The Maritime Culture in the Kitāb ʿAjāʿib al-Hind (The Book of the Marvels of India) by Buzurg Ibn Shahriyar (d.399/1009).

Submitted by Suhanna Shafiq, to the University of Exeter as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Arabic and Islamic Studies, August 2011.

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I certify that all the material in this dissertation which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other university.

Signed:_______________________________________________________
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Abstract

Scholars have conducted many literary and historical studies on medieval Arabic literary sources, studying aspects such as myths and legends, superstitions, faith/religious beliefs, spirituality, medieval Islamic culture, trade and travel, pilgrimage, and so on and so forth. There is however, a dearth of information dealing with medieval Arabian-Persian-Indian seafaring in the Indian Ocean. Little focus has been placed on the language; in particular, the language of material culture or more specifically, nautical and maritime culture. The study attempts to understand medieval Arabic maritime terminology, the etymology, and the continuity of its use from the classical period to modern times.

Arabic literary sources: historical, encyclopaedic, geographical works, mariners’ travelogues and manuals are often our main sources for understanding maritime material–cultural terminology as Classical and Medieval Arabic Lexica are often void of definitions of material-cultural terminology. Hence, the study of maritime terminology in this dissertation is based mainly on the Classical and Medieval Arabic collection of mariners’ tales Kitāb ʿAjāʿīb al-Hind (The Book of the Marvels of India) by Buzurg Ibn Shahriyār (d.399/1009). The study also compares the use of the terminology in this text to that used by contemporaries of Buzurg, namely the maritime travelogue/manual Akhbār al-Ṣīn wa l-Hind (News of China and India) (c.235/850), part of the work entitled Sīsilat al-tawārīkh; al-Muqaddasī (d. 378/ 988-9) in Āḥsan al-taqāsīm fī maʾrifat al-aqālim (The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions), and also the “Seven Voyages of Sindbād the Sailor” from the Alf layla wa-layla (Thousand and One Nights) of an unknown provenance and year.

The study focuses on the above mentioned texts alongside Classical and Medieval Arabic lexica including Ibn Durayd’s (d. 321/ 933) Jamharat al-lugha (Collection of Language), Ibn Manẓūr’s (d.1311-2) Lisān al-ʿArab (The Language of the Arabs) and al-Zabīdī’s (d.1791) Taj al-ʿarūs min jawāhir al-qāmūs (The Crown of the Bride from the Precious Stones of the Ocean) as it determines which of the two resources is of more value in the study of medieval Arabian-Persian-Indian maritime culture and medieval Arabic material-cultural terminology.
Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.................................................................................................................................................. 2
Abstract .................................................................................................................................................................. 3
Abbreviations and Symbols ................................................................................................................................. 6
Library of Congress Arabic Transliteration System......................................................................................... 7
Chapter 1: Introduction ..................................................................................................................................... 8
Chapter 2: Literature Review ............................................................................................................................ 15
Chapter 3: Buzurg ibn Shahriyār: a Historical and Geographical Perspective 37
Chapter 4: The Sea Stories of Buzurg Ibn Shahriyār ................................................................................. 54
Chapter 5: Life at Sea ..................................................................................................................................... 83
Chapter 6: Maritime Terminology in Buzurg’s Kitāb ʿAjāʾīb al-Hind: An Investigative Analysis. ..................... 108
Chapter 7: Conclusion ................................................................................................................................. 163
Appendices ...................................................................................................................................................... 168
Bibliography .................................................................................................................................................... 173
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of Figures, Tables and Maps</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1 Framework of Study.</td>
<td>11.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2 Framework for Terminology Analysis.</td>
<td>12.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3 Framework of the Present Study.</td>
<td>63.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 1 Dates as found in the Kitāb ʿAjāʾīb al-Hind.</td>
<td>20-21.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2 The sources of Buzurg Ibn Shahriyār.</td>
<td>64-67.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 1: The Seven Seas of the Indian Ocean.</td>
<td>40.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 2: The Red Sea and the Arabian-Persian Gulf.</td>
<td>44.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 3: The Indian Ocean World.</td>
<td>51.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 4: Monsoons in the northern half of the Indian Ocean.</td>
<td>95.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Abbreviations and Symbols**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AD</td>
<td>Anno Domini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AH</td>
<td>Anno Hegirae (in the year of the Hijra)</td>
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<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>Ibn (son of)</td>
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<td>c.</td>
<td>circa</td>
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<td>d.</td>
<td>died</td>
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<td>ed.</td>
<td>edited by/ editor</td>
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<td>eds.</td>
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<td>eg</td>
<td>exempli gratia (for example)</td>
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<td>fl.</td>
<td>flourished</td>
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<tr>
<td>ibid</td>
<td>ibidem (same source and place)</td>
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<tr>
<td>idem</td>
<td>same author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i.e.</td>
<td>id est (that is)</td>
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<td>lit.</td>
<td>literally</td>
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<td>MS</td>
<td>manuscript</td>
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<td>nd.</td>
<td>no year</td>
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<td>no.</td>
<td>numbers</td>
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<td>pl</td>
<td>plural</td>
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<tr>
<td>rev.</td>
<td>revised by</td>
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<td>trans.</td>
<td>translated by</td>
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<tr>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>filling gaps within a quote or information within a round bracket</td>
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**Library of Congress Arabic Transliteration System**

**Consonants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic</th>
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<td>d</td>
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</table>

**Vowels**

- Long: аа, ўу, іі
- Short: о, и, у

Doubled: І, І, оо, І

Dipthongs: ай, ов
Chapter 1: Introduction

Seafaring is a particularly important aspect of Islamic history, as not only did it allow Muslims to spread Islam as far as the seas of China, but it also played a huge role in the trade and commerce of the Indian Ocean. Additionally, long distance travel brought Muslims together in search of knowledge\(^1\) and pilgrimage. Yet, despite the importance of this aspect of Arabian and Islamic history, few studies have been carried out regarding the socio-cultural maritime history and the literature of the period. “The history of seafaring by the Arabs” remarks George Hourani, “is a subject of wide extension in space and time, fragments of which have been dealt with in a great number of scholarly articles and chapters.”\(^2\) Even fewer studies deal with the language of maritime material culture.

This general dearth of information could stem from the lack of medieval literary sources. Some works of medieval geographical and travel literature have dealt partially with the subjects of trade routes and goods, the imports and exports of places they visited, and in some cases, the geographers and travel writers took part in trade while on their travels. Historical works document the development of the Muslim navy; the importance placed on the conquests and the expansion of Islamic lands, which resulted in the construction of warships, the recruitment of soldiers and sailors; and even details such as the differences in their pay. Yet the same attention to detail and meticulous documentation was not afforded to the construction of cargo vessels, merchant mariners, or to seafaring in general.

Classical and Medieval Arabic treatises on ship-building and on navigation do not exist in our period of study i.e. the third-fourth/ninth-tenth centuries, nor do we have any record in the subsequent centuries until the early modern period, when we begin to see navigational treatises such as those of Ibn Mājid (d. after 906/1500), Kitāb al-fawā’id fī uṣūl al-bahr wa-l-qawā’id (The Book of Benefits in the Principles of Navigation) and Sulaymān al-Mahrī (d. 917/1511), Kitāb al-ʿumda l-mahriyya fī ḍabṭ al-ʿilm al-bahriyya (The Book of the Mahri Masterpiece on Exact Maritime Sciences).

Despite this, we do have available to us, a few early medieval Arabic texts dealing with seafaring in the Indian Ocean, both as the main subject, and in passing. Amongst these

\(^{1}\) fī talab al-ʿilm i.e. seeking knowledge is considered to be an obligation upon all Muslims.

\(^{2}\) Hourani 1995: xv
are the Kitāb ʿAjāʾīb al-Hind (The Book of the Marvels of India) by the Persian sea captain Buzurg Ibn Shahriyār (d.399/1009), the subject of our study. It is one of the earliest written collections of Arabic mariners’ tales dealing (mainly) with the Indian Ocean i.e. from East Africa to China, the Arabian-Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. This literary work forms the basis of the present research, and is discussed in further detail in Chapters 2 and 4.

Aim

Studies on medieval Arabic literary sources cover a number of aspects regarding, for example, Islamic culture, myths and legends, superstitions, religious beliefs, trade and travel, pilgrimage, and so on and so forth, but little focus has been placed on maritime culture, let alone the language of terminology. As there are hardly any Arabic technical sources dealing with this subject, this study aims to identify the sources that do provide information regarding maritime material-cultural terminology by examining their usage in medieval Arabic literary sources.

Essentially, the study is a synchronic investigation into medieval maritime terminology as found in Buzurg Ibn Shahriyār’s Kitāb ʿAjāʾīb al-Hind, the etymology of the nomenclature, as well as a diachronic inquiry to establish if there is a continuity of its use from the classical and medieval period to present times. Primarily, I aim to identify the context into which Buzurg Ibn Shahriyār’s work fits, and to determine just how much is known about the period in which it was written. Through this, I will attempt to ascertain whether the language was truly representative of the people of the time (i.e. the third-fourth/ninth-tenth century), or used as the lingua franca of the Western Indian Ocean world. By consulting the Arabic literary works, I should also be able to determine just how familiar the authors were with the technology, materials and tools of the coastal communities. As Classical and Medieval Arabic lexica form an integral part of this study, I will be examining the role they play in helping us to understand maritime material cultural terminology. If the terms are not found in the lexica, the question arises: what was the reason for the omission?

A further point to consider is the reliability of the data found: do the varying genres of the Classical and Medieval Arabic literary works affect the reliability of the data found? And even if the genre of the primary sources gives us no cause for concern, what guarantee do we have of the reliability of the data found in the primary sources, and just
how useful is it in helping us to understand maritime material culture? Moreover, how reliable are the lexica in providing accurate, relevant definitions for material-cultural terminology?

**Framework of the dissertation**

The study conducts an analysis of maritime life in the Western Indian Ocean as portrayed in the mariners’ tales of Buzurg b. Shahriyār and other contemporary works; the focal point at the end of this research is an inquiry into the origins of the maritime terminology. The framework of the investigation into maritime material-cultural terminology follows that which is found in the 1984- study of *Arabic Literary Works as a Source of Documentation for Technical Terms of the Material Culture* by D. A. Agius. The study argues that the lack of technical sources to provide us with material-cultural terminology means information has to be sourced from elsewhere. Classical and Medieval Arabic lexica fail to include material-cultural terminology, and therefore, it is proposed that Arabic literary works are our main source for extracting the meaning. The scope of the present study is somewhat narrower than the 1984- study as it focuses solely on maritime material-cultural terminology, rather than the terms of material-cultural as a whole, but the approach of the present study is a continuation of the 1984-study.

The maritime terminology collected here comprised of a range of subjects. The sheer volume of collected material would have been too great to cover in this study, and some of the material has been touched upon in other studies. Agius (2008), for example, has conducted a study into ship-typology, shipbuilding, crew, navigational techniques etc., using a range of literary works, lexicographical works, and iconographical and archaeological evidence. Hourani (1995) too, has provided us with information regarding nautical culture (though his was not a linguistic study). Details of the terms used for the ship management, seafaring and some weather conditions have also been touched upon by Agius (2008) and Tibbetts (1981), as well as in passing reference by other authors. The inquiry into maritime terminology in this study is, therefore, focused on three themes: the weather (at sea); the sea; and anchorage. This is a first study to cover an analysis of maritime terminology from the earliest Arabic literary maritime work ever written.
Methodology

Having selected the terminology, the analysis will run as follows: a) the textual reference from which the term has been extracted; b) a translation of the passage containing the term; c) a brief summary of the context of the passage, and d) a discussion of the term in question (Figure 1).

An initial analysis of the terms will be carried out using Classical and Medieval Arabic lexicographical works, such as Ibn Durayd’s (d. 321/933) Kitāb jamharat al-lugha (The Book of a Multitude in Language), al-Jawhari’s (d. 393/1002-3) Tāj al-lugha wa ṣiḥāḥ al-ʿArabiyya (The Crown of Language and the Ṣiḥāḥ of Arabic), Ibn Manẓūr’s (d. 711/1311-12) Lisān al-ʿArab (The Language of the Arabs), and al-Zabīdī’s (d. 1205/1791) Taj al-ʿarūs min jawāhir al-qāmūs (The Crown of the Bride from the Precious Stones of the Ocean). In addition to the Classical and Medieval Arabic lexica, I also consulted E. W. Lane’s (d. 1867) Arabic English Lexicon, as not only did Lane draw from the “most copious Eastern sources”3 including the above-mentioned works, but the use of a wider range of Classical lexica occasionally resulted in a different conclusion than the one suggested by Classical and Medieval lexicographers.

The maritime culture of seafarers and merchants belonging to Arabian, Persian, Indian and East African backgrounds, though socially and ethnically diverse, are unified by the Indian Ocean. Although my focus here is Arabian and Persian seafaring and Arabic maritime terminology, it is inevitable that words belonging to other cultures will have

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3 Lane 1863, I: v.
made their way into mainstream Arabic maritime terminology. Thus, foreign lexica such as Steingass’ (d. 1903) *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary*, as well as Hindi and Urdu dictionaries such as Platts *Dictionary of Urdu, Classical Hindi and English* form an integral part of this study (Figure 2).

Figure 2  Framework for Terminology Analysis

The contemporary texts of Buzurg Ibn Shahriyār’s ‘Ajā’īb al-Hind: the *Silsilat al-tawārīkh*, al-Muqaddasi’s geographical treatise *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm* and the *Arabian Nights* will be perused in order to establish whether the terms were commonly used in the period of the present study, or whether they were unique to the ‘Ajā’īb al-Hind. The context in which the terms are found in the contemporary texts will also be examined against those found in the ‘Ajā’īb al-Hind to determine whether they have the same intended meaning, or whether the terminology means something entirely different (and
possibly unrelated to the maritime genre). Furthermore, the contemporary sources, alongside a number of secondary sources and modern studies, may be able to provide additional details on any relevant historical, cultural or religious information that could further our understanding of the maritime terminology.

Contents of the dissertation

Chapter 1 is the present chapter, the Introduction; Chapter 2, or the Literature Review, discusses the Arabic literary sources and the lexica used in order to conduct this research. Chapter 3 looks at the historical and geographical background of the third-fourth/ninth-tenth century Indian Ocean world, which includes a discussion on the principal anchorages and port towns, and an overview of the imports and exports of the region. Chapter 4 is an analysis of the Kitāb ʿAjāʿib al-Hind; discussing the author Buzurg ibn Shahriyār, his method of collecting information, his sources of information, as well as a general discussion of the content of his work. Chapter 5 focuses on life at sea, including the hierarchal system on board the ship, the beliefs and superstitions of mariners’ as well as any rituals they may have carried out, and information regarding the sailing methods used, in particular, star navigation and the manipulation of the elements. Chapter 6 is the investigative analysis of the maritime terminology of Buzurg ibn Shahriyār’s Kitāb ʿAjāʿib al-Hind; and finally the Conclusion, Chapter 7.

Outcome Objective

This research establishes what the best source is for the study of maritime culture; whether lexicographical works provide us with the information we need, or whether Arabic literary sources provide more valuable information in this respect. It leads to a better understanding of the terminology both in definition, and in the historical, geographical, cultural and religious context in which it was used. Alongside the analysis of the maritime terminology of third-fourth/ninth-tenth century, the study ascertains how much information can be extracted from the sources regarding the evolution or development of Arabian (-Persian-Indian) seafaring in the Indian Ocean from early Islam to the coming of the Portuguese in the fifteenth century.

Overall, this research establishes the definition of the maritime terminology used in Classical and Medieval Arabic literary sources; its derivatives; its development and
etymology; the commonality and continuity of the terminology; whether or not it is area specific or whether local culture has an effect on the language, and other linguistic cultural and historical information.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Very few classical and medieval Arabic literary works deal solely with the maritime and nautical culture of the Western Indian Ocean (third-fourth/ninth-tenth centuries); fewer still deal with Arabian-Persian-Indian navigation in this period. Works that belong to the maritime genre itself, such as Ahmad ibn Mājīd’s (d. after 906/1500) *Kitāb al-fawā’id fī uṣūl al-bahr wa-l-qawā’id* (The Book of Benefits in the Principles of Navigation) and Sulaymān al-Mahri’s (d. 917/1511) *Kitāb al-‘umda l-mahriyya fī ḍabṭ al-‘ilm al-bahriyya* (The Book of the Mahri Masterpiece on Exact Maritime Sciences), were written much later; thus, they do not form the basis of this study. There are however, some geographical works, travel and other genres of literature, including the *‘ajā’ib* (marvels) genre, available that deal with this subject in passing, containing raw material pertaining to the maritime culture of the period under study. Literature belonging to the *‘ajā’ib* genre, as well as medieval geographical works (*jughrāfiyā*) have proven to be the best literary source for information on maritime culture, and as such, the primary sources used for this study belong, to some extent, to these expansive and diverse genres.

The *‘Ajā’ib* Genre

Among the *‘ajā’ib* works of marvels and curiosities there is Buzurg Ibn Shahriyār’s (d.399/1009) *Kitāb ‘Ajā’ib al-Hind* (The Book of the Marvels of India), which is the basis of investigation of the present study. It is a collection of sailors’ yarns compiled by a Persian sea captain from Rāmhurmuz, south-west Iran; tales which often border between myth and reality yet provide a great amount of information regarding the maritime culture of the Indian Ocean, from East Africa to China; life at sea; trade routes and goods; and physical geography. The term *‘ajā’ib*, in Classical and Medieval Arabic literature, comprises a genre of curiosities, marvels and the wonders of nature; otherwise known as *mirabilia* “a type of largely geographical or cosmological writing with an emphasis on those real or imaginary phenomena in the physical world which challenged human understanding”. In short, the Arabic/Islamic *‘ajā’ib* is simply the “marvels of God’s creation”, be they within the realm of our scientific understanding, or an “exclusion of realistic observation”.

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2 Dubler 1954-60, I: 203.
The (Arabic and Persian) ‘ajāʾīb literature has been influenced by both local and foreign cultures, the most important of which were Greek or Hellenistic learning; Islamic religious tradition, namely the Qurʾān and the Ḥadīth literature; eastern biblical ideas; and popular tales and fairytale themes, edited, embellished and passed on by long-distance tradesmen and travellers. This theory is supported by parallels found between the “Seven Voyages of Sindbād the Sailor” from the Arabian Nights, elements of which are thought to have been taken from Buzurg Ibn Shahriyār’s (d.399/1009) Kitāb ‘Ajāʾīb al-Hind (The Book of the Marvels of India) and also forms part of the present study. Sindbād’s voyages have parallels with Homer’s (fl. eighth century BCE) Odyssey, in particular, the legend of Polyphemus or Cyclops, as well as information found in Herodotus’ (484-425 BCE) The Histories.

The term ‘ajāʾīb literature is a fairly loose one and although it is a genre in its own right, it cannot be restricted to one category only. It not only encompasses works of myths and legends, such as the Arabian Nights, but also travel (riḥla), and some (but not all) geographical and maritime literature. A similar view is taken by Mia L. Gerhardt, specialist in story-telling techniques, who argues that there is a wide range of travel and geographical literature which contain a wealth of oral tradition such as the mariners’ tales of Buzurg and those of Sindbād the Sailor. Other stories are found in the geographical work of al-Muqaddasī (d. 380/990) and the maritime travelogue or manual for merchants and mariners, the Akhbār al-Ṣīn wa l-Hind (News of China and India) (c.235/850), part of the work entitled Silsilat al-tawārīkh; examples from which are studied in the present research. Some of the works of the ‘ajāʾīb border between fact and fiction, with the fiction not necessarily being recognised as such, Mia Gerhardt writes; she further explains that “significantly, the often-recurring term ‘wonders’ denotes both the accurate description of exotic things and the plainly fabulous.” But what constitutes ‘the fabulous’ mentioned above? Which of the wonders did truly exist? It seems the authors (and their readers) really did believe in the wonders they were writing about, as those that were unbelievable in their view were clearly labelled or highlighted as such. Different cultures have different beliefs, and things that were

4 Ibid.
5 The story of the Valley of Diamonds, for example, is found in the second voyage of Sindbād, in Herodotus’ Histories and in Buzurg’s tales (Buzurg 1981: 75 ‘Kashmiri Diamonds’).
6 Richter-Bernburg 1998, I: 65. He writes of the occult and the miraculous being one of the essential ingredients of travel writings in medieval Arabic, and that these themes were never entirely absent even from scientific literature (including geography).
7 Gerhardt 1963: 238.
described as “fabulous” could have a very believable or reasonable explanation (having taken into account the exaggeration for which some medieval Muslim writers were notorious for). The method of collecting information used by Classical and Medieval Muslim authors supports this theory, as many of them (with the exception of the *Arabian Nights*) followed a certain criteria when recording information, which is discussed in Chapter 4.\(^8\)

In short, the ‘\textit{\textipa{ajā'ib}}\text{"}, as stated above, are the “marvels of God’s creation”,\(^9\) be they what we believe to be real, or what we choose to believe is not. This genre is not always considered to be the most reliable source information with regard to historical facts and events. For information regarding social and cultural history, (often) geography, maritime culture and language however, this genre of literature proves to be extremely important, and it is the extracting of this material which forms the basis of this thesis.

My study is based on Buzurg’s *Kitāb \textipa{Ajā'ib al-Hind} (The Book of the Marvels of India)*. Other contemporary works I consulted were: the *Akhbār al-Ṣūn wa l-Hind* (News of China and India) (c.235/850), part of the work entitled *Silsilat al-tawārīkh* (A Chain of Narratives) published in 302/ 916, one of the earliest eyewitness accounts of its kind and al-Muqaddaš’ \text{"}s (d. 378/ 988-9) *Ahsan al-taqāsīm fi ma'rīfat al-aqālīm* (The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions), an important geographical treatise with personal observations on his experiences. One other work, the *Arabian Nights*, though fictional, was included in my study; thus, the “Seven Voyages of Sindbād the Sailor” portray the sea adventures which took place in the Indian Ocean.

These works not only verify any information found in Buzurg’s text, but also enhance our understanding of the historical, geographical, political and socio-economic context in which it was written, as they include details that Buzurg does not feel the need to include, either because his primary audience would have been familiar with the people, places and customs in question, or because he felt that additional details would detract from the flow of the narrative.

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\(^8\) Agius 2008: 16. The criteria adopted by Classical and Medieval Muslim authors to verify information was as follows: \textit{\textipa{isnād}}: to state where the information was taken from through a chain of reliable scholars or chain of narrators; \textit{\textipa{muṭāla'a}}: reading or consultation; \textit{\textipa{muḍ̄ayana}}: eye witnessing; \textit{\textipa{muḥādatha}}: interviewing or discussing of material; \textit{\textipa{taqyīd}}: travel notes; \textit{\textipa{ta'āruf}}: judging how commonly the term is used. See Chapter 4 for discussion regarding Buzurg’s use of this criteria.

\(^9\) Dubler 1954-60, I: 203.
As the enquiry is a synchronic and diachronic investigation into the maritime-cultural terminology of the ُAjā‘ib al-Hind, consulting both medieval and modern Arabic lexica was crucial in order to attempt to fully understand the terminology extracted from the text.

**Buzurg Ibn Shahriyār and his work, the Kitāb ُAjā‘ib al-Hind**

Not much is known about the author, Buzurg Ibn Shahriyār, other than he lived between 299-399/912-1009; he was from Rāmurmuz in the Province of Khuzistān, south-west Persia; and that he is likely to have lived in one of the ports of the Persian Gulf. A manuscript of the Kitāb ُAjā‘ib al-Hind found in Aya Sofía, Turkey describes him as a nākhōda, a captain or shipmaster, which is probably true. Hopkins is of the opinion that he was an ordinary mariner and merchant. He compiled a collection of maritime yarns, gathered from sea captains, shipmasters, navigators, sailors and merchants whom he met in various port towns of the Arabian-Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. This compilation consists of over 130 stories and anecdotes dealing with the marvels of the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Peninsula, East Africa, the West Indian coast and beyond as far as China. Like many Muslim authors, Buzurg speaks only of the western Indian ports, hardly of those of the eastern coast with which he may have been unfamiliar. In his preface, he states that God created His “marvels” in ten parts and of these, eight parts were assigned to China and India, or the whole of India, which was considered to include China.

The text itself is unique, not least because there is only one early manuscript known, MS 3306 in the Aya Sofía Mosque, now preserved in the Sülaymaniye Library in Istanbul. There is some confusion as to the age of the manuscript itself; the copyist, Muḥammad b. al-Qaṭṭān, dated the text 17th Jumādā al-Awwal 404/24th November 1013, a date which seems reasonable as Buzurg had died only a few years previously, in 399/1009. The frontispiece however, refers to the al-Ẓādiliyya Institute, Damascus, which was founded in 1215 by the Ayyūbid al-Malik al-Ẓādil (r. 592-615 / 1196-1218).

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10 Ahmad 1965, II: 583.
12 For more information regarding the etymology and use of the term nākhōda see Agius 2005 (b): 127-130.
13 Hopkins 1990: 323.
1218\textsuperscript{17}. If the manuscript is indeed associated with the al-\textsuperscript{5}Ādiliyya Institute, then it may be dated incorrectly. Freeman-Grenville, translator of Buzurg’s work into English, notes that the first figure ‘4’ of the year 404/1013 on the manuscript is not written clearly; amending the date to read 604/1246, in his view, would be more accurate.\textsuperscript{18}

What of the actual compilation of the text; when did Buzurg collect his tales? Of the 136 tales, few are dated; those dated either specify the date in the text; or we are able to date them through their historical context. As a majority of the (dated) tales fall between the years 900 and 953, some scholars believe that they were collected in this period\textsuperscript{19} (see table 1). Three tales fall outside this proposed collection span: one dated within the reign of Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 170-193/786-809); the second during the time of Caliph al-Mutamid Billāh (r. 256-279/870-892); and a third dated 390/999 in the manuscript; the latter has been amended to read 309/921, an amendment which has the consensus of most preceding scholars. Yet, it must be noted that the dates are not representative of the date of collection, but of when the events around the stories occurred. It must also be pointed out that if Buzurg’s date of birth was indeed 299/912 as it has been suggested,\textsuperscript{20} then the collection could not possibly have started in 288/900. It is possible that Buzurg settled down later in his life to compile the mariners’ yarns he had already heard during the course of his life at sea. The compilation was said to have been known to his contemporary historian and traveller, al-Mas\textsuperscript{6}ūdī (d. 342/953-7);\textsuperscript{21} the final draft of work therefore, had to have been completed sometime between 342/953, and 345/956. Hopkins however, dates the compilation of the text to around 375/985,\textsuperscript{22} 30 years after al- Mas\textsuperscript{6}ūdī’s death.

\textsuperscript{17} In 592/1196 al-Malik al-\textsuperscript{5}Ādil took over the government of Damascus as the viceroy of al-\textsuperscript{5}Azīz (son of Şalāh al-Dīn), he was proclaimed Sultan of Egypt and Syria in 596/1200, and his Sultanate was formally confirmed by the Caliph in 604/1207. Gibb 1954-60, I: 197.

\textsuperscript{18} Freeman-Grenville 1981: xviii.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{20} Ahmad 1965, II: 583.

\textsuperscript{21} Freeman-Grenville 1981: xvii. Al-Mas\textsuperscript{6}ūdī was the author of the multi-disciplinary Murāj al-dhahab wa ma‘āādīn al-jawāāhir (Golden meadows and Mines of Precious Stones), a historical and geographical work combined.

\textsuperscript{22} Hopkins 1990: 323. An (anonymous online) article suggests that al-\textsuperscript{2}Umarī’s Masālik al-abşār fi mamālik al-ansār volume 2, chapter 3, paragraph 3 is another version or an abridged compilation of Buzurg’s ‘Ajā‘ib al-Hind, containing approximately seventy-seven tales and anecdotes, many of which are not found in the Aya Sofia Mosque MS 3306. Six of these tales are dated, the earliest being 270/883-4 [also the date of the first tale in the text used for this study]. Three of the tales are dated between 361/971-2 and 367/977-8 and, according to the article, these tales also indicate that author had stayed “several times in Kalah (Kalah Bār) [around the west coast of the Malay Peninsula], Şanf (Champa), Sarbuza (Srivijaya) and Banjālān (Bengal).” http://repository.tufs.ac.jp/bitstream/10108/21867/2/jaas059001.html (accessed 23-01-2009). If this text is indeed an extension of or another version of the ‘Ajā‘ib al-Hind, then this would support the view that al-Mas\textsuperscript{6}ūdī did not have access to the complete or final draft; and that the date of completion is likely to be closer to that which was estimated by Hopkins i.e. 375/985.
The following table (Table 1) lists the tales (as numbered by the translator, Freeman-Grenville) in which a corresponding year has been recorded by Buzurg Ibn Shahriyār. In order to help understand the historical context of the tales, I have also included the names of any identifiable kings, rulers, caliphs, amīrs and wazīrs, mentioned by Buzurg, who were reigning at the time. Caliphs not mentioned by Buzurg are noted in square parenthesis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tale number arranged by Freeman-Grenville</th>
<th>Title as given by Freeman-Grenville</th>
<th>Page Number</th>
<th>Date of Occurrence</th>
<th>Reign</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>An Indian King Secretly Converted to Islam</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>288/900 and 270/883</td>
<td>ḌABBĀSID aḥDAR ḌabdAllah b. ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, the ruler of al-Manṣūra in Sind, from whom the king of the country between Upper and Lower Kashmir, Mahrūk b. Raʾīq requested a translation of the law of Islam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX</td>
<td>Giant Whales</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>300/912</td>
<td>Amīr ʿAḥmad b. Hilāl (governor of Oman (r. 913-928)). Caliph al-Muqtadir Billāh (r. 295-320/908-932).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>Another Whale</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>310/922</td>
<td>Caliph al-Muqtadir Billāh.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXIX</td>
<td>A Snake that Ate Elephants</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>339/950</td>
<td>[Caliph al-Muṭṭaqqī Līlāh (r. 334-363/946-974)].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXXII</td>
<td>A Slaving Adventure</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>310/922</td>
<td>Caliph al-Muqtadir Billāh.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXXIII</td>
<td>Zanj Witchdoctors</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>332/943</td>
<td>[Caliph al-Muṭṭaqqī Līlāh (r. 329-333/940-944)].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XL</td>
<td>A Sailor Seduced by a Monkey</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>309/921</td>
<td>Caliph al-Muqtadir Billāh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XLIX</td>
<td>A Red Sea Gale</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>325/936</td>
<td>[Caliph al-Rāḍī (r. 322-329/934-940)].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LI</td>
<td>Said the Weaver</td>
<td>56-7</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>Caliph al-Muṭṭamīd Billāh (r. 256-279/870-892).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1: Dates as found in the Kitāb ʿAjāʾib al-Hind

The Kitāb ʿAjāʾib al-Hind was introduced to the Western world in the nineteenth century when a manuscript copy was made available to the French orientalist C. Schefer; then translated by Devic, *Les merveilles de l’Inde*. Errors in the copy however, became apparent, and it was sent back to Istanbul where they were rectified by M. Ritterhausen. The Arabic text was republished by P. A van der Lith in 1883 alongside Devic’s revised French translation, this formed the basis for the English translation by G. S. P Freeman-Grenville’s *The Book of the Marvels of India* (1981).

The language of the Arabic text is brisk and lively, written in a style that is close to the spoken register of the seafaring community, suggesting that the intended audience was, sea captains, mariners and merchants. Although the Arabic may not be deemed eloquent or of good literary tradition, the conversational style not only helps to authenticate the text, but it also gives us a true representation of the Arabic of the time. Its elegance lies

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24 *Livre des merveilles de l’Inde*.
in its simplicity, and although Buzurg occasionally uses some technical terms, their use does not detract from the enjoyment of the text, but rather, adds to its authenticity.

The translation of the tales into French and English includes a numbering of the tales which is not present in the Arabic text. Nor does the Arabic text have captions or titles for each tale as Freeman-Grenville included in his translation. The English text is easy to read and, while it is not a literal translation, it follows Buzurg’s lively, conversational style.

The aim of the compilation was to entertain and instruct, as one would find in *adāb* literature; the uniqueness of the text lies in this impetus because, apart from the *Akhbār al-Šīn wa l-Hind*, the *Kitāb ʿAjāʾīb al-Hind* is one of the earliest examples of Arabic maritime literature. Buzurg was a pioneer; collecting stories and anecdotes from mariners and merchants, and bringing them to life in his text. He paved the way for, and provided information to, contemporary and later authors, such as al-Masʿūdī (d. 345/956-7), author of *Murūj al-dhahab wa maʾādin al-jawāhir* (Golden meadows and Mines of Precious Stones), who used his work as a source of geographical data on Southeast Asia. It is even possible the Sindbād stories (see below) were borrowed from Buzurg’s *ʿAjāʾīb al-Hind*.

Although the raw material provided by this work may be considered somewhat primitive, and some of the tales lend themselves to the *ʿajāʾīb* theme, the work as a whole provides a wealth of ethnographic information, some of which is not only reiterated in contemporary works, but is also found in the lives of the seafarers of today. Buzurg’s work offers a glimpse of the human element of life at sea in the Western Indian Ocean in the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries, a view which is not found in any other contemporary Classical and Medieval Arabic text.

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25 Buzurg (1966): the tales beginning on page 85 and page 90 are (both) are numbered XLVI, while those beginning on pages 128 and 129 are numbered LXXXI.
26 Agius 2008: 29.
Contemporaries of Buzurg Ibn Shahriyar

1. **Akhbār al-Ṣīn wa l-Hind** (News of China and India)

One of the earliest travel accounts known to us is the *Akhbār al-Ṣīn wa l-Hind* (News of China and India), an anonymous compilation composed in the second/eighth century. It forms part of the work entitled the *Silsilat al-tawārīkh* (A Chain of Narratives) published in 302/916 by Abū Zayd al-Ḥasan b. Yazīd of Sīrāf (fl. 4th/10th century). Alongside Buzurg’s *ʿAjāʾib al-Hind*, this work is one of the earliest Arabic works on human geography, and is possibly the most ancient account of China. Buzurg offers, amongst other things, a view of life at sea, while the *Silsilat* on the other hand, complements his work by providing the historical context in which it was written, which is why it has been included in this study. Detailed information regarding the most common (sea) routes, safe places to stop and access water, and the possibility of trade is all found in this text. It also paints a picture of the socio-economic and political changes that occurred at the time of writing, and in the gap of almost 70 years between the first part (i.e. the *Akhbār*) and the second part (i.e. Abū Zayd’s work); something which is not found in the *ʿAjāʾib*.27

Opinions on the identity of the compiler and the date of compilation vary although the *Akhbār* is usually dated 237/851, the date given by the publisher Abū Zayd in the second part of the work. Popular opinion attributes the *Akhbār* to Sulaymān al-Tājir (Sulaymān the merchant) who is also mentioned by Ibn al-Faqīh in his *Kitāb al-Buldān*. True, the *Akhbār* does mention Sulaymān al-Tājir, but in the capacity of an informant, not as the author.28 A second name, Abū Ḥubaysh is also mentioned at the beginning of the Arabic text (although not in the English translation),29 furthering the theory that Sulaymān al-Tājir was a contributor rather than the compiler. Abū Ḥubaysh, a man who lived to be around 250,30 is mentioned as an eye-witness. In the end, both Abū Ḥubaysh

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27 An interesting example is the Chinese revolution in which Huang Ch’ao captured and burnt Canton in 264/874 or 879, killing thousands of foreign merchants. The war lasted until Huang Ch’ao was killed in 884, and had caused Indian Ocean trade with China to diminish considerably, with many merchants opting for the safety of the Malay Peninsula, and in particular the port of Kalah. The *Akhbār* had been completed even before the first uprising in 860, at a time of stability and harmony in the (Indian) Ocean world. The *ʿAjāʾib* and Abū Zayd’s work were both written after this event, during the Period of Five Dynasties (906-960), a period of relative political instability in China (it was nonetheless, a period of trade expansion- particularly porcelain trade). Of the two, only Abū Zayd mentions this occurrence.

28 *Silsilat* 1845: 14. The Arabic reads (Sulaymān the merchant relates...).


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and Sulaymān al-Tājir, seem to have contributed to the work, not as compilers, but as eye-witnesses from whom material was collected.

In any case, it seems that the compiler was in fact a merchant and/or sea captain, perhaps a citizen of Sīrāf who had travelled to India and possibly as far as China. He records in great detail the routes the ships took from Sīrāf (Persian Gulf) to Canton (China), the distances between ports, the dangers faced on these routes such as rocks beneath the surface, reefs and shoals, the availability of water, information regarding taxes or duties, the tide, and also, like other travellers he notes the cultural habits of the people he meets, the customs and laws of the land, and (occasionally) the climate. His meticulous documentation of these various aspects of the Indian Ocean and its littorals enhances our understanding of the information provided by Buzurg in the ʿAjāʾīb. Additionally, although the Akhbār is not a navigational text, there are indications that he had access to early (now lost) navigational treatises, suggesting that he could have been a ship-captain. The text is a combination of the author’s own eyewitness accounts, and those that have been related to him by others, such as Sulaymān al-Tājir and Abū Ḥūbaysh.

In around 304/916, Abū Zayd al-Ḥasan b. Yazīd of Sīrāf was commissioned to edit and supplement the Akhbār, forming the work Silsilat al-tawārīkh (A Chain of Narratives). Abū Zayd is not thought to have travelled as extensively as the author of Akhbār, if at all; in fact, it is possible that he had not travelled further than Başra, where he met and exchanged information with the merchant and geographer al-Masʿūdī, probably in the year 303/915-6. He seems to have been a man of a fairly comfortable financial status, who kept company with the merchants and mariners of Sīrāf from whom he gathered and recorded information.

The content of Abū Zayd’s contribution is similar to that which is found in the Akhbār; he does however, add more information regarding India and China, and regarding the Southern Arabian coast, the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea which, in his view, has been neglected by the author of Akhbār. The Red Sea is only mentioned in the Akhbār by the translators of the text; the Arabic however, refers to the Arabian-Persian Gulf, where

31 Hopkins 1990: 322.
33 Ibid.
34 Pellat 2004, XII: 55.
ships from China go no further than Sūrāf due to the difficulty navigating in this stretch of water.\textsuperscript{35}

The text as a whole, like that of Buzurg, is unique in that there is only one surviving manuscript, which has been used as the basis for various translations.\textsuperscript{36} A version of the two parts was initially translated into French and published by Eusebius Renaudot in 1718; the work however, came under scrutiny and was labelled a hoax as he had not supplied any information regarding the origin of the text. Further translations followed; in 1845, M. Reinaud reintroduced and republished the Langlès text of 1811, adding an introduction and an annotated translation entitled \textit{Relations des voyages faits par les Arabes et les Persans dans l’Inde et Chine dans le IXe siècle de l’ère chrétienne}, and citing Sulaymān al-Tājir as the author of the first part. G. Ferrand, who also believed that Sulaymān al-Tājir was the author of the \textit{Akhbār}, entitled his 1922 contribution \textit{Voyage du marchand arabe Sulaymān en Inde et en Chine, rédigé en 851, suivi de remarques par Ab Zayd Hasan (vers 916)}; while in 1948, Jean Sauvaget translated and commented on the first part of the text, \textit{Aḥbār as-Ṣīn wa ‘l-Hind, Relation de la Chine et de l’Inde rédigée en 851}.

The English translation used for the present study was the 1733 translation of Renaudot’s publication, the \textit{Ancient Accounts of India and China, by two Mohammedan Travellers Who Went to Those Parts in the 9th Century};\textsuperscript{37} the Arabic text used is the 1845 Reinaud’s edition, \textit{Relations des voyages faits par les Arabes et les Persans dans l’Inde et Chine}. It also contains a chapter on distances apparently current during the reign of al-Malik al-Ẓādīl Nūr al-Dīn Abū l-Qāsim Maḥmūd b. Zankī (Zangī) (r. 541-565/1146-1174),\textsuperscript{38} and an extract from al-Mas‘ūdī’s work.\textsuperscript{39} The two parts of the \textit{Silsilat} text also contain dates, possibly written by the scribe, as the completion of the \textit{Akhbār} is dated 1011 (i.e. 401 or 402 A.H, while the second part is

\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Silsilat} 1845: 15; idem, 1995: 8.
\textsuperscript{36} The Bibliothèque Nationale holds MS 2281 which contains, amongst other things, I. folio 2a-23b, the untitled and anonymous \textit{Akhbār}, and II. Folio 24a-56b, Abū Zayd’s sequel. Pellat 2004, XII: 55.
\textsuperscript{37} Renaudot’s translation was entitled \textit{Anciennes relations des Indes et de la Chine, de deux voyageurs mahométans qui y allèrent dans le neuvième siècle, traduites d’arabe, avec des remarques sur les principaux endroits de ces relations}.
\textsuperscript{38} The Arabic states (564) \textsuperscript{2}; this is possibly a copyist error as the Zangid Sultan died in 569 not 564. \textit{Silsilat} 1845: 149.
\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Silsilat} 1845: 165-202. The first is entitled \textit{Extrait du Kitab-aladjayb ou Traité des merveilles, de Massoudi}, (p. 165-173) taken from MS 901, folio 12 in the Bibliothèque Royale; the second (173-202) is an extract from \textit{Murūj al-dhahab}. 

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dated Ṣaffar (the second month of the Islamic year) 596 which corresponds to November or December 1199.\footnote{An interesting feature of the Arabic text, or a discrepancy between the two versions used, is that in the English translation it states that the “beginning is wanted,” i.e. there is a \emph{lacuna} at the beginning of part one; the same is found at the end of part two although no mention is made of this. The text however, is found in the Arabic version, which begs the question that if there is only one surviving manuscript then why is the beginning missing from the English text and not the Arabic? Is it possible that Renaudot did not have access to the beginning of the text, or overlooked it, while the publishers at Langlès and Reinaud found it and/or included it? Or is the beginning of the Arabic text an addition made to, and not part of the original work? Whatever the case, the beginning of the first part, be it an addition or the original text, does not seem out of place with the rest of the Arabic text, in language, content or style. \textit{Silsilat} 1995: 1 (see appendix B)}

The language, like that of Buzurg’s ʿAjāʾīb is close to the spoken register of the merchants and seamen from whom the information was collected. In the opinion of G. Ferrand (1922 version), the language of the text is “barbarous”, and the subject matter “fabulous”\footnote{Hopkins 1990: 322.}, yet, as Sauvaget (1948) argues, “deviations from linguistic propriety are a guarantee of authenticity as being the actual words of narrators.”\footnote{Ibid.} The same can be argued for Buzurg’s ʿAjāʾīb al-Hind. As for the content of the text, the \textit{Akhbār} is, despite its spontaneity, often considered to be the more reliable of the two parts, with Abū Zayd occasionally lending to the theme of the “marvels” (“ajāʾīb)\footnote{Pellat 2004, XII: 55.} while exaggerating or embellishing accounts. This said, most of the information found in both parts of the work can be found in, and verified using, contemporary works.

