

TITLE: *World Map of Ibn Sa'id*

DATE: 1570/1270

AUTHOR: 'Ali ibn Musa ibn Sa'id al-Maghribi/ al-Shawi al-Fasi

DESCRIPTION: Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Mūsā ibn Sa'īd al-Maghribī (Arabic: موسى بن علي (سعيد بن الم غربى) (1213–1286), also known as Ibn Sa'īd al-Andalusī, was a geographer, historian, poet, and the most important collector of poetry from al-Andalus in the 12th and 13th centuries. Ibn Said was born at Alcalá la Real near Granada, and grew up in Marrakesh. He subsequently studied in Seville and stayed in Tunis, Alexandria, Cairo, Jerusalem and Aleppo. He was also a close friend of the Muladi poet Ibn Mokond Al-Lishboni (of Lisbon). Ibn Said was an indefatigable traveler, profoundly interested in geography. In 1250 he wrote his *Kitab bast al-ard fi 't-t ul wa-'l-'ard* [The Book of the Extension of the Land on Longitudes and Latitudes]. His *Kitab al-Jughrafiya* [Geography] embodies the experience of his extensive travels through the Muslim world and on the shores of the Indian Ocean. He also gives an account of parts of northern Europe including Ireland and Iceland. He visited Armenia and was at the Court of Hulagu Khan from 1256 to 1265. He died in Tunis or Aleppo in 1275 or 1286.

A variety of an Islamic world map with an open Indian Ocean is represented by a map found in a manuscript in the Bodleian Library, entitled *Kitab al-bad' wa-al-ta'rikh* [Book of beginning and history] 1569-70. Although the date of the map is very late, its derivation from Ibn Hawqal III (#213) is noticeable. However, one would expect a missing link somewhere between the two that may or may not have had the open Indian Ocean. The work it accompanies is anonymous but was originally attributed to Ibn Sa'id. Most of the maps attributed to Ibn Sa'id by the cartographic historian Konrad Miller, and others who follow Miller (e.g., Leo Bagrow), are really from the later version of Ibn Hawqal (Ibn Hawqal III) mentioned earlier. Existing manuscripts of Ibn Sa'id's work have no maps. Bagrow states that Ibn Sa'id produced three versions of the same map – one with climates alone, one with the outlines of continents and oceans, and finally a world map without climates. However, Manfred Kropp postulates that there is no connection with the work of Ibn Sa'id, and all we can really say is that it was produced in North Africa and in its present form dates from approximately the latter half of the 16th century, the period of the manuscript in which it is found. This manuscript and the map are discussed in an article by Kropp, who attributed the work to al-Shawi al-Fasi, the writer of the manuscript; a legend on the map states that the map is compiled according to an account taken by al-Kindi and al-Sarakhsi from the book of Ptolemy. This is a dubious statement, since these two authors were not geographers and are not mentioned in connection with maps until centuries after their deaths. But the origin of the map must date back to the 12th or 13th century, and it is influenced by both Ibn Hawqal III and by al-Biruni's sketch of land and water distribution (#214.3). Thus the southern half of the world circle consists mainly of water. The Northern Hemisphere is very similar to that of the circular world map of al-Idrisi (#219), and the pattern of arcs of circles for climatic boundaries is another feature derived from that author. The south coast of Asia resembles more than anything else the same area from the Ibn Hawqal III world map, whereas Africa shows the two peninsulas mentioned earlier, with no landmass to the south and east—only an open ocean. This is what will be found in future Islamic world maps. This map is from the Islamic west in the al-Idrisi tradition (#219), but the same features will be seen in the map of Hamd Allah Mustawfi in the east and in a later map of Indian origin. It is reasonably detailed and from this point of view

excels the map of Hamd Allah Mustawfi, but it cannot compare in detail of topographical content with the sectional maps of al-Idrisi or the world map of his successor al-Sifaqsi. Nevertheless, it shows considerable development in geographical content and as such is extremely interesting.

