**Alternate Influences: What Medieval Islamic Cartography Owes to the East**

There exist hundreds—if not thousands—of cartographic images of the world and various regions scattered throughout the medieval and early modern Arabic, Persian, and Turkish manuscript collections, worldwide. Yet most of these maps have lain virtually untouched, and have often been deliberately ignored on the grounds that they were not mimetic representations of the world. What many failed to see is that these schematic, geometric, and often perfectly symmetrical images of the world are iconographic representations of the way in which the medieval Muslims perceived it.

Iconographic studies on the maps (such as the work of J. H. Kramers, Hans von Mzik, and Maqbul Ahmad) have focused on the traditional story: namely how the Muslim maps can be traced back to Greek, specifically Ptolemaic influence, and how they began under Abbasid patronage in Baghdad. As a result the crucial dimension of Asian, in particular Chinese and Central Asian, influences on the Islamic mapping tradition have gone completely unnoticed.

It is my thesis that the genus of this prolific medieval Islamic mapping tradition is Asian. I base my assumptions on a comparison of Islamic maps with early Chinese mapping examples. It is well known that the Muslims acquired paper technology from the Chinese. I believe that they acquired much more than paper. I use my own in-depth research and familiarity with medieval Islamic mapping techniques to prove that Islamic mapping should be viewed as a hybrid of many cultural traditions. The majority of these traditions lay to the East and not to the West of the Muslim world.

This thesis can only be proven visually as we have no known surviving textual accounts providing us with information on how the medieval Muslims constructed their maps. Thus in this paper I demonstrate the alternate influences that must have been absorbed through inter-action along routes of connectivity, such as the Silk Road.