

# Outline: “Visualizing Disease and Care in Historic Iraq: Maps, illustrations, bibliographies” (2000BCE-1950CE)

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## I. Introduction:

The history of medicine in Mesopotamia and neighboring regions, including modern-day Iraq, alongside its neighbors, with periods extending to thousands of years, and each of these periods reflecting and resembling a rich mix of cultural, religious, as well as scientific traditions.

This large region, which was often called the “Cradle of Civilization”, was home to many of the most important, early medical writings, practices, as well as Institutions. Medicine in Ancient Mesopotamia combined factual observations with spiritual ideologies and beliefs, which in result created a different, and unique system of healing, and these were recorded extensively on cuneiform tablets.

With the evolving of the region, which happened through different political and cultural periods and eras, ranging from ancient empires, to more recent Islamic rule, Ottoman control, as well as influence from colonialism. The medical traditions also went through changes alongside these many different eras.

Our groups focus, which will be mainly on maps, illustrations, as well as bibliographies, all of which collectively helps us visualize and understand the development of medicine throughout the many different periods, which will help highlight how geography, alongside history, could and has shaped medical knowledge, as well as practices

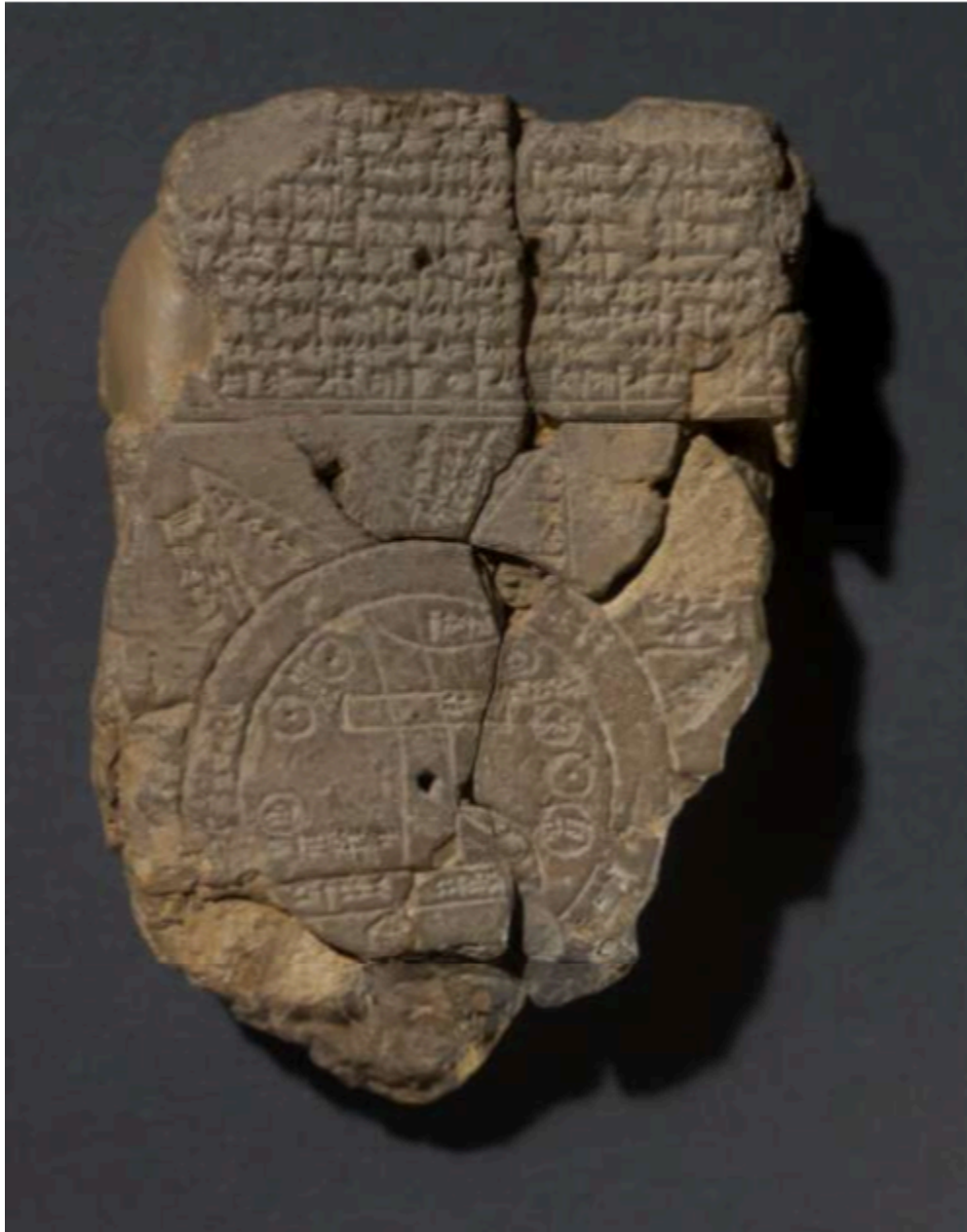
## ● Periods of focus and important sources

