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Visualised Space and Spatial Concepts: Al-Iṣṭakhrī's *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-al-Mamālik* and Its Reception

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The Book of Routes and Realms by al-Iṣṭakhrī (who lived in the tenth century) is the first preserved geographical work consisting not only of a textual description of the Islamicate world but also of twenty-one images – one of the world and twenty of the regions he describes.

On the one hand, both the title and text of his work take up topics previously addressed by other descriptive geographical works of the ninth and tenth century and are thus part of a geographic discourse. On the other, his depictions introduce a visualisation of space, which makes this work unique. This visualised space takes centre stage in my research, as it is a new category in geographical literature, which has been taken up by later authors and is intriguing in its own right as well as in terms of later modifications that might indicate different notions of space or aesthetics.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

1 | Looking at the work: What categories and terms does al-Iṣṭakhrī use to describe space and what is the relation between text and images in the *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-al-Mamālik*? How does he arrange space verbally and visually, what does he leave unmentioned or deem noteworthy, and how does this relate to previous works? This aims at establishing al-Iṣṭakhrī's standing in the geographical literature of his time and his particular contribution to it, taking into account the broader frame of Abbasid (knowledge) culture that might have given rise to the aspect of visualisation.

2 | Looking at the manuscript tradition: There are nearly forty copies and translations of al-Iṣṭakhrī's work into Persian and Turkish that have been copied, even in the nineteenth century. By looking at what parts of his work have actually been copied, whom they were copied for and in what language, and which elements have been changed or maintained, I want to get a picture of the work's impor-

ance, its audience, and the changes in focus in terms of description and depiction made by its "recipients". This aims at understanding what elements of his work were considered important in different periods and by/for whom – a reflection of trends in knowledge discourse and perceptions of geographical literature.

3 | Looking at later works: Which textual and visual aspects of the *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-al-Mamālik* have been taken up or modified in later geographical works or other genres? There are a number of authors coming immediately after al-Iṣṭakhrī or centuries later who also used depictions, which have not yet been put in contextual relation to his work, e.g. Ibn Sa'īd's (d. 1286) *Mukhtaṣar Jughrāfiyā*, or Ḥamd Allāh Mustawfī's (d. 1339) *Nuzhat al-Qulūb*. In comparing these to al-Iṣṭakhrī, I seek to understand what impact his work has had on spatial discourse – both textually and visually.

