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الدَّعْوَةُ الْإِسْلَامِيَّةُ

مَجَلَّةُ إِسْلَامِيَّةٌ ثَقَافِيَّةٌ تُصَدِّرُ سَنَوِيًّا مُوقَفًا

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أثر القرآن الكريم في انتشار المكتبات الإسلامية

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الإسلام ليس كما يدعي أعداؤه ديناً يحصر نفسه بين جدران المسجد الأربعة ، ولكنه طريقة منظمة وعلمية تهدف إلى أن يعيش المسلم حياة سعيدة في الدنيا والآخرة ، ولا يمكن أن تكون هناك حياة سعيدة بدون علم ومعرفة . ومن هنا كان اهتمام القرآن الكريم والأحاديث النبوية الشريفة بطلب العلم والجد في البحث عن المعرفة مهما كانت الظروف والصعاب . ويكفي دليلاً على اهتمام القرآن بالقراءة والبحث وطلب العلم أن أول كلمة أنزلت على الرسول الكريم كانت « اقرأ » . والأمر بالقراءة يحمل في طياته الحث على طلب العلم والمعرفة . وفي هذا البحث ، الذي بين أيدينا ، يتناول الكاتب بالشرح والتوضيح عدداً من الآيات المحكمات وعدداً من الأحاديث الشريفة التي تحث المسلمين وتحفزهم على طلب العلم والاهتمام بالمعرفة والجد في طلبها من المهد إلى اللحد . كذلك يبين الكاتب كيف لبى المسلمون الأوائل نداء القرآن وانتشارهم في الأرض يطلبون العلم من الأمم التي سبقتهم في الحضارة مثل الهند وفارس واليونان وغيرهم ، وكيف تناولوا تلك الحضارات بالدراسة وما ترجموه من أعمالهم في ميادين العلم المختلفة كالطب والهندسة والفلك والكيمياء والفلسفة وغيرها ، ثم كيف بدأ نشاط العلماء العرب والمسلمين الأصلي في البحث والدراسة في مختلف العلوم والفنون والآداب التي كانت معروفة لديهم وما قدموه للحضارة الإنسانية من نظريات في الطب والفلك والحساب والجبر والموسيقى والجغرافيا والرحلات لا تزال إلى اليوم موضوع دراسة واهتمام كثير من العلماء والباحثين . ثم يبين الكاتب كيف أن اثر الحركة الفكرية والعلمية في العالم الإسلامي بعشرات الآلاف من الكتب والمخطوطات والبحوث كان له أثر كبير في النهوض بحركة الترجمة والنسخ (النشر) ، وكيف أدت هذه الحركة إلى انشاء المئات من المكتبات العامة والخاصة والأكاديمية والمدرسية في مختلف مدن العالم الإسلامية المعروفة من الأندلس غرباً إلى الصين شرقاً ، وما كانت توفره هذه المكتبات من المخطوطات في شتى فروع المعرفة الإنسانية . وقد استشهد الكاتب بعدد كبير من الكتاب وخبراء المكتبات المسلمين والأوربيين عن عظمة المكتبات الإسلامية ، وأثر هذه المكتبات في حفظ التراث الإنساني من التلف والضياع . كما يتعرض الكاتب للحديث عن عدد من المكتبات الإسلامية التي اشتهرت على مر العصور والتي كانت علامات مضيئة أنارت الحضارة الإسلامية وكانت أساساً من أسس بناء الحضارة العلمية الحديثة .

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with shelves in which the books were kept, rooms where the visitors could read and study, rooms set apart for those in charge of making copies of manuscripts, rooms which served for literary assemblies, and even in some cases rooms for musical entertainment, etc. All rooms were richly and comfortably fitted, on the floors were carpets and mats, where the readers in Oriental fashion squatted with crossed legs... The windows and doors were closed with curtains, The chief entrance-door having a specially heavy curtain to prevent the cold air from entering.⁸⁰

Financially, like other learning centers and schools, libraries were mostly endowed for the upkeep of the building, price of the newly bought books and the salaries of the staff.⁸¹ Books were acquired partly by purchase and partly by the copyists of the library who were copying manuscripts.

