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Article: More than the Quran. The Urban Madrassah in Mediaeval Muslim Culture.

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The Urban Madrassah in Mediaeval Muslim Culture.

At the time of the Prophet and the first four Caliphs, we find another society parallel to the religious life in Mekka. There was a flourishing cultural life with music, poetry and singing. The music schools in Mekka are the oldest organized education system in the Arabic world. The great musicians founded their own schools to supply the new aristocracy and the famous public concerts with good educated singers and musicians. The religious part of the society in Mekka found it hard to accept the artistic life of the musicians and singing-girls.

Occasionally the music schools were shot down and the musicians banished.

The cultural educational center stayed in Al-Higaz, although the Caliphate moved to Damascus.

In the 8th century under the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad, was one of the best musicians in Mekka ordered to the Caliph's court in Baghdad. The cultural center moved from Al-Higaz to Baghdad. Some of the schools became very famous. Teachers and students from the best music schools got an enormous influence also on the political life in the Empire. The music schools became much more popular than the Quran-schools. At the music schools the students studied subjects like arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, rhetoric, logic, Arabic language, Quran, singing, and how to play the lute.

The later music philosophers and music theorists working at the two universities in Bagdad based their knowledge and experiences on music and music theories practiced at the music schools of the old masters. The music scientists tried to adapt the pure Arabic music to the old Greek theories in a way Islam could approve.

By the time they succeeded. Music became one of the main subjects at the universities together with arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy.

Personal Information

Marie Ingand graduated from the Ballet Academy in Oslo with diploma in choreography, folk dances from India and Eastern Europe and contemporary dance. She studied Arabic language, history and Islam at the University of Vienna and musicology at the universities of Vienna, Trondheim and Oslo graduating with a Mag. Art. degree with the dissertation «Al-ghina wa al-musiqqa, 600 years of musikal dialogue».

She is now working with immigrants and refugee children and young adults who need an introduction to the Norwegian society and school-system.