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Sommario/riassunto	<p>The pigeon has played a central role in Islam from the beginning of the Abbasid Caliphate (late VIIIth century). From the valleys of the Tigris and the Euphrates which were undoubtedly the cradle, it reached the East as well as the West (Andalus and Sicily). But no state attached more value to it than that of the Mameluks which covered the Empire with a dense network of dovecotes, from the banks of the Euphrates in northern Syria to the Red Sea in Egypt. These air messengers served the sovereigns, in time of war, as in time of peace for sometimes unforeseen ends: winged couriers carried freshly picked cherries to Damascus to treat the Fatimid Caliph Azîz in Cairo and spare him the unnecessary trouble of 'a long trip. However, they risked, despite their loyalty, to violate the secrets entrusted to their guard to deliver them to the enemy, if they fell into his hands. The intercepted banknotes could then be replaced by forgeries, which, instead of rekindling the ardour in the walls, brought desolation there, even if a rescue army came running to save them from peril. Flying messengers have also served individuals, since the advent of the Abbasids: lovers entrusted them with soft tickets; the sects learned through them the facts which had occurred in distant regions, before the fame, with its swift wings, spread the rumour. The merchants had to draw fruit from the secrets</p>

entrusted to their wings from the end of the Middle Ages to the Age of Enlightenment: those of Baghdad were thus instructed in the course of the riches of the Indies landed in the Persian Gulf and could speculate at leisure before their arrival. On return trips, long-distance pigeons commonly covered 800 to 1,000 kilometres. A few off-line bottom birds even exceeded 2,000, returning from Pergamon and Constantinople to Basra or from Tunis to Cairo. These feats were not equalled, then largely exceeded in the West in the second half of the 19th century.th century and the threshold of the XXth, when the lost secrets of the East were found after a huge oversight.
