

# 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

## Out of Cordoba by M. Basheer Ahmed, M.D.

IMPMS invited Mr. Jacob Bender, the producer of the documentary “Out of Cordoba” for the presentation and showing of the film. The event was held on June 16, 2012 at FunAsia, Richardson, Texas. Approximately 300 people attended the event. 60 registered guests were able to arrive just a few minutes before the documentary due to a serious traffic jam on the highway. The registration started at 12:30 pm. After registering, guests were offered a light lunch in the dining area before going to the film theater. There Mr. Edward Thomas, President of IMPMS, welcomed the audience and introduced Mr. Bender. A resident of New York City, Mr. Bender described how deeply the terrible attacks of 9/11 affected him. He felt it important to show that people of different faiths can live together peacefully and cooperate in important achievements. Spain in the past, where Muslims, Jews and Christians lived together in peace and harmony for centuries and made enormous contributions in the fields of philosophy, science and humanities, was a good example. He decided to focus on two 12<sup>th</sup> century scholars from Cordoba, capital of the Muslim rulers. Mr. Bender described briefly some of his experiences and impressions in visiting Spain and other countries as he made the documentary, The film itself then came on the screen.

Following the showing of the documentary, Mr. Bender answered questions from the audience. Dr. Basheer Ahmed concluded the meeting by thanking many sponsors and participants who made this event a great success. He especially thanked Mr. John Hamid of FunAsia for the sponsorship of the program. He also thanked many organizations and community leaders including Imam Dr. Yusuf Zia Kavakci & Mr. Mohsin Mandavia of the Islamic Association of North TX, Mr. Azhar Azeez of the Islamic Association of Carrollton, Imam Yaseen Sheikh & Mr. Shawkat Gaziani of the Islamic Association of Collin County, Imam Zia Shaikh & Hamid Haque of the Islamic Center of Irving, Imam Dr. Zafar Anjum & Mr. Abdul Hadi Khan of the Islamic Association of Frisco, Mr. Mike Ghouse of America Together Foundation, Furqan Azhar, Noaman Azhar and Farah Gopalani of Azhar & Azhar Law Firm, Mrs. Amina Rab of the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), Mr. Mani Rahman of Rahman Financial, Mr. Asif Effendi of the Institute of Islamic Learning in Metroplex.

Dr. Ahmed also recognized the faculty members of several local universities whose presence made this a successful event: Dr Pamela Patton, SMU, Dr. Susanne Scholz, SMU, Dr. Qaiser Abbas, UNT, Dr. Harbans Lal, UNT, Dr. Yushua Sadiq, TCU, Dr Kevin Krisciunas Texas A&M, and Dr. Zafar Anjum UTD.

**TEXAS MEDIEVAL ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN HOUSTON:** Members of the Institute of Medieval and Post-Medieval Studies are making a presentation at the Annual Conference of the Texas Medieval Association, OCTOBER 12-13, 2012, at the University of Houston, Houston, TX 77004.

The theme of presentation is “**Varieties of Medieval Islamic Cultural Legacies from Spain, Africa and the Greater Middle East**”. The IMPMS session will be chaired by Yushau Sadiq, Ph.D, President Elect of IMPMS, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, Texas.

Mr. Edward Thomas, President of IMPMS, will be speaking on “The Flourishing of Intellectual and Artistic Achievements under Medieval Turko-Persian Rule”; M. Basheer Ahmed, M.D., Past President of IMPMS, will be presenting on “Medieval Muslim Scholar Ibn Rushd (Averroes): Influence of his Philosophical Ideas on the West” and Muhsin H. Shaheed, Vice President of IMPMS will be speaking on “El Hassan Ibn Muhammed el-Wazzan-ez-Zayyati (Leo Africanus): The First Author of a Survey of Africa for the Western World”. The IMPMS session will be held on Saturday, October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2012 between 4:30 and 6 pm in the Honors College on the second floor of the Library, Room 212 P, University of Houston, 4800 Calhoun Rd., Houston, TX 77004. **There will be a nominal registration fee of \$10 for the members and guests of IMPMS.**

# Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Rumi

by Milena Gary - Winner of First Prize in IMPMS Essay Contest

**“Suddenly the drunken sweetheart appeared out of my door.  
She drank a cup of ruby wine and sat by my side.  
Seeing and holding the lockets of her hair  
My face became all eyes, and my eyes all hands.”  
-Rumi<sup>1</sup>**

Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī was a man of many eloquent words and timeless philosophies. A man ahead of his time, a man righteously well known for his creations and teachings, a man everlasting through his prose and poetry, enlightenment and aesthetics still practiced to this day, nearly 800 years after his death.

Jalāl ad-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī, commonly known as simply ‘Rumi’ in the American culture, was a renowned poet, philosopher, jurist, theologian, and Sufi mystic during the 13<sup>th</sup> century, at the very end of the Islamic Golden age.<sup>2</sup>

Rumi was born September 30, 1207 AD, in a small town in the Balkh province, present-day Afghanistan, into a family of known theologians and preachers of the liberal Hanafī rite (the most popular, liberal school of law within Sunni Islam, which uses a logical and open view in examining the Qur’an). The most complete existing genealogy, which stretches back to almost seven entire generations, indicates a heritage of Hanafī jurists<sup>3</sup>, and less credible sources claim a distant relation with royalty, but this has yet to be proven. His father, Bahā ud-Dīn Walad, was an appointed scholar with a group of followers at the time Rumi was born, and Rumi soon began to study his teachings.

During Rumi’s childhood, his family and a group of his father’s disciples fled the province due to fear of the upcoming Mongol cataclysm.<sup>4</sup> They completed the Hajj, or pilgrimage to Mecca. The hajj is one of the biggest pilgrimages in the world, and the fifth pillar of Islam, a duty every follower of Islam must complete at least once in a life time.<sup>5</sup> Rumi’s mother and sister both died in Konya within the next seven years of their travel. In 1225, Rumi married Gowhar Khatun and had two sons. When his wife died, he remarried and had two more children, including his first and only daughter. Then finally, in 1228, they settled in Konya, a city in present-day Turkey.

Rumi learned a lot from his father, but after Bahā passed away, Rumi, at the age of 24, succeeded his father and inherited his position as an Islamic molvi, or teacher, at the largest theological school in Konya. He was a product of his father indeed, following in his footsteps and then breaking off into his own person, exceeding his elders.

According to a hagiographical account, Rumi and his dad once came across a famous mystic Persian poet of this time, Attar, who, at seeing son walking behind father and sensing his spiritual eminence, said, “Here comes a sea followed by an ocean,” though it is not certain if this is fact or myth. This meeting supposedly had a deep impact on the 18-year-old Rumi, and later became the inspiration for his works.

Shortly after the death of his father, Rumi continued to study the foundations of Sufism (such as divine love, worship, austerity and abstinence, piety, consciousness of God, humility, and tolerance) for nine more years with his father’s disciple, Sayyed Burhan ud-Din Muhaqqiq Termaz. He spent most of this time either praying or doing busy work, preparing food, cleaning, or collecting wood. Once Sayyed passed away, Rumi’s independent public life finally began. He became an Islamic juror, and, in addition, a molvi, teaching at a madrassa, or school where one learns Islamic education. During this time, he travelled to Damascus and remained there for four years.

Apart from his father and Sayyed, Rumi had met many great and famous philosophers and scholars of his time, so he had both inner and outer sources to guide him through the years.

The meeting of Rumi and Shams-i-Tabrīzī in 1244 is said to be the event that led him to transform from a gifted teacher and juror to an apprenticing ascetic (someone who lives a minimal life free of superficial things for the purpose of achieving spiritual and religious enlightenment.) Rumi was compelled by Shams and his lifestyle, Shams had been travelling through the Middle East, searching for someone who could “endure his company”.

