



The Travels  
of  
Ibn Battuta

A verse tale by C. J. Holcombe

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Colin John Holcombe

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## PREFACE

Ibn Battuta — Shams ad-Din Abu `Abdullah Muhammad ibn `Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Ibn Battuta al-Lawati al-Tanji, to give him his full name and titles — was the greatest of medieval travellers. He left his native Morocco in 1325, journeyed to Mecca via Tunis and Cairo, toured Iraq and Persia, returned to Mecca, travelled down the east coast of Africa as far as Tanzania, and returned to Mecca by the overland route across Arabia. Thence he went to India via Asia Minor, the Black Sea, Constantinople, and the Asian steppes of Tansoxania, Khurasan and Afghanistan. In India he spent eight years as a qadi or judge to the Delhi Sultan, Muhammad Tughlaq, and was entrusted to lead a diplomatic mission to the Mongol emperor of China.

The mission ended in shipwreck off the west coast of India, and the would-be ambassador spent the next two years travelling round south-west India, the Maldiva Islands and Ceylon. Ibn Battuta then made a journey in a private capacity to China, during which he called in on Bengal, Burma and Sumatra. After probably some nine months in southern China he returned to Morocco by sea, again via Mecca, arriving at Fez in 1349. The following year saw a brief excursion to the Muslim kingdom of Granada. His final journey, from 1353 to 1355, was across the Sahara to the Mali kingdom of west Africa. On his return to Morocco, where he finally settled, Ibn Buttuta had visited territories that now make up 44 countries and travelled 73,000 miles: an astonishing achievement.

In writing his *rihla* or book of travels at the behest of Sultan Abu `Inan, the Marinid ruler of Morocco, Ibn Battuta was aided by Ibn Juzayy, a literary scholar he had met in Granada. Little is known of

the traveller's life thereafter, but he probably became a local magistrate, and may have married again.

Ibn Battuta's *rihla* is a typical document of the period, packed with details that would interest his educated contemporaries, as it does historians, but remaining silent on the conduct and concerns of other classes. It tells us practically nothing about Ibn Battuta's private life, or of the several women he married on the way. So while this poem follows the broad itinerary of Ibn Battuta's travels, its flavour, thoughts and intimate details are very much my creation. Ibn Battuta would have taken for granted what is often explored here, and is indeed my reason for writing the poem — those issues of faith, custom and hospitality that still make the Muslim world foreign to the west.

A short glossary follows the poem.

## 1. Introduction

The world is various, and only God  
the Merciful, from whom all blessings flow,  
has ranged on further than these feet have trod.

What sent me journeying I do not know  
except to witness for myself the great  
and forward spectacles our faith can show.

I've sat with beggars in their outcast state,  
been robed by emperors, at their right hand  
have talked as equal till the hour grew late.

I've seen the distant, often fabled land  
of mirages, of dervishes, of golden domes,  
the wind-hewn emptiness of desert sand.

Some men are patient, till the poorest loams,  
some tend their animals or hunt for food,  
yet others, journeying, will have no homes.

Some thrive on harmony, while others feud  
continually as Bedu do for wives  
to make their dynasties so many-hued.

One sits and begs all day, another strives  
to be the foremost in his craft or tribe:  
there's no accounting for our different lives.

But one thing's ever constant: all ascribe  
their peace to Him who makes of finer yarn  
the faith to which our better selves subscribe.

I've been to Najal and to Esfahan,  
and crossed the date-palm studded Tigris plain,  
have drunk from goblet as from mountain tarn.

So peace I say to all the faithful slain  
by Mongol Hulagu's vast conquering host  
usurping sovereignty for little gain.

Baghdad, our capital, is still a ghost,  
a place of masonry and tumbled walls,  
that was the centre of an empire's boast.

Yet night holds tenderness, and where there falls  
the sound of men in prayer that prayer has grown  
a revelation in those levelled halls.

I've sailed the pearl-strewn sparkling zone  
to Zanj and Kilwa sultanate. I've gone  
as far as that vast mosque of coral stone,

and back to Mecca more than once, and on  
to India, China, Mali, countless more,  
with Him whose kindness on me ever shone.

## 2. Tangier

Here in Tangier, at the wind-tossed door  
of Dar-al Islam, I must find the words  
to tell of travelling from shore to shore

of endless realms, as foremost in the herds  
that stray bewildered in the waking light,  
the first in flocks of those migrating birds

that fly off — who knows where? — but not alight  
before some kinder land, or summer send  
them back replenished to our grateful sight.

So flower our natures, how we comprehend  
the permanent in passing, transient lives  
and see the long returning as a friend.

And so it is, for even trades and wives  
fall off to sickness, nor are sins repaid  
until that final reckoning arrives.

From western limits of the world I made  
my pilgrimage in all good faith, as one  
who looks beyond the coloured cavalcade

of days to find where wares had first begun  
their journey to our crowded Tangier quays  
where gold and armaments and wool are won

by war or industry, and by degrees  
escape the dulling confines of the grey  
forever in these hard Atlantic seas.

Across those blustery straits, still northwards lay  
the lands of Andalus and infidels  
where trade and husbandry must pay

for dark-skinned chattels that the slaver sells,  
where these and ivory and gold defray  
the cost of caravans through those fierce hells

of blistering emptiness that southwards lay,  
well known to foreigners who thronged our streets,  
where costly merchandise was on display

in market stalls: those smiling, deft deceits  
that merchants make with merchants under screen  
of courtesies and shade from midday heats.

And known to tribesmen, each a go-between  
for pirates offering their greatest prize:  
the blue-eyed slave-girls that would grace a queen.

Perhaps that drew me most, those saddened eyes  
so different in their colours to the dark of ours  
but still humanity in different guise.

From them to larger sovereignties and powers,  
new worlds of learning when we here must stay  
a prisoner of the barely changing hours.

That limit hems us in, and, when we say  
obedient words to Him, the prayers we've said  
remain apart, indifferent, and do not lay

their content in the larger world, that bread  
of life which is the scholars' thought, nor be  
the phrase that dignifies the learned head.

Urbanity, discretion, decency,  
a cleanliness in all our habits, thought  
and dress, that never one in company

be ever shamed or irritated, brought  
to seem inferior, or shown as fool:  
the education that our customs taught.

Which I'd advanced in naturally: a school  
in manners, courtesy, a grave, calm air,  
where imperturbability must rule

in all we say or do, and tell us wear  
what is appropriate: a taylasan,  
that robe in which the honest qadis fare

most openly. In this you see a man  
as learned Fez or Marrakech will find  
the most accrediting our Berber clan.

