



**TRAVEL LITERATURE IN THE ARAB-ISLAMIC HERITAGE, AN
ANALYTICAL STUDY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF ART AND COGNITIVE
NARRATIVE**

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Abstract

Travel literature is one of the most valuable and richest forms of prose in the Arab-Islamic heritage, serving as a true mirror reflecting civilizational, cultural, and social transformations throughout the ages. Arab travelers were not merely passers-by; they were ambassadors of knowledge and eyewitnesses who documented the features of civilization, the customs of peoples, and the systems of political and economic life.

This study aims to trace the historical development of travel literature in the Arab-Islamic heritage and analyze the key junctures of its transformation across different eras, revealing the interplay of methodologies and themes between geography, history, and literary narrative.

The research examines the phenomenon of travel literature as a fundamental tributary of human, historical, and civilizational knowledge, clarifying its historical roots and its evolution through the ages, with a particular focus on the Arab-Islamic heritage and the contributions of Muslim travelers and geographers. Travel literature is defined as a prose literary art form in which the writer depicts their experiences and observations during a real journey to different places and societies, drawing their information from direct observation and experience rather than imagination. The historical and scientific importance of travel literature lies in its being an original and reliable source of historical, social, and economic events, often free from the bias of official historians or the constraints of authority. It is also distinguished by its meticulous observation of peoples' customs, traditions, and the details of their daily lives. Travel literature is characterized by numerous artistic features and styles, blending narrative, precise geographical description, and personal reflections, employing various artistic devices (such as dialogue, descriptive sketches, and exploratory letters), with the traveler's voice prominently featured through the use of the first-person pronoun.



As for the historical development of travel literature in the Islamic tradition: in the third century AH, early travel activity was for scientific and exploratory purposes, such as the journeys of Sallam al-Tarjuman, al-Jahiz, and Abu al-Hasan al-Mas'udi. The fourth century AH is considered the era of flourishing geographical writing, during which prominent figures such as Ibn Fadlan, al-Istakhri, al-Muqaddasi, and al-Mas'udi emerged. The fifth century AH was distinguished by a unique model of scientific and cultural travel, most notably al-Biruni's extensive journey to study the societies and beliefs of India. The sixth and seventh centuries AH were a fertile period that produced major texts documenting conflicts and civilizational transformations, such as the travelogue of Ibn Jubayr al-Andalusi, Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadi's description of the antiquities of Egypt, and al-Sharif al-Idrisi's atlas (Nuzhat al-Mushtaq). In the eighth century AH and beyond, this tradition culminated in the great journey of Ibn Battuta, which covered the Islamic world and Africa, alongside the travels of Ibn Khaldun and Afuqay al-Andalusi (the journey of the Moriscos).

Keywords: Travel literature, Arab-Islamic heritage, historical and geographical knowledge, Muslim travelers, direct observation and documentation, social history, geographical discoveries, narrative storytelling.

First: The components and artistic foundations of travel literature

God Almighty said: "Say, 'Travel through the land and observe how He began creation. Then God will produce the final creation. Indeed, God is over all things competent'¹. He commanded travel through the land because travel brings the observer closer to numerous sights from different lands with their mountains, rivers and contents, and he passes by the homes of nations, both present and past, so he sees many things and conditions that he is not accustomed to seeing.

Therefore, the command was given for this purpose, which is one of the comprehensive wisdoms. And the past tense was used in the aspect of the beginning of creation, because the traveler has no stability on his path, so he rarely witnesses the occurrence of the beginning of creatures, but he witnesses creatures that were begun before, so he realizes²

¹ [The Holy Quran, Surah Al-Ankabut: Verse 20].

² Ibn Ashur, Muhammad al-Tahir (1984). Tafsir al-Tahrir wa al-Tanwir, 21, Tunisia: Tunisian Publishing House, p. 230.



that the one who created them only created them after they did not exist, and that he is able to create their like, so he is more likely able to bring them back after they did not exist.”

Travel has made immense contributions to humanity, most notably the voyages of geographical exploration that uncovered the Earth, the origins and spread of humankind, the lives and customs of different peoples, and the diversity of their languages and dialects. These journeys attracted diverse groups of people, including religious and scientific scholars, travelers passionate about exploration and discovery, and adventurers and explorers driven by a spirit of adventure and curiosity to uncover the unknown lands and people. Most of these journeys are characterized by meticulous observation, research, and investigation when recording firsthand observations and personal experiences, accompanied by subjective impressions that may be positive or negative¹.

Travel is as old as humanity itself, known from ancient times to the present day. Despite the differences in reasons, means of travel, and subject matter, the writings of travelers, with their varying personal inclinations, reflect important aspects of the civilization of their era and describe many cultural elements of the countries they visited and the conditions of the peoples they interacted with, whether the journey was real or imagined. Some European travelers, in particular, contributed to uncovering the remains of ancient Arab civilization.

Some of them made significant contributions to the field of archaeological exploration, which helped trace the civilizations of certain peoples from their earliest times. Some journeys, especially those of geographical discovery, added much to human knowledge. The journey of the Venetian Marco Polo (1254-1324 AD) is credited with discovering many parts of the Eastern world, recounting the stories of numerous peoples, highlighting many aspects of their worldly and spiritual lives, and showcasing many facets of the human civilization of the ancient East².

Travelogues occupy a prominent place among the sources containing a wealth of information about countries, regions, and peoples throughout history. These journeys have been a continuous tradition since ancient times, with successive waves of travelers visiting

¹ Evliya Çelebi, Muhammad Agha Zilli ibn Darwish, known by his title Evliya Çelebi, 1020-1095 AH/1611-1684 AD (2016). *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatname-i*, translated by Muhammad Ali Awani, Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Misriyyah Press, p. 5.

² Çelebi, Evliya. *Seyahatname-i Misr*, p. 6.



the East from the era of the Greeks and Romans. Then, in the Middle Ages, greed and the lust for colonialism replaced curiosity and discovery, leading to the invasion of the Arab and Islamic East by Latin armies in what became known as the Crusades. With the dawn of the 16th century, a new phase began in this cultural and civilizational saga between East and West. The number of European travelers to the East increased dramatically, driven by numerous reasons and motives, both declared and undeclared. Unfortunately, this precious human heritage, comprising hundreds of rare travelogues, did not receive the attention it deserved from historians until relatively recently, despite the wealth of material these accounts provide, shedding light on various aspects of societies in both the East and the West¹.

