

Muslim world

Following Mohammed's footprints

The Muslims made it to the top of their time and now react in anger to the eternal exploiters' pretenses

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A CubaNews translation
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At a time when the West's extreme right-wingers are showing an all-time high, fully-exclusionary disrespect and contempt for Islam, which they don't hesitate to label "a new demon" which must be fought everywhere on Earth, there's no harm in remembering some elements about the greatness and the values of this human universe which accounts for almost one-third of the Earth's population.



Mohammed's image was defiled in the West

Resorting nowadays to the usual hatred based on belief, race and culture has not only a bitter taste of destructive fundamentalism, but also an undertone involving the exploiters' eternal intentions of

seizing the Muslim world's vast oil riches and imposing upon those nations a social, economic and political order quite foreign to them. Hence their irate response to such attempts, as recently happened when Mohammed was desecrated by the West.

A whole, very long story

After the Prophet's death in the year 632, Islam rapidly expanded to the West: through Northern Africa; across the Iberian peninsula to Spain (Granada and Córdoba); France (Poitiers); Turkey (between Europe and Asia); and Middle Eastern and Central Asian states like Uzbekistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as in Indonesia and other nearby countries.

According to the specialists, the appearance of Mohammed and Islam's brightness spread, paving the way in the 7th century for one of the most vastly extended revolutions ever known in the world. This convulsion was supported by language and religion, bound together by the Koran, a sacred book whose social and moral codes cover civil and religious issues, as well as by a strong, battle-hardened military structure. Four centuries after Mohammed's decease, Islam had taking over a huge expanse of

land.

The peoples thus submitted were not exterminated, nor was a conversion to a new creed forced upon them. Instead, they were granted complete freedom to maintain their religion, culture and even administrative structures in exchange for a tribute, a political decision that further enriched Arabic culture, hardly advanced from its origins but extraordinarily brilliant as a result of many elements assimilated through its conquests.

An Arabic legacy

This singular flowering of culture led to Muslim supremacy for at least four centuries in science, philosophy, literature, art and technology, fields in which the Arab wise men became universal benchmarks.



Arabic ornaments, an example of good taste and workmanship

Arabic mathematics gave us numbers, words and concepts such as cipher, zero, algebra or algorithm. The latter is named after Mamad Ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi, a mathematician born in 780 who seems to have been the first person to use the figure zero as a positional value, a cornerstone in Mathematics. He left us essential operations such as the rule of three and the system to extract square roots. His work Kitab-al abr, a treaty on integration and equations, gave origin to the word algebra. Muslim mathematical progress were

used to construct architectural works like palaces, mosques and other buildings and devise many hydraulic machines, and their numeral system boasts universal acceptance.

Arabic alchemy brought pivotal discoveries to the world: a table of well-measured specific weights, improved mechanisms for scales, and new dyes and acids, to name a few. They paid careful attention to, appreciated the value of, and made the best use of science. They produced and refined sugar by means of Indian-born processes which they used to make its grains look like crystals.

They came up with the Arabic device called a still to manufacture alcohol –another Arabic word– on a large scale and used it to make perfume. They made large quantities of soap and made it available in public baths. Soda was made in Arabic alchemical laboratories.

Medical science and economics

The Arabs relied on contributions by other, different cultures to develop medical science as much as they did in other spheres. Physicians in those times divided their science into two fields: theory and practice. Undeterred by a ban on dissecting corpses, which prevented them from doing in-depth anatomical studies, they performed surgical operations and

applied advanced suturing techniques, set fractures and even removed tumors. They knew about blood, cardiovascular circulation, and were able to distinguish arteries from veins, in addition to a quite approximate idea of the nervous system structure.

All physicians were familiar with the use of instruments to perform no matter what odontological operation, since they deemed it part of medical science, and used opium as an analgesic. Their pharmacopoeia was very irregular: together with certain remedies of indisputable healing power for some illnesses, they prescribed others drawn from superstition. Their experts, however, could differentiate four types of substances: foodstuff, medicine, poison and antidote.



The astrolabe, a major creation of Muslim culture

Besides, they used amulets and charms, and some physicians frequently prescribed remedies consisting of magical inscriptions patients were supposed to swallow, in close contact with the diseased part of their bodies.

Alcohol, one of their foremost discoveries, was promptly used as an antiseptic. They also cauterized open sores and leprosy ulcers. Noticeable in Islamic territories was the good condition of their hospitals and free-of-charge attention: patients were guaranteed a daily visit by a doctor and nursing services.

Scholars remark that the Arab's interest in observing the firmament was linked to certain needs of their people, such as steering by the stars when in the desert, or praying by facing Mecca, Islam's holiest city and the birthplace of Mohammed. Their astronomical works went beyond visual explorations of the skies: they went on to analyze it mathematically and geometrically, as made clear by astronomical terms such as zenith, azimuth or nadir.

They also improved the astrolabe, a fundamental instrument for celestial studies used to determine the altitude of heavenly bodies over the horizon and, accordingly, make accurate measurements of their motion. Their astronomers made figurative sketches of constellations.

Agriculture

The Arabs played a prime role in extending agrarian techniques, to the extent of virtuosity in designing hydraulic exploitation and distribution systems, which called for the construction of water wheels, wells and apparatuses to carry water from rivers for irrigation purposes. As early as the 10th century, floating devices used the current of the Tigris to grind grain.

Similarly, they developed textile production to the point that silk, manufactured in Iran around the 7th century, stopped being a Chinese monopoly. They had control over Indian cotton markets and had



The Muslim universe deserves a respect it has more than earned

Egypt's enormous textile industry available to them. Furthermore, they made great progress in metalworking, a production carefully undertaken and developed by the Arabs, who were equally zealous about the

secrets of weapons construction, and also designed and manufactured clocks.

In Muslim courts at that time caliphs, emirs, viziers and rais lived surrounded by poets, philosophers, sages and artists of every kind. Book-loving verged on passion. In their personal relations, they abided by rules of courtesy and hospitality, a strictly-observed Koranic principle.

These are just a few notes about the legacy Arabic civilization left to humanity in the four centuries of its expansion which began in the seventh century –first in the Hegira, Mohammed's flight from Mecca to Medina, marking the beginning of the Muslim era. Their thinkers and researchers reached the pinnacle of their time and enlightened the rest of the known world. They were not exactly "savages", as certain Western circles portray them to be.

March 3, 2006

Islamic States

Nations which have Islam as their official religion: Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Bahrain, Comodoro Islands, United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, The Maldives, Mauritius, Mauritania, Oman, Qatar, Syria, Sudan, Tunisia, Turkey, Yemen.

Countries with a significant Islamic population: Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Chad, Cyprus, Djibuti, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Guinea, Kazakhstan, Kirgistan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia, Tanzania, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan.

Indonesia: Though not officially an Islamic state, 94 percent of its population follow this religion, and it is the country with the largest Islamic population in the world.

Palestinian State: Though it hasn't been formally constituted, its population practices this religion.

There are lesser numbers of believers in various countries of Africa and Asia, as well as followers in Europe and America. Existen creyentes en menor número en diversos países de África y Asia.

A Cuban look at Islam:

Islamic Fundamentalism (TEMAS magazine):

<http://www.walterlippmann.com/docs823.html>

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