2. \textit{Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī maʾrīfat al-aqālīm} (The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions)

The physical and human geographical treatise \textit{Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī maʾrīfat al-aqālīm} (The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions) by al-Muqaddasī (d. after 380/990) is another important contemporary text. The work is contemporary to that of Buzurg’s (if a little later), and provides us with incalculable detail regarding the physical, economic, political and human geographical context of the era in which Buzurg’s ʿAjāʾīb al-Hind and its contemporary texts were composed. Like the \textit{Silsilat}, it provides us with detailed information regarding many of the lands that Buzurg speaks of, including the produce and availability (and quality) of water, as well as detailed information regarding the language, religion and culture of the citizens of these lands. His apparent interest in the maritime culture makes the \textit{Aḥsan al-taqāsīm} ideal for
comparing and contrasting Buzurg’s use of the nomenclature. Additionally, the fact that al-Muqaddasî hails from a different region to Buzurg enables the researcher to look at the terminology of maritime culture in a broader context.

Al-Muqaddasî is considered one of the most instructive Classical geographers writing about the realm of Islam, and his treatise “the foundation of medieval Islamic human geography”; 44 “[breaking] new ground in the science of geography, looking at the science of geography not only physically but also including a socio-economic description of the regions [he] visited.” 45 The work is primarily an eyewitness account, emphasising the value of seeing things for himself; he travelled to many parts of the Islamic world and experienced “all that may happen to a traveller.” 46 His research is based not only on personal observation, but also on investigation and on the consultation of earlier works, many of which he believes contain incorrect geographical information.

Ahsan al-taqāsīm is written in a methodical yet entertaining manner; after a general introduction where he informs the reader about the purpose and the methodology used to compile the text, along with other general information regarding the science of geography and an abridgement for those who do not have time to peruse the full text, the author goes on to discuss the Domain of Islam. The Islamic world, in the work of al-Muqaddasî, is made up of two parts (and fourteen regions): the six regions of the Arabs, and the eight regions of the non-Arabs. The description of these regions generally follows a fixed format: beginning with an account of the topography of the region, followed by “A Summary Account of Conditions in this Region”; which includes, among other things, information regarding the climate, the water of the region; the disposition of the inhabitants of the region; the local government; and finally, the routes and distances between major cities in the region.

Al-Muqaddasî’s work is one of the most reliable sources used in this study as he only included information he deemed authentic, either through the use of written materials, or through a number of veritable sources. 47 The text differs to that of Buzurg as, unlike the ‘Ajā‘īb, al-Muqaddasî’s intention was to produce a work of science that would prove

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44 Agius 2005: 379.
45 Ibid.
47 Al-Muqaddasî 2001: 3.
indispensable for state functionaries as well as travellers and merchants, the elite and the cultivated man. His use of rhymed prose and poetry, arguments and discussions regarding *fiqh* and theology, as well as his interest in history, philology, politics and trade among other things, not only give an indication of his social background, but also make the work accessible to all, as was his intention. Moreover, these unique characteristics of al-Muqaddasī and the *Ahsan al-taqāsīm* provide us with a clearer, more comprehensive picture of the historical and socio-political milieu in which Buzurg and his contemporaries lived.

The language of the text is considered to be of a higher literary standard and more eloquent than those written in the conversational style. His interest in philology drove him to produce a list of material cultural terms used by people of different regions which he proposes to investigate according to each region, but fails to do so. That said, the text as a whole does contain an exhaustive list of such terminology, including the names of thirty-six types of ships used in his time.

Overall, al-Muqaddasī displays a keen interest in the sea and seamanship; acquainting himself with shipmasters, cargo masters, coastguards, commercial agents and merchants whom he considers to be “the most discerning of people about this sea, and its anchorages, its winds and its islands”, and questioning them about the sea, its conditions and its limits. The incredible level of detail that he provides in some aspects of his work is of immense value to the researcher, although at other time he is rather vague. He notes that the seafarers he interviewed had, in their possession, “navigation instructions which they study carefully together and on which they rely completely, proceeding according to what is in them”; and claims to have studied these sources and taken copious notes, yet he fails to include these or even describe these sources in his work.

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50 Agius 1984: 45; idem, 2008: 23. This list can be found in Agius 2008: 386, appendix A. For information regarding the listed vessels, see Agius 1997 and Agius 2005(a).
52 Al-Muqaddasī 1906: 10; idem, 2001: 9.
3. The “Seven Voyages of Sindbād the Sailor”

The third and final primary source used in this investigation is the “Seven Voyages of Sindbād the Sailor/ Seaman”, arguably one of the most famous stories found in the Alflayla wa-layla or the Arabian Nights, and a classic example of the art of story-telling. It is a collection of (fictional) seafaring stories; essentially the tale of a rich citizen of Baghdad, who sets out on a sea voyage to recover the wealth he had squandered after his father’s death. His voyages follow a similar pattern throughout: embarking on a journey; encountering a problem; finding a solution; and the return home, where he holds a banquet and divides his wealth. This is followed by a renewed desire to travel again, where the cycle is repeated until the seventh and final voyage, after which he settles in Baghdad, City of Peace, and lives to tell the tale. The tales, though fictional, contain a wealth of information regarding life at sea, ethnographical and geographical information regarding the lands he visits, and in addition provide the reader with a lesson in morals. And, despite the fact that the Sindbād stories may not technically be contemporary to Buzurg, as the date of compilation of the Arabian Nights as a whole is uncertain, in terms of narrative style, content and context, the two are very similar. Both Buzurg and Sindbād were based in and around the Persian Gulf region, and spent a significant part of their lives at sea. The adventures of Sindbād were said to have taken place during the reign of the 6Abbāsid Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 170-193/ 786-809); only one of Buzurg’s tales took place during his reign, the rest occurred (and were written) some time after. Still, the historical, geographical and socio-political context of the Sindbād stories is very similar to that of Buzurg, which is why they have been included in the investigation. Moreover, the structured narrative of the Sindbād stories results in the inclusion of more details regarding sea voyages than the comparatively shorter or briefer anecdotes related by Buzurg, thus providing the researcher with a more complete picture regarding the medieval Indian Ocean maritime world.

The origins of the Arabian Nights as a whole are disputed as to whether the tales originate from Arabia, Persia or India, and when they emerged. Despite scouring ancient Indian, Iranian, Greek, Egyptian, Babylonian, and Arabic literatures for information regarding their origins, scholars have yet to come up with a definitive

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A consensus view emerged in the 1880s and 1890s; after much research into the manuscripts of the *Nights*, as well as medieval works referring to the *Nights* or similar story collections, Hermann Zotenberg and other scholars reached the conclusion that the *Nights* was a composite work, its earliest tales coming from Persia and India. These tales, collectively known as the *Hazār afsaneh*, were translated into Arabic in the eighth or early ninth century entitled *Alf khūrāğa*, and later *Alf layla*, forming the basis of the *Arabian Nights* as we know it today. More Arabian stories were added to this collection in ninth and tenth-century Iraq, followed by independent story cycles in the late tenth century. The thirteenth century saw further layers of stories added to this ever expanding collection in Egypt and in Syria; and finally, in the early modern period, more stories were added to the Egyptian collection, until the collection, quite literally, became the Thousand and One Nights.

The western world’s first introduction to the *Nights* was initiated by a French scholar, Antoine Galland (d. 1715), whose translation of the *Nights* or *Mille et une nuits* was published in 12 volumes between 1704 and 1715. Galland’s first contact with the *Nights* came about after his acquisition of an Arabic manuscript of the “Seven Voyages of Sindbād the Sailor” in the 1690s, which he translated into French and sent to the publishers in 1701. Before publication however, he became aware of a larger collection of stories of the *Arabian Nights*, which he requested, and subsequently translated and published. His main sources from which he drew his translation of the *Nights* were a fourteenth-century Syrian manuscript of the *Nights* comprising of 282 nights, and tales related to him by a Christian Arab of Aleppo. Galland’s decision to include the tales of Sindbād the Sailor in his edition of the *Nights* has resulted in much research and countless debates as to whether the “Seven Voyages of Sindbād the Sailor” actually belongs in the *Arabian Nights* or whether it was ‘borrowed’ from a different source; if so, what are the origins of this epic tale and why was it added to the *Nights*?

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54 Mahdi 1995: 5
55 Irwin 2004: 48. Hermann Zotenberg was a scholar who looked after oriental manuscripts in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, and was “the first scholar to attempt a comprehensive survey and comparison of the surviving manuscripts of the *Nights*” Irwin 2004: 45.
56 Ibid.
57 Not only was Antoine Galland the first scholar to introduce the *Nights* to the West; he was also the owner (and translator) of one of the earliest known surviving manuscripts of the *Nights*, produced in Syria in the Mamlik Period (mid-seventh/thirteenth to early tenth/sixteenth century) (Irwin 2004: 46). Many of the editions or manuscripts that came after that Galland were actually derived directly or indirectly from Galland’s *Nuits*.
The fact that Galland’s manuscript did not contain the “Seven Voyages of Sindbād the Sailor” but had been acquired prior to this as a separate manuscript brings us to the conclusion that the Sindbād stories were not originally a part of the *Nights*. Similarly, the earliest manuscript belonging to Zotenburg’s Egyptian corpus of manuscripts developed in the eighteenth century, did not contain the story of Sindbād the Sailor either. Furthermore, the first Calcutta edition (1814-1818) of the *Nights*, said to have been part of the same Syrian branch as Galland’s manuscript, copied in Aleppo between 1750 and 1771, only included the “Seven Voyages of Sindbād the Sailor” after the editor, Sheikh Aḥmad Muḥammad Shīrwānī l-Yamānī or his superiors decided that each volume should contain one hundred nights and therefore needed additional stories, hence the inclusion of Sindbād.

Recent studies on the *Nights* show that although the “Seven Voyages of Sindbād the Sailor” is a relatively late edition, a version of the tales is found in a Turkish copy of the *Nights* (1637), and in an eighteenth-century Egyptian version of the text. The presence of Sindbād in the Turkish text however, is thought to represent a story-cycle borrowed from a completely different source. The concept of this story-cycle, or elements of the tale are thought to have originated much earlier than the seventeenth century. Lane cited al-Qazwīnī’s (d. 682/1283) ʿAjāʾīb al-makhlūqāt (Wonders of the Created World) as being a source; other possible sources include Buzurg’s ʿAjāʾīb; the eleventh-century German epic poem *Herzog Ernst*; Ibn Khurradādbih’s (d. c. 300/911) *Kitāb al-masālik wa-l-mamālik* (The Book of Routes and Provinces), ʿal-Jāḥiz’s (d. 255/868-869) *Kitāb al-ḥayawān* (Book of Animals), the *Life/ Romance of Alexander the Great* (late third-early fourth century); the ancient (undated) Egyptian *Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor*; and Greek literature such as Herodotus’ (484-425 BCE) *Histories* and Homer’s (fl. eighth century BCE) *Odyssey*. It is possible, however, that though the origins of the tales go back a long time, an edited version was made to bring it in line with the name of the Arabian tales, set in the cities of Baghdād and Baṣra at the peak of the ʿAbbāsid period (r. 132–656/750-1258).

As for the translation of the *Nights*, Lanes’ *Arabian Nights Entertainment* (1834-41) was translated primarily from the Bulaq edition (1835), using the Calcutta I (1814-

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60 Gerhardt 1963: 239, 241; Marzolph 1997, IX: 638
62 Ibid.
1818) and the Breslau (1824-43) editions as supplementary sources; while Richard Burton’s primary source for the *Book of a Thousand Nights and a Night* (1885) was the Calcutta II (1839-42), deemed the most complete, authentic and original of all the editions of the *Nights*. The manuscripts used by these two prominent translators did, in fact, include the “Seven Voyages of Sindbād the Sailor”, although they vary in the content of the seventh voyage. The two translations differ in that Burton’s work is more scholarly and comprehensive, while Lane’s translation is easier to read though less comprehensive; both contain copious notes regarding, amongst other things, the Islamic culture. Both of these works are considered to be the best, most comprehensive translations of the *Arabian Nights*, which is why both have been consulted in the present study.

The language of the the “Seven Voyages of Sindbād the Sailor” is, like Buzurg’s text, representative of the language spoken at the time. It is often labelled coarse and ineloquent, and its literary value denied due to its mix of colloquial and classical Arabic, and also its “fabulous” content. Others however, consider it a masterpiece of the Arabic language, and view its content, a combination of realistic, fantastical, epic and moralistic tales, in a more positive light. It is a classic example of the art of storytelling, where oral storytelling has left its mark on “written forms of Arabic narrative literature…with their accumulation of repeated incidents, formulaic language phrased in *saj’* (rhymed prose), and colloquial spelling and diction”; and Sindbād, having retired from his travelling, has taken on the role of a *rūwī* (lit. reciter).

While the Sindbād stories as a whole belong to the *‘ajāʼib* genre, they do draw on real reports of Arabian seafarers in the Indian Ocean; the story may be legendary but some of the information regarding the historical background, the place names and trade goods, and in general, information regarding life at sea can be verified in other medieval Arabic literary works. The most important aspect of Sindbād however, is the language of the text; particularly if, as Irwin understands, the tales were composed in the *‘Abbāsid* period (r. 132 -656/ 750-1258), or as Gerhardt believes, the end of the

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63 Burton took a keen interest in the erotic aspect of the *Nights*, while Lane often omitted parts he deemed unsuitable for family reading.
64 Pinault 1998, II: 736.
65 Jacobi 1995, VIII: 466.
66 Irwin 2004: 122.
third/ninth or the beginning of the fourth/tenth century. If Gerhardt is right, it would make the stories of Sindbād an early contemporary of Buzurg, making it ideal for this study of maritime nomenclature as not only is it from the same era and geographical area as Buzurg, but like the ʻAjāʾīb, it is focused solely on the sea and aspects of life at sea. It is however, necessary to err on the side of caution when using the language of the Sindbād stories to compare with that of Buzurg, as the indeterminate date means that there is a possibility that the Arabic of the text is of a more modern era.

Lexica: Tracing Terminology

Many lexicographers, when compiling their works, aimed at creating a comprehensive dictionary, registering the entire vocabulary, a feat that is impossible to accomplish; not least because many medieval lexicographers were purists; they included Arabic terms even those that were no longer in use, but neglected common terms, for the very reason that they were common. This presents the researcher a problem: if a lexical item found in the medieval Arabic literary text was not considered to be Classical Arabic, or is etymologically of foreign origin, then it is likely to have been overlooked. Similarly, if a material cultural term was one that was of common occurrence at the time, it is also likely to have been excluded from the lexica. On occasion however, material cultural terms, and in particular, maritime terms found their way into these lexica; mainly through the shawāhid or literary examples that the lexicographers used in their entries to prove the existence of the term.

The earliest lexicon consulted for this research is Ibn Durayd’s (d. 321/933) Jamharat al-lugha (Collection of Language), a contemporary of Buzurg. It is vital for this study as alongside being a lexicographer, Ibn Durayd was also an etymologist; the uniqueness of this work lies in its inclusion of foreign vocabulary and its attempt to trace (as far as possible) the origins of the entries. There are, of course, limitations: the conclusions he draws regarding the etymology of certain terms is not always accurate, and he does

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67 Gerhardt 1963: 242. The author also cites De Geoje as dating Sindbād to the latter half of the ninth or the tenth century, and Littmann as ascribing it to the eleventh or twelfth century (p. 241).
69 Agius 1984: 77.
70 Agius 1984: 69.
not always define material-cultural terminology, declaring them to be maʿrūf, that is to say they are “known” at the time of their recording and therefore would not need any definition; yet it still proves to be an invaluable resource for this study.

Another useful and early lexicon is the Tāj al-lugha wa šīḥāh al-ʿArabiyya (The Crown of Language and the Šīḥāh of Arabic) of al-Jawhari (d. 393/1002-3)\(^{71}\). Al-Jawhari, originally from Fārāb\(^{72}\) (in Kazakhstan), was the student of al-Fārābī (d. 350/961-2) compiler of Dīwān al-adab fi bayān lughat al-ʿArab (The Dīwān of Polite Literature in Explaining the Language of the Arabs), and initiator of the rhyme system in lexicographical works, although al-Jawhari claimed to have introduced this arrangement.\(^{73}\) This widely used compilation, which served as a model and source for later compilations such as the Lisān al-ʿArab (see below), aimed to include only those terms which could be verified by a chain of narrators, much like the method of authentication used by the compilers of the hadīth literature.\(^{74}\)

Al-Jawhari’s lexicon was considered to be “one of the wonders of the age”, though, like many great books it is “not free from instances of inadvertence or mistakes.”\(^{75}\) Nevertheless, he was a contemporary of Buzurg, and thus, would have collected not only classical terms, but also terms that were current during the compilation of the Kitāb ʿAjāʿib al-Hind.

Possibly the most frequently consulted lexicographical work used in the present research, and what is now considered one of “the best and most authoritative dictionaries”\(^{76}\) is the Lisān al-ʿArab (The Language of Arabs), compiled in 689/1290 by Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711/1311-12), known (in the East) as Ibn Mukarram. His work is based on earlier dictionaries, such as al-Azhari’s (d.370/980-1) Tahdhīb al-Lugha (The Correction of Language); the Šīḥāh of al-Jawharī (see above); and Ibn Sīda’s (458/1065-6) al-Muhkam waʾl-muḥīṭ al-aʿzam (The Greatest Systematic and Exhaustive [Dictionary]) and as such, is one of the most comprehensive lexica used in this study.

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\(^{71}\) Lane 1968, I: xiv. The work was said to have been incomplete when he died from a fall off a rooftop: one theory suggests that he had reached the letter ص when he died, and that the rest was completed from rough drafts by Ibrāhīm Ibn Šāliḥ al-Warrāq; another suggests that he had reached س when he died, and the remaining text was completed by ʿAbd Allāh Muḥīmmas el-Bustee (Lane 1968, I: xiv).

\(^{72}\) Ibid.

\(^{73}\) Agius 1984: 93.

\(^{74}\) Kopf 1965: 495.

\(^{75}\) Lane 1968, I: xiv.

\(^{76}\) Agius 2008: 21.
Admittedly, many of his quotations are drawn directly from the above works, repeating many of the omissions or mistakes found in the original works. He also often omits the sources mentioned in the lexica\(^{77}\) and occasionally misunderstands his sources. Even so, the inclusion of several earlier works into this one lexicon, and the fact that it is of a somewhat later period to Buzurg’s ‘Ajā‘īb, provides us with a wider range of definitions with which to compare the data.

Ibn Manẓūr’s *Lisān al-ʿArab* was revised and updated in the eighteenth century by al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1791), in his work the *Tāj al-ʿarūs min jawāhir al-qāmūs* (The Crown of the Bride from the Precious Stones of the Ocean). The value of this lexicon lies in the fact that al-Zabīdī “registers the complete vocabulary materials derived from Classical and Medieval Arabic dictionaries and literary sources,”\(^{78}\) and often supplements the authorities that have been omitted by Ibn Manẓūr.

Collectively, these lexica form an integral part of this study as they enable us to understand the core meaning of the terminology that is found in Buzurg’s work and that of his contemporaries, as well as the etymology, derivatives, and any diachronic changes that may have occurred from the third-fourth/ninth-tenth century to the times of al-Zabīdī i.e. twelfth/eighteenth century. Whether or not the lexica enable us to determine the meaning of the terminology in the context of the primary sources in which it is used will be analysed in Chapter 6.

Western Arabic lexica are another important resource used in this study; not only do they enable us to gain a clearer understanding of the terminology in question but, as they are of a later period to the Arabic lexica used, we are able to determine whether or not the terminology is still evolving. The most important western dictionary used for this research is the *Lexicon* of Lane.

Edward William Lane (d. 1867) was a British orientalist, translator and lexicographer who travelled to and resided in Egypt for a number of years (1825-28 and 1842-49) and took a great interest in Classical and Medieval Arabic language, as well as in the Middle Eastern culture. His works include the translation of the *Alf layla wa layla* (see above) i.e. the *Arabian Nights Entertainment, An Account of the Manners and Customs of*

\(^{77}\) Fück 1979, III: 864; Agius 1984: 64, 75.
\(^{78}\) Agius 2008: 22.
Modern Egyptians (1860), and the Arabic English Lexicon (1863-77). Lane’s lexicon is considered to be one of the best dictionaries to have been produced so far, albeit incomplete; a Western lexicon which, like the Lisān al-ʿArab, not only gave the definition of the terms but also drew examples from literature in order to illustrate the use of the terms. His interest in medieval literature such as the Arabian Nights makes the work even more indispensable.

The lexicon itself is incomplete as Lane died as he reached the letter ʿ; the remaining letters were published after Lane’s death by his nephew Stanley Lane-Poole, who used his uncle’s notes to complete the work. Essentially the work is based on the classical and medieval Arabic dictionaries; yet the care taken by Lane to ensure the material was collected and transmitted correctly, and the emphasis he placed on the need for the language to be uncorrupt and pure signifies the superiority and excellence of this dictionary. Of course, like all such works, Lane’s Lexicon is not infallible; just how useful it is to the researcher will be assessed in the core chapter (Chapter 6).

As the Indian Ocean World was dominated by Arabian, Persian and Indian seafarers, it is necessary to consult lexica of languages other than Arabic in order to establish whether or not the selected terminology is of foreign origin: Francis Joseph Steingass’ (d. 1903) A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary is believed to be the best dictionary, and so, has been included in this study; John Platts’ Dictionary of Urdu, Classical Hindi and English; and the orientalist Thomas Roebuck’s (d. 1819) A Laskari Dictionary or Anglo-Indian Vocabulary of Nautical Terms and Phrases in English and Hindustani, Chiefly in the Corrupt Jargon in use among Laskars or Indian Sailors have also been consulted in order to determine the etymology of foreign terms.

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79 Irwin 2004: 10
80 Agius 1984: 80
81 Irwin 2004: 27.
Chapter 3: Buzurg ibn Shahriyar: a Historical and Geographical Perspective

The primary focus of this study is the language of terminology used in the Kitāb ʿAjāʾib al-Hind of Buzurg ibn Shahriyar, more specifically, third-fourth/ninth-tenth century Arabic maritime terminology. In order to appreciate the nomenclature however, it is important to understand the context in which it was used. Thus, this chapter looks at the historical and geographical background of the third-fourth/ninth-tenth century Indian Ocean world and the (sea) trade routes.

Generally, there seems to be a dearth of information regarding early medieval Arabian, Persian and Indian seafaring and navigation in the Indian Ocean, and there are very few navigational treatises from this period. Although too early for the present study, the Periplus Maris Erythraei (The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea), written in the first century CE by an Egyptian Greek, is an example of the type of maritime manual that merchants and navigators enjoyed. The closest we have in the Islamic period, though lacking in as much detail, is the Akhbār al-Ṣīn wa l-Hind (News of China and India) compiled by an unknown author circa 237/851. This text, which forms part of the Silsilat al-tawārīkh (A Chain of Narratives), as well as al-Muqaddasī’s (d. 378/988-9) Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī maʿrifat al-aqālīm (The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions) are used here to complement and expand on the information provided by Buzurg in his ʿAjāʾib al-Hind. The “Seven Voyages of Sindbad the Sailor” is also (tentatively) referred to as it is similar in content and context to the tales of Buzurg, though its present version (as known to us today) may have varied from the original medieval text.

The primary sources used for this study were written at the time of the revival of Indian Ocean trade, when the ʿAbbāsids (r. 132-656/750-1258) ruled Baghdād (and later Samarrā’), and Arabians and Persians were playing a greater role in long distance trade and navigation. The pre-Islamic Arabians, Christides writes, were not amongst the first seafaring nations; despite being surrounded by the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf and the

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1 The Erythraean Sea (lit. Red Sea): Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and the western Indian Ocean.
2 Esposito 1999: 692. The ʿAbbāsid capital was transferred from Baghdad to Samarrā’ in 221/ 836 – Buzurg tells us of Saʿīd the Poor Man (also called Saʿīd the Weaver)’s son attending the court of Caliph al- Muʿtamid Billāh (r.256–278/ 870-892) in Samarrā’ to present him with a pearl he had inherited. Buzurg 1981: 56.
Arabian Sea, many of their ports were inaccessible for navigation in ancient times.\textsuperscript{3} They did however, have links with East Africa (most likely Abyssinia, now Ethiopia and Eritrea) via the Red Sea, attested to in the \textit{Periplus} (first century AD) where the author states that the coastal community of Muza (Mocha, Southwest Yemen) sent large ships under Arabian captains and agents who knew the coast and understood the language (presumably Arabic or Southern Arabian).\textsuperscript{4} Tolmacheva on the other hand, uses the same \textit{Periplus} extract to portray the dominance of the Southern Arabians (people from Mocha) in Indian Ocean shipping, at least, with regard to African trade; Hourani also suggests that Omani sailors participated in this trade.\textsuperscript{5} Archaeological finds, in fact, tell us that ships have been crossing from the Arabian Peninsula to India since 2000 BC,\textsuperscript{6} suggesting that the art of navigation in the Indian Ocean is one of old.

In any case, the rise of the S\textsuperscript{s}\textsuperscript{a}nian dynasty (r. 224/225–651) saw the Persians take over the silk trade with India, and eventually replace Arabian (and Roman) shipping in the western part of the Indian Ocean. The pre-Islamic decline of Arabian navigation in the Indian Ocean is likely to have taken place after the fourth century as Fa-Hien, the Chinese Buddhist historian,\textsuperscript{7} records the presence of Sabaeans (Southern Arabians from the Yemen and Hadhramaut region) in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) in 412 AD;\textsuperscript{8} while Chinese chronicles from the fourth to the beginning of the seventh century record goods from India, East Africa and Arabia being transported to China by the Persians.\textsuperscript{9}

Before the expansion of the Islamic state, and the revival of Western Indian Ocean navigation, the competition for commercial dominance in the Red Sea and beyond was between the two superpowers of the time: the S\textsuperscript{s}\textsuperscript{a}nian Persians and the Byzantines, for whom the fifth and sixth centuries were navigational golden years,\textsuperscript{10} with the former dominating the sea traffic and monopolising oriental imports.\textsuperscript{11} The rise of Islam however, put an end to the S\textsuperscript{s}\textsuperscript{a}nian dynasty; the Muslim armies set out after the death

\textsuperscript{3} Christides 1993, VII: 40.  
\textsuperscript{4} \textit{Periplus} 1989: 50.  
\textsuperscript{5} Tolmacheva 1980: 189.  
\textsuperscript{6} Tibbetts 1971: 1.  
\textsuperscript{7} Fa-Hein, the Chinese Buddhist historian began his fifteen-year journey through India and Sri Lanka in 399, recorded in his work in \textit{A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms, Being an Account by the Chinese Monk Fa-Hien of his Travels in India and Ceylon (A.D.399-414) in Search of the Buddhist Books of Discipline}, see Kerr 2007: 30.  
\textsuperscript{8} Tolmacheva 1980: 190.  
\textsuperscript{9} Agius 2008: 61. Goods included, amongst others: coral, amber, pearls, glass, diamonds, steel, frankincense, turmeric, pepper and dates.  
\textsuperscript{10} Christides 1993, VII: 41.  
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid: 41-42; Agius 2008: 56.
of Muḥammad in 632AD, conquering first by land, and then by sea, inheriting Egyptian shipyards and their workers; the Phoenician maritime/nautical tradition from the conquered Byzantine orient; and also the Arabians living on the southern Arabian coast who were experienced sailors and skilful ship caulkers.

By the middle medieval period, the geo-political climate had altered significantly; the Islamic Empire had spread far and wide. According to Ibn Mājid (d. after 906/1500), it was during this period that Arab(ian) navigation truly began, and it was into this Golden Age that Buzurg Ibn Shahriyār (d. 399/1009) and his Kitāb ʿAjāʾīb al-Hind (The Book of the Marvels of India) were born.

The geographical focus of the study corresponds to the topographical references found in Buzurg’s ʿAjāʾīb: the Red Sea; the Persian Gulf; the Indian Ocean, (also called the Sea of India and the Sea of China) and their littorals. The Indian Ocean was further divided into seven seas: Fārs, the corridor from Southern Mesopotamia to Oman; Lār (or Lārawī / Lārwi), from East Africa to West India; the Sea of Harkand, in the Bay of Bengal; Kalahbar, around the west coast of the Malay Peninsula; Salahit, by Sumatra; the Sea of Kardanj, between the Islands of Sumatra and Borneo; and the Sea of Ṣanji, the South China Sea (Map 1). Interestingly, it has been suggested that the united socio-economic area that encompasses the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea can be considered as one entity: the Western Indian Ocean world; a view supported by Muslim geographical works.

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13 As in the text, the anchorages of India have been restricted to those found on the western coast.
14 Lunde 2005: 20-29- citing al-Yaʾqūbī (d. 897); Agius 2008: 8.
16 Agius 2008: 185.
Map 1: The Seven Seas of the Indian Ocean. (Blank maps courtesy of http://d-maps.com)
Though the Arabian system of navigation was essentially one based on techniques used by navigators in the Indian Ocean and adjacent waters, i.e. the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf (see Map 2) (as opposed to those used in the Mediterranean), the weather and conditions in the three areas differed. Contrary winds, currents, shallow waters and coral reefs made the Red Sea or Bahr Qulzum difficult to navigate. The winds made it especially dangerous to navigate these waters, more so in the northern part; in the summer the winds blow from the north or north-west in the north, and from the west or south-west around the southern coast. Particularly feared was Fārān on the Arabian littoral, where the winds from the Gulf of Suez and the Gulf of Āqaba meet, forming an overpowering whirl that caused “utter destruction of the ships there.” Buzurg recalls a tale told to him by a sea-captain, Īmrān the Lame, who was overtaken by a gale in the Red Sea; a gale so fierce that it “broke our anchor cables, and made us leave our anchorage, and carried us away.” The strength of the wind and the waves were enough to drive an accompanying vessel on to a reef, where it was swallowed up by the sea along with its crew and cargo. In addition to the wind, the Red Sea was subject to very thick fog, making for undesirable sailing conditions; hence, navigation in the Red Sea involved sailing close to the shore and anchoring by night. Not everyone was able to navigate in this Sea; many ships from India and Sīraf unloaded their cargo at Aden or Jeddah (which was also linked to caravan trade) on to the small ships of Qulzum, and transported further north. Moreover, the coral islands and lack of safe harbours and anchorages in this sea, as well as its barren shores and the poverty of the inhabitants of the Red Sea littorals, made the region all the more prone to the dangers of piracy. Despite the perils of sailing in this sea, the traffic crossing this sea was significant; not only was it used by pilgrims en route to the port of Jeddah, but also to export grain from Egypt to Jeddah and al-Jār (near modern Yanbo, north of Jeddah), as well as spices and pharmaceuticals from India, and gold and silver from the mines in the land of Tākā.

18 Agius 2008: 186.
19 Becker & Beckingham 1954-60, I: 931.
20 Al-Muqaddasī 2001: 11.
21 Buzurg 1981: 54.
24 Hourani 1995: 5.
26 Agius 2008: 96.
27 Ibid: 98.
28 Buzurg 1981: 26. Tākā is identified by Freeman-Grenville as being in Ethiopia; Hillelson (1913-1936, IX: 112) identifies it as a district in the Kassala province of Sudan (near the border with Eritrea), being
Trade was also at its peak in the Sea of Berbera (Gulf of Aden), which links the Red Sea corridor to the Arabian Sea (and Indian Ocean), with Yemen exporting scarves, carnelians, skins and slaves, glass, incense (as Yemen was known as the Land of Incense), as well as the famous Yemeni alum. The sea however, was considered by Buzurg and his companions, to be one of the most dangerous seas. Not only was the current very strong in this sea, but the sea was also abound with whales, large fish (measuring around fifty cubits) that followed ships along the coast, and fish that resemble humans. In addition to this, if a ship was wrecked on this coast, the crew had as much to fear from the inhabitants of Berbera as they did from the sea.

The Arabian-Persian Gulf or the Sea of Fārs (Map 2), from where many long distance sea voyages commenced, was one of the Seven Seas of the Indian Ocean (as mentioned above). The geographical position of the Gulf lent to its importance too; not only was commerce flourishing in the Gulf before the advent of Islam, but as Baghdād became the seat of the Caliphate in 132/749 and again in 279/892, it became the gateway to the cradle of Islamic civilisation. Like the Red Sea, pirates, frequent storms, reefs and the low level of water meant that the Gulf was not navigable by all; both Buzurg and the compiler of Akhbār speak of the storms in the Sea of Fārs affecting navigators and passengers travelling from Sīrāf to Başra, al-Ubulla to Bayān, and Oman to Başra, often with tragic consequences. Buzurg gives a curious description of the Sea of Fārs, writing that “when the waves are rough and break against one another, one sees them sparkle, and one would swear that one was crossing a sea of fire.” In order to avoid the dangers of this Gulf, many vessels, particularly the larger ocean going vessels, would anchor at Şohār (Oman), and Qais or Sīrāf on the Persian littoral; then tranship their cargo on to smaller vessels in order to reach the ports further north on the banks of the Shaṭṭ al-‘Arab. Al-Ubulla (located approximately around the site of modern day

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30 Agius 2008: 95.
32 Cubit: the measurement from the hollow of the elbow to the end of the middle finger.
35 Buzurg 1981: 11, 80-82, 94.
Baṣra) too, was a terminus for larger vessels unable to reach Baṣra, yet the whirlpool at the entrance to the canal or estuary made this port-shipyard dangerous to those not familiar with navigating in these waters. Danger was also found where the Shaṭṭ al-ʿArab emptied into the Arabian-Persian Gulf as the shallows and reefs made it difficult for ships to pass through safely; primitive lighthouses made of teak (beams) and stone (platform) were built in the sea in an attempt to guide ships away from the danger, and also to keep a look-out for the numerous pirates of the Gulf and the Indian Ocean.

Teak, or wood in general, was a common commodity imported to the Arabian-Persian Gulf (and Oman) from East Africa and India; both teak (usually from India) and mangrove poles (from East Africa) were used in the construction of buildings in Sirāf, while coconut trees from the islands of India (possibly the Maldive or Laccadive Islands) were used by the people of Oman in ship building. Bamboo was also imported to Sirāf (and Oman). Other Arabian-Persian Gulf imports included paper, Chinese ceramics, precious gems, ebony (from southern India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and possibly Ethiopia), ivory (from India, Sind (al-Manṣūra, a port on the Indus River) and Africa), animal (leopard) skins and tortoise shells (from East Africa), ambergris, aloes-woods, sandal-wood, camphor, musk, perfumes, spices, condiments, and medicaments, many of which came from the Land of Pepper i.e. India. Exports from the Gulf region (and the Shaṭṭ al-ʿArab ports) include linen (veils) from Baṣra and al-Ubulla; coloured silks from Baghdād; henna, rosewater and the essence of violet, as well as galbanum (used for medicinal purposes and in perfumes), verdigris and minerals such as antimony and cinnabar, precious stones and jewellery, as well as muʿqālī dates from Baṣra; and towels, pearls and linen from Sirāf. Further products such as perfumed oils, soaps, quicksilver and iron, carpets and rugs, gauze and brocade, sugar-

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39 Ibid. The present day village of Zubayr marks the location of the medieval city of Baṣra; the Baṣra we know today was founded in the eleventh/eighteenth century close to the site of the medieval port of al-Ubulla.
40 According to Ibn Hawqal, an ʿAbbāsid princess (possibly named Zubaydah) blocked this whirlpool by filling the entrance to this canal with stones – Le Strange 2011: 47.
43 The primary sources use the term خشب السماح i.e. teak (Wehr 1993: 454) when referring to the buildings of Sirāf (al-Muqaddasi 2001:347) however, archaeological findings show that mangrove poles were used extensively in the construction of the houses of Sirāf – Horton 2005: 74.
44 Silsilat 1845: 130-131; idem, 1995: 89. They used the timber for the planks and the mast, the bark for cordage with which to sew the planks, the leaves for the sail, and the coconuts as cargo.
45 Al-Muqaddasi 2001: 83; Le Strange 2011: 293.
46 Horton 2005: 73, 81, 87; Agius 2008: 77; Le Strange 2011: 293.
cane, nuts and olives, fish, and waterskins were taken from the region of Fārs to the ports of the Gulf for exportation to India and China, as well as north-west Africa.\textsuperscript{49} The sheer value of the produce being shipped in and out of the Arabian-Persian Gulf region made braving these hazardous waters worthwhile.

Map 2: The Red Sea and the Arabian-Persian Gulf (Blank maps courtesy of http://d-maps.com)

\textsuperscript{49} Le Strange 2011: 293-295.
The winds in this sea (of Fārs) are north-westerly for most of the year. In the Gulf of Oman which leads to the Arabian Sea (Sea of Lār) however, they vary; in the summer they are southerly, and in the winter the winds are northerly, according to the south-west monsoon in the northern part of the Arabian Sea. Oman, or more specifically Šoḩār, situated almost at the entrance of the Gulf was ideally located as its harbour provided shelter from the fierce monsoon winds; ships from Africa, India and China stopped here to trade before moving on to the ports further up on the eastern littorals of the Gulf. In addition to those products shipped into the Gulf, imports also included slaves; Buzurg speaks of a shipmaster kidnapping the king of one of the regions of East Africa, and selling him and his seven companions in a market in Oman for between thirty and sixty dinārs. Exports from Oman included masīn dates and possibly, spun cotton.

As with the rest of the Indian Ocean, navigation in the Arabian Sea (Sea of Lār, see Map 1) was dependent on the monsoon winds, and, according to al-Ya’qūbī, on the stars (see Chapter 5 for discussion regarding star navigation). It is a vast deep sea in which the waves are often described as towering mountains, where sailing inbound is highly dangerous, running the risk of shipwreck and drowning. Buzurg notes the dangers of this sea: he relates a tale in which three ships from Sīrāf and Sabā, bound for Ṣaymūr, were in sight of the mountains of Sindān, Tāna and Ṣaymūr on the west coast of India, when the wind changed. A gale blew, with rain, thunder and lightening, for six days; the ships began to founder and thirty-three men escaped in the ship’s boat, where, for another five days, they were subject to continuous wind and rain. When they finally reached shore, they learnt that the sea had claimed all but those who had embarked on the ship’s boat. The Arabian Sea (or Sea of Lār) was also home to huge fish, snakes, crocodiles, and many other wonders; piracy too, was a danger in this sea (as in the

50 With reference to the seven seas of the Indian Ocean mentioned above, it seems that the Arabian Sea roughly corresponds to the Sea of Lār, stretching from East Africa to West India, and includes the southern coast of Pakistan and the Western Indian ports of Sūbāra, Ṣaymūr, and Sindābūra (Goa).
51 Al-Muqaddasi 2001: 84.
53 Agius 2008: 186.
55 Al-Muqaddasi 2001: 11
57 Ibid: 102. He relates a tale in which a snake had come to the bay of Ṣaymūr and swallowed a large crocodile; in another tale he reports that the crocodiles in the bay of Sindābūra were bewitched so that they caused no harm to anyone (p. 92) in the middle of the town, but if a man goes outside, he cannot put a finger in the water without being seized by one of them (p. 61). Crocodiles were also found in the Indus River, which empties into the Arabian Sea – Le Strange 2011: 331.
whole of the Indian Ocean); ships passing through the Arabian Sea, al-Muqaddasī (d. 380/990) notes, needed to “carry armed men, and personnel to throw Greek fire.”

The Sea of Harkand (in the Bay of Bengal, see Map 1) is separated from the Sea of Lār by the archipelago of al-Dībajāt (the Laccadive and Maldive Islands);59 the chief of these islands is said to be Sarandīb or Ceylon (Sri Lanka, see Map 3).60 Sri Lanka was the meeting point for ships coming from the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf and East Africa, particularly during the monsoon season when navigators were required to make a stop before proceeding to the Far East.61 It was said to be between eighty62 and one hundred farsakh in length, and three hundred farsakh round,63 and was noted for its commodities: the mountain and mines provided rubies,64 opals, amethysts,65 diamonds and pearls;66 the trees provided cinnamon67 and camphor;68 the red earth was used to cut glass and crystal; and its red grass produced a high quality dye.69 Buzurg notes some of the wonders found in the Sea of Harkand, in particular, in the Gulf of Ceylon (Palk Strait and Gulf of Mannar), and on its islands, some of which include giant birds, one of which causes the wind to cease blowing for two weeks when it brings its young down to the seashore; fish that resemble humans; worms hatched from stones; and snakes, snake charmers, and magicians.70 Yet, despite the commodities and the strategic position of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) (see Map 3), Buzurg names the Gulf of Ceylon as being amongst the most difficult and dangerous seas, from which few return safely. If a ship crosses these seas, he reports, it is at risk of being attacked by pirates. If pirates take the ship, the men are taken and eaten. If the ship founders, the crew fall prey to crocodiles; if the

59 Hartmann & Dunlop 1954-60, I: 930.
60 Silsilat 1995: 2.
62 Al-Muqaddasī 2001: 12
63 Buzurg 1981: 106. The parsang or farsakh, is an ancient Persian unit of distance based on the movement of troops. Thus a parsang is roughly four kilometres when referring to infantry, and six kilometres in reference to cavalry. Geographically, the distance is approximately 5.94 kilometres. It is now officially fixed at six kilometres.
65 Silsilat 1995: 3.
66 Buzurg 1981: 106. He notes that the smaller pearls were of better quality than the larger ones.
67 Ibid: 106.
69 Buzurg 1981: 106.
men reach the shore, they are attacked by tigers.  

Further dangers of the Sea of Harkand were the weather, in particular the strong wind which caused violent agitations of the sea; and a type of fish called lokham (shark) which preyed on men.

The Sea of Andaman links the Sea of Harkand to the Sea of Kalahbar (see Map 1), around the west coast of the Malay Peninsula. Like the Sea of Harkand, Andaman was rife with danger: not only were there cannibals on the shores of the islands, and giant snakes and whales in the sea, but the weather in this sea claimed the lives of many. The compiler of the *Akhbār al-Ṣīn* writes of a white cloud which spreads over any passing ship, and forms a spout, which, on reaching the surface of the water, creates a whirlpool, swallowing everything in its path. This cloud then “discharges itself in a prodigious rain.”