What makes the great importance of travel books clear to us is that they provide us with a good stock of information and texts that we lack in history books, which were mostly written and recorded for a specific purpose, such as getting closer to a sultan, seeking prestige and money, or fearing the sultan's oppression. Therefore, they sometimes obscure or deliberately and knowingly turn a blind eye to many matters and events that, if revealed to us, would change many aspects of recorded history. Therefore, it is wise to say that travel books rise to the level of being original sources in clarifying the main or obscure side events and transferring them from the margin of thought to the focus of correct perception and reasonable interpretation that corresponds to the truth of reality. This importance is due to the fact that travelers penetrate among the classes of society that official (governmental, if you will) history books rarely pay attention to.

Another reason for their importance is that they are generally far removed from bias, as they contain firsthand accounts from the travelers themselves. Furthermore, the importance of travelogues to historians and others stems from the fact that the interests of travelers differed from those of official historians. For example, official historians often focused on glorifying the sultan's political² and military achievements, rarely addressing social and economic conditions unless it served to praise and salute the sultan. In such cases, the resulting accounts are often weak and unsatisfying, while travelogues offer a wealth of

¹ Butt, Firdous Ahmed. The literary importance of travel literature, Language Journal, India: Language Foundation Malappuram-Kerala, January-March 2016, pp. 25-34.

² Boussaiqa, Samia. The importance of travel writings in historical writings, Journal of the History of Science, Algeria: Ziane Achour University of Djelfa, Vol. 5, No. 3, June 2020, pp. 424-436.



historical material on these and other aspects.

However, there are some points to consider regarding travelogues. When dealing with travelogues and travelers, it's essential to remember that the traveler we accompany is not a professional historian. They might be a merchant, a religious figure, or a military man on a military mission. Therefore, we sometimes find that such individuals don't provide evidence or proof to substantiate their claims, but simply recount the events and remain silent. At other times, they accept what they heard from their contemporaries as established fact, and this is quite common. It's also crucial to consider that these travelers were not detached from their era and culture; rather, they were products of that time. Undoubtedly, they were a product of their time. With the rise of religious fervor during the Middle Ages in both the West and the East -to the point that some describe it as an age of faith- this was reflected in the writings of these European travelers, who focused on religious aspects, especially those who journeyed to holy sites. Thus, it's undeniable that we find a clear interest in religious matters among these travelers. Europeans who visited the East mentioned holy places, churches, places of worship¹, and the miracles of saints, including Christ and his mother, as well as their visits to those places and their descriptions of them according to the Bible. There are many examples of this, along with mention of the myths related to it.

It is also necessary to take into account the different nationalities of the travelers and their class and cultural level, and to realize the benefit of their different views of the incident or event. We find travelers from Russia, Spain, Germany, France, Italy, and England. We also find among them those who were leaders in their tribes, those from the middle class in their societies, and those who were slaves serving their masters on that journey. It is impossible for a master's perspective to be the same as a slave's. Therefore, it is natural that their interests would differ according to the environment in which they were raised and their political, economic, and religious circumstances. It is also essential to consider the era to which the traveler belonged when examining their journey. A traveler who lived during the Crusades will likely write with biased references against everything non-Christian, a natural consequence of the Crusader era. Then came the travelers of the 14th and 15th centuries to the East under Mamluk rule. These travelers were distinguished by their praise

¹ Qabbani, Rana (1988). *Europe's Myths about the Orient: Fabricate and Conquer*, translated by Sabah Qabbani, Damascus: Dar Talas for Studies, Translation and Publishing, p. 36.



of the Mamluks and their admiration for the organization of the state and the strength of their rule, resulting in a large and continuous flow of accounts. Then came the 16th century and beyond, and we find in their writings praise and criticism of the Ottomans. This is understandable given that they controlled the Holy Land. There are many similar examples. Therefore, caution and discernment are necessary when dealing with and examining these texts, and to treat them according to the data of contemporary texts, and not to take them as givens except when comparing them with others¹.

Travel literature is a literary genre in which the writer describes their experiences and observations during their travels to different places. This genre is a unique blend of storytelling, geographical, historical, and cultural description, making it a rich source of information and entertainment for readers.

Characteristics of travel literature include: storytelling, where the writer recounts their personal experiences during the journey, making the reader feel as if they are accompanying them on their adventures; geographical description, where the writer provides a detailed account of the places visited, including landscapes, monuments, cities, and villages; historical and cultural description, where the writer sheds light on the history and culture of the people they encounter, including their customs, traditions, beliefs, and arts; personal reflections, where the writer expresses their feelings, thoughts, and reflections on what they see and experience during the journey; and documentation, as travel literature is a valuable source of historical and geographical information, offering vivid descriptions of places and events that may not be documented in other sources. Its importance lies in documenting history and geography, as travel literature is a valuable source of historical and geographical information, providing a vivid description of places and events that may not be documented in other sources, and promoting cultural understanding, as travel literature helps to promote cultural understanding between peoples, as it presents a realistic picture of the lives, customs and traditions of different peoples.

Second: Types and Categories of Travel Literature According to Purpose and Motives

Among the types of travel literature are exploratory journeys to unknown or remote areas;

¹ Qabbani, Rana (1988). Europe's Myths about the Orient: Fabricate and Conquer, p. 19.



religious journeys, which describe pilgrimages to Mecca and Medina and visits to holy sites; scientific journeys, which describe the travels of scholars and researchers to different regions to gather information and conduct studies; and literary journeys, which describe the travels of writers and literary figures to different places to find inspiration for their work. Therefore, travel literature is a window onto different worlds, giving us the opportunity to explore diverse cultures and experiences. Thus, it can be described¹ as realistic travel literature, which is the journey undertaken by a traveler to a country around the world, where they record and describe the customs, behaviors, and morals they observed, and provide an accurate account of the natural landscapes they saw. This is in addition to narrating the stages of the journey or combining all of these elements simultaneously.

