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## From Arabick Roots to the Arab spring

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The Arabick Roots exhibition at the Royal Society helps to correct the 'clash of civilisations' view of the history of science. Alkali, algebra, algorithm, alembic. Spotted the pattern? It's no coincidence that many scientific words in English contain the Arabic definite article. In recent years, historians and scientists such as Jim al-Khalili have done a fantastic job of shedding some light on the Arabic origins of modern science (Arabic here referring to all cultures that made use of the script, rather than just the Arab people). In particular it's the "golden age" of Arabic science, between the 8th and 13th centuries, that gets all the press. So while the Vikings were romping around northern Europe, the 8th century Persian mathematician al-Khwārizmī was developing solutions to quadratic equations. While Alfred the Great was busy fending off those Vikings, the Arab polymath al-Kindi was introducing Indian numerals into mathematics, and the Persian physician al-Razi...