

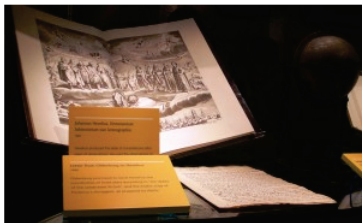
# A London exhibition shows how science from Arabic Civilisation influenced and inspired British key scientists

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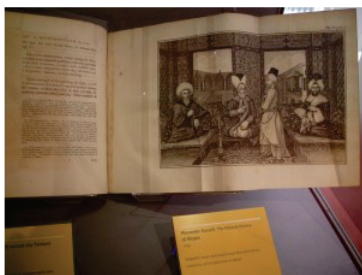
The exhibition of 'Arabick Roots' launched today at The Royal Society in London, is a surprising revelation of connections between the pioneer Arab-Muslim scholars and seventeenth century Britain's greatest scholars and scientists. The exhibition is the latest of a series of exhibitions sponsored by the British Foundation for Science, Technology and Civilisation (FSTC), Chaired by Prof. Salim Al-Hassani.

The exhibition displays rare books, scientific instruments and correspondence between early Fellows of the Royal Society with their intellectual contemporaries in the Arabic-speaking world. Showing how science and culture from the Arab and Muslim Civilisation influenced and inspired key figures such as Edmund Halley and Robert Boyle, and revealing the surprising history behind one of the most significant medical advances of all time, the vaccination against infectious diseases pioneered by Edward Jenner in the eighteenth century. However, Arabick Roots shows how scientists from the Arabic and Muslim world helped to pave the way for Jenner's great breakthrough and other key advances in astronomy, medicine and other disciplines.



When London was devastated by a smallpox epidemic in the mid-eighteenth century, Fellows of the Royal Society turned to their counterparts in the Arabic world to help them understand this terrible disease. In letters seen publicly for the very first time in this exhibition, the Ambassador to Tripoli at the time, Cassem Algiada Aga, describes the practice of inoculation, which had been taking place for centuries in North Africa and the Middle East.

Aga's letters provided valuable first-hand reassurance about the safety of inoculation at a time when there was serious public fear and mistrust of this life saving practice in Europe, and he was made a Fellow of the Royal Society, joining two existing Arab Fellows, Mohammed Ibn Haddu and Ben Ali Abgali.



Her Highness Sheikha Mozah of Qatar and British Culture Minister, Ed Vaizey, were guest of honour at the opening. Speaking at the launch event, Her Highness Sheikha Mozah said: "Today we open an exhibition about science in the Islamic world from centuries ago. However, we have a desperate need to repeat history. Only through beautiful minds, like the ones that we can see on display here today, can we achieve that. Collaboration between East and West is the key to repeating that history."



Exhibition Curator Dr Rim Turkmani, a Dorothy Hodgkin Research Fellow of the Royal Society and a Fellow of the Foundation for Science, Technology and Civilisation (FSTC) said: "This exhibition uncovers the never-before told story of the connections between the early Royal Society and contemporary and classical Arabic learning, and how they were used to solve some of the most pressing problems of the day."

"This was a time when British society as a whole was largely ignorant of the cultural achievements of the Arabic world – yet we find that the early Royal Society's group of 'ingenious and curious gentlemen' included three Fellows from the Arabic world. This forgotten history reveals a rich tradition of communication between two very different cultures, and shows that then – just like today – collaboration across linguistic and cultural boundaries can lead to great results."



Former British Foreign Office Minister for the Middle East Baroness Symons who visited the exhibition said: "Congratulations to FSTC on this excellent exhibition. It is superb. Like many other people, I had no idea how extraordinarily innovative the Arab scientists were and how much contact there was between this country and the Arab nations on science."

Arabick Roots exhibition will be open for the public, entry free, 9am - 5pm in the week of the Royal Society's Summer Science Exhibition (5 - 10 July, 2011). The exhibition runs until November 2011, after which it will transfer to Doha.