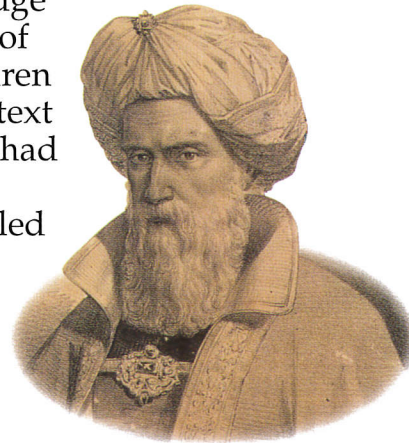




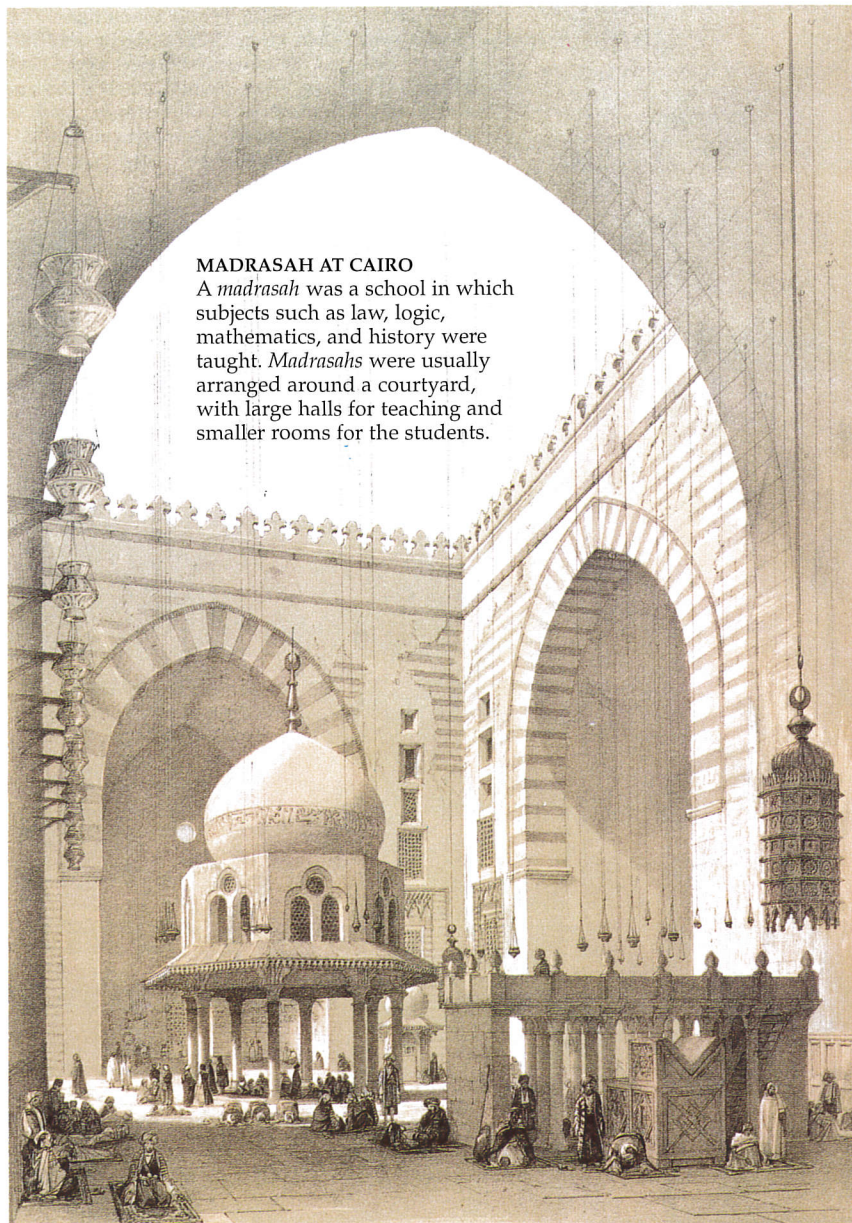
AL-AZHAR UNIVERSITY
Cairo's al-Azhar University was founded in the 10th century and became the world's most famous Islamic university. Renowned for its philosophical and theological scholarship, its name means "the resplendent." Many academic traditions, such as the distinction between graduates and undergraduates, began at al-Azhar.

Scholars and teachers

LEARNING HAS ALWAYS PLAYED a huge part in the Islamic world. A system of education developed in which children learned to memorize and recite the text of the Qur'an at school. When they had mastered this, they could become students at a higher-level school called a *madrasah*. Still more advanced study could be followed at university level. Muslim education has always had a religious basis, and the high standards produced scholars in a range of fields, from mathematics to poetry.



AVICENNA
The scholar Ibn Sina (980–1037), known in the West as Avicenna, wrote many important books on medicine and philosophy. In both fields, he developed the work of the ancient Greeks.



MADRASAH AT CAIRO
A *madrasah* was a school in which subjects such as law, logic, mathematics, and history were taught. *Madrasahs* were usually arranged around a courtyard, with large halls for teaching and smaller rooms for the students.