There was a borrowing system. The person who wished to borrow a book was requested to take care of it, and "he was required to be grateful for the lender's help and to express his thanks to him."⁸² The borrowing system was flexible, in which Yaqt had borrowed at one and the same time 200 books from the library of Marw and the historian Abū Hayyān (d. 745/1343) did not buy any books, because he said that whatever book he wanted to have he could get on loan from any library.⁸³

Conclusion

In view of the facts that were discussed above, one can easily reach the conclusion "that nine hundred years ago the early Muslims had a great revolution of their credit in respect of the establishment of personal and public libraries when printing was unknown".⁸⁴ The Muslim "public libraries were truly public and ministered to the interests of a great variety of readers. They offered unusual facilities for study to serious scholars".⁸⁵ Besides these they provided a sort of "entertainment and a means of education through reading, lectures, and discussions to the general public."⁸⁶

The history of human civilization proudly tells that "the world of Islam was actually a book-loving society."⁸⁷ The history of knowledge, books, and libraries shows that, besides the public libraries which were scattered all over the Muslim land, private libraries and book collections were almost in every Muslim's house, and "probably at few times in history of the world have private libraries reached such size and elegance as under the Muslims."⁸⁸ Throughout Muslim lands "libraries were so numerous and their books so plentiful that they far outnumbered anything the Christian world of the west could present."⁸⁹

The Muslim libraries were very well administered and managed. Their collections were well classified, cataloged, and arranged. Each library had its own catalogs and/or

Khūrasan with the intention of going to Mecca to perform the pilgrimage, decided to go and see it. He was so enthusiastic about it that he remained there and did not continue his journey.⁷¹ The private libraries of Muslims were so prevalent "that one writer has estimated that, as of (1200 A.D.), there were more books in private hands in the Muslim world than in all libraries, public and private, of western Europe."⁷²

Muslim libraries were highly organized well administrated, and their collections were well arranged. For the classification of the materials of Muslim libraries, the best example is the *Fihrist* compiled by Ibn al-Nadīm "which gives us a clear picture of the system of classification adopted in the libraries of those times."⁷³ The *Fihrist* was classified into ten main categories, and these ten categories were subdivided into other subdivisions according to the needs of the library. The main ten categories are:

1) The Qur'ān 2) Grammar 3) History 4) Poetry 5) Dogmatics 6) Jurisprudence 7) Philosophy 8) Literature 9) Religion 10) Alchemy (Chemistry).

The first six categories deal with Islamic literature, whereas the remaining categories deal with non-Islamic literature.⁷⁴

Almost every great private or public library had its catalog of books with the help of which users of the library could easily get access to the collection. The catalogs "were classified and entries were made under the names of the authors as is done today with a short bibliographical note on the author at the end."⁷⁵ These catalogs were in book form, one catalog for each subject. In addition to the catalogs, "the contents of each section of book were registered upon a strip of paper attached to the shelf outside; these strips had also indications of works which were incomplete or lacking in some part."⁷⁶ Jesse Shera awell – Known Figure in library Science today, reported that the arrangement of the collection seemed to have been by subject and "in the largest libraries, rooms were assigned to specified areas of knowledge."⁷⁷ The library of Al-Nizāmiyah College was reported to have a well-arranged catalog containing 6,000 titles of books.⁷⁸ In Egypt, the library of Mohmudia Madrasah (School) had two catalogs, one was in dictionary form, the other was subject-wise (classified form).⁷⁹

The library building was considered very important. Some libraries were housed in royal palaces and had separate rooms for different subjects. Some other libraries were housed or/and attached to the major mosques of the Muslim cities, and these were parts of the schools, too.

A good description of the library buildings is that of Dr. Olga Pinto. She says:

The princes took great care concerning the buildings which were to serve as public libraries. Some of them like those of Shiraz, Cordoba and Cairo were placed in separate structures, with many rooms for different uses; galleries

poor students who used this library, ink, pens, and some other writing supplies were provided free. This institution, like Bait al-Hikma in Baghdad, "encouraged the advancement of the sciences and the production of various forms of literature".⁶¹ This library was administered by its own staff and had its own librarians, binders and calligraphers. And further west of Egypt "there was a library in the mosque in Tripoli, which was destroyed by Christian Crusaders in 1109".⁶²

In Muslim Spain, where Muslim scholarship and learning reached high levels, libraries and cultural centers were established everywhere at Cordova, Toledo, Seville and other cities and places.

