

THE TRAVELS OF
IBN BAṬṬŪṬA

A.D. 1325 - 1354

Translated with revisions and notes
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headed', because *sar* means [in Persian] 'head' and *tīz* means 'sharp'. At the time of our arrival he was in the city of Siwasitān in Sind,⁴ which is ten days' journey from Multān. From the province of Sind to the Sultan's capital, the city of Dihlī, it is fifty days' journey, but when the intelligence officers write to the Sultan from Sind the letter reaches him in five days by the postal service. |

95 *Description of the Barīd [Postal Service].*⁵ The postal service in India is of two kinds. The horse-post, which they call *ūlāq*,⁶ consists of horses belonging to the Sultan [with relays] every four miles. The service of couriers on foot has within the space of each mile three relays, which they call *dāwa*,⁷ the *dāwa* being a third of a mile, and a mile itself is called by them *kurūh*.⁸ The manner of its organization is as follows. At every third of a mile there is an inhabited village, outside which there are three pavilions. In these sit men girded up ready to move off, each of whom has a rod two cubits long with copper bells at the top. When a courier leaves the town he takes the letter in the fingers of one hand and the rod with the bells in the other, and runs with all his might. The men in
96 the pavilions, on hearing | the sound of the bells, get ready to meet him and when he reaches them one of them takes the letter in his hand and passes on, running with all his might and shaking his rod until he reaches the next *dāwa*, and so they continue until the letter reaches its destination. This post is quicker than the mounted post, and they often use it to transport fruits from Khurāsān which are regarded as great luxuries in India; the couriers put them on [woven baskets like] plates and carry them with great speed to the Sultan. In the same way they transport the principal criminals; they place each man on a stretcher and run carrying the stretcher on their heads. Likewise they bring the Sultan's drinking water when he resides at Dawlat Ābād, carrying it

⁴ See p. 597 below.

⁵ On the *barīd*, see vol. I p. 51, n. 159.

⁶ A messenger or courier on a relay of post horses (Turkish).

⁷ Persian *daw*, 'running'; MS. A reads 'which they call *dāw*, each *dāwa* being a third of a mile'. This would correspond more accurately to Arabic usage, *dāw* being the collective and *dāwa* the noun of unity. But the autograph MS. 2291 has *dāwa* in the passage on p. 618 below.

⁸ Urdu *kuroh*, a third of a *farsakh* (see vol. I, p. 34 n. 93). Its equivalence with the Arabic mile (or two kilometres) is only approximate.

from the river Kank [Ganges], to which the Hindus go on pilgrimage and which is at a distance of | forty days' journey 97
from there.

When the intelligence officials write to the Sultan informing him of those who arrive in his country, the letter is written with the utmost precision and fulness of description.⁹ They report to him that a certain man has arrived of such-and-such appearance and dress, and note the number of his party, slaves and servants and beasts, his behaviour both on the move and at rest, and all his doings, omitting no details relating to all of these. When the newcomer reaches the town of Multān, which is the capital of Sind, he stays there until the Sultan's order is received regarding his entry and the degree of hospitality to be extended to him. A man is honoured in that country only according to what may be seen of his actions, conduct, and zeal, since no one there knows anything of his family or parentage. The king of India, the Sultan Abu'l-Mujāhid Muḥammad Shāh, makes a practice of honouring strangers and showing affection to them and singling them out for governorships or high dignities of state. | The majority of his courtiers, palace officials, minis- 98
ters of state, judges, and relatives by marriage are foreigners, and he has issued a decree that foreigners are to be called in his country by the title of 'Azīz [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 person, in order to gain his favour. The Sultan requites him for it by a gift many times its value. We shall have much to tell later on about the presents made to him by foreigners. When people became familiar with this habit of his, the merchants in Sind and India began to furnish each person who came to visit the Sultan with thousands of dinars as a loan, and to supply him with whatever he might desire to offer as a gift or for his own use, 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 debts 99
and his dues to them in full. So they ran a flourishing trade

⁹ The MSS readings vary slightly, but all amount to the same thing.

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 Takrīt 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

DEFEAT OF 'AIN AL-MULK

being brought to the Sultan when one of the 'Irāqīs came to me and said ' 'Ain al-Mulk has been seized and taken to the vizier.' I did not believe him, but a little later the malik Tamūr the *shurbadār* came up to me and taking me by the hand said 'Good news, for 'Ain al-Mulk has been taken and is now with the vizier.' At that moment the Sultan set out, and we in his company, for the *maḥalla* of 'Ain al-Mulk on the river Gang, and the troops plundered its contents. Many of the soldiers of 'Ain al-Mulk rushed into the river and were drowned. Dāwud ibn Quṭb al-Mulk and the son of the 'king of the merchants' were seized along with many others, and the treasures, horses, and goods were plundered. The Sultan alighted at the crossing-place and the vizier brought 'Ain al-Mulk, who was placed on the back of an ox, naked | except ³⁵² for a rag over his loins tied with a rope, the end of which was round his neck. He halted at the gate of the enclosure, and the vizier went on to the Sultan who gave him the *shurba* as a special mark of attention.²⁵ The 'sons of the kings' came to 'Ain al-Mulk and set about reviling him and spitting in his face and slapping his companions, and the Sultan sent to him the 'great king' [Qabūla], who said 'What is this that you have done?' but he found no answer. On the Sultan's orders he was dressed in a muleteer's cloak, had four chains attached to his feet and his hands manacled to his neck, and was delivered to the vizier to be kept under guard.

His brothers crossed the river in flight and reached the town of 'Awd²⁶ where they took their wives and children and all the wealth that they could, and said to the wife of their brother 'Ain al-Mulk 'Save yourself | and your sons by ³⁵³ escaping with us.' She replied 'Shall I not do as the wives of the infidels do who burn themselves with their husbands? I too shall die for my husband's death and live for his life.' Thereupon they left her, but this was reported to the Sultan and became the cause of her good fortune, for he was overtaken by compassion for her. The eunuch Suhail overtook Naṣrallāh, one of those brothers, killed him and brought the Sultan his head. He brought also the mother, sister, and wife of 'Ain al-Mulk, who were delivered over to the vizier and

²⁵ The Sultan offers him the *shurba*, that is the ceremonial drink.

²⁶ The 'town of 'Awd' is the capital of the future Oudh.

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-Banjī, whom we have
 354 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
 355 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-Ghāzī 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 ³⁵⁶ 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- ³⁵⁷ 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 ³⁵⁸

²⁹ See p. 596.