The fourth sea, known as the Sea of Kalahbar, which corresponds roughly to the Strait of Malacca, was said to be shallow and filled with huge serpents which ride the wind and smash ships. The Sea of Salahit (see Map 1), which along with the Sea of Harkand washed the shores of (northwest) Sumatra, was said to be very large and filled with wonders. Produce from the islands in this sea i.e. Sumatra and Java (the Land of Gold), Fanṣūr Island (possibly Barus or Sibolga on the western coast of Sumatra, or Nias Island, off the west coast of Sumatra), Lūlūbīlank (on the west coast of Sumatra between Fanṣūr and Lāmrī or Lāmurī Island (possibly Achin Head (Cape Pedro), northern Sumatra), Birāwa and al-Niyān Islands (see Map 3) included gold (hence the name of the group of islands), camphor, coconut fruit and coir, elephants, brazil-wood,

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72 *Silsilat* 1811: 12; idem, 1733: 6. The Arabic text reads وَأَماَّمَا يَحْرُكَنَّهُ فَرَبِحُ غَيْرِ هَذِهِ مَا بَيْنَ النَّاْفِلِيَّاتِ وَالتَّنَّاْفِلِيَّاتِ The *Banāt nāʾsh* are the three tail stars of the Ursa Major; the winds of the *Banāt nāʾsh* are winter winds (Tibbetts 1971: 129), more specifically, north-westerly winds which become strong between December and March (Agius 2005 (b): 193). The stars and the winds they cause to blow are discussed in Chapter 5.
75 *Silsilat* 1995: 6. This cloud appears in Buzurg’s text at the head of the Sea of China (Buzurg 1981:49-52).
77 Ibid.
78 The location of these two islands is uncertain. Freeman-Grenville (1981: 118) identifies Niyān Island with present day Nias Island, off the west coast of Sumatra. Buzurg (1981: 72) however, places the island in the “outer sea, one hundred parasangs (one parasang being six kilometres) from Fanṣūr”, making Nias Island too close (in distance) to be Niyān Island.
and rattan/bamboo. The inhabitants of the islands however, were said to be cannibals, some of which had tails and others who only ate their enemies.

There are two possible locations for the Sea of Kardanj: between the Islands of Sumatra and Borneo which would include the Java Sea; or the Gulf of Thailand. According to Hartmann & Dunlop, it is the Sea of Salahit that adjoins the Straits of Malacca (Sea of Kalahbar) from the south, not the Sea of Kardanj. The primary sources do not provide enough information regarding the location of this sea; al-Ya'qūbī simply names the sea and states “it is very rainy;” and the compiler of Akhār al-Ṣinh places Kadaranj (Kardanj) at ten days sail away from a place called Betūma (and Ṣanf in the other direction), and twenty days away from Kalahbar. In any case, Buzurg provides some information regarding the islands between Sumatra and Borneo (and therefore, possibly located in the Sea of Kardanj), one of which is Mayt Island, said to be near Ṣanf (Champa) and Sarīra (a town on the Lāmurī Island; one hundred and twenty zam from Kala.). According to Buzurg’s sources, no vessel could safely reach this island, which provided honey, gold and cotton. One would only be able to reach the island itself once a year, when a gale was blowing in the right direction; to do so, passengers of the approaching ship threw pieces of wood and other floating objects into the sea, and then attempted to swim ashore using the floats. Merchandise belonging to the passengers was packed and sealed in skins to prevent the seawater from spoiling the goods when the abandoned ship was thrown against the shore and wrecked. According to Buzurg, a hundred anchors could not stop the ship from being carried away by the waves; and those fortunate enough to reach the island were required to build another ship in order to leave it.

Interestingly, in the map of places mentioned in Buzurg’s ʿAjāʾib, Mayt (Māyṭ) Island is identified by Freeman-Grenville as either Bangka or Belitung Island, close to where the ninth-century Arabian/Persian or Indian dhow, now referred to as the Belitung

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79 Silsilat 1995: 3-4.
81 Agius 2008: 8.
82 Hartmann & Dunlop 1954-60, I: 930.
84 Silsilat 1995: 10. Kadaranj in this text seems to be a mountainous island inhabited by slaves and fugitives.
85 A zam is a nautical measure of distance, equivalent to approximately 12.85 miles. Twenty zam is approximately two hundred and sixty miles. Buzurg 1981: 41.
86 Buzurg 1981: 60.
wreck, was excavated. If this is the case, and Mayt Island is indeed Belitung Island (or the neighbouring island), it could further our understanding of early medieval Indian Ocean shipping, and in particular, the maritime silk route. Even today, the Strait is considered dangerous due to its concealed rocks and reefs, and it portrays a clearer picture as to why medieval navigators considered it impossible to approach the island.

The seventh and final sea of the Indian Ocean was the Sea of Sanji, or the South China Sea (see Map 1), the head of which is Ṣanḍarfūlūṭ or Ṣandalfūlūṭ (Hainan Dao, see Map 3). The destination in this sea was Khanfu (Canton, see Map 3), the chief port of China, from where silk, camphor, musk, spices, and ceramics were exported. Buzurg speaks of a certain merchant from Oman, Iṣḥāq b. Yahūda, who returned from China in a ship laden with musk, silk, porcelain, jewels and (precious) stones, all of incalculable value.

Porcelain (or ceramics) in particular, was a sought after commodity, evident not only in medieval Arabic sources, but also in archaeological excavations in Sīrāf and in East Africa. It also made up approximately ninety-eight percent of the cargo of the Belitung wreck mentioned above.

According to al-Yaʿqūbī one was driven there by the south wind; the compiler of Ḥīrāt al-Ṣīm adds that it takes seven days to steer through the rocks and shoals by Ṣanḍarfūlūṭ, and a month to sail from Ṣanḍarfūlūṭ to China. Under relatively fair conditions, navigators were able to sail eastbound from Yemen to India, and then to China in one season using the south-west monsoonal winds; west-bound ships (usually) completed the journey in two seasons, from China to India using the north-west monsoon winds, then to a port in the Arabian Sea using the south-west winds; or from China to Sumatra, then from Sumatra to the Southern Arabian coast.

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87 The wreck, dating back to (approximately 210/826) was uncovered in 1998 in the Gelasa Strait by sea cucumber divers; the excavation of this dhow, and the recovery of its valuable, and often perfectly preserved, cargo, was carried out under the direction of Michael Flecker between 1998 and 1999. For more information regarding this discovery, see "Made in China” National Geographic June 2009: 112-123.
88 Hourani (1995: 71) believes that Ṣanḍarfūlūṭ or Ṣandalfūlūṭ refers to Ṣaf on the coast of Vietnam while the Parcel Islands are known as the Gates of China.
89 Ibíd: 73.
92 Guy 2008: 11. The cargo was made up of different types of pottery, including large green-glazed stoneware jars called Guangdong wares or Dusun jars, produced in kilns near Canton, containing Changsha bowls. The finest grade (white monochrome) porcelain wares of the Xing or Ding kilns, characterised by their fine body and clear glaze, also formed part of the cargo of the Belitung wreck.
94 Silsilat 1811: 20.
that travelling west bound, using a northerly wind, ships leaving Canton were able to reach northern Sumatra in forty days;\(^96\) while Buzurg relates that in 317/ 929, the ship owner Ismāʾīl alwayh was able to travel from Kalah, on the west coast of Malaysia, to Oman in forty eight days,\(^97\) a trip that usually took around sixty days.\(^98\)

Medieval Arabian authors’ accounts of the Indian Ocean become somewhat less detailed as they discuss the seas further to the south and the east; this however, is of no surprise as sailing all the way to China was not a task that all were able to accomplish. Luckily, Buzurg was acquainted with ship masters and captains who had undertaken this epic voyage; he himself states that only adventurous men made the voyage to China and that no one had done it without accident. One was extremely lucky if he managed to reach China and return safely.\(^99\) Not only was danger caused by the rocks and reefs near Șandarfūlât, but according to Captain ʿAbraha, who had travelled to China seven times, every thirty days the sea water “goes down in an extraordinary way”, leaving the rocks bare, while at the same time a violent gale gets up from the deep, blowing any nearby vessels directly on to the rocks.\(^100\) The only way to escape relatively unscathed was to lighten the vessel: throw the merchandise overboard, and even cut down the mast and the anchor cables.

Like the whirlpool-causing cloud found in the Andaman Sea, a similar description is given by Buzurg of a cloud in the Sea of Sanji, where the cloud spreads over the ship and a gale engulfs it.\(^101\) Further terror caused by the weather when sailing from India to China has been described as a “black wind that filled all the space between heaven and earth”, raising the waves of the sea up to the clouds and letting them crash back down to earth.\(^102\) The black wind could be referring to (black) rain clouds or storm clouds blown in by the wind, or it could be a metaphor used to describe the deadly nature of the wind that had been released from the heavens. Sindbād the Sailor also tells a terrifying tale regarding this sea: they had almost reached China when they were engulfed by a violent headwind and a tempest of rain. The captain tore at his beard in despair, telling the crew that the wind had driven them into the utmost seas of the world, the Sea of the Clime of

\(^96\) Yajima 1977: 204.  
\(^97\) Buzurg 1981: 76-77.  
\(^98\) Agius 2008: 189.  
\(^99\) Buzurg 1981: 50.  
\(^100\) Ibid: 52.  
\(^101\) Ibid: 51.  
\(^102\) Ibid: 28.
the King, where the tomb of Solomon, son of David lies. In this sea there are huge and fearsome serpents, and great fish which rise up out of the water and swallow the ship whole.\footnote{Alf layla wa layla (nd.), IV: 11-12. Interestingly, Buzurg places the tomb of Solomon on Great Andaman Island- Buzurg 1981: 78. The “utmost seas of the world” is discussed shortly.}

Map 3: The Indian Ocean World. (Blank maps courtesy of http://d-maps.com)
Another tale of terror experienced in the Malay Seas, on the border of China, came about due to the appearance of *suhayl* (Canopus) on the horizon. Canopus is the brightest star in the southern constellation of Carina and the second brightest star after Sirius. Its appearance signals the end of summer and the beginning of the winter months when the fierce winds blow without warning from the north-west direction, so terrifying is the appearance of this star that Buzurg states that anyone who has been forced to steer in this sea until he has seen Canopus must abandon all hope of return. The appearance of Canopus brought with it thick fog, fierce winds, violent waves and a sea that boiled, a thick darkness, and above all despair. Interestingly, Buzurg tells us that once a man has seen Canopus, he enters a vast stretch of waters that run south, where the waves rise behind the ship and fall away in front of it, drawing the ship into the ocean that surrounds the earth. The notion of an ocean that “encircles the world as with a ring, having neither bound nor limit”, is a common belief held by medieval geographers. Al-Ṭabarî cites Muḥammad b. Sahl as stating that there are seven earths that are flat and islands, and between each two earths, there is an ocean ( البحر; all of which is surrounded by the (surrounding) ocean ( البحر المحيط al-bahr al-muhīt). In addition to this, having spent two nights (and days) being tossed around by the violent waves in complete darkness, the passengers were then confronted by a vast fire that filled the horizon. This fire, according to an old Spanish stowaway aboard the doomed ship, was an illusion caused by waves crashing against mountains that bordered the Island of Women. This fire, he claimed, could be seen from Spain, which is unlikely as the ship would have been sailing in the South China Sea; medieval Muslim

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104 It was originally the Alpha star of the ancient constellation Argo (Jason’s ship). In modern times, the huge Argo was broken into three parts: Carina (the Keel); Puppis (the stern); and Vela (the sails). Canopus fell into Carina, and is therefore now Alpha Carinae. It is also known as Menelaus’ helmsman. [www.astro.uiuc.edu/~kaler/sow/canopus.html](http://www.astro.uiuc.edu/~kaler/sow/canopus.html) (accessed 13-11-2008). For further information regarding *suhayl* see Tibbetts 1971: 128-134.

105 Agius 2005 (b): 192. The vessel Buzurg refers to was heading towards China when the wind coming from the coast blew them in the opposite direction.


110 Buzurg 1981: 13-18. The Island of Women is not identified however possible locations include the Parcel Islands, the Spratly Islands or the Philippines. It was inhabited by women who originally belonged on an island three days sail way; in an attempt to prevent the female population (of which there were twice as many females as there were males) from dominating the males, thousands of women were embarked on ships and abandoned on the remote, almost inaccessible island. The idea of an Island of Women is found in Greek mythology, in which the first stop made by Jason and Argonauts was at the Island of Lemnos (Limnos, in the northern Aegean Sea), an island that was entirely inhabited by women. The women of this island had been punished by Aphrodite for failing to honour her; the punishment caused the Lemnian women to give off an unpleasant odour which repelled their men, who in turn, turned to other women (mainly Thracian captives) for companionship. Jealousy and rage caused the Lemnian women to rise up and kill their husband and their Thracian companions and later, the remaining males including their fathers and sons, in order to avoid retribution. Tripp 1970: 75.
geographers however, like Ptolemy, believed western Spain to be on the outer rim of the earth, washed by the surrounding ocean (البحر المحيط).\footnote{Buzurg 1981: 16.}

To sum up: The Indian Ocean World was a vast entity that was traversed by many Arabian-Persian-Indian seafarers for trade and adventure. The chapter discusses the information regarding the seven seas of the Indian Ocean and the lands within these seas, as described by Buzurg and his contemporaries; the imports and exports of the region as well as the dangers faced in these seas. Medieval geographers provide a wealth of detail regarding the Red Sea and the Arabia-Persian Gulf and their littorals, as well as the regions of Fārs, yet they remain vague when it comes to the lands east of India, as many have not travelled beyond the lands of Islam. Thus, the further east one travels, the more dangerous the seas and the inhabitants of the lands in these seas; particularly brave were those who travelled to China and made it alive. Yet the higher the risk, the greater the reward, and the ultimate trade destination, Canton, provided merchants with the most valuable of cargoes.

Buzurg and his contemporaries provide detailed information regarding the trade goods available at the places they visited, ranging from the basic building materials such as wood, to items of decoration such as ivory and jewels. Spices and textiles were also an important commodity. Many of the countries mentioned by Buzurg are grouped according to the commodities available there: thus, India is the Land of Pepper, Sumatra and Java is the Land of Gold, and the Land of Incense is found on the Southern Arabian coast.\footnote{Ibid: 5; 55; 76.}

The men who sailed these seas were considered amongst the bravest of men, and their names were well-known amongst their peers. Some returned with tales of horror and of the marvels they witnessed while at sea, collected and recorded carefully by Buzurg; others were not as lucky, and the tales of their tragic demise is also recorded by Buzurg. Details regarding Buzurg’s collection of these tales, the sources that provided them, and the content of these tales are discussed in the following chapter.
Chapter 4: The Sea Stories of Buzurg Ibn Shahriyar

The basis of the investigation into maritime cultural terminology is the collection of sea stories, the Kitāb ‘Ajā‘īb al-Hind (The Book of the Marvels of India). Not much is known about the author of this work, Buzurg Ibn Shahriyar (d. 399/1009), other than that he lived (approximately) between 299-399/912-1009\(^1\), at the height of Arabian-Persian-Indian navigation in the Indian Ocean. We know from the manuscript that Buzurg was a shipmaster or ship captain of Persian origin, his full name being Buzurg Ibn Shahriyar al-Rāmhurmuzī, the latter is a nisba reference that he was born or originally came from Rāmhurmuz (see Map 2), a town and district in the province of Khuzistān (south-west Iran or littoral lowlands of Iran at the head of the Arabian-Persian Gulf\(^2\)). Perhaps being from Rāmhurmuz, he was predisposed to becoming a sea captain as, in Freeman-Grenville’s view, the people of Khuzistān belong “to the seafaring population of the Gulf region, whether Arab or Persian.”\(^3\) Al-Muqaddasī (d. 380/990), a contemporary, describes Rāmhurmuz as a large capital, with its towns situated in the highlands or mountains, where the rivers of the region do not reach it but they have a canal leading towards it.\(^4\) It lies, Minorsky writes, between the rivers of Āb-i-Kurdistān (or Jibūr), made up of various streams, and Gūpāl; a canal leading from Āb-i-Kurdistān supplies Rāmhurmuz, while the Gūpāl runs north of the town into the marshes.\(^5\) Al-Muqaddasī does not make any reference to the occupation of the inhabitants of Rāmhurmuz other than agriculture, and those found in the markets (cloth makers, perfumers and mat weavers)\(^6\) making it difficult to assess Freeman-Grenville’s (above) comment. Generally, the region of Khuzistān is portrayed as an agricultural centre, producing sugar (sugarcane being the regions main export) and fruit i.e. oranges and melons, as well as silks, brocades and rugs; and Rāmhurmuz as being famous for its silkworms.\(^7\) He does, however, mention that rivers flow through most of the region of Khuzistān, and that all of them were navigable,\(^8\) possibly exporting produce such as

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\(^1\) Ahmad 1965, II: 583.
\(^3\) Buzurg 1981: xvii.
\(^4\) Al-Muqaddasī 2001: 333, 337.
\(^5\) Minorsky 1995, VIII: 416. The streams include the Āb-i Gilāl (Āb-i Zard), Āb-i A‘lā (coming from Mungasht), Rūd-i Pūtang and Āb-i Darra-yi Kūl or Rud Zard, Rud Talkh and A‘la rivers, which combine to form the Rāmhormoz River. Le Strange (2011: 244) writes that it was a canal from the Tāb (now called Zohreh) River that supplied Rāmhurmuz with water.
\(^6\) Al-Muqaddasī 2001: 337.
\(^7\) Le Strange 2011: 243, 246.
\(^8\) Al-Muqaddasī 2001: 338. Interestingly, he describes the people of Rāmhurmuz as having wide and flat heads and complains that they do not speak clearly and that their language is incomprehensible. He quotes the Prophet as saying “The worst speech before God is the Persian, the Khūzian is the language of the
sugarcane, corn, cotton and raw silk⁹ from Rāhmūrūz to neighbouring port towns, the Arabian Sea or the West Indian coast.

Buzurg’s honorific title nākhudā (ship-owner or shipmaster) may have been, as it has been until recent times, hereditary as nākhudās were an élite class, one that did not include other seamen or merchants.¹⁰ The sons of the nākhudā would accompany their fathers on voyages from a young age, usually under fifteen years of age but sometimes even as young as six or seven, and learn the art of navigating first hand.¹¹ The exclusiveness of this class is evident in the story of ṢAbhara, which Buzurg introduces as “amongst the stories of sailors (bahrīyya or bānāniyya) and captains (nākhudā).”¹² Captain ṢAbhara of Kirmān (south-central Iran) graduated from being a shepherd to a fisherman, to a sailor sailing to India and as far as the Seas of China. He worked his way up until he became a captain, sailing to and from China seven times; yet despite the introduction, Captain ṢAbhara is not referred to as nākhudā, but rather as rubbān, a term which often means navigator.¹³ It is possible then that Buzurg held a dual role of a navigator and ship-master or owner managing the ship as she sailed to foreign lands, as well as taking part in trade activities in the ports he visited. The fact that Buzurg is known to have journeyed to both the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Aqaba (in the Red Sea) could indicate that he was a good coastal navigator, rather than an ocean-going navigator.¹⁴ The Red Sea in particular is notorious for its many coral and reefs, and the unpredictable north-westerly winds.

Approximately half of the stories in the ‘Ajā‘īb al-Hind were related to Buzurg by ship captains, ship owners, merchants, qādis (judges), physicians, and other local notables, suggesting that Buzurg held an important and respectable social status. As for other

devils...” (341) “Let no tribe marry with the Khūz, for their veins call for disobedience.” (329) ⁵Alī b. Abī Tālib is reported to have said that “There is no one of the face of the earth more wicked than the Khūz, nor have they ever produced a prophet or a noble person.” (329) Al-Muqaddasī also comments that when their youngsters grow up, they send them away to travel and make money, and so “they have no need for learning or refinement.” (329). See also Le Strange 2011: 246.

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⁹ Le Strange 2011: 243-244.
¹⁰ Agius 2005(b): 129, citing Alan J. Villiers.
¹¹ Agius 2005(b): 129.
¹³ Buzurg 1966: 85; idem, 1981: 49-50. Rubbān, for the most part, is translated by Freeman-Grenville as captain; the term is also used to denote navigator or pilot- more information regarding the crew is found in the following chapter.
¹⁴ It seems likely that Buzurg was not an ocean-going navigator but rather, was a coastal navigator as the topographical references mentioned in relation to Buzurg are located in and around the Red Sea, the Arabian-Persian Gulf and Oman.
informants in the stories they are simply noted as being a sailor, seafarer, traveller and, most vaguely, a man.

Buzurg does not provide much, if any, autobiographical detail in his work; his name provides us with a clue as to his origins yet there is little information regarding the rest of his life, in particular, where he settled. Freeman-Grenville suggests in the preface of his translation that Buzurg’s home was probably Sīrāf.\(^{15}\) Situated on the north-eastern shore of the Gulf, it had become the Arabian-Persian Gulf’s main harbour by the third/ninth century. In wealth, it rivalled Baṣra, the principal river port of Mesopotamia, and grew in importance with the increase of foreign trade, and the construction and use of larger vessels. The port of Baṣra could not accommodate the larger vessels due to its size and the large amount of silt from the mountains flooding the Tigris each year. The natural harbour of Sīrāf contributed to its success; the settlement and small fort that had existed there in Sāsānian times (224-651AD) were brought back to life with the construction of new defensive works, protecting the city from attacks by land, and by sea.\(^{16}\) As the importance of the port increased so did its population and soon visitors to the port were talking of its beauty, and its affluent population,\(^{17}\) its grand buildings made of teakwood, baked bricks and mangrove wood; its thriving markets;\(^{18}\) and its two main dockyards.\(^{19}\) It became the meeting place for merchants and seafarers from all over the Indian Ocean, and the point of access to (and from) China.\(^{20}\) The junks of China were understood to have sailed as far as Sīrāf,\(^{21}\) or at least to the west coast of India, from where their cargo was trans-shipped to Sīrāf. Sīrāfī captains and mariners were considered to be among the most knowledgeable and experienced, some of whom had spent their whole life at sea; a number of Sīrāfī merchants were known to have controlled the financial life of the whole province of Fārs.\(^{22}\)

It is possible that Buzurg did settle in Sīrāf for some time; however, I think it is more likely that Buzurg resided in Oman. We know from al-Muqaddasi that the population of this entrepôt for trade with China began to diminish during the Būyid dynasty (320-454/
despite the benefits and prosperity that the Būyid’s capture of Baghdād in 333-4/ 945 brought to Sīrāf and the Arabian-Persian Gulf as a whole, many merchants chose to re-establish themselves in Šoḫār, north-east Oman. Sīrāf was also struck by an earthquake in 367/ 977 which lasted seven days, and is believed to have destroyed the port. Due to the intensity of the heat, the lack of water and fruits, al-Muqaddasī described Sīrāf as “the gate of hell”, even as the city was being rebuilt and restored to its former glory. Other social, political and economic factors have been cited as reasons for the decline of Sīrāf; a large number of Sīrāfī merchants, ship-owners and navigators, including – I believe - Buzurg, relocated to Šoḫār, the Island of Qais (on the Persian littoral), Aden and Jeddah both for financial reasons i.e. the movement of trade, and for security reasons as many of the inhabitants of Sīrāf felt that the constant warlike activity in Sīrāf caused by the governor Abū l-Qāsim’s yearly (unsuccessful) attacks on the Island of Qais compromised their safety and security. Moreover, pirates based on the Island of Qais were causing ships to bypass the port of Sīrāf and go directly to Baṣra, negatively impacting the livelihood of those residing in the port town and causing many to emigrate to more politically stable and economically viable ports. Soucek attributes the decline of the port to the political and economic decline of ʿAbbāsid Iraq that began in the fourth/ tenth century; by the fifth/eleventh century Ubulla and Sīrāf were no longer functional (although Sīrāf was revived somewhat in the sixth/twelfth century), and Baghdād and Baṣra were in decline.

Buzurg attributes the decline of Sīrāf to an earlier incident occurring in the year 306/ 918, where three well-known ships sailing from Sīrāf to Saymur ran into a storm and sank. On board were 1200 passengers, and invaluable cargo and provisions. Only 33 people survived the disaster. The reason for Sīrāf’s decline, Buzurg believes, was due to

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23 Al-Muqaddasī 2001: 347.
25 Al-Muqaddasī 2001: 347; Bosworth 1997, IX: 667. The actual date of the earthquake given by al-Muqaddasī is the year 66 or 67 AH (which corresponds to 685-686 AD), yet this is an inconsistency, as he speaks of it as occurring after the Būyids took control of the region. The establishment of Būyid dynasty (320-454/ 932-1062) occurred when Buzurg was approximately twenty years of age, the invasion of Baghdad when he was thirty-three, and the earthquake in Sīrāf when he was aged sixty-five. If, as suggested by Hopkins (1990: 323), the ʿAjāʾīb al-Hind was completed around 375/ 985, then the absence of (mention of) this natural disaster in the text is quite significant; if the earthquake had occurred where Buzurg was residing then surely it would have featured at some point in the text.
27 Al-Muqaddasī 2001: 347.
28 Agius 2008: 80.
the loss of many well-known merchants and captains who had contributed to the growth of the port town and Saymur. While there is no historical record of this, it is interesting to note that Sīrāf was considered to be in decline by the merchant narrating the tale, and by Buzurg, who would have otherwise questioned this statement before including it in his book. Although it may be argued that Buzurg’s stories are not to be relied upon, this story may be considered as a true and significant event; Buzurg mentions the loss of 1167 lives as well as the loss of provisions and cargo of incalculable value, which meant that not only was it a tragic story and one that was well remembered by the sailors, but its occurrence during the days when economically Sīrāf was in decline meant the loss of such a wealthy cargo would have had a devastating financial impact on many merchants, ship-owners, mariners and their families.

Another tale in which Buzurg mentions, but fails to express any affinity to Sīrāf, is related by Abū ĖAbdallāh Muḥammad b. Bābishād b. Ḥarām b. Ḥamawayh al-Sīrāfī, one of the principal shipmasters to sail to the Land of Gold (Sumatra and Java) (see Map 3). Muḥammad b. Bābishād just happened to be at Sīrāf when a violent gale brought shipping activities to a halt. The local community were anxious as a ship had left Sīrāf for Baṣra a few days earlier, and when a local woman found her brother’s signet ring inside a fish she was cleaning, they realised (and later had it confirmed) that the ship had been wrecked, leaving no survivors. When relaying the tale in his book, Buzurg remarks that it is a curious story; if Buzurg was residing in Sīrāf, surely he would have been present when the news of the wreck broke, or at least, he would have been aware of it as the vessel carried a considerable number of people and a valuable cargo. If he had been part of the seafaring community of Sīrāf, then it is even likely that he would have known someone on board. Of course, depending on how much older Muḥammad b. Bābishād was than Buzurg, it is entirely possible that the event occurred before Buzurg’s time; however, the tone of the (curious) tale is distant, not at all like one learning and repeating tragic local history. Stories such as these, concerning shipwreck and loss of life and wealth, remain impressed in the minds of sailors; even today, almost everyone involved in seafaring has a story to tell regarding a terrifying

33 Buzurg’s method of collecting and verifying material is discussed below.
34 The lands visited by the medieval traders were grouped according to commodity, as discussed in Chapter 3; thus, the Land of Gold i.e. Sumatra and Java was known to be (one of) the providers of gold (amongst other products).
ordeal at sea, be it their own or that of another.\textsuperscript{36} Tales such as these were passed on between seafarers and merchants and from generation to generation, both to entertain and to emphasise the dangers of life at sea.

The reason why Buzurg would have chosen Oman as his residence was for its strategic location. Ṣoḥār, then the capital of Oman, was described by al-Muqaddasī as one of the most important towns on the Sea of China (i.e. the Indian Ocean), largely inhabited by Persians to the point that he states that the language of the province of Oman inland was Arabic, but the language of Ṣoḥār was Persian.\textsuperscript{37} The harbour was sheltered from the monsoon winds and it had an abundance of water, making it an ideal anchorage for vessels heading for the Persian Gulf, particularly for navigators wanting to avoid the dangers of this Gulf.\textsuperscript{38} Described as the gateway to China, it was the storehouse of the East and of Iraq, and as such, an attractive prospect for merchants and seafarers.

Other indications of Buzurg’s choice to reside in Oman come from stories recounted to him personally. In an anecdote regarding Isma‘īlawayh bin Ibrahīm b. Mirdās, one of the best ship-owners or shipmasters to go to the Land of Gold (Sumatra and Java), Buzurg writes:

\begin{quote}
\text{تذکرنا امر اسمعیلیه بن ابرهم بن مردام فقیل لی آنه وصل فی سنة سبع عشرة وثمانماثناء}
\end{quote}

We were talking about Isma‘īlawayh. Someone told me he arrived in 317/929.\textsuperscript{39}

Arrived where? They go on to elaborate:

\begin{quote}
\text{كان وصوله منذ خطف من كله وآلى ان دخل بكللاء عمان ثماني واربعين يوما}
\end{quote}

The duration of his voyage from Kala [in the Malay Peninsula] until he entered the port of Oman was exactly forty-one [eight] days.\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{36} See Agius 2005(b): 198-201 for more information.
\textsuperscript{37} Al-Muqaddasī 2001: 79, 82.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid: 79; Soucek 1995, VII: 66; Agius 2008: 85-86.
\textsuperscript{39} Buzurg 1966: 132; idem, 1981: 77.
In a previous story, Isma‘īlawayh had related the details of this voyage to Buzurg; during the voyage to Oman he met and fought with 66 pirates for three successive days, after which, it took him 41 days to reach the Southern Arabian Coast. When he reached his destination, he claims that the Sultan of Oman levied a tax of a tenth of the goods that were on the vessel, costing him 600,000 dinārs.41 This claim is refuted in the previously mentioned story:

وورد في تلك السنة كاوان من سرندب وبلغ عشور مركبه ستمائة ألف دينار لا
مركب اسمعيلويه

In the same year Kāwān came from Ceylon [i.e. to Oman]. It was he, not Isma‘īlawayh, who paid a tax of a tenth on his vessel [i.e. to the Sultan of Oman].42

Isma‘īlawayh features quite often in Buzurg’s tales; it is very possible that Isma‘īlawayh too, lived in Oman as many of his voyages concern departing from, or arriving in Oman. When Isma‘īlawayh abducted the Zanj king from Sofāla on the Zanj coast (i.e. East Africa), his intention was to sell him in the market of Oman, from whence they had come. When fate (and the wind) blew them back to the same place, they had again come from Oman.43 He also claims to have known a notoriously dishonest sea-captain, Marzabān, saying he appeared in court 13 times in one day and perjured himself each time.44 Chances are, Isma‘īlawayh witnessed this firsthand, otherwise the information would have been preceded by the source of information. If this is the case and Isma‘īlawayh did live in Oman, then it is possible that Buzurg was living in Oman in the year 339/ 950 when Sirāf was already suffering from economic decline. Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. ṢAmr b. Nās tells Buzurg of his terrifying experience when he comes face to face with an enormous, elephant-eating snake. Buzurg relates the story, and then adds that he questioned Isma‘īlawayh about the story in 339/ 950,45 which provides a clue as to when and where he settled and compiled his Kitāb ʿAjā‘ib al-Hind. Stories were also related to Buzurg by a Baluchi (Balūshī) physician in Oman (البلوجي)}

44 Ibid: 55.
The Book of the Marvels of India: Witnesses of the Wonders of India

Buzurg b. Shahriyār’s stories and anecdotes are about life at sea, trade, travel, and the wonders or marvels of the world. He states that the subject of his work Kitāb ʿAjāʾīb al-Hind is, as the title suggests, the “Wonders of India”\(^\text{46}\), so called because India is centrally located between the Western and Eastern Indian Ocean. From the west, it is connected by the two corridors of the Red Sea and the Arabian-Persian Gulf, and the Arabian Sea (including East Africa), and from the east, it is connected with the Seas of China. His inclusion of information regarding the regions outside of the land of India indicates that the marvels of India are, in actual fact, the marvels of the Indian Ocean World.

Buzurg, like many authors of the time, wrote in Arabic, the lingua franca (common language) of the time; mariners and coastal communities of the Gulf, the Arabian Sea and the Red Sea would have been bi-lingual Arabic and Persian. Judging by the language of the text, the conversational style and the content of the tales, his primary audience were people of a similar status or interest, sitting in large groups in the home of a wealthy merchant or one of the notables of the city, as well described in the stories of “Sindbād the Sailor”: “seated at tables garnished with all manner of flowers and sweet-scented herbs, besides great plenty of dainty viands and fruits dried and fresh and confections and wines of the choicest vintages.”\(^\text{47}\)

Buzurg’s sources of information were also from the same social circle as his audience; and as such, the names of captains, ship masters and merchants given in the text, which may not mean anything to us, are, for the audience of the time, a source of reference and a way of authenticating Buzurg’s tales. For a more modern audience, much of the

\(^{46}\) Ibid: 24.
\(^{47}\) Book of the Thousand Nights 1925, VI: 3. Although the work forms part of the oral tradition or Arabic narrative literature, Buzurg is not, in the traditional sense, a rāwī (a transmitter of poetry, narrative traditions and ḥadīth).
ethnographical information provided by Buzurg can actually be verified by contemporary works, such as the *Silsilat al-tawārīkh* (A Chain of Narratives) (c. 302/916), al-Masʿūdi’s (d. 345/956-7) *Murūj al-dhahab wa-maʿādin al-jawāhir* (Golden Meadows and Mines of Precious Stones) and al-Muqaddasī’s (d. 378/988-9) *Aḥsan al- taqāsīm fī maʿrifat al-aqālīm* (The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions). In addition to this, or in the absence of these contemporary texts, Buzurg has adopted a similar method of collecting information to those who collected or authenticated the *ḥadīth* or *tafsīr* (Qurʾānic exegesis) using a chain of narrators (*isnād*) to substantiate a point in *shariʿa* (Islamic) law, or the lexicographer, using anecdotes to prove a word existed.

The criteria adopted by Classical and Medieval Muslim authors to verify information is outlined in the model as defined by Agius in his *Classic Ships of Islam*: 49

1. *isnād*: to state where the information was taken from through a chain of reliable scholars or chain of narrators
2. *muṭālaʿa*: reading or consultation
3. *muʿāyana*: eye witnessing
4. *muhādatha*: interviewing or discussing of material
5. *taqyīd*: travel notes
6. *taʿāruf*: judging how commonly the term is used.

Of these, Buzurg is found to have adopted the *isnād*, the *muʿāyana*, and the *muḥādatha*. There is no evidence to suggest that Buzurg consulted other texts (*muṭālaʿa*), or made notes on his own travels (*taqyīd*); in fact, most of the information found in the text is provided by third party sources, Buzurg only ever offers his own eyewitness account (*muʿāyana*) occasionally. All the above criteria however, were applied by al-Muqaddasī in his work, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī maʿrifat al-aqālīm*.

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48 The *ḥadīth* pl *ahādīth* is a record of the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muḥammad (and his companions), regarded by Muslims as the secondary source (to be consulted after the Qurʾān) for information regarding Islamic beliefs and law, see Netton 1997: 90.
49 Agius 2008: 16.
The most important sources of information found in Buzurg’s work are the people mentioned in the text (i.e. the isnād). These sources can be divided into three categories:

1. **The original source**: the original story teller, Buzurg or the one who related the tale to Buzurg; the one whose name appears at the beginning of the anecdote. These can be further divided into: a) Buzurg as the source; b) a named source; c) unidentified source with some identifying factor e.g. a man from al-Manṣūra, a sea captain; d) unidentified source i.e. “they say”, “I was told”. "They say" possibly indicates the use of the muḥādatha; in another tale Buzurg begins the section with the words قد قيل “we were talking”50 – clearly a group talk.

2. **The eyewitness** (if not the original source) is either an a) identified eyewitness (identified by name); or b) unidentified eyewitness e.g. an old sailor.

3. **The others** include the protagonist of the tale [if not the eyewitness], ship-captains/shipmasters, sailors, merchants, relatives of named people, prophets, caliphs and foreign monarchs.

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Not all the sources are named; the use of “they say” and “I was told” could possibly mean that either Buzurg (or the scribe?) did not remember who had provided him with the information, or that the information was common knowledge at the time and many people had provided Buzurg with the same or similar information. Nor did Buzurg take all the information with which he is provided as the truth; he occasionally questions the source, saying “can you guarantee the truth in this story?“51 or seeks confirmation from another source.

There is much to learn from the people whose names are provided, such as their ethnic backgrounds, their family situation, their status in the community, and details of their travels. Table 2 (below) gives a list of names of mariners and merchants from whom Buzurg collected stories, or who featured in his tales; as well as the origins of these individuals and their profession.

Table 2: The sources of Buzurg Ibn Shahriyār.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Origins</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Other Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Abū Muḥammad al-Hasan b. ʿAmr b. Ḥammawayh b. Ḥārām b. Ḥammawayh al-Najīramī</td>
<td>Najīram, north of Sīrāf on the Gulf Coast</td>
<td>Possibly a merchant or traveller</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad b. Bābīsḥād b. Ḥarām b. Ḥammawayh al-Sīrāfī</td>
<td>Sīrāf</td>
<td>One of the principal shipmasters to sail to the Land of Gold</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. Munīr</td>
<td>Sīrāf</td>
<td>One of the best ship-owners to have sailed the seas</td>
<td>A man of considerable reputation amongst seafarers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

51Buzurg 1981: 5.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Origins</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Other Information</th>
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<tr>
<td>5. Abū al-Hasan Muḥammad b. Ahmad b. ʿUmar al-Sīrāfī</td>
<td>Sīrāf</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Abū al-Zahr al-Barkhaṭī</td>
<td>Sīrāf?</td>
<td>A shipmaster/shipowner; one of the principal notables of Sīrāf</td>
<td>Previously a Zoroastrian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Captain ʿAllāma</td>
<td></td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Abū al-ʿAbbās</td>
<td>Sīrāf</td>
<td>A chief merchant in an Indian town</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Captain Shahriyārī,</td>
<td></td>
<td>One of the captains on the China route</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Captain ʿAbhara,</td>
<td>Kirmān</td>
<td>Previously shepherd, then a fisherman, then a sailor on a ship to India, then he was on a Chinaman, finally becoming captain- he went to China seven times</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. ʿImrān the Lame</td>
<td></td>
<td>A sea-captain</td>
<td>Sailed in the Red Sea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Mardānshāh</td>
<td></td>
<td>One of the shipowners to go to the Land of Pepper (India)</td>
<td>Has a son al-Marzaban, a notoriously dishonest captain who mistreated merchants on his ship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Origins</td>
<td>Profession</td>
<td>Other Information</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Saʿīd the poor man</td>
<td>Aden</td>
<td>A weaver</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Ishāq b. Yahūda</td>
<td></td>
<td>A man who earned his living amongst brokers in Oman</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16. Kāwān</td>
<td></td>
<td>Shipowner/ master?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Muslim b. Bishr</td>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>An employer of pearl-divers</td>
<td>Found the famous Orphan Pearl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Yūnus b. Mihrān</td>
<td>Sīrāf</td>
<td>A merchant</td>
<td>Travelled to Java</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Dārbazīn</td>
<td>Sīrāf</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. ʿAbbās b. Māḥān</td>
<td>Sīrāf</td>
<td>Hunarman of Saymur</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. ʿAbd al-Wahīd b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān of Fasā</td>
<td>Fasā</td>
<td></td>
<td>Brother of Abū Hātim of Fasā who sailed the sea for many years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Sahl, known as Surūr,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Travelled to East Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Yazīd</td>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>A ship's captain who used to go to the Zanj country</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>24. Abū Ṭāhir</td>
<td>Baghdaḍ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Origins</td>
<td>Profession</td>
<td>Other Information</td>
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<tr>
<td>25. Muḥammad b. Muslim</td>
<td>Sīrāf</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lived in India for more than twenty years</td>
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<tr>
<td>26. Abū Yūsuf b. Muslim</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Rāshid, al-Ghulām bin Bābishād</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Possibly a servant of Bābishād</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. ʿAbdāllāh b. Junayd</td>
<td></td>
<td>A shipowner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Aḥmad</td>
<td></td>
<td>Shipmaster/ ship's captain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Muḥammad</td>
<td>Oman</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Jaʿfar b. Rashīd, known as Ibn Lākis</td>
<td></td>
<td>A sea-captain who was well known on the Land of Gold route and a shipowner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A frequently mentioned source of Buzurg’s for example, is Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad bin Bābishād bin Ḥarām bin Ḥammawayh al-Sīrāfī (see Table 2, number 2). We know from his name that Bābishād was originally of Sīrāf; Buzurg also tells us that:

كان وجه النواخذة الذين سافروا إلى بلاد الذهب وأعرف خلق الله بامر البحر ومن جَلَّة البحريين ومستوريهم

[he was] one of the principal shipmasters who used to sail to the Land of Gold [Sumatra and Java], and was one of the best informed of God’s creatures in nautical matters, and one of the best and most respected sailors.⁵²

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He was so distinguished, in fact, that an Indian king had a portrait painted of him, a custom usually reserved for famous, eminent men.\textsuperscript{53} We know from Buzurg that Bābishād spent much of his life sailing the seas, travelling to Oman, Sīrāf and India, as well as in the Eastern Indian Ocean, to Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Malaysia and Indonesia, Fanṣūr (an island off the coast of Sumatra), and Sarīra on the Lāmurī Island (north of Sumatra) (see Map 3). There is not much information given regarding Bābishād’s family background, though it is likely, given his agnomen Abū ʿAbdallāh, that he had a son (adopted or biological) named ʿAbdallāh; it is also possible that he had a slave whom he took with him on voyages, as Buzurg relates a story told to him by Rāshid, al-Ghulām bin Bābishād in which he describes a gale in which he was caught while travelling from Sīrāf to Başra in 305/ 918.\textsuperscript{54}

Another common source is Ismaʿīl bin Ibrahīm b. Mīrūdās (see Table 2, number 3), “one of the best ship-owners to go to the Land of Gold [Sumatra and Java]”.\textsuperscript{55} He was better known as Ismaʿīlwayh, and was the son-in-law of Ashkanīn (presumably the audience of the time knew who Ashkanīn was). He too, had travelled extensively to the Land of Gold, Lāmurī (north of Sumatra), Oman (where he possibly lived), India, and to the Land of the Zanj (East Africa). His character is somewhat suspect; although Buzurg seems to trust what he says, he is known to have betrayed the king of Sofāla on the south-east coast of Africa, taking him captive and selling him in a slave market in Oman in 310/922.\textsuperscript{56}

Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. ʿAmr b. Ḥammawayh b. Ḥarām b. Ḥammawayh al-Najīramī (see Table 2, number 1) is another source, whose name suggests that he was originally from the town of Najīram, north of Sīrāf, in the ancient district of Ardashīr Khurrah.\textsuperscript{57} The text does not indicate what his role was; it is possible that he was a merchant or traveller as, if he had been a ship-master or captain, then Buzurg would have introduced him as such. He did however, spend much of his time with seafarers,

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid: 57.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid: 94.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid: 5.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid: 31-36.
\textsuperscript{57} Al- Muqaddasi 2001: 346, 348. Al- Muqaddasi’s description of this place is brief; he describes the town as being part of the district of Ardashīr Khurrah, which was planned by Nimrūd b. Kanān and built by Sīrāf b. Fārs. The capital of the district was Sīrāf; the heat here was severe and the fruit scarce. As for Najīram itself, he describes it as a coastal town, having two mosques, and a market next to one of them, outside of the town. The drinking water here was from wells and ponds, which the rain water filled.
including Muḥammad bin Bābishād;\textsuperscript{58} many of the tales he relates to Buzurg are what he has heard from mariners. Judging by the stories, Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. ʾAmr had travelled mainly in and around India: he was in al-Manṣūra (the capital of the region of al-Sind, lower Indus\textsuperscript{59}) in 288/900, and had travelled to Sindān (West Indian coast), and possibly (Lower) Kashmir. Many of his tales describe the customs and traditions of the inhabitants of India (often Hindus) and Sri Lanka: such as an annual festival held in Lower Kashmir;\textsuperscript{60} the carrying or travelling of the kings and notables of Ceylon in hindolas (litters);\textsuperscript{61} the considering of urine to be cleaner than the water that had been used to wash the hand or mouth;\textsuperscript{62} and the method in which the inhabitants of Lower Kashmir journeyed to al-Manṣūra, i.e. down the River Mihrān at flood time, on (700-800lb) bags of grain, wrapped in skins, treated with resin and bound together to make a type of raft. The journey took 40 days, as opposed to the 70 days it would take by land; and the grain reached the port of Manṣūra in perfect condition.\textsuperscript{63} He had also travelled to Baṣra, where he met Buzurg and related the first tale of the ʾAjāʾīb; the story of the King of Rā, Mahrūk b. Rāiq, one of the greatest kings in India who lived between Upper and Lower Kashmir. The king had written to ʾAbdallāh b. ʿUmar b. ʾAbd al-Azīz, the ruler of al-Manṣūra, in 270/833, asking for a translation of Islamic law. ʾAbdallāh b. ʿUmar sent an Iraqi poet who remained there for three years; the king had, according to the poet, converted to Islam but could not openly profess his faith for fear of losing his royal status.\textsuperscript{64} The inclusion of the information provided by al-Ḥasan b. ʾAmr illustrates Buzurg’s role as an ethnographer, as not only do his tales concern seafaring but also the social and cultural interactions of the time, many of which were foreign or strange and thus provided entertaining material for storytellers to draw upon.