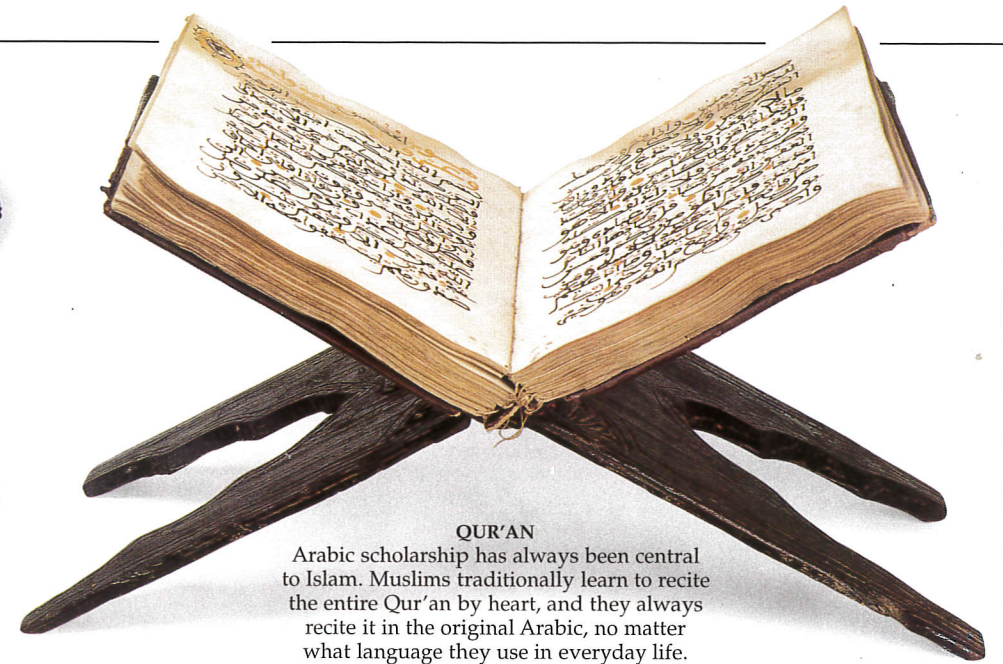
GLOBE
By the 13th century, Muslim scholars knew a vast amount about astronomy (p. 29). They produced celestial globes like this to show the positions of stars in the sky.



SCHOLAR'S TOMB
Sometimes a famous scholar is commemorated with a large tomb. Bin Ali, a notable scholar of the 14th century from Yemen, was buried in this striking double-domed tomb near Dhofar, Oman.



LIBRARY BOOKS
Centers of learning grew up in big cities such as Baghdad, Iraq, and Damascus, Syria, and these had libraries that were often much larger than the collections in Western cities and universities.



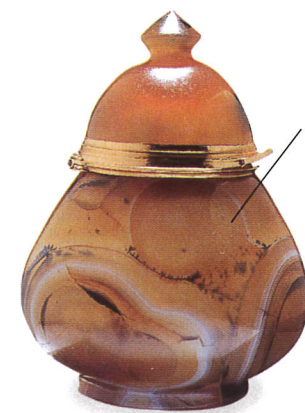
QUR'AN
Arabic scholarship has always been central to Islam. Muslims traditionally learn to recite the entire Qur'an by heart, and they always recite it in the original Arabic, no matter what language they use in everyday life.



LAW BOOK
Muslim scholars produced some very advanced laws. From the earliest times, for example, Muslim women – unlike women in the West – had the right to own and inherit property. This book contains information about how inheritance was calculated.

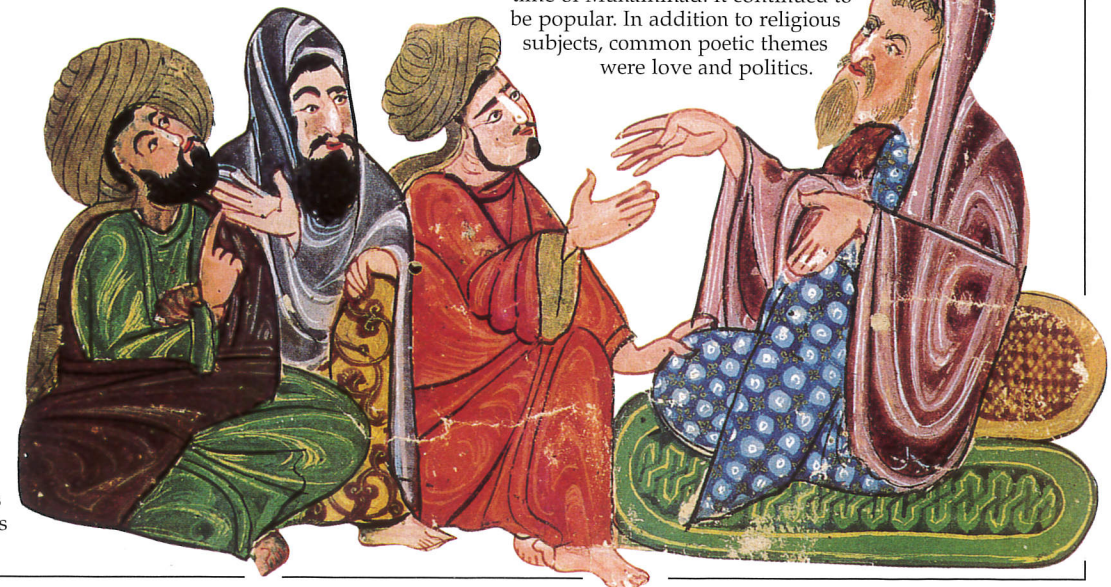


A MULLAH
A mullah is a person who is learned in religion. Most mullahs have had a formal religious training, but the title can be given to someone with a reputation for religious scholarship.



Inkpot made of gold and agate

AGATE INKPOT
Calligraphy was an important and respected art. While most writing materials were simple, some very fine pieces, like this 19th century inkpot, were also made.



POETRY READING
Recited or set to music, poetry was important in Arabia even before the time of Muhammad. It continued to be popular. In addition to religious subjects, common poetic themes were love and politics.