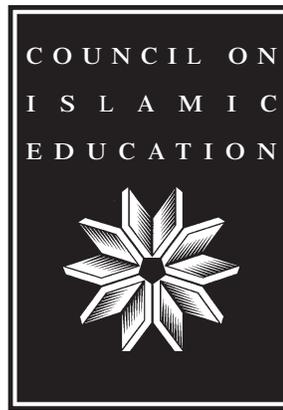


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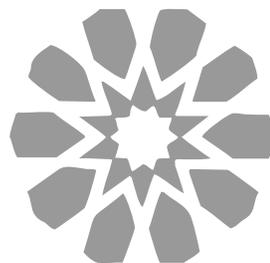
A Sampler of Literature
from Muslim Civilization

Research and Teaching Aids by Susan L. Douglass



*Beyond A Thousand
& One Nights*

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from Muslim Civilization**



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Beyond A Thousand and One Nights: A Sampler of Literature from Muslim Civilization

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NOTE TO THE READER:

Muslims pronounce a blessing upon the Prophet Muhammad whenever they mention him by name. The Arabic blessing *بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ* means “may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him.” Although this formula is not printed within the text of this unit, it is intended that it be inserted in any reading by a Muslim.

Arabic terms, with the exception of names of people and places, and a few other words, have been set in *italic* type, with definitions provided *in situ*.

Generally, dates are given in terms of the *common era* (C.E.), a convention referring to the common human experience, devoid of specific religious connotations. Historical excerpts may include “after hijra” (A.H.) dates.

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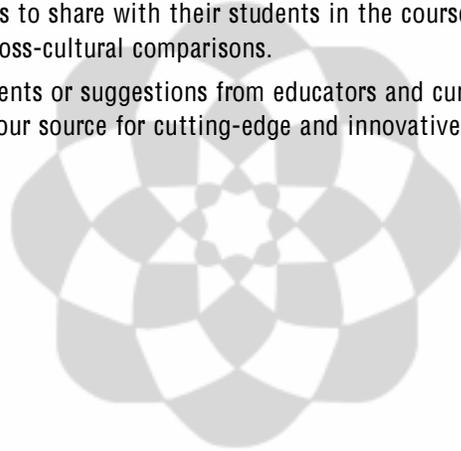


From the Director...

As-salaam Alaykum (may peace be with you). We are pleased to provide this collection of teaching resources to educators striving to raise the bar in teaching world history. As the title of this unit suggests, this sampler is intended to broaden the available literary materials teachers can use to illuminate the rich nature and varied contours of classical Islamic civilization. We have spent a great deal of time carefully selecting excerpts from works available in English translation that represent a variety of literary genres, from biographical writings, historical chronicles, poetry, scientific and philosophical treatises to insightful essays and humorous anecdotes. We trust that educators will use this sampler to cover Muslim history and culture in an authentic fashion and to enhance their students' appreciation of the role of Islamic civilization in the chain of human ingenuity and creativity. This unit will also help educators meet standards established in their states for teaching through literature.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Susan Douglass for her tireless efforts to unearth vital information for teachers and for shaping the materials in a manner that will be appealing and accessible to students at various levels. We leave it to the teacher to determine which excerpts to share with their students in the course of the school year, when covering Islam directly as well as when desiring to provide cross-cultural comparisons.

We welcome any comments or suggestions from educators and curriculum developers about this or other CIE publications. Our goal is to continue being your source for cutting-edge and innovative resources on Islamic and world history.



SHABBIR MANSURI
FOUNDING DIRECTOR

Authors' Acknowledgments

All praise is due to the Creator. To Him do we turn for aid, and to Him is the return. We are grateful for health and stamina while this work was in preparation. We pray that this effort in the service of education is accepted by Him and that it bears fruit in the spread of knowledge.

The first word of acknowledgement must go to my good friend, colleague and mentor, Elizabeth Barlow, former Outreach Coordinator for the Center for Middle East and North African Studies at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. It was her invitation to give a teacher workshop on literature from Muslim civilization that formed the germ of this collection. More importantly, she gave me the latitude of viewing literature as broadly as possible, and she was also generous enough to provide the teachers with an extensive packet of handouts, the prototype of the publication before you. It was only one small sample of her tireless work in education about Islam and the Middle East in general.

As always, gratitude is due to the generous supporters of the Council on Islamic Education, who can always be relied upon to provide what is needed for CIE publications, and for its work in general. Without them and Shabbir Mansuri, Founding Director of CIE, we would not have the autonomy to pursue such extended and often open-ended research projects. We are privileged to enjoy their confidence in our work.

I must also thank Munir Shaikh for his outstanding support, patient persistence and demanding scholarship which was so important in completing the many details involved in a collection from many sources such as this one. Gratitude must also be extended to Professor Khalid Blankinship of Temple University for his many suggestions on works that should be added to the initial collection, and to Dr. Muhammad Eissa who reviewed and commented on the manuscript. Freda Shamma also offered suggestions from her wide reading and experience with literary works from Muslim civilization. As always, the teacher reviewers lent the final polish to the work. To them is extended both gratitude and the hope that this work will come to life in lessons on a wide variety of subjects.

May my husband, Usama Amer, and our four children Anas, Ayman, Sarah and Maryam, be granted blessings for their patience and for the help and support they offer me in completing my education work. I hope to spark in them, and in students everywhere, the same fascination I felt in discovering the works of Muslims who lived so very long ago, and who still share their thoughts with us today.

SUSAN L. DOUGLASS

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Teacher's Guide

Introduction

The followers of Islam, called Muslims, produced one of the most literate cultures in world history. The *Qur'an*, the scripture that Muslims hold sacred as the directly revealed word of God, began with the word "*iqra*," meaning "read." The first five verses heard by Prophet Muhammad from the Angel Gabriel were:

*Read! In the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created,
Created man out of a clot of congealed blood.
Read! And thy Lord is Most Bountiful,
He Who taught (the use of) the pen,
Taught mankind that which he knew not.*

—Qur'an 96:1-5

These simple verses eloquently express the relationship between God, the source of all knowledge in Islamic tradition, and mankind. The lines establish the link between faith and learning, between learning and humility and between learning and recorded knowledge.

The art of the word is the highest form of artistic expression in Muslim culture—as recitation, as calligraphy and as eloquent composition. Acquisition of literacy skills is a prized accomplishment for Muslim women and men alike, and education is a duty. All over the Muslim world, recitation of the Qur'an in Arabic language was at the outset and remains to the present day an important component of Islamic practice.

Among the first impulses surrounding the transmission of the Islamic message and the development of Muslim culture was the preservation of knowledge in written and oral form. After the death of the Prophet Muhammad, numerous branches of scholarship developed to support the preservation, transmission and development of Islamic knowledge. These fields included history and law, which were both aided by the study of the Arabic language (linguistics, philology and grammar) and by improvements in writing techniques (refinement of Arabic script). Even paper-making and book-binding became highly developed crafts in the Muslim lands, in the service of spreading literacy. With the expansion and unfolding of Muslim culture from the 7th century to the present, the early literary tradition has also expanded to embrace a wide variety of literary traditions and genres from the cultures it has touched. The value of learning, writing, reading and recitation has remained paramount.

Arabic language in the Muslim world: “Arabic” vs. “Arab” scholars

The Arabic language is the universal vehicle of Muslim culture. The *Qur'an* is not accepted as authentic in any other language. While translations of the *Qur'an* are permitted, and have been produced in many world languages, they are only seen as a partial explanation of the original Arabic, not as an adequate substitute. Muslims may not dispute over interpretation merely by referring to a translation. Learning to recite the *Qur'an* in Arabic is a rite of childhood among those born in Muslim lands, and a requirement for participation in worship for anyone who accepts Islam at a later stage in life. Thus, the spread of Islam has been accompanied from the 7th century to the present by the spread of Arabic language. Even Muslims who do not speak Arabic intersperse their

everyday speech with Islamic expressions. Blessings, greetings, words for Islamic concepts and many other words have been transferred into the languages of Muslim peoples. Arabic was the script of choice for writing some other languages, like Turkish, Persian and Urdu.

Arabic language has been the most important medium of scholarship and refinement among Muslims. As such, it served as a universal bridge over which culture and the exchange of ideas was able to pass. During the first few centuries of Muslim civilization, vigorous and well-sponsored efforts at translation incorporated knowledge from Greek, Persian, Indian, and other sources into the Arabic literary corpus, where it was sifted through the sieve of Islamic cultural values, commented and built upon by an ethnically varied group of intellectuals. Often, in discussions of this literary flowering, the term “Arab” scholar is used, and it is often understood as an ethnic designation. This confusion often occurs in textbooks. It would be more accurate to call them “Arabic” scholars, meaning those who read and wrote chiefly in Arabic, regardless of their ethnic origin. Some of the most prominent “Arabic” scholars were Persians, Central Asians, Africans or others, as their surnames—often the adjectival form of a place-name (al-Bukhari, al-Khwarizmi, al-Faraghani, etc.) that is not part of the Arab world, ethnically or geographically, but is a very important part of the Muslim world—indicate.

Whether in Arabic or local languages, the spread of Islam carried with it everywhere the development of a literate tradition, and the development of Muslim thought entailed the retooling or development of various distinctive genres of scholarly and literary work. Thus, language—oral and written—plain and embellished, has played a continuous role in Islamic tradition for over 1400 years.

Using Literature to Teach About Islam and Muslim Culture

Fortunately, literature has become an important element of history teaching, at least on paper. Most state curriculum guides include and praise it, and most textbooks incorporate literature to some degree nowadays. It is important therefore to mention the goals of introducing literature into a history program. They are, to quote *the California History/Social Science Framework* “Historical and Cultural Literacy” Strands:

- ✿ To understand the rich, complex nature of a given culture
- ✿ To perceive what its members believe about themselves in terms of values, stories, beliefs, common bonds
- ✿ To recognize that literature and art reflect the inner life of a people
- ✿ To see through the eyes of people who were there

We can go far toward meeting these goals by sampling literature from a culture. In deciding what sorts of literature might be introduced into the history classroom, the first thought is often the *belles lettres*—poetry and prose fiction. This type of literature is undoubtedly both attractive and expressive of a culture, and has been liberally included in this sampler as well. Limiting students’ exposure to this narrow field may not, however, be entirely representative of a culture. The goal of understanding the richness and complexity of a culture and its inner life can only be met by casting a wider net. This is especially true when the topic of study is a major world culture with the diversity and longevity of Islam.

The Thousand and One Nights as literature for the classroom

In teaching about Islam and Muslim culture, *The Thousand and One Nights* (also called *Arabian Nights*) has often been introduced as an example of literature. As the title of this book indicates, we recommend and provide the tools for an alternative approach, but a brief note of explanation on the attitude toward the *Arabian Nights* may be indicated.

Undoubtedly, the famous frame tale about Sheherezade and the King is very attractive to young students, and has the additional value of name recognition and popularity. Students of literature have found in the collection enormous richness of detail and depth of expression. The work is even to some degree representative of certain aspects of the culture. What merits reconsideration, however, is its use as the sole work used to represent the literature of the Muslim world in a history course. For anyone familiar with the enormous literary output of Muslim culture, it is strange that educators have so often reached to *The Thousand and One Nights*, a popular, originally oral genre with roots in a multicultural fund of folk tales, for understanding and enrichment. It is thus frustrating that a whole host of literary genres is bypassed—genres that give a more characteristic overall picture of urban Muslim culture—one of the major forces that sustained Islamic civilization over the centuries.

A method used frequently in history classrooms is of course analysis of a literary selection for clues about everyday life. There are many hazards to using the *Arabian Nights* in this way. While it is certainly true that the stories probably capture some aspects of Baghdad society during the height of the Abbasid period¹—and that in a most compelling way—it is important for teachers to make their students aware that the stories belong to a genre based on both caricature and myth. First, they were originally told in informal social gatherings by storytellers, passed down and elaborated through many centuries before they were written down. The purpose of the stories in the Muslim world itself was to entertain, but also to evoke a legendary past in the mind of the Muslim listener—a golden age better than in the listener's own. By the hands of the romantic, orientalist travelers who translated them into European languages, additional veils of myth and mystery are placed between the historical subject of the stories and the eyes of the modern reader.

If the stories represent the students' only exposure to historical flavor, there is a danger that the imagery in the tales will come to stand for all of Muslim society and culture. Because the *Arabian Nights* involves legend and fantasy, the attempt to discover historical reality in them can invoke and reinforce formation of stereotypes. This is particularly true of the *Arabian Nights* because of the role they play in popular Western culture. Their extensive use to evoke images of Islam and Muslims in advertising, in cartoon shorts, feature films and in children's literature more accurately reflects Western fascination with the tales than it bears resemblance to their historical subject. There is a danger that the stories may come to stand for the historical Muslim world in students' impressionable minds. Added to this is the well-known problem of bias, ambiguity and misunderstanding in Western culture's approach to knowing about Islam and its Muslim neighbors. In conclusion, using the *Arabian Nights* as the only "primary" source for teaching about the Muslim world is like inviting foreign students to learn about American history by studying Batman, or asking students to learn about the native American experience by reading Hiawatha.

1. For students who wish to evaluate historical aspects of the *Arabian Nights*, a very useful corrective that provides detailed historical context to the period is the book by French historian Andre Clot, *Harun al-Rashid and the World of the Thousand and One Nights*, translated by John Howe (New Amsterdam Books, 1989).

Exploring Excerpts from a Variety of Muslim Literary Works

The purpose of the present collection is to allow students and teachers to become aware of and to sample the wide variety of literary forms in which Muslim writers have expressed themselves. This includes genres that are seldom considered under "literature," such as scientific, technical and philosophical writing. Each of the literary types included here is part of a long, proud tradition in the culture. In nearly every case, it would have been possible to fill an entire collection of this size just with excerpts from one genre. Thus it would have been possible to sample across the spectrum of Muslim world geography and historical periods in poetry, or history writing, scientific discovery, humor, folk tales, or allegorical stories. As it is, the present collection is quite eclectic, but still in some respects narrow. The rich literatures of Africa and Southeast Asia, later Persian, Indian and Turkish cultures, to name just a few, will have to be taken up in additional volumes to follow, God willing.

Tips for Classroom Use of the Sampler

This collection is designed and formatted to assist students in sustaining their effort and to encourage them to delve into the unfamiliar. The excerpts have been selected for brevity, interest, and representative content, as well as literary quality. Each includes brief background information on the author and the significance of the work, as well as a footnote citation of the full work in translation for further exploration. (A one-page skills lesson on using footnotes is included in this unit, following this introduction). The selections are generally followed by study questions and activities that aid comprehension of unfamiliar language and ideas, and help to put it in context. Many of the activities draw in works from other cultures for comparison and for exploration of the work's influence in some cases.

There are many ways to use the selections, some of which are suggested by the study questions and activities, but a few other ideas might be helpful in dealing with unfamiliar material. Students may initially have trouble with certain elements in the style or format of some selections. For example, in the hadith and some of the historical excerpts, the reader will notice that a sequence of narrators' names is given. While these could have been edited out, it is important to give the reader an authentic picture of the literary form. To help students over this obstacle, the teacher might suggest that they take note of these elements and their purpose initially, and perhaps use highlighter pen to locate them. When reading for the general meaning of the passage, they can then be ignored. In the case of the scientific and philosophical excerpts, for example, it may not be necessary in every case to thoroughly comprehend the passage in order to gain an appreciation for the historical and cultural importance of the work. The teacher can invite the class to look into the work initially just by looking *at* it as a cultural and personal *artifact*. What topics does it treat, and how are they handled from the standpoint of language and format? What literary formulas and style are apparent? How does the author give us a sense of his or her values? What obstacles are apparent from the writing that they had to overcome in reaching their goals or obtaining an audience? Are patrons mentioned by name? What is the author's point of view toward the subject, the audience, and the literary or scholarly tradition in which he or she is writing? What clues about the history of technology can be gleaned from a poem, an essay, or a scientific treatise, for example? What other clues to the life and times of the author can be discovered? Linking geography to the work, where did the author originate, and where was the work written? Locating author and work on a timeline and relating them to events in Muslim and global history can add depth. History teachers can of course benefit from consulting with their colleagues in the literature department on techniques for analyz-

ing literary works, and the opportunities for team teaching will maximize the benefits for students. The suggestions given here will of course be enriched by skillful and insightful teachers far beyond what the compiler of this sampler could suggest, and these teachers' ideas would be welcomed and acknowledged in future editions.

Finally, the famous words of a Muslim poet provide the best introduction to this effort to give teachers and students of Islam and Muslims a fuller picture of the inner life of a most fascinating and diverse cultural heritage:

تِلْكَ آثَارُنَا تَدُلُّ عَلَيْنَا * فَانظُرُوا بَعْدَنَا إِلَى الْآثَارِ

*“These are our works, these works our souls display;
Behold our works when we have passed away.”*



Guide to Classical Arabic Names and Islamic Chronology

Classical Arabic Names

In modern times, many Muslims, Christians and Jews of Arabic heritage have adopted the Western custom of using personal and family (first and last) names to identify themselves. During the classical Islamic period, however, when Arabic was the lingua franca of Muslim lands stretching from Spain to India, Muslim names (and those of Arabic-speaking Jews and Christians living under Muslim rule) were of Arabic derivation. Many Muslims adopted names of prophets or pious figures mentioned in the Qur'an, and likewise Jews and Christians adopted Arabic analogs of names in their own sacred texts (Isa for Jesus, for example). In later centuries, Persian, Turkish and other languages also became sources for names of peoples residing in the Muslim world.

The richness of the Arabic language and the diverse social settings and relationships between people led to the use of several types of names and identifying labels. Thus, classical Arabic proper names were composed of various combinations of five elements of nomenclature, listed below:

1. The *ism*, or personal name (first name). During the early centuries of Islam, most Muslim names (and those of Arabic-speaking Jews and Christians) were in Arabic, many derived from the Qur'an (names of prophets or pious figures). In later centuries, Persian, Turkish and other languages were sources for names of Muslims and other religious communities residing in the Muslim world.

Examples: Ahmad, Ali, Haleema, Abd al-Rahman, Yasmeen, Fatima, Ibrahim, Maryam, Musa, Sulayman

2. The *kunya*, an actual name or nickname comprised of the prefix *Abu* (father of), or *Umm* (mother of), followed by a personal name.

Examples: Umm Kulthum, Abu Kasim, Abu Bakr, Abu Nuwas

3. The *nasab*, a geneologic formulation describing an ancestral lineage. Each person in the list is successively listed using the prefix *ibn* (son of) or *bint* (daughter of). The term *Banu* (or *Bani*), meaning "sons of" is used to describe an entire tribe or family in classical texts.

Examples: Walladah bint Mustakfi, Ali ibn Hazm, Muhammad ibn Rushd, Banu Umayya, Bani Hilal

4. The *laqab*, an honorific or descriptive title or nickname, usually containing the definite article *al* ("the").

Examples: al-Rashid (the upright), al-Mansur (the victorious)

5. The *nisba*, an adjective derived from place of birth, region or residence, family name or origin, or profession. The *nisba* usually ends in "i" for males and "iyya" for females. The definite article *al* ("the") is also present in this formulation.

Examples: al-Isfahani (from Isfahan, Iran), al-Majriti (from Madrid, Spain), al-Qattan (the cotton weaver), al-Warraaq (the paper seller), al-Dimashqi (from Damascus, Syria)

The information above is intended to help readers decipher the component parts of Arabic names appearing in this unit.

Islamic Chronology

The Muslim tradition holds the Prophet Muhammad's migration in 622 C.E. from Makkah to Madinah (the *hijrah*) and his subsequent establishment of an Islamic polity centered at Madinah to be of seminal importance. The Muslim worldview takes this event as a new starting point, ushering in the Islamic era. Classical as well as contemporary Muslim scholarly and literary writings reflect this chronological framework.

Modern scholars of Islam and Muslim history typically employ the abbreviation AH (Anno Hegirae) to indicate dates according to the Islamic chronology. The Muslim year is comprised of twelve *lunar* months, and is as a result roughly 11 days shorter than the solar Gregorian calendar. Thus, there is not a one-on-one correlation of Islamic dates to standard Western dates, and a formula must be employed to accurately determine corresponding CE and AH dates. The formula for deriving AH dates from CE dates is given below:

$$AH = (CE - 622) \times 33/32$$





Footnotes Empower You, the Reader!

- **Situation:** Reading along in a book or article, you notice a little number¹, asterisk*, or dagger† spaced above the line of type. What do you decide to do? Ignore it and read on? Close the book and hide it? Shriek, “This is too hard!”?
- **What to do:** Empower yourself! Be a savvy reader! Look for the matching number or symbol at the bottom of the page you are reading. If you find it there, then you have just encountered a **footnote**. If it's not at the “foot” of the page, you have met up with an **endnote**. Look for the number at the end of the chapter or article. Or, the book's Table of Contents may refer to “Notes”. The endnotes will be grouped by chapter, under the number matching the note.
- **What notes are good for:** Footnotes offer a dialogue between the writer and you, the reader. They are similar to information in parentheses (which tells you something that doesn't fit smoothly into the text). A note does the same job—adding extra information—while adding a minimum of clutter.
- **Anatomy of a foot- or endnote:** Some notes just contain text. They may give the definition of a word. The writer may include in a footnote an extra tidbit that was too good to leave out, or to explain a point in the text. These notes help you, the reader, to understand, or they give you tips for your own research or study.

Most footnotes contain references to other books and articles, sources that the author has used. They come in many styles, but this is a common form:

THE QUOTE:

*“I am like a book, both silent and talking; the content of my question is hidden in my answer.”***

symbol

THE NOTE:

symbol

author/editor's name

book's title

where published

** George N. Atiyeh, ed., *The Book in the Islamic World* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), p. 71.

who published

year published

page where the author got the information

DETECTIVE WORK WITH REFERENCE FOOTNOTES:

Footnotes that cite sources let you do two things:

1. Check up on the author; is he or she telling the truth? Is the author accurately using a quote? Is the quotation consistent in meaning with the source? Was it taken too far out of context?
2. Learn more about the book cited in the footnote; you can go right to the page the author used. You can follow a line of thinking or a research trail, looking for ideas and other sources on the topic you want to learn about. If you are reading a quote or excerpt from a book, you can read a fuller version, or the whole book.

TRY IT!

Pick a quotation from a book. Copy it, placing after it a footnote symbol or number. Then, write a footnote containing all of the style elements and information in the sample footnote. Look for other styles of footnotes and practice using them.

Selected Hadith

(Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad)

Compiled and recorded in Hadith collections by early Muslim scholars

Historical Sources

Sahih al-Bukhari & Sahih Muslim
(The Authenticated Collections
by al-Bukhari and by Muslim)

Authors

Muhammad ibn Ismail
al-Bukhari (d. 870CE) and
Abu al-Husayn Muslim
(d. 875CE)

Excerpted from

The Alim for Windows CD-ROM
(Baltimore: ISL Software Corp.),
1996. [800-397-5561]

Hadith 1.3 ❁ Narrated by Aisha

The commencement of the Divine Inspiration to Allah's Prophet was in the form of good dreams which came true like bright daylight, and then the love of seclusion was bestowed upon him. He used to go in seclusion in the cave of Hira where he used to worship (Allah alone) continuously for many days before his desire to see his family. He used to take with him on the journey food for the stay and then come back to (his wife) Khadija to take his food likewise again till suddenly the Truth descended upon him while he was in the cave of Hira. The angel came to him and asked him to read. The Prophet replied, "I do not know how to read."

The Prophet added, "The angel caught me (forcefully) and pressed me so hard that I could not bear it any more. He then released me and again asked me to read and I replied, 'I do not know how to read.' Thereupon he caught me again and pressed me a second time till I could not bear it any more. He then released me and again asked me to read but again I replied, 'I do not know how to read (or what shall I read)?' Thereupon he caught me for the third time and pressed me, and then released me and said, 'Read in the name of your Lord, who has created (all that exists) has created man from a clot. Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous.'" (*Qur'an 96:1-3*). Then Allah's Prophet returned with the Inspiration and with his heart beating severely. He went to Khadija and said, "Cover me! Cover me!" They covered him till his fear was over and after that he told her everything that had happened and said, "I fear that something may happen to me." Khadija replied, "Never! By Allah, Allah will never disgrace you. You keep good relations with your kith and kin, help the poor and the destitute, serve your guests generously and assist the deserving calamity-afflicted ones."

Khadija then accompanied him to her cousin Waraqa bin Nawfal, who, during the Pre-Islamic Period became a Christian and used to write with Hebrew letters. He would write from the Gospel in Hebrew as much as Allah wished him to write. He was an old man and had lost his eyesight. Khadija said to Waraqa, "Listen to the story of your

nephew, O my cousin!" Waraqa asked, "O my nephew! What have you seen?" Allah's Prophet described whatever he had seen. Waraqa said, "This is the same one who keeps the secrets (angel Gabriel) whom Allah had sent to Moses. I wish I were young and could live up to the time when your people would turn you out." Allah's Prophet asked, "Will they drive me out?" Waraqa replied in the affirmative and said, "Anyone (man) who came with something similar to what you have brought was treated with hostility; and if I should remain alive till the day when you will be turned out then I would support

ABOUT THE SELECTION

The collection of *ahadith* (plural of *hadith*), the sayings and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad as related by his companions, began while he was still alive. The *sahabah* (companions), as those Muslims who lived and associated with him are called, took care to remember what he said and relate it to others. As they did with the words of the *Qur'an* that they heard from the Prophet, they committed these sayings to memory or to writing, and made frequent use of these narrations. The Companions of the first generation passed along this information. From this there developed a very useful tradition of establishing the authenticity of a *hadith* by relating its chain of transmission, or *isnad*, through several generations. Inclusion of *hadith* in written, scholarly works began in the early period after the death of Muhammad in 632CE, and culminated with several famous books of *hadith* compiled and authenticated during the 9th century. *Sahih al-Bukhari* (the scholar al-Bukhari died in 870CE) is one of the most famous and authoritative collections. It has been translated into English and has now been placed on CD-ROM for easy reference. Each *hadith* begins with the name of the person who narrated it on the authority of Prophet Muhammad.

you strongly.” But after a few days Waraqa died and the Divine Inspiration was also paused for a while.

Jabir ibn Abdullah al-Ansari narrated while talking about the period of pause in revelation, reporting the speech of the Prophet: “While I was walking, all of a sudden I heard a voice from the sky. I looked up and saw the same angel who had visited me at the cave of Hira sitting on a chair between the sky and the earth. I became afraid of him and came back home and said, ‘Wrap me (in blankets): And then Allah revealed the following Holy Verses (of Qur’an):

“O you (i.e. Muhammad) wrapped up in garments! Arise and warn (the people against Allah’s Punishment)...’ up to ‘and desert the idols.’ (Qur’an 74:1-5).

After this the revelation started coming strongly, frequently and regularly.”

Hadith 9.255 ❁

Narrated by Abdullah

Allah’s Prophet said, “Do not wish to be like anyone, except in two cases: (1) A man whom Allah has given wealth and he spends it righteously. (2) A man whom Allah has given wisdom (knowledge of the *Qur’an* and the *Hadith*) and he acts according to it and teaches it to others.”

Hadith 9.264 ❁

Narrated by Maqil

I heard the Prophet saying, “Any man whom Allah has given the authority of ruling some people and he does not look after them in an honest manner, will never feel even the smell of Paradise.”

Hadith 1.12 ❁

Narrated by Anas

The Prophet said, “None of you will have faith until he wishes for his brother what he likes for himself.”

Hadith 1.32 ❁

Narrated by Abu Huraira

The Prophet said, “The signs of a hypocrite are three:

1. Whenever he speaks, he tells a lie.
2. Whenever he promises, he always breaks it (his promise).
3. If you trust him, he proves to be dishonest. (If you keep something as a trust with him, he will not return it.)”

Hadith 1.38 ❁

Narrated by Abu Huraira

The Prophet said, “Religion is very easy and whoever overburdens himself in his religion will not be able to continue in that way. So you should not be extremists, but try to be near to perfection and receive the good tidings that you will be rewarded; and gain strength by worshipping in the mornings, and the nights.”

Hadith 8.200 ❁

Narrated by Abu Huraira

Allah’s Prophet said, “Allah said, ‘The offspring of Adam abuse the *Dahr* (Time), and I am the *Dahr*; in My Hands are the night and the day!’”

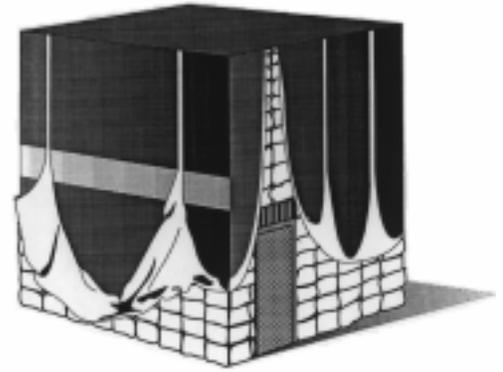
Hadith 8.135 ❁

Narrated by Abu Huraira

Allah’s Prophet said, “The strong is not the one who overcomes the people by his strength, but the strong is the one who controls himself while in anger.”

Additional Hadith

- ❁ Obey your parents and treat them kindly for if you do so then your own children will be obedient and kind to you.
- ❁ Heaven lies under the feet of the mother.
- ❁ All children are God's children and those dearest to God are those who treat His children kindly.
- ❁ When three people are together two should not talk secretly, leaving the third alone, since this may grieve him.
- ❁ Seeking knowledge is a duty of every Muslim.
- ❁ Exchange presents with one another for they remove ill feelings from the heart.
- ❁ Take advantage of five things before five others happen: your youth before you grow old; your health before you fall sick; your money before you become poor; your leisure before you become busy and your life before you die.
- ❁ Cleanliness is half of the religion.
- ❁ The most perfect in faith amongst Muslim men is he who is best in manner and kindest to his wife.
- ❁ Powerful is not he who knocks the other down. Indeed powerful is he who controls himself when he is angry.
- ❁ If one of you sees something evil he should change it with his hand. If he cannot he should speak out against it, and if he cannot do even that he should at least detest it in his heart.
- ❁ Actions are judged according to their intentions, and every person will be judged (in the Hereafter) according to what he or she intends.
- ❁ The world is green and beautiful, and God has appointed you His stewards over it.
- ❁ Modesty and Faith are joined closely together and if either of them is lost, the other goes also.
- ❁ He who eats his fill while his neighbor goes without food is not a believer.



The Ka'bah, the house of worship built by the Prophet Abraham in ancient times and rededicated to monotheism by the Prophet Muhammad in 630CE.

Study Questions and Activities

1. According to the *hadith* relating how the revelation of the Qur'an and Muhammad's prophethood began: (a) what habit of Muhammad's led him to the cave? (b) How was the experience of the revelation described in the tradition? (c) What two people confirmed for Muhammad the belief that his experience with the Angel Gabriel was real? (d) What happened after the first revelation, and why did Muhammad begin to preach to others?
2. Using these selections from *hadith*, make a list of good qualities a person should have and good acts a person should perform.
3. Write a short paragraph on one of the *hadith*, explaining its meaning and applying it to a familiar situation.

Farewell Address

Given by the Prophet Muhammad during his last pilgrimage to Makkah

Historical Sources

Sahih al-Bukhari & Sahih Muslim
(The Authenticated Collections
by al-Bukhari and by Muslim)

Authors

Muhammad ibn Ismail
al-Bukhari (d. 870CE) and
Abu al-Husayn Muslim
(d. 875CE)

Excerpted from

The Alim for Windows CD-ROM
(Baltimore: ISL Software Corp.),
1996. [800-397-5561]



A *minbar*, or stepped podium from which the *imam* (prayer leader) of a masjid addresses the congregation. Out of respect for the Prophet Muhammad, the imam stands below the topmost step.

“O People, lend me an attentive ear, for I don’t know whether, after this year, I shall ever be amongst you again. Therefore listen to what I am saying to you carefully and **take these words to those who could not be present here today.**

O People, just as you regard this month, this day, this city as Sacred, so regard the life and property of every Muslim as a sacred trust. Return the goods entrusted to you to their rightful owners. Hurt no one so that no one may hurt you. Remember that you will indeed meet your Lord, and that He will indeed reckon your deeds. Allah has forbidden you to take usury (interest), therefore all interest obligation shall henceforth be waived...

Beware of Satan, for your safety of your religion. He has lost all hope that he will ever be able to lead you astray in big things, so beware of following him in small things.

O People, it is true that you have certain rights with regard to your women, but they also have right over you. If they abide by your right then to them belongs the right to be fed and clothed in kindness. Do treat your women well and be kind to them for they are your partners and committed helpers. And it is your right that they do not make friends with any one of whom you do not approve, as well as never to commit adultery.

O People, listen to me in earnest, worship Allah, say your five daily prayers (*salah*), fast during the month of Ramadan, and give your wealth in *zakah*. Perform Hajj if you can afford to. You know

that every Muslim is the brother of another Muslim. **You are all equal. Nobody has superiority over other except by piety and good action.**

Remember, one day you will appear before Allah and answer for your deeds. So beware, do not stray from the path of righteousness after I am gone.

O People, **no prophet or apostle will come after me and no new faith will be born.** Reason well, therefore, O People, and understand my words which I convey to you. I leave behind me two things, the Qur’an and my example, the Sunnah and if you follow these you will never go astray.

All those who listen to me shall pass on my words to others and those to others again; and may the last ones understand my words better than those who listen to me directly. **Be my witness oh Allah that I have conveyed your message to your people.”**

ABOUT THE SELECTION

During the last year of his life, Prophet Muhammad, aware of signs that his end in this life was near, led the *hajj*, or pilgrimage to Makkah (Mecca). His biographers record that after his annual retreat during Ramadan, he determined to make the journey from Madinah to Makkah for the hajj. He told a secret to his daughter, Fatimah: “[The Angel] Gabriel recites the Qur’an to me and I to him once every year [to make sure that nothing of the Revelation had slipped from his memory]; but this year he has recited it with me twice. I cannot think but that my time has come.” Performing the rites of Hajj at Makkah is one of the five pillars, or basic acts of worship required of every Muslim who is able. Makkah, the city of his birth, had come into the fold of Islam, along with most of the territory of Arabia, after a struggle that had lasted about twenty years. This pilgrimage was attended by thousands of Muslims from all over Arabia, and with it the rites were established—based on the precedents of Prophet Abraham—that Muslims follow to the letter today. At the hill of Arafat, where pilgrims stand for a day praying for forgiveness from God, Muhammad preached this sermon, offering advice and warning to his community for the future, and pronouncing for the first time the last verse of the Qur’an to be revealed. This address was delivered on the Ninth Day of Dhul Hijjah 10AH in the Uranah Valley of mount Arafat.

Study Questions and Activities

1. What cautions were given to the people concerning religion?
2. What statements were made about marriage?
3. What warnings are repeated to the Muslims concerning life and property?
4. What statements in the address describe and define Prophet Muhammad's role in bringing the message of Islam?
5. Discuss the meaning of the last two sentences, in terms of the listeners on that day, and in terms the development of Muslim scholarly traditions in the centuries that followed.



Communications of the Early Khalifahs

Historical Source

Various early biographical works on the Prophet's companions

Authors

Abu Bakr (d. 634CE) and Umar (d. 644CE), the first two of the "Rightly-Guided" caliphs

Excerpted from

① Allana, G., ed. *A Rosary of Islamic Readings* (Karachi: National Publishing House), 1973.

➤ pp. 9-10

② Sabiq, Sayyid. *Fiqh al-Sunna*, Volume 3 (Cairo: Dar al-Turath al-Araby), 1958.

Translated from the Arabic by Usama Amer and Susan Douglass.

excerpt 1

Address from Khalifah Abu Bakr Upon the Death of the Prophet Muhammad

Behold! I have been charged with the responsibilities of Government. I am not the best amongst you. I shall need all the advice and help that you can give. If I act well, you must support me. If I make a mistake, advise me. To tell the truth to him who is given the responsibility to rule is dutiful allegiance. To hide it would be treason. The strong and the weak are equal in my eyes, and I want to mete out justice to both. As I obey God and His Prophet, you must obey me. If I disobey the Laws of God and the Prophet, I forfeit my right to your obedience.



A ceramic Iznik tile from c. 1665 showing a diagram of the Ka'bah in Makkah.

ABOUT THE SELECTIONS

The Rightly-Guided Khalifahs (caliphs) ruled the early Muslim state for thirty years (632-661CE) as successors to the Prophet Muhammad. Abu Bakr was the first, followed by Umar Ibn al-Khattab, second and longest ruling of the Rightly-Guided Khalifahs. He was followed by Uthman Ibn Affan. Uthman's death caused a period of strife that accompanied the rule of the fourth khalifah, Ali Ibn Abi Talib, whose rule also ended with his murder. The Rightly-Guided Khalifahs were early Muslim companions of the Prophet Muhammad and had absorbed much knowledge and experience from his example. The period of their rule is remembered until the present as a period of just government. The following selections give some idea why they are revered by Muslim and other historians, much as the Founding Fathers of the early United States are revered by Americans.

excerpt 2

A Letter from Khalifah Umar ibn al-Khattab to Abu Musa al-Ashari

(giving advice upon appointing him as provincial judge)

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Peace be with you.

Verily, administration of justice is an obligation and belongs to the Sunnah, so be aware that pronouncing the verdict without enforcing the judgement is worthless. Be just between the two opponents in the way you look at them, your fairness and the way you seat them. so that neither the wealthy take advantage because of their class nor the poor lose faith in your justice.

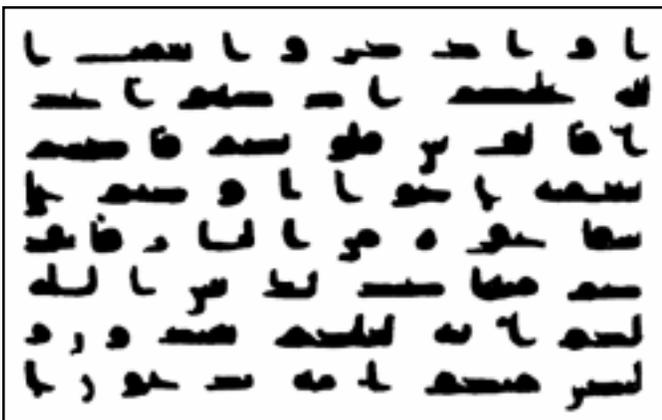
Proof is required from the plaintiff and an oath is required from the defendant and reconciliation is permissible among people, except in that which makes the lawful unlawful or vice versa. Don't hesitate to correct your verdict if you found out that a previous judgement was wrong, because it is never too late to reinstate that which is right, and it is always better than perpetuating the wrong. Whenever direct proof for judgement is not found in Qur'an or Sunnah you must thoroughly study it, then look for similar cases and weigh them carefully.

Set a time limit for those who need time for proof. If they bring evidence, settle the case for them, and if not, judge against them as this removes doubt.

All Muslims testimony is valid except a person who was punished for exceeding the limits of God (convicted of a crime) or a person who is known to have borne false witness or one who is a hypocrite. and God knows what is hidden.

Don't ever be restless or impatient during a dispute. Verily, God multiplies the reward for putting justice where it belongs. And whoever obeys his good intention and disregards the call of his desires, God will take care of his relations with people. And whoever shows a face different from what he hides, God will uncover his veil and he will be disgraced.

So, do you think of receiving a reward from someone other than God, whose mercy and bounty are imminent? Peace be with you.



Calligraphy of a Qur'anic verse, attributed to the hand of Umar ibn al-Khattab.

Study Questions and Activities

1. Upon what authority is Abu Bakr basing his executive authority and the legitimacy of his rule? Who decides whether Abu Bakr has fulfilled his trust? Do the ideas expressed in the sermon fit the definition of a *theocracy*? Why or why not?
2. Identify in the letters three principles of action that the two leaders are advising their appointees to follow. Explain why these are important attributes of governance.
3. Identify several legal principles from Abu Bakr's sermon and Umar's letter that apply to our modern legal system.
4. What values are exhibited in the sermon and letters that reflect Islamic virtues?
5. What social benefits for citizens of the state are contained, assuming that the advice of Abu Bakr and Umar is followed?
6. Write a letter to a modern leader offering some advice for today's political situation.



The Peak of Eloquence

ABOUT THE SELECTION

The collection entitled *Nahj al-Balagha* (meaning: "peak of eloquence") was first compiled in the fifth century by al-Sayyid al-Radi (970-1015CE). He was from an influential family of Shi'i scholars who traced their ancestry back to the family of the Prophet. Al-Radi was educated in the various branches of Islamic sciences, Arabic language and literature. He began teaching at the age of sixteen, and was a respected scholar and poet when he was still in his twenties.

Many of these sermons, letters and sayings that are attributed to Ali in this collection can be traced to respected earlier works, some of which still exist, or can be identified in the works of later authors. According to a famous biographical dictionary, *al-Rijal al-Kabeer*, Zaid Ibn Wahab Jahni, who died about 90 years after the Hijrah, was the first person to collect the sayings, sermons and letters of Ali in book form. He was known as a narrator of the traditions among those who had preserved this important historical and religious knowledge after the beloved leader's death, based on the strong tradition of oral transmission as well as some written records. During the second Islamic century, the compilation continued with Abdul Hamid ibn Yahya (died 132AH), Ibn al-Muqaffa (died 142AH) and others who are mentioned in the famous biographical collection the *Fihrist* of Ibn Nadim. Quotations from these collections appeared in many histories and other books, including historical works by al-Tabari, al-Masudi, al-Yaqubi and al-Kindi. Throughout the centuries, commentaries on the *Nahj al-Balagha* have been written by eminent scholars, and the respect held for the work by Sunni and Shi'i Muslims alike is a testament to the reverence in which Ali Ibn Abi Talib is held by all Muslims.

Ali Ibn Abi Talib was the fourth of the "Rightly-Guided Khalifahs," all close companions of Prophet Muhammad who shared in the development of the early Muslim community. He took over the *Khilafah*, or leadership of the state, following the rule of Uthman Ibn Affan, who is known to have appointed some governors with whom citizens were dissatisfied.

Ali's selection of a governor for Egypt was particularly important, and he emphasized to Malik al-Ashtar that good governance would be of the utmost importance in re-establishing trust in that province. It was a disgruntled group of Egyptians whose dissatisfaction resulted in Uthman's murder and the contested leadership of the state by Muawiyah, Uthman's governor of Syria, who was a member of Uthman's family. Muawiyah contested the affirmation of Ali as *Khalifah*, which resulted in a serious conflict in the early Muslim community, called the *fitna*. Ultimately, Ali ruled for almost five years before he was murdered, after which Muawiyah managed to hold onto the leadership of the Muslim state with the help of his Syrian supporters. He then became founder of the Umayyad Dynasty when he appointed his son Yazid as his successor.

Though it is lengthy, Ali's letter to Malik is given in full here. It is a remarkable statement for its time, and provides an interesting comparison with treatises on government from a variety of cultures and historical periods. It includes the major principles of good government as expressed by the foremost of Prophet Muhammad's followers. Ali, the Prophet's cousin and later his son-in-law, had been extremely close to him from his earliest childhood, was one of the first to accept Islam, and shared in all of the struggles and triumphs of the earliest community. Most importantly, Ali spent a tremendous amount of time in Prophet Muhammad's presence, learning and absorbing wisdom. His character, wisdom and learning have been praised in histories both in East and West for generations.

This letter summarizes many of the basic Islamic principles of administration and justice. It deals with the duties and obligations of rulers, their chief responsibilities, the priorities of rights and obligations, dispensation of justice, control over officials of the state; the branches of administration, their co-ordination with each other and their co-operation with the executive. Malik is especially advised to combat corruption and oppression among the officers, to keep watch over the markets and prevent hoarding and fraud. In it he also explained the roles of various classes in a society, the duties of the government towards the various groups, how they are to be looked after and how their conditions are to be improved, the principle of equitable distribution of wealth and opportunities, orphans and their upbringing, maintenance of the handicapped, crippled and disabled persons. There is a discussion of the military, and the most suitable professionals and volunteers to serve in it. Finally, he comments upon the rights of rulers over the ruled and of the ruled over the rulers. The central idea running through these instructions is the message of submission to the One God, the promise of His Mercy, the hope of His Forgiveness to the pious and the warning against His Punishment for the wrongdoers.

📖 Historical Source
Nahj al-Balagha
(The Peak of Eloquence)

✍ Author
al-Sharif al-Radi (d. 1015CE)

📄 Excerpted from
Jafery, Syed M.A. *Nahjul Balagha: Sermons, Letters and Sayings of Hazrat Ali* (Karachi: Khorasan Islamic Centre), 1971.

➤ pp. 491-511

Letter to Malik al-Ashtar from Khalifah Ali Ibn Abi Talib

(on appointing Malik as Governor of Egypt)

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE BENEFICENT, THE MERCIFUL. These are the orders issued by the creature of Allah, Ali, the son Abu Talib, to Malik, the son of Ashtar, when he appointed Malik as the Governor of Egypt to collect *zakat* (alms tax) there, to combat the enemies of Islam and Egypt, to work for the welfare of its people and to look after its prosperity.

I order you, Malik, always to keep the fear of Allah in your mind, to give priority to His worship and to give preference to obeying His Commands over every other thing in life, to carefully and faithfully follow the commandments and interdictions as given by the Holy Book and the traditions of the Holy Prophet because the success of a man to attain happiness in

this world and in the next depends upon these qualities, and a failure to achieve these attributes brings about total failure in both the worlds.

I order you to use your heart, hands and tongue to help the creatures of Allah because the Almighty Allah holds Himself responsible to help those who sincerely try their best to help Him. Allah has further ordered you to keep your desires under control, to keep yourself under restraint when extravagant and inordinate yearnings and cravings try to drive you towards vice and wickedness because usually your 'self' tries to incite and drag you towards infamy and damnation unless the Merciful Lord comes to your help.

Let it be known to you, Malik, that I am sending you as a governor to a country which has seen many regimes before this. Some of them were benign, sympathetic and good, while others were tyrannical, oppressive and cruel. People will judge your regime as critically as you have studied the activities of other regimes and they will criticize you in the same way as you have censured or approved other rulers.

1: The Qualities of a Good Ruler

You must know that a good and virtuous man is known and recognized by the good that is said about him and the praise which Allah has destined him to receive from others. Therefore, make your mind the source and fountain-head of good thoughts, good intentions and good deeds. This can only be attained by keeping a strict control on your desires and yearnings, however much they may try to incite and coerce you. Remember that the best way to do justice to your inner self and to keep it out of harm is to restrain it from vice and from things which the 'self' inordinately and irrationally desires.

Malik! You must create in your mind kindness, compassion and love for your subjects. Do not behave towards them as if you are a voracious and ravenous beast and as if your success lies in devouring them.

Remember, Malik, that amongst your subjects there are two kinds of people: those who have the same religion as you

have; they are brothers to you, and those who have religions other than that of yours, they are human beings like you. Men of either category suffer from the same weaknesses and disabilities that human beings are inclined to, they commit sins, indulge in vices either intentionally or foolishly and unintentionally without realizing the enormity of their deeds. Let your mercy and compassion come to their rescue and help in the same way and to the same extent that you expect Allah to show mercy and forgiveness to you.

Malik! You must never forget that if you are a ruler over them then the caliph is the ruler over you and Allah is the Supreme Lord over the caliph. And the reality is that He has appointed you as the governor and tested you through the responsibility of this governance over them. Never think of raising yourself to such a false prestige that you can declare war against Allah because you cannot ward off His Wrath and you can never be free from the need of His Mercy and Compassion.

Do not feel ashamed to forgive and forget. Do not hurry over punishments and do not be pleased and do not be proud of your power to punish. Do not get angry and lose your temper quickly over the mistakes and failures of those over whom you rule. On the contrary, be patient and sympathetic with them. Anger and desire of vengeance are not going to be of much help to you in your administration.

Never say to yourself, "I am their Lord, their ruler and all in all over them and that I must be obeyed submissively and humbly" because such a thought will unbalance your mind, will make you vain and arrogant, will weaken your faith in religion and will make you seek support of any power other than that of Allah. If you ever feel any pride or vanity on account of your influence and rule over your subjects then think of the supreme authority and rule of the Lord over the Universe, the extent of His creations, the supremacy of His Might and Glory, His Power to do things which you cannot even dream of doing and His control over you which is more dominating than that which you can ever achieve over

anything around you. Such thoughts will cure your mental weakness, will keep you away from vanity and rebellion (against Allah), will reduce your arrogance and haughtiness and will take you back to the sanity which you had foolishly deserted.

Take care never to think of bringing yourself on a par with Allah, never to think of matching your power with Him and contesting His Glory and never to pretend that you possess might and power like Him; because the Mighty Lord will always humble pitiless tyrants and will degrade all pretenders to His Power and Might.

So far as your own affairs or those of your relatives and friends are concerned, take care that you do not violate the duties laid down upon you by Allah and do not usurp the rights of mankind, be impartial and do justice to them because if you give up equity and justice then you will certainly be a tyrant and an oppressor. And whoever tyrannizes and oppresses the creatures of Allah, will earn enmity of Allah along with the hatred of those whom he has oppressed; and whoever earns the Wrath of Allah loses all chances of salvation and he has no excuse to offer on the Day of Judgement.

Every tyrant and oppressor is an enemy of Allah unless he repents and gives up oppression. Remember, Malik! that there is nothing in this world more apt to turn His Blessings into His Wrath quicker than to insist upon oppression over His creatures because the Merciful Allah will always hear the prayers of those who have been oppressed and He will give no chance to oppressors.

NOTE: Section headings have been added here in order to facilitate discussion or to allow segments of it to be studied. They do not belong to the primary source document or its translator.

2: The Characteristics of Officials and Others Associated with the Ruler

You must always appreciate and adopt a policy which is neither too severe nor too lenient, a policy which is based upon equity will be largely appreciated. Remember that the displeasure of common men, the have-nots and the depressed persons more than overbalances the approval of important persons, while the displeasure of a few big people will be excused by the Lord if the general public and the masses of your subjects are happy with you.

Remember, Malik! that usually these big personages are morally the scum of the human society, they are the people who will be the worst drag upon you during your moments of peace and happiness, and the least useful to you during your hours of need and adversity, they hate justice the most, they will keep on demanding more and more out of the State resources and will seldom be satisfied with what they receive and will never be obliged for the favor shown to them if their demands are justifiably refused, they will never accept any reasonable excuse or any rational argument and when the time changes, you will never find them staunch, faithful and loyal.

While the common men, the poor and the apparently less important section of your subjects are the pillars of Islam, they are the real assemblage of Muslims and the power and defensive force against the enemies of Islam. Keep your mind on their affairs, be more friendly with them and secure their trust and goodwill.

But be careful in forming your contacts (whether with the most important persons or the commoners); keep such people away from you and think them to be the enemy of the State who are scandal-mongers and who try to find fault with others and carry on propaganda against them because everywhere people have weaknesses and failings and it is the duty of the government to overlook (minor) shortcomings. You must not try to go in search of those weaknesses which are hidden from you, leave them to Allah, and about those weaknesses

which come to your notice, you must try to teach them how to overcome them. Try not to expose the weaknesses of the people and Allah will conceal your own weaknesses which you do not want anybody to know.

Do not give cause to the people to envy each other (man against man, tribe against tribe or one section of the society against the other). Try to alleviate and root out mutual distrust and enmity from amongst your subjects. Be fair, impartial and just in your dealings with all, individually and collectively and be careful not to make your person, position and favors act as sources of malice. Do not let any such thing or such person come near to you who does not deserve your nearness and your favor. Never lower your dignity and prestige. Remember that backbiters and scandal-mongers belong to a mean and cunning group, though they pretend to be sincere advisers. Do not make haste to believe the news they bring and do not heed to their advice.

Do not accept the advice of misers, they will try their best to keep you away from acts of kindness and from doing good to others. They will make you frightened of poverty. Similarly do not allow cowards to act as your advisers because they will make you timid in enforcing your orders, will scare you from handling important affairs boldly and will make your enterprises and invasions timid and timorous attempts. At the same time avoid greedy and covetous persons who would aspire to the position of acting as your counselor because he will teach you how to exploit the community and how to oppress people to get their wealth. Remember that miserliness, cowardice and greed appear to be different wicked qualities but they all arise from the same evil mentality of having no faith and no trust in Allah.

Your worst ministers will be the men who had been ministers to the despotic rulers before you and who had been a party to atrocities committed by them. Such persons should not be taken into your confidence and should not be trusted because they have aided sinners and have assisted tyrants and cruel rulers.

In their stead you can find persons who are equally wise and learned but who have not developed sinful and criminal mentalities, who have neither helped the tyrants in their tyrannies nor have they assisted them to carry on their sinful deeds. Such persons will prove the least troublesome to you. They will be the most helpful. They will sincerely sympathize with you. If you take them into your confidence they will sever their connections with your opponents. Keep such people with you as companions in your informal company as well as in official gatherings. From among such honest and humane companions and ministers some would receive your fullest confidence and trust. They are those who can always speak out the bitter truth to you and unreservedly and without fear of your status, can refuse to assist you or associate with you in the deeds which Allah does not like His good creatures to commit.

Select honest, truthful and pious people as your companions. Train them not to flatter you and not to seek your favor by false praises because flattery and false praises create vanity and conceit and they make a man lose sight of his real self and ignore his duties.

You should not treat good and bad people alike because in this way you will be discouraging good persons and at the same time emboldening the wicked to carry on their wickedness. Everyone should receive the treatment which his deeds make him deserve.

Try to realize that a ruler can create goodwill in the minds of his subjects and can make them faithful and sincere to him only when he is kind and considerate to them, when he reduces their troubles, when he does not oppress them and when he never asks for things which are beyond their power.

These are the principles which you should keep in mind and act upon. Let them not lose faith in you, because a good faith on their part will reduce many troubles in administration and will relieve you of many worries and anxieties. And so far as your

confidence and trust is concerned, let it rest with those people whom you have tested in difficulties and whom you have befriended, but you should always mistrust those people whom you have wronged or who have proved themselves undeserving, inefficient or unfaithful.

Do not give up those practices and do not break those rules which good Muslims have evolved or introduced before you, which have created unity and amity among the various sections of the society and which have benefited the masses. Do not break them and do not introduce innovations because if you do away with those good rules and traditions, the reward of having introduced them will go to those who evolved them and the punishment of having despoiled them will be your lot.

3: Social Classes and Criteria for Selecting Administrators

You must know, Malik, that the people over whom you rule are divided into classes and grades and the prosperity and welfare of each class of the society individually and collectively are so interdependent upon the well-being of the other classes that the whole set-up represents a closely woven net and reciprocal aspect. One class cannot exist peacefully, cannot live happily and cannot work without the support and good wishes of the other.

Amongst them there are the soldiers of the army of Allah who defend His cause, the next class is that of the secretaries of the State to whom duties of writing out and issuing special or general orders are assigned, the third group is of the judges and magistrates to administer justice, the fourth is of officers who maintain law and order and guard the peace and prosperity of the country. Then there are common men, the Muslims who pay the taxes levied by the government, and non-Muslims who pay the taxes levied by the government, and non-Muslims who pay tribute to the State (in lieu of taxes). Then comes the class of men who carry on various professions and trades and the last but not the least are the poor and the have-nots who are considered as the lowest class of the society.

The Merciful Allah has fixed rights and duties of each one of them. They have been either mentioned in His Book or explained through the instructions of the Holy Prophet. A complete code of them is preserved with us.

As far as the soldiers are concerned, they are by the commands of Allah a fortress and stronghold to guard and defend the subjects and the State. They are the ornaments of the ruler and the country. They provide power and protection to the religion. They propagate and preserve peace among mankind. In fact, they are the real guardians of peace and through them good internal administration can be maintained. The upkeep and maintenance of an army depends upon the taxes collected by the State out of which Allah has fixed for them a share. With this amount they provide for their requirements, maintain themselves and their arms in sound position to defend the religion and the cause of justice.

The army and the common men (common citizens who pay taxes or tributes) are two important classes, but their well-being cannot be guaranteed without proper functioning and preservation of the third class, the judges and magistrates, the secretaries of the State and the officers of various departments who collect various revenues, maintain law and order as well as preserve peace and amity among the diverse classes of the society. They also guard the rights and privileges of the citizens and look to the performances of various duties by individuals and classes. And the prosperity of this whole set-up depends upon the merchants and artisans. They act as a medium between the consumers and the suppliers. They collect the requirements of the society. They exert to provide goods. They open up shops, markets and trading centers. Thus providing the consumers with their necessities, they relieve the citizens of the need of running after their requisites of life.

Then comes the class of the poor and the disabled persons. It is absolutely necessary that they should be looked after,

helped and well-provided for. The Merciful Allah has explained the ways and means of maintaining and providing for each of these classes. And everyone of this class has the right upon the ruler of the State that at least minimum necessities for its well-being and contented living are provided.

Remember, Malik, that Almighty Allah will not absolve any ruler from his obligations unless he sincerely tries his best to discharge his duties, invokes Allah to help him in their performance, remains steadfast and diligent on the path of truth and justice and bears all this whether the performance of these duties is congenial or hateful to him.

So far as the army is concerned its chief and commander should be a person who is most sincere and faithful to Allah, to the Holy Prophet and to your Imam (the Khalifah); who is most pious, who is famous for his forbearance, clemency and gentleness, who is neither short-tempered nor does he get angry quickly, who sympathetically treats sincere excuses and accepts apologies, who is kind and compassionate with the weak, but severe against the strong and the powerful, who has no vindictiveness which might lead to violence or any inferiority complex or weak-mindedness which makes them helpless and dejected. To find and select such persons you should have contacts with pious and noble families with high ideals and exalted traditions, families well-known for their bravery and courage and generosity and magnanimity. They are the people who may be considered as sources of magnificence and sublimity of character and fountain-heads of piety and good deeds.

When you have found and selected such persons then keep an eye over them and watch them as parents watch their children so that you may find out if there appears any change in their behavior. Treat them kindly and sympathetically. Do not grudge highest considerations to them (if they rightly deserve) and do not refuse small mercies. This kind of treatment will create reciprocal tendencies in them and they will

trust you and will be faithful to you. Under the impression that you have paid enough attention to their major necessities and wants, do not close your eyes to their minor requirements and needs because small favors often bear better fruits though careful attention to major necessities is very important. Among the military officers those should receive your highest respect and consideration who pay most attention to the needs of the soldiers under their command who come forward to help the soldiers with their personal means and property so that the soldiers may lead a happy and contented life and may have full confidence of the future of their families and children. If the soldiers are thus satisfied and are free from anxieties and care then they will bravely and wholeheartedly face the conflicts. Your constant attention towards the officers and soldiers will make them love you more and more.

The thing which should most gladden the heart of a ruler is the fact that his State is being ruled on the principles of equity and justice and that his subjects love him. And your subjects will only love you when they have no grievance against you. Their sincerity and loyalty will be proved if they gather around you to support your government, when they accept your authority without considering it an unbearable burden on their heads and when they do not secretly wish your rule to come to an end.

So let them have as many justifiable hopes in you as they can and fulfil as many as you reasonably can. Speak well of those who deserve your praise. Appreciate the good deeds done by them and let these good actions be known publicly.

The correct and timely publicity of noble actions and golden deeds creates more zeal in the minds of the brave and emboldens the cowards and the weaklings. You must know and realize the good deeds done by every single individual so that the credit of noble deeds done by one may not be given to another. Do not underestimate and underpay the good work done. Similarly do not overpay a work simply because it has been done by a very important person and do not let his position and prestige be the cause of overvaluation of the merit of his work and at the same time do not undervalue a great deed if it is done by a very ordinary person or a commoner. Let equity, justice and fair play be your motto.

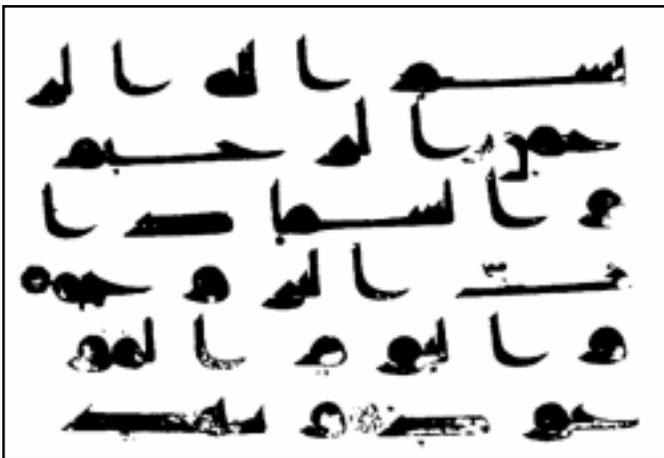
When you are faced with problems which you cannot solve or with a difficult situation from which you cannot escape or when uncertain and doubtful circumstances confuse and perplex you, then turn to Allah and the Holy Prophet because Allah has thus ordered those whom He wants to guide. The way to turn to Allah is to act diligently according to the clear and explicit orders given in His Holy Book and to the turn to the Holy Prophet means to

follow those of his orders about which there is no doubt and ambiguity and which have been generally accepted to be correctly recorded.

So far as dispensing of justice is concerned, you have to be very careful in selecting officers for the same. You must select people of excellent character and high caliber and with meritorious records. They must possess the following qualifications: Abundance of litigation and complexity of cases should not make them lose their temper.

When they realize that they have committed a mistake in judgement they should not insist on it by trying to justify it. When truth is made clear to them or when the right path opens up before them, they should not consider it below their dignity to correct the mistake made or to undo the wrong done by them. They should not be corrupt, covetous or greedy. They should not be satisfied with ordinary enquiry or scrutiny of a case, but should scrupulously go through all the pros and cons, they must examine every aspect of the problem carefully, and whenever and wherever they find doubtful and ambiguous points, they must stop, go through further details, clear the points, and only then proceed with their decisions. They must attach the greatest importance to reasoning, arguments and proofs. They should not get tired of lengthy discussions and arguments. They must exhibit patience and perseverance in scanning the details, in testing the points presented as true, in sifting facts from fiction and when truth is revealed to them they must pass their judgements without fear, favor or prejudice.

They should not develop vanity and conceit when compliments and praises are showered upon them. They should not be misled by flattery and cajolery. But unfortunately they are few persons having such characteristics. After you have selected such men to act as your judges, make it a point to go through some of their judgements and to check their proceedings. Pay them handsomely so that their needs are



Calligraphy of a Qur'anic verse, attributed to the hand of Ali ibn Abi Talib.

fully satisfied and they are not required to beg or borrow or resort to corruption. Give them such a prestige and position in your State that none of your courtiers or officers can overlord them or bring harm to them. Let judiciary be above every kind of executive pressure or influence, above fear or favor, intrigue or corruption. Take every particular care of this aspect because before your appointment this State was under the influence of corrupt, time-serving and wealth-grasping opportunists who were lewd, greedy and vicious and who wanted nothing out of a State but a sinful consent of amassing wealth and pleasures for themselves.

Then come the officers of your State. You must supervise their work. They must be appointed after a careful scrutiny of their capabilities and characters. These appointments must be made originally on probation without any kind of favoritism being shown or influence being accepted otherwise tyranny, corruption and misrule will reign in your State. While selecting your officers take care to select experienced and honorable persons, members of respectable families who had served Islam during its early days because these are usually of noble character and good repute. They are not greedy and cannot be easily bribed. They mostly have before them the ultimate result of their thoughts and their deeds. Keep them also well-paid so that they may not be tempted to lower their standard of morality and may not misappropriate the cash of the State which they hold in their trust and if after being paid handsomely they prove dishonest, then you will be right to punish them. Therefore keep a careful watch over their system of work and rule.

You may also appoint trustworthy and honest men to keep a watch over the activities of these officers. The knowledge that they are being watched secretly will keep them away from dishonesty, misrule, malpractice and tyrannizing the subjects. Protect your government from dishonest officers. If you find any of them dishonest and your confidential intelligence service submits acceptable proofs of his dishonesty, then you must punish him. This may

be corporal punishment besides dismissal from service and taking back from him all which he has dishonestly collected. He must be humiliated and must be made to realize the infamy of his wicked deeds. His humiliation and punishment must be given publicly so that it may serve as a lesson and a deterrent to others.

4: Economy, Taxes, and the State Treasury

So far as collection of land revenues and taxes are concerned you must always keep in view the welfare of the tax-payers which is of primary importance than the taxes themselves because these taxes and the tax-payers are the original sources on which the welfare of your State and its subjects depend.

A State really lives upon the revenues collected from the tax-payers. Therefore, more importance should be attached to the fertility of land than to the collection of taxes because actual taxable capacity of people rests upon the fertility of the land. The ruler, who does not pay attention to the prosperity of his subjects and fertility of the land but concentrates only on collection of revenues, lays waste the land and consequently ruins the State and brings destruction to the creatures of Allah. His rule cannot last for long.

If the tax-payers complain to you of the heavy incidence to taxation, of any accidental calamity, of the vagaries of the weather, of the means of irrigation, of floods or destruction of their crops on account of excessive rainfall; and if their complaints are true, then reduce their taxes. This reduction should be such that it provides them opportunities to improve their conditions and eases them of their troubles.

Decrease in State-income due to such reasons should not depress you because the best investment for a ruler is to help his subjects at the time of their difficulties. They are the real wealth of a country and any investment on them even in the form of reduction of taxes, will be returned to the State in the shape of the prosperity of its cities and improvement of the country at large. At the same time you will be in a

position to command and secure their love, respect and praises along with the revenues. Will that not be a lasting happiness?

Not only this, but your benign rule and humane treatment will so affect them that they will come to your help at the time of your difficulties and you will be able to rely on their support. Your kindness, your clemency and your justice will be a kind of moral training to them, and the contented, happy and prosperous life, for which they will be grateful to you, will be the best support, strongest protection and the greatest treasury for you. Later if such circumstances arrive that you find yourself in need of their support, their help, their confidence, their wealth and their manpower, then they will have no grudge against you.

Remember, Malik! If a country is prosperous and if its people are well-to-do then it will happily and willingly bear any burden.

The poverty of the people is the actual cause of the devastation and ruination of a country and the main cause of the poverty of the people is the desire of its ruler and officers to amass wealth and possessions whether by fair or foul means. They are afraid of losing their posts or positions and influence or rule and want to make the most during the shortest time at their disposal. They never learn any lesson from the history of nations and never pay any attention to the commands of Allah.

You will also have to be very careful about your secretaries. You should entrust your work only to those who are the best among them. Specially the affairs which are of confidential nature and which deal with secrets, and the security of the State should be entrusted only to men of noble character because men who are intoxicated with power, position and prestige carry on propaganda and speak against the government in public, they openly misbehave with you and consider themselves so important as to ignore you or your orders in financial transactions essential to the State, they avoid placing necessary papers before you or attending to important correspondence.

Particular care should be taken that when the officers make contracts on behalf of the government or sign agreements, these contracts and agreements are not defective or harmful to the State, if they are negotiating any treaties and alliances they do not overlook or forsake the interests of the State or if they find the State in a weak and embarrassing position on account of unfavorable terms of treaties or due to intrigues, they should be able to find sensible ways out of them. See that they know and realize their proper place and rank, because he who does not realize his place and position will never understand those of others.

One more thing about these officers: You must remember not to select them for very important posts and not to trust them completely simply because you have found them honest, diligent, trustworthy and intelligent and have formed a good opinion about them because there are some people who, when it suits them, pretend honesty, diligence and fidelity and can put on the garb of piety and virtue and thus find their ways in the hearts of the rulers, though actually they are neither honest nor diligent nor wise nor sagacious. Therefore, you must always look to the record or reputation of the services of such men during previous regimes; more importance should be attached to their good reputation. This kind of selection and supervision will prove that you are faithful to Allah and that you wish your Imam well.

Thus you must appoint one officer as the Head of each important branch of your government. He should have knowledge and wisdom enough to cope successfully with all the intricate problems of his department and should be diligent enough to cope with extensive work. Remember well that if there is any defect in your officers and you are tolerating it, then you and only you are responsible for all those evils. I want to advise you about your merchants and artisans. Treat them well, and order your officers to follow the same policy.

A horseshoe-shaped disc from Kashan, Iran on which is recorded the details of the construction of a way-station for pilgrims in honor of Ali ibn Abi Talib.



There may be local merchants carrying on their trade in certain places or those who send their merchandise from one place to another. There may even be those who import and export goods. Similarly there may be artisans as well as laborers or men engaged in the handicrafts. They all deserve sympathy, protection and good treatment.

They all are the sources of wealth to the country. They provide goods for the consumers. Most of these merchants carry and convey these goods from across deserts, seas and over open lands and mountains, their consignments are brought from distant lands, often from places which are not easy to approach and where usually people do not care or do not dare to go. These merchants are usually peace-loving people, not given to mischievous disturbances and seditious fomentation. You must look after their interest and protect them whether they are trading in your cities or towns or whether they are travelling over the countries carrying goods from place to place.

One more thing about these merchants and artisans. While treating them most sympathetically you must keep an eye over their activities as well. You know they are usually stingy misers, intensely self-centered and selfish, suffering from the obsession of grasping and accumulating wealth. They often hoard their goods to get more profit out of them by creating scarcity and by indulging in black-marketing. Such a condition is extremely injurious to the public on one hand and disgraceful to the ruler on the other.

You must put a stop to all such practices because the Holy Prophet has explicitly prohibited such practices. Remember that trade should go on between the buyers and sellers according to correct measures and weights and on such reasonable terms that neither the consumers nor the suppliers should have to face losses. But even with all the sympathetic treatments accorded to them and with all the facilities provided to them, if the merchants and artisans carry on hoarding and black-marketing, then you must punish them according to the intensity of their crime.

Then I want to caution you about the poor. Fear Allah about their conditions and your attitude towards them. They have no support, no resources and no opportunities. They are poor, they are destitute and many of them are cripples and unfit for work. Some of them come out begging and some (who maintain self-respect) do not beg, but their conditions speak of their distress, poverty, destitution and wants. For the sake of Allah, Malik, protect them and their rights. He has laid the responsibility of this upon your shoulders. You must fix a share for them from *Baytul Mal* (the Government Treasury). Besides this reservation in cash, you must also reserve a share in kind of crops etc. from government granaries in cities where food-grains are stored as are cultivated on State-owned land because in these storage the share of those living far away from any particular city is equal to the share of those living nearby.

Let me remind you once again that you are made responsible for guarding the rights of the poor people and for looking after their welfare. Take care that the conceit of your position and vanity of wealth may not deceive you to lose sight of such a grave and important responsibility. Yours is such an important post that you cannot claim immunity from the responsibility of even minor errors of commission or omission with an excuse that you were engrossed in the major problems of the State which you have solved diligently.

Therefore, be very careful of the welfare of the poor people. Do not be arrogant and vain against them. Remember that you have to take particular care of those who cannot reach you, whose poverty-stricken and disease-ridden sight may be hateful to you, and whom society treats with disgust, detestation and contempt. You should be a source of comfort, love and respect to them. Appoint a respectable, honest and pious person - a person who fears Allah and who can treat them honorably, order him to find out everything about them and to submit a report to you.

Then treat these poor people in such a way that on the Day of Judgement you can plead your case successfully before Allah because of all classes of your subjects this class deserves more of your attention, sympathy and fair-deal.