Freeman-Grenville has, in his translation, attributed a story to another individual named Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. ʾAmr b. Nās, a shipowner,\textsuperscript{65} implying that two of his sources had very similar names. If this was the case, identifying the source collected by Buzurg from Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. ʾAmr or al-Ḥasan b. ʾAmr, where the surname was not mentioned, would be difficult. In the Arabic text however, the beginning reads:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{58} Buzurg 1981: 70.
\item \textsuperscript{59} Al- Muqaddasi 2001: 387.
\item \textsuperscript{60} Buzurg 1981: 3.
\item \textsuperscript{61} Ibid: 68.
\item \textsuperscript{62} Ibid: 69.
\item \textsuperscript{63} Ibid: 60.
\item \textsuperscript{64} Ibid: 2.
\item \textsuperscript{65} Ibid: 29. The tale is entitled “A Snake that ate Elephants”.
\end{itemize}
Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. ʿAmr b. Nās, a shipowner, told me he was at sea when he was driven by a sharp squall...⁶⁷

This translation is not correct, for it should state that Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. ʿAmr, who heard it from or on the authority of (ʿan) some shipmasters. There is no mention of the surname Nās in the Arabic edition, as can be seen in the passage above; thus, it seems that this story, and indeed all the stories in the ʿAjāʿib in which al-Ḥasan b. ʿAmr have been cited as the source, have been narrated to Buzurg by the aforementioned sea captain Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. ʿAmr b. Ḥammawayh b. Ḥarām b. Ḥammawayh al-Najīramī.

Captain ʿAbhara too (see Table 2, number 11), was a well-known individual during the time of Buzurg. He was (as mentioned earlier) a native of Kirmān (region in Iran), who was a shepherd in his early years; after which, he became a fisherman; then he joined a ship’s crew, sailing as far as China. He eventually rose to a higher level and took the duties of a rubbān (navigator)⁶⁸ and, we are told, sailed to China seven times; an impressive feat as Buzurg informs us:

 ولم يكن سلك قبله إلى الصين آلًا من غزّر ولم يسمع أن أحدا سلكه وسلم وعند قط فان
سلم في المضي فهو عجّب فلا يكاد يسلم في العودة وما سمعت أن احدا سلم في
الذهاب والمجيء سواء

Only adventurous men had made this voyage before. No one had done it without an accident. If a man reached China without dying on the way, it was already a miracle. Returning safe and sound was unheard of. I have never heard tell of anyone, except

⁶⁸ Idem, 1981: 50. Though rubbān is translated by Freeman-Grenville as Captain.
him, who had made the two voyages [i.e] there and back without mishap. 69

69 Abhara, it seems, was a brave and adventurous navigator although not infallible; his ship was wrecked due to miscalculations regarding the tide, and he was found adrift in his ship’s boat in the South China Sea by the narrator of the tale, Captain Shahriyārī (“one of the captains on the China route”70). He was well respected for his knowledge and his sailing expertise and experience, so much so that those attempting to rescue him from the predicament they found him in were willing to pay him a salary of “a thousand dinārs of merchandise at the Sīrāf rate”71 and give him control of the ship, in order to have him on board their ship and seek his advice. This extraordinary business venture paid off as Abhara’s knowledge of the tides and weather patterns, the (navigational) calendar, and the location of reefs and shoals saved Captain Shahriyārī and his ship from certain destruction. Captain Abhara’s story proves to be an important and extremely informative one as it provides us with information regarding aspects of seafaring such as the salary of a navigator and the method of payment, and aspects of navigation such as the requisite knowledge for long distance voyages (i.e. knowledge of tides and the weather, as will be discussed in Chapter 5). That information, particularly the passage quoted above, and Buzurg’s admiration of the courageous men who sail to China, also reinforces the theory that Buzurg may have been a coastal navigator who sailed around the Red Sea, the southern Arabian coast and the Arabian-Persian Gulf, rather than a deep sea navigator, or one who travelled to China.

Captain Abhara was not the only legendary captain in Buzurg’s circle; Captain ʿAllāma was also amongst those who travelled to China and back successfully. Buzurg does not provide much biographical detail regarding Captain ʿAllāma, other than that he travelled to India, China and an island of the Land of al-Bakham;72 his name however, is interesting. Derived from the root term علمن l-m, his name (literally) means the “most erudite, very learned”;73 it is possible that ʿAllāma is the captain’s nickname or moniker, signifying perhaps, his status amongst his peers. The tale, related by Buzurg,
portrays Ālāma as an astute captain, who was able to recognise the signs of impending bad weather before they became visible to anyone else on board, and take precautionary measures in order to be able to ride out the storm. In fact, those on board Ālāma’s ship during his voyage from India to China, although hindered by a violent storm which wrecked many other ships, not only survived due to the captain’s foresight (and his order to jettison the cargo to lighten the ship), but also recovered or gained a great deal of valuable merchandise from ships that had been wrecked in the same storm. Thus, those travelling with Captain Ālāma were blessed, as the “voyage brought them wealth and happiness”.

Themes in the Ājā’ib al-Hind

Religious Belief

With regard to the content of the stories, almost all the tales tell of the wonders witnessed by travellers, merchants, and seafarers, be it part of the ājā’ib, unusual customs of the inhabitants of foreign lands, or terrible storms, the likes of which have not been seen before. As for the themes, there are many that recur throughout the Ājā’ib al-Hind, painting a picture of life at sea in the Medieval period; similar themes and patterns are also found in the “Seven Voyages of Sindbād the Sailor” which, like Buzurg’s text, is essentially a collection of seafaring stories, though its provenance is disputed (see Chapter 2). As with many Muslim authors, a prevalent theme found throughout much of the text is that of religion or faith; like most of the Muslim classical and medieval works, Buzurg introduces his work with the bismillāh (in the name of God): “He has created different kinds of people and nations. He, by His creative genius, has made them differ in character and appearance.”

Al-Muqaddasī, in a similar manner, states his intention to please God and earn some recompense, while being wary of displeasing Him and earning His wrath. In order to do

75 Idem, 1966: 1; idem, 1981: 1. Buzurg’s introduction reads:

"بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم وهو حسبي الحمد لله ذو العزة والجلال، والأعمال والأفضله، خالق الأباطرة والأجلي، ووعدهم بفطرته في الأخلاق والأشكال، ومنصرفهم بقدرتهم من حال الى حال، ومعملهم بما خلقه من عرايب الأعمال"

“In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate: He is my refuge. Praise be to God, to whom belongs power and majesty, the source of grace and well-doing! He has created different kinds of people and nations. He, by His creative genius, has made them differ in character and appearance. He, by His almighty power, makes them change from one state to another. He, in His wisdom, teaches them to perform wonderful works.”
this, he writes, he has avoided falsehood and excesses, and has only written what has been verified by trustworthy people. The *Alf layla wa layla* (Arabian Nights), by introducing the tales with the *bismillāh* beseeches Allāh to let the legends of old be a lesson to future generations; the compiler considers the stories from the *Nights*, and all that is in them of wonders or marvels (*gharāʾib*) and adages (*amthāl*), to be from amongst these lessons or warnings (*ʿibrāʾ*).77

The *Silsilat*, on the contrary, does not start with the *bismillāh* formula. Its absence is unusual, particularly as the compilers of both parts of the text appear to be of the Islamic faith. In fact, there are only a few religious references throughout the whole of the text. However, both parts of the *Silsilat* (see Chapter 2) end with a reference to God, asking for His forgiveness and praising Him, although judging by the dates, this appears to have been added by the transcriber or copyist rather than the authors themselves.79

Religious references are found throughout the *ʿAjāʾib al-Hind*, regarding both the Islamic faith and other faith groups; the latter is remarkable and not common in Islamic sources. The first story recounts the secret conversion of the king of Rā, Mahrūk b. Rāyiq, as mentioned earlier; other conversions to the Islamic faith follow: the shipmaster Abū al-Zahr al-Barkhatī, one of the principle notables of Sirāf, and whose stories have been recounted by Buzurg, was initially a *mājūs* (Zoroastrian80). Buzurg gives an indication of the multicultural, multi-faith harmony that existed at that time, as he describes the shipmaster as being regarded as

كان عندهم أمينا يقبلون قوله ويستودعونه أموالهم وأولادهم

a man of integrity, to whose word one paid heed, and to whom one entrusted one’s goods and children.81

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77 *Alf layla wa layla* [nd.], IV: 9 – the “Seven Voyages of Sindbād the Sailor” do not begin in the name of God as the tales follow on from a previous night (of the thousand and one nights).
78 It has been suggested that this absence is perhaps due to some section of the text being missing; the Arabic edition of the text being used for this study however, does not appear to have the same lacuna as the English edition. In any case, the second part of the text, which has been compiled by Abū Zayd al-Hasan b. Yazid of Sirāf, does not begin with the *bismillāh* formula either.
79 *Silsilat al-tawārīkh* 1811: 60, 148. The dates included in this text are 1011 (سنة أحد عشر بعد الفرض) in the first part, and 596 in the second. See Chapter 2 for more information.
80 Zoroastrianism, initially an élite Sāsānid Persian religion, was, by the fourth/tenth century, widespread across (the regions of) Iran, north-west India, the western Indian coast, and China, as well as elements in Iraq, Oman, Yemen and Bahrain, see Morony 1986, V: 1110.
He eventually became a Muslim and undertook the pilgrimage, but not before he had established himself as a worthy shipmaster and distinguished member of the community of Sīrāf.

Further evidence of the apparent harmony between different faith groups in the seafaring community is witnessed in the tale regarding the Island of Women. A ship sailing in the Malay Sea, near the borders of China, was forced to steer under the star سهیل (suhayl) Canopus. The passengers, frightened by the ferocity of the weather and perhaps, sensing their impending doom,

توادعوا وصلّى كلّ منهم إلى جهة على قدر معبوده لأنّهم كانوا شغلاً من الهند والهند والعجم والجزائر واستسلموا للموت

said farewell to one another, and each of them prayed according to his religion, for there were men from China, India, Persia and the islands. Then they surrendered themselves to death.\(^{82}\)

The travellers had sailed from India, a journey that would have taken at least two months during which, no mention is made of any discord amongst those on board. In fact, at one point the merchants plead with the captain to turn the ship around, stating that rather than heading toward what they believed to be fire, they would rather remain in the abysmal darkness so that they did not have to witness their comrades suffering.\(^{83}\)

One must question whether this harmony extended beyond the Indian Ocean seafaring community, or whether it was limited to it; as often the two seem quite distinct, particularly after the expansion of Islam.\(^{84}\)

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\(^{83}\) Buzurg 1981: 14

\(^{84}\) The Zoroastrians in particular, suffered after the advent of Islam, their fire temples were destroyed, the priests killed, and much of their land was confiscated (Morony 1986, V: 1110). The use of the Persian (solar) calendar for navigational seasons on the other hand, suggests that the introduction of the Islamic lunar calendar did not affect the maritime world, although the changes in the lunar calendar make it generally unsuitable for calculating periodic seasonal changes or the appearance of certain stars. While writing of the Arabian modification of the Persian sidereal rose, the assimilation of the Persian system of orientation and the adoption of the Persian calendar, Tolmacheva suggests that the merger of Arabian and Persian maritime and nautical traditions either happened before the rise of Islam, or remained unaffected by it. Tolmacheva 1980: 188.
Buzurg’s acceptance of or interest in others is a unique feature of the 'Aja’ib because not only does he talk of the Islamic faith and culture but, unlike some other Muslim authors, he also talks of lands outside of the realm of Islam, and of their religion, language and culture. He displays an open-mindedness and acceptance of foreign cultures and faiths that is quite unusual; a genuine interest free from any form of derision or contempt. It is possible that his belief cited earlier, that God created different kinds of people and nations, making them differ in character and appearance, frees him from making any kind of judgement regarding those who follow different belief systems.\(^85\) He describes what he considers to be the ‘ajā’ib of foreign customs and beliefs without condemning them; rather than judge these foreign cultures and beliefs, or any other ‘ajā’ib that he hears about, he simply states in the known formula “God knows best"\(^86\) or quotes, “blessed be God, the best of creators”.\(^87\) He does however, seem to be uncomfortable with (ritual) suicide, believing those who commit it to be destined for hell. This view is reflected in the third voyage of Sindbād the Sailor, when, despairing of their situation (of being held captive by a cannibal giant), Sindbād and his companions begin to consider suicide. Upon reflection however, they deem it better to kill the giant and try to escape using a raft; they would rather try to escape and drown, in which case they would be considered martyrs, than become the giant’s meal or commit the unlawful act of suicide.\(^88\)

As mentioned previously, Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. ʿAmr b. Ḥammawayh b. Ḥarām b. Hammawayh al-Najīramī, who spent much of his time in India, as well as other travellers who had visited the region, provided Buzurg with a wealth of information regarding the religious and cultural habits of the inhabitants of India. The king of India for example, having ascended the throne, is presented with a number of devotees called balāwajir, who protect him from harm; surrounding him in battle, tasting his food before him to ensure it has not been poisoned, inspecting any concubines or slaves that are brought to him and even examining his bed before he lies upon it. When the king

\(^{85}\) Buzurg 1966: 1; idem, 1981: 1.


\(^{87}\) Buzurg 1966: 42; idem, 1981: 25. The phrase is taken from the Qur’ānic account of the creation of man, sūrat al-mu’minūn xxiii: 14, Yusuf Ali’s (2002: 239) translation reads “So blessed be Allāh, the Best to Create.”

\(^{88}\) *Alf layla wa layla* (nd.), III: 293.
dies, the *balāwajir* commit suicide, throwing themselves on to the king’s funeral pyre.\(^{89}\)

Hindu suicide is a common theme in the ʾAjāʾib, witnessed in both India and Ceylon (Sri Lanka), often committed through loyalty as above, or as a means of gaining salvation. Buzurg relates a tale regarding two men who filled a ditch with dried dung which they set alight, and then entered this ditch and played draughts, “chewed betel, and sang”\(^{90}\) while the fire consumed them; the apparent absence of pain is astonishing, and perhaps similar (though to a lesser extent) to the act of walking across hot coals.

Other curiosities of the Hindu people include their diet, regarding which Buzurg notes that they “eat dead beasts”\(^{91}\), i.e. they do not sacrifice their animals in the same manner as Muslims; and their laws. He writes that theft is a serious issue according to Hindus, for which the punishment is often confiscation of the thief’s wealth, and death; on one occasion, the offender was condemned to be skinned alive.\(^{92}\) To the Muslim community this may seem extreme, as the punishment for theft in Islam is imprisonment or amputation of the hand;\(^{93}\) and for Muslims residing in Hindu territory, the matter is dealt with by the *hunarman* (the equivalent of a *qādī* (judge)), who sentences the thief according to *sharīʿa* law.

Hindu holy men also intrigue Buzurg and his audience, in particular the Bhikku\(^{94}\) (البيكور al-Bīkūr) of Sri Lanka. These Buddhist monks were, according to Buzurg, sympathetic to the Muslims, and derived many of their teachings regarding humility and their ascetic lifestyle from the examples of Caliphs Abū Bakr and ʿUmar.\(^{95}\) Whether or not the Buddhist monks did adopt the teachings of Islam into their already austere lifestyles is debatable; Buzurg’s inclusion of the tale however, and the open-minded, non-judgemental tone with which he relays this information, illustrates the uniqueness of this medieval Indian Ocean ethnographer.

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\(^{89}\) Buzurg 1981: 67-68. The practice of committing suicide on someone’s funeral pyre is *anumaranā* which can be committed by males or females, unlike the (now banned) tradition of *sati* or *suttee* which is restricted to widows.

\(^{90}\) Ibid: 86.

\(^{91}\) Ibid: 95.

\(^{92}\) Ibid: 101.


\(^{95}\) Buzurg 1981: 91.
The Sea and its Creatures

Fear of the terror of the ocean is found throughout the Ajāʾib al-Hind, and in the “Seven Voyages of Sindbād the Sailor”, particularly in the description of the sea, the wind and the rain, which often symbolise God’s wrath, punishment for sins, and spiritual cleansing (rain); this will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5. Often, this representation stems from, or is an indication of the mariners’ fear of the sea; not only of the sea itself, but of what is found beneath the waves.

One of the most common ‘sea monsters’ found in medieval seafaring texts are whales or giant fish.96 Buzurg relates a variety of tales regarding whales and their habits, and also, regarding their sizes, which range from fifty cubits long to over two hundred cubits in length and fifty cubits high.97 From a distance, the whales’ (or ʿal wāl as it is named in one instance in both the Ajāʾib al-Hind and the Akhbār) tail and fins resemble the sails of a boat, and the water it spouts seems like a minaret.98 These creatures are occasionally playful, following ships and even racing with them; at other times however, they are deadly creatures, attacking or ramming ships for no apparent reason, or in the hope that the vessel can provide them with some food. They strike the ship continuously with their head, occasionally getting caught in the hole they have created; but often causing the ship to capsize and swallowing all that falls into the ocean.99 Sindbād also came into contact with one of the more frightening aspects of the whales’ nature; he and his crew were heading towards China when they were overcome by a storm. The captain of the ship, having climbed the mast to evaluate the situation, proclaimed their doom just as a terrible sound like the peal of thunder was heard. The ship rose out of the water and crashed back into it as the crew realised they were the playthings of the three whales now surrounding the ship; the largest of the whales opened its mouth intending to swallow the ship in its entirety when the ship was blown by a gust of wind on to a reef, and descended into the abyss.100 The only way to protect

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96 Buzurg uses the terms سمكة (samak) which translates as fish, while in Sindbād we have حوت (hūt) i.e. fish or whale. Buzurg 1966: 14, 15, 16, 17 and also دواب البحر animal/beast of the sea: 18. Alī layla wa layla (nd.), IV: 12.
97 Buzurg 1966: 14. Cubit is the measurement from the hollow of the elbow to the tip of the middle finger.
98 Silsilat 1811: 3-4; Buzurg 1966: 15.
99 Silsilat 1811: 3-4; Buzurg 1966: 15.
100 Alī layla wa layla (nd.), IV: 12.
oneself against the threat posed by whales was to strike pieces of wood against each other, shout, beat drums,\textsuperscript{101} or ring bells throughout the night.\textsuperscript{102}

Despite the fearsome portrayal of these creatures in medieval texts, the mariners were resourceful when it came to whales, particularly those that had been stranded on the shore. Abū Zayd, in the second part of the \textit{Silsilat al-tawārīkh}, illustrates this resourcefulness in his recounting of a (third party) eyewitness account of when a whale washed up on to the shore near Sīrāf:

The fishermen exposed him to the sun, sliced away his flesh, and having digged a pit, gathered up the grease which was melted by the sun; and that having drained off all the oil, they sold it to the masters of ships. This oil, mixed up with another kind of stuff, in use with seamen, serves for caulking of ships, to secure the seams of the planking, and to stop up leaks. This whale oil is negotiated for great sums of money.\textsuperscript{103}

Buzurg goes into further detail, relating what Abū l-Ḥasan Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ʿUmar al-Sīrāfī had seen in Oman in the year 300/ 912, where the fat from the eyes of a beached whale had sold for around 10,000 dirhams. Even today, in the Gulf, the Red Sea, the Southern Arabian Coast and other Indian Ocean regions, shark oil is applied to the topside and interior of vessels, preventing the planks from splitting and warping. To protect the bottom of the vessel (below the waterline) from barnacles and shipworm, it is coated with a mixture made of boiling oil and animal (mutton) fat mixed with burned lime; in one area however, they still use shark oil, or rather shark liver oil (ṣall or dahnldehen).\textsuperscript{104}

\textsuperscript{101} Buzurg 1981: 10.
\textsuperscript{102} Silsilat 1811: 3.
\textsuperscript{103} Silsilat 1811: 140-1; idem, 1995: 95.
\textsuperscript{104} Agius 2002: 171, 173-5.
Other sea creatures mentioned by Buzurg are giant lobsters, so big that their horns resemble two mountains in the sea. Despite their large size, Buzurg does not portray them as dangerous; rather, Isma‘īlawayh relates how his ship carried on sailing after they had anchored as a lobster was playing with the anchor, which weighed at least 600 *mann*. If these lobsters however, reached an island in the Sanf Sea (South China Sea, possibly including the Gulf of Tongking), they would turn into stone; this stone was imported to Iraq and used by medieval pharmacists (apothecaries) as a remedy for spots on the eyes.

An enormous snake called a dragon is also found in the sea, and its existence has been attested to by many of the seafarers, travellers, merchants and captains that Buzurg was acquainted with. It does not seem to bring harm to those at sea, but it is believed that if God wishes misfortune on a people, then this dragon, which has been taken away from the sea in some form of condensation cloud, falls upon their land and eats all of their livestock, leaving the people with nothing. Other snakes are deadly to man: Buzurg talks of the inhabitants of a village in Champa (Vietnam, possibly present day Đăk Nâng) having to emigrate due to a man-and-cattle eating snake, while the grey or spotted snakes found in the mountains (Western Ghats) off the Lār coast (west coast of India) can kill a man just by looking at him. Buzurg also reports of giant snakes that were able to kill and eat elephants and crocodiles. Other venomous creatures include the scorpions of Wāqwāq, deadly creatures that are able to fly; “when they bite a man, his body swells up. He falls sick, and his skin flakes off, and he dies.”

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105 Buzurg 1981: 5
106 Buzurg 1966: 7-8. *Mann* is defined as a weight of 2 *raḥl*; a *raḥl* is equivalent to 449.28g (in Egypt), 462g (in Saudi Arabia), 504g (in Tunisia), 508g (in Morocco), 1.785kg (in Damascus), and 2.566kg (in Beirut and Aleppo). Wehr 1993: 1085 & 399.
110 Ibid: 30. The snake able to kill with a single glance bears resemblance to the legendary basilisk, the king of serpents; this creature could possibly be referring to a spitting cobra although the venom is usually only (fatal) toxic if it is spat directly into a man’s eyes. There are a number of highly venomous snakes in the region of the Western Ghats, such as the King Cobra, the Common Cobra, the Hump-nosed Pit Viper, Saw-scaled Viper, Russell’s Viper, Wall’s Sind Krait, Banded Krait, and the Common Krait; the tale could be referring to any of these deadly snakes - [http://www.chakramhikers.com/important-information/snake-bite.html](http://www.chakramhikers.com/important-information/snake-bite.html) (accessed 05-07-2011).
112 Ibid: 30. The Wāqwāq refers to an as yet unidentified island or group of islands located somewhere in the Indian Ocean; possible locations range from the East African shores, to the islands off of the south coast of India, Southeast Asia and Japan. For more information, see Viré, F “Wākwāk, Waḵwāk, Wâk Wâk, Wâkal-Wâk, al-Wâkwäk(a.)” *Encyclopaedia of Islam* 2002, XI: 103.
Other less deadly land-and-sea creatures also feature in the text: mermaids for example, and other creatures born from the union of man and animal, such as the monkey, the nasnas (half a human; creature with half a head and body) and other animals that resembled men. Birds too, appear often in Buzurg’s text: the phoenix-like samandal, a bird with red, white, green and blue plumage, and the giant roc or rukh, the giant legendary bird of prey, though in the ‘Ajā’ib it is simply referred to as a tāyr ē’azīm an enormous bird. This creature features in many medieval Eastern and Western accounts in addition to the ‘Ajā’ib al-Hind, including the Sindbād stories and other tales from the Arabian Nights, the Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, and the Travels of Marco Polo. Parallels of the legendary rukh are found in the garuda (half-vulture half-man) of the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa; the simurgh of the Persians; the bar yuchre of the Rabbinical legends and the gryps (gryphon or griffin – a creature with the head and wings of an eagle and the body of a lion) of the Greeks. The legend of the rukh and similar giant birds may have risen from the existence of now-extinct creatures such as the Aepyornis (elephant bird), the Harpagornis (Haast’s eagle, a native of New Zealand), or larger members of the harrier or vulture genus/family. In addition to the creatures found beneath the waves and in the air, those on land also proved to be a problem for seafarers. Snakes and crocodiles, both of which terrorised travellers in the sea and on shore, and tigers on the shores of India and Sri Lanka made sailing and anchoring around the southern coast of India particularly dangerous.

Humans however, were just as dangerous; pirates infested the western Indian Ocean, while the East African coastline and many of the islands were home to cannibals. Cannibalism, a prevalent theme throughout many works of travel literature, appeared to be rampant in some areas of the Indian Ocean; Buzurg talks of cannibals with tails at Lūlūbīlank (on the west coast of Sumatra), on Great Andaman Island, on Niyān and

113 Irwin 2005: 206.
114 Buzurg 1981: 101. This bird also features in the Arabian Nights in the story of Gūnār, the Sea-Born, and her son Badr Baṣīm Prince of Persia, where Princess Jannah the daughter of the king of Samandal, turns Badr into a white flightless bird with red claws and beak. Book of the Thousand Nights 1958, III: 92.
115 Buzurg 1966: 12, 64; idem, 1981: 8, 38.
117 Marco Polo 1920, book 3 chapter 33; Irwin 2005: 207. Marco Polo calls the bird Gryphon, and notes that the description of this bird differs from the traditional description of the legendary griffin, being more like an eagle, “but one indeed of enormous size; so big in fact that its wings covered an extent of thirty paces, and its quills were twelve paces long, and thick in proportion. And it is so strong, that it will seize an elephant in its talons and carry him high into the air, and drop him so that he is smashed to pieces; having so killed him the bird Gryphon swoops down on him and eats him at leisure. The people of those isles [Madagascar and Zanzibar] call the bird Ruc, and it has no other name.”
118 Flightless birds of Madagascar, some standing at 3m (10 feet) high, whose eggs were up to 89cm (35 inches) http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/7194/Aepyornis (accessed 06-07-2011).
Birāwa Islands, and some of other the islands of Southeast Asia, as well as in Sofāla (in Mozambique). Some of these cannibals attack all those who happen upon their shores; others only eat their enemies out of vengeance,\(^{119}\) or out of sheer desperation, as in the case of the thirty-three shipwrecked sailors who, adrift in their ship’s boat for five days, began considering eating one of their companions in order to survive.\(^{120}\) Other cannibals take the form of man-eating giants, elements of which are found in the form of the giant shepherd in the ‘Ajā‘ib al-Hind;\(^{121}\) in the third voyage of Sindbād the Sailor; and as Polyphemus or Cyclops in Homer’s *Odyssey*.

To conclude: Buzurg’s method of collecting and authenticating material, which mirrors that used by collectors of the *hadīth* literature, makes the work even more unique. Naming the sources (see Table 2) that provided him with the information further authenticates the work as, although the modern reader does not recognise the people named by Buzurg, his audience of the time would have, thus making it necessary for Buzurg to verify and correctly record the material lest someone from his audience should recognise the information as false.

In his work, he not only provides the reader with a catalogue of ‘ajā‘ib or wonders that have been witnessed by many travellers and seafarers throughout the Indian Ocean world; but also presents us with a window into the world of medieval Indian Ocean maritime culture, as well as into the cultures of the communities of the Indian Ocean littorals. The wonders described by Buzurg make excellent story-telling material; although today we are able to tentatively identify many of the creatures he speaks of (as discussed above); for those who experienced the terror of these huge whales and giant snakes first hand while stranded in the midst of the abyss, the fear at the time and the relief at survival would have have caused them to embellish their accounts to make these creatures even more fearsome. Prolonged repetition of stories also leaves them open to additions and embellishment; the basics of the tale however, remain the same, providing the reader with a great deal of ethnographical detail.

Some of the ethnographical and cultural information provided by Buzurg and his contemporaries, in particular that which gives details on the historical, geographical and socio-economic context in which we find Buzurg Ibn Shahriyār, has been discussed in

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\(^{119}\) Buzurg 1981: 74.
\(^{120}\) Ibid: 97-98.
\(^{121}\) Ibid: 106-111.
this chapter and in Chapter 3. Information regarding medieval Indian Ocean navigation, as well as an investigation into select medieval maritime material-cultural terminology will be discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.
Chapter 5: Life at Sea

The current chapter will present a discussion on the knowledge of winds and star-gazing our seafarers displayed in relation to navigation; although the focus is the Kitāb ‘Ajā’ib al-Hind, references to earlier classical texts such as the Qurʾān and the hadīth will be made, as well as to medieval Arabic works, such as that of al-Muqaddasī and the Silsilat al-tawārīkh (A Chain of Narratives) amongst others. Using their knowledge of the winds, and the rudimentary navigational aids the seafarers had, they were able to sail far and wide from East Africa to the Seas of China, but often their life was hanging by a thread. The chapter will also look at the seafarers, and how they dealt with maritime hazards and unpredictable winds and currents; much of their survival depended on religious beliefs, folklore and superstition. Although these subjects have been touched upon briefly in previous chapters, the focus here is upon those aspects or elements that have come about through the analysis of the terminology (in Chapter 6).

The nature of the sea is such that, despite its vastness, the danger it is known to present, and the element of the unknown, it creates, within its surrounding regions, a united socio-economic area or ‘regions of cultural unity’ quite unlike any connection made overland/ by land. The similarities in the way of life in these areas, as well as the contact created through trade and migration resulted in a diffusion of language and culture, an exchange of technological ideas and navigational techniques. Navigation in the Indian Ocean world for example, which is thought to include the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, is dependant on the ecological phenomena of the monsoon; how and when to exploit these winds is knowledge that would have been shared amongst Indian Ocean navigators of Arabian, Persian, Indian, Malaysian and Indonesian origin. Similarly, navigational techniques such as astronomical observations, and aides such as the sidereal rose (compass), bear (linguistic) evidence of being shared amongst various seafaring communities.

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122 The seventh / thirteenth century traveller, Ibn al-Mujāwir, author of Tārīkh al-Mustabṣir comments on the superiority of the navigational technique of the people of Qumr (Madagascar or Comoros), the inhabitants of which are thought to have been Indonesian settlers who would have brought with them the tradition and knowledge of monsoon sailing. As there was regular trade activity between the ports of the Arabian Sea and those on the East African coast, it is almost certain that the Arabian seafarers came into contact, and exchanged ideas with seafarers from the Malay Peninsula and the Indonesian Archipelago (Tolmacheva 1980: 191-2 & Lunde 2005: 12-19).
The advent of Islam in the first/seventh century, and the subsequent conquests further unified the Indian Ocean world, although by no means does this suggest that the seafaring community as a whole had accepted this new religion. Yet the conquering armies brought with them a new language, a new culture and new ideas, while simultaneously (and maybe unconsciously) absorbing the native language and culture. This fusion is evident in many aspects of life, none more so than in marine life: the focus of this study.

The *lingua franca* of the Indian Ocean will be discussed in the next chapter; although the discussion is limited to fifteen maritime terms, the investigation shows that the language used by Indian Ocean mariners in the fourth/tenth century was not limited to Arabic, but also included words of Semitic origin (i.e. Hebrew, Aramaic, Akkadian, Ugaritic, Sabean, Ethiopian), and Indo-Iranian (i.e. Sanskrit, Urdu, Hindi and Sindhi), highlighting the diverse nature of the maritime language. In addition to linguistic information, the selected terminology, and the four primary Medieval Arabic literary sources

as a whole, provide details of other aspects of maritime culture; this too, is of a diverse nature, and perhaps, an amalgamation/fusion of the various cultures that make up the Indian Ocean World.

**Religion, Superstition and Folklore**

Religion, superstition and folklore play an important part in the lives of many people from different cultural and religious backgrounds; ideals which form part of one’s faith may be regarded as folklore and superstition by another; some beliefs, on the other hand, may transcend cultural and religious barriers as a result of what is termed ‘cultural interpenetration’ or ‘cross-cultural contamination’. Mariners in particular, are considered to be a highly superstitious class of people; even today, their journeys are dominated by rituals designed to ward off bad luck and to encourage or ensure prosperity and safe return.

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124 The *Akhbār al-Ṣīn wa l-Hind* (News of China and India) (c.235/850), part of the work entitled *Silsilat al-tawārīkh* (A Chain of Narratives); al-Muqaddasī’s (d. 378/988-9) *Ahsan al-taḥqīq fī ma’rifat al-aqālīm* (The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions); and the “Seven Voyages of Sindbad the Sailor” from the anonymous and undated compilation, the *Alf layla wa-layla* (A Thousand and One Nights).

125 [http://m.examiner.com/exBaltimore/pm_63485/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=8qxocDOF](http://m.examiner.com/exBaltimore/pm_63485/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=8qxocDOF) (accessed 25-03-2011). Some modern day mariners’ rituals and superstitions include not putting a hat on the bunk; stepping on to the boat using the right foot; never starting a voyage on a Friday as Jesus was crucified on a Friday, rather Sunday is considered to be a better day (this belief is likely to be restricted to non-Muslim seafaring communities/ North American fishing communities as Friday is considered a blessed day by
In Classical and Medieval times, both before and after the rise of Islam, the sea was a relatively unknown entity, to be both utilised but mostly feared. It was believed to be situated at the very edge of the world, and was home to all manner of terrifying creatures: sea-monsters in the deep, cannibals on the islands they passed, giant birds, flying snakes and dragons filling the skies. Iblīs (Satan) himself is said to have placed his throne on the sea from where he sends forth his armies; while the Dajjāl (the Antichrist) is thought to be residing (awaiting release) on a remote island in the Mediterranean, the Arabian Sea or on an island further east. Furthermore, it was a symbol of power and strength and often, of God’s mercy / benevolence and His wrath, and is portrayed as such in Medieval Arabic literary works, the Qur’ān and the hadīth literature. The ambiguous nature of the sea is portrayed several times throughout the Qur’ān (xvii: 66):

رَبِّكَ الَّذِي يَرْجِي لَكُمُ الْفَلَكَ فِي الْبَحْرِ لِيَتْبَغَوْا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ إِنَّكُمْ رَحِيمًا

Your Lord is He that makes the ship go smoothly for you through the sea, in order that you may seek of His Bounty. For He is to you Most Merciful.

Muslims). Dolphins playing near the boat are considered to be a sign of good luck, while sharks following the boat are a sure sign for disaster. Women on board the ship were thought to bring bad luck; this notion is not mentioned in Buzurg’s text, however, women feature as passengers onboard a vessel in at least two of his tales: both of those vessels were overtaken by storms (Buzurg 1981: 80, 82). Offerings are also given to the sea (or Davy Jones in some cases), often a sip of the captain’s drink, or rice, discussed below. For more information on mariners superstitions see Jonathan Eyers 2011 *Don’t Shoot the Albatross: Nautical Myths and Superstitions.*

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126 See discussion of sea monsters in Chapter 4: The Sea Stories of Buzurg.
128 Muslim 1998, II: 537-539. The hadīth or story of Tamīm al-Dārī is narrated by Fāṭima bint Qays who reports that she heard it when attending the congregational prayer at the mosque. Tamīm al-Dārī, a Christian who had pledged allegiance to Islam, relates that he was sailing in a ship with thirty other men. They had been tossed about by the waves for around a month when they drew near an unknown island and dropped anchor; this island was the home of both the Jassāsa and the Dajjāl, whose arms and legs were shackled to prevent him from escaping from the monastery he resides in. According to popular Islamic belief, the Dajjāl is confined to this island until nearer the Day of Judgement when he will be released and will wreak havoc upon the countries, towns and villages he passes; his reign of destruction will last for forty nights (another hadīth suggests forty nights, months or years) until God sends Jesus to kill the Dajjāl and restore peace. The location of the Dajjāl’s island is somewhat uncertain as the Prophet Moḥammad is reported to have said:

آلا إنه في بحر الشام أو بحر اليمن. لا يُبْلِ من قبل المشرق

Behold he (the Antichrist) is in the Syrian Sea (Mediterranean) or the Yemen Sea (Arabian Sea). Nay, on the contrary, he is in the east… (Muslim 1998, II: 537-539).
129 Sūrat Banī Isrāʾīl xvii: 66; trans. Ali 2002: 196. The ‘bounty’ of the sea is described in another āya which states “It is He who has made the sea subject, that you may eat thereof flesh that is fresh and tender, and that you may extract therefrom ornaments to wear” – Sūra-t al-nahl xvi: 14 (Ali 2002: 182). The bounty also includes the ability to sail upon the sea (for trade and travel), and man’s ship building
This verse shows the more positive nature of the maritime world which, according to this and similar āyās, was created to be utilised by man. Other āyās however, reveal a more negative, destructive aspect of the sea in which it is used as a means of punishment:

أَمَّمِنْ أَنْ يُبيِّنَكُمْ فِيهِ تَارَةً أَخْرِىَ فِيّرْسِلُ عَلْيْكُمْ فَاصْفَهَا مِنَ الْرِّيحِ فَيُغَرَّقُكُمْ بِمَا كَفَّرتُمُ

Or do you feel secure that He will not send you back a second time to sea and send you against a heavy gale to drown you because of your ingratatitude...

This ambiguous nature, also highlighted in a tradition related by al-Muqaddasī regarding the creation of the sea,¹³¹ is frequently portrayed by Buzurg and by Sindbād the Sailor in their respective stories; often, in the beginning of a journey, the weather is fair, the wind is favourable, and the waves and the tides are aiding the journey, when suddenly the weather changes, and the sea becomes a semblance of Hell from which one has to seek refuge.¹³²

Skills which are said to have been passed down from Noah (who is believed to be the first man to be taught to build and travel by ship) to future generations.

¹³⁰ Sūrat Bānī Isrā’īl xvii: 69; trans. Ali 2002: 196. A tradition related by Ibn Dāwūd warns against travelling by sea, stating that only those travelling for the pilgrimage (travelling to complete the Ḥajj or Ḥajj) or for a military expedition (ghāzāt[an]) should travel by sea as beneath the sea there is fire, and beneath the fire there is sea / water (Ibn Kathīr [nd], V: 476).

¹³¹ Al-Muqaddasī 1906: 15-16; idem, 2001: 15 – the passage reads:

فَالَّذِي نَشَأَ الْبَحْرَ الْمُحْرَقَ، أَمَّأَنْ نُبِيِّنَكُمْ فِيهِ تَارَةً أَخْرِىَ فَسَأَلْتُكُمْ فِيهِ الْرِّيحَ فَيُغَرَّقُكُمْ بِمَا كَفَّرتُمُ

The tradition relates that when God created the Sea of al-Shām [Mediterranean Sea], he uttered this inspiration to it: “I have created thee and designed thee as a carrier for some of my servants, who seek my bounty, praising me, worshipping me, and glorifying me; so how wilt thou act towards them?” Said the sea: “My Lord, then I shall drown them.” Said the Lord: “Begone, for I curse thee, and will diminish thy worth and thy fish.” Then the Lord inspired into the sea of al-Īrāq (the Indian Ocean) the selfsame words, and it said: “My Lord, in that case I shall carry them on my back; when they praise Thee I praise Thee with them, and when they worship Thee I worship Thee with them, when they magnify Thee I magnify Thee with them.” Said the Lord: “Go, for I have blessed thee, and will increase thy bounty and thy fish.”

It is also interesting to note that although the Mediterranean Sea (Sea of al-Shām) is said to be cursed according to the tradition above, paradoxically it (baḥr al-rūm) has also been called blessed in another tradition - Ibn Kathīr [nd], IV: 476. When the oceans boil over with a swell (Sūrat takwīr lxxxi: 6; trans. Ali 2002: 424)). According to Muḥāwiya bin Saʿīd the ‘sea’ in the passage above refers to the blessed sea, or baḥr al-rūm (the Mediterranean). The tradition refers to a type of well or stove beneath the sea being set alight nearer the Day of Judgement, causing the sea to boil.

¹³² The Qur’ān, in its description of the end of the world (Day of Judgement), states: 

إِذَا الْبَحْرُ سَجَرَتْ... When the oceans boil over with a swell - Sūrat takwīr lxxxi: 6; trans. Ali 2002: 424; the āya has also been translated as “when the seas become a blazing fire”. According to a tradition found in the Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr Caliph ʿAlī once asked a Jewish man regarding the whereabouts of Hell, to which the man replied
The (religious) symbolism associated with the sea brings into focus the underlying moral aspect of the tales told by Buzurg and by Sindbād. Religion played a prominent part in the lives of the mariners and, as God was the creator and controller of the winds and the sea, piety and good character – especially while at sea – was a necessity. Of course, there were exceptions; al-Marzabān, son of Mardānshāh, was a notoriously dishonest sea captain who mistreated the merchants who travelled on board his ship, while Ismā‘īlawyah, a regularly used source of Buzurg, kidnapped the hospitable king of Sofāla on the Zanj coast (in Mozambique) and sold him in the slave market in Oman. In most cases however, piety was upheld, manifesting itself most clearly when the mariners found themselves victim of the elements.

The elements, like the sea, were allegorical, representative of both blessing and curse, and of the need for spiritual cleansing. The winds (عَرَق rīḥ) for example, were viewed as an indication of glad tidings, as they raise the clouds which in turn bring the rain, reviving the dry earth. Furthermore, a favourable wind drives the ship, aiding mankind in their journey across the open seas. Yet the ferocity and strength of the wind could destroy one’s home, land and crops, as well as ships sailing in the sea. Similarly, the rain (مَطر māṭar) was considered to be a blessing, a form of sustenance for the crops / harvest; however, as the difference in the verb forms (أَمْثَر amṭara and مَṭَرَار maṭara) indicates, the rain also symbolises God’s wrath. According to Islamic and Biblical traditions, rain contributed heavily to the Flood; even today, heavy rainfall can destroy a harvest and one’s home, as well as cause rivers to burst their banks and flood the surrounding areas.

