

Islamic influence in modern university

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Islamic Influence in Modern - Satish Running head: DOES THE MODERN HAVE IT'S ROOTS IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD. Does the modern University have it's roots in the Islamic World

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Evolution of Modern Universities.

According to Mehdi Nakosteen, the present day university setup was first initiated by the Islamic scholars of the ancient Cairo. The extensive contacts the ancient Muslims had with their Chinese, Indian and European counterparts enabled them to exchange information on various subjects ranging from mathematics, medicine, philosophy and astronomy. Being the dominant religion (750-1150 C. E) only helped their cause. The knowledge they possessed on preserving their ideas on paper, helped people pursue their subject of choice in a better way. Cairo's importance as the business hub allowed people to travel easily and exchange views. The ancient Muslims excelled in the fields of architecture, astronomy, geography and medicine. This knowledge spread to the European countries and from there, it spread further west. Though Islam first started the present day University system, the system did not evolve as much as other pioneers would have liked. The crusade wars took heavy toll of the learning system and the places of learning became the seats of revolutions. People began to give more importance to religious teachings and religious scholars gained prominence. The other fields where they excelled took backseat for the entire war periods. It took a long time before normalcy was restored. But it was never the same as it once was. And the method they had imparted to the world found growing acceptance in the western world and began to flourish. The university system was not their

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primary focus anymore as the religious wars had a severe effect on its growth. Thus the system they had initiated did not make them the best practitioners in the modern world.

According to Charles Homer Haskins, the present day university system first started in Bologna, Italy and Paris during the medieval period. Religious schools existed from the very beginning dating back to the fourth century B. C. These schools are considered to have given rise to the thought of setting up independent educational bodies or universities. The available documents state that the earliest University was setup in Paris during 1200 and 1215 A. D. Though there are references which state that the first University was setup in Bologna, Italy during 1088 A. D. Universities were setup to be separate, secular and independent bodies. However, the church always played a role in deciding who taught and what was taught. People were encouraged to pursue their subject of choice as there was demand for people with knowledge in technology and science.

I agree with Charles Homer Haskins view that the first universities were setup in Europe. This is simply because of the available evidence in the form of documents with clear description. There might be several opinions based on assumptions

and studies but evidence is what counts. There are several instances when assumptions have been proved wrong upon finding documental evidence. It is hard to believe the ancient Muslims did not have a university setup in place given their achievements, especially in the field of architecture, medicine and astronomy. But opinions and assumptions are never a substitute for evidence. There is proof that the Al-Azhar University was established in 972 A. D. but there is no proof that university type curriculum

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was followed there. It was more of large religious school than a prototype of the modern day University.

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