Travel literature is distinguished from other prose genres by several characteristics, most notably realism and subjectivity. The traveler is a real person who has lived in reality, traveled to real places, and interacted with real people. He is the one who writes his travelogue, so his personality is prominent and clear in his writing. The traveler always uses the first-person pronoun, whether singular or plural, when narrating and describing his journeys; he is the primary narrator of his travels. Travel literature also offers a wealth of knowledge, including religious, historical, geographical, and diverse scientific knowledge, as well as genealogical information. It incorporates various forms of discourse, such as poetry, letters, anecdotes, narratives, descriptions, dialogues, and stories. The traveler begins by recounting the events of his journey from the starting point, continuing until he reaches his destination, settling in one place, then leaving again, and so on.

The traveler begins by narrating the events of his journey from the starting point, following them until he reaches his destination. He settles in a place, then leaves, then returns to the starting point, and so forth. Travel literature comprises a range of prose styles and a wealth of diverse knowledge. The components of travel literature encompass various fields of knowledge, as the traveler provides the reader with useful information of all kinds. Narration is the primary means of conveying the traveler's journey to the reader, beginning with the journey's start and ending with its conclusion. Description is a crucial element of the travelogue; the traveler must possess keen observation skills to describe the people they

¹ Roubach, Jamila. Travel Literature in the Maghreb, PhD Thesis, Faculty of Arts and Languages - Mohamed Khider University of Biskra, 2015, p. 17.



meet, the places they visit, and the names of the things they see and learn about. Travel literature possesses two great values: literary and scientific¹, travels in themselves are journeys, and a traveler does not necessarily have to be a writer to convey his journey in a literary style, but the methods used in narrating journeys elevate the journeys to be a literary art or a genre of prose, due to the description, dialogue, storytelling in an exciting style, and other elements that it uses.

The scholarly value of travel literature² lies in its rich content of historical, religious, geographical, and other knowledge, including genealogy, tribal history, and poetry, Travelers record their experiences through direct observation and interaction with people, writing about tribal customs and traditions, kingdoms and cities, describing geographical features, mentioning rulers and their retinues, the names of scholars of the period they visited, the names of mosques, and types of food. Travel literature is a text in which the writer depicts, entirely or partially, the events and experiences encountered during a real journey to a particular country or society. Information and facts are drawn from firsthand observation and direct experience, not from imagination or what one reads or hears. In short, travel literature is defined as "literary writing about a real journey."

Travel literature flourished primarily at the hands of geographers and explorers who were keen to record everything they saw or heard, even if it seemed implausible or bordered on the fantastical. Travelogues are considered valuable sources for history, archaeology, and society, adding a wealth of information and events, and offering descriptions of places and people. They provide personal and realistic impressions of the social and cultural aspects of the regions they cover, constituting rich material for geographers, historians, sociologists, economists, literary scholars, and others. Travelogues are a fertile source for geographers, historians, and sociologists, offering lessons, wisdom, and valuable insights for those who follow them, and leaving a positive impact on the traveler. Travel flourished significantly after the Islamic conquests. Before that, early travelers rarely recorded their journeys in writings.

These travels are mentioned in history books or geographical dictionaries, with the traveler

¹ Rahmani, Faiza Iman (2016). Travel Literature in Modern Algerian Literature: Its Language and Characteristics, Tlemcen - Algeria: University of Abou Bekr Belkaid Tlemcen, p. 2.

² Wahba and Al-Muhandis, Magdi and Kamel (1984). Dictionary of Arabic Terms in Language and Literature (2nd ed.), Beirut: Library of Lebanon Publishers, p. 17.



conveying to the reader descriptions, methods, stories, and observations of everything they saw and witnessed. The Arab-Islamic heritage is replete with accounts of journeys and travelers, and their writings about their observations and descriptions, representing excellent examples of travel literature. This has made travel a part of the heritage, connecting it to descriptive geography and Islamic history. Travelers recorded their feelings in a beautiful and moving style, writing a kind of "traveling book," whose pages contain images of the different lands they pass through, descriptions of places, mosques, libraries, and the people they meet, along with information they gather, and more¹.

On an artistic level, travel literature represents a literary genre that combines some characteristics of the short story, the novel, and autobiography, and utilizes important artistic tools such as painting and storytelling, thus making it an artistic field². This allows it to convey its diverse and varied intellectual and artistic messages. Following the Islamic conquests, new fields of knowledge were opened, leading to intellectual and cultural advancement and providing the human mind with ample opportunity for innovation and creativity. As a result, travel began, and many were eager to journey, whether for pilgrimage, seeking knowledge, trade, or political purposes.

The journey's aspects and purposes multiplied over time, and a group of travelers were keen to record their observations and mention the diverse situations and suffering they encountered while they were touring the country.

They recorded historical, geographical, social, and cultural knowledge of great value, and spent their money and their lives, and made tremendous efforts to cross mountains, traverse deserts, cross seas, and walk on rough paths. They spent their lives traveling and returned to their countries, diligently recording what they had obtained and collected, leaving us a wonderful heritage³.

Third: The Historical Classification of Travelogues in the Arab-Islamic Heritage (According to Eras)

¹ Al-Haqil, Abdullah bin Hamad (2007). Images from travel literature to the Two Holy Mosques, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Al-Tawbah Library, pp. 16-17.

² Al-Hamadi, Abdullah bin Ahmed bin Hamed. Travel Literature in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Master's Thesis, College of Arabic Language, Umm Al-Qura University, 1997, p. 9.

³ Qandil, Fouad (2010). Travel Literature in the Arab Heritage, Cairo: Dar Al Arabiya Library for Books, pp. 29-36.



The Arabs have been familiar with travel literature since ancient times, and their interest in it was great throughout the ages. Perhaps one of the earliest examples of this is the journey of Sallam al-Tarjuman to the fortresses of the Caucasus Mountains in 227 AH (841 AD). The geographer Ibn Khurdadhbih (205-280 AH / 820-893 AD)¹ narrated the details of this journey, which was commissioned by the Abbasid Caliph al-Wathiq to search for the wall of Gog and Magog. Another example is the sea voyage of al-Sirafi (284-368 AH / 897-978 AD)² to the Indian Ocean in the third century AH.