I left both family and youth behind,  
my books and tutors and the haunts of prayer,  
the hours of happiness that give mankind

its blest existence, bringing everywhere  
as part and instinct to us, close to hand,  
the thoughts I loosed into the desert air,

the blue-steeped mountains and the crescent sand,  
the cedar valleys and the hostile inns,  
the warring kingdoms, the marauding band,

abodes of shadows and of fearsome jinns  
that draw the wandering pilgrim's steps astray:  
anticipating, so this tale begins.

### 3. Tunis to Tripoli

The man of stalwart faith has but to pray,  
to act correctly and abhor all sin,  
to see His love illuminate the way.

At once at Tunis I was taken in,  
was given alms and asked to add my thought  
to pious homilies, and sleep within

the shaded walls of Abu Bakr's court.  
So hospitality, observed by all  
at once and lavishly, as soon as sought.

So too the hour of common prayer, the call  
of brotherhood about the earth: what can  
I tell you as the pointing shadows fall

about the life I've led, the places man  
may dream about but never know in full  
unless he place adventuring in the van

of all his qualities, and feel the pull  
of goodness in the muezzin's call obeyed  
in worlds both hazardous and beautiful.

Here Tunis profited the more from trade  
in slaves and ivory and native gold  
than our poor merchandise so roughly made,

yet needed nonetheless, and briskly sold  
in street and thoroughfare and market stall.  
Indeed the crowded streets could scarcely hold

such bustling wealth of industries that call  
across far corners of the world. I saw  
within the turreted engirdling wall

rise mosques and palaces, such things as draw  
the multitudes to service and so mend  
their erring thoughts. Like minarets that soar

from rough, flat earth below to airy end,  
we strive to winnow out the sins that stain  
the chatter even with a childhood friend.

No doubt those shaded gardens still retain  
their wealth of oranges in leafy air  
that ornament a worthy sultan's reign.

Beyond lay waste, continual dangers where  
we cannot hear the wailing muezzin's call  
but hope that piety will onward fare

from Rif to cragged mesetas, to the tall  
high cliffs and overhanging, where the heat  
drains out all colour, where we'd slowly crawl

to see wide vistas of the yellow wheat  
in lands that float on upwards to a golden haze,  
thinning and diminishing till they meet

the rain-fringed splendour of the blue-cast days,  
the clouds oracular while still they hung  
above the object of our earnest gaze.

And so to sanctuary, to peace among  
the Prophet's scholars and of kindred trust  
in her I briefly wed, whose modest tongue

bespoke of many virtues such as must  
awhile remind us sinners where we go  
when this poor dross of body is as dust:

that far garden where the houris show  
us every tenderness whereby desires  
may set a well-beloved's face aglow.

We travel constantly: from single fires  
soon doused by distances there come to loom  
vast wastes of shadow as the sun retires

to sudden dark. Before the sealing tomb  
we think our passage on, as in our prayers  
from splendid palace or the tawdriest room.

All rooms I left at last: the traveller fares  
the best who travels lightest. I could see  
a larger world behind these mundane cares —

of taste, refinement, outward piety.  
In Tunis with its cultured sultanate  
I grew proportionate to destiny,

and knew, before strange races, I'd relate  
each stage of my far journey, thereby learn  
to truly hear the Prophet, gain the state

of blessedness for which the faithful yearn:  
the hajj across the wastes of sinfulness,  
and to that journeying I now must turn.

#### 4. Cairo and Damascus

I left for Mecca under no duress  
to hurry on past wonders, no caprice  
of mine to stay in Cairo, that excess

of earthly riches clad in quiet-robed peace,  
that ornate Turkish kingdom by the Nile  
whose wondrous industry will never cease.

With them I stayed some weeks, but all the while  
as passer-by or honoured household guest,  
I was enraptured by that easy style

of prayer and spectacle. For all seemed blest  
with grace and innate modesty — as fares  
a mausoleum where the faithful rest,

there watered, as it were, by murmured prayers  
from schools of learning and in cool retreats  
of fine madrasas round the tree-lined squares.

Immense the populace that packed the streets,  
and hubbub round a thousand market stalls,  
the trade in carpentry and butchers' meats,

in candles, gold and slaves. The whole world falls  
to commerce in these bustling alley-ways,  
from cloth-hung market to the palace walls.

Above the vast, incessant din and haze  
there loomed the Mamluk citadel, a grim  
old palace-fortress placed beyond our gaze.

All hope of mercy is a pious whim  
when crimes are serious: the criminal  
is crucified or cut up, limb by limb.

So are the janissaries, that fierce school  
of martial gifts and discipline: they keep  
their virtues pure within that Turkish pool.

So pray their vigilance will never sleep.  
It is a feeble world that would rely  
on those among us like the fabled sheep.

Yet I should tell of what their gold would buy,  
the plates and ewers, the ornaments of quartz  
whose sheer transparency would seem belie

the months that skilful industry supports,  
the flamed calligraphy of holy writ,  
or dress of those attending rich men's courts.

Damascus then I saw, remember it  
as mosques, madrasas, and of tent-hung streets,  
the hum as prayers and peddlers interknit

with steady commerce in the rug-strewn seats  
in that great mosque and scattered shade  
about the colonnades of quiet retreats.

So brims this Syria in a rich brocade,  
with glazed ceramics and blue lustre glass,  
the work of artisans of every trade —

the stone and metalworkers, such that pass  
continually from mosque to marble halls,  
to craft in ivory or gilded brass.

Despite the opulence of bathhouse walls  
and riches made for simple riches' sake,  
it is the Sufi faith that truly calls

on what is meaningful, and bids partake  
of rich communion, where no specious lies  
make all our striving here a vast mistake.

We find a quiet reproach in candid eyes,  
in thoughts that turn away, where one such look  
convicts us of the things we should despise.

So in Damascus, still a traveller, I took  
the next of many wives, and in her won  
a sense of fervour that our holy book

refines to truth and splendour. She was one  
extending daylight into scented night  
whereby our duty on this earth is done

by giving of ourselves, where we ignite  
what latent powers we have, and humbly serve  
God's larger purposes. We see aright

how good this world is, how its rounding curve  
goes on forever, opening to our gaze  
its feasts and parables, that He deserve

our faith, obedience, our earnest praise  
that one so cultivated and so young  
should fill with sunlight our disputed ways.

Which I remembered later, lost among  
the breath of others, when enclosed in arms  
the more companionable, when honeyed tongue

that's no doubt promising still further charms  
to whet the appetite or lead the eye.

Then, loosed to comfort, thankfulness becalms

us on some further shore, content to lie  
in blissful consciousness that here we see  
God's goodness tented over with the sky.

Each hour we turn toward eternity  
our modest steps, and hope such lives afford  
a path to His high state, if distantly.