They went on spiritual journeys together, learned from and taught one another, connected on an unthinkable level, deeming themselves “spiritual lovers”. With the help of Shams, Rumi finally became a Sufi mystic, his connection to god strengthened by Shams. Shams had a bigger impact on Rumi than he would even know, for, one day, as they eat dinner, Shams answered a knock at the back door to never be seen again. Rumi set out looking for him, then realized:

“Why should I seek? I am the same as  
He. His essence speaks through me.  
I have been looking for myself!”<sup>6</sup>

Following Shams's death, Rumi secluded himself, practicing ascetics up to forty days in a row, living without much food and comfort. He continued to develop ideas and principles, and managed to get even closer to Allah.<sup>7</sup>

Rumi's principles and teachings were so liberal that they were not necessarily limited to Muslims. He focused on reaching god through art, such as music, poetry, or dance. Rumi believed that music helped one focus completely on the divine to the point of passing and resurrection. He encouraged Sama, which was reaching enlightenment through listening to music and doing the sacred dance.

He also believed that the divine ego could only be reached by devolution, reducing oneself to your most primitive form. According to him, the whole universe undergoes this cosmic phenomenon, fueled by a fiery love for, and desire to become one with the great divine. This oneness was to be the goal of every living creation.<sup>8</sup>

He published thousands of poems in his life time, and some of his greatest works include the *Spiritual Couplets* (a six volume poem considered by many as one of the greatest mystic poems), *The Works of Shams* (inspired by and dedicated to his spiritual lover), and *In It What's In It*, but these are only few in an enormous pool of glamorous poetry and prose.

Perhaps the best mystical poet of Islam, Rumi has helped hundreds of people reach enlightenment, become one with Allah, see the world through the eyes of love and acceptance. His teachings are still used to this day as a good introduction to the philosophies of Sufism. He provided open and tolerable insight, was able to break down the most complex of thoughts into simple concepts. His poetry has been translated into over 10 different languages and is still read to this day.

As soon as I started researching Rumi, I knew I would choose him for this essay. His ideas and poetry were interesting, alluring, and I know I'm not the first to be moved by his creations. If his works have affected me, an unbiased, non-religious teenage girl, I can only imagine the kind of effect he had on the Islamic culture. He is, indeed, a legacy.

**“Come, come, come again,  
Whoever you may be,  
Come again, even though  
You may be a pagan or fire worshipper,  
Our hearth is not the threshold of despair.  
Come again, even if you may have  
Violated your vows a hundred times,  
Come again...”<sup>9</sup>**

1 Jalāl Al-Dīn Rūmī, and Shahram Shiva. *Rumi, Thief of Sleep: Quatrains from the Persian*.

2 "Islamica Magazine: Mawlana Rumi and Islamic Spirituality". 11-14-2007.

3 Franklin Lewis, *Rumi Past and Present, East and West: The Life, Teachings, and Poetry of Jalāl al-Din Rumi*, 2000, pp. 47–49.

4 H. Algar, Encyclopedia Iranica, "Baha Al-Din Mohammad Walad"

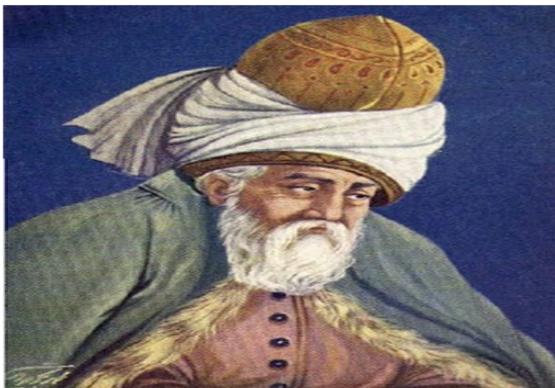
5 Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs - IslamSee drop-down essay on "Islamic Practices"