Then come the travels of Al-Mas'udi, author of "Meadows of Gold," a historian, geographer, and astronomer, considered one of the most important travelers. He was born and educated in Baghdad and traveled extensively, visiting Persia, India, Ceylon, the Caspian Sea region, Sudan, southern Arabia, the Levant, and the Byzantine Empire. He eventually reached Egypt³ and died in Fustat⁴. He provided valuable information about the peoples of the regions he visited, describing their ethnicities, physical characteristics, customs, traditions, crafts, food, clothing, and shelter.

The third century AH (9th century AD): Most of the travelers and geographers in the first half of this century were linguists, the most prominent of whom was the well-known linguist and historian Hisham al-Kalbi (c. 110-204 AH (728-819 AD) who authored the Great Book of Regions and Countries, the Small Book of Countries, and Genealogies of Countries⁵. Al-Asma'i (122-216 AH/740-831 AD)¹ authored the Book of Weather and a

¹ Al-Jaburi, Kamil Salman (2003). Dictionary of Writers from the Pre-Islamic Era until 2002 AD. Beirut: Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyah, 4, p. 185.

Bosworth, C. Edmund (1997). "Ebn Kordābeh". In Yarshater, Ehsan (ed.). Encyclopædia Iranica. Vol. VIII/1: Ebn 'Ayyās—Economy V. London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul. pp. 37–38.

² Margoliouth, David Samuel (1905). The Discussion between Abu Bishr Matta and Abu Sa'id al-Sirafi on the Merits of Logic and Grammar, The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, janvier, pp. 79-129.

³ Al-Mas'udi, Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn al-Husayn ibn Ali al-Mas'udi 283-346 AH/896-957 AD (2011). Muruj al-Dhahab wa Ma'adin al-Jawhar, Beirut: Al-Maktabah al-'Asriyyah.

⁴ Mas'ūdī; Paul Lunde; Caroline Stone, (1989). The meadows of gold, London; New York: Kegan Paul International; New York, NY, USA: Distributed by Routledge, Chapman and Hall.

⁵ Al-Dhahabi, Shams al-Din (1985), Siyar A'lam al-Nubala', edited by Shu'ayb al-Arna'ut, Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risalah, vol. 10, p. 101. Al-Zarkali, Khayr al-Din (2002). Al-A'lam: A biographical dictionary of the most famous men and women from the Arabs, Arabized peoples, and Orientalists, Beirut: Dar al-'Ilm lil-Malayin, vol. 8, pp. 87-88.



treatise on the description of the earth, sky, and plants.

Al-Jahiz (163-255 AH/780-869 AD)² authored the Book of Cities and Wonders of Countries, and Insight and Trade. Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Tayyib al-Sarakhsi (died 286 AH/899 AD) authored a treatise on seas, waters, and mountains³, Muhammad ibn Musa al-Munajjim al-Khwarizmi⁴.

The 4th century AH (10th century AD): Politically, this period is considered the final decline of the Islamic Caliphate, but it is also a golden age of Arab civilization. Among the most important travelers of this century were al-Mas'udi (d. 346 AH/957 AD)⁵, author of *Muruj al-Dhahab wa Ma'adin al-Jawhar* (Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems); Ibn Fadlan (d. 310 AH/922 AD), author of the travelogue to the lands of the Turks, Khazars, Rus, and Slavs, known as "Risalat Ibn Fadlan" (The Epistle of Ibn Fadlan)⁶; Yaqut al-

¹ Ibn Kathir, Abu al-Fida Ismail ibn Umar al-Dimashqi. *Tabaqat al-Fuqaha al-Shafi'iyyin wa-Dhayl al-Tabaqat li-Ibn Qadi Shahba*, 1, p. 219. Al-Dhahabi, Shams al-Din (2006). *Tarikh al-Islam wa-Wafayat al-Mashahir wa-al-A'lam*, ed. Saad Yusuf Mahmud et al., Cairo: Al-Maktabah al-Tawfiqiyyah, p. 597.

² Nuwayhid, Adel (1988), *A Dictionary of Quranic Commentators: From the Early Islamic Period to the Present Day*, Beirut: Nuwayhid Cultural Foundation for Authorship, Translation and Publishing, 1, p. 403. Al-Baghdadi, Abu Bakr Ahmad ibn Ali ibn Thabit al-Khatib 392-463 AH/1001-1070 CE (2002). *The History of the City of Peace and the Accounts of its Narrators and Mention of its Scholars from Outside its Inhabitants and Visitors*, edited by: Bashar Awad Maarouf, Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 12, p. 212.

³ Al-Jaburi, Kamil Salman (2003). *Dictionary of Writers from the Pre-Islamic Era until 2002 AD*, Beirut: Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyah, p. 281.

Frye, R.N., ed. (1975). *The Cambridge history of Iran* (Repr. ed.). London: Cambridge U.P. p. 415.

⁴ Al-Hamawi, Yaqut (1995). *Dictionary of Countries*, Beirut: Dar Sader, 2, p. 61.

Toomer, Gerald J. (1970–1980). "al-Khwārizmī, Abu Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Mūsā", In Gillispie, Charles Coulston (ed.). *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, Vol. VII, Scribner. pp. 358–365. Vernet, Juan (1960–2005). "Al-Khwārizmī". In Gibb, H. A. R.; Kramers, J. H.; Lévi-Provençal, E.; Schacht, J. (eds.). *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Vol. IV, Leiden: Brill, pp. 1070–1071.

⁵ John L. Esposito (ed.), (2004). *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, Oxford University Press, p. 195. Shboul, Ahmad A. M. (1979). *Al-Mas'udi and His World*, London: Ithaca Press, pp. 3–4.

