

IBN BATTUTA

TRAVELS IN ASIA AND AFRICA

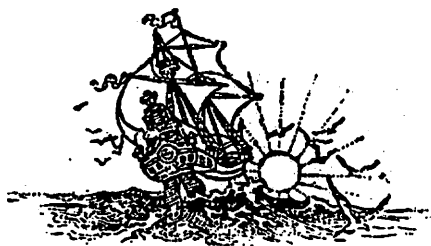
1325-1354

Translated and selected by

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With an Introduction and Notes



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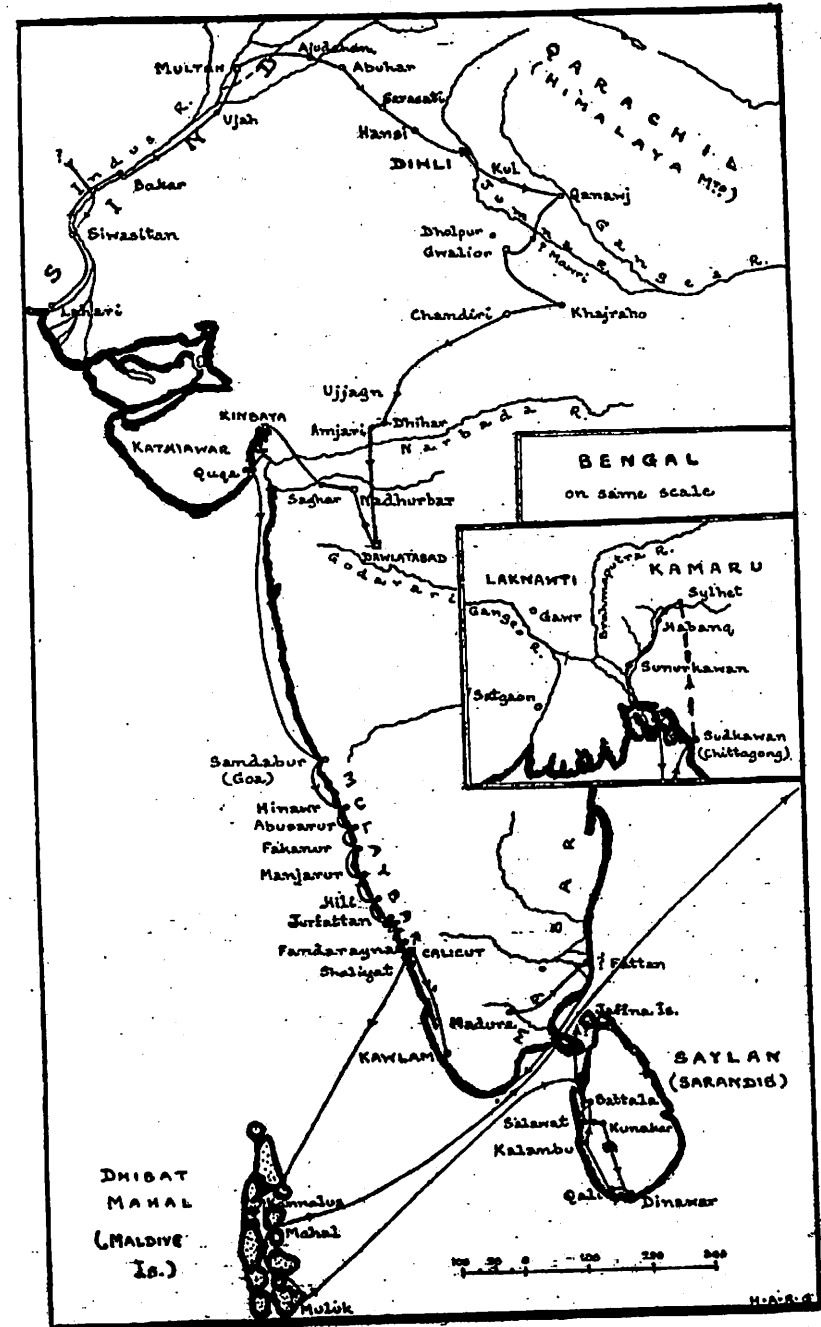
(1986)

SELECTIONS FROM THE

put on plates and carried with great speed to the sultan. In the same way they transport the principal criminals; they are each placed on a stretcher and the couriers run carrying the stretcher on their heads. The sultan's drinking water is brought to him by the same means, when he resides at Dawlat Ábád, from the river Kank (Ganges), to which the Hindus go on pilgrimage and which is at a distance of forty days' journey from there.