Maps resembling this one have survived until comparatively recent times, and degenerate copies appear from time to time, especially in the Indian subcontinent. An interesting and detailed map that must derive ultimately from this source exists in the Museum fur Islamische Kunst in Berlin and probably comes from the 18th century (#226.2). It is basically an Arab map in Arabic, though some Persian forms appear and place-names in India are given in both Arabic and Hindi scripts. However, the whole map is nothing but a very decadent and late version whose ancestry goes back through some map similar to the Bodleian map to a version of Ibn Hawqal III, but without an African landmass spreading throughout the Southern Hemisphere.

The semicircular world map from the work of Sadiq Isfahani (#204) shows a similar derivation, as do several other maps of Indian origin that have been published. The later they are, the more decadent they appear. The map (albeit in a European copy) Bagrow illustrates as a Persian map may not appear to be related either to the world map of Ibn Hawqal III or to that of al-Idrisi. It is nevertheless their ultimate descendant through a long series of maps in the Indian sub-continent.

The origin of this Islamic world map is the middle of the 13th century, but, as mentioned above, the reproduced copy is from a manuscript dated 977 AH/1570 CE entitled *Kitab al-bad' wa-al-ta'rikh* [Book of beginning and history]. The manuscript is attributed to Ibn Sa'id Maghribi (1213-1286) or al-Dawi al-Farsi. The origin of the map, however, goes back to the Islamic cartography of the 12th or 13th centuries. On the margin of the map the mapmaker mentions that he has used information from the book of Ptolemy the Greek and two other sources.

Unusually for an Islamic map, this one is oriented with East at the top, more in line with the Christian traditions of the time. This is a later version of the Balkhi School of Islamic cartography and is a detailed and faithful representation of the eastern hemisphere, possibly due to the source material used. Here the depiction of the seas and landmasses are near-accurate reflection of their relative positions. The mountains are colored brown, seas are dark green, and rivers light green. The seven climatic zones are also indicated with curved red lines, Armenia is shown falling mainly in the Fifth and partly in the Fourth Climate Zones, which is similar to its location shown on Idrisi's maps (#219).

In the map the shape of the eastern hemisphere is the most accurate in medieval Islamic cartography. Africa is shown as a continent surrounded by the oceans and the western (Atlantic) ocean is connected to the eastern (Pacific) oceans by the southern passage. In South Asia the shapes of the Arabian Peninsula, Indian Subcontinent, Indo-China, Malaya and China can be made out. Siberia is marked as the land of *Gog and Magog*, who are separated from the rest of the world by the wall built by Alexander the Great, shown here together with the vignette of a gate. The seas in Southeast Asia are filled with many islands. In Europe the shapes of the Iberian Peninsula, France and Northern Europe can be recognized. In the North Sea there are seven large islands while the Mediterranean has but five. All of the continents are filled with the legends of important provinces and cities.

Constantinople is shown on the narrow strait that connects the Mediterranean to the Black Sea, which would be the representation of the Straits of Bosphorus or

Dardanelles. To the east of the Black Sea is the Caspian, which is the rectangular lake at the center of the map, with two large (imaginary?) islands. Below the Caspian (to its west) lies a large mountain mass, possibly the Caucasian Mountains, with a second one further west (below), which probably is the depiction of the Armenian Highlands or the Taurus range.