- **Ancient Mesopotamia** (2000 BCE - 539 BC)
  - Collecting and exploring early medical texts, traditions, practices, as well as institutions.
  - Including the Handbook used for Diagnostics, And exploring traditional roles and health professionals.
  - Exploring treatments and spiritual healing in one of the oldest civilizations
  - Saikku: a series of cuneiform diagnostic handbooks
    - **Primary**
    - 7th - 1st century BCE
- **Medieval Islamic Period** (622 AD)
  - Exploring the medical advancements during Islamic rule, including the translation of:
    - Old classical works
    - Creation and establishment of hospitals

- Examining the increased public health awareness in Iraq, and the bigger Islamic World
- Ibn Sina: canon of Medicine
  - **Primary**
  - 1025 CE
- Bimaristan: Islamic Hospital architectural illustrations
  - **Primary**
  - 12th - 14th centuries CE
- **Ottoman Era (1534 - 1932)**
  - Studying the Ottoman Empire's period of medical perspective
  - Focusing on the integration of local ottoman traditions, alongside the European Influences, as well as the formalization of medical services, including hospitals, and pharmacies
  - Ottoman public-health and sanitary maps of Iraq(Basra, Baghdad)
    - **Primary**
    - 1830 - 1910 CE
- **British Mandate ( 1920 - 1932 )**
  - Analyzing the modernization of healthcare under British administration, which helped focus on the introduction of Western medicine, medical education, as well as public health policies.
  - British Mandate Iraq epidemiological maps(cholera, smallpox, quarantine stations)
    - **Primary**
    - 1917 - 1932 CE
- **Republic of Iraq (1958...)**
  - View of Post Monarchy medical development, which includes modern healthcare institutions, blending of traditional Iraqi and Western practices, alongside the growth of medical education, as well as public health infrastructure.
  - Paul Farmer, Infections and Inequalities
    - **Secondary**
    - 1999
  - Omer Dewachi: Ungovernable Life, Mandatory Medicine and Statecraft in Iraq
    - **Secondary**

