

This Day in History

(July 16)

Today is Thursday; 25th of the Iranian month of Tir 1394 solar hijri; corresponding to 29th of the Islamic month of Ramadhan 1436 lunar hijri; and July 16, 2015, of the Christian Gregorian Calendar.

1393 solar years ago, on this day in 622 AD, the Islamic lunar calendar began. It was fixed in 638 AD, 16 solar years after the passing away of Prophet Mohammad (SAWA), when confusion arose regarding the dates and years to be followed. During his caliphate Omar ibn Khattab, who had banned the written compilation of the Prophet's hadith and even rejected the collection of the ayahs of the holy Qur'an in book form as ***Mus'haf*** after having deprived the Prophet's divinely-decreed successor, Imam Ali ibn Abi Taleb (AS) of the political rule of the Muslim state, received a letter from the governor of Basra that the absence of any years on the correspondence he receives from Medina, make it difficult for him to determine which instructions were most recent. Omar was clearly perplexed, and as usual the magnanimous Imam Ali (AS) came to his rescue by advising that the Islamic calendar should be dated according to the Hijra or migration of the Prophet from Mecca to Medina. Omar accepted the Imam's advice, but as per the insinuation of Osman ibn Affan he fixed the date of the beginning of the Islamic year on the 1st of Moharram, in line with the pagan Arab custom of that time, even though the actual migration of the Prophet had taken place on the eve of Rabi al-Awwal.

803 solar years ago, on this day in 1212 AD, The Battle of al-Uqab or Las Navas de Tolosa, occurred in southern Spain between Muslims and Christians some 64 km from the city of Jaen (corruption of the Arabic 'Khayyan' which means crossroads of caravans), resulting in the defeat of the self-styled caliph, an-Nasser of the al-Muwahidin (Almohad) Empire of Morocco-Andalusia by the combined armies of the kingdoms of Portugal, Castile, Aragon, and Navarre. It marked the decline of Islamic Spain after five centuries of ascendancy, and was the outcome of a crusade against Spanish Muslims called by Pope Innocent III involving Christian mercenaries from all over Europe. The debacle was because of laxity on the part of the self-styled caliph, who proud of his vast army, left unguarded in the mountainous terrain some small passes through which the Christians led by Castile's King Alfonso VIII sneaked in for the ambush while the Muslim camp was asleep. The result was a great slaughter of the Muslim forces, as an-Nasir fled the battlefield. Alfonso followed up his victory by immediately taking Ba'eza and Ubuda. The extensive effects of the Muslim defeat did not become apparent until two decades later after 1233, when the Almohad Empire disintegrated owing to dynastic squabbles and, lacking a central leader, the Muslim hold on Spain slipped rapidly before the Christian armies with the important centres of Islamic culture, Cordova and Seville, gradually falling to them.

799 solar years ago, on this day in 1216 AD, Innocent III, the most powerfully politicized Pope of the Catholic sect of Christianity, and the most hostile towards Muslims and Jews, died suddenly while on a visit to Perugia, Central Italy, at the age of 56 after an 18-year reign. He was seen in a vision the same day by the Nun Lugarda in her monastery at Aywieres in faraway Belgium, engulfed in flames for three of the most cardinal sins he had committed in life, and for which he said (before disappearing in anguish) that he would languish for centuries in purgatory as divine punishment. Named Lotario dei Conti di Segni at birth in Italy to a Roman family that produced nine popes, he believed in the superiority of the Church over temporal rulers, and on being selected pope, strove to make the kings and emperors of Europe subordinate to his authority. He also decreed that all Jews in Christendom should wear special identifying markings on their clothing. At the same time, he persecuted as heretics all those Christians that dissented with the Catholic Church. An instance in this regard was his ordering of wars that resulted in the massacre of 20,000 men, women and children of the Albigenses or Cathar sect of southwestern France, who viewed the Catholic Church as corrupt. An avowed enemy of Islam, Pope Innocent III, in total disregard to the Muslim-Christian peace accord in Palestine mobilised the 4th Crusade for invasion of Egypt, which, however, because of fears of facing the powerful Ayyubids, was diverted towards an easier target, that is, the fellow Christians of the Byzantine Empire, and led to the fall of Constantinople and its savage plunder – all of which were legitimized by the Pope, regardless of the permanent rift he was causing between the Greek and Latin Churches. Earlier in 1212 he had ordered a crusade involving Christian mercenaries against the al-Muwahadin Muslim rulers of Spain that resulted in the unmanly ambush of Las Navas de Tolosa (Battle of al-Uqab in Arabic), and huge massacre of civilians, incidentally on July 16.

