The Christians took learning and art from them. The idolaters acquired the arts of the dead arts of Aristotle, and made Plato come to life again. They made every city and town a Greece, and let everyone taste the heights of learning and philosophy. They pulled away the veil from the eye of the world, and around the age

The spread of virtues.
Text and translation

77 These level roads, these spotless highways with the shade of trees unbroken on both sides. The signs for mile and league set up at intervals, with wells and serais prepared by the roadside. In these things all made copies of them, and these are all marks which that caravan left.

Travelling and voyages

78* Sightseeing and travelling were ever agreeable to them. They passed through every continent. All oceans and lands were thoroughly explored by them. If someone’s tent was in Ceylon, his home was on the Barbary Coast. They reckoned their homeland and travel as the same, and considered every desert and valley their home.

79* The world still remembers their travelling, for their footprints are still visible. Their vestiges are still to be found in Malaya, and Malabar still weeps for them. The Himalayas know their exploits by heart, and their traces remain on Gibraltar.

The monuments of Islam

80* There is no continent upon this globe in which their buildings do not stand firm. Arabia, India, Egypt, Spain, Syria, Dailam, the whole world is filled with their foundations. From the summit of Adam’s Peak to the Sierra Nevada, you will find their traces wherever you go.

81 Those palaces of stone and their brilliant purity, to whose ruins moss clings today! Those tombs whose domes were gilded, those mosques where divinity was gloriously manifest! Although time has robbed them of their perfection, yet there is no desolate spot empty of them.

80 ‘On this globe’ refers to the upper hemisphere of the earth on which we are situated. Dailam is a mountainous country near Gilan to the south of the Caspian Sea. Both these countries used to lie within the frontiers of Iran, but are now under Russian rule. Adam’s Peak is the highest peak in the range of mountains on Lanka. The Europeans call the Sierra Nevada (Soh-e Bâzî) in Spain the Sierra Albeda. Because its peak is always white with snow, the Arabs called it the White Peak (Qullâ Bezdâ); and its ancient name is Sierra.
82* Through them Spain was entirely turned into a rose-garden, where many of their memorials remain. Anyone who wishes may go and see them for himself today. It is as if these words were on the tongue of the Alhambra, 'My founders were of the Umayyad clan. I am the token of the Arabs in this land.'

83 Their majesty is manifest from Granada, their greatness is made apparent by Valencia, Their glory is recalled by Badajoz, Cadiz throb with longing for them. Their fortune sleeps in Seville, and Cordoba weeps for them night and day.

84* One may go and see the ruins of Cordoba, the arches and doors of the mosques, The houses of noblemen from the Hijaz. One may go and see the Caliphate overturned. Their glory shines forth in the ruins, like pure gold glittering in the dust.

The Caliphate of Baghdad

85* That city which was the glory of the cities of the world, whose coin was current on sea and land, In which the standard of the Abbasids was planted, because of which Lower Iraq was the envy of paradise, Which the wind of arrogance swept away, which the Tartars' flood washed away,

Valencia is a very fine city in the eastern part of Andalus, surrounded by gardens and canals. Badajoz is a very large city situated six days to the north-west of Cordoba. Here Mutawakkil ibn Umar Aftah had most magnificent buildings constructed. Ibn Falas wrote some very moving verses in memory of it.

Cadic (the English name for Qadis) is a smallish island twelve miles long attached to the Gulf of Zaqag, or Bay of Cadiz. Seville is one of the capitals of Spain, situated four days from Cordoba. Cordoba is a very famous and great city of Andalus, with walls of stone, which used to contain 1600 mosques, 900 baths, 50 hospitals and 80 general schools in the time of the Umayyad Caliph. Nasir Amma constructed a city to the west of it on top of a mountain, which was called Zahra, and which is mentioned in the elegy by Yahya Qurtabi.

85 The capital of the Abbasid', i.e. Baghdad, the capital of the Abbasid Caliphate from AH 132 to AH 1656, situated on both banks of the Tigris in Iraq. The settlement on the western bank is called Karth and that on the east Askar Mahdi and Rusafa. Arab Iraq is the country bounded on the west by the land of the Jazira, between the Tigris and Euphrates, on the east by the mountainous territory of Persian Iraq. Its best known cities are Qadisiya, Kufa, Baghdad, Mada'in, Nahrawan, Wadi, Basra, etc.
86 If a man goes and listens with the ear of awareness, then every atom makes this proclamation there,

"In the days when the sun of Islam was shining, the air here was revivifying for the age.

"It was from here that life entered into the dust of Athens, it was from here that the name of Greece came to life again."

87 "Those hidden pearls of Aesop and Socrates, those mysteries of Hippocrates and those teachings of Plato,

"Aristotle's introduction and Solon's laws, all lay buried in some ancient grave.

"It was after coming here that their seal of silence was broken. It was from this fair garden that their fragrance was diffused.'"

88 The state of attention to learning there was like that of a wounded man in search of a salve.

In no way would their thirst grow less. Neither rain nor dew would extinguish their fire.

Loaded on camels, the archives of Egypt and Greece used to come into the precincts of the Caliphate.

89 Those stars which were shining brilliantly in the East, but by whose rays even the West was illuminated,

With whose writings the libraries of Paris, Rome and London are even now adorned.

Whose fame was celebrated in all countries, they are sleeping in the graves of Baghdad.