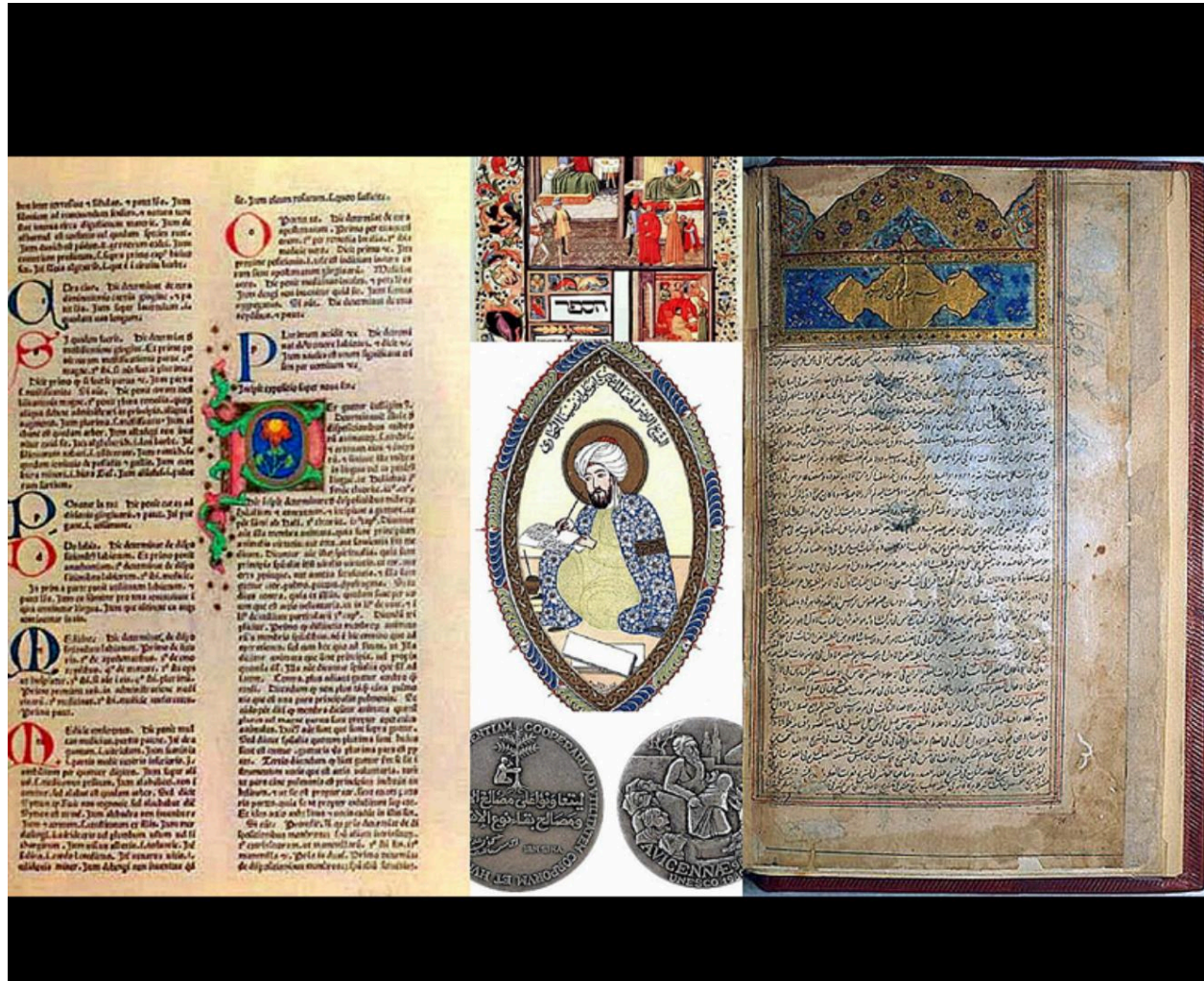
## Examples of Maps

## Ancient Mesopotamia:



This tablet is a tablet that shows an ancient babylonian World map, which shows a flat, circular earth that is circled by a cosmic ocean called the “Bitter River”, with Babylon, and the Euphrates at the center, and nearby regions, such as Assyria, Der, Bit-Yakin, Habban, and Urartu placed around it, Sometimes not very accurately. Outside the ocean lied eight distant regions, each separated by several beru of distance and partly described as mysterious outer lands whose interiors “No one knows”. This text mixes geography with myth, describing ruined gods in the underworld, legendary figures, and many different creatures that inhabit the sea.