It was a tale foretold, in faith not sword,  
so said a shaykh in Alexandria, gave  
me names of friends of his I'd meet abroad

in India and beyond. For I'd behave,  
he said, as one whose future is assigned  
to serving faithfully as Allah's slave.

## 5. Damascus to Mecca

So on to Mecca, strengthened, faith combined  
with firm credentials that would surely quell  
my fears of stumbling on so far behind.

I went with tens of thousands. Each could tell  
of pains and hardship, the ache in bone  
at dawn departures, the clotted camel's bell

that urges onward, where we might alone  
have faltered in those seas of tents that loom  
around the kiswas for the Ka'ba stone.

We reached Medina with the Prophet's tomb,  
of 'Umar, Abu Bakr, al-Haram  
that make the city one perpetual bloom

of gathered festivals when travellers cram  
inside the holy places, fervour such  
as makes obedience an oriflamme,

if I may call it that, a fervour much  
to be applauded where the least will fare  
in grace, uplifted, blessed, as then in touch

with larger natures, spending each night there  
as one of thousands at that sacred shrine,  
alert and listening to that intoned air

of rapt devotion that was theirs and mine,  
with soul's own destiny reprov'd and chaste,  
on which a thousand lauding candles shine.

Once more across the burning desert waste  
I went, but clothed in white, a celebrant  
in ihram joyously, in common haste

as one of faithful thousands paying scant  
regard to outward things, in sandals shod,  
so came to Mecca cleansed of sin and rant.

What is thy wish? I'm here O God,  
and in the Ka'ba, as the faithful must,  
repeating seven times, the tawaf trod.

It is beatitude, a state of trust  
obeyed by everyone, the white, the black,  
the prepossessing, humble and august:

all personages, that is, there and back  
to Safa, Marwah and to 'Arafat  
along that levelling and crowded track.

Such joy in burly comradeship, and that  
the least of it, but for a common good,  
those hallowed precepts that the place begat.

A desert city, therefore, one that stood  
for trade and piety, an entrepôt  
for camphor, aloes and for perfumed wood.

All manner of great riches overflow  
the confines of its narrow maze of streets:  
a pearl, or garnet with its sombre glow,  
or other gem is traded: there it meets  
the output of the workaday, exchanged  
for foodstuffs, textiles, or for choicest meats.

For all subsist within a city ranged  
about by high dry hills and simmering heats  
wherein the wealthiest become deranged  
in seeking wisdom out of self-conceits,  
and not the Infinite among us, shown  
by thought and piety in still retreats.

Beneath the towering walls of mountains grown  
voluminous in shimmering falls of light,  
the sun is pitiless on glinting stone.

Impartially, it blazes on till night  
will drape surrounding cauldron walls with deep  
blue shadows as the further peaks ignite  
successively with fire, from steep to steep  
across that harsh, decrepitating waste  
until the world of ours lies down to sleep.

So would I travel endlessly, not taste  
of peace or quiet contentment till my end,  
whatever court or counsels I embraced.

## 6. Persia and Iraq

We went by night. I saw the thousands wend  
their way in silence over cooling sands  
beneath the care the Ilkhan kings extend

to faithful hajjis coming back from lands  
ablaze with fervour and the flaring lights  
that guide the litters and the camel bands.

So on to Najaf and the wondrous sights  
that make the Caliph Ali's golden tomb,  
in which the Shi'a pilgrim most delights.

But I went eastward then, so having room  
to see the wonders of that Ilkhan rule  
which their conversions to our faith assume.

I met disciples of the Rifa'I school  
that rolled in embers, made their mouths aflame,  
each one in ecstasy a holy fool.

I stayed at Basra, one whose early fame  
was for grammarians and learned men,  
but found their practices now tired and lame.

A mix of trades and farms: each citizen  
repeats the scriptures in some mindless rote,  
and to his arrant nonsense says amen.

I went to Abadan, sought there of note  
a learned anchorite, whose simple life  
had all the goodness that our ways promote.

And there was tempted, truly, having wife  
and wealth then tasted, seeing what they wreak  
of world's perpetual but not trivial strife.

Why do we journey on? What do we seek  
in our plain person when the same goes on  
so crudely fashioned in the words we speak?

But yet for me some radiance ever shone  
beyond the hill at sunset or in cities known  
to our first Caliphate, though they be gone

beneath the Mongol horsemen: millions thrown  
to fire and rapine and dismemberment.  
How terrible was that wide terror sown

that we the faithless must in full repent  
of all our ignorant and selfish ways,  
and hear the wisdom that the Prophet sent.

And so to Esfahan, where I would gaze  
on yet more piety: my soul awoke  
to that most dignified of Sufi ways.

I asked for khirqa; that patched white cloak  
at once was given me, and skullcap too,  
those practices surviving foreign yoke.

I went to Shiraz in the ardent hue  
of inwardness, and saw proud Sa'di's tomb  
whose grace in piety will none outdo.

At length I left that cramped, small college room  
and on to Kufa went, and Karbala  
where Shia's fervour lights that outward gloom,

and Baghdad came to, which though known afar  
as first of cities, had become the last:  
its former glory as the brightest star

must gutter out. I walked foundations grassed  
with hope and errors of too worldly ways,  
which spoke of splendour though their rule be past.

For, at the conquering Mongol host, a blaze  
of what were coloured faïence towers and domes  
have paled to memory's disputed haze,

and therefore desecrated. Where there roams  
the donkey now or lank-haired stumbling goat  
a wealth of learning had its well-kept homes.

A world of piety, where all of note  
could freely read and gain what study yields.  
The pondered wisdom that our jurists wrote

is now mere nothing but these pock-marked fields,  
wild walnut thickets and pistachios:  
injustices that war's destruction wields.

A poor and bitter soil where mallow grows,  
and oleaster, woodbine with its whitish flowers:  
all mean, pale things on which the dry wind blows

without cessation, where the dryness scours  
the land of farms and villages, and earth  
is robbed of reinvigorating powers,

its irrigation broken, every birth  
of new-found industry as good as killed,  
so is the land deprived of budding worth.

It is by agriculture that we build  
our peace, prosperity and well-stocked mind,  
those aims with which the jurist's thought is filled.

And to those truths the Ilkhan lords inclined,  
adopting our own language and religious codes  
and so with our high wisdom were aligned.

They travel furthest who have well made roads,  
with teams of horses and good hostelries,  
as rested camels bear the greatest loads.

The good are proved by good intentions: this  
the Ilkhan Ghazan knew, and Abu Said  
ensures that nothing much can go amiss

across his rich and settled realms. To ride  
day long across such unfamiliar lands  
without an escort or a practised guide

must seem preposterous, but yet withstands  
the closest scrutiny. So in that light  
it is the trusting heart that understands.

