

Zoology

Muslim scholars made great advances in zoology, the scientific study of animals, during the Golden Age. Because for years Muslims' lifestyle and economy were dependent on animals—for trade and travel—there was interest in the study of animals. Al-Jahiz was one of the foremost scholars to explore zoology. Born about the year A.D. 776 in the town of Basra, Al-Jahiz's greatest contribution was to popularize (to make popular) science. During his life, al-Jahiz composed some 200 works, the most famous of which was the *Book of Animals*. This book contained a large collection of lore (knowledge) about animals from the Koran, the Hadith, pre-Islamic poetry, proverbs, storytellers, sailors, personal observation, and Greek writing. While the *Book of Animals* was full of anecdotes (short, entertaining stories), it also contained important scientific theories and information. Al-Jahiz's work was a model for later scholars like Ibn Bakhtishu, a doctor, who wrote *The Uses of Animals*, an account of the medicines that could be extracted from animals in the eleventh century. In the fourteenth century Al-Damiri used al-Jahiz's scientific information to write an encyclopedia of animals called *The Lives of the Animals*.

Document C



The Granger Collection, New York

Banking System

During the rule of the Abbasids of Baghdad, a banking system was developed that helped to end the confusion caused by the many currencies (kinds of money) that were then in use. From this system came the word “check” from the Arabic word *sakk*. The Abbasids had central banks with branch offices and an elaborate system of checks and letters of credit. It became possible for a check written on a bank in one part of the empire to be cashed in a distant city. This was important because international trade had expanded and goods were being marketed (sold) throughout the empire and abroad (in foreign countries).

Document D