

The Maritime Culture in the *Kitāb 'Ajā'ib al-Hind* (The Book of the Marvels of India) by Buzurg Ibn Shahriyār (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.

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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 ʿAjāʾib 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 *Akḥbār al-Šīn wa l-Hind* (News of China and India) (c.235/850), part of the work entitled *Silsilat al-tawārīkh*; al-Muqaddasī (d. 378/ 988-9) in *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī māʿrifat al-aqālīm* (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-lughā* (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 <i>Kitāb 'Ajā'ib al-Hind</i> : An Investigative Analysis. | 108 |
| Chapter 7: Conclusion | 163 |
| Appendices..... | 168 |
| Bibliography | 173 |

| List of Figures, Tables and Maps | | Page |
|---|--|-------------|
| Figure 1 | Framework of Study. | 11. |
| Figure 2 | Framework for Terminology Analysis. | 12. |
| Figure 3 | Framework of the Present Study. | 63. |
| Table 1 | Dates as found in the <i>Kitāb ʿAjāʾib al-Hind</i> . | 20-21. |
| Table 2 | The sources of Buzurg Ibn Shahriyār. | 64-67. |
| Map 1: | The Seven Seas of the Indian Ocean. | 40. |
| Map 2: | The Red Sea and the Arabian-Persian Gulf. | 44. |
| Map 3: | The Indian Ocean World. | 51. |
| Map 4: | Monsoons in the northern half of the Indian Ocean. | 95. |

Abbreviations and Symbols

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

Library of Congress Arabic Transliteration System

Consonants

| | | | |
|---|----|---|----|
| ء | ‘ | ط | t |
| ب | b | ظ | z |
| ت | t | ع | c |
| ث | th | غ | gh |
| ج | j | ف | f |
| ح | h | ق | q |
| خ | kh | ك | k |
| د | d | ل | l |
| ذ | dh | م | m |
| ر | r | ن | n |
| ز | z | ه | h |
| س | s | و | w |
| ش | sh | ي | y |
| ص | ṣ | | |
| ض | ḍ | | |

Vowels

| | | | | | |
|------------|-------|------------------------|-------|----|---|
| Long | ا | ā | Short | اَ | a |
| | و | ū | | اِ | i |
| | ي | ī | | اُ | u |
| Doubled | يَّ | iyy (final form = /ī/) | | | |
| | وَّ | uww (final form = /ū/) | | | |
| Diphthongs | اَيَّ | ay | | | |
| | اَوْ | aw | | | |

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 knowledge¹ 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-baḥr 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 dabṭ al-ʿilm al-baḥriyya* (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 ṭalab al-ʿilm* i.e. seeking knowledge is considered to be an obligation upon all Muslims.

² Hourani 1995: xv

are the *Kitāb ‘Ajā’ib 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 ‘Ajā’ib 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).

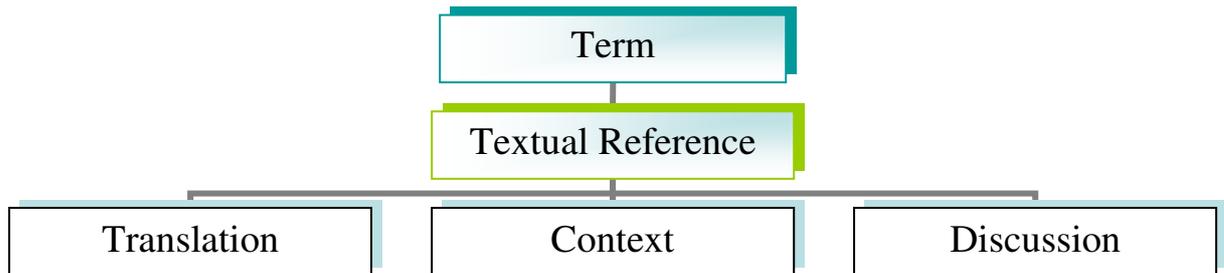


Figure 1 Framework of Study

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-Jawharī’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

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 Urdū, Classical Hindī and English* form an integral part of this study (Figure 2).

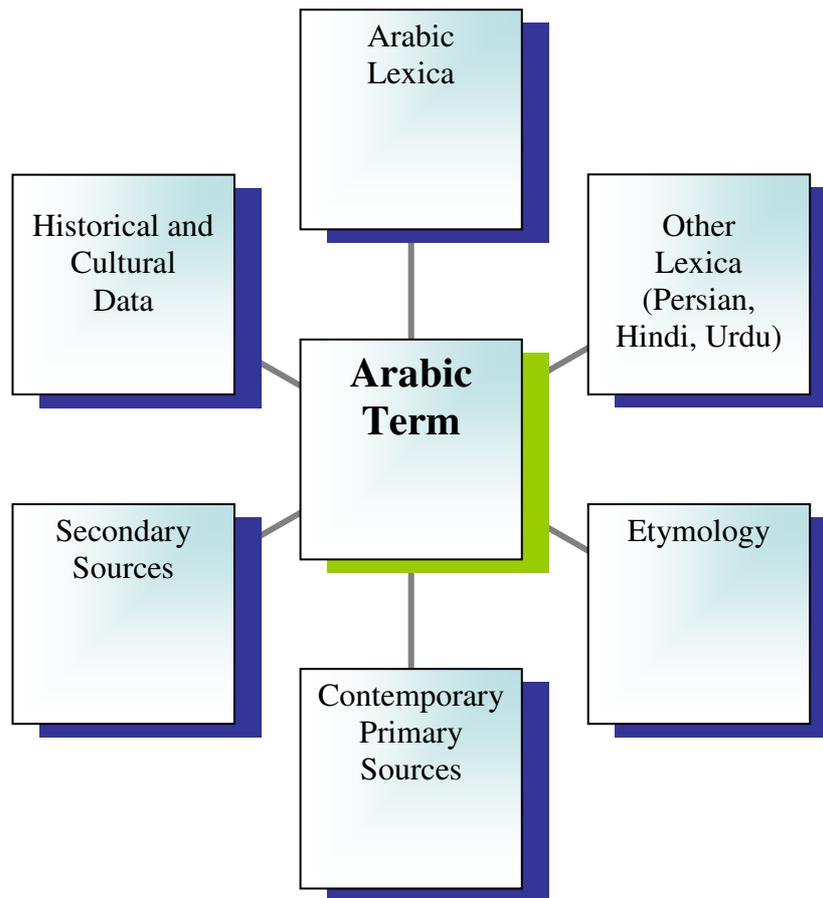


Figure 2 Framework for Terminology Analysis

The contemporary texts of Buzurg Ibn Shahriyār's *ʿAjāʿib al-Hind: the Silsilat al-tawārīkh*, al-Muqaddasī'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 *ʿAjāʿib al-Hind*. The context in which the terms are found in the contemporary texts will also be examined against those found in the *ʿAjāʿib 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 ‘Ajā’ib 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 ‘Ajā’ib 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 Aḥmad ibn Mājid's (d. after 906/ 1500) *Kitāb al-fawā'id fī uṣūl al-baḥr wa-l-qawā'id* (The Book of Benefits in the Principles of Navigation) and Sulaymān al-Mahrī's (d. 917/ 1511) *Kitāb al-'umda l-mahriyya fī dabṭ al-'ilm al-baḥriyya* (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 (*juḡhrāfiyā*) 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 Rāmhrumuz, 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 understanding¹". In short, the Arabic/Islamic *'ajā'ib* is simply the "marvels of God's creation",² be they within the realm of our scientific understanding, or an "exclusion of realistic observation".³

¹ Richter-Bernburg 1998, I: 65.

² Dubler 1954-60, I: 203.

³ Richter-Bernburg 1998, I: 65.

The (Arabic and Persian) *‘ajā’ib* 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 Qur’ān and the Ḥadīth literature; eastern biblical ideas; and popular tales and fairytale themes, edited, embellished and passed on by long-distance tradesmen and travellers.⁴ 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 ‘Ajā’ib 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*.⁵

The term *‘ajā’ib* 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.⁶ 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 *Akḥbār 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 *‘ajā’ib* 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.”⁷ 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 *‘ajā’ib*, 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 ‘Ajā’ib al-Hind* (The Book of the Marvels of India). Other contemporary works I consulted were: the *Akhbār al-Šīn 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-Muqaddasī’s (d. 378/ 988-9) *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma‘rifat 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.

⁸ Agius 2008: 16. The criteria adopted by Classical and Medieval Muslim authors to verify information was as follows: *isnād*: to state where the information was taken from through a chain of reliable scholars or chain of narrators; *muṭāla‘a*: reading or consultation; *mu‘āyana*: eye witnessing; *muḥādatha*: interviewing or discussing of material; *taqyīd*: travel notes; *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 *ʿAjāʾib 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 ʿAjāʾib al-Hind*

Not much is known about the author, Buzurg Ibn Shahriyār, other than that he lived between 299-399/ 912-1009;¹⁰ he was from Rāmhurmuz 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 ʿAjāʾib al-Hind* found in Aya Sofia, Turkey describes him as a *nākhōda*,¹¹ a captain or shipmaster,¹² which is probably true. Hopkins is of the opinion that he was an ordinary mariner and merchant.¹³ 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,¹⁴ 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 Sofia Mosque, now preserved in the Süleymaniye 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 1013,¹⁵ a date which seems reasonable as Buzurg had died only a few years previously, in 399/ 1009. The frontispiece however, refers to the al-ʿĀdiliyya Institute, Damascus,¹⁶ which was founded in 1215 by the Ayyūbid al-Malik al-ʿĀdil (r. 592-615 / 1196-

¹⁰ Ahmad 1965, II: 583.

¹¹ Freeman-Grenville 1981: xvii.

¹² For more information regarding the etymology and use of the term *nākhōda* see Agius 2005 (b): 127-130.

¹³ Hopkins 1990: 323.

¹⁴ Buzurg 1981: 1.

¹⁵ Buzurg 1966: 192; idem 1981: xviii.

¹⁶ Freeman-Grenville 1981: xviii.

1218¹⁷). If the manuscript is indeed associated with the al-^cĀdiliyya 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.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 period¹⁹ (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-Mu^ctamid 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,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^cūdī (d. 342/ 956-7);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/ 985,²² 30 years after al- Mas^cūdī's death.

¹⁷ In 592/ 1196 al-Malik al-^cĀdil took over the government of Damascus as the viceroy of al-^cAzīz (son of Ṣalāh 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.

¹⁸ Freeman-Grenville 1981: xviii.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ahmad 1965, II: 583.

²¹ Freeman-Grenville 1981: xvii. Al-Mas^cūdī was the author of the multi-disciplinary *Murūj al-dhahab wa ma^cādin al-jawāhir* (Golden meadows and Mines of Precious Stones), a historical and geographical work combined.

²² Hopkins 1990: 323. An (anonymous online) article suggests that al-^cUmarī's *Masālik al-abṣār fī mamālik al-amṣār* volume 2, chapter 3, paragraph 3 is another version or an abridged compilation of Buzurg's *ʿAjāʾib 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], Ṣanf (Champa), Sarbuza (Śrīvijaya) 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 *ʿAjāʾib al-Hind*, then this would support the view that al-Mas^cūdī 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.

| Tale number arranged by Freeman-Grenville | Title as given by Freeman-Grenville | Page Number | Date of Occurrence | Reign |
|--|--|--------------------|---------------------------|--|
| I | An Indian King Secretly Converted to Islam | 2 | 288/900 and 270/883 | °Abbāsīd amīr °Abdallāh b. °Umar b. °Abd al-°Azīz, the ruler of al-Manṣūra in Sind, from whom the king of the country between Upper and Lower Kashmir, Mahrūk b. Raiq requested a translation of the law of Islam. |
| IX | Giant Whales | 9 | 300/912 | Amīr Aḥmad b. Hilāl (governor of Oman (r. 913-928)). Caliph al-Muqtadir Billāh (r. 295-320/ 908-932). |
| X | Another Whale | 10 | 310/922 | Caliph al-Muqtadir Billāh. |
| XXIX | A Snake that Ate Elephants | 29 | 339/950 | [Caliph al-Muṭṭir° Lillāh (r. 334-363 / 946-974)]. |
| XXXII | A Slaving Adventure | 31 | 310/922 | Caliph al-Muqtadir Billāh. |
| XXXIII | Zanj Witchdoctors | 36 | 332/943 | [Caliph al-Muttaqī Lillāh (r. 329-333/940-944)]. |
| XXXVII | Giant Ants | 38 | 306/918 | Amīr Aḥmad b. Hilāl. Caliph al-Muqtadir Billāh. |
| XL | A Sailor Seduced by a Monkey | 40 | 309/921 | Caliph al-Muqtadir Billāh |
| XLIX | A Red Sea Gale | 54 | 325/936 | [Caliph al-Rādī (r. 322-329/ 934-940)]. |
| LI | Said the Weaver | 56-7 | n.d. | Caliph al-Mu°tamīd Billāh (r. 256-279/ 870-892). |
| LXI | The History of Ishaq | 62 | 300/912 | Amīr Aḥmad b. Hilāl. Wazīr Abū al-Ḥassan °Alī b. Moḥammad b. Furāt (al-Muqtadir Billāh's second wazīr who held |

| | | | | |
|----------|--------------------------------------|-----|--------------------------------------|--|
| | | | | this position three times, and was executed in 312/ 924 ²³). Caliph al-Muqtadir Billāh. |
| LXXXIII | Pirates and Taxes | 76 | 317/929 | Caliph al-Muqtadir Billāh. |
| LXXXV | Ismailawayh's Story | 77 | 317/929 | Caliph al-Muqtadir Billāh. |
| LXXXVIII | The Orphan Pearl | 78 | n.d. | Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 170-193/ 786-809). |
| XCV | Five Bales of Cotton | 86 | 342/953 | [Caliph al-Muṭī ^c Lillāh (r. 334-363 / 946-974)]. |
| CIX | A Gale Between Siraf and Baṣra | 94 | Dhu al-Qada 305/ April-May 918 | Caliph al-Muqtadir Billāh. |
| CXIV | Three Shipwrecks | 97 | 306/918 | Caliph al-Muqtadir Billāh. |
| CXXVII | The Snake that Swallowed a Crocodile | 102 | 340/951 | [Caliph al-Muṭī ^c Lillāh (r. 334-363 / 946-974)]. |
| CXXIX | A Waqwaq Expedition to Qanbalu | 103 | 334/945 | [Caliph al-Mustakfī Billāh (r. 333-334/ 944-946)]. |
| | | | | |

Table 1: Dates as found in the *Kitāb 'Ajā'ib al-Hind*

The *Kitāb 'Ajā'ib 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;²⁴ 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

²³ Gil 1992: 317.

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.²⁵ 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 *Akḥbār al-Šīn wa l-Hind*, the *Kitāb 'Ajā'ib 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-Mas'ūdī (d. 345/956-7), author of *Murūj al-dhahab wa ma'ādin al-jawāhir* (Golden meadows and Mines of Precious Stones), who used his work as a source of geographical data on Southeast Asia.²⁶ It is even possible the Sindbād stories (see below) were borrowed from Buzurg's *'Ajā'ib al-Hind*.

Although the raw material provided by this work may be considered somewhat primitive, and some of the tales lend themselves to the *'ajā'ib* 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.

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 Shahriyār

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

One of the earliest travel accounts known to us is the *Akhbār al-Šīn 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 250³⁰, is mentioned as an eye-witness. In the end, both Abū Ḥubaysh

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 ... وذكر سليمان التاجر ان... (*Sulaymān the merchant relates...*).

²⁹ *Ibid*: 2-3.

³⁰ *Ibid*: 2-3. The text reads وفتح ابو حبيش وهو الرجل الذي عاش من العمر مائتين وخمسين سنة.

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 Sīrāf³¹ 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 *‘Ajā’ib*. Additionally, although the *Akhbār* is not a navigational text, there are indications that he had access to early (now lost) navigational treatises,³² 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 Ḥubaysh.

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;³³ in fact, it is possible that he had not travelled further than Baṣra, where he met and exchanged information with the merchant and geographer al-Mas[‘]ūdī, probably in the year 303/ 915-6.³⁴ 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.

³² Agius 2008: 28.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Pellat 2004, XII: 55.

ships from China go no further than Sīrāf due to the difficulty navigating in this stretch of water.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.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 *Relations des voyages faits par les Arabes et les Persans dans l'Inde et Chine dans le IX^e 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 *Akhbār*, entitled his 1922 contribution *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, *Aḥbār aṣ-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 *Ancient Accounts of India and China, by two Mohammedan Travellers Who Went to Those Parts in the 9th Century*;³⁷ the Arabic text used is the 1845 Reinaud's edition, *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-ʿĀdil Nūr al-Dīn Abū l-Qāsim Maḥmūd b. Zankī (Zangī) (r. 541-565/ 1146-1174),³⁸ and an extract from al-Masʿūdī's work.³⁹ The two parts of the *Silsilat* text also contain dates, possibly written by the scribe, as the completion of the *Akhbār* is dated 1011 (سنة احد عشر بعد الف) i.e. 401 or 402 A.H, while the second part is

³⁵ *Silsilat* 1845: 15; idem, 1995: 8.

³⁶ The Bibliothèque Nationale holds MS 2281 which contains, amongst other things, I. folio 2a-23b, the untitled and anonymous *Akhbār*; and II. Folio 24a-56b, Abū Zayd's sequel. Pellat 2004, XII: 55.

³⁷ Renaudot's translation was entitled *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*.

³⁸ The Arabic states (564) ٥٦٤ سنة في ضريحه في سنة ٥٦٤; this is possibly a copyist error as the Zangid Sultan died in 569 not 564. *Silsilat* 1845: 149.