⁶ Gabriel, Judith (November–December 1999). "Among the Norse Tribes: The Remarkable Account of Ibn Fadlan". *Saudi Aramco World*. Vol. 50, no. 6. Houston: Aramco Services Company. pp. 36–42. Knight, Judson (2001). "Ibn Fadlan: An Arab Among the Vikings of Russia". In Schlager, Neil; Lauer, Josh (eds.). *Science and Its Times*. Vol. 700 to 1449. Detroit: Gale, pp. 32–34. Frye, Richard N. (2005). *Ibn Fadlan's Journey to Russia: A Tenth-Century Traveler from Baghdad to the Volga River*, Markus Wiener Publishers, p. 8.



Hamawi; al-Istakhri (d. 346 AH/957 AD)¹, author of *Kitab al-Masalik wa al-Mamalik* (Book of Routes and Kingdoms); Qudama ibn Ja'far (275-337 AH/948-888 AD)²; Ibn Hawqal (d. after 367 AH/977 AD)³; and al-Muqaddasi⁴ (336-380 AH/947-990 AD), whose whose most famous work is *Ahsan al-Taqaṣim fi Ma'rifat al-Aqalim* (The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions).

The book is one of the most famous geographical encyclopedias that appeared in the fourth century AH (10 AD). Its author devoted himself to mentioning the Islamic regions and what they contain of seas, lakes and rivers, and described their famous cities and their mentioned towns, their inhabited houses, their used roads, the elements of medicines and tools, the mines of transport and trade, the differences of the people of the countries in their speech, voices, tongues and colors, their doctrines, their measures and weights, their money and exchanges, the description of their food, drink, food and fruits and water, knowledge of their glories and defects, what is carried from them and to them, mentioning places of danger, the number of houses, mentioning sands, hills, plains and mountains, mines of abundance and fertility, places of scarcity and drought, mentioning sights, observatories and characteristics, kingdoms, borders and sources, and mentioning crafts and sciences.

The fifth century AH (11th century AD): Among the most important travelers in this

¹ Bosworth, Clifford Edmund (1989). "al-Masālik wa'l-Mamālik". *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, Volume 6. Leiden: E. J. Brill. pp. 639. Van Donzel, E.J., ed. (1994). *Islamic Desk Reference* (compiled from the *Encyclopedia of Islam*). Brill. p. 177. Bolshakov, O. G. (1998). "EṢṬAKRĪ, ABŪ ESHĀQ EBRĀHĪM". *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. VIII, Fasc. 6. pp. 646–647.

² Al-Jaburi, Kamil Salman. *Dictionary of Writers from the Pre-Islamic Era until 2002 AD*, 4, p. 487.

Nadim (al-), Ishaq ibn (1970). Dodge, Bayard (ed.). *The Fihrist of al-Nadim A Tenth Century Survey of Muslim Culture*. Vol. 1. New York & London: Columbia University Press, pp. 285.

³ Al-Zarkali, Khair al-Din. *Al-A'lam*, vol. 6, p. 111. Ibn Hawqal (1983). *Surat al-Ard* (The Image of the Earth). Beirut: Dar Sader, pp. 1-4. Khasbak, Shaker (1979). *Kitabat Mudhi'a fi al-Turath al-Jughrafi al-'Arabi* (Illuminating Writings in Arab Geographical Heritage). Baghdad: Dar al-Salam Press. p. 56.

⁴ Al-Maqdisi, Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Maqdisi al-Bashari (1906). *The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions*, Beirut: Dar Sader.

Al-Maqdisi (1906). M. J. Goeje (ed.). *The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions* (Arabic) (2 ed.). Brill. p. 440. Rahman, Mushtaqur (2008). "Al-Muqaddasi". *Encyclopaedia of the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine in Non-Western Cultures*. p. 145.



century were Ibn Butlan (d. 458 AH/1066 AD)¹, Al-Biruni (362-440 AH/973-1047 AD)², Ahmad ibn Umar al-Udhri (393-478 AH/1003-1085 AD)³, whose works include: The Signs of Prophethood, and The Order of Coral in the Routes and Kingdoms, and Abu Ubaid Abdullah al-Bakri (405-487 AH/1014-1094 AD)⁴.

Al-Biruni's (d. 440 AH/1048 AD) travelogue⁵, entitled "Investigating what is Acceptable or Unacceptable in India," is the most important and comprehensive book we have on Hindu beliefs. He spent forty years in India studying their laws and customs. It stands as a unique model, distinct from all previous accounts, and is considered an important historical document that transcends geographical and historical studies to examine the cultures of ancient Indian societies, represented by their languages, beliefs, and customs. He pays particular attention to Sanskrit, the ancient language of India, analyzing it and comparing it to Arabic in a novel way. His mastery of Sanskrit, his broad culture, his inclination towards investigation and precision, and his long stay in India -nearly forty years- all contributed to this achievement. Al-Biruni had entered India in the company of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni during the conquest of India, and then embarked on a journey of contemplation and exploration⁶.

The sixth century AH (12th century AD): It was distinguished by the number of travelers, their strength, the importance of the traces they left behind, and the methods they followed

¹ Al-Zarkali, Khair Al-Din. Al-A'lam, 7, p. 191.

² Al-Zarkali, Khair Al-Din. Al-A'lam, 5, p. 314.

Kennedy, Edward Stewart (1975). "The Exact Sciences". In Frye, R. N.; Fisher, William Bayne (eds.). The Cambridge History of Iran. Vol. 4. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 394. Ataman, Kemal (2008). Understanding Other Religions: Al-Biruni's and Gadamer's "Fusion of Horizons". Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change. Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, p. 58.

³ Stalls, Clay (1995). Possessing the Land: Aragon's Expansion in Islam's Ebro Frontier Under Alfonso the Battler, Brill, 10, pp. 1104-1134.

⁴ Al-Zarkali, Khair Al-Din. Al-A'lam, 4, p. 98.

Lévi-Provençal, E. (1960), "Abū 'Ubayd al-Bakrī", Encyclopaedia of Islam, Vol. 1, Leiden: Brill, pp. 155–157.

⁵ Al-Biruni, Abu Rayhan (1958). Investigating what India has to say that is acceptable to reason or reprehensible. Hyderabad - Deccan: Osmania Encyclopedia.