Though everyone of these poor persons deserves your sympathy and you will have to do justice to His cause to achieve His favor, yet you should pay more attention to young orphans and old cripples. They neither have any support nor can they conveniently come out begging. They cannot reach you; therefore, you must reach them. Remember that the fulfillment of this obligation and duty is considered as a tiresome burden by most of the rulers but to those who desire to achieve His Blessings and to enter into His Realm, even this work seems light and congenial. They bear it happily, dutifully and sincerely. They find pleasures in it and they believe in the promise made by Allah.

5: Being Accessible to the People, and Managing the Duties of the Ruler

Out of your hours of work, fix a time for the complainants and for those who want to approach you with their grievances. During this time you should do no other work but hear them and pay attention to their complaints and grievances. For this purpose you must arrange public audience for them during this audience, for the sake of Allah, treat them with kindness, courtesy and respect. Do not let your army and police be in the audience hall at such times so that those who have grievances against your regime may speak to you freely, unrestrainedly and without fear.

All this is a necessary factor of your rule because I have often heard the Holy Prophet saying, "That nation or regime, where that rights of the depressed, destitute and suppressed are not guarded and where the mighty and powerful persons are not forced to accede these rights, cannot achieve salvation". You must remember that

in those audiences the most common men will gather. therefore, if you find them misbehaving, becoming unmannerly or if you feel that their talk is irrelevant, tolerate them; do not be rude and do not insult them, so that Allah may be kind and merciful to you and may reward you for obeying His commands explicitly. Treat them courteously, hear their grievances patiently and if you are forced to reject their demands then reject them in such a way that your rejection may please them as much as your grants.

Then there are certain duties which only you will have to perform and which none of your officers can carry out. Among them are replies to the letters of your commissioners and governors and are beyond the jurisdiction or preview of your secretaries. If you find that your officers are not attending as much to the complaints of the public as they should, then you should personally attend to them. You must finish a day's work on that day only because each day will bring its own special work for you. Reserve your best time for prayers to Allah, though every work of the State is the work of Allah, especially, if you are sincere and honest, and if your subjects are happy with your rule and are safe from your oppression.

Among those duties that you are to perform diligently must be your daily prayers. These should be offered sincerely and persistently. You must fix times for this during days and nights. You must tax your bodily strength for this duty though it may tire you. Your observance of prayers should be sincere and faultless and should neither be so long as to tire out those who follow you in these prayers nor so short as to be faulty and defective because amongst those who follow you during the prayers, there may be some sick persons, while others may have to attend to some important work. When the Holy Prophet sent me to Yemen I asked him how to lead the prayers. He advised me, "Offer prayers like a weak and old person and be kind to the faithful" (so that weak and old persons may follow your prayers easily and happily).

You must take care not to cut yourself off from the public. Do not place a curtain of false prestige between you and those over whom you rule. Such pretensions and show of pomp and pride are in reality manifestations of inferiority complex and vanity. The result of such an attitude is that you remain ignorant of the conditions of your subjects and of the actual cases of the events occurring in the State.

You will fail to realize the comparative importance of events taking place and may attach great significance to minor events and may slip over important facts, similarly you may attach importance to mediocre or insignificant people and may ignore real men of consequence; and what is more, you may lose the power of distinction between good and bad and may take one for the other or hopelessly mix up the two. After all a ruler is as much a human being as any other man and he may remain ignorant of facts of which his officers want to keep him in the dark (and on which the public may throw light). Thus truth may get mixed up with falsehood and may not be distinguished because there are no birthmarks on the forehead of truth that it may be easily differentiated from falsehood, one has to search for facts and sift realities from fictions, only then can one reach the truth. Think for yourself, there are only two categories of rulers and you may belong to one of them.

You may either be a pious, sincere and diligent ruler, doing the right thing at the right moment and following the principles of justice and equity and you may be protecting rights of others and doing your best to fulfil your obligations, in that case why hide from the public, why draw a curtain around yourself! Or you may be a miser refusing to be generous to anyone, in that case people will gradually come to know of this trait of your character and will gradually give up asking for favors from you but do not overlook the fact that most of their demands will have nothing to do with your private purse, they will be about the rights of people, obligations of the State, com-

plaints against the State, oppressions, and solicitations of justice, then why try to avoid hearing these requests!

You should never overlook the fact that around the rulers there usually are certain privileged persons (relatives and friends). They may often try to take advantage of their status and may resort to selfishness, intrigues, fraud, corruption and oppression. If you find such people around you then do away with them (however closely connected they may be with you), immediately bring an end to the scandal and clear your surroundings of all such moral and spiritual filth.

You must never give lands in permanent lease with all proprietary and ownership rights to your friends and relatives. You must never allow them to take possession of the source of water-supply or lands which have special utility for the community (or the public). If they get possession of such holdings they will oppress others to derive undue benefits and thus gather all the fruits for themselves leaving for you a bad reputation in this world and punishment in the next.

Be fair in dispensing justice. Punish those who deserve punishment even though he may be your near relation or a close friend and even if such an action may give you pangs of sorrow and grief. Bear such a sorrow patiently and hope for Divine reward. I assure you this will bear good fruits.

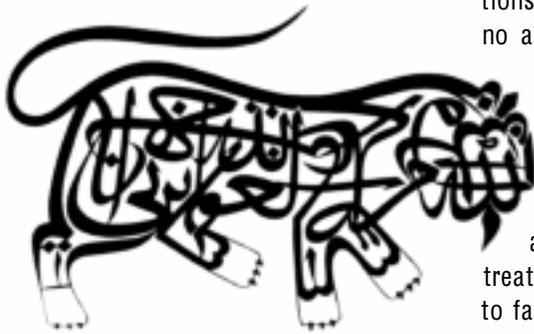
If on account of your strict measures people get suspicious of your behaving like a tyrant and oppressor, then come out openly before them and explain to them the reasons of your actions and let them see the facts for themselves and realize the truth. This will give training to your mind, will be an act of kindness to the subjects and the confidence thus reposed in them will make them support justice and truth while you will achieve the end you have in view of obtaining their support in the cause of truth.

6: Treatises, Promises, and the Ruler's Self-Control

If your enemy invites you to a peace treaty that will be agreeable to Allah, then never refuse to accept such an offer because peace will bring rest and comfort to your armies, will relieve you of anxieties and worries, and will bring prosperity and affluence to your people. But even after such treaties be very careful of the enemies and do not place too much confidence in their promises because they often resort to peace treaty to deceive and delude you and take advantage of your negligence, carelessness and trust. At the same time be very careful, never break your promise with your enemy, never forsake the protection or support that you have offered to him, never go back upon your words, and never violate the terms of the treaty. You must even risk your life to fulfil the promises given and the terms settled because of all the obligations laid by Almighty Allah upon man (in respect to other men) there is none so important as to keep one's promises when made.

Though people may differ in their religions and ideologies and may have divergent views upon various problems of State, yet they all agree that promises when made must be fulfilled. Even the unbelievers take care to keep the promises made among themselves because they have seen and realized the evil effects of breaking promises. Therefore, take very particular care of promises made, never go back upon the words given, never go into the offensive without previously challenging and giving an ultimatum. Deception and fraud even against your enemy is a deception against Allah and none but a wretched sinner would dare do that.

Allah has given promises and treaties the high rank of being messengers of peace and prosperity and through His Kindness and Mercy has made them a common desire (of keeping promises) in the minds of all men and a common requirement for all human beings. He has made them such a shelter and asylum that everybody desires to be under their protection.



19th-century calligraphic lion symbolizing the strength of Ali ibn Abi Talib. The words read "The lion of God, the victorious Ali."

Therefore, there should be no mental reservation, no fraud, no deception and no underlying meanings in between the lines when you make a promise or conclude a treaty. Do not use such words and phrases in your promises and treaties as have possibilities of being translated in more than one way or as may have various interpretations and many explanations, let there be no ambiguity in them, and let them be clear, precise and to the point. And when once a treaty has been finally concluded, do not try to take advantage of any ambiguous word or phrase in it. If you find yourself in a critical situation on account of the treaty made in the cause of Allah, then try to face the situation and bear the consequences bravely and do not try to back out of the terms that account, because to face such perplexing situations as may gain His Rewards and Blessings is better than to break your promises on that account and earn that about which you feel nervous and for which you will have to answer Allah and which may bring down His Wrath upon you in this world and damnation in the next.

Beware of the sin of shedding blood without justification and sanction because there is nothing quicker to bring down the Wrath of Allah, to take away His Blessings, to make you more deserving of His Wrath and to reduce the span of your life than to shed innocent blood. On the Day of Judgment Allah will first attend to sins of bloodshed carried out by man against man. Therefore, never try to strengthen your power, position and prestige by shedding innocent blood. Such murders instead of making your position strong will not only considerably weaken it but may also transfer your power totally, taking it away from you and entrusting it to somebody else.

If you have intentionally murdered a man then no excuse shall be acceptable to Allah or to me because punishment of such a crime is necessary. And if you kill a man by mistake without any intention or motive of killing or while delivering legal penalties, your whip, sword or hand unintentionally and inadvertently deals a fatal blow because even a forcefully delivered

slap or box on the ear may cause death, then do not, on account of your prestige and position, refuse paying the compensation to the heirs.

Beware and do not develop the trait of self-admiration and self-appreciation. Do not get conceited of the good points that you find in your good character or good deeds that you have done. Do not let flattery and cajolery make you vain and egoist. Remember that of all the cunning ruses of the devil to undo good deeds of the pious people and to affect their piety, flattery and false praises are the ones on which it relies the most.

Do not boast of the favors and kindness that you have done to your subjects and do not try to make them realize this, do not think too much of the good that you have done to them, and do not go back upon the promises made, all these three habits are very ugly features of one's character. The practice of boasting over the favors done undoes the good done, the habit of exaggerating and thinking very highly of our good actions will make us lose the guidance of Allah, and the habit of breaking one's promises is disliked both by Allah and by man. The Merciful Allah says, "It is most hateful in the sight of Allah, to say something and not to practice it." [Qur'an, 61:3].

Do not be hasty and do not precipitate your decisions and actions, when the time comes for an action to be done, or a decision to be taken, then do not be lazy and do not waste time and do not show weakness. When you do not find a true way to do the thing on hand, then do not persist on the wrong way and when find a correct solution, then do not be lethargic in adopting it. In short, do everything at a proper time and in a proper way and keep everything in its proper place.

Do not reserve for yourself anything which is a common property of all and in which others have equal rights. Do not close your eyes from glaring malpractice of the officers, miscarriage of justice and misuse of rights because you will be held responsible for the wrong thus done to others. In

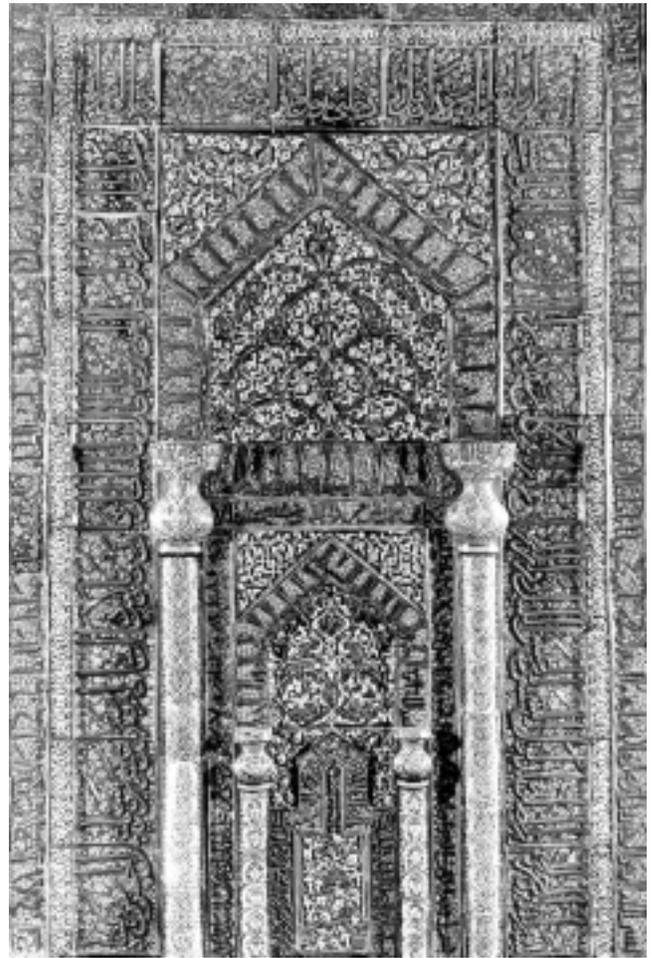
the near future your wrong practices and mal-administration will be exposed and you will be held responsible and punished for the wrong done to the helpless and oppressed people. Take care and keep control over you temper, your anger and your desire to be arrogant and vain. Take care of your hands when you are out to deliver punishment and of the sharpness of your tongue when you are saying harsh things. The best way to achieve this is not to be hasty in making remarks and to delay in delivering punishment so that you may keep your temper under control and are not overexcited.

And you cannot achieve this unless you constantly remember that you have to return to Allah and unless His fear overcomes every other sentiment.

You must always try to remember the good and useful things done in the past, activities of a just and benign regime, good deeds done by it, good laws promulgated, instructions of the Holy Prophet, commands of Allah given in His Holy Book and things that you have seen me doing or have heard me saying. Follow the good actions and advice found therein. Similarly, follow carefully the pieces of advice contained in these orders. Through them I have tried to teach you all that can be taught about a good regime. I have done my duty towards you so that you may not go astray and your mind may not crave for base desires. If it does then you will have no excuse before Allah.

I beseech Allah that by His Limitless Mercy and by His Supreme Might He may grant our prayers, that He may lead both of us to the Divine Guidance of achieving His Pleasure, of successfully pleading our cases before Him, justifying our deeds before man, of gaining good repute, of leaving good results of our benign and just rule with ever expanding prosperity and ever increasing welfare of the State and of meeting our ends as martyrs and pious persons, as our return is towards Him only.

May the peace of Allah be upon the Holy Prophet and His chosen descendants.



The names of Ali and eleven descendants (known as the Twelve Imams) are found inscribed around the frame of this 13th-century ceramic *mihrab*, or prayer niche in the wall of the Maydan Masjid in Kashan, Iran.

Study Questions and Activities

1. Sections 1 & 6: Summarize "in a nutshell" the qualities and major responsibilities of the executive as described to Malik al-Ashtar. What attitude does the letter take toward precedent, or the weight of previous rulers' decisions? What is the ultimate source of authority?
2. Section 2: What vision of government is most prominent in this section? Do you believe that Ali's view of those who would be near to those in power is accurate? Why is this vision so difficult to achieve? Give examples from historical or contemporary politics to support your answer.
3. Section 3: Does this section include or refer to all of the important groups in society? Does today's society have additional or different basic groups? Discuss the characteristics of the state bureaucracy, the military and the judiciary in this scheme.
4. Section 4: What is the role of the State in developing and maintaining the prosperity of the country? How should this role be carried out? How should the state ensure the honesty of officials? How should the State respond to poverty? Develop a role-play activity that outlines these functions of government, such as a meeting of wazirs in different departments reporting on the state of the State to the ruler.
5. Section 5: What do the statements in this letter imply about the relationship between the ruler and the ruled?
6. Section 6: On a piece of paper folded into two columns, list the orders given with regard to treaties and commitments in one column, and the reasons given for the necessity of keeping the letter and spirit of treaties and commitments in the second column. Does the letter allow for any instance when a treaty may be broken?
7. Compare this letter with the picture of the ideal ruler in Machiavelli's *The Prince*. How does each author portray the role of the ruler and his relationship with his associates and the governed?
8. Compare this letter with writings from various cultures, such as those of China, Greece, and Rome, or European Enlightenment thinkers and American political theorists, on the characteristics and conduct of rulers and government officials, and the relationship of the ruler and the ruled.
9. Using a dictionary definition of theocracy, discuss whether or not the principles and practices of government laid out in this treatise fit the standard definition or not. What is the difference between theocracy and the rule of law?

The Life of the Prophet Muhammad

excerpt 1

A Conspiracy

The death of Mut'im, the Prophet's protector, seemed to clear the way for action; and to clear it still further, Abu Lahab deliberately absented himself from the meeting which the leaders of Quraysh now held in the Assembly. After a long discussion, when various suggestions had been made and rejected, they agreed—some of them with reluctance—to the plan put forward by Abu Jahl as being the only effective solution to their problem. Every clan was to nominate a strong, reliable and well-connected young man, and at a given moment all these chosen men together should fall upon Muhammad, each striking him a mortal blow, so that his blood would be on all the clans. The Bani Hashim would not be able to fight the whole tribe of Quraysh; they would have to accept blood money—which would be offered them—in place of revenge; and so at last the community would be rid of a man who, as long as he lived, would give them no peace.

[The Angel] Gabriel now came to the Prophet and told him what he should do. It was noon, an unusual time for visiting, but the Prophet went straight to the house of Abu Bakr who knew at once, as soon as he saw him at that hour, that something important had happened. A'ishah and her elder sister Asma were with their father when the Prophet came in. "God hath allowed me to leave the city and to emigrate," he said. "Together with me?" said Abu Bakr. "Together with thee," said the Prophet. A'ishah was at that time in her seventh year. She used to say afterwards: "I knew not before that day that one could weep for joy until I saw Abu Bakr weep at those words."

When they had made their plans, the Prophet returned to his house and told Ali that he was about to leave for Yathrib, bidding him stay behind in Mecca until he had given back to their owners all the goods which had been deposited in their house for safe keeping. The Prophet had never ceased to be known as al-Amin, and there were still many disbelievers who would trust him with their property as they would trust no one else. He also told Ali what Gabriel had told him about the plot Quraysh had made against him.

The young men chosen to kill him had agreed to meet outside his gate after night-fall. But while they were waiting until their numbers were complete, they heard the sound of women's voices coming from the house, the voices of Sawdah, Umm Kulthum, Fatimah and Umm Ayman. That gave them cause to think; and one of the men said that if they climbed over the wall and broke into the house their names would be forever held in dishonour among the Arabs because they had violated the privacy of

 Historical Source
al-Sirah al-Nabawiyah
(The Life of the Prophet)

 Author

Martin Lings, based on works by several early biographers of the Prophet Muhammad

 Excerpted from

Lings, Martin. *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* (New York: Inner Traditions International, Ltd.), 1983.

➤ ❶ pp. 116-117

➤ ❷ pp. 118-122

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Although Martin Lings is a 20th century scholar and writer, this work belongs to a tradition of writing about the life of Prophet Muhammad that began in the 7th and 8th centuries. This tradition is called the *Sirah*, literally, "path" or "way." Lings' biography of the Prophet of Islam is not based on his own notion of what happened, but on a careful culling of fourteen 8th to 10th century sources and two 11th century sources. These include the *sahabah* (his companions) and famous biographers of the Prophet Muhammad such as Ibn Ishaq (d. 768ce), Ibn Hisham (d. 813ce), Ibn Sa'd (d. 844ce), al-Waqidi (d. 823ce), and al-Tabari (d. 923ce). In addition, he drew, as did the early *Sirah* writers, on Qur'anic references and the most authoritative collections of *hadith*—those by al-Bukhari, al-Tirmidhi, and six others. During Muhammad's life and after his death in 632ce, there was a strong awareness among his companions that the momentous events surrounding the rise of Islam should be preserved for future generations. Certain of the companions prided themselves on committing to memory the words and deeds (*hadith*) of the Prophet Muhammad, whose mission was to provide a living example of the principles and laws contained in the revealed Qur'an. Combining the oral and written traditions of recording and authenticating events, a strong historical tradition and a respected branch of Islamic scholarship developed from the recording of the *Sirah al-Nabawiyah*.

women. So they decided to wait until their intended victim came out, as it was his wont to do in the early morning, if he came not out before.

The Prophet and Ali were soon aware of their presence; and the Prophet took up a cloak in which he used to sleep and gave it to Ali, saying: "Sleep thou on my bed, and wrap thyself in this green Hadrami cloak of mine. Sleep in it, and no harm shall come to thee from them." Then he began to recite the *Surah* that is named after its opening letters, *Ya-Sin*; and, when he came to the words: *And We have enshrouded them, so that they see not*, he went out of the house; and God took away their sight so that they did not see him, and he passed through their midst and went on his way.

A man was coming in the opposite direction, and their paths crossed, and he recognised the Prophet. A little later his path took him not far from the Prophet's house, and seeing men at its gate, he called out to them that if it was Muhammad they wanted he was not there but had gone out not long since. "How could that be?" they thought. One of the conspirators had been watching the house and had seen the Prophet enter it before the others had arrived; and they were certain that no one had left it while they had been there. But now they began to be uneasy, until one of them who knew where the Prophet slept went to a point from which he could see through the window, just enough to make sure that someone was sleeping on the Prophet's bed, wrapped in a cloak, so he reassured his fellows that their man was still there. But when it was dawn Ali rose and went to the door of the house, still wrapped in the cloak; and they saw who it was, and began to think they had been somehow outwitted. They waited a little longer; the thinnest of crescents, all that was left of the waning moon of the month of Safar, had risen over the eastern hills, and now it began to pale as the light increased. There was still no sign of the Prophet, and with a sudden impulse they decided to go, each one to his chief of clan, to give the alarm.

excerpt 2

The Hijrah

Meantime the Prophet had returned to Abu Bakr, and losing no time they went out through a window at the back of his house where two camels, already saddled, were waiting for them. The Prophet mounted one of them, and Abu Bakr the other, with his son Abd Allah behind him. As they had planned, they made for a cave in the Mount of Thawr a little to the south, on the way to the Yemen, for they knew that as soon as the Prophet's absence was discovered search parties would be sent out to cover all the northern outskirts of the city. When they had gone a little way beyond the precincts of Mecca, the Prophet halted his camel, and looking back he said: "Of all God's earth, thou art the dearest place unto me and the dearest unto God, and had not my people driven me out from thee I would not have left thee."

Amir ibn Fuhayrah, the shepherd whom Abu Bakr had bought as a slave and then set free and put in charge of his sheep, had followed behind them with his flock to cover up their tracks. When they reached the cave, Abu Bakr sent his son home with the camels, telling him to listen to what was said in Mecca the next day when the Prophet's absence was discovered, and to bring them word of it the following night. Amir was to pasture his sheep as usual with the other shepherds during the day and to bring them to the cave at night, always covering up the tracks of Abd Allah between Thawr and Mecca.

The next night Abd Allah returned to the cave and his sister Asma came with him, bringing food. Their news was that Quraysh had offered a reward of a hundred camels to anyone who could find Muhammad and bring him back to Mecca. Horsemen were already following every normal route from Mecca to Yathrib, hoping to overtake them both—for it was assumed that Abu Bakr was with the Prophet, since he also had disappeared.

But others, perhaps unknown to Abd Allah, thought they must be in hiding, in one of the numerous caves in the hills round Mecca. Moreover, the Arabs of the desert are good trackers: even when a flock of sheep had followed in the wake of two or three camels, the average Bedouin would see at a glance the remains of the larger prints of the camel-hooves which the multitude of smaller prints had all but obliterated. It seemed unlikely that the fugitives would be to the south of the city; but for such a generous reward every possibility should be tried; and camels had certainly preceded the sheep on those tracks which led in the direction of Thawr.

On the third day the silence of their mountain sanctuary was broken by the sound of birds—a pair of rock doves they thought—cooing and fluttering their wings outside the cave. Then after a while they heard the faint sound of men's voices, at some distance below them but gradually growing louder as if the men were climbing up the side of the mount. They were not expecting Abd Allah until after nightfall, and there were still some hours to go before sunset, although in fact there was strangely little light in the cave for the time of day they supposed it to be. The voices were now not far off - five or six men at least - and they were still approaching. The Prophet looked at Abu Bakr, and said: *Grieve not, for verily God is with us.* And then he said: "What thinkest thou of two when God is their third?"

They could now hear the sound of steps, which drew nearer and then stopped: the men were standing outside the cave. They spoke decisively, all in agreement that there was no need to enter the cave, since no one could possibly be there. Then they turned back the way they had come.

When the sound of their retreating steps and voices had died away, the Prophet and Abu Bakr went to the mouth of the cave. There in front of it, almost covering the entrance, was an acacia tree, about the height of a man, which had not been there that morning; and over the gap that was left between the tree and the wall of the cave a spider had woven its web. They looked through the web, and there in the hollow of a rock, even where a man might step as he entered the cave, a rock dove had made a nesting place and was sitting close as if she had eggs, with her mate perched on a ledge not far above.

When they heard Abd Allah and his sister approaching at the expected hour, they gently drew aside the web that had been their safeguard, and taking care not to disturb the dove, they went to meet them. Amir had also come, this time without his flock. He had brought the Bedouin to whom Abu Bakr had entrusted the two camels he had chosen for their journey. The man was not yet a believer, but he could be relied on to keep their secret and also to guide them to their destination by such out-of-the-way paths as only a true son of the desert would know. He was waiting in the valley below with the two mounts, and had brought a third camel for himself. Abu Bakr was to take Amir behind him on his, to look after their needs. They left the cave, and descended the slope. Asma had brought a bag of provisions, but had forgotten to bring a rope. So she took off her girdle and divided it into two lengths, using one to tie the bag securely to her father's saddle and keeping the other for herself. Thus it was that she earned the title "She of the two girdles".

When Abu Bakr offered the Prophet the better of the two camels he said: "I will not ride a camel that is not mine own." "But she is thine, O messenger of God."

said Abu Bakr. "Nay," said the Prophet; "but what price didst thou pay for her?" Abu Bakr told him, and he said: "I take her at that price." Nor did Abu Bakr insist further on making it a gift, although the Prophet had accepted many gifts from him in the past, for this occasion was a solemn one. It was the Prophet's *Hijrah*, his cutting off of all ties of home and homeland for the sake of God. His offering, the act of emigration, must be entirely his, not shared by another in any respect. The mount on which the act was accomplished must therefore be his own, since it was part of his offering. The camel's name was Qaswa, and she remained his favourite camel.

Their guide took them away from Mecca to the *west* and a little to the *south* until they came to the shore of the Red Sea. Yathrib is due north of Mecca, but it was only at this point that any north came into their direction. The coastal road runs north-west and for a few days they kept to this. On one of their first evenings, looking across the water towards the Nubian desert, they saw the new moon of the month of Rabi'Al-Awwal. "O crescent of good and of guidance, my faith is in Him who created thee." This the Prophet would say when he saw the new moon.

One morning they were somewhat dismayed to see a small caravan approaching from the opposite direction. But their feelings changed to joy when they saw that it was Abu Bakr's cousin Talhah who was on his way from Syria where he had bought the cloth and other merchandise with which his camels were laden. He had stopped in Yathrib on his way, and intended to return there as soon as he had disposed of his wares in Mecca. The Prophet's arrival in the oasis, he said, was awaited with the greatest eagerness; and before bidding them farewell he gave them each a change of clothes from out of the fine white-Syrian garments which he had intended to sell to some of the richer men of Quraysh.

Not long after their meeting with Talhah they turned due north, going slightly inland from the coast, and then north-east, now at last making directly for Yathrib. At one point of their journey the Prophet received a Revelation which told him: *Verily He who hath made binding upon thee the QurAn will bring thee home once more.*



Calligraphy design using Muhammad's name and the words "Prophet of God" in Arabic, by a modern Turkish calligrapher.

Shortly before dawn on the twelfth day after leaving the cave they reached the valley of Aqiq, and crossing the valley, they climbed up the rugged black slopes on the other side. Before they reached the top the sun was well up and the heat was intense. On other days they would have stopped for rest until the great heat of the day had passed; but they now decided to climb the final ridge of the ascent, and when at last they came within sight of the plain below there could be no question of holding back. The place that the Prophet had dreamed of, "the well watered land between two tracts of black stones," was lying before them, and the grey-green of the palm groves and the lighter green of orchards and gardens stretched at one point to within three miles of the foot of the slope they had to descend.

The nearest point of greenery was Quba, where most of the emigrants from Mecca had first stayed, and where many of them still were. The Prophet told their guide: "Lead us straight to the Bani Amr at Quba, and draw not yet nigh unto the city"—for so the most densely inhabited part of the oasis was called. That city was

soon to be known throughout Arabia, and thence elsewhere, as "the City", in Arabic *al-Madinah*, in English Medina.

Several days previously news from Mecca of the Prophet's disappearance, and of the reward offered for him, had reached the oasis. The people of Quba were expecting him daily, for the time of his arrival was now overdue; so every morning, after the dawn prayer, some of the Bani Amr would go out to look for him, and with them went men of other clans who lived in that village, and also those of the emigrant Quraysh who were still there and had not yet moved to Medina. They would go out beyond the fields and palm groves onto the lava tract, and after they had gone some distance they would stop and wait until the heat of the sun became fierce; then they would return to their homes. They had gone out that morning, but had already returned by the time the four travellers had begun their descent of the rocky slope. Eyes were no longer staring expectantly in that direction; but the sun shone on the new white garments of the Prophet and Abu Bakr which were set off all the more against the background of bluish-black volcanic stones, and a Jew who happened to be on the roof of his house caught sight of them. He knew

at once who they must be, for the Jews of Quba had asked and been told why so many of their neighbours had taken to going out in a body into the wilderness every morning without fail. So he called out at the top of his voice: "Sons of Qaylah, he is come, he is come!" The call was immediately taken up, and men, women and children hurried from their houses and streamed out once more onto the strip of greenery which led to the stone tract. But they had not far to go, for the travellers had by now reached the most outlying palm-grove. It was a noon of great joy on all sides, and the Prophet addressed them, saying: "O people, give unto one another greetings of Peace; feed food unto the hungry; honour the ties of kinship; pray in the hours when men sleep. Even so shall ye enter Paradise in Peace."



Study Questions and Activities

1. What plan did the leaders of Quraysh decide to put into action, and what was its purpose?
2. What role did the Prophet's cousin Ali play in foiling the plot?
3. How did the Prophet escape, and with whom?
4. Name all of the persons who helped the travelers reach Yathrib, and tell what specific assistance they gave.
5. Describe the incident involving the cave, the doves, the spider and the search party. Why do you think that this might have become one of the most famous stories about the Hijrah told to young and old alike? What meanings might the story hold for Muslims?
6. How did the people of Yathrib (and Quba, its suburb) receive the travelers?

The Great Book of the Generations

a biographical dictionary

Historical Source

Kitab al-Tabaqat al-Kabir
(The Great Book of the Generations)

Author

Muhammad Ibn Sa'd (d. 845CE)

Excerpted from

Haq, S. Moinul and H.K. Ghazanfar. *Ibn Sa'd's Kitab al-Tabaqat al-Kabir* (Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society), n.d.

➤ pp. 482-483, 480, 466-468

Dictionary Entry:

“The Classification of Notices”

Muhammad Ibn Umar al-Aslami said: “There are very few narrations on the authority of the elders from among the Companions of the Prophet of Allah, may Allah bless him, because they died before their help was sought. They are in abundance from Umar Ibn al-Khattab and Ali Ibn Abi Talib because they became rulers, and questions were put to them, and they had to give decisions to the people. All the Companions of the Prophet of Allah, may Allah bless him, were leaders to be followed; what they did was to be remembered, and also what questions were put to them and what answers they gave. They transmitted the *hadiths* they heard. Very few *hadiths* are related on the authority of the elders from among the Companions of the Prophet of Allah, may Allah bless him, as for instance Abu Bakr, Uthman, Talha, al-Zubayr, Sa'd Ibn Abi Waqqas, Abd al-Rahman Ibn Auf, Abu Ubaydah Ibn al-Jarrah, Sa'd Ibn Ubadah, Ubadah Ibn al-Samit, Usayd Ibn al-Hudayr, Mu'adh Ibn Jabal and others like them. As many *hadiths* have not been on their authority as have come down to us from younger Companions of the Prophet of Allah, may Allah bless him, like Jabir Ibn Abd Allah, Abu Said al-Kudri, Abu Hurayrah, Abd Allah Ibn Umar Ibn al-Khattab, Abd Allah Ibn Amr Ibn al-As, Abd Allah Ibn al-Abbas, Rafi Ibn Khadij, Anas Ibn Malik, al-Bara Ibn Azib and others like them. All of them were considered to be Jurists among the Companions of the Prophet of Allah, may Allah bless him, and they were always in the company of the Prophet of Allah, may Allah bless him, with others who were like them. Still younger of the Companions who have narrated large number of Traditions were Uqbah Ibn Amir al-Juhni, Zayd Ibn Khalid al-Jubni, Imran Ibn al-Husayn, al-Nu'man Ibn Bashir, Mu'awiyah Ibn Abi Sufyan, Sahl ibn Sa'd al-Sa'idi, Abd Allah Ibn Yazid al-Khatmi, Maslamah Ibn Mukhallad al-Zurqi, Rabiah Ibn Ka'b al-Aslami, Hind and Asma, the two Sons of Harithah, and two Aslamis, who

served the Prophet of Allah, may Allah bless him, and attended on him. They and others like them among the Companions of the Prophet, may Allah bless him, knew many Traditions and possessed extensive knowledge, because they served for a long time and their ages were long. The People were in need of them. Many Companions of the Prophet of Allah, may Allah bless him, having information about him predeceased him, or died soon after him. They left nothing of it and on account of the large number

of the Companions of the Prophet of Allah, may Allah bless him, being alive, there was no need of (acquiring information from) them.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Muhammad Ibn Sa'd al-Basri was born in the second century after Hijrah, about 168AH, at Basra, Iraq. Like many early seekers of knowledge about Islamic law, history and Arabic language, he traveled to Kufa and visited Madinah, and points in between. There, he met narrators of hadith and other information. He later migrated to Baghdad, where he is buried outside the Damascus Gate. This book was the major work in which Ibn Sa'd placed the information he had collected, and he is the inventor of the biographical dictionary, a genre of historical writing that has remained to the present day—a *Who's Who* in Islam. Ibn Sa'd employs an important form of documentation—*isnad* (the chain of transmission, or authority for each narration)—which enables the reader to decide on its authenticity. This is an important contribution of Muslim writers to historiography. Ibn Sa'd's *Tabaqat* was edited and published in the West, in Arabic, by Prof. E. Sachau in Leiden, Holland between 1904 and 1921. It is an important source for modern historians.¹

1. See, for example, Richard Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period* (Harvard, 1979) and Ruth Roded, *Women in Islamic Biographical Collections: From Ibn Sa'd to Who's Who* (Lynne Rienner, 1994).

Thirty thousand Muslims were present at Tabuk, the last *ghazwah* [battle] which the Prophet of Allah, may Allah bless him, fought. Besides, there were others who had embraced Islam and had remained behind in their native towns and did not take part in fighting. Their number was larger than those who fought at Tabuk. We have noticed (in this book) only those about whom we could get information as to their names, genealogies and their role in *ghazwahs* and *sariyyahs* [expeditions]. We have mentioned the places where they stayed and given an account of those who died a martyr's death during the life of the Prophet of Allah, may Allah bless him, and of those who waited upon the Prophet of Allah, may Allah bless him, in deputation, and returned to the towns of their people, and of those who transmitted *hadiths* from him, if their genealogy and joining the fold of Islam were known. There are persons who are known by the *hadiths* they have narrated from the Prophet of Allah, may Allah bless him. There are others who died before the death of the Prophet of Allah, may Allah bless him, and the genealogy, account and places where they attended on the Prophet are known. Again, there are others who died after the death of the Prophet of Allah, may Allah bless him, and their number is large..."

Dictionary Entry:

“Abu Hurayrah”

✿ Abu Damrah Anis Ibn Iyad al-Laythi informed us; he said: Abd Allah Ibn Abd al-Aziz al-Laythi informed us on the authority of Amr Ibn Mirdas Ibn Abd al-Rahman al-Jundhai, he on the authority of Abu Hurayrah²; he said: “The Prophet of Allah, may Allah bless him, said to me: ‘Spread your cloth.’ I spread it. Then the Prophet of Allah, may Allah bless him, talked to me throughout the day. Then I drew it [the cloth] near my belly. After that I did not forget anything from what he had related to me.”

✿ Muhammad Ibn Isma’il Ibn Abi Fudayk informed us on the authority of Ibn Abi Dhi’b, he on the authority of al-Maqburi, he on the authority of Abu Hurayrah; he said: “I said to the Prophet of Allah, may Allah bless him: I hear many *hadiths* from you but I have forgotten them. Thereupon he said: ‘Spread your sheet.’ I spread it and he sprinkled water on it with his hand. Then he said: ‘Draw it to yourself.’ I drew it and since then I have never forgotten a *hadith*...”

✿ Ibn Umar said: “O Abu Hurayrah! Carefully examine what you relate, because you relate many Traditions from the Prophet, may Allah bless him.” He [Abu Hurayrah] caught his [Ibn Umar’s] hand and took him to Ayesha and said to her: “Inform him what you have heard from the Prophet of Allah, may Allah bless him.” She verified Abu Hurayrah’s statement. Then Abu Hurayrah said: “O Abu Abd al-Rahman! By Allah! The planting of palms or visiting markets did not obstruct me from attending to the Prophet, may Allah bless him.” Thereupon Ibn Umar said: “O Abu Hurayrah! You knowing the Prophet of Allah, may Allah bless him, remember his Traditions more than others among us.”

✿ Al-Walid Ibn Ata Ibn al-Agharr and Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn al-Walid al-Azraqi, both of Makkah, informed us; they said: Amr Ibn Yahya Ibn Sa’id al-Umawi informed us on the authority of his grandfather; he said: “Ayesha said to Abu Hurayrah: ‘Verily you relate many *hadiths* from the Prophet, may Allah bless him, which I did not hear.’ Thereupon Abu Hurayrah said: ‘O Mother!³ I sought them while mirror and collyrium-case⁴ kept you engaged and there was no such thing to keep me engaged.’

Dictionary Entry:

“Ayesha, the wife of the Prophet”

✿ Muhammad Ibn Umar informed us. He said: Muhammad Ibn Muslim Ibn Jammaz related to me on the authority of Uthman Ibn Hafs Ibn Umar Ibn Khaldah, he on the authority of al-Zuhri, he on the authority of Qabishag Ibn Dhuwayb Ibn Halhalah; he said: “Ayesha was the most learned of the people, and the elders from among the Companions of the Prophet of Allah, may Allah bless him, consulted her.”

✿ Ubayd Allah Ibn Umar informed us. He said: Ziyad Ibn al-Rabi informed us. He said: Abu Burdah Ibn Abi Musa related to me on the authority of his father; he said: “When the Companions of the Prophet of Allah, may Allah bless him, had a doubt about any thing, they asked Ayesha about it and received information from her.”

✿ Abu Muawiya al-Darir informed us on the authority of al-Amash, he on the authority of Muslim, he on the authority of Masruq, to whom a question was put if Ayesha was proficient in calculating *fara’id* (inheritances). He replied: “By Him in Whose hand is my soul! I saw the elders of the Companions of the Prophet, may Allah bless him, asking her about *fara’id*.”

✿ Muhammad Ibn ‘Umar informed us. He said: Musa Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim al-Taymi informed us; he said: My father informed me on the authority of Abu Salamah Ibn Abd al-Rahman; he said: “I have not seen any one having more knowledge of the *sunnah* [practice] of the Prophet of Allah, may Allah bless him, than Ayesha, nor more intelligent in opinion if her opinion was

2. Abu Hurayrah is cited and known as one of the most prominent narrators of *hadith* among the Companions.

3. The Companions and later Muslims referred to the wives of the Prophet as “Mothers of the Believers,” so this is a title of respect, not referring to her as a relative.

4. The collyrium-case is the applicator for *kohl*, the black, medicinal eyeliner that women have used for millennia in the region. Abu Hurayrah is poking fun in a gentle competition with Ayisha, the very young, and favorite wife of the Prophet after his first wife of many years, Khadijah, died.

sought, or having better knowledge of the [Qur'an] verses as to what they were revealed about, or in calculating the *fara'id*."

- ✿ Muhammad Ibn Umar informed us. He said: On the authority of Mahmud Ibn Labid; he said: "The wives of the Prophet, may Allah bless him, remembered many *hadiths* but none as Ayesha and Umm Salamah. Ayesha used to give *fatwa* (legal judgement) during the Caliphate of Umar Ibn al-Khattab and Uthman and continued until she died, may Allah show her mercy. The Companions of the Prophet of Allah, may Allah bless him, Umar and Uthman, sent messengers to her after him [the Prophet's death], asking her about the *sunnah* [his practice]."

- ✿ Abd al-Rahman Ibn Qasim, on the authority of his father, said: "Ayesha continued giving *fatwa* during the Caliphate of Abu Bakr [her own father], Umar, Uthman and after them until she died, may Allah show her mercy. I was permanently with her and she was good to me. I used to be in the company of al-Bahr Ibn Abbas. I used to be in the company of Abu Hurayrah and Ibn Umar and frequently visited him."



Study Questions and Activities

1. Why did Ibn Sa'd classify and list some of the most prominent transmitters of *hadith* [sayings and deeds of Muhammad] for his time and for later historians? Why do you think that the *Tabaqat* became an important source for historians, even in modern times?
2. What seems to be the most common reason for Companions and the later generations of transmitters to have related the text of a *hadith*?
3. Find the longest chain of transmission listed under Abu Hurayrah's or Ayesha's dictionary entry. How many links are there? Considering that Ibn Sa'd wrote this work in the second century after the *Hijrah*, estimate how many generations of transmitters are involved, and how long a generation might be.
4. What fact do the narrators cite that boosts Abu Hurayrah's authority? What other facts does Abu Hurayrah cite that enabled him to hear and transmit so many *hadiths*? Knowing that he attended to the Prophet, what do you think Abu Hurayrah meant by mentioning planting, visiting markets and attending to personal appearance?
5. Summarize the statements made by the transmitters about Ayesha's authority, reliability and learning.

Regarding Ibn Sina

from a biographical dictionary

 **Historical Source**
Wafayat al-A'yan
(The Biographies of Notables
Whose Dates of Death are Known)

 **Author**
Abu al-Abbas Ahmad
ibn Khallikan (d. 1282CE)

 **Excerpted from**
De Slane, B^N Mac Guckin. *Ibn
Khallikan's Biographical
Dictionary*, Vol. 1 (Beirut:
Librarie du Liban), 1970.
➤ pp. 440-444

AL-RAIS IBN SINA [Latin transliteration: AVICENNA]

Al-Rais (the chief) Abu Ali al-Husain Ibn Abd Allah Ibn Sina, a celebrated physician: his father was a native of Balkh, but he removed from that city to Bukhara; and having displayed great abilities as an *aamil* [officer to the governor of a province], he was appointed to fill that office in a town called Kharmaithen, one of the government estates in the dependencies of Bukhara, and a place of great antiquity.

It was there that Abu Ali [Ibn Sina] and his brother were born: their mother, Sattara, was a native of Afshana, a village near Kharmaithen. They afterwards went to inhabit Bukhara, and Abu Ali then traveled abroad to study the sciences and acquire a knowledge of their different branches. At the age of ten years, he was a perfect master of the Qur'an and general literature, and had attained a certain degree of information in dogmatic theology, the Indian calculus (arithmetic) and algebra. The *hakim* [physician] Abu Abd Allah an-Natili having visited them about that time, Abu Ali's father lodged him in his own house, and Abu Ali studied, under his tuition, the *Eisagogy* of Porphyry, and mastered the art of logic, the *Elements* of Euclid, and the *Almagest*; he even far surpassed his master, and explained to him difficulties and obscurities in these works which he, an-Natili, had not comprehended. Besides these studies, he frequented the lessons of Ismail the Sufi, from whom he learned jurisprudence, and he exercised himself in acquiring the readings of the Qur'an, making learned researches and holding discussions. On the departure of an-Natili, who went to visit Khawarzim Shah Mamun Ibn Muhammad, Abu Ali labored in the acquisition of natural philosophy, divinity and other sciences; he read the texts with the commentaries, and God opened for him the gates of knowledge.

He then felt an inclination to learn medicine, and studied the works composed on that subject; he also treated patients, not for emolument [pay] but for instruction, and

in a very short time he surpassed in that art the ancients and moderns, and remained without a rival or an equal. In the sixteenth year of his age, physicians of the highest eminence came to read, under his tuition, the works which treat of the different branches of medicine, and learn from him those modes of treatment which he had discovered by his practice. During the period of his studies he never slept an entire night, nor passed a day in any other occupation but study; and when he met with an obscure point, he used to perform a total ablution and proceed to the great mosque, where he would pray Almighty God to facilitate its comprehension to him and unlock the gate of difficulty.

The amir Nuh Ibn Mansur as-Samani, prince of Khorasan, having heard, during a fit of sickness, of Abu Ali Ibn Sina's talent,

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Abu al-Abbas Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Khallikan (1211-1282CE), like Ibn Sina, was of a family from Balkh. He was born at Arbela, and educated at Mosul, and later in Egypt, where he taught and gave opinions on the law. He lived much of his life in Damascus, where he served as chief judge, or qadi. He was known as the most learned man and best historian of Damascus. He was also a scholar of the Arabic language, a poet, a historian and a scholar of religious sciences.

Ibn Khallikan's *Wafayat* is a classic work in the Muslim tradition of biographical dictionaries. It is considered to be one of the most valuable sources on the civil and literary history of Muslim culture. Arab scholars quoted from it, published extracts from it, and used it as a model for supplements to it, one of which ran into 26 volumes! Ibn Khallikan's hundreds of entries on eminent Muslim scholars, poets, rulers, doctors, jurists, scientists and others are especially interesting for the anecdotes he gives to illustrate the person's character, rather than giving a highly detailed sketch of his life. Ibn Khallikan saw no need to do this, since he assumed that his readers were already familiar with the detailed work of his own teacher, Ibn al-Athir, and others. He discusses his sources, mentioning and quoting from several biographical compilers, comparing different versions of the details they offer and giving his judgment.

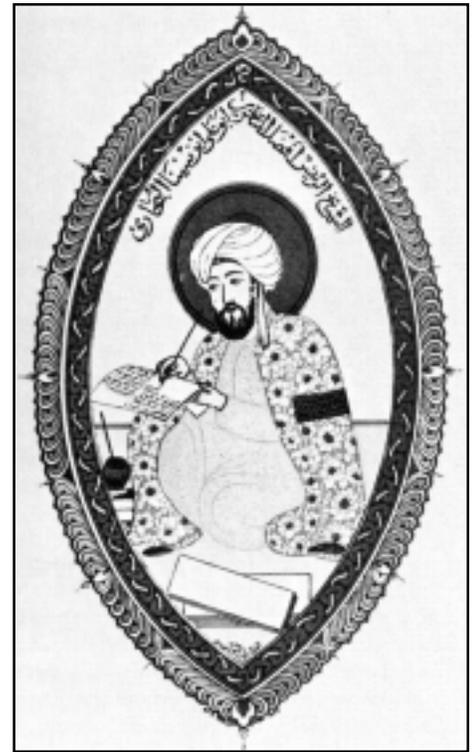
Ibn Khallikan's work was the first of its kind to collect the lives of the most famous Muslim figures into one work, arranged in alphabetical order. Earlier biographical dictionaries concentrated on famous people in only one field, for example, or important persons in one city, or those of a particular generation. Only the famous literary and biographical encyclopedia known as the *Fihrist* of Ibn Nadim is similar in scope and color, but it is organized around classes of scholars and literary figures and their works. Like the *Fihrist*, Ibn Khallikan's dictionary is a gold mine for information on social and civic history.

sent for him and was restored to health under his treatment. Abu Ali was then received into the favor of that prince, and he frequented his library, which was of incomparable richness, as it contained not only all the celebrated works which are found in the hand of the public, but others not to be met with anywhere else, and of which not only the titles but the contents were unknown. Here Abu Ali discovered treatises on the sciences of the ancients and other subjects, the essence of which he extracted, and with the greater part of which sciences he became acquainted. It happened, some time afterwards, that this library was consumed by fire, and Abu Ali remained the sole depository of the knowledge which it contained. Some persons even said that it was he who set fire to the library, being induced to do so for the reason that he alone was acquainted with its contents, and that he wished to pass off as his own the information which he had there acquired.

He had not reached his eighteenth year when he had completely mastered all the sciences to the attainment of which he had directed his studies. At the age of twenty-two, he lost his father, in the vicissitudes of whose fortune he had partaken, and with whom he acted as *aamil* for the sultan. When the affairs of the Samanid dynasty fell into disorder, Abu Ali left Bukhara and proceeded to Korkanj, the capital of Khawarzim, where he frequented the court of Khawarzim Shah Ali Ibn Mamun Ibn Muhammad: he wore the dress of a juriconsult [scholar of law] with the *taillesan* [a hood or hooded cloak, like doctoral robes in the West] and obtained a monthly stipend for his support. He afterwards departed from Korkanj and visited Nasa, Abiward, Tus, and other cities, during which period he paid his court to the amir Shams al-Maali Kabus Ibn Washmakir. When Kabus was arrested and confined in the castle where he died...Abu Ali went to Dihistan where he had a severe illness, and then returned to Jurjan, where he composed his *Kitab al-Awsat* (medium treatise) and which is called for that reason *al-Awsat al-Jurjani* (the Jurjan Medium). It was there that the doctor Abu Obaid Abd al-Wahid al-Jurjani made his acquaintance.

From Jurjan, Abu Ali proceeded to Rai and was attached to the court (of Majd ad-Dawlat, son of Fakhr ad-Dawlat); he afterwards went to Kazwin, and thence to Hamadan, where he became *wazir* [minister] to Shams ad-Dawlat, but his troops having revolted against him, they pillaged his house, arrested him, and required Shams ad-Dawlat to put him to death. This, however, the prince refused to do, and Abu Ali effected his escape and concealed himself. Some time afterwards, a violent attack of colic obliged Shams ad-Dawlat to have recourse to his medical skill, and therefore recalled him and re-appointed him as *wazir*, having made excuses to him for what had happened. On the death of this prince, his son and successor Taj ad-Dawlat refused Abu Ali's services as *wazir*. He therefore went to Isfahan, where he met with a kind reception from Ala ad-Dawlat Abu Jaafar Ibn Kakuyeh.

Ibn Sina's constitution was naturally strong, but...as he was never careful of his health, he was seized with a colic [digestive disorder], for which he took eight injections in a day; the result was excoriation [irritation] of the intestines and a dysentery. It happened that he also had to make a journey with Ala ad-Dawlat, during which he experienced that prostration (of strength) which attends colic; to relieve himself, he ordered the third of a drachm of parsley (or parsley seed) to be put into a mixture which he employed for injections; but the physician who attended him put in five drachms, and the result was that the dysentery increased from the acrid nature of the parsley. A great quantity of opium was also thrown into one of his medicines by his boys who had deceived him in some manner, and were apprehensive of being punished by him if he recovered. From the commencement of his illness he continued to support the burden of business and give public audiences from time to time; he neglected the necessary regimen...One week, he was well; the next, ill. At this period, Ala ad-Dawlat left Isfahan for Hamadan and took Abu Ali with him; during the journey, the colic returned, and on arriving at the latter place, Abu Ali was in a state of



Cover from an Arabic manuscript of the 11th century. The Arabic text says: "The Chief Master, the Best of the Latecomers, Abu Ali Ibn Sina of Bukhara."

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continued

extreme weakness, and his strength was almost totally prostrated. He now discontinued every medical application, and said: "The director which is in my body is unable to control it any longer, and no treatment can avail."

He then made his ablutions [the Muslim purification with water preceding prayers], turned himself to God, gave his wealth in alms to the poor, and redressed the grievances of all those whom he could recollect; he manumitted [freed] also his *mamluks* [slaves], and read the Qur'an through once every three days till he expired. The date of this event we shall give at the end of this article.

By his learning, penetration, and writings, he was the prodigy of his age: he composed a treatise on philosophy, entitled *as-Shafa* (the remedy); and is author of the *Najat* (or preservative); the *Isharat* (or indications), the *Qanun* (canon medicine), and other works, both short and long, amounting to nearly one hundred; besides epistles (or short treatises) on different subjects. Some of his epistles are beautifully written, such as *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*, *Salaman and Absal*, and the *Risalat at-Tair* (epistle of the bird). Great profit has been derived from his writings. He was one of the philosophers of the Muslims. There exists some poetry composed by him...

...The great merit of Ibn Sina is well known: he was born in the month of Safar AH 370 (August or September 980 CE), and he died at Hamadan on a Friday, in the month of Ramadan 428 (June or July 1037); he was buried in that city. My *shaykh* [teacher] Ibn al-Athir states in his great historical work (the *Kamil*) that he died at Isfahan; but the first is the more general opinion...

Study Questions and Activities

1. Use a historical atlas to locate the cities mentioned in Ibn Sina's biographical notice. In what modern countries do they lie? In what geographic region did he live and work?
2. To what social class did Ibn Sina's parents probably belong? How do you think his class, and the background of his father, affected the type of education he received?
3. Describe the steps in Ibn Sina's education, and compare the stages, time and circumstances of his education with those of a medical student today. What areas of scholarship did he pursue other than medicine?
4. What were the advantages and disadvantages of being employed at the courts of rulers as shown in Ibn Khallikan's biographical notice?
5. What other information about the society in which Ibn Sina lived can be gathered from Ibn Khallikan's account?

Chess and Backgammon

Historical Source

Muruj al-Dhahab
(Meadows of Gold)

Author

Abu al-Hassan al-Masudi
(d. 956CE)

Excerpted from

Lunde, Paul and Caroline Stone,
tr. *The Meadows of Gold: The
Abbasids* (London: Kegan Paul
International), 1989.

➤ pp. 395-398

The general flow of the narrative and the logical sequel of this story lead me to talk of chess and to quote what has been said on this subject. I have already, in another part of this work, in the chapter on India, talked of the origins of chess and backgammon and the affinity between these games and the heavenly bodies. Here I will add a few new points. The authors, ancient and modern, say that all the different chess boards may be reduced to six types, the only ones used in this game:

1. The ordinary square chess board, which is eight squares wide and eight squares deep—this is ascribed to the ancient peoples of India.
2. The rectangular chess board, four squares wide and sixteen long. At the beginning of the game, the pieces are drawn up in four rows on each side, the knights in two rows and in front of them the pawns, also in two rows. The manner of moving the pieces is the same as with the first board.
3. The square chess board, ten squares by ten. This one also has two pieces called *dabbaba* —‘war engines’—which move like the king, except that they can take and be taken.
4. The round chess board attributed to the Byzantines.

5. Another round chess board, connected with the stars, and called ‘zodiacal’. It has twelve divisions, like the signs of the zodiac, which separate the board into two halves. On it move seven pieces of different colours. This number, seven, refers to the five planets and the two great luminaries, the sun and the moon. I have already mentioned, in the chapter on India, the theories of their learned men regarding the influence of the planets on the heavenly bodies and their attraction for the higher spheres. They believe the sphere moves as a result of a sympathetic attraction towards a higher sphere; that the soul descends from the world of intelligence to that of the senses; that it there loses all memory of its origins and becomes ignorant, though once it was wise. I have set down these confused theories, the knowledge of which is, according to them, connected to the game of chess.

6. Another chess board, known as ‘organic’, has been invented in my own day. It has seven squares by eight and twelve pieces, arranged six against six on either side of the table. Each of these six pieces has the

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Abu al-Hassan Ali ibn al-Husain ibn Ali ibn Ali ibn Abdullah al-Masudi was born in Baghdad about 896CE, and died in Egypt around 956CE. Masudi, as he is commonly called, was a geographer and historian whose works have been recognized contributions to Muslim literary culture from his time on. Available information on Masudi himself comes mainly from his own works, though he does appear in biographical dictionaries. Masudi is known to have written 36 works, including many revisions, but only two of his books survive today. His longest work of history and geography is lost, except for quotations and references in other works, and with it many detailed descriptions of places and people are gone forever.

Masudi began to travel while still in his teens, and died far from his home city. Masudi interests modern historians especially for the interest he took in describing other cultures and religions with accuracy, depth and a tolerant spirit of inquiry. For example, he visited the Byzantine frontier and interviewed knowledgeable diplomats and leaders, and made first-hand observations. He spoke with eastern Jews, Christians of various eastern rites, and groups outside the monotheistic tradition. He visited the Caspian and Caucasus and beyond, in the land of the Slavs, Bulgars and Khazars. He described the geographic and cultural features of these places, and even expressed curiosity about the history of the Franks, or western Europeans and interviewed travelers returning from China. He visited and described India before the invasion of Mahmud of Ghazna.

He grew up in Baghdad while the Abbasids were still in power, absorbing the remarkable cultural life of the time and learning details about the *khalifah* [caliph] and life at court. Much of the volume from which this excerpt is taken concerns the history of the Abbasid rulers, told in a very readable and anecdotal manner. Masudi’s history of the Abbasids is very personal, and not at all like many later “histories” of dynasties that read like chronicles of military exploits and political events. Masudi clearly wished to entertain as well as educate his audience, and took pleasure in a good story.

The selection chosen from this volume is a good example of the way in which travel and contact with many cultures enabled Muslims to play important roles in transmitting ideas across the eastern hemisphere. Here, Masudi describes the variations of two popular board games that he has discovered through travel and wide reading. Note that Masudi refers the reader to more detailed descriptions of the games in other books of his that have unfortunately been lost. They were available at the time and for a long time after his death, however. Masudi was discussed in detail by Ibn Khaldun in the 14th century.

name of one of the organs or members which enables a man to sense, speak, hear, see, touch and move—that is to say, they represent the senses and the senses' common seat, the heart.

The Indians, Greeks, Persians, Byzantines and other peoples who play chess have described its forms, moves, rules, the explanations that have been given to it, its peculiarities and the setting out of the pieces. Furthermore, players have collections of anecdotes and amusing stories, which, according to some of them, stimulate the player and serve to concentrate his mind. These perform for them the same function as do the mnemonic poems in the *rajaz* meter for the warrior on the field of battle, or the caravan leader when the caravan is worn out, or for the water-drawer hauling his bucket to give water to travellers. For the chess player, they are as valuable a stimulant as poems and *rajaz* verses are to those who fight. From among the many pieces of this kind, I will quote the following passages from a poem by a chess player:

*Chess anecdotes, aptly quoted,
Burn like flaming coals.
How many times have they given
A weak player the edge
Against his cleverer adversary!*

Here is another passage in which the game is described with a rare felicity of expression:

*The square, red-leather chess board
Is set down between two noble friends.
They evoke memories of war,
Producing its simulacrum
But without shedding blood.
One attacks, the other counters
And the eye of war does not close in sleep.
See how the knights of the two armies
Manoeuvre without trumpets or standards!*

Among the poems of this sort noteworthy for their elegance and the polish of their descriptions, is the following by Abu al-Hasan ibn Abi al-Baghl, the secretary. This man, who was distinguished both as secretary and as a leading governor, was also known for the skill and finesse of his game:

*An intelligent player moves the pieces
In such a way as to discover
Consequences which escape the ignorant eye.
He foresees the future with the sure
Eye of the sage, but under the guise
Of frivolity. Thereby he serves
The ruler's interest, showing in this game
How disaster may be averted.
The vicissitudes of the chess board,
If closely observed,
Equal those of squadrons and lances.*



13th century Christian illustration of Muslims playing chess.

As to the game of backgammon, I have already explained, in the same chapter on India, how this game is played and who invented it, according to the various traditions. Connoisseurs say there are different ways of playing and various rules for arranging and setting out the pieces, but the number of points is always the same and can be neither



Medieval European woodcut depicting a backgammon game in progress.

increased nor decreased, according to the rules of the game. Thus, as I have said before, it is the two dice which are the law in this game. The player, although he has no freedom of action and cannot save himself from the decisions of the dice, must nevertheless show some discernment in moving the pieces, in scoring and in moving the counters. The game of backgammon and the thralldom of the players to the whims of the dice are the subjects of a large number of technical poems, often very detailed. I will quote a fragment:

*Backgammon is no good, for during
A run of bad luck the practised player
Cannot count on his own wit!
You see how the dice rule and decide
The difference between good
And evil fortune on a single toss.
The more skilled player,
If luck abandons him can do nothing
To save himself from defeat.*

The secretary Abu al-Fath Mahmud ibn al-Husain ibn al-Sindi ibn Shahak, known as 'Kushajim', an educated man, sagacious and well-read, told me he had sent the following verses to one of his friends. In them, the poet criticizes the game of backgammon, to which he was devoted:

*Arrogant man, who tries to find
In the game of backgammon the means
To lord it over your friends,
Truly you would find me
A terrible adversary,
If the dice had not favoured you.
The hopes of the skilled player
Are dashed and he laments
The harshness of ill-fortune.
When the judges have passed sentence
The opponents cannot escape
Their decision. By my life,
I am not the first man
To be betrayed by destiny!*

Kushajim also quoted to me the following passage from Abu Nuwas:

*She does the opposite of what she is bidden,
She doesn't trouble herself as to what is just or unjust.
Since she does not yield to my will
And I submit to hers, it is I
Who have become her slave.*

At the beginning of this book, in the chapter on the kings of India, I cited the opinions of those who consider backgammon and dice as a sort of symbol of the possessions of this world, which are allotted neither on the grounds of cleverness nor cunning. The invention of the aforesaid game is, as I have said, attributed to Ardashir, the son of Babak. This king, struck with the spectacle of the mutability of fortune, divided the backgammon board into twelve points, in accordance with the number of the months and instituted thirty 'dogs', or pieces, according to the number of days in a month. The two dice represent fortune and its capricious effect on the inhabitants of this world. For all this information and more of a similar nature, I must ask you to refer back to the chapter mentioned and to my other works.

Lastly, a Muslim philosopher maintains that the inventor of chess was a Mu'tazilite, an upholder of the doctrine of Justice—that is, Free Will—while the inventor of backgammon was a fatalist who wanted to show, by means of this game, that one can do nothing against fate and that true understanding is to mould one's behaviour to the decisions of destiny.

Study Questions and Activities

1. List the cultures Masudi describes in relation to the origin and variations of these two board games.
2. What fields of science, or pseudo-science does Masudi mention in connection with these games, their boards, rules, strategies and pieces? Briefly describe the meaning or symbolism he attributes to each of these fields.
3. How do these games, as Masudi describes them, relate to the author's own culture?
4. What familiar human activities are reflected in his description?
5. How do they relate to the spiritual life of the culture?
6. What role might the poems about these games play in Muslim culture, and what functions did they serve? What do they tell us about the class, status, and occupations of those who played? What do they tell us about the poets' intellectual life?
7. How might Masudi's writing have affected the popularity and transmission of these games in Muslim lands and beyond?

A History of Prophets and Kings

Historical Source

Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk
(History of the Prophets and Kings)

Author

Muhammad al-Tabari (d. 923CE)

Excerpted from

① Perlmann, Moshe, tr. *The History of al-Tabari: Volume IV—The Ancient Kingdoms* (Albany: State University of New York Press), 1985.

➤ pp. 87-95

② Powers, Stephen, tr. *The History of al-Tabari: Volume XXIV—The Empire in Transition* (Albany: State University of New York Press), 1985.

➤ pp. 85-86, 91-93, 96

“The Account of Darius the Elder and His Son Darius the Younger. How He Perished and the Account of Alexander.”

excerpt 1

Darius b. Bahman b. Isfandiyar b. Bishtab became king. He was nicknamed Jihrazad, meaning 'noble-natured'. They say that he dwelt in Babylon, that he sternly administered his realm, and that he subdued the kings around him and they paid him tribute. He built in Fars a city which he called Darabjird. He cut the tails of the riding beasts that carried the royal mail and arranged the animals in proper order. He was amazed by his son Darius. Because of his love for him, he named him after himself and designated him as successor to the throne. He had a *wazir* [minister], Rastin by name, a man of fine mind. But intrigue and enmity arose between Rastin and a youth called Biri who was raised with the younger Darius. Rastin slandered him to the king, and it is said that the king gave Biri a drink from which he died. The prince bore a grudge against the *wazir* and the group of military commanders who had supported the *wazir* against Biri. Darius reigned for twelve years.

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continued

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Abu Jafar Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari (839-923CE) is celebrated as one of the greatest historians of the Arabic tradition. He was born in Tabaristan, Persia. He is said to have memorized the entire Qur'an by age seven. Although he was not wealthy, he traveled extensively to gain an education, first in the famous cities of Iraq, then in Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and Persia. He supported himself as a tutor and teacher of *hadith* and Islamic law. His life was simple but extremely diligent, and he did not like to accept large gifts and sums of money for his scholarly work. The Muslim geographer and historian al-Yaqut wrote that for forty years, al-Tabari wrote forty pages per day. His two most important works are a 3,000 page *Commentary on the Holy Qur'an* and his 30-volume universal history, in addition to other works on *hadith* and Islamic law.

The work from which these excerpts are taken is his most famous, a history of the world from the Creation to al-Tabari's own time, called "universal history." This work was an outstanding example of the historical method developed in the Muslim tradition, which uses evidence based on a chain of transmitters, or *isnad*, for every report cited. In the excerpts, these transmitters are listed between "___" which stand for "According to X who related to Y who told Z, who narrated." The information follows. Each citation of *isnad* begins a different version of a story where accounts conflict, or add to one another. Throughout the work, al-Tabari places various versions of historical accounts side by side, listing the narrators in sequence, and occasionally giving his own view, attributed to Abu Ja'far. Al-Tabari was so thorough and consistent in his use of this system, which was a prominent feature in the Muslim historical tradition, that modern historians can evaluate the quality of individual narrators' reports in great detail.

The first excerpt describes Alexander the Great's struggle with Persia, the expansion of his empire and rulers in the region up to the time of Jesus. Notice how al-Tabari skillfully weaves traditions and stories into his chronology of kings and prophets. It is important to note that in Arabic, the term used for Alexander is Dhul Qarnain, meaning "he of two horns," an inspired conqueror mentioned in the Qur'an, who is often associated with Alexander in the Muslim tradition. The early volumes of the History contain detailed accounts of prophets and kings known in the Biblical tradition, whose prophets are also recognized as messengers of God in Islamic teachings.

The second excerpt is from the period of the Umayyad caliphate, whose capital was Damascus. Theirs was the dynasty that followed the four "Rightly-Guided" *khalifahs* [caliphs] Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali Ibn Abi Talib, which was established after Muawiyah, governor of Syria, disputed the leadership of the Muslim state against Ali. He established the practice of appointing sons and relatives as successor, whereas the earliest *khalifahs* were elected by a group of Prophet Muhammad's companions. The excerpt tells of the reign and character of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (ruled 717-720CE), the Umayyad who is often called Umar II and "the fifth Rightly-Guided Khalifah", because of his pious, unworldly character and the justice he tried to establish through his example and policies. Here, too, al-Tabari shows his skill at incorporating stories of interest and anecdotes that reveal the personal qualities of historical figures and characteristics of their time.

He was succeeded by his son, Darius b. Darius b. Bahman. His mother was Mahiyahind, daughter of Hazarmard b. Bihradmah. At his coronation Darius said, "We shall neither force anyone into the abyss of destruction nor hold back one who tumbles into it." It is said that he built the city of Dara in the Jazirah. He employed Biri's brother and made him *wazir*, because of his sympathy for him and his brother. But the *wazir* instigated the king against his aides and induced him to kill a number of them. This angered the notables and the public, and they loathed the king who was a heedless, excitable, malicious and violent young man.

According to Hisham b. Muhammad: After Darius b. Ardashir, his son Darius ruled for fourteen years. He mistreated his subjects and slew their leaders, and Alexander [the Great] attacked him at that time. The people of his realm were fed up with him and detested him, and they wished to be rid of him. Many of their leaders and dignitaries joined Alexander. By exposing Darius' weak points, they strengthened the invader. In the Jazirah, the contenders met and battled for a year. Then some of the intimates of Darius pounced upon him, slew him, and brought his head to Alexander. He ordered that they be put to death, saying, "This is the reward for him who dares an attempt on his king's life." Alexander married Darius's daughter, Rushanak. He invaded India and the lands to the east, after which he withdrew, intending to go to Alexandria. But he died in the region of the Sawad, and his remains were taken to Alexandria in a gold casket—his reign had lasted fourteen years. Greek rule had become centralized, whereas before Alexander it was dispersed; [on the other hand] Persian rule was dispersed, whereas before Alexander it had been centralized.

According to a source other than Hisham: When Darius' son Darius became king, he ordered a vast city to be built in the Jazirah, and he named it Daranawa; it is called Dara today. He also reports that Darius built and equipped it with everything necessary, and that Philip, the father of Alexander the Greek, reigned over a Greek

land known as Macedonia and other lands that he had occupied. He concluded a peace treaty with Darius, under which he paid an annual tribute to the latter. Philip died, and his younger son succeeded him, but he did not send the tribute that his father used to send. This brought the wrath of Darius upon him [Alexander]. Darius wrote to him upbraiding him for the misdeed of stopping the payment of the tribute his father used to pay, and so forth, saying that it was youth and ignorance that led him to withhold what his father used to send as a tribute. Darius sent to Alexander a polo mallet, a ball, and a load of sesame. In a written message, he stated that Alexander was a boy, and that he should play with the polo mallet and ball, but not function or parade as a king. Should he not confine himself to this order, and should he assume kingship and rebel, then he, Darius, would send an emissary to fetch him in shackles; and (he stated) that the soldiers of Darius were as numerous as the grains of sesame (he) sent to Alexander.

In reply, Alexander wrote to Darius that he understood the message. (He said) that he had looked at the polo mallet and the ball sent to him, and saw therein a good omen; that is, he would throw the thrower of the ball to the mallet, and drag him with the ball. He likened the earth to the ball, and declared that he would drag the realm of Darius to his own kingdom and country, (and this) into his domain. In the same light, he viewed the sesame sent to him; although abundant, it was neither bitter nor pungent. Along with his letter, he sent Darius a sack of mustard and told him that what he was sending was small in size but that in pungency, bitterness and strength, it equaled the gift of sesame, and that his army fully answered this description.

When Alexander's message reached Darius, the latter assembled his army and prepared to fight Alexander, who in turn made preparations and set out toward the land of Darius. The news thereof reached Darius who advanced to meet him. The two forces met and engaged in the fiercest of battles; and fate turned against the army of Darius...



Coin showing Alexander the Great.

It is said that upon Alexander's command, twelve cities were constructed, each one of them named Alexandria. One of them in Isfahan...Three towns were built in Khurasan, among them Herat, Marw, and Samarqand. In Babylonia he built a town for Rushanak...He also built other cities.

...The Greek age of the empire continued from the time of Alexander until the Romans took over. Religion and government under the Israelites in Jerusalem and its environs was not monarchic in form; then the Persians and the Romans devastated their country, and banished them from it after John the Baptist was slain.

After Ptolemy ibn [son of] Lagos, Syria, Egypt and the lands to the West were ruled by Ptolemy Philadelphius for forty years. After him...Ptolemy Euergetes...then Ptolemy Epiphanes...then Ptolemy Soter...Ptolemy Alexander I...after him ruled the Ptolemy who disappeared from the throne after eight years...Ptolemy Dionysos...Ptolemy Cleopatra for seventeen years. All these were Greeks. Each of the kings after Alexander was addressed as Ptolemy, just as the Persian rulers were each addressed as Chosroes...

