

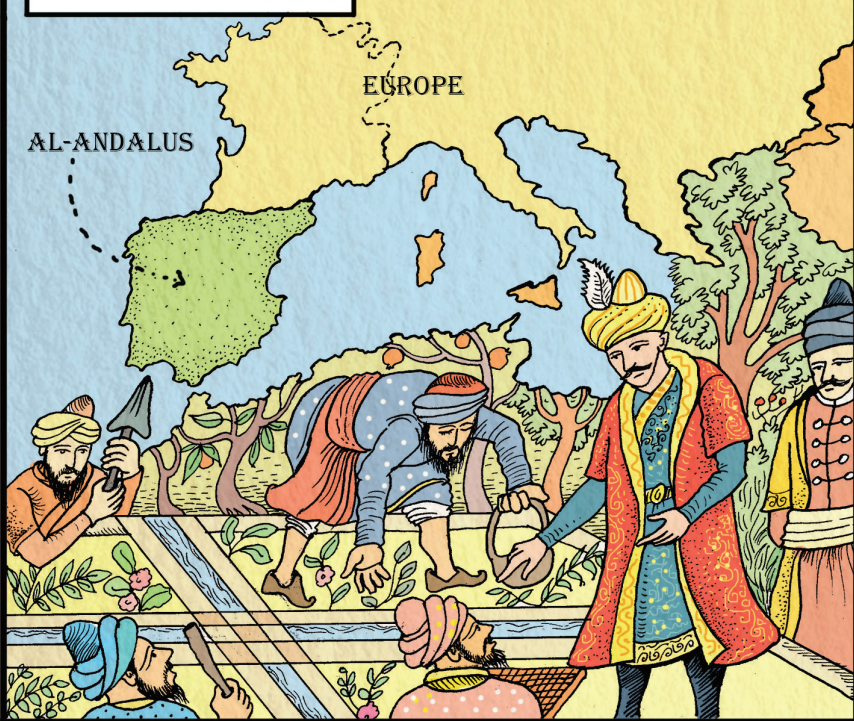
Taking Root: Ibn Bassal

and the growth of agriculture
(1050-1100)

TEXT: MOLLY SINNOTT
ART: ARGHA MANNA

BIG HISTORY PROJECT

IBN BASSAL WAS A SCHOLAR WORKING FOR THE MUSLIM ABBASID DYNASTY IN AL-ANDALUS. HE SERVED THE EMIR'S COURT AS BOTANIST IN THE GARDENS OF TOLEDO AND SEVILLE.

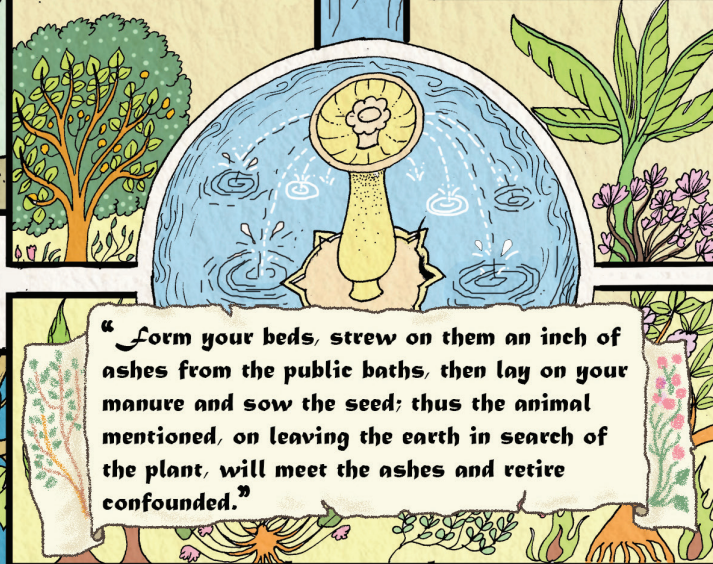


WHILE TRAVELING ON A PILGRIMAGE TO MECCA, HE VISITED SICILY, SYRIA, EGYPT, PERSIA, AND INDIA. HE COLLECTED MANY SEEDS AND PLANTS TO BRING HOME, TRANSFORMING AGRICULTURE IN AL-ANDALUS.



IBN BASSAL USED WHAT HE LEARNED TO WRITE EXTENSIVELY AND DEMONSTRATE NEW TECHNIQUES TO ORDINARY FARMERS.