## 7. Arabian Sea

I journeyed back to Mecca, this despite  
the wealth of learning I had not discerned  
in words familiar to the faithful's sight.

But now I studied carefully and earned  
some merit from the jurists, pious men  
who to humility with age had turned.

But I was ever restless, took again  
to travel, went along the Red Sea Hills  
to reefs and sandstorms, towering heat and then

a blazing nothingness, where brilliance spills  
into vacuities of heat-swooned days,  
and only as the salted south wind wills

itself to eddy through the dust-rimmed haze,  
that hem of swirling dusts that hardly lift  
above our everywhere-and-heat-stung gaze.

Long days I felt the slight-built vessel drift  
from shore to shore of burning dune-heaped sand  
as will the lazy currents ebb or shift.

So are we all beneath God's guiding hand,  
both true believer and the infidel.

So in His grace and gifts we may withstand

the bile of hopelessness, find thoughts that well  
afresh to blessedness and hope despite  
the roaring wastes around, that burning hell.

Then almost shipwrecked, in a sorry plight,  
we saw the Bedu people, called the Beja there,  
behave most honourably in Allah's sight.

On camel back we came, through scorching air,  
to port at Suakin, a long, long, pull  
and so took sail again, that winds would bear

us to that southern shore, when yet more full  
of hurt we crossed the treeless, arid plain  
to that harsh town, the Yemen capital:

the lowland Zabid, where there's never rain  
or industry, and so on inland where  
in mountain heights ferocious hill-tribes gain

the meanest livelihood, where strange things fare  
most curiously beneath the walls of stone  
that rise around the dreaded bandits' lair.

I went to Ta'izz. On his silk-clad throne  
sat al\_Din 'Ali: there he offered alms,  
since all prosperity is but on loan.

He questioned me, but here I had no qualms  
with honesty and made no foolish boasts,  
but turned on southwards to those yielding arms

of Africa, those palm-girt, sultry coasts  
of ports and trading kingdoms, rich  
with dark-skinned, smiling, lavish hosts,  
punctilious of courtesy, the which  
they made much issue of, as rulers would  
who have no merchandise to bait and switch.

For all were truthful here: one nationhood  
of faith and honesty, whose simple code  
bound all in harmony, as custom should.

I saw vast riches, how at anchor rode  
long fleets of dhows, each laden deep  
with cargoes groaning at a heavy load

of costly merchandise, and all things cheap  
in their far origin but here most rare,  
as houris guard us in our final sleep.

For here were silks and coloured earthen-ware,  
glass beads and brass and pale green celadon,  
exchanged for what these backward countries spare

in slaves and gold, indeed depend upon  
to keep their states in order: so they fall  
to wretchedness, these captives toiling on.

Enough of that, for when the evening's wall  
of flaring crimson darkens cloud by cloud  
and birds and animals together call

to weave their web of loneliness aloud  
we look for comfort of some perfumed skin  
that's nubile, practised, and is well endowed

with warm entanglements. But at the sin  
of slaughtering livestock not in ways prescribed,  
whatever their brute customs may have been,

I thought it best to take the way inscribed  
in white across that corridor of blue,  
and come to Mecca, which I have described.

But now I was the travelled student who  
had seen throughout the west lands and the south  
how many ways the Prophet's words were true

in lands of hardship, heat and drouth,  
the fervid lands of cloudless, bright blue skies,  
and all companionable, one common mouth.

And so I learned as scholar, one who tries  
to see the truth beyond the well-worn sense  
of homilies and gain some larger prize.

Refreshed, a mujawir, I went on hence  
and south to Sinai where parched air fills  
a land of silences, to that immense

high presence building in the Taurus hills.  
For there 'Alaya stood with busy quays  
and Turcomans who pray as Allah wills.

I met the Karamids, and took my ease  
as guest among the learned once again,  
the Marinid whose learning might appease

the rivalry of Turk and Persian, men  
who threw the Christian out, where Seljuk Rum  
gives way to not the pious citizen

but rough-dressed hillside folk who'd come  
through green-clad valleys as a swelling wave  
of stolid, rural doltishness. In sum,

astonishing what care the fityan gave  
to travellers, ensuring theirs be fed  
appropriately. I saw there each behave

with utmost courtesy. The feasts were led  
by young men simply clothed. In all the world  
I never knew such inner fervour wed

to song and dancing. How the light feet whirled  
about the rug-cleared floor! A heady throng  
as then the strange white bonnets slow unfurled

to spinning arabesques that all along  
the pillared archways of that lamp-hung place  
accompanied the lifting pipe and song.

So was the Anatolian blest, a race  
I first thought barbarous, but was more true  
than beauty haunts that promised houri face.

## 8. Anatolia

At last I came to Konya, would renew  
my short acquaintance with the merchants' fate:  
a name to many but well-known to few.

In that rich city's walls they gather, wait —  
Armenians, Jews and Arabs, Turks and Greeks —  
as Seljuk vassals of the Ilkhan state,

most numerous and voluble. Each speaks  
of cities, towns and costly markets seen  
and of the enterprises which he seeks.

For here's assembled, as it were, a screen  
where shadowed figures must declaim their parts  
and make this world of ours a bridge between

the hoped-for spectacles of honest hearts  
and sober prospects for the citizen,  
for in this bustling town all trading starts.

I went to Erzurum and back again,  
to Birgi, Egridir and Bursa too,  
the lair of eagles and the robber's den

as much as princely courts. From each I drew  
respect and honour and substantial gifts  
which to the learned man are always due.

Wealth I had, and then by certain shifts  
obtained a slave of forty dinars' worth:  
most beautiful, and in those scented drifts

of fire and indolence the stony earth  
grew warm and welcoming. I shone  
as though a majesty were in my birth.

Reluctantly, with winter coming on,  
I left, and in the mountains lost my way,  
with snow each pathway shrouded, gone

into a hardened world where we must pay  
for lodgings and for guides that were not good,  
indeed most mercenary. When swept away

at River Sakarya we understood  
to be our crossing place, no like mistake  
we made in going on until we stood

half-starved by waters of a vast, grey lake  
that glimmered out to distant, frost-hazed shores.  
It brooded ill for travellers who'd take

a thoughtless passage through. So, after pause,  
I weighed up warnings and the threatened cost,  
advice no traveller for long ignores,

and then went boldly on — when all seemed lost,  
with sails and goods and men swept overboard,  
but from that storm and testing peril crossed

to faith and confidence, a new accord  
with He who is our maker: this I knew:  
however poor I was, or overawed

by threatening destiny, He'd always hew  
a path across and every tempest quell,  
affording me at least firm passage through.