In Cordova, the ruler, the caliph Al-Hakam II founded an academy and a library. This library is "reputed to have over 400,000 volumes. Its catalog alone consisted of 44 volumes."⁶³ It was also "reported to have given employment to over 500 people including many agents sent to all parts of the world to buy books."⁶⁴ This library was reported to have been the greatest, and possibly the largest, in the world at that time.⁶⁵ Another magnificent library in Cordova was that of Abū al-Mutarraf (d. 1011) "a Cordovan judge, possessed a magnificent library largely of rare books and masterpieces of calligraphy."⁶⁶ Six copyists were employed by Abu al-Mutarraf in his library. The library was sold in an auction after al-Mutarraf's death.

It was reported that there were 70 public libraries in al-Andalus. Some of them were in Toledo which was great center for translating books into Arabic and Latin. Also in al-Andalus libraries were attached to schools, mosques, and palaces, and many fine ones were in the homes of private citizens.

* * *

Besides all these public or semi-public libraries, private libraries and book collections were to be found all over the Muslim lands. Most, if not all, Muslim scholars and learned people had their own private libraries and collections. Many of these private libraries and collections were of a remarkable size. "The historian Omar al-Wāqidī possessed 120 camel loads of books. — In Cairo about 1170 there were four private libraries large enough to be noted by a visiting scholar."⁶⁸ When al-Sahib Ibn 'Abbād was invited by Nūh Ibn Mansūr to become his chancellor, he refused the invitation "on the ground that it would require four hundred camels to transport his books."⁶⁹ Another private library was that of Ibn-Alqamī which had about 10,000 volumes. At Baghdad, Al-Fath Ibn Khaqan had a magnificent library "collected and arranged by 'Alī Ibn Yahyā al-Munajjim (died 275/888)."⁷⁰ 'Alī Ibn Yahyā al-Munajjim himself collected in his magnificent castle in the village of Karkar, near Qufs in the neighbourhood of Baghdad, books and called it Khizānat al-Hikmah (Treasury of Wisdom). This library was known in the whole Arab world and attracted students in such manner that the astronomer Abū Ma'shar (d. 272/885) coming from

and work for two librarians, in addition to the director of the entire academy. The somewhat trivial anecdote shows the concern of a librarian for the books in his care, and also that librarians were not above playing the sort of ranks one might rather expect from run boy.⁵⁰

Nizām al-Mulk, a Persian, a vizier to the Seljuks, was a person of "cultivated tastes, much interested in the dissemination of learning,"⁵¹ established in 457/1065 a college bore his name. It was known as the Nizamiyah College. Nizām al-Mulk was praised by Ibn al-Athīr for his gifts of books to the college, and Ibn al-Najjar, the historian, bequeathed his books to this college when he died in 643 (1245 A.D.) and "he followed a common custom whereby scholars and patrons of learning enriched the library of their favorite schools and provided safe-keeping for their own works and valuable collections."⁵² It was said also that the caliph Al-Nasir Caliph From (575 to 622/1180-1225 A.D.) who "made the collection of the Nizāmiyah one of the largest and most valuable that ever existed in a Muslim land."⁵³

At the city of Basrah, 'Alī Ibn Sawwār Al-Kātib, who was in the service of the Buwayhid Sultan 'Adud Al-Dowlah, founded a library known as Khizānat al-Waqf. This library contained some rare books remained intact until the time of Al-Harīrī (d. 1122 A.D.) who mentioned it in his great work, *Maqāmat al-Harīrī*.⁵⁴

In Persia, every important city had its own library, and book collections were founded in Ghaznah, Shiraz, Nishapur, Ispahan, and Merv. In Musil "the poet Ibn Hamdān (d. 935) founded a house of learning and stocked it with books on all branches of knowledge,"⁵⁵ and it was open to the scholars as well as others who wanted to use it. Also in Musil, Abu-l-Qāsim Ja'far Ibn Muhammad Ibn Hamdan al-Mūsili (854-934 A.D.) founded a public library known as Dāru al-'Ilm (House of Learning).⁵⁶ In Shiraz, 'Adud al-Dowlah, the Buwayhid Sultan (977-982), founded a magnificent library, and "ordered for collection of all books on various subjects beginning from the advent of Islam till his time."⁵⁷

