CALIFORNIA EDUCATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT INITIATIVE | Unit 7.2.5. | Arabic Trade Networks: Growth and Expansion in the Middle Ages | Information Cards
725IC

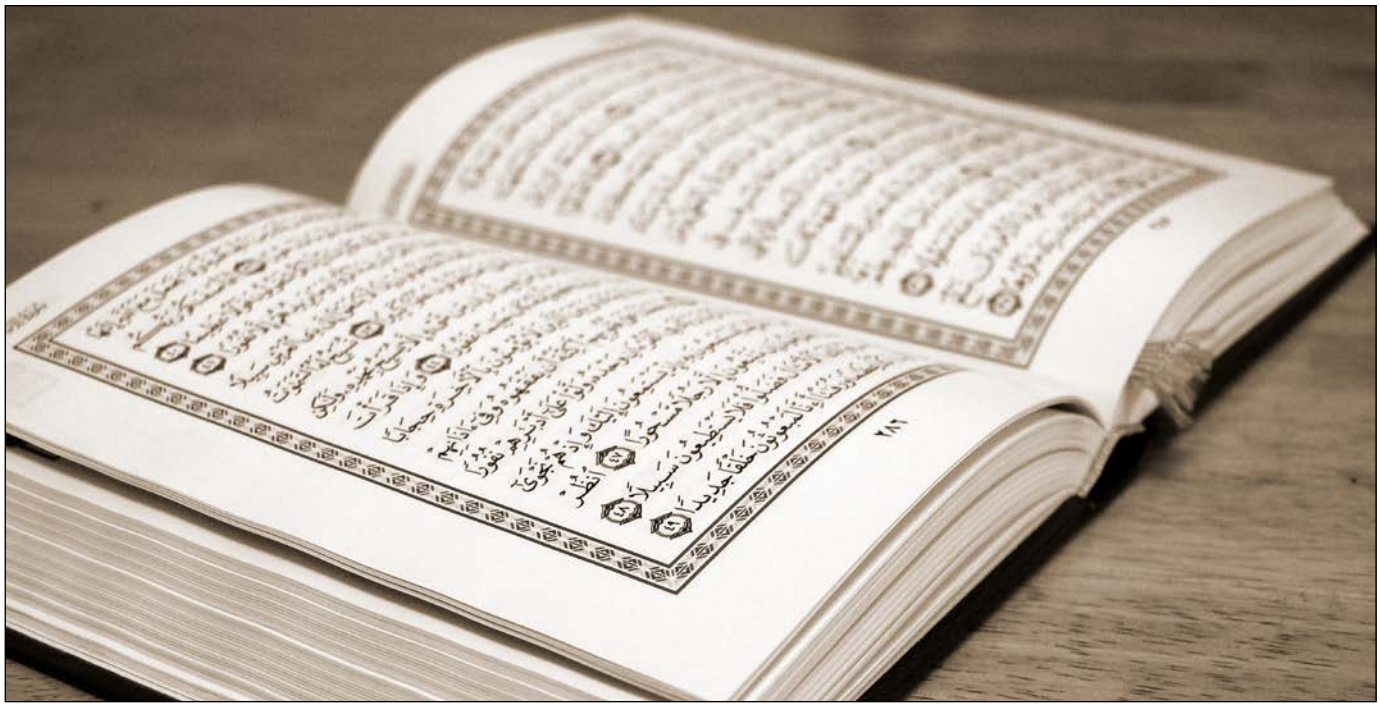
Printed on post-consumer recycled paper

Artifact

The product in this photograph is a tapestry. It is made of silk, with gold thread wrapped around a cotton center. To make gold thread, the textile-maker dips normal thread into melted gold. The textile-maker purchased the gold. This tapestry dates from the 14th century. It combines design elements and natural resources from the Arabian Peninsula and China.

