

Lithographed map with hand-colour in outline, in six sheets joined, backed on Japan paper, some creasing and minor tears skilfully repaired

THE EARLIEST ISLAMIC WALL MAP OF ARABIA

)...مملك محروسهء شاهانه دن آسياThe Kingdom of Asia's Imperial Palace)

Author
[EFENDI, Hüseyin Hüsnü]

Publication date
1871].

Publisher

Publication place
[Istanbul,

Physical description
Lithographed map with hand-colour in outline, in six sheets joined, backed on Japan paper, some creasing and minor tears skilfully repaired

Dimensions
1000 by 980mm (39.25 by 38.5 inches).

Notes
The earliest known large-scale Islamic wall map of Arabia.

Extending from the Mediterranean and Egypt to Iran, focusing on the Arabian Peninsula. Cities, towns, roads, and geographic features such as waterways and mountains are labelled in Arabic

script throughout.

The map includes particularly detailed hachures and terrain markings, including in the hithero poorly-mapped interior of Arabia. Major fortified cities including Jersualem, Damascus, Baghdad, and even cities beyond Ottoman control, such as Shiraz, are shaded red and displayed with fortifications.

The map was produced during major administrative and cartographic developments, when the Ottoman Empire was securing its fragile control of Mecca, Medina, and Yemen against both internal and external pressure.

Outside of Palestine and Iraq, most of the territory shown in the present example was beyond direct Ottoman control at the time. For instance, the Suez Canal, completed only two years before the map's publication, is clearly demarcated, as is Najd, the large central region of Arabia and the homeland of the Wahhabi Movement and its affiliated Saudi State. The British-administered free port of Aden is also illustrated with a hand-drawn border. As these areas posed threats to the Ottomans, including them in military maps was of the utmost strategic importance.

In the preceding decades, the Ottomans embarked upon a range of modernizing reforms collectively known as the Tanzimat ('Reorganisation'). These included the most significant administrative reorganisation in centuries, replacing most eyalets (provinces or pashaliks) with more centrally-controlled vilayets. Such reforms were incomplete at the time of this map's publication. For instance, Basra remains part of the Baghdad Eyalet on this map, but was made its own vilayet in 1875.

The primary aim of these reforms was to cement the empire's territory, which had drastically reduced in Egypt and the Balkans. The fringes of the empire, historically ruled loosely through local intermediaries, were susceptible to European powers and nationalist movements. Amongst other concerns, the Ottomans were eager to remain overseers of Mecca and Medina, which operated largely autonomously under Ottoman protection. Aside from religious prestige, this 'custodianship' brought trade and business from visiting pilgrims.

The First Saudi State (Emirate of Diriyah) had briefly expelled the Ottomans from both cities in the early nineteenth century, but they were re-conquered by the Ottoman Commander of Egypt, Muhammed Ali Pasha. Although the Saudi State was crushed, it regrouped as the Emirate of Nedj (Second Saudi State) and posed a continuous threat on the frontier. Although Muhammad Ali Pasha had launched successful military campaigns, he was forced to relinquish control over Yemen due to outside diplomatic pressure, especially from Great Britain. His successors left Egypt to fall under increasingly forceful influence from Britain and France, although they still remained problematic for the Ottomans. To the east, the Ottomans feuded with the Persian Qajar over their mutual borderlands.

Captain Hüseyin Hüsnü Efendi (1849-1911) was a military offer attached to the Tophane-i-Amire (Imperial Armory) in Istanbul. After rising from Lieutenant to Undersecretariat for Court Inspection, he shifted careers to becoming a law teacher and, later in Yemen, was appointed sheik al-Islam.

Rare: we have been unable to trace any other examples, either in institutions or on the market.

Bibliography

Provenance

Price:

Inventory reference: 22040

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