



## Lesson 1: Khashkhash Ibn Saeed

Objective: The students will describe the Iberian Peninsula under the Andalusian rule and identify Khashkhash Ibn Saeed as a person who may have discovered America around the year 900 AD.

Key words:

**Moors** – Muslims who lived in the Iberian Peninsula between the 700's and the 1600's

**Andalusia** – The name of a country ruled by Moors in the Iberian Peninsula.

**Caliphs** – The title of a leader of Andalusia

**Akbar az Zaman, Ard Majhoola:** Titles given to the Americas by the Andalusians.

**Al Mas'oudi** – A historian and geographer of Andalusia.

**Iberian Peninsula** – the area of land that is now Portugal and Spain.

### **People Who Discovered America Before Columbus**

Historians widely accept that several people had sailed to the new world before Columbus. There is strong evidence that the Vikings, Polynesians, and perhaps Japanese and Chinese sailed to the Americas several hundreds of years before Columbus. Many historians believe that there is also substantial proof that Moors from Spanish Andalusia discovered North American lands before

Columbus. Moors were Muslims who lived in Iberian Peninsula between the 700's and the 1600's. The **Iberian Peninsula** is now modern day Spain and Portugal. They included great scholars of geography and cartography, demonstrating their knowledge and ability for ocean navigation. Even historians who are critical of Arabs arriving in the Americas before Columbus agreed that the Arab ships at the time were much larger and better built than Columbus' ships (Riley, 1971).

### **Muslims of Andalusia**

Muslims came from Syria to the Iberian Peninsula from the

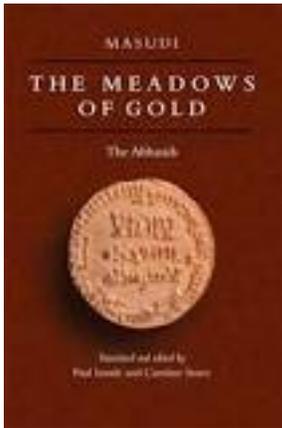


Umayyad Empire when the Abbasid Empire took over the area. The leaders of the Umayyad Empire were referred to as **Caliphs**. It eventually came to be known as **Andalusia**, consisted of states called Cordoba, Granada, and

Seville. Andalusia was known to be a place of opulence, intellectual enlightenment, and beauty. At a time when most of Europe had no trash collection system, no running water, little variety in food, and disease that ran rampant, Andalusia was known for gardens with fountains, hospitals, and exotic foods that were a result of new discoveries in agriculture. Andalusia was often compared to be in the pursuit of paradise on earth, and Muslims brought new optimism for exploration to Europeans (Glick, 1999).

## Khaskhash Ibn Saeed Ibn Al-Aswad

Khaskhash Ibn Saeed Ibn al-Aswad was a Moorish navigator living in Andalusia. Abu al-Hasan Ali al-Mas'udi in his book, *The*



*Book of Golden Meadows*, and other works, that Khaskhash referred to the new world as the, “Akbar az-Zaman,” or, “the Great Land.” Al-Mas’udi reports that Khaskhash sailed through the “Sea of Darkness,” which Andalusians referred to the Atlantic Ocean at the time, and then discovered a large unknown land in the year 889. Khaskhash’s accomplishments were well noted by the

people of the time was because many attempted to find the unknown lands in the Atlantic Ocean, but perished. Khaskhash, however, not only made it back alive, but also brought back lots of riches and booty from his trip. Al- Mas’udi reports that Khaskhash’s trip began in Delba (Palos), Andalusia and ended in the Americas in a place he refers to as **Ard Majhoola**. A map of his trip is included the accounts of his voyage and the unknown land on the maps referred to show where he landed. The map matches that of the New World in relationship to Spain.

Some historians argue that they actually discovered the Canary Islands, which are off the coast of Africa. Even though there is no way to prove that Khaskhash did in fact discover the New World instead of the Canary Islands, Mas’udi’s report of Khaskhash’s discover prompted rise to new expeditions into the Atlantic Ocean, and what was learned from those voyages contributed to the field of cartography and ocean navigation (Dame, 2013). Mas’udi remarked, “Every Spaniard knows this story,” after telling this story.

We don't have a picture of Khashkhash Ibn Saeed; however every year, at a festival people dress up for the National Day of Valencia, in Valencia, Spain. This festival is celebrated today to mark the end of Muslim occupation in Spain. Pictures of the costumes of the Moorish sailors give us some idea of what Khashkhash Ibn Saeed may have looked like, and how he may have dressed.



**Spaniards re-enacting the Muslim occupation of Spain on National Day of Valencia in Spain.**

Study Questions:

1. What was the name of the country that Khashkhash Ibn Saeed came from?
2. What year was Khashkhash reported to have traveled to an unknown land in the Atlantic Ocean?
3. What title was given to the New World? What does it mean literally?

4. What happened on the Day of Valencia?
5. What did the Moorish explorers look like? How did they probably dress?
6. What was the name of the book and author that wrote about Khashkhash's voyages to the unknown land?

#### Activities:

1. Create a time line with at least 5 major events in history, beginning with Khashkhash Ibn Saeed's discovery of America and ending with Columbus's discovery.
2. Create a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting Khashkhash Ibn Saeed and Columbus
3. Describe and analyze the Al-Masudi's map of the new world. Provide evidence to the claim that Khashkhash Ibn Saeed discovered America.