628 lunar years ago, on this day in 807 AH, the Egyptian Hanafi historian, Ibn al-Furat, passed away in his hometown Cairo at the age of 72. His history ***"Tarikh ad-Duwwal wa'l-Muluk"*** focuses largely on the Crusades. The work survives in fragments. His work is of importance for modern scholars due to its high level of detail and the mostly verbatim use of a wide variety of sources, including Christian and Shi'a. Some of these works survive through his reuse of them.

332 solar years ago, on this day in 1683 AD, the Manchú Qing Dynasty naval forces under the traitorous commander Shi Lang defeated the Kingdom of Tungning in the Battle of Penghu near the Pescadores Islands. Founded in 1642, the Qing Dynasty lasted till 1912.

174 lunar years ago, on this day in 1272 AH, the virtuous scholar Seyyed Hassan Sadr Ibn Seyyed Hadi as-Sadr was born in the holy city of Kazemain, near Baghdad in Iraq. At the age of 16 he went to holy Najaf to study under the leading ulema and nine years later moved to Samarra to study under the celebrated scholar, Ayatollah Mirza Hassan Shirazi (famous for his fatwa against tobacco consumption in Iran). He returned to Kazemain seventeen years later and soon became the leading mujtahed. He passed away in 1354 at the age of 82. He groomed many students and wrote several books such as the ***"Role of Shi'ite Scholars in Development of Islamic Sciences", "The Shi'ite Muslims and Promotion of Islamic Arts"***, and a refutation of the absurd viewpoints of the pseudo scholar Ibn Taimiyya.

143 solar years ago, on this day in 1872 AD, Norwegian explorer, Roald Engelbregt Gravning Amundsen, was born. He interrupted his studies in medicine to join the first winter expedition to the Antarctic, sailing in 1897 on a Belgian expedition. On his next voyage he established the Northwest Passage. In 1904 he located the site of the North Magnetic pole. When he turned his attention to the Antarctic, he achieved his quest to be the first to reach the South Pole in 1911. After three unsuccessful attempts, he was among the first to cross the Arctic by air in 1926 when he made a flight from Spitsbergen, across the North Pole to Alaska.

125 solar years ago, on this day in 1890 AD, the Parkinson Disease and how it develops were identified by English physician, James Parkinson. The main reason for this illness is brain malfunctions, and currently no certain treatment has been found for it.

70 solar years ago, on this day in 1945 AD, the US misused science and technology to explode the first atomic bomb at Los Alamos, New Mexico, thereby triggering a race for weapons of mass destruction to the detriment of humanity. The atomic bomb was invented by two refugee German scientists, Professor Rudolph Peierls and Otto Frisch. They designed a "blueprint" for making an atom bomb in 1940 after fleeing to the US from Nazi Germany. It actually began when the Italian-born physicist Enrico Fermi, working in the US, invented an apparatus which produced the first atomic chain reactions. In 1940 both the Americans and British were researching the atom bomb and when the United States entered WW2, the British joined the American "Manhattan Project" and production of the bomb went on ahead in the US, which is the only power to have criminally used the atomic bomb on the hapless Japanese people as field test, when World War 2 was virtually over.

67 solar years ago, on this day in 1948 AD, following resistance, the Palestinian city of an-Nasserah (Nazareth), revered by Christians as the childhood hometown of Prophet Jesus (AS), fell to the Israeli troops, and has since been under Zionist occupation. The population is still predominantly Arab (99 percent), with Muslims making up 69 percent and Christians 30 percent.