HIS MOST IMPORTANT BOOK WAS *DIWAN AL-FILAH*, OR BOOK OF AGRICULTURE. IT DESCRIBED DIFFERENT KINDS OF SOIL, INTRODUCED DOZENS OF NEW PLANTS, AND OFFERED PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS.



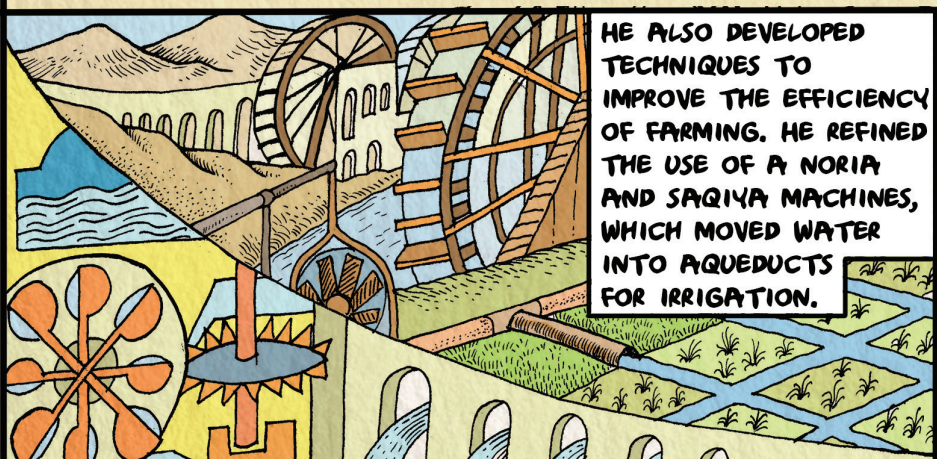
"Form your beds, strew on them an inch of ashes from the public baths, then lay on your manure and sow the seed; thus the animal mentioned, on leaving the earth in search of the plant, will meet the ashes and retire confounded."



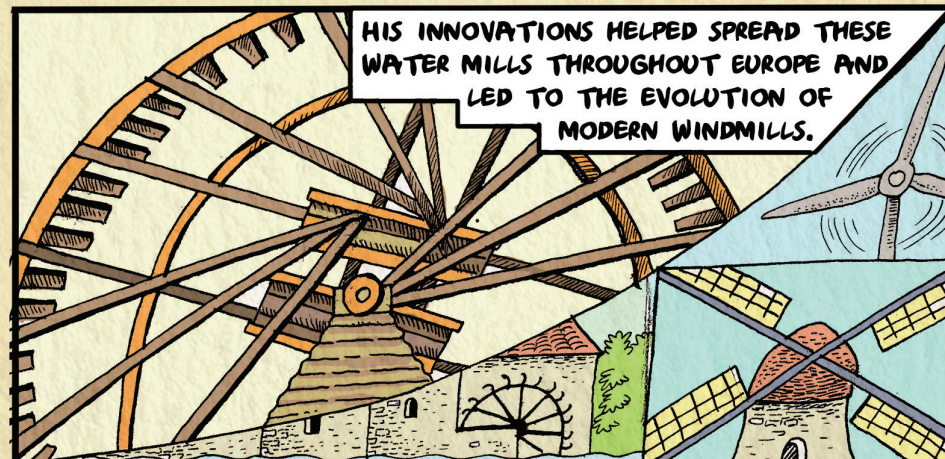
HE PIONEERED GRAFTING TECHNIQUES TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF DISEASE AMONG PLANTS.



...AND TO DEAL WITH THE EVER-PRESENT THREAT OF SLUGS.



HE ALSO DEVELOPED TECHNIQUES TO IMPROVE THE EFFICIENCY OF FARMING. HE REFINED THE USE OF A NORIA AND SAQIYA MACHINES, WHICH MOVED WATER INTO AQUEDUCTS FOR IRRIGATION.



HIS INNOVATIONS HELPED SPREAD THESE WATER MILLS THROUGHOUT EUROPE AND LED TO THE EVOLUTION OF MODERN WINDMILLS.

THE KNOWLEDGE IBN BASSAL ENCOUNTERED AND REFINED ON HIS TRAVELS REVOLUTIONIZED AGRICULTURE IN HIS HOME. HE WAS PART OF WHAT HISTORIANS CALL THE ARAB GREEN REVOLUTION—PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT EVENT IN HUMAN PRODUCTION SINCE THE AGRICULTURAL REVOLUTION.