Among the minor works of the poet-historian Ibn Sa'id al-Maghribi, born in Granada, raised in Seville and widely traveled in the East, is a little geographical handbook. Based on Claudius Ptolemy (#119), it is not very original, but it contains a certain amount of information about the coasts of Africa, western and eastern, not found elsewhere. Ibn Sa'id derived this information from Ibn Fatimah, of whom little is known except that he seems to have been a merchant who flourished around 1250. Ibn Fatimah's importance lies in his descriptions of places that were not reached by Europeans for another 200 years. He mentions the Cape Verde Islands, for example, but with a maddening lack of detail. On the east coast of Africa, he knows Madagascar and something of the coast opposite it. It is hard to know whether information of this sort reached men like the Vivaldi brothers and influenced them, but Ibn Sa'id's works were certainly well-known in Andalusia. In 1291 the Vivaldi brothers, from Genoa, undertook a major expedition down the west coast of Africa, in an effort to find the sea route to the Spice Islands. They never returned, and how far south they reached is not known, but the very fact that they thought it possible to circumnavigate Africa means they had access to a non-Ptolemaic tradition, probably of Arab origin, scholars like al-Biruni were certain the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean joined in the south.

LOCATION: Bodleian Library, MS. Laud. Or. 317, fols. 10v-11r, Oxford

SIZE: 28.5 cm diameter

REFERENCES:

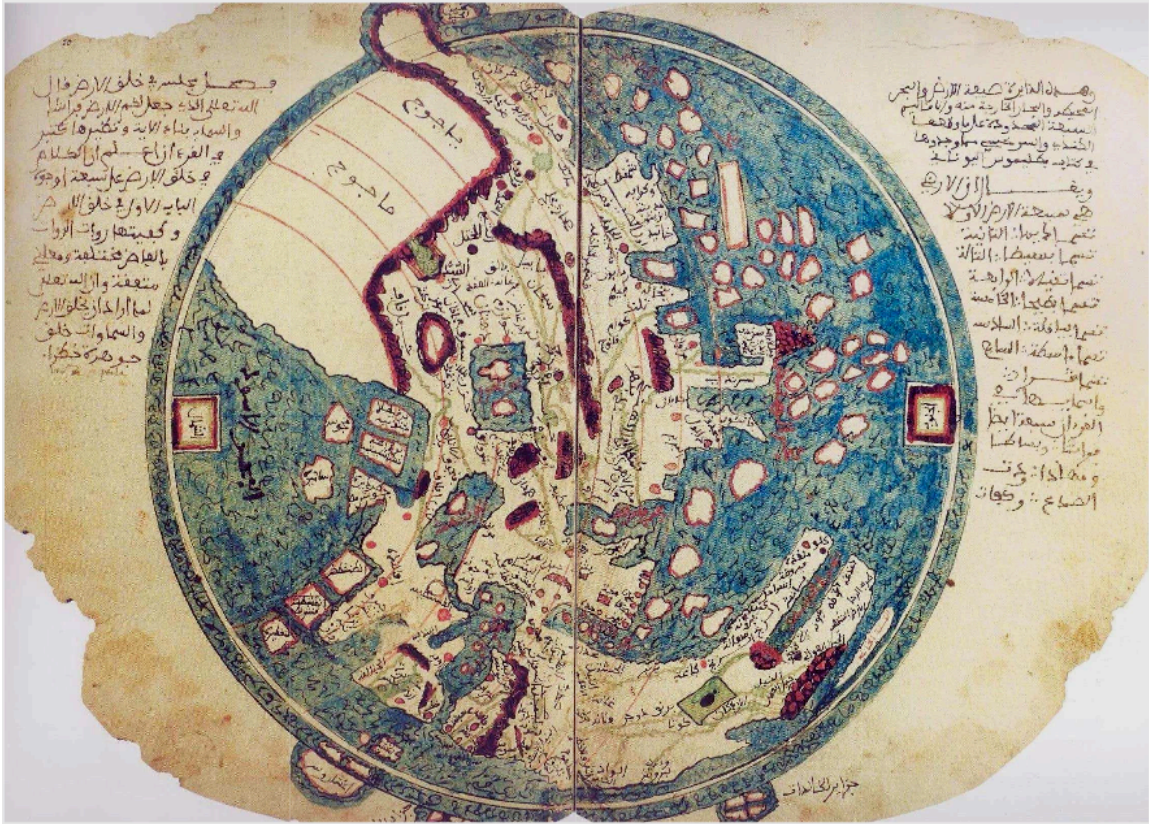
*Edson, Evelyn, E. Savage-Smith, *Medieval Views of the Cosmos*, 2004/2011.

