



The House of Wisdom: How the Arabs Transformed Western Civilization

Jonathan Lyons

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For centuries following the fall of Rome, Western Europe was a benighted backwater, a world of subsistence farming, minimal literacy, and violent conflict. Meanwhile Arab culture was thriving, dazzling those Europeans fortunate enough to visit cities like Baghdad or Antioch. There, philosophers, mathematicians, and astronomers were steadily advancing the frontiers of knowledge, as well as keeping alive the works of Plato and Aristotle. When the best libraries in Europe held several dozen books, Baghdad's great library, The House of Wisdom, housed *four hundred thousand*. Jonathan Lyons shows just how much "Western" ideas owe to the Golden Age of Arab civilization.

Even while their countrymen waged bloody Crusades against Muslims, a handful of intrepid Christian scholars, hungry for knowledge, traveled East and returned with priceless jewels of science, medicine, and philosophy that laid the foundation for the Renaissance. In this brilliant, evocative book Jonathan Lyons reveals the story of how Europe drank from the well of Muslim learning.

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