³⁹ *Silsilat* 1845: 165-202. The first is entitled *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 *Murūj al-dhahab*.

dated *Ṣaffar* (the second month of the Islamic year) 596 which corresponds to November or December 1199.⁴⁰

The language, like that of Buzurg's *ʿAjāʾib* 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”;⁴¹ yet, as Sauvaget (1948) argues, “deviations from linguistic propriety are a guarantee of authenticity as being the actual words of narrators.”⁴² The same can be argued for Buzurg's *ʿAjāʾib al-Hind*. As for the content of the text, the *Akhhbār* 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” (*ʿajāʾib*)⁴³ 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. *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī maʿrifat al-aqālīm* (The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions)

The physical and human geographical treatise *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī maʿrifat 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 *ʿAjāʾib al-Hind* and its contemporary texts were composed. Like the *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 *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm* ideal for

⁴⁰ 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 *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. *Silsilat* 1995: 1 (see appendix B)

⁴¹ Hopkins 1990: 322.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Pellat 2004, XII: 55.

comparing and contrasting Buzurg's use of the nomenclature. Additionally, the fact that al-Muqaddasī hails from a different region to Buzurg enables the researcher to look at the terminology of maritime culture in a broader context.

Al-Muqaddasī 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.

Aḥsan 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-Muqaddasī, 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-Muqaddasī'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 *ʿAjāʾib*, al-Muqaddasī's intention was to produce a work of science that would prove

⁴⁴ Agius 2005: 379.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Hopkins 1990: 315; al-Muqaddasī 2001: 41.

⁴⁷ Al-Muqaddasī 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,⁴⁸ but also make the work accessible to all, as was his intention. Moreover, these unique characteristics of al-Muqaddasī and the *Aḥsan 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 regions⁴⁹ 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.⁵⁰

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.⁵¹ 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”;⁵² 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.

⁴⁸ Miquel 1993, VII: 492.

⁴⁹ Al-Muqaddasī 2001: 27-29.

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).

⁵¹ Al-Muqaddasī 2001: 9.

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 *Alf layla 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 Baghdād, 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 Baghdād, City of Peace,⁵³ 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 °Abbāsīd 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

⁵³ Buzurg gives Baghdād a rather unusual, alternative description, calling it دار البلايا *City of Sin*. Buzurg 1966: 81; idem 1981: 47

answer.⁵⁴ 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.⁵⁵ These tales, collectively known as the *Hazār afsaneh*, were translated into Arabic in the eighth or early ninth century entitled *Alf khurāfa*, 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.⁵⁶

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,⁵⁷ and tales related to him by a Christian Arab of Aleppo.⁵⁸ 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*?

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 Mamlūk 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*.

⁵⁸ Meisami 1998, I: 69.

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,⁵⁹ 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) *ʿAjāʾib al-makhlūqāt* (Wonders of the Created World) as being a source; other possible sources include Buzurg's *ʿAjāʾib*; the eleventh-century German epic poem *Herzog Ernst*; Ibn Khurradādhbih's (d. c. 300/ 911) *Kitāb al-masālik wa-l-mamālik* (The Book of Routes and Provinces);⁶⁰ al-Jāḥiẓ's (d. 255/ 868-869) *Kitāb al-ḥayawān* (Book of Animals);⁶¹ the *Life/Romance of Alexander the Great* (late third-early fourth century);⁶² 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 ʿAbbāsīd 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-

⁵⁹ Meisami 1998, II: 721.

⁶⁰ Gerhardt 1963: 239, 241; Marzolph 1997, IX: 638

⁶¹ Gerhardt 1963: 239; Meisami 1998, II: 722.

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;⁶³ 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";⁶⁴ and Sindbād, having retired from his travelling, has taken on the role of a *rāwī* (lit. reciter⁶⁵).

While the Sindbād stories as a whole belong to the *ʿajāʿib* 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 ʿAbbāsīd period (r. 132 -656/ 750-1258),⁶⁶ or as Gerhardt believes, the end of the

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.⁶⁷ 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 area⁶⁸ as Buzurg, but like the *‘Ajā’ib*, 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.⁶⁹ 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-lughā* (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,⁷⁰ and he does

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).

⁶⁸ It seems that Sindbād travelled to India, Sri Lanka, Sumatra (Gerhardt 1963: 242; Marzolph 1997, IX: 638) and East African islands (Marzolph 1997, IX: 638). Gerhardt writes that the “existence of China is not recognised in the story” (Gerhardt 1963: 242), although in the text used for the current study (an undated Beirut edition), Sindbād does mention مدينة الصين *Madīnat-al-Sīn* (*Alf layla wa layla* (n.d.), IV: 11; *Book of the Thousand Nights* 1925, VI: 69).

⁶⁹ Agius 1984: 77.

⁷⁰ Agius 1984: 69.

not always define material-cultural terminology, declaring them to be *ma^crūf*, 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-luġha wa ṣiḥāḥ al-^cArabiyya* (The Crown of Language and the *Ṣiḥāḥ* of Arabic) of al-Jawharī (d. 393/ 1002-3)⁷¹. Al-Jawharī, originally from Fārāb⁷² (in Kazakhstan), was the student of al-Fārābī (d. 350/ 961-2) compiler of *Dīwān al-adab fī bayān luġhat al-^cArab* (The *Dīwān* of Polite Literature in Explaining the Language of the Arabs), and initiator of the rhyme system in lexicographical works, although al-Jawharī 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-^cArab* (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 *ḥadīth* literature.⁷⁴

Al-Jawharī’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 ^cAjā’ib 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-^cArab* (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-Azharī’s (d.370/980-1) *Tahdhīb al-Luġha* (The Correction of Language); the *Ṣiḥāḥ* of al-Jawharī (see above); and Ibn Sīda’s (458/1065-6) *al-Muḥkam wa’l-muḥīṭ al-^czam* (The Greatest Systematic and Exhaustive [Dictionary]) and as such, is one of the most comprehensive lexica used in this study.

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 ض when he died, and that the rest was completed from rough drafts by Ibrāhīm Ibn Ṣāliḥ al-Warrāq; another suggests that he had reached س when he died, and the remaining text was completed by ^cAbd Allāh Muḥammad el-Buṣṭee (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 lexica⁷⁷ 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 *ʿAjāʾib*, 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;⁷⁹ a Western lexicon which, like the *Lisān al-^cArab*, not only gave the definition of the terms but also drew examples from literature in order to illustrate the use of the terms.⁸⁰ 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 ق; 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,⁸¹ and so, has been included in this study; John Platts' *Dictionary of Urdū, Classical Hindī 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.

⁷⁹ Irwin 2004: 10

⁸⁰ Agius 1984: 80

⁸¹ Irwin 2004: 27.

Chapter 3: Buzurg ibn Shahriyār: 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 Shahriyār, 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 Sea¹), 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 Sindbād 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'²), 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

¹ The Erythraean Sea (lit. Red Sea): Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and the western Indian Ocean.

² Esposito 1999: 692. The ʿAbbāsīd 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-Muʿtamīd 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.³ They did however, have links with East Africa (most likely Abyssinia, now Ethiopia and Eritrea) via the Red Sea, attested to in the *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).⁴ Tolmacheva on the other hand, uses the same *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.⁵ Archaeological finds, in fact, tell us that ships have been crossing from the Arabian Peninsula to India since 2000 BC,⁶ suggesting that the art of navigation in the Indian Ocean is one of old.

In any case, the rise of the Sāsānian 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,⁷ records the presence of Sabaeans (Southern Arabians from the Yemen and Hadhramaut region) in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) in 412 AD;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.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 Sāsānian Persians and the Byzantines, for whom the fifth and sixth centuries were navigational golden years,¹⁰ with the former dominating the sea traffic and monopolising oriental imports.¹¹ The rise of Islam however, put an end to the Sāsānian dynasty; the Muslim armies set out after the death

³ Christides 1993, VII: 40.

⁴ *Periplus* 1989:

⁵ Tolmacheva 1980: 189.

⁶ Tibbetts 1971: 1.

⁷ Fa-Hein, the Chinese Buddhist historian began his fifteen-year journey through India and Sri Lanka in 399, recorded in his work in *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.

⁸ Tolmacheva 1980: 190.

⁹ Agius 2008: 61. Goods included, amongst others: coral, amber, pearls, glass, diamonds, steel, frankincense, turmeric, pepper and dates.

¹⁰ Christides 1993, VII: 41.

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/naval 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,¹² and it was into this Golden Age that Buzurg Ibn Shahriyār (d. 399/1009) and his *Kitāb ʿAjāʾib 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 *ʿAjāʾib*: the Red Sea; the Persian Gulf; the Indian Ocean, (also called the Sea of India and the Sea of China) and their littorals.¹³ 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 *Şanji*, the South China Sea¹⁴ (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;¹⁵ a view supported by Muslim geographical works.¹⁶

¹² Tibbetts 1971: 4.

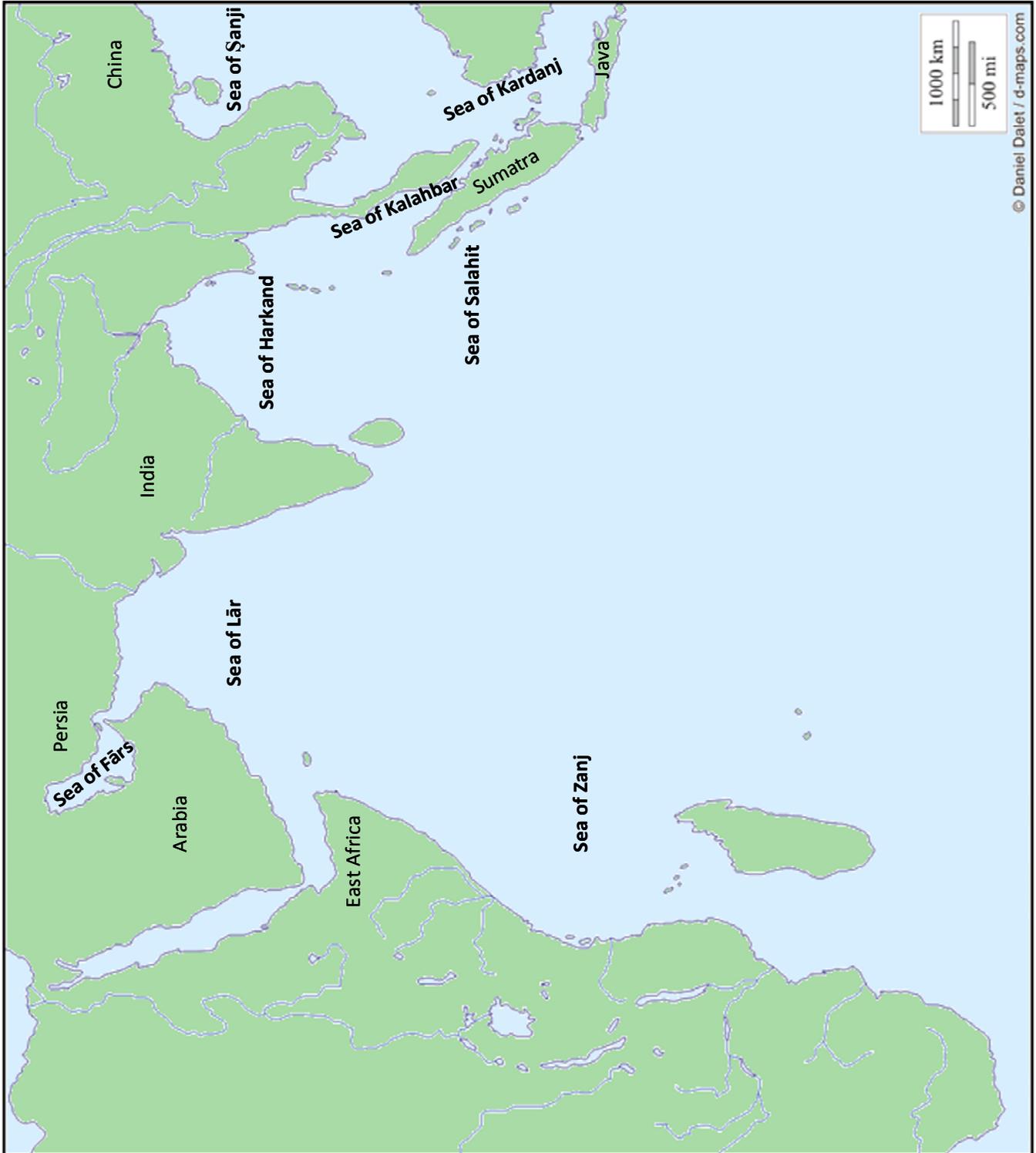
¹³ As in the text, the anchorages of India have been restricted to those found on the western coast.

¹⁴ Lunde 2005: 20-29- citing al-Yaʿqūbī (d. 897); Agius 2008: 8.

¹⁵ Yajima 1977: 195-208.

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),¹⁷ the weather and conditions in the three areas differed. Contrary winds, currents, shallow waters and coral reefs made the Red Sea or Baḥr 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.¹⁸ Particularly feared was Fārān on the Arabian littoral, where the winds from the Gulf of Suez and the Gulf of °Aqaba meet,¹⁹ forming an overpowering whirl that caused “utter destruction of the ships there.”²⁰ Buzurg recalls a tale told to him by a sea-captain, °Imrān 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.”²¹ 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,²² 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 Sīrāf 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.²³ 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.²⁴ 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-Jār²⁵ (near modern Yanbo, north of Jeddah²⁶), as well as spices and pharmaceuticals from India,²⁷ and gold and silver from the mines in the land of Tākā.²⁸

¹⁷ Tolmacheva 1980: 180.

¹⁸ Agius 2008: 186.

¹⁹ Becker & Beckingham 1954-60, I: 931.

²⁰ Al-Muqaddasī 2001: 11.

²¹ Buzurg 1981: 54.

²² *Silsilat* 1995: 93.

²³ *Silsilat* 1995: 93; Becker & Beckingham 1954-60, I: 931-2.

²⁴ Hourani 1995: 5.

²⁵ Al-Muqaddasī 2001: 72, 75; Hourani 1995: 82.

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,²⁹ glass,³⁰ incense (as Yemen was known as the Land of Incense), as well as the famous Yemeni alum.³¹ 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 cubits³²) 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.³³

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;³⁴ both Buzurg and the compiler of *Akhhbār* speak of the storms in the Sea of Fārs affecting navigators and passengers travelling from Sīrāf to Baṣra, al-Ubulla to Bayān, and Oman to Baṣra,³⁵ 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.”³⁶ In order to avoid the dangers of this Gulf, many vessels, particularly the larger ocean going vessels, would anchor at Ṣoḥār (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-ʿArab.³⁷ Al-Ubulla (located approximately around the site of modern day

“the area formed by the annual overflow of the River Gash (Qash) or Mareb, which rising in the mountains south of Asmara, brings down a heavy volume of flood water during the months from July to October and forms a delta of notable fertility.”

²⁹ Al-Muqaddasī 2001: 83.

³⁰ Agius 2008: 95.

³¹ Buzurg 1981: 76, 99.

³² Cubit: the measurement from the hollow of the elbow to the end of the middle finger.

³³ Buzurg 1981: 66.

³⁴ *Silsilat* 1995: 8; Hourani 1995: 70.

³⁵ Buzurg 1981: 11, 80-82, 94.

³⁶ *Ibid*: 24. The author of *Akhhbār al-Ṣīn* uses the same description to describe the Sea of Harkand (Bay of Bengal) *Silsilat* 1995: 6.

³⁷ *Silsilat* 1995: 8.

Baṣra³⁸) too, was a terminus for larger vessels unable to reach Baṣra,³⁹ 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.⁴⁰ Danger was also found where the Shaṭṭ al-^cArab 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.⁴¹

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 India⁴²) and mangrove poles (from East Africa) were used in the construction of buildings in Sīrāf,⁴³ while coconut trees from the islands of India (possibly the Maldiva or Laccadive Islands) were used by the people of Oman in ship building.⁴⁴ Bamboo was also imported to Sīrāf (and Oman).⁴⁵ 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.⁴⁶ Exports from the Gulf region (and the Shaṭṭ al-^cArab 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 *ma^cqilī* dates from Baṣra;⁴⁷ and towels, pearls and linen from Sīrāf.⁴⁸ Further products such as perfumed oils, soaps, quicksilver and iron, carpets and rugs, gauze and brocade, sugar-

³⁸ Pellat 1954-1960, I: 1085.

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 Ḥawqal, an ^cAbbāsīd princess (possibly named Zubaydah) blocked this whirlpool by filling the entrance to this canal with stones – Le Strange 2011: 47.

⁴¹ Al-Muqaddasī 2001: 12; Hourani 1995: 69; Le Strange 2011: 49.

⁴² Buzurg 1981: 84-85.

⁴³ The primary sources use the term خشب الساج i.e. teak (Wehr 1993: 454) when referring to the buildings of Sīrāf (al-Muqaddasī 2001:347) however, archaeological findings show that mangrove poles were used extensively in the construction of the houses of Sīrāf – 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-Muqaddasī 2001: 83; Le Strange 2011: 293.

⁴⁶ Horton 2005: 73, 81, 87; Agius 2008: 77; Le Strange 2011: 293.

⁴⁷ Al-Muqaddasī 2001: 107-108; Le Strange 2011: 81.

⁴⁸ Al-Muqaddasī 2001: 358.

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.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>)



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.⁵⁰ Oman, or more specifically Ṣoḥār, 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 *dīnārs*. Exports from Oman included *masīn* dates⁵¹ and possibly, spun cotton.⁵²

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,⁵³ and, according to al-Ya^cqūbī, on the stars⁵⁴ (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.⁵⁵ 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.⁵⁶ The Arabian Sea (or Sea of Lār) was also home to huge fish, snakes, crocodiles,⁵⁷ 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-Muqaddasī 2001: 84.

⁵² Buzurg 1981: 86. Buzurg speaks of a merchant leaving Oman for Jeddah with a cargo of (amongst other things) five bales of spun cotton.

⁵³ Agius 2008: 186.

⁵⁴ Lunde 2005: 20-29- citing al-Ya^cqūbī.

⁵⁵ Al-Muqaddasī 2001: 11

⁵⁶ Buzurg 1981: 97-98.