I'd known the thunderous, hard Atlantic swell,  
the lands of sultriness and dowered heat,  
but now turned north where colder evenings fell

## 9. Russian Steppes

the more unwelcoming. I hoped to meet  
that Turkoman who led the Golden Horde,  
who from the world's great blood-stained feat

now strove for dignity, as overlord  
of all the gloomy lower Volga lands,  
and kept them subject to his tax and sword.

As Muslim, Jew or Christian, none withstands  
the imposition of so great a state  
which by its rough-limbed industry expands

from fur and grain and timber to a freight  
of sumptuous silks and textiles, much in use  
for slavery which is the Mamluk's fate.

Its foul inhabitants did not induce  
a longer stay in Kaffa, nor could drown  
me in idolatry, nor yet produce

the needful host, or even brief renown  
at that rich court and greater realm beyond.  
With Tuluktemur on to that far town

I went as guest. Although I was not fond  
of yurts and qumizz, still this cheerful band  
aspired to what in time would correspond

to carnival throughout this Tartar land.

I went to Azak and to Al-Machar,  
found Ozbeg's party, where on every hand

were sons and wives and officers. Both far  
and wide the tented city stretched around:  
indeed each wife or khatun on a par

with sovereign ruler had her moving ground,  
her vast mahalla of a thousand tents,  
patrolled by officers, where there are found

both Greeks and Indians. To all intents  
was half of Asia on its jewelled move,  
with slave girls, hundreds of them: each consents

to be the territories at some remove,  
whereby their jewel-encrusted bodies served  
for larger purposes, and therefore prove

how higher still is God, how more deserved  
is He of worship, rightful love, and yet  
the path of traveller is strangely curved.

When Princess Bayalun, whom I had met,  
resolved to visit her Byzantium,  
on that famed city too my heart was set.

We left. In months the many thousand sum  
of pages, slaves, companions, wagons, horse,  
arrived at Mahtuli, and had become

a boisterous caravan that in due course  
arrived at those high landward walls, and found  
from our high principles a grave divorce.

In Christian lands to Christian customs bound,  
she ate of pork and near to every day  
would send the wine-filled pitcher round.

On more than this I will be silent, pay  
Andronicus what's due, who gave to me  
his earnest favour, gifts and all that lay

within his infidel's rich sovereignty.

He questioned me and, kindly, led me hence  
to view his city's greatness. I could see

but halls of overblown magnificence,  
as though some pointless, vast pretence supports  
parades at variance with real events.

In haste I left those incense-mouldering courts  
and turned on back to Astrakhan, while still  
the Princess Bayalun by all reports

stayed on against her husband's express will.

A hard time then, with autumn coming on  
and next the first sharp bite of winter's chill,

when swiftly every sign of life was gone.

The grass tufts froze and sparkled, disappeared  
and all too winterly the red sun shone

on dreary wastelands, hung or slowly veered  
between a frost by day and worse by night:  
across the stone-hard ground we persevered.

Beneath three coats we felt the sharp winds bite,  
the water boiled for washing promptly froze:  
the world around us one unending white.

With Ozbeg gone from Astrakhan we chose  
to journey on to New Sarai, a town  
of ill-constructed huts that barely rose

above low Volga flats: so Ozbeg's crown  
with mosque and market place and trading bourse  
spread slatternly and with a surly frown.

But to the scholar-bureaucrats a source  
of new employment and a worthy pride  
as through the untaught lands they took their course.

As I did also, south, to India's side  
across to Urgench and to Samarkhand:  
a long and melancholy, telling ride

to find Buhkara walls half sunk in sand,  
its mosques abandoned and its courts grass-grown  
and naught of history they could understand

of that great wisdom our beliefs had sown  
in what was wilderness and was once more,  
a place of carnage and of shattered bone.

Then on to Balkh whose fertile cradle bore  
much peace and learning in the kindly shade  
of courts and libraries, though now one saw

but desolation that the Tartar made,  
the mounds for miles of sun-dried brick beset  
by howling winds, and all its past decayed.

Today's descendent of that sack I met:  
Tarmashirin, the Khan of Chagatay,  
the greatest ruler I'd encountered yet.

With various gifts he sent me on my way  
across the Hindu Kush whose mountains, vast  
and perilous with snow, closed off my day —

until, eventually, all hazards past,  
I came to that wide valley famed afar  
as gate to India, and to wealth at last.

## 10. Delhi

His was a fearsome rule, this Tughlaq Shah,  
in truth magnificent but so severe  
that ministers could be arraigned, and are

at once confounded, rightly made to fear  
the flashing sword that speedily removed  
the head from mendicant or grand vizier.

The innocent chastised with nothing proved:  
each day saw hundreds at his court in chains  
weighed down, the Prophet's holy word reproved

in this rough treatment of a thousand pains,  
the beating, torture, elephants with swords  
in busy courtyards which their lifeblood stains.

I was a qadi, one whose life affords  
a path to principle, the one who sees  
how much with clarity true faith rewards.

But, as the winds that plied the western seas,  
how fickle were those laden dhows that came  
with gifts and messengers, the signatories

of realms and kingdoms round that claim  
equality with our high sultan's power.  
From tropic heats to icy steppes the same

rich produce emptied in, an endless shower  
of pearls and spices, gemstones, silk and hides  
that surely God was in that blissful hour.

Yet he who sails upon the treacherous tides  
of court and governing must ever make  
his bulwark stout and fast on all four sides.

Shihab al-Din, no doubt a worthy shaykh,  
indeed abstemious, of pious thought,  
refused all honours paid him, nor would take

a salary for service, or attend the court:  
a crime to Tughlaq Shah, for no one should  
pursue his holiness to such a fault.

So Tughlaq sentenced him to death, and would  
have done much worse had but his strength defied  
the gross barbarities his pain withstood.

When jails were full, great pits were dug beside  
the road at city gates: among his peers  
the innocent there languished, starved and died.

And then the famine came. Those earlier tears  
were trivial to the millions dying, fed  
on bark or rotting hides for two full years.

As favoured court official there, I led  
another world existence, and did well  
as is expected of a thoroughbred.

I lived. I spent. My lavishness would tell  
how all encompassing our sultan's grace:  
a strange existence like a golden spell

attired as others at the annual chase.  
At great festivities and hours of prayer,  
this proud Maghribi held a special place.

Who knows how truth and industry will fare?  
But in Qutb al-Din Mubarak's shrine  
I poured especially my daily care —

to be rewarded when new lands fell mine:  
an embassy to China, there to stay  
in occupations where my gifts would shine.

We left in pomp one blazing summer's day  
with slaves and dancers, textiles, robes and swords,  
a thousand cavalry to guard our way,

and all the ceremony the state affords  
to Cambay first and then from Calicut  
to Toghon Timur and my just rewards.