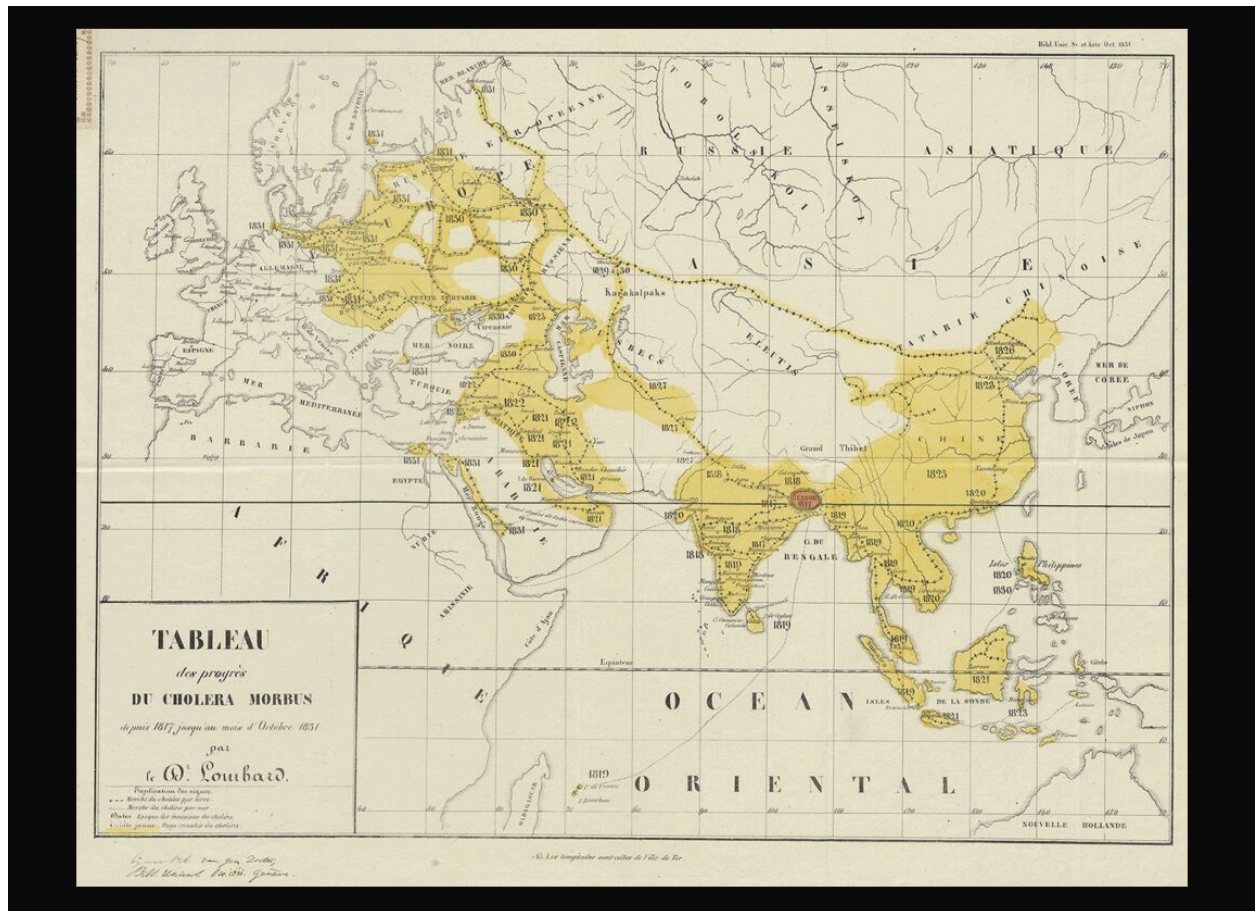
## Medieval Islamic Golden Age (8th century to 13th century)



Ibn Sīnā's Canon of Medicine, completed around 1025 CE, became a key medical textbook in both the Islamic world and later Europe. Persian copies from the 14th century were beautifully decorated and carefully organized to help doctors find information easily. These manuscripts combined art and science, showing important sections with decorations and including notes by readers that reveal how medical knowledge was shared and changed over time. They helped preserve and spread medical ideas about diagnosis, drugs, and surgery for centuries.

## Ottoman Era:





Map showing the spread of the first cholera pandemic

This cholera outbreak map, dating from 1817 to 1831, illustrates the first outbreak of the cholera pandemic, highlighting how the disease spread through trade, pilgrimage, and caravan routes. Furthermore, this map visually documents one of the earliest waves of cholera to strike the Ottoman Empire and also highlights how the region was connected within itself. In addition, the Ottoman Empire's strength, being its massive size and its mobility within its routes, was also the cause of its vulnerability during an epidemic and it pushed the empire to create early quarantine laws, building quarantine stations (karantina), improving port inspections, and taking an interest in contagion theories (which many physicians at the time still resisted). Furthermore, this map traces the disease's movement from the Persian Gulf into Basra and Baghdad, and then north toward Ottoman urban centers, showing how the empire's commercial and cultural networks pushed the spread of infection. This cholera outbreak compelled the Ottoman state to address the limitations of traditional medicine and prompted it to adopt more modern public health strategies, which were influenced by European medical practices. To add on, culturally, the epidemic affected travel patterns, especially during the Hajj pilgrimage, as the disease would spread through pilgrimage routes, and it shaped public opinions of the Ottoman state's involvement in health matters. Lastly, the map is historically important because it captures when the Ottoman Empire began moving towards a more centralized and developed medical system, while also showing how the geography, mobility, and authority shaped the course of disease across the region.

**British Mandate ( 1920 - 1932 )**



This is an old picture of the “Royal Medical College Baghdad” which was founded in 1927 and inaugurated in 1930 during the British Mandate period. It played a key role in advancing medical education and health care in Iraq. It is now known as the “College of Medicine at the University of Baghdad”. It was established by Iraqi doctors who studied abroad to advance medical education in their home country.