

Exhibit highlights 1001 inventions of the Muslim world

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A new exhibit at London's Science Museum explores the often-forgotten contributions to science from Muslim scholars.

1001 Inventions: Discover the Muslim Heritage in our World follows the contributions of Muslim civilization from the 7th to the 17th centuries. After the disintegration of the Roman Empire, scientific study lapsed in Europe, but soon dynamic civilizations based in the Middle East took up the slack. From important centers such as Damascus and Baghdad came developments in medicine, mathematics, astronomy, geography, and a host of other studies. Muslim scholars were the first to build gliders, the first to create free public hospitals, and the first to use carrier pigeons as a means of quick, long distance communications.

The exhibition is divided into sections such as Home, Town, and Market, each highlighting different contributions to science and daily life. Also discussed is how civilizations in the Middle East preserved many ancient Greek and Latin books in Arabic translations when they were lost in Europe. Later they were translated back into Greek and Latin so Renaissance scholars could read them, thus bringing much of Europe's heritage back to Europe.



1001 Inventions

The centerpiece of the exhibition is a replica of a 13th century clock by the Arab scholar Al-Jazari that stands more than twenty feet high and celebrates the diversity of knowledge by having an Indian elephant holding up an Egyptian phoenix, Arab figures, a Persian carpet, and Chinese dragons. The clock runs on moving water following a system invented by the Greeks.

In an [interview](#) with the BBC, Professor Salim Al-Hassani, one of the exhibition's organizers, suggested that science lapsed in Islamic civilization after the twin blows of the Crusades and the destruction of Baghdad by the Mongols. Much of the Muslim world was taken over by the Ottomans, a bureaucratic state that stifled scientific initiative. Then the scientists of Renaissance Europe adopted their learning and progressed it further, much like the Muslim world took the learning of the Classical World and developed it.

1001 Inventions runs until April 25. Admission is free.

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