

February 2014

RENAISSANCE MONTHLY

Your monthly update on The Renaissance Project



LETTER FROM THE FOUNDER

Mohamed Al Qadi



Dear Friends,

Welcome to our February edition of our monthly newsletter. This month, we celebrate the life of Abd Al Rahman Al Dakhali, "Saqr Quraish", the founder of the Umayyad Dynasty in

Spain, and one of the most legendary leaders in medieval history. We also travel to the home town of Abd Al Rahman I, Damascus, and narrate the story behind the Umayyad mosque, the 4th holiest place in Islam. Finally, we highlight the work of Anoud Hariri in her initiative "Yaretni" which targets impoverished regions in Jordan

We have received more coverage on the Renaissance Project, this time in Emarat Al Yom, a local Arabic newspaper. Our work on the scholarship program seems to generate a lot of interest among media and other groups and will become one of our major focus areas going forward. Once again, thank you all for making this possible.

حمد القاضي يفتش عن عقول العلماء في العالم العربي

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اطمح لإحياء مجد الحضارة العربية والإسلامية التي أنارت للعالم الطريق، وأسست للعلوم الأدب والفنون، وألهمت العلماء في كل مكان. هكذا يلخص المواطن الشاب محمد تاج دين القاضي مشروع «النهضة الحضارية» الذي يفتش فيه عن عقول العلماء بين طلبة بيئات الفقيرة في العالم العربي.

يؤكد محمد الذي درس إدارة الأعمال السياسة في لندن ويعمل حالياً بجهة حكومية رموقة في أبوظبي، أن «هناك الكثير من المواهب في البيئات الفقيرة تحتاج للمساعدة التركيز عليها». ويضيف «رغم إمكاناتي البسيطة فإن المبادرة لاقت استجابة من عدد من أصدقائي وأقاربي، فقرروا البدء من الأردن.

<http://www.emaratalyom.com/life/four-sides/2014-02-01-1.645690>

Regards,

"The Falcon of Quraish"

Muslim of the Month By Yasmine Saqer, Newsletter Editor



Known as "the Immigrant" and dubbed as the "Falcon of Quraish" by his biggest foe, **Abd al-Rahman I** was the founder of the Umayyad dynasty in Spain and is considered as one of the greatest leaders of all time.

Son of the Umayyad prince Mu'awiya ibn Hisham, Abd al-Rahman was born in Syria near the city of Damascus in 731 AD.

As a prince, his legendary journey started when he was 19 after the Umayyad dynasty was overthrown by the Abbasids. Mercilessly pursued and having witnessed the beheading of his own brother, he spent 6 years travelling the region to escape prosecution. Determined to fulfil his destiny as a great leader, he finally decided to immigrate to Al Andalus. During that time, Al Andalus was experiencing a civil war that threatened to end muslim rule in Spain. As a lonely immigrant with no friends or allies, Abd Al Rahman began employing his exceptional skills and energy.

Building an alliance with fellow Umayyads and Yemeni tribes, he worked endlessly towards uniting the different groups and ending the conflict. His initial success would prompt the governor of Al Andalus, - Al Fihri to wage war against him to maintain control over the Emirate. Riding a mule from the chief of Yemen and creating a banner from an unfolded green turban tied to his spear, now a symbol of the Andalusian Umayyads, Abd al-Rahman led the charge toward al-Fihiri's army at the bank of Guadalquivir, routing Al Fihri and establishing a new, united state of Al Andalus; he was 25 years old only.

Over his 32 year reign, Abd Al Rahman would defeat invasions and instigated rebellions created by the Abbasids and European States on 25 occasions. He would heal the country's societal fabric after years of civil conflict, and create one of the most powerful and inspiring states in medieval history that would eventually become the center for science, innovation and culture.

A fugitive and immigrant in an unfamiliar country, Abd Al Rahman managed to forge an impossible future and cement his legacy as one of the most important figures in European and Islamic history.

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A History of the Umayyad Mosque—Damascus, Syria
The Marvels of Islamic Art By Yasmine Saqer

Heroes of Today
“Yaretni”



One of the largest and most ancient of mosques, the Umayyad Mosque remains today as a fascinating historical site and a spectacle of Pre-Islamic architecture.

Located in the very heart of Syria, the site of the Umayyad Mosque first belonged to the Romans, as they conquered Damascus in 64 C.E. In honor of the god of thunder, the Romans first built the Temple of Jupiter on the land—the largest temple in Roman Syria.

At the end of the 4th century, the site of the Hellenic temple to Jupiter became a Christian basilica, dedicated to John the Baptist (Yahya) by the Christian Emperor Theodosius I (379-395). Inside the church, a shrine was built enclosing the head of John the Baptist.

The land finally became home to today’s “Great Mosque of Damascus” after the Arab conquest in 634. The sixth Umayyad caliph, al-Walid I, commissioned the mosque on the site of the cathedral in 706. Though the cathedral was completely demolished, workers discovered a cave-chapel protecting the box with John the Baptist’s head. Upon this discovery, al-Walid instructed that the head be buried under a particular pillar in the mosque that was inlaid with marble.

Considered the fourth-holiest place in Islam, the mosque is visited and respected by both Christians and Muslims alike. Rich with centuries of culture and history, the Umayyad Mosque is nothing short of a treasure with immense historical significance.

“No one should Beg or Cry for food”



“Yaretni” is a charity initiative created by Anoud Hariri in 2011. It’s objective is to help people in need across different areas in Jordan.

This is usually done by collecting old and new clothes, food, toys, and other equipment to distribute among the less fortunate.



Yaretni’s success over the past 3 years has relied on engaging the community and volunteers. People are encouraged to collect items that can be donated, help in packing them, and assist in distributing them among the needy. “Yaretni” operates under the principle that we all have a duty to help the less fortunate and must put in the required time and effort.

For more information on Yaretni, please visit:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/176042279012/>

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