The devastation caused by the natural elements was familiar to the mariners, who recognised that being caught by a storm at sea could ultimately lead to their demise. In such situations, the advice given by the captain of the ship, in this case Captain c‘Allāma, was to “purify your souls, say your prayers, repent of your past sins, and ask [insert citation].”

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“the sea”; ḌAll told those present that he believed the man to be truthful (Ibn Kathīr [nd], IV: 476.) There is also said to be fire (of Hell) beneath the sea (see above notes).

133 Buzurg 1981: 55.
135 The difference in form can (but not always) signify different types of rain where أَمْثَر amṭara is used for a rain sent upon people as a form of punishment, while مَṭَارْا maṭara is used for a blessed rain. See Chapter 5 for more details.
136 Genesis 7: 4 – For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth. A similar belief is found in Greek mythology – Guerber 1927: 23.
pardon of God.”

There were of course, some preventative measures which mariners took in order to placate the sea and the elements, and any supernatural forces that were at work. Bad weather such as unfavourable winds and storms were often attributed to the jinn (genie), many of whom inhabited the desert, the mountains and the bottom of the ocean (particularly near the Island of Socotra) causing mischief to unfortunate travellers crossing their path. It was believed that at times, God gave free reign to / unleashed the jinn upon the sea; al-Hamadânî (fl. end of 3/9th century) writes:

إذا طلعت النّّرَّةِ ارتحّ البحر واحتللت الريح، وسلّط الله الجنّ على المياه...

Upon the rising of thurayyâ (Pleiades) the sea heaves/ boils and contrary winds blow, and God gives the jinn power/ mastery over the seas.

Sailors and merchants often gathered food particularly rice to throw overboard as an offering to the sea in order to appease these supernatural beings and to prevent them from causing harm to the ship and her crew. From the tale regarding the Island of Women, we learn that offerings were also given to the guardian angels on board the ship in exchange for their protection; in this case the offering was a (daily) plate of buttered rice. Other rituals carried out to ward off evil or danger was the cutting of the wind with swords, possibly symbolic of an attempt to diminish the spiritual power that the wind was often associated with. Interestingly, the zawbî’a, mentioned in the Silsilat, is also attributed to the supernatural; translated as whirlwind and whirlpool in the text, it (زَوْبِیّ a and also اَمَّ زوْبیّ abû zawbî’a) is defined by Lane as a whirlwind of dust or sand, or a wind that raises the dust/ sand towards the sky as though it were a pillar, some measuring (as measured in Upper Egypt by Lane using a sextant) between five hundred and seven hundred and fifty feet in height. Adapted to the maritime context with its translation of whirlpool, Lane writes

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138 A plural form of the word rîh, is also used in a tradition as a metaphor to define the jinn (genie), as they are often supposed to be invisible like the wind - Lane 1867, III: 1181.
139 Agius 2008: 240. The chief of the jinn (Iblîs) is said to have placed his throne on the sea from where he sends forth his armies (Ahmad b. Ḥanbal citing Jâbir, who heard it from the Prophet Muhammad – www.inter-islam.org/faith/jinn2.html accessed 15-02-2011).
141 Buzurg 1981: 16.
142 Agius 2008: 240.
143 Silsilat 1811: 12; idem, 1995: 6.
144 Lane 1968, III: 1212.
that inside the الزبيعة zawbi’a is “a devil, insolent and audacious in pride and rebellion”.145

There are also a multitude of prayers prescribed to ward off evil, grief, anxiety and misfortune while sailing,146 as well as supplications for beneficial winds and rains. Ibn Mājid warns the reader not to neglect the Ḥizb al-bahr (The Litany of the Sea) as it provides the reader with the “protection afforded by the strong fortress”;147 the prayer is not mentioned by Buzurg, however he does, in one tale, inform the reader that the passengers of a certain ship “recited the Qur’ān, prayed and called upon God”148 whilst trying to ride out a storm.

The recitation of the Qur’ān and Islamic prayers by those in distress by no means indicates that there were only followers of the Islamic faith on board the ships. As mentioned earlier, the Indian Ocean world was an amalgamation of beliefs, languages and cultures which boasted a unity that was, perhaps, not always reflected on land. The harmony and tolerance of this era is best reflected in Buzurg’s description of the scene on board a stricken vessel, in which

توادعوا وصلّى كلّ منهم إلى جهة على قدر معبدوه لأنهم كانوا شيخًا من أهل الصين والهند والعجم والجزائر واستسلموا للموت

the passengers said farewell to one another, and each of them prayed according to his religion, for there were men from China, India, Persia and the islands. Then they surrendered themselves to death.149

The Crew

In order to survive these dangerous seas, one needed a capable and reliable crew. At the top of the hierarchal system was the nākhudā (or nākhūda). Derived from the Persian

145 Ibid. The الزبيعة zawbi’a is primarily defined as the name of a certain devil; a devil which is insolent and audacious in pride and rebellion; a certain chief of the jinn said to be one of those mentioned in the Qur’ān: Behold, We turned towards you a company of Jinns (quietly) listening to the Qur’ān. When they stood in the presence thereof, they said, “Listen in silence!” When the (reading) was finished, they returned to their people, to warn (them of their sins) - Sūrat Abqāf xlvi: 29; trans. Ali 2002: 356.
146 Tibbetts 1981: 194.
147 Ibid. The prayer is attributed to a Sūfī (Islamic mystic) Abū l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (d. 656/1258) – some lines of this litany are found in Ibn Baṭṭūta’s Rihla 1997: 26-27.
nau or nāw (boat/ship) khoda\textsuperscript{150} and khudā (master), the term literally means shipmaster, ship-owner. The term was a common one, and is in fact, still used by the coastal communities of the Gulf and Oman; its meaning however, varies. Tibbetts defines the nākhudā as the owner of the ship, the one who fixes the course of the ship contracting a captain to follow this course.\textsuperscript{151} He was the general supervisor in charge of the ship and trade, and was responsible for the safe delivery of the goods and passengers;\textsuperscript{152} in the event of shipwreck or accident, the nākhudā was required to contribute towards covering the losses.\textsuperscript{153} The term is also used to denote captain and pilot although, for the most part, Buzurg uses the term to mean ship-owner and shipmaster. The nākhudās were, until fairly recent times, a privileged class into which one was born, the children of nākhudās sailed with their fathers from a very young age; and while the nākhudā could also be a merchant, a merchant’s son could never become a nākhudā.\textsuperscript{154}

After the nākhudā (or șāhib al-markab\textsuperscript{155}) came the rubbān, the pilot (and occasionally, captain). The term was used to denote both the coastal and ocean-going navigator (also called mu'allim, but this term is not used by Buzurg), the one who guides the ship to her destination, and has knowledge of the coastline, the currents, the winds and the constellations. The rubbān mentioned in Buzurg’s ʿAjāʿīb, are mainly ocean-going navigators, sailing to the Land of Gold (Malaysia and Indonesia), China, India and the Zanj (East Africa), using their experience and knowledge to complete the journey, albeit not always successfully. The use of the constellation to plot a route was common: Abū Zahr al-Barkhatī (a nākhudā) relates a tale regarding his grandfather in which the rubbān spent the night under the stars, studying them and memorising the position of the constellation and the general lay of the land, so that he was able to come and go to the Whale Islands (or Fish Islands) as he pleased.\textsuperscript{156} A man from Baṣra who was shipwrecked near Zabaj (Java), along with his companions, used the stars to guide them in their escape from cannibals that were holding them captive.\textsuperscript{157} For those sailing closer to the shore, Muḥammad b. Bābishād advises navigators who want to know

\textsuperscript{150} Buzurg 1981: xvii.
\textsuperscript{151} Tibbetts 1971: 58, 61.
\textsuperscript{152} Agius 2008: 178.
\textsuperscript{153} Idem, 2005 (b): 128.
\textsuperscript{154} Ibid: 129.
\textsuperscript{155} Alī layla wa layla (n.d.), III: 280; Book of the Thousand Nights 1925, VI: 6. I was unable to find the term nākhudā in the Sindbād stories.
\textsuperscript{156} Buzurg 1966: 32.
\textsuperscript{157} Idem, 1981: 110.
whether they are near land or a mountain to look out after the afternoon prayer when the sun is going down, for at that time they will see their location more distinctly.\footnote{Ibid: 54.}

The rubbān would also use the weather to his advantage, allowing the wind to carry them in the direction they were heading in. The (unnamed) Spaniard, mentioned earlier in relation to the Island of Women, waited until the wind changed and began blowing in the direction of India before attempting to escape from the island in the ship’s boat.\footnote{Ibid: 17.} His manipulation of the ecosystem is further proof that Indian Ocean navigators had been using the monsoons since at least the first century AD.

Buzurg also talks of the rubbān, in particular, Captain ʿAllāma and Captain ʿAbraha, as being able to calculate, and in one case, sense (or predict) the arrival of bad weather, and in doing so, saving the crew and passengers from what could have potentially been, a tragic situation. In the case of Captain ʿAbraha, his lightening of the load of the vessel (including throwing merchandise overboard, cutting down the mast and cutting the anchor cables) so that they were able to withstand the storm and not run aground on the reefs, was a result of his calculation of the tidal patterns in the South China Sea.\footnote{Ibid: 49-52.} Captain ʿAllāma on the other hand, looked out to sea while crossing from India to China and was seized with terror; he refused to remain on board the vessel unless everything was thrown overboard and all that remained was men, water and provisions. There was no apparent reason for this, the merchants initially questioned the order, pointing out that the sea was calm, there was a gentle wind and “we are sailing peaceably under the protection of the Master of the Universe.”\footnote{Ibid: 27.} Buzurg gives no indication of what Captain ʿAllāma had seen either; the lightening of the vessel was attributed to God’s inspiration. In any case, Captain ʿAllāma’s actions did indeed save those on board, as a deadly storm broke from which few escaped shipwreck.

In addition to these methods, Sindbād speaks of a certain sea-chest that he becomes privy to in his final voyage. As his vessel sails into unchartered waters and they fall foul of a tempest, the captain (who in the Sindbād stories is referred to as rayyis) pulls out from the chest a bag of blue cotton, from which he extracts a powder, like ashes. This he set in a saucer wetted with a little water and, after waiting a short time, smelt and tasted...
it. He then takes a booklet out of the chest, reads awhile and fearfully informs the passengers, "know, O ye passengers, that in this book is a marvellous matter, denoting that whoso cometh hither shall surely die, without hope of escape…”\textsuperscript{162} It seems the contents of the chest revealed the ship’s location, or at least information regarding their current location. While the chest, with its powder and booklet, is not mentioned by Buzurg or in the \textit{Silsilat}, it is possible that the significance of the chest has been dramatised by Sindbād, and is simply used for storage. The booklet, on the other hand, could possibly have been some form of navigational treatise.

Whatever the methods, the \textit{rubbān} were bound by an oath to carry out their duty to the best of their ability. Buzurg mentions this code of honour in his ‘\textit{Ajā’ib}, where the \textit{rubbān} informs the crew:

\begin{quote}
نحن معشر الرئابى علىنا العهود والمواليد ان لا تعرض سفينة الى العطب وهي باقية
لم يجر عليها قدر ونحن معشر رئابية السفن لا نطالعها ألا وأجئنا وااعمارنا معنا فيها
فتعيش بسلامتها ونموت بعطتها
\end{quote}

All of us captains are bound by oaths. We are sworn not to expose a ship to loss when it is still sound and its hour has not yet come. All us captains, when we board a ship, stake our lives and destiny on it. If the ship is saved, we remain alive. If it is lost, we die with it.\textsuperscript{163}

This oath is taken very seriously; the \textit{mu’allim} is responsible for the ship, and if an accident occurs during a voyage, then the \textit{mu’allim} should distribute alms to the poor (as repentance). If an accident or shipwreck occurs due to the \textit{mu’allim}’s negligence, then “he ought to content himself with death, unless God show salvation to his servant.”\textsuperscript{164}

\textsuperscript{162}Alf layla wa layla (n.d.), IV: 12; \textit{Book of the Thousand Nights} 1925, VI: 69. Sindbād describes the ritual and the text as follows:

(he) pulled out a bag of blue cotton, from which he took a powder like ashes. This he set in a saucer wetted with a little water and, after waiting a short time, smelt and tasted it; and then he took out of a chest a booklet, wherein he read awhile and said weeping, "know, O ye passengers, that in this book is a marvellous matter, denoting that whose cometh hither shall surely die, without hope of escape.”

\textsuperscript{163}Buzurg 1966: 22; idem, 1981: 14.

\textsuperscript{164}Tibbetts 1971: 62.
Other members of the crew included the *baḥrīyya*\textsuperscript{165} and the *bānānīyya*\textsuperscript{166} (sailors). These were usually hand picked by the captain and pilot, who looked for experience, a willingness to serve and ability to follow instruction.\textsuperscript{167} This, for the navigator, was a crucial point; the *rubbān* needed to be able to trust his crew and all on board to obey his orders, otherwise the safety of the ship was not assured. In the tale regarding the Island of Women, the passengers and crew of a vessel caught in a storm were making too much noise for the captain to be heard above the crashing of waves and the howling of the wind. As a result, when the captain gave orders to adjust the cables, they were not heard; “thus, the ship was on the point of foundering, because of the crew’s negligence and the state of the rigging, rather than because of the sea or the wind.”\textsuperscript{168}

**Knowledge of the Winds and Stars**

Not only did the elements play an important part in the belief system of the medieval Indian Ocean mariner, thus affecting his conduct on board the ship; they were also an important factor to consider in the art of navigation itself, for, to be able to navigate deep sea voyages successfully, the navigator needed to be able to manipulate the elements to his advantage. Knowledge of the winds (ریاح *riyāḥ*) and weather systems, the currents, the maritime calendar\textsuperscript{169} and astronomy, was essential for the navigator as the weather has influenced deep sea voyages for centuries. The quarter of horizon and sky from which the wind blows\textsuperscript{170}, the rising and setting of certain stars, and the pattern and character of the winds are all signs of certain seasonal and monsoonal winds, expertise navigators and sailors would have gained through years at sea.

The most prevalent weather system in the Indian Ocean world is the monsoon season, a phenomenon which governs life on the Indian subcontinent and has dictated long distance deep sea voyages in the Indian Ocean since the pre-Islamic times. Derived

\textsuperscript{165} Buzurg 1966: 5, 16.
\textsuperscript{166} Ibid: 10, 11, 16, 52.
\textsuperscript{167} Agius 2005 (b): 130.
\textsuperscript{168} Buzurg 1981: 14.
\textsuperscript{169} A three hundred and sixty five day solar calendar, the new year coinciding with the Persian *nayrūz/nawrūz* – the old Zoroastrian solar calendar established by the Sāsānid monarch Yazdagird III (r. AH? /632-651) - Agius 2008: 188; Tibbetts 1993, VII: 52 (E of I); Tibbetts 1981: 361.
\textsuperscript{170} The four cardinal directions which define the winds, and the system of recognising them, are the *shāmāl* “north” wind, recognised by its dividing of the clouds; *janāb* “south” draws rain from the clouds; *sābā* “east” collects the clouds together; and *dābūr* “west” scatters the clouds. Agius 2005: 156 & 187 (citation – Tibbetts 1981: 112).
from Arabic مَوْسِمِ (mawsim i.e. season), the term monsoon, thought to have originally referred to the wind reversals in the Arabian Sea, is associated with the annual weather cycles that occur in the Indian Ocean (see Map 4): the seasonal wind “generated by the large land mass to the north of the [Indian] ocean, which heats up in summer and cools down in winter faster than the sea” thus dividing the year into wet and dry seasons (in the summer and winter respectively). The wet/summer season begins in May with the south-west monsoon blowing steadily until September, during which time the moisture from the sea brings an abundance of rain to the Indian subcontinent, the effects of the wind blowing parallel to the Arabian coastline generates a “strong seasonal upwelling”, and shipping is carried out in the eastern direction. After a brief period of little to no wind, the north-east monsoon season begins in October and lasts until April, a period in which the winds are lighter, the weather is generally fine, the sea is calmer with a cessation of upwelling, and voyages are undertaken in a westerly direction.

171 Agius 2005(b): 193 – the origins of the term may go back to pre-Islamic times where the mawsim referred to the trade fair which coincided with the monsoonal winds.
174 Ibid. “Upwelling” refers to the “process in which water from deep down is brought up to the surface along divergent fronts [a surface feature of the sea caused by relatively sharp changes in either temperature or salinity (p. 228)] in the open sea, in the lee [lee shore – a coastline on to which the wind blows directly (p. 313)] of headlands along coasts, and as a result of the interaction between Coriolis force [see below] and the effects of alongshore winds. Where the upwelled water comes from below the thermocline, the concentrations of the nutrients needed to stimulate the growth of the marine plant phytoplankton are enhanced, so rich communities of plankton and fish develop.” The regions where upwelling occurs regularly, such as West Africa and in the north-west Arabian Sea, are major centres for commercial fisheries (Ibid: 607). [Coriolis Force: the name given to the inertial forces acting on a body moving across the surface of a rotating sphere (p. 138)- [in the case of the monsoonal winds, south-easterly winds in the southern hemisphere will be deflected once they have passed the equator into the northern hemisphere to become south-westerly winds].
175 Higher temperatures at the beginning and the end of the monsoon (April-June and October-November) however, bring with them the danger of cyclones/hurricanes/typhoons, particularly over the Bay of Bengal (or Sea of Harkand, see Map 1) http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/~dib2/asia/monsoon.html (accessed 13-06-2011).
The regularity of these winds made for easier shipping, not in terms of navigation itself, but rather, because the monsoons provided the Indian Ocean world with a rhythm and constancy not found in any other aquatic region. An understanding of (the pattern of) this weather system allowed navigators (and port cities) to prepare for the different seasons: “the season for sailing, the season when the trading fleet returned and the closed period.” Interestingly, these seasons, and the monsoonal winds that bring about these seasons are only mentioned in passing in *Kitāb ʿAjāʿib al-Hind* and contemporary texts; in fact, the term “monsoon” does not appear in these texts at all. The ‘closed period’ for example, is not mentioned specifically; however it is alluded to in the tale regarding a man from Cadiz, Spain who was stranded on the Island of Tibbetts 1981: 361. The ‘port’ seasons were controlled by the seasonal monsoonal winds: the *riḥ al-kūs* (south-west winds) which left the ports of South West India and Southern Arabia closed; the *dāmānī / dīmānī*, when the ports of South West India and Southern Arabia were open; and the north-east *riḥ azyāb*, a favourable wind throughout which, the ports remained open. Agius 2005(b): 193-197 & http://nabataea.net/sailing.html (accessed 15-06-2011).

The monsoonal rains are referred to by Abū Zayd al-Ḥasan b. Yazīd of Sīrāf (fl. 4th/10th century) as *jasara* (a term used by the inhabitants of the Indies), heavy rains which fall incessantly, day and night, for three months. He reflects that these rains are “the life of the Indians”, if they were to fail then the harvest (rice) would fail, and the Indians would be left in poverty. Silsīlat al-tawārīkh 1995: 86.
Women, or the House of the Sun. The narrator recounts that having moored there in the wake of a terrible storm brought about by the appearance of Canopus (i.e. سهل suhayl, see below), the Spaniard was forced to wait on the island until “eventually the wind changed and began to blow in the direction of the land of India, whence the ship had set out.”178 The Spaniard had sailed before, and was presumably aware that (in the Indian Ocean) the winds occur with great regularity, blowing in one direction for around six months, and in the opposite direction for the next six months. Thus, states Tibbetts, “one can rely on a favourable wind at the same time every year to take one from Arabia to India or from Coromandel to Sumatra knowing for sure that in six months time the wind will change and blow you home.”179 Once the wind changed, the Spaniard set sail and within ten days he had reached the port he had departed from. 180

In addition to the requisite knowledge of the (monsoon) seasons, it was also essential for the navigators to be able to recognise the signs of impending changes in the weather; to identify the type of wind that was blowing for instance, its causes and effects, and to be able to adjust his navigational technique accordingly. The strength of the wind and the direction it was blowing in would have, for example, determined the type of sail used,181 the length of time it would take to reach the intended destination, and the likelihood of whether or not the ship would reach its destination.

Signs of impending bad weather are occasionally given in the Kitāb ʿAjāʾib al-Hind and contemporary texts; Ibn Faqīh al-Hamadānī (fl. end of 3/9th century) for example, gives an interesting description of the term khibb/khabb (gale,182 squall,183 and the agitation and commotion of the sea184) in his Kitāb al-buldān (The Book of Countries). He states that in the Sea of Ṣanjī (or the South China Sea), when the gale begins to blow stronger and the waves become increasingly violent, creatures or men measuring four or five hands high and resembling the children of the Zanj (East Africa) or Ḥabashī (Abyssinian) children, appear out of the sea and climb on board the vessel where they spend the night. These creatures do not pose any threat to those on board the ship, nor

180 For further information regarding the (seasonal) winds, the theory of winds and typhoons, and the maritime calendar, see Agius 2005(b): 191-201 & Tibbetts 1981: 360-387.
181 Agius 2005(b): 186.
183 Ibid: 29.
184 أصلىله الخبب when the waves surge and clash, and the winds whirl/blow, and ships head for shore or cast anchor - Lane 1865, II: 691-2; Ibn Manẓūr 2003, I: 402-404; al-Jawhari 2005: 280. Lane places a fatḥa on the kh so the term reads khabb whereas Ibn Manẓūr and al-Jawhari place a kasra. ٌأصلىله الخبب إذا خطب بهم البحر.
do they cause them any harm; once the night is over, they return to the sea from whence they appeared. Their appearance does however, herald the arrival of the wind (ريح rīḥ) identified as khībb, the worst of all winds, allowing the seafarers to prepare for the impending spell of bad weather.

Another indication of unfavourable weather appears in the form of a white cloud, described in the Silsilat al-tawārīkh (A Chain of Narratives):

سحاب أبيض يطل المراكب فيشرح منه لسان طويل رقيق حتى يصلق ذاك اللسان بما البحار فيغليه ما البحار مثل الزيوة فإذا ادركت الزيوة المركب ابتلعته ثم يرتفع ذلك السحاب فيمطر منظرًا فيه قذى البحر...

A white cloud, which at once spreads over a ship, and lets down a long thin tongue, or spout, quite to the surface of the water, which it disturbs just after the manner of a whirl-wind; and if a vessel happen to be in the way of this whirlpool, she is immediately swallowed up thereby: but at length this cloud mounts again, and discharges itself a prodigious rain.

This white cloud seems to be a sign of the cyclones/typhoons that appear in the Sea of Harkand (Bay of Bengal, see Map 1), caused by the higher temperatures at the beginning and the end of the monsoon seasons (April-June and October-November).

In other cases, signs of the approach of severe weather are not visible to the inexperienced eye; Moḥammad b. Bābīshād relates a tale regarding a certain Captain Ḥaqqāma, who was sailing from India to China when suddenly, something out at sea caught his attention. Overcome with terror, he ordered the merchants to throw all they possessed overboard, leaving only provisions and water; the merchants however questioned the order as “there is a gentle wind; the sea is calm, and we are sailing peaceably under the protection of the Master of the Universe.” Only after Captain

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185 Al-Hamadānī 1996: 68. A similar description is found in al- Masʿūdī’s (d. 345/956-7) Murūj al-dhahab wa maʿādīn al-jawāhir (Golden Meadows and Mines of Precious Stones) - Extract taken from Silsilat al-tawārīkh 1845: 196.
186 Silsilat al-tawārīkh 1845: 11-12; idem, 1995: 5-6.
187 Lit. most erudite, very learned. For discussion regarding Captain Ḥaqqāma (and his name), see Chapter 4.
188 Buzurg 1981: 27.
Allāma and his crew threatened to abandon ship did the merchants obey his order. Neither Moḥammad b. Bābīshād nor Buzurg describe what it was that Allāma had seen as he does not elaborate either, he simply states “If only you knew what will happen to you tonight! Believe me, purify your souls, say your prayers, repent your past sins, and ask pardon of God.” 189 The rest of the day was spent in worship and repentance, and when night fell:

God opened the doors of heaven, and gave room to a black wind that filled all the space between heaven and earth, and raised the waves of the sea right up to the clouds, and let them fall again on the earth. 190

Captain Allāma’s insight (or “God’s inspiration”191) and the lighter load of the vessel had saved them from certain destruction, when very few other ships in the region escaped shipwreck. This insight or knowledge however, is not privy to all; in the case of the three shipwrecks that occurred between Sirāf and Shaymūr in 306/918, despite the storm that had blown the vessel off course and the insistence of the officers and sailors on board, the captain and shipmaster Aḥmad refused to acknowledge the danger or jettison the cargo until it was too late, by which time the ship was on the point of foundering. Aḥmad’s incorrect interpretation of (or inability/refusal to recognize) the warning signs ultimately led him and many others on board the ship, to their doom.

Similarly, certain stars are believed to be the harbingers of adverse weather conditions, among them the banāt al-naʾsh (lit. daughters of the bier (naʾsh) - alternatively known as the Eta Ursae Majoris),thurayyā (Pleiades), and suhayl (Canopus). These stars in particular, are believed to determine the direction of the wind; according to Ibn al-Aʿrābī, the west wind blows between the rising point of Canopus and the rising point ofthurayyā and that of banāt al-naʾsh; the east wind from the rising point ofthurayyā and the north wind from the rising point of the banāt al-naʾsh to the setting point of Altair (Arabic al-Ṭāʾir)- the brightest star in the constellation of

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191 Ibid.
Aquila\textsuperscript{192}); and the south wind from the setting of Altair to the rising point of Canopus.\textsuperscript{193}

The \textit{banāt al-naʾsh} (or \textit{banī naʾsh}\textsuperscript{194}) is the name of the three stars found in the tail of the constellation \textit{naʾsh} (lit. bier) or Ursa Major (the Great Bear). The name of this cluster of stars is closely linked to those of the winds that blow in the Gulf and the Arabian Sea during the winter months (\textit{Shimāl}); a north-easterly wind known as \textit{naʾshī}, and a fierce north-westerly wind (\textit{banāt al-naʾsh}) that blows during the “days of Banāt” (December or January) making it difficult for ships sailing in the Arabian Sea to reach their destination.\textsuperscript{195}

The \textsuperscript{2} \textit{thurayyā} (Pleiades, the Seven Sisters,\textsuperscript{196} or M45) is one of the best known and brightest star-clusters in the heavens containing over three thousand stars,\textsuperscript{197} located in the constellation of Taurus. Ibn Mājid writes that the \textit{thurayyā} is a lucky (lunar) mansion, particularly as “its setting in the dawn is a sign of wealth to the Arabs”;\textsuperscript{198} a sign of wealth and of the onset of colder/cooler weather.\textsuperscript{199} The rising of the Pleiades at dawn on the other hand, is accompanied by the hot season, bringing with it hot, destructive winds called \textit{bāriḥ at-thurayyā} (Pleiades)\textsuperscript{200} and disrupting sea trade and travel. Al-Hamadānī warns against traversing by sea after the rising of Pleiades, stating:

\begin{quote}
إذا طلعت الثُرَيِّيَة ارتجَ البحر واختلت الرياح
\end{quote}

Upon the rising of \textit{thurayyā} (Pleiades) the sea heaves/ boils and contrary winds blow

\textsuperscript{192} http://www.solstation.com/stars/altair.htm (accessed 11-06-2011). The name is thought to have been derived from the Arabic for \textit{nasm al-dafar} 'the flying eagle'.

\textsuperscript{193} Forcada 1995, VIII: 526.

\textsuperscript{194} Tibbetts 1981: 133.

\textsuperscript{195} Tibbetts 2005(b): 192-193. The \textit{Silsilat al-tawārīkh} (1845: 12) also discusses the \textit{banāt al-naʾsh} in the context of wind (\textit{rīḥ}).

\textsuperscript{196} The Seven Sisters is a reference to Greek mythology in which the Pleiades are the seven daughters of Atlas and Pleione, who were elevated to the sky after they died of grief, mourning the death of their sisters (the Hyades) who had died mourning their brother, Hyas. Another account has them placed in the sky by Zeus to protect them from the advances of Orion (who was also elevated to the stars). Tripp 1970: 483.

\textsuperscript{197} It is also one of the closest clusters, being approximately four hundred light years away and thirteen light years across. http://apod.nasa.gov/apod/ap060109.html (accessed 30-05-2011).

\textsuperscript{198} Tibbetts 1981: 82.

\textsuperscript{199} Ibid: 84.

\textsuperscript{200} Agius 2005(b): 192. These winds blow in April and May, and bring sailing to a standstill as many believe that “Pleiades are hungering to destroy poor sailors at this season” (Ibid).

\textsuperscript{201} Al-Hamadānī 1996: 65 – the passage further warns that upon the rising of this constellation, God unleashes the \textit{jinn} upon the seas (discussed earlier).
According to the Jewish tradition the constellation Pleiades was the cause of the (Noah’s) Flood when, as punishment for mankind’s misdeeds, God took two stars away from this constellation and changed the order of its rising and setting,\(^\text{202}\) causing water to gush from the space in the heavens from where the stars were removed, and the springs on the earth to overflow. In other cultures, Pleiades heralds the arrival of rain,\(^\text{203}\) and also signifies the advent of winter (or stars signalling the approach of winter).

Another star signalling the approach of poor weather conditions is the سهيل suhayl (Canopus). Abū l-Zahr al-Barkhatī, the narrator of the tale regarding the Island of Women\(^\text{204}\) and an oft used source of Buzurg Ibn Shahriyār, paints a bleak picture of the consequences of sailing towards this star:

من اضطرّ في ذلك البحر إلى أن يصير سهيل على قمة رأسه فقد دخل بحرا لا رجعة
له منه وتنغّس في لجّة هابطة إلى الجنوب مصوّبة إلى تلك الجهة فكلما مرّت المركب
علاما وراءها من جهتنا وهبط ما بين يديها من تلك الجهة فلا تستطيع الرجوع بريح
عاصف ولا غيره وهو في نجح البحار المحيطة

Now a man who has been forced to steer in this sea until he has seen Canopus at its zenith must abandon all hope of return. He enters a vast stretch of waters [lujja - see Chapter 6] that runs towards the south. As the ship goes forward, so the waves rise behind it, and on the other side the waves fall away. So, whatever the wind is, strong or gentle, return is cut off, for the current draws him into the ocean that surrounds the earth.\(^\text{205}\)

سُهِیْل (Canopus), from the Arabic root سُهِیْل √س-ه-l,\(^\text{206}\) is the brightest star in the southern constellation of Carina and the second brightest star in the heavens (after Sirius).\(^\text{207}\) It


\(^{204}\) [http://creation.mobi/constellations-a-legacy-of-babel](http://creation.mobi/constellations-a-legacy-of-babel) (accessed 01-06-2011) - this particular belief is part of the Australian Aborigine culture.

\(^{205}\) Buzurg 1981: 13-18. The Island of Women is not identified however possible locations include the Parcel Islands, the Spratly Islands or the Philippines.


\(^{207}\) It seems ironic that a star that induces so much terror in the hearts of those who perceive it on the horizon should be derived from an Arabic root which covers a semantic field related to ideas of ease, convenience, smoothness and evenness.
was originally the Alpha star of the ancient constellation Argo (Jason’s ship); in modern times the huge Argo was broken into three parts: Carina (the Keel); Puppis (the stern); and Vela (the sails). Canopus fell into Carina, and is therefore now Alpha Carinae. Described as a “brilliant white star”, it appears on the northern horizon of the Gulf in September, signalling the end of summer and the beginning of the winter months when the fierce winds blow without warning from the north-west direction. For those sailing in the Malay Seas toward the Island of Women, Canopus brought with it thick, impenetrable fog ضباب dabāb; violent wind ريح عاصفة rih āsifa; and “a sea that boiled”. In the context of the above passage, it appears that sailing under Canopus meant entering uncharted (un-navigable) waters, from where returning home was almost impossible. Yet according to Ibn Mājid (d. after 906/1500), the suhayl was used as a (navigational) guide and for taking measurements; he considered the use of this star to be the best method of measuring latitudes, and claimed that “another like this will never be seen throughout all eternity.” Ibn Mājid, however, belongs to a much later period than Buzurg; it is possible that the fourth/tenth-century navigators were not as familiar with navigation in the southernmost part of the Indian Ocean, or with using the constellation of the southern hemisphere, and that this knowledge and skill was acquired later, either through continuous sailing in this region, or through (cross-cultural) contact with seafaring nations that were familiar with this part of the sea (such as the mariners of the Indonesian Archipelago and the Malay Peninsula). Whatever the reasons, and whatever the effects of Canopus, the star itself is significant in that it is the only one named by Buzurg Ibn Shahriyar in his text; a surprising dearth, considering the importance of stars for the navigator.

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208 An article posted on www.irbs.com discusses the Suhail [Suhayl] and Canopus as two separate stars as opposed to being the same star. www.irbs.com../chapt15.pdf (accessed 01-06-2011).
209 www.astro.uiuc.edu/~kaler/sow/canopus.html (accessed 13-11-2008). The star is also known as Menelaus’ (a king of Sparta) helmsman; α Carinae; and as Agastya in the Hindu culture, named after the sage (Agastya) who saw the star for the first time in ancient times (4000 – 5000 BC) (Abhyankar 2005: 2176).
211 Agius 2005(b): 192. Lane also writes that at the time of its (i.e. Canopus) rising, the fruits ripen, and the qaṣṣ (i.e. the greatest heat) ends - Lane 1872, IV: 1454. For further information regarding suhayl see Tibbetts 1981: 128-134.
214 Other texts also (infrequently) mention various stars; al-Hamadānī for example, talks of the dangers of sailing after the rising of the qurayyā (Pleiades) - al-Hamadānī 1996: 65 (see also above). Al-Muqaddasī 2001: 363 talks of the Pleiades in the context of something completely unrelated to navigation or even stars and their affects; and of Canopus and the bandāt al-na‘sh in the context of the latitude of the earth,
Celestial navigation (also astronomical navigation or astronavigation), one of the oldest human arts, refers to the use of the heavenly bodies (the stars, the planets, the sun, and the moon) to navigate the seas (and the deserts). For centuries, navigators (on land and sea) have been using the sun and the stars to determine their position and navigate their way across the oceans (and deserts); indeed, in the eighth-century BCE epic *The Odyssey*, Homer (fl. eighth century BCE) writes of Odysseus using the stars to plot his course across the seas in an attempt to reach Phaeacia, the land of the Phaeacians (possibly Corfu).215 An art form still practised in modern times, knowledge of the constellations and how to use them for orientation was essential for the long distance traveller, both on land and by sea. The practice is recognised by the Qur’ān, and references to astronomical navigation and the purpose of (the creation of) the heavenly bodies are found throughout:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْنَّجُومَ لِتَهْيَذُوا بِهَا فِي ظَلْمَتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحرِ ۖ فَعَلَّمَنَا الْآيَتِ الَّتِى نَفْرَحُونَ

It is He who makes the stars (as beacons) for you, that you may guide yourselves, with their help, through the dark spaces of land and sea. We detail Our signs for people who know.217

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214 Tripp 1970: 469.
215 Homer 2001: 88. The poem reads:
and now the master mariner [Odysseus] steered his craft,
sleep never closing his eyes, forever scanning,
the stars, the Pleiades and the Plowman late to set
and the Great Bear that mankind calls the Wagon:
she wheels on her axis always fixed, watching the Hunter,
and she alone is denied a plunge in the Oceans baths.
Hers were the stars the lustrous goddess [Calypso] told him
to keep hard to port as he cut across the sea.
216 The vulnerability of the modern GPS (Global Positioning System) or satellite navigation technology (caused by system failures or through withdrawal of the technology by the United States Department of Defence) or, in some cases, the lack of GPS (or similar technology) means that celestial navigation remains a widely practised art.
217 *Surat al-An‘ām* vi: 97; trans. Ali 2002: 94. According to Ibn Kathīr, the salaf (early generation of Muslims after Muhammad - (Netton 1997: 222)) have warned against holding any beliefs regarding the stars other than the following three: that Allāh created them to decorate the skies/heavens; to shoot at the devils (traditionally, shooting stars are believed to have been hurled at devils or jinns attempting to listen in on heavenly secrets); and to guide mankind through the dark recesses of the land and the sea. Ibn Kathīr (n.d.), II: 161-162.
Mention of this skill is also found in the Kitāb Ḥaḍr ʿAjāʿib al-Hind; the ship-owner Abū l-Zahr al-Barkhāṭī tells Buzurg of his maternal grandfather who was onboard a ship headed to Fanṣūr Island (an island off Sumatra; see map 3) when they were carried, by the current, to the Fish Islands. The captain of the ship, believing that this island, with its slave trade, would make his fortune, spent the night “studying the stars, and recognising the positions of the constellations, so as to fix in his memory how to go and come back.” Similarly, in another tale a shipwrecked sailor and his companions use the stars to guide their path from the village where they were being held captive by cannibals, to a distant beach far from the reach of the captors.

Astronavigation was of course, dependent upon clear skies; in the event that the navigator was unable to see the stars, he was forced to seek alternative methods. For those sailing close to the coast, the ship’s position could be fixed using landmarks on the shore, such as mountains, hills, and (make-shift) lighthouses. Muḥammad b. Bābishād advises Buzurg on this method of orientation, saying:

إذا كنت في البحر واجبت أن تعرف هل انت بقرب ارض او جبل فانظر بعد العصر
إذا انحطت الشمس فأنها إذا انحطت وكان في وجهها جبل او جزيرة تبيّنت

When one is at sea... if you want to know whether you are near land or a mountain, look out after the afternoon prayer, when the sun is going down. At that time, if you are opposite a mountain or an island, you will see it distinctly.

The Qur’ān also refers to the use of “marks and sign-posts” to guide oneself when travelling by land or by sea. If however, the navigator was far from land, and the stars, the sun and the moon have been hidden from his view, as in the case of those being carried towards the Island of Women surrounded by thick fog and abysmal darkness

$^{218}$ The location of the Fish Islands is unknown.

$^{219}$ Buzurg 1981: 19.

$^{220}$ Ibid: 106-111.

$^{221}$ Al-Muqaddasi (2001: 12) describes al-Khashabā’t (in the Arabian Sea) as make-shift lighthouses, where palm trunks have been driven into the seabed and huts built on them; at night, people are stationed in these huts, keeping a fire alight in order to guide ships away from them.

$^{222}$ Buzurg 1966: 92; idem,1981: 54.

$^{223}$ The qāya reads: وَعَلَّمَتْ وَبَنَجَمُونَ هُمْ يَهِدنَوْن. And marks and sign-posts; and by the stars (men) guide themselves. Sūrat al-Nahl xvi: 16; trans. Ali 2002: 182. The “marks and sign-posts” is said to refer to landmarks such as mountains and hills which travellers use to find their way should they get lost – Ibn Kathīr (n.d.), II: 582.
after unwittingly sailing under Canopus, then often it was a case of having “confidence in the sovereign of the wind and sea, who can change them at His will”\(^{224}\) and enduring the period of bad weather.

The heavenly bodies and the elements are also responsible for influencing another important aspect of navigation, namely the tides (.moves و Displays currents\(^{225}\)). Caused by the gravitational forces of the sun-moon-earth system and the movement of the three bodies within this system,\(^{226}\) the ability to recognise solar and lunar tides as well as spring\(^{227}\) and neap tides;\(^{228}\) knowledge of the regularity with which tides occur and the similarities in tidal patterns; and a basic understanding of astronomy (or the calendar) in order to be able to (attempt to) predict the tides, was extremely valuable to the navigator. Mention of the tides is found in all four of the Classical and Medieval primary sources, with the patterns of the ebb and flow generally being attributed to the influence of the moon.\(^{229}\) Coincidentally, the authors of the *Ajā‘īb al-Hind* and *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm* and the compiler of the *Akhbār al-Ṣīn wa l-Hind*, all talk of the ebb and flow in and around the Sea of China (Sea of Ṣanjī or South China Sea, see map 1); Buzurg’s tale concerns the tidal patterns near Ṣandalfūlāt (Hainan Dao - China), the *Akhbār al-Ṣīn wa l-Hind* discusses the ebb and flow in the port of Canton and how it differs from that which affect the waters near Baṣra, while al- Muqaddaṣī comments on how the rise and fall of the waters in the Sea of China affect the ebb and flow of the tide at Baṣra and as a consequence, the Tigris and the connected channels which irrigate the lands around the city.\(^{230}\)

\(^{225}\) Knowledge of the ocean currents (generated by forces such as the wind, the Coriolis force, density differences (i.e. differences in temperature and salinity), and gravity was (and remains) essential for the navigator as it allowed them to use the currents to their advantage in order to further their journey. Mention of the currents is found in the Sindbad stories with reference to a fast flowing river – *Alf layla wa layla* (n.d.), IV: 14.
\(^{227}\) Spring tides – those which rise higher and fall lower than the average tide- occur when the sun, moon (new or full) and earth are in line. Ibid: 551.
\(^{228}\) Neap tides, occurring when the three bodies form a right angle, cause lower than average high waters and higher than average low tides. Ibid: 391.
\(^{229}\) Al-Muqaddaṣī notes several other theories as to the cause of the tides and the ebb and flow: that an angel plunges his finger into the water causing the tide to flow, and the ebb when he removes his finger; a similar theory suggests it is the foot of the angel charged with the responsibility of the ocean depths, rather than his finger; another explanation, said to have been passed on to al-Khāḍr (a popular, mystical Islamic figure or saint who features in the Qur’ān) by an angel, is that the ebb is caused by a whale inhaling, while the flow is caused by the whale’s exhalation. Al- Muqaddaṣī 2001: 12, 104.
Information regarding celestial bodies and their effects on the weather and tides, and regarding the seasonal weather systems, as well as information concerning latitudes, orientation, and geographical information was found in Persian, Sanskrit, Tamil and Chinese maritime manuals, similar to the *Kitāb al-fawā'id fī ʿuṣūl al-bahr wa-l-qawā'id* (The Book of Benefits in the Principles of Navigation) compiled by ʿAlīmd ibn Mājid (d. after 906/1500). Although now lost, it is clear that many of the medieval mariners, and indeed, the author of *Akhbār al-Ṣīn wa l-Hind* and al- Muqaddāsī, had access to sailing instructions which provided the information discussed above. Al- Muqaddāsī notes in his discussion of the seas and the rivers that mariners had “in their possession navigation instructions (دفتر) which they study carefully together and on which they rely completely, proceeding according to what is in them;”\(^{231}\) he claims to have studied these manuals yet fails to provide the reader with any information regarding their contents. As mentioned previously, Sindbād also mentions a form of manual; his embellishment of the rituals surrounding its reading however, makes the nature of this text unclear.\(^{232}\)

Buzurg, on the other hand, does not mention any form of manual, yet he talks of captains and pilots who have the necessary knowledge and skill, acquired through years of experience (some captains had been sailing for nearly eighty years\(^{233}\)) and observation or study of the elements. Captain čAbraha, a native of Kirmān (Persia) who went from being a shepherd to a fisherman, to a sailor and finally a captain, and had sailed to China seven times, was one such example. In a tale related by Captain Shahrīyārī,\(^{234}\) Captain čAbraha was invited on to their vessel only for him to order everyone on board to throw everything heavy overboard, cut down the mainmast and cut the anchor cables. Days later, the ship was engulfed by a gale that lasted three days and nights, yet they managed to reach China unscathed, and on the return journey, they recovered the anchors from where they had left them. Captain čAbraha’s knowledge of the calendar, “when I met you it was at the high tide of the thirtieth day (of the lunar month)”\(^{235}\); of the tides:

\(^{231}\) Al- Muqaddasī 2001: 9.
\(^{232}\) Alf layla wa layla (n.d.), IV: 12; Book of the Thousand Nights 1925, VI: 69.
\(^{233}\) Buzurg 1981: 16.
\(^{234}\) Ibid: 49-52.
we [the Captain and others who have crossed that particular sea] have observed that on each thirtieth day the water goes down in an extraordinary way, so as to leave the rocks bare and of the pattern of the wind “at the same time a violent gale gets up from the deep”

saved the passing ship and her crew from certain destruction.

