

ROBERT BONNETT'S BLOG

Misanthropy And Persiflage



1001 Inventions Versus A Generation Of Jihad

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In light of the news today that the hopelessly optimistic chief constable of West Yorkshire Police, Sir Norman Bettison, believes the UK faces another twenty years of home-grown Islamic extremism, it's refreshing to examine another aspect of Islam, which is exactly what the 1001 Inventions exhibition at London's Science Museum is doing.



Although it's true to say that some Muslim scientists of yesteryear held varying degrees of scepticism about their religion, it was nonetheless the case that Islam provided the driving force behind many scientific breakthroughs and discoveries. And not just those that benefited it, such as perfecting the use of astrolabes to aid in locating the qibla, so that Muslims could face towards Mecca when praying.

The show, which runs until April 25th and is free to enter, offers an insight into the achievements of the Islamic world during the millennium or so following Muhammad's death. Whilst Europe dwindled in the Dark Ages, Muslim scientists, engineers and technologists were at the forefront of development, in many cases laying the foundations of modern medicine, architecture, optics, agriculture, wind power, hydraulics, astronomy, mathematics, cartography, chemistry, etc, etc, etc.

Hospitals, algebra, star names, our (though it's not really) numbers system, and a vast array of the words we use every day all have their roots in the Islamic Golden Age. A Muslim lady, Fatima al-Fihri, even founded the world's first degree granting university, Morocco's University of Al Karaouine in Fez – been there, easy place to get lost, thoroughly recommend a trip in a police van should the decent chaps from the local constabulary offer you one, can't endorse the loos in the souk, mind, but I might be confusing them with the ones in Marrakech.

And yes, Islam granted women rights, albeit not entirely equal ones by modern Western standards, but rights nonetheless and long before Europeans or anyone else gave so much as a single thought to such things. . . .

<http://www.1001inventions.com>