*Galichian, R., *Countries South of the Caucasus in Medieval Maps: Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan*, pp. 1233-125.

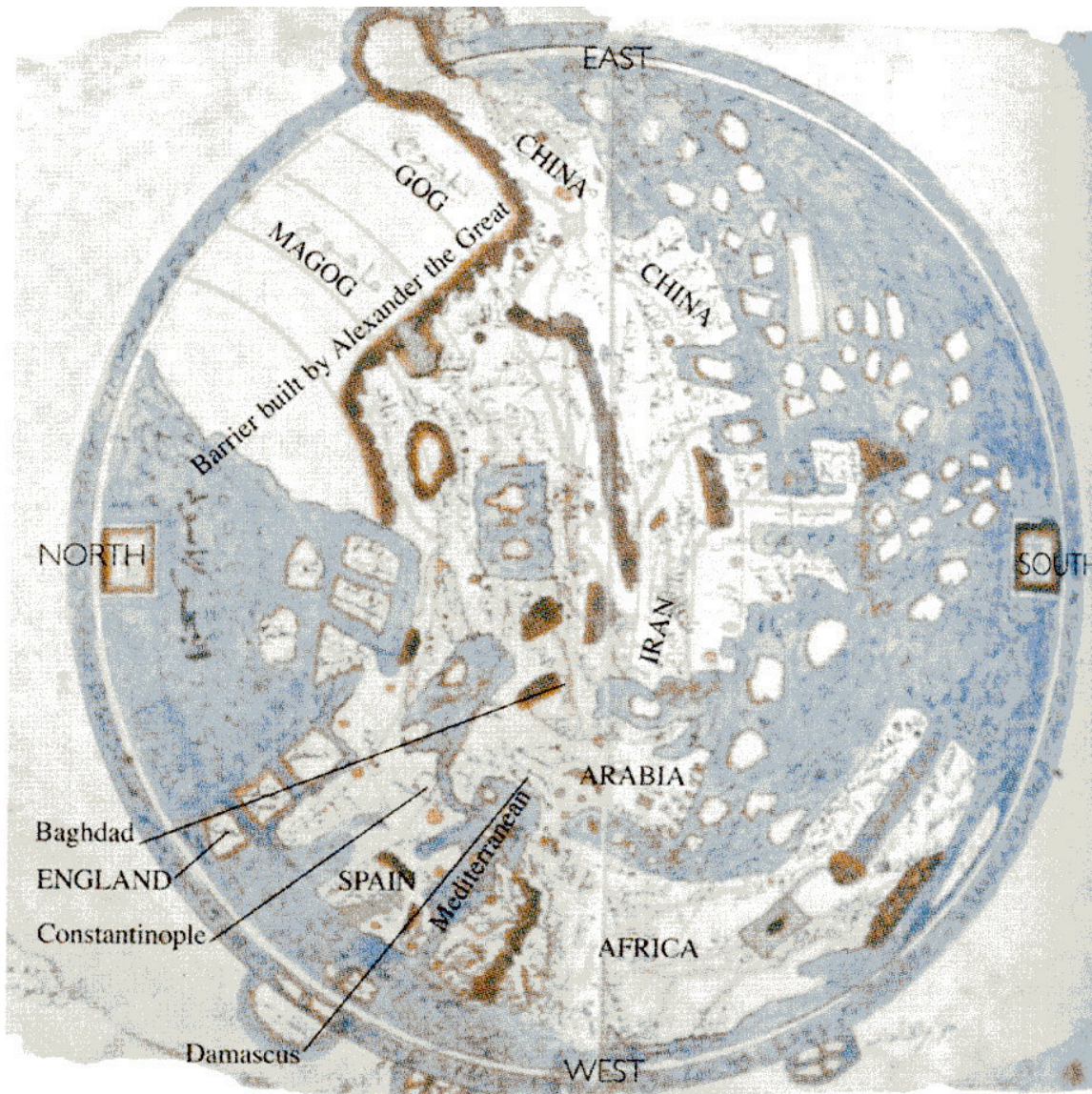
*Harley, J. B., *The History of Cartography*, Volume Two, pp. 145-46, 170, Plate 10.