Surveying and astronomy

90 That plain of Sanjar and of Kufa, in which the geometers of the age assembled.

They deployed their apparatus for surveying the globe. The value of the whole became apparent from the part.

The world is still lamenting there, 'Where has that Society of the Abbasids gone?'

been collected with great effort and care. He died through being given poison in 400 BC.

Solon was also an Athenian. He and Lycurgus were the famous lawgivers of Greece.

90 Sanjar is an ancient and famous city in the area of the Jazirm (between the Tigris and the Euphrates) known as Dijar Rabia. There is a very large level plain here, called Barriya by the Arabs. Once in this plain and another time in the plain of Kufa geometers were gathered on the orders of Manun ibn Rashid. They measured one degree of the circumference of the earth and deduced its total circumference to be 24,000 miles. The four sons of Musa ibn Sakir, i.e. Da'far, Muhammad, Ahmad and Husain, whose book the Hijal Bani Māzīd is well known, were sent on this task.
91 Right from Samarkand to Spain it was their observatories that diffused
their splendour.
On the outskirts of Maragha and on Qasiyun, the cry is continually coming
from the earth.
‘Where are those astronomers of the Muslims, of whose observation these
traces are left?’

History

92 The historians who are such careful researchers today, who have such
marvellous rules of investigation,
Who have scoured the world’s archives and have completely sifted through
the earth’s globe.
It was the Arabs who went and inspired their hearts. It was from the Arabs
that they learnt to rush on at full speed.

93 Histories were shadowed over with darkness. The star of historical
tradition was eclipsed.
A cloud was passing over the sun of knowledge. The plain of testimony
was darkened.
The Arabs lit a lamp on the road, from which the trace of every caravan
was found.

94 There was a group which sought knowledge about the Prophet, which
tracked down every fabricator.
It left no chink for hidden falsehood, and put every pretender in difficulty.
It fashioned laws for invalidation and substantiation, and did not allow the
spell of falsehood to operate.

95 In this strong desire, it made every journey easy. In this passion, it
traversed every ocean and continent.
When they heard some man was a treasure-keeper of religious learning,
they went and collected testimony and evidence from him.
Then they put it on the touchstone and tested it themselves. After sampling its flavour themselves, they gave it to others.

94 By ‘this group’ is meant the Muslim specialists in Hadith, the Muhaddithin.
In the technical language of the Muhaddithin, ‘invalidation’ (fitnah) is to prove some transmitter
of tradition to be guilty of carelessness, imperfect memory, untruthfulness or fabrication, while
‘justification’ (tanll) is to establish a transmitter to be accepted, having a good memory,
truthful or trustworthy.

95 Testimony and Evidence (khobar aur aqar) are types of Hadith.
96 'Virtues' (manāqib) and 'vices' (maqālib): in describing the circumstances of the transmitters, the Muhaddithin paid full regard to justice and freedom. If they saw a genuine fault amongst the abstemious, they would reveal it, and if they found some virtue in the vicious, they did not conceal it. This way of working too was learnt by the Europeans from the Arabs.

97 By rijāl is meant the 'am-e riṣāl, in which the circumstances of the learned and the transmitters of traditions are recorded with great accuracy. By nasībād is meant the science of Hadith, in which the name of each transmitter is mentioned together with the text of the Hadith. Dr Spranger has written: 'The Musalmans are entitled to be proud of the 'am-e riṣāl. No people of the past or present has, like the Musalmans, written for twelve hundred years the biographies of scholars. In their books we can find reports of half a million scholars.' 'Liberty' is the English word for freedom, and 'liberal' means free.

96 They exposed whatever faults they found in a bearer of Traditions. They strained off virtues and melted vices.
They made known the base qualities which emerged in revered Shaikhs and told of the blots they saw in Imams.
They broke the spell of righteousness of every holy figure. They spared neither the Mullah nor the Sufi.

97 The volumes of verified reports and attested collections are complete testimony to their independence.
They did not put just their co-religionists under an obligation. In this achievement they were the guides of every people and community.
Let those who are today pre-eminent in 'liberty' say when it was that they started to become 'liberal'.

The eloquence of the Arabs

98 The archives of eloquence were all destroyed. The ways of rhetoric were in no one's care.
On one side Byzantium's candle of composition was extinguished, on the other the fire of Persia had died down.
When all of sudden Arabia's lightning came and flashed, everyone's eyes were opened, and remained open wide.

99 When they beheld the fiery eloquence of the Arabs, when they listened to their apt oratory,
Those verses which rooted themselves in the heart, that river-like flow of their addresses,
Those magic sentences and bewitching phrases, then they thought that it was as if they had been dumb until then.

100 None possessed the art of praise and blame, or remembered the method for expressing joy and grief,
Or the style of instruction, preaching and philosophy. The treasure of the tongue and pen was buried.
All learnt melodiousness from them. Everyone's tongue was loosened by the articulateness of the Arabs.

98 Elocution and rhetoric were the natural genius of the Arabs. Through their speeches on the battlefield, soldiers' hearts were encouraged and their enemies' spirits downcast. In their wars it was their tongues which acted as their arrows and spears. John Davenport has written: 'Arab literature again put new life into the literatures of Rome and Greece.' It was admitted in the first recommendation of the Oriental Translation Committee that: 'In literature, especially in tales and stories, no one has surpassed the Arabs.' The custom of speech-making (šīāh kā dastān) which still exists among the Europeans in ordinary gatherings, national assemblies and on occasions of war, etc., probably reached them from the Muslims of Spain.