In summation: As will be discussed in the following chapter, the language of the medieval Indian Ocean mariner was a diverse one; the *lingua franca* of this world was an amalgamation of languages borrowed from the ports on the East African coast, to the Red Sea, the Southern Arabian ports and those of the Persian-Arabian Gulf, to those of (western) India, Indonesia and Malaysia, to China. Example of this *lingua franca* will be discussed in Chapter 6. Similarly, the contact between the Arabian, Persian, Indian, Indonesian, Malaysian and East African (and Chinese) seafaring communities led to a sharing of navigational theoretical knowledge and a fusion of technological ideas. The people of Qumr (Madagascar or Comoros) for example, are thought to have been Indonesian settlers who would have brought with them the tradition and knowledge of monsoon sailing. The Chinese on the other hand, were thought to be excellent astronomers and have been credited with the invention of the compass. As there was regular trade activity between the ports of the Arabian Sea and those on the East African coast, as well as with China, it is almost certain that the Arabian and Persian seafarers came into contact, and exchanged ideas with seafarers from the Malay Peninsula, the Indonesian Archipelago, and China.

As the text is not intended as a scientific text, direct information regarding the art and science of navigation is limited. Yet indirect references provide us with a wealth of information regarding this subject. We know from Buzurg and his contemporaries that fundamentally, ocean navigation depended on the currents, the tides and winds; these were subject to their own rhythmic cycles, often influenced by the heavenly bodies, which affected the pattern of life in the Indian Ocean world. The navigator also depended on landmarks such as the mountains and hills on the coastline for orientation, the stars to guide them, and prayer and rituals to ensure their safe passage. Most

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235 Ibid: 52.
importantly, they relied upon a good, knowledgeable and obedient crew to aid them in their journey across the seas.

The knowledge and skill required to cross the ocean, which included familiarity with the celestial sphere and the environment, was essential for the Indian Ocean navigator; this skill was inherited through the cross-cultural contact of the seafaring communities of this region which, in time, became the multi-cultural, multi-technological, diverse Indian Ocean world as portrayed in Buzurg’s *Kitāb ʿAjāʾīb al-Hind* (The Book of the Marvels of India).

This final chapter analyses fourteen maritime terms pertaining to the weather (at sea), the sea and anchorage, as found in the *Kitāb ʿAjāʾib al-Hind* (The Book of the Marvels of India) by Buzurg Ibn Shahriyar (d.399/1009). Comparisons will be drawn from contemporary sources discussed in Literature Review (Chapter 2), such as: a) the *Akbār al-Śīn wa l-Hind* (News of China and India) (c.235/850), part of the work entitled *Silsilat al-tawarīkh* (A Chain of Narratives); b) al-Muqaddasî’s (d. 378/ 988-9) *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī maʿrifat al-aqālīm* (The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions). The “Seven Voyages of Sindbād the Sailor” from the anonymous and undated compilation, the *Alf layla wa-layla* (A Thousand and One Nights) will also be tentatively referred to as, although Sindbād may have been compiled at a later date than ʿAjāʾib al-Hind, in content and context they are very similar.

The above sources provide the researcher with a wide range of maritime material-cultural data, some of which, for example, ship types and rigging, and trade (routes and goods), have been touched upon in previous studies. Other data, such as the terminology used to describe the weather (at sea), the sea and anchorage have not been studied in the context of maritime philology, and so, this study attempts to fill that gap. The terms under study are those of common usage: the sea, for example, the wind and the rain; yet they have never been investigated in a maritime context, or in the context of a work such as the ʿAjāʾib al-Hind. The research is not just a linguistic inquiry into these terms; it shows how these terms were used by Buzurg and his contemporaries in the context in which they were written, and also how they have developed over the centuries up until modern times. It also highlights the historical impact of the spread of Islam and the rise of Arabian navigation; the influx of a variety of languages and cultures into the Western Indian Ocean had an immense impact of the *lingua franca* of this region, as will be shown below.

This chapter is a philological inquiry into the terminology, and will include: a) the textual reference in Arabic and the context of the term, or passage; b) the translation of the passage; and c) a discussion of the term, tracing its etymology, derivatives and other philological information. The framework of this analysis follows the methodology of
Agius 1984, discussed in the introduction of this study.\footnote{Agius 1984: 185-311 (Chapter Six).} Freeman-Grenville’s translation and transliteration of Buzurg’s text is lacking in diacritics for the names of people and places; I have included these in the extracts presented in this chapter.

I have divided the fourteen maritime terms into three sections:

**Sea**

1. بحر
2. البحيرة

**Weather Conditions**

3. ريح
4. خبئ
5. شرط
6. ضباب
7. مطر

**Anchorage**

8. ساحل
9. شاطئ
10. جون
11. خور
12. مرساة / مرسا
13. فرضا
14. كلاء
The Sea

1. Terms: بحر pl. bahār and بئر barr

Textual Reference A (بحر bahār and بئر barr)

وأخلافها تختلف باختلاف مواضعها المسروقة المعروفة ببعوض السفارة والصيادين وقرب السواحل المعمرة والبحار المنقطعة المهجورة والبعض من السواحل المعمرة وعمق البحار وعدم البحار ودم البحار والجزائر والسواحل (بوزرغ [ديفيك]: 19).

Translation A

The ways in which fish behave differ according to the parts of the seas where they live, according to whether they are near inhabited lands, on the routes of voyagers and fishermen, or in far off and unexplored seas, or in the depths of the ocean, far from the mainland or islands. The world of the ocean depths is indeed a different world. Blessed be God, the best of creators! (Buzurg [Freeman-Grenville], Tale XIII: 12).

Textual Reference B (بئر barr)

(بوزرغ [ديفيك]: 16). فلم وصلوا الى جدد نجلوا المركب وانزلوه وتركوه الى البحار

Translation B

When they got to Jidda [Jeddah], they unloaded the ship, brought it up on the shore and secured it. (Buzurg [Freeman-Grenville] Tale XI: 10-11).

Context A

The first extract is taken from an incident related to Buzurg by a sea-captain in which he reports that a fish (whale) the size of the ship they were sailing in, which was fifty

\[2\] Buzurg 1966: 19.
\[4\] Idem, 1966: 16.
cubits long, followed them for over a hundred and seventy parasangs. He goes on to describe the varying behaviour of the fish / whales that they encounter in different parts of the ocean.

**Context B**

The second textual reference has been extracted from a tale related to Buzurg by Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. Ṣamr b. Ḥammawayh b. Ḥaram b. Ḥammawayh al-Najīramī, a regular source of information used by our narrator. The tale tells of a ship’s collision with a whale near Zaila (Zeila, present day Seylac) on the coast of Somaliland near present day Djibouti, and the subsequent inspection of the vessel once they had safely reached Jeddah. The practice of hauling ships on to the shore / beach at high tide and supporting them with wooden baulks to enable them to carry out any required repair work once the tide has receded as described in this tale is still carried out on the shores of East Africa and Peninsular Arabia.

**Discussion of Terms**

Both terms بحَر bahr and بَر barr are arguably two of the most common and well known words used both in everyday spoken and written language. Naively, they look straightforward terms and, because they are well known, one rarely finds a discussion on them; however, as we shall see, these terms are intricately involved in other linguistic families. They are generic terms to denote the opposing elements of the sea and the land, and are often used together as بِهَاوْر وَبَر i.e. (by) land and sea, in order to encompass the whole world. Examples of the use of the two words, both together in one phrase as shown above and separately, can be found in early medieval Arabic texts as can be seen in the primary sources used for this study. The Qur’ān also uses these terms extensively, both to portray the omniscience and omnipresence of God:

وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ

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6 Ibid: 12. A cubit is the measurement from the hollow of the elbow to the tip of the middle finger.

7 The *parsang* or *farsakh*, is an ancient Persian unit of distance based on the movement of troops. Thus a *parsang* is roughly four kilometres when referring to infantry, and six kilometres (5.94km) in reference to cavalry. The advent of Islam saw the *farsakh* being officially fixed at three (Arab) miles (each mile measuring one thousand šāṭ [fathom]). Geographically, the distance is approximately 5.94 kilometres. It is now officially fixed at six kilometres (Hinz 1965, II: 812).
He knows whatever there is on the earth and in the sea.  

And to encompass the whole world:

ظَهَرَ الفَسَادُ فِي الْبَحْرِ وَالْبَخْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَّتُهَا أَلْدَى الْنَّاسِ...  

Mischief has appeared on land and sea because of (the meed) that the hands of men have earned...  

Not only do the two terms in question appear together in many instances, including in the lexica where, although they are discussed as two separate units, the analysis of both terms are often interlinked. It appears that the etymology of بَخْرُ bahr and نَهْرُ barr may be connected, a theory which will be investigated shortly. The close link between these two opposing elements – in meaning, use and etymology- is the reason that the two have been discussed as one unit.

بَحْرُ bahr is defined as the sea or large river; synonymous with نَهْرُ nahr stream, river; a spacious place comprising a large quantity of water; a large quantity of water be it sweet or salty. Lane cites Ibn Sīda (d. 458 /1066) (author of the Muhkam) who lists بَخْرُ bahr as any large river; al-Zujāj (d. 311/923-4) and al-Azhārī (d. 370-1/980) (author of Tahdīḥ al-luḥa The Reparation of Speech) gives the term as any river of which the water does not cease to flow, naming the Tigris and the Nile and other similar large

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9 Sūrat al-Rūm xxx: 41; trans. Ali 2002: 284. According to Ibn ‘Abbās, ‘Ikrama, al-Ḍāḥik, al-Suddī and others, فَمَا فِيهَا بَكْرٌ barr refers to the desert i.e. empty land / wilderness while بَخْرُ bahr means cities and towns / villages (inhabited areas). Ibn ‘Abbās and ‘Ikrama have further reported that بَخْرُ bahr refers to the towns or cities built upon the banks of a river. Others have said that the meaning of بَخْرُ bahr and فَمَا فِيهَا barr is the most common / well known one i.e. sea and land. ‘Abd al-Khūrāsānī states that فَمَا فِيهَا barr refers to cities and villages while بَخْرُ bahr refers to its islands. The first theory however, is thought to be the most correct one as Muḥammad b. Ishāq has written in the sīra (biography of the prophet Muḥammad) that Muḥammad wrote to the ruler of Ayla (Elat) in order to foster peace between them, and used the term بَخْرُ bahr to mean مَدِعُوحٌ balad i.e country / city / town. Zayd b. Rāf‘ states that the evil affecting the land and sea refers to the rain being withheld from the land فَمَا فِيهَا barr causing a famine and concealing (obscuring from view) the fish in the sea بَخْرُ bahr. Ibn Abī Ḥātim reports (having received the information through a recorded chain of narrators) that Muḥājīd translated the mischief or evil of the land (فَمَا فِيهَا barr) to be the killing of the son of Adam, while the evil of the sea is piracy, Ibn Kathīr [n.d.], III: 450.
11 Al-Anṣārī 1896: 299.
12 Lane 1968, I: 156.
14 Ibid.
sweet-water rivers as examples. Al-ʿUmawī (cited by Ibn Manẓūr and al-Zabīdī) on the other hand, believes that بَحْرُ bahr can only be applied to salt water. Persian lexica list bahr as being an Arabic term meaning sea, great river, estuary, gulf.

Derived from the verb بَحْرُ bahr (to slit, cut, divide, split or clave; to enlarge or make wide), there are several theories as to the reason for its name: it is named as such as the sea is cleft or trenches in the earth; or due to its depth and width/ large extent; or because of its saltiness. This last theory however, makes the presumption that all large bodies of water (seas and rivers) are salty whereas this is not always the case. Seawater has a much higher salt content than river water and in particular, freshwater such as the Amazon River; the highest salt content occurs in the Red Sea and the Arabian-Persian Gulf.

Derivatives of the term بَحْرُ bahr include بَحْرِيٌّ bahrīyya and (بَحْر) bahr(a), adjectival nouns of bahr used to denote seamen and sailors as can be seen in the example of السُنْدِبَادُ al-Sindbād al-bahrī Sindbad the Seaman/Sailor, named as such as much of his (adult) life was spent at sea. One of the early Muslims, Asmāʾ bint ʿUmays, was also referred to as البحريّة al- bahrīyya as when she migrated to Abyssinia during the first hijra (migration) she travelled by sea.

As far as بَر barr is concerned, it is a generic term used when referring to dry land (as opposed to بَحْر bahr the sea), terra firma, mainland and open country. Believed to have been derived from بَر birr, used to signify ampleness, largeness and

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16 Ibn Manẓūr 2003, IV: 47; also Lane 1968, I: 156.
17 Lane 1829: 244.
18 Lane 1968, I: 156-7.
19 Ibid.
24 Ibn Manẓūr 2003, IV: 53. Sailors are also referred to as مِلَّاحُ mللāḥ due to their constant presence upon the سَلَطَ الْمَلْءَ mīlāḥa navigation (Lane 1968, VII: 2733). بَحْرُ bahr is further used in the name of a type of cloud: بَحْرِيُّ bahrīyya navigation (Ibn Manẓūr 2003, IV: 52; al-Jawhari 2005: 75). These clouds have also been called بَنَات بَحْر banāt bakhr and بَنَات مَكْحِر banāt makhr, with al-ʿAzhari stating that بَنَات بَحْر banāt bakhr is the correct name for these particular clouds, not بَنَات بَحْر (Ibn Manẓūr 2003, IV: 52-53).
extensiveness, it is found in most Medieval Arabic sources where it is translated as land; when used in the context of a maritime setting however, the term is usually used to denote coastal features, such as the shore, coast, side of a creek or river, or harbour. The term is also found in Persian lexica, where it is defined as a continent, a desert, the earth and a globe.

Taking these two terms, bahr and barr together, etymologically, they appear to be of Arabic origin; but interestingly enough, they share links with other linguistic families ultimately having Indo-Aryan connections. First of all, bahr means the sea in Arabic; it is also defined as al-rīf i.e. “fertile, cultivated land, countryside or rural area, seashore and sea-coast”, while bahra means a wide tract of land, or synonymous with baḥra i.e. land / country and the diminutive form buḥayra is used for small sea or lake. It is also found in Classic Ethiopian/Ethiopic (Ge’ez), to mean a stretch of water; while baraha means desert in Amharic. Secondly, according to the author of the Akhbār al-Ṣin, in the language used by the people of Calabar (كلاه بَنْز Kalāh Bār, Kedah in Malay) the term bār signifies a coast i.e. ساحل sāhil. Thirdly, in Hindi, bār means water and vāri the same in Sanskrit; bharu is used for the sea in both Pāli and Sanskrit, while bai is defined as coast, shore and strand [as is the Arabic term barr]. Przyluski citing Paul Jouën suggests that the term bār does not belong to the Semitic language group; rather, it shares the same origins as the

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26 Lane 1968, I: 176. Lane also notes that it is possible that biirr has been derived from bai.
29 Arabian Nights Entertainment 1859, III: 10.
32 Richardson 1829: 253; Steingass 1930: 166.
33 Richardson 1829: 253.
34 Interestingly, a web document written and posted by S. Kalyanaraman (Kalyanaraman 1995: Bharu-kaccha, varūnā; maru = desert, water, shore. (http://kalyan97.googlepages.com/Etymamaru.doc) (accessed 10-05-2010), which analyses Jean Przyluski’s “Varūna, God of sea and the sky”, Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (July 1931): 613-622), illustrates the phonetic similarities between terms occurring in Indo-Aryan, Indo-European and Austro-Asiatic languages, noting the similarities between the terms for desert, water and the shore used in these language groups.
35 Ibn Manẓūr 2003, IV: 50. See Sūrat al-Rūm xxx: 41 “مَنْ هَدَى الْيَأْمَانَ فِي أَبِيّ الْبَخْرِ” discussed above- Abū ʿAli (cited by Ibn Manẓūr), reasons that neither mischief /evil nor good can spread in the water, rather (as discussed above) the āya is most likely referring to coastal towns.
36 Wehr 1993: 431.
37 Lane 1968, I: 157.
39 Sīlsilat 1811: 18; idem, 1995: 10.
40 Przyluski 1931: 614. Przyluski hypothesised a Palaeo-Asiatic root bar, from which the terms listed above (as well as term such as baroh (Malay for low-lying country, seashore, sea), barah (plain, flatland), bār (used for sea in dialects of the Malay Peninsula) etc) are derived. Przyluski, Jean “Varūna, God of sea and the sky”, Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (July 1931): 613-622.
Sanskrit and Pāli term bharu, i.e. the proto-term bar. It is possible that the term barr is also derived from the same Palæo-Asiatic proto-term (bar). As the article points out, it is interesting to note that according to this theory, the root term covers both opposing elements: barr wa bahr, the land and the sea.

There are many terms used to refer to the sea (or parts/areas of the sea) and to the various types of anchorage situated around the littorals of the Indian Ocean World, the most common of which are barr and bahr. Barr, as we have seen in the (maritime) context of the primary sources, means the shore, coast, harbour or side of a river; yet the term is highly situational and, as mentioned above, can also be used to represent the desert i.e. empty land/wilderness.41 Bahr too, is used primarily to mean the sea, yet the term also means a river or gulf. Interestingly, in the ‘Ajā’ib al-Hind, the term is used most often to refer to the sea rather than the ocean, for which Buzurg (often, but not always) uses the alternative term (lujja (see below).42 He does use, in addition to bahr, other terms to denote the sea including the aforementioned lujja (see below) and khalij canal,43 strait;44 however, bahr occurs with the most frequency. There is also an abound of terminology found in his work referring to aspects of the sea, such as the ebb and flow, currents, the waves; terms for measuring the depth of water i.e. fathom; terms for sea related or maritime phenomena such as whirlpools; as well the adjectives, verbs and adverbs used to describe the sea in both fair and stormy weather, some of which may be alluded to briefly during the course of this study. Coastal features (i.e. barr) and anchorages - as found in the Kitāb ‘Ajā’ib al-Hind - however, are analysed below.

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41 Ibn Kathīr [n.d.], III: 450.
42 Bahr is occasionally used to refer to the ocean, either in the plural form i.e. bahr or with the use of an adjective, for example عمق البحار the depths of the ocean (Buzurg 1966: 19; idem, 1981: 12)
44 Silsilat 1995: 60.
2. Term: لجّة / لجّة / لجّة لجّة (pl lujaj)

Textual Reference A

وتنجّس في لجّة هابطة إلى الجنوب مصوّبة إلى تلك الجهة فكلما مررت المركب علا ما وراءها من جهتنا وهبب ما بين يديها من تلك الجهة فلا تستطيع الرجوع بريح عاصف ولا غيره وهو في لجّ البحر المحيطة (Buzurg [Devic]: 20).

Translation A

He enters a vast stretch of waters that runs towards the south. As the ship goes forwards, so the waves rise behind it, and on the other side the waves fall away. So, whatever the wind is, strong or gentle, return is cut off, for the current draws him into the ocean that surrounds the earth. (Buzurg [Freeman-Grenville] Tale XIV: 13).

Textual Reference B

وأشتّد الريح فما مضت ساعة حتى غابت بلدته عن عيوننا وظلّنا الليل ودخلنا اللجّ (Buzurg [Devic]: 53).

Translation B

As the wind got up, the coast was not slow to disappear from sight. Then night enfolded us in its shrouds and we reached the open sea. (Buzurg [Freeman-Grenville] Tale XXXII: 32).

Context A

The passage is taken from the tale entitled “The island of Women” related to Buzurg by Abū l-Zahr al-Barkhatī, a ship-master and one of the principal notables of Sīrāf, a man.

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known for his integrity and honour. It tells of a ship sailing in the Malay Sea towards China when they were blown off course towards the star of Canopus, entering a vast stretch of waters from which there is no return. 49

Context B

A Slaving Adventure is recounted by Ismāʿīl b. Ibrāhīm b. Mirdās, also known as Ismāʿīlawayh, one of the best ship-owners (الناخذة) to go to the Land of Gold (Sumatra and Java, see Map 3), and several seamen who were with him when he left Oman to go to Qanbalu in 310/922. Their ship was driven off course by a storm towards Sofala on the south coast of East Africa (see Map 3), also known as the Zanj (Blacks) coast, which was inhabited by cannibals. The crews’ fear for their lives however, was unfounded as the king gave them leave to trade freely in his kingdom; the crew on the other hand, were not as gracious and they abducted the young king and sold him in the markets of Oman. The king escaped and eventually made it back to his homeland, a month before Ismāʿīlawayh and his crew were again blown off course towards Sofala. 50

The extract speaks of the moment Ismāʿīlawayh’s ship, aided by the elements, left the south-east African coast with the captives on board.

Discussion of Term

Lujja لجة is defined as a vast stretch of water; 51 the main body of water (of the sea); the depth or deep sea, the bottom of which cannot be reached and the extremities of which cannot be seen; the fathomless deep; 52 a great deep; the middle of the sea; an abyss. 53

Ibn Manẓūr compounds the term لجة lujja with further nouns rather than using the term لجة lujja on its own: لجة الاماء lujjat al-mā’ being مغطّه الماء i.e. the main body of water, which some have specified as معظم البحر muʿzam al-bahr, the main part of the sea; 54 لجة البحر lujja al-bahr the fathomless deep, while لجّ البحر lujj al-bahr refers to the breadth or

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50 Ibid: 31-36.
52 Lane 1968, VII: 2650-1.
53 Richardson 1829: 1259. Also, Lane 1968, VII: 2650 & Platts 1974: 953. Richardson lists all variations of this term as being Arabic.
54 Al-Fayyūmī 1872, II: 101; Ibn Manẓūr 2003, II: 413; al-Jawhari 2005: 938. Similarly, لجة الأمر lujjat al-ʿamr is defined as the main part of the matter or affair (or مغطّه muʿ zamahā).
width of the sea (a great expanse of water or sea of which the extremities cannot be seen).\(^{55}\)

A commonly used term, it is found in al-Muqaddasi’s geographical treatise with reference to the fathomless depth of Qulzum (i.e. the Red Sea):

ومواضع الخوف في المملكة جبيلان موضع غرق فروعون وهي لجة الظلم
وفيها تسير المراكب العرّاض لترجع من الير العامر إلى الير العامر

The perilous passages of it [the sea] in the realm of Islām are:
Jubaylān [Arabian littoral of the Red Sea], the place of the drowning of Pharaoh; it is the **fathomless deep** of al-Qulzum [Red Sea], and here ships must travel athwart, so as to return from the desolate side to the civilised and cultivated side.\(^{56}\)

It is also found in the “Seven Voyages of Sindbād the Sailor” as في وسط البحيرة, meaning in the midst of the waves,\(^{57}\) or in the midst of the sea.\(^{58}\)

As seen from the examples in the text and in the lexica, the term is used both on its own and in a compound with nouns such as بحر bahr “sea” and ماء mā’ “water”, and is understood to refer to the sea or the abyss in both cases. Yet the term لجة lujja is also used to describe the intensity of a (often abstract) noun, such as لجة الليل lujj al-layl the depth of the night i.e. its intense darkness or blackness, or لجة الظلم lujjat al-zulām the depth of darkness, or (in metaphorical language) كان عينه لجة ka’anna ʿaynahā lujja as though his eyes were a fathomless sea i.e. intensely black.\(^{59}\) Is it possible that لجة lujja initially referred to the intensity and/or vastness of any given thing, and then, through common usage, came to represent by extension the fathomless deep of the sea? Variations of the term are found in the Qur’ān and in the ḥadīth literature; the Qur’ān provides a very detailed description of the ocean in which the term lujja is used as an adjective to describe the sea as “a vast deep ocean”.\(^{60}\)

\(^{55}\)Ibn Manṣūr 2003, II: 413; Lane 1968, VII: 2650.

\(^{56}\)Al-Muqaddasi 1906: 11; idem, 2001: 11.

\(^{57}\)Alf layla wa layla [nd], III: 295; *Book of the Thousand Nights* 1925, VI: 29

\(^{58}\)Arabian Nights’ Entertainment 1859, III: 30.

\(^{59}\)Ibn Manṣūr 2003, II: 413; also Lane 1968, VII: 2650-1. It is also said to mean ‘plenty’ i.e. large volume Richardson 1829: 1259.

\(^{60}\)Sūrat al-Nūr xxiv: 40; trans. Ali 2002: 246. The ʿāya reads:
The verb Form I لَجِّي lajjā is defined as to be stubborn or obstinate, unyielding, relentless, persistent, or to wear out or weaken;\(^{61}\) while verb Form VIII لَتَجِّي itajja, which is generally used in relation to the sea, is defined as being noisy or tumultuous, or to roar, storm and rage; thus لَتَجِّي البحر itajja al-bahr translates as the sea became tumultuous.

This verb form is found in ḥadīth literature, highlighting the dangers of travelling by sea, and the general distrust or mistrust the medieval Arabians had of the sea:

\[\text{من ركب البحر إذا التَّجَّي فقد بَرَتَتِ منه الدَّمَةُ} \]

Whosoever sails in the sea when it is tumultuous / stormy, he is relieved of his obligations / he has only himself to blame.

Interestingly, the term لَجِّي lajjā is also used to denote a sword; the terror of the sword is said to be comparable to the terror of the لَجِّي i.e. the vast, fathomless ocean. This however, is not thought to be a widely used interpretation of the term; it appears to be restricted to the dialects of the people of Tayy, the people of Hudhayl, or the people of a certain tribe of Yemen.\(^{63}\)

Conversely, as well as being used to describe the sea, لَجِّي lajjā, like the term بَحْر bahr, also refers to the seashore and the side of a valley.\(^{64}\) In the context of its use in the aforementioned sources however, “abyss” or “fathomless deep” is the correct and most appropriate definition as it best describes the immeasurable depths of the vast, deep ocean, the immenseness of which is such that neither its shores, nor the seabed can be seen or reached.

\[^{61}\text{Wehr 1993: 1006.}\]
\[^{62}\text{Ibn Manẓūr 2003, II: 413; also Lane 1968, VII: 2650.}\]
\[^{63}\text{Ibn Manẓūr 2003, II: 413; also Lane 1968, VII: 2650.}\]
\[^{64}\text{Richardson 1829: 1259; Lane 1968, VII: 2650.}\]
Weather Conditions

3. Term: ريح pl ريح rǐh (pl riyāḥ)

Textual Reference A

فقالوا وَأَيْ شَيْءٍ جَرا عَلَيْنَا حَتَّى تَقُولُ لَنَا هَذَا الْقُولُ رَبَّنَا رَحْمَةٌ وَبُكْرَةٌ رَهْوُنَّا رَهْوُنَّا وَنَحْنُ سَالِمُونَ فِي كَنْفٍ رَبِّ

(Buzurg [Devic]: 45).

Translation A

What’s this? said the merchants. What’s happening for you to talk like this? There is a gentle wind; the sea is calm, and we are sailing peaceably under the protection of the Master of the Universe.66 (Buzurg [Freeman-Grenville] Tale XXVII: 27).

Textual Reference B

فلما كان الليل فتح الله سبحانه أبواب السماء بريح سوداء مثلت ما بين السماء والأرض ورفعت امواج البحر إلى السحاب وحطتها إلى التراب...

(Buzurg [Devic]: 46).

Translation B

When night came, behold God opened the doors of heaven, and gave room to a black wind that filled all the space between heaven and earth, and raised the waves of the sea right up to the clouds, and let them fall again on the earth.68 (Buzurg [Freeman-Grenville] Tale XXVII: 28).

Context

The above tale was related to Buzurg by Abū ʿAbdallah Muḥammad b. Bābishād, who in turn heard it from Captain ʿAllāma, the protagonist of the tale. They were sailing

65 Buzurg 1966: 45.
from India to China when suddenly, despite the apparently favourable sailing conditions, Captain Ālāmā ordered the crew to lower the sails and jettison the cargo. The merchants questioned the order as they could perceive no immediate threat; Captain Ālāmā however, refused to stay on board until all that remained were men, water and provisions, saying “if only you knew what will happen to you tonight! Believe me, purify your souls, say your prayers, repent of your past sins, and ask pardon of God.” The crew and passengers did as he ordered and sure enough, come nightfall those on board found themselves in the middle of a deadly storm that lasted three days, wrecking/destroying most of the ships at sea. Captain Ālāmā’s vessel escaped shipwreck due to its lighter load, and the passengers were rewarded for their obedience as they managed to recover not only their own merchandise but also stores and trade goods from ships that had been claimed by the storm.69

**Discussion of Term**

The term ṛīḥ, from the root روح روزج روزج, was originally written as روزج روزج, however, due to the kasra on the rā’, the و was replaced by the ی to form یة. It is a commonly used term, found in all four of the medieval sources under discussion, and is generally used as a generic term for wind.72 Both Medieval and Western Arabic lexica define it as تعبير الهواء nasīm al-hawā’, a gentle wind or breeze,73 or the air that is made to obey the will of God and to run its course between heaven and earth, so called because it provides راحة روزج 74 rāḥal rawḥ (rest/ ease/ comfort).75

 gratuits is the most frequently used term by Buzurg Ibn Shahriyār and his contemporaries al-Muqaddasī, the Silsilat and the “Seven Voyages of Sindbād the Sailor”; the difference being in the adjective used. (ريح عاصفة) ṛīḥ ʿāṣif(ah), for example, is used to

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70 Ibid. For information regarding Abū Ābdallāh Muḥammad b. Bābīshād, Captain Ālāmā and other individuals mentioned by Buzurg see Chapter 4, The Sea Stories of Buzurg Ibn Shahriyār.
74 Lane 1968, III: 1180-1.
75 Furthermore, the term ṛūḥ (spirit) is derived from the same root as ṛīḥ i.e. روح روزج روزج. ṛūḥ is defined in the lexica as the soul or spirit (Lane 1968, III: 1180). The connection between ṛīḥ and ṛūḥ could possibly be linked to the belief that the soul, or spirit is ‘blown’ into the body, like a breath; and like the wind, or breath, it is felt/ perceived rather than seen. Interestingly, this link between the terms ṛīḥ (wind) and ṛūḥ (soul, spirit) is mirrored by the Arabic نفس النفس nafūṣ (breath) and نفس نفس nafūs (soul, psyche, spirit) (Wehr 1993: 1155-6). ṛūḥ is also used to refer to the Angel Gabriel (Jibrāʾīl).
depict a violent head wind,\textsuperscript{76} a fresh wind,\textsuperscript{77} violent gale,\textsuperscript{78} ريح العاصفة الشديدة, a furious squall;\textsuperscript{79} ريح عظيمة is also a violent squall of wind,\textsuperscript{80} or a fierce gale;\textsuperscript{81} and ريح سوداء is a black, or dark wind,\textsuperscript{82} perhaps referring to a wind that brings with it black rain or storm clouds. Favourable winds also use the term ريح مستقيمة al-رَّيح المستقيمة, the wind was in our favour;\textsuperscript{83} ريح المتوسطة al-رَّيح المتوسطة, a very easy gale;\textsuperscript{85} and طابنا الريح تابا lanā al-رَّيح, a fair wind.\textsuperscript{86} Meteorological (such as the kutub al-anwā’ (المنامات)\textsuperscript{87}) and lexicographical treatises from the third/ninth century list over a hundred terms depicting “different kinds of winds according to their effects, qualities and direction,”\textsuperscript{88} yet Buzurg uses ريح, possibly because it is the most accessible term, understood by all.

Etymologically, the terms ريح and رعد, have been derived from a common Semitic root $r-h$, having cognates in earlier Semitic languages, such as Hebrew ruah,\textsuperscript{89} Aramaic $rwh$ (wind; spirit) and Ugaritic $rh$ (wind).\textsuperscript{90} The term $ruah$ (wind [something that is in motion and has the power to set other things in motion] and breath)\textsuperscript{91} is found in the Old Testament in both Hebrew and Aramaic, often in the phrase $ruah$ “lohim, translated as a specific wind; general wind; breath; the Spirit of God and energy of life.\textsuperscript{92} The Indonesian roh (spirit) also appears to have been derived from a similar source, most probably Arabic.

Derivatives of the root term روح روح ريح ریح a type of wind,\textsuperscript{93} a wind of short duration or a gust of wind;\textsuperscript{94} روح، windy, violently windy;\textsuperscript{95} also a day of pleasant

\textsuperscript{76} Book of the Thousand Nights 1925: 69.
\textsuperscript{77} Buzurg 1981: 19.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid: 13.
\textsuperscript{79} Book of the Thousand Nights 1925: 35.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid: 70.
\textsuperscript{81} Buzurg 1981: 54.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid: 28.
\textsuperscript{83} Al-Muqaddasi 2001: 295.
\textsuperscript{84} Buzurg 1981: 51.
\textsuperscript{85} Silsilat al-tawārikh 1995: 64.
\textsuperscript{86} Book of the Thousand Nights 1925, VI: 30 & 67.
\textsuperscript{87} Works containing an explanation of the system of the anwā’ (a system of computation among early Arabs), a list of mansions, a table of the dates of the rising and setting of the stars which determine them, the system of the winds and rains etc- Pellat 1954-60, I: 523.
\textsuperscript{88} Forcada 1995, VIII: 526.
\textsuperscript{89} Transliterations of the Hebrew term vary between $ruah$, $rā‘ah$ and $ru‘ā‘h$ $ruach$.
\textsuperscript{90} Ouro 2000: 60.
\textsuperscript{92} Ouro 2000: 59.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibn Manẓūr 2003, II: 534; also Lane 1968, III: 1181.
\textsuperscript{94} Lane 1968, III: 1181.
wind;\textsuperscript{96} and روحُ rawḥ, a gentle wind;\textsuperscript{97} or more specifically, a cool gentle wind; it is also defined as happiness and joy,\textsuperscript{98} possibly symbolic of the ease and comfort (الراحة rāḥa) provided by the gentle breeze. A similar term is روح rawāḥ, synonymous with عشي cāshīy (evening), so called for the favourable breeze that often blows in the afternoon, providing comfort (from the heat).\textsuperscript{99} روحُ rawḥ is also thought to be synonymous with رحمة rahma, God’s mercy or compassion.\textsuperscript{100}

As for the plural form of ريح rih, Lane cites Ibn Manẓūr and al-Zabīdī as distinguishing between the singular ريح rih and the plural رياح riyāḥ in that the plural form is often (but not always) used in a good sense, i.e. beneficial or gentle winds; the singular on the other hand, is used to signify a fierce destructive wind, as in الريح العظيم al-riḥ al-\textsuperscript{2}aqīm.\textsuperscript{101} However, as the textual reference shows, Buzurg has used the singular ريح rih to denote both the gentle wind and the destructive black wind. Another plural form of the word ريح arwāḥ, is also used in a tradition as a metaphor to define the جن jinn (genie), as they are often supposed to be invisible like the wind, and are feared most by sailors.\textsuperscript{102}

Overall, the use of the term ريح rih throughout the text, and indeed in the contemporary texts suggests that although the primary definition found in the lexica is a gentle wind or breeze,\textsuperscript{103} it is generally used as a generic term for wind, be it a gentle breeze or a violently fierce gale, differentiated only by the adjectives used. As mentioned above, specific names are given in navigational treatises such as those of Ibn

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{96} Ibn Manẓūr 2003, II: 535; also Lane 1968, III: 1177, 1180.
\item \textsuperscript{97} Lane 1968, III: 1177.
\item \textsuperscript{98} Ibn Fāris 1990, II: 454-457.
\item \textsuperscript{99} Ibn Manẓūr 2003, II: 536; also Lane 1968, III: 1180.
\item \textsuperscript{100} Ibn Fāris 1990, II: 454-457.
\item \textsuperscript{101} Ibn Manẓūr 2003, II: 543. Ibn Manẓūr cites a حديث hadith narrated by Abū Hurayra stating that he heard Muhammad refer to the wind al-riḥ as من رحمة الله إِنِّي رَحِمَ اللَّهُ الدُّكَّالِينَ من رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ. Abū Hurayra states: سمعت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يقول: الريح من روح الله تأتي بالرحمة وتأتي بالعداء، فإذا رأيتها فلا تنظرها وإلا رأيتها وبالدعاء بل إنها مريم من خيرها، واستغفروه الله من شرها و لا تنطوا من روح الله. A passage from the Qur’an سورة يوسف Sūrat Yūsuf xii: 87; trans. Ali 2002: 165-6. The ٍآية aya tells of the advice given by Ya’qūb (Jacob) to his sons as they set out in search of information regarding Yūsuf (Joseph) and his brother Binyāmīn (Benjamin) i.e. don’t give up hope or despair of God as “truly no one despairs of Allah’s Soothing Mercy, except those who have no faith.”
\item \textsuperscript{102} This theory is supported by the حديث hadith tradition (cited by Ibn Manẓūr and Lane) according to which, when the wind rose, the Prophet Muḥammad would pray:

أَلْهِمُ اجْعَلُهُمْ رِيَاحًا وَلاَ تَجْعَلُهُمْ رِيَاхًا “O God, make it to be winds, and make it not to be a wind.” (Lane 1968, III: 1181; Ibn Manẓūr 2003, II: 535). This is apparently linked to the Arab belief that “the clouds are not made to give rain save by diverse winds” hence, the prayer asks for the winds to be those that bring rain (clouds), not that which brings God’s wrath.
\item \textsuperscript{103} Lane 1968, III: 1181.
\item \textsuperscript{104} Ibn Manẓūr 2003, II: 534; also Lane 1968, III: 1180-1.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Mājid (d. after 906/1500) and Sulaymān al-Mahrī (d. 917/1511) and in the *Kutub al-anwār*, for different types of winds according to their effects, qualities, direction, and the rising of various stars that bring about these winds. Although the most common term for wind used in Buzurg’s text and that of his contemporaries is *rīh*, alternative names are found though these are few and far between; those found in the ‘Ajā‘ib al-Hind are discussed below. Furthermore, *rīh* and the adjectives used to differentiate one type of wind from another, were often used (though inappropriately) for the monsoon which blow north-west and south-east (alternately) for six months. The term *mawsim* (i.e. monsoon) did not exist at the time, and therefore, the monsoonal winds were defined generally as *rīh* (see Chapter 5 for information regarding the monsoons).

4. Term: خبّ khabb, khibb

Textual Reference

 حدثني محمد بن بابشاد بن حرام أنه كان بسيراف وقد خرج منها مركب إلى البصرة ووقع فيها خبّ بعد خروجه بابيام فانقطعت المراكب وتعلقت القلوب باخبرات البحر

(Buzurg [Devic]: 16-17).

Translation

Moḥammad b. Bābishād b. Ḥarām told me… he happened to be at Sīrāf when they were anxious about a vessel that had just left for Başra. Several days after it had left it was overtaken by a *gale*. Ships stayed in port, and every man was agog for news of the sea…

(Buzurg [Freeman-Grenville] Tale XII: 11).

Context

This tale was related to Buzurg by Abū Ābdallah Muḥammad b. Bābishād b. Ḥarām b. Ḥamawayh al-Sīrāfī, one of the principal shipmasters to sail to the Land of Gold (Sumatra and Java [modern day Malaysia and Indonesia, see Map 3) and “one of the best informed of God’s creatures in nautical matters, and one of the best and most respected sailors.”

104 Buzurg 1966: 16-17.  
main harbour in the third/ninth century, situated on the north-eastern shore of the Gulf) to Baṣra (the principal river port located in southern Iraq) but had fallen prey to the foul weather and was wrecked, leaving no survivors. News of this loss first reached the port when a woman found her brother’s signet ring inside a fish she was preparing.

Discussion of Term

The term خبب, a word of Arabic origins that is listed in the lexica as both khibb and khabb, is found several times in Kitāb ʿAjāʾib al-Hind, but I was unable to find it in any of the other (main) primary literary sources being used. It is translated in the text mostly as gale, but also as squall and is preceded by the verbs أخذ (‘akhadha) or وقع في (waqaʿ a bi/ fi).

Although the definition found in the translation of the text is certainly the correct one given the context of the tale, it is not the primary definition listed in any of the Classical and Medieval Arabic lexica. In fact, the main and most common definition of خبب is something different: disloyalty, faithlessness, deception, deceit, guile, cunning, corruption and general badness. The lexica does however, list the relevant definition where خبب is a state of agitation and commotion of the sea; أصابهم الخبب when the waves surge and clash, and the winds whirl/blow, and ships head for shore or cast anchor.

To illustrate further the winds that surge a ship, Ibn Manzūr (d. 711/1311-2) quotes the following (part of a) ḥadīth:

An بوبن، على نبيت وعليه الصلاة والسلام، لما زكب البحر أخذهم خبب

شديد

109 Ibn Manzūr 2003, I: 402; al-Jawhari 2005: 280; also Richardson 1829: 596; Lane 1968, II: 691-2. Other definitions include a low hillock of sand or an elevated tract of sand cleaving to the ground; a concealed place in the ground/low or depressed land. Lane 1968, II: 691-2; Ibn Manzūr 2003, I: 402.
110 Ibn Manzūr 2003, I: 402-404; al-Jawhari 2005: 280, see also Lane 1968, II: 691-2 and Richardson (1829: 596) who places a fatha on the kh when referring to the agitation of the sea and defines khibb (with a kasra) as deceiving; a deceiver. Lane, in his discussion of the term, places a fatha on the kh so the term reads khabb whereas Ibn Manzūr and al-Jawhari place a fatha on the verb form and a kasra on the noun.  
111 Ibn Manzūr 2003, I: 402. The ḥadīth concerns the prophet Yūnus b. Mattā or Jonah (son of Amittai) who, according to Biblical and Qur’ānic tradition, whilst attempting to flee from his responsibilities or God’s command, boarded a ship sailing from Joppa (modern day Jaffa, Israel, [www.bibleplaces.com/joppa.htm accessed 10-09-2010]) to Tarshish (possibly Spain, Cyprus or Tarsus of Asia Minor [www.encyclopaedia.com/topic/Tarshish.aspx accessed 10-09-2010]). The ship set sail, and was soon engulfed by a fierce storm; the men on board, fearing that this storm was a result of the
When Yūnus set sail he was engulfed or overtaken by a fierce *khibb*.