And fell to brigands. Separated, but  
if by chance my life was not there lost  
it found the page of fortune fastened shut.

So think: escaping all and having crossed  
the Deccan heights to coasts of Malabar  
our gifts were to the angry waters tossed.

Yet still the emissaries sailed on, and far  
from their ambassador who, now as must,  
weighed up what waited from a vengeful shah.

So is this world of spectacle but dust  
beneath the desert winds or horses' hooves:  
a world of emptiness without His trust.

## 11. Maldives and Ceylon

Abandoned in a land where nothing moves  
but on the orders of Jamal al-Din,  
what could I do but as experience proves

to be a needful compromise? But in  
the intercession loomed incessant wars,  
in which I fought, and would by this begin

my sharp reversals and the shifting course  
that I was party to, and ill report,  
the while entrammeled by these Indian shores.

But with a name like mine I could resort  
to visiting the Maldives, from Ceylon  
sail on to China's would-be welcome court.

I was ambassador the same, and on  
a kingly mission where my foreign birth  
pronounced me worthy as the gifts now gone.

Their wealth of cowries made these islands' worth:  
tall palms of coconuts arranged in bright  
green rings but rooted into coral earth,

which was but dry and powdery sands: a white  
that coruscated with the salt-wind breeze  
but cool and wholesome in the tropic night.

A Queen Khadija ruled, with dignitaries  
she gathered in from far-flung realms, but I,  
a Delhi qadi, snubbed their embassies,

and would not serve their rustic courts, nor lie  
with jewelled slave-girls sent, be locked  
in fond entanglements of how and why.

I made to leave but found my passage blocked.  
I'd stay by principle or stay by force,  
or anything the ruler could concoct.

And so I stayed, and smiled, and in due course  
was married, severally, and had four wives,  
and all most beautiful, and, with divorce,

two more were added — such the pleasant lives  
these chattering natives led, and signally  
it is by marriages preferment thrives.

Becoming justice minister, on me  
devolved all legal customs and decrees  
against those women's wiles, though I could see

my case was difficult. By slow degrees  
I fell to politics, and court intrigues  
the more reluctantly. At length to ease

that inner burden I put needed leagues  
between my person and those scheming lies.  
For feints have purposes but it fatigues

whatever's honest in those smiling eyes.  
With India closed to me, I left for far  
Ceylon beneath those blue, exotic skies.

From wives divorced, I sailed to Battala,  
so rich in jewels and nuts and cinnamon,  
and things most traded down through Malabar.

Arrived as kin to sultan, I anon  
was brought in pomp to greet its Hindu king  
on which the grace of custom also shone.

Received most courteously in everything,  
I asked to journey to that central peak,  
that sanctuary round which the wild birds wing

their constant flight, of which the Buddhists speak:  
that long and terrifying steep ascent  
which nonetheless all men of merit seek.

That course I took, at once, and straightway went  
to pay my homage to the Buddha's foot,  
most odious to us, and, while it lent

some lustre to my name, it also put  
me on an enterprise where I betrayed  
myself to insurrections underfoot

when, shipwrecked once again, accepting aid  
from one who moved against the Maldivé Isles,  
I too was swept up in this masquerade

of foolishness. The very thought defiles  
my memory of that palm-girt, airy land  
of cowered indolence. I witnessed piles

of writhing souls impaled upon the sand,  
the which I fled from, but, then tempest tossed,  
against foul pirates made my desperate stand.

Captured, stripped and threatened, there I lost  
the rich mementoes given me, each gem  
and pearl and dinar earned at fearsome cost.

I went to Bengal then, from which may stem  
my confidence in Islam's jewelled elite,  
for there they aided me: God's peace to them.

## 12. China

Forever sailing south along that wind-filled heat:  
Barah Nagar, Qaqula to where  
the level Mekong pours its rolling sheet

of muddy waters out, the favoured lair  
of slit-eyed pirates, where whole villages  
observed us with a strange, unblinking stare.

We floated on, and past high barrages  
of storm clouds blown into the blue around  
the green and palm-inverted mirages.

Four months we sailed, until I found  
a China prosperous at the seas' far end  
in fruit and produce from its patchwork ground.

A land of contrasts, where the short paths wend  
from august temple down to rustic shrine  
as fields of rice to pool on pool descend.

And here I met a countryman of mine,  
al-Bashri, who had prospered mightily,  
and of his slaves and slave-girls would assign

me two of each, and gifts, that I should be  
a living witness of the Muslim cause,  
and rightly recognized, for all would see

how Arab trade brought wealth to China's doors  
in pearls and sapphires, and that favoured flower,  
the peony, which flared on robes indoors.

So do the rich assert their foremost power  
in wealth of silk and gold embroidery  
that marks their status. Here the dullest hour

in markets, even late at night, will see  
a raucous crowd of merchants roistering on  
without much care for name or decency.

Though skills and careful industry had gone  
in jade and ornaments that deck the hair,  
on which a thousand temple lanterns shone,

it all was supervised. Officials there  
maintain each stretch of road, canal and weir;  
to keep them functioning, in good repair.

All things are totted up, and every year  
sees foodstuffs laid up for hard times ahead,  
when drought or pestilence or floods appear.

Whole tiers of mandarins, and at their head  
there is an emperor whose practice spoke  
of ostentation and mere craft instead

of His wise words, and more of women-folk  
who stooped to practices we would repress,  
where drink and sing-song tavern girls provoke

a gross licentiousness, which I confess prevailed on me to leave this land and come in faith to Tunis and my first success.

### 13. Home Again

And not before good time. Behind me some  
thick stench of putrefaction spread its stain,  
and from Damascus grew to overcome

all normal modes of life. It bred a train  
of fasts, assemblies, prayers. And then a flight  
from every city followed: all again

quite pitiful and hopeless. A woeful sight  
to see the victims laid out by the roads  
and picked at by the hungry cur or kite.

I saw the flagellants with whips and goads,  
and tear-stained faces numbed with disbelief  
in long processions with heavy loads

of shrouds and coffins burdened down with grief,  
the thousands wailing or just walking on  
in tears, bewildered and beyond relief

as sickness came and fastened and anon  
were tens or hundreds falling every hour  
till just as suddenly the plague was gone

in such intensity, did not devour  
its victims quite so avidly. I quickened pace,  
forever conscious of His saving power

and came unharmed to Mecca. In that place  
I made observances, and to the west  
of home and family then turned my face.

Our point of origin is also rest,  
a place to find ourselves who no more fare  
in constant hardship on our earnest quest.

At last to Tunis then, but found the air  
was dark with insurrection, wars between  
the Sultan Abu l'Hasan and his heir.

