **Fasl Al Maqal**, he discussed the creation and eternity of the universe, the destiny of man, the nature of knowledge of God, immortality of the soul, and resurrection. Ibn Rushd emphasized that the Quran encourages man to explore nature as divine providence. He also differentiated God's knowledge from man's. Man's knowledge is limited to only what God permits us to have, and God's knowledge, like man himself, is not derived from things; rather things derive their being through God's knowledge of them. He also clarified his perception of human destiny by stating that human actions depend partly on free will and partly on outside causes. He believed that man is neither in full control of his destiny, nor is it fully pre-determined for him. Therefore man should make utmost efforts to attain perfection. In his second book, **Kitab al Kashf**, he argues that the highest form of demonstrative reasoning cannot clash with the principles of religion. Philosophers are best able to understand properly the allegorical passages in the Quran on the basis of their logical training, and there is no religious stipulation that all such passages have to be interpreted literally. His third book, **Tahafut al Tahafut** ("The Incoherence of the Incoherence") was written as a response to Imam al- Ghazali's book "The Incoherence of the Philosophers". Ghazali criticized the work of Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina by saying that philosophers try to prove that philosophy is a more sophisticated analysis of the nature of reality than that available to ordinary Muslims. The philosophers are creating a doubt in the religious notion of God, life after death, and creation. Ibn Rushd emphasized that demonstrative reasoning does not lead to disagreement with what the divine law has brought forth. For truth does not contradict but agrees with it.

Ibn Rushd introduced reasoning and rationalism in both Jewish and Christian dogma. A great Jewish physician-philosopher and rabbi, Ibn Maimun (Moses Maimonides) was born in the city of Cordoba about 10 years after Ibn Rushd. He was very much influenced by the writing of Ibn Rushd and became a master of Aristotelian philosophy. He also attempted to harmonize the truth of reason with the revelation of the Torah, and of course this also generated considerable controversy among the Jews. However his philosophical writings, which supported Ibn Rushd's concept of harmony between reason and religion, prevailed and influenced European thinking.

Thomas Aquinas was born in Naples, Italy about 25 years after Ibn Rushd. He was a monk who subsequently became a professor of theology in Paris. He also incorporated Aristotle's and Ibn Rushd's rationalism in Christian theology. He was also opposed by theologians. His famous book: *Summa Theologia* is considered the most comprehensive exploration of Christian philosophy, and it had a profound impact on rationalism and humanism, which then became the basis of the Renaissance.

These three great scholars of the medieval period: Ibn Rushd, Maimonides, and Thomas Aquinas, each had a great influence on Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, respectively. During the 12th century, when revelations without reason were the principle dogma of theologians, these great scholars advocated understanding revelation by reason and logic, and this was a great challenge. Because of their bold approach, they also faced condemnation from the contemporary theologians of their respective religions. It is said that without the work of the Muslim philosopher, Ibn Rushd, much of what occurred in Medieval Europe in the field of philosophy would not have existed.

Abridged from a book chapter:

M. Basheer Ahmed, M.D. "A Medieval Muslim Scholar's Influence on European Renaissance - Ibn Rushd (Averroes) - 1128-1198" from the book "Islamic Intellectual Heritage and its Impact on the West" published by Institute of Medieval & Post-Medieval studies, Dallas, Texas. Edited by M. Basheer Ahmed, M.D.

DO YOU KNOW

Compiled by M. Basheer Ahmed, M.D.

The Muslim culture now often associated with an anti-science ideology was once a catalyst for innovation. In the Middle Ages, while Christians were not making any scientific progress due to dogmatic teaching of the Bible, Muslim scholars were inventing the most advanced devices of the day. They refined the scientific method, developed effective cardiac drugs, and built celestial observatories—yet over time their contributions were largely forgotten. The Muslim world provided a bridge between antiquity and the renaissance .

Toothbrush

The Prophet Mohammed popularized the use of the first toothbrush in around 600. Using a twig from the Meswak tree, he cleaned his teeth and freshened his breath.

Hospitals

Hospitals as we know them today, with wards and teaching centers, come from 9th century Egypt. The first such medical center was the Ahmad ibn Tulun Hospital, founded in 872 in Cairo. Tulun Hospital provided free care for anyone who needed it -- a policy based on the Muslim tradition of caring for all who are sick.

Chemistry

Jabir ibn Hayyan,(eighth century), is widely regarded as the founder of chemistry. He invented many of the basic processes and equipment still used by chemists today such as distillation (a way of separating chemical substances). Early Muslim scientists made great advances in distillation, a process they refined to create medicines, perfumes, and essential oils.

Flying machine

In the 9th century CE, Abbas ibn Firnas was the first person to make a real attempt to construct a flying machine and fly. His designs would undoubtedly have been an inspiration for inventor Leonardo da Vinci's hundreds of years later.

University

In 859 a young princess named Fatima al-Firhi founded the al-Qarawiyyin University in Fez, Morocco. It wasThe first university in the world granting degrees.

Algebra

The word algebra comes from the title of a Muslim mathematician' s famous 9th century treatise "Kitab al-Jabr Wa l-Muqabala" "The Book of Reasoning and Balancing." The new algebraic order was a unifying system for rational numbers, irrational numbers and geometrical magnitudes.

Optics

Around the year 1000 Ibn al-Haitham proved that humans see objects by light reflecting off of them and entering the eye, dismissing Euclid's and Ptolemy's theories that light was emitted from the eye itself. He also noticed light coming through a hole in shutters which made an upside-down image on the opposite wall. This discovery led to today's camera (the name of which comes from the Arabic word qamara).

Fountain Pen

In the tenth century, the first reservoir pen was created for an Egyptian sultan called al-Mu'izz. The idea was to design a pen that would write only when the writer so chose and would not leave unwanted inky stains

Astronomy

Copernicus, reportedly used the astronomical treatise of Muslim astronomer Al-Battani,(9th century) whose body of work included star catalogues and planetary tables. Al-Battani also popularised trigonometry. The progress made in the great observatory in Samarkand, (today a city in Uzbekistan) laid the foundations for the science we take for granted today.

Ibn-Nafees described blood circulation 300 years before William Harvey.

Al-Zahrawi of 10th century Spain designed many surgical instruments which are similar to the instruments used today.

The Crank:

Many of the basics of modern automatics were first put to use in the Muslim world, including the revolutionary crank-connecting rod system. By converting rotary motion to linear motion, the crank enables the lifting of heavy objects with relative ease. This technology, discovered by Al-Jazari in the 12th century, exploded across the globe, leading to everything from the bicycle to the internal combustion engine.

Coffee (*al-Qahwa* in Arabic) was discovered by a Muslim, Khalid of Ethiopia, in the 9th century. It was introduced to Europe in 1645.

PLEASE JOIN IMPMS TODAY

IMPMS goals are to disseminate information about Islamic civilization's contribution to world civilization through presentations of lectures and seminars to students and teachers at all levels from Middle School to University and to establish a library of books, manuscripts, and other learning resources of and about major Medieval and Post-Medieval Muslim scholars in the Islamic World.

If you like to support these activities, please become member of IMPMS and donate generously

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