In Egypt, which was, and still is, an important cultural center, the first library was founded in Cairo by the Fātimid Caliph Al-'Azīz (975-966 A.D.) in 988 "in connection with his house of learning, where thirty-five students were supported from endowments. This school library had perhaps 100,000 volumes (some say 600,000) of bound books, among which were 2,400 Korans beautifully illuminated in gold and silver."⁵⁸ The rest of its collection were books on grammar, history, biography, rhetoric, jurisprudence, astronomy and chemistry. A great portion of the collection "went into the House of Science or House of Wisdom, founded by Caliph Al-Hākim in 1004, which acquired so vast a collection of rare books that legend exaggerated its number to 1,600,000 books."⁵⁹ The caliph Al-Hākim sent out his agents to many places "to buy books for his institution-a combination of library, academy, and auditorium."⁶⁰ For

"Baghdad in its glory abounded with libraries. Even before the Caliph al-Ma'mūn, in the time of his father, Hārūn al-Rashīd, the Arab historian Umar al-Wāqidi (736-811) possessed one hundred and twenty camel loads of books."³⁹ The caliph al-Ma'mūn was one of the great learned Muslims. "During his Caliphate, hadith literature were collected and was shaped in book forms."⁴⁰ He founded one of the greatest libraries in Baghdad, known as Bait al-Hikma or (the House of Wisdom) which was a "library academy and translation bureau."⁴¹ The library of "bait al-Hikma" contained an astronomical observatory. Hunayn Ibn Ishāq was appointed a superintendent by al-Ma'mūn. Ibn Ishāq was one of the greatest translators in Muslim history and "al-Ma'mūn paid him in gold the weight of the books he translated from Persian, Sanskrit, Syriac, Coptic and Greek."⁴² Also among the scholars of this institution were famous names such as, Abū Yahyā Ibn Batriq – Yūhannā Hunayn's teacher and translator of about 121 books of Galenus, and Al-Kindī, one of the greatest Muslim philosophers.⁴³ "Al-Khawārizmī, the author of an algebra and the compiler of an almanac which was long considered authoritative, was in the habit of retiring into Al-Ma'mūn's library (Bait al-Hikma) for study."⁴⁴ "Bait al-Hikma", the first public library in the Muslim world, was used as a research institute where "valuable research was undertaken, especially in connection with astronomy, medicine, and pharmacy."⁴⁵ S.k. Padover writes:

All told, Baghdad possessed thirty six libraries. The last library was of the Vizier, Ibn al-Alkami who owned 10,000 books. It perished during the sack of the city by the Mongols in 1258, when every other library also was destroyed. Baghdad also had over a hundred book dealers, who did business in stalls or in bazaars and were stationers who sold paper, ink, pens, etc. Some of these were publishers, too, who maintained a corps of expert copyists who worked in a scriptorium.⁴⁶

In 383/993 the wazir, Sabur ibn Ardashīr founded in Baghdad an institute known as "Dār al-ilm" (The House of Learning), which was situated at al-Karkh, a large quarter in the Western part of the City of Baghdad. The library of this institute or academy was a significant feature. «The endowment was sufficiently large that the institution did not suffer from the vicissitudes of its founder's career, for it was flourishing at the time of Sābūr's death in 416 (1025-26 A.D.)."⁴⁷ The book collection of this library was burned in 447 (1055 A.D.) "when Tughril Beg, the Seljuk, entered the city of the 'Abbasids."⁴⁸ According to another source, the collection "was burned in a fire which swept through Al-Kharkh in 451 (1095 A.D.)."⁴⁹ About the position of the librarian of this library-academy, Ruth S. Mackensen says:

The position of librarian was filled by men of scholarly attainments, as in the library of Al-Ma'mūn, and apparently there was sufficient endowment

Arabs and non-Arabs. It is one of the information sources of Islamic literature and science and "one of the most important bibliography"³² of that time. Al-Nadīm said in the preface:

"An index of the books of all nations, Arabs and foreign alike, which are extant in the Arabic language and script, on every branch of knowledge comprising information as to their compilers and classes of their authors together with the genealogies of those persons, the dates of their birth, the length of their lives, the times of their death, the place to which they belonged, their merits and their faults, since the beginning of every science that has been invented down to the present epoch-namely the year 377 of the Hijra."³³

The contents of this book are: 1) Books of Law (i.e. Jurisprudence), 2) Grammar and Philology, 3) History, Biography, Genealogy and related subjects, 4) Poetry, 5) Scholastic Philosophy, 6) Law and Traditions, 7) Philosophy and Ancient Sciences, 8) Legends, Fables, Magic, etc., 9) Sects and Creeds of Hindus, Budhists, and Chinese, 10) Alchemy (Chemistry).