Artifact

This photograph shows some of the spices that were very popular to trade in the Middle Ages. Spices were not heavy or bulky and would not rot or break on long journeys. Carrying and trading them over long distances was easy. Spices preserved foods in a time when there was no refrigeration. They were used as medicines and makeup. People burned certain spices to keep away insects. The list of spices traded by Arab merchants during this time includes pepper, cinnamon, frankincense, myrrh, ambergris, areca, balsam, betel leaf, cardamom, cassia, dill, ginger, mace, and musk.



Printed on post-consumer recycled paper

CALIFORNIA EDUCATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT INITIATIVE | Unit 7.2.5. | Arabic Trade Networks: Growth and Expansion in the Middle Ages | Information Cards
725IC

Printed on post-consumer recycled paper

Artifact

This photograph shows a popular book in the Middle Ages that is a scientific report on agriculture. It covers soils, fertilizers, water, gardens, trees, and fruits. It also describes different ways to preserve fruits. It describes the farming of specific types of plants, livestock breeding, bee keeping, and veterinary science.

Scholars first hand-wrote books like these on paper made from papyrus. A printer would then copy the manuscript and bind the pages inside a leather cover to make a book. People of the city could buy a copy of the book from the printer or read one at the local library.

Artifact

The product shown in this photograph is rice. Rice is the seed of the rice plant, which is a grass that grows in places where there is a lot of water. There are two basic types of rice that were traded during the Middle Ages. One was rice that came from Southeast Asia and the other was rice that came from South Africa. The rice from Asia was more popular than the rice from Africa.

Arab merchants spread the farming and use of rice from China and India to Arabia, and then, to West Africa and Southern Europe. Arab merchants exported rice to the rest of Europe, where the climate was too cold for rice to grow.

Artifact

This photograph shows a sword made of Damascus steel. In medieval times, swords made in Damascus were legendary for their sharpness and strength. The way that the steel was forged created a rippling effect on the blade. People believed they could cut through other swords, and even rock, with swords made in Damascus. How Damascus swords got their name is not clear. Some think the name refers to the city where the swords were made. Others claim it refers to the name of the inventor.

Artifact

This is a photograph of incense being burned in a brass incense burner, inlaid with silver and gold. Arabic words and other decorations appear on its surface. People lit the incense on fire and then hung the burner from a chain or set it on the floor. The incense burned inside this artifact would be frankincense or myrrh, usually in a temple or royal building, during special occasions and religious celebrations.

Printed on post-consumer recycled paper

CALIFORNIA EDUCATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT INITIATIVE | Unit 7.2.5. | Arabic Trade Networks: Growth and Expansion in the Middle Ages | Information Cards
725IC

Printed on post-consumer recycled paper

8 **Artifacts From the Sunken Dhow**
Information Card | *card 8 of 8*

Artifact

The product in this photograph is raw cotton. Cotton is a fiber that comes from the flower of the cotton plant. In ancient times, cotton grew wild in the northern Indus River Valley of India. Indians sold raw cotton to the Persians and the Chinese. They later exported it across the maritime and overland Arab trade routes. By the Middle Ages, Arab peoples began to grow a lot of cotton and process the cotton into cloth. The cotton textile centers were in Damascus, Cairo, Tunis, and cities in Andalus. Cotton textiles were very popular in Europe. The English word for cotton comes from the Arabic word *qutun*.

Artifact

The product in this photograph is sugarcane. Sugarcane is a wild grass that originally grew in tropical Southeast Asia. People discovered its sweetness when they picked it and ate it. At first, Indians cultivated sugar for their own use. Then, they began to trade it. They kept the source of the sugar and the process for getting it out of the sugarcane a secret.

When the Persians invaded northern India, they discovered the secret. They began to grow and refine sugar for themselves. When Islamic armies invaded Persia in the 7th century, they too discovered the secret. European soldiers brought sugar back from their battles in the Arabian Peninsula. The English word "sugar" comes from the Arabic word *sukkar*.