According to what is mentioned, after Cleopatra, Syria was ruled by Rome alone. The first Roman to rule was Gaius Julius, for five years, After him, Syria was ruled by Augustus for fifty-six years. In the forty-third year of his reign Jesus was born. Three hundred and three years elapsed between the rise of Alexander and the birth of Jesus.

excerpt 2

“The Caliphate of Umar b. Abd al-Aziz” [The Events of the Year 99, The Events of the Year 100 and The Events of the Year 101]¹

According to al-Harith→Ibn Sa’d→Muhammad b. Umar→al-Haytham b. Waqid:

Umar b. Abd al-Aziz was appointed as Khalifah at Dabiq, on Friday, the tenth of Safar, in the year 99 (September 22, 717).

According to Muhammad b. Umar→Dawud b. Khalid b. Dinar→Suhayl b. Abi Suhayl→Raja b. Haywah:

On Friday [Umayyad Khalifah] Sulayman b. Abd al-Malik put on green robes made of silk and looked in the mirror, saying, “By God, I am a king in the prime of his manhood.” Then he went out to lead the people in the Friday prayers. Upon his return, however, he fell ill. When his condition deteriorated, he entrusted the succession, in a document he wrote, to one of his sons, a youth who had not yet attained puberty. I said to him, “What are you doing, O Commander of the Faithful? One of the things that preserves a Khalifah in his grave is the appointment of an upright man to serve as his successor over the Muslims.” Sulayman replied, “I will ask God for guidance, and I will consider the matter, for I have not made up my mind yet.”

Sulayman tarried a day or two and then tore up the document. He called for me and asked, “What is your opinion of Dawud b. Sulayman?” I replied, “He is away in Constantinople, and you do not know if he is dead or alive.” He asked me, “Whom do you propose, then?” I replied, “The decision is yours, O Commander of the Faithful.” I wanted to see whom he would mention. He asked, “What is your opinion of Umar b. Abd al-Aziz?” I replied, “By God, I know him to be a worthy excellent man and a sincere Muslim.” He said, “He is exactly as you describe him.” Then he said, “But if, by God, I appoint him and do not appoint anyone else, there will be civil strife, for the (Banu Abd al-Malik) will never allow him to rule over them, unless one of them is put next in succession”...“Therefore I will appoint Yazid Abd-al Malik to be Khalifah after him.” I said, “The decision is yours.”

...Then Sulayman wrote, “In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. This is a document from the servant of God, Sulayman, Commander of the Faithful, to Umar b. Abd al-Aziz. I have appointed you to be my successor to the khalifate, and you are to be succeeded by Yazid b. Abd al-Malik. Therefore, hearken unto him, O people, and obey; fear God and avoid dissention, lest enemies take advantage of you.” He sealed the document...

...**Raja continued:** When they had sworn the oath of allegiance after Sulayman’s death, and I realized that I had put the matter on a solid footing, I said, “Rise, out of reverence for your master, for he has just died.” They recited, “Surely we belong to God, and to Him we return.”² Then I read the document to them...

...When the burial ceremony had been completed, the khalifal stable of animals was brought out to Umar: there were slow-paced horses, swift riding horses, and mules, each animal with its own groom. Umar asked, “What is this?” They replied, “The Khalifah’s stable.” He said, “My own mount will suffice.” Then Umar mounted it, and after the animals had been sent away, he departed. Someone asked, “Will you occupy the Khalifah’s

1. The Islamic lunar calendar years 99, 100, and 101 “after Hijra”, i.e. 717-718, 718-719, and 719-720ce.
2. The verse from the Qur’an translated in this speech is recited upon the death of someone or upon news of a calamity.

residence?" Umar replied, "The family of Abu Ayyub [that is, Sulayman] is still living there, and my own pavilion will suffice until they leave." He therefore remained in his own living quarters until they eventually vacated the Khalifah's residence.

Raja said: On the evening of the same day, Umar said, "O Raja, summon a scribe [secretary] for me." I called one. Now up to this point I was pleased with everything that he had done, that is, the actions he had taken with regard to the riding animals and Sulayman's residence. I said to myself, "How is he going to handle writing? Will he make drafts or what?" When the scribe had taken his seat, Umar dictated a single letter, directly from his mouth to the hand of the scribe, without any preliminary drafts. He dictated in the finest, most eloquent and most succinct manner possible. He then decreed that copies of the letter should be sent to every land.

...People invoked God's blessings upon Sulayman because he appointed Umar b. Abd al-Aziz as his successor and passed over his own children.

...Umar then wrote to al-Jarrah [a provincial governor], saying, "Whoever prays with you in the direction of the *qiblah* [direction of Makkah; meaning, whoever has accepted Islam] is to be relieved of the *jizyah* tax [on non-Muslim citizens, instead of the *zakat* and military service that Muslims owe]." As a result, many people hastened to accept Islam. Someone said to al-Jarrah, "The people are rushing to accept Islam in order to avoid the tax, so test them by requiring that they submit to circumcision." Al-Jarrah conveyed this suggestion to Umar, who wrote back, "God sent Muhammad in order to summon people to Islam, not to circumcise them."

...**According to Ali b. Muhammad**→**Kharijah b. Musab al-Dabbi and Abdallah b. al-Mubarak, and others:** Then, when Umar wanted to appoint someone as governor of Khurasan, he said, "Find me a trustworthy man who might advise me about conditions in Khurasan." ...He said, "Tell me about Abd al-Rahman Abdullah." He said, "He rewards those who are competent but treats enemies with hostility.

He is a military commander who acts independently and will advance boldly if he finds supporters." Umar asked, "What about Abd al-Rahman b. Nu'aym?" He replied, "Soft, flexible, forgiving, and gentle." Umar said, "I prefer the one who is forgiving and gentle." ...

According to Ali ... [etc]: Umar b. Abd al-Aziz wrote to Abd al-Rahman b. Nu'aym as follows: "Now then, if you are a sincere servant of God with regard to his servants, no reproach that anyone might utter will have any effect on you in the cause of God, for God is closer to you than the people are, and what you owe Him is greater than what you owe them. Do not commission anything in the affairs of the Muslims except that which is known to be good for them and that which promotes their welfare, and be faithful to what is entrusted to you. Beware lest you incline toward anything but what is right, for the unseen is not concealed from God. And do not walk along a path that leads away from God, for there is no refuge from God, except with Him."

“The Death of Umar b. Abd al-Aziz”

According to Ahmad b. Thabit→**the person he mentioned**→**Ishaq b. Isa**→**Abu Ma'shar:** Umar b. Abd al-Aziz died on the twenty-fifth of Rajab in the year 101...He was thirty-nine years and a few months old and had been Khalifah [caliph] for two years and five months. He died in Dayr Sim'an.

...His mother was Umm Asim, the daughter of Asim b. Umar b. al-Khattab [the second "Rightly Guided" Khalifah]. He was known as "The Umayyad with the scar on his forehead" because one of his riding animals had wounded him in the face.

According to al-Harith... [etc]: I frequently used to hear Ibn Umar [son of Umar b. al-Khattab] say, "Would that I knew who from among the children of Umar will have a sign on his face. That one will fill the world with justice."

According to Mansur... [etc]: When Umar b. Abd al-Aziz was a child in Damascus, he was kicked by an animal and carried to his mother, Umm Asim...who took him in her arms and wiped the blood from his face. His father came in to see her while she was taking care of the boy, and she turned to him and scolded him, blaming him for the accident, saying, "You have destroyed my son! Why didn't you make sure that he had a servant or a nurse to protect him from something like this?" He said to her, "Be quiet, Umm Asim. All is well that ends well, since he is destined to be 'The Umayyad with the scar on his forehead.'"

“Aspects of His Character”

According to Ali b. Muhammad... [etc]: When Umar b. Abd al-Aziz became Khalifah, he wrote to Yazid b. Muhallab [a governor] as follows: "Now, then, Sulayman was one of God's servants upon whom God bestowed his blessing and then took him away. He designated me as his successor and he designated Yazid b. Abd al-Malik—if he is still alive—to succeed me. The office that God has entrusted and allotted to me is not easily borne. Were it my desire to take many wives and acquire wealth, then what He has already given me is greater than that attained by any of His creatures. But I fear, in connection with the office for which I have been chosen, a difficult reckoning and a painful questioning, except for whatever defense from trial God may grant me, in His mercy. Those at our end have sworn the oath of allegiance, so now let those at your end do the same."

The letter was brought to Yazid al-Muhallab, who showed it to Abu Uyaynah. After the latter had read it, (Yazid) said, "I will not be one of his governors." Abu Uyaynah asked, "Why not?" He replied, "This is not the way that members of his household [the other Umayyad rulers] have spoken in the past, and he does not intend to follow their example."

[...]

According to Ali...[etc]: Umar wrote to Abd al-Rahman b. Nu'aym as follows: "Indeed, Action and Knowledge are closely related, so be one who is knowledgeable of God and one who acts on His behalf. There have been people who were knowledgeable but did not act; their knowledge was detrimental [harmful] to them."

...According to Abdullah b. Ahmad...[etc]: Umar b. Abd al-Aziz wrote as follows: "Greetings from the servant of God, Umar, the Commander of the Faithful, to Abd al-Hamid [governor, at Kufah]. Now, then, the army of al-Kufah has been stricken by trial, hardship, and deviation from the judgements of God, as well as by corrupt customs that were imposed on them by evil governors [i.e. those appointed by the Umayyads before him to suppress dissent].

The foundation of religion is justice and the performance of good deeds, and there is nothing more important to you than your soul. Remember that even the smallest sin is significant. Do not treat uncultivated land like cultivated land, nor cultivated land like uncultivated land. Examine the uncultivated land, take from it whatever it can bear, and improve it so that it will flourish. Nothing should be taken from cultivated land, except the rate of the tribute. Take it gently, leaving the peasants unruffled. Do not take as tribute anything but the weight of seven. The following levies are not permitted: tolls, the wages of mint officials, presents...at the [pre-Islamic Persian] festivals; and fees for official papers, for couriers, for housing, and for weddings. No tribute shall be levied on those peasants who accept

Islam. Follow my instructions in this matter, for I have commissioned you to carry out what I was commissioned to do by God...Farewell."

Study Questions and Activities

1. What causes does al-Tabari give for the defeat of Darius the Younger by Alexander?
2. What major political change came to the lands ruled by Persians and Greeks as a result of Alexander's conquests?
3. Explain the story of the polo ball, mallet and sesame. What was the meaning of the contrast between sesame and mustard seed? Why do you think these symbolic stories passed into tradition, and what do they tell about life in these ancient kingdoms?
4. Check the accuracy of the dates al-Tabari gives for Alexander the Great's conquests and the birth of Jesus, according to modern historical sources. (Look in encyclopedia or textbooks).
5. How does al-Tabari contrast power and wealth with death in telling about Sulayman's life? List other references to Islamic views of life, death, and worldly power in the excerpt.
6. How did Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz show humility as soon as he took office? Why do you think al-Tabari included this information. Who is the source for these details?
7. How does the reader learn that Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz was skilled in Arabic language, one of the most highly respected talents among the Arabs?
8. List evidence from the anecdotes given by al-Tabari that Umar II's policies were different from the policies of Umayyad rulers before him.
9. What is the significance of the story told about Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz's childhood, and to which famous Muslim hero was the boy related by birth?
10. What does al-Tabari's narrative tell about the qualities of leadership for which Muslims have celebrated Umar II for many generations?

The History of Baghdad

Historical Source

Tarikh Baghdad
(The History of Baghdad)

Author

al-Khatib al-Baghdadi (d. 1091^{CE})

Excerpted from

Lassner, Jacob, tr. *The Topography of Baghdad in the Early Middle Ages* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press), 1970.

➤ pp. 50-53, 61-62, 75-76, 108-109, 25-42

Dimensions of Baghdad and the Construction of Mansur's Capital

On the authority of Muhammad b. Ali al-Warraq and Ahmad b. Ali al-Muhtasib→Muhammad b. Ja'far an Nahwi→al-Hasan b. Muhammad as-Suhkuni→Muhammad b. Khalaf→Yahya b. al-Hasan b. Abd al-Khalīq [related]: The area of Madinat al-Mansur was 1 *mil* by 1 *mil*, and the bricks used in its construction 1 square cubit.

Muhammad b. Khalaf Ahmad Mahmud ash-Sharawi related that the task of tracing the city of Baghdad was entrusted to al-Hajjaj b. Artat and a group of men from al-Kufah.

Abu an-Nasr al Marwazi→Ahmad b. Hanbal [the famous jurist] related: Baghdad comprises everything from the Sarat Canal to Bab at-Tibn. Al-Khatib al-Hafiz Ahmad [b. Hanbal] in that statement meant Madinat al-Mansur as what is adjacent to it, since the upper part of the city is the fief of Umm Jaafar, below which is the trench that divides this fief from the buildings connected with the city proper. Similarly, the lower part of the city, consisting of al-Karkh and what is adjacent to it, is separated from the city proper by the Sarat Canal. That is the boundary of the city and what is adjacent to it measured by its length. As for the boundary of the city according to its width, it extends from the bank of the Tigris to a place called the Kabsh wal-Asad [the ram and the lion]. All these places were completely built up with palaces and dwellings. Today, the Kabsh wal-Asad is a sown field some distance from the city.

When I used to pass through the Kabsh wal-Asad with my father, I could not force myself free of the surging crowd in the markets. A report reached me by way of Muhammad b. Khalaf, that Abu Hanifah an-Nu'man b. Thabit [the jurist] was appointed to supervise

brick-making for the city, and to count them until the construction of the city wall adjacent to the moat was completed. Abu Hanifah used to count them with a cane [i.e. to measure and multiply by the number of units], and was the first to do so; others then made use of his practice.

Muhammad b. Ishaq al-Baghawi mentioned that Rabah the architect, who was entrusted with the task of constructing the wall of al-Mansur's city, related to him, "The distance between each of city's gates was one *mil*." In each of the brick courses there were 162,000 Jaafari bricks. When we had built a third of the wall we made it thinner

and laid only 150,000 to a course, and when we had completed two thirds, we made it thinner again and laid 140,000 bricks to the course until the top..."

Muhammad b. Khalaf: They say, when al-Mansur built his city he constructed four gates, so that if one came from al-Hijaz he entered by way of the Kufah Gate; if he came

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, who died in 1091 ^{CE}, was a well-known jurist and religious scholar. He set about, as did many local historians, to write a biographical dictionary of prominent individuals in Baghdad. We are fortunate that al-Baghdadi wrote such a lengthy introduction to his main work, in which he described the topography of his native city of Baghdad—the famous capital of the Muslim world in the Abbasid period. He was aware, like the author of a similar history of Damascus, that he was writing about a very important, wonderful place. In 900 ^{CE}, Baghdad was the largest city in the world, with a population of 1,000,000. It was a center for government, trade, sciences, literature and the arts. Al-Baghdadi's description is "the major statement on the physical design of Baghdad...[since] no major excavations [archaeological digs] were ever undertaken on the...site of the medieval city." The city was destroyed by the Mongols in 1258, and suffered periodic floods and fires. Since the information is based on chains of authority that can be checked in other works, it helps historians to reconstruct the stages of development of the city. Dr. Jacob Lassner, the translator of this work, calls it "the most detailed statement of this kind,...the key to any such study."

from al-Maghrib [west] he entered by way of the Damascus Gate; if he came from al-Ahwaz, al-Basrah, Wasit, al-Yamamah and al-Bahrayn he entered through the Basrah Gate; and if he arrived from the east he entered through Khurasan Gate. The reference to the Khurasan Gate was omitted from the text, and was not mentioned by Muhammad b. Jaafar on the authority of al-Sakuni; but we corrected the text from a different account. He, that is to say, al-Mansur, placed every gate opposite the palace. He capped each gate with a dome, and erected eighteen towers between each gate, with the exception of the wall between the Basrah and Kufah Gates where he added an additional tower. He fixed the length between the Khurasan Gate and the Kufah Gate at 800 cubits, and from the Damascus Gate to the Basrah Gate at 600 cubits. There were five iron gates between the main entrance to the city and the gate which led to the courtyard.

Waki related in the account which I have on his authority that Abu Jaafar built the city in a circular form because a circular city has advantages over the square city, in that if the monarch were to be in the center of the square city, some parts would be closer to him than others, while, regardless of the divisions, the sections of the Round City are equidistant from him when he is in the center. Al-Mansur then built four main gates, dug moats, and erected two walls and two *fasils*. Between each main gate were two *fasils*, and the inner wall was higher than the outer wall. He commanded that no one be allowed to dwell at the foot of the higher inner walls or build any dwelling there; but ordered construction along the wall in the second *fasil* because it was better for the fortification of the wall. Then he built the palace and mosque. In back of al-Mansur's palace was a reception hall [*diwan*] thirty by twenty cubits and in back of this hall was an audience room twenty by twenty by twenty cubits, whose ceiling ended in a dome. Above this audience room was a similar chamber, above which rested the green dome. The chamber stood twenty cubits high until the point where the vaulting of the dome begins. The distance

between the ground line and the top of the green dome was eighty cubits, and surmounting the green dome, which could be seen from the outskirts of Baghdad, was the figure of a mounted horseman.

Al-Qadl Abu-l-Qasim at-Tanukhi: I heard a group of scholars mention that the green dome was surmounted by the figure of a horseman holding a lance in his hand. If the Sultan saw that figure with its lance pointing to a given direction, he knew that some rebels would make their appearance from there; and before long word would reach him that a rebel had appeared in that direction, or something to that effect.

Ibrahim b. Makhlad al-Qadl → Isma'il b. 'Ali al-Khutabi: The top of the green dome which surmounted the palace of Abu Jaafar's city fell on Tuesday, the 7th of Jumada I, 329 [941 CE], during a night of torrential rain, awesome thunder, and terrible lightning. Indeed, that dome was the crown of Baghdad, a guidepost in the region, and one of the memorable things that one associates with the Abbasids. It was built at the beginning of their rule and remained intact until this time. Over 180 years elapsed between its construction and fall.

Waki related in the account, which I have received on his authority, that the city was round, and encompassed by round walls. The diameter measured from the

Khurasan Gate to the Kufah Gate was 1,200 cubits; and the diameter measured from the Basrah Gate to the Damascus Gate was 1,200 cubits. The height of the interior wall, which was the wall of the city, was thirty-five cubits. On the wall were towers, each rising to a height of five cubits above it, and battlements. The thickness of the wall at its base was approximately twenty cubits. Then came the *fasil*, 60 cubits wide between the inner and outer walls, followed by the outer wall which protected the *fasil*, and beyond which the moat was situated. The city had four gates: east, west, south and north, and each gate in turn was made up of two gates, one in front of the other, separated by a corridor [*dihliz*] and a court [*rahbah*] opening unto the *fasil* which turned between the two walls. The first gate was that of the *fasil*, the second that of the city. When one entered the Khurasan Gate, one first turned to the left in a vaulted corridor constructed of burnt brick cemented by gypsum. The corridor was twenty cubits wide by thirty cubits long. The entrance was in the width, and the exit, which was in the length, led to a court sixty cubits by forty cubits. This court extended to the second gate, and was walled on both sides from the first to the second wall.

In back of the court was the second gate which was the gate of the city; flanking to the right and left of the court were two doors the Damascus Gate; the left door



An artist's rendition of the Round City, the Abbasid rulers' capital in the heart of Baghdad. The khalifah's palace and masjid were in the center, surrounded by government offices, libraries, markets, and housing for the families of the khalifah and high officials. Canals connect to the Tigris river and criss-cross the numerous quarters of bustling Baghdad, spread out around the Round City. (illus. by Abd al-Muttalib Fahemy)

led to the *fasil* of the Basrah Gate, which then turned from the Basrah Gate to the Kufah Gate. The *fasil* which led to the Damascus Gate turned to the Kufah Gate in exactly the same fashion, since the four gateways were identical in regard to gates, *fasils*, courts, and arcades. The second gate was the gate of the city and was protected by the large wall which we have described. The main gate gave access to a vaulted passage, constructed of burnt brick cemented by gypsum, which was twenty cubits long and twelve cubits wide. This was true as well for the other of the four gates. Above the vaulted passage of each gate was an audience room with a staircase against the wall by which means one ascended to it. Crowning this audience room was a great dome which reached a height of fifty cubits. Each dome was surmounted by a figure different from those of the other domes, which turned with the wind. This dome served as the audience room of al-Mansur when he desired to look at the river or see whoever approached from the direction of Khurasan. The dome of the Damascus Gate served as the audience room when he desired to look at the suburbs and the countryside surrounding them. When he wished to look at al-Karkh and whoever might approach from that direction, the dome of the Basrah Gate served as his audience room; and the dome of the Kufah Gate served this function when al-Mansur desired to view the gardens and the estates. The gateways in both the city's walls were protected by a heavy iron double door of large dimensions.

Muhammad b. Ali al-Warraq and Ahmad b. Ali al-Muhtasib→**Muhammad b. Jaafar al-Hasan b. Muhammad al-Sakuni Muhammad b. Khalaf:** Ahmad b. al-Harith reported on the authority of al-Attabi that Abu Jaafar transferred the gates from Wasit, where they had been the gates of al-Hajjaj. Al-Hajjaj found them at the site of a city opposite Wasit, which was built by Sulayman b. Dawud, and which was known as al-Zandaward; these gates were five in number. Al-Mansur, also, erected a gate in the Khurasan Gateway, which he brought from Syria and which was made by the Pha-

rahs. In the exterior Kufah Gateway was a castle which he named al-Khuld on the Tigris, entrusting this task to Aban b. Sadaqah and al-Rabi. He ordered a bridge constructed near the Bab al-Sha'ir, and distributed fiefs among companions, consisting of plots fifty cubits square.

Al-Shaykh Abu Bakr: The palace of al-Mansur was named al-Khuld because of its likeness to Jannat al-Khuld, "the Garden of Eternity," and because it commanded a remarkable view, and revealed superior planning, and magnificent architectural construction—it was situated beyond the Khurasan Gate, but it was demolished, and no trace of it remains now.

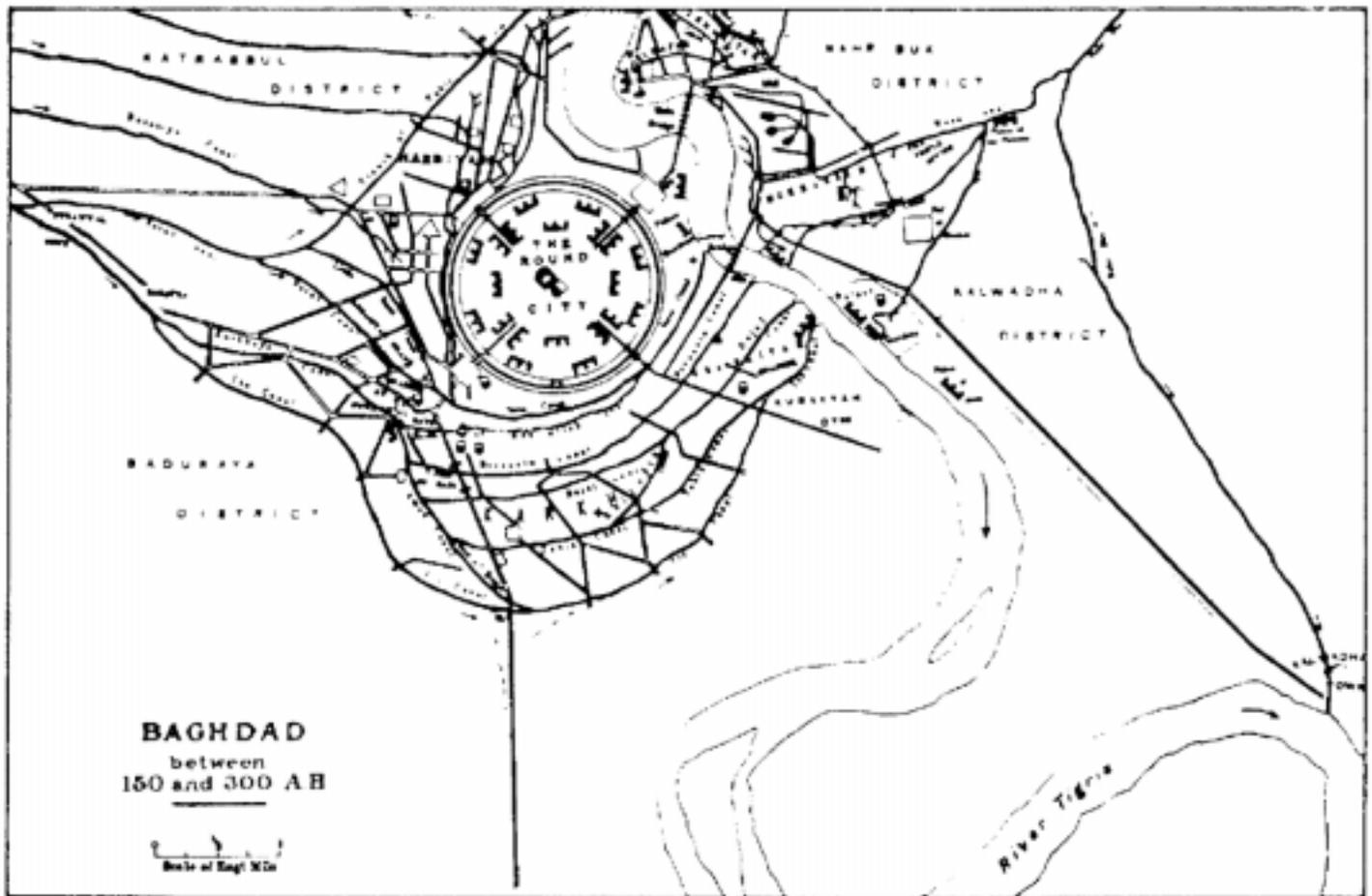
The Byzantine Ambassador's Inspection Tour

Muhammad b. Khalaf: Al-Harith b. Abi Usamah related the following account to me: When Abu Jaafar al-Mansur completed Madinat al-Salam, establishing the markets in the arcades on each side of the city, a delegation from the Byzantine Emperor visited him. At his command, they were taken on a tour of the city, and then invited to an audience with him, at which time the Caliph asked the Patrikios, "What do you think of this city?" He answered, "I found it perfect but for one shortcoming." What is that?" asked the Caliph. He answered, "Unknown to you, your enemies can penetrate the city anytime they wish. Furthermore, you are unable to conceal vital information about yourself from being spread to the various regions." "How?" asked the Caliph. "The markets are in the city," said the Patrikios. "As no one can be denied access to them, the enemy can enter under the guise of someone who wishes to carry on trade. And the merchants, in turn, can travel everywhere passing on information about you." It has been suggested that, at that time, al-Mansur ordered moving the markets out of the city to al-Karkh, and ordered the development of the area between the Sarat and the Isa Canal. This task was entrusted to

Muhammad b. Hubaysh al-Khatib. Al-Mansur called for a wide garment, and traced the plan of the markets on it, arranging each type of market in its proper place. He said, "Place the Butcher's Market (*Suq al-Qassabin*) at the end because their wits are dull, and they have sharp cutting tools. Then he ordered that a mosque be built for the people of the markets so that they may assemble there on Friday without having to enter the city. This task, undertaken especially for them, was entrusted to a man called al-Waddah b. Shaba who then built the palace known as Qasr al-Waddah, and the adjoining mosque. Because it was situated east [*sharq*] of the Sarat, this section was called al-Sharqiyah. Al-Mansur did not fix any rents on the markets as long as he lived, but when al-Mahdi became Caliph, Abu Ubaydallah advised him to do this. At the Caliph's command, tax [*kharaaj*] was levied on the shops, and Sa'id al-Harrashi was appointed to supervise this in the year 167 [783-784 CE].

The Mills of the Byzantine Ambassador and Their Income

Abu Abdallah al-Husayn b. Muhammad b. Jaafar al-Khali→**Ali b. Muhammad b. al-Sari al-Hamadani**→**al-Qadi Abu Bakr Muhammad b. Khalaf**→**Ishaq b. Muhammad b. Ishaq:** I was told that Yaqub b. al-Mahdi asked al-Fadl b. al-Rabi about the Mills of the Patrikios. "Who is the Patrikios that these mills are named after?" Al-Fadl replied: When your father became Caliph, an Ambassador from Byzantium came to congratulate him. The Caliph, having invited the Ambassador to his presence, addressed him with the aid of an interpreter. The Byzantine then remarked, "I have not come to the Commander of the Faithful for the sake of wealth or any ulterior motive, but have come yearning to meet him and



This map shows the plan of Baghdad around 767-917^{CE}, with the Round City at the center. It shows many canals and suburbs, including the market-places of Karkh, and the palaces on the eastern bank of the Tigris.

thereby see his face, for indeed we have found written in our books that the third person of the house of the Prophet of this nation will fill the earth with justice just as in the past it had been filled with tyranny." Al-Mahdi replied, "Your words cause me to rejoice; and we will fulfill any wish that you may have." Then the Caliph ordered al-Rabi to settle the Ambassador in his quarters and to honor him with gifts. After having remained there sometime, he left his quarters to take a walk, and passed by the future location of the mills. Looking at this spot, he said to al-Rabi, "Lend me 500,000 dirhams so that I may build an establishment that will bring in 500,000 dirhams every year." Al-Rabi indicated he would do so, and brought the matter to the attention of al-Mahdi, who then commanded, "Give him 500,000 dirhams, and 500,000 better; also pay him whatever income the property may yield, and should

he leave for his native land, send it to him yearly." Al-Rabi acted accordingly, and the mills were built. The Byzantine returned to his native land, and they forwarded the income to him until the time of his death. Al-Mahdi then ordered the mills annexed to his own property. The name of the Patrikios was Tarath b. al-Layth b. al-Ayzar b. Tarif. His father was one of the Byzantine Kings in the days of Muawiyah b. Abi Sufyan.

Bathhouses and Other Wonders of the City of Baghdad

Hilal b. al-Muhassin: One day in the year 383 [993-994^{CE}], when I was in the presence of my grandfather, Abu Ishaq Ibrahim b. Hilal al-Sabi, one of the merchants who

used to come to him entered. While conversing with my grandfather, he remarked, "One of the merchants told me that there are presently 3,000 bathhouses in Baghdad." Grandfather exclaimed, "That is only a sixth of the bathhouses which we counted and listed!" The merchant asked, "How can that be?" And my grandfather said, "I remember that Rukn al-Dawlah Abu al-Hasan b. Buwayh wrote to the Wazir Abu Muhammad al-Muhallabi: "We have been informed about the great number of mosques and baths in Baghdad. However, we have found that the reports concerning this matter conflict with one another, and since we desire to know the exact number, inform us of the exact details." Grandfather continued, "Abu Muhammad then gave me the letter and said, 'Go to the Amir Mu'izz al-Dawlah, show him the letter, and ask him for permission to proceed with this task.' This I did."

The Amir then said to Abu Muhammad, "Gather the information and make it known to me. Abu Muhammad al-Muhallabi then ordered Abu al-Hasan al-Bazighji, who was in charge of the police [*sahib al-ma'unah*], to count the bathhouses and mosques. I do not recall what was said about the number of mosques, but there were some 10,000 bathhouses. Returning to Mu'izz al-Dawlah, I informed him of this, whereupon he ordered, "Make a note on the subject of bathhouses, and indicate that they number 4,000." From his remarks, we sensed that he was being cautious for fear that he might incite the envy of his brother [Rukn al-Dawlah] because he possessed so great a city. Abu Muhammad was startled, as we were, at the then current number of bathhouses. For they were counted during the reign of al-Muqtadir, and totaled 27,000, and the time which had elapsed between these two periods was not long enough to account for this difference.

Hilal: It is said that during the reign of Adud al-Dawlah there were more than 5,000 bathhouses.

Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi: In the entire world, there has not been a city which could compare with Baghdad in size and splendor, or in the number of scholars and great personalities. The distinction of the notables and general populace serves to distinguish Baghdad from other cities, as does the vastness of its districts, the extent of its borders, and the great number of residences and palaces. Consider the numerous roads [*darb*], thoroughfares [*shari*], and localities, the markets and streets [*sikkah*], the lanes [*aziqqah*], mosques and bathhouses, and the high roads [*tariq*] and shops—all of these distinguish this city from all others, as does the pure air, the sweet water, and the cool shade. There is no place which is as temperate in summer and winter, and as salubrious in spring and autumn. The very great population also distinguishes it from all other cities.

It reached its highest point in buildings and population during the reign of [Harun] al-Rashid, since there reigned quiet and the utmost prosperity in the world. Then came the civil war and continuous tribulations. The city decayed and the population departed.

However even with the general decline, Baghdad in the period before our own time was different from all other cities and urban centers.

Study Questions and Activities

1. List some methods historians have for finding out what a city looked like in the past. What sources of information should they look for?
2. How can advanced technology be used to find out about a city's past?
3. How much is a cubit? What part of the body is used to measure it? How can the information al-Baghdadi gives about bricks tell us the dimensions of the Round City?
4. Sketch a diagram of the Round City based upon the description in the text. Include as many details as you can find.
5. What criticism did the Byzantine ambassador relate to the Caliph about the new government complex? How did the Caliph react?
6. What does the anecdote about the Mills of the Patrikios tell you about diplomacy at that time?
7. Imagine that you are a visitor to Baghdad during the time described by al-Khatib al-Baghdadi. Write a diary of your stay for three days. Tell the reader whether you are a diplomat, a merchant, a scholar, a craftsman, or other.

Observations on the Crusades

 Historical Source
Kitab al-I'tibar
(The Book of Admonition)

 Author
Usama ibn Munqidh (d. 1188CE)

 Excerpted from
Philip K. Hitti, tr. *Kitab al-I'tibar of Usama ibn Munqidh, A Syrian-Arab Gentleman and Warrior in the Period of the Crusades* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 1987.

➤ pp. 94-97, 99-101, 246-247

Tancred's guarantee of safety proves worthless

Tancred, who was the first lord of Antioch after Bohemond [succeeded him in 1108 CE], had previous to this pitched his camp against us. After the fight, we had a reconciliation, and he sent a message requesting that a horse belonging to an attendant of my uncle, Izz-al-Din (may Allah's mercy rest upon his soul!), be given him. That was a noble steed. My uncle dispatched it to him mounted by one of our men, a Kurd named Hasanun, one of our valiant cavaliers, young, good-looking and thin, in order to hold races with other horses in the presence of Tancred. Hasanun ran a race and his horse out-ran all the horses which were in the course. He was brought before Tancred, and the knights began to inspect his arms and wonder at his thin physique and his youth, recognizing in him a valiant cavalier. Tancred bestowed a robe of honor on him. But Hasanun said to him, "O my lord, I wish that thou wouldst give me thy guarantee of safety to the effect that if I should fall into thy hands at war time thou wouldst favor me and set me free." Tancred gave him his guarantee of safety-as Hasanun imagined, for these people speak nothing but Frankish; we do not understand what they say.

A year or more passed. The period of truce having expired, Tancred advanced anew at the head of the army of Antioch. A battle ensued near the wall of our lower town. Our horsemen had met their vanguard, and one of our men, a Kurd, named Kamil al-Mashtab, had used his lance on them to great effect. Kamil and Hasanun were peers in valor. This took place while Hasanun on his mare was standing near my father (may Allah's mercy rest upon his soul!) and awaiting his charger, which his attendant was bringing to him from the veterinary, and his quilted jerkin. The attendant was late and Hasanun was getting impatient, seeing the lance blows of Kamil al-Mashtab. So he said to my father,

"O my lord, put at my disposal light equipment." My father replied, "Here are the mules laden with arms and standing still. Whatever suits thee, put on." I was at that time standing behind my father. I was a mere lad," and that was the first day in which I saw actual fighting. Hasanun examined the jerkins, in their cases on the backs of the mules, but none of them suited him. In the meantime, he was boiling in his desire to proceed and do what Kamil al-Mashtab was doing. So he charged on

horseback, void of arms. A Frankish knight intercepted his way and struck the mare in its croup. The mare, getting the bit in its teeth, rushed with its rider on its back until it threw him off amidst the lines of the Franks. They took him prisoner and inflicted on him all varieties of torture. They even wanted to put out his left eye. But Tancred (may Allah's curse be upon him!) said to them, "Rather put out his right eye, so that when he carries his shield his left eye will be covered, and he will be no more able to see anything." So they put out his right eye in accordance with the orders of Tancred and

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Usama ibn Munqidh lived from 1095 to 1188CE. He lived at the same time as the great leader Salah al-Din (Saladin). Usama was born to the family of Munqidhite princes who held the castle on the ancient hill of Shayzar, on the Orontes River, in Syria, a highly strategic location that had long passed back and forth between the Byzantines and the Arabs. The castle stood on a steep ridge called the "cock's crest," so it was impregnable to the constant attacks by Byzantines and Franks, with the river on one side and a deep moat on the other. The family built the Citadel of the Bridge to guard its only entrance. Usama was eyewitness to many events in the local area, which he recorded in this Memoir. Growing up in an atmosphere of constant threat and danger, Usama grew up to be a warrior and a hunter. The well-known historian Ibn al-Athir mentions Usama as a hero. He was also a gentleman, poet and man of letters. In these excerpts, he tells about some knightly exploits and other events in the region.

demanded as a ransom from him one thousand dinars and a black horse, which belonged to my father, of Khafajah breed and one of the most magnificent horses. My father (may Allah's mercy rest upon his soul!) ransomed him for [the price of] that horse.

On that same day a large number of footmen had gone out of Shayzar. The Franks made an onslaught on them but did not succeed in dislodging them from their position. This made Tancred angry at them and say, "Ye are my knights, and every one of you receives a stipend equal to the stipends of a hundred Moslems. Those men ye met were sergeants (by which he meant footmen) and ye cannot dislodge them from their position!" They replied, "Our fear was only for our horses. Otherwise we would have trampled them under our feet and used our lances fully on them." Tancred replied, "The horses are my property. Whosoever of you loses his horse shall have his horse replaced." Thereupon they made several charges on our men, in the course of which seventy of their horses were killed, without being able to drive our men out of their position.



Badrhawa the knight routs four Moslem* cavaliers

There was in Afamiyah one of the most valiant Frankish knights named Badrhawa [Pedrovant]. He used always to say, "Is it not possible that I shall some day meet Jum'ah in combat?" And Jum'ah used always to say, "Is it not possible that I shall some day meet Badrhawa in combat?"

The army of Antioch now camped against us, pitching their tents in the place where they used to pitch them. Between them and us was the water. We had a de-

tachment posted on an elevation opposite the enemy. One of their knights rode out of the camp and advanced until he stood just below our detachment, with the water separating him from us. And then he shouted to them, "Is Jum'ah among you?" "No," they replied. And, by Allah, Jum'ah was not present among them. That knight was Badrhawa.

The knight, looking around, saw four of our cavaliers on his side of the river: Yahya ibn-Safi al-A'sar, Sahl ibn-abi-Ghanim al-Kurdi and Harithah al-Numayri, together with a fourth cavalier. The knight charged upon them, put them to flight and overtook one of their number, whom he smote with his lance, missing him. His horse did not go fast enough to enable him to deal successive blows with the lance. So he returned to his camp.

On the return of our men to the town, their story was disclosed and the people disgraced them, blamed them and despised them, saying, "Four cavaliers put to flight by one single knight! Ye should have sepa-

rated before him and he would have used his lance against one of you. Then the other three would have killed him, and ye would not have been put to such a shame." The bitterest one of all in his criticism was Jum'ah al-Numayri. But as though that defeat gave them hearts other than the ones they possessed and an amount of courage to which they never aspired before, these same cavaliers now became imbued with valor, and they fought and distinguished themselves in warfare, so much so that they became among the noted cavaliers after that defeat.

As for Badrhawa, he subsequently left Afamiyah and proceeded on some business of his to Antioch. On his way, a lion fell upon him from a forest in al-Ruj, snatched him off his mule and carried him into the forest where he devoured him—may Allah's mercy not rest upon his soul!

One Frank captures a cavern

A similar thing happened when Tancred, the lord of Antioch, made a raid on Shayzar and drove before him many of its animals after having killed and taken some of our men as prisoners. He then camped near a village called Zalin in which was an inaccessible cavern as if suspended in the middle of the mountain. It had no way of descent to it from above and no way of ascent from below. He who seeks refuge in it can descend to it only by means of ropes. This happened on the twenty-fifth of Rabi' II, in the year 502 [Nov. 27, 1108 CE]. A devil from among their knights came to Tancred and said, "Make me a box of wood in which I will sit and ye shall lower me to the enemy from the top of the mountain by chains of iron which ye tie to the box, so that they cannot cut them with the swords and I be not hurled down."

Accordingly they made a box for him and lowered it with chains to the hanging cavern, which he captured and from which he carried away to Tancred all who were in it. The way he did it was this: The cavern was an open court in which there was no place where one could secrete himself. He

* The spelling "Muslim" is more accurate than the archaic form found in the translation.

began to shoot arrows at them, and because of the narrowness of the place and the crowded condition of the people in it, not one of his arrows fell except on a person.

Usama's uncle ransoms a woman

Among those who were taken captive [by the Franks] that day was a woman of noble Arab origin. Her description was once, prior to this, given to my uncle, 'Izz-al-Din Abu-al-'Asakir Sultan (may Allah's mercy rest upon his soul!), when she was still in her father's home. My uncle on that occasion sent one of the old women of his entourage to inspect her. She came back dilating in her report on the girl's great beauty and intelligence, either because of some bribe the old woman had received or because she was shown another girl. My uncle was engaged to her and subsequently married her. When she uncovered before him, he saw something different from what was described to him. Besides, she was dumb [unable to speak]. He therefore paid her the dowry and sent her back to her people. This woman was taken prisoner, on that day, from the home of her people. But my uncle said, "I shall not let a woman whom I had married and who had uncovered before me stay in the captivity of the Franks."

So he bought her (may Allah's mercy rest upon his soul!) for five hundred dinars and delivered her to her own people.

A maiden's ingenuity saves the day

A similar case was related to me by al-Mu'ayyad, the Baghdadi poet, in al-Mawsil in the year 565 [Sept. 25, 1169]. This is what he said:

The caliph bestowed upon my father as fief a village which my father used to frequent. That village was infested with vagabonds who carried on highway robbery and whom my father endeavored to please for fear of them and for profiting a little from what they seized. As we were one day sitting in their village, there came a young

Turk mounted on a horse, and with him a mule carrying a maiden riding on the saddle-bag. He alighted, assisted the maiden to dismount and said, "O young men, help me put down the saddlebag." We came and put down the bag with him and lo! it was full of gold dinars and jewelry. He sat down with the maiden and ate something. Then he said "Help me lift the saddlebag." We lifted it up with him. Then he said to us, "Where is the road to al-Anbar?" My father said to him, "Here is the road (pointing it out with his hand), but there are on the road sixty vagabonds from whom I fear for thy safety." The man pooh-pooed my father, saying, "I fear the vagabonds!" My father left him and went to the vagabonds and told them the story of the man and what he carried. The vagabonds set off to intercept him on the way. When he saw them he pulled out his bow, put in it an arrow and bent it, desiring to shoot them. The string gave way. The vagabonds rushed at him and he fled away. So they took the mule and the maiden, together with the saddle-bag. The maiden said, "O young men, by Allah, dishonor me not. Rather let me buy myself and the mule also for a necklace of gems which is with the Turk and the value of which is five hundred dinars. Then take ye the saddlebag and all that is in it." "We accept," they replied. She said, "Send with me someone from among you so that I may speak with the Turk and take the necklace." Accordingly they sent with her someone to guard her until she came near the Turk and said to him, "I have bought myself and the mule for the necklace which is in the leg of thy left boot, thy shoe. Deliver it to me." "All right," said he. Presently he went aside, took off his boot and lo! there was in it a bowstring, which he immediately fixed on his bow and turned back on them. They kept on fighting him while he was killing one after the other until he had killed forty-three men of their number. Looking around, he unexpectedly saw my father among the vagabonds who survived. So he said, "Thou too among them! Dost thou desire that I should give thee thy share of arrows?" "No," replied my father. "Take them," said the Turk, "these seventeen who survive, lead

them to the magistrate of the city to hang them." In the meantime those seventeen had stood staring with fear and put down their arms. The Turk drove his mule with all that was on it and continued his march. Thus Allah (exalted is he!) sent through him upon the vagabonds a calamity and great wrath.

A lion scared by a falcon

My father (may Allah's mercy rest upon his soul) used to go to the *Citadel of the Bridge*, in the vicinity of which game was plentiful, and spend there a few days. We would be with him hunting partridges, francolins, waterfowl, roebucks, gazelles and hares. One day my father went there and we mounted our horses to chase the francolins. He flew at a francolin a falcon which was carried and trained by a Mamluk, named Niqula [Nicholas]. Niqula himself went galloping behind the falcon. The francolin put in within a thicket of brambles. All of a sudden the screams of Niqula filled our ears and he himself came back galloping. We asked him, "What is the matter with thee?" He replied, "A lion has issued from the bush where the francolin fell. So I left the falcon and took to flight." And lo! the lion also was scared like Niqula. When it heard the sound of the flight of the falcon, it rushed out of the thicket and bounded towards the forest.



Study Questions and Activities

1. Define "chivalry" from a dictionary. Find passages from Usama ibn Munqidh's text that bring out points and values from the chivalric tradition.
2. Find evidence in the text that indicates respect for chivalric behavior in knights of the opposing side, both among the Muslims and the Christian Crusaders.
3. What indications do you find in the text that the ecology of the Eastern Mediterranean coast has changed since the time of the Crusades described here (circa 900 years ago)?
4. What indications do you find regarding the situation of women at that time? Bear in mind that Usama described the women of his own family as strongly encouraging both scholarship and attention to defending the family property and name.



The Algebra

Historical Source

Al-Maqalah fi Hisab al-Jabr wa al-Muqabilah (The Treatise on Completion and Reduction)

Author

Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi (d. 840_{CE})

Excerpted from

Rosen, Frederick, tr. *The Algebra of Mohammed ben Musa* (Hildesheim: George Olms Verlag), 1986.

➤ pp. 3-6, 70-71, 75-78, 172-174

From the Author's Preface

...That fondness for science, by which God has distinguished the Imam Al-Mamun, the Commander of the Faithful (besides the caliphate which He has vouchsafed unto him by lawful succession, in the robe of which He has invested him, and with the honours of which He has adorned him), that affability and condescension which he shows to the learned, that promptitude with which he protects and support them in the elucidation of obscurities and in the removal of difficulties, has encouraged me to compose a short work on Calculating by (the rules of) Completion and Reduction, confining it to what is easiest and most useful in arithmetic, such as men constantly require in cases of inheritance, legacies, partition, law-suits, and trade, and in all their dealings with one another, or where the measuring of lands, the digging of canals, geometrical computation, and other objects of various sorts and kinds are concerned, relying on the goodness of my intention therein, and hoping that the learned will reward it by obtaining (for me) through their prayer the excellence- of the Divine mercy: in requital of which, may the choicest blessings and the abundant bounty of God be theirs. My confidence rests with God, in this as in every thing and in Him I put my trust. He is the Lord of the Sublime Throne. May his blessing descend upon all the prophets and heavenly messengers!

Completion and Reduction¹

When I considered what people generally want in calculating, I found that it always is a number.

I also observed that every number is composed of units, and that any number may be divided into units.

Moreover, I found that every number, which may be expressed from one to ten surpasses the preceding by one unit: afterwards the ten is doubled or tripled, just as

before the units were: thus arise twenty, thirty, etc., until a hundred; then the hundred is doubled and tripled in the same manner the units and the tens, up to a thousand; then the thousand can be thus repeated at any complex number; and so forth to the utmost limit of numeration.²

I observed that the numbers which are required in calculating by Completion and Reduction are of three kinds, namely, roots,

➤➤➤
continued

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Muhammad ibn Musa Al-Khwarizmi, who flourished in about 825_{CE}, wrote this "popular" treatise, or textbook, on algebra at the request of the Khalifah Mamun. There were other works on the subject, but the elegance of al-Khwarizmi's style and clarity distinguish it. While scholars disagree on whether or not al-Khwarizmi actually invented the system, he himself acknowledges his debt for certain ideas to Indian mathematicians. Scholars agree, however, that al-Khwarizmi's treatment of the subject is very different from the Indians'. In any case, it was a book by al-Khwarizmi that was translated into Latin in Toledo, Spain, that introduced Arabic numerals to the West, as they are still called today. Words in English like algorithm and cipher came in with this translation, a work that changed nearly all aspects of life from trade to pure mathematics to computers. Historians of science agree that the thousand-year contribution of Muslim mathematicians to Western culture was profound in many far-reaching ways.

1. The translator notes that "Completion and Reduction" is the translation of the Arabic words *al-Jabr* and *Mukabalah*. *Al-Jabr*, which also means "bone-setting" means "restoration of anything defective by means of what is complete of another kind." Latin translators picked up the term *al-Jabr* to name al-Khwarizmi's mathematical method. We know it today as ALGEBRA. The second term, *mukabalah*, means "making the sides face one another," or "restoring something defective in its deficiency," or "balancing" it by adding something else. Al-Khwarizmi is referring to solving equations by performing additions and subtractions to both sides of the equal sign, "reducing" the complex equation to a simple solution.
2. In this opening passage, al-Khwarizmi is expressing the importance of being able to express numbers of the base-ten system from one to ten (including the place-holder "zero") and on to infinity. Equally important is al-Khwarizmi's transmission to Europe of the Hindi system of writing all possible numbers using ten simple symbols, or digits. This occurred through Latin translation of another of his books, *Addition and Subtraction in Indian Arithmetic*. This way of writing numbers using digits from 0-9 is much easier than using the complex system of Roman numerals, which would make algebraic equations into a nightmare—try it! These simplifications in notation made many advances in mathematics possible.

squares, and simple numbers relative to neither root nor square.

A root is any quantity which is to be multiplied by itself, consisting of units, or numbers ascending, or fractions descending. [By the word 'root' is meant the simple power of the unknown quantity].

A square is the whole amount of the root multiplied by itself. A simple number is any number which may be pronounced without reference to root or square. A number belonging to one of these three classes may be equal to a number of another class; you may say, for instance, "squares are equal to roots," or "squares are equal to numbers," or "roots are equal to numbers."

Of the case in which squares are equal to roots, this is an example. "A square is equal to five roots of the same." The root of the square is five, and the square is twenty-five, which is equal to five times its root.

So you say, "one third of the square is equal to four roots." Then the whole square is equal to twelve roots; that is a hundred and forty-four; and its root is twelve.

Or you say, "five squares are equal to ten roots." Then one square is equal to two roots; the root of the square is two, and its square is four.

Mensuration

[Finding the Area of Figures]

Know that the meaning of the expression "one by one" is *mensuration*: one yard (in length) by one yard (in breadth) being understood.

Every quadrangle of equal sides and angles, which has one yard for every side, has also one for its area. Has such a quadrangle two yards for its side, then the area of the quadrangle is four times the area of a quadrangle, the side of which is one yard. The same takes place with three by three, and so on, ascending or descending: for instance, a half by a half, which gives a quadrangle or other fractions, always following the same rule. A quadrangle [square], every side of which is half a yard, is equal to one-fourth of the figure which has one

$cx^2=bx$	→	$cx^2=a$ $bx=a$	→	$\therefore x^2=5$
$\frac{x^2}{3} = 4x$	→	$\therefore x^2 = 12x$	→	$\therefore x = 12$
$5x^2 = 10x$	→	$\therefore x^2 = 2x$	→	$\therefore x = 2$

Equation 1 in al-Khawarizmi's book. The remainder of the section on Algebra, or Completion and Reduction, proceeds for over 65 pages.

yard for its side. In the same manner, one-third by one-third, or one-fourth by one-fourth, or one-fifth by one fifth, or two-thirds by a half, or more or less than this, always according to the same rule.

One side of an equilateral quadrangular figure, taken once, is its root; or if the same be multiplied by two, then it is like two of its roots, whether it be small or great. If you multiply the height of any equilateral triangle by the moiety of the basis upon which the line marking the height stands perpendicularly, the product gives the area of that triangle.

In every equilateral quadrangle, the product of one diameter multiplied by the moiety of the other will be equal to the area of it.

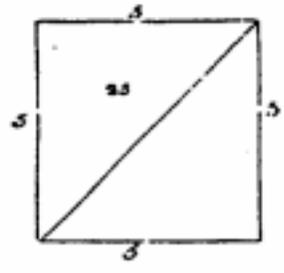
In any circle, the product of its diameter, multiplied by three and one-seventh, will be equal to the periphery. This is the rule generally followed in practical life, though it is not quite exact. The geometers have two other methods. One of them is, that you multiply the diameter by itself; then by ten, and hereafter take the root of the product; the root will be the periphery. The other method is used by the astronomers among them: it is this, that you multiply the diameter by sixty-two thousand eight hundred and thirty-two and then divide the product by twenty thousand; the product is the periphery. Both methods come very nearly to the same effect...

[...] ...Quadrangles are of five kinds: firstly with right angles and equal sides; secondly, with right angles and unequal sides; thirdly, the

rhombus, with equal sides and unequal angles; fourthly, the rhomboid, the length of which differs from its breadth, and the angles of which are unequal, only that the two long and the two short sides are respectively of equal length; fifthly, quadrangles with unequal sides and angles.

First kind •

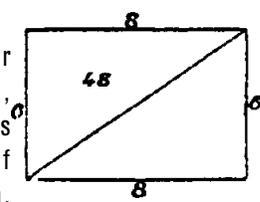
The area of any quadrangle with equal sides and right angles, or with unequal sides and right angles, may be found by multiplying the length by the breadth.



The product is the area. For instance, a quadrangular piece of ground, every side of which has five yards, has an area of five-and-twenty square yards.

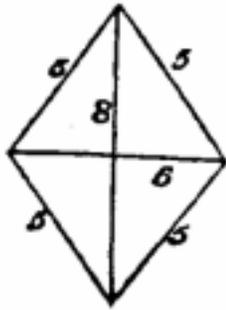
Second kind •

A quadrangular piece of ground, the two long sides of which are of eight yards each, while the breadth is six. You find the area by multiplying six by eight, which yields forty-eight yards.

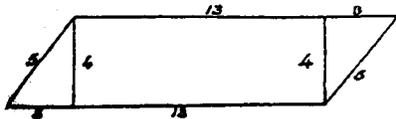


Third kind • the *Rhombus*—its sides are equal: let each of them be five, and let its diagonals be, the one eight and the other six yards. You may then compute the area, either from one of the diagonals, or from both. As you know them both, you multiply the one by the moiety of the other, the

product is the area: that is to say, you multiply eight by three, or six by four; this yields twenty-four yards, which is the area. If you know only one of the diagonals, then you are aware, that there are two triangles, two sides of each of which have every one five yards while the third is the diagonal. Hereafter you can make the computation according to the rules for the triangles.



The **fourth kind**, or *Rhomboid*, is computed in the same way as the rhombus.



The other quadrangles are calculated by drawing a diagonal, and computing them as triangles. Triangles are of three kinds, acute-angular, obtuse-angular or rectangular...

[...]

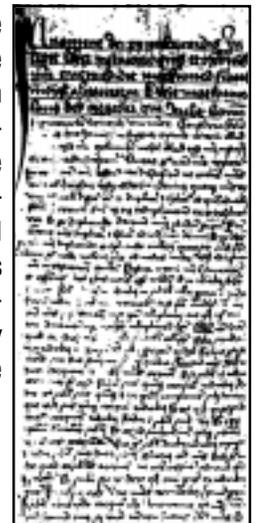
A Word Problem

"Suppose that a man, on his sick-bed, deliver to someone thirty dirhams in a measure of victuals, worth ten dirhams; he

afterwards dies in his illness; then the receiver returns the measure and returns besides ten dirhams to the heir of the deceased." **Computation:** He returns the measure, the value of which is ten dirhams; and places to the account of the deceased twenty dirhams; and the legacy out of the sum so placed is thing; thus the heirs obtain twenty less thing, and the measure. All this together is thirty dirhams less thing, equal to two things, or equal to twice the legacy. Reduce it by separating the thing from the thirty, and adding it to the two things. Then, thirty are equal to three things. Consequently, one thing must be one-third of it, namely ten, and this is the sum which he obtains out of what he places to the account of the deceased.

"Suppose that someone on his sick-bed delivers to a person twenty dirhams in a measure worth fifty dirhams; he then repels it while still on his sick-bed, and dies after this. The receiver must, in this case, return four-ninths of the measure, and eleven dirhams and one-ninth." **Computation:** You know that the price of the measure is two and a half times as much as the sum which the donor has given the donee in money; and whenever the donee returns anything from the money capital, he returns from the measure as much as two and a half times that amount. Take now from the measure as much as corresponds to one thing, that is, two things and a half, and add this to what remains from the twenty, namely, twenty less thing. Thus the heirs of the deceased obtain twenty dirhams

and one thing and a half. The moiety of this is the legacy, namely, ten dirhams and three-fourths of thing; and this is one-third of the capital, namely, sixteen dirhams and two-thirds. Remove now ten dirhams on account of the opposite ten; there remain six dirhams and two-thirds, equal to three-fourths of thing. Complete the thing, by adding to it as much as one-third of the same; and add to the six dirhams and two-thirds likewise one-third of the same, namely, two dirhams and two-ninths; this yields eight dirhams and eight-ninths, equal to thing. Observe how much the eight dirhams and eight-ninths are of the money capital, which is twenty dirhams. You will find them to be four-ninth of the same. Take now four-ninths of the measure and also five-ninths of twenty. The value of four-ninths of the measure is twenty-two dirhams and two-ninths; and the five-ninths of the twenty are eleven dirhams and one-ninth. Thus the heirs obtain thirty-three dirhams and one-third, which is as much as two-thirds of the fifty dirhams. God is the Most Wise!



This is a page from the 12th c. Latin translation of one of al-Khwarizmi's works. His work on arithmetic survives only in its Latin version.

Study Questions and Activities

1. List some uses for mathematics in Islamic law and explain why they require algebra.
2. Why do you think Latin scholars in Western Europe, who were often churchmen, became interested in translating this work by al-Khwarizmi, which was already about four centuries old when it was translated?
3. Use al-Khwarizmi's descriptions of formulas for finding area to solve some real-life measuring problems. Are these formulas still used today? Compare with your math textbook.
4. Challenge: Solve the word problem about the inheritance of dirhams, writing the necessary equations.

The Exhaustive Treatise on Shadows

Historical Source

Ifrad al-Maqal fi Amr al-Zilal
(The Exhaustive Treatise on Shadows)

Author

Abu Rayhan al-Biruni
(d. 1048CE)

Excerpted from

Kennedy, E.S., tr. *The Exhaustive Treatise on Shadows by Abu Rayhan Muhammad b. al-Biruni* (Aleppo: Institute for the History of Arabic Science), 1976.

➤ pp. 6-9, 57-58, 74-75

I say firstly, that the subject of this investigation can hardly be comprehended except after encompassing knowledge of the constitution of the universe according to what is known by demonstration, excluding what the various groups of people apply to it of what they have heard from their ancestors, as well as recourse from the sects to their beliefs, and also after attaining the capability of dealing with its various situations, in which one cannot dispense with arithmetic and deep investigation of it by geometry.

Verily, even he who has studied much in the sacred books may not be separated from mass of common people, nor from their conviction that this art is contradictory to religion, contrary to divine law; that is, it is a forbidden pursuit, and is an abrogated and forsaken practice.

Nothing impels him to this belief but his ignorance of what impugns religion so that he might properly support it, his revulsion from the unfamiliar which he inherits from before him, and his inability to distinguish what is truly impugning to religion from what is not. Thus, if he learns that a matter is as he thinks, he does not accept what is traditionally said about it—an excellent thing, should he prove to be unrelying on tradition in what he believes or thinks. And if he is shown that arithmetic and geometry are impossible to understand unless one proceeds systematically from first principles, unlike other sciences in which he may be acquainted with something of their middle parts or their ends without knowledge of their beginnings, he thinks that this is intended to turn him away from his appreciation and to confuse him...This adds to his revulsion, so that the stopping of his ears with his fingers becomes his most potent recourse and the raising of his voice in shouts his most powerful equipment...And verily, both understandings, if they are approached by systematic learning, questions in both of the two arts are attained, and they are realized in an elegant manner, and the acquisition pulls the curtain of doubt from between them and the truths of knowledge concerning both. Then, if he knows that prayer is the buttress of religion, and its perfection is restricted to its observance at its proper time and facing in the proper direction

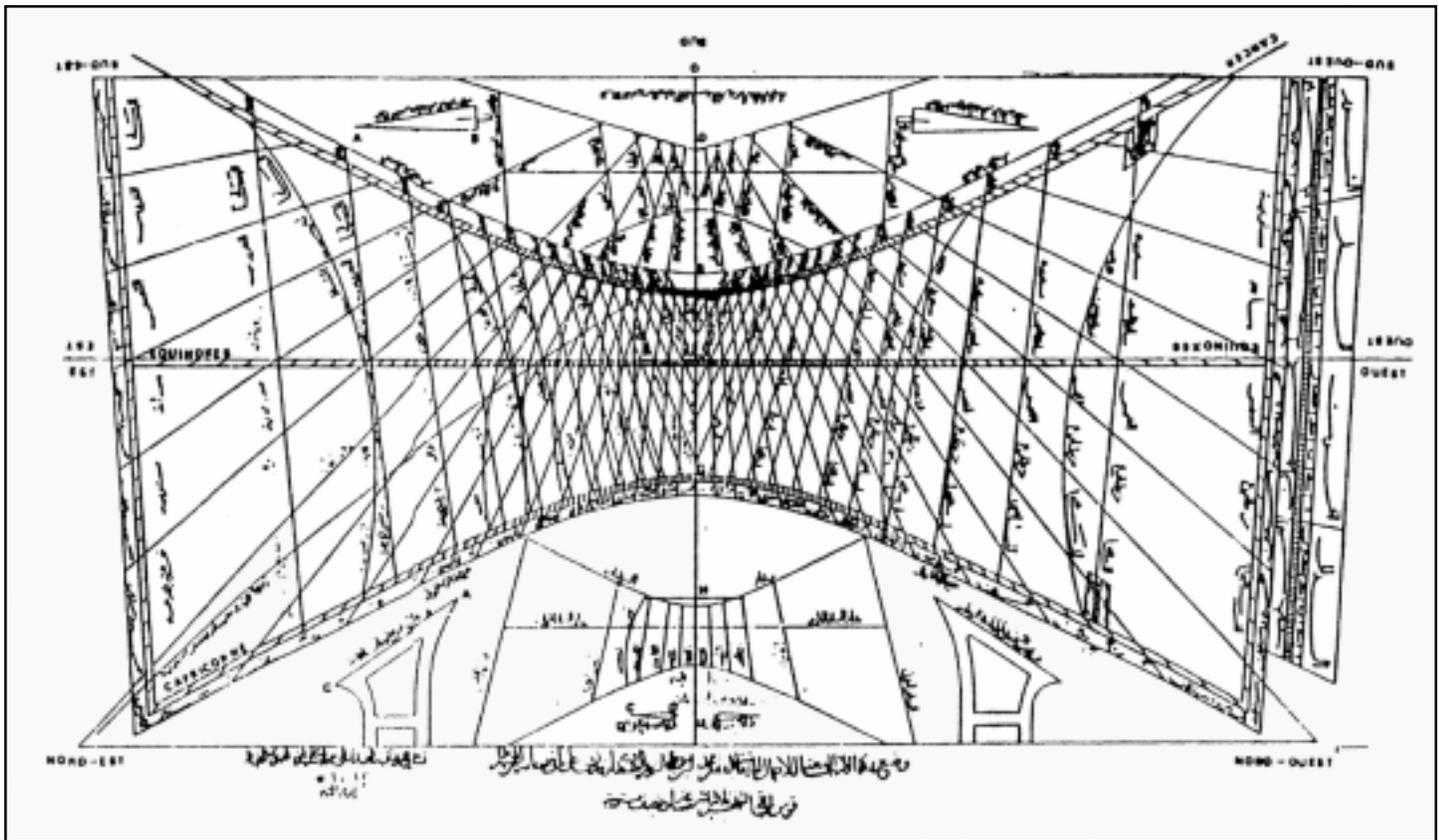
for it, and that both matters are connected with astronomy and a due amount of geometry; and giving the poor due [*zakaat*] follows them, and inheritances, there being no escape from them, just as there is no escape from buying and selling as a means of subsistence, in the Muslim law, and since all of them require arithmetic, either the lowest degree, in imitation of the computers, or else at its highest level, it being the deep investigation of geometry, then people accuse him of error and denial and claim that he is not pious because of these two arts, but how so? For he is obliged to apply the two in giving the

poor due, for the manufacture of weights and standard measures and for the manufacture of weapons of war and various instruments of steel, welded together with violent power

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Al-Biruni, Persian by birth, was a Muslim scientist who lived from 973-1050CE. He was one of the pioneers of scientific writing in Arabic. He studied astronomy, mathematics, medicine, geography and natural science, a wide range of fields even for Muslim scholars of his time. In making astronomical tables to discover the order of the heavenly bodies, he studied the classics, but relied upon observation and mathematical calculation. Al-Biruni's works, while absorbed by other Muslim scientists, did not become known in the West until modern times. His description of India's position and coastline corresponds closely to that of modern maps. His conclusions about the geology of India are surprisingly modern, pointing to gradual change over geologic time. Another famous work of al-Biruni lists the coordinates of important cities, using longitude and latitude.

Al-Biruni was an excellent observer during his travels, and his works contain descriptions of crafts, mining and many other technical processes that he recorded, giving historians of science and technology important sources of information on the spread of inventions. Today, the *Treatise on Shadows* seems an unlikely topic for a scientific study, but the detailed geometric, mathematical and physical study was important to the calibration of sundials and keeping of accurate time in the days before reliable mechanical clocks.



The markings of the splendid sundial of Ibn al Shatir which once graced the main minaret of the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus. The original sundial is in fragments, preserved in the garden of the Damascus Archaeological Museum. This copy was made from an exact replica made in the 19th century, which is still in the minaret today. These markings were developed from astronomical and geometric calculations of the kind al-Biruni is discussing.

are necessary...The learned in religion who are deeply versed in science know that Muslim law does not forbid any of what the partisans of the craft of astronomy concern themselves...

Relating to Shadows and Measuring Time

However, according to what was related about Plato, a shadow should be a true one if it continues to stay, and that in winter it should be dense, while in summer rarer, the silliness of which is apparent since the facts are not thus. The sayings of the man Plato are subject to interpretation because of his use of special symbols, for to him rest does not have a meaning opposite to that of motion, except with regard to existence and non-existence. Also the shaded and the illuminated are to him opposite in this respect.

Then I say that if what we related about the mixing of light and dark is determined, then the amount of shadows will

be correspondingly determined as to their lack and deficiency with respect to the shadow which should have been cast. Because if a gnomon is conical in shape, as used in instruments made for measuring hours [sundials], then the ray at its tip surrounds it on three sides so that it is near to the height of the erected gnomon with the result that its actual shadow is less than the shadow determined theoretically for it.

What we mentioned can be observed if a thing of sensible size is put at the head of the gnomon so that a shadow appears for it on the ground. It will be seen that its shadow is small, and distinct from that of the gnomon...

Thus, let ABG be a quadrant of the circle of altitude with center E , which is the center of everything, and $AE[H]^1$ is in the true horizon, and T the head of the gnomon, and W its base at the locality, on the face of the earth, and $[N]W^2$ in the apparent horizon. Let the sun be at point B , its computed altitude being AB , and its

distance from the zenith BG , and we extend $[B]T[N]^3$. So WN will be the shadow of gnomon TW at this altitude, I mean the direct actual shadow, the ratios of the shadows to their gnomens at the two equinoxes and the two solstices, as a gnomon, and he made half the diameter of the circle sixty parts. So the gnomon was graduated in its the radius' parts, and the moderns follow him and profit from it in two ways.

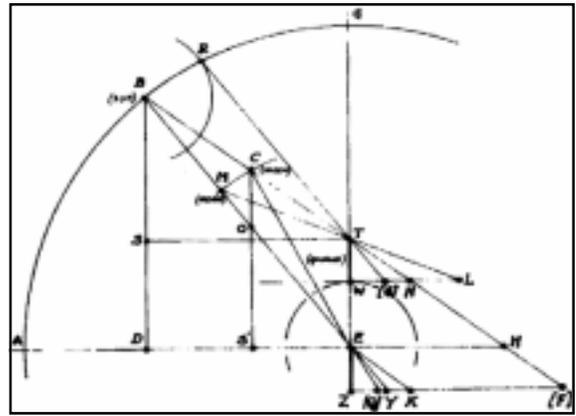
One of the two is that some of their operations with shadows become much easier than was previously done, by using sines, and thereby they were relieved of half the difficulty. The second is that this number is the number of parts in one unit among the astronomers and among many of the people concerned. For multiplication by the total sine and division by it becomes easier, being performed by depressing its rank to minutes or elevating it above them. Thus also is multiplication by the gnomon and division by it, or multiplication by one of the two and division by the other is thus simplified. I added to the operations in the

zijas the merit of additional simplicity by making both the total sine and the gnomon one part, so that there fell from them the need for depression and elevation completely.

The second type of the number of the divisions is twelve, and it is the opinion of those of the East (*Ahl al-Mashriq*), the Indians being among them. For they characterize the latitudes of localities by the shadows at the equinox and the two solstices. And they perform most operations with shadows, and they call the parts of these divisions digits, in their language [*ankula*]. Thus in the Arkand Zij the digits and their minutes are put as [*anjula*] and [*bianjula*]. But I have never heard of such minutes, rather he carried over the form of the name as it was in the copies.

When the ratio is established as we mentioned, the ratio of the shadow to the shadowcaster for a single time and at a certain place will be a fixed ratio. The parts into which the shadow-caster is divided into twelve divisions whether large or small, are called digits. The third variety is the seven, or the six and a half. Each of these two units is called a foot being the opinion of the Muslims between the above-mentioned opinions. The reason for it is that they did not need to use shadows for what the

Byzantines al-Rum and Indians needed them, but rather they needed the noon shadows in order to ascertain the time of the afternoon prayer due to the necessity of adding to the noon shadow in order to maintain the prayer for its time can easily be confused. Because those appointed to determine it are the muezzins of the mosques, and those of them who seek verification imitate the opinions of the astrologers as to instruments which they made and set up for them. They the muezzins add their own professional deductions, thus fixing the magnitudes of the noon shadows for their localities for all the days of the year by examination and consideration until they reach the extraction of the time of the afternoon prayer from them. So they took the heights of their own bodies as gnomons, since these are natural columns. They associated with them the shadows fixed by them. But they needed to measure the shadow, and the foot was the nearest thing for it, because it is an old procedure and it is a custom among the people to measure the sizes of houses in feet when they lay down the founda-



A diagram showing the mathematics of al-Biruni's calculations on shadows and light.

tion of the wall, and take measurements for their carpets and furniture and things like that. The normal foot is to the normal height of the same person in a known ratio. They state that it is the ratio of one to seven, and even as one digit is half a sixth of the gnomon, so also the foot is a seventh of its gnomon, and the seven-fold divisions of that they call feet.

