

## **Dedication**

*To the land of the civilizations that inspired the European renaissance.*

*To the land of pioneers, whose genius thinking opened the way for European thinkers to follow.*

*To the land where the sun of science and arts rose.*

*To all those who contributed to the development of human civilizations, from east or west.*

*To those who enlightened minds, and who were open minded allowing a fruitful inter-civilizations' dialogue, giving and taking, putting aside bias and supremacy trends.*

*To Arab and Islamic nations and sons, those who graced history with their civilization,*

*I dedicate this book..*

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### *Introduction*

It was the heritage left by the ancient generations that paved the way for humanity to achieve the current level of civilization, a heritage without which no progress or development was ever possible.

This is why the human thinking must be considered as a body that grows and develops. Parts of this body perform certain roles at certain times, which in their turn were preparing for other certain roles to be performed later on.

Greeks, Persians, Indians and Chinese - as examples - provided the early ancient world with all their inventions and sciences, and then came the Arabs who prepared the minds for performing the roles, which the Europeans played subsequently. At that time, there were no competitions among civilizations, for they used to adopt what their predecessors achieved in the different fields and then added to it.

The first sources of Arab civilization were the peoples in the states they opened as those peoples had deep-rooted respectable civilizations. There was the Sassenach civilization, prevailing in Iraq and Persia, a civilization that was keeping a special Asian legacy from both the Chinese and Indian civilizations - that contributed in its creation to a great extent-. There was also the Byzantine civilization prevailing in the region of the Mediterranean Sea. This civilization was of oriental Greek origins because the Byzantines and the Romans were the scholars of the major Greco-Roman cultural centers in Greece, Alexandria, Hearn, Arraha, Nezibe, and Antioch.

Arabs had their own ancient noble heritage of civilizations. There were those of Ma'in, Sabaa (Sheba), and Hemier in Yemen. There was also al-Hejaz civilization - which was famous of its commercial and religious activities-. Yet, when they opened other countries, they found well developed and advanced civilizations, having organized governmental administrations and superior economic systems in agriculture, irrigation works and industry; added to this there were also the developments in the fields of mental and experimental sciences such as mathematics, astrology, and physics. Arabs did not lose the opportunity of benefiting of these systems and developments within the limitations of their traditions and beliefs.

Hence, we can consider that the Islamic State, in its dependence upon those civilizations, had managed to combine and mingle them in an Islamic blend. A blend that formed the basis of that amazing scientific renaissance extending over a period beginning from the emergence of the Abbasid state until the end of the Tenth century A.D

If the Arab Islamic State in the beginning of Islam claims the merit of spreading Islam, communicating with many ancient civilizations, and laying the first seeds of Islamic civilization, yet the Abbasid State can claim the favor of protecting the roots of this civilization and actively working to make it grow and flourish. The Muslims in this Abbasid period at first conveyed and translated that ancient heritage of other nations into their Arabic language; by the time they assimilated this heritage, they then began to produce, create and add to it, until they provided the world with what was known as the Arab/Islamic Civilization. Arab/Islamic Civilization was based upon the three features that characterize the major civilizations, which are distinction, originality and ability to contribute to the development of humanity.

Human culture has several Eastern and Western sources, similar to the current of a river that many tributaries supply with water, and it by its turn has many branches nourishing new ranges and reviving latent energies.

These facts can be clarified on studying ancient civilizations and cultures unveiling their true nature. No human civilization could flourish in a certain nation during a certain period without mating with a foreign civilization. Each of the human civilizations was benefiting from the efforts of preceding civilizations, a process without which the world civilization would have not made any progress. Instead of adding and building on ready basis, every nation would have to start from the very beginning.

Human cultures were transmitted from one through nation to another, by means of communications, invasion and conquests, or through translation.

After the Islamic conquests, the Eastern Christians communicated with the Muslims and enjoyed living with them in a lenient religious atmosphere; moreover, they participated in intellectual and cultural activities and were among the pioneers who led the new Islamic scientific movement. They excelled in many professions as physicians, philosophers,

astronomers and chemists who contributed in transforming the Greek heritage into Arabic.

Scientific research was liberal and free from barriers of race, language or religion. Muslims took from Christians and gave to them, Arabs took from Persians and gave to them, this proves that science is not limited to only one nation. Human civilizations are the outcome of varied and continuous human efforts. This is clear in the history of ancient, middle, modern and contemporary civilizations and is confirmed by the relation between Islamic East and European West, which flourished largely in the Abbasid period.

