

October 2014

# RENAISSANCE MONTHLY

Your monthly update on The Renaissance Project



## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Yasmine Saqer

Dear Friends,

This month the Renaissance Project invites to learn of another influential Islamic scientist, and to open your eyes to an architectural wonder.

A botanist and physician from Muslim Spain, **Ibn al-Baitar** is responsible for recording his and others' discoveries in plants and medicine.

In Islamabad, Pakistan, the **Faisal Mosque** sits supreme at the Margalla Hills. A unique and remarkable Islamic construct, the mosque is a symbol to the nation and a wonder to the world.

We hope you enjoy the read.

Best,

Yasmine Saqer

## "The Botanist"—Ibn al-Baitar

*Muslim of the Month* by Yasmine Saqer, Newsletter Editor



Born in the Spanish city of Malaga at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, **Ibn al-Baitar** was the most renowned botanist and pharmacist in Muslim Spain. His efforts and accomplishments in science went on to make him one of the most important Islamic scientists of the Middle Ages.

Al-Baitar first learned botany under Abu al-Abbas al-Nabati, a renowned botanist during his time, with whom he collected and studied plants in and around Spain. After working with al-Nabati, al-Baitar left Spain on an expedition to collect more plants along the northern coast of Africa, going as far as Asia Minor. In 1224, al-Baitar was appointed chief herbalist by the fourth Ayyubid sultan of Egypt, al-Kamil. With al-Kamil extending his reign over the Arabian Peninsula and Palestine, al-Baitar was able to travel and conduct research all over the Islamic world.

Al-Baitar compiled his research in botany and medicine and that of others to produce two of the most important pharmaceutical encyclopedias, *Kitab al-Jami fi al-Adwiya al-Mufrada*, al-Baitar and *Kitab al-Mlughni fi al-Adwiya al-Mufrada*.

Al-Baitar's encyclopedias were referenced by many scientists for centuries following, and his extensive knowledge and experience with plants translated into various medicines and treatments used today.

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## Faisal Mosque—Islamabad, Pakistan

*Islamic Architecture* by Yasmine Saqer, Newsletter Editor

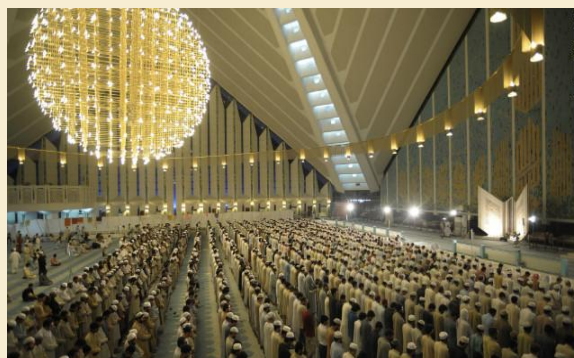


Sitting just at the foot of the Margalla Hills, the Faisal Mosque is an astounding and incomparable example of Islamic architecture.

Located in the capital of Pakistan, the Faisal Mosque is regarded as the national mosque. The mosque was named in honor of King Faisal bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia, who supported the project, and stands as a token of the nation's hopes and aspirations for the future. Talks for the construction of the mosque began in the late 1960's, and the build was completed in 1986.

At first glance, it's clear that the Faisal Mosque lacks the traditional design of a mosque, such as arches and domes, but rather has incorporated a design inspired by the region. Designed by Turkish architect Vedat Dalokay, the geometric exterior of the mosque, with its eight-sided concrete shell, was modeled after the desert Bedouin's tent.

Inside the mosque, the hall is covered with



white marble and decorated with mosaics, and includes calligraphy by Pakistani artist Sadeqain. But the most eye-catching part of the interior of the mosque is the grand, Turkish-styled chandelier.

Faisal Mosque is the second largest mosque in the nation, with a prayer hall accommodating 10,000 worshippers, another room that can hold another 24,000, and a courtyard for 40,000.

An eclectic design and eminent presence in Islamabad, Faisal Mosque is a unique and stellar work of architecture.