61 solar years ago, on this day in 1954 AD, Henri Frankfort, Dutch-American archaeologist who established the relationship between Egypt and Mesopotamia and completed a thoroughly documented reconstruction of ancient Mesopotamian culture and art, died at the age of 57. The excavations he directed in Egypt and later in Iraq were conducted with exemplary archaeological scholarship. He wrote 15 books and monographs and about 73 articles about archaeology and cultural anthropology. Among his books are ***"Kingship and the Gods"*** and ***"Review of Cylinder Seals: A Documentary Essay on the Art and Religion of the Ancient Near East"***.

43 lunar years ago, on this day in 1393 AH, Ayatollah Seyyed Ahmad Hussaini Zanjani passed away at the age of 85 and was laid to rest in the mausoleum of Hazrat Ma'souma (SA). After Islamic studies in his hometown Zanjan, he moved to Qom on revival of the Seminary of the holy city by Ayatollah Shaikh Abdul-Karim Ha'eri and mastered jurisprudence, theology, history and literature. He was well aware of contemporary issues and authored ***"Khayr al-Omour"***.

36 solar years ago, on this day in 1979 AD, Iraq's first president of the repressive Ba'ith minority regime, General Hasan Ahmad al-Bakr, was ordered by his masters in London and Washington to resign and hand over power to his more brutal vice-president, Saddam, five months after the triumph of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. Saddam instantly launched a reign of terror by imprisoning and murdering prominent religious and political leaders of the long-suppressed Arab Shi'ite majority, including the reputed scholar, Ayatollah Seyyed Mohammad Baqer as-Sadr. He also suppressed the ethnic Sunni Kurds of the north and expelled tens of thousands of Iraqi citizens on the pretext of being of Iranian origin. In September 1980, at the behest of the US, he launched a brutal war on the Islamic Republic of Iran which raged for 8 years. In 1990, he occupied Kuwait and was driven out seven months later by an international coalition. With his downfall in 2003 at the hands of his own backers, the Americans, 34 years of brutal Ba'ith minority rule came to its end.

7 solar years ago, on this day in 2008 AD, Lebanon's legendary anti-terrorist movement, the Hezbollah, in another victory, in return for the handover of the bodies of two Zionist soldiers, forced Israel to release five Lebanese prisoners and the bodies of nearly 200 martyrs. The exchange took place following indirect negotiations with the mediation of Germany. Among the freed Lebanese, were individuals from other groups, such as Samir Qantar, jailed for 30 years.

(Courtesy: IRIB English Radio – <http://english.irib.ir>)

Iranian Calligrapher Among Top Participants

TEHRAN (IQNA) - Iranian calligrapher Farhad Shirkhani was selected as one of the five top participants in the 7th edition of the international meeting of Quran calligraphers in Dubai.

According to emaratalyom.com, the closing ceremony of the event was held on July 13 where the top calligraphers were awarded.

Ahmad Faris Rizq from Egypt, Adel Fawzi Ouda from Palestine, Mahfuz Zanut Al-Abidi from Iraq, Muhammad Safar Bati from Algeria and Farhad Shirkhani from Iran were announced as the five top Quran calligraphers in this program.

Organized by the UAE's Ministry of Culture, Youth and Community Development, the 7th edition of the international meeting of Quran calligraphers started on Saturday, July 11, in Dubai.

The gathering opened with the



Farhad Shirkhani

participation of Sheikh Nahyan ibn Mubarak Al Nahyan, UAE's Minister of Culture, the Youth and Social Development, as well as a number of cultural figures of the

country.

30 calligraphers of the Quran from 11 countries including Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Egypt, Jordan, Turkey, Algeria, Yemen, Den-

mark, Syria and the UAE participated in the gathering to inscribe a Juz (part) of the Quran each.