It is true that this book is "one of the most important documents in Islamic culture. Much of our knowledge of Islamic learning, both in translations of classical works into Arabic and in creative books, to the last decade of the tenth century, is based on information available in the **Index, (al-Fihrist)**."³⁴ The first time that this book was printed was "as late as 1871 by G. Flügel, the famous German Orientalist, but after printing of only six pages he died, and so the work was completed by Dr. J. Roedgar and Dr. Muller on the request of Flügel's son in 1872".³⁵

Islamic Libraries

The intellectual life of the early Muslims who loved education and sought knowledge wherever it was to be found required the establishment and foundation of libraries. It was in the second century after the Hijra that "hundreds and thousands of public and private libraries were established all over the Muslim empire."³⁶

Even though the golden age of the Muslim intellectual life and libraries reached its highest level during the Abbāsid period, "the first Muslim who founded a library and managed to get all available sources of knowledge to be translated into Arabic, was Khālid Ibn Yazīd (d. 704) A.D."³⁷ He was also the first Muslim chemist. Ibn al-Nadīm, the author of the **Fihrist**, visited this library and found many books of great value on medicine, surgery, astronomy and chemistry.³⁸ In the following pages concentration will be on some of the famous Muslim libraries and learning centers in some of the Muslim cities where Muslim intellectual life and activity was flourishing.

in the West, it was spreading in Syria and Arabia."²⁰ Whenever the Muslims of Arabia conquered new lands at that time and found strong intellectual life and tradition based on Greek, Syriac, and some other languages. "These languages gradually faded out, and Arabic became the linguistic vehicle of the intellectual life of the vast empire."²¹ In the western part of the Muslim empire, the intellectual life flourished in Andalusia. Cordova, Seville, and Toledo, the Western centers of intellectual activity, were rivals to Basra, Kufa, and Baghdad in the East. This intellectual life in western part of the Islamic empire made many historians "thinking of the Arabic Spain of the tenth century as the fountain head of learning in Europe."²² And before the 13th century "Toledo was a center for making translations from Arabic into Latin."²³

In the field of poetry, "the greatest intellectual measure of progress was achieved under the Umayyads."²⁴ Among the famous poets at that time were 'Umar Ibn-Abi-Rabia, who was considered a "prince of erotic poetry", Jamil Ibn Ma'amar al-'Udhri, who "stood for pure and innocent love of the platonic type,"²⁵ and Qays Ibn al-Mulawwah, better known as Majnun Layla, who "represents the lyric type of poetical composition."²⁶ And besides love poetry, "political poetry made its appearance under Umayyad auspices. The first occasion was the request made of Miskin al-Darimi to compose and sing publicly verses commemorating the nomination of Yazid to the caliphate."²⁷ The compilation of pre-Islamic (jahiliyah) poetry also belongs to this period. In science, Khalid Ibn Yazid, known as the "philosopher" (hakim) was "the first in Islam to have translations made from Greek and Coptic books on alchemy, medicine and astrology."²⁸ But besides these intellectual activities at the time of the Umayyads, "Muslim learnings and the arts of civilization",²⁹ and the golden age of Muslim intellectual life were achieved at the time of the 'Abbasids. "The most momentous intellectual awakening in the history of Islam and one of the most significant in the whole history of thought and culture,"³⁰ was at the period of the 'Abbasids, particularly at the time of Harun al-Rashid and his son Al-Ma'mun. It was that period which led to the erection of great number of libraries all over the Muslim world.

The Fihrist of Ibn Al-Nadim

Before we talk about the great time of the history of Muslim libraries, briefly we shall talk about one of the greatest books of Islamic writing relating to librarianship. The book is entitled **al-Fihrist** (The Index), and better known as **The Fihrist of Al-Nadim**, written by Abu al-Fraj Muhammad Ibn Ishaq, better known as Abu Yaqub al-Nadim, who was "a native of Baghdad either by birth or residence, and WARraq by profession."³¹ This book is an index of many books written in Arabic by

applied to the recording of the verses of the Holy Quran.”¹² The Quran was variously recorded on bones, papyrus, hides, palm fibres, and parchment. The importance of reading and writing was shown also when the Muslims won the battle of Badr and the ransom of those who were captured from the non-believers’ side to be set free, was that every one of the captives who knew how to read and write shall teach these two skills to ten Muslims.