I had my audience at Fez, was seen  
to be the traveller returning home:  
released, I hurried to that former scene

and found both parents dead. I saw the dome  
of our good mosque: how small and quaint it stood,  
as is the consequence for all who roam

as I had done, with wasted parenthood  
in women met and married on the way,  
the need for family misunderstood.

I thought of namesakes lost, and every day  
in this grew restless, and at last set sail  
for far Iberia. In disarray

the Muslim forces stood, could not prevail  
against Castille's investment of the Rock  
but sought in volunteers to stem the gale.

But God in His high mercy took good stock  
of this, His people's plight, and by His hand  
the king was carried off with plague. A shock

to those rough infidels, who must disband,  
retreat and let the Muslim faith restore  
both wealth and happiness to this green land.

Released from such jihad, I went ashore  
to that great citadel, and as a guest  
became acquainted with its stony core

of camp and armoury that well attest  
to our rich mastery in men at arms  
throughout the lands of Andalus the blest.

I rode and for myself observed the harms  
on ancient husbandry that warfare brought  
to fields and mulberry groves and modest farms.

Yet in retirement still the Nasrid court  
made peace with all and those Granada walls  
enclosed a citadel of twilit thought

where mind to mind in faithful deference calls,  
the which I heard as ever far and more  
I rode the lands on which His quietness falls,

as do the shadows through those courts. I saw  
the arabesques of interlacing stones  
that spoke the Prophet's words and inner store

of praise in pillared courts, where wind intones  
its words with water falling through the screens  
that guard the mysteries of splendid thrones.

I rode on further to familiar scenes  
of husbandry in vine and olive trees  
and criss-cross marquetry of varied greens

in fields of wheat and barley such as please  
the traveller through the evening mists that sheath  
the full day's industry as some chemise

must clothe the majesty of breasts beneath:  
a fertile land with groves of cedar trees  
and oranges across the sun-burnt heath.

From ice-capped mountains to rich fields one sees  
what gladness goads us into travelling,  
and so to Málaga's salt, sea-borne breeze.

Back home at last I went, but everything  
stood much the same, and no advancement came.  
I went to Abu `Inan, there to bring

some royal favour to my cause, to tame  
my lust for wandering and find good board.  
Yet nothing came of it, and I the same

at last turned south and kept in close accord  
to what my eminence might once have won,  
but now as private citizens afford.

## 14. Mali

Towards those heat-hazed lands of constant sun,  
I went, beneath a high and glowering blue  
with trials and sweat-stained torments new begun.

We climbed the Atlas Mountains, which withdrew  
to steep and rocky fastnesses, to tracks  
beside rough-falling rivers: hard ways through.

That water foamed into the ground, and cracks  
replaced the water-pools, a puddled brown  
inviting rivalry and more attacks.

We came to Tafilat, a pleasant town  
with palms and palaces and high, wrought gates  
that spoke of enterprise and some renown

among the Berber and the Arab states  
that, through the dry oasis lands between  
the deep, lush forests and Gibraltar straits,

observe the Prophet's words. So I was seen  
about the qadi's court, to ever stay  
most courteous to all, in nothing mean.

At dawn, before the mounting heat of day  
made all impossible we left, and rode  
from water-hole to water-hole, a way

of whirling, retching wastes of sand, that showed  
a scene so desolate that not a trace  
of dried-up branch or thorn could point the road.

In cool we travelled, but at gruelling pace,  
where hardly camels could be kept awake.  
The moon glare blinded us, wind stung the face.

Tagaza showed a shimmering, burning lake  
of salt, which blackened men with bars attack,  
to lift each heavy, glistening slab, and break

it neatly shaped to fit the camel's back,  
which seems but punishment, a hell on earth  
for those stretched out on life's most tortuous rack.

Then on to Walata, where jinns have birth,  
a howling wilderness of fearsome cost  
for any man to prove his inner worth.

Our Ibn Ziri, swallowed up, was promptly lost,  
as all who trail behind, for never trace  
is left when once into that furnace tossed.

The town was nondescript, with little grace,  
where court and governor showed me scant respect:  
a fly-blown end of empire, tawdry place

that gave me millet only, in effect  
an insult to my person, where his guard  
of ruffian native warriors made a sect

too dismal to be told, a thin charade  
of what is stipulated, flagrant breach  
of rightful courtesy. In this regard

I was not slow to travel on and reach  
the Mali capital of mud and reed,  
and find there nothing much to teach

a man so travelled, what he'll heed,  
except outlandish customs and atrocious food  
which left me suffering and much in need

of long care afterwards, and then renewed  
attention from that pigmy dark-skinned race  
where all's provisional, both strange and crude.

I saw the sultan in his gold-awned place,  
and watched the poets in their feathered romp,  
the dust the sultan scattered on his face

when he would speak to us, the tawdry pomp  
about the throne, the constant press  
to be combined with us, as though to swamp

the gross discourtesy of scarcely dress,  
in which our blest religion scarcely shone,  
for all that early faiths to worse regress.

So fashion passes in the clothes we don:  
indeed the laughing daughter of a king  
received me formally with nothing on.

Taste and custom make for everything  
in this, the thought-tossed world in which we live  
before the calm reflections age can bring.

So back to Fez. I wrote this narrative  
with Ibu Juzayy, and then retired  
to what His providence was pleased to give

to small-town magistrate. In time I sired  
another family: my fast they break  
when I am in the Prophet's words expired.

## 15. Blessings

The world is how we know it, what we wake  
to in each beating moment of our lives,  
which otherwise are obdurate if not opaque

to all embodiments of goods and wives,  
that blessed enabling that is always ours,  
as promised surely as the pilgrim strives

to reach those self-delighting, heavenly powers  
that rise instinctive in the air we breathe,  
the light perpetual out of noonday hours.

With this I take my final parting, leave  
to you this world of wonders, pray my tongue  
was ever honest with you, will bequeath

a swelling sense of happiness among  
the brethren of our faithful here below,  
in harmony with what the angels sung.

Which we may hear, if listening as we go  
about His purposes, and quietly trace  
the lineaments beyond this world we know.

So blessings of His word, and may His grace  
attend you always as you journey on  
to sense the forwardness of that far place

that's ours in majesty, when all is gone  
from us, our breath, our bodies, those we love:  
and we but paths on whom His mercy shone.

# GLOSSARY

## 1. Introduction

*Hulagu's vast conquering host*: Mongol armies led by Hulagu (1218-65) destroyed the Baghdad caliphate in 1258.

*Zanj*: lands bordering the Arabian Sea immediately south of Aden.

*Kilwa*: small sultanate on island off present day Tanzania.

