



Syriac world map by Bar Hebraeus, 1226-1286 depicting the northern half of the eastern hemisphere, known as the oikumene [known habitable world], divided into seven climatic zones. Following the Islamic cartographic tradition South is at the top.



The Syriac literary figure and religious leader Grigory Bar-Ebroyo, better known as Bar Hebraeus or Abul-Faraj, was born in Malatya and died in Maragha (Iranian province of Azerbaijan), and therefore was well informed of the history and geography of the area. He was a prolific writer and became *maphrian* [primate] of the Syriac Orthodox Church. In one of his works, *Menaret Qudhshe* [Lamp of the Sanctuary], there is a map of the

habitable world (the northern half of the Eastern hemisphere) of which three manuscript copies have reached us.

The map shown above is a 14<sup>th</sup> century copy inserted in a dictionary dating from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, kept in Cambridge University Library. This is a semicircle of 21 cm diameter and, as per Islamic cartography, is oriented with south at the top, the world being divided into seven habitable zones by parallel red lines. The sea and ocean shores are shown with bolder red lines and the toponyms are in Syriac, the translations of which appear on the second map above, prepared by Konrad Miller, where some of the relevant names are numbered and listed in the table below the map.

The World Map of Bar Hebraeus with some of the toponyms as translated and re-drawn by Konrad Miller:

**Zone I**

1. Ethiopia
2. Nubia
3. River Nile
4. Sudan
5. Indian Sea
6. Island of Ceylon

**Zone II**

1. Africa
2. Land of Egypt
3. Red Sea
4. Mount Sinai
5. Persian Gulf
6. Land of the Indians

**Zone III**

1. Alexandria
2. Egypt
3. Caesaria
4. Anthiochia
5. Jerusalem
6. Damascus

**Zone IV**

1. Slavs
2. Cyprus
3. Adriatic Sea

4. Maragha [where the writer died]

5. Tabriz
6. Samarkand
7. Halab [Aleppo]

**Zone V**

1. Spain
2. Rome
3. Anatolia
4. Sis [capital of Lesser Armenia, now called Kozan]
5. Lesser Armenia
6. Melitini [Malatya]
7. Khlat [Capital of Greater Armenia]
8. Arzan
9. Maiferkat [Tigranakert]
10. Lake Van
11. Greater Armenia
12. Azerbaijan
13. Caspian Sea
14. Iberia

15. Gates of Iron

**Zone VI**

1. France
2. Black Sea
3. Shirvan
4. Land of the Alans
5. Gorgan [Caspian] Sea
6. Land of the Huns and Turks who are Mongols
7. Amazones, who cut off their breasts
8. Caucasus Mountains

**Zone VII**

1. Scythians
2. Bulgarians
3. Baltic/Northern Sea
4. Turkish mountains, where live the Huns, who are barbarians.
5. Land of Gog and Magog
6. Boristhenes [River Dnepr]

A. Equator, which is the warm land, to the north of it lie the inhabitable lands and to the south there is no habitable land.

B. Impassable Ocean.

C. The seven climates (inverted).

In the above list, the texts in the brackets are added in order to clarify the content of the map, the first letter showing the zone in Latin numerals and then the number allocated to the name in the particular zone of the map. The toponyms are divided according to

the seven climatic zones shown red. In the named cities, the author of the map has included those which were of importance including his lifetime.