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.”⁵⁸

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

⁵⁸ Al-Muqaddasī 2001: 11. Greek Fire: flammable composition used in warfare in ancient and medieval warfare. More specifically, it refers to a petroleum based mixture introduced by the Byzantine Greeks in the seventh century, invented during the reign of Constantine IV Pogonatus by a Greek-speaking Syrian refugee from the Arab conquest of Syria. www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/244571/Greek-fire accessed 13-01-2011.

⁵⁹ Hartmann & Dunlop 1954-60, I: 930.

⁶⁰ *Silsilat* 1995: 2.

⁶¹ Agius 2008: 187.

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.

⁶⁴ Buzurg 1981: 106; *Silsilat* 1995: 3; al-Muqaddasī 2001: 12; Lunde 2005: 20-29- citing al-Ya^cqūbī.

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.

⁶⁸ al-Muqaddasī 2001: 13.

⁶⁹ Buzurg 1981: 106.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*: 8, 23, 70-71, 99, 101.

men reach the shore, they are attacked by tigers.⁷¹ Further dangers of the Sea of Harkand were the weather, in particular the strong wind which caused violent agitations of the sea;⁷² 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,⁷³ and giant snakes and whales in the sea,⁷⁴ 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.”⁷⁵

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.⁷⁶ 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.⁷⁷ Produce from the islands in this sea i.e. Sumatra and Java (the Land of Gold), Faṣūr 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 Faṣūr and Lāmūrī or Lāmūrī Island (possibly Achin Head (Cape Pedro), northern Sumatra), Birāwa and al-Niyān Islands⁷⁸ (see Map 3) included gold (hence the name of the group of islands), camphor, coconut fruit and coir, elephants, brazil-wood,

⁷¹ Ibid: 66.

⁷² *Silsilat* 1811: 12; idem, 1733: 6. The Arabic text reads *واما بحر هرکند فله ريح غير هذه ما بين المغرب الى بنات نعش* The *Banāt na^csh* are the three tail stars of the Ursa Major; the winds of the *Banāt na^csh* 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.

⁷³ Buzurg 1981: 78; *Silsilat* 1995: 4.

⁷⁴ *Alf layla wa layla* (n.d.), IV: 12; *Book of the Thousand Nights* 1925, VI: 69.

⁷⁵ *Silsilat* 1995: 6. This cloud appears in Buzurg’s text at the head of the Sea of China (Buzurg 1981:49-52).

⁷⁶ Lunde 2005: 20-29- citing al-Ya^cqūbī.

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 Faṣūr”, making Nias Island too close (in distance) to be Niyān Island.

and rattan/ bamboo.⁷⁹ The inhabitants of the islands however, were said to be cannibals, some of which had tails and others who only ate their enemies.⁸⁰

There are two possible locations for the Sea of Kardanj: between the Islands of Sumatra and Borneo⁸¹ which would include the Java Sea; or the Gulf of Thailand.⁸² 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^cqūbī simply names the sea and states “it is very rainy;”⁸³ and the compiler of *Akhbār al-Šīn* places Kadranj (Kardanj) at ten days sail away from a place called Betūma (and Şanf in the other direction), and twenty days away from Kalahbar.⁸⁴ 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 Şanf (Champa) and Sarīra (a town on the Lāmurī Island; one hundred and twenty *zam*⁸⁵ 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.⁸⁶

Interestingly, in the map of places mentioned in Buzurg’s *‘Ajā’ib*, 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

⁷⁹ *Silsilat* 1995: 3-4.

⁸⁰ Buzurg 1981: 73-74.

⁸¹ Agius 2008: 8.

⁸² Hartmann & Dunlop 1954-60, I: 930.

⁸³ Lunde 2005: 20-29.

⁸⁴ *Silsilat* 1995: 10. Kadranj 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.⁸⁷ 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 Şandarfulāt or Şandalfulāt (Hainan Dao, see Map 3⁸⁸). The destination in this sea was Khanfu (Canton, see Map 3), the chief port of China, from where silk, camphor, musk, spices,⁸⁹ and ceramics were exported. Buzurg speaks of a certain merchant from Oman, Ishāq b. Yahūda, who returned from China in a ship laden with musk, silk, porcelain, jewels and (precious) stones, all of incalculable value.⁹⁰ 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.⁹¹ It also made up approximately ninety-eight percent of the cargo of the Belitung wreck mentioned above.⁹²

According to al-Ya^cqūbī one was driven there by the south wind;⁹³ the compiler of *Akḥbār al-Şīn* adds that it takes seven days to steer through the rocks and shoals by Şandarfulāt, and a month to sail from Şandarfulāt to China.⁹⁴ 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.⁹⁵ Yajima reports

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 Şandarfulāt or Şandalfulāt refers to Şanf on the coast of Vietnam while the Parcel Islands are known as the Gates of China.

⁸⁹ Ibid: 73.

⁹⁰ Buzurg 1981: 63.

⁹¹ Horton 2005: 80-81.

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.

⁹³ Lunde 2005: 20-29.

⁹⁴ *Silsilat* 1811: 20.

⁹⁵ Agius 2008: 187 & 189.

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 Ismāʿīlawayh 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 Ṣandarfūlāt, 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.

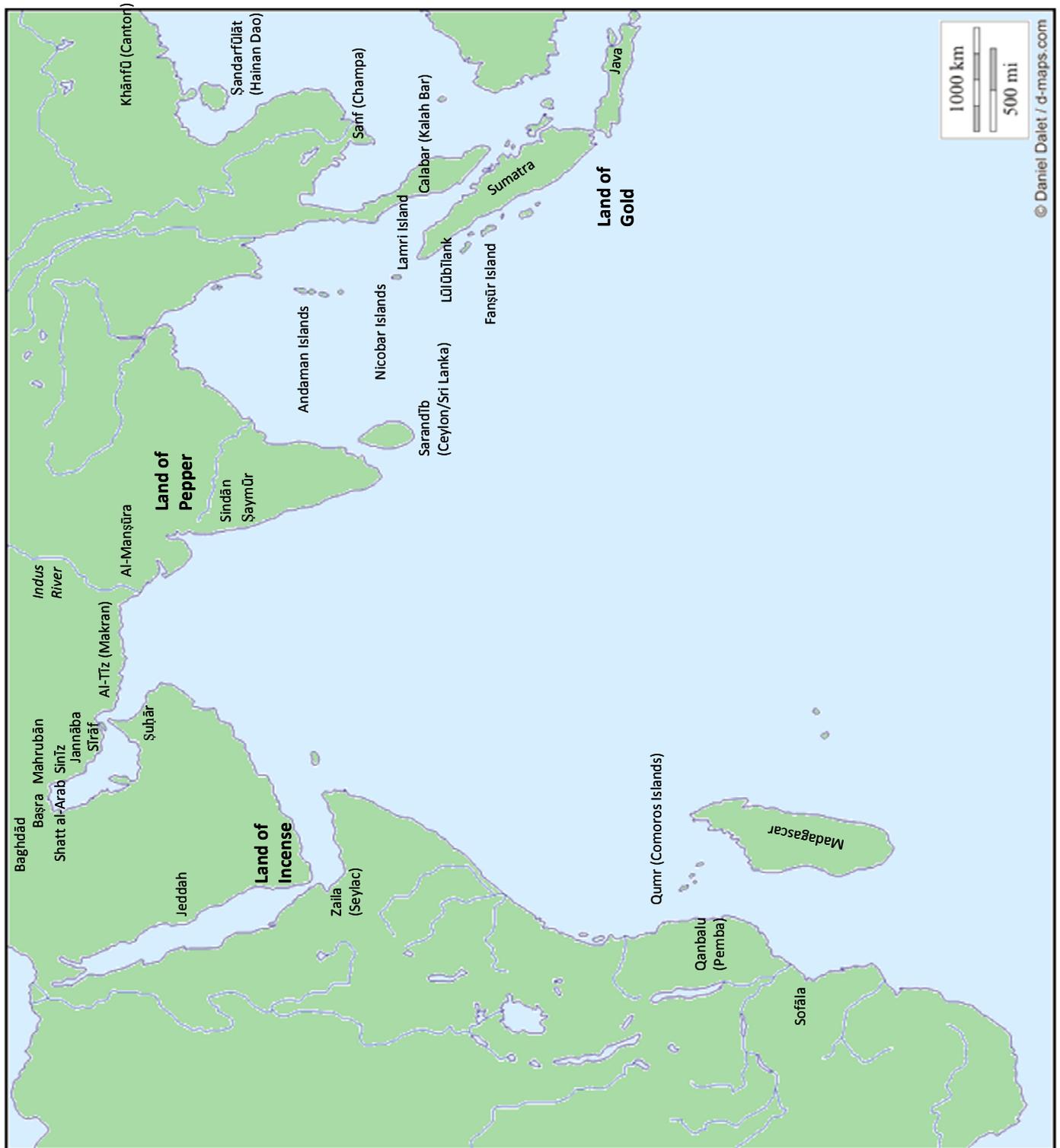
¹⁰⁰ Ibid: 52.

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.¹⁰³

Map 3: The Indian Ocean World. (Blank maps courtesy of <http://d-maps.com>)



¹⁰³ *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.

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.¹⁰⁴ 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;¹⁰⁵ 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.¹⁰⁶ 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.¹⁰⁷ The notion of an ocean that “encircles the world as with a ring, having neither bound nor limit”,¹⁰⁸ is a common belief held by medieval geographers. Al-Ṭabarī 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 (بحر); all of which is surrounded by the (surrounding) ocean (البحر المحيط) *al-baḥr al-muḥīt*.¹⁰⁹ 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.¹¹⁰ 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

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 (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.

¹⁰⁶ Buzurg 1981: 13.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid: 13.

¹⁰⁸ Al-Muqaddasī 2001: 16.

¹⁰⁹ Al-Ṭabarī 1989, I: 208.

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 (Límnos, 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).¹¹¹

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.¹¹²

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.

¹¹¹ Buzurg 1981: 16.

¹¹² Ibid: 5; 55; 76.

Chapter 4: The Sea Stories of Buzurg Ibn Shahriyār

The basis of the investigation into maritime cultural terminology is the collection of sea stories, the *Kitāb ‘Ajā’ib al-Hind* (The Book of the Marvels of India). Not much is known about the author of this work, Buzurg Ibn Shahriyār (d. 399/ 1009), other than that he lived (approximately) between 299-399/ 912-1009¹, 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 Shahriyār 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 Gulf²). 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

¹ Ahmad 1965, II: 583.

² Al-Muqaddasī 2001: 329.

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 Ṭāb (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 Rāmhurmuz 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 °Abhara, which Buzurg introduces as “amongst the stories of sailors (*bahriyya* or *bānāniyya*) and captains (*nākhudā*).”¹² Captain °Abhara 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 °Abhara 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'ib al-Hind* were related to Buzurg by ship captains, ship owners, merchants, *qādīs* (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) °Alī b. Abī Ṭālib 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.

⁹ Le Strange 2011: 243-244.

¹⁰ Agius 2005(b): 129, citing Alan J. Villiers.

¹¹ Agius 2005(b): 129.

¹² Buzurg 1966: 85; idem, 1981: 49.

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-Muqaddasī that the population of this *entrepôt* for trade with China began to diminish during the Būyid dynasty (320-454/

¹⁵ Freeman-Grenville 1981: vii.

¹⁶ Ibid: xxii.

¹⁷ Agius 2008: 75.

¹⁸ Al-Muqaddasī 2001: 347; Bosworth 1997, IX: 667.

¹⁹ Agius 2008: 142.

²⁰ *Silsilat al-tawārīkh* 1995: 8; al-Muqaddasī 2001: 347.

²¹ Agius 2008: 77.

²² Ibid: 79.

932-1062);²³ despite the benefits and prosperity that the Būyid's capture of Baghdād in 333-4/ 945 brought to Sīrāf and the Arabian-Persian Gulf²⁴ as a whole, many merchants chose to re-establish themselves in Ṣoḥār, north-east Oman. Sīrāf was also struck by an earthquake in 367/ 977 which lasted seven days,²⁵ and is believed to have destroyed the port.²⁶ 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.²⁷ 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 Ṣoḥār, 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.²⁸ Moreover, pirates based on the Island of Qais were causing ships to bypass the port of Sīrāf and go directly to Baṣra,²⁹ 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 ʿAbbāsīd Iraq that began in the fourth/ tenth century;³⁰ by the fifth/eleventh century Ubulla and Sīrāf were no longer functional (although Sīrāf was revived somewhat in the sixth/twelfth century³¹), 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

²³ Al-Muqaddasī 2001: 347.

²⁴ Ricks 1970, III: 346.

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 *ʿAjāʾib 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.

²⁶ Ricks 1970, III: 351.

²⁷ Al-Muqaddasī 2001: 347.

²⁸ Agius 2008: 80.

²⁹ Bosworth 1997, IX: 667.

³⁰ Soucek 1995, VII: 66.

³¹ Bosworth 1997, IX: 667.

the loss of many well-known merchants and captains who had contributed to the growth of the port town and Saymur.³² 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.³³ 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 ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad b. Bābishād b. Ḥarām b. Ḥamawayh al-Sīrāfī, one of the principal shipmasters to sail to the Land of Gold (Sumatra and Java³⁴) (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.³⁵ 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

³² Buzurg 1966: 165-168; idem, 1981: 97-98.

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).

³⁵ Buzurg 1981: 11.

ordeal at sea, be it their own or that of another.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.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.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:

تذاکرنا امر اسمعیلویہ بن ابرہیم بن مرداس فقیل لی اَنہ وصل فی سنة سبع عشرة
وثلاثمئة

We were talking about Isma'īlawayh. Someone told me he arrived in 317/ 929.³⁹

Arrived where? They go on to elaborate:

كان وصوله منذ خطف من كله والى ان دخل بگلاء عمان ثمانية واربعين يوما

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

³⁶ See Agius 2005(b): 198-201 for more information.

³⁷ Al-Muqaddasī 2001: 79, 82.

³⁸ Ibid: 79; Soucek 1995, VII: 66; Agius 2008: 85-86.

³⁹ Buzurg 1966: 132; idem, 1981: 77.

In a previous story, Ismaʿīlawayh 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 dīnārs.⁴¹ This claim is refuted in the previously mentioned story:

وورد في تلك السنة كاوان من سرنديب وبلغ عشور مركبه ستمائة الف دينار لا
مركب اسمعيلويه

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

Ismaʿīlawayh features quite often in Buzurg’s tales; it is very possible that Ismaʿīlawayh too, lived in Oman as many of his voyages concern departing from, or arriving in Oman. When Ismaʿīlawayh 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, Ismaʿīlawayh witnessed this firsthand, otherwise the information would have been preceded by the source of information. If this is the case and Ismaʿīlawayh did live in Oman, then it is possible that Buzurg was living in Oman in the year 339/ 950 when Sīrāf was already suffering from economic decline. Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. ʿAmr 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 Ismaʿīlawayh about the story in 339/ 950,⁴⁵ which provides a clue as to when and where he settled and compiled his *Kitāb ʿAjāʾib al-Hind*. Stories were also related to Buzurg by a Baluchi (Balūshī) physician in Oman (البلوحيّ)

⁴⁰ Idem, 1966: 132; idem, 1981: 77.

⁴¹ Idem, 1966: 129-130; idem, 1981: 76.

⁴² Idem, 1966: 132; idem, 1981: 77.

⁴³ Buzurg 1981: 31-36.

⁴⁴ Ibid: 55.

⁴⁵ Ibid: 29.

(المتطَبِّب بعَمان), and by other people from Oman; it could be argued that Buzurg met these people elsewhere as we know for certain that he did travel, to Baṣra, the Gulf of Ayla (Aqaba) and the Sea of Fārs however, it is more likely that he would not want to reside in a city that was in decline but rather take residence in the commercial hub of Oman, Ṣoḥār.

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 'Ajā'ib al-Hind* is, as the title suggests, the "Wonders of India";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."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-Masʿūdī's (d. 345/956-7) *Murūj al-dhahab wa-māʿādin 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*⁴⁸ or *tafsīr* (Qurʾānic exegesis) using a chain of narrators (*isnād*) to substantiate a point in *sharīʿa* (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. *muḥādatha*: 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*.

⁴⁸ The *ḥadīth* pl *aḥādīth* 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.

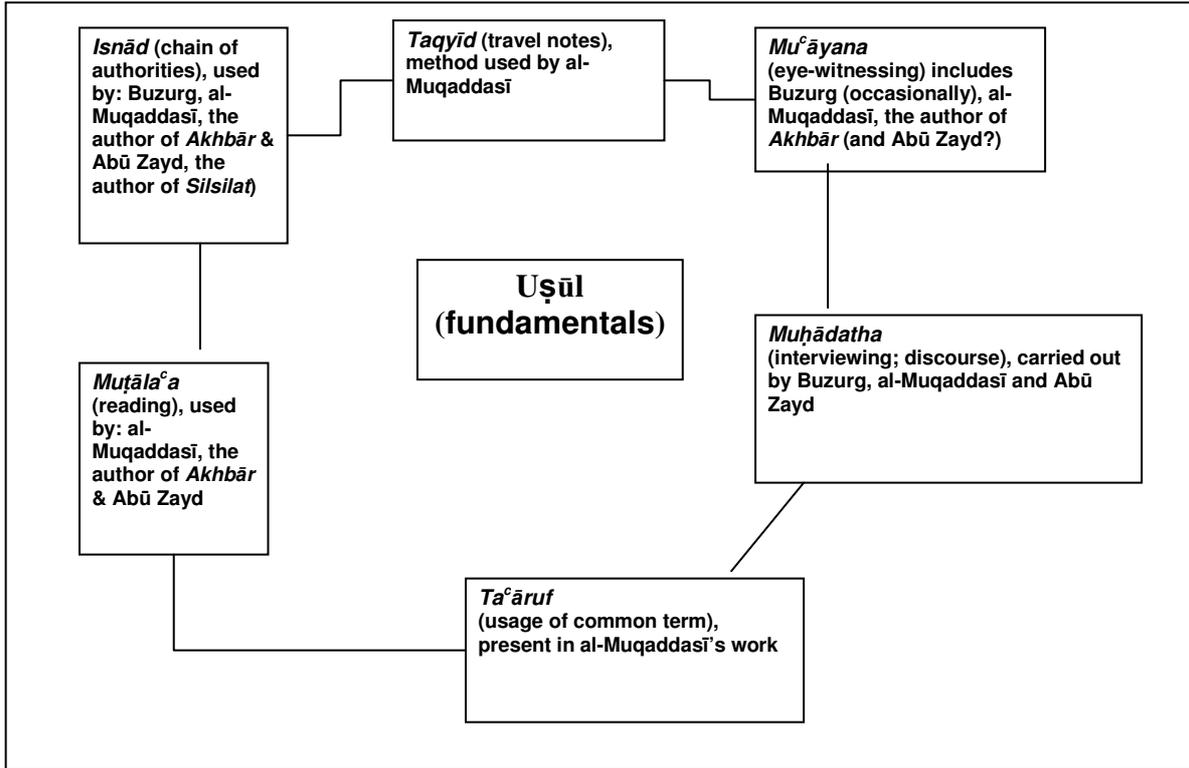


Figure 3 Framework for the present study (after Agius 2008: 16).

