

May 2014

RENAISSANCE MONTHLY

Your monthly update on The Renaissance Project



LETTER FROM THE FOUNDER

Mohamed Al Qadi



Dear Friends,

I would like to start off by wishing everyone a happy Israa and Miraj day and I hope this year can bring peace to the Holy Land

In our May 2014 newsletter, we highlight the story of “Al Jazari”, the mechanical genius who is one of the most celebrated inventors of his time. We also travel to Malaysia and take a look at the unique crystal palace mosque.

With regards to The Renaissance Project, we are currently working on creating an advanced training program that addresses critical thinking and problem solving skills among our students. The training program will be punctuated by a STEM (sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics) competition that challenges students in various groups to create a product that will solve a real life problem. We are hoping to roll out the program sometime in June of this year.

We are also in the midst of finalizing chapter 14 of Al Kitab which investigates insects and their scientific prominence in the Quran. Looking forward for its release this Ramadan.

Thank you and I hope you enjoy the read

Regards,

Mohamed Al Qadi

“The Mechanical Genius” – Al Jazari

Muslim of the Month By Yasmine Saqer, Newsletter Editor



A Muslim scholar, inventor, and the an accomplished mechanical engineer, Al-Jazari was one of the most outstanding creators of his time.

Al-Jazari’s name was inspired by his place of birth, Al-Jazira, the land between the Tigris and Euphrates in Mesopotamia—now northwestern Iraq and northeastern Syria.

Following the footsteps of his father, Al-Jazari served the Artuqid kings of Diyarbakir for several decades between 1174 and 1200 C.E. as a mechanical engineer.

During his time, Al-Jazari built many machines, such as clocks, water-raising machines, and mechanical devices like the crankshaft. Al-Jazari is recognized as one of the first individuals to use robotics, as many of his machines were incorporated with moving figures.

In the service of Artuqid king Nasir al-Din, Al-Jazari was asked to document his inventions in a manual entitled *The Book of Knowledge of Ingenious Mechanical Devices*, which later became his most famous work. The book includes details of his beautifully innovative wudhu machines, revolutionizing the Islamic process of ablution before prayer.

In his book, Al-Jazari elaborates on his famous “Elephant Clock,” and the various elements that cause the clock to move and make a sound every half hour. This device is reminiscent of the elaborate clocks found on medieval town halls in Europe, which made the passage of time more entertaining with the performance of the moving figures.



Al-Jazari’s countless mechanical inventions inspired many devices and automatic machines used today. And according to the Encyclopedia Britannica, the Italian Renaissance inventor Leonardo da Vinci himself may have been influenced by the classic automata of Al-Jazari.

Regarded for his innovative craftsmanship and his ability to write and instruct with sufficient detail, Al-Jazari’s life and work has provided a wealth to the field of mechanical engineering.

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The Crystal Mosque—Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia *The Marvels of Islamic Art* By Yasmine Saqer



Located on the island of Wan Man, the Crystal Mosque is one of Islam's most unique and astonishing pieces of architecture.

Built between 2006 and 2008, the Crystal Mosque (also called Masjid Kristal) was incorporated as part of the city's Islamic Heritage Park. In addition to the Crystal Mosque, The Islamic Heritage Park includes several replicas of famous places of worship such as the Taj Mahal, Masjid al-Haram, the Aleppo Citadel, and Al-Hambra Mosque. The park is regarded as one of the island's largest tourist attractions, the Crystal Mosque being the highlight.

The impressive Crystal Mosque and park required a considerable amount of planning and resources. It cost a total of \$80 million to bring the dreamlike mosque and park to life. The Crystal Mosque was officially opened in February of 2008 by 13th Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin of Terengganu. The mosque has the capacity to accommodate 1,500 worshippers at a time.

Created out of steel and glass, the mosque is unlike any other in the world. The design of the mosque is sleek and modern, built with stunning visual effects. The brilliant exterior reflects off the water and the interior is often illuminated, making its glass domes shine. Consistent with its modern style, it is the first mosque in the world equipped with wireless internet and full IT facilities, a feature of pride for the architects.



The Crystal Mosque is an incredible example of architectural achievement. It gives tourists and worshippers around the world the opportunity to experience a scenery as fantastic and otherworldly as those described in fairytales and legends. The Crystal Mosque is an architectural wonder.

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Therenaissanceproj@gmail.com