Ibn Fāris (d. 395/1005-6) has similar definitions; the primary being irrelevant to the study, the second describes it as a type of deception, treachery or deceit. He goes on to describe the term as both the act of deceit and the deceiver/ betrayer; both of which, he believes, are derived from خَبَبُ البحر اضطررب, the agitation or commotion of the sea.\(^\text{112}\) Lane on the other hand, writes that the use of *khabb* in relation to the sea comes from the phrase لابِرَةُ الأمَّرٍ خَبَبَ, to hasten (to begin the affairِ الأمَّرٍ); hence, it is said of the sea that it was or became agitated, or in a state of commotion.\(^\text{113}\)

As mentioned earlier, the use of the term *khabb* is uncommon in medieval Arabic literature, and it does suggest that, at the time of Buzurg, the word was already fading away from use by mariners. It is also possible that even though the word is a three-consonantal form, it may after all be of Fārsī origin which would be familiar to Persian-speaking mariners such as Buzurg himself, but would explain the reason why the primary definition in the Arabic lexica is of a semantic field relating to deception and betrayal rather than the weather.

5. **Term:** شرّتا *shartā*

Textual Reference A

سمع بعض شيوخ المراكب يحدث ان مركبا خرج من بلاد الهند الى بعض النواحي فذهب من يد صاحبه (Buzurg [Devic]: 36-7). \(^\text{114}\)

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\(^{112}\) Ibn Fāris 1990, II: 157. He vocalises the term as Ibn Manūr and al-Jawharī do, placing a *fatḥa* on the verb form and a *kasra* on the noun: أصابهم خَبَبَ.

\(^{113}\) Lane 1968, II: 691.

\(^{114}\) Buzurg 1966: 36-7.
Translation A

He heard an old sailor relate how a ship, that had sailed from India for some other place, went off course in spite of the captain’s efforts, because of the strength of the wind, and got damaged. (Buzurg [Freeman-Grenville] Tale XVIII: 22).

Textual Reference B

قال كنت بالتيز وعمنا اليها بالتواهية فتركنا المركب ونجلنا الحمولة واقفنا ننتظر الشرتا... (Buzurg [Devic]: 130-131).

Translation B

[He said] I was at al-Tīz, which we had reached after losing our way. We had already disembarked and put our cargo ashore, and were awaiting a favourable wind. (Buzurg [Freeman-Grenville] Tale LXXXIV: 76).

Context A

The first passage is extracted from a tale in which, after being blown off course by a strong wind, a captain landed his ship on a small island. Having repaired the damage caused by the wind, the crew lit fires to celebrate the Nayrūz/ Nawrūz (New Year’s Day) only to find out that the island was not an island but was, in fact, a sleeping turtle. A similar tale is found in the “Seven Voyages of Sindbād the Sailor”: in his very first voyage, the ship Sindbād is sailing in casts anchor at an island only to find out that the island is not an island but a sleeping whale. Lane notes that the origin of Sindbād’s ‘whale island’ tale is, in fact, found in al-Qazwīnī’s (d. 682/1283) ‘Ajā‘ib al-makhlūqāt (The Wonders of Creation), in which the island is a “tortoise”; yet, it is possible that

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117 Idem 1981: 76.
119 Arabian Nights Entertainment 1859, III: 79. It appears that, in Arabic, no distinction is made between the tortoise and the turtle as ملخة sulahfā is used for both (Wehr 1993: 491). The correct definition of ملخة sulahfā, in this case, given the context of the tale, would be turtle (as translated by Freeman-Grenville) and not tortoise, as it is the turtle that is the aquatic reptile.
the origin of this tale is much earlier as a similar concept is found in the third-fourth century text *Vita Alexandri Magni* (Life of Alexander the Great).\(^{120}\)

**Context B**

The second extract is taken from a tale related to Buzurg by a Baluchi [Balūshī] physician who, alongside those he was travelling with, was stranded on the shores of al-Tīz (chief port of Makrān in the coastal region of Baluchistān\(^{121}\)) waiting for a favourable wind to blow, when he was approached by a beautiful woman complaining of her aged husband and “his importunities”.\(^{122}\) His condition was brought about, he told them, after he consumed a dead fish when he was shipwrecked many years ago.

**Discussion of Term**

The term *shartā* is found twice in the ‛Ajā‘ib al-Hind and is translated as “wind” by Freeman-Grenville (implying a fairly strong wind)\(^{123}\) and “favourable wind”.\(^{124}\) It also appears in al-Muqaddasī’s Aḥsan al-taqāsīm as *sharta*, synonymous with طَارَوس، a favourable wind.\(^{125}\) Al-Muqaddasī proposes to investigate such terms, as other material-cultural terms used by communities of different regions, but fails to do so. The fact that *sharta* is used only this once makes it difficult to identify the region in which it was used. The term is not found in either the “Seven Voyages of Sindbād the Sailor” or in the *Silsilat al-tawārīkh*.

While al-Muqaddasī does not specify which region the term *shartā* is used in, or provide any information regarding this term other than its synonym طَارَوس، Buzurg does however, give a little more detail. In the first tale that the term is used, an old sailor relates how a ship that had sailed from India for some other place was damaged because of the strength of the *shartā* wind.\(^{126}\) Is it possible that the sailor was also from India, and was therefore, using his native language to describe the weather

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\(^{120}\) Gerhardt 1963: 239.


\(^{122}\) Buzurg 1981: 76.

\(^{123}\) Ibid: 22.

\(^{124}\) Ibid: 76.

\(^{125}\) Al-Muqaddasī 1906: 31; idem, 2001: 28. Incidentally, I was unable to find the term طَارَوس in the Arabic lexica; it is likely to be a Fārsī term (written communication D. A. Agius 13-07-2011).

\(^{126}\) Buzurg 1981: 22.
conditions? The second tale which contains this term was related to Buzurg by a Baluchi [Balūshī] physician, who had been stranded at al-Tīz, and was waiting for a shartā (translated in this case as favourable wind) to take them home.\(^\text{127}\) It is possible that here too, the narrator of the tale was using terms from his native language, Baluchi (also Balochi\(^\text{128}\)) to refer to the wind.

The absence of the term shartā from the Classical and Medieval Arabic lexica suggests that it is not of Arabic origin, as lexicographers often left out words that were foreign. It is found in Platts’ Urdu- Hindi- English Dictionary, where it is listed as the Sanskrit śarat: “the sultry season, autumn, the two months succeeding the rains; according to the Vaidiks, it comprises the months Bhādra and As’vin; and according to the Paurāṇiks, it comprises As’vin and Kārttik; thus fluctuating from August to November.”\(^\text{129}\) A more relevant (in context) definition is found in Captain Thomas Roebuck’s Anglo-Indian Vocabulary of Nautical Terms and Phrases (1882), where the term ‘fair (wind)’ is translated/defined as bād-i-shartā.\(^\text{130}\) Etymologically, the term is almost certainly of Indo-Iranian origin (such as Sanskrit, Hindi, Sindhi and Urdu); its presence in the vernacular of an Arabic-speaking-Persian mariner (via an Indian sailor and a Baluchi physician) illustrates the importance of the sea as a medium of linguistic diffusion.\(^\text{131}\)

\(^\text{128}\) “Balochi is one of the oldest living languages of the Indo-Iranian group of the Indo-European languages,” and is spoken by about five million people as a first or second language in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, India and Baloch diaspora communities. www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/.../Balochi-language (accessed 01-12-2010).
\(^\text{129}\) Platts 1974: 724. The Urdu dictionary/thesaurus Fīroz al-lughāt lists a similar term (Hindi) sharātā as the (loud) sound of rain or of a downpour (زور سے مہنگا برسبین کی آواز) Uddīn (n.d.): 839.
\(^\text{130}\) Roebuck 1882: 18 (online version accessed 14-07-2010).
\(^\text{131}\) In an interesting article by Henry R. Kahane, “The sea as a medium of linguistic diffusion” (Italica [December 1951]: 287-291), he discusses the role that the sea plays in creating regions of cultural unity such as the ‘Indian Ocean world’ (as discussed in Chapter 4), the Mediterranean and the Caribbean. Although the main focus of the article is on the Mediterranean, the theory that the sea functions as a highway, connecting people more closely than land, creating, for its littorals, similar ways of life which, in turn, makes these littorals or regions open to similar vocabulary or a lingua franca, applies not only to the Mediterranean but to all aquatic regions of cultural unity and can be seen in the example above (شترة shartā).
6. Term: ضباب ُ

Textual Reference

وهم يجرون في قار وضباب طول ليلهم فلم يشعروا به نشدة ظلما ما هم فيه واتصال قار (Buzurg [Devic]: 21).

Translation

All night they were in thick fog. When dawn came, they did not realise it because of the surrounding gloom, and the fog that mingled with the black surface of the sea, the violence of the wind and the troubled weather. 133 (Buzurg [Freeman-Grenville] Tale XIV: 13).

Context

The passage is extracted from the tale regarding the Island of Women, where a ship sailing in the Malay Seas was blown off course by a fierce wind, driving them towards the star, Canopus. The extract is part of a description of the terrible sailing conditions experienced by the crew before the sea calmed and they were able to seek refuge on the nearest island.

Discussion of Term

Of the works under study, only the ‘Ajā‘īb al-Hind uses ضباب ُ, translated by Freeman-Grenville as fog. Defined by early lexicographers as ضباب ُ ندئ كالغيم cloud-like moisture or mist, or mist i.e. moisture, like clouds, or like dust, covering the earth in the early morning; Ibn Manzūr and Abū Zayd al-Anṣārī (d. 215-7 / 830-1) list ضباب ُ ُ as being the (collective) plural of ضباب ُ, meaning clouds that covers the

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earth like smoke, while Lane remarks that the term refers to thin clouds, like smoke, so called because they cover the horizon.

The root term √d. b. b. is defined in the lexica (amongst other definitions) as “it covered a thing, and became intermixed with it” / “the covering of a thing, and the entering of one part, or portion, of it into another”. Ibn Durayd (d. 321/933) surmises that the term ضباب, which he gives as thin clouds, has been derived from this root because of its covering of the horizon; this also suggests that etymologically, the term is of Arabic origin. Incidentally, Ibn Durayd notes that the word was mafrūf (known), and therefore needed no further explanation, a device employed by lexicographers to demonstrate that such words are common knowledge and that detailing them would be a waste of time.

ضباب, or sea fog, as Buzurg is likely to be referring to in the tale, is a dangerous ecological occurrence that presents itself in many areas around the seafaring world; particularly noted for it are the Chinese Seas, where the above incident took place. It is a kind of condensation phenomenon which occurs in the lower layer of the atmosphere over seas or coastal areas, formed when warm air flows over the cold sea surface; the huge amount of suspended water droplets and ice crystals weakens visibility causing severe disruptions to voyages, as well as to seaport operations and other activities at sea.

The Chinese Seas are notoriously foggy areas, with the number of foggy days ranging from a few hours to over eighty days per year depending on the area; the South China Sea for example, experiences less foggy days than the Yellow Sea. The crew mentioned in the above tale suffered the terrors of this fog for almost three days and nights. In the

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137 Lane 1968, V: 1762.
139 http://www.iugg.org.cn/report2003-2006/IAPSO/IAPSO_07.pdf (accessed 30-12-2010). The most common type of fog to occur on the Chinese coast is advection cooling fog; other types of fog include: advection evaporating fog, mixing fog, radiation fog, and topographic fog, although it is not always possible to distinguish the different types of fog. The American Meteorological Society defines Sea Fog as a type of advection fog formed when air that has been lying over a warm surface is transported over a colder water surface, resulting in the cooling of the lower layer of air below its dew point.
tale, the fog (along with the bad weather in general) is linked to the appearance of the star, Canopus; it is also likely that the monsoons play a role in the fog-conditions.

7. Term: أمطار (pl أمطار) maṭar (pl amṭār)

Textual Reference

 ثم جاءتنا الريح من الجبال فلم نضبط الشرع واخذنا الخشب والمطر والرعد والبرق  
(Buzurg [Devic]: 166).

Translation

But the wind changed, coming against us from the mountains. All of a sudden a gale got up, with lightening, thunder and rain. The sails could not be reefed, and the gale carried us away. (Buzurg [Freeman-Grenville] Tale CXIV: 97).

Context

The extract above is taken from what Buzurg considers to be a popular maritime tale, related to him by a merchant, in which three ships set sail from Sīrāf (on the Persian littoral of the Gulf) in 306/918, destined for the western Indian port of Şaymūr (south of present day Mumbai). In record time, the convoy was in sight of the mountains of Şaymūr and expecting to land in the morning when suddenly the weather changed and they were blown off course. The captain of one of the vessels, Aḥmad, was initially reluctant to jettison the cargo despite the insistence of the crew and merchants on board. On the sixth day of bad weather, Aḥmad gave order to jettison the cargo; it was too late however, as the rain had soaked into the cargo making it three times heavier than it originally was. Thirty-three men escaped the sinking ship using the ship’s boat and after

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143 Buzurg 1966: 166.
five days at sea, they reached al-Tīz. Of the twelve hundred people on board the three ships only some of those who escaped in the ship’s boat survived.146

Discussion of Term

One of the most common words in the Classical and Medieval times, as it is today, both in written literary Arabic and in several dialectal registers is the term مطر maṭar, generally defined as rain;147 water that pours (المنسک عن السک) from the clouds, or water of/from the clouds.148 It seems to be used as a generic term for rain; none of the lexica have specified what type of rain maṭar refers to. Lane does list مطرة maṭara as rain or a shower of rain149 but apart from this, no other distinction is made in the lexica.

The translation of maṭar found in the four medieval sources under study is generally “rain”, though the authors have occasionally used adverbs to specify the type of rain they are discussing. In the “Seven Voyages of Sindbād the Sailor” for example, Sindbād relates that نزل علينا مطر شديد nazala ʿalaynā maṭar shadīd “a tempest of rain fell on us”,150 where maṭar is accompanied by shadīd (strong, powerful, violent, and calamitous)151 and so, has been interpreted as a tempest (of rain). Al-Muqaddasī uses the term maṭar when discussing sources of drinking water in the various places he visited, where often the rainwater was collected in cisterns; or with regards to agriculture, telling us of farms that are watered only by the rain. In all these cases, the term has been translated simply as rain. Even when speaking of the weather, in Āmul, capital of Tabaristān for example, the summer (is) rainy (الصيف مطر), in the regions of al-Daylam (present day Gīlān - northern Iran, along the Caspian Sea), rains are abundant (كثير المياه والأمطار),153 and when speaking of a group of travellers taking refuge from the rain154, al-Muqaddasī uses maṭar. Interestingly, while maṭar is employed as a

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146 Buzurg 1981: 98. According to the narrator of the tale, “the loss of these ships and their cargo, of officers, captains and well-known merchants, contributed to the decline of Sīrāf and Ṣaymūr,” an interesting theory which is discussed in Chapter 4.
147 Lane 1968, VII: 2722.
149 Lane 1968, VII: 2722.
150 Alf layla wa layla (nd), IV: 12; trans: Book of the Thousand Nights 1925, VI: 69.
151 Wehr 1993: 537.
152 Al-Muqaddasī 1906: 359; idem, 2001: 292.
154 Al-Muqaddasī 1906: 175; idem, 2001: 147.
generic term for (various kinds of) rain, he uses عَطَى ghayth\textsuperscript{155} to describe pouring rain (وعَطُى مَمِيد).

In the *Silsilat al-tawārīkh*, maṭar appears to describe heavy rains; Abū Zayd writes:

اليسارَةَ الَّتِي تَكوِنُ بِبَلَادِ الْهَنْدَ وَتَفَسِّيرُهَا المَطْرَ

In the Indies there are **heavy rains**, which the people of the country call *jasara* [yasāra].\textsuperscript{157}

These rains, he continues, last three whole months during the summer, continuously raining throughout the day and night; it is very likely that these *yasāra* rains the author is referring to are what we now know as the monsoon rains. Monsoon (or Arabic مَوْسِم which means season) was used to indicate heavy rains but the term was labelled much later than the period in question i.e. the third-fourth/ninth-tenth century (see Chapter 5).

Another example of the heavy (monsoonal) rains is the description of the weather in the Sea of Andamān (in the Indian Ocean between the Bay of Bengal and the Straits of Malacca, to the west of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands), where a white cloud appears in the sky and takes the form of a whirlwind, after which the “cloud mounts again, discharges itself a prodigious rain” (في مَطْرٍ مَطْرًا فِي قَدْي الْبَحْر).\textsuperscript{158} It is interesting to note that the verb form used in this sentence is based on Form IV i.e. فعلِ افْعَ أَلَا (paradigm for *amṭara*), not Form I فعلِ فَأَلَا (ماَتَارَا). The difference in form can (but not always) signify different types of rain: in a religious sense أمَّطَر mor, *amṭara* is used for a rain sent upon people as a form of punishment, while مَطْر maṭara is used for a blessed rain.\textsuperscript{159}

\textsuperscript{155} غَطَى ghayth is defined as abundant rain (Wehr 1993: 807), or as a productive (as opposed to destructive) rain (Lane 1968, VI: 2314).

\textsuperscript{156} Al-Muqaddasi 1906: 359; idem, 2001: 292.

\textsuperscript{157} *Silsilat al-tawārīkh* 1811: 126; idem, 1995: 86.

\textsuperscript{158} *Silsilat al-tawārīkh* 1811: 12; idem 1995: 6.

\textsuperscript{159} Ibn Durayd 1926, II: 375; Lane 1968, VII: 2721; Ibn Manzūr 2003, V: 209. Examples of the use of أمَّطَر* amṭara* to denote punishment are found in the Qur’ān: “And We rained down on them a shower (of brimstone), and evil was the shower on those who were admonished (but heeded not)” Sūrat al-Nāmāl xxvii: 58; trans. Ali 2002: 266.
Although *māṭar* is found in the early Arabic lexica, cognates of the term are found in other Semitic languages, such as Hebrew (*matar / māṭar / māṭār*),\(^{160}\) Akkadian (*meṭru* rain), Ugaritic (*mfr* rain) and Sabaeon (*mfr* field watered by rain).\(^{161}\) These terms, as the Arabic word, appear to have been derived from a common Semitic root (*m-t-r*). Ibn Durayd, however, notes in his discussion of *māṭar* that al-ʿAṣmaʿī did not analyze this term in his own work *Lughat al-Qur’ān* (The Language of the Qur’ān) because he categorized it as a foreign word. This is a common occurrence with authors who, due to their extreme piety, deemed words of foreign extraction impure to the Holy Qur’ān and therefore unworthy of discussion.\(^{162}\)

*Māṭar* is a generic, all-encompassing term for rain, be it a light shower or a monsoon-style downpour, determined by the context in which it is used. The Biblical use of the term supports this theory as, in Exodus *māṭar* is used for a heavy rain/hail, sent down upon the Pharaoh as a form of punishment;\(^{163}\) in Deuteronomy, it refers to a light rain, sent as a blessing;\(^{164}\) and it is used to denote the flood rain in Genesis.\(^{165}\) The context of the tale in Buzurg’s work suggests that, in this case, he is using *māṭar* to describe heavy rain, as the crew and passengers are in the middle of the sea where they have been engulfed by fierce winds, thunder and lightening, and rain (واخذنا الخبَط والمطر والمَّرِيد والأَبَرِق).

Like the term *riḥ* which can be viewed as a generic term for wind, there are a wide range of synonyms for the term *māṭar* listed in philological tracts such as the *Kitāb lughat al-Qur’ān*.\(^{166}\)

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\(^{160}\) Several Jewish and Hebrew websites and blogs have touched upon the meaning of the term *māṭar*, many only in passing. One such post was regarding the origins of the Angel of the Rain, in which the author writes “the first Jewish angel of rain is probably “Matriel” who is mentioned in the Book of Enoch (circa 2nd century BCE) and whose etymology is simple. “Matar” means rain and “el” means “god or power”… other names for the Jewish angel of rain were things like Matriel, Matariel, and Batarel which are clear derivations.” [http://orthoprax.blogspot.com/2005/10/af-bri-angel-of-rain.html](http://orthoprax.blogspot.com/2005/10/af-bri-angel-of-rain.html) (accessed 29-09-2010). Lowin, in his article on the Hebrew root-word *g-sh-m*, lists various Hebrew words for rain including *yoreh* early rain; *malkosh* late rain; *geshem* usually associated with heavy rain; and “plain old (*matar*), rain” - [http://jhom.com/topics/rain/hebrew.html](http://jhom.com/topics/rain/hebrew.html) (accessed 29-09-2010). The article is entitled “a Hebrew lesson: rootword g-sh-m” written for the Jewish Heritage Online Magazine by Joseph Lowin. Another online article [http://www.pathlights.com/ce Encyclopedia/Encyclopedia/14flood07.htm](http://www.pathlights.com/ce Encyclopedia/Encyclopedia/14flood07.htm) (accessed 29-09-2010) discusses the use of the terms *matar* and *geshem* in the Bible, and the use of *matar* to portray different types of rain.

\(^{161}\) Bomhard & Kerns 1994: 659. The Hebrew term is written as *māṭar* in this text.

\(^{162}\) Ibn Durayd 1926, II: 375. At one point, Ibn Durayd states that *amṭarat al-samā‘* is considered to be *لغة فصيحة lugha fasīḥa* (pure, good Arabic language; Wehr 1993: 837). See also Agius 1984: 67.

\(^{163}\) Exodus 9: 18 – Behold, to morrow about this time I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as hath not been in Egypt since the foundation thereof even until now.

\(^{164}\) Deuteronomy 28: 12 – The Lord shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow.

\(^{165}\) Genesis 7: 4 – For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth.

al-maṭar of Abū Zayd Saʿīd b. Aws al-Anṣārī, which discusses the “names of the different kinds of rain and the expressions used in speaking of rain”\textsuperscript{167}. It also discusses the relationship or the effect that the stars have upon the rain, and the subjects of thunder (رعد raʿd), lightening (برق barq), mist (ضباب saḥāb- including the previously discussed ضباب dabāb) and waters (مياه miyāḥ); many interesting data which are absent from works such as Buzurg’s Kitāb ʿAjāʿib al-Hind and which deserve an in-depth study, culturally and linguistically.

**Anchorage**

8. **Term:** سواحل pl ساحل sāḥil (pl sawāḥil)

**Textual Reference**

فحملتهم الرياح إلى جزيرة مجهولة لا يعرفونها فرمو بنفوسهم على سواحلها وليس لهم حركة لشدة ما لحقهم في البحر من الاهوال والشدايد فمكثوا هالك بقية يومهم ثم قاموا فاحتالوا في القارب إلى ان جروهم إلى الساحل وباتوا ليلتهم معه 168

(Buzurg [Devic]: 71)

**Translation**

The wind took them on to an absolutely unknown island. Thrown up on shore, they stayed there the rest of the day exhausted by the terrors and sufferings they had endured. Finally they took courage, and hauled the boat up on to the beach, and spent the night in it.\textsuperscript{169} (Buzurg [Freeman-Grenville] Tale XLI: 41-2).

**Context**

This tale is related to Buzurg by ‘one of the sailors’, possibly a regular participant in majālis (gatherings) frequented by Buzurg. A ship was sailing from Sanf (Champa, west coast of South Vietnam) to Oman when it began to sink. Only around ten of the passengers escaped in the ship’s boat, and were thrown up on to the shore of an island

\textsuperscript{167} Gottheil 1896: 313. Abū Zayd is a frequently cited source of al-Zabīdī and Ibn Manẓūr amongst others.

\textsuperscript{168} Buzurg 1966: 71.


\textsuperscript{170} Ibid.
they were not familiar with where they were led to a gold mine by monkeys residing on the island. The passage concerns the landing of both the sailors and the boat on the sāḥil, and later dragging the boat further away from the sea and supporting it on or with wooden baulks (see discussion in terms بُحَرَ bahr and بَرَ barr: Context B).

Discussion of Term

Sāḥil ساحل is a common Arabic term generally used to mean seashore, coast and littoral. It is found in all four of the primary sources under discussion: the ‘Ajā‘īb al-Hind uses the term to mean shore and beach; the Silsilat al-tawārīkh applies this term to mean “coast”; while in the Sindbād stories it carries the meaning of “river-bank”, “sea-coast”, “river-quay” (جانب الساحل jānīb sāḥil), “shore”, and “beach” (ساحل البحر sāḥil bahr). Al-Muqaddasī also uses the term, both singular and plural, numerous times, and has been translated, depending on the context, in various ways: “shore”; “coast”, “banks” (of a river) or “riverbank”, “littoral”, “seashore”, ساحل الساحل / ساحل البحر sawāḥil bahr “seashore”, “seacoast”, the shore of the lake”, “coastal areas”, the السواحل المنكورة sawāḥil mazkūra “well-known maritime amenities”, “port”, and, interestingly, “a place.”

The term, found in Classical and Medieval Arabic lexica, is generally defined as seashore or the shore of a river, so called because the seawater abrades or pares (قشر qashara or سم ساحلة sawāḥala) it (i.e. the shore); or because ebb and flow of the tide washes or

171 Wehr 1993: 466.
172 Buzurg 1981: 18, 41.
175 Book of the Thousand Nights 1925, VI: 14.
176 Ibid: 21 – this is the translation used for the plural form sawāḥil (Alf layla wa layla [nd], III: 290).
177 Book of the Thousand Nights 1925, VI: 48.
178 Ibid: 56.
179 Ibid: 73.
183 Ibid: 25, 293, 372.
184 Ibid: 77.
185 Ibid: 55, 180, 347.
186 Ibid: 75, 189.
187 Ibid: 293.
188 Ibid: 81.
189 Al-Muqaddasī 1906: 80.
191 Ibid: 75, 76.
sweeps away all that is upon it. Persian lexica list the word as an Arabic one, giving a similar definition as above: shore, (sea) coast and beach. Lane has given the term as being synonymous with judd(a), from where the place-name Jeddah (on the Red Sea Arabian coast) is derived, al-Fayyūmī as synonymous with shāṭī’ al-bahr seashore; and al-Muqaddasī synonymous with šaṭṭ (see discussion below).

The origins of the term seem to be Arabic as I have not found any evidence to suggest otherwise. But what exactly does sāḥil mean, and what type of ‘anchorage’ is it referring to? In Classic Ships of Islam, the term is listed under seashore terminology rather than with the terminology for ports or harbours, or for coastal features. Indeed, the translations given in the primary sources do, for the most part, agree with this classification, though al-Muqaddasī applies sāḥil in the context of "port":

الحوراء هي ساحل خيبر

Al-Hawrā’ [Ḥawrā’] is the port of Khaybar

and

العوذين هي ساحل قرح عامة كثيرة العسل ولها مرسى حسن

Al-Ḥawrā’ is also labelled مرسى or مرسى مرسى marsā, suggesting that مرسى and ساحل sāḥil are semantically rendered the same. Yet, the above extract regarding al-Ḥawrā’ suggests that sāḥil and marsā are two distinct elements. Is it possible that ساحل sāḥil is a generic

194 Ibn Durayd 1926, II: 155; Ibn Manẓūr 2003, XI: 393; also Lane 1968, IV: 1320. Technically, the term should be the passive participle مساحل mashāḥil rather than the active participle ساحل sāḥil.
195 Richardson 1829: 797; Steingass 1930: 638.
196 Steingass 1930: 638.
197 Lane 1872, IV: 1320. This is supported by Agius 2008: 174 – sāḥil is synonymous with judda and sīf.
198 Al-Fayyūmī 1872, I: 135.
201 Ibid: 76
202 Ibid: 11 – the text reads “Next is the port if al-Ḥawrā’, abounding in rocks, so that ships are taken by surprise on attempting to enter it.”
term which includes all forms of anchorage, be they ports, harbours, or the seashore? Or that the places mentioned by al-Muqaddasī have a particular feature which would allow them to be labelled both ṣāḥil and marsā? 

Ṣāḥil is also said to be a geographical term meaning “edge, border zone, fringe area, zone”, used, for example, for the ṣāḥil of Tunisia (the coastal region of the northeast, around the towns of Sousse, Monastir and Mahdia); the ṣāḥil of Algeria (the coastal regions of Algeria, mainly those around Algiers and Oran); the southern “shore” of the Sahara; and also the well-known Sawāḥil (plural form), the coastal region of East Africa on the Western Indian Ocean. In light of this, ṣāḥil (in the maritime context) is applied to any place situated on the coast or seashore, be it an anchorage or simply a beach; it also carries the meaning of port which, in actual fact, is understood to mean a place where boats and ships are hauled and then supported on wooden baulks as found in Buzurg’s text.

9. Term: ṣāḥil (pl shuṭṭān, shuṭṭān)

Textual Reference

(Buzurg [Devic]: 119).

Translation

The king had a customs post on the shore where he levies import duties on merchandise. (Buzurg [Freeman-Grenville] Tale LXIX: 69).

Context

The above is an extract from a short passage regarding custom duties in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and the custom post on the Sri Lankan shores.

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204 Callot 1995, VIII: 836.
205 Ibid.
Discussion of Term

Derived from the root ش-ت-ث، the term شاطئ shaṭṭ is primarily defined in the early Arabic lexica as to be, or become distant, remote or far off. Ibn Manẓūr cites Ibn Barī, defining شاطئ as بابة to be distant. Given the context of the tale, the correct definition of شاطئ is “the bank” [of a river or body of water], the side of a river or valley, synonymous with شاطئ shaṭṭ. Amongst other definitions, Steingass’ Persian dictionary lists it in the context of the Tigris or any large river.

Apart from the ‘Ajā‘ib al-Hind, شاطئ shaṭṭ is found in al-Muqaddāsī’s Aḥsan al-taqāsīm. Buzurg uses it to mean shore as seen in the example above, as does al-Muqaddāsī; others are rendered as: شاطئ البحر shaṭṭ al-baḥr “seashore”, “a bank” or “riverbank”, “riverine”, “coast”, and “on a river”. It has also been used to mean river, as al-Muqaddāsī describes the Tigris, in the region of Ḥirāq:

Indeed, two-thirds of the charm of Baghdād derives from this river.

The use of شاطئ shaṭṭ to denote both land and water (riverbank and river) echoes that of the term بحر baḥr where, depending on the context in which the word is used, بحر baḥr can mean the sea (the most common meaning), or it could be alluding to coastal cities or

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209 Lane 1968, IV: 1548.
212 Ibn Manẓūr 2003, VII: 378; also Lane 1968, IV: 1549. In Classic Ships of Islam, shaṭṭ is discussed under terms for riverbank whereas شاطئ shaṭṭ is classed as seashore terminology (Agius 2008: 174).
213 Steingass 1930: 745.
220 Ibid: 236, 238.
221 Ibid: 103.
inhabited areas as opposed to the barren desert. Similarly, the term ٔشاط shatṭ, though often (and certainly in the context of the above passage extracted from Buzurg’s text) used to mean riverbank, can also be used to refer to a river. Examples of the varying use of this term can be found across the Middle East and North Africa. In Iraq for example, the ٔشاط shatṭ refers to the Shaṭṭ al-ʻArab, “formed by the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers at the town of al-Qurnah,” the southern part of which constitutes the Iran-Iraq border, and then empties into the Gulf.

The varying usage or definitions of the term ٔشاط shatṭ highlight the need to assess or analyse the terminology in the context in which it appears. The extract from Buzurg’s text shown at the beginning of this discussion for example, uses ٔشاط shatṭ in the sense of shore, or more specifically, the seashore; as the passage is discussing the Sri Lankan shores, defining the term as riverbank, as applied by medieval lexicographers and the modern lexicographers who copied them, would be incorrect in the context of Buzurg’s use. When speaking of travelling to Sarandīb (Sri Lanka), medieval authors rarely specified which area of Sri Lanka they were travelling to, or at which port they were docking. Of course, Buzurg’s text could be referring to a port near a riverbank, or situated on a riverbank however, as we are unable to determine for sure which area of Sri Lanka Buzurg is referring to, it would be prudent to translate the term as shore. Applying the definition of “riverbank” to al-Muqaddasī’s description of the Tigris quoted above, in which he uses the term ٔشاط shatṭ would be incorrect; the correct definition of this term can be found across the Middle East and North Africa.

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222 In North Africa, shatṭ generally refers to the salt lakes, both on the high plains (at altitudes of more than 1,000 m/3280 feet), such as the Shaṭṭ Tigrīn in Morocco and the Shaṭṭ al-Gharbī, the Shaṭṭ al-Sharkī and the Shaṭṭ al-Hudnā in Algeria; and at lower levels (sometimes below sea level), such as the Shaṭṭ Malghīr in Algeria and the Shaṭṭ al-Jarīd in Tunisia. In this case, the term has been adopted by both the French and the English languages, becoming chott and shott respectively – see Callot 1997, IX: 368. Salt lakes are in fact smooth depressed areas which (as a general rule) are dry in the summer, with very little water in the winter. Shaṭṭ al-Jarīd in Tunisia is considered to be the largest North African salt lake – originally, the term shatṭ was used (in Tunisia) to refer to the part of the flats with halophyte (salt tolerant) vegetation, with the vegetation free part being called sabkha.


223 http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/31417/Shatt-Al-Arab (accessed 25-03-2011). The Shaṭṭ (previously called Dijlāt al-ʻAwrā’ – Najī & Ali 1981: 298), which is navigable as far as Iraq’s chief port of Basra, requires continuous dredging due to the large quantities of silt that are emptied into the channel from the Kārūn River (previously known as the River Ulai, this river once flowed directly into the Gulf rather than into the Shaṭṭ al-ʻArab as it does today – Hourani 1995: 10), in order to keep the channel navigable for shallow-draft ocean going vessels. Known in Iran as the Arvand Rūd, the Shaṭṭ is thought to have been formed relatively recently (in geological terms); the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers originally emptied into the Gulf via a more westerly channel. The name Arvand, in fact, was originally used for the Tigris River (in Middle Persian literature and in the Shāhnāma); its use with regards to the Shaṭṭ al-ʻArab began during the Pahlavi Dynasty (1925-1979). (See also http://www.defencejournal.com/jul99/shatt-al-arab.htm (accessed 25-03-2011)).

224 A derivative of this term is the Ottoman Turkish form Şat, used to refer to the River Tigris. http://forum.wordreference.com/showthread.php?t=330813 (accessed 01-11-2010).
definition in the context of the passage is river. The salt lakes of North Africa are a further example of the need to take the context of a term into consideration, as defining these chotts (from شط شطّ) as riverbanks or the shore is incorrect.

10. Term: أجوان pl جون jūn (pl ajwān)

Textual Reference A

اسريت في مركب لي كبير ونحن طالبين جزيرة فنصور فاسقطنا الريح إلى جون اقمنا فيه ثلثين وثلثين (Buzurg [Devic]: 30).

Translation A

I set out on a large ship that belonged to me to go to Fanṣūr Island [on the western coast of Sumatra]. The wind drove us into a bay, where we stayed for thirty-three days.226 (Buzurg [Freeman-Grenville] Tale XV: 18).

Textual Reference B

حدثني أنه سمع بعض البحريين يحكى ان بلوبلينك – وهو جون في البحر – فيه قوم يأكلون الناس (Buzurg [Devic]: 125).

Translation B

The same man also told me that he had heard a sailor say that at Lūlūbilank [on the west coast of Sumatra], which is a bay in the sea, there are cannibals.228 (Buzurg [Freeman-Grenville] Tale LXXVII: 73).

Context A

The first passage is extracted from the tale entitled The Whale Islands, related by Abū l-Zahr al-Barkhatī, a shipmaster and ship-owner [الناخذ], one of the principal notables of

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228 Idem, 1981: 73.
Sīrāf. The tale in question was recounted to al-Barkhātī’s maternal uncle, Ibn Anshartū who in turn heard it from his father, al-Barkhātī’s maternal grandfather, the protagonist of the tale. Buzurg emphasises the authenticity of his tales by describing al-Barkhātī as “a man of integrity, to whose word one paid heed, and to whom one entrusted one’s goods and children”, adding that he was a Magian (Zoroastrian) who eventually embraced Islam.

The tale tells us of a ship blown off course towards the Fish Islands, populated by man and the islanders, who had “smiling faces… plump bodies, soft to touch, like cream… Only they had small heads, and on their sides they had a kind of wings, or flippers, like a turtle.” These creatures were the product of the union between man and fish, and were able to remain both on land and in the sea.

**Context B**

The second passage is taken from a snippet of information provided by Abū ʻAbdallāh Muḥammad b. Bābishād b. Ḥārām b. Ḥamawayh al-Sīrāfī, one of the principal shipmasters to sail to the Land of Gold, who had heard from a sailor that the Bay of Lūlūbīlank (on the west coast of Sumatra) is inhabited by cannibals.

**Discussion of Term**

The definitions for جون jūn in early lexica are based around the concepts of darkness and light, and they do not fit in the context of the passage. It has also been used in poetry to represent black clouds: جون ajash, where jawn refers to black clouds and ajash to the sound that these black clouds make i.e. the sound of thunder.
Generally, جون is used to depict the relationship or connection between black and white, or, according to some scholars, as a metaphor to symbolise light and dark.\footnote{Al-Fayyūmī 1872, I: 60. An unrelated definition is also listed by al-Fayyūmī: the diminutive form of the term، جوین is a large district of Naysābūr (in the region of Khurāsān) to which the term has been ascribed to by some scholars.}

Modern Arabic dictionaries such as the Hans Wehr’s define جون (jūn) as gulf, inlet and bay\footnote{Wehr 1993: 177.}, as do both the English translation of the Arabic text by Freeman-Grenville shown above, and the French translation by Devic, une baie.\footnote{Buzurg 1966: 30 & 125.} Dozy has جون (pl أجوان) as golfe, with جونا being synonymous with تقويرا، en côttoyant le golfe, both in his dictionary and in his translation of al-Idrīsī’s (d. 548 / 1154) text.\footnote{Al- Idrīsī 1969: 281; Dozy 1927, I: 236.} Similarly, Blachère gives جون jawn as baie, golfe,\footnote{Blachère 1976, III: 1955.} as well as جون جوان as stagnant, murky water; pond;\footnote{Ibid: 1953.} while the مهیت al-muḥīt lists it as being synonymous with خور khawr (see below) and خليج khalīj [bay, gulf, canal\footnote{Wehr 1993: 293.}], and notes that according to geographers, or in the context of geography، جون refers to a gulf (or inlet) that cuts deeply into the coastline.\footnote{Bustānī 1983: 139 –the entry reads بحيرة من البحر تدخل داخلها عمليا في البرز.}

Steingass’ and Richardson’s Persian dictionaries define جون as the jumna or a large river in India (in Sanskrit called Yamunā).\footnote{Steingass 1930: 379.} Richardson gives the Arabic definitions which are more or less a repetition of those listed previously, adding jān (pl of جون jawn) black.\footnote{Ibid. The term is also listed in Urdu and Hindi lexica; amongst the definitions, though none fit in with the context of the passage, was the Hindi jawan, jaun, defined as foreigners; the country of the Yavanas (sometimes applied to Bactria (Central Asia), Ionia (Modern Turkey), Greece, and, more recently, to Arabia), see Platts 1974: 398.}

In addition to the lack of a suitable definition in the Classical and Medieval Arabic lexica, it is also interesting to note that I was unable to find جون either in the contemporary text سیلسلة التواریک, nor in احسن التقا‌شیم, or in the Arabian Nights. It is however, frequently found in al-Idrīsī’s geographical work نزحات الامسhtagsیات fī ikhtirāq al-afāq (The Stroll of One Who Desires to Cross the Horizons), to mean ‘gulf’, as understood by the nineteenth-century scholars Dozy and De Goeje.\footnote{Al-Idrīsī 1969: 123, 138, 281.}
The absence of (a suitable definition for) the term جون in early Arabic lexica and its presence in select texts poses some interesting questions: could it be possible that the word جون has been used as a metaphor to describe the darkness and the depth of the sea? Buzurg describes the situation the sailors found themselves in:

نحن متخليين على وجه البحر ولا تلقح سباكتا قرار البحر على عمق الف باع

[Abū l-Zahr al-Barkhatī’s maternal grandfather reports] we stayed still on the sea, and our leads could not reach bottom at a depth of 1000 fathoms.244

Yet the same word is used by al-Idrīsī simply to describe the coastal features of the areas he travelled to. The term is not area specific: Buzurg uses جون when referring to anchorage points off the Indonesian coast or South-East Asia (a voyage headed from India to Fanṣūr Island blown off course towards the Fish Islands, and the second passage regarding Lūlūbilank); while al-Idrīsī uses it for (amongst other places) his description of Egypt. Nor is the term dialectal or of a specific regional variation, as Buzurg and al-Idrīsī were from different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds: the former was of Persian origin (albeit one who frequented the ports of the Arabian-Persian Gulf amongst other places) while the latter was of Moroccan descent but lived in Sicily and Italy. It is possible that the term was neglected by the lexicographers as it was a common term at the time and so, they had not thought it necessary to include it. If this were the case however, then it seems likely that the term would have been applied in the primary sources used in this study. Nor is the term likely to be a neologism, as the lexica used in this investigation are either contemporary of, or of a later date than Buzurg, and the lexicographers would therefore be aware of this term. It is possible that etymologically, جون is of foreign origin which would explain its absence from early Arabic lexica, though I was, however, unable to trace the origins of this word. What is known though, is that جون is still in use today, as can be seen by its presence in modern Arabic dictionaries; it is also used by members of the seafaring community in Oman.245

244 Buzurg 1966: 30; idem, 1981: 18.
245 Written communication- D. A. Agius 18-12-2010.
11. Term: خُورُ pl خُور khawr (pl khuʿūr)

Textual Reference A

كان يسير في مركب فاندهت عليه الريح وأخذه الخب لفجا إلى خور لاح له فدخله.
(Buzurg [Devic]: 47-48).

Translation A

He was at sea when he was driven by a sharp squall, and was glad to take refuge in a bay.

Textual Reference B

وادا برجل قد وافا فقال لي قد دخلت الخور خشبة طويلة عليها اسمك.
(Buzurg [Devic]: 145).

Translation B

A man came and said to me: a long piece of wood has arrived in the port with your name carved on it

Context A

Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. ʿAmr relates how a ship-owner and his crew, having taken refuge from a storm in a bay, discover a hoard of elephants tusks (ivory) left behind by the huge snake they had followed into the jungle, approximately a mile away from where the ship was anchored. The snake, it seemed, ate elephants and left their tusks.