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. قد قيل “they say”, حدثني “I was told”. “They say” possibly indicates the use of the *muḥādatha*; in another tale Buzurg begins the section with the words تذاكرنا “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.

⁵⁰ Buzurg 1966: 132; idem, 1981: 77.

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.

| Source | Origins | Profession | Other Information |
|---|--|--|--|
| 1. Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. °Amr b. Ḥammawayh b. Ḥarām b. Ḥammawayh al-Najīramī | Najīram, north of Sīrāf on the Gulf Coast | Possibly a merchant or traveller | |
| 2. Abū °Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Bābīshād b. Ḥarām b. Ḥammawayh al-Sīrāfī | Sīrāf | One of the principal shipmasters to sail to the Land of Gold | |
| 3. Isma°l b. Ibrahīm b. Mirdās (Isma°lawayh) | Origins unknown – possibly a resident of Oman. | One of the best shipowners to go to the Land of Gold | Son-in-law of Ashkanīn |
| 4. Aḥmad b. °Alī b. Munīr | Sīrāf | One of the best ship-owners to have sailed the seas | A man of considerable reputation amongst seafarers |

⁵¹Buzurg 1981: 5.

| Source | Origins | Profession | Other Information |
|--|---------|--|---|
| 5. Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ʿUmar al-Sīrāfī | Sīrāf | | |
| 6. Abū al-Zahr al-Barkhatī | Sīrāf? | A shipmaster/ shipowner; one of the principal notables of Sīrāf | Previously a Zoroastrian |
| 7. Captain ʿAllāma | | Captain | |
| 8. Abū al-ʿAbbās | Sīrāf | A chief merchant in an Indian town | |
| 9. Abū al-Ḥasan Alī b. Shādān al-Sīrāfī | Sīrāf | | |
| 10. Captain Shahriyārī, | | One of the captains on the China route | |
| 11. Captain ʿAbhara, | Kirmān | 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 | |
| 12. ʿImrān the Lame | | A sea-captain | Sailed in the Red Sea |
| 13. Mardānshāh | | One of the shipowners to go to the Land of Pepper (India) | Has a son al-Marzaban, a notoriously dishonest captain who mistreated merchants on his ship |

| Source | Origins | Profession | Other Information |
|---|---------|---|--|
| 14. Sa ^ʿ īd the poor man | Aden | A weaver | |
| 15. Ishāq b. Yahūda | | A man who earned his living amongst brokers in Oman | |
| 16. Kāwān | | Shipowner/ master? | |
| 17. Muslim b. Bishr | Oman | An employer of pearl-divers | Found the famous Orphan Pearl |
| 18. Yūnus b. Mihrān | Sīrāf | A merchant | Travelled to Java |
| 19. Dārbazīn | Sīrāf | | The brother of ^ʿ Ubaidallāh b. Ayyūb's (the paternal uncle of the <i>qāḍī</i> ^ʿ Abdallāh b. al-Fadhī) wife |
| 20. ^ʿ Abbās b. Māhān | Sīrāf | <i>Hunarman</i> of Saymur | |
| 21. ^ʿ Abd al-Wahīd b. ^ʿ Abd al-Raḥmān of Fasā | Fasā | | Brother of Abū Ḥātim of Fasā who sailed the sea for many years |
| 22. ^ʿ Alī b. Muḥammad b. Sahl, known as Surūr, | | | Travelled to East Africa |
| 23. Yazīd | Oman | A ship's captain who used to go to the Zanj country | |
| 24. Abū Ṭāhir | Baghdād | | |

| Source | Origins | Profession | Other Information |
|--|---------|--|---|
| 25. Muḥammad b. Muslim | Sīrāf | | Lived in India for more than twenty years |
| 26. Abū Yūsuf b. Muslim | | | |
| 27. Rāshid, al-Ghulām bin Bābishād | | | Possibly a servant of Bābishād |
| 28. °Abdāllah b. Junayd | | A shipowner | |
| 29. Aḥmad | | Shipmaster/ ship's captain | |
| 30. Muḥammad | Oman | | |
| 31. Ja°far b. Rashīd, known as Ibn Lākis | | A sea-captain who was well known on the Land of Gold route and a shipowner | |

A frequently mentioned source of Buzurg's for example, is Abū °Abdallāh 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 الى بلاد الذهب واعرف خلق الله بامر البحر ومن
جلة البحريين ومستورهم

[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

⁵² Buzurg 1966: 5; idem, 1981: 4.

He was so distinguished, in fact, that an Indian king had a portrait painted of him, a custom usually reserved for famous, eminent men.⁵³ We know from Buzurg that Bābīshād 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 Lāmūrī Island (north of Sumatra) (see Map 3). There is not much information given regarding Bābīshād’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 had a slave whom he took with him on voyages, as Buzurg relates a story told to him by Rāshid, al-Ghulām bin Bābīshād in which he describes a gale in which he was caught while travelling from Sīrāf to Baṣra in 305/918.⁵⁴

Another common source is Ismaʿīl bin Ibrahīm b. Mirdās (see Table 2, number 3), “one of the best ship-owners to go to the Land of Gold [Sumatra and Java]”⁵⁵. He was better known as Ismaʿīlawayh, 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, Lāmūrī (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 310/922.⁵⁶

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.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,

⁵³ Ibid: 57.

⁵⁴ Ibid: 94.

⁵⁵ Ibid: 5.

⁵⁶ Ibid: 31-36.

⁵⁷ Al- Muqaddasī 2001: 346, 348. Al- Muqaddasī’s description of this place is brief; he describes the town as being part of the district of Ardashīr Khurrah, which was planned by Nimrūdh b. Kanʿān 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 Bābīshād;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. ʿAmr had travelled mainly in and around India: he was in al-Manṣūra (the capital of the region of al-Sind, lower Indus⁵⁹) 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;⁶⁰ the carrying or travelling of the kings and notables of Ceylon in *hindolas* (litters);⁶¹ the considering of urine to be cleaner than the water that had been used to wash the hand or mouth;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.⁶³ He had also travelled to Baṣra, where he met Buzurg and related the first tale of the ʿAjāʾib; 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 ʿAbdallāh b. ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-Azīz, the ruler of al-Manṣūra, in 270/ 833, asking for a translation of Islamic law. ʿAbdallāh b. ʿUmar sent an Iraqī 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.⁶⁴ The inclusion of the information provided by al-Ḥasan b. ʿAmr 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. ʿAmr b. Nās, a shipowner,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. ʿAmr or al-Ḥasan b. ʿAmr, where the surname was not mentioned, would be difficult. In the Arabic text however, the beginning reads:

⁵⁸ Buzurg 1981: 70.

⁵⁹ Al- Muqaddasī 2001: 387.

⁶⁰ Buzurg 1981: 3.

⁶¹ Ibid: 68.

⁶² Ibid: 69.

⁶³ Ibid: 60.

⁶⁴ Ibid: 2.

⁶⁵ Ibid: 29. The tale is entitled “A Snake that ate Elephants”.

وخبرنى ابو محمد الحسن بن عمرو عن بعض النواخذة انه كان يسير في مركب
فاشتدّت عليه الريح...⁶⁶

Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. °Amr 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. °Amr, who heard it from or on the authority of (عن) 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 °Ajā'ib in which al-Ḥasan b. °Amr have been cited as the source, have been narrated to Buzurg by the aforementioned sea captain Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. °Amr b. Ḥammawayh b. Ḥarām b. Ḥammawayh al-Najīramī.

Captain °Abhara 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 الى الصين الا من غرر ولم يسمع ان احدا سلكه وسلم وعاد قط فان
سلم في المضى فهو عجب فلا يكاد يسلم في العودة وما سمعت ان احدا سلم في
الذهاب والمجىء سواه

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

⁶⁶ Buzurg 1966: 47-8.

⁶⁷ Idem 1981: 29. Devic translates the Arabic text as: "D'après un récit que m'a fait Abou Mohammed al-Haçan, fils d'Amr, un capitaine de navire..." Buzurg 1966: 47.

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

°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 dīnārs 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 °Allāma was also amongst those who travelled to China and back successfully. Buzurg does not provide much biographical detail regarding Captain °Allāma, 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 علم √^c-l-m, his name (literally) means the “most erudite, very learned”;⁷³ it is possible that °Allāma is the captain's nickname or moniker, signifying perhaps, his status amongst his peers. The tale, related by Buzurg,

⁶⁹ Buzurg 1966: 85; Idem, 1981: 50.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Buzurg 1966: 86; Idem, 1981: 50.

⁷² Freeman-Grenville does not identify the location of the Land of al-Bakham. He may have been referring to a place in Persia as Persian lexica list بَخْم Bakhm as the “name of a country famous for its musk.” Richardson 1829: 247.

⁷³ Wehr 1993: 744.

portrays ʿAllāma 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 ʿAllāma’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 ʿAllāma were blessed, as the “voyage brought them wealth and happiness”.⁷⁴

Themes in the ʿAjāʿib 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 ʿajāʿib, 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 ʿAjāʿib 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.”⁷⁵

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

⁷⁴ Buzurg 1981: 28.

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

"بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ وَهُوَ حَسْبِي الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ ذِي الْعِزَّةِ وَالْجَلَالِ، وَالْإِنْعَامِ وَالْإِفْضَالِ، خَالِقِ الْأُمَمِ أَطْوَارًا وَالْأَجْيَالِ، وَمُنْوَعِهِمْ بِفَطْرَتِهِ فِي الْأَخْلَاقِ وَالْأَشْكَالِ، وَمَصْرِفِهِمْ بِقُدْرَتِهِ مِنْ حَالٍ إِلَى حَالٍ، وَمُعَلِّمِهِمْ بِحِكْمَتِهِ مَا يَصْنَعُونَ مِنْ غَرَائِبِ الْأَعْمَالِ"

“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.⁷⁶ 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 (غرائب *gharā'ib*) and adages (امثال *amthāl*), to be from amongst these lessons or warnings (عبرة *ibra*).⁷⁷

The *Silsilat*, on the contrary, does not start with the *bismillāh* formula. Its absence is unusual,⁷⁸ 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 *'Ajā'ib 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 Sīrāf, and whose stories have been recounted by Buzurg, was initially a *majūs* (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 امينا يقبلون قوله ويستودعونه اموالهم واولادهم

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

⁷⁶ Al- Muqaddasī 2001: 1-2.

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-Ḥasan b. Yazīd of Sīrāf, does not begin with the *bismillāh* formula either.

⁷⁹ *Silsilat al-tawārīkh* 1811: 60, 148. The dates included in this text are 1011 (سنة احد عشر بعد الف) in the first part, and 596 in the second. See Chapter 2 for more information.

⁸⁰ Zoroastrianism, initially an élitist 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.

⁸¹ Buzurg 1966: 19; idem, 1981: 13.

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 سهيل (*suhayl*) Canopus. The passengers, frightened by the ferocity of the weather and perhaps, sensing their impending doom,

توادعوا وصلّى كلّ منهم الى جهة على قدر معبوده لأنهم كانوا شيعًا من اهل الصين
والهند والعجم والجزاير 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

⁸² Idem, 1966: 21; idem, 1981: 14.

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.

Social and Cultural Curiosities

Buzurg's acceptance of or interest in others is a unique feature of the *ʿAja'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 *ʿajā'ib* of foreign customs and beliefs without condemning them; rather than judge these foreign cultures and beliefs, or any other *ʿajā'ib* that he hears about, he simply states in the known formula *والله اعلم* "God knows best"⁸⁶ or quotes, *فتبارك الله احسن الخالقين* "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. Ḥammawayh 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.

⁸⁶ Buzurg 1966: 175; idem, 1981: 102.

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 *‘Ajā’ib*, 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 *qāḍī* (judge)), who sentences the thief according to *sharī‘a* law.

Hindu holy men also intrigue Buzurg and his audience, in particular the Bhikku⁹⁴ (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 ‘Umar.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.

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

⁹⁰ Ibid: 86.

⁹¹ Ibid: 95.

⁹² Ibid: 101.

⁹³ Netton 1997: 225-6.

⁹⁴ Buzurg refers to them as Hindus, however the term *bhikku* refers to Buddhist monasticism: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/64123/bhikku> (accessed 12-07-2011).

⁹⁵ Buzurg 1981: 91.

The Sea and its Creatures

Fear of the terror of the ocean is found throughout the *‘Ajā’ib 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 *wāl* وال as it is named in one instance in both the *‘Ajā’ib al-Hind* and the *Akhhbār*) 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 in to the abyss.¹⁰⁰ The only way to protect

⁹⁶ Buzurg uses the terms سمك \ 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. *Alf 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 Buzurg 1981: 11, 12.

¹⁰⁰ *Alf 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,¹⁰¹ or ring bells throughout the night.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 *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:

والصيادون اذا ظفروا بها طرحوها في الشمس وقطعوا لحمها وحفروا له حفراً يجتمع فيها الودك ويُعرف من عينها اذا اذابتها الشمس الودك بالحرارة ويجمع فيبياع على ارباب المراكب ويخلط باخلاق لهم يمسح بها مراكب البحر يسدّ به خرزها ويسدّ ايضاً ما ينفثق من خرزها فيبياع ودك هذا الحوت بجملة من المال

The fishermen exposed him to the sun, sliced away his flesh, and having dug 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.¹⁰³

Buzurg goes into further detail, relating what Abū l-Ḥasan Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. °Umar 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 *dahn/dehen*).¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Buzurg 1981: 10.

¹⁰² *Silsilat* 1811: 3.

¹⁰³ *Silsilat* 1811: 140-1; idem, 1995: 95.

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.¹⁰⁵ Despite their large size, Buzurg does not portray them as dangerous; rather, Ismaʿīlawayh 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*.¹⁰⁶ 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.¹⁰⁷

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.¹⁰⁸ Other snakes are deadly to man: Buzurg talks of the inhabitants of a village in Champa (Vietnam, possibly present day Đă Nâng) having to emigrate due to a man-and-cattle eating snake;¹⁰⁹ 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.¹¹⁰ Buzurg also reports of giant snakes that were able to kill and eat elephants and crocodiles.¹¹¹ 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.”¹¹²

¹⁰⁵ Buzurg 1981: 5

¹⁰⁶ Buzurg 1966: 7-8. *Mann* is defined as a weight of 2 *raṭl*; a *raṭl* 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.

¹⁰⁷ Buzurg 1981: 100.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid: 25.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid: 29.

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 (fatally) 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> (accessed 05-07-2011).

¹¹¹ Buzurg 1981: 29, 102.

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 “Wāḳwāḳ, Waḳwāḳ, Wāḳ Wāḳ, Wāḳal-Wāḳ, al-Wāḳwāḳ(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 body¹¹³) 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,¹¹⁴ and the giant roc or *rukḥ*, the giant legendary bird of prey, though in the *ʿAjāʿib* it is simply referred to as a طير عظيم *ṭayr ʿaẓīm* an enormous bird.¹¹⁵ This creature features in many medieval Eastern and Western accounts in addition to the *ʿAjāʿib 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 *rukḥ* are found in the *garuḍa* (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 lion¹¹⁶) of the Greeks.¹¹⁷ The legend of the *rukḥ* and similar giant birds may have risen from the existence of now-extinct creatures such as the *Aepyornis* (elephant bird¹¹⁸), 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 Gulnār, the Sea-Born, and her son Badr Basīm Prince of Persia, where Princess Janharah 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.

¹¹⁶ Tripp 1970: 255.

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 *ʿAjāʿib 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 *ʿajāʿib* 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 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

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 Qur’ān and the *ḥadīth* 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,¹²² 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.¹²³ 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.

¹²² Yajima 1977: 195-208.

¹²³ 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, Sabaean, Ethiopic), 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 sources¹²⁴ 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.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ The *Akhbār al-Šīn 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) *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm* (The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions); and the "Seven Voyages of Sindbād 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 (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.¹²⁶ Iblīs (Satan) himself is said to have placed his throne on the sea from where he sends forth his armies;¹²⁷ 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.¹²⁸ 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 *ḥadīth* literature. The ambiguous nature of the sea is portrayed several times throughout the Qur’ān (xvii: 66):

رَبُّكُمُ الَّذِي يُرْجِي لَكُمْ الْفَلَكَ فِي الْبَحْرِ لِنَبِّئُكُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِكُمْ 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.¹²⁹

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*.

¹²⁶ See discussion of sea monsters in Chapter 4: The Sea Stories of Buzurg.

¹²⁷ www.inter-islam.org/faith/jinn2.html (accessed 15-02-2011).

¹²⁸ Muslim 1998, II: 537-539. The *ḥadīth* 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 *ḥadīth* 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:

ألا إنه في بحر الشام أو بحر اليمن. لا بل من قِبَل 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 Isrā’īl* 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 *āyas*, was created to be utilised by man. Other *āyas* however, reveal a more negative, destructive aspect of the sea in which it is used as a means of punishment:

أم أمنتُم أن يُعيدَكُم فيه تارةً أخرى فَيُرْسِلَ عليكم قاصفا من الريح فَيُغْرِقَكُم بما كفرتُم...