*vast mosque of coral stone*: mosque at Kilwa.

## 2. Tangier

*Dar-al Islam*: world of Islam.

*Andalus*: Muslim Spain.

*taylasan*: dress of legal scholar: shawl and wide-sleeved gown.

*jinn*s: supernatural spirits, often ill-disposed.

## 3. Tunis to Tripoli

*Abu Bakr*: ruler of Hafsid Sultanate (1318-46).

*hajj*: pilgrimage to Mecca.

*muezzin*: mosque official calling faithful to prayer.

*Rif*: mountainous region of north Africa.

*houris*: beautiful virgins of the Islamic paradise.

## 4. Cairo & Damascus

*madrassa*: theological college.

*Mamluk*: Turkish-speaking warrior class.

*janissaries*: slave-warriors serving ruler alone.

*Sufi*: spiritual strain of Islam.

*shaykh*: venerable Sufi teacher

## 5. Damascus to Mecca

*kiswas*: black cloth carried to Mecca and draped over the Ka'ba.

*Ka'ba*: great cuboid building in the al-Haram mosque at Mecca.

*ihram*: special garment worn by pilgrims on journey from Medina to Mecca.

*'Umar*: Second Caliph (634-644).

*Abu Bakr*: First Caliph (632-634).

*al-Haram*: area of Medina holding sacred buildings and tombs.

*tawaf*: required circumambulation of the Ka'ba.

*'Arafat*: plain south-east of Mecca and part of the pilgrimage.

*Safa, Marwah*: Muslims also run between the two hills of Al-Safa and Al-Marwah to remember Hagar's search for water.

## 6. Persia and Iraq

*Ilkhan*: Mongol ruler of Persia.

*Caliph Ali*: Fourth Caliph and son-in-law of the Prophet (656-661).

*Rifa'I*: brotherhood of Sufi mystics.

*khirqqa*: patched robe of the Sufi.

*Sa'di*: Persian poet (1213-91) buried outside Shiraz.

*Ilkhan Ghazan*: Ruler of Persia 1271-1304 and converting to Islam.

*Abu Sa'id*: Ilkhan and Islamic ruler of Persia 1305-35.

## 7. Arabian Sea

*Suakin*: small Beja port on west coast of the Red Sea.

*Zabid*: date-palm city 27 miles from Red Sea coast.

*Ta'izz*: inland city, capital of Rasulid sultanate.

*al\_Din 'Ali*: ruler (1321-62) of Rasulid sultanate in Yemen.

*mujawir*: scholar-sojourner at Mecca.

*'Alaya*: city in Anatolia, now Alanya.

*Karamids*: emirate around Alanya on south-west coast of present day Turkey.

*Taurus hills*: mountain complex in southern Turkey.

*Seljuk Rum*: earlier Turkish sultanate in Anatolia, predating the Ottomans.

*fityan*: corporations of unmarried men giving hospitality to travellers.

*Marinid*: citizen of Marinid sultanate, i.e. Ibn Battuta.

## 8. Anatolia

*Birgir, Egridir, Bursa*: towns in Anatolia (eastern Turkey).

*Sakarya*: river a few miles east of Iznik.

*vast, grey lake*: Black Sea.

## 9. Russian Steppes

*Golden Horde*: Kipchak (Mongol) khanate of the western steppes.

*Kaffa*: Genoese port in the Crimea.

*Tuluktemur*: Turkish governor at al-Qiram (now Starry Krim).

*New Sarai*: Capital of Chipchak khanate.

*yurts*: moveable felt-covered tents used by tribal peoples.

*qumizz*: drink made of fermented mare's milk.

*khatun*: ruler's wife or favourite.

*mahalla*: moving camp of Ilkhan rulers with court and guards.

*Azak*: port on Sea of Azov, now called Azov.

*Al-Machar*: city on the western steppes, now in the Ukraine.

*Princess Bayalun*: Daughter of Byzantine emperor and a wife to Uzbek, ruler of the Chipchak khanate.

*Mahtuli*: fortress on Christian Bulgaria - Byzantium border.

*Andronicus (II)*: Byzantine emperor.

*Urgench*: provincial capital of the Chipchak khanate, in present day Turkmenistan.

*Tarmashirin*: 'Ala al-Din Tarmashrin, ruler of Chagatay khanate (1326-46).

*that wide valley*: Panjshir.

## 10. Delhi

*Tughlaq Shah*: Mohammad Tughlaq, Sultan of Delhi 1351-88.

*qadi*: Muslim judge.

*Maghribi*: one from the maghrib, i.e. Ibn Battuta.

*Qutb al-Din Mubarak*: previous Sultan of Delhi (1316-20).

*Cambay*: port city on north-west coast of India.

*Calicut*: port on Malabar coast.

*Toghon Timur*: emperor of Yuan China 1320-70.

*Malabar*: south-west coast of India.

## 11. Maldives and Ceylon

*Jamal al-Din (Mohammed)*: ruler of Honavar on west coast of India.

*Queen Khadija*: Rehendi Kabadi Kilege, ruler of the Maldives.

*Battala*: city on west coast of Ceylon, probably now Puttalam.

*foolishness*: Battuta got involved in an abortive insurrection.

## 12. China

*Barah Nagar*: port on coast of what is today Burma.

*Qaqula*: port on west coast of present day Malaysia.

## 13. Home Again

*Sultan Abu l'Hasan*: Marinid sultan (1331-51).

*Nasrid*: Andalus sultanate of Granada.

*Abu 'Inan*: heir to and rival of Sultan Abu l'Hasan.

## 14. Mali

*Ibn Ziri*: fellow traveller lost between Taghaza and Walata.

*Ibu Juzayy*: Abu 'Abdallah Mohammad ibu Juzayy: literary secretary in Nasrid court and co-writer of Ibn Battuta's *rihla*.

## SOURCES

There are many Internet and book sources, but I found the following most useful:

1. *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta* by Ross Dunn. University of California Press, 1986. Excellent overview of Ibn Battuta's itinerary, the cultural background to the countries visited and the sources of academic interest and dispute.
2. *The Travels of Ibn Battuta: A Virtual Tour with the 14th Century Traveler*. [University of Berkeley](#). An extended introduction with maps and photos.
3. *Ibn Ibn Battuta: A Traveler's log in the spirit of history's greatest itinerant* by Andrew G. Farrand. [IbnIbnBattuta](#). Brief account with map and recommended books.
4. *Medieval Sourcebook: Ibn Battuta: Travels in Asia and Africa 1325-1354* by Paul Halsall. [Fordham University](#), 2001. With excerpts, and links to other material of interest.

I hope Muslim readers will understand why I have not used the customary complimentary phrase (peace be upon him) when mentioning the Prophet.