It is imperative that the foundation and essence of the Islamic culture and thought is religion, “and hence, naturally, it is the basis of Muslim education, Muslims were inspired by the many verses of the Quran as well as by the Prophetic Traditions and sayings which exhorted them to seek knowledge as a religious duty and cheerfully bear hardships, if any, in its acquisition.”¹³ Thus early Muslims “established vital contact between them and the rich cultural tradition represented by Greeks, Syrians, Persians, and Egyptians.”¹⁴

Muslims researched into every science which was known to them: philosophy, history, philology, logic, mathematics, medicine, art, law, theology, and jurisprudence. “They respected learning, they honored scholars. They introduced the science and philosophy of the Greeks, Persians, Hindus to Western Christian schoolmen.”¹⁵

There is no doubt that Islam is a comprehensive system for both the worldly and the other life. Thus it is the philosophy of Islamic education that “aims at the realization of happiness in this and the next world”,¹⁶ and this is very clear according to the following saying of the Prophet Mohammad: “the best among you are not those who neglect this world for the other, or the other for this. He is the one who works for both together.”

Although emphasis will be made upon Islamic libraries and their history, it is necessary to mention something about the intellectual life that led to the establishment of such great libraries in the Muslim era. Dissemination of books had begun when Muslim scholars and learned persons started translating works of ancient civilizations such as Greek, Persian, Hindu, and others into Arabic when Islam had reached those areas. Before that time “a good beginning was made in respect of the collections and preservation of the sacred lore. Besides the works on religious literature, of which most of the Companions had private copies, there were several poetical works and other lay books”.¹⁷ And it was after the spread of Islam into such a large area, the Muslim Arabs “became aware of the existing body of scientific knowledge.”¹⁸ Another factor which had its influence on the intellectual life of the Muslims was “the study of the Quran and the necessity of expounding it gave rise to the twin sciences of philology and lexicography as well as to that most Characteristically Muslim literary activity¹⁹. The Muslims were aware of the value of learning and knowledge and “when the secular literature was little esteemed in Constantinople and

creation, then God brings forth all later growth. Lo! God is Able to do all things]⁴

The verse indicates that it is a duty of Muslims to travel and think in order to be acquainted with the unique power of creation of God. The Holy Quran also emphasizes the importance of being knowledgeable in order to be successful in life, as the following verses indicate:

[Say "O Mohammad": Are those who know equal with those who know not?]⁵

[And say: My Lord: Increase me in knowledge]⁶

And in many other places which show and indicate the importance of reading and writing, such as:

[Nun. By the pen and that which they write]⁷

the dignity and value of the pen are thus indicated by swearing by it. The importance of writing is also stressed upon in the following verses of The Holy Quran:

[O ye who believe! when you borrow one from another for a fixed period, then write it down.

And let a scribe write it in your presence faithfully; and no scribe should refuse to write, because of Allah has taught him, so let him write!]⁸

Muslims who have, and seek, knowledge will be exalted by God to a high rank, as the following verses say:

[God will exalt those who believe among you, and those who have knowledge, to high ranks.

God is informed of what you do]⁹

In short "God has clearly demonstrated the dignity of the high office of knowledge."¹⁰

Besides The Holy Quran, the sayings of the Prophet (Hadiths) also put great emphasis on the importance of knowledge and learning. In this regard some of the Prophet's sayings are translated below:

- 1. To seek knowledge is incumbent upon every Muslim.**
- 2. Who ever treads a path in search of learning, God makes thereby easy for him the way to paradise.**
- 3. The superiority of a learned man over a mere worshipper is like the superiority of the full moon over all other stars.**

It was for the application and practice of the Holy Quran and the sayings of the Prophet that "Muslims, both Arab and non-Arab, received a great incentive, travelled far and wide in search of knowledge and contributed a great deal to human thought and progress."¹¹

It is also worth mentioning that the early Muslim skills of writing "were first