In spite of the fact that such contact had primarily emerged in the late Umayyad period, yet, writing books began in the Abbasid period including books in all branches of science written by hundreds of authors. Reviewing the *Fehrest* (Index) book by *Ibn el-Nadim* which indexed the texts written in that era will be amazing, not only regarding the huge number of books but also at the way Islamic scientists in that period handled all kinds of sciences. Those great people played an active role in laying out the foundation for a dialogue among the newly born Islamic/Arabic Civilization and the civilizations of India and Persia in the East and that of Greece in the West. Participants in that dialogue included some scientists, philosophers and literary men such as *al-Kendy*, *al-Farabi* and *Ibn Sina (Avicenna)* who led a dialogue with the world civilizations concentrating on the scientific and philosophical achievements and the extent of the mutual effects between civilizations.

We can say that without the Arabs conveying what was left from the Greek books to Europe; the European renaissance would have been delayed. Also, without *Ibn El Haytham*, *Jaber Ibn Hayyan (Geber)*, and other Muslim scientists, the emergence of *Galileo*, *Newton*, and other European scientists would have been delayed in the same way. In other words, without Ibn el-haytham Newton would have to begin not from where Ibn el haytham reached, but from the very beginning, and without Jaber Ibn Hayyan (Geber) Galileo would have to begin not from where Jaber Ibn Hayyan (Geber) reached, but again from the very beginning. Hence we can say that without Arab and Muslims efforts, the European renaissance would have begun in the 14<sup>th</sup> century from the very same point the Arabs started their scientific renaissance in the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

Arabic-European relations became more active after the development and spread of the Arabic/Islamic state and the expansion of its activity with having Many Arabic cultural centers that emerged in Sicily, Cyprus, Crete, and parts of South Italy and France. There were also the Islamic Caliphate in Andalusia which competed with the eastern Islamic Abbasid Caliphate. These relations were in general of a civilized nature. Towards the ends of the middle ages Europe rose up from the darks of these medieval ages to find a flourishing Arab-Islamic civilization, Europe then welcomed this civilization and began benefiting from it and adding to it many methods of scientific research and scientific facts. Then time had its turn over and suddenly the Arab/Islamic civilization began to retreat in front of the modern European civilization.

Thus, Arabs had no other choice than to derive from the Europeans, Arabic language - as the language of sciences- was replaced by European languages, Arabs had to learn these languages if they wanted to gain knowledge, especially after the loss of the original Arabic manuscripts leaving the Muslim/Arab heritage kept only with Europeans and written only in their languages.

The European renaissance was a turning point in all aspects of life not only in Europe but also all over the whole world.

After the series of geographic discoveries that resulted from European imperialistic movement, the industrial revolution, and the growing nationalist movements in Europe, European imperialism extended to the East, followed by exploitation of its resources. Subsequently, national awareness appeared and Arab peoples launched revolutions against imperialism, followed by liberation movements especially after *The Second World War*, which made great changes in the features of the world map. Some states took a leading position such as *The Soviet Union*, which emerged as a force competing with the Western block led by *The United States*. Some others retreated from first to second rate such as Britain and France. There appeared also the so-called *Cold War* between both the Eastern and Western blocs, which continued until the disruption of Berlin Wall in 1989, and the fall of *The Soviet Union* in 1990. After the end of the Cold War the world of two poles disappeared and the *U.S* emerged as the one and only pole in the world. Throughout that period, new conflicts

erupted in many regions of the world substituting the old ideological dispute between *Socialism* and *Capitalism*. Some of these new conflicts were religious, ethnic, or tribal; others were resulting from latent historical causes related to competitions for authority, benefits, or influence.

Some Western mass media began announcing the beginning of a new world distinguished with co-operative relations instead of disputes and conflicts. At the same time, new terms emerged such as the conflict of civilizations, cultures and religions. In addition, the idea of searching for a new enemy emerged especially after the appearance of some attempts for explaining and foretelling the future movement of history. The most significant and effective one was the *Fucuyama* theory known as *the end of history*, then the ideas offered by *Samuel Huntington*, prof. of political sciences in *Harvard University* in USA, about "changes in the sphere of security and U.S national interests", under the title of *The Clash Of Civilizations*. He said that the Islamic threat to the Western civilization is a true fact and the conflict between the West and Islam will be inevitable and also the war between them will take the place of war between the West and Communism. Since that time, writings continued on that subject either approving this opinion, expecting a cold or hot war between Islam and the West, or opposing it and trying to bring Muslims, Europeans and Americans closer and declaring that Islam is free from fanaticism.

