Online manuscript provides medieval Islamic view of Heavens and Earth

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[摘要] 29 March 2007. How did Muslim scholars, travellers, astronomers, and historians view the Heavens and Earth in medieval times? A medieval manuscript, loosely translated as The Book of Curiosities of the Sciences, and Marvels for the Eyes, is now available online showing some of the earliest maps and diagrams in the history of Islamic cartography.

[关键词] Muslim;cartography

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How did Muslim scholars, travellers, astronomers, and historians view the Heavens and Earth in medieval times? A medieval manuscript, loosely translated as The Book of Curiosities of the Sciences, and Marvels for the Eyes, is now available online showing some of the earliest maps and diagrams in the history of Islamic cartography. Thanks to money from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the AHRC, the University's Bodleian Library in collaboration with the Oriental

The website provides not only high-

resolution reproductions of the entire manuscript, but (for scholars) an Arabic edition of the entire text along with an annotated English translation, and (for students) an English translation without the notations as well as a Teachers' Pack for Key Stage 3 (aimed at 11

-14 year olds). It also has a search capability in both English and in Arabic. The website employs a new method for publishing maps with a mouse-

over facility that allows the user to enlarge the label,and read the Arabic text with the translation alongside the label.

The Book of Curiosities is an illuminated anonymous cosmography, compiled in Egypt between 1020 and 1050 AD. The only known copy of this manuscript, probably made in the late 12th or early 13th century, was acquired by the Bodleian Library in 2002. Its unique maps and diagrams include: diagrams of star

groups and comets; a rectangular map of the world with a graphic scale (the earliest surviving example of such a map); a circular world map; individual maps of islands and ports in the eastern Mediterranean ,including Sicily, Tinnis, Mahdia, Cyprus, and the Byzantine coasts of Asia Minor; maps illustrating the Mediterranean Sea as a whole, the Indian Ocean, and the Caspian Sea; and maps of five major rivers (the Nile, Indus, Oxus,Euphrates, and Tigris).

Professor Emilie Savage-

Smith, from the Oriental Institute, who headed the team providing the academic analysis for the website, said: "The Book of Curiosities provides a unique insight into the world of the early 11th century. The book contains much new information on trade and travel at the time, and it includes 17 large maps, most of which are unparalleled in the history of cartography. Here we find, for example, the earliest recorded maps of Sicily and Cyprus, as well as the town of Tinnis

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