

MUSLIM CONTRIBUTIONS TO GEOGRAPHY

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The revised edition of the book is appearing after seventeen years when it was originally published. In the intervening years no fresh light has been thrown on the subject but an increasing number of students and scholars are becoming aware of the importance of Muslim contributions to Geography in the past.

In the present edition some changes have been made in the scheme of chapters. Particular stress has been laid on the question of the beginnings of Muslim geography and the influence it exerted on the West through several centuries of development. Minor corrections and improvements have also been made in the existing text. It is hoped that the book will continue to draw the attention of students and scholars as in the past.

Dacca
March 15, 1964

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

While there have been many attempts to recognise and appreciate the extent and value of Muslim contributions to geography, the history of Muslim geographical thought is still to be written. The work of some Western Orientalists of the calibre of Reinaud, De Goeje, Nallino, Sachau, Barthold, Le Strange, Kramers and Minorsky has greatly helped to unfold the many-sided contribution of Muslims to the general advancement of geographical thought and knowledge. But it is increasingly felt that scholars from Islam's cultural *milieu* could help towards a better appreciation and evaluation of this glorious achievement and in the process avoid many a pitfall and overcome some of the cultural, linguistic and socio-religious difficulties which stand in the way of an 'alien' scholar, howsoever painstaking and sympathetic he may be.

This small volume is offered as a modest contribution to studies directed to that end. Much of the ground covered is familiar to students of the subject. But the author's aim has been twofold. First, to illustrate the theme with the help of a large variety of facts and, secondly, to evaluate the output spread over a period of more than six centuries, in a systematic form according to the practice and 'parlance' of modern geography.

The author is fully conscious of many short-