Or do you feel secure that He will not send you back a second time to sea and send against you a heavy gale to drown you because of your ingratitude...¹³⁰

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 Banī 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 *Hajj* or *Umra*) or for a military expedition (*ghāz[in]*) 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:

قال: أن الله لما خلق بحر الشام أوحى إليه أني خلقتك وأنى حامل فيك عبادا لي يبتغون من فضلي يسبحونني ويقدسونني ويكبرونني ويهللونني فكيف أنت صانع بهم. قال: رب إذا أغرقهم. قال: اذهب فقد لعنتك، وسأقل حليتك وصيدك. وأوحى إلى بحر العراق مثل ذلك. فقال: رب إذا أحملهم على ظهري فإذا سبحوك سبحتك معهم وإذا قدسوك قدستك معهم وإذا كبروك كبرتكم معهم. قال: اذهب فقد باركت فيك سأكثر حليتك وصيدك.

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-‘Irāq (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 (*bahr al-rūm*) has also been called blessed in another tradition - Ibn Kathīr [nd], IV: 476. (وإذا البحار سُجِّرَتْ) *(Sūrat takwīr* lxxxi: 6; trans. Ali 2002: 424)). According to Mu‘āwīya bin Sa‘īd the ‘sea’ in the passage above refers to the blessed sea, or *bahr 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 وإذا البحار سُجِّرَتْ... 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 ‘Alī 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,¹³³ while Ismāʿīlawayh, 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.¹³⁴ 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 (ريح *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 (مطر *maṭar*) was considered to be a blessing, a form of sustenance for the crops / harvest; however, as the difference in the verb forms (أمطر *amṭara* and مطر *maṭara*)¹³⁵ indicates, the rain also symbolises God's wrath. According to Islamic and Biblical traditions, rain contributed heavily to the Flood;¹³⁶ 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 ʿAllāma, was to “purify your souls, say your prayers, repent of your past sins, and ask

“the sea”; ʿAlī 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.

¹³⁴ Ibid: 31-36.

¹³⁵ The difference in form can (but not always) signify different types of rain where *amṭara* is used for a rain sent upon people as a form of punishment, while *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.”¹³⁷ 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),¹³⁸ many of whom inhabited the desert, the mountains¹³⁹ 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-Hamadānī (fl. end of 3/9th century) writes:

إذا طلعت الثُّرَيَّا ارتجَّ البحر واختلقت الرياح، وسلَّط الله الجنَّ على المياه...

Upon the rising of *thurayyā* (Pleiades) the sea heaves/ boils and contrary winds blow, and God gives the *jinn* power/ mastery over the seas.¹⁴⁰

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.¹⁴¹ Other rituals carried out to ward off evil or danger was the cutting of the wind with swords,¹⁴² possibly symbolic of an attempt to diminish the spiritual power that the wind was often associated with. Interestingly, the *الزوبعة* *zawbi^ca*, mentioned in the *Silsilat*, is also attributed to the supernatural; translated as whirlwind and whirlpool in the text,¹⁴³ it (*الزوبعة* *zawbi^ca* and also *أم زوبعة* *umm zawbi^ca* and *أبو زوبعة* *abū zawbi^ca*) 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).¹⁴⁴ Adapted to the maritime context with its translation of whirlpool, Lane writes

¹³⁷ Buzurg 1981: 28.

¹³⁸ A plural form of the word *rīh*, *أرواح* *arwāh*, 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* (Iblīs) is said to have placed his throne on the sea from where he sends forth his armies (Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal citing Jābir, who heard it from the Prophet Muḥammad – www.inter-islam.org/faith/jinn2.html accessed 15-02-2011).

¹⁴⁰ Al-Hamadānī 1996: 65.

¹⁴¹ Buzurg 1981: 16.

¹⁴² Agius 2008: 240.

¹⁴³ *Silsilat* 1811: 12; idem, 1995: 6.

¹⁴⁴ Lane 1968, III: 1212.

that inside the الزوبعة *zawbi^ca* 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-baḥr* (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 الى جهة على قدر معبوده لأنهم كانوا شيعة من اهل الصين
والهند والعجم والجزاير 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 *nākhōda*). Derived from the Persian

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. The الزوبعة *zawbi^ca* 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 Aḥqāf* xlvi: 29; trans. Ali 2002: 356.

¹⁴⁶ Tibbetts 1981: 194.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. The prayer is attributed to a *Ṣūfī* (Islamic mystic) Abū l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (d. 656/1258) – some lines of this litany are found in Ibn Baṭṭūṭa’s *Riḥla* 1997: 26-27.

¹⁴⁸ Buzurg 1981: 28.

¹⁴⁹ Buzurg 1966: 21; idem 1981: 14.

nau or *nāw* (boat/ship) *khoda*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.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;¹⁵² in the event of shipwreck or accident, the *nākhudā* was required to contribute towards covering the losses.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 ship-master. 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*.¹⁵⁴

After the *nākhudā* (or *ṣāhib al-markab*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^callim*, 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 *‘Ajā’ib*, 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.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.¹⁵⁷ For those sailing closer to the shore, Muḥammad b. Bābishād advises navigators who want to know

¹⁵⁰ Buzurg 1981: xvii.

¹⁵¹ Tibbetts 1971: 58, 61.

¹⁵² Agius 2008: 178.

¹⁵³ Idem, 2005 (b): 128.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid: 129.

¹⁵⁵ *Alf 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.

¹⁵⁶ Buzurg 1966: 32.

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.¹⁵⁸

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.¹⁵⁹ 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 °Allāma and Captain °Abraha, 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 °Abraha, 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.¹⁶⁰ Captain °Allāma 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.”¹⁶¹ Buzurg gives no indication of what Captain °Allāma had seen either; the lightening of the vessel was attributed to God's inspiration. In any case, Captain °Allāma'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

¹⁵⁸ Ibid: 54.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid: 17.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid: 49-52.

¹⁶¹ Ibid: 27.

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..."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 *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 *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 *‘Ajā’ib*, where the *rubbān* informs the crew:

نحن معشر الربانية علينا العهود والمواثيق ان لا نعرض سفينة الى العطب وهي باقية
لم يجر عليها قدر ونحن معشر ربانية السفن لا نطلعها الا و آجالنا واعمارنا معنا فيها
فنعيش بسلامتها ونموت بعطبها

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.¹⁶³

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

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

وأخرج منه كيساً قطنياً وفكه وأخرج منه تراباً مثل الرماد، وبله بالماء وصبر عليه قليلاً وشمه ثم إنه أخرج من ذلك الصندوق كتاباً صغيراً وقرأ فيه، وقال لنا: إعلموا يا ركاب أن في هذا الكتاب أمراً عجبياً يدل على أن كل من وصل إلى هذه الأرض لم ينج منها بل يهلك (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 whoso cometh hither shall surely die, without hope of escape."

¹⁶³ Buzurg 1966: 22; idem, 1981: 14.

¹⁶⁴ Tibbetts 1971: 62.

Other members of the crew included the *bahṛīyya*¹⁶⁵ and the *bānānīyya*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.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.”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 (رياح *riyāḥ*) and weather systems, the currents, the maritime calendar¹⁶⁹ 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 blows¹⁷⁰, 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

¹⁶⁵ Buzurg 1966: 5, 16.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid: 10, 11, 16, 52.

¹⁶⁷ Agius 2005 (b): 130.

¹⁶⁸ Buzurg 1981: 14.

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.

¹⁷⁰ The four cardinal directions which define the winds, and the system of recognising them, are the *shamāl* “north” wind, recognised by its dividing of the clouds; *janūb* “south” draws rain from the clouds; *ṣabā* “east” collects the clouds together; and *dabūr* “west” scatters the clouds. Agius 2005: 156 & 187 (citation – Tibbetts 1981: 112).

from Arabic موسم *mawsim* (i.e. season),¹⁷¹ 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):¹⁷² 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”¹⁷³, 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”¹⁷⁴, 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,¹⁷⁵ the sea is calmer with a cessation of upwelling, and voyages are undertaken in a westerly direction.

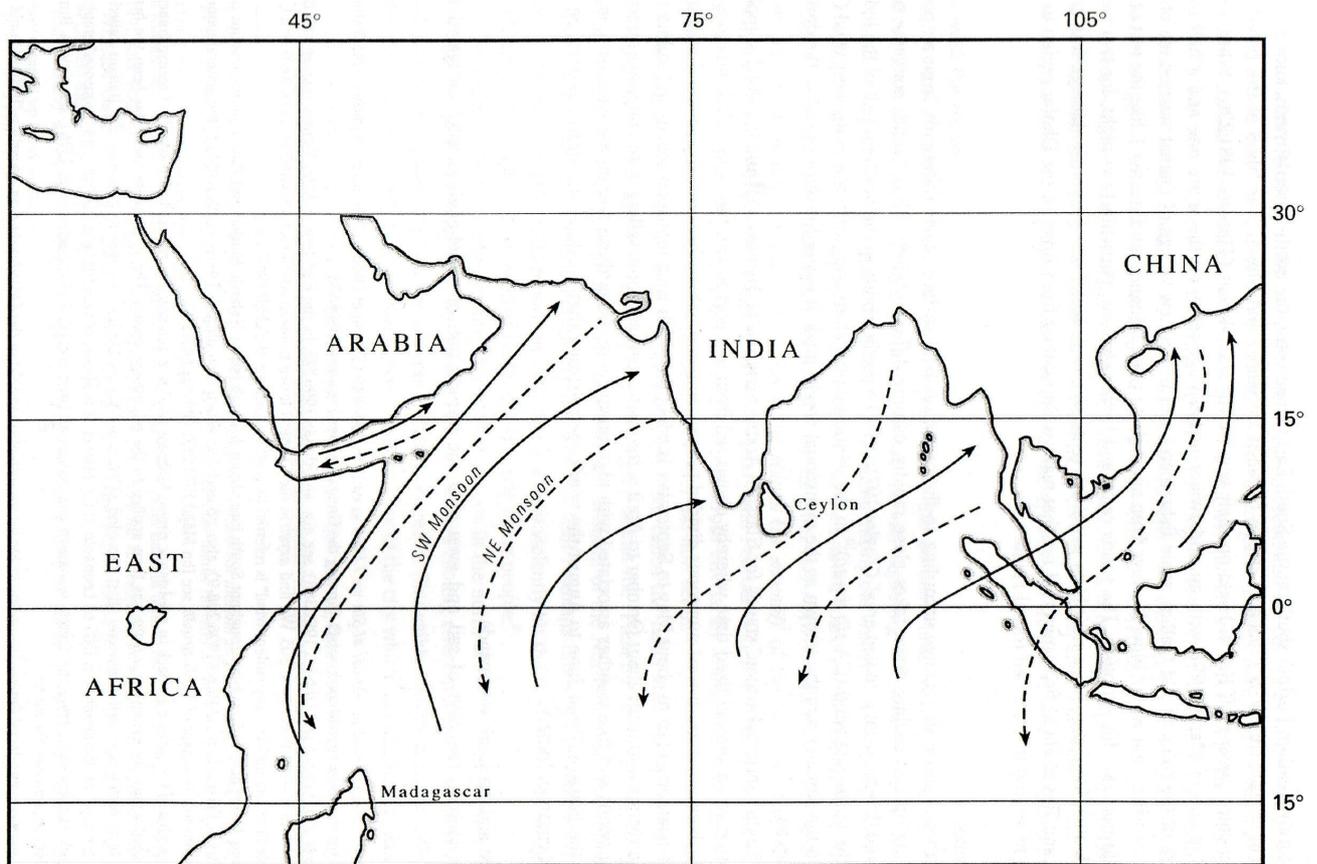
¹⁷¹ Agius 2005(b): 193 – the origins of the term may go back to pre-Islamic times where the *mawsim* referred to the trade fair which coincided with the monsoonal winds.

¹⁷² <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/~dib2/asia/monsoon.html> (accessed 13-06-2011). The Indian Ocean here includes Tropical and Sub-tropical Asia, Africa and Australia.

¹⁷³ Dear & Kemp 2006: 370.

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).



Map 4: Monsoons in the northern half of the Indian Ocean (after Agius 2005(b): 194).

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.”¹⁷⁶ Interestingly, these seasons, and the monsoonal winds that bring about these seasons are only mentioned in passing in *Kitāb ‘Ajā’ib al-Hind* and contemporary texts; in fact, the term “monsoon” does not appear in these texts at all.¹⁷⁷ 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

¹⁷⁶ Tibbetts 1981: 361. The ‘port’ seasons were controlled by the seasonal/monsoonal winds: the *rīh al-kōs* (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 *rīh azyab*, a favourable wind throughout which, the ports remained open. Agius 2005(b): 193-197 & <http://nabataea.net/sailing.html> (accessed 15-06-2011).

¹⁷⁷ 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. *Silsilat 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. سَيْل *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 ‘Ajā’ib al-Hind* and contemporary texts; Ibn Faqīh al-Hamadānī (fl. end of 3/9th century) for example, gives an interesting description of the term *khubb/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

¹⁷⁸ Buzurg 1981: 17.

¹⁷⁹ Tibbetts 1981: 360.

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.

¹⁸² Buzurg 1981: 11, 51, 54 & 97.

¹⁸³ Ibid: 29.

¹⁸⁴ أصابهم الخبُّ إذا خَبُّ بهم البحرُ 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-Jawharī 2005: 280. Lane places a *fatha* on the *kh* so the term reads *khabb* whereas Ibn Manẓūr and al-Jawharī place a *kasra*, إذا خَبُّ بهم البحرُ.

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 *khibb*, the worst of all winds,¹⁸⁵ 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 ابيض يظل المراكب فيشرع منه لسان طويل رقيق حتى يصلق ذلك اللسان
بمآ البحر فيغلى له مآ البحر مثل الزوبعة فاذا ادركت الزوبعة المركب ابتلعته ثم يرتفع
ذلك السحاب فيمطر مطرًا 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.¹⁸⁶

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 ^cAllāma,¹⁸⁷ 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.”¹⁸⁸ Only after Captain

¹⁸⁵ Al-Hamadānī 1996: 68. A similar description is found in al- Mas^cūdī’s (d. 345/956-7) *Murūj al-dhahab wa ma^cādin 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 ^cAllāma (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:

فتح الله سبحانه ابواب السماء بريح سوداء ملأت ما بين السماء والارض ورفعت
امواج البحر الى السحاب وحطتها الى التراب...

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 Sīrāf and Ṣaymūr 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-na^csh* (lit. daughters of the bier (*na^csh*) - alternatively known as the Eta Ursae Majoris)), *ثُرَيَّا* *thurayyā* (Pleiades), and *سهيل* *suhayl* (Canopus). These stars in particular, are believed to determine the direction of the wind; according to Ibn al-A^crābī, the west wind blows between the rising point of Canopus and the rising point of *ثُرَيَّا* *thurayyā* (the Pleiades), the east wind from the rising point of *ثُرَيَّا* *thurayyā* and that of *banāt al-na^csh*; the north wind from the rising point of the *banāt al-na^csh* to the setting point of Altair (Arabic al-Ṭā’ir)- the brightest star in the constellation of

¹⁸⁹ Ibid: 28.

¹⁹⁰ Buzurg 1966: 46; idem, 1981: 28.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

Aquila¹⁹²); and the south wind from the setting of Altair to the rising point of Canopus.¹⁹³

The *banāt al-na^csh* (or *banī na^csh*¹⁹⁴) is the name of the three stars found in the tail of the constellation *na^csh* (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 (*Shimāl*); a north-easterly wind known as *na^cshī*, and a fierce north-westerly wind (*banāt al-na^csh*) that blows during the “days of Banāt” (December or January) making it difficult for ships sailing in the Arabian Sea to reach their destination.¹⁹⁵

The ثُرَيَّا *thurayyā* (Pleiades, the Seven Sisters,¹⁹⁶ or M45) is one of the best known and brightest star-clusters in the heavens containing over three thousand stars,¹⁹⁷ located in the constellation of Taurus. Ibn Mājid writes that the *thurayyā* is a lucky (lunar) mansion, particularly as “its setting in the dawn is a sign of wealth to the Arabs”,¹⁹⁸ a sign of wealth and of the onset of colder/cooler weather.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 *bāriḥ at-thurayyā* (Pleiades)²⁰⁰ and disrupting sea trade and travel. Al-Hamadānī warns against traversing by sea after the rising of Pleiades, stating:

إذا طلعت الثُّرَيَّا ارتجَّ البحر واختلقت الرياح²⁰¹

Upon the rising of *thurayyā* (Pleiades) the sea heaves/ boils and
contrary winds blow

¹⁹² <http://www.solstation.com/stars/altair.htm> (accessed 11-06-2011). The name is thought to have been derived from the Arabic for النسر الطائر ‘the flying eagle’.

¹⁹³ Forcada 1995, VIII: 526.

¹⁹⁴ Tibbetts 1981: 133.

¹⁹⁵ Tibbetts 1981: 236; Agius 2005(b): 192-193. The *Silsilat al-tawārīkh* (1845: 12) also discusses the *banāt al-na^csh* in the context of wind (ريح *rīḥ*).

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.

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).

¹⁹⁸ Tibbetts 1981: 82.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid: 84.

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).

²⁰¹ Al-Hamadānī 1996: 65 – the passage further warns that upon the rising of this constellation, God unleashes the *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,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,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 Women²⁰⁴ 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 الى ان يصير سهيل على قمة رأسه فقد دخل بحرا لا رجعة
له منه وتتكس في لجة هابطة الى الجنوب مصوبة الى تلك الجهة فكأما مرّت المركب
علا ما وراءها من جهتنا وهبط ما بين يديها من تلك الجهة فلا تستطيع الرجوع بريح
عاصف ولا غيره وهوت في لجج 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.²⁰⁵

سهيل (Canopus), from the Arabic root سهيل $\sqrt{s-h-l}$,²⁰⁶ is the brightest star in the southern constellation of Carina and the second brightest star in the heavens (after Sirius).²⁰⁷ It

²⁰²Starbuck 2006: 101; <http://creation.mobi/constellations-a-legacy-of-babel> & <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=749&letterC> (accessed 01-06-2011). There is some difference in opinion as to whether it was the rising or the setting of the Pleiades that caused the flood.