Several Arab and Islamic writers criticized the ideas against Islam and substituted the word conflict by the term dialogue. There also appeared the idea of protecting humanity from the dangers of religious conflicts whereas U.S and European mass media began to repeat the sayings of *Huntington* and approve them, claiming that Islam as a belief calls for fanaticism and radicalism. Consequently, conflicts increased in many parts of the world, creating a common state of human anxiety and sufferings of millions that was aggravated after events of *Sept. 11th.2001* when some civil planes penetrated the highest world towers – the symbol of American hegemony. A deep sense of anger and hatred towards Arabs and Muslims prevailed U.S and some European states due to the haphazard quick accusations by Western responsible authorities of Arabic and Islamic groups with arranging the events and stigmatizing them with terrorism. There emerged the notion of the civilizations clash to face any opponents to the

capitalist Western model. On the other hand, there spread a wave of refusal and protest against U.S. policy for its treatment of the events and its complete alignment with Israel against the Palestinian rights.

In this study, we are trying to review the facts of this subject objectively, intending to clarify all matters to all people everywhere around the world especially the Western people who are disgracing Islam and stigmatizing Muslims with terrorism and being blood thirst. We are also emphasizing the fact that there are no conflicting civilizations, but civilizations are in a dialogue the model of which was offered by the Islamic civilization. In this model, Islamic civilization was giving to other civilizations and taking from them. Islamic civilization did not underestimate the cultures of nations opened by Muslims, on the contrary, it assisted their people and was assisted by them, which means that Muslims sometimes played the role of teachers who taught, corrected and added to their sciences. In other times, they played the role of the student who benefited from the sciences of Greeks, Persians, Indians and others. Communication between nations has certainly its active effects on customs, beliefs, language and culture. These effects are more evident among the weak than they are among the strong, since people were, and are still fond of imitating those who are superior to them in the aspects of civilization and culture.

Islam appeared as a system of life that defines the way and points out clearly the features of life on earth and after death; it realized justice, equality, freedom and respected human dignity. Islam has acknowledged man as a body, mind and soul and managed to establish a human unity based on liberty, equality and tolerance, it also strived to remove political barriers between different countries giving them a unified form, an attitude that had a direct effect on several aspects of life.

It must be mentioned that in Europe there are some unbiased scientists, these scientists represented the true spirit of scientific research and gave attention to Arabic heritage, and recognized the greatness of what the Arabic mind left to science and culture. They became certain that the Arab civilization is a glorious one, deserving all respect and pride. For instance, the *Faculty of Medicine in Paris University* highly estimated Arab scientists' efforts to the extent that it still keeps two large portraits in one of

its major halls, one for *al-Razy (Rhazes)* and the other for *Ibn Sina (Avicenna)*. In addition, *The American Princeton University* recognized Arabs' services and favors for humanity and culture; this was expressed by allocating the best part of one of its most magnificent buildings for the works of *al-Razy (Rhazes)* who is one of the most famous and prominent leaders of Arab civilization. This university also established a house for teaching Arabic sciences and searching for Arabic scripts to translate them into English, so that the world can become aware of the influence of the Arabic heritage on scientific progress and human prosperity.

The effects of Arab Islamic civilization on the Western civilization and culture are subjects with several branches and multiple approaches, in which a number of scientists showed great interest. Examples of these effects was what was evident in *Dante's The Divine Comedy*.

Andalusian and classical Arabic poetry had a great influence on the European lyrics. *Ibn Sina (Avicenna)* had a great impact on European philosophy. The growing interest in studying Islamic heritage and its impact on European thinking is a proof for the continuity of world civilizations, and is emphasizing the importance of human dialogue as a means to reach human unity and settle peace among all countries regardless of color, ethnicity, culture or language.

The booming civilization that Europe claims nowadays is the sum of successive efforts of major civilizations, which left distinguished marks on human history, including Arabic/Islamic civilization. This means that the current modern civilization is a compilation of many civilizations - not restricted to any specific country or people - but established by the efforts of humanity at large.

To clarify these facts, the plan of this study is restricted to three main sections :

**Section (1)** deals with the passages of Arabic/Islamic civilization to Europe in the beginning of the renaissance age.

**Sections (2&3)** deal with the evidences confirming the influence on the European thinking by the achievements of Islamic thinking in literature, geography, history, music, architecture, navigation, medicine, astronomy, engineering, philosophy, arts and others . Certainly, other fields can be added to these subjects such as sociology and political thinking.

**Section (4)** demonstrates how the meeting of civilizations is an inevitable necessity for making a dialogue. The idea that Western civilization is more superior to Arabic/Islamic civilization is refused by history and fact, and that the chance is still there to change these ideas and establish a world where stability, peace, and mutual respect among nations and peoples are dominant. Finally, we cannot help wondering that man, the maker of civilization, sometimes has a contradictory attitude to what he himself has established, and exposing this civilization to dangers and threats of annihilation and even destruction which will not only ruin civilization, but even man himself in case he does not act rationally.