Cultural impact of Islam

- Culture open to, and draws on, the greatest achievements of all peoples “encountered” by Muslims
- Especially blends Greek ideas with ideas from the Indian subcontinent

The Arab-Islamic Empire provides:
  - a very prosperous economy
    A. New crops, agricultural experimentation, and urban growth
      1. Spread of new foods and industrial crops - new irrigation techniques make it possible to grow tropical and subtropical crops in the Mediterranean area (year-around growing season)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>origin of:</th>
<th>introduced to West for 1st time:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>coffee</td>
<td>cotton textiles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pasta (durum semolina wheat)</td>
<td>rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sherbet</td>
<td>sugar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coconut</td>
<td>oranges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>watermelon</td>
<td>lemons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>artichoke</td>
<td>limes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mango</td>
<td>eggplant</td>
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<tr>
<td>spinach</td>
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</tbody>
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  2. Effects of new crops
     a. Increased varieties and quantities of food
     b. Industrial crops became the basis for a thriving textile industry
  3. Urban growth
     a. Increasing agricultural production contributed to the rapid growth of cities
     b. A new industry: paper manufacture

  - extensive commerce (spice trade, silk trade)
    A. The formation of a hemispheric trading zone
      1. Overland trade
        a. Trade revived silk roads
        b. Umayyad and Abbasid rulers maintained roads for military and administration
        c. Overland trade traveled mostly by camel caravan
      2. Maritime trade
        a. Arab and Persian mariners borrowed the compass from the Chinese
        b. Borrowed the lateen sail from southeast Asian and Indian mariners
        c. Borrowed astrolabe from the Hellenistic mariners
      3. Banks
        a. Operated on large scale and provided extensive services
        b. Letters of credit, or sakk, functioned as bank checks
      4. The organization of trade
        a. Entrepreneurs often pooled their resources in group investments
        b. Traders even went to West Africa, Russia, Scandinavia

  - Arabic language as common communications medium

  - rulers nearly always support science, art, intellectual life

Some achievements:
  - Mathematics: foundation of all modern math in the Arab-Islamic fusion of Greek theory with Hindu-Muslim decimal numbers
    1. systematize: algebra
    2. origin: trigonometry; heliocentric theory (astronomy)
    3. introduce to West: zero; decimal counting
• **Medicine:** medical scholars also practice medicine
  1. origin: alcohol (for medicinal purposes)
  2. teaching hospital

• **Art:** very limited representation of humans, animals. Instead:
  1. calligraphy - writing (script)
  2. geometric designs, patterns
  3. "Arabesque" - intertwined flowers, plants

**Islamic values and cultural exchanges**
A. The formation of an Islamic cultural tradition
  1. The Quran and sharia were main sources to formulate moral guidelines
  2. Promotion of Islamic values
     a. Ulama, qadis, and missionaries were main agents
     b. Education also promoted Islamic values
  3. **Sufis**, or Islamic mystics
     a. Most effective missionaries
     b. Encouraged devotion to Allah by passionate singing or dancing
     c. Sufis led ascetic and holy lives, won respect of the people
     d. Encouraged followers to revere Allah in their own ways
     e. Tolerated those who associated Allah with other beliefs
  4. **The hajj**
     a. The Ka'ba became the symbol of Islamic cultural unity
     b. Pilgrims helped to spread Islamic beliefs and values

B. Islam and the cultural traditions of Persia, India, and Greece
1. Persian influence on Islam
   a. Most notable in literary works
   b. Ideas of kingship: wise, benevolent, absolute
2. Indian influences
   a. Adopted "Hindi numerals," which Europeans later called "Arabic numerals"
   b. Algebra and trigonometry
3. Greek influences
   a. Muslims philosophers especially liked Plato and Aristotle