The other of the two parties of muezzins are of the common people, whose hearts are disgusted by the mention of shadows, or altitude, or sines, and who get goose-pimples at the mere sight of computation or scientific instruments. With them it reaches such an extent that one cannot trust them with anything...

Study Questions and Activities

1. Which modern fields of science and which branches of mathematics are involved in his study of shadows?
2. What are the purposes of these mathematics in everyday Muslim life and in Islamic law?
3. In the second excerpt, cite evidence that al-Biruni is making critical use of the available scientific information from other cultures. Does he accept all of it as true? What evidence do you find that al-Biruni is attempting to improve on the methods passed on to him?
4. What does al-Biruni seem to suffer from the ignorance or narrow-mindedness of certain people with regard to his scientific work? How does he defend himself against their doubts?

Ingenious Devices

Historical Source

Kitab al-Hiyal
(The Book of Ingenious Devices)

Authors

Banu (sons of) Musa bin Shakir
(fl. circa 850CE)

Excerpted from

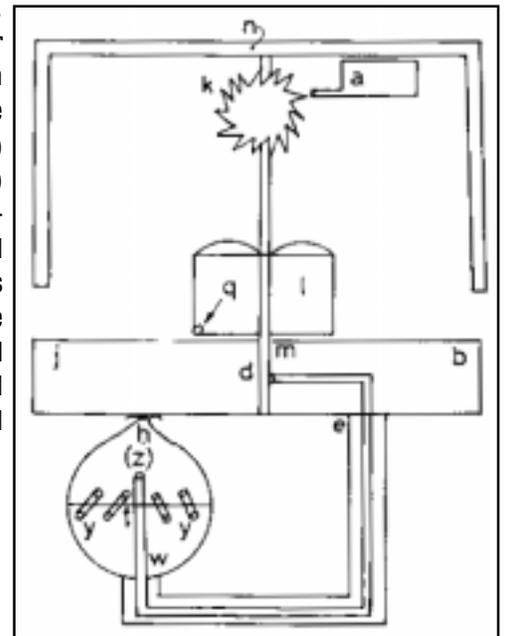
Hill, Donald R., tr. *The Book of Ingenious Devices by the Banu (sons of) Musa bin Shakir* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing), 1979.

➤ pp. 50-51, 222-223, 236-237

MODEL 1

A Many-Shaped Water Fountain

Construction of a fountain from which the water shoots up at one time like the shape of a lily-of-the-valley and at one time like a lance. It is worked by the wind as long as it blows, and we can also make it work and alternate by the flow of water. The example of that is that we make a fountain (ht) and divide it by a plate (y) and we set in the plate the pipes (y) that discharge the shield. In the fountain we install a pipe (we) that terminates in the tank (b) and we connect to tank (b) another similar tank (j). From tank (j) we lead out a pipe (dz) that terminates close to the top of the fountain. On the division shared between these two tanks we erect a stanchion (mn) which makes a right angle with the horizon, and we make it rotate on two axles [i.e. bearings] (m,n). On this stanchion we erect splits, which turn stanchion (nm) if the wind blows, like those which people are accustomed to install in windmills. To this stanchion we attach a tank (l), and we make a hole (q) in tank (l). We make the water inflow through pipe (a). It should be clear from what we have made that when the wind blows vaned wheel (k) rotates, and turns stanchion (nm) and tank (l) rotates. Hole (q) is at tank (j) y[say] and water comes out of tank (l) into tank (j) through hole (q), and enters pipe (dz) and the fountain discharges a rod. And if tank (l) rotates and hole (q) comes to tank (b) the water enters pipe (ew) and the fountain discharges a Lily-of-the-Valley. And so continuously as long as the wind blows on it. We have made [alternatively] a pipe (a) which discharges on to the vaned wheel so that the fountain also alternates, and works like it worked with the wind. And this is what we wished to explain.



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

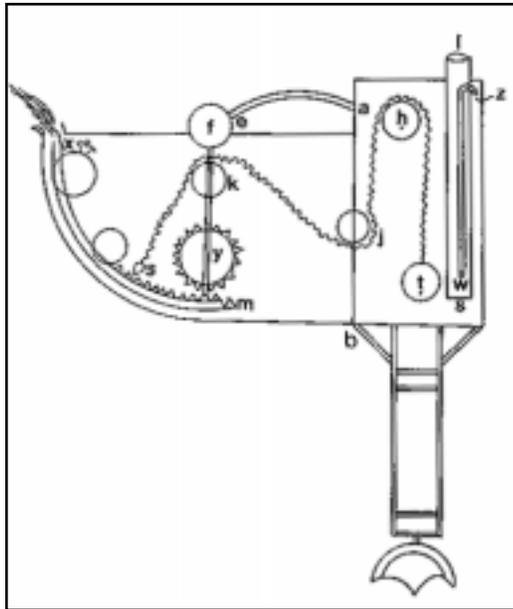
The Banu (sons of) Musa were important figures in 9th-century Baghdad's intellectual and political life, playing a key role in the development of Arabic science and technology. Skilled in mathematics, music, astronomy, and engineering, the brothers also dabbled in the physical sciences. By working in the Khalifah's translation library, the House of Wisdom, the brothers' fortune went from rags to riches. They worked on determining the circumference of the earth, making fancy curiosities for palaces, town planning and public works. They were quoted in many later scientific works, and they did much to encourage the development of translation and scientific works. They built their knowledge on a foundation of Greek and Roman engineering, to which they added with their own ingenuity.

MODEL 2

“The Lamp of God”

Construction of a lamp: the wick comes out by itself and the oil flows by itself and everyone who sees it thinks that the fire has consumed nothing whatsoever from the oil or from the wick. This lamp is known at “the lamp of God”. The example of that is that we make the lamp from which the wick emerges by itself [i.e. Model 961 and we repeat its picture as we have illustrated, namely: the pulley (k) which is in it for the chain (k) to be passed over it, and the weight (s) to which one end of the chain is fixed. We also make another as we made for the lamp into which the oil flows by itself. We position the pipe into which the air passes from the lamp into the oil reservoir in the column (jb).

The chain goes through into the hollow of this pipe. And we install another small pulley (at h) above the top of the pipe and lead over it the chain in the way we have illustrated so that the chain terminates, as we have illustrated, at a float (t). Float (t) would be double the weight of weight (s), although the float rides above the oil. Between the reservoir contain in it the oil and the lamp we make another hole (a) like hole (j) and we lead out from hole (a) a pipe (ae) that terminates at the mouth of the bird. The bird's beak should be above the hole (f) in the lamp so that when the oil flows through pipe (ae) it discharges into hole (f) and enters the lamp. It should be clear that when we pour the oil into hole (l) it enters pipe (ae) and flows through pipe (wz) into the reservoir which it [i.e. the pipe] is in. Float (t) rises, weight (s) sinks, and in sinking pulls the chain, which rotates pulley (k), and the toothed wheel (y) rotates with it. Toothed rod (mx) slides, together with the wick in direction (x). We pour in the required amount of oil, lamp (fb) fills with oil, we light the wick while we are observed. The oil diminishes until hole (j) is uncovered and the air enters the reservoir through hole (j) and the oil runs from the reservoir into the



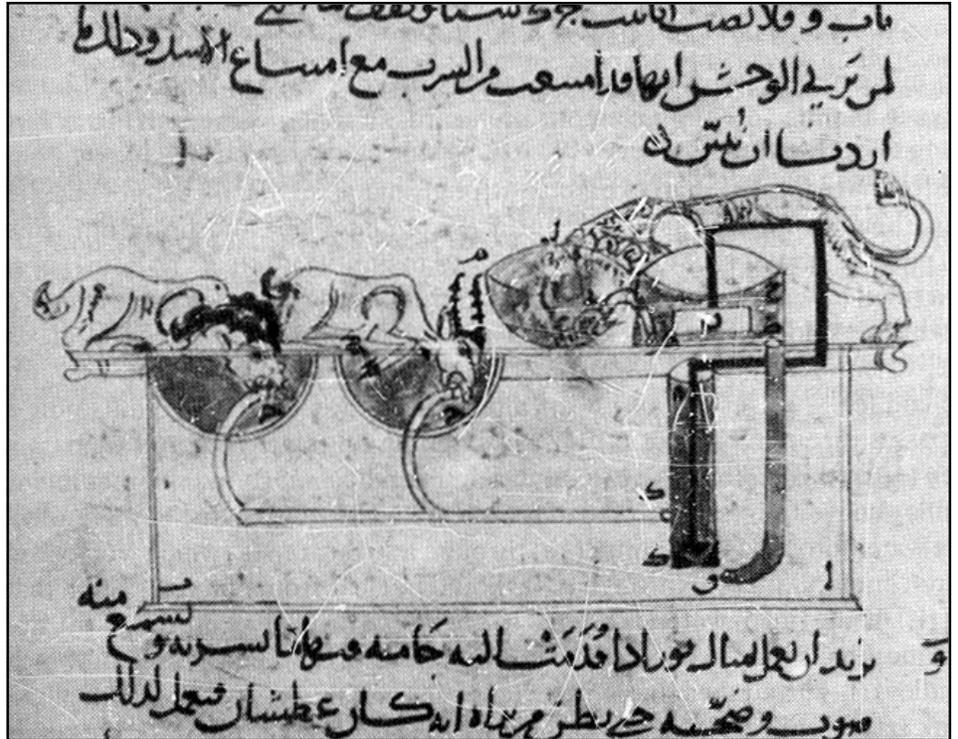
lamp through pipe (ae), and the oil drips from the bird's beak until end (j) of the pipe is closed. When the oil diminishes in the reservoir, float (t) sinks, pulling the chain, weight (s) rises, pulley (k) and toothed wheel (y) rotate, the rod to which we attached the wick moves in the direction of mark (x) and the wick therefore emerges. It is clear that we have made a lamp from which the wick emerges of its accord, and it is possible with these arrangements to make a lamp that shows the [passage of the] hours, and whenever an hour elapses a ball drops. This is not absolutely correct, but it is almost correct. If we wish, then whenever a day passes, float (t), as it sinks, causes a ball to be discharged so that if anyone wishes to know the time that has elapsed since this lamp was lit, he looks at the number of balls and reckons each ball as a day. The people of the religions require this lamp — they who see it believe that it is a perpetual lamp, namely the fire never goes out, and there is always fuel in the fire-tubes. They are the Magians. And in churches, the Christians place the column and the reservoir for the oil in a wall, and [everything] is hidden except the lamp, [which is] more beautiful for the viewers of the lamp. And that is what we wished to explain.

MODEL 3

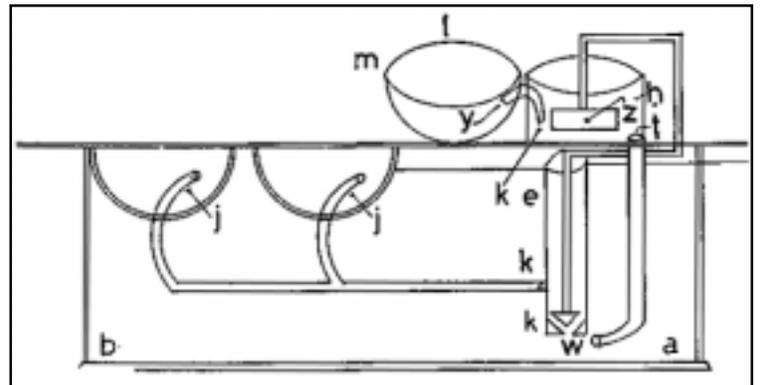
Mechanical Drinking Animals

We wish to make figures of wild animals for whom water is poured into bowls they are in, and they do not drink from it. With them is the figure of a lion, and when the water is poured out for the lion into the bowl to drink, then all the wild animals drink from the water that is in their bowls. When the lion stops drinking, the wild animals do not drink and if the lion drinks, the wild animals drink with him, and so on.

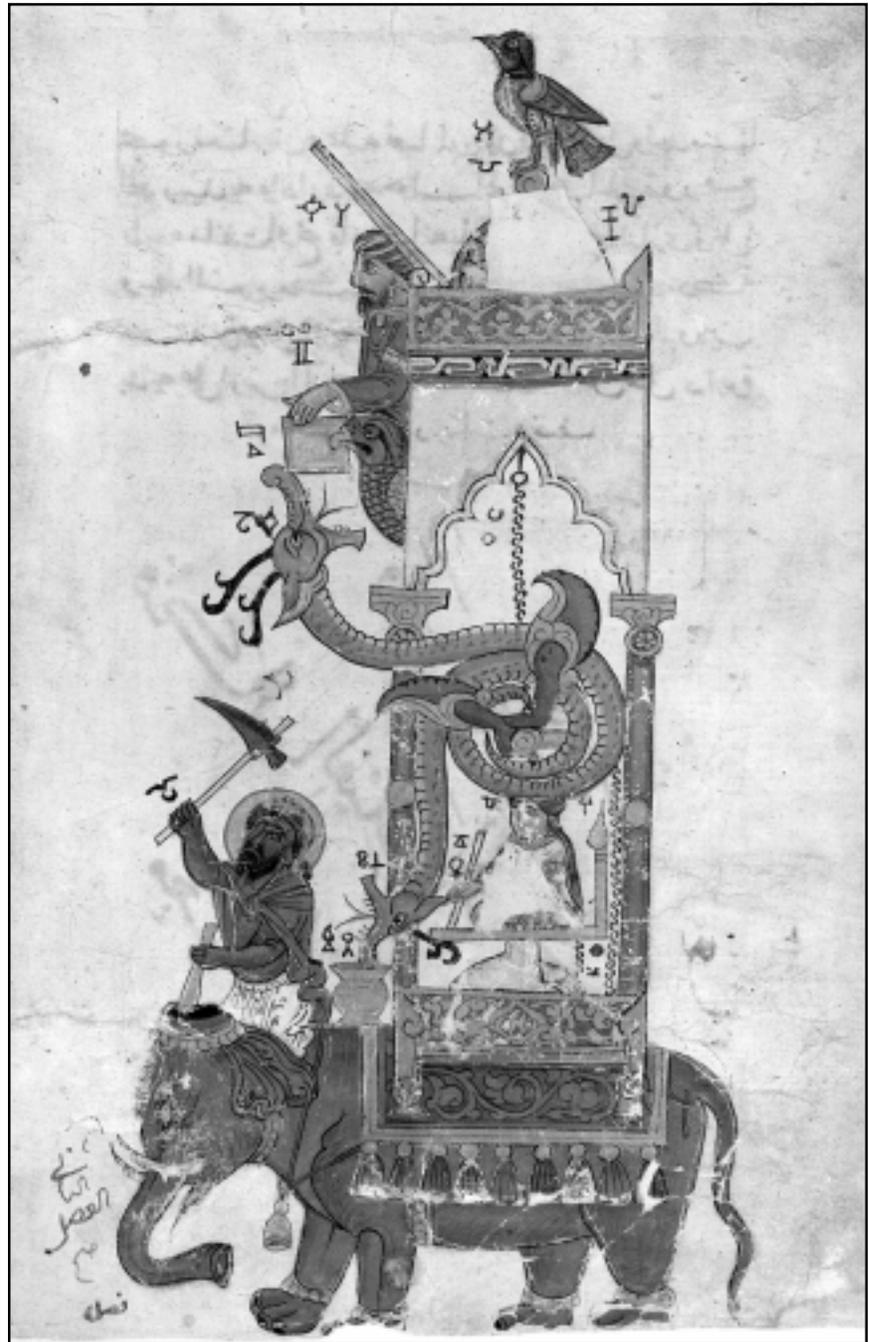
The example of that: we make for that a plinth (*qa'ida*) (ab) like a box and install on it bowls (j) and solder the rims of the bowls to the surface of plinth (ab). We make a pipe (ke), its thickness 1, and we solder end (c) to the surface of plinth (ab) and to end (k) we fit a ground valve (w) similar to the one we made before this [refers to previous model]; its opening is upwards. We lead out a rod from the valve-plug through the surface of plinth (ab) and solder it to float (z), and float (z) is in a small tank (ht) the bottom of which coincides with the upper surface of plinth (ab), and lower than it [i.e. the tank] is a bowl (lm) on the surface of plinth (ab) and soldered to it. In the bottom of the tank we make a narrow hole (t) which discharges into plinth (ab). And if water is poured into tank (ht)



it overflows from edge (h) into plinth (ab). We make pipe (yk): its end (k) discharges into tank (ht) and its end (y) is soldered to the mouth of the lion. Tank (ht) is thus enclosed in the hollow of the lion so that it is hidden from view. From end (k) of pipe (ke) we lead out two pipes (k) and we place their ends marked (j) in the bottoms of the bowls and solder them to the mouths of the wild animals. It should be clear from our description that when the water is poured out for the wild animals into their bowls, which fill up, they do not drink the water because ground valve (w) is closed and there is no way for the water to discharge into plinth (ab). At this juncture those who are looking at the animals will get the illusion that they have refused to drink. And if water is poured out for the lion into bowl (lm), until it reaches the top of bent pipe (yk) in the hollow of the lion, it will flow into tank (ht) and anyone looking at the lion will get the illusion that he is drinking. As water descends into tank (ht) float (z) rises and opens the plug of valve (w), and pipes (jk) discharge into plinth (ab). Anyone looking at the wild beasts will get the illusion that they have drunk while the lion drank. And if the lion's drink is cut off, tank (ht) will empty itself through hole (t), float (z) will fall, valve (w) will close and pipes (jk) will discharge nothing and the water will remain in the bowls. Anyone looking at the wild animals will get the illusion that they have refrained from drinking when the lion refrained. And that is what we wished to explain.



13th-century illustration depicting a mechanical device by al-Jazari.



Study Questions and Activities

1. Describe in writing or draw a historical scene in which these inventions are featured, explaining the use to which the device is put. How does it make life more pleasant or easy? How does this device fit into the culture of the time?
2. You are a craftsman who writes an advertisement for a wealthy patron or administrator of an institution to commission your shop to make one of these devices.

A Theory of Grammar

Historical Source

Kitab al-Idah fi Ilal al-Nahw
(Book of the Explanation of
Linguistic Causes)

Author

Abu al-Qasim al-Zaggagi
(b. ca 860CE)

Excerpted from

Versteegh, Kees, tr. *The
Explanation of Linguistic Causes:
Az-Zaggagi's Theory of Grammar*
(Philadelphia: John Benjamin
Publishing Company), 1995.

➤ pp. 147, 135-136

What is the reason for calling grammar *nahw*?

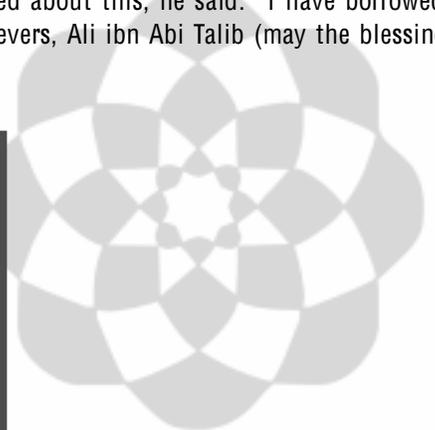
If someone were to ask, "What is the reason for calling this discipline *nahw*, and why is it known by that name?", one could answer: "This goes back to a story told about Abu al-Aswad al-Du'ali. When he heard the language of those Basrans who were born from an Arab father and a foreign mother, he disapproved of the mistakes they made due to their contact with the sedentary Arabs and non-Arabs. One day, the story goes, his daughter said to him: *Yabah, ma asaddu al-harri?* "O father, what is the most terrible heat?" He answered: "The scorching heat of the noon hour, my daughter!" (or something like that; there are different versions of the story). She then said to him: "I did not ask you that; I was only wondering at the terrible heat." He said to her: "In that case, you should say *ma asadda al-har!* "O, what a terrible heat!" He then continued: "We belong to God, but the tongues of our children have become warped!" So, he decided to write a book in which he would bring together the principles of the Arabic language. But Ziyad [a ruler] prevented him from doing so, because he said: "We fear that people would put their trust in it and stop using their own dialect and borrowing eloquence from the mouths of the Arabs." Eventually, however the corruption of speech spread and increased, and the language deteriorated so he told him to do what he had forbidden him to do at first. He [Abu al-Aswad] composed a book about the whole of the Arabic language and told them [the Arabs]: *unhu hadha al-nahw* ("take this direction!"), because the word *nahw* means "direction". This is the reason why grammar is called *nahw*.

It is said that he was the first to put on record that speech is divided into noun, verb, and meaningful particle. Being asked about this, he said: "I have borrowed this division from the Commander of the Believers, Ali ibn Abi Talib (may the blessing and the protection of God be upon him!)."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Abu al-Qasim Abd al-Rahman ibn Ishaq al-Zaggagi was born in the third century of the Hijra, about 860CE, in the city of Hamadan, in present-day Iran. In spite of the fact that his books are among the most popular in the Arabic-speaking world, little is known about his life. He was educated in Baghdad, and lived in Damascus and Aleppo. Al-Zaggai's contribution was to present the best arguments by the grammarians of Kufa and Basra (Iraq), who set down the rules of Arabic grammar. As the excerpt shows, the reason for their effort in grammar was that the influence of the Arabs and Islam was rapidly spreading to include large areas where Persian, Greek and other languages were spoken. Systematic analysis of Arabic grammar would help to preserve the language of the Qur'an from corruption, and allow people of other language groups to learn it. These early scholars of grammar helped to make Arabic the *lingua franca*, or common language, in the rapidly expanding Muslim world, a position it still holds today.

Al-Zaggagi's 9th century book gives modern scholars a picture of new trends in Arabic grammar after Greek logic and philosophy had already begun to influence the intellectual and literary life of the Muslim world. In addition, modern scholars are fascinated by his advanced treatment of linguistic science.



The theory about the noun, the verb, and the particle: which one of them comes first in rank and hierarchy?

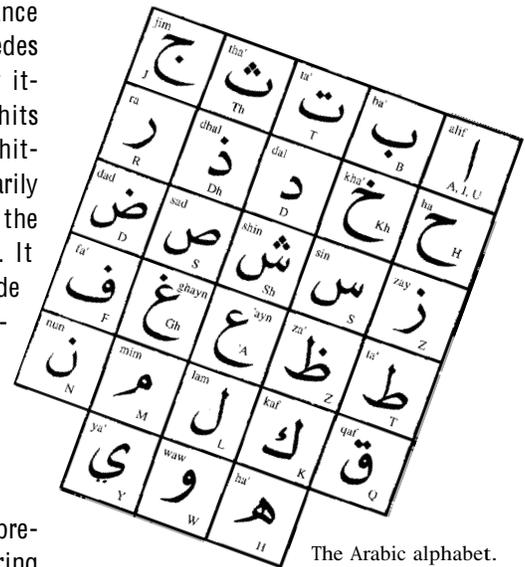
The Basrans and the Kufans say: "Nouns come before verbs, and the particles follow the nouns. This is because verbs are the events of nouns." By 'nouns' they understand the referents; we have already discussed their use of this technical term. "Nouns come before verbs, because the actions [which are signified by the verbs] proceed from them [from the nouns] and an agent always precedes his action. As for the particles, they are only attached to the nouns and the verbs in order to produce various meanings in them and cause them to be declined [given grammatical suffixes]." We have already made it clear that nouns have the first right to declension. Declension affects nouns, and the particles are the operators in the nouns and the verbs, producing the meaning and the declension in them. It follows from this that the particles must be secondary to them.

There is an inevitable question to those who put forth this theory. It is said to them: "You agree with us that an operator precedes what it operates on, just as an agent precedes his action, and just as the producer precedes his product. You all acknowledge that the particles serve as operators to the nouns and the verbs. It

would, therefore, seem logical to let the particle precede the nouns and the verbs, since they are actually prior to them. This is an inevitable conclusion according to your own standards and criteria."

The answer is as follows: "This is a mistake. The matter is not the same as with the product and its producer, or the cause and its effect. We say that someone who performs an action on a body, for instance a movement of something else, precedes the action he performs, not the body itself. Thus, we say that a person who hits someone else, precedes his [action of] hitting that person but he does not necessarily precede the person whom he hits, in the sense that he should exist before him. It is, indeed, necessary for him to precede his [action of] hitting, which he performs on the body of the person who is hit. But the person who is hit may very well be older than the person who hits. We also say that a carpenter precedes the door which he has manufactured but he does not have to precede the wood he used in manufacturing the door. Examples like these are clear and evident. The same holds true for the particles which are operators for the nouns and

the verbs, even if they themselves are not substances. We say, therefore, that the particles precede their activity in the nouns and the verbs—viz. the *nominative*, the *accusative*, the *genitive* and the *jussive*—but this does not mean that they precede the nouns and the verbs themselves. This is clear and evident."



The Arabic alphabet.

Study Questions and Activities

1. Write down an expression in English that can be misunderstood because of faulty grammar, such as the one al-Zaggagi cites from the daughter of Abu Aswad al-Du'ali.
2. Compare the example of the early Arabs' desire to preserve Arabic language with modern attitudes about using slang vs. "proper English," or with the debate about multilingual education in a nation with many immigrants, like the United States or Great Britain?
3. Why do you think that differences in Arabic speech may have been associated with certain towns or regions, like Kufa and Basra, in the early Islamic period? What was the importance of setting down rules of grammar for literary activity in the Arabo-Islamic world? What has been its historical and cultural significance?

The Spiritual Physick (Healing)

Historical Source

Tibb al-Ruhani
(Spiritual Medicine)

Author

Abu Bakr Muhammad al-Razi
(d. 925CE)

Excerpted from

Arberry, Arthur J., tr. *The Spiritual Physick of Rhazes* (London: John Murray), 1950.

➤ pp. 59-60, 66-67

Of Repelling Anger

Anger is put into an animal to be a means of taking revenge upon another that causes it pain. When this disposition is taken to excess and surpasses its proper bounds, to the extent that reason is lost in consequence, it may well be that the injury and suffering it brings upon the one moved by this emotion will prove severer and more grievous than that endured by the object of such anger. It therefore behoves the intelligent man to recall frequently the cases of those whom anger has brought sooner or later to disagreeable circumstances, and to try to picture himself in their predicament when his anger is roused. For many men when they are angry are apt to strike out with their fists and slap and even butt with their heads, and often enough hurt themselves more than the person with whom they are angry.

I have seen a man punch another on the jaw and dislocate his fingers in doing so, so that he had to nurse them for a long time, whereas his victim came to no great harm. I once saw another man get into a rage and scream and spit blood on the spot; that led on to consumption, which caused his death. We have heard tell of men who during the time of their anger have brought suffering upon their families and children and dear ones for which they repented a long while, and which they perhaps never put right till the end of their lives. Galen states that his mother used to rush at a padlock with her mouth and bite it if it was difficult for her to open. Upon my life, there is no great difference between the man who loses his powers of thought and reflection when he is angry and a lunatic.

If a man will constantly keep such situations in mind while he is normal, he is more likely to be able to picture them when anger seizes him. He should be aware that those who do such monstrous things when they are angry are only brought to that pass because they lose their reason at that time; and so he ought to see to it that when he is angry he will not do anything except after due thought and deliberation, lest he injure himself where he intended to injure another. He should not share with the beasts in

liberating action without reflection. And during the time he is inflicting punishment, he ought to be free of four emotions: arrogance, anger against the person he is punishing, and the opposites of these two; for the two former states of mind provoke him to make his punishment and vengeance exceed the dimension of the crime, while the two latter result in their being too lenient. If the intelligent man will keep these ideas in mind, and prevail upon his passion to follow them out, his anger and

revenge will be proportionately just, and he will be secure from suffering any consequent injury to his soul or body in this world or the next.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakariya al-Razi was born in 864CE in Persia, and died there in 925. He is one of the most famous Muslim scientists in both the Muslim world and the West (where he was known as Rhazes). Like many early universal scholars in the Muslim world, he was a mathematician, philosopher, and writer. He is most famous for his medical work. He studied and practiced in Baghdad at a time when it was the most renowned center of medical studies and hospitals. al-Razi wrote a great many books on medicine and other topics, but one of the most famous is his huge encyclopedia of medicine. Several of his medical books were translated into Latin from the 13th century onwards, and they were popular for centuries. He is also noted for his accurate diagnostic descriptions of smallpox and measles. Arberry, the translator of this small book on spiritual and physical health, states that no man so powerfully affected the course of learning in the Middle Ages and the early Renaissance as al-Razi.

Of Repelling Excessive and Hurtful Anxiety and Worry

These two dispositions, although affections of the reason, are nevertheless just as hurtful and deleterious when present in excess, in the way of denying access to the achievement of our desires, as the lack of them, as we have already explained when we discussed the excessive activity of the rational soul. It therefore behoves an intelligent man to give his body repose from them, and to indulge it in as much diversion and amusement and pleasure as it requires to keep it fit and maintain it in good health; otherwise the body will weaken and become emaciated and finally collapse, so preventing us from reaching our goal.

Because men differ so much in temperament and habit, there is also a difference in the amount of anxiety and worry they can stand; some can endure a great deal of them without being adversely affected, while others are unable to put up with so much. This power of endurance needs to be looked after and taken care of and gradually increased as much as possible before the matter becomes too difficult; habit is of great help and assistance here. In short, we ought to indulge in diversion and amusement and pleasure not for their own sakes, but in order that we may be recreated and strengthened to engage the thought and care we require to reach our purpose. As the traveller's object in giving his horse provender is not to give it the pleasure of eating but to strengthen

it so that it may bring him safely to his lodging-place, so it is necessary for us to act in watching over the interests of our bodies.

If we act in this way and give the matter this amount of consideration, we shall attain our goals in the quickest time they can possibly be reached; we shall not be like the man who destroyed his mount before ever coming to the land he intended by over-loading and overstraining it, neither shall we resemble the other man who was so concerned with pampering and fattening his horse that the time went by in which he ought to have reached his stage and lodging-place.

Let us give a further example. Say a man wanted to study philosophy, and was so fond of it that he devoted all his care and occupied all his thought to that one end. Then he had the ambition to rival Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Theophrastus, Eudemus, Chrysippus, Themistius and Alexander, say in the period of one year. So he prolonged his cogitations and speculations, and took less and less food and repose — for insomnia would be the inevitable result of such a procedure. I say that this man would become a prey to delusion and melancholia, consumption and wasting away ere the whole of that time was past, and long before he in any way approached the philosophers we have named. I would add that if another man also desired to attain a perfect knowledge of philosophy, but only looked into it from time to time when he had no other occupation and was bored with his pleasures and appetites, whereas if the slightest task occurred to him or if his least appetite was

stirred he at once stopped his studies and returned to his former routine — I repeat that this man would never completely master philosophy in the whole of his life, nor would he come anywhere near to doing so. Both these men would therefore have failed to achieve their purpose; the one because of excess, the other owing to short-coming. Hence it behoves us to be moderate in our anxieties and worries if we aim at achieving our purposes; then indeed we will reach our goals, and not fail on account of shortcoming or excess.



This is a stained glass window in a chapel at Princeton University which is intended to portray the famous physician al-Razi, and to honor his contributions to modern medicine.

Study Questions and Activities

1. Explain the title of al-Razi's book. Why does he combine these two ideas?
2. Apply the advice given by this famous physician and scholar to a situation you have witnessed at school or elsewhere.
3. Why are anger and worry destructive, according to al-Razi? How do they affect the mind and the body?

Rules for Kings

Historical Source

Siyasat-namah or *Siyar al-Mulk*
(Rules for Kings)

Author

Abu Ali Hasan ibn Ali
Nizam al-Mulk (d. 1116CE)

Excerpted from

Drake, Hubert, tr. *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings: The Siyasat-nama or Siyar al-Mulk* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 1960.

➤ pp. 1-2, 9-10, 13, 14, 23, 32, 33-35, 43-47, 50-51, 62-65

In the name of Allah, The Merciful, The Clement

PROLOGUE

Rule 2 • Thus says the copyist of the books of the Royal Library that the reason for the composition of this book was that The Fortunate Sultan Malikshah (may Allah illumine his proof) in the year 479 gave orders to several of the nobles, elders and wise men, instructing each one of them to give thought to the condition of the country, and to consider—'whether there is in our age and time anything out of order either in the divan, the court, the royal palace or the audience-hall—anything whose principles are not being observed by us or are unknown to us; whether there are any functions which kings before us have performed and we are not fulfilling: consider further what have been the laws and customs of past kings, make a digest of them and present them for our judgment; we shall then reflect upon them, so that hereafter affairs religious and worldly may proceed in accordance with their proper rules, every duty may be correctly discharged, and all wrong practices may be discontinued; for since God (be He exalted) has given us His consummate grace, and bestowed the world upon us and subdued all our enemies, there must not be hereafter anything improperly done or anything concealed from us.'

Rule 3 • No king or emperor can afford not to possess and know this book, especially in these days, for the more he reads it, the more he will be enlightened upon spiritual and

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nizam al-Mulk lived during the time that the Seljuk Turks ruled large parts of the Muslim world. The Seljuks had invaded from the Kirghiz steppe in Central Asia during the time of the Abbasid rulers. They were subdued, and converted to Islam, became the elite troops of the later Abbasids. Eventually, the Abbasid rulers became so dependent on them that the so-called "Khalifah" was a mere puppet in their hands. The Seljuks went on to become the first Turkish group to take over rule of the central Muslim lands. Under the rule of Alp Arslan and Malikshah, the Seljuk state expanded, and Nizam al-Mulk served as head of the civil service that administered this vast territory.

This excerpt is from the book Nizam al-Mulk wrote in an effort to reform the government of which he was an important part. The work emphasizes the need for the ruler to secure justice for the common people who support the ruling classes with their labor and taxes, and to maintain central control over the governors and competing princes and lords who threatened the stability of their rule. Nizam al-Mulk wanted to restore the legendary rule of the Persian kings and the Muslim caliphate, converting the rule of nomadic conquerors to that of a stable, central bureaucracy. He emphasized the need of the king for information from his subjects, for sound agricultural policy, and for appointing and granting authority to judges well versed in Islamic law. He supported learning and culture in the state as ornaments of a stable, beneficial rule. Nizam al-Mulk, himself trained in Islamic learning, helped to spread a system of education in the *madrasahs*, well-funded learning institutions attached to *masajid* (mosques) that formed the basis of colleges in many important cities. The most famous college he founded was the Nizamiyyah at Baghdad. These institutions have helped to spread and unify the heritage of Islamic knowledge across the Muslim lands.

In style, *Book of Government* represents a type of literature often called "the mirror of kings." It was written in Persian prose rather than Arabic, and is informal but elegant in style. *The Book of Government* has remained popular over many centuries. The author uses anecdotes to make his points effectively, and writes in a plain, clear style that is not cluttered by too much embroidery, or too much flattery of the master for whom it was written.

temporal matters, the better he will appreciate the qualities of friends and foes; the way of right conduct and the path of good government will be open to him; the rules for the management of the court, the audience hall, the divan, the royal palace and the parade ground, and the methods of administering taxes, transacting business and setting the affairs of the people and the army will be clear to him; and nothing in the whole realm whether great or small, far or near, will remain concealed (if Allah wills—be He exalted).

Note: The writings in the section "Communications of the Early Khalifahs" are also political writings, and may be compared to the more formal writings in this section. The history of the Rightly-Guided Khalifahs was a major source for Muslim political theorists.

CHAPTER ONE

On the turn of Fortune's wheel and in praise of The Master of the World—may Allah confirm his sovereignty:

1 In every age and time God (be He exalted) chooses one member of the human race and, having adorned and endowed him with kingly virtues, entrusts him with the interests of the world and the well-being of His servants; He charges that person to close the doors of corruption, confusion and discord, and He imparts to him such dignity and majesty in the eyes and hearts of men, that under his just rule they may live their lives in constant security and ever wish for his reign to continue.

2 Whenever—Allah be our refuge!—there occurs any disobedience or disregard of divine laws on the part of His servants, or any failure in devotion and attention to the commands of The Truth (be He exalted), and He wishes to chasten them and make them taste the retribution for their deeds—may God not deal us such a fate, and keep us far from such a calamity!—verily the wrath of The Truth overtakes those people and He forsakes them for the vileness of their disobedience; anarchy rears its head in their midst, opposing swords are drawn, blood is shed and whoever has the stronger hand does whatever he wishes, until those sinners are all destroyed in tumults and bloodshed, and the world becomes free and clear of them; and through the wickedness of such sinners may innocent persons too perish in the tumults; just as, by analogy, when a reed-bed catches fire every dry particle is consumed and much wet stuff is burnt also, because it is near to that which is dry.

3 Then by divine decree one human being acquires some prosperity and power, and according to his deserts The Truth bestows good fortune upon him and gives him wit and wisdom, wherewith he may employ his subordinates every one according to his merits and confer upon each a dignity and a station proportionate to his powers. He

selects ministers and their functionaries from among the people, and giving a rank and post to each, he relies upon them for the efficient conduct of affairs spiritual and temporal. If his subjects treat the path of obedience and busy themselves with their tasks he will keep them untroubled by hardships, so that they may pass their time at ease in the shadow of his justice. If one of his officers or ministers commits any impropriety or oppression, he will only keep him at his post provided that he responds to correction, advice or punishment, and wakes up from the sleep of negligence; if he fails to mend his ways, he will retain him no longer, but change him for someone who is deserving; and when his subjects are ungrateful for benefits and do not appreciate security and ease, but ponder treachery in their hearts, showing unruliness and overstepping their bounds, he will admonish them for their misdeeds, and punish them in proportion to their crimes. Having done that he will cover their sins with the skirt of pardon and oblivion. Further he will bring to pass that which concerns the advance of civilization, such as constructing underground channels, digging main canals, building bridges across great waters, rehabilitating villages and farms, raising fortifications, building new towns, and erecting lofty buildings and magnificent dwellings; he will have inns built on the highways and schools for those who seek knowledge; for which things he will be renowned for ever; he will gather the fruit of his good works in the next world and blessings will be showered upon him.

CHAPTER THREE

On holding court for the redress of wrongs and practicing justice and virtue:

1 It is absolutely necessary that on two days in the week the king should sit for the redress of wrongs, to extract recompense from the oppressor, to give justice and to listen to the words of his subjects with his own ears, without any intermediary. It is fitting that some written petitions

should also be submitted if they are comparatively important, and he should give a ruling on each one. For when the report spreads throughout the kingdom that on two days in the week The Master of the World summons complainants and petitioners before him and listens to their words, all oppressors will be afraid and curb their activities, and no one will dare to practice injustice or extortion for fear of punishment.

2 I have read in the books of the ancients that most of the non-Arab [Persian] kings used to put up a high platform and sit up there on horseback so that they could see all the complainants gathered round about, and they would redress the grievances of every one. The reason for this was that when the king sits in a place protected by gates, locks, vestibules and screens, self-interested and oppressive persons can keep people back and not let them go before the king.

3 I have heard that a certain king was rather hard of hearing. He was anxious lest those who acted as interpreters might not report the words of the complainants correctly, and that he, not knowing the true facts, might give an order quite unsuitable to the case. So he commanded that all complainants were to wear red clothes, so that he could recognize them; no one else at all was to wear red. This king used to appear on the plain seated upon an elephant, and wherever he saw people in red clothes, he ordered them to be collected in a group. Then he would sit in a place apart and they were brought before him; they stated their cases in a loud voice and he gave them justice.

Men have taken all this care so that they may not be found ignorant when they have to give their answer in the next world.

CHAPTER FOUR

Concerning tax-collectors and constant enquiry into the affairs of wazirs:

1 Tax-collectors, when they are given a fiscal district, must be instructed to deal honourably with their fellow creatures, and to take only the due amount of revenue, and to claim that too with civility and courtesy, and not to demand any taxes from them until the time comes for them to pay; because when they demand payment before the time, trouble comes upon the peasants, and to pay the tax they are obliged to sell their crops for half of what they would be worth when they ripen, whereby they are driven to extremities and have to emigrate. If any peasant is in distress and in need of oxen or seed, let him be given a loan to ease his burden and keep him viable, lest he be cast out from his home into exile.

2 I heard that in the time of King Qubad there was famine in the world for seven years, and blessings [rain] ceased to come down from heaven. He ordered the tax-collectors to sell all the grain which they had, and even to give some of it away as charity. All over the kingdom the poor were assisted by gifts from the central treasury and local treasuries, with the result that not one person died of hunger in those seven years—all because the king chid his officers.

CHAPTER FIVE

Concerning assignees of land and enquiry into their treatment of the peasantry:

1 Officers who hold lands in fief (*iqta*) must know that they have no authority over the peasants except to take from them—and that with courtesy—the due amount of revenue which has been assigned to them to collect; and when they have taken that, the peasants are to have security for their persons, property, wives and children, and their goods and farms are to

be inviolable; the assignees are to have no further claim upon them. If peasants want to come to the court to state their cases, they are not to be prevented from doing so; any assignee who does otherwise must be checked; his fief will be taken away from him and he will be reprimanded as a warning to others. They must know that the country and the peasants belong to the ruling power; assignees and governors are like prefects over the peasants [on their fiefs], in the same relation to them as the king is to other peasants [not on feudal lands]. In this way the peasants will be contented and the king will be secure from punishment and torment in the world to come.

The Story of The Just King

2 They say that when Qubad the king died Nushirwan (The Just), who was his son, succeeded to the throne; he was only eighteen years old, yet he reigned as king. He was a youth whose character had been trained in justice right from infancy; he recognized evil things as evil and he knew what was good. He always used to say, 'My father is weak in judgment and simple hearted; he is quickly deceived. He has left the country to the hands of officials and they are doing whatever they please; so the country is being ruined and the treasury emptied; they are embezzling the revenue, and the shame and guilt will be for ever upon his neck.' Qubad completely



The legendary Persian king Nushirwan, from a 16th-century miniature painting. In the story told here, the king learns from the talk of two owls living in a ruined village that his policies have been wrong and oppressive to the common folk.

succumbed to the wiles of Mazdak; similarly he was deceived by two men—a governor and a tax-collector—who together had ruined their province and impoverished the peasantry by illegal extortions; such was his love of money that when they proffered him a purse of dinars he was seduced and satisfied; he had not sufficient discernment to question them and to say [to the one], 'You are the governor and the commander of this province. I assigned you such proportion of the provincial revenue as would suffice for the pay, rations and clothing of you and your retinue; I am sure that you will have extracted the full amount from the people. Then what is

this surplus which you have brought to me? I know that you did not inherit it from your father; it is all what you have illegally extorted from the people.' Nor did he speak likewise to the tax-collector, saying, 'The revenue of the province is so much; some of it you have used for [encashing] drafts and some you have sent to the treasury. This surplus which I see you have— where did you obtain that? Is it not part of your illegal extortions?' He never investigated such matters nor took suitable measures against the offenders so that others might have made a practice of honesty.

3 When three or four years of his reign has passed, the assignees and officials were still practicing their wonted oppression, and complainants were clamouring at the king's threshold. Nushirwan The Just held court for the redress of wrongs and summoned all the nobles; he sat upon the throne and first gave thanks to God; then he said, 'You know that God (to Him be power and glory) has granted me this kingdom; furthermore I inherited it from my father; and thirdly my uncle rebelled against me and I did battle with him and regained the throne by the sword. As God has bestowed the world upon me, so have I assigned it to you, and to each one have I given authority; I did not leave without a portion anyone who had deserved well of this dynasty; the nobles who had received high rank and command from my father were maintained in their rank and station, and I did not in any way reduce their degree or subsistence. I have constantly exhorted you to treat the people well and to gather only the due amount of taxes; I have guarded your honour but you have cared for nothing and listened to nothing; you do not fear God nor do you spare His creatures. Wherefore I fear retribution; I do not wish that your iniquity and injustice should rebound upon the days of my reign. The world is free of enemies; you have prosperity and ease; therefore you ought to concentrate on thanksgiving to God for the benefits which He has bestowed upon you and upon us; for injustice brings about the decline of empires and ingratitude causes the stop-

page of benefits. Henceforth there must be no ill treatment of God's creatures; you must keep the peasants lightburdened and never oppress the weak; respect learned men, consort with the good, avoid the bad, and do no harm to those who mind their own business. I call upon God and the angels to be my witnesses that if any man follows a path contrary to this, I will not suffer him further.' All said, 'We will do as you say and obey your command.'

CHAPTER SIX

Concerning judges, preachers and inspectors (of weights and measures) and the importance of their activities:

1 It is necessary for full information to be available about every single judge in the country. Those that are learned, pious and uncovetous should be retained in their appointments, while any that are not so, should be dismissed, and worthy persons installed in their place. Let each one be paid salary and allowances according to merit, so that he will have no excuse for dishonesty. This is a most important and delicate matter, because they have power over the lives and property of Muslims. If any judge signs an order or records a sentence capriciously or out of avarice or rnalice, the other judges must inform the king of this wrong sentence, and that judge must be dismissed and punished.

All other officers must strengthen the hand of the judge and uphold the dignity of the court. If anyone makes excuses and fails to appear in court, however exalted he may be, he must be forcibly compelled to be present. For in the time of The Companions of The Prophet (upon him be peace and blessings) justice was dispensed by them in person and not delegated to anyone else, so that there could be no scope for injustice or evading the law. In every age from the time of Adam (peace be upon him) until now, in every nation and every country men have practiced equity, given justice and striven after righteousness, and where this has been so, dynasties have endured for generations.

2 They say that it was the custom of the non-Arab [Persian] kings to give special audiences for the common people at the festivals of Mihrjan and Nauruz, and nobody was debarred. Several days beforehand proclamations were read telling the people to be ready for a certain day; then they prepared their cases, wrote their petitions and collected their documents, and their opponents did likewise. When the day came the king's herald stood outside the gate of the bazaar and shouted, 'If any man this day impedes another from submitting his needs, the king will be innocent of his blood.' The king then received the people's petitions and laid them all before him; one by one he looked at them, and if amongst them there was one complaining against himself he rose and came from the throne and knelt in supplication before the mubad (this meant chief justice in their language, and he sat on the king's right hand) saying, 'Before all other cases judge between me and this man, impartially and regardlessly.' Then it was announced that all whose suit was against the king should sit on one side as their cases would be dealt with first.

3 Then the king would say to the *mubad*, 'In the eyes of God (be He exalted) there is no sin greater than a king's sin. The right way for a king to acknowledge God's grace is by looking after his subjects, giving them justice, and preserving them from oppressors. When a king is a tyrant all his courtiers begin to practice tyranny; they become forgetful of God and ungrateful for His bounty. Verily God abandons them in His wrath, and before long the world goes to ruin and they are all destroyed because of the vileness of their sins. Then the kingship is transferred to another house. O Godfearing mubad, take care that you do not favour me against your conscience, because everything which God (be He exalted) demands of me, I ask of you; so I hereby make you responsible.' Then the mubad considered the case and having decided between the king and his opponent, he awarded judgment in full to the winning party; but if anyone made a false accusation against the king and had no proof, he was severely punished and it was

proclaimed that this was the punishment for one who had the audacity to find fault with the king and the state. When the king had finished with these disputes he returned to the throne, put on the crown and turning to his nobles and retainers said, 'For this purpose I commenced the proceedings with myself, namely that if any one of you should have oppressive desires against another they might be suppressed. Now let all of you who have adversaries give them satisfaction.' On that day whoever was nearest to the king was furthest and he who was strongest was weakest.

4 From the time of Ardashir Babakan until Yazdijird this procedure was followed. But Yazdijird changed the customs of his fathers; he made injustice the rule in the world and introduced evil practices. The population suffered distress and their curses upon his name were unceasing. Until one day it happened that a bare-back horse suddenly entered his palace. Its form was such that all the nobles who were present agreed on its excellence, and all tried to catch it. Nobody was successful until it came in front of Yazdijird and stood still at the side of the hall. Then Yazdijird said, 'All stand back, for this is a gift which God (be He exalted) has sent to me.' He got up and gently approaching the horse, caught it by the mane. He stroked the horse's head and patted its back. The horse never moved, but remained quiet. Yazdijird called for saddle and bridle; he bridled the horse and after putting on the saddle and making the girth tight, he came to the hind quarters to pass the crupper under its tail. Suddenly the horse kicked him right upon the heart and killed him on the spot. Then it bolted out of the door before anyone could stop it. Nobody knew whence it had come nor whither it went. All agreed that it was an angel sent by God to deliver them from that tyrant.

5 It is said that Umara ibn Hamza was sitting in the company of Abu Dawaniq on the day for hearing grievances. A man got up—one of the injured parties—and complained that 'Umara had forcibly seized

his farm. The Commander of the Faithful said to Umara, "Rise and confront your adversary and plead your defence." Umara said, "I am not this man's adversary. If the farm is mine, I make him a present of it. I do not wish to leave the place in which the caliph has honourably seated me, nor will I throw my dignity and rank to the winds for the sake of a farm." All the nobles were impressed by his magnanimity.

6 It must be understood that the king should give judgment in person and hear the words of opposing parties with his own ears. If the king is Turkish or Persian or one who does not know Arabic and has not learnt the precepts of Muslim law, of course he will need a deputy through whom he may perform his function. It is the judges who are the king's deputies, so it is essential for the king to strengthen their hands. Besides, their reputation and dignity must be above reproach because they are the lieutenants of the caliph and bear his standard. At the same time they are appointed by the king and are his agents.

Likewise the preachers who read the prayers in the public mosques should be chosen by the king for their piety and knowledge of the Quran. For it is a crucial point about the prayer of Muslims that it depends upon the imam [leader]. When the leader's prayers are invalid the prayers of the whole congregation are ineffectual.

In every city an inspector must be appointed whose duty is to check scales and prices and to see that business is carried on in an orderly and upright manner. He must take particular care in regard to goods which are brought from outlying districts and sold in the bazaars to see that there is no fraud or dishonesty, that weights are kept true, and that moral and religious principles are observed. His hand must be strengthened by the king and other officers, for this is one of the foundations of the state and is itself the product of justice. If the king neglects this matter the poor will suffer distress, and the traders in the bazaars will buy as they like and sell as they like, and sellers of short weight will

be predominant; iniquity will be rife and divine law set at naught. The post of inspector always used to be given to one of the nobility or else to a eunuch or an old Turk, who having no respect for anybody, would be feared by nobles and commoners alike. Thus business was transacted with justice and the precepts of Islam were guarded.

The Story of Sultan Mahmud's Ugliness

They say that Sultan Mahmud Ghazi was not handsome; he had a drawn face, his skin was dry, his neck long, his nose high, and his beard was thin. Because he always ate clay, his complexion was yellow. One day after his father Sabuktigin died, and he ascended the throne and Hindustan became subject to him, in the early morning he was sitting on his prayer-mat in his private room; he was praying and in front of him was his mirror and his comb and two private pages were in waiting, when his wazir Shams al Kufat Ahmad ibn Hasan entered the room, and bowed; Mahmud nodded to him to sit down. When he had finished his prayers, he put on his hat and cloak and shoes, and looked at himself in the mirror; he saw his face, then smiled and said to Ahmad ibn Hasan, 'Do you know what is passing through my mind at this moment?' He said, 'My lord knows best.' He said, 'I am afraid that people don't love me because I am not handsome; they always prefer handsome kings.' Ahmad ibn Hasan said, 'Master, do just one thing, and they will love you more than their wives and children and their very selves, and at your command they will go through water and fire.' He said, 'What am I to do?' He said, 'Take gold as your enemy and men will regard you as their friend.' Mahmud was pleased at this and said, 'A thousand meanings and profits are hidden in these words.' Then he opened his band in generosity and charity. All the world adored him and praised him, and many noble works and great victories sprang from his hands; he went to Somnat and broke the idol and brought it back; he went as far as

Samarqand and came also to 'Iraq. Then one day he said to Ahmad ibn Hasan, 'Since I renounced gold, both worlds came into my hand, and when I repudiated worldly things, I became beloved of both worlds.'

Tradition says that The Prophet (the prayers of God be upon him) said 'Justice is the glory of the faith and the power of the government; in it lies the prosperity of nobility and commons.' It is the measure of all good things, as God (be He exalted) said [in the Quran, 59:6], 'He raised up the heavens and He set the Balance'—that is, justice. And in another place [Quran, 42:16] He said, 'Allah it is who sent down the Book with truth, and the Balance.' The person most worthy for kingship is he whose heart is a repository of justice, whose house is a haven for wise and religious men, and whose boon-companions and agents are discreet and God-fearing.

For the sake of justice and the welfare of the people, kings have always put in charge of affairs abstemious and God-fearing men who being without self-interest, will on every occasion report on matters truthfully, as The Commander of the Faithful al-Muttasim did at Baghdad.

CHAPTER EIGHT

On enquiry and investigation into matters of religion, religious law and suchlike:

1 It is incumbent upon the king to enquire into religious matters, to be acquainted with the divine precepts and prohibitions and put them into practice, and to obey the commands of God (be He exalted); it is his duty to respect doctors of religion and pay their salaries out of the treasury, and he should honour pious and abstemious men. Furthermore it is fitting that once or twice a week he should invite religious elders to his presence and hear from them the commands of The Truth; he should listen to interpretations of the Quran and traditions of the Prophet (may Allah pray for him and give him peace); and he should hear stories about just kings and

tales of the prophets (upon them be peace). During that time he should free his mind from worldly cares and give his ears and attention wholly to them. Let him bid them take sides and hold a debate, and let him ask questions about what he does not understand; when he has learnt the answers let him commit them to memory. After this has gone on for some time it will become a habit, and it will not be long before he has learnt and memorized most of the precepts of divine law, the meanings of the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet (upon him be peace). Then the way of prudence and rectitude in both spiritual and temporal affairs will be open to him; no heretic or innovator will be able to turn him from that path. His judgment will be strengthened and he will increase in justice and equity; vanity and heresy will vanish from his kingdom and great works will spring from his hands. The roots of wickedness, corruption and discord will be cut out in the time of his empire. The hand of the righteous shall become strong and the wicked shall be no more. In this world he shall have fame, and in the next world he shall find salvation, high degree and inestimable reward. In his age men will more than ever delight, in gaining knowledge.

4 Sufyan Thawri says, "The best of rulers is he who keeps company with men of learning, and the worst of learned men is he who seeks the society of the king."

6 The Commander of the Faithful Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) says "There is nothing more detrimental to the country and more ruinous to the peasantry than difficulty of access to the king: conversely there is nothing more profitable to the people than ease of access to the king—or more impressive, especially to officers and tax-collectors, for when they know that the king is accessible they will not dare to practice oppression and extortion on the peasants."

7 Luqman The Wise said, "Man has no better friend in this world than knowledge, and knowledge is better than wealth, because you must take care of wealth but knowledge takes care of you."

8 Hasan of Basra (Allah's mercy upon him) says, "The wise man is not he who knows more Arabic and is more competent in its grammar and vocabulary; the wise man is he who knows what he ought to know. If he knows languages in addition that is well. If anyone knows the precepts of religious law and meanings of the Quran in Turkish or Persian or Greek, and knows no Arabic whatever, he is still a learned man. If he knows Arabic as well, that is all to the good; for God (be He exalted) sent down the Quran in the Arabic tongue and Muhammad The Elect (the prayers of Allah and His peace be upon him) spoke in Arabic."

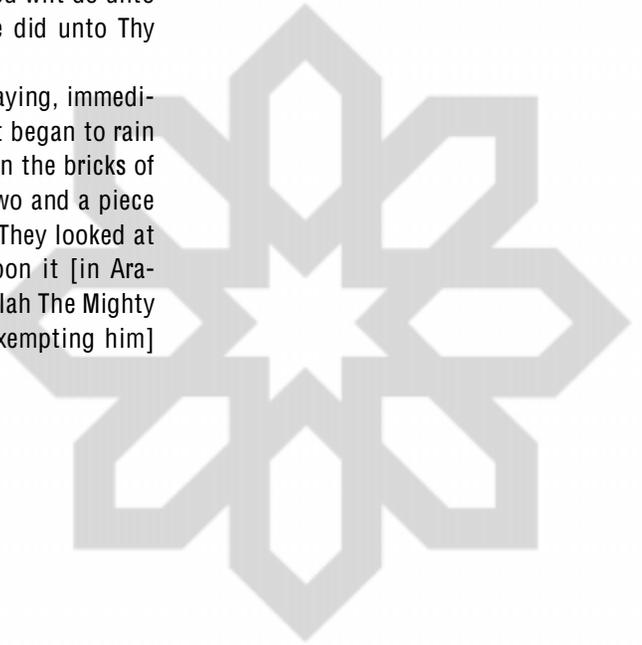
9 But when a king possesses divine splendours and sovereignty, and knowledge withal is wedded to these, he finds happiness in both worlds, because everything he does is informed with knowledge and he does not allow himself to be ignorant. Consider how great is the fame of kings who were wise, and what great works they did; names such as these will be blessed until the resurrection—Afridun, Alexander, Ardashir, Nushirwan The Just, The Commander of the Faithful 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him), 'Umar ibn 'Abd al 'Aziz (may Allah illumine his resting place), Harun, al Ma'mun, al Muttasim, Isma'il ibn Ahmad the Samanid, and Sultan Mahmud (Allah's mercy be upon them all). The deeds and ways of them all are well known for they are recorded in histories and other books; men never cease reading about them and singing their praises and blessings.

The story of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz and the famine

10 They say that in the days of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (Allah's mercy be upon him) there was a famine and the people were in distress. A party of Arabs approached him and complained saying, "O Commander of the Faithful, we have consumed our own flesh and blood in the famine (that is, we have become thin), and our cheeks have turned yellow because we have not enough to eat. We need what is in your treasury; and as for that treasure, it belongs either to you or to God or to the servants of God. If it belongs to God's servants it is ours; if it belongs to God, He has no need of it; if it is yours, then [as the Qur'an 12:88 says] "be charitable unto us, for Allah will requite the charitable"; and if it is ours let us have it that we may escape from these straits, for the skin is withered on our bodies." Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz was moved to sympathy for them, and tears came into

his eyes; he said, "I will do as you have said," and in the same hour he gave orders for their requests to be attended to and their wants to be supplied. When they were about to get up and go, Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (Allah's mercy be upon him) said, "O men where are you going? As you presented your case and that of the rest of God's servants to me, so do you present my case to God (meaning: remember me in your prayers)." Then those Arab tribesmen lifted their eyes to heaven and said, "O Lord, by Thy glory [we pray] that Thou wilt do unto Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz as he did unto Thy servants."

When they had done praying, immediately a cloud came up and it began to rain heavily; a hailstone fell upon the bricks of Umar's palace; it broke in two and a piece of paper fell from inside it. They looked at it and there was written upon it [in Arabic], "This is a grace from Allah The Mighty to Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz [exempting him] from the fire."



Study Questions and Activities

1. Why might the use of stories be a good way for a member of the court to give advice to a king?
2. Select an anecdote from the excerpt and explain how the point of the story might translate into government policy.
3. What role is recommended for the scholars trained in religion and law, and what purpose do they serve the state?
4. What relationship between the people and their ruler does the *Book of Government* reflect? How does it compare with various governments today?

On the Perfect State

Historical Source

Mabadi Ara Ahl al-Madina al-Fadila (Principles of the Views of the Citizens of the Excellent State)

Author

Abu Nasr al-Farabi (d. 950CE)

Excerpted from

Walzer, Richard. *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 1985.

➤ pp. 229-233, 253-257, 291-299



In order to preserve himself and to attain his highest perfection every human being is by his very nature in need of many things which he cannot provide all by himself; he is indeed in need of people who each supply him with some particular need of his. Everybody finds himself in the same relation to everybody in this respect. Therefore man cannot attain the perfection, for the sake of which his inborn nature has been given to him, unless many o (societies of) people who co-operate together who each supply everybody else with some particular need of his, so that as a result of the contribution of the whole community all the things are brought together which everybody needs in order to preserve himself and to attain perfection. Therefore human individuals have come to exist in great numbers, and have settled in the inhabitable (inhabited?) region of the earth, so that human societies have come to exist in it, some of which are perfect, others imperfect.



There are three types of perfect society, great, medium, and small. The great one is the union of all the societies in the inhabitable world; the medium one the union of one nation in one part of the inhabitable world; the small one the union of the people of one city in the territory of any nation whatsoever. Imperfect are the union of people in a small village, the union of people in a quarter [of the city], then the union in a street, eventually the union in a house, the house being the smallest union of them all. Quarter and village exist both for the sake of the city, but the relation of the village to the city is one of service whereas the quarter is related to the city as a part of it; the street is a part of the quarter, the house a part of the street. The city is a part of the territory of a nation, the nation a part of all the people of the inhabitable world.



The most excellent good and the utmost perfection is, in the first instance, attained in a city, not in a society which is less complete than it. But since good in its real sense is such as to be attainable through choice and will and evils are also due to will and choice only, a city may be established to enable its people to co-operate in attaining some aims that are evil. Hence felicity is not attainable in every city. The city, then, in which people aim through association at co-operating for the things by which felicity in its real an true sense can be attained, is the excellent city, and the society in which there is a co-operation

to acquire felicity is the excellent society; and the nation is which all of its cities co-operate for those things through which felicity is attained is the excellent nation. In the same way, the excellent universal state will arise only when all the nations in it co-operate for the purpose of reaching felicity.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Abu Nasr al-Farabi (870-950CE) was born in Turkestan on the Syr Darya. His father was a general, but al-Farabi was not highly placed socially. He settled in Baghdad, the Abbasid capital. He spent much of his writing career as something of an outsider. Always wearing a simple, brown robe, he worked as a laborer in the gardens by day, and studied by the light of the watchmen's lanterns by night. He had no wealthy patrons as did other scholars like al-Kindi, Ibn Sina or al-Razi. He held no office as physician, judge or secretary. Only toward the end of his life was he invited to associate with the court of the *amir* (prince) Sayf al-Dawla at Aleppo, Syria, where he lived on a modest salary.

This was al-Farabi's last work. The book depends on an understanding of Greek philosophers like Plato and Aristotle, by whom al-Farabi, like many of his contemporaries, was influenced. The work is, however, original both in structure and in the way he used Greek ideas to seek answers to the social and political questions of his day. Historians note that the Arabic language al-Farabi used shows the developments that took place in Arabic as translations from Greek and Syriac enriched the growing vocabulary for use in scientific and philosophical writing. Existing hand-written copies show that the book was studied much, from the 10th to the 18th centuries and beyond. Along with Ibn Sina, al-Farabi was considered to be one of the best commentators on Aristotle and the Greek philosophers, and the two philosophical writers whose ideas the famous Muslim theologian al-Ghazzali attacked in *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*.

The first brief excerpt describes his thoughts on the foundations of society and government. The second is a critique of the "ignorant" state, the society that "misses the mark." Historians of al-Farabi's time are curious to know just which state or rulers he was criticizing in this work.



The excellent city resembles the perfect and healthy body, all of whose limbs co-operate to make the life of the animal perfect and to preserve it in this state. Now the limbs and organs of the body are different and their natural endowments and faculties are unequal in excellence, there being among them one ruling organ, namely the heart, and the organs which are close in rank to that ruling organ, each having been given by nature a faculty by which it performs proper function in conformity with the natural aim of that ruling organ. Other organs have by nature faculties by which they perform their functions according to the aims of those organs which have no intermediary between themselves and the ruling organ: they are in the second rank. Other organs, in turn, perform their functions according to the aim of those which are in the second rank, and so on until eventually organs are reached which only serve and do not rule at all. The same holds good in the case of the city. Its parts are different by nature, and their natural dispositions are unequal in excellence: there is in it a man who is the ruler, and there are others whose ranks are close to the ruler, each of them with a disposition and a habit through which he performs an action in conformity with the intention of that ruler; These are the holders of the ranks. Below them are people who perform their actions in some accordance with the aims of those people; they are in the second rank. Below them in turn are people who perform their actions according to aims of the people mentioned in the second instance; and the parts of the city continue to be arranged in this way until eventually parts are reached which perform their actions according to the aims of others, which there do not exist any people who perform their actions according to their aims; these then are the people who serve without being served in turn, and who are hence in the lowest rank and at the bottom of the scale.

[...]



In opposition to the excellent city are the 'ignorant' city, the wicked city, the city which has deliberately changed its character and the city which has missed the right path through faulty judgment. In opposition to it are also the individuals who make up the common people in the various cities.



The 'ignorant' city is the city whose inhabitants do not know true felicity, the thought of it never having occurred to them. Even if they were rightly guided to it they would either not understand it or not believe in it. The only good things they recognize are some of those which are superficially thought of as good among the things which are considered to be the aims in life such as bodily health, wealth, enjoyment of pleasures, freedom to follow one's desires, and being held in honor and esteem. According to the citizens of the ignorant city each of these is a kind of felicity, and the greatest and perfect felicity is the sum total of them all. Things contrary to these goods are misery such as deficiency of the body, poverty, no enjoyment of pleasures, no freedom to follow one's desires, and not being held in honor.



The ignorant city is divided into a number of cities. One of them is the city of necessity, that is the city whose people strive for no more food, drink, cloths, housing [etc.] than is necessary for sustaining their bodies, and they co-operate to attain this. Another is the city of meanness; the aim of its people is to co-operate in the acquisition of wealth and riches, not in order to enjoy something else which can be got through wealth, but because they regard wealth as the sole aim in life. Another is the city of depravity and baseness; the aim of its people is the enjoyment of the pleasure connected with food and drink and the general pleasures of the senses and of the imagination, and to give preference to entertainment and idle play in every form and in every way. Another is

the city of honour; the aim of its people is to cooperate to attain honour and distinction and fame among the nations, to be extolled and treated with respect by word and deed and to attain (gain, achieve) glory and splendor either in the eyes of other people or amongst themselves, each according to the extent of his love of such distinction or according to the amount of it which he is able to reach. Another is the city of power; the aim of its people is to prevail over other and to prevent others from prevailing over them, their only purpose in life being the enjoyment which they get from power. Another is the 'democratic' city: the aim of its people is to be free, each of them doing what he wishes without restraining his passions in the least.



Some people said after that: This state is natural for the existents and this is the nature with which they are endowed: and what natural bodies do by their very nature ought to be done through acts of choice and will by those living beings which are free to choose and through deliberation by those which can deliberate. Therefore they held that cities ought to overpower and to fight each other, there being neither any ranks nor any established order, nor any place of honour or something else reserved for one and nobody else in particular according to merit; and that every man should keep any good he has to himself exclusively and seek gain by force every good owned by another, and that the man who is most successful in overpowering whoever rises against him is most happy.



Out of these views many specific views of the ignorant cities follow and arise in the cities. Some people maintained that mutual affection and attachment do not exist, neither by nature nor by a conscious act of will, that every human being ought to hate every other human being and that everybody ought to show dislike of everybody; that two people join forces only in case of necessity and do not unite

except in case of need, and further, that even, that even their association is based on the agreement that one should be the commander and the other submits himself to him. If some outside event compels them to associate and unite, their co-operation will go on while there is need and as long as the outside threat compels them. But when that emergency has passed, they ought again to dislike each other and separate. This, then, is the brutish ('bestial', 'subhuman') view among the views held by men.



Others were in favor association, since they notice that a man cannot satisfy all his needs in complete isolation, unless he has assistants and helpers each of whom provides him with some of what he needs.



Some maintained that association should be brought about by force, the man who is in need of helpers gaining mastery over people by force enslaving them, and with their help gaining mastery over others and enslaving them in turn and that his helpers should not be his equals but people overcome by him in battle. For example, he who has the greatest physical strength and the best weapons will prevail over some man and will, then, when the other one has been overcome, prevail with his help over some other man or a small group of people, and with their help over others so that a number of helpers will be gathered round him gradually: once he has brought them together, he employs them as his tools and makes use of them in everything he desires.



But others maintained that a bond of friendship and mutual affection as to be admitted to exist but disagree about the nature of the bond which unites people.

Some maintain that common descent from the same ancestor is such a bond, and that this is the factor which produces

association, union, mutual friendship and co-operation so that they can subdue others and make it impossible for others to subdue them, difference (failure to agree) and dislike obviously being due to different ancestry. To share a particular ancestor who has lived not too long ago necessarily produces a stronger tie but the more generally he is acknowledged as a common ancestor the more the bond becomes necessarily weaker, and it will snap altogether when he is still more generally acknowledged and has lived a very long time ago. Then mutual dislike will take the place of mutual affection, only to be overcome in an emergency due to an outside event, as for instance to an evil which takes them by surprise against which then can only defend themselves by gathering numerous forces. Some maintained that common kinship is such a bond, brought about by intermarriage, that is to say when the men of one group marry the women of the other, and the men of the other marry the women of the first.

Some maintained that such a bond between people is provided by having in common the first ruler who brought them together in the first instance and became their leader so that through him they became powerful and rich or obtained some other good which the people of the ignorant city consider to be a good.

Some maintained that such a bond is brought about by oath and a treatise of alliance and contracts which stipulate what everybody provides by himself without showing dislike to the others or letting them down. Their forces are united to overcome others and to defend themselves against being overcome by others.

Others maintained that such a bond is brought about by similarity of character and inborn nature and by common language and speech and that these three features account for the difference between the nations. Every nation is united by this kind of bond. They ought, then, to love each other and dislike those who do not belong to their own nation; for the differences between the nations are due to these three features.

Others maintained that such a bond is brought about by common residence, its closest form consisting in sharing the same house; next comes the sharing of the same road, next the sharing of the same quarter - and one recommends to be kind to the neighbor, for the neighbor is he who lives in the same road or the same quarter - then the sharing of the same city or of the region in which the city is situated.



There are also factors which are thought to bring about a partial bond between a small group of people, between a handful and between two only; such as being together for a long time or sharing food and inebriating drink or sharing a profession or sharing an evil which overtakes them, and particularly when the evil is of the same kind and they are together, because one can then comfort the other; or sharing some pleasure; or being together in places in which each may need the other, for instance.

Study Questions and Activities

1. Make a diagram of the levels of social organization that al-Farabi identifies. What levels of social organization can attain "perfection" and "excellence"?
2. What determines good and evil in al-Farabi's system?
3. Upon what natural model does al-Farabi base the organization of the perfect state? How do the parts work together to serve the goals of the whole?
4. List the types of social and political bonds that al-Farabi describes in the second excerpt. Using your knowledge of world history, link each type of bond with an actual historical city-state, state or empire anywhere on the globe at any time in history.
5. Using a dictionary or encyclopedia, define the word "nationalism" and compare al-Farabi's ideas with the bonds that are associated with the formation of modern national states.



The Prolegomena (Introduction)

Historical Source

al-Muqaddimah
(The Introduction)

Author

Abd al-Rahman ibn Muhammad
Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406CE)

Excerpted from

Rosenthal, Franz, tr. *Ibn Khaldun: The Muqaddimah, An Introduction to History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 1967.

➤ pp. 152-155, 310-311

On Authority and “Group Feeling”

People, thus, cannot persist in a state of anarchy and without a ruler who keeps them apart. Therefore, they need a person to restrain them. He is their ruler. As is required by human nature, he must be a forceful ruler, one who exercises authority. In this connection, group feeling is absolutely necessary, for as we have stated before, aggressive and defensive enterprises can succeed only with the help of group feeling. As one can see, royal authority of this kind is a noble institution, toward which all claims are directed, and one that needs to be defended. Nothing of the sort can materialize except with the help of group feelings, as has been mentioned before.