The difference between this copy of the Holy Quran and those written in the previous editions of the program is that it was inscribed not only in Naskh script but in Muhaqqiq and Thulth.

Muhammad Uzjay from Turkey, Abdul Reza Bahiya Davoud Al-Farjawi from Iraq and Ms Ubayda Muhammad Salih Al-Bunaki from Syria were members of this edition's judging board who selected the top calligraphers.

An art exhibition was also organized by UAE's Ministry of Culture on the sidelines of the gathering where rare Islamic calligraphy and illumination works by eminent artists were put on display.

Shirkhani received his certificate in Naskh and Thulth script from Davoud Baktash, Turkish expert in calligraphy, in 2014.

Portuguese High Schools to Learn Chinese

LISBON (Xinhua) -- Around 500 Portuguese secondary school students from 21 schools will start to learn Mandarin Chinese in the coming three years, according to an agreement signed here on Tuesday.

The agreement was signed by Chinese Ambassador to Portugal Huang Songfu on behalf of the Confucius Institute Headquarters and Nuno Crato, Portuguese Minister of Education and Science.

Under the agreement, the teachers will come from Chinese side and they will count with the support from eight

Portuguese institutes of higher education to teach secondary school students who opt to teach mandarin Chinese as a foreign language.

In his speech at the signing ceremony, Huang expressed his wish for a successful implementation of the teaching program, which he hopes will produce excellent Chinese language teachers for Portugal as well as other European countries to lay a solid foundation for the promotion of bilateral exchange and co-operation in such domains as politics, trade, education, science and technology, and culture.

For his part, Crato said that he hopes to see the program expanded to more schools in the following school year.

National Library Displays Foreign Publishers Books on Iran

TEHRAN (CHN) - A collection of books on Iranian and Islamic studies published by foreign companies was showcased in an exhibition at the National Library and Archives of Iran (NLAI) on Sunday.

The collection composed of 260 books was purchased by the NLAI at the 28th Tehran International Book Fair during May, NLAI Deputy Director Gholamreza Amirkhani said at the opening ceremony of the ten-day exhibition.

"We saw the scarcity of books on these subjects in the country," he stated.

He added, "Frankly, we can say that the studies conducted by Western scholars on Islam and Iran are more comprehensive and deeper than ours."

"A good example of this fact is U.S. scholar Michael Cook's 'Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought', for which he used over 1600 sources from Shia and Sunni books on fiqh.

"We should accept that the studies conducted at reliable research centers in the West are better than those we carry out in the country."

France to Host Joint Stage Performance With Iran

TEHRAN (IRIB) - A joint theatrical production by Iran and France is set to be performed at the 2015 Shakespeare International Festival in France.

'The Storm' is inspired by 'The Tempest,' a play written by world-renowned British playwright William Shakespeare. It is directed by Iran's Asghar Nouri and a French stage director from the Sycomore Theater Company.

According to Press TV, Nouri has written the text of the play based on Persian and French translations of Shakespeare's 'Tempest.' Twelve Iranian and French actors will perform the bilingual play.

Mohammad-Reza Charkhtab, Yalda Sarrafi, Arash Nouri and Neda Farhangmeh are the Iranian actors of the play. Iranian musician Farshad Haqiqi has composed the music of the play.

'The Storm' is a joint production of France's Sycomore Theater

Company and Iran's Theater 88 Company. It uses Iranian narrative techniques, puppets, video art and toy theater performances.

Asghar Nouri is an Iranian playwright, theater director and translator who also participated at the Shakespeare International Festival in 2013 and 2012.

He presented adaptations of Shakespeare's 'Hamlet' and 'Richard III,' using Iranian narrative techniques and traditional Persian music.

Shakespeare International Festival is a cultural project gathering young artists from France and other countries.

The 16th edition of the event will present performances from France, Algeria, Russia, Italy, Hungary and Iran. Organized by Sycomore Theater Company, the event will be held from July 26 to August 1 in Tournon and three other French cities.

Picture of the Day



Chama Ice Cave - Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province –Iran

Courtesy: IRNA