6 *The Essential Rumi*. Translations by Coleman Barks

7 Hz. Mawlana and Shams by Sefik Can

8 Maulana Rumi (25 May 2011). *The Masnavi I Ma'navi of Rumi: Complete 6 Books*

9 *Rumi Daylight: A Daybook of Spiritual Guidance* (1990) translations by Camille Adams Helminsk and Kabir Helminski



**Jalal ad-Din RUMI**



**Shrine of Jalal ad-Din RUMI in Konia, Turkey**

## Nasir al-Din TUSI (1201-1274), Astronomer, Mathematician and more by Edward Thomas

Tusi (pronounced “TOOSEE) got that name because he was born in Tus, a town in what is now northeastern Iran. He was a contemporary of the great mystic poet Rumi, though it is unlikely that they never met. He was also a contemporary of the fearsome Genghis Khan, who was proclaimed supreme chief at a gathering of Mongol chiefs in 1206, when Tusi was five years old. When he was about 13, Tusi moved to Nishapur (also now in northeastern Iran), which was a center of learning. Young Tusi soon showed his intellectual brilliance. Meanwhile, however, Genghis was beginning his career of conquest that was to spread death and destruction over a huge area of Asia and Europe.

By about 1220, it seemed clear that the Mongol armies were on their way to the area that included Tus and Nishapur. Tusi sought refuge at a mountain stronghold occupied by a group known as the Hashishin. That name is thought to come from the members’ use of hashish. The group was composed of devotees of the Isma‘ili branch of Shiism, which holds that the rightful rulers of the world are *Imams* descended from the Prophet Muhammad’s daughter Fatima and her husband ‘Ali, the Prophet’s first cousin. The Fatimid empire, with its capital in a magnificent new city named Cairo, became a serious rival to the Abbasid caliphate with its imposing capital in Baghdad. The Hashishin saw their mission as to weaken and eventually overthrow the caliphate of the Sunni Abbasids by killing top Abbasid officials. After information about them reached Europe, from the word Hashishin our word “assassin” came into being. (The main Isma‘ili sequence of Imams survived some internal rivalries to lead to today’s 49<sup>th</sup> Imam, the Aga Khan.)

Tusi was probably of Shiite origin, though perhaps not of the Isma‘ili branch before he took refuge with the Hashishin. In any case, they received him hospitably, and he spent more than the next thirty years of his life with them. He was soon moved to their headquarters, the mountain fortress of Alamut, northwest of Tehran. There was a remarkably good library there, and over the years Tusi wrote impressive works, especially in mathematics, astronomy and philosophy. He has been called the inventor of trigonometry. He is well known for a geometrical technique called the Tusi-couple, which shows how linear motion can be generated from the sum of two circular motions. The same technique was used by Copernicus two-and-a-half centuries later. Copernicus did not mention Tusi, but there is evidence that he may have copied Tusi’s explanation. Tusi also produced works in many other fields, including a book in Persian on ethics.

Long after Genghis Khan’s death, his grandson, Hulaku Khan, led Mongols forces on a campaign to wipe out the Abbasid caliphate. Before attacking Baghdad, in 1256 Hulaku did what the Abbasids had tried but failed to do: get his forces up to the Alamut fortress and get rid of the Hashishin. But he saved Tusi and took him along on his attack on Baghdad in 1258, which ended the 500-year life of the Abbasid caliphate. Tusi then convinced Hulaku to build a great astronomical observatory. The place chosen was Maragha, a town today in northwestern Iran. Top astronomers not only from the Islamic world but also a few from China and India were given positions there under Tusi. The result was the most accurate astronomical tables produced up to that time. Moreover, after astronomers who had worked at Maragha returned to their various locations in the predominantly Muslim world, they trained younger astronomers who in turn trained others, leading to what became known as the Maragha School of important astronomers right up to the time of Copernicus. Tusi himself died in 1274.

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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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