

Lecture: Overview of Islam and the Italian Renaissance

1. Islamic influence
 - a. Translated knowledge
 - b. New discoveries and ideas
 - c. Approach to knowledge shapes how we do science today: scientific method and scientific institutions like colleges, hospitals, and observatories.¹
2. Arabic appreciation for and translation of classical knowledge
 - a. Islamic liberal approach to knowledge says reason was the criterion of truth and Greek philosophy was used to explain God's oneness.²
 - b. Wave of translations provided texts in Latin considered necessary for teaching Aristotelian philosophy, Euclidean geometry, Ptolemaic astronomy, and Galenic medicine. 196³
 - c. Reason - Islamic leaders, the Caliphate in Baghdad in 750 AD, wished to rival and prove their superiority over Byzantine culture. The appropriation of ancient knowledge was Islam's way of laying claim to the great knowledge of the past and suggesting that Islam was the heir to such ideas. Greek works were translated into Arabic and became a part of an imperial/political ideology of knowledge and advancing everything.^{4,5}
3. Knowledge transfer between Islam and the West
 - a. "Islam's influence on the formation of Medieval Western culture was therefore decisive. For its part, the Christian world was able to experience forms of intellectual and artistic life far different from its own, sometimes even entering into dialogue but in any event always learning because the transfer of knowledge went in one direction only: from the East to the West." 104⁶
 - b. Two periods of knowledge transfer between Islam and the West
 - i. 11th to 13th centuries with the Crusades
 - ii. 15th and 16th centuries when a new freedom and awareness of the world took place.⁷
 - c. Islamic contribution obfuscated
 - i. During Italian Renaissance, people began to deny Arabic contribution⁸

¹ "The West Owes a Debt to Islam."

² Naraghi, "The Islamic Antecedents of the Western Renaissance."

³ Burnett, "The Second Revelation of Arabic Philosophy and Science."

⁴ "The West Owes a Debt to Islam."

⁵ Cooper M., "From Baghdad to Barcelona."

⁶ Naraghi, "The Islamic Antecedents of the Western Renaissance."

⁷ Ettinghausen, "Muslim Decorative Arts and Painting: Their Nature and Impact on the Medieval West."

⁸ "The West Owes a Debt to Islam."

- ii. One group of people was trying to learn the contributions that Muslim scholars were making in disciplines like astronomy and mathematics.⁹
 - iii. The other group, the humanists, were emphasizing the pure Greek and believed Islam's translations of these texts had corrupted them.¹⁰
- d. Geographies
- i. Centers of learning like Baghdad, Marrakech, and Cordoba, Jandishapur in southwest Iran
 - ii. Through Spain and Sicily, North Africa played a leading role in the transmission of Arab knowledge to Medieval Europe. 93¹¹
 - iii. In the 11th century, Cordoba will be the most advanced city in Europe. The Christians there will learn Arabic and begin translating Latin, Greek and Hebrew classics in Arabic that will in turn trigger of flowering of ideas, science, and literature.¹²
 - iv. Al Majriti latin translations conducted in Spain will bring Catholic monks and thinkers. His translations opened the doors for these people to Muslim astronomy, philosophy, and mathematics 131¹³
 - v. Cities in Italy played an important role in transmitting Oriental wares in the Middle Ages. 12 Venice and Sienna were among the first Italian cities to trade with the Ottomans.¹⁴
 - vi. During the Renaissance, such acquisitions of luxury goods multiplied and became more varied, as trade assumed greater importance, facilitated by the growth of extensive and increasingly dependable mercantile networks. Artifacts were imported from various parts of the Middle East: from Fatimid (909-1171) and, later, Mamluk (1250-1517) territories, that is, principally, from Egypt and Syria; from the Ilkhanid Empire (1256-1353), which controlled Iraq and Iran and also gave access to Central Asia (Turkestan) and China, especially with regard to silk; and, with the rise of the Ottomans as a new major power in the fifteenth century, increasingly from Turkish centers of production. 292¹⁵

⁹ "The West Owes a Debt to Islam."

¹⁰ "The West Owes a Debt to Islam."

¹¹ Naraghi.

¹² Morgan, *Lost History*.

¹³ Morgan, *Lost History*.

¹⁴ Contadini, "Artistic Contacts."

¹⁵ Contadini, "Threads of Ornament in the Style World of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries.' In."

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