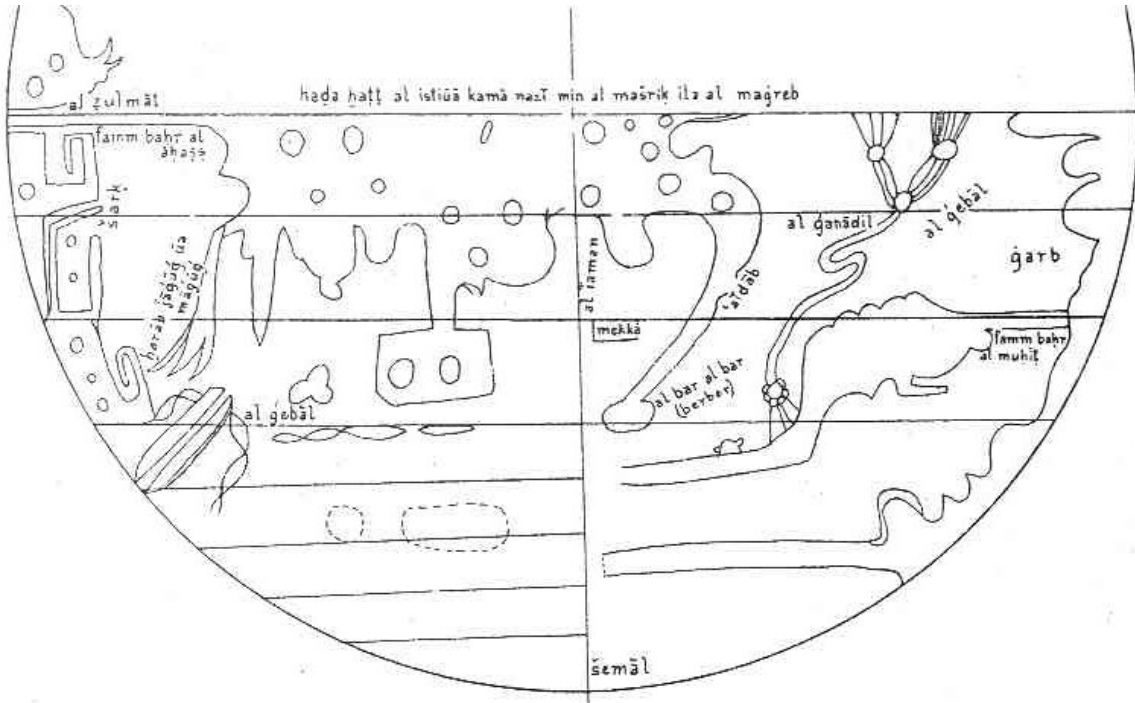
*Kropp, M., " 'Kitab al-bad' wa-t-ta'rih' von Abu l-Hasan 'All ibn Ahmad ibn 'Ali ibn Ahmad As-Sawiiial-Fasl und sein Verhältnis zu dem 'Kitab al-Ca'rafiyya' von az-Zuhri,'" in *Proceedings of the Ninth Congress of the Union Europeenne des Arabisants et Islamisants*, Amsterdam, 1st to 7th September, 1978, ed. Rudolph Peters (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981), 153-68.