Group feelings differ. Each group feeling exercises its own authority and superiority over the people and family adhering to it. Not every group feeling has royal authority. Royal authority, in reality, belongs only to those who dominate subjects, collect taxes, send out (military) expeditions, protect the frontier regions, and have no one over them who is stronger than they. This is generally accepted as the real meaning of royal authority.

There are people whose group feeling falls short of accomplishing (one or another of these things which constitute) part of (real royal authority), such as protecting the frontier regions, or collecting taxes, or sending out (military) expeditions. Such royal authority is defective and not royal authority in the real meaning of the term.

Then, there are people whose group feeling is not strong enough to gain control over all the other group feelings or to stop everyone, so that there exists an authority superior to theirs. Their royal authority is also defective, and not royal authority in the real meaning of the term. It is exercised, for instance, by provincial amirs and regional

chieftains who are all under one dynasty. This situation is often found in far-flung dynasties. I mean that there are rulers of provincial and remote regions who rule their own people but also obey the central power of the dynasty.

Royal and governmental authority is something relative, a relationship between ruler and subjects. Government becomes a

reality when (a ruler) rules over subjects and handles their affairs. A ruler is he who has subjects and subjects are persons who have a ruler. The quality accruing to the ruler from the fact of his correlative relation with his subjects is called 'rulership'. That is, he rules them, and if such rulership and its concomitants are of good quality, the purpose of government is most perfectly achieved. If such rulership is good and beneficial, it will serve the interests of the subjects. If it is bad and unfair, it will be harmful to them and cause their destruction.

Good rulership is equivalent to mildness. If the ruler uses force and is ready to mete out punishment and eager to expose the faults of people and to count their sins, (his subjects) become fearful and depressed and seek to protect themselves against him through lies, ruses, and deceit. This becomes a character trait of theirs. Their mind and

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ibn Khaldun, who lived from 1332 to 1406CE, was a statesman, jurist, historian and scholar. He was born in Tunis of an aristocratic family, and he was prominent in the politics of North Africa and Muslim Spain. He represents the rare combination of philosopher and statesman, and he is best known today as the father of sociology. He made an effort to assess the state of knowledge that came down to him, and to draw conclusions about universal patterns of human history and society. The *Muqaddimah*, or Prolegomena, is actually an introduction to a universal history, but it has become much more famous and respected than the rest of the work.

character become corrupted. They often abandon (the ruler) on the battlefield and (fail to support his) defensive enterprises. The decay of (sincere) intentions causes the decay of (military) protection. The subjects often conspire to kill the ruler. Thus, the dynasty decays, and the fence (that protects it) lies in ruin. If the ruler continues to keep a forceful grip on his subjects, group feeling will be destroyed. If the ruler is mild and overlooks the bad sides of his subjects, they will trust him and take refuge with him. They love him heartily and are willing to die for him in battle against his enemies. Everything is then in order in the state.

The concomitants of good rulership are kindness to, and protection of, one's subjects. The true meaning of royal authority is realized when the ruler defends his subjects. To be kind and beneficent toward them is part of being mild to them and showing an interest in the way they live. These things are important for the ruler in gaining the love of his subjects.

An alert and very shrewd person rarely has the habit of mildness. Mildness is usually found in careless and unconcerned persons. The least (of the many drawbacks) of alertness (in a ruler) is that he imposes tasks upon his subjects that are beyond their ability, because he is aware of things they do not perceive and, through his genius, foresees the outcome of things at the start. (The ruler's excessive demands) may lead to his subjects' ruin. Muhammad said: 'Follow the pace of the weakest among you.'

Muhammad therefore made it a condition that the ruler should not be too shrewd. For this quality is accompanied by tyrannical and bad rulership and by a tendency to make the people do things that it is not in their nature to do.

The Meaning of Caliphate and Imamate

Royal authority implies a form of organization necessary to mankind. It requires superiority and force, which express the wrathfulness and animality (of human nature). The decisions of the ruler will therefore, as a rule, deviate from what is right. They will be ruinous to the worldly affairs of the people under his control, since, as a rule, he forces them to execute his intentions and desires, and this may be beyond their ability. This situation will differ according to the intentions to be found in different generations. It is for this reason difficult to be obedient to the ruler. Disobedience makes itself noticeable and leads to trouble and bloodshed.

Therefore, it is necessary to have reference to ordained political norms, which are accepted by the mass and to whose laws it submits. The Persians and other nations had such norms. The dynasty that does not have a policy based on such (norms) cannot fully succeed in establishing the supremacy of its rule.

If these norms are ordained by the intelligent and leading personalities and minds of the dynasty, the result will be a political (institution) with an intellectual (rational) basis. If they are ordained by God through a lawgiver who establishes them as (religious) laws, the result will be a political (institution) with a religious basis, which will be useful for life in both this and the other world.

This is because the purpose of human beings is not only their worldly welfare. This entire world is trifling and futile. It ends in death and annihilation. The purpose (of human beings) is their religion, which leads them to happiness in the other world. Therefore, religious laws have as their purpose to cause (them) to follow such a course in all their dealings with God and their fellow men. This (situation) also applies to royal authority, which is natural in human social organization. (The reli-

gious laws) guide it along the path of religion, so that everything will be under the supervision of the religious law. Anything (done by royal authority) that is dictated by force, superiority, or the free play of the power of wrathfulness, is tyranny and injustice and considered reprehensible by (the religious law), as it is also considered reprehensible by the requirements of political wisdom. Likewise, anything (done by royal authority) that is dictated by considerations of policy or political decisions without supervision of the religious law, is also reprehensible, because it is vision lacking the divine light. At the Resurrection, the actions of human beings, whether they had to do with royal authority or anything else, will all come back to them.

Political laws consider only worldly interests. On the other hand, the intention the Lawgiver has concerning mankind is their welfare in the other world. Therefore, it is necessary, as required by the religious law, to cause the mass to act in accordance with the religious laws in all their affairs touching both this world and the other

The mausoleum of the 14-century Turko-Mongol ruler Timur (Tamerlane) at Samarqand. While traveling in Egypt and Syria, Ibn Khaldun met Timur outside the city walls of Damascus following the city's surrender to Timur's forces.



world. The authority to do so was possessed by the representatives of the religious law, the prophets; then by those who took their place, the caliphs.

This makes it clear what the caliphate means. (To exercise) natural royal authority means to cause the masses to act as required by purpose and desire. (To exercise) political (royal authority) means to cause the masses to act as required by intellectual (rational) insight into the means of furthering their worldly interests and avoiding anything that is harmful in that respect. (To exercise) the caliphate means to cause the masses to act as required by religious insight into their interests in the other world as well as in this world. (Worldly interests) have bearing upon (the interests in the other world), since according to Muhammad all worldly conditions are to be considered in their relation to their value for the other world. Thus, (the caliphate) in reality is a substitute for Muhammad inasmuch as it serves, like him, to protect the religion and to exercise leadership of the world.

...Therefore, an old merchant said to a person who wanted to find out the truth about commerce: 'I shall give it to you in two words: Buy cheap and sell dear. There is commerce for you.' By this, he meant the

same thing that we just established. The transportation of goods by merchants. The merchant who knows his business will travel only with such goods as are generally needed by rich and poor, rulers and commoners alike. (General need) makes for a large demand for his goods. If he restricts his goods to those needed only by a few, it may be impossible for him to sell them, since these few may for some reason find it difficult to buy them. Then, his business would slump, and he would make no profit.

Also, a merchant who travels with needed goods should do so only with medium quality goods. The best quality of any type of goods is restricted to wealthy people and the entourage of the ruler. They are very few in number. As is well known, the medium quality of anything is what suits most people. This should by all means be kept in mind by the merchant, because it makes the difference between selling his goods and not selling them.

Likewise, it is more advantageous and more profitable for the merchant's enterprise, if he brings goods from a country that is far away and where there is danger on the road. In such a case, the goods transported will be few and rare, because the place where they come from is far away or because the road over which they come is

beset with perils, so that there are few who would bring them, and they are very rare.

When goods are few and rare, their prices go up. On the other hand, when the country is near and the road safe for travelling, they will be found in large quantities, and the prices will go down.

Therefore, the merchants who dare to enter the Sudan country are the most prosperous and wealthy of all people. The distance and the difficulty of the road they travel are great. They have to cross a difficult desert which is made almost inaccessible by fear (of danger) and beset by thirst. Therefore, the goods of the Sudan country are found only in small quantities among us, and they are particularly expensive. The same applies to our goods among them.

Thus, merchandise becomes more valuable when merchants transport it from one country to another. They get rich quickly. The same applies to merchants who travel from our country to the East, also because of the great distance to be traversed. On the other hand, those who travel back and forth between the cities and countries of one particular region earn little and make a very small profit, because their goods are available in large quantities and there is a great number of merchants who travel with them.

Study Questions and Activities

1. Respond to your reading by writing a paragraph explaining what Ibn Khaldun means by "group feeling," and giving your own views of what it means and why it is important for society.
2. Explain the significance of the *hadith* from Muhammad quoted by Ibn Khaldun, "Follow the pace of the weakest among you." Do you think that this is good policy for a leader? Why or why not? Can you think of a politician today who seems to follow similar advice in explaining policy to his or her constituents?
3. Make a chart with two columns. In the first column, list the good qualities of a ruler as described by Ibn Khaldun. In the second column, list those qualities that he finds destructive to the welfare of the people and the state.
4. According to Ibn Khaldun, what is the role of religion in the exercise of the ruler's authority?
5. Identify some modern economic principles in Ibn Khaldun's discussion of trade and commerce.

Metaphysics:

“On First Philosophy”

Historical Source

Fi al-Falsafah al-Ula
(On First Philosophy)

Author

Abu Yusuf Yaqub al-Kindi
(d. 870CE)

Excerpted from

Ivry, Alfred L. *Al-Kindi's Metaphysics* (Albany: State University of New York Press), 1974.

➤ 55-58, 59-60

IN THE NAME OF GOD THE MERCIFUL THE COMPASSIONATE.
MY SUCCESS IS IN GOD ALONE.

Al-Kindi's Book, for al-Mutasim Billah.

May God grant you long life, O son of the highest of princes and of the (strongest) bonds of bliss; of those who, whoever holds fast to their guidance is happy in the abode of this life and the abode of eternity; and may He adorn you with all the accoutrements of virtue and cleanse you from all the soil of vice.

Indeed, the human art which is highest in degree and most noble in rank is the art of philosophy, the definition of which is knowledge of the true nature of things, insofar as is possible for man. The aim of the philosopher is, as regards his knowledge, to attain the truth, and as regards his action, to act truthfully; not that the activity is endless, for we abstain and the activity ceases, once we have reached the truth.

We do not find the truth we are seeking without finding a cause; the cause of the existence and continuance of everything is the True One, in that each thing which has being has truth. The True One exists necessarily, and therefore beings exist.

The noblest part of philosophy and the highest in rank is the First Philosophy, i.e., knowledge of the First Truth Who is the cause of all truth. Therefore it is necessary that the perfect and most noble philosopher will be the man who fully understands this most noble knowledge; for the knowledge of the cause is more noble than knowledge of the effect, since we have complete knowledge of every knowable only when we have obtained full knowledge of its cause.

Every cause will be either matter or form or agent, i.e., that from which motion begins; or final, i.e., that for the sake of which the thing is. Scientific inquiries are four, as we have determined elsewhere in our philosophical treatises; either “whether”, “what”, “which”, or “why”. “Whether” is an investigation only of the existence (of something); “what” investigates the genus of every existent which has a genus; “which” investigates its specific difference; “what” and “which” together investigate its species; and “why”

its final cause, since it is an investigation of the absolute cause. It is evident that when we obtain full knowledge of its matter we thereby obtain full knowledge of its genus; and when we obtain full knowledge of its form we thereby obtain full knowledge of its species, knowledge of the specific difference being subsumed within knowledge of the species. When, therefore, we obtain full knowledge of its matter, form and final cause, we thereby obtain full knowledge of its definition, and the real nature of every defined object is in its definition.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Al-Kindi (ca. 801-873CE) lived during the most brilliant period of Abbasid rule. Wealth, scientific and literary work was flourishing. Translation from Greek, Persian and Indian scientific and literary sources brought together the wisdom of several cultures into the crucible of Muslim thought.

Al-Kindi was the grandson of a *Sahabah*, or companion, of Prophet Muhammad. He had been a knight from the famous South Arabian tribe of Kindah. His father was governor of Kufah, Iraq under two caliphs. Al-Kindi took up the life of a scholar, and developed interest and ability in all branches of knowledge. Like many of the best minds of his time, and like the later “Renaissance men” of Europe, he mastered and wrote on many diverse subjects, including philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, physics, geography, meteorology, chemistry, logic, law and medicine. All in all, he wrote over 270 manuscripts, many of which still exist in libraries today. It is no wonder, then, that al-Kindi has been called “The Philosopher of the Arabs,” the word “philosophy” meaning literally, “love of wisdom.”

This excerpt is the beginning of his *Metaphysics*, which describes the study of philosophy and its purpose. This may be useful for modern students, most of whom are not familiar with this ancient study, the wellspring of the sciences. It provided the basis for a system of acquiring and organizing knowledge about human beings and their world, and their relationship to the Creator, or First Cause.

Knowledge of the first cause has truthfully been called "First Philosophy", since all the rest of philosophy is contained in its knowledge. The first cause is, therefore, the first in nobility, the first in genus, the first in rank with respect to that the knowledge of which is most certain; and the first in time, since it is the cause of time.

The truth requires that we do not reproach anyone who is even one of the causes of even small and meagre benefits to us; how then shall we treat those who are (responsible for) many causes, of large, real and serious benefits to us?

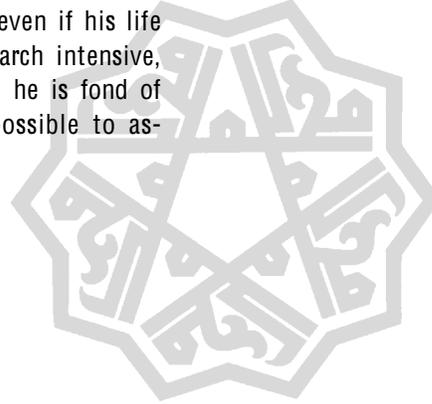
Though deficient in some of the truth, they have been our kindred and associates in that they benefited us by the fruits of their thought, which have become our approaches and instruments, leading to much knowledge of that the real nature of which they fell short of obtaining. We should be grateful particularly since it has been clear to us and to the distinguished philosophers before us who are not our co-linguists, that no man by the diligence of his quest has attained the truth, i.e., that which the truth deserves, nor have the philosophers as a whole comprehended it. Rather, each of

them either has not attained any truth or has attained something small in relation to what the truth deserves. When, though, the little which each one of them who has acquired the truth is collected, something of great worth is assembled from this.

It is proper that our gratitude be great to those who have contributed even a little of the truth, let alone to those who have contributed much truth, since they have shared with us the fruits of their thought and facilitated for us the true (yet) hidden inquiries, in that they benefited us by those premises which facilitated our approaches to the truth. If they had not lived, these true principles with which we have been educated towards the conclusions of our hidden inquiries would not have been assembled for us, even with intense research throughout our time. But indeed this has been assembled only in preceding past ages, age after age, until this our time, accompanied by intensive research, necessary perseverance and love of toil in that. In the time of one man—even if his life span is extended, his research intensive, his speculation subtle and he is fond of perseverance—it is not possible to as-

semble as much as has been assembled, by similar efforts—of intense research, subtle speculation and fondness for perseverance—over a period of time many times as long.

Aristotle, the most distinguished of the Greeks in philosophy, said: "We ought to be grateful to the fathers of those who have contributed any truth, since they were the cause of their existence; let alone being grateful to the sons; for the fathers are their cause, while they are the cause of our attaining the truth." How beautiful is that which he said in this matter! We ought not to be ashamed of appreciating the truth and of acquiring it wherever it comes from, even if it comes from races distant and nations different from us. For the seeker of truth nothing takes precedence over the truth, and there is no disparagement of the truth, nor belittling either of him who speaks it or of him who conveys it. The status of no one is diminished by the truth; rather does the truth ennoble all.



Study Questions and Activities

1. What is, according to al-Kindi, the source of truth?
2. What is the author's attitude toward knowledge from cultures other than his own? Cite a quotation from the excerpt that gives evidence of this view.
3. Why does al-Kindi believe that virtuous behavior and adherence to religion is necessary for the seeker of knowledge?
4. Do you find any evidence in the excerpt that al-Kindi favored experimenting and observing, or speculation and use of reasoning alone?

Selected Sayings of al-Kindi

Historical Source

Muntakhab Siwan al-Hikmah
(Selections from the Repository
of Wisdom)

Author

Muhammad ibn Tahir al-Sijistani
(d. 970CE)

Excerpted from

Atiyeh, George N. *Al-Kindi:
Philosopher of the Arabs*
(Rawalpindi: Islamic Research
Institute), 1966.

➤ pp. 240, 242, 244-245,
247-253, 256

The knowledge of the true nature of things includes knowledge of Divinity, unity and virtue, and a complete knowledge of everything useful, and of the way to it; and a distance from anything harmful, with precautions against it. It is the acquisition of all this which the true messengers brought from God, great be His praise. For the true messengers, may God's blessings be upon them, brought but an affirmation of the Divinity of God alone, and an adherence to virtues, which are pleasing to Him; and the relinquishment of vices, which are contrary to virtues both in themselves and in their effects.

Devotion to this precious possession is, therefore, required for possessors of the truth, and we must exert ourselves to the utmost in its pursuit, in view of that which we have said previously and that which we shall say now, namely, acquisition of this is required necessarily even according to the tongues of its adversaries; for they must say that acquisition of this is either necessary or not necessary. If they say that it is necessary, then its pursuit is necessary for them. If, on the other hand, they say that it is not necessary, it is necessary for them to bring a cause of this, and to give a demonstration of this; and the presentation of cause and demonstration are part of the possession of knowledge of the real nature of things. Pursuit of this acquisition is, therefore, required by their own tongues, and devotion to it is necessary for them.

We ask Him Who examines our inner thoughts and who knows our diligence in establishing the proof of His Divinity and the explanation of His Unity, and in defending Him against His opponents who disbelieve in Him by proofs which subdue their disbelief and rip the veils of their shameful actions that show the deficiencies of their vicious creeds; ask that He encompass us, and anyone who follows our approach, within the fortress of His everlasting might, and that He clothe us with the garments of His protective armor and bestow upon us the assistance of the penetrating edge of His word and the support of the conquering might of His strength. We ask this so that He bring us to our ultimate intention of assisting the truth and supporting veracity; and so that he

bring us to the level of those whose intentions He likes and whose actions He accepts and to whom He grants success and victory over His opponents who deny His grace and who deviates from the truthful approach which is pleasing to Him.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Al-Kindi (ca. 801-873CE) lived during the most brilliant period of Abbasid rule. Wealth, scientific and literary work was flourishing. Translation from Greek, Persian and Indian scientific and literary sources brought together the wisdom of several cultures into the crucible of Muslim thought.

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This excerpt is a selection of al-Kindi's sayings recorded in the work of a later Muslim scholar, Muhammad al-Sijistani. Most of the sayings discuss the habits and morals needed for success in life.

And he said:

- ❁ "The study of books of wisdom and philosophy is the *Eid* [occasion of festivity] of the rational souls."
- ❁ "If a person either with his own hands or of his own will damages even the most ordinary limb of his body he would be considered condemnable and bereft of reason; so what would be the fate of a person who damages the noblest limb of his body which actuates the faculties of sense-perception and the powers which govern his whole body, i.e. the brain. It is so because the definition of a live organism is that it is sensitive and moved by volition; and sensation in the body is diffused by the brain. And this is the case with all the psychical faculties such as reflection which gives birth to volition and thought."
- ❁ "He who minds his tongue will have many a supporter and all the people will become his helpers."
- ❁ "The carefree remains unharmed while the careful meets with trouble."
- ❁ "A slave is as good as a free man if contented but a free man is no more than a slave if greedy."
- ❁ "He who overcomes his self becomes the master of a large kingdom and faces no difficulties. And he who becomes the master of such a great kingdom achieves the greatest peace and becomes free from regrets. And he who achieves the greatest peace remains free from regrets within his kingdom and is safe from blame and ruin. And he who is safe from blame and ruin every one praises him and his life becomes pleasant for all time to come. He should, therefore, not expect praise from each and every one and a pleasant life throughout, for there is no object more valuable to achieve than these two."
- ❁ "The height of vileness is the want of modesty in the soul and he whose soul is bereft of modesty, vices never leave him. And he whose soul is shorn of modesty, people feel ashamed of his manners; and he who does not possess modesty is always visited by misfortune. But he who sticks to modesty always enjoys safety and protection. He whose soul does not part with modesty, never faces condemnation, because the commission of shameful acts invites censure and condemnation; and he alone is upbraided who in fact deserves censure. So, he who does not deserve censure, never faces condemnation."
- ❁ "The exact sciences are the festivals of the soul because in them, from them and through them become manifest fine wonders for the soul and lovely decorations through which she derives real pleasures and in which she finds genuine and true enjoyment."
- ❁ "The most precious commodity is *fadhilah* (excellence, virtue) and no war is more destructive than depravity."
- ❁ "He who adopts justice as a habit, it becomes the strongest shield for him."
- ❁ "He who holds to wisdom as a bridle to control his passions, people hold him up as their leader."
- ❁ "Disgrace is absence of chastity; and cupidity is the meanest avocation."
- ❁ "He who is deeply in love with sensual appetites, is pursued by calamities."
- ❁ "He who abstains from the world, obtains her; but he who covets her, she kills him."
- ❁ "He who shuns the world she does not overtake him, but he who covets her, she wearies him."
- ❁ "He who takes to avarice as a habit, tastes disappointment repeatedly."
- ❁ "He whose contentment is graceful, his spring knows no autumn."
- ❁ "He who is ridden by greed, is always accompanied by need (poverty)."
- ❁ "Pride lowers prestige."
- ❁ "Jealousy is the deepest sorrow."
- ❁ "A jealous person never becomes rich, he is always in want."
- ❁ "Trustworthiness is the raiment of integrity."
- ❁ "He who keeps his word, is always happy."
- ❁ "He who speaks the truth, finds the middle of his way clear."
- ❁ "He who has no associates often blames the times; he who often blames the times, is never free from grief; he who is often in grief, is not favoured by the times; and he who is not favoured by the times is scorned at."
- ❁ "Boasting smells fouler than carcass; and he whose boasting is exposed, loses face."
- ❁ "Extravagance is thirst and pride is blindness."
- ❁ "He who becomes self-centered, loses all feeling, and he who succumbs to vanity is wrapped up in falsity."
- ❁ "A boastful person is the biggest liar, and knowledge of self is the best thing to acquire."
- ❁ "A conceited person is always angry."
- ❁ "Riding wishes is childish."
- ❁ "He who is lazy, becomes weak."

✿ And a person asked him one day: "Who is the strongest among men?" He replied: "He who has the greatest control over himself." He then asked him: "Who is he who has got the greatest control over himself?" He replied: "He who subdues his passion (lust), and smothers his rage so that it becomes for him a docile beast by riding which he gains what is right and repels what is wrong and in this he even defies death." The man then asked: "Who is the best ruler among men?" Al-Kindi replied: "Ho who knows his own self best and can best suffer even the most bitter and distasteful medicine for the treatment of his [psychical] ailments." The man then asked: "And who is the most just among the people?" He replied: "He who sticks to truth and does not veer from it or from doing what is demanded by Truth." The man then asked: "And who is the most continent among men?" He replied: "He who maintains a balance in his carnal appetites and does not satisfy them for purposes other than those which are indispensable for maintaining the outer

form of his individuality and bearing fruit in accordance with the rational law and positive laws."

✿ And some one told him one day: "Whose days are the most miserable among the people?" He replied: "He whose self desires to possess what does not belong to him. Consequently he always misses what he is after; and what he loves, eludes him. And every thing missed is accompanied by grief, and every thing lost by misfortune. Both these are born of sadness and grief which are the opposites of cheerfulness and joy, and opposites never blend together in a thing. So, whenever a man is struck with grief and sorrow his cheerfulness and joy disappear. And he who is sad and grief-stricken his life becomes unhappy; and he whose life becomes unhappy his days become miserable." The man then asked: "Who is unlucky in the Hereafter?" Al-Kindi replied: "He who does not recognize his Creator and what brings him near Him and neither does he do anything to that effect."

Study Questions and Activities

1. Discuss why collections of sayings and snippets of wisdom have been popular throughout the ages and across cultures. Find examples of such collections from a variety of cultural and language groups.
2. Select one of the sayings that appeals to you personally, and write a paragraph discussing its meaning for your life.
3. Write an imaginary letter giving advice to a friend or famous person. Quote one of al-Kindi's letters in support of your advice, and explain the value of the wisdom it contains for their situation.
4. Find a current news item in a newspaper, Internet news source or magazine about a political or other situation that is relevant to one of these
5. Use a CD-ROM reference utility to search famous quotations. Select several of al-Kindi's sayings that you find appealing. Find and copy quotations (with their authors, works and dates) on the same topic. Compare the meanings of your quotations. As a class, discuss how the cultural and religious context affects the way common wisdom is expressed across time and place.

Commentary on Aristotle's "Rhetoric"

Historical Source

Talkhis Kitab al-Shir (Summary of the *Book of Poetics*)

Author

Abu al-Walid Muhammad ibn Rushd (d. 1198CE)

Excerpted from

Butterworth, Charles E., tr. *Averroes' Three Short Commentaries on Aristotle's "Topics," "Rhetoric," and "Poetics"* (Albany: State University of New York Press), 1977.

➤ pp. 63-64, 73-73

The Speech About Rhetorical Arguments: Introduction

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate, I beseech your succour our Lord!

Since we have finished speaking about dialectical syllogisms and the extent of assent they provide, let us speak about persuasive things and the extent of assent they too provide. It is apparent that persuasion is a kind of probable supposition which the soul trusts despite its awareness of an opposing consideration. In what preceded we already defined supposition.

From scrutiny and inductive investigation, it appears that the things effecting persuasion can first be divided into two classes: one of them consists in arguments, and the second is external things which are not arguments-like oaths, testimonies, and other things we will enumerate. Similarly, from scrutiny it also appears that the arguments used in public speaking fall into two classes: example and proof. (In this art, the latter is called enthymeme.) That is because when someone advises someone else to take a certain kind of medicine he says to him: "Use it because so-and-so used it, and it helped him." He thus persuades him by citing an example. Or he says to him: "You have a disease like this or like that." It is like that with every single thing concerning which people converse with one another.

Since it has become apparent that this sort of speaking uses these two classes of arguments, we will speak about them first. Then, after that, we will go on to speak about the other persuasive things, for the former are more worthy of being considered persuasive than the latter and are prior by nature.

The Enthymeme

We say: the enthymeme is a syllogism leading to a conclusion which corresponds to unexamined opinion previously existing among all or most people. Unexamined previously existing opinion is opinion which strikes a man as a probable supposition and

which he trusts as soon as it occurs to him, even before he has examined it. Syllogisms become conclusive according to unexamined previously existing opinion either because of their forms or because of their matters. This happens because of their forms when they are conclusive according to unexamined opinion. It happens because of their matters when their premises are true, once again according to unexamined opinion.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ibn Rushd was born in 1126CE (502AH) in Cordoba, Spain. Like that of most scholars of the time, his training included many fields. He studied the Islamic religious disciplines, as well as philosophy, poetry, literature, eloquence and medicine. His learning brought him to the attention of the Almohad ruler, who appointed him judge, then chief justice of Seville. He also served the court as a physician. Ibn Rushd built with his writings a great reputation among learned men of the Middle Ages. He was known as a skillful interpreter of ancient Greek philosophy and a defender of theoretical speculation using reason. Ibn Rushd's biggest impact was on Western European thinkers of the Middle Ages, who studied the Latin translations of his work that were prepared in the centuries after his death. "Averroes," as his name was translated into Latin, was known and his ideas were debated by Western scholars "either as the foremost interpreter of Aristotle or...the gravest menace to Christianity,"¹ depending on their view. Dr. Butterworth introduced his new translation of this work by stating, "There was a time when Dante could be certain that even an oblique reference to Averroes would be immediately understood by any of his readers."

Persuasive Things Which Do Not Occur by Arguments

After this, we ought to proceed to speak about the persuasive things which do not occur by arguments and about the extent of assent they provide. All together, there are thirteen kinds of persuasive things:

1. Among them is [proclaiming] the virtue of the speaker and the defect of his opponent, for it is clear that by this a man acquires a good reputation and acceptance of what he is saying.
2. Among them is bringing the listeners around to assent by means of the passions; for example, strengthening the passions in the soul of the listener so that he must assent because of fanaticism, mercy, fear, or anger. Now it is evident that this also inclines a man to assent.
3. Among them is what inclines the listeners by means of moral speeches; this is done, just as Galen used to do, by making them imagine that the chaste, the people of preeminent character, and those who are neither sullied by corrupt thought nor false [in their thoughts] accept their speech.
4. Among them is extolling and belittling the matter which is spoken about, for when the speech is extolled, the soul is more inclined to it. On the contrary, when it is deprecated, the soul avoids it; and no inclination for it takes place.
5. Among them is consensus.

6. Among them are testimonies.
 7. Among them is awakening a desire for, or apprehension about, something.
 8. Among them is challenging and betting.
 9. Among them are oaths.
 10. Among them is for the quality of the speech, the voice, and the inflection to be in such a condition that they cause the existence the matter whose affirmation is desired to be imagined; for example, someone whose face has already become pale and whose voice has already risen recounting a fearful matter.
 11. Among them is distorting speeches and dropping much from them and putting them into a form in which their repulsiveness appears and opposition to them is simplified; now these enter more into sophistry than they do into rhetoric.
- These, then, are all of the external persuasive things. With many of these, it is immediately evident that they only provide persuasion; with others, that may be somewhat obscure. We will speak about the latter...



Latin translation of Aristotle's *de Anima* with commentaries by Ibn Rushd.

Study Questions and Activities

1. Use a dictionary to look up any unfamiliar words in the excerpt. Write each term with the short definition that fits the context. Reread the excerpt using your list.
2. Rhetoric³ was a very important study for scholars of the Middle Ages. What does this study include, and why do you think it was important at that time? What sources of learning were just being rediscovered in Europe at the time? Do schools include this study today? Why do you think so?
3. Explain what Ibn Rushd means by the two classes, or kinds of persuasive things. Develop some examples of these two types on your own.
4. Choose three of the eleven “persuasive things which do not occur by arguments,” and give examples of their use in advertising (TV, radio, direct mail) and/or political campaign speeches (candidate or issue advertising on TV).
5. Write and/or present orally a speech using some of these techniques to convince your audience.
6. What is the benefit in analyzing methods by which people (souls, as Ibn Rushd calls them) can be convinced of things? Who can utilize this information?



The Incoherence of *The Incoherence*

Historical Source

Tahafut al-Tahafut
(The Incoherence of *The Incoherence*)

Author

Abu al-Walid Muhammad
ibn Rushd (d. 1198CE)

Excerpted from

Van den Bergh, Simon. *Averroes' Tahafut al-Tahafut (the Incoherence of the Incoherence)*, vol. I (London: Oxford University Press), 1954.

➤ 353-354, 356-357, 358-363

al-Ghazali says:

The ninth proof is that the philosophers say: "How can man be attributed to body with its accidents, for those bodies are continually in dissolution, and nutrition replaces what is dissolved, so that when we see a child after its separation from its mother's womb fall ill a few times and become thin and then fat again and grow up, we may safely say that after forty years no particle remains of what was there when his mother was delivered of it. Indeed, the child began its existence out of the parts of the sperm alone, but nothing of the particles of the sperm remains in it; no, all this is dissolved and has changed into something else, and then this body has become another. Still we say that the identical man remains and his notions remain with him from the beginning of his youth, although all the bodily parts have changed. And this shows that the soul has an existence outside the body and that the body is its organ."

The objection is that this is contradicted by what happens to animals and plants, for when the condition of their being small is compared to the condition of their being big, their identity is asserted equally with the identity of man; still, it does not prove that they have an incorporeal existence. And what is said about knowledge is refuted by the retention of imaginative forms, for they remain in the boy from youth to old age, although the particles of his brain change.

I say:

None of the ancient philosophers used this proof for the survival of the soul; they only used it to show that in individuals there is an essence which remains from birth to death and that things are not in an eternal flux, as was believed by many ancients who denied necessary knowledge, so that Plato was forced to introduce the forms. There is no sense in occupying ourselves with this, and the objection of Ghazali against this proof is valid.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ibn Rushd was born in 1126CE (502AH) in Cordoba, Spain. Like that of most scholars of the time, his training included many fields. He studied the Islamic religious disciplines, as well as philosophy, poetry, literature, eloquence and medicine. His learning brought him to the attention of the Almohad ruler, who appointed him judge, then chief justice of Seville. He also served the court as a physician. Ibn Rushd built with his writings a great reputation among learned men of the Middle Ages. He was known as a skillful interpreter of ancient Greek philosophy and a defender of theoretical speculation using reason. Ibn Rushd's biggest impact was on Western European thinkers of the Middle Ages, who studied the Latin translations of his work that were prepared in the centuries after his death. "Averroes," as his name was translated into Latin, was known and his ideas were debated by Western scholars "either as the foremost interpreter of Aristotle or...the gravest menace to Christianity,"¹ depending on their view. Dr. Butterworth introduced his new translation of this work by stating, "There was a time when Dante could be certain that even an oblique reference to Averroes would be immediately understood by any of his readers."

The Third Discussion

And after this Ghazali says that the philosophers have two proofs to demonstrate that the soul after once existing cannot perish. The first is that if the soul perished this could only be imagined in one of three ways: either (1) it perishes simultaneously with the body, or (2) through an opposite which is found in it, or (3) through the power of God, the powerful. It is false that it can perish through the corruption

of the body, for it is separated from the body. It is false that it can have an opposite, for a separate substance has no opposite. And it is false, as has been shown before, that the power of God can attach itself to non-being.

Now, Ghazali objecting to the philosophers answers: 'We theologians do not admit that the soul is external to the body; besides, it is the special theory of Avicenna that the souls are numerically differentiated through the differentiation of the bodies, for

that there should be one single soul in every respect and in all people brings about many impossibilities, for instance that when Zaid knows something Amr should know it too, and when Amr does not know something Zaid should not know it either; and many other impossibilities follow from this assumption.' And Ghazali adduces against Avicenna the argument that when it is assumed that the souls are numerically differentiated through the differentiation of the bodies, then they are attached to the bodies and must necessarily perish with their decay.

And there are none of the old philosophers who do not acknowledge these souls, and they only disagree as to whether they are identical with the souls in our bodies or of another kind. And as to those who accept a bestower of forms, they regard these powers as a separate intellect; but this theory is not found in any of the old philosophers, but only in some philosophers of Islam, because it belongs to their principles that the separate principles do not change their matters by transformation in respect of substance and primarily, for the cause of change is the opposite of the thing changed. This question is one of the most difficult in philosophy, and the best explanation that can be given of this problem is that the material intellect thinks an infinite number of things in one single intelligible, and that it judges these things in a universal judgement, and that that which forms its essence is absolutely immaterial. Therefore Aristotle praises Anaxagoras for having made intellect, namely an immaterial form, the prime mover, and for this reason it does not suffer any action from anything, for the cause of passivity is matter and in this respect the passive potencies are in the same position as the active, for it is the passive potencies possessing matters which accept definite things.

The Fourth Discussion

Having finished this question Ghazali begins to say that the philosophers deny bodily resurrection. This is a problem which is not found in any of the older philosophers, although resurrection has been mentioned in different religions for at least a thousand years and the philosophers whose theories have come to us are of a more recent date. The first to mention bodily resurrection were the prophets of Israel after Moses, as is evident from the Psalms and many books attributed to the Israelites. Bodily resurrection is also affirmed in the New Testament and attributed by tradition to Jesus. It is a theory of the Sabaeans, whose religion is according to Ibn Hazm the oldest.

But the philosophers in particular, as is only natural, regard this doctrine as most important and believe in it most, and the reason is that it is conducive to an order amongst men on which man's being, as man, depends and through which he can attain the greatest happiness proper to him, for it is a necessity for the existence of the moral and speculative virtues and of the practical sciences in men. They hold namely that man cannot live in this world without the practical sciences, nor in this and the next world without the speculative virtues, and that neither of these categories is perfected or completed without the practical virtues, and that the practical virtues can only become strong through the knowledge and adoration of God by the services prescribed by the laws of the different religions, like offerings and prayers and supplications and other such utterances by which praise is rendered to God, the angels, and the prophets.

In short, the philosophers believe that religious laws are necessary political arts, the principles of which are taken from natural reason and inspiration, especially in what is common to all religions, although religions differ here more or less. The philosophers further hold that one must not object either through a positive or through a negative statement to any of the general

religious principles, for instance whether it is obligatory to serve God or not, and still more whether God does or does not exist, and they affirm this also concerning the other religious principles, for instance bliss in the beyond and its possibility; for all religions agree in the acceptance of another existence after death, although they differ in the description of this existence, just as they agree about the knowledge, attributes, and acts of God, although they differ more or less in their utterances about the essence and the acts of the Principle. All religions agree also about the acts conducive to bliss in the next world, although they differ about the determination of these acts.

In short, the religions are, according to the philosophers, obligatory, since they lead towards wisdom in a way universal to all human beings, for philosophy only leads a certain number of intelligent people to the knowledge of happiness, and they therefore have to learn wisdom, whereas religions seek the instruction of the masses generally. Notwithstanding this, we do not find any religion which is not attentive to the special needs of the learned, although it is primarily concerned with the things in which the masses participate. And since the existence of the learned class is only perfected and its full happiness attained by participation with the class of the masses, the general doctrine is also obligatory for the existence and life of this special class, both at the time of their youth and growth (and nobody doubts this), and when they pass on to attain the excellence which is their distinguishing characteristic. For it belongs to the necessary excellence of a man of learning that he should not despise the doctrines in which he has been brought up, and that he should explain them in the fairest way, and that he should understand that the aim of these doctrines lies in their universal character, not in their particularity, and that, if he expresses a doubt concerning the religious principles in which he has been brought up, or explains them in a way contradictory to the prophets and turns away from their path, he merits more than anyone else that the term unbeliever

should be applied to him, and he is liable to the penalty for unbelief in the religion in which he has been brought up.

Further, he is under obligation to choose the best religion of his period, even when they are all equally true for him, and he must believe that the best will be abrogated by the introduction of a still better. Therefore the learned who were instructing the people in Alexandria became [Muslims] when Islam reached them, and the learned in the Roman Empire became Christians when the religion of Jesus was introduced there. And nobody doubts that among the Israelites there were many learned men, and this is apparent from the books which are found amongst the Israelites and which are attributed to Solomon. And never has wisdom ceased among the inspired, i.e. the prophets, and therefore it is the truest of all sayings that every prophet is a sage, but not every sage a prophet; the learned, however, are those of whom it is said that they are the heirs of the prophets.

And since in the principles of the demonstrative sciences there are postulates and axioms which are assumed, this must still more be the case for the religions which take their origin in inspiration and reason. Every religion exists through inspiration and is blended with reason. And he who holds that it is possible that there should exist a natural religion based on reason alone must admit that this religion must be less perfect than those which spring from reason and inspiration. And all philosophers agree that the principles of action must be taken on authority, for there is no demonstration for the necessity of action except through the existence of virtues which are realized through moral actions and through practice.

And it is clear from this that all the learned hold about religion the opinion that the principles of the actions and regulations prescribed in every religion are received from the prophets and lawgivers, who regard those necessary principles as praiseworthy which most incite the masses to the performance of virtuous acts; and so nobody doubts that those who are

brought up on those principles are of a more perfect virtue than those who are brought up on others for instance that the prayers in our religion hold men back from ignominy and wickedness, as God's word certifies, and that the prayer ordained in our religion fulfils this purpose more truly than the prayers ordained in others, and this by the conditions imposed on it of number, time, recitation, purity, and distance from acts and words harmful to it. And the same may be said of the doctrine of the beyond in our religion, which is more conducive to virtuous action than what is said in others. Thus to represent the beyond in material images is more appropriate than purely spiritual representation, as is said in the Divine Words: 'The likeness of the Paradise which thou who fear God are promised, beneath it rivers flow.' And the Prophet has said: 'In it there is what no

This image representing Ibn Rushd appears in an Italian fresco painting called "The Triumph of St. Thomas Aquinas" in Italy. Ibn Rushd has a very prominent place in the painting, shown seated thoughtfully just below a throne on which St. Thomas sits. This shows the important place Ibn Rushd's thought held in Renaissance Europe. The painting describes the branches of knowledge and virtues of learning for Christians.



eye has seen, no ear has heard, nor ever entered the mind of man.' And Ibn Abbas said: 'There is no relation in the other world to this world but the names.' And he meant by this that the beyond is another creation of a higher order than this world, and another phase superior to our earthly. He need not deny this who believes that we see one single thing developing itself from one phase to another, for instance the transformation of the inorganic into beings conscious of their own essences, i.e. the intellectual forms. Those who are in doubt about this and object to it and try to explain it are those who seek to destroy the religious prescriptions and to undo the virtues. They are, as everyone knows, the heretics and those who believe that the end of man consists only in sensual enjoyment. When such people have really the power to destroy religious belief both theologians and philosophers will no doubt kill them, but when they have no actual power the best arguments that can be brought against them are those that are contained in the Holy Book. What Ghazali says against them is right, and in refuting them it must be admitted that the soul is immortal, as is proved by rational and religious proofs, and it must be assumed that what arises from

the dead is simulacra of these earthly bodies, not these bodies themselves, for that which has perished does not return individually and a thing can only return as an image of that which has perished, not as a being identical with what has perished, as Ghazali declares. Therefore the doctrine of resurrection of those theologians who believe that the soul is an accident and that the bodies which arise are identical with those that perished cannot be true. For what perished and became anew can only be specifically, not numerically, one, and this argument is especially valid against those theologians who hold that an accident does not last two moments.

Ghazali accused the philosophers of heresy on three points. One concerns this question, and we have already shown what opinion the philosophers hold about this, and that according to them it is a speculative problem. The second point is the theory attributed to the philosophers that God does not know individuals, but here again we have shown that they do not say this. The third point is their theory of the eternity of the world, but again we have shown that what they understand by this term has not the meaning for which they are accused of heresy by the theologians. Ghazali as-

serts in this book that no Muslim believes in a purely spiritual resurrection, and in another book he says that the Sufis hold it. According to this latter assertion those who believe in a spiritual but not in a perceptible resurrection are not declared heretics by universal consent, and this permits belief in a spiritual resurrection. But again in another book he repeats his accusation of heresy as if it rested on universal consent. And all this, as you see, is confusing. And no doubt this man erred in religious questions as he erred in rational problems. God is the succourer for the finding of what is true, and He invests with the truth whomever He chooses.

I have decided to break off my inquiry about these things here, and I ask pardon for their discussion, and if it were not an obligation to seek the truth for those who are entitled to it—and those are, as Galen says, one in a thousand—and to prevent from discussion those who have no claim to it, I would not have treated all this. And God knows every single letter, and perhaps God will accept my excuse and forgive my stumbling in His bounty, generosity, munificence and excellence—there is no God but He!

Study Questions and Activities

1. List the Greek philosophers named in this excerpt. Use a dictionary or encyclopedia to find out when they lived and why their work was significant.
2. In the first part of the excerpt (lines x-xx), al-Ghazzali states the position of the philosophers on the relation between the body and the soul. Summarize this position in a sentence or two. Then, briefly explain al-Ghazzali's objection to their idea. Why do you think it was important to philosophers to explain how the human being's soul, personality and knowledge exist in, or apart from, their "accidental" or material body?
3. Explain in simple terms the philosophers' and theologians' argument about the eternal soul, and about the existence of a universal soul in lines x through xx.
4. In lines x-xx, Ibn Rushd discusses the importance of believing in the resurrection of the soul. Why does he say that people and society benefit from this belief?
5. Why does Ibn Rushd say that philosophers do not and should not deny religion?
6. If you were a medieval, Christian scholar, how would you react to lines x-xx and
7. Compare the excerpt by Ibn Rushd with similar passages from enlightenment philosophers such as Voltaire, Rousseau, Descartes and John Locke.

Hayy ibn Yaqzan

A Philosophical Tale

Historical Source

Hayy ibn Yaqzan
("Alive, the son of Awake")

Author

Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Tufayl
(d. 1185CE)

Excerpted from

Goodman, Lenn Evan. *Ibn Tufayl's Hayy ibn Yaqzan* (New York: Twayne Publishers), 1972.

➤ pp. 102-103, 105-106,
109-115, 156, 157-161

I myself would not have garnered what truth I have attained, the culmination of my intellectual efforts, without pursuing the arguments of Ghazah and Avicenna, checking them one against the other, and comparing the result with the views that have sprung up in our era, so fervently admired by self-appointed philosophers, until finally I was able to see the truth for myself, first by thought and theory, and now in my first brief taste of the actual experience. I feel able now to set down a view to be preserved in my name; and because of our close friendship, I want you to be the first to whom I express myself.

Nonetheless, if I tell you of the highest levels I reached this will demand no small amount of time, free of all other concerns, for devotion to this endeavor. But if you work hard, you'll be glad in the morning of the ground you gained at night. Your efforts will be blessed; you will please your Lord, and He will please you. I shall be at your side as long as you need me, to lead you where you wish to go by the shortest, safest, and most unobstructed route.

To give you a brief glimpse of the road that lies ahead, let me tell you the story of Hayy Ibn Yaqzan, Absal, and Salaman, who were given their names by Avicenna himself. For the tale points a moral for all with heart to understand, "a reminder for anyone with a heart or ears to listen and to hear". Our forefathers, of blessed memory, tell of a certain equatorial island, lying off the coast of India, where human beings come into being without father or mother. This is possible, they say, because, of all places on earth, that island has the most tempered climate. And because a supernal light streams down on it, it is the most perfectly adapted to accept the human form. This runs counter to the views of most ordinary philosophers and even the greatest natural scientist. They be-

lieve the most temperate region of the inhabited world to be the fourth zone, and if others, however, deny it and relate a different version of his origin, which I shall tell you. They say that opposite this island there is a large island, rich and spacious, and inhabited by people over whom one, a proud and angry man, was king. Now this king had a sister whom he forbade to marry until he himself should find a fitting match. But she had a kinsman named Aware, and he married her secretly, but lawfully according to their rite. She soon conceived and bore him a son, but fearing exposure of her secret she took the infant after nursing him, put him in a tightly sealed ark; and, attended by a few trustworthy friends and servants, brought him at nightfall down to the sea, her heart aching with love and fear for her child. She then wished the child farewell and cried "Almighty God, you

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ibn Tufayl of Guadix (d.1181CE), was an Andalusian (Spanish Muslim) philosopher and court physician to the Almohad ruler Abu Ya'qub (1163-1184). He was the master who introduced the young Ibn Rushd to the court and encouraged him in his philosophical studies, requesting him to write the famous *Commentary on Aristotle*. Ibn Tufayl is a very important philosopher and Muslim writer as well, whose most important work is *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*, the story of a boy who grows up on a lonely island, raised by no human mother, but by a doe. He is thus a natural man, free of social influence, free of religious or worldly education by others. He is very intelligent and curious, and learns by questioning his experience, by reasoning and by experimenting with the world around him, searching for the truth. Eventually, a religious man—a Muslim named Absal—comes to his island in search of spiritual truth, and meets up with Hayy. For modern readers, it is interesting to recall that Ibn Tufayl did not have the evidence or understanding of human historical development that archaeologists and historians have today.

Hayy Ibn Yaqzan was translated into Latin in 1671 as *The Autodidact Philosopher*, by Oxford scholar Edward Pocock. In 1674, the Latin edition caught the eye of George Keith, a follower of the Quakers, a Christian sect. Keith translated from the Latin into English, and Ibn Tufayl became well known for his piety and devotion among the Quakers, and the book was accepted into their higher councils. In 1708, another translation came out, and *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* became known in wider circles. Partly owing to faulty editing and translation, the book became controversial, and Ibn Tufayl's brilliant critical review of philosophy was misunderstood. The story and the idea, however, may well have influenced Daniel Defoe's early English novel *Robinson Crusoe*. Gracian wrote another work quite similar to *Hayy*, called *El Criticón*. The theme of natural man was a popular one during the Enlightenment period, and was also taken up by Voltaire in the novel *Candide* and by Rousseau.

formed my baby 'when it was nothing, a thing without a name' You fed him in the darkness of my womb and saw that he was smooth and even and perfectly formed. In fear of the wicked tyrant I entrust him to your care. I beg you shed your bounty upon him. Be with him. Never leave him, most merciful God" She cast him into the sea.

A powerful current caught the box and brought it that very night to the coast of other island of which I spoke. At that very moment the tide reached a height to which it would not return for another year. It lodged the little ark in a pleasant thicket, thick with shady cover, floored by rich loam, sheltered from wind and rain and veiled from the sun, which "gently slanted off it when began to ebb, leaving the ark high and dry. Sand drifted up with gusts of the breeze, damming the watercourse into the thicket so the water could not reach it. The nails of the box had been loosened and the boards knocked askew by the pounding of the surf against them in the thicket. When the baby had gotten very hungry, he began to cry and struggle. The sound of his voice reached a doe; and taking it for call of her lost fawn, she followed the sound until she came to the ark. She prodded with her hoof and the baby fought from inside until one of the top board came loose. The doe felt sorry for the infant and nuzzled him tenderly. She gave him her udder and let him drink her own delicious milk. She became his constant nurse, caring for him raising him and protecting him from harm.

This, according to those who deny spontaneous generation, is the story of his origin. In a moment I shall tell you how grew up and progressed from one phase to the next until he reached his remarkable goal.

They agree that the doe that cared for him was richly pastured, so she was fat and had plenty of milk, to give the baby the best nourishment. She stayed with him, leaving only when necessary to graze. The baby grew so fond of her he would cry if she were late, and then she would come rushing back. There were no beasts of prey on the island.

So the child grew, nourished by its mother-doe's milk, until he was two years old. By then he'd learned to walk; and, having his teeth, he took the following the doe on her foraging expeditions. She treated him gently and tenderly, taking him where fruit trees grew and feeding him the sweet, ripe fruits that fell from them. The hard-shelled ones she cracked between her teeth, or if he wanted to go back for a while to milk she let him. She brought him to water when he was thirsty; and when the sun beat down she shaded him. When he was cold she warmed him, and at nightfall she would bring him back to the spot where she had found him, nestling him to herself among the feathers with which the little ark had been cushioned.

When they went out to forage and came back to rest they were accompanied by a troop of deer that went along to graze and stayed the night near where they slept. Thus the child lived among the deer, imitating their calls so well that eventually his voice and theirs could hardly be distinguished. In the same way he imitated all the bird calls and animal cries he heard with amazing accuracy, but most often he would mimic the calls of the deer for alarm, court; Ship, summons or defense-for animals have different cries for these different contingencies. The animal were used to him and he was used to them, so they were not afraid of each other.

Hayy discovered in himself an aversion toward some things and an attraction to others even after the things themselves were no longer objects of his immediate experience, for their images were fixed in his mind. He observed the animals from his perspective and saw how they could were clothed in fur, hair or feathers, how swiftly they could run, how fiercely they could fight, and what apt weapons they had for defense against any attacker-horns, tusks, hooves, spurs and claws. Then he looked back at himself and realized how naked and defenseless he was. He was a weak runner and not a good fighter. When the animals grappled with him for a piece of fruit they usually wrested it from him and got away with it. He could not defend himself or even run away.

Hayy saw the fawns his age sprout horns from nowhere and grow strong and swift. But in himself he could discover no such change. He wondered about this but could not fathom the cause. No maimed or deformed animal he could find was at all like himself. All other animals, he observed, had covered outlets for their bodily wastes-the solid by a tail, the liquid by fur or the like. And the fact that the private parts of an animal were better concealed than his own disturbed him greatly and made him very unhappy.

When he was nearly seven and had finally lost hope of making up the deficiencies which so disturbed him he took some broad leaves from a tree and put them on, front and back. Then out of palits of palms and grass he made something like a belt about his middle and fastened his leaves to it. But he had hardly worn it at all when the leaves withered and dried and, one by one, fell out. So he had constantly to get new ones and work them in with the old in bundles. This might make it hold up a while longer, but still it lasted only a very short time.

He got some good sticks from a tree, balanced the shafts and sharpened the points. These he would brandish at the animals that menaced him. He could now attack the weaker ones and hold his own against the stronger. His self-esteem rose a bit as he observed how superior his hands were to those of an animal. They enabled him to cover his nakedness and to make sticks for self-defence, so he no longer needed natural weapons or the tail he had longed for.

All the while, he was growing, and soon he was seven. The chore of gathering new leaves to cover himself was taking too long, and he had an urge to get the tail of some dead animal and fasten that on instead. But he had noticed that the living wildlife shunned the bodies of the dead and fled from them. So he could not go ahead with his plan, until one day he came upon a dead eagle. Seeing that the animals had no aversion to it, he snatched the opportunity to put his idea into effect. Boldly

taking hold of the eagle, Hayy cut off the wings and tail just as they were, all in one piece. He stretched out the wings and smoothed down the feathers, stripped of the remaining skin and split it in half, tying it about his middle, hanging down, half in front and half behind. The tail, he threw across his back; and he fastened the wings to his arms. Thus he got a fine covering that not only kept him warm but also so terrified the animals that not one of them would fight with him or get in his way. In fact none would come near him except the doe that had nursed and raised him.

She was inseparable from him and he from her. When she grew old and weak he would lead her to rich pastures and gather sweet fruits to feed her. Even so, weakness and emaciation gradually tightened their hold, and finally death overtook her. All her movements and bodily functions came to standstill. When the boy saw her in such state, he was beside himself with grief. His soul seemed to overflow with sorrow. He tried to call her with call she always answered, shouted as loud as he could, but saw not the faintest flicker of life. He peered into her eyes and ears, but no damage was apparent. In the same way he examined all her parts but could find nothing wrong with any of them. He hoped to discover the place

where she was hurt so he could take away the hurt and allow her to recover-but he could not even make a start; he was powerless.

That made him think there was something he could "take away" was his own past experience. He knew that when he shut his eyes or covered them, he saw nothing until the obstruction was removed; if he stopped his fingers he could not hear until the obstacle was gone; and if he held his nose he would smell nothing until the passageway was clear again.

These observations led him to believe that not only his senses, but every one of his other bodily functions was liable to obstructions that might block its work. When the block was removed it would return to its normal functioning. But when he had examined all her external organs and found no visible wound or damage, considering meanwhile that her inactivity was not confined to one part but spread throughout the body, it dawned on him, that the heart must be in some organ unseen within the body, without which none of the external parts could function. When that organ had been hurt, the harm was general. No part of the body could carry on its work. Hayy hoped that if he could find that organ and remove whatever had lodged in

it, it would revert to normal, its benefits would once more flow to the rest of the body and all the bodily functions would resume.

He had observed in the past that the parts of animals dead bodies were solid, having no hollows except those of the head, chest and abdomen. He felt certain that the vital organ he was looking for must occupy one of these

three cavities, and it seemed to him most likely by far that it be in the central of the three. Surely it had to be centrally located, since all the other organs were equally dependent on it. Besides, in his own case, he could feel what must be such an organ in his breast. He could restrict the action of his other organs-hands, feet, eyes, nose, and ears; he could lose these parts and conceivably get along without them. Conceivably he could get along without his head. But when he thought of whatever it was he could feel in his breast he could not conceive of living for an instant without it. For this reason, in fact, when fighting with animals, he had always been especially careful to protect his breast from their horns-because he could feel that there was something there.

Study Questions and Activities

1. What is Ibn Tufayl's purpose in writing the story of Hayy Ibn Yaqzan?
2. Compare the writer's view of "civilization" vs. "the state of nature."
3. Describe Hayy's method of learning. Do you think it is more or less effective than being taught from someone else's experience?
4. Research European Enlightenment views about "reason" and "natural man." How did European explorers' views of native Americans in the New World affect their ideas about natural man?
5. Research the authors and dates of other stories of children growing up in the wild, or without parents. Which are said to be true stories? Read one of the stories, and contrast the writer's approach to the subject.
6. Compare Robinson Crusoe's character with Hayy's, and Friday's with Absal.
7. Why do you think writers, philosophers and psychologists have been interested in "Wild Child" stories? Why might some people have mixed feelings about whether society's influence is beneficial or stifling to human development?



Selected Essays of al-Jahiz

excerpt 1

Historical Sources

Fi al-Jidd wa al-Hazl (On Jest and Earnest) for excerpt ①

Kitab al-Hayawan (The Book of Animals) for excerpts ② & ③

Risalat al-Ma'ad wa al-Ma'ash fi al-Adab wa Tadbir al-Nas wa Mu'amalatihim (An Essay on This World and the Next, Concerning Manners, Conduct and Human Relations) for excerpt ④

Author

Abu Uthman al-Jahiz
(d. 868CE)

Excerpted from

Pellat, Charles. *The Life and Works of Jahiz* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 1969.

➤ pp. 149, 154-155,
195-197, 211-212

The Disadvantages of Parchment

What is it to you that all my books are written on China paper or Khurasan paper? Explain why you have pressed on me the advantages of using parchment and urged me to write on hide, when you know very well that parchment is heavy and cumbersome, is useless if it gets damp, and swells in wet weather—so much so that were its sole disadvantage to make its users hate rainy days, and its owners regard a shower as a nightmare, this alone would be reason enough for giving up the stuff. You know very well that on rainy days copyists do not write a single line or cut a single skin.

Parchment has only to get moist, let alone left out in the rain or dipped in water, for it to bulge and stretch; and then it does not return to its original state, but dries noticeably shrunk and badly wrinkled. What is more, it smells worse, is more expensive, and lends itself more readily to fraud: Wasit skins are passed off as Kufa ones, and Basra ones as Wasit ones. You are obliged to leave it to age in order to get rid of the smell and for the hair to fall out; it is fuller of lumps and flaws, more is wasted in scraps and clipping it turns yellow sooner, and the writing very quickly disappears altogether. If a scholar wished to take with him enough parchment for his journey, a camel-load would not suffice, whereas the equivalent in *qutni* [cotton-fiber paper] could be carried with his provisions.

You said: "You should use parchment because it stands up better to scratching out and correction, and also to repeated borrowing and handling; then unwanted sheets are still worth something, palimpsests can be re-used, and second-hand parchment does the same job as new. Writing-books of *qutni* are of little value on the market, even if they contain the most original texts, the choicest rarities and the most priceless learning. If you went to sell books of an equivalent number of parchment pages containing nothing but the feeble poetry and the idlest gossip, they would be in much greater demand. And you added: 'Hide is entrusted with the accounts of the administrative system, with title-deeds, diplomas, contracts and surveys; sculptors' sketches are made on it, postal pouches are made out of and it is used for making bags, lids for jars and stoppers for bottles.'" You did me a grave disservice when you made me take to using parchment instead of paper,

and were the cause of my misfortune when you made me exchange light writing-books for volumes too heavy to hold, that crush people's chests, bow their backs and make them blind...

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Al-Jahiz was born in the city of Basra in about 776CE, and died in about 868CE. He was a scholar at a time when Basra was at its height as a center of Arabic/Muslim culture and commercial importance. Al-Jahiz was of an African family, and client [mawla] of the Arab tribe of Kinanah, whom he defended in his writings. He lived for many years in Baghdad shortly after its founding as the capital. His early education had been ordinary, but he had a very curious mind and keen powers of observation, and rose to a high position as writer, scholar and adviser at the court of the Khalifas. It is interesting to note that he was involved with books at the time when paper had just been brought from China to the Muslim world.

Noah's Dove excerpt 2

The champion of pigeons says: Arabs, Bedouins and poets all agree that it was a dove that served as guide and scout to Noah; and it was that dove that asked God, as its reward, for the necklace which its like wear round their necks. God granted it this privilege and vouchsafed it this adornment at Noah's instance, when the bird returned bearing a vine-shoot, its feet all covered with mud and clay; as recompense for the clay it received the privilege of having feet of a distinctive colour, and for its obedience and its reconnaissance work for Noah it received the necklace that adorns it.

The Qadi and the Fly excerpt 3

There can never have been a magistrate as sedate, composed, dignified, impassive, self-controlled or precise in his movements as a *qadi* (judge) we had at Basra called Abd Allah ibn Sawwar.

He used to say the morning prayer at home, though he lived quite near the mosque, and then go to his court, where he would wrap his robes around him and sit down without supporting himself on anything as he did so. He sat bolt upright and stock still, neither turning round in his seat, opening his coat, crossing his legs or leaning on either arm of the chair; he was like a statue.

He would remain thus until the noon prayer compelled him to rise, then sit down again and take up the same posture until the time of the afternoon prayer; having accomplished that, he would remain motionless until sunset, when he would get up, say his prayers, and sometimes (what am I saying? often, rather) return to his seat and deal with a multitude of deeds, contracts and miscellaneous documents. Then he would say his evening prayer and go home. If the truth be told, he never once got up to go to the lavatory during the whole of his tenure of office: he did not need to, since he never felt like a drink of water or other beverage. Such was his routine all the year round, winter and summer, whether the days were long or short. He never so much as lifted his hand or inclined his head, but limited himself to moving his lips.

One day, when his assessors and the public had taken their place beside him, in front of him and in the galleria, a fly settled on his nose. It lingered there awhile, and

then moved to the corner of his eye. He left it alone and endured its biting, just as he had armed himself with patience when it settled on his nose, neither twitching his nostrils, shaking his head or waving it away with a finger. However, since the fly was becoming really persistent, causing him acute pain and moving towards a spot where it was beyond bearing, he blinked his eyelid. The fly did not go away. This persistence drove him to blink repeatedly, whereupon the fly moved away until the eyelid stopped moving, then returned to the corner of the eye even more fiercely than before and stuck its sting into an already sore spot. The *qadi's*

endurance was weakening and his irritation growing: he blinked harder and more rapidly. The fly went away for a moment, then settled again and became so persistent that our *qadi*, his patience completely at an end, was reduced to driving it away with his hand. Everyone in court was watching this and pretending not to see it. The fly went away until he dropped his hand, then returned to the charge and compelled him to protect his face with the hem of his sleeve, not once but several times.

The magistrate realized that no detail of this scene was escaping his assessors and the public. When he caught their eye,



Illustration of a Muslim judge at court.

he exclaimed: 'I swear the fly is more persistent than the cockroach and more presumptuous than the crow! God forgive me! How many men are infatuated with their own persons! But God acquaints them with their hidden weakness! Now I know I am but a weakling, seeing that God's most feeble creature has vanquished and

confounded me!' Then he recited this verse: 'And if the fly should rob them of aught, the gods of the idolaters would be unable to restore it to them. Worshipper and idol are both powerless.' [Qur'an, 22:72-73]

The Friend excerpt 4

Nothing you possess deserves to be more jealously safe-guarded or more vigilantly cherished than the friend whom you have proved through thick and thin, whose ways you know, whose virtues you have tested, whose inmost thoughts are pure and whose attitude to you is one of frankness. He is the brother of your soul and the gateway to peace in your lifetime; his thoughts are an extension of yours and his mind the twin of yours. A solitary life will do you no good: a man needs company. But frequent changes of friends mean continual trouble. If a friend shows himself completely true to you, prize him more jealously than the most precious of your treasures. Above all, be not tempted to give him up on account of one or two traits that displease you. For even your own character, which is after all the closest to you of all, does not conform to your wishes in every respect: and so much the less another man's. Be satisfied with the greater part of your friend, for wise men have rightly said: 'How shall you possess the whole of your friend? What man is perfect?'

But do not let this stop you seeking to have many friends; for they are soldiers in readiness to serve you, and they will noise your virtues abroad and take your part. Do not let the attraction of novelty in the company of another friend lead you to tire of an old one; that would be stupid, contemptible and clumsy, and would deter anyone from seeking your friendship. God grant you success.

Study Questions and Activities

1. Summarize the points of comparison between parchment and paper from vegetable (cotton) fiber. Underline the points that explain why "china paper" replaced parchment around the world.
2. Write a sentence describing the purpose of each essay excerpted in these selections.
3. In what way is al-Jahiz's advice about friendship valuable to your life? Explain.

The Dove's Necklace

Historical Sources

Tawq al-Hamamah
(The Dove's Necklace)

Author

Ali ibn Ahmad ibn Hazm
(d. 1064CE)

Excerpted from

Kritzeck, James, ed. "Tawq al-Hamamah," in *Anthology of Islamic Literature from the Rise of Islam to Modern Times* (New York: Meridian Books), 1975.

➤ pp. 129-130

Arberry, Anthony, tr. *The Ring of the Dove* (London: Luzac Oriental), 1994.

➤ pp. 163-165

Love has certain signs which the intelligent man quickly detects and the shrewd man readily recognizes. Of these the first is the brooding gaze the eye is the wide gateway of the soul, the scrutinizer of its secrets, conveying its most private thoughts and giving expression to its deepest-hid feelings. You will see the lover gazing at the beloved unblindingly, his eyes follow the loved one's every movement, withdrawing as he withdraws, inclining as he inclines, just as the chameleon's stare shifts with the shifting of the sun.

Other signs of love are that sudden confusion and excitement betrayed by the lover when he unexpectedly sees the one he loves coming upon him unawares, that agitation which overmasters him on beholding someone who resembles his beloved or on hearing his name suddenly pronounced. A man in love will give prodigally, to the limit of his capacity, in a way that formerly he would have refused; as if he were the one receiving the donation, he the one whose happiness is the object in view; all this in order that he may show off his good points, and make himself desirable. How often has the miser opened his purse-strings, the scowler relaxed his frown, the coward leapt heroically into the fray, the clod suddenly become sharp-witted, the boor turned into the perfect gentleman, the stinker transformed into the elegant dandy, the sloucher smartened up, the decrepit recaptured his lost youth the godly gone wild, the self-respecting kicked over the traces—and all because of love!



Textile design featuring a series of stylized doves.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ali ibn Ahmad ibn Hazm was born in 994CE. His home was the city of Cordoba, the Umayyad capital of *al-Andalus* (Muslim Spain) since 756CE. He lived among the fine buildings and brilliant culture that had emerged in the two centuries of Muslim presence in Iberia. He came from a prominent family who had converted from Christianity several generations earlier. His father served as a high official at the Cordoban court. He received an excellent education during his privileged childhood. During Ibn Hazm's lifetime, the Umayyad caliphate unraveled, however, causing his father's dismissal and death. Ibn Hazm fled the city. For the next fourteen years, he led a chaotic life, alternating between court appointments, prisons and exile, as rulers rose and fell in the fragmenting political climate. Until his death in 1064, he stayed away from politics, but writing got him into trouble as well. In those turbulent times, his books were publicly burnt once at Seville.

The Ring of the Dove is an unusual example of elegant literature among his many writings about religious studies and law. It did not survive in full, however, since the manuscript we have now is a summary, or *epitome*, of the original. Unlike many works of Muslim literature, its survival depended on the existence of only one copy of the book, discovered in the late 19th century. It was translated and published after World War I, when interest in psychology was high among European thinkers. It has been translated several times since. Ibn Hazm's work is an essay on love, and what happens to lovers' thoughts and behavior. The essay interweaves the traditional Islamic learning and value system with ideas from Greek philosophy and Persian literature. The work is among the finest examples of Arabic prose, but Ibn Hazm wove some very average poetry into *The Ring* as well.

Of Separation

We know well that every union must in the end disperse, and all things near some time draw apart. Such is God's wont with men as with lands, until such time as Allah inherits the earth and all that dwells thereon; and Allah is the best of inheritors!

No calamity is there in the world equal to separation: if the souls of men should flow out of their bodies by reason of it—and much more the tears out of their eyes—it were but little to wonder at. A certain philosopher, on hearing a man remark that separation was the brother of death, said, "Nay, but death is the brother of separation."

Parting is divided into various kinds. The first is for a period of time which one can be sure will end, so that presently there will be a returning. Such parting is a load oppressing the heart, a lump obstructing the throat, that will not be mended save by a coming back. I know a man whose beloved was absent from his sight just one day, and he was so overcome by anxiety, fretfulness, preoccupation and successive paroxysms of anguish that he almost expired.

Next there is the separation that is due to a deliberate prevention of any meeting, a confining of the beloved so that she may not be seen by the lover. When this happens, though the person whom you love may be with you under the same roof it is still a separation, because the beloved is parted from you; and that engenders not a little grief and regret. I have tried it myself, and found it bitter indeed. The following verses reflect my experience:

*In every minute of each hour
To view her house is in my power,
But she who in the house resides
Eternally unseen abides.*

*What does this close propinquity
Of residence profit me,
Since spies are posted to forestall
My drawing nigh to her at all?*

*Alas, sweet neighbor dwelling near
Whose every footstep I can hear,
And yet am conscious that Cathay
Itself is not so far away!*

*So might a thirsty man espy
Deep in some well some sweet waters lie,
But in his raging fever hit
Upon no way to come to it.*

*So too the dead within the tomb
Are hidden from us in their gloom,
With nothing else to intervene
But the cold slabs set up between.*

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continued

Then there is the separation which the lover deliberately seeks, so as to remove himself beyond the reach of slanderers, and because he fears that his continuing with the beloved may be a cause of further meetings being prevented, and an occasion for the spreading of malicious talk, thus leading to the strict seclusion of his loved one.

Separation may also be initiated by the lover because of some dreadful mischance which overtakes him. In this case his excuse is to be accepted or rejected, according to the urgency of the motive impelling him to take his departure.

I call to mind a friend of mine whose residence was in Almeria, but who was obliged by reasons of business to travel to Jativa. He lodged there in my house for the whole of his stay. Now he had an amorous attachment in Almeria which was the greatest worry and most pressing concern to him; and he was looking forward all the time to complete his arrangements and have done with his affairs, so that he could soon be on his way back and hurry home. But he had only been staying with me a trifling while, when al-Muwaffaq Abu al-Jaysh Mujahid, the ruler of the Balearic Islands, mobilized his forces, moved forward his battalions, and opened hostilities against Khayran, the ruler of Almeria, intending to extirpate him. As a consequence of this war the roads were cut, all land-routes were patrolled, and the sea passages were blockaded by the fleets. My friend's anguish was thus redoubled, for he could not find any way whatever of departing; he was almost snuffed out by despair; he was unable to discover any comfort but in solitude, and took refuge in prodigious sighs and sullen grief. And upon my life, he was the kind of man I would never have supposed likely to yield his heart submissively to love; I could scarcely believe that his unsociable nature would respond to the tender call of passion.

Study Questions and Activities

1. What conclusions can you draw from Ibn Hazm's statements about people in love? Does he apply them to both men and women?
2. Can a literary work such as *Tawq al-Hamamah* serve a historical source? What example(s) can you identify in the excerpts?

The Excellences of Various Nations

Historical Sources

Kitab al-Imta wa al-Muanasah
(The Book of Enjoyment and
Good Company)

Author

Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi
(d. 1023CE)

Excerpted from

Kritzeck, James, ed. "Enjoyment
and Good Company," in *Anthology
of Islamic Literature from the Rise
of Islam to Modern Times* (New
York: Meridian Books), 1975.