When the intelligence officials write to the sultan informing him of those who arrive in his country, he studies the report very minutely. They take the utmost care in this matter, telling him that a certain man has arrived of such-and-such an appearance and dress, and noting the number of his party, slaves and servants and beasts, his behaviour both in action and at rest, and all his doings, omitting no details. When the new arrival reaches the town of Multán, which is the capital of Sind, he stays there until an order is received from the sultan regarding his entry and the degree of hospitality to be extended to him. A man is honoured in that country according to what may be seen of his actions, conduct, and zeal, since no one knows anything of his family or lineage. The king of India, Sultan Muhammad Sháh, makes a practice of honouring strangers and distinguishing them by governorships or high dignities of State. The majority of his courtiers, palace officials, ministers of state, judges, and relatives by marriage are foreigners, and he has issued a decree that foreigners are to be given in his country the title of 'Aziz [Honourable], so that this has become a proper name for them.

Every person proceeding to the court of this king must needs have a gift ready to present to him, in order to gain his favour. The sultan requites him for it by a gift many times its value. When his subjects grew accustomed to this practice, the merchants



SKETCH MAP OF INDIA TO ILLUSTRATE IBN BATTÚTA'S TRAVELS

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in Sind and India began to furnish each newcomer with thousands of dinars as a loan, and to supply him with whatever he might desire to offer as a gift or to use on his own behalf, such as riding animals, camels, and goods. They place both their money and their persons at his service, and stand before him like attendants. When he reaches the sultan, he receives a magnificent gift from him and pays off his debt to them. This trade of theirs is a flourishing one and brings in vast profits. On reaching Sind I followed this practice and bought horses, camels, white slaves and other goods from the merchants. I had already bought from an 'Iráqí merchant in Ghazna about thirty horses and a camel with a load of arrows, for this is one of the things presented to the sultan. This merchant went off to Khurásán and on returning to India received his money from me. He made an enormous profit through me and became one of the principal merchants. I met him many years later, at Aleppo, when the infidels had robbed me of everything I possessed, but he gave me no assistance.

After crossing the river of Sind called Panj Áb, our way led through a forest of reeds, in which I saw a rhinoceros for the first time. After two days' march we reached Janání, a large and fine town on the bank of the river of Sind. Its people are a people called the Sámira, whose ancestors established themselves there on the conquest of Sind in the time of al-Hajjáj [712 A.D.]. These people never eat with anyone, nor may anyone observe them while they are eating, and they never marry outside their clan.² From Janání we travelled to Síwasitán [Sehwan], a large town, outside which is a sandy desert, treeless except for acacias. Nothing is grown on the river here except pumpkins, and the food of the inhabitants consists of sorghum and peas, of which they make bread. There is a plentiful supply of fish and buffalo

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milk, and they eat also a kind of small lizard stuffed with curcuma. When I saw this small animal and them eating it, I took a loathing at it and would not eat it. We entered Síwasitán during the hottest period of the summer. The heat was intense, and my companions used to sit naked except for a cloth round the waist and another soaked with water on their shoulders; this dried in a very short time and they had to keep constantly wetting it again.³

In this town I met the distinguished doctor 'Alá al-Mulk of Khurásán, formerly qádí of Herát, who had come to join the king of India and had been appointed governor of the town and province of Láharí in Sind. I decided to travel thither with him. He had fifteen ships with which he sailed down the river, carrying his baggage. One of these was a ship called the *ahawrah*, resembling the tartan of our country, but broader and shorter. In the centre of it there was a wooden cabin reached by a staircase, and on top of this there was a place prepared for the governor to sit in. His suite sat in front of him and slaves stood to right and left, while the crew of about forty men rowed. Accompanying the *ahawrah* were four ships to right and left, two of which carried the governor's standards, kettledrums, trumpets and singers. First the drums and trumpets were sounded and then the musicians sang, and this continued alternately from early morning to the lunch hour. When this moment arrived, the ships closed up and gangways were placed from one to the other. The musicians then came from on board the governor's *ahawrah* and sang until he finished eating, when they had their meal and returned to their vessel. The journey continued thereafter as before until nightfall. The camp was then set up on the bank of the river, the governor disembarked, tables were set and most of the troops joined in the meal. After the last evening

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prayer sentries were posted for the night in reliefs. As each relief finished its tour of duty one of them cried in a loud voice "O lord King,⁴ so many hours of the night are past." At dawn the trumpets and drums sounded and the dawn prayer was said, then food was brought and when the meal was finished they resumed their journey.

