

September, 2006

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**Post-Doctoral Research Project:**

**“Veterinary Medicine and Attitudes to Animals: The Heritage of Medieval Islam”**

The main purpose of my application for a post-doctoral research scholarship is the preparation of a book (based on my Ph.D. dissertation), entitled: **Mamluk and Animals: Veterinary Medicine in Medieval Islam.**

This Project is the first comprehensive research on these subjects, which have hitherto been only partially, and sometimes superficially, explored. It approaches the subject from three main perspectives:

1. Analysis of the theory and practice of veterinary medicine in medieval Islam, on the basis of extant professional writings on the medical treatment of animals, written or transcribed between the mid-thirteenth and the early sixteenth century.
2. Examination of the place of animals and the people responsible for treating them in late medieval Islamic society, carried out by using a wider spectrum of sources, including religious writings, chronicles, literary sources, philosophical works and administrative sources.
3. An assessment of attitudes to animals in medieval Islamic civilization, and their impact on the medical treatment of animals, including ethical principles, both on the wider philosophical level and on the practical and professional one.

In the framework of the proposed project, the materials will have to be re-elaborated and integrated with new research on aspects that remain to be clarified or completed. One of these aspects is cultural interaction in the field of veterinary medicine, since the Islamic corpus of medieval veterinary writings results from a confluence of various traditions, such as the Greek, Persian and Indian ones, combined with accumulated practical experience. The importance of the corpus of medical treatises, many of them still unpublished, will be brought to light.

Another subject worthy of further elaboration concerns the ethical aspects of animal treatment in medieval Islam. This part of the medieval Islamic heritage is rather neglected today. In view of the growing awareness of ethical questions related to our treatment of the natural environment, the proposed project will also contribute to the preservation of the Islamic heritage in this regard, and to its integration into current debates.

The veterinary and medical treatises of medieval Islam contain a treasure of pharmacological knowledge. Considering the rising interest in medical treatment based on natural products, the proposed project is also aimed at preserving this rich heritage of medieval Islam and turning the attention of the scholarly world to the potential usefulness of this material.

Most of this project can be carried out in Israel, but since many of the relevant materials cannot be found in Israeli libraries, it will be necessary to pay a few visits to libraries abroad that are better endowed with research literature and medieval sources, including unpublished ones.

Although this is research in the field of history, I have chosen to conduct it in the framework of the "Animals and Society Project" of the Department of Zoology, intending to benefit from contacts with zoologists interested in human-animal interactions. Working in this milieu can help me to further elucidate zoological aspects that occupy an important place in Arabic veterinary treatises, and will reinforce the interdisciplinary nature of my research project.