➤ pp. 73-75

I went to the vizier's house another evening, and the first thing which he addressed to the gathered circle was "Do you prefer the Arabs over the non-Arabs or the non-Arabs over the Arabs?"

I said "In the opinion of the learned men, there are four nations: the Greeks, the Arabs, the Persians and the Indians. Three of these are non-Arab, and it is difficult to say that the Arabs by themselves are preferable to the other three, inspite of both their common collections and their differentiations." He said, "However, I like from this group the Persians." And I said, "Before I decide anything, speaking for myself, I will relate a conversation by Ibn al-Muqaffa who is of pure Persian origin and is deep-rooted among non-Arabs, a man superior among the people of merit..." The vizier said, "Bring me unto the blessing of God and His assistance."

I then related the conversation of Shabib ibn Shabba, who said: We were standing in the courtyard of the camel station (in Basra)—the standing place of the nobles and the meeting place of the people, with the notables of Egypt present—when Ibn al-Muqaffa came into view. There was not among us anyone who did not take delight in him or who did not derive satisfaction in questioning him, and we rejoiced at his appearance. He said, "What keeps you upon the backs of your animals in this place? By God, if the Caliph were to send out to the people of the earth, seeking the likes of you, he should not locate anyone like you. Now go to the house of Ibn Barthan, in extended shade and shielded from the sun, facing the northerly breeze. Give rest to your animals and servants. We will sit on the ground, for it is a fine carpet, most tread upon." Some

of us were listening, for he is the most accomplished of the circle and the most prolific at conversation. So we hastened to do what he had said and alighted from our animals at the house of Ibn Barthan, inhaling the northerly breeze, when Ibn al-Muqaffa drew near to us and said, "Which nation is most intelligent?" We thought he had in mind the Persians, so we said, "The Persians are the most intelligent," seeking to ingratiate ourselves and having in mind to flatter him. But he said, "Not at all. That ability is not theirs, nor is it among them. They are a people who were taught and who then learned, who were given an example and who then imitated and followed after, who were started on a matter and who then went on to pursue it. They have neither invention or discovery." So we said to him, "The Greeks." But he said, "It is not them

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi (ca. 922-1023CE) was born either in Iraq or Persia, and died in the city of Shiraz. It is not known whether he was Persian or Arab, and he may have been from a lower class background (*tawhid* was a seller of dates). He lived during the rule of the Shi'i Buwayhids, though he himself was Sunni. He served at the Buwayhid court for some time. Although al-Tawhidi was sometimes neglected as a literary figure, geographer and writer Yaqut (d. 1229CE) called al-Tawhidi in a biographical entry, "the philosopher of cultured men, and a man of culture among philosophers." Some of al-Tawhidi's writings have only recently been discovered, and they are very interesting to historians for the information they give about social and vibrant intellectual life during the tenth century. His writing is recognized as a fine example of *adab*, or elegant Arabic literature, but also for its wide variety of intellectual and spiritual topics. Many students of Arabic literature find al-Tawhidi's work very relevant for today, especially in the dialogue among people of many cultures and religious beliefs. He is also valued for his frankness and honesty about leadership and its relationship with people of all classes. Al-Tawhidi wrote in an essay "Of the Branches of Knowledge" (*al-Risalah fil-Ulum*) about the ideal of a writer:

"[He] will not think it the least of his duties to study fluency and command versatility, for he may be called upon to use his craft to sooth resentment and remove dissent and to fulfill missions of state, to render critical assistance to the great and important service for the benefit of the commoners: hence his wit must always rove far afield and his pen must follow it."

1. Quoted in Julia Ashtiany et al, *Abbasid Belles-Lettres* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 113.

either. Though they have strong bodies and are masters at building and architecture, they do not know anything other than those two, nor have they perfected anything else."

We said, "The Chinese." He replied, "Masters of furniture and crafts, but they have neither thought nor deliberation." We said, "The Turks." He answered, "Lions for quarrel." We said, "The Indians." He responded, "Masters of imagination, trickery, sleight-of-hand, and deception." So we handed over the matter to him, and he said, "The Arabs." We exchanged glances and whispered to one another; that enraged him, his color turning pale. Then he said, "It seems that you suspect me of ingratiating myself with you. By God, I wish that this thing were otherwise, but I would be disgusted if the matter escaped me and its correct solution eluded me. I will not leave you until I explain why I said what I did, in order to clear myself of the suspicion of deception and the imputation of flattery.

"The Arabs did not have a proper condition to follow as a pattern nor a Book to guide them. They are a people of a poor land, deserted from mankind: everyone among them, in his loneliness, has need of his thoughts, his contemplation, and his mind. They knew that their livelihood came from the plants of the earth, so they marked each of them and attributed to each its type, and they knew the benefit that was in the fresh plant and the dry plant, and their growth cycles, and which were suitable for sheep and camels. Then they contemplated time and its succession and rendered it as spring, summer, mid-summer and winter. They knew that their drink was from the heavens, so they invented for them the constellations. And they were aware of the changing of time, so they made for it divisions of the year. They needed to spread out on the earth. so they made of the heavenly stars guides for the sections of the earth and its regions, and followed the land by means of them. And they made among themselves something which would prevent them from doing evil and which would make them desirous of the beautiful, by which they would avoid baseness

and which would spur them on to excellent qualities, even to the extent that a member of their nation, though he be in any remote spot of the earth, describes these excellent qualities, not omitting a thing from his description, and he is immoderate in the censure of evil acts and condemns them at length. They do not discourse except in discussion which encourages good deeds, the preservation of the neighbor, the giving away of goods, and the setting up of commendable acts. Everyone of them achieves that by his mind and deduces it by his native intelligence and his thought, without learning or becoming well-mannered; instead, his natural disposition is well-bred and his mind is perceptive. This is why I said they are the most intelligent nation, because of the soundness of natural endowment, correctness of thought, and acuteness of understanding." This was the end of the conversation.

The vizier said, "How good is what Ibn al-Muqaffa said! How good is what you narrated and what you brought! Bring me now what you have heard and have deduced."

I replied, "If what this man, skillful in his manners and excellent of mind, has said is sufficient, then anything added to it would be a superfluity, unnecessary to it, and following it with something similar would be of no use."

The vizier said, "The range of description varies in beautifying and making ugly; the different characteristics depend upon what is thought correct and incorrect. This question—I mean the preference of one nation over another—is, among nations, a thing over which people have contended and have pushed each other around. Nor, since we have exchanged words in this room, have they come to a firm settlement and an apparent agreement."

I responded, "This happens of necessity, for it is not in the Persian's nature nor his custom nor his origin to acknowledge the merit of the Arab, and neither is it in the nature of the Arab nor in his habit that he be delighted at the merit of the Persian. And the same applies to the Indian,

the Greek, the Turk, the Dailamite, and others, for the consideration of merit and nobility rests upon two things. The first is that by which one people became distinguished from another, at the time of the creation, by the choice of good and bad, by correct and erroneous opinion, and by the contemplation of the beginning and the end. The matter depends upon this, but secondly, every nation has virtues and vices and every people has good and bad qualities, and every group of people is both complete and deficient in its industry and its wielding of influence. And it is decreed that bounties and merits and faults be poured forth over all mankind, scattered among them all.

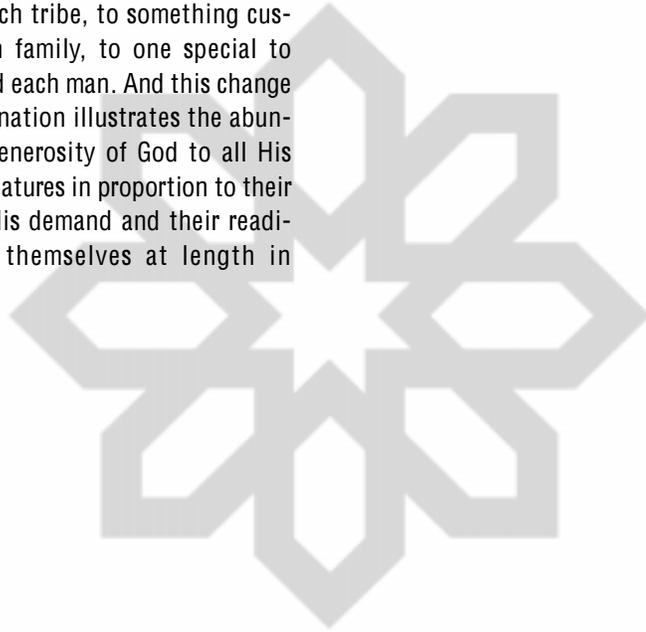
"Thus the Persians have politics, manners of government, restraints, and ceremonies; the Greeks have science and wisdom; the Indians have thought, deliberation, agility, beguilement, and perseverance; the Turks have courage and boldness; the Negroes have patience, the ability for hard labor, and joy; and the Arabs have bravery, hospitable reception, fidelity, gallantry, generosity, responsibility to obligation, oratory, and a gift for explanation.

"Moreover, the merits mentioned above, in these famous nations, are not possessed by everyone of their individuals but rather are wide-spread among them. But there are some in their group who are devoid of all of them and are characterized by their opposite; that is, the Persians do not lack a man ignorant of politics and lacking in manners, found among the riffraff and the rabble. Similarly, the Arabs do not lack a cowardly or an ignorant or a foolish or a miserly or an inarticulate man. And the same holds true for the Indians, the Greeks, and others. Accordingly, when the people of merit and perfection from the Greeks are compared with the people of merit and perfection from the Persians, they come together on an even path. There is no difference between them except in the degrees of merit and the extents of perfection, and those are general rather than specific. In a like manner, when the people

of shortcoming and vileness of one nation are compared with those of shortcoming and vileness of another nation, they come together on a single path. There is no difference between them except in degrees and extents. And no attention is paid to that nor any blame put upon it. Thus it has become clear from this list that all the nations have divided among themselves merits and shortcomings by the necessity of natural endowment and the choice of thought. Beyond that, people only compete among themselves regarding inheritance, native custom, overwhelming passion of irascible souls, and the angry impulse of emotional force.

"Here is another thing, an important principle which it is not possible to avoid pointing out in our discussion. Every nation has a period of domination over its opponents. This is clearly evident when you imagine for a moment the Greeks at the time of Alexander the Great, when they conquered, governed, ruled, sowed and unsowed, prescribed, managed and commanded, incited and restrained, erased and recorded, acted and reported. Similarly, when you turn your attention to discuss-

ing Chosroes Anushirvan [Sasanid Emperor, 531 578 A.D.], you find these same conditions.... And for this reason, Abu Muslim, when asked which people he found most courageous, said, 'All people are courageous when their fortune is rising.' He had spoken truly. And accordingly, every nation at the beginning of its prosperity is virtuous, courageous, brave, worthy of glory, generous, outstanding, eloquent, perceptive, and reliable. This point of view is extrapolated from a phenomenon common to all nations, to one universal to each nation at a time, to a thing embracing each group, to one prevalent to each tribe, to something customary in each family, to one special to each person and each man. And this change from nation to nation illustrates the abundance of the generosity of God to all His creation and creatures in proportion to their fulfillment of His demand and their readiness to exert themselves at length in attaining it."



Study Questions and Activities

1. What is the setting where the conversation about people of different cultural backgrounds takes place? Do you think it is a serious conversation?
2. What does the conversation tell you about the Muslim world during the 11th century? What evidence do you find that the world of the writer is a multi-cultural environment?
3. What final conclusion does al-Tawhidi draw about differences among various cultural groups?
4. Write a script for a similar conversation about significant cultural groups in the world today. Select a point of view, or vantage point, from a city in the world today. How do you and your guests view others and their accomplishments?

Early Arabic Poetry

A *Balad*, or *Qasidah*, in pre-Islamic Style



Historical Source

Mufaddiliyah
(The Preferred Selections)

Author

al-Mukhabbal as-Sa'di
(fl. mid-8th century CE)

Excerpted from

Sells, Michael A. "Along the Edge of Mirage': The Mufaddiliyah of al-Mukhabbal as-Sa'di, an Interpretation," in Mustansir Mir, ed., *The Literary Heritage of Classical Islam: Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of James A. Bellamy* (Princeton: Darwin Press), 1993.

➤ pp. 119-135

He remembered Rabab.
 Her memory was sickness.
 He was young again.
 He didn't know.
 When her phantom came round
 my eye stung
 along the tear lines
 and began to water,
 Pearls
 slipping
 from a necklace
 poorly strung.
 I make out a dwelling there,
 hers,
 amid the pools of Sidan,
 traces unfaded,
 Ashes, cold,
 banked and sheltered
 from the winds
 by blackened hearthstones,
 Ruins of a flood-break,
 stone walls
 broken in
 and broken down,
 As if what the side winds
 and rains had left
 there on the empty yards
 were a tattoo,
 Where doe-oryx pasture,
 following along toward water,
 white-backs
 on brown-backed mingled,

With oryx fawns
 and gazelle fawns,
 round her tracings,
 like kids and lambs.

Rabab might have alighted,
 with an advanced guard,
 well-armed,
 to ward off enemies,

There where the torrent beds
 are unfaded,
 at Lost Place,
 Bend of the Trail, and Zukhm.

Graceful as a rush of papyrus,
 beauty comes to her
 before others.
 She grows into it early.

She reveals to you
 a delicate face
 Like the pearl of pearls
 distant Persians use
 to light up the throne-hall
 of a sultan,

His chest smeared with oil,
 he brings it out
 from the billow-waved deep
 of the swordfish.

Or an egg of the dunes,
 set into the earth,
 smooth to the touch,
 and perfectly curved,

The first-lain of the nest,
 warmed by a clump-wing,
 feathers matted
 like a heap of rags.

Maids lose their combs
 in the thickness of her curls,
 thick as the curls of the grape
 along the trellis.

Why not find consolation
 for yearning,
 for a bond of union,
 broken?

ABOUT THE SELECTION

Early Muslim poetry celebrated the style of the great Arabic poets of the pre-Islamic period, which Muslims refer to as the *Jahiliyyah* or "Age of Ignorance." It was a time (8th century CE) when the Arabs settled new lands, and Arabic grammar and philology flourished. These poems followed the form of the famous pre-Islamic *qasidah*, which had several sections: "(1) the remembrance of the lost beloved, Rabab, appearance of her phantom, and the evocation of the traces of her abandoned campsite; (2) the journey with the performance of the hero's mount; and (3) the boast, with criticism of the blamer, and the poet's response. The translator is the author of the article cited below, who sees in the final verses that, "Perhaps we might say that this verse inhabits both the Jahili (pre-Islamic) and the Islamic world, a moment of intersection between these two manifestations of ancient Arabian culture."

How many a worn track,
a rough ride, rutted,
like the net of a weaver,
through a terrain of rounded hills,

Hollows of the water-bound
sand grouse
along the side of the trail,
Like a mottled cloak,

Have I driven across
in the darkening dusk
on an obedient night-rider
fresh as a stallion from the stable.

She scatters the rocks,
shattered, as she gales forth,
the hill rises running together
along the edge of mirage,

Barreling down the track
and shaking
like a squeaking water wheel
around a pivot post,

Backquarters built up
and interlocked
along the vertebrae,
withers huge,

Forelegs slanted
like the columns of a temple,
the muscle packed on
above the knees.
When you brandish the whip
above her,
a sharp pulsing beneath her ribs,
drives her on.

She blocks the gap
between her hind legs
with a bristling tail
that barrenness has made luxuriant.

Hooves like the hammers
of a smith,
not fleshy,
or padded with tufts of hair.

At rest at midday
she stands in the tent's shade
like a white antelope at dusk
in a glen of wild lote trees,

Like a stone washed up
and stranded
at the edge of the flood,
boulders thrown down beneath it.

I wore her down
to the marrow of the bones,
the flesh along the joints
shrunken back.



An oryx.

My blamer said
(and what does she know
of tomorrow
and what will come after?)

"Immortality
resides in possessions.
Lack them
and your day will grieve."

By your father's life!
I find no life eternal,
not in a hundred camels,
thick-furred, dark-hued,

Even if you built me
the palace of Mushaqqar
on a stony hill
dwarfing a herd of white-foot ibex,

The shades of death
would track me down.
There is no decree
like that of God.

Study Questions and Activities

1. What type of geographic environment does the imagery in the poem suggest? Explain, using illustrations from the text.
2. Identify cultural values expressed in the poem and explain.
3. What sources of tension in the author can you identify, for example, between the traditional Arab way of life and the new life in the larger Fertile Crescent lands, or between the pre-Islamic religion and Islamic monotheism?

Poems from Muslim Spain

Historical Source

Rayat al-Mubarizeen wa Ghayat al-Mumayizeen (The Banners of the Champions and Pennants of the Chosen)

Author

Ibn Sa'īd al-Maghribi (b. 1213cE)

Excerpted from

Bellamy, James and Patricia Owen Steiner, tr. *The Banners of the Champions: An Anthology of Medieval Arabic Poetry from Andalusia and Beyond* (Madison: Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies), 1989.

➤ miscellaneous pages

Half the moon

In the ocean of night, as the last of the flood-tide was ebbing, an eclipse snatched away half the moon. It became like a mirror heated by a blacksmith, with the red of the fire fading into the black.

Ibn Hamdis (Sicily, 1055-1132)

Sun on the Horizon

Look at the sun on the horizon; it is like a bird casting its wing over the surface of the bay.

Ali ibn Musa ibn Sa'īd (Alcala la Real, 1213-1286)

The Hands of Spring

The hands of spring have built strong lily castles on their stems, Castles with battlements of silver where the defenders, grouped around the prince, hold swords of gold.

Ibn Darraj (Caceta, 958-1030)

Lily Pond

Drink from the lily pond, red with flowers, and also green, As if the flowers were tongues of fire coming out of the water.

Ibn Hamdis (Sicily, 1055-1132)

The Beauty of the Rose

How beautiful the rose in its colors of deep red and pure white. Its whiteness is like the brilliance of the stars; its redness not different from the red of twilight. And the yellow in its center is like sesame seeds clustered on a plate.

Abu al-Abbas al-Ghassani (Tunis, c. 1261)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ibn Sa'īd al-Maghribi was born near Granada in 1213cE, to a prominent literary family. He spent his life traveling and writing, and he authored or compiled over forty works on various branches of knowledge. He was familiar with many of the cities of Andalusia, with North Africa, and with eastern locales such as Cairo, Baghdad and Makkah. He is best known for completing a great anthology of poetry in over 15 volumes. Started by his great-grandfather, it took over 100 years to finish. The "Banners" is a short extract of about 300 poems compiled in Cairo in the summer of 1243cE.

The River's Coat of Mail

The right hand of the wind forges a coat of mail on the river which ripples with a thousand wrinkles. And whenever the wind adds a ring, the rain comes along to fasten it with its rivets.

Asa al-A'ma (Manish, c. 1131)

Writing on the River

The river is like a piece of parchment on which the breeze is tracing its lines. And when they see how beautiful the writing is, the branches bend down to read it.

Ali ibn Musa ibn Sa'id (Alcala la Real, 1213-1286)

Boats Racing on the River

How I love those boats as they start to race, like horses chasing one another. The neck of the river was unadorned before, but now, in the darkness of night, it is all decked out. The brightness of the boats' candles is as the brilliance of stars; you'd think their reflections were lances in the water. Many boats are moved along by their sail wings and others by their oar feet; they look like frightened rabbits fleeing from falcons.

Ibn Lubbal (Jerez, d. 1187)

The Dove

Nothing disturbed me more than a dove, singing on a branch between the island and the river. Its collar was the color of pistachio nuts, its breasts of lapis lazuli, its neck brightly embroidered, its tail and leading wing feathers of dark green. A ring of gold surrounded its pearl eyelids, pearls which rolled over rubies. Black was the tip of its sharp beak, as if it were a silver penpoint dipped in ink. It pillowed itself on a couch of an Ark tree and bowed with its wings folded over its breast. But when it saw my tears, it was troubled by my weeping and standing straight up on the green bough. It spread out its wings and flapped them, flying off with my heart to wherever it flew. Where? I don't know.

Ali ibn Hisa (Seville, d. 1050)

Petition for a Falcon

O king, whose fathers were of lofty mien and most noble lineage! You have always adorned my neck with marvelous gifts; so may you now adorn my hand with a falcon. Bestow on me one with fine wings, as if its leading feathers had been arched by the north wind. Proudly I shall take him out in the morning, making the wind veer in my hand, and I shall capture the free with my chained one.

Abu Bakr Ibn al-Qabturnuh (Badajoz, c. 1126)

A Horse like a Meteor

Bright as a meteor, he came prancing forth in a gilded saddle cloth. Someone said, envying me, as he saw him trotting beneath me into battle: "Who has bridled the morning with the Pleiades and saddled the lightning with the crescent moon?"

Abu al-Sall (Denia, 1067-1134)

White for Mourning

If white is the color of mourning in Andalusia, that is only just. Don't you see that I have put on the white of old age out of mourning for my youth?

al-Kafif al-Husri (Kairouan, d. 1095)

Insomnia

When the bird of sleep thought my eye was a nest, he saw its lashes and, being afraid of nets, he was frightened away.

Ibn al-Hammarah (c. 1150)

Insect Musicians

You have a house where the curtains are perfect for musical evenings, but let us understand one thing: The flies do the singing, the mosquitoes accompany them, and the fleas are the dancers.

Abu Abdallah ibn Sharaf (Kairouan, d. 1068)

Generosity That Binds

My soul and my family be the ransom for my patron,
from whom I never ask for help against fate
without being helped.

They feathered my wings and then drenched them with
the dew of generosity, so now I cannot fly away from
their tribe.

Ibn al-Labbanah (Denia, d. 1113)

Good Deeds at Random

Scatter your good deeds all around, not caring
whether they fall on those near or far away,
Just as the rain never cares where the clouds pour
it out, whether on fertile ground or on rocks.

Ibn Siraj (Cordova, d. 1114)

Death Comes for the Sinner

My soul said to me: "Death has come for you
and here you are still in this sea of sins.
And you haven't even provided for the journey."
"Be quiet, " I said. "Does one take
provisions to the Generous One?"

Abu al-Hajjaj al-Munafiq (Almuzafes, c. 1210)

Bad Food

O you who eat whatever you like and so
insult both medicine and doctors.
Now you will taste the fruit that you have
planted, so expect sickness soon.
For bad food, like a bucket,
collects diseases day by day.

al-Sumaysir (Granada, 11th century)

Perfection Seldom Found

Be forgiving of your friend when he offends
you, for perfection is seldom ever found.
In everything there is some flaw; even the
lamp, despite its brilliance, smokes.

Ibn al-Haddad (Almeria, d. 1087)

Dancing Flame

Look at the fire as she dances,
shaking her sleeves with joy.
She laughs with amazement as the essence
of her ebony is transmuted into gold.

Ibn Abi al-Khisal (Segura, d. 1145)

The Fountain

Oh, the beauty of the fountain, pelting the
horizon with shooting stars, leaping and
jumping around playfully;
Bubbles of water burst out of it, gushing into
its basin like a frightened snake,
as if it used to move back and forth beneath the
earth, but when it had the chance, it quickly escaped,
and settled into the basin, happy with its new
home, and in amazement kept smiling, showing its bubbles.
And the branches hover overhead, about to kiss
it as it smiles, revealing the whiteness of its teeth.

Ibn al-Ra'iah (Seville, 13th century)



An Andalusian garden scene with
musicians playing for the guests.

The Spinning Waterwheel

How wonderful is the water-wheel! It spins around like a celestial sphere, yet there are no stars on it.
It was placed over the river by hands that decreed that it refresh others' spirits as it, itself, grows tired.
It is like a free man, in chains,
or like a prisoner marching freely.
Water rises and falls from the wheel as if it were a cloud that draws water from the sea and later pours it out.
The eyes fell in love with it, for it is a boon companion to the garden, a cupbearer who doesn't drink.

Ibn al-Abbar (Valencia, d. 1260)

Wedding Feast on the Horizon

Pass round your cups for there's a wedding feast on the horizon—
although it would be enough for us just to feast our eyes on your beauty.
The lightning is a henna-dyed hand, the rain, pearls,
and like a bride, the horizon is led forth to her husband—
and the eyes of the dawn are lined with kohl.

Ali ibn Musa ibn Sa'id (Alcala la Real, d. 1286)

The Reconquest

O people of Andalusia, spur on your horses,
for staying here is a mistake;
Garments begin to unravel at the seams, but now I see
that the peninsula is unraveling at the center.

al-Assal (Toledo, d. 1094)

Arab Dignity

We are moons in the darkness of the night;
wherever we sit, there is the head of the room.
If contemptuous fate unjustly takes away our greatness,
it can not take away the greatness of our souls.

Ibn Adha (Granada, d. 1145)



Study Questions and Activities

1. Describe several aspects of everyday life and culture in Muslim Spain based on the images used in the poems.
2. How does the imagery in these poems reflect the climate and landscape of al-Andalus?
3. Write a paragraph explaining the meaning of one of the poems from *Banners of the Champions*.
4. Find an American or European poet or poem whose work seems similar to one or more of these selections and explain your choice.

An Elegy (*Nasib*) for Nudar

Historical Source

Al-Nudar an al-Maslah an Nudar
(Pure Gold for Solace for Nudar)

Author

Athir al-Din Muhammad
ibn Yusuf (b. 1256CE)

Excerpted from

Th. Emil Homerin. "I've Stayed by the Grave": An Elegy/*Nasib* for Nudar," in Mustansir Mir, ed., *The Literary Heritage of Classical Islam: Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of James A. Bellamy* (Princeton: Darwin Press), 1993.

➤ pp. 107-117

My soul turned
away from this world
after Nudar settled
in the moist earth,

So my ear is deaf
when someone speaks;
my eye stares
far away.

How can I mind
whom I'm with
when I can't see
Nudar's shining face?

No. And I can't hear
her voice
whose finest words
were pearls.

If strung in verse
they'd be the blazing stars;
if scattered in prose,
they'd be the brightest blossoms.
Though she may be veiled
from my eye,
still her figure
is etched in my heart;

I've stayed by the grave
where she settled,
where fragrant musk
lingers.

There with her dwell
knowledge and virtue;
she was renowned for them
among the leading men.

In excellence,
no other woman could compare—
can a rock ever match
a jewel?

She recited the Qur'an
freshly, clearly,
without an error,
without distortion,

And adorned in ink
her page-
an embroidered tapestry
of revealing lines-

With tales of the Chosen Prophet,
with grammar and jurisprudence,
and with poetry,
always well-composed.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Abu Hayyan was born in Granada in 1256CE, studied in Andalusia and North Africa, and finally settled in Mamluk Cairo. He was a Qur'anic scholar, writer and one of the greatest Arab grammarians, and author of more than fifty works. He was father to a son, and a daughter—Nudar—who became the light of his life, his best student. Nudar was born in 1301CE, probably married quite young and had two sons. She was exceptionally well educated, having studied with noted scholars in Qur'anic recitation, *hadith* and jurisprudence. She became, like her father, a scholar of Arabic language. She was counted among the intellectual elite of the time in Cairo. At the age of twenty-eight, she was overtaken by illness and died suddenly. Her father, who mourned her for a year, composed numerous poems to work through his grief. The following is one of these elegies, called *nasib* in Arabic. It is a common type of poetry in Muslim literature, expressing Islamic beliefs and symbols as a means for confronting the "chaos of death."

Study Questions and Activities

1. What qualities in the poem describe Nudar's education, "professional" abilities and acquired skills?
2. Do you perceive the imagery of the poem as masculine or feminine? Why?
3. How does the picture of Nudar compare with stereotyped views of women in Muslim societies?



The Rose Garden

📖 Historical Source
Gulistan (The Rose Garden)

✍️ Author
Muslah al-Din Saadi (d. 1292CE)

📄 Excerpted from
Dole, Nathan Haskell and Belle M. Walker, eds. *The Persian Poets* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Company), 1901.
➤ pp. 303

The Cause for Composing the Gulistan

I was one night meditating on the time which had elapsed, repenting of the life I had squandered and perforating the stony mansion of my heart with adamantine tears. I uttered the following verses in conformity with the state of mind:

*Every moment a breath of life is spent,
If I consider, not much of it remains.
O thou, whose fifty years have elapsed in sleep,
Wilt thou perhaps overtake them in these five days?
Shame on him who has gone and done no work.
The drum of departure was beaten but he has not made his load.*

*Sweet sleep on the morning of departure
Retains the pedestrian from the road.
Whoever had come had built a new edifice.
He departed and left the place to another
And that other one concocted the same futile schemes
And this edifice was not completed by anyone.
Cherish not an inconstant friend.
Such a traitor is not fit for amity.
As all the good and bad must surely die,
He is happy who carries off the ball of virtue.
Send provision for thy journey to thy tomb.
Nobody will bring it after thee; send it before.
Life is snow, the sun is melting hot.
Little remains, but the gentleman is slothful still.
O thou who hast gone empty handed to the bazaar,
I fear thou wilt not bring a towel filled.
Who eats the corn he has sown while it is yet green,
Must at harvest time glean the ears of it.
Listen with all thy heart to the advice of Saadi.
Such is the way; be a man and travel on.*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Saadi (1184-1292CE) was a Persian poet from the city of Shiraz, in Persia. Saadi was called by another Persian poet the "nightingale [*bulbul*] of the groves of Shiraz." Saadi was the father-in-law of another famous Shirazi poet, Hafiz. He was also noted in his lifetime as a religious teacher, though he never claimed to be inspired by any higher wisdom than the human intellect. The first work of this remarkable man was the *Bustan*, which means "fruit garden", or orchard. The title refers to the fruits of experience, Saadi's judgments about life, which he illustrated with anecdotes from his memory and from the fund of Persian and Arabic culture. In 1258 he wrote the *Gulistan*, which means "rose garden" in Persian, a collection of stories and wisdom in eight chapters, with each section representing a flower of the garden. Saadi's *Gulistan* is one of the most popular books in the Muslim world, because of its eloquence of style, clear language, moral guidance and counsel given through poetic language. It is often quoted even today.

*The capital of man's life is his abdomen.
 If it be gradually emptied there is no fear.
 But if it be so closed as not to open,
 The heart may well despair of life;
 And if it be open so that it cannot be closed,
 Go and wash thy hands of this world's life.
 Four contending rebellious dispositions
 Harmonize but five days with each other.
 If one of these four becomes prevalent,
 Sweet life must abandon the body
 Wherefore an intelligent and perfect man
 Sets not his heart upon this world's life.*

After maturely considering these sentiments, I thought proper to sit down in the mansion of retirement to fold up the skirts of association, to wash my tablets of heedless sayings and no more to indulge in senseless prattle:

*To sit in a corner, like one with a cut tongue, deaf and dumb,
 Is better than a man who has no command over his tongue.*

I continued in this resolution till a friend...entered at the door, according to his old custom with playful gladness; but I would give him no reply nor lift up my head from the knees of worship. He looked at me aggrieved and said:

*Now, while thou hast the power of utterance,
 Speak, O brother, with grace and kindness.
 Because tomorrow, when the messenger of death arrives,
 Thou wilt of necessity restrain thy tongue.*

One of my connections informed him how matters stood and told him that I had firmly determined and was intent upon spending the rest of my life in continual devotion and silence, advising him at the same time, in case he should be able, to follow my example and to keep me company. He replied: 'I swear by the great dignity of Allah and by our old friendship that I shall not draw breath, nor budge one step, unless he converses with me as he used to, and in his usual way; because it is foolish to insult friends and easy to expiate an oath.'

[...] In short, I had not the firmness to restrain my tongue from speaking to him, and did not consider it polite to turn away my face from his conversation, he being a congenial friend and sincerely affectionate...I was under the necessity of speaking and then went out for diversion in the spring, when the traces of severe cold had disappeared and the time of the dominion of roses had arrived:

*Green garments were upon the trees
 Like holiday robes on contented persons.
 On the first of the month Ardibihesht Jellali
 The bulbuls [nightingales] were singing on the pulpits of branches.
 Upon the roses pearls of dew had fallen,
 Resembling perspiration on an angry sweetheart's cheek.*

I happened to spend an evening in a garden with one of my friends and we found it to be a pleasant cheerful place with entangled trees; its ground seemed to be paved with small glass beads whilst, from its vines, bunches like the Pleiades [stars] were suspended.

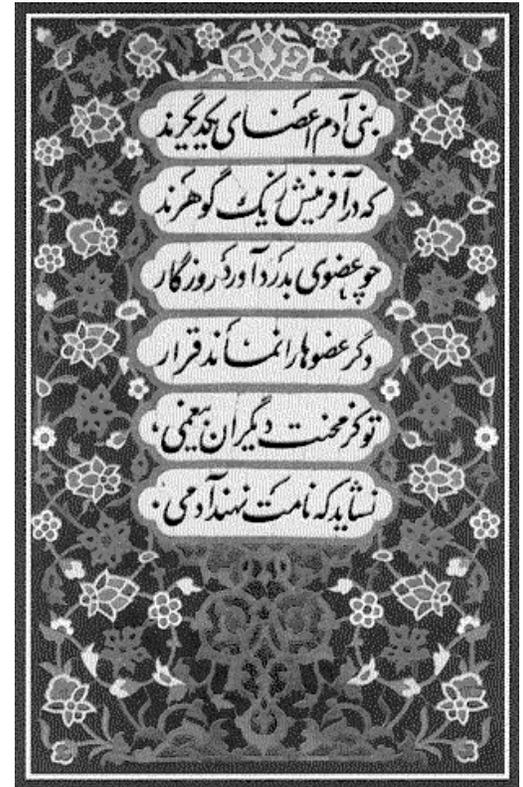


A 16th century Persian miniature of a garden.

A garden the water of whose river was limpid
A grove the melody of whose birds was harmonious.

The former full of bright-coloured tulips,
The latter full of fruits of various kinds;
The wind had in the shade of its trees
Spread out a bed of all kinds of flowers.

The next morning when the intention of returning had prevailed over the opinion of tarrying, I saw that my friend had in his robe collected roses, sweet basil, hyacinths and fragrant herbs with the determination to carry them to town; whereon I said: 'Thou knowest that the roses of the garden are perishable and the season passes away', and philosophers have said: 'Whatever is not of long duration is not to be cherished.' He asked: 'Then what is to be done?' I replied: 'I may compose for the amusement of those who look and for the instruction of those who are present a book of a Rose Garden, a *Gulistan*, whose leaves cannot be touched by the tyranny of autumnal blasts and the delight of whose spring the vicissitudes of time will be unable to change into the inconstancy of autumn.'



Saadi poem in Persian script.

The Pearl

(A poem about humility and self-esteem)

A single drop of rain fell from a
cloud in the sky
But was filled with shame when it
saw the sea so wide.
'Next to the sea then, who am I?
If the sea exists, then how can I?'
While looking down on itself
With the eyes of contempt,
An oyster in its shell,
Took it in for nourishment.
And so it was, that its fate was
sealed by this event,
And it became a famous pearl to
adore a king's head.
Having descended to the depths,
It was now exalted to the heights.
On the portal of non-existence it
went knocking,
Until it finally was transformed
into being.

An Anecdote from the Gulistan

I saw the son of a rich man seated at the head of his father's sepulcher, and engaged in a dispute with the son of a poor man, and saying, "My father's sarcophagus is of stone, and the inscription colored with a pavement of alabaster and turquoise bricks. What resemblance has it to that of thy father, which consists of a brick or two huddled together, with a few handfuls of dust sprinkled over it?" The son of the poor man heard him, and answered, "Peace! For before thy father can have moved himself under this heavy stone, my sire will have arrived in paradise. This is a saying of the Prophet: 'The death of the poor is repose!'"

Study Questions and Activities

1. At what stage of life did the poet decide to change, and what did he want to do?
2. How did Saadi's friend change his mind, and what is the meaning of
3. What does the Rose Garden symbolize?
4. Discuss the imagery of the garden flowers and people's delight in it in these verses. How is the description of nature related to worship in its effect on people?



Things in Pairs

📖 Historical Source
Mathnawi (Things in Pairs)

✍ Author
Jalal al-Din Rumi (d. 1273CE)

📄 Excerpted from
Home, Charles F., ed. *The Sacred Books and Early Literature of the East. Volume VIII: Medieval Persia* (New York: Parke, Austin & Lipscomb), 1917.
➤ pp. 111-130

Sorrow Turned to Joy

“He who extracts the rose from the thorn
Can also turn this winter into spring.
He who exalts the heads of the cypresses
Is able also out of sadness to bring joy.”

The Wisdom of the Weak

“O friends, God has given me inspiration.
Oftentimes strong counsel is suggested to the weak.
The wit taught by God to the bee
Is withheld from the lion and the wild ass.
It fills its cells with liquid sweets,
For God opens the door of this knowledge to it.
The skill taught by God to the silkworm
Is a learning beyond the reach of the elephant.
The earthly Adam was taught of God names,
So that his glory reached the seventh heaven.
He laid low the name and fame of the angels,
Yet blind indeed are they whom God dooms to doubt!”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jalal al-Din Rumi is famous as a teacher of Sufism, a mystical branch of Islamic teachings, and he is celebrated as the finest poet of that spiritual tradition. He was born in 1207CE, in the city of Balkh, in Afghanistan, and died in 1273 in Konya, Turkey, after Anatolia came under Turkish rule, but was still called *Rum* [Rome, or Byzantium]. His father was a scholar, jurist, and Sufi teacher who, fleeing the Mongol invasions, finally settled in Asia Minor with his young son Jalal al-Din. At the age of only twenty-four, Rumi took over his father's leadership of the center of Sufism established at Konya. Rumi is recognized as a major factor in spreading Sufi doctrines in the region and beyond. Rumi was the founder of the “whirling dervishes.” According to a traditional account, there was a central pillar in Rumi's house, and when Rumi was in a state of spiritual ecstasy, he took hold of that pillar and turned around it, reciting his poetry.

The *Mathnawi* gets its name from the Arabic word related to “things in pairs,” which refers to the fact that Rumi's enormous work in six books contains almost 30,000 rhymed couplets, or paired lines of verse. Its main content is comprised of the symbolic, or allegorical, stories and sayings through which Sufi teachings were often relayed to students. The source of such material is oral tradition, imagination and Islamic teachings. Its purpose was to teach, and as such, the material has a fluid quality rather than being a formal and polished literary work. Many of the stories from the *Mathnawi* have been passed down through students and others in a variety of versions. Many admirers of Rumi's poetry believe that it was more the product of inspiration than conscious composition.

Exert Yourselves

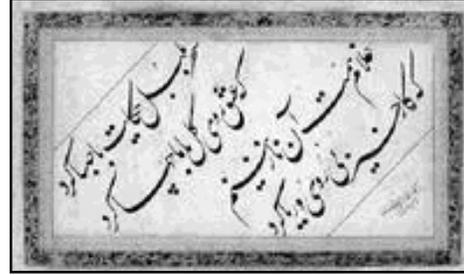
“Trust in God, yet tie the camel's leg.
Hear the adage,
‘The worker is the friend of God’;
Through trust in Providence
neglect not to use means.
Go, O Fatalists, practise trust
with self-exertion,
Exert yourself to attain
your objects, bit by bit.
In order to succeed,
strive and exert yourselves;
If you strive not for your objects,
ye are fools.”

White Nights

Every night Thou freest our spirits from the body
 And its snare, making them pure as rased tablets.
 Every night spirits are released from this cage,
 And set free, neither lording it nor lorded over.
 At night prisoners are unaware of their prison,
 At night kings are unaware of their majesty.

The Believer's Heart

The Prophet said that God has declared,
 "I am not contained in aught above or below,
 I am not contained in earth or sky, or even
 In highest heaven. Know this for a surety, O beloved!
 Yet am I contained in the believer's heart!
 If ye seek Me, search in such hearts!"



15th century Persian calligraphy of a couplet.

Self-Satisfaction

No sickness worse than fancying thyself perfect
 Can infect thy soul, O arrogant, misguided one!
 Shed many tears of blood from eyes and heart,
 That this self-satisfaction may be driven out.
 The fate of Iblis lay in saying, "I am better than He,"
 And this same weakness lurks in the souls of all creatures.

The Vision of Eternal Truth

The end and object of all negation is to attain to subsequent affirmation, as the negation in the creed, "There is no God," finds its complement and purpose in the affirmation "but God." Just so the purpose of negation of self is to clear the way for the apprehension of the fact that there is no existence but the One. The intoxication of Life and its pleasures and occupations veils the Truth from men's eyes, and they ought to pass on to the spiritual intoxication which makes men beside themselves and lifts them to the beatific vision of eternal Truth.

Study Questions and Activities

1. What is the purpose of the verses, and what method of teaching do they represent?
2. Write a paragraph on one of the short poems, explaining its meaning and applying it to a situation from your experience.
3. Compare the method and style of teaching used in these verses with that of other teaching stories like Kalila and Dimna and al-Kindi, or find examples of mystical writings from other cultures and compare the examples, stories and metaphors they used (refer to the Sufi stories contained in the section of excerpts entitled "Humor, Stories and Tales" in this book).

Verses in Praise of God

Historical Source

Diwan Hafiz (Hafiz's Collection)

Author

Shamsuddin Muhammad Hafiz
(d. ca. 1389CE)

Excerpted from

Selection ❶ Mystic Ode

Horne, Charles F., ed. *The Sacred Books and Early Literature of the East*, Vol. VIII (New York: Parke, Austin & Lipscomb), 1917.

➤ pp. 332-335

Selection ❷ Ghazal

Gray, Elizabeth T., tr. *The Green Sea of Heaven: Fifty Ghazals from the Diwan of Hafiz* (Ashland, OR: White Cloud Press), 1995.

➤ pp. 143

Mystic Ode

In wide Eternity's vast space,
Where no beginning was, wert Thou:
The rays of all-pervading grace
Beneath Thy veil flamed on Thy brow.
Then Love and Nature sprang to birth,
And Life and Beauty filled the earth.
Awake, my soul! pour forth thy praise,
To that great Being anthems raise—
That wondrous Architect who said,
"Be formed," and this great orb was made.
Since first I heard the blissful sound—
"To man My Spirit's breath is given";
I knew, with thankfulness profound,
His sons we are—our Home is heaven.
Oh! give me tidings that shall tell
When I may hope with Thee to dwell,
That I may quit this world of pain,
Nor seek to be its guest again.
A bird of holiness am I,
That from the vain world's net would fly;
Shed, bounteous Lord, one cheering shower
From Thy pure cloud of guiding power,
Before, even yet, the hour is come,
When my dust rises toward its home.

What are our deeds?—all worthless, all—
Oh, bring Devotion's wine,
That strength upon my soul may fall
From drops Thou mad'st divine.
The world's possessions fade and flee,
The only good is—loving Thee!
O happy hour! when I shall rise
From earth's delusions to the skies,
Shall find my soul at rest, and greet
The traces of my loved one's feet:
Dancing with joy, whirled on with speed,
Like motes that gorgeous sunbeams feed,
Until I reach the fountain bright
Whence yonder sun derives his light.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

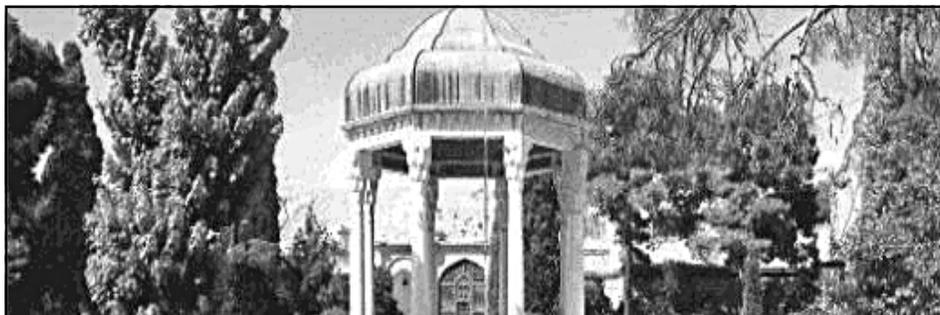
Khwaja Shamsuddin Muhammad Hafiz al-Shirazi was born at Shiraz, in southern Persia, around 1325, and died there around 1389. He lived between the end of the Il-Khan dynasty established by the Mongol Hulegu, the infamous conqueror who sacked Baghdad in 1258, and the equally notorious Timur Lang, or Tamerlane of Central Asia. The city of Shiraz, which was spared the destruction of the period, was a center of Muslim culture and learning in the province of Fars, known for its beautiful river, gardens and tiled architecture. Hafiz received a classical education, and after working for a time as a copyist, enjoyed the patronage of Shah Shuja at Shiraz for 27 years. Though his poetic skills got him offers from far and wide, he stayed in the city he loved.

Hafiz is the name by which the famous Persian poet is known. The word is a title of honor used for a person who is able to recite the entire Qur'an by heart. He was one of the world's greatest masters of lyric verse. His poetry is still recited, and often heard on radio in Iran and other countries where Persian-speaking people live. Hafiz belongs to the tradition of mystical Persian poetry, and like Rumi, uses the typical symbolism that allows the listener to hear in the poetry both a spiritual and a worldly meaning. The last poem is a ghazal, or unique form of rhymed Persian poetry in five to twelve lines.

Earthly And Heavenly Love

A being, formed like thee, of clay,
 Destroys thy peace from day to day;
 Excites thy waking hours with pain;
 Consumes thy sleep with visions vain.
 Thy mind is rapt, thy sense betrayed;
 Thy head upon her foot is laid.
 The teeming earth, the glowing sky,
 Is nothing to her faintest sigh.
 Thine eye sees only her; thy heart
 Feels only her in every part.
 Careless of censure, restless, lost,
 By ceaseless wild emotions tossed;
 If she demand thy soul, 'tis given—
 She is thy life, thy death, thy heaven.
 Since a vain passion, based on air,
 Subdues thee with a power so rare,
 How canst thou marvel those who stray
 Tow'rd the true path are led away,
 'Till, scarce the goal they can descry,
 Whelmed in adoring mystery?
 Life they regard not; for they live
 In Him whose hands all being give:
 The world they quit for Him, who made
 Its wondrous light, its wondrous shade:
 For Him all pleasures they resign,
 And love Him with a love divine!
 On the cupbearer gazing still,
 The cup they break, the wine they spill.
 From endless time their ears have rung
 With words, by angel voices sung;
 "Art thou not bound to God?" they cry;
 And the blest "Yes" whole hosts reply.
 They seem unmoved, but ceaseless
 thought works in their minds,
 with wisdom fraught.

Their feet are earth, but souls of flame
 Dwell in each unregarded frame.
 Such power by steady faith they gain,
 One yell would rend the rocks in twain;
 One word that cities could o'erthrow,
 And spread abroad despair and woe.
 Like winds, unseen, they rove all ways;
 Silent, like stone, they echo praise:
 So rapt, so blest, so filled are they,
 They know not night—they see not day!
 So fair He seems, all things who made,
 The forms He makes to them are shade;
 And, if a beauteous shape they view,
 'Tis his reflection shining through.
 The wise cast not the pearl away,
 Charmed with the shell, whose hues are gay;
 To him pure love is only known,
 Who leaves both worlds for God alone.



Tomb of Hafiz in Shiraz, Iran.

Ghazal

O ignorant one, try to become a master of knowledge.
If you are not a traveler how can you become a guide?

In the school of truth listen carefully to the tutor of love
So that one day, O son, you can become a father.

Like those worthy of the path, wash your hands of the copper of existence
So that you can find the philosopher's stone of love, and become gold.

Sleeping and eating have kept you far from your station.
You will arrive at your self when you give up sleeping and eating.

If the light of the love of truth falls on your heart and soul,
By God, you will become lovelier than the sun in heaven.

For a moment drown yourself in the sea of God and don't believe
That the seven seas will wet a single hair.

From head to toe you will become the light of God
When you lose yourself on His glorious road.

Once God's face becomes the object of your sight
There is no doubt that you will become a master of vision.

When the foundations of your existence become topsy-turvy,
Have nothing in your heart, or you will also become topsy-turvy.

O Hafiz, if desire for union fills your head
You must become dust in the doorway of those who see.



Study Questions and Activities

1. What is the perspective of the mystical poet on the meaning of life? How does the poet use imagery to celebrate God and His creation?
2. In what ways are the two kinds of love similar and different in the view of the poet?
3. How does the word "humility" relate to the message of the ghazal? What images does the poet associate with the quest for knowledge?
4. Choose an image in these poems and describe how the poet uses it to paint a picture and evoke feelings in the reader (or better, listener, since these poems are to be recited in Persian, not read from books).

Maqamat of al-Hamadani

Historical Source

Maqamat al-Hamadani
(The Assemblies by al-Hamadani)

Author

Badi al-Zaman al-Hamadani
(d. 1008CE)

Excerpted from

Prendergast, W.J., tr. *Maqamat al-Hamadani* (London: Curzon Press), 1973.

- pp. 88-92
- pp. 128-129

The Maqamat of the Madirah

Isa Ibn Hisham related to us and said:

“I was in Basra and with me was Abu’l-Fath al-Iskanderi, the man of eloquence who summons it and it responds to him, the man of rhetoric who commands it and it obeys him. We were present with him at a merchant’s entertainment and there was placed before us madirah which did credit to the townsfolk, oscillated in a large dish, announced health and testified to the Khalifate of Mu’awiya, (may God have mercy upon him!) in a dish which dazzled the eye and wherein beauty was bestirring itself. When it took its place upon the table and its home in the hearts, Abu’l-Fath al-Iskanderi arose cursing it and its owner, manifesting repugnance to it and its eater and reviling it and its cook. We thought he was joking, but behold! the reverse was the fact, and jest was the essence of earnestness. He withdrew from the table and abandoned cooperation with his brethren. So we ordered it to be removed and it was taken away, and with it the hearts. Eyes travelled behind it, mouths watered for it, lips were licked for it, livers were inflamed after it and hearts followed in its trail. But we associated ourselves with him in separation from it and we enquired of him the fact concerning it.

He answered: ‘My story regarding it is more extensive than my misfortune in it and, if I were to relate it to you, I should not be secure from hate and from wasting time.’ We said: ‘Produce it.’ He said: ‘While I was in Baghdad a merchant invited me to partake of madirah and he clung to me with the clinging of a pressing creditor, and of the dog to the companions of al-Raqim¹, till I accepted his invitation to it, so we started. Now the whole way he was praising his wife and ready to sacrifice his heart’s blood for her, eulogising her cleverness in her art, and her excellent taste in cooking, saying, ‘Sir, if

thou wert to see her with the apron tied round her waist, going about the rooms, from the oven to the cooking pots, and from the cooking pots to the oven, blowing the fire with her mouth, pounding the spices with her hands; and if thou wert to see the smoke discolouring that beautiful face and affecting that smooth cheek, thou wouldst behold a spectacle at which eyes would be

dazed. I love her because she loves me, and it is a mark of a man’s good fortune that he should be given a lawful helpmate and that he should be aided by his spouse, and especially when she is of his own clay. In near relationship she is my paternal uncle’s daughter, her clay is my clay, her town is my town, her paternal uncles are my paternal uncles and her origin is my origin. But in disposition she is more generous than I am, and in form more beautiful.

He bored me with his wife’s virtues till we reached his quarter, whereupon he said: ‘Sir, seest thou this quarter? It is the best quarter in Baghdad. Worthy men vie with one another for settling in it, and the great ones jealously compete with one another for finding quarters in it; but none but merchants live in it. Verily a man is known by his neighbour. My house is in the middle of its belt of buildings and is the point in the centre of its circle. How much dost thou think, Sir, was spent upon each house in it? Say

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Badi al-Zaman (“Wonder of the Age”) al-Hamadani is the 10th century originator of the type of literature called *Maqamat*, or “Assemblies.” They consist of anecdotes in the life of a picaresque, or rogue hero, a trickster who reveals much about the society in which he lived. The stories are entertaining—containing word plays and literary tricks—but also served satirical and moral purposes. The *Maqamat* genre has been a part of Arabic literature for about 1,000 years. Some scholars of literature have seen in it the forerunner of picaresque novels in European Spain, of which *Don Quixote* is the most famous example.

1. An allusion to the Qur’an, and the story of “the companions of the cave”; also known as the biblical story of the Seven Sleepers, in which a group of Christians sleep in a cave with their dog, and are resurrected after 100 years.

approximately, if thou dost not know for certain.’ I replied: ‘Much.’ Said he: ‘Good gracious, what a terrible mistake! Thou sayest “much” only! and he heaved a deep sigh and said: ‘Praise Him who knoweth all things!’ And we reached the door of his house and he said: ‘This is my house, how much dost thou reckon I spent on this window? By heavens! I spent upon it beyond my means and what exceeded the limits of poverty. How dost thou find its workmanship and shape? I adjure thee by God, hast thou ever seen its like? Observe the fine finish of it. Ponder its curves which seem to have been drawn with a compass. Regard the skill of the carpenter in the make of this door. Of how many planks did he make it? Say, How do I know? It is made of teakwood from one piece which was neither worm-eaten nor rotten. When it is moved it creaks, and, when it is struck with the finger, it rings. Who made it, Sir? Abu Ishaq ibn Muhammad the Basarian made



it, and he is, by Heavens! a man of clean reputation, well acquainted with the art of making doors, deft of hand in the work. What a splendid man that is! By my life I shall employ none but him for such work as this. Now this knocker; dost thou observe it? I bought it in the fancy bazaar from 'Imran, the curiosity dealer, for three Muizzi dinars. How much brass does it contain, Sir? There are in it six pounds. It revolves on a pin in the door. I adjure thee by God, turn it, then sound it and observe it. By the preciousness of my life to thee, do not buy knockers except from him, for he sells only the best.’ Then he knocked at the door, we entered the vestibule and he said: ‘May God prosper thee, O house! and not destroy thee, O wall! How strong are thy walls, substantial thy superstructure, and how firm thy foundations! By heavens! observe its staircase, the entrance and the exit, and ask me ‘How didst thou get it?’

How many devices didst devise before thou didst appropriate it?’ I had a neighbour surnamed Abu Suleyman, who lived in this quarter. He had of live stock more than enclosure could contain, and of dead stock more than could be weighed. He died—may God have mercy upon him!—and left a son who squandered it on wine and music and scattered it between backgammon and dice. I was afraid lest excessive need should compel him to dispose of the house and he should sell it while in a state of vexation, or expose it to ruin, in which case I should see the chance of buying it lost, and wear myself out with vain regrets to my dying day. So I took some stuff not in demand, carried it to him and offered it to him, and I bargained with him to buy it on credit; and the unfortunate one counts credit a gift, and the promise breaker considers it a present. And I asked him for a bond for the goods, so he granted it, and signed it in my favour. Then I pretended to be indifferent in demanding payment till the extremities of the garment of his state became frayed, and then I came to him and asked him to pay the debt. He begged for time and I respited him. He next asked for

some stuff besides that; so I brought it and asked him to mortgage his house to me as a security in my hands, and he did so. Then I gradually involved him in bargains till it came to selling the house and it was acquired by me through rising fortune, and helping fate, and the strength of my arm. *There is many a toiler for an idle sitter.* And, praise God, I am exceedingly lucky, and in such matters worthy of commendation, and this will suffice thee, Sir. For many nights I had been sleeping in my house with those therein when lo! there was a knock at the door, I said, who is the wandering nocturnal visitor?’ And behold it was a woman with a pearl necklace with a surface as clear as water, and in fineness like unto the mirage, which she offered for sale! So I snatched it from her with a plundering snatch and bought it for a low price and soon there will be derived from it a manifest gain and plentiful profit, by the help of God, the most High, and thy good fortune. I have only related this story to thee that thou mightest know the propitiousness of my fortune in commerce.’ Luck brings forth water from stones.’ Great God! None can inform thee more truly than thyself and naught is nearer to thee than thy yesterday. I bought this mat in an auction. It was taken from the house of the Furat family at the time of sequestration and plundering. For a long time I had been seeking one like it, but had found none. But time is pregnant and it is not known what it will bring forth. Then it so happened I was at the Taq gate and this was being offered for sale in the streets. So I weighed out for it such and such a sum of dinars I adjure thee by God observe its fineness, softness, workmanship, and colour, for it is of great worth. Its like is found but rarely. If thou hast heard of Abu Imran, the matweaver, it is his handiwork. And he has a son who will succeed him and who is now in his shop. Fine mats can only be had of him. By my life! do not buy mats except at his shop. Now the righteous man is his brethren’s counsellor, especially of him whose person is rendered inviolable by eat-

Abu Zayd, the rogue hero.

ing at his table. Let us return to the story of the Madirah for noontide has approached. 'Boy! the basin and the water!' I said 'Great God! perhaps deliverance is nigh, and escape has become easy.' The slave came forward. He asked: 'Dost thou see this slave, he is of Greek origin, brought up in 'Iraq. Step forward boy, uncover thy head, bare thy calf, tuck up thy sleeves, expose thy teeth, advance, retire!' The slave did so. Said the merchant: who bought him? 'By Heavens! Abu'l-'Abbas bought him from the slave dealer. Put down the basin and bring the ewer.' The slave put it down and the merchant picked it up, turned it round, looked it over, sounded it and said: 'Look at this brass, it seems like a burning brand, or a piece of gold. Its brass is Syrian and it is of Iraq workmanship. It is not a worn-out curio. It has known and made the round of the palaces of kings; consider its beauty and ask me 'When didst thou buy it?' I bought it, by Heavens! in the famine year and I have preserved it for this hour. Boy, the ewer!' And he brought it. And the merchant took it up, turned it over and said: 'The spout is of one piece with it. This ewer is fit only for this basin, and this basin is only suitable for this company and this company suits only this house and this house is not adorned except by this guest. Boy! pour the water, for food time is nigh. I adjure thee by God, dost thou see this water? How pure it is! Blue as the eye of the cat, clear as a crystal wand, drawn from the Euphrates, and it is used after standing for the night when it has become like the flame of a torch and translucent as a tear. And the importance is not in the water carrier, but in the vessel. Nothing proves to thee the purity of the vessel more correctly than the purity of the liquid. Now this napkin, ask of me its story. It is a fabric of Jurjan and a production of Arrajan. It fell to my lot and I bought it. My wife took a portion of it for drawers and I made some of it into a napkin. Her drawers took twenty cubits and I forcibly wrested this much from her hand, gave it to the embroiderer to make and embroider it as thou

seest it. Then I brought it back from the market and stored it away in a box and preserved it for refined guests. The common Arabs have not defiled it with their hands, nor women with the corners of their eyes, for every precious thing has its day and every instrument its people. Boy! the table! for the delay is great, and the bowls! for the discussion has been long, and the food! for words have been multiplied.' The slave brought the table. The merchant then turned it over sounded it with his fingers, and bit it with his teeth and said: 'May God prosper Baghdad, how excellent are her goods and skilful her artisans! By Heavens! observe this table, look at the breadth of its surface, the lightness of its weight, the soundness of its timber and the beauty of its make.' Said I: 'This is the make but when is the meal?' He answered: 'Immediately. Boy! quick, the food! But the table, its legs are a part of it.' Said Abu'l-Fath, 'My spirit boiled, and I said: 'There remaineth the baking and its implements, the bread and its properties, the wheat and whence the grain was first bought, and how the transport was hired for it, in which mill it was ground and the vessel in which it was kneaded, which oven was heated and which baker was hired; and there remaineth the wood, whence it was gathered, when it was brought in, how it was stacked till it was seasoned and how it was stored until it dried. Then there are left the baker and his description, the apprentice and his qualification, the flour and its praise, the leaven and its tale, the salt and its savour; and then there remain, the dishes and who had them, how he procured them, who used them and who made them. Then the vinegar, how its grapes were picked, or how its ripe dates were bought, how its press was plastered, how the essence was extracted, how its jar was besmeared with pitch and how much its vat is worth. Then there remain the vegetables and the devices whereby they were picked, in which vegetable garden they were arranged, and the skill displayed to produce them free from impurities. Then there remaineth the

Madirah and how its meat was bought and its extra fat was got, how its cooking pot was set up, how its fire was kindled, how its spices were pounded, till, finally, it was well-cooked and its gravy became consistent. But this is a mighty matter and a never-ending affair?' 'So I arose. He asked: 'Whither dost thou intend to go?' I replied, 'I intend to go to discharge a need.' He enquired: 'Sir, dost thou want a privy that makes the spring quarters of the prince, and the autumn residence of the wazir appear contemptible? Its top has been plastered with gypsum and its bottom with mortar, its roof has been made flat and its floor paved with marble. The ant slips down from its wall and cannot cling, and the fly tries to walk upon its floor but slides. It has a door whose venetians are made alternately of teak and ivory and joined together with an excellent joining so that the guest desires to eat in it.' Said I: 'Eat thou from this bag, the privy was not in the reckoning.' And I went out towards the door, quickened my pace and began to run, while he was following me and shouting: 'Abu'l-Fath! the Madirah!' And the boys thought Madirah was a title of mine, and took up his cry. So out of excessive vexation I threw a stone at one of them, but a man received it on his turban and it sank into his skull. Therefore I was attacked with sandals, old and new, and with cuffs good and bad; and then I was placed in prison and remained in that unfortunate plight for two years. So I vowed not to eat Madirah as long as I lived. Now ye men of Hamadhan am I unjust in this?' Said 'Isa ibn Hisham: 'So we accepted his excuse, we vowed the same vow and said: "Long since did Madirah sin against the noble and prefer the base to the good."'



The Maqamat of the Spindle

Isa Ibn Hisham related to us and said:

I entered Basra when I was wide of fame and abundant of reputation, and there came to me two young men. One of them said: “May God strengthen the Shaykh! This youth entered our house and seized a kitten² with vertigo in its head, with the sacred cord and a whirling sphere around its middle.

Gentle of voice, if it cries;
quick to return, if it flees;
long of skirt, if it pulls;
slender of waist,
weak of chest, of the size of a plump sheep.

Staying in the town, yet not abandoning travel.
If it be given a thing, it returns it.
If it be tasked with a journey, it goes energetically, and,
if it is made to draw the rope, it lengthens it.
There it is, bone and wood.
It contains property, immoveable and moveable,
a past and a future.”

Said the young man: “Yes, may God strengthen the Shaykh, for he forcibly took from me:

Pointed is his spearhead, sharp are his teeth,
His progeny are his helpers, dissolving union is his business.
He assails his master, clinging to his moustache;
Inserting his fangs into old and young.
Agreeable, of goodly shape, slim and abstemious.
A shooter, with shafts abundant, around the beard and moustache.’ ”

So I said to the first: “Give him back the comb in order that he may return to thee the spindle.”



2. Here, the riddle begins, as he describes the thing in various different ways. It is not a kitten, but a soft, furry thing (wool spindle) that does such and such...

Maqamat of al-Hariri

Historical Source

Maqamat al-Hariri
(The Assemblies by al-Hariri)

Author

Abu Muhammad al-Qasim
al-Hariri (d. 1122CE)

Excerpted from

Amina Shah, tr. *The Assemblies of al-Hariri* (London: Octagon Press), 1980.

➤ pp. 38-40

The Twenty-Fifth Assembly: The Encounter at Kerej

I was Wintering in Kerej (between Isfahan and Hamadan) by reason of the fact that I was there for the repayment of a debt, and I experienced its fierce winter and its scorching cold, that which afflicted me with sorest torment.

I sat as long as I could beside my fire, and did not venture out except for some necessity, until one day I had to go to a certain place on business. I saw in the street a large crowd, surrounding a poor old man, who in all that cold, was almost bare; he was turbaned with a kerchief, and had just a small piece of linen around his loins.

However, he was reciting, and these were his words:

“O people, nothing can announce to you my poverty more truly than this, my nakedness in the season cold.

So from my outward misery, judge the inward condition, and what is hidden of my state; And be aware of a change in the truce of fortune;

For know that I was once illustrious of rank, I had command of plenty, and of a blade that severed;

My yellow gold served my friends, and my lances destroyed my foes; Then, my habitation was razed, my camels’ milkflow delayed,

My price and my song went down among men, And I became the lean beast of poverty and need,

Naked of back, stripped of my covering,

As though I were a spindle in my nakedness. Now, is there anyone here who is a deep sea of bounty, lord of an ample robe,

Who will cloak me either with embroidered garment or ragged coat, Seeking the face of God, and not my thanks?”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Al-Hariri (1030-1090CE) was born and lived his life in Basra, the home of Arabic grammar and philology (the study of language). During the 11th and 12th centuries, Basra was wealthy and cultured, and nowhere else in the world was there such a concentration of literary commentators and critics, rhetoricians (specialists in public speaking) and grammarians.

Arabic is a very rich and complex language, both in grammar and vocabulary, and like his Basran contemporaries, al-Hariri competed to explore and incorporate in his work the fanciest possibilities of the language. Al-Hariri adopted the form of the *maqamat* from al-Hamadani, and it became one of the most famous versions of that type of literature. Al-Hariri’s language is famous for astonishing feats of puns, tricks, and wordcrafting. For example, he wrote a passage that could be read either forward or backward, another with words that all had a double meaning, and yet another that alternates lines of Arabic letters having dots with lines of letters that have none.

Al-Hariri contributed to our picture of life during the heyday of Muslim culture in the region. Not only do the episodes in the life of Abu Zayd describe dress, habits and items in common use, but al-Hariri’s famous *Maqamat* was published many times in illustrated form. The paintings show lively scenes from everyday life—city and village scenes, traveling by ship and caravan, *masjid* (mosque) and marketplace. Among the most famous of such illustrations are by the 12th century painter al-Wasiti of Iraq. Several copies exist as rare books in museums and libraries.

Then he added: “O you lords of wealth who trail in furred robes, he that is endowed with good let him expend; he that is able to bestow, let him bestow. For the world is a treacherous place, and fortune trips; ability is the visit of a vision, and opportunity is a summer cloud. For, by Allah, I have often met with its winter, and prepared its necessities before its coming. But today, sirs, my arm is my pillow, my skin is my garment, the hollow of my hand is my dish. So let him that is wise consider my estate, and be beforehand with the changing of the nights, for the happy man is he who takes warning of his fellow, and makes preparation for his journey.”

“You have certainly displayed your scholarship,” said one, “Now tell us your pedigree.”

“A curse on him who boasts of mouldering bones!” said he, “There is no glory but in piety and choice scholarship. By your life, man is but the son of his own day, according as that day displays itself, he is not the son of his yesterday. There is no boast in rotten bones; there is only the glory of him who seeks glory through himself.”

Then he sat down, and shrank, shivering, and said “O God, who overwhelm with Your Bounty, and have asked us to ask You, send Your blessings on Mohammed and his House, and help me against the terrors of the cold; and appoint some generous man who shares even though it be only a scrap.” So, when he had thus disclosed himself, the glances of my eye began to test him. I saw that it was Abu Zayd, and that his going naked was but a noose for his prey.

He realized that I had recognized him, and avoided my face, saying further: “I swear by the shade of night and the moon, by the stars and the moonlight, that no one shall cloak me but one whose disposition is worthy, whose face is imbued with the dew of benevolence.”

I was grieved at his shivering, so I took off the fur coat that was my plumage by day and my covering by night, and gave it to him. He recited:

“Well done he who has clothed me with a fur coat, which shall be my protection from shivering. He has clothed me with it, preserving my heart’s blood...may he be preserved from the harm of men and Jinn!

Today he shall deck himself with my praise, tomorrow he shall be decked with the silk of Paradise!”

Now, when he had fascinated the company with his excellence, they threw to him furred robes and silken padded coats, as if the weight of them were too much to bear, and he could scarcely lift them and carry them himself. I followed him, and said “That was a sharp wind indeed which froze you, but do not go naked again like that.” He replied “Fie on you! Swiftmess to blame does not belong to the just; do not hasten to censure, for it is wrong; do not prosecute when you have no knowledge of the case. For by Him who has given the light of hoariness, and made the tomb of Medina sweet, had I not stripped myself I should have gone home a failure, to an empty wardrobe! But,” and here he frowned, “do you not know that it is my nature to pass from prey to prey, yet you check me, and resist me. You make me lose double of what

you have profited me; then spare me (God save you) from your vain talk, shut on me the door of your earnestness and jest.”

But I pulled him with the string of playfulness and said: “By Allah, had I not kept your secret, and revealed you to the crowd, you would not have got one gift! You would not have come away more coated than an onion So now recompense me for my goodness, and for the covering I gave you, either by returning to me my fur coat or by giving me some advice about how to keep warm in winter.” He looked at me very angrily and said “As for returning your fur coat, that is as impossible as restoring the yesterday that is past, or the dead man that is gone. But I will give you this which will help you:

‘Winter comes and its needs to me are seven, when the rain confines me from business:

A home, a purse, a stove, a drink after the roast meat, a pleasant wife, and clothing.’

“My dear friend, surely an answer like that is better than a cloak that warms, so be content with what you have learned and depart.” So I parted from him, and my fur coat’s departure left me shivering all the rest of the winter.

Study Questions and Activities

1. Write a short paragraph giving your impression of the standard of living for a merchant in 10th century Baghdad according to the “Maqama of the Madirah.” What amenities do they enjoy that we have today?
2. What are some of the characteristics of the society satirized in the character of the merchant, his household and his guest in the “Maqama of the Madirah”?
3. At what social classes are the *Maqamat* aimed? What evidence from the literature leads you to your conclusions?
4. How do rural and urban ways of life mix in the last two *Maqamat* (“The Spindle” and “Encounter at Kherej”)?
5. Invent your own *Maqama*, using a contemporary character and a situation from modern life.
6. What modern types of entertainment and/or literature correspond to the *Maqamat*?

Allegorical Tales from Sufi Sources

 Historical Source
Oral Tradition

 Author
Transmitted via oral tradition

 Excerpted from
Shah, Idries. *Caravan of Dreams*
(London: Curzon Press), 1973.
➤ pp. 156, 180-181

The Camel and the Tent

This tale is handed down from the Sufi Shaykh Abd al-Aziz of Makkah, who died in the seventh century. He is said to have been given the “elixir of life” by the Prophet Muhammad, whose companion he was, and to be still alive, in one sense or another, nourished by this magical potion.

Other versions say that the “potion” was in fact an exercise called “imprisoning the breath,” which—although dangerous for those who do not know how to use it—enables one to put the body into a state of suspended animation.

The method is used by the followers of several Sufi orders; though Abd al-Aziz’s affiliation was with the Qalandari (whom some say he founded) and the Chishti orders.

A bedouin, making a long desert trek, pitched his small black tent and lay down to sleep. As the night grew colder his camel woke him up with a nudge. ‘Master, it is cold. May I put my nose inside the tent to warm it?’ The traveler agreed, and settled down to sleep again. Scarcely an hour had passed, however, before the camel began to feel colder. ‘Master, it is much colder. Can I put my head inside the tent?’

First his head was admitted to the tent, then, on the same argument, his neck. Finally, without asking, the camel heaved his whole bulk under the cloth. When he had, as he thought, settled himself, the bedouin was lying beside the camel, with no covering at all. The camel had uprooted the tent, which hung, totally inadequately, across his hump.

‘Where has the tent gone?’ asked the confused camel.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Idries Shah is a modern writer born in 1924 to a family that traces its lineage back to Prophet Muhammad and the pre-Islamic Sasanian Emperors of Persia and beyond, to 122 BCE. He has written many books on travel, history and literature, but is best known for his writings on Sufi, or mystical Muslim, thought, especially as it applies to both Eastern and Western culture. The background paragraphs that precede each allegorical tale, Idries Shah identifies the source of the tale and gives other relevant information about it.

