BAGHDAD IN THE YEAR 1000

Director(s): Patrick CABOUAT, Atsushi MURAYAMA, Kaoru KAWADA

Writer(s): Alain MOREAU

Today, Baghdad is a battered city. But we need to remember that before the ruins, from the 8th to the 13th century, Baghdad had been the capital of a refined civilisation !
Over thousand years ago, Baghdad had been named Madinat al Salam, « the City of Peace » with the ruling Abbassids - named after Caliph "Abu al-Abbas" - who had founded the dynasty. In 749, the Abbassid Caliphat further spread its sphere of influence, reaching from Spain to the borders of China.
As protector of ancient knowledge, Baghdad had translated Aristotle, Plato, Euclid. The head of its medical school, Ali Abu Ibn-Sina or Avicenna, a Persian from Bukhara, was also a commentator on Aristotle's writings.
Baghdad, city of « A Thousand and One Nights », was a cultural melting pot where craftsmen, poets and merchants were able to get together through to their common language, Arabic. Baghdad enjoyed a culture of commerce and trade - inspired by the Coran - which had been unique for its time: very sophisticated financial transactions... cheques issued in Baghdad and cashed in Cordoba, Spain, some 4000 kilometres away.
This side-by-side of different languages, cultures and races turned Baghdad into a cosmopolitan city, a dynamic and colourful metropolis, which had been unequalled at its time. However, after five centuries of grandeur, secure in its comfortable lifestyle and weakened by in-fighting, Baghdad was to collapse all of a sudden. In the 13th century, 12 000 Mongol horsemen under the command of Hulagu-Khan, grandson of Gengis Khan, stormed the city and laid siege to Baghdad and its one million inhabitants, for seventeen days. The event heralded the end of Baghdad as the capital of the Caliphat. The city would never again recapture its intellectual radiance, nor its splendour.

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