⁶ Ataman, Kemal (April 2005). "Re-reading al-birūnī's India : a case for intercultural understanding". Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations. 16 (2): pp. 141–154. Starr, S. Frederick (2023). The Genius of their Age: Ibn Sina, Biruni, and the Lost Enlightenment, Oxford University Press, pp. 104-105.



in collecting material and recording observations. Among these were Abu Hamid al-Gharnati al-Andalusi (473-565 AH/1080-1170 AD), who had two books¹, *Tuhfat al-Albab* and *Nukhbat al-I'jab*, and al-Maghrib on some of the wonders of Morocco, al-Sharif al-Idrisi, *Nuzhat al-Mushtaq fi Ikhtiraq al-Afaq* (493-560 AH/1100-1165 AD)², Ibn Jubayr (540-614 AH/1145-1217 AD)³, and al-Harawi (542-611 AH/1147-1215 AD), who had *al-Isharat fi Ma'rifat al-Ziyarat*.

This century and the one that followed it are among the most productive centuries for travel literature. Here, among the many examples, we find two: the journey of Ibn Jubayr al-Andalusi⁴, which is actually three journeys. The first was to Mecca for the Hajj, the second was to the East and lasted two years, 585-587 AH (1189-1191 AD), and the third was also to the East. Ibn Jubayr undertook this journey when he was, at that time, an old man, and he did not return to his country, Andalusia, after which he stayed for about ten years moving between Mecca, Jerusalem, and Cairo, working in teaching until his death in Alexandria. He recorded for us the resistance of the Muslims to the Crusader invasion led by Nur al-Din and Saladin. He also described aspects of life in Sicily and the Norman court, in literary language and interesting imagery. This is in addition to his description of aspects of luxury and prosperous life in Mecca. His journey served as a comprehensive record of all that he saw, a clear page of some of the history of the Islamic and Christian countries he passed through, a dictionary of the terminology of his era in shipbuilding and maritime navigation, and a list of the names of prominent Muslim scholars and their kings in the late sixth century AH (11th century AD)⁵.

Alongside Al-Idrisi's in *Nuzhat al-Mushtaq fi Ikhtiraq al-Afaq* (The Delight of the One

¹ Norris, H. T. (1994). "From Asia to Africa: The '*Tuhfat al-Albāb*' by Abū Ḥāmid al-Gharnāṭī (473/1080-565/1169) as a Source for the Chronology and Content of the '*Sīrat 'Antar B. Shaddād*'". *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*. 57 (1): pp. 174–183

² Al-Zarkali, Khair Al-Din. *Al-A'lam*, 7, p. 24.

Ahmad, S. Maqbul, ed. (1960). *India and the neighbouring territories in the "Kitab nuzhat al-mushtaq fi'ikhtiraq al-'afaq" of al-Sharif al-Idrisi*. Translated by Ahmad. Leiden: Brill, p. 158.

³ Ibn Jubayr, Abu al-Husayn Muhammad ibn Jubayr al-Kinani al-Andalusi al-Balansi al-Shatibi. *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, 1st ed., edited by: Husayn Nassar, 1955, Cairo: Dar Misr for Printing.

⁴ Ibn Jubayr, Abu al-Husayn Muhammad ibn Jubayr al-Kinani al-Andalusi al-Balansi al-Shatibi (540-614 AH/1145-1217 AD). *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, 1st ed., edited by: Husayn Nassar, 1955, Cairo: Dar Misr for Printing.

⁵ Al-Zarkali, Khair Al-Din. *Al-A'lam*, 5, p. 319.



Who Yearns to Traverse the Horizons), a geographical atlas commissioned by the Norman King Roger II in 1138 CE and completed by the Arab geographer Muhammad al-Idrisi in 1154 CE, the atlas includes 70 maps of the known world with descriptions and annotations for each location identified by al-Idrisi.

This collection of maps had a profound and lasting influence for centuries¹. Many contemporary scholars have hailed it as the greatest geographical work of its time. Moreover, the atlas influenced later geographical works with its techniques, inspiring maps of similar accuracy².

This is in addition to the journey of the historian and traveler Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadi (557-629 AH/1162-1232 AD)³. Sheikh Muwaffaq al-Din wrote a book about this journey, recounting things he witnessed or heard from those who had seen them—things that would astound the mind regarding the sights and events witnessed in Egypt. His interest in this matter was evident during the days he spent in Egypt, where he saw its antiquities and art⁴, and he authored his famous book on the subject.

This book reveals al-Baghdadi's extensive knowledge and diverse interests, most notably his interest in antiquities, his passion for them, his zeal for their preservation and protection, as they are the best evidence of the civilization of the ancients and their profound sophistication and refinement.

The seventh century AH (13th century AD): Among the great travelers were Yaqut al-Hamawi, who authored two books, namely Mu'jam al-Buldan (Dictionary of Countries) and Mu'jam al-Udaba' (Dictionary of Writers) (574-626 AH/1176-1229 AD)⁵, Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadi, who authored the book *Al-Ifada wal-I'tibar fi al-Umur al-Mushahada*

¹ Al-Idrisi, Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Abdullah ibn Idris al-Hasani al-Talibi, known as al-Sharif al-Idrisi, d. 560 AH/1145 CE (1989). *Nuzhat al-Mushtaq fi Ikhtiraq al-Afaq*, Beirut: Alam al-Kutub.

² Hasan, Muhammad 'Abd al-Ghanī (1972). *al-Sharīf al-Īdrīsī*. Cairo.

³ Al-Baghdadi, Muwaffaq al-Din Abd al-Latif ibn Yusuf ibn Muhammad ibn Ali al-Baghdadi (1869 CE). *Al-Ifada wal-I'tibar fi al-Umur al-Mushahada wal-Hawadith al-Mu'ayana bi-Ard Misr* (The Benefit and Consideration of Matters Observed and Events Witnessed in the Land of Egypt), Cairo: Wadi al-Nil Press.

⁴ Leaman, Oliver (2015). *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Islamic Philosophy*. Bloomsbury Academic, p. 44.