After five days' travelling we reached 'Alá al-Mulk's province, Láharí, a fine town on the coast where the river of Sind discharges itself into the ocean.⁵ It possesses a large harbour, visited by men from Yemen, Fárs, and elsewhere. For this reason its contributions to the Treasury and its revenues are considerable; the governor told me that the revenue from this town amounted to sixty lakhs per annum. The governor receives a twentieth part of this, that being the footing on which the sultan commits the provinces to his governors. I rode out one day with 'Alá al-Mulk, and we came to a plain called Tárna, seven miles from Láharí, where I saw an innumerable quantity of stones in the shape of men and animals. Many of them were disfigured and their forms effaced, but there remained a head or a foot or something of the sort. Some of the stones also had the shape of grains of wheat, chickpeas, beans and lentils, and there were remains of a city wall and house walls. We saw too the ruins of a house with a chamber of hewn stones, in the midst of which there was a platform of hewn stones resembling a single block, surmounted by a human figure, except that its head was elongated and its mouth on the side of its face and its hands behind its back like a pinioned captive. The place had pools of stinking water and an inscription on one of its walls in Indian characters. 'Alá al-Mulk told me that the historians relate that in this place there was a great city whose inhabitants were so depraved that they were turned to stone, and that it is their

THE TRAVELS OF
IBN BATTŪṬĀ

A.D. 1325 - 1354

Translated with revisions and notes
from the Arabic text edited by
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and made vast profits, and it became an established usage amongst them. On reaching Sind I followed this practice and bought horses, camels, white slaves and other goods from the merchants. I had already bought in Ghazna from an 'Irāqī merchant, a man from Takrit by the name of Muḥammad al-Dūrī, about thirty horses and a camel with a load of arrows, for this is one of the things presented to the Sultan. This merchant went off to Khurāsān and on returning later to India received his money from me. He made an enormous profit through me and became one of the principal merchants. I met him many years later, in the city of Aleppo, when the infidels had robbed me of everything I possessed, but I received no kindness from him. |

¹⁰⁰ *Description of the Rhinoceros.* After crossing the river of Sind called Banj Āb, we entered a forest of reeds, following the track which led through the midst of it, when we were confronted by a rhinoceros. In appearance it is a black animal with a huge body and a disproportionately large head. For this reason it has become the subject of a proverb, as the saying goes *Al-karkaddan rās bilā badan* (rhinoceros, head and no torso). It is smaller than an elephant but its head is many times larger than an elephant's. It has a single horn between its eyes, about three cubits in length and about a span in breadth. When it came out against us one of the horsemen got in its way; it struck the horse which he was riding with its horn, pierced his thigh and knocked him down, then went back into the thicket and we could not get at it. I saw a rhinoceros a second time on this road after the hour of afternoon prayer. It was feeding on plants but when we ¹⁰¹ approached it | it ran away. I saw a rhinoceros yet another time when in the company of the king of India we had entered a jungle of reeds. The sultan was mounted on an elephant and we too were mounted on elephants along with him. The foot-soldiers and horsemen went in and beat it up, killed it and conveyed its head to the camp (*maḥalla*).

After two days' march from [the crossing of] the river of Sind we reached the town of Janānī, a large and fine town on the bank of the river Sind.¹⁰ It has beautiful bazaars and has

¹⁰ Janānī no longer exists and is apparently not mentioned elsewhere. From this description it lay somewhat to the north of Sehwan but its

been inhabited from ancient times by a people called the Sāmira,¹¹ whose ancestors established themselves there on the conquest of Sind in the time of al-Ḥajjāj [A.D. 712], as the chroniclers of the conquest of Sind have noted. The shaikh, the learned imām, the ascetic doer of the law, and devout Rukn al-Dīn, son of the shaikh and virtuous doctor of the law Shams al-Dīn, son of | the shaikh, the devout and ¹⁰² ascetic imām Bahā' al-Dīn Zakariyā, the Qurashite (he was one of the three whom the shaikh and virtuous saint Burhān al-Dīn the lame told me in the city of Alexandria that I should meet them in the course of my journey, and I did meet them, God be praised),¹² told me that his earliest ancestor was called Muḥammad ibn Qāsim the Qurashite,¹³ and he took part in the conquest of Sind in the army which al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf dispatched for that purpose during his governorship in al-'Irāq and settled there and founded a numerous family. These people called the Sāmira never eat with anyone nor may anyone observe them while they are eating, nor do they marry anyone outside their clan, nor do they allow anyone to marry into it. They had at this time an amīr called Wunār whose history we shall relate in due course.¹⁴

From Janānī we travelled | to Sīwasitān [Sehwan],¹⁵ a ¹⁰³ large town, outside which is a sandy desert, treeless except for acacias. Nothing is grown on the river here except melons, and the food of the inhabitants consists of sorghum and peas, which they call *mushunk*¹⁶ and of which they make

identification with Halānī (proposed by Sir W. Haig) is very dubious. See also Mahdi Husain, intro. p. lxxvi.

¹¹ I.B. applies the familiar Arabic term for the Samaritans to the Rajput tribe of the Sūmras, who had maintained their independence in lower Sind from the eleventh century until shortly before this time.