The Ants and the Pen

This allegory, based upon an argument of Rumi’s, was used by the teacher Saad al-Din Jabravi, the founder of the Saadi Sufi order.

The intention in this version is to admit the usefulness of the scientific method of investigation, while

insisting that another kind of knowledge (literacy) not normally associated with man, must be acquired in order to make sense of life.

Jabravi died in Damascus in 1335. His tales are still current, accompanied by the argument that allegory is essential for the human mind to envisage ideas which cannot be captured by any other method.

An ant one day strayed across a piece of paper and saw a pen writing in fine, black strokes. ‘How wonderful this is!’ said the ant. ‘This remarkable thing, with a life of its own, makes squiggles on this beautiful surface, to such an extent and with such energy that it is equal to the efforts of all the ants in the world. And the squiggles which it makes! These resemble ants: not one, but millions all run together!’

He repeated his ideas to another ant, who was equally interested. He praised the powers of observation and reflection of the first ant.

But another ant said: 'Profiting, it must be admitted, by your efforts, I have observed this strange object. But I have determined that it is not the master of this work. You failed to notice that this pen is attached to certain other objects, which surround it and drive it on its way. These should be considered as the moving factor, and given the credit.' Thus were fingers discovered by the ants.

But another ant, after a long time, climbed over the fingers and realized that they comprised a hand, which he thoroughly explored, after the manner of ants scrambling all over it.

He returned to his fellows: 'Ants' he cried, 'I have news of importance for you. Those smaller objects are a part of a large one. It is this which gives motion to them.'

But then it was discovered that the hand was attached to an arm, and the arm to a body, and that there were two hands, and that there were feet which did no writing.

The investigations continue. Of the mechanics of the writing, the ants have a fair idea. Of the meaning and intention of the writing, and how it is ultimately controlled, they will not find out by their customary method of investigation. Because they are 'literate'.

Study Questions and Activities

1. Why are allegories, parables, or stories with a moral, useful tools for explaining a point?
2. What modern scientific method is related to the Physician Shadrach's way of diagnosing the Princess's ailment? Why do you think it worked for him? Why did the father react as he did, and how did the physician take advantage of the situation through a psychological "cure"?
3. The expression the "camel's nose in the tent" is a fairly common journalistic allusion that was passed down to modern times through this story. Think of an example from our times that is appropriate to the meaning of this story [i.e., a situation that corresponds either to the surprise of the camel or the predicament of the traveller].
4. What does the author of "The Ants and the Pen" mean by saying that the ants are "literate" creatures? What method might the ants employ to discover the meaning of the writing? What do scientific investigation of the world and mystical pondering of the Creation have in common? Identify famous philosophers of various cultures who have concerned themselves with the problem of human perception by the senses. What is the importance of "intuition" in scientific investigation? Compare this story to an ongoing scientific investigation of our times.

The Book of the Superiority of Dogs Over Some of Those Who Wear Clothes

Historical Source

Fadl al-Kilab ala Kathir Min Man Labisa al-Thiyab (Superiority of Dogs Over Some Who Wear Clothes)

Author

Muhammad Ibn Marzuban
(d. 921CE)

Excerpted from

Smith, G.R. and M.A.S. Abdel Halim, eds. & trans. *The Book of the Superiority of Dogs Over Some of Those Who Wear Clothes* (Warminster, England: Aris & Phillips, Ltd.), 1978).

➤ pp. 18-21

An old trustworthy shaykh who had been on pilgrimage one year said: "We went off with our baggage out as far as al-Yasiriyyah and sat down by some fresh water to have our lunch. There was a dog lying near, so we threw him some of our food. Then we went on our way and stopped at Nahr al-Malik. When we brought out the provisions, there was this self-same dog lying near us, as on the previous day. I said to the servants: 'This dog has followed us, so it is our duty to provide for him. Take care of him.' So the servants shook out the cloth in front of the dog and he ate. He kept on following us from stop to stop in this manner and whenever anyone approached our camels and our baggage, the dog barked noisily. So we felt secure from robbers and such like until we reached Makkah. Then we decided to go down to the Yemen on business and the dog accompanied us as far as Quba. We returned to Baghdad and he was still with us!"



Another story was told by Muhammad b. Khallad who said: "A man came to a certain sultan who had in his company the ruler of Armenia. When the man was going home, he passed by a cemetery where there was a grave over which a mausoleum had been built. Inscribed on it was: 'This is the tomb of a dog. He who wants to know his story can go to such and such a village where there is someone to give him the information.'

The man enquired about the village and was directed to it. Off he went. He asked the villagers and they told him where he could find an old man. So he sent a message to

the old man and asked him to come to see him. There he was, over one hundred years old! The man questioned him and he replied: 'Yes, what happened was this. There was a great king who took pleasure in recreation, hunting and traveling. He had a dog whom he had personally reared and to whom he had given a name. The dog never

left the king, wherever he went. When the king was having lunch or dinner, he fed the dog from his own food. One day the king was going off to one of his hunting lodges and said to one of his servants: "Tell the cook to prepare a milk pudding for us. I just feel like a milk pudding, so go and make a good one for me." Off he went to his hunting lodge. The cook brought in some milk and made a big pudding for the king, but forgot to cover it up. He then busied himself cooking something else. Now there appeared through one of the cracks in the walls a viper which sipped from the milk and spat poison into the pudding while the dog lay watching. If he could have warded off viper, he would have done so, but a dog has no stratagem against the viper and the snake! The king also had an old deaf servant woman who had seen what the viper had done. Now the king came back from the hunt at the end of the day and said: "Servants, first bring me the milk

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ibn Marzuban, or Muhammad Ibn Khalaf, died in about 921CE, collected numerous such stories and poems about the excellence of some canine companions of man. While according to Islamic law, Muslims should keep dogs only for useful purposes, Islam requires kindness and forbids cruelty all of to God's creatures. Ibn al-Marzuban explains with vigor how the dog remains as he has always been, man's consistently loyal friend, the guardian of his property and family and his able hunter.

pudding." When it was put before him, the deaf woman made a sign to them, but they did not understand what she was saying. The dog barked and howled, but they took no notice of him. He kept on howling to let them know what he meant. Then the king threw the dog some food as he did every day, but the dog would not touch it and kept on howling. So the king said to his servants: "Take him away. There must be something wrong with him!" The king then reached for the milk. When the dog saw him intending to eat, he sprang into the middle of the table, pushed his mouth into the milk and lapped from it. He fell down dead and his flesh began to fall away piece by piece. The king was aghast at the dog and what he had done. The deaf woman again made signs to those who were there and then they realised by his action what she had meant. The king said to his drinking companions and courtiers: "A creature who has saved my life by giving his own is indeed worthy of some recompense. None but I shall carry him away and bury him." So the king buried the dog between his own father and his mother and built a mausoleum over him, inscribing it with what you have read. This is the story of that dog."



Illustration of two dogs in a manuscript of Ibn Marzuban's work.

Study Questions and Activities

1. Compare these anecdotes with some modern equivalents about heroic exploits of animals in journalism, books and videos.
2. Relate a story you have heard about extraordinary feats by real-life pets or wild animals. Did you witness the events first-hand? If not, do you believe the story, or do you believe its narrator may have exaggerated?
3. What qualities of human nature makes such animal stories universally popular?

Kalila wa Dimna

Historical Source

Kalila wa Dimna
(Kalila and Dimna)

Author

Ibn al-Muqaffa (d. 756CE)

Excerpted from

Atil, Esin. *Kalila wa Dimna: Selected Stories* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press) 1981.

➤ pp. 17-26

The Rogue and the Dupe

Once upon a time, a rogue and a dupe were partners in business. On the road they chanced upon a purse containing a thousand dinars. They both had to return home, and as they were approaching their town, they sat down to divide the dinars.

So the dupe said to the rogue: "You take half, and give me half."

Meanwhile the rogue had been thinking of some means to get away with all of it; so he said: "Let's not divide it, for sharing and having in common is closer to honesty and sincerity. Let's bury the remainder in a safe place so that when we need expense money, we can both come and take what we need."

The dupe said: "Yes."

So they took a trifling sum from the dinars, and buried the rest at the foot of a large tree of the tallest sort. Then the rogue reneged about the dinars and took them, patting the earth back into place.

Some months later, the dupe said to the rogue: "We need some expense money, so let's go off and take our expenses out of the dinars."

So they both went off to the tree. They dug up where the dinars had been, and didn't find a thing.

The rogue grabbed his hair and pulled it out, beating his breast and shouting: "Nobody can trust anyone! Even one's brother and friend will deceive you! You came back and took the dinars!"

The dupe began to deny it and swear up and down, while the rogue kept on till he became violent and said to him: "Who'd take it besides you? Would anyone other than us get wind of it?"

Then the rogue took hold of the dupe and went off to the judge with him. He told him the whole story, and insisted that the dupe had taken the dinars.

So the judge said to him: "Have you any proof about this?"

The rogue said: "Yes, the tree at whose roots the dinars lay, will bear witness for me."

The judge was surprised at his claim that the tree would bear him witness, and reproached him for what he had said, ordering him to get bail for himself. And he said to the bondholder: "Be sure to bring him along tomorrow so that what he claims about the tree bearing witness can be straightened out."

The rogue went off home and told his father the story, saying: "Father, I only asked witness of the tree because of something that occurred to me, and I'm relying on you to bear out what I claim. If you want, we can keep the dinars, and earn as much again from the dupe."

ABOUT THE SELECTION

Ibn al-Muqaffa (d. 757CE) was a Persian convert to Islam. A member of the secretarial class that helped administer the Muslim state, he was also an important contributor to the development of worldly literature in Arabic language. He translated *Kalilah wa Dimnah*, named after the two main characters, from Persian, but the source of the stories was Indian. They were derived from the Sanskrit *Fables of Bidpai*. This is only one version of the famous animal fables that came to Arabic literature from Indian sources—many through the famous Persian Academy of Jundishapur, which continued under Muslim rule. These tales and other Indian literature became popular in early Abbasid times. The stories are part of a "frame tale," in which two jackals offer moral instruction and practical advice on getting along in the society of various animals. The animals, of course, represent human society, and contain much satire as well as wisdom. Some of the stories are quite universal, being found also in collections like the classical Greek *Aesop's Fables*. *Kalilah and Dimnah* also found their way to Europe, where they influenced development of fables and frame tales. There are many translations of *Kalilah wa Dimnah* into English, many of them nicely illustrated as children's stories.

The rogue's father said: "What are you ordering me to do?"

The rogue said: "I purposely chose the largest sort of tree in existence for the dinars. It has a hollow trunk you can get into without being seen, and I buried them at its foot. Then I went back, took them, and accused the dupe. Now I want you to go off at night and get in there. When the judge comes and asks the tree for its testimony, you will speak from inside and say: "The dupe took the dinars!"

The rascal's father said: "Son, a trick may catch the trickster; you're planning something like the duck plotted."

The scoundrel said: "How was that, father?"

The rascal's father said:



Dimna, the Jackal, talks to the King of the Beasts.

The Smart Duck

Once upon a time a duck lived near a snake, and whenever the duck had any ducklings, the snake would come to her nest and eat her young. Now the duck was well-fixed there and unable to leave, and she was saddened by what the snake was doing to her. A crab found out about that, and came to say:

"What makes you so sad?"

So she told him what was happening.

The crab said to her: "Do you want me to show you something to help you get rid of the snake?"

She said: "What is that?"

The crab took her to a cavern across the way and said: "Do you see this cave? Now here lives a weasel who hates snakes; so gather a lot of fish and then place pieces all the way from the snake's hole to the weasel's. The weasel will eat the first fish, and the next, until he comes to the snake's hole and kills it."

The duck did that, and the weasel came up to the snake and killed it. Then he went back, sniffing along as usual, till he chanced upon the duck's nest, since it was so close to the other. So he ate the duck and her ducklings.

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continued

"Now I have made this story up to teach you that whoever is not sure about what trick he is playing, finds that it comes back upon him worse than he played it on some one else."

The rogue said: "I have heard this story, but don't be so frightened, for the matter is easier than you think."

So the old man gave in to his son, followed him to the tree, and climbed inside. Next morning the judge, the rogue, and the dupe arrived at the tree, and the judge asked it: "Have you any evidence?"

The old man answered from inside the tree: "Yes. The dupe took the dinars!"

The judge was extremely surprised at this, and wanted to get to the bottom of

it. So he started looking about, and decided that some one should walk around the tree and glance into the hollow. He looked inside and didn't see anything, since the man had already pulled himself up above the spot where the peephole was. The judge called for some wood, and it was gathered. Then he asked for a light, and started to smoke out the hollow.

The rogue's father endured it for an hour. Then his strength failed, and he shouted and called for help. The judge ordered him pulled out when he was at the point of death; while the rogue was punished and then fined. Then he went off home with his father on his back, and the dupe went away with his dinars."

The Lion and the Ox

Dabshalim, the king of India, asked his minister and advisor, who was a philosopher, to tell him stories that contained instructions on governing his kingdom. His first request to the philosopher was to explain how a false and cunning person can come between two friends and cause dissention, turning their love and trust to hatred and enmity. The philosopher began by telling the story of the merchant and his three sons.

There was a well-to-do merchant with three extravagant and irresponsible sons. When the sons squandered their father's money, the merchant admonished them and gave them the following advice: everyone desired three things in life—ample sustenance, respect, and provisions for the life hereafter—which could be obtained through four means: to amass wealth by lawful procedures, put this wealth to good use, care for one's own interests, and be generous to the less fortunate.

The sons followed their father's counsel, and the oldest set out on a trading venture with a wagon drawn by two oxen called Shanzabeh and Banzabeh. When they reached a marshy terrain, Shanzabeh, exhausted from pulling the heavy wagon, got stuck in the mud. The young merchant, who was in a hurry, decided to leave the ox with an attendant assigned to free the animal. The attendant waited for a while and then left the ox. When he had caught up with his master, he lied and said that the ox had died.

Meanwhile Shanzabeh was able to free himself from the marsh. He found a good pasture near a stream and soon recovered his strength and became fat and healthy. Although he had plenty of food and water, Shanzabeh was lonely. He would bellow pathetically whenever he felt sad and alone.

Not too far from Shanzabeh's meadow was the court of the lion, which included two jackals, Kalila and Dimna, who were employed at the royal gate. The jackals were crafty and bright as well as wise and learned. Dimna was particularly ambitious and not at all content with his present position. He was constantly on the lookout to improve his status and be closer to the king.

Every time the lion heard the ox bellow, he cringed in fright, not knowing who was making this dreadful sound. Ashamed of his fear, the lion hid in his den whenever he heard the noise. Dimna noticed that the lion kept close to his den and rarely ventured far from court. He requested an audience with the king and presented himself. He started telling stories, which put the lion at ease, and quickly won the king's confidence. But as soon as the bellow of the ox was heard, the lion became terrified and confessed that he was afraid of whoever was making this noise. Dimna understood the lion's dilemma and began to tell him the story of the fox and the drum.



A hungry fox was walking through the forest when he heard a deafening sound. It was coming from a large drum suspended from a tree; whenever the wind blew, branches hit the drum, thereby producing a loud noise. The fox followed the direction of the sound and when he saw the drum, he attacked it, thinking that it contained food. When he found nothing inside, he realized that it was the insignificant things that were bigger in size and louder in sound.



Dimna finished the story of the fox and the drum by saying that perhaps the terrible sound disturbing the lion was also from an insignificant creature. He volunteered to go and seek its source.

The lion anxiously awaited Dimna's return. When the jackal came back, he reported that the noise was coming from an ox who was big but lacked the power of the lion; he also said that the lion had no reason to fear this creature. The lion, greatly relieved, asked to see this ox. Dimna went once again to the meadow and told Shanzabeh that the lion, king of the beasts, summoned him to appear at this court. The ox, alarmed at this request, said that he would go with Dimna, provided the jackal promise that no harm



would befall him. Upon being reassured by the jackal, he set out to meet the lion.

After Dimna introduced Shanzabeh to the lion, the king asked the ox how he came to this part of the world. Shanzabeh related the story of his falling into the marsh and being abandoned by his master. The lion invited him to stay at his court and soon a great friendship developed between the two. They roamed the forest, held counsel, and thoroughly enjoyed each other's company.

Dimna became jealous of their friendship and felt that his influence with the lion was quickly being replaced by that of the ox. He decided to resort to cunning and treachery to put an end to this affair. He revealed his intentions to his brother, Kalila, who advised him not to complain since it was his fault that the lion met the ox; besides, Kalila said, these two animals were much stronger than a jackal. Dimna, not convinced that defeat should be his fate, told Kalila several stories proving that strength is no match for cunning.



One of these stories was about the lion and the hare. The lion, a fearsome creature, lived in a forest inhabited by many kinds of animals who were terrified of him. They agreed among themselves that if they sent the lion one animal each day, he would leave the others in peace and not prey upon them. The lion agreed to this arrangement and every day the animals drew lots to determine which one would be fed to the lion the following day.

One day the lot fell on a certain hare, who was exceptionally clever and had no intention of being the lion's next meal. She devised a plan to trick the lion and asked to be sent to him very slowly so that she would be late for the meal. The hungry lion, annoyed that his food was late, was in an ugly mood. When the hare approached him he wanted to know who she was. She said that she was a messenger; the fat hare sent to him by the animals had been seized by another lion. Furious that his territory was invaded by another lion, the lion asked to see his rival.

The hare took him to a deep well filled with water and told him to look down. The lion did as he was instructed and saw his own reflection together with that of the hare. He thought that he was seeing the rival lion with the fat hare intended for him. He leaped at his reflection to snatch his food, fell into the well, and drowned.



At the conclusion of the story Kalila told Dimna that if he could destroy the ox without harming the lion, then he should do so. But Kalila was worried that the lion would become extremely distressed by the loss of his friend.

Dimna, oblivious to his brother's advice, went on with his plans. He stayed away from the lion for several days. When he finally appeared at the court, the lion asked him why he had been absent. Dimna replied that he had heard dreadful news and could not bring himself to face the lion. After pretending to evade the issue, Dimna announced that Shanzabeh was plotting against the lion. At first the lion refused to believe him, but Dimna was able to convince him that the ox was indeed planning to eliminate the king. The jackal suggested that the lion attack the ox before Shanzabeh had a chance to kill him. The lion said that if the story was true, he would order Shanzabeh to leave his court and expel him from his kingdom. But his suspicion was aroused when Dimna warned him to be cautious if the ox approached with his head held down and horns thrust out.

Dimna then sought out the ox and told him the same story. He tried to convince Shanzabeh that the lion was planning to kill him. When Shanzabeh refused to believe this rumor, Dimna said that he was just as naïve as the honest and trusting camel, and proceeded to tell the story of the lion, the crow, the wolf and the jackal.



The lion dwelt near a public road and had three companions: the crow, the wolf, and the jackal. The lion hunted regularly and his companions fed well on his leftovers. One day some merchants passing by left behind them a camel, who wandered into the marsh where the lion lived. The lion

decided to spare the camel and give him protection since the animal was harmless and only ate grass. The camel joined the other companions and was very happy to be in their company.

During one of his outings, the lion ran into a powerful elephant who attacked him. They fought furiously and the lion was so badly wounded that he crawled back to his home and lay sick for days. He became weaker and weaker, unable to hunt and eat. The crow, the wolf, and the jackal, accustomed to being fed by the lion, could not find food and decided that the easiest catch was the camel. When they told the lion they needed to eat the camel, the lion was indignant; he had promised to protect the camel and would not go back on his word. The three companions then devised a plan to trick the camel. They told him that since the lion was wounded and could not hunt, he was in desperate need of food. They were willing to offer themselves to the lion who had protected and befriended them. First the crow asked to be eaten, but the others objected, saying that he was small and scrawny and could not satisfy the lion's hunger. Then the wolf offered himself, but he, too, was rejected since his meat was indigestible and gave cramps and pain. When it was the jackal's turn, they told him that his flesh was stinking and foul and thus inedible. Then the simple-minded camel said that his flesh was the sweetest and asked that the lion eat him, thinking that the others would make excuses for him as well. But this was exactly what the three companions had planned; they fell upon the unsuspecting camel and tore him to pieces. The lion, seeing that the camel had offered himself willingly and it was now too late to save him, joined the others.



When Shanzabeh heard this story, he wondered whether he would come to a similar end. Dimna continued to persuade the ox that the lion was determined to kill him. The jackal said that if Shanzabeh did not take the advice of friends, he fate would be like that of the tortoise who did not profit from wise counsel.


 The tortoise lived in a marsh together with two geese. They were good friends and enjoyed one another's company. But, when the marsh began to dry up, the geese decided to seek another lake to build their nest. The tortoise asked them to devise a plan so that he, too, could go with them and not be left behind to die. The geese told him that if he took hold of the middle of a stick with his mouth and they held its ends in their beaks, they could transport him. But, they warned, he would have to observe absolute silence during the flight.

The tortoise promised to keep quiet and took the stick in his mouth. The geese began to fly, carrying the tortoise with them. They passed over a group of villagers who were amazed by this strange sight; they began to laugh and make fun of the tortoise. The tortoise forgot his promise and opened his mouth to answer them. He let go of the stick and fell to his death.



13th-century illustration in a manuscript containing the stories of *Kalila wa Dimna*.


 Shanzabeh, now totally convinced that Dimna was telling the truth, decided to go to the lion peacefully and affectionately and try to persuade him to change his mind. This, naturally, would have upset Dimna's plans. He told the ox to watch the lion's mood: if the lion's ears were extended like arrows and his paws were stamping the ground, then he was ready for the kill.

Shanzabeh, terrified of the lion, approached him cautiously. The lion saw him coming and became nervous; he extended his ears like arrows and began to stamp the ground with his paws. The ox saw this change in his friend and became even more frightened; he held his head down and thrust out his horns. Things were exactly as Dimna had predicted and each was now sure that the other was out to destroy him. The lion and the ox engaged in a fierce battle that lasted a long time.

Kalila and Dimna came to see the outcome of this fierce encounter. During the course of the battle Dimna told his brother several stories. Kalila scolded him for breaking up the friendship between the lion and the ox and warned him that if his treachery were ever discovered, Dimna would be severely punished.

Finally, the battle was over and the lion had fatally wounded the ox. Soon after Shanzabeh died, the lion repented and missed his friend. Dimna tried to justify the kill by saying that when a poisonous snake has bitten a man's finger or toe, he cuts off his hand or foot so that it does not infect the entire body.

Later the lion learned that it was Dimna's envy and deceit that had caused the death of Shanzabeh. Thus, a lying confidant and a false friend had caused a friendship to be severed and had turned the love between two friends into hatred.

Study Questions and Activities

1. Count the number of stories that are "nested" in this excerpt. What function do the stories serve, and which one of them is the "shell" tale?
2. Compare these stories with similar versions in *Aesop's Fables* and other collections that you may know.
3. Explain the moral, or point, in each of these stories, and what they imply in the way of human behavior. Which ones celebrate virtues, and which ones guile or cleverness without regard for moral behavior. Which ones play on personality traits that are difficult to change?
4. How can we explain the enormous popularity of animal fables across cultures and down through the ages?

Abdullah of the Land and Abdullah of the Sea

ABOUT THE SELECTION

This selection is one of the lesser known tales from the collection than includes the famous stories of Ali Baba, Sindbad, and Aladdin. As you probably know, the tales are arranged around a “frame tale,” or story-within-a-story. The frame is about a troubled king who was wronged by an unfaithful woman, and tried to take revenge on all women by marrying a different one every night and having her executed the next morning. A clever, cultured, and very well-read woman named Sheherezad offers to break the cycle by offering herself as his bride. She entrances the king by telling a continuous story for one thousand and one nights, leaving the story unfinished each night, and at the same time weaving into the stories lessons about life, faith, patience and suffering, punishment and forgiveness. At the end of the 1001 nights, of course, the king has been cured of his need for revenge, his faith in humanity restored through the faith, intelligence, and creativity of this woman.

While many modern versions of the stories—especially children’s books—have few references to Islamic beliefs and religious expressions heard in everyday speech of Muslims everywhere, the original versions of the stories translated from Arabic sources are chock-ful of them. This story was adapted from the 19th century translation by Richard Burton, a famous traveler and student of Arabic language and culture. The book from which this was taken was published privately in 1886 by the Burton Club, in London. While translations of the Thousand Nights and a Night began to appear in Western languages like French, German, Italian and English as early as the 18th century, they were often assembled from more than one source. The stories were passed down in several versions as an oral tradition through the urban hakawati, or café storytellers, who jealously guarded their trade secrets, as well as in the popular culture of families. Many a Muslim family was blessed with an aunt or grandmother who “was virtually a walking volume of Arabian Nights. She was a born story-teller and . . . would never tell a story while daylight lingered, and as she had always left off her story the previous evening at the most critical stage, she kept us on tenterhooks for the whole of the next day . . .” (In Charis Waddy, *Women in Muslim History*, Longman, 1980). The stories themselves originated both within and outside Muslim culture, some being universal story types, others Persian, Indian, Arabic, or Chinese in origin. Some scholars have even argued that traditional European tales were either added and adapted to the setting, or invented outright for the 18th century French version. In any event, the tales have become universally popular, and have been told in many versions over centuries in many cultures.

In using the stories to represent the literature and everyday life of Muslim society at any historical period, it is important to recall the diverse origins of the tales and the fact that they are not intended to be realistic, but fantastic, fanciful, and to mythologize their subjects. While the stories are in some respects representative of Muslim life and thought, not every translation or retelling reproduces these elements, and some are taken from second and third hand sources. Others add their own touches. Western versions of the Nights have also been accompanied by illustrations that reflect European attitudes about Muslim society more than they represent that world itself.

The story of Abdullah of the Land and Abdullah of the sea is quite unusual. The name Abdullah is a very common name that means “servant of God,” a title that applies to all believers, and is used in the Qur’an as an epithet for all human beings. The story appears among the last nights, (#940-946), but it is not included in some versions, even of Burton’s translation. Also, while it is based on a universal type of fantasy—the “rags-to-riches” tale—which was always appealing to the common folk, the tale is presented in a way that makes it clearly Muslim in origin. The speech and actions of the characters are thoroughly characteristic of Muslim attitudes toward God’s creatures, their humility and striving to be faithful worshippers, the values of patience, hard work, and virtuous behavior, trust that God provides for everyone, of loyalty to friends, acceptance of other cultures, and many other qualities. As an undertone of the tale, it is apparent how Sheherezad is appealing to the king’s better side as she concludes her series of tales. Notice, too, how Islamic thought and expressions are woven into the speech of the characters, even though they are very common folk. Richard Burton, who knew both popular and classical Arabic, learned to appreciate the universality of these expressions among Muslims during his travels, and he has retained this important touch in his translation of the *Thousand Nights and a Night*.

Historical Source

Alf Layla wa Layla
(A Thousand and One Nights)

Author

Transmitted via oral tradition

Excerpted from

Burton, Richard F. *The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night*, volume 9 (Privately printed by The Burton Club), 1885.

With gratitude to Dr. Amira El-Zein, Georgetown University Department of Arabic, for bringing the story to our attention. The adaptations to Burton’s translation mostly involved modernizing the archaic forms of verbs and pronouns, and eliminating some repetitive elements to make it easier for young readers to enjoy.

There was once a Fisherman named Abdullah, who had a large family—nine children and their mother, so he was very poor, owning nothing but his net. Every day he used to go to the sea fishing, and if he caught little, he sold it and spent the price on his children, according to that which Allah granted him. If he caught much, he would cook some meat and buy fruit and spend till nothing was left, saying to himself, “Tomorrow’s daily bread will come tomorrow.” Presently, his wife gave birth to another child, making a total of ten, and it chanced that day that he had nothing at all; so she said to him, “O husband, get me something to sustain me.” Said he, “I am going (under favor of Almighty Allah) to the sea to fish on the luck of this newborn child, that we may see its fair fortune;” and said she, “Put your trust in Allah!”

So he took his net and went down to the seashore, where he cast it on the luck of the little one, saying, "O my God, make his living of ease not of unease, and abundant, not scant!" Then he waited awhile and drew in the net, which came up full of rubbish and sand and pebbles and weeds, and he saw in it no sign of fish. He cast it again and waited, then drew it in, but found no catch in it, and threw it a third and a fourth and a fifth time. Still not a single fish came up. So he removed to another place asking his daily bread of Allah Almighty. Thus he kept working till the end of the day, but caught not so much as a minnow. At this he fell to marveling to himself and said to himself, "Has Allah then created this newborn child without a share of provision? This may never, never be. Almighty Allah is the Bountiful, the Provider!"

So saying, he shouldered his net and turned homewards, broken-spirited and heavy at heart about his family, for that he had left them without food, the more so because his wife was in bed with child. As he trudged along and said to himself, "How shall I do and what shall I say to the children tonight?" He came to a baker's oven and saw a crowd around it, for the season was one of dearth, and in those days food was scant with the folk. People were offering the baker money, but he paid no heed to any of them, by reason of the dense crowd. The fisherman stood looking and sniffing the smell of the hot bread (and indeed he longed for it, by reason of his hunger), till the baker caught sight of him and cried out to him, "Come here, O fisherman!" So he went up to him, and the baker said, "Do you want bread?" But he was silent. Said the baker, "Speak out and be not ashamed, for Allah is bountiful. If you have no silver, I will give you bread and have patience with you till your luck improves." And said the fisherman, "By Allah, O master, I have indeed no money! But give me bread enough for my family, and I will leave you this net in pawn till the morrow." Rejoined the baker, "Nay, my poor fellow, this net is your shop and the door to your daily subsistence; so if you pawn it, with what will you fish? Tell me how much will be

enough for you!" Replied the fisherman, "Ten half-dirhams' worth." So he gave him the bread and ten half-dirhams in silver saying, "Take these coins and cook yourself meat; so would you owe me twenty, for which bring me fish tomorrow; but, if you catch nothing again, come and take your bread and your ten half-dirhams, and I will have patience with you till better luck comes to you."

And Shahrazad perceived the dawn of day and ceased her story.



When it was the Nine Hundred and Forty-first Night, she continued: It has reached me, O auspicious King, that the baker said to the fisherman, "Take whatever you need and I will have patience with you till better luck come to you, after which you shall bring me fish for all you owe me." Said the fisherman, Almighty Allah reward you, and reward you for me with all good!" Then he took the bread and the coins and went away, glad at heart, and buying what he could returned to his wife whom he found sitting up, soothing the children, who were weeping for hunger, and saying to them, "At once your father will be here with something you may eat." So he set the bread before them and they ate, while he told his wife what had happened, and she said, "Allah is bountiful."

The next morning, he shouldered his net and went from his house, saying, "I beseech you, O Lord, to grant me this day what will whiten my face with the baker!" When he came to the seashore, he cast his net and pulled it in; but there came up no fish. He ceased not to toil till the end of the day but he caught nothing. Then he set out homewards, in great concern, since the way to his house lay past the baker's oven. He said to himself, "How shall I go home? But I will speed up my pace so the baker may not see me." When he reached the shop, he saw a crowd about it and walked faster, being ashamed to face his creditor. But the baker raised his eyes to him and cried out to him, saying, "Hey,



An engraving of a *qanun* player for a 19th-century translation of *The Thousand and One Nights*.

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fisherman! Come and take your bread and spending-money. It seems you forget." Said Abdullah, "By Allah, I had not forgotten; but I was ashamed to face you, because I have caught no fish this day;" and said the baker, "Be not ashamed. Did I not tell you, at your leisure, till better luck comes to you?" Then he gave him the bread and the ten half-dirhams and he returned and told his wife, who said, "Allah is bountiful. Better luck shall yet come and you shall give the baker his due, Inshallah [God willing]."

He ceased not doing this way for forty days, going daily down to the sea, from the rising of the sun to its setting, and returning home without fish. At still he took bread and spending-money from the baker, who never once mentioned the fish to him nor neglected him nor kept him waiting like the other folk, but gave him the bread and the ten half-dirhams without delay. Whenever the fisherman said to him, "O my brother, reckon with me," he would say, "Be off:" this is no time for reckoning. Wait till better luck comes to you, and then I will reckon with you." And the fisherman would bless him and go away thanking him.

On the one-and-fortieth day, he said to his wife, "I have a mind to tear up the net and be quit of this life." She asked, "Why would you do this?" He answered, "It seems there is an end of my getting my daily bread from the waters. How long shall this last? By Allah, I burn with shame before the baker and I will go no more to the sea, so I may not pass by his oven, for I have no other way home. Every time I pass he calls me and gives me the bread and the ten silvers. How much longer shall I run in debt to him?" The wife replied, "Alhamdulillah—praised be the Lord, the Most High, who has inclined his heart to you, so that he gives you our daily bread! What do you dislike in this?" And the husband rejoined, "I owe him now a mighty great sum of dirhams, and there is no doubt but that he will demand his due." "Has he vexed you with words?" "No, on the contrary, he still refuses to reckon with me, saying, "Wait till better luck comes to you." If he presses you, say to him, "Wait till there comes the good luck for which we hope, you and I!"

"And when will the good luck come that we hope for?" he sighed. "Allah is bountiful," she said. "You speak the truth!" he answered.

So saying he shouldered his net and went down to the sea-side, praying, "O Lord provide me, even with one fish, that I may give it to the baker!" And he cast his net into the sea and pulling it in, found it heavy; so he tugged at it till he was tired. But when he got it ashore, he found in it a dead donkey swollen and stinking; whereat his senses sickened and he freed it from the net, saying, "There is no Majesty and there is no Might except with Allah, the Glorious, the Great! Indeed, I can no more! I say to that wife of mine, "There is no more provision for me in the waters; let me leave this craft." And she still answers me, 'Allah is bountiful; good will presently be-tide you. Is this dead donkey the good she speaks of?' And he grieved with the sorest grief.

Then he turned to another place, so he might get away from the stench of the dead donkey, and cast his net there and waited a full hour. Then he drew it in and found it heavy. Thereupon said he, "Good. we are hauling up all the dead donkeys in the sea and ridding it of its rubbish." However he did not give up tugging at the net till blood came from the palms of his hands, and when he got it ashore, he saw a man in it and took him for one of the Afreet (Jinns whom Solomon set to work) of the lord Solomon. He thought he might be one such whom Solomon imprisoned in vessels of brass and cast him into the sea, who, after the vessel had burst, the Afreet had come forth and fallen into the net.

The fisherman fled from him, crying out and saying, "Mercy, mercy, O Afreet of Solomon!" But the son of Adam called out to him from within the net and said, "Come here, O fisherman, and flee not from me; for I am human like yourself. Release me, so you may get a reward for me of Allah." When he heard these words, the fisherman took heart and coming up to him, said to him, "Are you not an Afreet of the Jinn?" And the man from the sea replied, "No. I am a mortal and a believer in Allah and His Apostle." Asked the fisherman, "Who threw

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you into the sea?"; and he answered, "I am of the children of the sea, and was going about in it, when you cast the net over me. We are people who obey Allah's commandments and show loving kindness to the creatures of the Almighty. If I had not feared and dreaded to be disobedient, I would have torn your net; but I accept that which the Lord has decreed to me. By setting me free you become my owner and I your captive. Would you then set me free for the love' of Almighty Allah and make a covenant with me and become my comrade?"

I will come to you every day in this place, and do you come to me and bring me a gift of the fruits of the land. For with you are grapes and figs and watermelons and peaches and pomegranates and so forth, and all you bring me will be acceptable to me. Moreover, with us are coral and pearls and chrysoberites

and emeralds and rubies and other gems, and I will fill the basket in which you bring me the fruit with precious stones and jewels of the sea. "What say you to this, O my brother?" Said the fisherman, "Be the Opening Chapter of the Koran [*al-Fatiha, a chapter often recited to seal agreements*] between you and me upon this!" So they recited together the Fatihah, and the fisherman loosed the Merman from the net and asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Abdullah of the Sea; and if you come here and see me not, call out and say, "Where are you, O Abdullah, O Merman?" and I will be with you."

And Shahrazad perceived the dawn of day and ceased her story.



When it was the Nine Hundred and Forty-second Night, she resumed: It has reached me, O auspicious King, that Abdullah of the sea told the other, "If you come here and see me not, call out and say, 'Where are you, O Abdullah, O Merman?' and I will be with you forthwith. But you, what is your name?" Said the fisherman, "My name also is Abdullah;" and said the other, "You are Abdullah of the Land and I am Abdullah of the Sea; but wait here till I go and fetch you a present.

And the fisherman regretted having released him and said to himself, "How do I know that he will come back to me! Indeed, he beguiled me, so that I loosed him., and now he will laugh at me. Had I kept him, I might have made a show of him for the diversion of the city folk and taken silver from all men and gone with him to the houses of the great. And he regretted having set him free and said, "You have let your prey out of your hand." But, as he was thus bemoaning his folly in releasing the prisoner, behold, Abdullah the Merman returned to him with both hands full of pearls and coral and emeralds and rubies and other gems, and said to him, "Take these, O my brother, and excuse me; if I had a fish-basket I would have filled it for you."

Abdullah the fisherman rejoiced and took the jewels from the Merman who said to him, "Every day come here, before sunrise," and bidding him farewell, went down into the sea. The other returned to the city, rejoicing, and did not stop walking till he came to the baker's oven and said to him, "O my brother, good luck has come to us at last; so let us now reckon what I owe you." Answered the baker, "There is no need of reckoning. If you have something, give it to me. If you have nothing, take your bread and spending-money and be gone. May good befall you." Rejoined the fisherman, "O my friend, indeed good has befallen me from Allah's bounty, and I owe you much money. But take this. So saying, he took out for him a handful of the pearls and coral and rubies and other jewels he had with him (the handful being about half of the whole), and gave them to the baker, saying, "Give me some ready money to spend this day, till I sell these jewels." So the baker gave him all the money he had in hand and all the bread in his basket and rejoiced in the jewels, saying, "I am your slave and your servant." Then the baker set all the bread on his head, and following the fisherman home, gave it to his wife and children, after which he repaired to the market and brought meat and greens and all kinds of fruit.

Moreover, the baker left his oven and stayed with Abdullah all that day, busying himself in his service and fulfilling all his affairs. Said the fisherman, "O my brother, you weary yourself;" and the baker replied, "This is my duty, for I have become your servant and you have overwhelmed me with generosity. Replied the fisherman, "It was you who was my benefactor in the days of want and distress." And the baker passed that night with him enjoying good cheer and became a faithful friend to him. Then the fisherman told his wife what had befallen him with the Merman, at which she rejoiced and said, "Keep your secret, lest the government come down upon you;" but he said, "I keep my secret from all men, yet I will not hide it from the baker." The next morning, he arose at dawn, and shouldering a basket which he had filled in the evening with all kinds of fruits, went before sunrise to the seashore, and setting down the crate on the waters edge called out, "Where are you, O Abdullah, O Merman?" He answered, "Here am I, at your service;" and came forth to him. The fisherman gave him the fruit and he took it and plunging into the sea with it, was absent a full hour, after which time he came up, with the fish-basket full of all kinds of gems and jewels. The fisherman set it on his head and went away; and, when he came to the oven, the baker said to him, "O my lord, I have baked you forty buns and have sent them to your house; and now I will bake some firsts and as soon as all is done, I will bring it to your house and go and fetch you greens and meat." Abdullah handed to him three handfuls of jewels out of the fish-basket and going home, set it down there.

Then he took a gem of each sort and going to the jewel-bazaar, stopped at the jewel-dealer's shop and said to him, "Buy these precious stones of me." "Show them to me," said the dealer. So he showed them to him and the jeweler said, "Have you more beside these?" And Abdullah replied, "I have a basket-full at home." The dealer asked, "And where is your house?" and the fisherman answered, "In such-and-such a

quarter"; whereupon the dealer took the jewels from him and said to his followers, "Lay hold of him, for he is the thief who stole the jewelry of the Queen, the wife of our Sultan." And he told them to beat him. So they beat him and tied him up. After that, the dealer and all the people of the jewel-market arose and set out for the palace, saying, "We have caught the thief." Said one, "None robbed the Queen but this villain," and said another, "'Twas none but he stole all that was so-and-so's house;" and some said this and others said that. All this while he was silent and spoke not a word nor returned a reply, till they brought him before the King.

The dealer entered the palace and said, "O King of the Age, when the Queen's necklace was stolen, you sent to tell us of the theft, requiring us to discover the culprit, and so I made an effort beyond that of the other folk. I have captured the thief for you. Here he stands before you, and these are the jewels we have recovered from him." Thereupon the King said to a servant, "Carry these jewels for the Queen to see, and say to her, "Are these your property you had lost?" So the servant took the jewels and went in with them to the Queen, who seeing their luster marveled at them and sent to the King to say, "I have found my necklace in my own place and these jewels are not my property. No, they are finer than those of my necklace. So oppress not the man;"

And Shahrazad perceived the dawn of day and ceased her story.



When it was the Nine Hundred and Forty-third Night, she said: It has reached me, O auspicious King, that when the King's wife sent to the King to say, "These are not my property; nay, these gems are finer than those of my necklace. So oppress not this man; but, if he will sell them, buy them for your daughter Umm al-Su'ud, that we may set them in a necklace for her." When the servant returned and told the King what the Queen said, he damned the jewel dealer and his company, with the damnation of 'Ad and Thamud [two towns mentioned in

the Qur'an as destroyed by God for their sins], and they said to him, "O King of the age, we knew this man for a poor fisherman and deemed such things too much for him, so we supposed that he had stolen them." Cried the King, "O you foul villains, begrudge you a True Believer good fortune? Why did you not make due enquiry of him? Happily Allah Almighty has given him these things from a source whereupon he reckoned not. Why did you make him out a thief and disgrace him amongst the folk? Be gone, and may Allah never bless you!" So they went out affrighted.

The King said to Abdullah, "Man, man (Allah bless you in all He has bestowed on you!), no harm shall befall you; but tell me truly, where did you get these jewels? For I am a King yet have I not the like of them." The fisherman replied, "O King of the Age, I have a fish-basket full of them at home and the case is thus and thus." Then he told him of his friendship with the Merman adding, "We have made a covenant together that I shall bring him every day a basket full of fruit and that he shall fill me the basket with these jewels." Said the King, O man this is your lucky lot; but wealth needs rank," I will defend you for the present against men's domineering; but haply I shall be deposed or die and another rule in my place, and he might slay you because of his love of the goods of this world and his covetousness. So I am minded to marry you to my daughter and make you my Wazir and bequeath you the kingdom after me, so none may hanker after your riches when I am gone. Then said he, "Take this man to the palace baths." So they bore him to the baths and bathed his body and robed him in royal raiment, after which they brought him back to the King, and he made him his Wazir and sent to his house couriers and the soldiers of his guard and all the wives of the notables, who dressed his wife and children in kingly costume. Mounting the woman in a horse-litter, with the little child



Illustration of a fisherman from *The Thousand and One Nights*.

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continued

in her lap, walked before her to the palace, escorted by the troops and courtiers and officers. They also brought her elder children in to the King who made much of them, taking them in his lap and seating them by his side; for they were nine children male and the King had no son and heir nor had he been blessed with any child save this one daughter, Umm al-Su'ud. Meanwhile the Queen treated Abdullah's wife with honour and bestowed favors on her and made her Waziress to her. Then the King bade draw up the marriage contract between his daughter and Abdullah of the Land who assigned to her, as her dower, all the gems and precious stones in his possession, and they opened the gates of festival. The King commanded by proclamation to decorate the city, in honor of his daughter's wedding. Then Abdullah went in to the Princess. Next morning the King looked out of the window and saw Abdullah carrying on his head a fish-crate full of fruit. So he called to him, "What have you there, O my son-in-law, and where are you going?"

The fisherman replied, "To my friend Abdullah the Merman." and the King said, "O my son-in-law, this is no time to go to your comrade." Said Abdullah, "Indeed, I fear to break: my trust with him, lest he reckon me a liar and say, "The things of the world have diverted you from me," and said the King, "You speak the truth; go to your friend and God help you!" So he walked through the city on his way to his companion; and, as he went, he heard the folk who knew him say, "There goes the King's son-in-law to exchange fruit for gems." Those who knew him not said, "Hey, fellow, how much a pound? Come, sell to me." And he answered, saying, "Wait till I come back to you," for that he would not hurt the feelings of any man. Then he went on till he came to the sea-shore and met with his friend Abdullah the Merman, to whom he delivered the fruit, receiving gems in return.

He ceased not doing thus till one day, as he passed by the baker's oven, he found

it closed, and so he did ten days, during which time the oven remained shut and he saw nothing of the baker. So he said to himself, "This is a strange thing! I wonder where the baker went!" Then he inquired of his neighbor, saying, "O my brother, where is your neighbor the baker and what has Allah done with him!" The other responded, "O my lord, he is sick and does not come out of his house." "Where is his house?" asked Abdullah. The other answered, "In such a quarter." So he went there and inquired of him. When he knocked at the door, the baker looked out of window, and seeing his friend the fisherman, full basket on head, came down and opened the door to him. Abdullah entered. Throwing himself on the baker, he embraced him and wept, saying, "How are you, O my friend? Every day, I pass by your oven and see it unopened; so I asked your neighbor, who told me that you were sick; therefore I inquired for your house, that I might see you." Answered the baker, "Allah reward you with all good! Nothing ails me; but it reached me that the King had taken you, for that certain of the folk had lied against you and accused you of being a robber wherefore I feared and shut shop and hid myself." "True," said Abdullah and told him all that had happened with the King and the head of the jeweler's' bazaar, adding "However, the King has given me his daughter to wife and made me his Wazir;" and, after a pause, "So do you take what is in this fish-basket as your share and fear nothing." Then he left him, having banished his fears, and returned with the empty crate to the King, who said to him, "O my son-in-law, it would seem that you have not met with your friend the Merman today." Replied Abdullah, "I went to him but that which he gave me I gave to my friend the baker, to whom I owe kindness." "Who may this baker be," asked the King. The fisherman answered, "He is a benevolent man, who did with me thus and thus in the days of my poverty and never neglected me a single day nor hurt my feelings." Said the

King, "What is his name?" "His name is Abdullah the Baker; and my name is Abdullah of the Land and that of my friend the Merman Abdullah of the Sea." Rejoined the King, "And my name also is Abdullah; and the servants of Allah' are all brethren. So send and fetch your friend the baker, that I may make him my Wazir of the left."

So he sent for the baker who speedily came to the presence, and the King invested him with the Wazirial uniform and made him Wazir of the left, making Abdullah of the Land his Wazir of the right.

And Shahrazad perceived the dawn of day and ceased her story.



When it was the Nine Hundred and Forty-fourth Night, she continued: It has reached me, O auspicious King, that the King made his son-in-law, Abdullah of the Land, Wazir of the right and Abdullah the baker Wazir of the left. In such condition the fisherman lived a whole year, every day carrying for the Merman the crate full of fruit and receiving it back, full of jewels; and when fruit failed from the gardens, he carried him raisins and almonds and filberts and walnuts and figs and so forth. and all that he brought for him the Merman accepted and returned him the fish-basket full of jewels according to his custom.

Now it chanced one day that he carried him the crate, full of dry fruits as usual, and his friend took them from him. Then they sat down to converse, Abdullah the fisherman on the beach and Abdullah the Merman in the water near the shore, and discussed. The talk went round between them, till it fell upon the subject of graves; at which the Merman said, "O my brother, they say that the Prophet (whom Allah bless and save!) is buried with you on the land. Do you know his tomb?" Abdullah replied, "Yes; it lies in a city called Yathrib." Asked the Merman, "And do the people of the land visit it?" "Yes," answered the fisherman, and the other said, "I give you joy, O people of the land, of visiting that noble Prophet and compassionate, which whoever visits merits his intercession! Have you made such

a visit, O my brother?" Replied the fisherman, "No: for I was poor and had not the necessary money to spend by the way, nor have I been in an easy state but since I knew you and you bestowed on me this good fortune. But such visitation is my duty me after I have made pilgrimage to the Holy House of Allah [the Ka'bah in Makkah] and nothing holds me from going but my love for you, because I cannot leave you for one day." Rejoined the Merman, "And do you set the love of me before the visitation of the tomb of Mohammed (whom Allah bless and save!), who shall intercede for you on the Day of Judgement before Allah and shall save you from the Fire and through whose intercession you shall enter Paradise?" And do you, for the love of the world, neglect to visit the tomb of your Prophet Mohammed, whom God bless and preserve?" Replied Abdullah, "No, by Allah, I set the visitation of the Prophet's tomb above all else, and I crave your leave to pray before it this year."

The Merman rejoined, "I grant you leave, on condition that when you shall stand by his tomb you salute him for me with the "Salam." Furthermore I have a trust to give you; so come you with me into the sea, that I may carry you to my city and entertain you in my house and give you a deposit; which when you take your station by the Prophet's tomb, do you lay it there, saying, "O apostle of Allah, Abdullah the Merman salutes you and sends you this present, imploring your intercession to save him from the Fire!" Said the fisherman, "O my brother, you were created in the water and water is your abiding place and it does you no harm, but, if you should come onto the land, would any harm befall you?" The Merman replied, "Yes; my body would dry up and the breezes of the land would blow upon me and I would die." Rejoined the fisherman, "And I, in like manner, was created on the land and the land is my home; but, if I went down into the sea, the water would enter my belly and choke me and I would die." Retorted the other, "Have no

fear of that, for I will bring you an ointment, and when you have anointed your body with it, the water will do you no hurt, you should pass the rest of your life going about in the deep. You shall lie down and rise up in the sea and nothing will harm you." Said the fisherman, "If that be the case, well and good, but bring me the ointment, so that I can try it." Said the Merman, "So be it."

Then, taking the fish-basket, he disappeared into the depths. He was absent awhile, and presently returned with an unguent the fat of beef, yellow as gold and sweet smelling. Asked the fisherman, "What is this, O my brother?" Answered the Merman, "'Tis the liver-fat of a kind of fish called the Dandan, which is the biggest of all fishes and the fiercest of our foes. He is bigger than any beast of the land, and if he met a camel or an elephant, he would swallow it in a single mouthful." Abdullah inquired, "O my brother, what does this baleful beast do?" The Merman replied, "He eats the beasts of the sea. Have you not heard the saying, 'like the fishes of the sea: the strong eats the weak?'" "True; but have you many of these Dandans in the sea?" "Yes, there be many of them with us. None can tell their tale except Almighty Allah." "Indeed, I fear that if I go down into with you into the deep, such a creature might devour me." "Have no fear; when he sees you, he will know you for a son of Adam and will fear you and flee. He dreads none of the sea as he dreads a son of Adam. We only collect the liver-fat of the Dandan when a man falls into the sea and is drowned, then we light upon our enemy and take the liver-fat."

And Shahrazad perceived the dawn of day and ceased her story.



When it was the Nine Hundred and Forty-fifth Night, she continued: It has reached me, O auspicious King, that Abdullah of the Sea said to Abdullah of the Land, "And if a thousand or more of this kind hear a son of Adam cry a single cry, all die nor hath one

of them power to leave the place. So, whenever a son of Adam falls into the sea, we take him and anoint him with this fat and go around about the depths with him, and whenever we see a Dandan or two or three or more, we tell him to cry out and they all die immediately from his one cry." Said the fisherman, "I put my trust in Allah," and taking off his clothes, buried them in a hole that he dug in the beach. After that, he rubbed his body from head to heels with the ointment. Then he descended in to the water, and diving, opened his eyes and the salty water did him no harm. So he walked right and left, and if he wanted, rose to the surface, and if he wanted, sank to the bottom. And he saw the water as if it were a tent over his head, yet it did him no harm. Then said the Merman to him, "What do you see, O my brother?" He said, "O my brother, I see nothing but good, and indeed you spoke the truth in what you told me, for the water does no harm." Said the Merman, "Follow me," So he followed him and they kept going from place to place, while Abdullah discovered before him on the right and left mountains of water. He comforted himself by gazing at them and at the many kinds of fish, some great and some small, which cavorted in the deep. But whenever they drew near to the fisherman, they fled. He said, "O my brother, how is it that I see all the fish flee when we draw near?" Said the Merman, "Because they fear you, for all things have Allah made to fear the son of Adam." The fisherman kept amusing himself with the marvels of the deep, till they came to a high mountain and went along beside it. Suddenly, he heard a mighty cry and saw a black thing, the size of a camel or greater, coming down upon him from the liquid mountain and crying out. So he asked his friend, "What is this?" "This is the Dandan. He comes in search of me, seeking to devour me, so cry out at him, O my brother, before he reaches us, or else he will snatch me up and eat me." Accordingly Abdullah of the Land cried out at the beast, and behold, it fell down

dead. When he saw this, he said, "Glorified be the perfection of God and His praise! I smote it not with sword or knife! How is it that, for all of its size, it died from my cry alone?" Replied the Merman, "Marvel not, for my Allah, O my brother, were there a thousand or two thousand of these creatures, yet they could not endure the cry of a son of Adam."

They walked on till they came to a city, whose inhabitants the fisherman saw to be all women, so he said to his companion, "O my brother, what city is this and what are these women?" "This is the city of women, for its inhabitants are women of the sea." "Are there any men among them?" "No!" "Then how do they bear children, without men?" "The King of the sea banished them here and they do not bear children. All the women of the sea with whom he is angry, he sends to this city, and they cannot leave it. Should one of them come forth from it, any of the beasts of the sea would eat her. But in other cities there are both men and women." At this the fisherman asked, "Are there then other cities than this in the sea?" The Merman answered, "There are many." Said the fisherman, "And is there a Sultan over you in the sea?" "Yes." Then said Abdullah, "O my brother, I have indeed seen many marvels in the deep!" But the Merman said, "And what have you seen of its marvels? Have you not heard the saying, 'The marvels of the sea are more than those of the land?' " "True," replied the fisherman, and gazed at the women, whom he saw with faces like moons and hair like women's hair, but their hands and feet were in their middle and they had tails like fishes."

Now, when the Merman had shown him the people of the city, he took him away from there and walked him to another city full of folk, both males and females, all having fish-tails like the others. But there was no buying and selling among them as with the people of the land, nor had they clothing. Said the fisherman, how do they marry? Do you give the women precious

stones and jewels?" Said the Merman, Gems with us are only worthless stones. When a believer wants to marry, he must catch a certain number of fishes of various kinds, a thousand or two thousand, more or less. As soon as he bring them, the families of the bride and bridegroom assemble and eat the marriage-banquet, after which they bring him in to his bride, and he catches fish to feed her. If he be unable, she catches fish and feeds him." Abdullah marveled at this, and the Merman took him to another city and another, and yet another, till he had entertained him with the sight of eighty cities, and he saw the people of each city unlike those of every other. Then said the fisherman to the Merman, "O my brother, are there yet other cities in the deep?" To that said the other, "And what have you seen of the sea and its wondrous spectacles? By the virtue of the Noble Prophet, the benign the compassionate, were I to show you every day a thousand cities for a thousand years, and in each city a thousand marvels, I would not have shown you one carat of the twenty-four carats of the cities of the sea and its miracles! I have only shown you our own province and country, nothing more." The fisherman continued, "Since this is the case, what I have seen is enough, for I am tired of eating fish, and these eighty days I have been in your company, you have fed me, morning and night, upon nothing but raw fish, neither broiled nor boiled." "And what is broiled and boiled?" "We broil fish with fire and boil it in water and dress it in various ways and make many dishes of it." "And how should we come by fire in the sea? We know not broiled nor boiled nor anything else of the kind." Said the fisherman, "We also fry it in olive oil and oil of sesame." "How should we come by olive oil and sesame oil in the sea? Indeed, we know nothing of what you speak of." "True, but O my brother, you have shown me many cities, but you have not shown me your own city." "As for my own city, we passed it a long way, for it is near the land where

we came from with you, and I left it and came with you here, thinking only to entertain you with the greater cities of the sea." "What I have seen of them is enough for me, and now I want you to show me your own city." "So be it," answered Abdullah of the Sea, and returning in his footsteps, took him back there and said to him, "This is my city." Abdullah of the Land saw a city small by comparison with those he had seen. Then he entered with his comrade of the deep, and they went on until they entered a cave. Said the Merman, "This is my house and all the houses of the city are like this, caverns great and small in the mountains, as are all other houses of the sea. Whoever has a mind to make a house must go to the King and say to him, 'I wish to make myself a house in such and such a place.' Whereupon the King sends with him a band of fish called 'Peckers' which have beaks that crumble the hardest rock, and they take for wages a certain amount of fish. They go to the owner's chosen place and pierce the mountain, while the owner catches fish for them and feeds them till the cave is finished. Then they go on their way and the owner takes up his abode in the cave. This is how all of the people of the sea live; they do not deal with one another in any way but by giving them fish, and their food is fish and they themselves are a kind of fish." Then the Merman said to him, "Enter," so Abdullah entered and the Merman cried out, saying, "Ho, daughter of mine!" Behold, there came to him a damsel whose face was like the roundness of the moon, eyes black-edged and hair long, of a beautiful shape, but with a tail. When she saw Abdullah of the Land she said to her father, "O my father, what is this No-Tail you have brought with you?" He replied, "This is my friend of the land from whom I bring the fruits of the ground. Come here and greet him with the 'Salaam.'" So she came and greeted the fisherman with eloquent speech, and her father said, "Bring meat for our guest, by whose visit a blessing has come to us." At that she



Illustration of a ship sailing in the Persian Gulf. The faces of passengers can be seen in the windows.

brought two great fishes, each the size of a lamb, and the Merman said to him, "Eat." So he ate from hunger, despite himself, for he was tired of eating fish and they had nothing else but fish. Before long, in came the Merman's wife with her two children, each with a small fish in hand, which they crunched like a man would crunch a cucumber. When she saw the fisherman with her husband, she said, "What is this No-Tail?" And she and her sons and their sister came up to him and began to examine the back of Abdullah of the Land, saying, "He is tail-less!" And they laughed at him. So he said to the Merman, "O my brother, have you brought me here to make me a laughing-stock for your children and your wife?"

And Sheherezad perceived the dawn of day and ceased her story.



When it was the Nine Hundred and Forty-sixth Night, she continued: It has reached me, O auspicious King, that Abdullah of the Land said to Abdullah of the Sea, "O my brother, have you brought me here for your family to laugh at me?" Cried the Merman, "Pardon, O my brother! Those who have no

tails are rare among us, and whenever one is found, the Sultan takes him to make fun of him, and all who see him laugh at him. But, O my brother, excuse these young children and this woman, for they lack wits." Then he cried out to his family, "Silence!" so they were afraid and held their peace, while he went on to soothe Abdullah's mind.

As they were talking, in came some ten Mermen, strong and tall and stout, and said to him, "Abdullah, it has reached the King that you have with you a No-Tail of the No-tails of the earth." Answered the Merman, "Yes, and this is he, but he is not of us nor of the children of the sea. He is my friend of the land and has come to me as a guest and I propose to take him back to the land." Said they, "We cannot depart except with him, so, if you have anything to say, arise and come with him before the King, and what you want to say to us, say to the King." Then said the Merman to the fisherman, "O my brother, we may not disobey the King, but go with me and I will do my best to deliver you from him, Inshallah! Fear not, for he thinks you are of the children of the sea, but when he

sees you, he will know you as a child of the land, and will treat you honorably and restore you to the land." And Abdullah of the Land replied, "It is yours to decide, I will trust in Allah and go with you."

So he took him to the King, who laughed at him and said, "Welcome to the No-Tail!" And all who were about the King began to laugh at him and say, "Yea, by Allah, he is tail-less!" Then Abdullah of the Sea came forward and acquainted the King with the fisherman's case, saying, "This man is of the children of the land and he is my comrade and cannot live amongst us, for that he doesn't like eating fish except if it is fried or boiled, so please give me leave to restore him to the land." The King replied to this, "Since the case is so, I give you leave to take him back, after due entertainment – bring him the guest meal!" So they brought him fish of various kinds and colors and he ate in obedience to the King. After that, the King said to him, "Ask a favor of me!" Said he, "I ask of you that you give me jewels," and the King said, "Take him to the jewel-house and let him choose what he needs." So his friend took him there and let him pick out what he wanted.

After this the Merman took him back to his own city, and pulling out a purse, said to him, "Take this in trust and lay it on the tomb of the Prophet, whom Allah bless and save." And he took it, not knowing what was in it. Then the Merman went with him to the surface of the sea, and on the way he heard singing and merry-making and saw a table spread with fish and folk eating and singing and holding a mighty high festival. Abdullah of the Land said to his friend, "Why are they rejoicing? Is there a wedding?" Replied Abdullah of the Sea, "Nay, one of them is dead." "When one of you dies, you rejoice and sing and feast?" said Abdullah of the Land, astonished. "Yes," answered the Merman, and you of the land, what do you do?" "When one dies amongst us, we weep and wail for him and the women beat their faces and tear their clothes in sadness for the dead."

Abdullah the Merman stared at him with wide eyes and said, "I have broken off our companionship and our friendship. From this day on you will no longer see me, nor I see you." Cried the fisherman, "Why do you say this?" Answered the Merman, "Are you not, the folk of the land, a trust of Allah?" "Yes." "Why then," asked the Merman, "is it grievous to you that Allah should take back His trust and why do you weep over it? How can I entrust a deposit for the Prophet (whom Allah bless and save), seeing that, when a child is born to you, you rejoice in what Allah placed as a trust, yet when He takes it again, you weep and mourn?" Since it is hard for you to give up the trust of Allah, how should it be easy for you to give up the trust I gave you for the Prophet's grave? For this reason we do not need your companionship."

Thus Abdullah of the Sea left him and disappeared into the deep. Thereupon, Abdullah of the Land donned his clothes, and taking the jewels, went up to the King, who met him lovingly and rejoiced at his safe return, saying, "How are you, my son-

in-law, and what is the cause of your long absence from me?" So he told him his tale and acquainted him with what he had seen of marvels in the sea, at which the King wondered. Then he told him what Abdullah the Merman had said, and the King replied, "Indeed you were at fault to tell him this." Nevertheless, he continued for some time to go down to the shore and call upon Abdullah of the Sea, but he answered him not nor came to him. So, at last, he gave up all hope of him and lived, he and the King his father-in-law and the families of them both in the happiest of conditions and the practice of righteous ways, till there came to them the Destroyer of delights and the Severer of societies and they all died. Wherefore glory be to the Living, Who dies not, whose is the empire of the Seen and the Unseen, who over all things is Omnipotent and is gracious to His servants, and knows their every intent!

Study Questions and Activities

1. Find quotations from the beginning of the story that demonstrate the faith in God of Abdullah and his wife.
2. Find examples of everyday expressions used by Muslims that signify faith in God and tell how each is used in certain situations.
3. Read the paragraphs leading up to the end of each night's story session. How does the storyteller use suspense to keep the audience interested?
4. Pick one of the characters in the story and sketch out a portrait of their personality, value system, social role and class status. You may act out these sketches as interviews or diary entries or other forms of dramatization. [Examples: Abdullah (Land or Sea), his wife (or either family), the baker, the king, the wazir]
5. Discuss ways in which story might personify an Islamic worldview and personal values to which a Muslim might aspire.
6. Write one or more paragraphs summarizing the contrast between the life, society, and attitudes of Abdullah of the Land with the life, society, and attitudes of Abdullah of the Sea. Analyze the message or social commentary that the storyteller has woven into this contrasting picture of two worlds.
7. Identify a piece of modern science fiction that might be compared to this story about creating fictional worlds. In an essay, compare the social commentary by each author.

Jokes from a Universal Character of the Muslim World

 Historical Source
Oral Tradition

 Author
Transmitted via oral tradition

 Excerpted from
1 2 3 Shah, Idries. *Caravan of Dreams* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1972)

➤ miscellaneous pages

4 5 6 7 Johnson-Davies, Denys. Goha (Cairo: The British Council, Hoopoe Books, 1993)

➤ miscellaneous pages

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

These humorous anecdotes related from two different sources represent a type found all over the Muslim world. The foolish-wise character has many names—Goha, Juha, Mulla Nasruddin or Nasruddin Hoja or even Abu Nuwwas—depending on the country where his stories are told, and the language (Arabic, Turkic, Farsi, etc.). There are literally thousands of these jokes, with new ones appearing all the time, all featuring this mirror of society's foibles and falsehoods, as well as commonly-held wisdom and irony.

Back to Front excerpt 1

"Reasonable people always see things in the same way," said the Khan of Samarkand to Nasruddin one day.

"That is just the trouble with 'reasonable' people," said Nasruddin; "they include at least some people who always see only one thing out of a potential two possibilities."

The Khan called the divines and the philosophers to explain, but they thought Nasruddin was talking nonsense.

The next day Nasruddin rode through the town on a donkey in such a way that his face was towards its tail. When he arrived at the palace where the Khan was sitting with his advisors, Nasruddin said, "Would your Highness please ask these people what they have just seen?"

When asked, they all said, "A man riding back-to-front on a donkey."

"That is exactly my point," said Nasruddin. "The trouble with them all is that they did not notice that perhaps it was me who was right and the donkey the wrong way around."

The Rich Man excerpt 2

"How I wish I could be really wealthy," said Nasruddin to his cronies in the teahouse, "like, say, Kara Mustafa the great lord, who has everything."

"How strange you should say that," said the potter, "because in my shop a few minutes ago Mustafa himself was saying how much he wished that he were a poor and simple man."

"But that is only because he is rich already!" said Nasruddin; "he has the wish and also knows the method of becoming poor. / only have the desire to be rich!"

The Law is the Law excerpt 3

Mulla Nasruddin studied law under a tutor. Since he had no money to pay for his lessons, the arrangement was that he would pay his fees as soon as he won a case. But Nasruddin did not practice as an advocate. The Tutor took the Mulla to court.

Nasruddin said, when the complaint had been heard: "Your honor, If I win the case, claiming that my tutor need not be paid, he will not get his money. If on the other hand, I lose, I shall not have to pay him, because I will not have won a case yet: he will not get his money."

"What other result is possible?" asked the confused judge.

"Case dismissed," said Mulla Nasruddin.

excerpt 4

Goha and His Lamp

Goha was sitting in the cafe one day, telling people that he could see in the dark.

"If you really can see in the dark," said one of those sitting with him, "why do you always carry with you a lamp at night?"

"Oh that," said Goha, "is just so that people won't bump into me."



Goha is one of the traditional picaresque heroes in Arabic literature.

excerpt 5

Goha Gives His Son a Lesson About People

Goha had a son who was always worried about what people would think or say. The boy could never do anything because he was always afraid that people might think him foolish. Goha wanted to show his son that it was a waste of time to worry about the opinions of others. He therefore saddled his donkey and told his son that he was going to the neighboring village.

Goha got on his donkey and asked his son to walk behind him. On the way they passed by some people who pointed at Goha and said, "Look at that heartless man who rides his donkey and makes his son walk."

When he heard this, Goha got off the donkey and asked his son to get on, while he walked. Again they passed by some people who pointed at the boy and said, "Just look at the boy who has no manners or respect for the elderly — he rides the donkey and lets his old father walk."

Goha thought about this, so he decided that both he and his son should now ride the donkey. Again they passed by some people who pointed at the donkey carrying both Goha and his son. "What a cruel man that is!" they said. "He has no pity for his donkey and allows both himself and his son to ride it at the same time."

Again Goha gave some thought to what the people had said, so he and his son got off the back of the donkey and both walked behind it. This time, passing by some people, he heard them saying among themselves, "What a couple of fools those two are! Imagine walking when they have a donkey they could ride."

This time Goha was at a loss. Finally, after a lot of thought, he said to his son, "Come along, let's carry the donkey between us."

So they lifted up the donkey and began carrying it along the road. As they were staggering along, some people saw them and burst out laughing. "Look at those two madmen," they said, "carrying the donkey instead of riding on it!"

So they put the donkey down and Goha said to his son, "You must know, my son, that whatever you do in this life, you will never please everyone."

excerpt 6

Goha Gives Thanks to Allah

Goha once lost his donkey. He couldn't find it anywhere. As he went around the town searching for it, he kept on saying, "Thanks be to Allah! Thanks be to Allah!"

People were surprised to find him giving thanks to Allah when he had lost his donkey. They asked him: "O Goha, why are you saying 'Thanks be to Allah' when you have lost your donkey? Surely that is not something to thank Allah for."

"I am thanking Allah," answered Goha, "because I want not riding it, or I too would be lost."

Goha at the Public Baths

excerpt 7

Goha went to the public baths in the town. As usual, he was poorly dressed and so the attendants did not treat him with any respect. He was given only the smallest piece of soap and a little towel that didn't look very clean. During his time in the baths he was not served tea and cakes like the other customers. In fact, the attendants made it obvious they would not mind if they never saw him there again. But when he left the baths Goha gave the two attendants a gold coin each. They were amazed at how this poorly dressed man, whom they had treated roughly, should suddenly be so generous to them. Perhaps the next time, they told themselves, he would be even more generous.

The following week Goha again went to the public baths. This time, despite the fact that he was dressed in the same clothes, he was treated like a king. When he left he handed to each of the attendants the smallest copper coin instead of the gold one he had given them after his first visit.

"This copper coin," explained Goha to the surprised men, "is for the previous visit when I was treated like a beggar. The gold coins I gave you were for this time."



Study Questions and Activities

1. List items appearing in the jokes that describe historical aspects of Muslim culture that are different from our own. How is their everyday life similar to our own?
2. Using the anecdotes listed here, develop a social profile of Goha, Mulla Nasruddin, or Nasruddin Hoja, as he is variously called. Define his social class, the occupation(s) that seem to fit him, and the type of environment (urban/rural) to which he seems to belong.
3. Compare this universal clown of the Muslim world to a figure like Charlie Chaplin, or Lily Tomlin's "bag lady," or a comic strip figure. How do these characters represent the times in which they live? What social functions do they serve?
4. Invent a joke using a stock character from our times, or invent your own.

Observations on the Vikings and Russians

Historical Source

Mujam al-Buldan
(Compendium of Countries)

Author

Ahmad Ibn Fadlan (fl. 920CE)

Excerpted from

Fraehn, C.M. *Ibn Fozlan's und anderer Araber Berichte über die Russen älterer Zeit: Nachdruck der Ausgabe von 1823* (Haburg: Helmut Buske Verlag), 1976.

Translated from the German and Arabic
by Susan Douglass and Usama Amer.

➤ pp. 1-23.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

In the year 921CE, Ibn Fadlan set out with a party on a journey from Baghdad to the north as ambassadors of the Abbasid Khalifah al-Muqtadir (ruled 908-932CE) to the King of the Slavs, in the cold, forested land of long rivers which is now in northern Russia. The Khalifah had received a letter from that king, asking him to send someone who could teach them about Islam, and to send funds to help build a masjid [mosque]. The head of the expedition was Nadir al-Harami, a scholar, and Ibn Fadlan was to be the secretary. What brought these groups—who lived about 1,500 miles apart—in contact was a network of trade routes from the northern forests and arctic seacoasts down the great Dneiper and Volga rivers to the Black and Caspian Seas. Along these routes, Viking ships carried amber, furs, honey and handicrafts, trading for textiles, pottery, spices, metal and glass wares from Muslim and Byzantine lands. Due to this trade, many Arabic coins have been found buried in Scandanavia. Descendants of the Vikings who had long raided Europe now traded and settled in these lands as the Rus, among the ancestors of the Russian people. The knowledge that Ibn Fadlan gathered sheds light even today on a time in those lands about which little is known. Much of what is known of this culture is the result of archaeological finds like graves. This account is valuable because it describes the actual rites of burial for the Viking chiefs, as they occurred in Ibn Fadlan's time.

