

Free the history of gunpowder in the middle east research paper example

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Nowadays we can meet almost any type of weapon people 100-150 ago couldn't imagine with the help of which armies defend their countries, conquest foreign ones, and use their arsenal for deterrent purposes.

According to this, quite reasonable question rises. What was the starting point of making arms that could attack targets on a large distance? The answer is gunpowder. By a coincidence one of the regions of our world where gunpowder weapons developed very fast is the same region where weapon is widely used to solve the problems in our time. This refers to Middle East.

As many historians suppose, gunpowder was invented in the 9th century in China. According to Chase (2003), the earliest known formula for gunpowder can be found in a Chinese work dating probably from the 800s. The Chinese didn't waste time in applying to it to warfare, and they produced a various range of gunpowder weapons, e. g. flamethrowers, rockets, bombs, mines, before firearms were invented (Chase, 2003, p. 1). There is a widespread belief that originally scientists tried to find the elixir of immortality, but completely different substance appeared. Mostly all these weapons were used against Mongols who tried to invade China. After Mongols conquered China, the expansion of gunpowder began to other countries, including those of Middle East. Nevertheless, another point of view exists, and it deals with the statement that gunpowder originally was created on Middle East.

According to Frantz, the principal ingredient of Black Powder which is saltpeter first appears in the writings of Abd Allah in the year of 1200.

Descriptions of fireworks and flash powder came from China to the West with

merchants and traders. Frantz in *A chronology of Black Powder* said that the first who did this was not Marco Polo because he did not return to Venice until 1299. Also, it was not his father nor uncle, whose travelled there before Marco. At the time of the Polos' journeys, China's ruler was Kublai's Khan from Mongolia. His brother, Hugul, was the ruler of Persia. The trade route between these regions, both by land and sea, existed in place by the time of the Polos. All the way long this route and between the residences of the rulers continual government and diplomatic connections took place. Because of that an exchange of technical information was entirely possible. (Frantz). If we take all this into our consideration, the question whether such technology originated in China, or in the Middle East remains still open. The fact written by Frantz that there were no arms, nor high power gunpowder weapons which were mentioned by the Polos as late as 1299, while Arabic works existed describing Black Powder before the travels of Polos strongly suggests that Black Powder was invented in the Middle East, not in China (*A chronology of Black Powder*). Moreover, one should always keep in memory the fact that during the Middle Ages technologies and science were on a high level and outran European and Chinese ones in many aspects.

One writing which played an important part in gunpowder development on the Middle East was, as Este et al. (2013) suggests, instructions by the famous scientist and writer Najm al-Din Hasan Al-Rammah which were handed down to him by his father and other predecessor. 107 recipes for gunpowder with multiple tables were included in that book. (*Gunpowder Composition for Rockets and Cannon in Arabic Military Treatises In Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*).

According to the abovementioned article, another notional work was *ʿIyarat al-naft* (Formulae of Gunpowder). It consists of about 239 recipes. Al-Rammah's wrote his book approximately in 1270-80 and, as some historians believe, this one could be created on the first decades of the 14th century. It gives recipes for fireworks as well as for military purposes. First small portable cannon were used in the battle of *ʿAyn Jalut* in Palestine in 1260 between the Arab Army and the Mongols. The purpose of the early cannon and other gunpowder weapons as we can see from the description of the battles of that time was to frighten the enemy's horses and cavalry and cause disorder in their ranks (2013)

The Safavid Empire had a great military power including the Qizilbash forces. The Qizilbash made up the bulk of the army, and it goes without saying that they fought on horseback. The earliest recorded use of firearms by the Safavids dates back to 1488, when Ismail's father used cannon against the fortress of Gulistan. Ismail himself bombarded the city of Yazd with "stones, cannonballs, and musket shot" in 1504, and he besieged the fortress of Jizra "with musket and mortar" in 1506 (Chase, 2003, p. 117).

No doubt that people on the Middle East used gunpowder not only in military purposes. Este et al. (2013) suggest that the small cannons were used for celebrations purposes in addition to its use in wars and battles. The French traveler Bertrandon de la Brocquiere visited the Holy Land in 1432 and wrote his book *The Voyage d'Outremer*. When he was in Damascus he saw the celebrations dedicated to people who returned from pilgrimage to Mecca. Mamluk sultans also used fireworks in public celebrations in the fourteenth century and later; it is reported in the history writings of that time (2013).

Middle East also played significant part in delivering and developing of gunpowder in European countries. Frantz wrote that one of the great examples is The Book of Fire (Liber Ignium) where the different types of rockets, firearms, and principles of their functioning were described. He also had an opinion that this work was probably a translation, or to be more precise, an adaptation of an Arabic writing of that time which came to the European world through Constantinople. That was the time of Richard I of England, and the Third Crusade. Many material objects that were taken from the Muslims from Holy Lands, returned with the warriors to their home lands, or somehow appeared in the hands of The Church. The Church, or those connected with it, was nearly the main and the only source of written material in the European world at that time. By one of these routes the knowledge of Black Powder, or this particular work, became available to both Roger Bacon and Albertus Magnus (Frantz).

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Gunpowder Composition for Rockets and Cannon in Arabic Military Treatises

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