Context B

The second passage is taken from a tale related to Buzurg by ʿAbbās b. Māhān, *hunarman*\(^{251}\) (*qādī* or judge) of Saymūr, West India, in which a merchant had fitted out a ship and sent an agent to go from Sindān or Saymūr\(^{252}\) to Oman with a piece of teak to trade in his name. Before departure, the piece of wood was placed securely under the bridge of the vessel to prevent it from being jettisoned if bad weather struck. When the piece of teak was found floating in the port, without the ship or the representative, the merchant feared the worst. As it happened, the ship had been caught in a storm when the crew were unloading their cargo in Oman; and the piece of teak, which had found its way back to its owner in most extraordinary circumstances, was the only item of cargo to be lost.

Discussion of Term

*Khawr* خَوْر is a commonly used term, defined in early Arabic lexica as an inlet (lit. a neck) from the sea or large river entering into the land; a place, channel, or outlet where water pours into the sea or large river; a canal, gulf, bay or cut from the sea; synonymous with خُلْيَج khālij [bay, gulf, canal]\(^{253}\).\(^{254}\) It is also listed as being synonymous with غُور ghawr: low or depressed ground or land, between two elevated parts.\(^{255}\) Ibn Durayd states that *khawr* is (synonymous with) خُلْيَج khālij i.e. a gulf or bay, and adds that he believes the term to be an Arabicised Persian term (loanword from Fārsī).\(^{256}\) Conversely, the term is listed in the Persian lexica as an Arabic one, meaning bay, gulf and a valley between two mountains.\(^{257}\) There could possibly be a tenuous link between خور *khawr* and the Persian terms خواراب *kh’ur-āb* (impure, muddy water; the dam of a sluice) and خواراُم *kh’urābah* (a river, especially one whence water is brought in for the purpose of cultivation; water to drink).\(^{258}\)

\(^{251}\) Ibid: 94 - the equivalent of a *qādī* (judge) (“This *hunarman* is like a *qādī* in a Muslim country. He can only be chosen from amongst Muslims”).

\(^{252}\) Buzurg (1981: 84) states “the uncertainty is mine”. The exact location of the port of Sindān on the western coast of India has not yet been established (Shokoohy 2003: 23); one theory is that Sindān is (present day) Sanjan in Gujarat (see Map 3).

\(^{253}\) Wehr 1993: 293.

\(^{254}\) Ibn Manẓūr 2003, IV: 306; also Lane 1968, II: 821.


\(^{256}\) Ibn Durayd 1926, II: 216 & III: 237.

\(^{257}\) Richardson 1829: 636.

\(^{258}\) Ibid.
Also found in the contemporary (primary) sources, such as al-Muqaddasī’s use in the description of the region of Fārs,

Siṃīz [between present day Bandar Daylam and Bandar Gonāveh in the Būshehr province of Iran] is half a farsakh away from the sea, above Mahrūbān [north of Bandar Daylam]. It has a long market penetrated by an inlet on which boats ply. The mosque is distant from the market, the administration building opposite to it; there are many palaces…Jannāba [by Bandar Gonāveh in the Būshehr province] also is on an inlet…

while in Silsilat al-tawārīkh, the term is translated as both “freshwater gulf” with reference to the Pearl River Estuary en route to Canton (China), and “bay”.

The presence of the term خور Khawr in modern Arabic dictionaries indicates that the term is still in use; further evidence of the continuity of its use is found in the (Arabic) dialects of the seafaring people of the Arabian and Persian Gulf and Oman, wherekhōr is applied to denote “inlet”, bay; in Qalhat and Sur (south east Oman), for example, it is used to mean a river estuary, an inlet, or harbour. Khawr or khōr is also frequently attached to place-names, for example خور Moysi Khōr Qusayyir and خور Mūsā.

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260 Silsilat 1811: 20-21; idem, 1995: 11: "فَذَا جَازَتُ السَفِينَة الابْوَابُ وَدَخَلَ الخُورُ صَارَتْ إِلَى مَا عَذَبَ إِلَى المَوْصُولِ الَّذِي تَرْسِي عِيْنِهِ مِنُ الْبَيْلَادِ الْمَنْغِرِيَّةِ وَهُوَ يَسْمَى خَانْفُو " "When a ship has got through the gates [of China], she, with the tide of flood, goes into a fresh water gulf [the Pearl River Estuary (and Delta)], and drops anchor in the chief port of China, which is that of Canfu [Canton],” See Chapter 4 for discussion regarding the Gates of China.
261 Silsilat 1811: 32; idem, 1995: 18: "الخُورَ فَلِمَلْكٌ قَلِيلٌ يَقِعُ الْخُورُ يَقِعُ اللِّي العَنْبِ الْكَبِيرِ " "…a small kingdom called Hitrange [a kingdom in the Indies], which is very poor; but it has a bay, where the sea throws up great lumps of ambergris.”
262 Agius 2005 (b): 43. In Ras Musandam, fishermen use ghubba to refer to a wide gulf or bay.
263 Ibid: 177. Estuaries are generally elongated and funnel-shaped with a river running along the centre line and beaches mainly near the mouth of the estuary http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/56637/bay (accessed 27-02-2011); additionally, the water in an estuary is generally a mix of seawater and river water or salt and freshwater.
264 Agius 2005 (b): 170, 177.
The discussion regarding خور jawn and جُنْ jawn (see above) seem to indicate that both terms are used interchangeably to mean gulf and bay (and estuary), the difference between which (even in the English language) is not always clearly defined. A bay—which is semi-circular (or circular) in shape—usually refers to “an indentation in the coastline between two headlands.” It is a smaller body of water than a gulf (although there are exceptions to this rule); a gulf on the other hand, is defined as a large coastal indentation, “the re-entrant of an ocean, regardless of size, depth, configuration, and geological structure.” Often, gulfs are referred to as bay, and the characteristics of the two cannot always be distinguished, as the characteristics of one often apply to the other. As a result, I feel that the terms خور khawr and جون jawn, although not completely synonymous with each other, are used to define very similar coastal features and, like their English language counterparts, cannot always be distinguished from one another.

12. Term: مرسا مرسا/مرساة pl مرسا/مرساة pl مرسا/مرساة marsā / mîrsāt (pl marāsī)

Textual Reference A

وقدموا على الجزيرة مع شروق الشمس وأصحت السماء وأشرقتها على الجزيرة وختعوا مرسا كمينا (Buzurg [Devic]: 26).

Translation A

At daybreak, they drew near to an island. The sky brightened. They saw land, and chose a good anchorage. (Buzurg [Freeman-Grenville], Tale XIV: 16).

Textual Reference B

أينما عابثت الموضوع علمت أن أقد وقعا إلى بادج الناز الذين يأكلون الناس فذا وقفتنا في هذا الموضوع اتيقنا باللهكثير فعضلنا وتبنا إلى الله تعالى وصلمنا على بعضنا بعض صلوات الموت واحاطت لنا الدواليج فدخلوا بنا

265 Dear & Kemp 2006: 37.
266 The Bay of Bengal for example, is larger than the Gulf of Mexico, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/56637/bay (accessed 27-02-2011).
Translation B

Seeing the coast where we were, and realising that we were falling among cannibal negroes, and were certain to perish, we performed the ritual ablutions and turned our hearts towards God, saying the prayers for the dead for each other. The canoes of the negroes surrounded us and brought us into the harbour. We anchored and disembarked. (Buzurg [Freeman-Grenville], Tale XXXII: 31).

Context A

Excerpt one is taken from the tale regarding the Island of Women, related to Buzurg by the ship master and ship owner Abū l-Zahr al-Barkhatī, one of the principal notables of Sīrāf, and in the words of Buzurg, a man of integrity and honesty, “to whose word one paid heed, and to whom one entrusted one’s goods and children – eventually he was converted to Islam [from Zoroastrianism], proved a good Muslim and made the Pilgrimage.”

The tale tells us of a ship blown off course towards the star Canopus and falling prey to the terrors of the sea such as thick fog, violent gales, a sea that boiled, and a fire that filled the horizon. When the sea finally calmed, the captain and his crew anchored at a nearby island where they were overpowered by the thousands of women who had been abandoned on this Island of Women. Only one man, an old Muslim from Cadiz in Spain who had been hidden by, and eventually escaped with, one of the women, lived to tell the tale.

Context B

The second passage is taken from Ismāʿīl b. Ibrāhīm b. Mirdās (Ismāʿīlawyh)’s Slaving Adventure in which he and his crew abducted the king of Sofāla (on the Zanj coast), and sold him in the slave market in Oman. The extract tells of the moment those on board

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surrendered themselves to death as they found themselves being led into the harbour and surrounded by “cannibal negroes”.274

**Discussion of term**

Derived from the root √r. s. w. or √r. s. y., the word marsā is found in varying forms – مرسا - in all of the early sources used for this study. The verb forms, Form I رسا and Form IV أرسا are defined as to be stationary, at rest, to be fixed, firm, steady or stable.275 The term is explained in various contexts; when compounded with قدمه, for example, it refers to someone being steadfast in war (lit. his foot stood firm).276 When compounded with the nouns سفينة safīna or مركب mkarb (ship/ vessel) it is rendered as the ship anchored, or lay at anchor,277 or became grounded.278 The texts here however, vary in this respect; in some instances, the narrator or author has specified فارست or السفينة على الجوادي “the [Noah’s] ark anchored upon [Mount] al-Jūd”.280 At other times, no mention is made of a ship as the verb itself is sufficient for one to understand the context: وکل محل رسموت عليه “we cast anchor” or “we anchored”.281

From the same root come the nouns used for both anchors and anchorage. Marsā مرسا is a common term used in the Arabic texts; and is often translated as “anchorage”,282 or “port”.283 Lane classifies the term as an infinitive noun ( مصدر), or noun, of time, and of place, where it would be defined as an anchorage, a place of anchoring, a port, or a station of ships.284 Included in the Qur’an, it is used to mean both fixed time,285 and, in the case of the Noah story, harbour or haven,286 (lit.) to be at rest.287

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277 Al-Manẓūr 2003, XIV: 395; also Lane 1968, III: 1086.
281 Buzurg 1981: 16; al-Muqaddasi 2001: 9, 12, 76.
283 Lane 1968, III: 1087. Steingass (1930: 1215) and Richardson (1829: 1392) give it as (an Arabic term) a place where anything stands firmly; a port and anchorage (Steingass only).
Also from the same root is the term مرساة mirtsāt, the oldest literary Arabic term for anchor,\(^{286}\) listed as being synonymous with the Persian langar\(^{287}\) (an instrument) used to stay or still a ship,\(^{288}\) i.e. an anchor or انجر anjar;\(^{289}\) although, the mirtsāt is said to be heavier or larger than the anjar.\(^{290}\) Other than the fact that the mirtsāt is relatively large, one does not know the composition, shape or size of the anchor being used; I found no information pertaining to the anchor types or manufacture in any of the medieval Arabic sources I consulted. The term itself is an Arabic one, derived from the root mentioned above. Derivatives and developments of the term, all of which are still in use, include, among others: بروسي brūsī “anchor”, used in al-⪼Aqabah; بروسي from Yemen; بروسي in Soqotri and brussi in Tigré.\(^{293}\)

Of the sources consulted, the term mirtsāt “anchor” (pl مرساسي) was found most often in the Sindbād stories. In the “Ajā‘ib al-Hind however, Buzurg uses the alternative term anjar\(^{294}\) for anchor, while using mirtsāt to mean “harbour”\(^{295}\) (see textual reference 2), showcasing how the context in which a term is found, is often just as important as the definitions found in Arabic lexica, for understanding maritime and nautical nomenclature. The terms still appear to be in use in modern times, given their presence in Modern Arabic dictionaries; however, lanjar (langar), anyar and angar (Gulf regional variations of the classical anjar\(^{296}\) used by Buzurg) are more commonly used to refer to ‘anchor’ than the term مرساة mirtsāt.

Similarly, the use of the term marsā مرسى - referring more specifically to the maritime aspect implied by harbour rather than the economic one meant by the term مرسى مرسى.
fūrda (see below), and has been used by Buzurg to mean anchorage, port and (مَرْسَاء) harbour - has diminished considerably since the third-fourth / ninth-tenth century. Although still in use in modern times, even in place names (such as Marsā Matrūh, a village northwest Egypt on the Mediterranean coast), it appears to be less common than terms such as the Persian loanword bandar (a comprehensive term used to denote both a harbour and a port town) and the possibly Greek (limen) or ancient Egyptian ميناء mīnā' (a similarly comprehensive term used for harbour, port and anchorage), neither of which appear in the ʿAjāʾib al-Hind. Despite its dwindling use, the term has an immensely rich history, one which can only be recounted via a thorough linguistic inquiry.

13. Term: فرضة fūrda (pl furaḍ)

Textual Reference

(Buzurg [Devic]: 104).

Translation

In this way they come down the Mihran [Mihrān] and reach the port of Manṣūra in forty days. (Buzurg [Freeman-Grenville] Tale LVII: 60).

Context

The excerpt is taken from the anecdote entitled “Rafts of Grain”, related to Buzurg by Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. ʿAmr b. Ḥammawayh al-Najīramī, who witnessed people from Lower Kashmir reaching the port of Manṣūra (the capital of the region of al-Sind, lower Indus) having travelled down the River Mihrān (the Indus River) using makeshift rafts made from bags of grain treated with resin to make them waterproof.

Buzurg 1966: 104.
Idem 1981: 60.
Al- Manṣūra, former capital of the Islamic Empire in Sind. A metropolis built upon the ruins of a city called Brahmanābād some hundred miles upstream from the delta, the name was changed in honour of Caliph al-Manṣūr (136-158/ 754-775), the second ʿAbbāsid caliph. Now it is a ruined city approximately 19km south-east of Shāhddpur, Sind, Pakistan. Brett 2001: 396. See also UNESCO Collection of History of Civilisations of Central Asia: http://unesco.culture.free.fr/asia-new/html
Discussion of Term

Furda is a mark made by notching or otherwise; a notch or an incision in something. When this definition (incision, gap, opening) is applied to the maritime/coastal context it becomes a gap or breach in the bank of a river whence one draws water, or by which one descends to the water or ships and boats ascend. Ibn Manzūr lists furda as gap or breach in a river (bank), and specifies furda al-nahr as a drinking place, possibly, as above, the breach in the river from where one draws water. He also cites al-Asma‘ī’s concurring definition of mashra‘a drinking place.

Furdat al-bahr is synonymous with muḥāṭ al-sufūn, the place where ships are stationed near the bank of a river or near land, and the place where ships unload. Persian lexicographers list the term as being an Arabic one, and define it as (amongst other definitions listed previously) “a bight [curve or recess in a coastline, river, etc] where ships ride at anchor; a harbour, dock, station for shipping”, and “the mouth of a river”.

Other than in the ʿAjāʾib al-Hind, furda is found more frequently in al-Muqaddasī’s Aḥsan al-taqāsīm. In the translation, for the most part, it is used to represent “port”. Its other definitions however include (in order of frequency) seaport, harbour, (http://unesco.culture.free.fr/asia-new/html_eng/chapitre4218/chapitre4.htm accessed 25-06-2011)
docks;\textsuperscript{314} export point;\textsuperscript{315} point of departure (of travellers);\textsuperscript{316} فرضة التجار furda al-tujjār place of assembly of merchants\textsuperscript{317} and al-Furdha, the gap (in the region of Kirmān, south-central Iran).\textsuperscript{318} It is also used by al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/922-3), in its plural form, to mean the city’s loading quays\textsuperscript{319} and a beachhead;\textsuperscript{320} the translator of the work writes that furda is a modern military term.\textsuperscript{321}

The term, of Arabic origins,\textsuperscript{322} is believed to have, in the early centuries, been used to denote the sense of port, referring to the economic function of the place, rather than the maritime aspect implied by مرسا marsā, harbour (as discussed earlier), or even minā’. The distinction is highlighted by the geographer Abū l-Fidā’ (d. 732/1331) saying:

بيروت فرضة دمشق...ولها ميناء جليل

Beirut is the \textit{port} of Damascus, and has a fine harbour\textsuperscript{323}

Judging by the definitions found in the lexica however, this distinction does not always apply. In any case, both terms مرسا and فرضة have been gradually replaced by the more comprehensive terms الميناء minā\textsuperscript{324} and بدر bandar.

Buzurg’s use of the word is in the context of al-Manṣūra (a now ruined city near Shāhdādpur, Pakistan) and the River Mihrān (Indus), which flowed around the northern and western borders of this metropolis, suggesting that the term furda, in this case, means a gap or breach in the bank of a river whence one draws water, or by which one descends to the water. It could also be referring to the place where ships and boats ascend; however in this case, they would have to be relatively small boats (or rafts, as mentioned in the tale) as the river only carries limited navigation. Additionally,

\textsuperscript{314} Ibid: 180.
\textsuperscript{315} Ibid: 261.
\textsuperscript{316} Ibid: 186.
\textsuperscript{317} Al-Muqaddasī 1906: 33; idem, 2001: 30.
\textsuperscript{318} Idem, 2001: 383.
\textsuperscript{319} Al-Ṭabarī 1964, V: 2432; idem, 1989, XIII: 14. The term is used in the description of the conquest of Iraq and Iran.
\textsuperscript{320} Al-Ṭabarī 1964, V: 2438; idem, 1989, XIII: 18.
\textsuperscript{322} Soucek 1995, VII: 66 labels it a “classical term” while Ibn Durayd does not comment on the origins, suggesting that the term is deemed to be of Arabic origins - Ibn Durayd 1926, II: 365.
\textsuperscript{323} Al-Ṭabarī 1964, V: 2432; idem, 1989, XIII: 14.
\textsuperscript{324} Ibn Durayd 1926, II: 365.
\textsuperscript{325} Soucek 1995, VII: 66.

155
although al-Manṣūra is labelled a port town by Buzurg in the context of this one tale,\textsuperscript{325} al-Muqaddasī, who derives much of his description of the region of Sind from al-Iṣṭakhrī (fl. c. 340/ 951-2),\textsuperscript{326} does not mention any form of anchorage in relation to the capital city of al-Manṣūra. Consequently, it seems that the translation of the term \textit{furda} (be it port, مخطط السفن \textit{muhāṭṭ al-suʃun} a station off/for ships, or a breach in the river), like many other terms, is situational, and highly dependant on the context in which it is used.

14. Term: كَلَّاء \textit{kallā’}

Textual Reference

التذكروا امر اسمعك، ابن إبراهيم بن مرداس، قليل ليا أنه وصل في سنة سبع عشرة وثلاثمائة وكان وصوله (بوزرغ [ديفيك]:132-3)

Translation

We were talking about Ismā’īlawyah b. Ibrāhīm b. Mirdās. Someone told me he arrived in 317/929, and that the duration of his voyage from Kala [in the Malay Peninsula\textsuperscript{328}] until he entered the \textit{port} of Oman was exactly forty-one days.\textsuperscript{329} (Buzurg [Freeman-Grenville], Tale LXXXV: 77.)

Context

The above is taken from a story recounted by Ismā’īlawyah b. Ibrāhīm b. Mirdās and his arrival in Oman in the year 317/929. The passage also provides details of the customs tax (of a tenth on the goods in the ship) levied by the Sultan of Oman.

\textsuperscript{325} It is also counted as being amongst the ports of Sind by Hourani (1995: 63, 70).
\textsuperscript{326} Al-Muqaddasī 2001: 384.
\textsuperscript{327} Buzurg 1966: 132-3.
\textsuperscript{328} The exact location of the trading port of Kala is uncertain; Freeman-Grenville and Hourani (1995: 71) believed it to be present day Kedah (Buzurg 1981: 117), while Fatimi (1960, I: 62-101) investigates the possibility of it being situated in the Klang region of the Malay Peninsula.
\textsuperscript{329} Buzurg 1981: 77.
Discussion of Term

The term كَالَّا kallā’ from the root √k-l-‘, is defined as harbour;330 or a station of ships, so called because it keeps the vessels safe (نَكَلُ من) from the wind;331 or, according to Aḥmad b. Yahyā, because the wind there becomes lessened or slackened (الرِيح نكَّلَ فيه)332. It is also said to be a place where ships are moored near the bank of a river, although according to Ibn Manẓūr and al-Jawhari, this is the definition of مَكَالَة mukalla’ rather than كَالَّا kallā’.333 The first is linguistically a ‘mīmated’ (beginning with mīm) word and as such, is classified as a place of function i.e. the place where ships are moored. Mukalla is a point in Aden where, at one time, cargo ships from India, East Africa and the Arabian-Persian Gulf put in. Ibn Manẓūr and al-Jawhari further specify this mooring place as being the sāhil of every river, as discussed earlier, although al-Jawhari cites al-ʾAṣmaʾī in this respect.334 Synonymous with مَكَالَة mukalla’,335 the verb form كَالَا kala’a means to guard, protect, preserve or keep safe (حْفَازَ حَرَاسَة), hence كَالَّا kallā’ becomes the place where ships are protected. From the same root comes the name of Baṣra’s market area of al-Kallā’,336 Ibn Manẓūr and al-Jawhari note that it was named as such because of the ships that moored there,337 seeking refuge from the wind. Ibn Manẓūr also cites Ibn al-Sakīt giving kallā’ as the gathering place of ships (مَجْتَمَعُ السَّفَن mujtamaʾ al-sufun) hence, al-Kallā’ of Baṣra was where ships congregated.338

The geographical location of al-Kallā’ on the eastern side of Baṣra corroborates the definition given in the lexica of a mooring place near the bank of a river. This river harbour with its sūqs was situated on the Nahr al-Fayd or (the Fayd Canal), connected to the Nahr Maqqil (down which ships came from Baghdad339) via the Nahr Bilāl b. Burda (canal dug in 729AD under the order of the governor of the time whom the canal

335 Lane 1968, VII: 2624. Al-Mukallā is also the name of a seaport and, until recent times, a shipyard in Southern Yemen.
336 al-Muqaddasī 2001: 98. The text reads

"وَأَسْوَافُهَا نَاثِرَةُ قَطِعُ الكلَّاءِ عَلَى الْبُدُورِ، وَسُوقُ الْبَيْضِ، وَسُوقُ الْمَجْمَعِ، وَكَلَِّلَ أَسَاَوَافُهَا حَسَنَةً."

"The markets are in three sections: Al-Kallā’ (“a mooring for ships”) which is along the canal, the Great Market, and the بَابِ الْجَامِعِ Bāb al-Jāmi’ market. All these markets are quite good.”
339 Le Strange 2011: 44.
was named after) and to the Nahr al-Ubulla (by which traffic passed from Baṣra going southeast to the Arabian-Persian Gulf\(^{340}\)), as well as the Shaṭṭ al-ʿArab.\(^{341}\) The market-harbour could accommodate up to two thousand boats and ships at any one time, particularly during the date season,\(^{342}\) although, the theory on the size of these vessels vary. Pellat writes that al-Kallāʾ was able to take ships of a fairly large tonnage;\(^{343}\) Naji and Ali too, believe the word al-Kallāʾ implies a place for landing ships of a fairly large tonnage.\(^{344}\) Sindbād, in his voyages, speaks of travelling (or sailing) from Baghdād to Baṣra, where he embarked on fine, tall ships,\(^{345}\) ready for the sea.\(^{346}\) Interestingly though, the author does not use the term kallāʾ for the port he travels from but instead refers to it as ساحل saḥil, the river-bank.\(^{347}\) In his final voyage, Sindbād returns to Baṣra in a “great ship”\(^{348}\) (مركباً كبيراً markaban kabīran), implying that Baṣra was able to accommodate large, ocean going vessels, yet hires another vessel upon reaching Baṣra in order to reach his home in Baghdād. The difficulty in entering the Shaṭṭ al-ʿArab’s estuary, however, the low water level, the shoals and the coral reef in the Shaṭṭ’s waterways leads one to believe that the harbour quarter would only have been accessible using smaller, sea-going vessels of a lesser tonnage\(^{349}\) (shallow-draft ocean going vessels). Larger vessels would have stopped at the ports of either Ubulla, on the western bank of the Shaṭṭ al-ʿArab\(^{350}\) or at Sīrāf, and transferred their goods over on to smaller vessels.\(^{351}\)

Ubulla is the name of the old port near Baṣra and for many centuries, was an important port town prior to Islam. The definition of kallāʾ as a mooring place near the bank of a river fits the description of al-Ubulla and Baṣra. The kallāʾ of Oman however, mentioned by Buzurg and translated as “port” in the French and English translations,
was not a river harbour; although the text does not identify which port in Oman Buzurg and Ismā‘īlawayh are referring to, it is very likely to be the capital of the time, Sohar (Ṣuḥār), a wealthy, populous and charming town described by al-Muqaddasī as the “vestibule of al-Ṣīn”, and the most important town on the Sea of China. Furthermore, al-Muqaddasī, in his section “An Account of Names and their Diversities”, writes that some towns have more than one name; for example Makka is also known as Bakka, as Madīna is Yathrib. ʿUmān (Oman), according to al-Muqaddasī, was also known as Ṣuḥār and Mazūn; the town itself was situated along the shore of the sea, and the location of it was such that it was sheltered from the (monsoon) winds, making it the ideal mooring place for ships heading for the Persian Gulf, hence matching the other definition of kallāʾ, a station or mooring place where ships seek refuge from the wind.

With regards to the etymology of the term kallāʾ, the evidence suggests that the term is of Arabic origin, and that it has been borrowed and adapted into other languages. In The Legacy of Islam, Thomas Arnold and Alfred Guillaume note that during Muslim rule in Spain many Arabic terms, particularly nouns, were absorbed by the Spanish and Portuguese languages; as such, they suggest that kallāʾ which they define as anchorage, from kala’a (to protect) “is found separately as Cala (beach), and in combination, such as Cala Barca, Cala Blanca, Cala de San Vicente, Cala Santany, Punta de la Cala, Torre de la Cala Honda, [and] La Caleta.”

Overall, in the literal sense, it appears that the term kallāʾ is used to mean harbour i.e. a place of shelter for ships; Buzurg’s mention of a tax however, levied upon the vessel as it entered Oman, suggests that it would more appropriate, in this instance, to translate the term as “port” rather than “harbour”, as found in the translations by Devic and Freeman-Grenville. This again proves that the context in which a term is found is just as important, if not more, than the definition of the term as provided by Classical and Medieval, and indeed, modern Arabic lexica.

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353 Ibid: 79.
354 Ibid: 27.
355 Ibid: 79.
356 Agius 2008: 85.
In conclusion, the aim of this final chapter, primarily, was to ascertain which of the two sources - medieval Arabic literary works such as Buzurg’s Kitāb ʿAjāʾīb al-Hind, the Silsilat al-tawārīkh, al-Muqaddasī’s Aḥsan al-taqāṣīm fī maʿrifat al-agālīm, or medieval Arabic lexica- provided the most information regarding Indian Ocean maritime cultural terminology. Of the terminology selected, all but ʿshotā were found in some form or other in the early Arabic lexica, suggesting that this term found its way into the Indian Ocean vernacular through cross cultural contact, most likely with Baluchistān (the Makrān Coast of Baluchistān), Sind or northwest India. The definition of the terms that were given in the lexica was not always suitable in the context in which they were used. The anchorage ʿjun, for example, was not listed in the lexica as such; rather, the definitions of this term as found in the early lexica are based around the concepts of darkness and light and, by extension, the depths of the sea. Other terms, such as ʿrī and maṭr, generic terms for the two elements of wind and rain, are not specific enough to provide the reader with an idea as to what type of weather the navigators were dealing with; in the case of a fierce storm, translating ʿrī according to the definition found in the lexica, i.e. a gentle wind or breeze would be an incorrect rendition of the source text. In such cases, adjectives describing the type of wind or rain are needed to provide the reader with a more complete picture, making the source text more informative than the lexica.

Translating Arabic primary sources is problematic, not least because when the lexica do provide definitions for material-cultural terms it is, more often than not, of the standard use rather than the regional or dialectal use. The Classical and Medieval writers (geographers and travellers) on the other hand, have applied meanings to terms which are different from each other. The early Arabic literary term مرساة mīrsāt for example, is understood by the compiler of the Sindbād stories to mean anchor, whereas Buzurg uses the term when referring to the harbour at Sofāla. Similarly, ʿkalla’ is generally used for “harbour”, yet Buzurg uses it to mean “port”. The differences in the understanding of the terminology stems from the varying regional and linguistic backgrounds of the writers, the level of education they received, and the company they kept; those residing in the midst of the maritime milieu for example, would have, consciously (like al-Muqaddasī) or unconsciously, absorbed the lingua franca of this exclusive social environment and used them as they deemed appropriate.

359 Ibn Manẓūr 2003, II: 534; also Lane 1968, III: 1180-1.
Further difficulties arise in the translation of terminology, in particular that which is used to denote a form of anchorage, due to the ever changing nature of geography. Eroding coastlines, the silting up of waterways and the changing course of rivers makes it difficult to determine exactly the type of anchorage that medieval Muslim writers were referring to. The Indus River port of al-Manšūra for example, mentioned by Buzurg, was frequented by merchants and agents from all over the Indian Ocean world, and was strategically placed as a fortified city, providing the conquering Muslims with protection from invaders. It was a stopping point for merchants heading from the Arabian-Persian Gulf to China, and Buzurg reports that traders from as far as Kashmir travelled down the Indus River on rafts made of bags of grain in order to trade in this bustling port city.\(^{360}\) Yet the location of al-Manšūra provides the researcher with a problem; many sources place this now ruined metropolis at Brahmanābād approximately 19km south-east of Shāhhdādpur, Sindh, Pakistan;\(^{361}\) Freeman-Grenville however, places it further south, near the Mouth of the Indus.\(^{362}\) In addition to this, the River Indus has changed course at least twice since the eighteenth century, making it even more difficult to envisage this port town and the type of anchorage it provided. Buzurg provides some information regarding the type of craft that traversed on this river, i.e. small rafts, suggesting that the port of this city was a relatively small river-port, accessible only to small river-craft. The term Buzurg uses when referring to the port of al-Manšūra (furda فَرْضَة) however, is used by Abū l-Fidā’ in his description of the port of Beirut which is not situated on the banks of a river.

The difference between al-Manšūra and Beirut is clear, yet the use of the same term to describe these two distinct anchorages highlights the difficulties of rendering a source text (or nomenclature) into a target text (or language), and the necessity of understanding the context in which a word is used before applying a definition to it. As noted throughout the chapter, the translation of terminology is highly situational and depends greatly on the context in which it has been used; thus, although the lexica provides the researcher with the core meaning of select data, it would be imprudent to rely solely on lexicographical sources as, in many cases, it is through the medieval Arabic literary sources that the reader attains an overall better understanding of the language being used.

\(^{360}\) Buzurg 1981: 60.
\(^{362}\) Buzurg 1981: xxiii.
The study of the terminology has overall, highlighted the diversity of the language of the medieval Indian Ocean mariner; the *lingua franca* of this world was an amalgamation of languages borrowed from the port cities in this aquatic region, from the ports of East Africa, to the Red Sea, the Southern Arabian ports and those of the Persian-Arabian Gulf, to those of (western) India, Indonesia and Malaysia, to China. The diversity of this *lingua franca* is somewhat reflected in the *Kitāb ʿAjāʾīb al-Hind* (The Book of the Marvels of India) and contemporary texts, however not to the fullest extent; the various names for the seasons, winds and rains are not mentioned by Buzurg, possibly because the purpose of the text is to entertain rather than to be used as a form of manual.
Chapter 7: Conclusion

Buzurg Ibn Shahriyār paints an interesting picture of the Indian Ocean World, where the promise of incalculable wealth provides the impetus for long-distance sea travel, and people from all faiths and cultures live, travel and trade together in harmony. He lived and compiled his work at a time when Arabian-Persian and Indian navigation was at its peak, and the lands from East Africa to China provided the basic and luxury goods that were in demand across the region, from the rich courts of the caliphate to those of the emperors of China. Mangrove and teak wood, ivory, slaves, fruit, spices, drugs, textiles, gold and porcelain, amongst other commodities, were regularly shipped in and out of the major port towns of the Indian Ocean, including Jeddah, Sīrāf, Baṣra, Şoḥār, those on the west coast of India, such as Sindān and Şaymūr, Sumatra and Java (the Land of Gold), and the surrounding islands i.e. Fanṣūr Island (possibly Barus or Sibolga on the western coast of Sumatra, or Nias Island, off the west coast of Sumatra), Lūlūbīlank (on the west coast of Sumatra between Fanṣūr and Lāmrī or Lāmurī Island) and Canton.

Buzurg’s description of the Indian Ocean world is one of peace and harmony, where Arabian, Persian, Indian, East African, Malaysian, Indonesian, and Chinese mariners and traders live and practice their various faiths together with no fear of discrimination or persecution; no mention is made of the political instability and power struggles that were being experienced on land, with the breakdown of the ʿAbbāsids (r. 132-656/750-1258), the rise of the Fāṭimids in 358/964 or other dynasties, such as the Būyid’s (320-454/932-1062). Nor does he mention any of the political problems of the lands outside the reach of the Islamic Empire. The same may be said of the Silsilat al-tawārīkh; such texts are void of political and administrative issues because their audience was different and they were more interested in maritime links and seafaring hazards that they might encounter. It is possible, on the other hand, that the political tensions and invasions that were experienced on land were not felt by those at sea; or, in the case of those travelling as far as China, it is possible that they were not there to experience it, which is why it was never discussed. It is equally possible, that these tensions were so common at the time, that neither Buzurg nor the eyewitnesses who narrated their accounts felt the need to mention them.
Buzurg’s intention, in his own words, is to discuss the “wonders of India”,¹ whether they are the belief systems of non-Muslims, the cultural differences of the inhabitants of foreign lands, or “marvellous” creatures. These creatures include whales, giant lobsters, flying lobsters, snakes, giant birds, and mermaids amongst other, some of which can be identified as an exaggerated or distorted description of an actual animal. Cannibals are also a popular feature in Buzurg’s text, and those of his contemporaries; these too, have some semblance of truth. Of equal importance to the intended information provided by Buzurg, is that which was given in passing. References to countries and commodities, to the weather conditions, to navigators and navigation are all of extreme importance and provide us with a wealth of information, some of which is detailed in this research. In terms of the study however, the language of Buzurg’s text is of utmost importance.

The study of the lingua franca of any regional area is problematic; the study of aquatic regional patois even more so, due to the sheer size of the geographical area that they cover and the diverse cultures that it connects. The Indian Ocean World for example, brings together languages and cultures from East Africa, the Middle East, south and south-east Asia, and China; thus, although the basis of the study was medieval Arabic texts, it was necessary to keep an open mind as to the origins of the selected maritime terms. The linguistic development of a region also depended on who was dominating the area at any particular time. Before the rise of Islam, Persians dominated Indian Ocean navigation; even after the spread of Islam, there was a huge Persian influence on seafaring, hence the transference of many Persian maritime and nautical terms into the language of Arabian seafaring. Similarly, the migration of the inhabitants of the Malay Peninsula to Madagascar meant that they would have brought with them, not only their language, but also navigational techniques, possibly even the knowledge of the manipulation of the monsoonal winds.

The aim of the research was to ascertain whether or not the language of Buzurg’s text was representative of the people of the time, or used as the lingua franca of the Western Indian Ocean World. I believe it is a mixture of both; the text is not a scientific navigational account, and the language used by Buzurg is fairly simplistic. He does include some technical terms yet many are those found in every day use, like rīḥ (wind) and maṭar (rain). The two terms are generic terms, used to portray all types of wind and rain, differentiated only by the adjectives used. Arabic is an immensely comprehensive

language, with words available to denote every type of wind and rain possible, yet for the most part, Buzurg chooses to use the simplest of terms. There may be several reasons for this: could it be possible that Buzurg used these generic terms in order to reach a wider audience? His audience at the time may have been made up of merchants who traded on land as opposed to the sea, as well as other elite members of the society who had not been to sea. Certainly, Buzurg was not a linguist or a word collector; he may have been aware that there are over a hundred different terms available to depict different types of wind and rain according to the seasons in which they appear, the stars that cause them to appear and the affects that they have, but, at the end, he chose not to use them as he preferred to stick to a simple technical language accessible to an audience who would have listened to stories rather than read them as many were illiterate. At the end, Buzurg was a skilful story-teller and a good story-teller aims at delivering stories in a simple language for everyone to understand.

A further aim of the study was to determine which of the two sources, Arabic literary sources, or medieval Arabic lexicographical works, provided more information regarding maritime terminology. As ascertained in Chapter 6, although the lexica did list the terminology, with the exception of شرثًا shartā, and provided adequate definitions (though not for جون jūn), the definitions provided were, however, not enough to explain what the term meant in the context of Buzurg’s use. The definitions used for ports in particular, are highly dependent on the context in which they are used; the term کلا kallā‘, for example, is defined as harbour,² where ships are sheltered from the wind. In the context of Baṣra, the term is used to denote a mooring place at the side of a river; the کلا kallā‘ of Oman on the other hand, as mentioned by Buzurg,³ is better translated as “port”. Similarly, مرساة mirsāt which is used by Buzurg to mean harbour⁴ is defined in the lexica as an instrument used to stay or still a ship,⁵ i.e. an anchor or أنجر anjar.⁶ Furthermore, the term جون jūn is translated as “bay” by Freeman-Grenville,⁷ the definitions in the medieval lexica nonetheless, are based around the concepts of light and dark.⁸

³ Buzurg 1981: 77.
⁵ Al-Jawhari 2005: 405.
⁶ Ibn Manṣūr 2003, XIV: 396; also Richardson 1829: 1392; Steingass 1930: 1214; Lane 1968, III: 1086-7.
⁷ Buzurg 1981: 73.
It appears that although the lexica do provide some definitions of the terms, they do not always fit in with the context in which they were used, and therefore, in order to understand the true meaning of the term, it is necessary to evaluate it in the context in which it appears. With regard to technological information, the concept of using the stars for orientation and the winds to aid sailing, are alluded to in the texts but not explained in great detail as Buzurg’s work is not intended to be a navigational treatise.

This study was limited to four Arabic literary sources as I believed that these would provide the most information regarding maritime terminology, for the reasons stated in Chapter 2. The Akhbār al-Ṣīn wa l-Hind (News of China and India) (c.235/850), part of the work entitled Silsilat al-tawārīkh (A Chain of Narratives) is useful in terms of the information it provides regarding trade routes and the goods available at the major port towns on these routes; al-Muqaddasī’s (d. 378/ 988-9) Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī maʿrifat al-aqālīm (The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions) enables us to identify and locate topographical references found in Buzurg’s text, and provides information regarding the exports of these places; and the “Seven Voyages of Sindbād the Sailor” from the anonymous and undated compilation, the Alī layla wa-layla (A Thousand and One Nights), is similar to the ‘Ajā‘ib al-Hind in both content and context, though the concept of the stories may predate Buzurg’s tales through Indian and Persian sources. Additionally, the Sindbād stories, being a complete and structured set of tales as opposed to the anecdotes of Buzurg, provides details regarding sea voyages that are absent from Buzurg’s text.

It is possible that consulting other medieval geographical and historical works may have aided the investigation further, providing more information regarding the geographical and historical context of Buzurg but this falls beyond the scope of the present thesis. The lexica proved to be a disappointment; they do not provide sufficient explanations for the understanding of maritime terminology, and it is better understood through the context of its use in Arabic literary sources. The term شَصْط shaṭṭ for example, is defined in the lexica as the bank of a river;9 Buzurg however, uses it in the context of a port on the Sri Lankan shores,10 while al-Muqaddasī uses it in his description of a river, the Shaṭṭ al-Ṣ-Arabs in Iraq, rather than a riverbank.11

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defined as a gap or breach in the bank of a river whence one draws water, or by which one descends to the water or ships and boats ascend.\textsuperscript{12} Buzurg uses the word in the context of al-Manṣūra on the River Mihrān (Indus),\textsuperscript{13} thus suggesting that the lexica, in this instance, provides the correct definition. Al-Muqaddasī however, uses it to mean “port”,\textsuperscript{14} harbour,\textsuperscript{15} docks,\textsuperscript{16} and export point;\textsuperscript{17} while Abū l-Fidā’ (d. 732/1331) uses it to mean “port, (as opposed to harbour).\textsuperscript{18} In this case, the context in which the term is found provides more information with regards to the meaning of the term than the lexica do.

Overall, although the discussion was limited to fourteen maritime terms, the inquiry shows that the language used by Indian Ocean mariners in the fourth/tenth century was not limited to Arabic, but also included words of Semitic origin, and Indo-Iranian, highlighting the diverse nature of the maritime language. In addition to linguistic information, the selected terminology, and the four primary Medieval Arabic literary sources as a whole, provides details of other aspects of maritime culture; this too, is of a diverse nature, and perhaps, an amalgamation/ fusion of the various cultures that make up the Indian Ocean World.

\textsuperscript{12} Al-Fayyūmī 1872, I: 59; Ibn Durayd 1926, II: 365; al-Jawhari 2005: 806; also Richardson 1829: 1082; Steingass 1930: 919; Lane 1968, VI: 2374. Ibn Durayd defines it as the breach by which one descends to the water or river (\textit{nahr}); Richardson defines it as an indent of a river where they draw water for the purpose of irrigation. Al-Fayyūmī and al-Jawhari specify فرصة النهر rather than just \textit{furda}.

\textsuperscript{13} Buzurg 1981: 60.

\textsuperscript{14} Al-Muqaddasi 2001: 77, 107, 146, 149, 150, 256, 258, 291, 307, 387, 391. Agius 2008: 174 also defines the term as small port town.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid: 347.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid: 180.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid: 261.

Appendices

Appendix A

Appendix B

Scanned image of the first four pages of the *Akhbār al-Ṣīn wa l-Hind* (News of China and India) (c.235/850) (after *Relations des voyages faits par les Arabes et les Persans dans l’Inde et Chine*, Reinaud, 1845) which are absent from the English translation.
اللغ وإلقاء آخر من نغب الماء ورسه حتى إذا سقط إبتلعته وبيّس هذا المك المغتفي والمك كله باكل بعدها بعدها بعدها

الماء فطتنا فطتنا بطلا ناخرجنا منا أيضا سكع من جنها ثم سطتنا بطن الغابة فإذا في بطنها شالها وكل هذا من بسط من يشبه بعدها بعدها

في الصورة راهنا الماء المك الكبير الذي ي ๆ الولاء مع عموم خلقه سكع تدوي اللطاف طلعا قد ذرنا فإذا طعع هذه الماء ورمى وأخذ المك في الجهر سيلت على علها المك الصغرى صارت في اصل إذن ولا تقاربا حتى تقفها ونثرت بالمركب فلا تقرب المركب هذه المك الكبيره الوّم من الصغرى ده في هذا المك أيضا سكع مع رفعه وجه الإنسان تطور فوق الماء ورام هذا المك
Appendix C

Map of the Middle East and East Africa, including the maritime route to Western India (after Hourani 1995:85).
Map of the Far East, including the maritime route from Western India to China (after Hourani 1995: 86).

V. THE FAR EAST AS KNOWN TO THE ARABS IN ‘ABBASID TIMES
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