⁵ Al-Zarkali, Khair Al-Din. *Al-A'lam*, 8, p. 131.

Chisholm, Hugh, ed. (1911). "Yāqūt". *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Vol. 28 (11th ed.). Cambridge University Press. p. 904. Dodge, Bayard, ed. (1970). *The Fihrist of al-Nadim*. Vol. 2. New York & London: Columbia University Press. p. 902.



wal-Hawadith al-Mu'ayana bi-Ard Misr (557-629 AH/1162-1232 AD)¹, Yusuf ibn Ya'qub al-Dimashqi, famously known as Ibn al-Mujawir (601-690 AH/1205-1291 AD)², who authored Tarikh al-Mustabsiri, Zakariya al-Qazwini (605-682 AH/1208-1283 AD)³, who authored the book Aja'ib al-Makhluqat wa-Ghara'ib al-Mawjudat, wa-Athar al-Bilad wa-Akhbar al-'Ibad, and Muhammad al-'Abdari (d. c. 700 AH/1300 AD)⁴, who left us the Moroccan Journey.

The eighth century AH (14th century AD): Among the great travelers were Shams al-Din al-Dimashqi (654-727 AH/1256-1327 AD)⁵, who authored the book Nukhbat al-Dahr fi Aja'ib al-Barr wa al-Bahr, as well as Ibn Rashid al-Fihri (657-721 AH/1259-1321 AD)⁶, Ibn Fadl Allah al-Umari (700-750 AH/1301-1349 AD), Ibn Battuta (703-779 AH/1304-1377 AD)⁷, and many others.

Ibn Battuta represents the second model of travel literature in the 8th century AH (14th century AD). He is considered the greatest of Muslim travelers, and his journey began in 725 AH (1325 AD) from Tangier, Morocco, to Mecca. He spent approximately twenty-nine years traveling from country to country, finally returning to dictate his observations and memories to a writer named Muhammad ibn Juzayy al-Kalbi, commissioned by the Sultan of Morocco. Ibn Battuta titled his travelogue "A Gift to Those Who Contemplate the

¹ Al-Zarkali, Khair Al-Din. Al-A'lam, 4, pp. 61-419.

Leaman, Oliver (2015). The Biographical Encyclopedia of Islamic Philosophy. Bloomsbury Academic, p. 44.

² Al-Zarkali, Khair Al-Din. Al-A'lam, 8, p. 258. Al-Jaburi, Kamil Salman. Mu'jam Al-Udaba' min Al-'Asr Al-Jahili hatta Sanat 2002 AD, 7, p. 47.

³ Kahala, Omar bin Rida (1993). Dictionary of Authors, Beirut: Al-Risalah Foundation, 4, p. 183. Al-Qazwini, Zakariya bin Muhammad bin Mahmoud (1985). The Beneficial of Sciences and the Dispeller of Worries, edited and introduced by Muhammad Abdul Qadir Atta, Beirut - Lebanon: Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyah, p. 7.

⁴ Al-Zarkali, Khair Al-Din. Al-A'lam, 7, p. 32.

⁵ le Strange, Guy (1890). Palestine Under the Moslems: A Description of Syria and the Holy Land from A.D. A.D. 650 to 1500. Committee of the Palestine Exploration Fund., Londonp. 10.

⁶ Nuwayhid, Adel (1988), Dictionary of Commentators: From the Dawn of Islam to the Present Day, Beirut: Nuwayhid Cultural Foundation for Authorship, Translation and Publishing, 2, p. 597. Al-Zarkali, Khair Al-Din. Al-A'lam, 6, p. 314.

⁷ Al-Zarkali, Khair Al-Din. Al-A'lam, 6, p. 235. Ibn Battuta, Muhammad ibn Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Al-Lawati Al-Tanji, 1325 CE (2002). The Travels of Ibn Battuta, entitled Tuhfat Al-Nuzzar fi Ghara'ib Al-Amsar wa 'Aja'ib Al-Asfar, Cairo: Dar Al-Sharq Al-Arabi.



Wonders of Cities and the Marvels of Travel."

Ibn Battuta¹ recounted his experiences in African countries, being the first to explore them. He also depicted many customs in Indian societies three centuries after the Islamic conquest. The journey, in its entirety, is a comprehensive and detailed portrait of the Islamic world during the 8th century AH, highlighting the bright aspects of Islamic civilization and the brotherhood among its peoples, aspects not found in traditional historical sources.

In travel literature, there is the book "Khatrat al-Tayf fi Rihlat al-Shita' wa al-Sayf" (d. 776 AH/1374 AD)² by the renowned Granadan writer, Lisan al-Din Ibn al-Khatib, as well as "Nafadat al-Jirab fi 'Ilalat al-Ightirab," in which he describes his observations in the Maghreb during his exile there. This work is in three parts.

In addition, there is Ibn Khaldun's "Al-Ta'rif bi Ibn Khaldun wa Rihlatuhu Gharban wa Sharqan" (Introduction to Ibn Khaldun and His Journey West and East), a blend of autobiography and travel writing, written in a fluid style. It provides a detailed account of his travels to Andalusia, where he stayed as a guest of the Nasrid king of Granada, and to Seville, where the king sent him on an embassy to its Christian ruler. He then resided in Egypt for nearly a quarter of a century, holding various positions in teaching and the judiciary.

The 9th/11th century AH (15th-17th centuries AD): Among the most important travelers of this century was Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi (1050-1143 AH/1641-1731 AD), who documented a journey entitled "The Hijaz Journey." Travel decreased during this period due to political, social, and economic conditions³.

In the 11th century AH (17th century AD), the journey of Al-Shihab to meet his loved ones emerged, attributed to the Morisco Afuqay, who fled Spain to escape the Inquisition and

¹ Al-Jaburi, Kamil Salman. Dictionary of Writers from the Pre-Islamic Era until 2002 AD, 5, p. 410.

Elad, Amikam (1987). "The description of the travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa in Palestine: is it original?", Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, 119, pp. 256-272. Dunn, Ross E. (2005). The Adventures of Ibn Battuta, U.S.A.: University of California Press.