The excerpt given here is a good example of the detective work necessary for scholars who work with ancient manuscripts. Like many other valuable original works, the manuscript of Ibn Fadlan's report has been lost. We know it today only because other Muslim geographers of the time or later read it and quoted from it in their own works. In many of these citations, Ibn Fadlan's name is mentioned in connection with the information, as in the case of the reproduction of Ibn Fadlan's report in the important *Geographical Lexicon* by Shihab al-Din Abu Abdullah Yaqut al-Hamawi (1179-1229CE). Yaqut wa, a Syrian merchant whose travels took him deep into Asia, and whose trade in books gave him access to rare copies of the many works on geography that were such an important part of the Muslim scientific tradition. Sometimes a scholar can recognize that the knowledge of a traveler like Ibn Fadlan has been included, but without attributing it to the source. This was very common in medieval times, as knowledge was compiled and recompiled by different authors. By looking at the wording and amount of detail, a scholar-detective can tell whether the author actually must have had the book in front of him, or whether he relied on an account in someone else's book, or even got the information third-hand. Some of the most famous Muslim geographers quoted Ibn Fadlan from some source or another, in detail, like Belassory in the 9th century, Ibn Khordadbeh and the historian al-Tabari in the 10th century, as well as al-Istakhry, Mas'udi and Ibn Haukal 10th century. Scholars have not yet found a complete version of Ibn Fadlan, but it is hoped that it may be found some day, sandwiched unrecognized between other works in a larger volume among the quarter of a million Arabic manuscripts that lie in libraries around the world, some not yet studied and printed. Yaqut's retelling of Ibn Fadlan's report was first translated into German in 1823, and printed with the Arabic. This English translation was made with the help of both languages, as the German scholar researched some unusual terms in the original.

The Rus are a folk whose land borders on that of the Slavs and the Turks. They have their own language and a religion and a religious law, which has nothing in common with that of any other. Maqdisi [*the 10th century Arab geographer*] says: they live on the island of Wabia which is surrounded by a sea that protects them against invaders. Their number is estimated at one hundred thousand souls. They neither farm nor keep herds. The Slavs attack them and rob them of their possessions. If one of them is granted a son, he throws down his sword and says: 'Yours is only that which you gain by means of your sword.' When their king judges between two opponents and they are not satisfied with his judgement, he says to them: 'Then judge among your selves by your swords.' Whoever's sword is the sharpest, victory is his. It was the Rus who took the city of Berda'a in the year...and dealt with it harshly, until God struck them back from there and wiped them out.

I have read a small book whose author is Ahmed Ibn Fadlan Ibn Abbas Ibn Rashid Ibn Hammad the client of Muhammad Ibn Sulaiman, whom the Khalifah Mukhtadir sent as ambassador to the King of the Slavs, in which he relates everything he saw on his journey out from Baghdad until his return. I give you here—and not without amazement—what he tells [about the Rus] in that report.

I saw the Rus, he says, as they arrived with their wares and camped on the banks of the River Itil [the Volga]. I had never seen people of such tall stature—they are as tall as palm trees, blond, and ruddy of complexion. They do not wear shirts or caftans [*robes*].

Their custom is to wear a length of coarse cloth that they wrap around their sides and throw over the shoulder so that one arm remains bare. Each of them carries with him an ax, a dagger and a sword. They are never seen without these weapons. Their swords are broad with wavy stripes on the blade, and of Frankish [European] manufacture. On one side, from the point to the handle, it is covered with figures and trees and other decorations. The women fasten to their bodice a locket.

of iron, copper, silver or gold, according to the wealth and position of her husband. On the locket is a ring, and on that is a knife, also fastened to the front of their bodice. They wear silver and gold chains around their necks. If the man possesses ten thousand dirhams [silver coins], he has a chain made for his wife; and if he has twenty thousand, she gets two necklaces; and so she receives one more each time he becomes ten thousand richer. In this way the Rus woman acquires a great number of necklaces. Their most valued jewelry consists of green glass beads like the kind found on the ships. They exaggerate in this, paying a dirham for one such bead and stringing them into necklaces for their women...

They come out of their country, anchor their ships in the Itil, which is a great river, and build great wooden houses on its banks. Ten or twenty, more or less, live in such a house together. Each of them has a bed or bench on which he and his women sit, as well as the beauties determined for sale...

As soon as their ships arrive at anchor, each of them goes on land with his bread, meat, onions, milk and intoxicating drink with him, and betakes himself to a high, upright wooden post carved with the face of a human and surrounded by small statues, behind which other posts are standing. He goes up to the highest of the wooden figures, throws himself prostrate on the ground in front of it and speaks: '*O my Lord! I am come from a faraway land, and bring with me so-and-so many maids, and of sable furs so-and-so many skins*'; and when he has named in this way all of the trade goods he brought with him, he con-

tinues: 'I have brought you this offering'; and lays down at the feet of the wooden statue what he has brought and says: '*I wish that you bless me with a buyer who has plenty of gold and silver pieces, who buys all that I desire him to buy, and meets all of my demands*.' Having said this, he then goes away. If his trade goes poorly and his stay drags on too long, then he returns bringing a second, and sometimes a third offering [to the statue]. If he still experiences difficulty in fulfilling his wishes [or getting what he wants], then he brings each of the small statues an offering, and asks for intercession, saying: '*These are the sons and daughters of our Lord*.' And so he continues, going up to each individual statue, pleading for intercession, bowing himself humbly before it. After that, perhaps his trade goes well and easily, and he sells all of the wares he has brought. Then he says: '*My Lord has fulfilled my wish. Now it is my duty to repay him*.' Then he takes a number of cattle and sheep, slaughters them, gives a portion of the meat to the poor, carries the rest to that great statue and the small ones around it, and hangs the heads of the cattle and sheep on the wooden posts arranged behind the statue. During the night, however, the dogs come and devour everything. Then the one who laid them there calls out: '*My Lord is pleased with me; he has eaten my offering*.'

If one of them becomes ill, they pitch a tent for him a distance from their encampment. They lay him inside of it and leave beside him some bread and water. After this, they do not go near him nor speak to him, and what is more, they do not visit him even once in all of the time [he lies sick], especially if he is poor or a slave. If he recovers and stands up from his sick-bed, then he goes back to his people. If he dies, they burn his body; however, if he is a slave, they leave him as he is, until he finally becomes the prey of dogs and carrion birds.

If they discover a thief or robber, they bring him to a high, stout tree and sling a strong rope around his neck and leave him to hang until his corpse falls to pieces in the wind and rain.

They tell me that they do things with their chiefs of which burning is only the least. I wished to learn more about these ceremonies, and it was related to me about the death of one of their chiefs. They laid him in his grave and built a roof over it for ten days, until the cutting and sewing of his grave-clothes was completed. If he was a poor man, they build for him a small ship, lay him in it and burn it. Upon the death of a wealthy chief, however, they gather all of his goods and divide them into three parts. One third is for his family, the second third is for the making of the grave-clothes, and with the last third they buy intoxicating drink to imbibe on the day when a maiden gives herself up to death and is burned together with her lord. They give themselves up to the enjoyment of wine in a most foolish manner, drinking it all day and through the night, to the extent that one of them might even die with the drinking-cup in his hand.

When one of their chiefs dies, his family asks its slaves: '*Which one of you will die with him?*' Then one of them replies: '*I*.' When he has spoken this word, he is then bound to it, and he is no longer free to withdraw himself; and if he wanted to, they would not allow him. Most of the time it is the maidens who do it. When that man, whom I mentioned above, died, they asked his maidens: '*Who will die with him?*' One of them answered: '*I*.' Then she was given over to two maidens who were to watch over her and accompany her wherever she went, and sometimes they even washed her feet. The people began to busy themselves with the affairs of the dead man, to tailor his grave-clothes and to prepare everything else that was required. The maiden drank every day, and sang and was cheerful and in high spirits.

When the day came, on which the corpse and the maiden were to be burned, I went down to the river in which his ship lay. But it had already been hauled ashore. Four corner blocks of wood had been set up for it, and around it those great, human-like carved wooden figures. The ship was then hauled out and placed onto the wooden corner-blocks. The people then

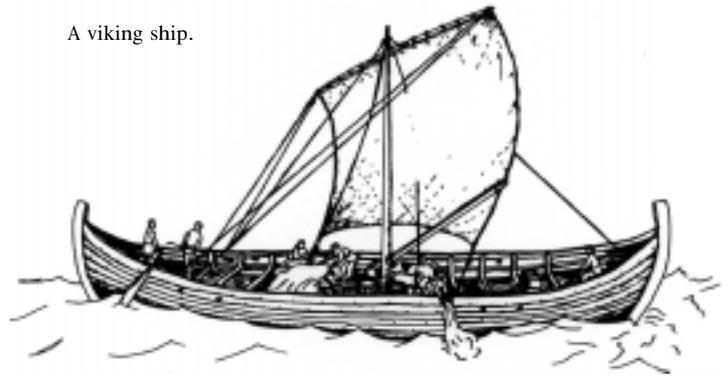
began to go back and forth, speaking words that I did not understand. The corpse still lay in the grave from which it had not yet been removed. After that they brought a bed, put it onto the ship, and covered it with quilted cloths, with gold-worked, Byzantine brocades and with cushions of the same material. Then came an old woman whom they call the Death-Angel, and spread it out on the bed. It is she who took care of the sewing of the grave-clothes and all of the other equipment, and it is she who kills the maiden. I saw her, she was a devil with dark, fierce eyes. When they came to his grave, they removed the earth from the wooden roof, carried it away and dragged him out in the shroud in which he had died. I saw how he had become black from the cold of this land. In his grave they had placed a lute, fruit and intoxicating drink, which they now took out. The corpse, however, had not changed at all except in color. They then dressed him in stockings, pants and boots, a tunic and caftan of gold cloth and golden buttons, and put a cap of gold fabric trimmed with sable on his head. Then they carried him into the tent that was on the ship, laid him on the quilted coverlet and propped him up with pillows, and brought intoxicating drink, fruits and basil herb and laid it all next to him. They also placed before him bread, meat and onions. At that, they brought a dog, cut it into two pieces, and threw it into the ship. They then laid all of his weapons by his side, brought two horses, which they chased until

they dripped with sweat, upon which they hacked them up with their swords and threw the meat into the ship. Then two oxen were brought, also cut up and thrown in the ship, and finally they brought a hen and a rooster, slaughtered them and threw them in there.

The maiden who was to be killed paced all the while up and down, and went into one of the tents that they had there. The inhabitants of the tents ...spoke to her: *Tell your lord: I do this only out of love for you.* . . .Then [after the death of the maiden] the nearest relative of the dead man, naked, took a piece of wood, lit it, and walked backwards to the ship, the torch in one hand, and the other hand behind him, until the corner-blocks under the ship caught fire. At this, the others came forward with torches and kindling wood, everyone carrying a burning piece, and threw it onto the pyre. Soon the wood caught fire, then the ship, then the tent and the man and the maiden and everything that was in the ship. A terrible wind blew up, which fanned the flames and there was no more need to light it.

By my side was a man of the Rus, standing next to the interpreter, whom I heard speaking with him. I asked the interpreter

A viking ship.



what the Rus said, and he answered me: *'You Arabs, he said, are a dumb people. You take the most beloved and honored person among you and throw him into the ground, where the creeping vermin devour him. We, on the other hand, burn him in an instant, so that he is directly transported and enters forthwith into Paradise.'* Then he broke into unrestrained laughter and added: *'His Lord's love for him makes it so, that as soon as the breeze blows, he is whisked away.'* And in fact, not an hour passed before the ship, the wood and the maiden were reduced to ashes with the corpse.

Following this, they constructed over the place where the beached ship had stood something like a round hill or mound, and put up in its middle a large tablet of wood. On it they wrote the name of the dead, and the name of the king of the Rus. Then they took leave of the place.

Study Questions and Activities

1. Discuss the evidence of attitudes about the Rus held by the Arab travelers, and about the Arabs held by the Rus hosts. Was either visitor or host in danger from the other's presence?
2. Compare the way of life of the Rus with other groups familiar to you from historical accounts, in terms of their livelihood, their dress, housing and forms of transport.
3. Describe the religion of the Rus, and compare it to that of the visitors from Baghdad. What do you know about the religion of the Rus, or Russians, in this region at a later period?
4. How credible does the account by Ibn Fadlan seem to be? What evidence can you find to support your conclusion?

Observations on India

Historical Source

Tahqiq al-Hind
(The Precise Description of India)

Author

Abu Rayhan al-Biruni (d. 1048CE)

Excerpted from

Sachau, Edward C., tr. *Al-Biruni's India* (New York: W.W. Norton), 1971.

➤ pp. 243-246, 196-198

On Mount Meru according to the Belief of the Authority of the Puranas and of Others

We begin with the description of this mountain, since it is the center of the Dvipas and seas, and, at the same time, the center of Jambudvipa. Brahmagupta says: "Manifold are the opinions of people relating to the description of the earth and to Mount Meru, particularly among those who study the religious literature. Some describe this mountain as rising above the surface of the earth to an excessive height. It is situated under the pole, and the stars revolve round its foot, so that rising and setting depends upon Meru. It is called Meru because of its having the faculty of doing this, and because it depends alone upon the influence of its head that sun and moon become visible. The day of the angels who inhabit Meru lasts six months, and their night also six months." Brahmagupta quotes the following passage from the book of Jina, i.e. Buddha: "Mount Meru is rectangular, not round."

The commentator Balabhadra says: "Some people say that the earth is flat, and that; Mount Meru is an illuminating, light-giving body. However, if such were the case, the planets would not revolve round the horizon of the inhabitants of Meru; and if it were shining it would be visible because of its height, as the pole above it is visible. According to some, Meru consists of gold; according to others it consists of jewels."

Aryabhata thinks that it has not absolute height, but only the height of one yojana, and that it is round, not quadrangular, the realm of the angels; that it is invisible, although shining, because it is very distant from the inhabited earth, being situated entirely in the high north, in the cold zone, in the center of a desert called Nandanavana. However, if it were of a great height, it would not be possible on the 66th degree of latitude for the whole Tropic of Cancer to be visible, and for the sun to revolve on it, being always visible without ever disappearing."

All that Balabhadra produces is foolish both in words and matter, and I cannot find why he felt himself called upon to write a commentary if he had nothing better to say. If he tries to refute the theory of the flatness of the earth by the planets revolving round the horizon of would go nearer proving the theory than refuting it. For if the earth were a flat expanse, and everything high on earth were parallel to the perpendicular height of Meru, there would be no change of horizon, and the same horizon would be the equinox for all places on earth.

On the words of Aryabhata as quoted by Balabhadra we make the following remarks:

Let AB be the globe of the earth round the center H. Further, A is a place on the earth in the 66th degree of latitude. We cut off from the circle the arc AB, equal to the greatest declination. Then B is the place in the zenith of which the pole stands. Further,

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Al-Biruni, Persian by birth, was a Muslim scientist who lived from 973-1050CE. He was one of the pioneers of scientific writing in Arabic. He studied astronomy, mathematics, medicine, geography and natural science, a wide range of fields even for Muslim scholars of his time. In making astronomical tables to discover the order of the heavenly bodies, he studied the classics, but relied upon observation and mathematical calculation. Al-Biruni's works, while absorbed by other Muslim scientists, did not become known in the West until modern times. His description of India's position and coastline corresponds closely to that of modern maps. His conclusions about the geology of India are surprisingly modern, pointing to gradual change over geologic time. Another famous work of al-Biruni lists the co-ordinates of important cities, using longitude and latitude.

Al-Biruni was an excellent observer during his travels, and his works contain descriptions of crafts, mining and many other technical processes that he recorded, giving historians of science and technology important sources of information on the spread of inventions.

we draw the line AC touching the point A. This line lies in the plane of the horizon as far as the human eye reaches round the earth. We join the points A and H with each other, and draw the line H-R-C, so that it is met in C by the line AC. Further, we let fall the perpendicular AT on HC. Now, it is evident that AT is the sine of the greatest declination; TB the versed sine of the greatest declination; TH the sine of the complement of the greatest declination. And as we here occupy ourselves with Aryabhata, we shall, according to his system, change the sines. Accordingly:

$$\begin{aligned} AT &= 1397 \\ TH &= 3140 \\ BT &= 298 \end{aligned}$$

Because the angle H-A-C is a right angle, we have the equation:

$$HT:TA = TA:TC$$

And the square of AT is 1,951,609. If we divide it by TH, we get as quotient 622. The difference between this number and TB is 324, which is BC. And the relation of BC to P, H, the latter being *sinus totus* = 3438, is the same as the relation of the number of yojanas of BC to the yojanas of BH. The latter number is, according to Aryabhata, 800. If it is multiplied by the just-mentioned difference of 324, we get the sum of 259,200. And if we divide this number by the *sinus totus* we get 75 as quotient, which is the number of yojanas of BC, equal to 600 miles or 200 *farsakh*. If the perpendicular of a mountain is 200 *farsakh*, the ascent will be nearly the double. Whether Mount Meru has such a height or not, nothing of it can be visible in the 66th degree of latitude, and it would not cover anything of the Tropic of Cancer at all (so as to intercept from it the light of the sun). And if for those latitudes (66° and 23°) Meru is under the horizon, it is also under the horizon for all places of less latitude. If you compare Meru with a luminous body like the sun, you know that the sun sets and disappears under the earth. Indeed Meru may be compared with the earth. It is not invisible to us because of its being far away in the cold zone, but because it lies below the horizon, because the earth is a globe, and everything heavy is attracted towards its center.



Schematic map of the Eastern Hemisphere by al-Biruni.

Various Notes on Their Country, Their Rivers, and Their Ocean. Itineraries of the Distances Between Their Several Kingdoms, and Between the Boundaries of Their Country.

...This southern ocean does not form the utmost southern limit of the inhabitable world. On the contrary, the latter stretches still more southward in the shape of large and small islands which fill the ocean. In this southern region land and water dispute with each other their position, so that in one place the continent protrudes into the sea, whilst in another the sea penetrates deeply into the continent.

The continent protrudes far into the sea in the western half of the earth, and extends its shores far into the south. On the plains of this continent live the western negroes, whence the slaves are brought; and there are the Mountains of the Moon, and on them are the sources of the Nile. On its coast, and the islands before the coast, live the various tribes of the Zanj. There are several bays or gulfs which penetrate into the continent on this western half of the earth the bay of Berbera, that of Klysmā (the Red Sea), and that of Persia (the Persian Gulf); and between these gulfs the western continent protrudes more or less into the ocean.

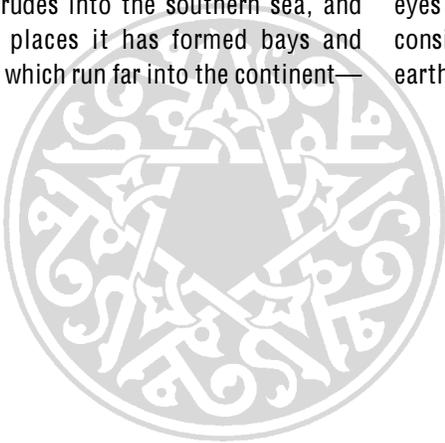
In the eastern half of the earth the sea penetrates as deeply into the northern continent as the continent in the western half protrudes into the southern sea, and in many places it has formed bays and estuaries which run far into the continent—

bays being parts of the sea, estuaries being the outlets of rivers towards the sea. This sea is mostly called from some island in it or from the coast which borders it. Here, however, we are concerned only with that part of the sea which is bordered by the continent of India, and therefore is called the Indian Ocean.

As to the orographic configuration of the inhabitable world, imagine a range of towering mountains like the vertebrae of a pine stretching through the middle latitude of the earth, and in longitude from east to west, passing through China, Tibet, the country of the Turks, Kabul, Badhakhsan, Tokharistan, Bamiyan, Elghor, Khurasan, Media, Adharbaijan, Armenia, the Roman Empire, the country of the Franks and of the Jalalika (Galicians). Long as this range is, it has also a considerable breadth, and besides, many windings which enclose inhabited plains watered by streams which descend from the mountains both towards north and south. One of these plains is India, limited in the south by the above-mentioned Indian Ocean, and on all three other sides by the lofty mountains, the waters of which flow down to it. But if you have seen the soil of India with your own eyes and meditate on its nature—if you consider the rounded stones found in the earth however deep you dig, stones that

are huge near the mountains and where the rivers have a violent current; stones that are of smaller size at greater distance from the mountains, and where the streams flow more slowly; stones that appear pulverized in the shape of sand where the streams begin to stagnate near their mouths and near the sea—if you consider all this, you could scarcely help thinking that India has once been a sea which by degrees has been filled up by the alluvium of the streams.

The middle of India is the country round Kanoj (Kanauj), which they call Madhyadesa, i.e. the middle of the realms. It is the middle or center from a geographical point of view, ill so far as it lies half way between the sea and the mountains, in the midst between the hot and the cold provinces, and also between the eastern and western frontiers of India. But it is the political center too, because in former times it was the residence of their most famous heroes and kings. The country of Sindh lies to the west of Kanoj. In marching from our country to Sindh we start from the country of Nimroz, i.e. the country of Sijistan whilst marching to Hind or, India proper we start from the side of Kabul. This, however, is not the only possible road. You may march into India from all sides, supposing that you can remove the obstacles in the way.



Study Questions and Activities

1. Why does al-Biruni disagree with the ancient Indian sources concerning the shape of the earth and the position of Mount Meru (probably Everest, or another very high mountain of the Himalayas) in the universe?
2. What kind of reasoning and mathematical evidence does al-Biruni bring to support his argument? What branch of mathematics does he demonstrate in the proof?
3. Knowing that al-Biruni was writing in the 10th century CE, do you find it surprising that he believed he had proof that the earth is round? Why?
4. Find the passage in which al-Biruni draws the conclusion that the surface of the earth has changed over a long period of time. Do research to find out when scientists in the West developed the concept of geologic time and transformation.
5. Locate as many of the places al-Biruni mentions on a globe or world map. Identify them with their modern names.



The Travels of Ibn Batutah

Voyage to Zaila

Historical Source

Rihlat Ibn Batutah
(The Journey of Ibn Batutah)

Author

Abu Abd Allah Muhammad
Ibn Batutah (d. 1378^{CE})

Excerpted from

Gibb, H.A.R., tr. *Ibn Battuta:
Travels in Asia and Africa*
(London: Hakluyt Society), 1929.

➤ pp. 373-374, 379-380,
391-392, 396-397, 407

I travelled from the city of Adan by sea for four days and arrived at the city of Zaila, the city of the Barbara, who are a people of the negroes, Shafi'ites in rite. Their country is a desert extending of two months' journey, beginning at Zaila and ending at Maqdashaw. Their cattle are camels, and they also have sheep which are famed for their fat. The inhabitants of Zaila are black in colour, and the majority of them are Shi'is.
[...]

We sailed on from there for fifteen nights and came to Maqdashaw [Mogadishu], which is a town of enormous size. Its inhabitants are merchants, possessed of vast resources; they own large numbers of camel, of which they slaughter hundreds every day [for food], and also have quantities of sheep. In this place are manufactured the woven fabrics called after it, which are unequalled and exported from it to Egypt and elsewhere. It is the custom of the people of this town that, when a vessel reaches the anchorage, the *sumbuqs*, which are small boats, come out to it. In each *sumbuq* there are a number of young men of the town, each one of whom brings a covered platter containing food and presents it to one of the merchants on the ship saying 'This is my guest,' and each of the others does the same. The merchant, on disembarking, goes only to the house of his host among the young men, except those of them who have made frequent journeys to the town and have gained some acquaintance with its inhabitants; these lodge where they please. When he takes up residence with his host, the latter sells his goods for and buys for him; and if anyone buys anything from him at too low a price or sells to him in the absence of his host, that sale is held invalid by them. This practice is profitable one for them.

When the young men came on board the vessel in which I was, one of them came up to me. My companions said to him "This man is not a merchant, but a doctor of the law,"

whereupon he called out to his friends and said to them "This is the guest of the *qadi* (judge)," There was among them one of the *qadi's* men, who informed him of this, and he came down to the beach with a number of students and sent one of them to me. I then disembarked with my companions and saluted him and his party. He said to me "In the name of God, let us go to salute the Shaykh." "And who is the Shaykh?" I said, and he answered, "The Sultan," for it is their custom to call the sultan 'the Shaykh'. Then I said to him "When I am lodged, I shall go to him," but he said to me, "It is the custom that whenever there comes a jurist or a *sharif* or a man of religion, he must first see the sultan before taking a lodging." So I went with him to the sultan, as they asked.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Abu Abdullah ibn Batutah was born in 1304^{CE}, in Tangier, Morocco, to a family of legal scholars. He was also educated as a legal scholar, qualified to take a post as judge. In 1325, he decided to depart for the *hajj* (Islamic pilgrimage) to Makkah. A year and a half later, after visiting North Africa, Egypt, Palestine and Syria, he took the *hajj* caravan to Makkah. He then began a journey that would end almost 30 years later, and would not repeat the same route twice. He visited Iraq and Persia, returned to Makkah, then set out by sea to East Africa. He returned via Southern Arabia to the Persian Gulf, and returned again to Makkah. Hearing that the Sultan of Delhi was offering employment to judges, he left for India. Instead of the sea route, however, he went north to Asia Minor, crossed the Black Sea, visited Constantinople, and crossed the Steppe to Central Asia in the company of a Turkish princess's entourage. He approached the Indus River from the north, crossing the mountains through Afghanistan. After spending eight years in India, he was sent as an ambassador to China. Shipwrecked off the coast of India, he later visited Sri Lanka, Ceylon and the Maldiv Islands. He decided to go to China on his own, and visited Bengal, Burma and Sumatra, going on to Canton, and perhaps farther. He returned to Makkah via Persia, Syria and Egypt, and made a last *hajj*. In 1349, he arrived in Fez, Morocco, where he discovered that his parents had died of the plague. He then went to Spain. Four years later, he crossed the Sahara to visit the West African kingdom of Mali.

At the request of the Moroccan Sultan, Ibn Batutah's *Rihla* was written in 1356, with the help of Andalusian literary scholar Ibn Jusayy. Ibn Batutah's final years were spent quietly, in a post as judge.

Account of the Sultan of Maqdashaw

The sultan of Maqdashaw is, as we have mentioned, called only by the title of 'the Shaykh'. His name is Abu Bakr, son of the *shaykh* Umar; he is by origin of the Barbara (Berbers) and he speaks in Maqdishi, but knows the Arabic language. One of his customs is that, when a vessel arrives, the sultan's *sumbuq* (patrol ship) goes out to it, and enquires are made as to the ship, whence it has come, who is its owner and its *rubban* (that is, its captain), what is its cargo, and who has come on it of merchants and others. When all of this information has been collected, it is presented to the sultan, and if there are any person [of such quality] that the sultan should assign a lodging to him as his guest, he does so.

When I arrived with the *qadi* I have mentioned, who was called Ibn al-Burhan, an Egyptian by origin, at the sultan's residence, one of the serving-boys came out and saluted the *qadi*, who said to him "Take word to the intendant's office and inform the Shaykh that this man has come from the land of al-Hijaz." So he took the message, then returned bringing a plate on which were some leaves of betel and areca nuts. He gave me ten leaves along with a few of the nuts, the same to the *qadi*, and what was left on the plate to my companions and the *qadi*'s students. He brought also a jug of rose-water of Damascus, which he poured over me and over the *qadi* [i.e. over our hands], and said "Our master commands that he be lodged in the students' house," this being a building equipped for the entertainment of students of religion. The *qadi* took me by the hand and we went to this house, which is in the vicinity of the Shaykh's residence, and furnished with carpets and all necessary appointments. Later on the serving boy brought food from the Shaykh's residence. With him came one of his viziers, who was responsible for the care of the guests, and who said "Our master greets you and says to you that you are heartily welcome." He then set down the food and we ate. Their food is rice cooked with *ghee* (clarified butter), which they put into a large wooden platter, and on top of this they set platters of *kushan*. This is the

seasoning made of chickens, meat, fish and vegetables. They cook unripe bananas in fresh milk and put this in one dish, and in another dish they put curdled milk, on which they place pieces of pickled lemon, bunches of pickled pepper steeped in vinegar and slated, green ginger, and mangos. These resemble apples, but have a stone; when ripe they are exceedingly sweet and are eaten like other fruit, but before ripening they are acid like lemons, and they pickle them in vinegar. When they take a mouthful of rice, they eat some of these salted and vinegar conserves after it. A single person of the people of Maqdashaw eats as much as a whole company of us would eat, as a matter of habit, and they are corpulent and fat in the extreme.

After we had eaten, the *qadi* took leave of us. We stayed there three days, food being brought to us three times a day, following their custom. On the fourth day, which was a Friday, the *qadi* and students and one of the Shaykh's viziers came to me, bringing a set of robes; these [official] robes of theirs consist of a silk wrapper which one ties round his waist in place of drawers (for they have no acquaintance with these), a tunic of Egyptian linen with an embroidered border, a furred mantle of Jerusalem stuff, and an Egyptian turban with an embroidered edge. They also brought robes for my companions suitable to their position. We went to the congregational mosque and made our prayers behind the *maqsura* [area restricted for the ruler]. When the Shaykh came out of the door of the *maqsura* I saluted him along with the *qadi*; he said a word of greeting, spoke in their tongue with the *qadi*, and

then said in Arabic "You are heartily welcome, and you have honored our land and given us pleasure." He went out to the court of the mosque and stood by the grave of his father, who is buried there, then recited some verses from the Qur'an and said a prayer. After this the viziers, amirs, and officers of the troops came up and saluted him. Their manner of salutation is the same as the custom of the people of al-Yaman (Yemen): one puts his forefinger to the ground, then raises it to his head and says "May God prolong the majesty." The Shaykh then went out of the gate of the mosque, put on his sandals, ordered the *qadi* to put on his sandals and me to do likewise, and



Medieval Latin map depicting Mali and surrounding areas of Africa.

set out on foot for his residence, which is close to the mosque. All the rest of the people walked barefoot. Over his head were carried four canopies of colored silk with the figure of a bird in gold on top of each canopy. His garments on that day consisted of a large green mantle of Jerusalem cloth, with fine robes of Egyptian cloth with embroideries underneath, and he was girt with a waist-wrapper of silk and turbaned with a large turban. In front of him were sounded drums and trumpets and fifes, and before

and behind him were the commanders of the troops, while the *qadi*, the doctors of the law and the sharifs walked alongside him. He entered his audience hall in this disposition, and the viziers, amirs and officers of the troops sat down in a gallery there. For the *qadi* there was spread a rug, on which no one may sit but he, and beside him were the jurists and sharifs. They remained there until the hour of the afternoon prayer, and after they had prayed it, the whole body of troops came and stood in rows in order of their ranks. Thereafter the drums, fifes, trumpets and flutes are sounded; while they play no person moves or stirs from his place, and anyone who is walking stands still, moving neither backwards nor forwards. When the playing of the drum-band comes to an end, they salute with their fingers as we have described and withdraw. This is a custom of theirs on every Friday.

[...]

I then sailed from the city of Maqdashaw, making for the country of Sawahil [coastlands], with the object of visiting the city of Kulwa in the land of the Zinj people. We came to the island of Mambasa, a large island two days' journey by sea from the Sawahil country. It has no mainland territory, and its trees are the banana, the lemon, and the citron. Its people have a fruit which they call *jammun*, resembling an olive and with a stone like its stone. The inhabitants of this island sow no grain, and it has to be transported to them from the Sawahil. Their food consists mostly of bananas and fish. They are Shafi'ites in rite, pious, honourable, and upright, and their mosques are of wood, admirably constructed. At each of the gates of the mosques there are one or two wells (their wells have a depth of one or two cubits), and they draw up water from them in a wooden vessel, into which has been fixed a thin stick of the length of one cubit. The ground around the well and the mosque entrance washes his feet before entering, and at its gate there is a piece of thick matting on which he rubs his feet. If one intends to make ablution, he holds the vessel between his thighs, pours water on his hands and performs the ritual washings. All the people walk with bare feet.

We stayed one night in this island and sailed on to the city of Kulwa, a large city on the seacoast, most of whose inhabitants are Zinj, jet-black in color. They have tattoo marks on their faces, just as there are on the faces of the Limis of Janawa. I was told by a merchant that the city of Sufala lies at a distance of half a month's journey from the city of Kulwa, and that between Sufala and Yufi, in the country of the Limis, is a month's journey; from Yufi gold dust is brought to Sufala. The city of Kulwa is one of the finest and most substantially built towns; all the buildings are of wood, and the houses are roofed with *dis* reeds. The rains there are frequent.



region; I preferred it to all kinds of meat and used to eat nothing else. They broil it on the leaves of trees, place it on rice, and eat it thus; the rice is brought to them from India. They are traders, and make a livelihood by what comes to them on the Indian Sea. When a vessel arrives at their town, they show the greatest joy. Their speech is incorrect although they are Arabs and every sentence that they speak they follow up with "la" ("no"). So, for example, they say "You eat, no; you walk, no; you do so-and-so, no."

[...]
In the vicinity of Qalhat is the village of Tibi, one of the loveliest of villages and most striking in beauty, with flowing streams and verdant trees and abundant orchards. Fruits of various kinds are brought from it to Qalhat. There is there a banana called *marwari*, which in Persian means 'pearly'; it grows plentifully there and is exported from it to Hurmuz and other places. There is also the betel but it is small-leaved. Dried dates are imported into these parts from Oman.

We set out thereafter for the land of Oman, and after traveling for six days through desert country we reached it on the seventh. It is fertile, with streams, trees, orchards, palm groves and abundant fruit of various kinds. We came to the capital of this land, which is the city of Nazwa, a city at the foot of a mountain, enveloped by orchards and streams, and with fine bazaars and splendid clean mosques. Its inhabitants make a practice of eating meals in the courts of the mosques, every man bringing what he has and all assembling together to eat in the mosque courtyard, and the wayfarers eat along with them.

The City of Qais

We travelled on from there to the city of Qais, also called Siraf. It is on the coast of the Indian Sea, which connects with the sea of al-Yaman (Yemen) and Fars (Persia), and it is reckoned as one of the districts of Fars. It is a city of wide extent, commodious, in a rich country-side, and with wonderful gardens of scented herbs and leafy trees amongst its houses. Its people draw their water from springs that gush out from its hills. They are Persians of noble stock, and among them is a body of Arabs of the Banu Saffaf. It is these latter who dive for pearls.

Account of the Pearl Fishery

The pearl fishery is situated between Siraf and al-Bahrain, in a calm channel like a great river. When the month of April and the month of May come round, large numbers of boats come to this place with divers and merchants of Fars, al-Bahrain and al-Qutaif. The diver, when he makes ready to dive, puts over his face a covering made of the shell of the *ghailam*, that is the tortoise, and makes of this same shell a sort of thing like scissors which he fastens on his nose, then ties a rope round his waist and submerges. They differ in their endurance under water, some of them being able to stay under water for an hour or two hours or less. When a diver reaches the bottom of the sea he finds shells there, stuck in the sand among small stones, and pulls them out by hand or cuts them loose with a knife that he has for that purpose, and puts them in a leather bag slung round his neck. When his breath becomes restricted he pull on the rope, and the man who is holding the rope on the shore feels the movement and pulls him up to the boat. The bag is then taken from him and the shells are opened. Inside them are found pieces of flesh which are cut out with a knife, and when they come into contact with the air they solidify and turn into pearls. All of these are collected, whether small or large. The sultan takes his one-fifth and the remainder are bought by the merchants who are there in the boats. Most of them are creditors of the divers, and they take the pearls in quittance of their debts, or so much of them as is their due.

Study Questions and Activities

1. Identify some local customs of East Africans that show the importance of trade to their way of life.
2. Identify types of clothing mentioned in the excerpt that were imported from other places. Locate these places on a map, and use a trade route map to figure out the routes by which they might have arrived in East Africa.
3. What inferences can you draw about East African culture and religion from the way Ibn Batutah was received there? Which factor do you think was most important about Ibn Batutah himself—that he was a widely traveled person, a learned person and judge, an Arab, or a *hajji* [a person who had completed the Hajj to Makkah]?
4. Use books on Islamic art and architecture to find examples of *qashani* (ceramic tiles of Kashan, Persia) and *zaliq*, or *zilliq* (colored mosaic tiles cut in shapes to make designs). Where did Ibn Batutah see these designs, and in what other Muslim regions is such work found?
5. Search the *National Geographic Magazine* or other sources to find out about the pearl diving industry and its history. What countries produce pearls, and what techniques are used? How accurate is Ibn Batutah's description?



The Travels of Ibn Jubayr

 Historical Source
Rihlat Ibn Jubayr
(The Journey of Ibn Jubayr)

 Author
Abu al-Husayn Ibn Jubayr
(fl. 1185CE)

 Excerpted from
Broadhurst, R.J.C., tr. *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr* (London: Jonathan Cape), 1952.

➤ pp. 50-53, 225

The Month of Muharram of the Year 579^{AH}

[April 26 - May 25, 1183^{CE}]

May God let us know His grace and favour.

The new moon rose on the night of Tuesday the 26th of April while we were in Cairo. May God prosper us in our aims. On the morning of Sunday the 6th of Muharram we left Misr (Nile delta) and ascended the Nile towards upper Egypt, making for Qus. May God, by His favour, grant us His habitual succour and generous relief. The day on which, with the help of Great and Glorious God, we sailed, fell on the first day of May. Villages and large cities followed continuously along the banks of the Nile, as we shall presently relate.

One of these villages is Askun, which lies on the eastern bank of the Nile and to the left of him who ascends it. It is said that here was born Moses the Interlocutor—the blessings of God on our Prophet and on him—and here, as it is said, his mother cast him upon the waters of the Nile. On the day of our sailing, and that following, we observed, to the west of the Nile and on our right, the ancient city of Joseph the Truthful—God bless and preserve him—where is the prison in which he was confined, which is now being demolished and its stones removed to the citadel being built at Cairo; a strong and impregnable fortress. In this city are the store-houses in which Joseph—may God bless and preserve him—stored the food. They are hollow, it is said. From there we moved to a place called Muniyat ibn al-Khasib, a large town on the bank of the Nile, to the right of him who ascends it, with markets, baths, and all the conveniences of a town. We passed it on the night of Sunday the 13th of Muharram, the eighth day after our sailing from Cairo, for the wind had fallen and we had been fain to stop on our way. Now were we to

describe every place we happened upon on the banks of the Nile, right and left; our book would be cramped by it. We therefore intend to include only the larger and more famous places.

Near to Muniyat and to our left we came upon the blessed mosque dedicated to Abraham the friend of the All-Merciful—God's blessings upon him and upon our Prophet. This mosque is celebrated and

known for the benedictions it brings on those who visit it. In its court are said to be the footprints of the beast ridden by *al-Khalil* (the friend of God, i.e. Abraham)—may God bless and preserve him. Beyond that, to the left, is a place called Ansina, a spacious and handsome village with ancient monuments. In past times it was (already) an ancient city, having ancient walls. Saladin destroyed them and imposed on all ships descending the Nile the task of carrying one stone to Cairo. They have now all been moved.

On the morning of Monday the 14th of Muharram, the ninth day after our sailing from Misr, we passed a mountain called Jabal al-Maqlah, on the eastern bank of the Nile,

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ibn Jubayr was a resident of al-Andalus, or Muslim Spain, during the 12th century CE. His journey was the result of an unfortunate incident at the court of the ruler. It seems that the ruler forced the pious Ibn Jubayr to taste an alcoholic beverage in jest. Ibn Jubayr was so disturbed that it caused the ruler to regret his actions. To make up for the outrage, he is said to have given Ibn Jubayr a quantity of gold. To atone for his sin of weakness, Ibn Jubayr vowed to use the money for a Hajj, or pilgrimage journey to Makkah. He did so, and made a tour of several other places around the Mediterranean. Historically, his travel account is especially interesting since he lived during the Crusades, at the time of Salah al-Din (Saladin). He was an excellent observer of his time.

to our left. This mountain is halfway to Qus from Misr, being thirteen postal stages (*barid*) from both.

What must be mentioned for its remarkable-ness is that, starting from the district of Misr, there lies along the east bank of the Nile, to the left of him who ascends, a continuous and ancient wall, some of which has been destroyed and some of which remains, which continues along that bank to Uswan at the end of Sa'id (Upper Egypt). Between Uswan and Qus are eight post-stages. The stories concerning this wall are varied and contradictory, but to be short, it is a wonderful thing and its secret is known only to Great and Glorious God. It is known as "The Wall of the Old Woman." She has a story, and I think it is the sorceress mentioned in the book *al-Masalik wa al-Mamalik* ("Routes and Countries") who reigned here for a time.

A note to repair an oversight

When we landed at Alexandria in the month mentioned (Dhu al-Qadah), the first thing we saw was a large concourse of people come forth to gaze upon Rumi (European Crusader) prisoners being brought to the town on camels, facing the tails and surrounded by timbal and horn. We asked of their story, and were told a case that would

rend the heart in compassion and pity. A number of Syrian Christians had assembled and built ships in that part of their land which is nearest to the Sea of al-Qulzum (Red Sea), and had then moved their various parts on camels belonging to neighboring Arabs at a price they had agreed upon with them. On arrival at the shores of the Sea, they had nailed their ships together, completed their construction, set them in order, and launched them into the sea.

They had then sailed forth to harass Muslim pilgrims. Coming to the Sea of al-Na'am, they there burnt some sixteen ships, and then went on to Aydhab where they caught a ship coming with pilgrims from Jiddah. On the land they seized a large caravan journeying from Qus to Aydhab and killed all in it, leaving none alive. They captured two ships bringing merchandise from the Yemen, and burnt many foods prepared on the beaches as provisions for Mecca (Makkah) and Medina (Madinah)—God exalt them. Many infamous acts they committed, such as are unheard of in Islam, for no Rumi had ever before come to that place. The worst, which shocks the ears for its impiety and profanity, was their aim to enter the City of the Prophet—may God bless and preserve him—and remove

him from the sacred tomb.

This intent they spread abroad, and let report of it run on their tongues. But God brought punishment upon them for their audacity, and for embarking on that which Providence has forbidden. They were no more than a day's journey from Medina, when God repelled their hostile purpose with

ships prepared in Misr and Alexandria, and in which were the chamberlain known as Lu'lu' (Husam al-Din Lu'lu') and some valiant Muslim sailors. They pursued the enemy who had been near to escape, and seized them all. It was one of the signs of All-Powerful God's solicitude. They had overtaken them after a long time, for there had been more than a month and a half or thereabouts between them. The enemies were killed or taken prisoner. The prisoners were distributed amongst various countries to be put to death in them, and some were sent to Mecca and Medina. God, with His beneficent works, is sufficient to Islam and the Muslims in this grave tide. Praise be to God, Lord of the Universe.
[...]

The Month of Safar of the Year 580AH

[May 14 - June 11, 1184CE]

May God let us know His grace and favour.

We had heard that the air of Baghdad engenders gladness in the heart and disposes the spirit to joy and conviviality so that you will scarce find in it one who is not cheerful and gay, even though he be a stranger and far from his home. So when we had alighted at this place which is one stage from the city, and had breathed its scented breezes and quenched our burning thirsts from its cool waters, we felt, despite our alien loneliness, the call to happiness, and on our rugged path we sensed joy, the joy of the absent returning. We felt aroused in us the promptings of good cheer, reminding us of the meetings of loved ones in the brightness of youth. If so it is with the stranger absent from his native land, how then shall it be for the pilgrim returning to his kith and home?

*"God watered Bab al-Taqa with the drenching clouds,
And restored to his native land each stranger."*



Illustration of a Hajj caravan destined for Makkah.

A Note on the City of Peace, Baghdad, May God Most High Protect It

Baghdad is an ancient city, and although it has never ceased to be the capital of the Abbasid Caliphate and the pivot of the Qurayshite, Hashimite Imams' claims, most of its traces have gone, leaving only a famous name. In comparison with its former state, before misfortune struck it and the eyes of adversity turned towards it, it is like an effaced ruin, a remain washed out, or the statue of a ghost. It has no beauty that attracts the eye, or calls him who is restless to depart to neglect his business and to gaze, none but the Tigris which runs between its eastern and its western parts like a mirror shining between two frames, or like a string of pearls on a woman's chest. The city drinks from it and does not thirst, and looks into a polished mirror that does not tarnish. And the beauty of its women, wrought between its waters and its air, is celebrated and talked of through the lands, so that if God does not give protection, there are the dangers of love's seductions.

We now return to our description of Baghdad

As we have said, this city has two parts, an eastern and a western, and the Tigris passes between them. Its western part is wholly overcome by ruin. It was the first part to be populated, and the eastern part was but recently inhabited. Nevertheless, despite the ruins, it contains seventeen quarters, each quarter being a separate town. Each has two or three baths, and in eight of them is a congregational mosque where the Friday prayers are said. The largest of these quarters is al-Qurayah, where we lodged in a part called al-Murabba (the Square) on the banks of the Tigris and near to the bridge. This bridge had been carried away by the river in its flood, and the people had turned to crossing by boats. These boats were beyond count; the people, men and women, who night and day continuously cross in recreation are likewise numberless. Ordinarily, and because of the many people, the river had two bridges, one near the palaces of the Caliph, and the other above it. The crossings in the boats are now ceaseless.

Then (comes the quarter of) al-Karkh, a noted city, then that of Bab al-Basrah (the Basra Gate), which also is a suburb and has in it the mosque of al-Mansur—may God hold him in His favor. It is a large mosque, anciently built, and embellished. Next is (the quarter) al-Shari, also a city. These are the four largest quarters. Between the al-Shari and Bab al-Basrah quarters is the *Suq al-Maristan* (the Market of the Hospital), which itself is a small city and contains the famous Baghdad Hospital. It is on the Tigris, and every Monday and Thursday physicians visit it to examine the state of the sick, and to prescribe for them what they might need. At their disposal are persons who undertake the preparation of the foods and medicines. The hospital is a large palace, with chambers and closets and all the appurtenances of a royal dwelling. Water comes into it from the Tigris. It would take long to name the other quarters, like al-Wasitah, which lies between the Tigris and a canal which branches off the Euphrates and flows into the Tigris and on which is brought all the produce of the parts watered by the Euphrates. Another canal passes by Bab al-Basrah, whose quarter we have already mentioned, and flows as well into the Tigris.

[...]

Another quarter is that called al-Attabiyah, where are made the clothes from which it takes its name, they being of silk and cotton in various colors. Then comes al-Harbiyyah, which is the highest (on the river bank) and beyond which is nothing but the villages outside Baghdad. Other quarters there are that it would take too long to mention. In one of them is the tomb of Maruf al-Karkhi, a pious man and famed amongst the saints. On

the way to the Bab al-Basrah is a splendidly built shrine in which is a tomb with a large convex tombstone bearing the words, "This is the tomb of Awn and Muin, sons of the Prince of the Faithful Ali ibn Abu Talib"—may God hold him in His favor. Also on the west side is the tomb of Musa ibn Jaafar—may God hold them (father and son) in His favor. Many other tombs there are of saints and men of piety and men of noble forebears, whose names I cannot recollect—may God hold them all in His favour.

[...]

The eastern part of the city has magnificent markets, is arranged on a grand scale and enfolds a population that none could count save God Most High, who computes all things. It has three congregational mosques, in all of which the Friday prayers are said. The Caliph's mosque, which adjoins the palace, is vast and has large water containers and many and excellent conveniences—conveniences, that is, for the ritual ablutions and cleansing. The Mosque of the Sultan is outside the city, and adjoins the palaces also named after the Sultan known as the Shah-in Shah. He had been the controller of the affairs of the ancestors of this Caliph and had lived there, and the mosque had been built in front of his residence. The (third) mosque, that of al-Rusafah, is in the eastern part, and between it and the mosque of the Sultan lies about a mile. In al-Rusafah is the sepulchre of the Abbasid Caliphs—may God's mercy rest upon their souls. The full number of congregational mosques in Baghdad, where Friday prayers are said, is eleven.

[...]

The baths in the city cannot be counted, but one of the town's shaykhs told us that, in the eastern and western parts together, there are about two thousand. Most of them are faced with bitumen, so that the beholder might conceive them to be of black, polished marble; and almost all the baths of these parts are of this type because of the large amount of bitumen they have. The question of this bitumen is strange: it is brought from a well between Basra and al-Kufah from which God has caused to ooze the fluid that produces the bitumen. It comes over the sides of the spring like clay and is scooped up and, after congealing, carried away. Glory to God who creates what He wishes. There is no God but He. The (ordinary) mosques in both the eastern and the western parts cannot be estimated, much less counted. The colleges are about thirty, and all in the eastern part; and there is not one of them that does not out-do the finest palace. The greatest and most famous of them is the Nizamiyah, which was built by Nizam al-Mulk and restored in 504AH. These colleges have large endowments and tied properties that give sustenance to the *faqih*s (legal scholars) who teach in them, and are dispensed on the scholars. A great honor and an everlasting glory to the land are these colleges and hospitals. God's mercy on him who first erected them, and on those who followed in that pious path.



A 13th-century illustration depicting a *suq*, or marketplace. Shown from left to right are a jewelry shop, an apothecary (pharmacy), a butcher shop, and a bakery.

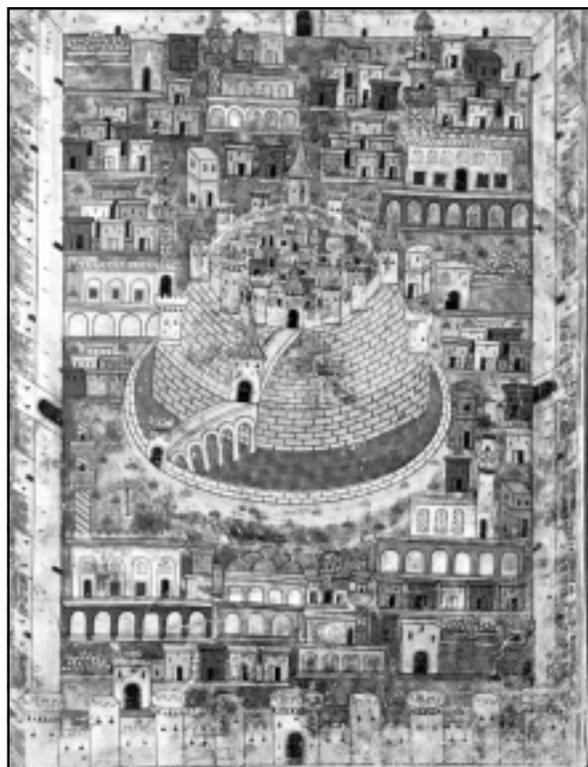
An Account of the City of Aleppo, May God Most High Protect It

Aleppo is a town of eminent consequence, and in all ages its fame has flown high. The kings who have sought its hand in marriage are many, and its place in our souls is dear. How many battles has it provoked, and how many white blades have been drawn against it? Its fortress, renowned for its impregnability and from far distance seen for its great height, is without like or match among castles. Because of its great strength, an assailant who wills it or feels he can seize it must turn aside. It is a massive pile, like a round table rising from the ground, with sides of hewn stone and erected with true and symmetrical proportions. Glory to him who planned its design and arrangement, and conceived its shape and outline.

The town is as old as eternity, yet new it has never ceased to be. Its days and years have been long, and the leaders and the commoners have said their last farewell. These are the homes and abodes; but where are their ancient dwellers and those that came to them? Those are the palaces and courts, but where are the Hamdanid princes and their poets? All have passed away, but the time of this city is not yet. Oh city of wonder! It stays but its kings depart; they perish, but its ruin is not yet decreed. Others after them have betrothed her, and to contract her in marriage is not hard. She is desired and it is with ease that she is possessed. This is Aleppo. How often have its kings taken the predicate 'was', and the adverb of time [the time of their rule] been erased while the adverb of place [their capital] remained. Her name was put in the feminine, and she was decked in the ornaments of a chaste maiden, while (woman-like) upon the treacherous she practised deceit. She was adorned as a bride for the Sword of her State, [Sayf al Dawlah] ibn Hamdan. Alas! Alas! her youth will not endure, suitors she will lack, and after a time ruin will hasten upon her, and the vanguard of misfortune will draw near to her, until "God has inherited the earth and all upon it" [Qur'an 19:40]. There is no God but He. Glory to Him, splendid is His power. But talk has led us from our purpose: we return now to what we were about.

We say that amongst the honors of this castle is that, as we were told, it was in early days a hill where Abraham the Friend of God—may God's blessings and protection enfold him and our Prophet—was wont to repair with some flocks he had, and there milk them and dispense the milk as alms. The place was therefore called Halab ("milk" in Arabic. "Aleppo" is the Latinized version of "Halab"). God best knows concerning this. In the fortress is a venerated shrine, dedicated to him, which men visit to win blessings by praying therein. Amongst its perfect qualities, and a necessity in the defence of fortresses, is that water springs up within it. Two cisterns have been built over the water and they discharge water throughout the year, so never is there fear of thirst. Food also will keep there for all time without impairment. In all the conditions of defence there are no more important and certain than these two attributes. Round the two cisterns, on the side facing the town, is a strong double wall, at the foot of which lies a ditch, whose bottom the eye cannot reach, where water springs. The state of this fortress, both as regards its strength and its beauty, is grander than we can reach in description. Its upper wall is all towers, well-disposed, with dominating high-points and commanding galleries, opened throughout with loopholes. Each tower is garrisoned, and inside the fortress are the suites of the Sultan and apartments for the royal dignitaries.

As for the town, it is massively built and wonderfully disposed, and of rare beauty, with large markets arranged in long adjacent rows so that you pass from a row of shops of one craft into that of another until you have gone through all the urban industries. These markets are all roofed with wood, so that their occupants enjoy an ample shade,



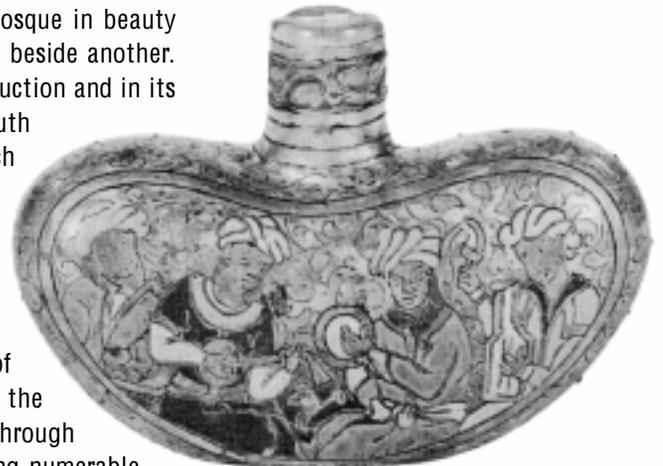
16th-century miniature of Aleppo in a book describing the campaigns of Ottoman Sultan Sulayman the Magnificent.

and all hold the gaze from their beauty, and halt in wonder those who are hurrying by. Its *qaysariyah* (market for luxury goods) is as a walled-in garden in its freshness and beauty, flanked, as it is, by the venerated mosque. He who sits in it yearns for no other sight even were it paradisaical. Most of the shops are in wooden warehouses of excellent workmanship, a row being formed of one warehouse divided by wooden railings richly carved that all open on (separate) shops. The result is most beautiful. Each row is connected with one of the gates of the venerated mosque.

This is one of the finest and most beautiful of mosques. Its great court is surrounded by large and spacious porticos that are full of doors, beautiful as those of a palace, that open on to the court. Their number is more than fifty, and they hold the gaze from their fine aspect. In the court there are two wells fed by springs. The south portico has no *maqsurah* (private space for the ruler), so that its amplitude is manifest and most pleasing to look upon. The art of ornamental carving had exhausted itself in its endeavors on the pulpit, for never in any city have I seen a pulpit like it or of such wondrous workmanship. The woodwork stretches from it to the *mihrab* (prayer niche), beautifully adorning all its sides in the same marvelous fashion. It rises up, like a great crown, over the *mihrab*, and then climbs until it reaches the heights of the roof. The upper part of the mosque is in the form of an arch furnished with wooden merlons, superbly carved and all inlaid with ivory and ebony. This marquetry extends from the pulpit to the *mihrab* and to that part of the south wall which they adjoin without any interval appearing, and the eyes consider the most beautiful sight in the world. The splendor of this venerated mosque is greater than can be described.

At its west side stands a Hanafite college which resembles the mosque in beauty and perfection of work. Indeed in beauty they are like one mausoleum beside another. This school is one of the most ornamental we have seen, both in construction and in its rare workmanship. One of the most graceful things we saw was the south side, filled with chambers and upper rooms, whose windows touched each other, and having, along its length, a pergola covered with grape-bearing vines. Each window had bunches of grapes that hung before it, and each occupant could, by leaning forward, stretch forth his arm and pluck the fruit without pain or trouble.

Besides this college the city has four or five others, and a hospital. Its state of splendour is superb, and it is a city fit to be the seat of the Caliph. But its magnificence is all within, and it has nothing on the outside save a small river that flows from north to south and passes through the suburb that surrounds the city; for it has a large suburb containing numerable khans. On this river there are mills contiguous with the town, and in the middle of the suburb are gardens that stretch along its length. But whatever may be its state, inside or out, Aleppo is one of the cities of the world that have no like, and that would take long to describe. We lodged in its suburb, in a khan called the "Khan of Abu al-Shukr", where we stayed four days.



Bottle from Syria depicting four musicians.

Study Questions and Activities

1. How does Ibn Jubayr's tour of famous places in Egypt, Iraq, and Syria compare to similar trips by tourists today? What type of sites interested Ibn Jubayr [Both he and Ibn Battuta viewed the Pyramids at Giza, though descriptions are not included in these excerpts.]
2. Why does Ibn Jubayr mention Moses, Joseph and Abraham and speak blessings upon them as he does Prophet Muhammad? What is the importance of these religious figures in Islam?
3. When Ibn Jubayr speaks about the "Rumi" prisoners, he means the Franks, or Crusader soldiers captured in battle. In particular, he mentions some Franks captured in a naval engagement on the Red Sea, led by the infamous Reynald of Chatillon against the Muslim holy cities of Makkah and Madinah. Describe the treatment of the prisoners, and Ibn Jubayr's attitude toward them.
4. What is the importance of Baghdad to Muslim history? What is the state of the city as Ibn Jubayr finds it? Compare Ibn Jubayr's 12th century description of Baghdad with Ibn Battuta's 14th century description of the city. What catastrophic event happened between the two travelers' visits? [Hint: 1258ce]
5. List the types of famous places and noteworthy institutions in the city that Ibn Jubayr finds in Baghdad and Aleppo.



The History and Description of Africa

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Historical Source

Wasf Afriqiya / Della Descrittione dell'Africa (Description of Africa)

Author

al-Hassan ibn Muhammad
al-Wazzan al-Fasi [Leo Africanus]
(d. 1552CE)

Excerpted from

Pory, John, tr. *The History and Description of Africa and the Notable Things Therein Contained* (London: Hakluyt Society), 1896.

➤ pp. 822-827

Al-Hassan al-Wazzan al-Fasi is best known as Leo Africanus. He was an Arab of al-Andalus, or Muslim Spain, born in Granada around 1494 or so, just as the city came under the rule of Ferdinand and Isabella. His family left Spain for Africa when he was just a boy, eventually settling in Fez, Morocco. Fez welcomed refugees from al-Andalus and was famous as a city of learning and culture. There Leo was educated in the traditional sciences and literature. He was probably also introduced to the works of Arab geographers like Mas'udi and al-Bakri, whose knowledge of Africa he mentions in his work. Most of what we know about al-Hassan's life comes from brief references in his writings. As a youth, he was employed as a scribe or notary, and served occasionally as a judge in rural Morocco. He also traveled around North Africa with merchants, perhaps serving as a clerk. He seems to have seen military service in the Sultan of Morocco's campaigns to defend against Portuguese invasion, and accompanied several diplomatic missions in the region. Most of his information on Africa was probably gained during a long caravan trip across the Sahara to the Niger region of towns, Lake Chad and Bornu. He visited the famous cities of Timbuktu and Djenne during the rule of the Songhay. Other journeys included Egypt, parts of Arabia, Persia and Constantinople.

Returning from Constantinople around 1520, Leo was captured by pirates—probably Venetian corsairs—who carried the prized, learned prisoner off to Rome and presented him to Pope Leo X. At that time, Moorish (Muslim) guards and slaves were common at Italian courts and in the Papal city. The Pope had him baptized as Giovanni Leone, with the Pope himself as godfather. Such conversions, the sincerity of which were doubtful, were very common among captives. Leo traveled in Italy and taught Arabic. When it became apparent that Leo possessed coveted knowledge of Africa, source of much gold and legendary fame, he was encouraged to write a volume in Italian about his travels. Sometime after Pope Leo X died, it is thought that Leo returned to Africa, and probably returned to the practice of Islam until he died at Tunis in 1552.

Leo wrote his *Description of Africa* first in Arabic, then translated it into Italian. The work was printed and soon appeared in several European languages and in Latin. By 1600 the first English translation had been made and printed. The *Description of Africa* was a very important work, since it was one of the very few sources upon which Europeans relied for knowledge of unknown Africa south of the Sahara. The work also stimulated much desire to explore and possess the place. Even after the coasts of Africa had been explored, the interior remained a mystery that would not be solved until the 19th century. For three centuries, then, Leo Africanus' excellent work remained the standard guide to sub-Saharan Africa's secrets. It is fortunate that this sole witness was a scholar and observer of such high standards and thoroughness. Even at the end of the 19th century, when the edition from which these excerpts were taken was printed, Leo Africanus was still a source of importance.

Our ancient chroniclers of Africa, to wit, al-Bakri and al-Masudi, knew nothing of the lands of the Negros but only the regions of Guechet and Cano, for in their time all other places of the land of the Negros were undiscovered. But in the year of the Hijra 380, by means of a certain Muslim which came into Barbary, the rest of the said land was found out, being as then inhabited by large numbers of people.

A Description of the Kingdom of Djenne

This kingdom called by the merchants of our nation "Gheneoa", by the natural inhabitants thereof "Djenne", and by the Portuguese and other people of Europe "Ghinea", stands in the midst between Gualata on the north, Timbuktu on the east, and the kingdom of Mali on the south. In length it contains almost five hundred miles, and extends two hundred and fifty miles along the river of Niger, and borders upon the Ocean sea in the same place, where Niger falls into the said sea. This place exceedingly abounds with barley, rice, cattle, fishes, and cotton. Their cotton they sell to the merchants of Barbary, for cloth from Europe, for brazen vessels, for armor, and other such commodities. Their coin is of gold without any stamp or inscription at all. They have certain iron-money also, which they use about matters of small value, some pieces whereof weigh a pound, some half a pound, and some one-quarter of a pound. In all this kingdom there is no fruit to be found but only dates, which are brought hither either out of Gualata or Numidia.

There is neither town nor castle, but a certain great village only, wherein the prince of Djenne, together with his priests, doctors, merchants, and all the principal men of the region inhabit. The walls of their houses are built of chalk, and the roofs are covered with straw. The inhabitants are clothed in black or blue cotton, wherewith they cover their heads also, but the priests and doctors of their law go appareled in white cotton. This region during the three months of July, August, and September is yearly environed with the overflowings of the Niger in the manner of an island, at which time the merchants of Timbuktu convey their merchandise hither in certain canoes or narrow boats made of one tree, which they row all the day long but at night they bind them to the shore, and lodge themselves upon the land. This kingdom was subject in times past unto a certain people of Libya, and became afterward tributary unto king Sunni Ali, after whom succeeded Sunni Ali Izchia, who kept the prince of this region prisoner at Gage, where together with a certain nobleman, he miserably died.

Of the Kingdom of Mali

This region extending itself almost three hundred miles along the side of a river which falls into Niger, borders northward upon the region last described, southward upon certain deserts and dry mountains, westward upon huge woods and forests stretching to the Ocean sea shore, and eastward upon the territory of Gago. In this kingdom there is a large and ample village containing six thousand or more families, and called Mali, whereof the whole kingdom is so named. And here the king hath his place of residence. The region itself yields great abundance of corn, flesh, and cotton. Here are many craftsmen and merchants in all places, and yet the king honorably entertains strangers. The inhabitants are rich, and have plenty of wares. Here are great store of mosques, *imams*, and professors, who read their lectures only in the mosques, because they have no *madrassahs* (colleges) at all. The people of this region excel all other Negros in wit, civility, and industry; and were the first that embraced Islam, at the same time when the uncle of Yusuf the king of Morocco was their prince, and the government remained for a while unto his posterity. At length Izchia subdued the prince of this region, and made him his tributary, and so oppressed him with grievous exactions that he was scarce able to maintain his family.

Of the Kingdom of Timbuktu

This name was in our times (as some think) imposed upon this kingdom from the name of a certain town so called, which (they say) king Mansa Sulayman founded in the year of the Hijra 610, and it is situated within twelve miles of a certain branch of the Niger, all the houses whereof are now changed into cottages built of chalk, and covered with thatch. There is a most stately mosque to be seen, the walls whereof are made of stone and lime, and a princely palace also built by a most excellent workman of Granada. Here are many shops of craftsmen, and merchants, and especially of such as weave linen and cotton cloth. And hither do the Barbary merchants bring cloth of Europe. All the women of this region except maid-servants go with their faces covered, and sell all necessary victuals. The inhabitants, and especially strangers there residing, are exceeding rich, such that the present king married both his daughters to two rich merchants. There are many wells, containing most sweet water, and so often as the river Niger

19th-century European illustration of Timbuktu.



overflows, they convey the water thereof by certain sluices into the town. Corn, cattle, milk, and butter this region yields in great abundance, but salt is very scarce here, for it is brought hither by land from Tagaza, which is two hundred miles distant. When I myself was here, I saw one camel's load of salt sold for 80 *ducats*. The rich king of Timbuktu has many plates and scepters of gold, some of which weigh 1300 pounds, and he keeps a magnificent and well furnished court. When he travels anywhere he rides upon a camel, which is led by some of his noblemen; and so he does likewise when he goes to warfare, and all his soldiers ride upon horses. Whosoever will speak unto this king must first fall down before his feet, and then taking up earth must sprinkle it upon his own head and shoulders. This custom is ordinarily observed by them that never saluted the king before, or by ambassadors from other princes. He has always three thousand horsemen, and a great number of footmen that shoot poisoned arrows, attending upon him. They have often skirmishes with those that refuse to pay tribute, and so many as they take they sell unto the merchants of Timbuktu. Here are very few horses bred, and the merchants and courtiers keep certain little nags which they use to travel upon, but their best horses are brought out of Barbary. And the king so soon as he hears that any merchants are come to town with horses, he commands a certain number to be brought before him, and choosing the best horse for himself, he pays a most liberal price for him....

There are great store of doctors, judges, *imams*, and other learned men that are bountifully maintained at the king's cost and charges. And hither are brought diverse manuscripts or written books out of Barbary, which are sold for more money than any other merchandize. The coin of Timbuktu is of gold without any stamp or superscription, but in matters of small value they use certain shells brought hither out of the kingdom of Persia, four hundred of which shells are worth a *ducat*, and six pieces of their golden coin with two-third parts weigh an ounce. The inhabitants are people of a gentle and cheerful disposition, and spend a great part of the night in singing and dancing through all the streets of the city: they keep great store of men and women-slaves, and their town is much in danger of fire. During my second time there, half the town almost was burnt in five hours. Outside of the suburbs there are no gardens nor orchards at all.

Of the Town of Kabara

This large town built without walls, in the manner of a village, stands about twelve miles from Timbuktu upon the river Niger, and here such merchants as travel unto the kingdoms of Ghinea and Mali embark themselves. Neither are the people nor buildings of this town any whit inferior to the people and buildings of Timbuktu, and hither the Negroes arrive in great numbers by water. In this town the king of Timbuktu appoints a judge to decide all controversies, for it is tedious to go to Timbuktu as often as need requires. I my self am acquainted with Abu Bakr, surnamed Pargama, the king's brother, who is black in color, and most beautiful in mind and conditions. Here breed many diseases which exceedingly diminish the people, and that by reason of the fond and loathsome mixture of their meats, for they mingle fish, milk, butter, and beef altogether. And this is the ordinary food also in Timbuktu.



Of the Town and Kingdom of Gago

The great town of Gago, being unwall'd also, is distant southward of Timbuktu almost four hundred miles and inclines somewhat to the southeast. The houses thereof are but mean, except those wherein the king and his courtiers remain. Here are exceedingly rich merchants: and hither continually arrive great store of Negroes who buy cloth brought out of Barbary and Europe. This town abounds with corn and meat, but is much destitute of wine, trees, and fruits. Here there is plenty of melons, citrons, and rice. Here are many wells also containing most sweet and wholesome water. Here is likewise a certain place where slaves are to be sold, especially upon such days as the merchants used to assemble, and a young slave of fifteen years age is sold for six *ducats*, and so are children sold also. The king of this region has a certain private palace wherein he maintains a great number of concubines and slaves, which are kept by eunuchs, and for the guard of his own person he keeps a sufficient troupe of horsemen and footmen. Between the first gate of the palace and the inner part thereof, there is a place wall'd around wherein the king himself decides all his subjects' controversies. Albeit the king is in this function most diligent, and performs all things thereto appertaining, yet he has about him his counselors and other officers, namely his secretaries, treasurers, factors, and auditors. It is a wonder to see what plenty of merchandise is daily brought hither, and how costly and sumptuous all things are. Horses bought in Europe for ten *ducats* are here sold again for forty and sometimes for fifty *ducats* apiece. There is not any cloth of Europe so course, which will not here be sold for fewer *ducats* an *ell*, and if it be anything fine they will give fifteen *ducats* for an *ell*: and an *ell* of the scarlet of Venice or of Turkish-cloth is here worth thirty *ducats*. A sword is here valued at three or fewer crowns, and so likewise are spurs, bridles, and other like commodities, and spices also are sold at a high rate. But of all other commodities salt is most extremely dear. The residue of this kingdom contains nought but villages and hamlets inhabited by husbandmen and shepherds, who in winter cover their bodies with beasts' skins. But in summer they go all naked save their private members, and sometimes they wear upon their feet certain shoes made of camel's leather. They are ignorant and rude people, and you shall scarce find one learned man in the space of a hundred miles. They are continually burdened with grievous exactions, so that they have scarce anything remaining to live upon.

Study Questions and Activities

1. Describe the geographic setting of Mali, as Leo Africanus described it. Compare this description with the data on modern maps.
2. Other than gold and salt, what goods are traded at Timbuktu? Where do the goods originate that are sold in Timbuktu's markets? Do other towns in the region seem to carry on a similar trade? What goods are produced locally, and what imports come from regional and long-distance trade through North Africa?
3. Make a list of occupations and social groups found in West Africa during Leo Africanus' time.
4. What role does the Niger River play in the geography and economy of the region?
5. What evidence of prosperity does Leo Africanus weave into his account? Is prosperity limited to the king? What is the relationship between learning and wealth?