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### **Innovations of Islam**

"Prophet Mohammed did business with Jews," says Omar Kalair. "There's nothing wrong with doing business with other entities. In Islam, people have the freedom to practise their own religion. You're not supposed to force people to conform to your own mindset."

Historically, Muslims were known as traders, he says, travelling the world, dealing with people of all races and faiths, open to progressive ideas. From India and China, they brought back the number system and writing on paper – concepts they developed and passed on to Europe.

The trading of money from one city to another originated through the Arabic "saqq," or cheque.

"In the 9th century, a Muslim businessman could cash a cheque in China drawn on his bank in Baghdad," states an article, "How Islamic Inventors Changed the World," in *The Independent*, a British newspaper.

Also included in a long list of Muslim advances are:

- Arabic "qamara," invented by a 10th century Muslim mathematician, astronomer and physicist, became the "camera."
- Distillation, invented in 800 by Muslim scientist Jabir ibn Hayyan, the founder of modern chemistry.
- Crankshaft, which *The Independent* cites as "one of the most important mechanical inventions in the history of humankind," invented by engineer al-Jazari, author of the *Book of Knowledge of Ingenious Mechanical Devices* (1206).
- Parachute and "flying machine," created in 852-875 by Muslim astronomer and engineer Abbas Ibn Firnas, who at the age of 70 jumped from a mountain and flew aloft for 10 minutes before crashing.
- Soap. "It was the Arabs who combined vegetable oils with sodium hydroxide and aromatics such as thyme oil. One of the Crusaders' most striking characteristics, to Arab nostrils, was that they did not wash."

As well as: Modern surgical instruments (in the 10th century), the windmill (in 634), technique of inoculation, the fountain pen, algebra, carpets, and the concept of the three-course meal.

Kalair says the root cause of the eventual decline of Muslim societies was "disunity, factions within, regions set against each other, instead of collaborating with each other, as in the United States of America."