² Ibn al-Khatib, Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Abdullah ibn Saeed al-Salmāni al-Lushi al-Asl al-Gharnati al-Andalusi, famously known as Lisan al-Din (2003). Khatrat al-Tayf fi Rihlat al-Shita' wa al-Sayf, edited by Ahmad Mukhtar al-Abbadi, Cairo: The Arab Foundation for Studies and Publishing.

³ Al-A'lam: A biographical dictionary of the most famous men and women among the Arabs, Arabists, and Orientalists, Lebanon, Egypt, 4, p. 32. Nuwayhid, Adel. Mu'jam al-Mufasssir, 1, p. 291.



settled in Morocco. There, Sultan Zaydan al-Nasir ibn Ahmad appointed him as his ambassador to Europe, and he compiled all these adventures in his book.

The journey of Al-Shihab to meet the loved ones is known as the journey of Afuqay Al-Andalusi, and he summarized it in another book entitled *Nasir Al-Din 'ala Al-Qawm Al-Kafirin*. It is a book in the literature of travel by the Morisco traveler¹ Ahmad bin Qasim Al-Hajari, known as Afuqay and Al-Shihab Al-Hajari. The book revolves around his escape with his religion and body from the pursuit of the Inquisition courts in 1597 AD from the outskirts of Granada, and his going to the port of Santamaria in Portugal, and his disguise as a Christian from Seville, and his boarding of a Portuguese ship claiming that he was heading to the city of Mazagan, which was under Portuguese occupation, so that he and a group with him could escape to the lands of the Muslims and land in the port of Azemmour in Morocco.

The journey presented the developments that led the Moriscos to confront the Castilian authorities in resistance to the forced conversion campaign, and how this culminated in their great revolt in Granada. It also detailed the stratagems they employed to evade the Inquisition, which targeted them and inflicted upon them the most severe forms of torture. This was followed by Afuqay's account of The Hague (1611-1613 AD), which describes the traveler's visit to the Netherlands. He describes The Hague and Amsterdam, and the debates he engaged in with the French and Dutch to present his Morisco cause².

This is considered a rare historical document and one of the most important texts in Arabic that addressed the experience of the Arab Moriscos who had converted to Christianity. Although the manuscript is lost, only fragments of it have survived, found in a manuscript titled "*Zahrat al-Bustan fi Nasab Akhwal Sayyidina Mawlay Zaydan*" (The Flower of the Garden on the Lineage of the Maternal Uncles of Our Master, Mawlay Zaydan).

Conclusions

- The study concluded that Islamic travel literature was not merely a detached geographical record, but rather evolved over successive eras into a comprehensive

¹ Afuqay al-Andalusi, Ahmad ibn Qasim al-Hajari (2004). *Travel Literature, Abridged Journey of al-Shihab to Meet the Beloved*, Cairo: The Arab Foundation for Studies and Publishing, First Edition.

² Hamilton, Alastair (1994). *An Egyptian Traveller in the Republic of Letters: Josephus Barbatus or Abudacnus the Copt* Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, 57. pp. 123-150.



literary and prose genre, blending the traveler's subjectivity and intellectual perspective with firsthand observations. This historical development contributed to enriching human memory with a unique and indispensable documentary record for understanding the history of civilization and the interaction of cultures.

- **Source of Social History:** Travelogues are priceless historical documents, successfully shedding light on the details of daily life and marginalized social classes overlooked by official historical records.
- **Objectivity of Firsthand Observation:** The material recorded in travel literature enjoys a high degree of credibility due to its reliance on direct observation and eyewitness accounts by the travelers.
- **Diverse Motives and Perspectives:** The motives for travel throughout the ages have varied, ranging from religious (pilgrimage and visitation) to scientific and exploratory, and political, leading to a diversity of knowledge produced and a broadening of its scope.
- **The Importance of Systematic Textual Criticism:** The research emphasized the necessity of a careful and systematic approach to travelogues, taking into account the cultural, religious, and social background of the traveler, as well as the circumstances of their era, when analyzing historical information and events.
- The first stage in travel literature represents its roots and foundational phase (the third century AH). This stage was characterized by the emergence of the connection between travel and the pursuit of linguistic, religious, and geographical knowledge. It was also marked by the prevalence of early exploratory journeys, linguistic expeditions to collect scattered elements of the language from the desert, and the documentation of early routes and kingdoms. Prominent examples include commercial and maritime exploration journeys (such as those of al-Sirafi and Sallam al-Tarjuman), alongside the early contributions of al-Jahiz and al-Mas'udi.
- The second phase, the era of flourishing and geographical documentation (4th and 5th centuries AH), witnessed advanced literary and scientific techniques in travel writing, coinciding with the expansion of the Islamic state. This period was characterized by the emergence of travelogues and accounts of kingdoms, and by the precise ethnographic and cultural descriptions of peoples and beliefs. Prominent examples include Ibn Fadlan's journey, which masterfully documented the lives of the peoples of the North and the Balkans, the contributions of al-Muqaddasi, and al-Biruni's investigative



journey to India, which combined philosophical and field analysis.

- The third stage, the era of artistic maturity and encyclopedic documentation (6th to 8th centuries AH), represents the artistic and historical zenith of Arabic travel literature. It was characterized by the interweaving of geographical discourse with narrative and personal accounts, the emergence of the literature of wonders, and the astonishingly precise descriptions of monuments, literature, and societies. Prominent examples include Al-Idrisi's journey, which combined mapmaking with regional descriptions; Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadi's meticulously descriptive account of Egypt's antiquities; and the golden age of the comprehensive travelogue, exemplified by Ibn Battuta's "A Gift to Those Who Contemplate the Wonders of Cities and the Marvels of Travel," which covered the entire known world at the time.
- The fourth stage, the later periods and the embassies of transformation (11th century AH and beyond), saw travels characterized by diplomatic missions, journeys of escape and persecution (such as the literature of the Moriscos), and the documentation of cultural shock and encounters with the other. Notable examples include Afuqay al-Andalusi's "The Meteor to Meet the Beloved," and the embassies of Granada and Morocco to the other side of the Mediterranean.