²⁰³ <http://creation.mobi/constellations-a-legacy-of-babel> (accessed 01-06-2011) - this particular belief is part of the Australian Aborigine culture.

²⁰⁴ Buzurg 1981: 13-18. The Island of Women is not identified however possible locations include the Parcel Islands, the Spratly Islands or the Philippines.

²⁰⁵ Buzurg, 1966: 20; Idem, 1981: 13.

²⁰⁶ 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.²⁰⁸ Described as a “brilliant white star”,²⁰⁹ 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.²¹⁰ For those sailing in the Malay Seas toward the Island of Women, Canopus brought with it thick, impenetrable fog ضباب *ḍabāb*; violent wind ریح عاصفة *rīḥ ʿāṣifa*; and “a sea that boiled”.²¹¹

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.”²¹² 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 Shahriyār in his text; a surprising dearth, considering the importance of stars for the navigator.²¹³

²⁰⁷ 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).

²⁰⁸ www.astro.uiuc.edu/~kaler/sow/canopus.html (accessed 13-11-2008). The star is also known as Menelaüs' (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).

²⁰⁹ Tibbetts 1981: 129.

²¹⁰ Agius 2005(b): 192. Lane also writes that at the time of its (i.e. Canopus) rising, the fruits ripen, and the قَيْظ *qayẓ* (i.e. the greatest heat) ends - Lane 1872, IV: 1454. For further information regarding *suhayl* see Tibbetts 1981: 128-134.

²¹¹ Buzurg 1981: 13.

²¹² Tibbetts 1981: 131-132.

²¹³ Other texts also (infrequently) mention various stars; al-Hamadānī for example, talks of the dangers of sailing after the rising of الثُرَيَّا *thurayyā* (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 *banāt al-naʿsh* 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 Corfu²¹⁴).²¹⁵ An art form still practised in modern times,²¹⁶ 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 النُّجُومَ لِتَهْتَدُوا بِهَا فِي ظُلُمَاتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ
يَعْلَمُونَ

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

which is “from the south pole, around which Suhayl (Canopus) turns, to the north pole, round which turn Banāt Na^csh (Ursa Major and Ursa Minor)” - al-Muqaddasī 2001: 53.

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^cām* vi: 97; trans. Ali 2002: 94. According to Ibn Kathīr, the *salaf* (early generation of Muslims after Muḥammad - (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 *jinn*s 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 ‘Ajā’ib al-Hind*; the ship-owner Abū l-Zahr al-Barkhatī 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.²¹⁸ 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.”²¹⁹ 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.²²⁰

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 (makeshift) lighthouses.²²¹ Muḥammad b. Bābishād advises Buzurg on this method of orientation, saying:

إذا كنت في البحر واحببت ان تعرف هل انت بقرب ارض او جبل فانظر بعد العصر
إذا انحطت الشمس فإنها اذا انحطت وكان في وجهها جبل او جزيرة تبيئت

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. ²²²

The Qur’ān also refers to the use of “marks and sign-posts”²²³ 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-Muqaddasī (2001: 12) describes al-Khashabāt (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 *āya* reads: وَعَلَّمْتِ وَالنَّجْمِ هُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ 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 (مَدُّ وَجَزُّ) ebb and flow; التيارات currents²²⁵). 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 spring²²⁷ 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’ib al-Hind* and *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm* and the compiler of the *Akḥbār al-Šīn wa l-Hind*, all talk of the ebb and flow in and around the Sea of China (Sea of Şanjī or South China Sea, see map 1); Buzurg’s tale concerns the tidal patterns near Şandalfūlāt (Hainan Dao - China), the *Akḥbār al-Šīn wa l-Hind* discusses the ebb and flow in the port of Canton and how it differs from that which affect the waters near Başra, while al- Muqaddasī comments on how the rise and fall of the waters in the Sea of China affect the ebb and flow of the tide at Başra and as a consequence, the Tigris and the connected channels which irrigate the lands around the city.²³⁰

²²⁴ Buzurg 1981: 14.

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 Sindbād stories with reference to a fast flowing river – *Alf layla wa layla* (n.d.), IV: 14.

²²⁶ <http://www.pol.ac.uk/home/insight/tidefaq.html#3> (accessed 01-06-2011) & Dear & Kemp 2006: 584.

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-Muqaddasī 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-Khiḍr (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- Muqaddasī 2001: 12, 104.

²³⁰ Buzurg 1981: 52; *Silsilat al-tawārīkh* 1995: 11-12; al- Muqaddasī 2001: 12.

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 uṣūl al-baḥr wa-l-qawā'id* (The Book of Benefits in the Principles of Navigation) compiled by Aḥmad ibn Mājid (d. after 906/1500). Although now lost, it is clear that many of the medieval mariners, and indeed, the author of *Akḥbār al-Ṣīn wa l-Hind* and al- Muqaddasī, had access to sailing instructions which provided the information discussed above. Al- Muqaddasī notes in his discussion of the seas and the rivers that mariners had “in their possession navigation instructions (دفاتر) 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 years²³³) and observation or study of the elements. Captain °Abraha, 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 Shahriyārī,²³⁴ Captain °Abraha 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 °Abraha’s knowledge of the calendar, “when I met you it was at the high tide of the thirtieth day (of the lunar month)”; of the tides:

فوجدنا في رأس كلّ ثلاثين ينقص نقصا عظيما حتّى تنكشف هذه الجبال

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”²³⁵ 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

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 'Ajā'ib al-Hind* (The Book of the Marvels of India).

Chapter 6: Maritime Terminology in Buzurg's *Kitāb 'ajā'ib al-Hind*: An Investigative Analysis.

This final chapter analyses fourteen maritime terms pertaining to the weather (at sea), the sea and anchorage, as found in the *Kitāb 'Ajā'ib al-Hind* (The Book of the Marvels of India) by Buzurg Ibn Shahriyār (d.399/1009). Comparisons will be drawn from contemporary sources discussed in Literature Review (Chapter 2), such as: a) the *Akhbār al-Šīn wa l-Hind* (News of China and India) (c.235/850), part of the work entitled *Silsilat al-tawārīkh* (A Chain of Narratives); b) al-Muqaddasī's (d. 378/ 988-9) *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat 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 *'Ajā'ib 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 *'Ajā'ib 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.¹ 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. برّ and بحر
2. لجة

Weather Conditions

3. ریح
4. خبّ
5. شرتا
6. ضباب
7. مطر

Anchorage

8. ساحل
9. شطّ
10. جون
11. خور
12. مرساة / مرسا
13. فُرضة
14. كلاء

¹ Agius 1984: 185-311 (Chapter Six).

The Sea

1. Terms: بحر pl *bahr* (pl *baḥār*) and بَرّ *barr*

Textual Reference A (بَحْرٌ *bahr* and بَرّ *barr*)

واخلاقها تختلف باختلاف مواضعها المسلوكة المعهودة بعبور السفار والصيادين وقرب السواحل المعمورة والبحار المنقطعة المهجورة والبعد من السواحل المعمورة وعمق البحار وعدم البرّ والجزاير والسواحل وهو عالم آخر تبارك الله احسن الخالقين² (Buzurg [Devic]: 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!³ (Buzurg [Freeman-Grenville], Tale XIII: 12).

Textual Reference B (بَرّ *barr*)

فلما وصلوا الى جدّة نجلوا المركب وانزلوه وتركوه الى البرّ⁴ (Buzurg [Devic]: 16).

Translation B

When they got to Jidda [Jeddah], they unloaded the ship, brought it up on the *shore* and secured it.⁵ (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.

³ Idem, 1981: 12.

⁴ Idem, 1966: 16.

⁵ Idem, 1981: 10-11.

cubits long,⁶ followed them for over a hundred and seventy *parasangs*.⁷ 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. ʿAmr 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 *بَحْرٌ* *baḥr* and *بَرٌّ* *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 *بَرًّا وَبَحْرًا* 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

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

⁷ The *parasang* or *farsakh*, is an ancient Persian unit of distance based on the movement of troops. Thus a *parasang* 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 *bāʿ* [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*.⁸

And to encompass the whole world:

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ...

Mischief has appeared on *land* and *sea* because of (the deed)
that the hands of men have earned...⁹

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 *بَحْرٌ* *baḥr* and *بَرٌّ* *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.

بَحْرٌ *baḥr* is defined as the sea or large river;¹⁰ synonymous with *نَهْرٌ* *nahr* stream, river;¹¹ a spacious place comprising a large quantity of water; a large quantity of water be it sweet or salty.¹² Lane cites Ibn Sīda (d. 458 /1066) (author of the *Muḥkam*) who lists *بَحْرٌ* *baḥr* as any large river; al-Zujāj (d. 311/ 923-4)¹³ and al-Azharī (d. 370-1/ 980) (author of *Tahdhīb al-luġha* The Reparation of Speech)¹⁴ 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

⁸ *Sūrat al-‘An‘ām* vi: 59; trans. Ali 2002: 90.

⁹ *Sūrat al-Rūm* xxx: 41; trans. Ali 2002: 284. According to Ibn ‘Abbās, ‘Ikrama, al-Ḍaḥāk, al-Suddī and others, *بَرٌّ* *barr* refers to the desert i.e. empty land / wilderness while *بَحْرٌ* *baḥr* means cities and towns / villages (inhabited areas). Ibn ‘Abbās and ‘Ikrama have further reported that *بَحْرٌ* *baḥr* refers to the towns or cities built upon the banks of a river. Others have said that the meaning of *بَحْرٌ* *baḥr* and *بَرٌّ* *barr* is the most common / well known one i.e. sea and land. ‘Aṭā l-Khurāsānī states that *بَرٌّ* *barr* refers to cities and villages while *بَحْرٌ* *baḥr* 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 *بَحْرٌ* *baḥr* to mean *بلد* *balad* i.e. country / city / town. Zayd b. Raff‘ states that the evil affecting the land and sea refers to the rain being withheld from the land *بَرٌّ* *barr* causing a famine and concealing (obscuring from view) the fish in the sea *بَحْرٌ* *baḥr*. Ibn Abī Hātim reports (having received the information through a recorded chain of narrators) that Mujāhid translated the mischief or evil of the land (*بَرٌّ* *barr*) to be the killing of the son of Adam, while the evil of the sea is piracy, Ibn Kathīr [n.d.], III: 450.

¹⁰ Lane 1968, I: 156. Also referred to as river in al-Ṭabarī 1964, V: 2432, 2437; trans. idem, 1989, XIII: 13, 17 and as ocean in al-Ṭabarī 1909, I-II: 21; trans. idem, 1989, I: 207-208.

¹¹ Al-Anṣārī 1896: 299.

¹² Lane 1968, I: 156.

¹³ Ibid, I: xxx (preface).

¹⁴ Ibid.

sweet-water rivers as examples.¹⁵ Al-‘Umawī (cited by Ibn Manẓūr and al-Zabīdī) on the other hand, believes that بَحْرٌ *baḥr* can only be applied to salt water.¹⁶ Persian lexica¹⁷ list *baḥr* as being an Arabic term meaning sea, great river, estuary, gulf.

Derived from the verb بَحَرَ (to slit, cut, divide, split or clave; to enlarge or make wide¹⁸), there are several theories as to the reason for its name: it is named as such as the sea is cleft or trenched in the earth;¹⁹ or due to its depth and width/ large extent;²⁰ or because of its saltiness.²¹ 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, freshwater²² such as the Amazon River; the highest salt content occurs in the Red Sea and the Arabian-Persian Gulf.²³

Derivatives of the term بَحْرٌ *baḥr* include بحري *baḥrī*, بحرية *baḥrīyya* and بَحَّارٌ *baḥār(a)*, adjectival nouns of *baḥr* used to denote seamen and sailors as can be seen in the example of السندباد البحري *al-Sindbād al-baḥrī* Sindbād the Seaman/Sailor, named as such as much of his (adult) life was spent at sea. One of the early Muslims, Asmā’ bint ‘Umays, was also referred to as البحرية *al-baḥrīyya* as when she migrated to Abyssinia during the first *hijra* (migration) she travelled by sea.²⁴

As far as بَرٌّ *barr* is concerned, it is a generic term used when referring to dry land (as opposed to بحر *baḥr* the sea), *terra firma*, mainland and open country.²⁵ Believed to have been derived from بَرٌّ *birr*, used to signify ampleness, largeness and

¹⁵ Cited by Ibn Manẓūr 2003, IV: 49 and Lane 1968, I: 156-7.

¹⁶ Ibn Manẓūr 2003, IV: 47; also Lane 1968, I: 156.

¹⁷ Richardson 1829: 244.

¹⁸ Lane 1968, I: 156-7.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid & al-Fayyūmī (d. c. 770/1368) 1872, I: 21; Ibn Manẓūr 2003, IV: 47-54; al-Jawharī 2005: 75.

²¹ Al-‘Umawī as cited by Lane 1968, I: 156 & Ibn Manẓūr 2003, IV: 47. Al-‘Umawī defines بَحْرٌ *baḥr* as salt water.

²² Usually having a salt concentration of less than 1%: University of California Museum of Palaeontology – www.ucmp.berkeley.edu/exhibits/biomes/freshwater.php (accessed 10-05-2010).

²³ (Swenson, Herbert – US Geological Survey Publication) www.palomar.edu/oceanography/salty_ocean.htm (accessed 25-05-2010).

²⁴ Ibn Manẓūr 2003, IV: 53. Sailors are also referred to as مَلَّاحٌ *mallāḥ* due to their constant presence upon the (ملح *milḥ* salt) water, their occupation being مِلَّاحَةٌ *milāḥa* navigation (Lane 1968, VII: 2733). بَحْرٌ *Baḥr* is further used in the name of a type of cloud: بنات بحر *banāt baḥr* lit. daughters of the sea, clouds that appear before the summer (منتصبات رفاقا) (Ibn Manẓūr 2003, IV: 52; al-Jawharī 2005: 75). These clouds have also been called بنات بحر *banāt baḥr* and بنات مخر *banāt makhr*, with al-‘Azharī stating that بنات بحر *banāt baḥr* is the correct name for these particular clouds, not *banāt baḥr* (Ibn Manẓūr 2003, IV: 52-53).

²⁵ Al-Fayyūmī 1872, I: 24; Ibn Manẓūr 2003, IV: 62; al-Jawharī 2005: 84; also Lane 1968, I: 176; Wehr 1993: 61.

extensiveness,²⁶ it is found in most Medieval Arabic sources where it is translated as land;²⁷ when used in the context of a maritime setting however, البرّ is usually used to denote coastal features, such as the shore,²⁸ coast,²⁹ side of a creek or river³⁰, or harbour.³¹ The term is also found in Persian lexica, where it is defined as a continent, a desert,³² the earth and a globe.³³

Taking these two terms, بحرٌ *baḥr* and برّ *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.³⁴ First of all, بحرٌ *baḥr* means the sea in Arabic; it is also defined as الريف *al-rīf*³⁵ i.e. “fertile, cultivated land, countryside or rural area, seashore and sea-coast”,³⁶ while بحرة *baḥra* means a wide tract of land, or synonymous with بلدة *balda* i.e. land / country and the diminutive form بحيرة *buḥayra* is used for small sea or lake.³⁷ 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 *Akḥbār al-Ṣīn*, in the language used by the people of Calabar (كلاه بَار *Kalāh Bār*, Kedah in Malaya³⁸) the term بَار *bār* signifies a coast i.e. ساحل *sāḥil*³⁹. Thirdly, in Hindī, *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 برّ *barr*]. Przulski citing Paul Jouön⁴⁰ suggests that the term بحرٌ *baḥr* does not belong to the Semitic language group; rather, it shares the same origins as the

²⁶ Lane 1968, I: 176. Lane also notes that it is possible that *birr* has been derived from *barr*.

²⁷ Al-Ṭabarī 1989, XIII: 17; al-Muqaddasī 2001: 107, 112.

²⁸ Buzurg 1981: 11; *Arabian Nights Entertainment* 1859, III: 11, 24; *Book of the Thousand Nights* 1925, VI: 11, 23, 72.

²⁹ *Arabian Nights Entertainment* 1859, III: 10.

³⁰ Buzurg 1981: 29.

³¹ *Book of the Thousand Nights* 1925, VI: 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, varun.a; maru = desert, water, shore*. (<http://kalyan97.googlepages.com/Etymamaru.doc>) (accessed 10-05-2010), which analyses Jean Przyluski’s “Varuṇa, 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 “ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ” discussed above- Abū ‘Alī (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.

³⁸ Hourani 1995: 71.

³⁹ *Silsilat* 1811: 18; idem, 1995: 10.

⁴⁰ Przyluski 1931: 614. Przyluski hypothesised a Palæo-Asiatic root *bar*, from which the terms listed above (as well as term such as *baroh* (Malay for low-lying country, seashore, sea), *baruh* (plain, flatland), *bāruh* (used for sea in dialects of the Malay Peninsula) etc) are derived. Przyluski, Jean “Varuṇa, 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 بَرّ *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: بَرًّا وَبَحْرًا *barr wa baḥr*, 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 بَرّ *barr* and بَحْرٌ *baḥr*. *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 *Baḥr* too, is used primarily to mean the sea, yet the term also means a river or gulf. Interestingly, in the *ʿAjāʿib 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 لَجْجٌ (ة) *lujja* (see below).⁴² He does use, in addition to بَحْرٌ *baḥr*, other terms to denote the sea including the aforementioned لَجْجٌ (ة) *lujja* (see below) and خَلِيجٌ *khalīj* canal,⁴³ strait;⁴⁴ however, *baḥr* 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. بَرّ *barr*) and anchorages - as found in the *Kitāb ʿAjāʿib al-Hind* - however, are analysed below.

⁴¹ Ibn Kathīr [n.d.], III: 450.

