

A COLLECTION OF EARLY PRINTED BOOKS RELATING
TO ISLAMIC SCIENCE AND MEDICINE IN ISTAC
LIBRARY

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It is a revolutionary interpretation of world history put forward by Prof. S. M. N. al-Attas, Founder-Director of ISTAC, that it is Islam that created world history¹. One major evidence to support this thesis is none other than the transfer of knowledge and learning from the East to the West. "Islam carried to the West superior knowledge and the spirit of intellectual and rational investigation of higher truths that was to set the pace in the development of Western Christian intellectual history."² The Medieval West not only enlightened itself with it, but also after its appropriation of "new sciences" from the Muslim World it later developed and created new ones, just as the Muslims did with the Greek sciences. Shortly thereafter, a new period began in the "Western Christian World".

The great period for the dissemination of Islamic science and medicine in the West began in the 12th and 13th centuries when a large number of texts by major authors such as Ibn Sīnā, Ibn al-Jazzār, Ibn Rushd, al-Rāzī, Ibn al-Ḥaytham, Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī were translated into Latin. Muslim authors, as a result of these translations, became widely known under Latinized names: Rhazes for al-Rāzī, Avicenna for Ibn Sīnā, Averroes for Ibn Rushd, and so on. These translations were widely read, frequently cited and quoted, commented on, abbreviated and expanded. These Latin versions revived the spirit of learning in Western Europe during the late Middle Ages and many became standard texts in the universities, giving the necessary impetus to the

¹ For a discussion on the rise and spread of Islam and its influence on the West and world history, see S. M. N. al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1993, reprint), 97-105.

² *Ibid*, 103.

growth of European science. With the advent of printing in the second half of the 15th century, almost all of this material began to be published, initially in Latin, sometimes in Arabic and Persian and eventually in French, German, Italian and English.

The following books were acquired by Prof. Al-Attas for the ISTAC Library with a special grant from the Government of Malaysia through the Ministry of Education. These books illustrate the spread and influence of Muslim learning which gave rise to learning in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. The number of each item represents their call nos. in ISTAC Special Collection of Rare Books in the Latin Category (SpRBL01-SpRBL16). The description of each item was prepared by Farhad Hakimzadeh. The physical detailed description of each item is featured in full in the ISTAC Library Special Collection Catalog.

01 Abū 'Alī Yaḥyā b. Ghalib al-Khayyāt (ALBOHALI).-De iudicis nativitatum liber unus, antehac non editus. Cum privilegio D. Ioanni Schonero consesso. Noribergae (Nürnberg), Ionnaes Montanus & Ulrich Neuber, 1546.

A rare first edition of Albohali's *Kitāb al-mawālīd* as translated to Latin by Johannes Hispalensis (John of Seville).

Abū 'Alī Yaḥyā b. Ghālib al-Khayyāt (known as Albohali) (d. ca. 835 AD) was one of the best known astrologers of his time and a pupil of the highly influential Māshā'allāh b. Atharī al-Baṣrī. Ibn al-Nadīm, in his great bio-bibliographical dictionary of the 10th century, *al-Fihrist*, attributes to Albohali the *Kitāb al-masā'il fī aḥkām al-nujūm* and the *Kitāb al-mawālīd*, which are both extant, along with a number of other works now lost.

Albohali's fame in medieval Europe stems from the *Kitāb al-mawālīd*, a text on judicial astrology which also contains horoscopes for illness, frequent citations from Ptolemy and Hermes on the *pars fortunae*, etc. Two Latin translations were made of it, one by Plato of Tivoli (Plato Tiburtinus) at Barcelona in 1136, and the other by John de Seville (Ioannes Hispalensis) in 1153; the latter translation was printed at Nürnberg (1546, 1549).

The translator, Ioannes Hispalensis, was the chief and most