¹² See Vol. I, pp. 23-4. Bahā' al-Dīn Zakariyā (1183-1267) was the effective founder of the Indian branch of the Suhrawardī order (see Vol. II, p. 297). His grandson Rukn al-Dīn Abu'l Faṭḥ, son of Ṣadr al-Dīn 'Arīb, died in Multān in 1335. I.B. curiously omits to say whether he met this shaikh in Janānī, or, as seems more probable, in Multān.

¹³ Since Muḥammad b. Qāsim was commander of the Arab army which conquered Sind in 712, the claim is open to question, and indeed contradicted by the Indian biographers who relate that Bahā' al-Dīn's grandfather emigrated to Multān from Khurāsān.

¹⁴ See p. 599 below.

¹⁵ A small town 120 miles north of Karachi, at some distance from the present bed of the Indus river.

¹⁶ Persian *mushang*, glossed as 'a kind of grain', or 'small pea'.

THE REIGN OF SULTAN MUḤAMMAD IBN TUGHLUQ

placed in a tent near the tent of 'Ain al-Mulk, who used to go to visit them and sit with them and then return to his prison.

In the afternoon of the day of the rout the Sultan gave orders to release the lower orders of those who were with 'Ain al-Mulk, such as muleteers, pedlars, slaves and persons of no importance. The 'king' Ibrāhīm al-Banji, whom we have mentioned, was brought in, and the 'king of the army', | the malik Nuwā, said 'O Master of the World, kill this man for he is one of the rebels.' The vizier replied 'He has ransomed himself by the leader of the rising,' so the Sultan pardoned him and set him free to go back to his own country. After the sunset prayer the Sultan took his seat in the wooden tower and sixty-two of the principal associates of the rebel were brought in. Then the elephants were brought and these men were thrown down in front of them, and they started cutting them in pieces with the blades placed on their tusks and throwing some of them in the air and catching them, and all the time the bugles and fifes and drums were being sounded. 'Ain al-Mulk too was standing watching their slaughter, and parts of them were thrown at him, then he was taken back to his prison.

The Sultan remained near the river-crossing for some days owing to the multitude of the troops and the small number of boats. He sent over his personal effects and his treasures upon the elephants, and distributed elephants to his chief courtiers to send over their effects. | He sent me one of those elephants on which I sent over my baggage.

The Sultan then went, taking us with him, to the city of Bahrāyij,²⁷ a fine town on the bank of the river Sarū, which is a great stream with a strong current. The Sultan crossed it in order to visit the tomb of the pious shaikh, the warrior Sālār 'Ūd [Mas'ūd]²⁸ who made the conquest of most of these territories. There are wonderful stories told of him and celebrated expeditions.

There was such a crowding and scrambling of people for the crossing that a large vessel sank with about 300 souls, not

²⁷ Bahrāyij was a town on the river Ganges.

²⁸ The title of Sālār 'Ūd is the name of Mas'ūd al-Ghāzi who died in 557 (1162) in the war with the Hindus. Another account is that he was born in 1013 and was killed at Bahrāyij in 1033.

one of whom escaped except one Arab of the party of Amīr Ghadā. We ourselves had embarked in a small boat and God Most High delivered us. The Arab who escaped from drowning was called Sālim ['safe'] which is a strange coincidence. He had intended to mount with us into our boat but he found that we had already | started to cross the river so he took his place in the boat which was sunk. When he came out the people thought that he was with us and there was great alarm amongst our companions and the rest of the people, imagining that we were drowned, and then when they saw us afterwards they rejoiced at our safety.

We visited the tomb of the saint whom I have mentioned, situated in a pavilion which we were unable to enter because of the multitude of the press. It was on that journey that we entered a thicket of canes and a rhinoceros came out of them against us. It was killed and the man brought its head, and though it is smaller in size than an elephant yet its head is many times bigger than an elephant's head. We have mentioned this animal in a previous passage.²⁹

Account of the Sultan's return to his capital and the rebellion of 'Alī Shāh Kar. When the Sultan was victorious over 'Ain al-Mulk, as we have related, he returned to his capital after an absence | of two and a half years. He pardoned 'Ain al-Mulk, and pardoned also Nuṣra Khān, who had revolted in the province of Tiling, and set them both to a common task, namely the supervision of the Sultan's gardens, and furnished them with robes and horses and fixed for them a daily allowance of flour and meat.

News was received after that that one of the associates of Quṭlū Khān namely 'Alī Shāh Kar (Kar means 'deaf'), had revolted against the Sultan. He was a gallant man of fine figure and character, and having taken possession of Badrakūt he made it the capital of his kingdom. The troops went out against him and on the Sultan's orders his preceptor [Quṭlū Khān] went out to engage him in battle with large forces. He besieged him in Badrakūt, and when its towers were mined and the rebel's position became desperate he requested a promise of security and Quṭlū Khān gave it to him and sent him to the Sultan in chains. The Sultan pardoned him | and

²⁹ See p. 596.