⁴² *Baḥr* is occasionally used to refer to the ocean, either in the plural form i.e. بَحَارٌ *baḥār* or with the use of an adjective, for example عمق البحار the depths of the ocean (Buzurg 1966: 19; idem, 1981: 12)

⁴³ Buzurg 1981: 107; *Silsilat* 1995: 59-60.

⁴⁴ *Silsilat* 1995: 60.

2. Term: لُجْج pl لُجَّة / لُجَّ *lujja* (pl *lujaj*)

Textual Reference A

وتنكس في لُجَّة هابطة الى الجنوب مصوبة الى تلك الجهة فكأما مرّت المركب علا ما وراءها من جهتنا وهبط ما بين يديها من تلك الجهة فلا تستطيع الرجوع بريح عاصف ولا غيره وهوت في لُجج البحار المحيطة⁴⁵

(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.⁴⁶ (Buzurg [Freeman-Grenville] Tale XIV: 13).

Textual Reference B

واشدّد الريح فما مضت ساعة حتّى غابت بلدته عن عيوننا وظلّنا الليل ودخلنا اللّج⁴⁷

(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*.⁴⁸ (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

⁴⁵ Buzurg 1966: 20.

⁴⁶ Idem, 1981: 13.

⁴⁷ Idem, 1966: 53.

⁴⁸ Idem, 1981: 32.

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 لُجَّة 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 لُجَّة *lujja* with further nouns rather than using the term لُجَّة *lujja* on its own: لُجَّةُ الْمَاءِ *lujjat al-mā'* being مُعْظَمُهُ i.e. the main body of water, which some have specified as معظم البحر *muʿẓam al-baḥr*, the main part of the sea;⁵⁴ لُجَّةُ الْبَحْرِ *lujja al-baḥr* the fathomless deep, while لُجَّ الْبَحْرِ *lujj al-baḥr* refers to the breadth or

⁴⁹ Ibid: 13.

⁵⁰ Ibid: 31-36.

⁵¹ Ibid: 13.

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-Jawharī 2005: 938. Similarly, لُجَّةُ الْأَمْرِ *lujjat al-amr* is defined as the main part of the matter or affair (or مُعْظَمُهُ *muʿẓamahū*).

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-Muqaddasī's geographical treatise with reference to the fathomless depth of Qulzum (i.e. the Red Sea):

ومواضع الخوف في المملكة جيبان موضع غرق فرعون وهي لجة القلزم
وفيهما تسير المراكب العراض لترجع من البر الغامر إلى البر 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 اللجة, 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 *baḥr* “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 لُجُّ اللَّيْلِ *lujj al-layl* the depth of the night i.e. its intense darkness or blackness, or لُجَّةُ الظلام *lujjat al-zulām* the depth of darkness, or (in metaphorical language) كَأَنَّ عَيْنَهُ لُجَّةٌ *ka’anna ‘aynahū 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 Manẓūr 2003, II: 413; Lane 1968, VII: 2650.

⁵⁶ Al-Muqaddasī 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 Manẓūr 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 *āya* reads:

The verb Form I لَجَّ *lajja* is defined as to be stubborn or obstinate, unyielding, relentless, persistent, or to wear out or weaken;⁶¹ while verb Form VIII التَّجَّ *iltajja*, which is generally used in relation to the sea, is defined as being noisy or tumultuous, or to roar, storm and rage; thus البحر التَّجَّ *iltajja 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:

من ركب البحر إذا التَّجَّ فقد برئت منه الذَّمة⁶²

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 *lujja* is also used to denote a sword; the terror of the sword is said to be comparable to the terror of the *lujja* 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 Ṭayy, the people of Hudhayl, or the people of a certain tribe of Yemen.⁶³

Conversely, as well as being used to describe the sea, *lujja*, like the term *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.

"أَوْ كَظَلَّمَتْ فِي بَحْرِ أَلْجِي يَغْشَاهُ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِ سَحَابٌ ظَلَمَتْ بَعْضُهَا فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ إِذَا أَخْرَجَ يَدَهُ لَمْ يَكُنْ يَرَاهَا وَمَنْ لَمْ يَجْعَلِ اللَّهُ لَهُ نُورًا فَمَا لَهُ مِن نُّورٍ"

“Or (the Unbelievers’ state) is like the depths of darkness in *a vast deep ocean*, overwhelmed with billow topped by billow, topped by (dark) clouds. Depths of darkness, one above another: if a man stretches out his hand, he can hardly see it! For any to whom Allah gives not light, there is no light!”

⁶¹ Wehr 1993: 1006.

⁶² Ibn Manzūr 2003, II: 413. A similar *ḥadīth* is found in al-Hamadānī 1996: 65; in place of a stormy sea it speaks of those who set sail after the rising of the Pleiades:

من ركب البحر بعد طلوع الثريا فقد برئت منه الذمة

⁶³ Ibn Manzūr 2003, II: 413; also Lane 1968, VII: 2650.

⁶⁴ Richardson 1829: 1259; Lane 1968, VII: 2650.

Weather Conditions

3. Term: ریح pl ریح *rīḥ (pl riyāḥ)*

Textual Reference A

فقالوا وایّ شیء جرا علينا حتّى تقول لنا هذا القول **ریحنا رخو** وبحرنا رهو ونحن سالمين فى كنف ربّ العالمين⁶⁵
(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 ابواب السماء بريح سوداء ملأت ما بين السماء والارض ورفعت امواج البحر الى السحاب وحطّتها الى التراب...⁶⁷
(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 °Abdallah Muḥammad b. Bābishād, who in turn heard it from Captain °Allāma, the protagonist of the tale. They were sailing

⁶⁵ Buzurg 1966: 45.

⁶⁶ Idem, 1981: 27.

⁶⁷ Idem, 1966: 46.

⁶⁸ Idem, 1981: 28.

from India to China when suddenly, despite the apparently favourable sailing conditions, Captain °Allāma ordered the crew to lower the sails and jettison the cargo. The merchants questioned the order as they could perceive no immediate threat; Captain °Allāma 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.”⁶⁹ 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 °Allāma’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.⁷⁰

Discussion of Term

The term *rīḥ*, from the root $\sqrt{r. w. ḥ}$, was originally written as رَوْحٌ however, due to the *kasra* on the *rā’*, the *و* was replaced by the *ي* to form رِيح.⁷¹ 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 نَسِيمِ الهَوَاءِ *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 رَاحَةٌ \ رَوْحٌ⁷⁴ *rāḥa/ rawḥ* (rest/ ease/ comfort).⁷⁵

Rīḥ 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. رِيحٌ عَاصِفٌ (ة) *rīḥ °āṣif(ah)*, for example, is used to

⁶⁹ Ibid: 28.

⁷⁰ Ibid. For information regarding Abū °Abdallah Muḥammad b. Bābishād, Captain °Allāma and other individuals mentioned by Buzurg see Chapter 4, The Sea Stories of Buzurg Ibn Shahriyār.

⁷¹ Ibn Durayd 1926, II: 147; Ibn Manẓūr 2003, II: 534; al-Jawharī 2005: 435; also Lane 1968, III: 1180-1.

⁷² Platts 1974: 611; Forcada 1995, VIII: 526.

⁷³ Ibn Manẓūr 2003, II: 534; Lane 1968, III: 1180-1.

⁷⁴ Lane 1968, III: 1180-1.

⁷⁵ Furthermore, the term *rūḥ* (spirit) is derived from the same root as *rīḥ* i.e. رَوْح. *Rūḥ* is defined in the lexica as the soul or spirit (Lane 1968, III: 1180). The connection between *rīḥ* and *rūḥ* 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 *rīḥ* (wind) and *rūḥ* (soul, spirit) is mirrored by the Arabic نَفَسٌ *nafas* (breath) and نَفْسٌ *nafs* (soul, psyche, spirit) (Wehr 1993: 1155-6). *Rūḥ* is also used to refer to the Angel Gabriel (*Jibrā’īl*).

depict a violent head wind,⁷⁶ a fresh wind,⁷⁷ violent gale;⁷⁸ *rīḥ ʿāṣifah shadīda*, a furious squall.⁷⁹ *rīḥ ʿaẓīm* ریح عظیم is also a violent squall of wind,⁸⁰ or a fierce gale;⁸¹ and ریح سوداء *rīḥ sawdāʾ* is a black⁸² or dark wind,⁸³ perhaps referring to a wind that brings with it black rain or storm clouds. Favourable winds also use the term *rīḥ mustaqīma*: الريح مستقيمة *al-rīḥ mustaqīma*, the wind was in our favour;⁸⁴ الريح المتوسطة *al-rīḥ al-mutawasiṭa*, a very easy gale;⁸⁵ and طاب لنا الريح *ṭāba lanā al-rīḥ*, a fair wind.⁸⁶ Meteorological (such as the *kutub al-anwāʾ* (أنواء)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,”⁸⁸ yet Buzurg uses *rīḥ*, possibly because it is the most accessible term, understood by all.

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

Derivatives of the root term روح include ريحة *rīḥa* a type of wind,⁹³ a wind of short duration or a gust of wind;⁹⁴ راح *rāḥ*, windy, violently windy;⁹⁵ also a day of pleasant

⁷⁶ *Book of the Thousand Nights* 1925: 69.

⁷⁷ Buzurg 1981: 19.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*: 13.

⁷⁹ *Book of the Thousand Nights* 1925: 35.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*: 70.

⁸¹ Buzurg 1981: 54.

⁸² *Ibid*: 28.

⁸³ Al-Muqaddasī 2001: 295.

⁸⁴ Buzurg 1981: 51.

⁸⁵ *Silsilat al-tawārīkh* 1995: 64.

⁸⁶ *Book of the Thousand Nights* 1925, VI: 30 & 67.

⁸⁷ Works containing an explanation of the system of the *anwāʾ* (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.

⁸⁸ Forcada 1995, VIII: 526.

⁸⁹ Transliterations of the Hebrew term vary between *ruah*, *rûah* and *ruʾach/ ruach*.

⁹⁰ Ouro 2000: 60.

⁹¹ Definition from E. Jenni and C. Westermann, *Diccionario Teologico Manual del Antiguo Testamento*, trans. R. Godoy (Madrid: Cristiandad, 1985), II: 915- cited by Roberto Ouro, 2000: 59.

⁹² Ouro 2000: 59.

⁹³ Ibn Manẓūr 2003, II: 534; also Lane 1968, III: 1181.

⁹⁴ Lane 1968, III: 1181.

wind;⁹⁶ and رَوْحٌ *rawḥ*, a gentle wind⁹⁷ or more specifically, a cool gentle wind; it is also defined as happiness and joy,⁹⁸ possibly symbolic of the ease and comfort (الرَّاحَةُ *rāḥa*) provided by the gentle breeze. A similar term is رَوَاحٍ *rawāḥ*, synonymous with عَشِي *‘ashīy* (evening), so called for the favourable breeze that often blows in the afternoon, providing comfort (from the heat).⁹⁹ رَوْحٌ *rawḥ* is also thought to be synonymous with رَحْمَةٌ *rahma*, God’s mercy or compassion.¹⁰⁰

As for the plural form of *rīḥ*, Lane cites Ibn Manzūr and al-Zabīdī as distinguishing between the singular *rīḥ* and the plural *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 الرِّيحُ الْعَقِيمُ *al-rīḥ al-‘aqīm*.¹⁰¹ However, as the textual reference shows, Buzurg has used the singular *rīḥ* to denote both the gentle wind and the destructive black wind. Another plural form of the word *rīḥ*, أَرْوَاحٍ *arwāḥ*, 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, and are feared most by sailors.¹⁰²

Overall, the use of the term *rīḥ* throughout the text, and indeed in the contemporary texts suggests that although the primary definition found in the lexica is نَسِيمُ الْهَوَاءِ a gentle wind or breeze,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

⁹⁵ Ibn Manzūr 2003, II: 535; also Lane 1968, III: 1177, 1180.

⁹⁶ Lane 1968, III: 1177.

⁹⁷ Ibn Fāris 1990, II: 454-457.

⁹⁸ Ibn Manzūr 2003, II: 536; also Lane 1968, III: 1180.

⁹⁹ Ibn Fāris 1990, II: 454-457.

¹⁰⁰ Ibn Manzūr 2003, II: 543. Ibn Manzūr cites a *ḥadīth* narrated by Abū Hurayra stating that he heard Muḥammad refer to the wind *al-rīḥ* as رَوْحُ اللَّهِ i.e. من رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ. Abū Hurayra states:

سمعت رسول الله، صلى الله عليه وسلم، يقول: الريح من رَوْحِ اللَّهِ تأتي بالرحمة وتأتي بالعذاب، فإذا رأيتموها فلا تسُبُّوها واسألوا من خيرها، واستعينوا بالله من شرها

A passage from the Qur’ān “and never give up hope of Allāh’s *soothing mercy*” also suggests the same meaning - *Sūrat Yūsuf* xii: 87; trans. Ali 2002: 165-6. The *āya* 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 Allāh’s Soothing Mercy, except those who have no faith.”

¹⁰¹ This theory is supported by the *ḥadīth* tradition (cited by Ibn Manzūr and Lane) according to which, when the wind rose, the Prophet Muḥammad would pray:

اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْهَا رِيحًا وَلَا تَجْعَلْهَا رِيحًا

“O God, make it to be winds, and make it not to be a wind.” (Lane 1968, III: 1181; Ibn Manzūr 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.

¹⁰² Lane 1968, III: 1181.

¹⁰³ Ibn Manzūr 2003, II: 534; also Lane 1968, III: 1180-1.

Mājīd (d. after 906/ 1500) and Sulaymān al-Mahrī (d. 917/ 1511) and in the *Kutub al-anwā'*, 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 *rīḥ*, alternative names are found though these are few and far between; those found in the *'Ajā'ib al-Hind* are discussed below. Furthermore, *rīḥ* 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 *rīḥ* (see Chapter 5 for information regarding the monsoons).

4. Term: خَبَّ *khabb, khibb*

Textual Reference

حدّثني محمّد بن بابشاد بن حرام أنّه كان بسيراف وقد خرج منها مركب الى البصرة ووقع فيها خَبَّ بعد
خروجه بأيام فانقطعت المراكب وتعلّقت القلوب باخبار البحر¹⁰⁴ (Buzurg [Devic]: 16-17).

Translation

Moḥammad b. Bābīshād b. Ḥarām told me... he happened to be at Sīrāf when they were anxious about a vessel that had just left for Baṣra. 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...¹⁰⁵ (Buzurg [Freeman-Grenville] Tale XII: 11).

Context

This tale was related to Buzurg by Abū 'Abdallah Muḥammad b. Bābīshād 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.”¹⁰⁶ It concerns a ship that had set sail from Sīrāf (the Persian Gulf's

¹⁰⁴ Buzurg 1966: 16-17.

¹⁰⁵ Idem, 1981: 11.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid: 4.

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 *خَب*, a word of Arabic origins that is listed in the lexica as both *khibb* and *khabb*, is found several times in *Kitāb 'Ajā'ib 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,¹⁰⁷ but also as squall¹⁰⁸ and is preceded by the verbs *أخذ* ('*akhadha*) or *وقع* (*waqa'a bi/fī*).

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 *خَب* is something different: disloyalty, faithlessness, deception, deceit, guile, cunning, corruption and general badness.¹⁰⁹ The lexica does however, list the relevant definition where *خَب* is a state of agitation and commotion of the sea; *أصابهم الخَب* when the waves surge and clash, and the winds whirl/blow, and ships head for shore or cast anchor.¹¹⁰ To illustrate further the winds that surge a ship, Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711/ 1311-2) quotes the following (part of a) *ḥadīth*:

أَنَّ يُونُسَ، عَلَى نَبِيَّنَا وَعَلَيْهِ الصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ، لَمَّا رَكِبَ الْبَحْرَ أَخَذَهُمْ خَبٌّ شَدِيدٌ¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ Buzurg 1981: 11, 51, 54 & 97.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid: 29.

¹⁰⁹ Ibn Manẓūr 2003, I: 402; al-Jawharī 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; and *خَب* a concealed place in the ground/ low or depressed land. Lane 1968, II: 691-2; Ibn Manẓūr 2003, I: 402.

¹¹⁰ Ibn Manẓūr 2003, I: 402-404; al-Jawharī 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 Manẓūr and al-Jawharī place a *fatha* on the verb form and a *kasra* on the noun *أصابهم خَبٌّ إِذَا خَبَّ بِهِمُ الْبَحْرُ*.

¹¹¹ Ibn Manẓūr 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 *خَبَّ البحر اضطرب*, the agitation or commotion of the sea.¹¹² Lane on the other hand, writes that the use of *khabb* in relation to the sea comes from the phrase *خَبَّ في الأمر*, to hasten (to begin the affair *الأمر*); hence, it is said of the sea that it was or became agitated, or in a state of commotion.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: شرتا *shartā*

Textual Reference A

سمع بعض شيوخ المراكب يحدث ان مركبا خرج من بلاد الهند الى بعض النواحي فذهب من يد صاحبه بقوّة الشرتا وعاب المركب...¹¹⁴
(Buzurg [Devic]: 36-7).

wrath of God in which they would all perish, cast lots to decide who they would throw overboard. The lot fell to Jonah three times, after which he was cast into the sea and swallowed by a whale (Jonah 1: 1-17). Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373) writes that it was Nineveh in the land of Maṣīl (Iraq) that Jonah set out from (in anger as the people of the village persisted in their disbelief) (Ibn Kathīr [n.d.], III: 197).

¹¹² Ibn Fāris 1990, II: 157. He vocalises the term as Ibn Manẓūr and al-Jawharī do, placing a *fatha* on the verb form and a *kasra* on the noun: أصابهم خَبُّ.

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.¹¹⁵ (Buzurg [Freeman-Grenville] Tale XVIII: 22).

Textual Reference B

قال كنت بالتيز وقعنا اليها بالتواهيّة فتركنا المركب ونجلنا الحمولة واقمنا ننتظر الشرّتا...¹¹⁶
(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*.¹¹⁷ (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.¹¹⁸ Lane notes that the origin of Sindbād's 'whale island' tale is, in fact, found in al-Qazwīnī's (d. 682/1283) *ʿAjā'ib al-makhlūqāt* (The Wonders of Creation), in which the island is a "tortoise";¹¹⁹ yet, it is possible that

¹¹⁵ Idem, 1981: 22.