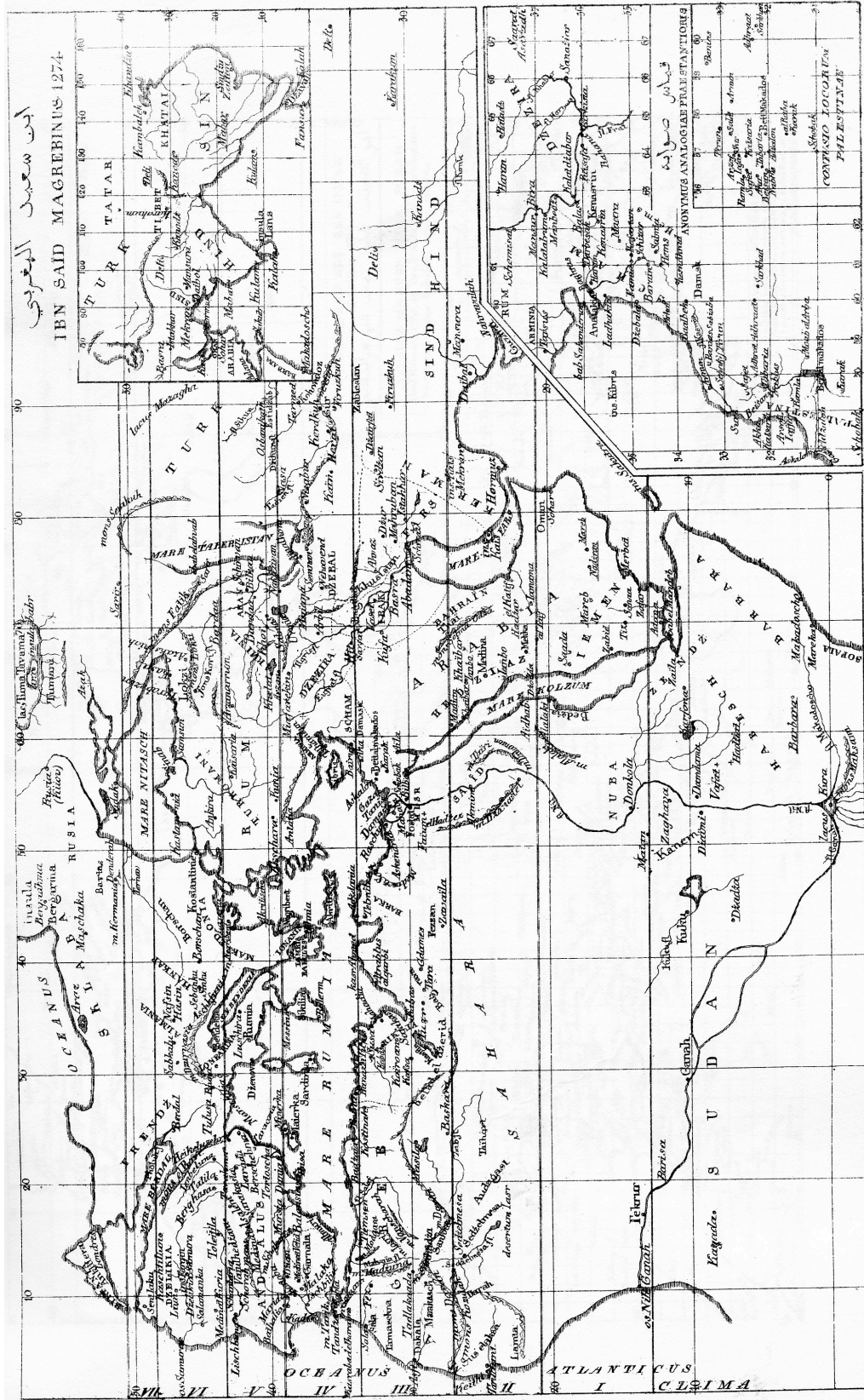
*illustrated



Ibn Sa'id's world map from the *Kitab al-bad' wa-al-ta'rikh*, 13th century
(oriented with East at the top)
28.5 cm diameter







World map of Ibn Sa'id from Geographie du Moyen Age by Joachim Lelewel