Discover how Muslim Civilisation Influenced Today’s Homes

Coffee

The story goes that, more than 1200 years ago in Ethiopia, a goat herder noticed his animals became livelier after eating coffee berries. By boiling the berries, people created al-qahwa, which they drank to help them concentrate during late-night prayers. Coffee found its way to Europe through Arabia and Turkey then reached England in 1650, thanks to a Turkish merchant. Cappuccino was inspired by Capuchin priests using coffee left behind by the Turkish army after the siege of Vienna in 1683. It appears that the Viennese mixed Turkish coffee with cream and honey to create cappuccino.

Music

In the ninth century, mathematician and astronomer Al-Kindi was one of the first people to write on the therapeutic value of music. He also used musical notation and added a fifth string to the lute, an instrument like the lute.

Al-Kindi developed the rebab, an ancestor of the violin family, and the qanun, a table zither.

The notes of the musical scale, with their names do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, ti, bear a striking phonetic similarity to letters in the Arabic alphabet dal, ra, mim, fa, sad, lam, sin.

Ibn al-Haytham

Eleventh-century scholar Ibn al-Haytham was a pioneering scientist, who inspired his contemporaries to enter a dark room, develop Kapabutter which led him to make great breakthroughs in understanding light and vision.

He laid out new ideas about light, colour and vision in his Book of Optics, probably completed around 1027 while he was in Egypt. Later, European scholars drew on the book’s Latin translation.

Born in Basra around the year 965, Ibn al-Haytham not only changed people’s understanding of how we see, but he laid the foundation for experimental science. He died in Cairo in around 1040.

Ibn al-Haytham proved that we see objects lit by the Sun because its light reflects off the objects, then enters our eyes.

Camera Obscura

By experimenting in a dark room that he called Al-Bayt al-Muzlim (camera obscura in Latin), Ibn al-Haytham proved that he was objects lit by the Sun because its light reflected off the objects, then entered our eyes.

Food and Diet

The development of agricultural techniques in Muslim civilisation enabled the provision of a wider variety of foodstuff, and people tended to eat according to seasonal influences.

A great deal of influence on food consumption and preparation arrived in Europe from the Muslim world. A considerable number of culinary delights have Eastern origins. Yoghurt, for instance, has Turkish origin. Ice cream was diffused to the rest of the world from Sicily, and early production used to take place in cool caves on the island. Books on food and diet also spread. 19th-century astrologer Al-Khalfi was the author of a book on cookery, which gave a menu for each day of the year and at the end of the 12th century poet and historian Ibn al-Ahmed wrote an encyclopedia on food, diet and perfumes.

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