

January 2014

RENAISSANCE MONTHLY

Your monthly update on The Renaissance Project



LETTER FROM THE FOUNDER

Mohamed Al Qadi

“The Eloquent: Artist and Trend Setter”

Ziryab - Muslim of the Month by Samar Ahmad



Dear Friends,

In our first edition of 2014, we celebrate the life of Abdul-Hasan Ali Ibn Nafi, one of the most famous trend setters, musicians, and fashion experts in history.

We also travel to India and look at the beautiful wonder of the Taj Mahal which is considered to be the epitome of Mughal architecture. Finally, we highlight the work of the Abu Dhabi Cause Connect Team in our Heroes of Today section.

As you know, winter has been particularly harsh this year. The UN estimates that over 90% of Syrians are in need of aid and hundreds have perished due to the cold.

There are a number of entities that are collecting clothes and donations to help refugees in Syria and other countries cope with the cold. Please, if you are able to, don't forget to contribute to a charity organization of your choice; your help is much needed.

If you are a resident of the UAE, the Red Crescent has organized a massive campaign to clothe syrian refugees. Please visit: http://www.rcuae.ae/syrian_campaign.aspx for more details.

From the Renaissance Project team, we wish you a happy new year and hope you have a productive and fruitful year.

Best,

Mohamed Al Qadhi



Abul-Hasan 'Ali Ibn Nafi', also known as Ziryab “the black singing bird”, is one of the most influential figures that revolutionized social conduct, fashion and music in history. Born in 789 in modern day Iraq, he was an avid learner, explorer, and had a profound influence in music and culinary spheres. He used to sing, compose his own melodies, and play the Oud.

His music brilliance and talent attracted attention from across the world, and landed him an opportunity in Cordoba where he taught music under the patronage of the Umayyad amir of Al-Andalus, Abdul Rahman II.

His influence in Europe is apparent and can be seen in people's dress codes, their cuisine, the way they eat, and the music they listen to. At the time, there was a cultural revolution in Spain that Ziryab played an instrumental role in shaping. One of his prominent contributions was the introduction of what is now commonly known as “fine dining”. Ziryab had a passion for food and enjoyed consuming his meals in an organized manner. His three meals consisted of soup, main dish, and desert. Prior to Ziryab, different plates with various kinds of foods where piled together and placed on a wooden table simultaneously in Europe. Table etiquettes did not exist. However, due to Ziryab's contribution, this has changed and the three course serving manner became the common practiced form of dining in Europe and across the world. He was also behind the transformation of heavy metal drinking gold cups into the delicate crystal glass.

In addition, Ziryab was a great cook, a fashion designer, and one of the most gifted musicians of all time who's influence is still felt to this day. Some of his most important achievements include the introduction of seasonal dresses, adding a fifth base string to Al Oud, setting up a fashion industry, establishing the world's first conservatoire in Cordoba, and rearranging music theory completely by setting free metric and rhythmical patterns.

Due to his tremendous influence and accomplishments, Ziryab is celebrated worldwide as an inspirational character who transformed our way of life.



Chapter 13 “The Mind”

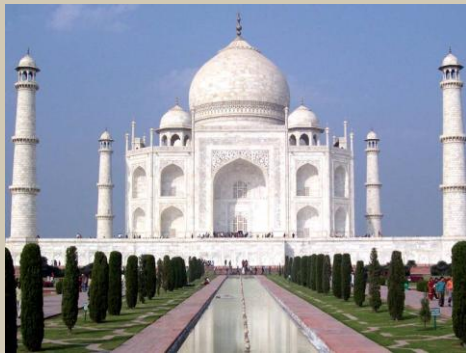
Read our newest chapter: <http://www.the-renaissance-project.com/#!al-kitab/c199t>

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Taj Mahal – Agra India *The Marvels of Islamic Art*



The Taj Mahal in Agra India is one of the most iconic sites in the world. It was commissioned by the legendary Moghul Emperor Shah Jahan “King of the World” in 1631 AD to house the body of his late wife Mumtāz Mahal “Beloved ornament of the palace”. The work, which celebrates Shah Jahan’s legendary love for his wife, was finally completed in 1653 AD and is now seen as one of the 7 wonders of the world.

The complex’s design is centered around the theme of heaven where the mausoleum, mosque and landscape were all conceived as a replica on earth of the house of Mumtaz in paradise.

Surrounded by 300 squared meters of beautiful gardens and the Yamuna river, the complex is centered around the mausoleum where Mumtaz and Shah Jahan were buried. This large structure, covered with white marble, stands on a square plinth and consists of a symmetrical building with an arch-shaped doorway topped by a large dome and finial and surrounded by four minarets. The marble dome that surmounts the tomb is the most spectacular feature with a height equal to that of the length of the base (around 35 metres). The entire structure blends elements of Persian, Othman, and Hindu architecture to create one of the most fabulous buildings in the world.

Finally, the beauty of the structure is punctuated by the exterior decorations of the Taj Mahal which are among the finest in Mughal architecture. As the surface area changes the decorations are refined proportionally, and throughout the complex, passages from the Quran are used as decorative elements that give the Taj its unique look.

Heroes of Today “Abu Dhabi Cause Connect”



Abu Dhabi Cause Connect is a community group launched in 2011 that is dedicated to increasing creative collaboration between causes, community, and companies. The group’s main objective is to connect the local community with non profit causes by making people aware of all the volunteering and charity events being run in Abu Dhabi and UAE.

This includes educating people on the reasons behind an event, why it is important, and what is needed from volunteer and donors. The group also launches campaigns of its own such as the Ramadan milk campaign that provided milk to underprivileged students in Dakha.

The importance of Abu Dhabi Cause Connect’s work cannot be understated; in a region that lacks a volunteering culture, ADCC has raised awareness on the amazing campaigns and events being run and has promoted a culture of volunteering across the UAE. Furthermore, their work has been critical to the success of many campaigns, including that of The Renaissance Project.

WHO WE ARE GRATEFUL TO Dima Dajani - Volunteer



In this segment, we recognize the work of individuals who have contributed to the project. This month, I would like to thank **Dima Dajani** for her continued support.

Though Dima isn't actively involved in the project, she always looks for ways to contribute and is a regular volunteer in our various campaigns and events.

Thank you Dima for your continued support, and I hope your example will encourage others to volunteer to all the good causes run by different groups and organizations across the world.

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Therenaissanceproj@gmail.com