¹¹⁶ Idem 1966: 130-1.

¹¹⁷ Idem 1981: 76.

¹¹⁸ *Alf Layla wa Layla* [nd.], III: 279-285.

¹¹⁹ *Arabian Nights Entertainment* 1859, III: 79. It appears that, in Arabic, no distinction is made between the tortoise and the turtle as سلحفاة *sulahfā* is used for both (Wehr 1993: 491). The correct definition of سلحفاة *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 Baluchistān¹²¹) 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 شَرْتَا *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-taqāsim* as شَرْتَا *sharta*, synonymous with طَارُوس *tārūs*, 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 شَرْتَا *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 طَارُوس *tārūs*, 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

¹²⁰ Gerhardt 1963: 239.

¹²¹ <http://www.iranica.com/articles/makran> (accessed 25-06-2011). Freeman-Grenville places al-Tīz on or around the (current) coastal border between Iran and Pakistan. Buzurg 1981: xiv-xv.

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 طَارُوس *tārūs* 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.¹²⁷ It is possible that here too, the narrator of the tale was using terms from his native language, Baluchi (also Balochi¹²⁸) 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' *Urdū- Hindī- 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."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-sharṭa*.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.¹³¹

¹²⁷ Idem, 1966: 131; Idem, 1981: 76.

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).

¹²⁹ Platts 1974: 724. The Urdu dictionary/thesaurus *Fīroz al-lughāt* lists a similar term (Hindi) شراتا *sharātā* as the (loud) sound of rain or of a downpour (زور سے مینہ برسنے کی آواز) Uddīn (n.d.): 839.

¹³⁰ Roebuck 1882: 18 (online version accessed 14-07-2010).

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 (شراتا *shartā*).

6. Term: ضباب *dabāb*

Textual Reference

وهم يجرون في قار وضباب طول ليلهم واصبح عليهم فلم يشعروا به لشدة ظلمة ما هم فيه واتصال قار البحر مع ضباب الجوّ وغلظ الريح وكنورته¹³² (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’ib al-Hind* uses ضباب *dabāb*, translated by Freeman-Grenville as fog. Defined by early lexicographers as نَدَى كالغيم cloud-like moisture or mist,¹³⁴ or mist i.e. moisture, like clouds, or like dust, covering the earth in the early morning;¹³⁵ Ibn Manẓūr and Abū Zayd al-Anṣārī (d. 215-7 / 830-1) list ضباب *dabāb* as being the (collective) plural of ضبابة *dabāba*, meaning clouds that covers the

¹³² Buzurg 1966: 21.

¹³³ Idem, 1981: 13.

¹³⁴ Ibn Manẓūr 2003, I: 629.

¹³⁵ Al-Fayyūmī 1872, II: 2; Ibn Manẓūr 2003, I: 629.

earth like smoke,¹³⁶ while Lane remarks that the term refers to thin clouds, like smoke, so called because they cover the horizon.¹³⁷

The root term $\sqrt{d. b. b.}$ is defined in the lexica (amongst other definitions) as ¹³⁸(تغطية الشيء ودخول \ تداخل بعضه في بعض) “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”.¹³⁹ Ibn Durayd (d. 321/ 933) surmises that the term ضباب *dabāb*, which he gives as السحاب الرفيق thin clouds,¹⁴⁰ has been derived from this root because of its covering of the horizon;¹⁴¹ this also suggests that etymologically, the term is of Arabic origin. Incidentally, Ibn Durayd notes that the word was *ma^crūf* (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 *Dabāb* 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.¹⁴²

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

¹³⁶ Al-Anṣārī 1896: 293; Ibn Durayd 1926, III: 185; Ibn Manẓūr 2003, I: 629.

¹³⁷ Lane 1968, V: 1762.

¹³⁸ Ibn Manẓūr 2003, I: 629.

¹³⁹ Lane 1968, V: 1761- (also citing al-Zabīdī).

¹⁴⁰ Ibn Durayd 1925, I: 34.

¹⁴¹ Idem, 1926, III: 185. He writes: اشتقاق الضباب من هذا لتغطيته الأفق (اشتقاق : Derivation of a word from an old Arabic root; neologism based on an old Arabic root, see also Wehr 1993: 561).

¹⁴² 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 **مطر** *maṭar* (pl *amṭār*)

Textual Reference

ثم جاءتنا الريح من الجبال فلم نضبط الشرع واخذنا الخبّ والمطر والرعد والبرق¹⁴³

(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.¹⁴⁴ (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 Ṣaymūr (south of present day Mumbai¹⁴⁵). In record time, the convoy was in sight of the mountains of Ṣaymūr 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

¹⁴³ Buzurg 1966: 166.

¹⁴⁴ Idem, 1981: 97.

¹⁴⁵ Ṣaymūr has been tentatively identified as Chaul on the Konkan coast

<http://www.konkan.co.za/history.php> &

http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/parsi/konkan_thana.htm (accessed 30-06-2011).

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 (المنسكب \ انسكب) 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 *مَطْرَةٌ* *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 (والصيف مطر);¹⁵² 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

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.

¹⁴⁸ Ibn Manẓūr 2003, V: 209.

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.

¹⁵³ Al-Muqaddasī 1906: 353; idem, 2001: 287.

¹⁵⁴ Al-Muqaddasī 1906: 175; idem, 2001: 147.

generic term for (various kinds of) rain, he uses غيث *ghayth*¹⁵⁵ to describe pouring rain (وغيثهم مديد)¹⁵⁶.

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

...اليسارة التي تكون ببلاد الهند وتفسيرها المطر

In the Indies there are **heavy rains**, which the people of the country call *jasara* [*yasāra*].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 موسم *mawsim* 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” (فيمطر مطراً فيه قذى البحر)¹⁵⁸. It is interesting to note that the verb form used in this sentence is based on Form IV i.e. افعل *afʿala* (paradigm for *amṭara*), not Form I فعل *faʿala* (*maṭara*). The difference in form can (but not always) signify different types of rain: in a religious sense أمطر *amṭara* is used for a rain sent upon people as a form of punishment, while مطر *maṭara* is used for a blessed rain.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵ غيث *ghayth* is defined as abundant rain (Wehr 1993: 807), or as a productive (as opposed to destructive) rain (Lane 1968, VI: 2314).

¹⁵⁶ Al-Muqaddasī 1906: 359; idem, 2001: 292.

¹⁵⁷ *Silsilat al-tawārīkh* 1811: 126; idem, 1995: 86.

¹⁵⁸ *Silsilat al-tawārīkh* 1811: 12; idem 1995: 6.

¹⁵⁹ Ibn Durayd 1926, II: 375; Lane 1968, VII: 2721; Ibn Manẓūr 2003, V: 209. Examples of the use of أمطر *amṭara* to denote punishment are found in the Qurʾān: مَطَرُ الْمُنذَرِينَ “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-Namal* xxvii: 58; trans. Ali 2002: 266.

Although *maṭar* is found in the early Arabic lexica, cognates of the term are found in other Semitic languages, such as Hebrew (*matar / maṭar / māṭār*),¹⁶⁰ Akkadian (*meṭru* rain), Ugaritic (*mṭr* rain) and Sabaean (*mṭr* field watered by rain).¹⁶¹ These terms, as the Arabic word, appear to have been derived from a common Semitic root (*m-ṭ-r*). Ibn Durayd, however, notes in his discussion of *maṭar* that al-Aṣmaʿī did not analyse this term in his own work *Lughat al-Qurʾān* (The Language of the Qurʾān) because he categorised it as a foreign word. This is a common occurrence with authors who, due to their extreme piety, deemed words of foreign extract impure to the Holy Qurʾān and therefore unworthy of discussion.¹⁶²

Maṭar 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 *maṭar* 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 *maṭar* 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 lightning, and rain(واخذنا الخبّ والمطر والرعد والبرق)

¹⁶⁶ Like the term ریح *rīḥ* which can be viewed as a generic term for wind, there are a wide range of synonyms for the term *maṭar* listed in philological tracts such as the *Kitāb*

¹⁶⁰ Several Jewish and Hebrew websites and blogs have touched upon the meaning of the term *maṭar*, 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 “Matarel” 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> (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> (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 (accessed 29-09-2010) discusses the use of the terms *maṭar* and *geshem* in the Bible, and the use of *maṭar* to portray different types of rain.

¹⁶¹ Bomhard & Kerns 1994: 659. The Hebrew term is written as *māṭār* in this text.

¹⁶² Ibn Durayd 1926, II: 375. At one point, Ibn Durayd states that امطرت السماء *amṭarat al-samāʿ* is considered to be لغة فصیحة *lughā faṣīḥa* (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.

¹⁶⁶ Buzurg 1966: 166; Idem, 1981: 97.

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”.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 (سحاب *sahāb*- including the previously discussed ضباب *ḍabāb*) and waters (مياه *miyāh*); many interesting data which are absent from works such as Buzurg’s *Kitāb ‘Ajā’ib al-Hind* and which deserve an in-depth study, culturally and linguistically.

Anchorage

8. Term: سواحل pl ساحل *sāhil* (pl *sawāhil*)

Textual Reference

فحملتهم الرياح الى جزيرة مجهولة لا يعرفونها فرموا بنفوسهم على ساحلها وليس لهم حركة لشدة ما لحقهم فى البحر من الاهوال والشدايد فمكثوا هنالك بقية يومهم ثم قاموا فاحتالوا فى القارب الى ان جروه الى الساحل وباتوا ليلتهم معه¹⁶⁸
(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.¹⁶⁹
(Buzurg [Freeman-Grenville] Tale XLI: 41-2).

Context

This tale is related to Buzurg by ‘one of the sailors’¹⁷⁰, 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

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

¹⁶⁸ Buzurg 1966: 71.

¹⁶⁹ Idem, 1981: 41-2.

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 *بَحْرٌ baḥr* and *بَرٌّ barr*: Context B).

Discussion of Term

Sāḥil ساحل is a common Arabic term generally used to mean seashore, coast and littoral.¹⁷¹ It is found in all four of the primary sources under discussion: the *ʿAjāʾib al-Hind* uses the term to mean shore¹⁷² and beach;¹⁷³ the *Silsilat al-tawārīkh* applies this term to mean “coast”;¹⁷⁴ while in the *Sindbād* stories it carries the meaning of “river-bank”,¹⁷⁵ “sea-coast”,¹⁷⁶ “river-quay” (جانب الساحل *jānib sāḥil*),¹⁷⁷ “shore”,¹⁷⁸ and “beach” (ساحل البحر *sāḥil baḥr*).¹⁷⁹ Al-Muqaddasī also uses the term, both singular and plural, numerous times, and has been translated, depending on the context, in various ways: “shore”,¹⁸⁰ “coast”,¹⁸¹ “banks” (of a river) or “riverbank”,¹⁸² “littoral”,¹⁸³ “seashore”,¹⁸⁴ سواحل البحر / ساحل *sāḥil/ sawāḥil baḥr* “seashore”,¹⁸⁵ “seacoast”,¹⁸⁶ “the shore of the lake”,¹⁸⁷ “coastal areas”,¹⁸⁸ السواحل المذكورة *sawāḥil mazkūra* -¹⁸⁹ “well-known maritime amenities”,¹⁹⁰ “port”,¹⁹¹ and, interestingly, “a place”.¹⁹²

The term, found in Classical and Medieval Arabic lexica, is generally defined as seashore or the shore of a river,¹⁹³ so called because the seawater abrades or pares (قشر *qashara* or سحل *saḥala*) it (i.e. the shore); or because ebb and flow of the tide washes or

¹⁷¹ Wehr 1993: 466.

¹⁷² Buzurg 1981: 18, 41.

¹⁷³ Ibid: 42, 85.

¹⁷⁴ *Silsilat* 1995: 10, 16, 92.

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.

¹⁸⁰ Al-Muqaddasī 2001: 9, 28, 56, 77, 78, 81, 165, 167, 170, 178, 180, 385.

¹⁸¹ Ibid: 18, 23, 24, 26, 55, 60, 75, 77, 79, 82, 86, 87, 88, 93, 133, 137, 157, 171, 180, 181, 356, 392.

¹⁸² Ibid: 20, 102, 167, 180.

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.

¹⁹⁰ Idem, 2001: 72.

¹⁹¹ Ibid: 75, 76.

¹⁹² Ibid: 214.

¹⁹³ Al-Fayyūmī 1872, I: 135; Ibn Manẓūr 2003, XI: 393; al-Jawharī 2005: 480; also Lane 1968, IV: 1320.

sweeps away all that is upon it.¹⁹⁴ Persian lexica list the word as an Arabic one, giving a similar definition as above: shore, (sea) coast¹⁹⁵ and beach.¹⁹⁶ Lane has given the term as being synonymous with جُدَّ *judd(a)*, from where the place-name Jeddah (on the Red Sea Arabian coast) is derived;¹⁹⁷ al-Fayyūmī as synonymous with شاطئ البحر *shāṭi' al-baḥr* seashore;¹⁹⁸ and al-Muqaddasī synonymous with شَطٌّ *shatt*¹⁹⁹ (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.²⁰⁰ 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-Ḥawrā' [Ḥawrā'] is the *port* of Khaybar²⁰¹

and

العونيد هي ساحل قرح عامرة كثيرة العسل ولها مرسى حسن

Al-^cAwnīd is the *port* of Qurḥ: a thriving town, producing plenty of honey, and having a fine anchorage.²⁰²

Al-Ḥawrā' is also labelled مرسى *marsā*,²⁰³ suggesting that مرسى *marsā* and ساحل *sāḥil* are semantically rendered the same. Yet, the above extract regarding al-^cAwnīd 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 Manzūr 2003, XI: 393; also Lane 1968, IV: 1320. Technically, the term should be the passive participle مسحول *mashūl* 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.

¹⁹⁹ Al-Muqaddasī 1906: 31.

²⁰⁰ Agius 2008: 174.

²⁰¹ Al-Muqaddasī 2001: 75

²⁰² Ibid: 76

²⁰³ Ibid: 11 – the text reads ثم مرسى الحوراء كثير العرى تغتر فيه المراكب عند دخوله “Next is the port of 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 *sāhil* and *marsāʿ*?

Sāhil is also said to be a geographical term meaning “edge, border zone, fringe area, zone”,²⁰⁴ used, for example, for the *Sāhil* of Tunisia (the coastal region of the northeast, around the towns of Sousse, Monastir and Mahdia); the *Sāhil* of Algeria (the coastal regions of Algeria, mainly those around Algiers and Oran); the southern “shore” of the Sahara,²⁰⁵ and also the well-known *Sawāhil* (plural form), the coastal region of East Africa on the Western Indian Ocean. In light of this, *sāhil* (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: شطوط، شطان pl شطّ *shatṭ* (pl *shuṭūṭ*, *shuṭṭān*)

Textual Reference

من رسوم سلطانها في معاملته اشياء منها ان له منظرة على الشطّ يضرب فيها على الامتعة²⁰⁶
(Buzurg [Devic]: 119).

Translation

The king had a customs post on the *shore* where he levies import duties on merchandise.²⁰⁷ (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.

²⁰⁴ Callot 1995, VIII: 836.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Buzurg 1966: 119.

²⁰⁷ Idem, 1981: 69.

Discussion of Term

Derived from the root شطط $\sqrt{sh-t-t}$,²⁰⁸ the term شَطٌّ *shatt* is primarily defined in the early Arabic lexica as to be, or become distant, remote or far off.²⁰⁹ Ibn Manẓūr cites Ibn Barī, defining شَطًّا *shatta* as بَعْدَ *ba'uda* to be distant.²¹⁰ Given the context of the tale, the correct definition of شَطٌّ *shatt* is “the bank” [of a river or body of water], the side of a river or valley,²¹¹ synonymous with شَاطِئِ *shāṭi*.²¹² Amongst other definitions, Steingass’ Persian dictionary lists it in the context of the Tigris or any large river.²¹³

Apart from the *‘Ajā’ib al-Hind*, شَطٌّ *shatt* is found in al-Muqaddasī’s *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*. Buzurg uses it to mean shore as seen in the example above, as does al-Muqaddasī;²¹⁴ others are rendered as: شَطُّ الْبَحْرِ *shatt al-baḥr* “seashore”,²¹⁵ “a bank”,²¹⁶ or “riverbank”,²¹⁷ “riverine”,²¹⁸ “coast”,²¹⁹ and عَلَى الشَّطِّ *‘alā shatt* “on a river”.²²⁰ It has also been used to mean river, as al-Muqaddasī describes the Tigris, in the region of ‘Irāq:

وثَلَاثَا طَيْبِ بَغْدَادِ فِي ذَلِكَ الشَّطِّ

Indeed, two-thirds of the charm of Baghdād derives from this
river.²²¹

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

²⁰⁸ Ibn Manẓūr 2003, VII: 377-8; al-Jawharī 2005: 548.

²⁰⁹ Lane 1968, IV: 1548.

²¹⁰ Al-Fayyūmī 1872, I: 157; Ibn Manẓūr 2003, VII: 377; al-Jawharī 2005: 548; also Steingass 1930: 745; Lane 1968, IV: 1548.

²¹¹ Al-Fayyūmī 1872, I: 157; Ibn Manẓūr 2003, VII: 378; al-Jawharī 2005: 548; also Steingass 1930: 745; Lane 1968, IV: 1548.

²¹² Ibn Manẓūr 2003, VII: 378; also Lane 1968, IV: 1549. In *Classic Ships of Islam*, *shatt* is discussed under terms for riverbank whereas شَاطِئِ *shāṭi* is classed as seashore terminology (Agius 2008: 174).

²¹³ Steingass 1930: 745.

²¹⁴ Al-Muqaddasī 2001: 28, 176, 237.

²¹⁵ Ibid: 199.

²¹⁶ Ibid: 101, 175, 180, 235, 237, 239, 391.

²¹⁷ Ibid: 99, 108, 117, 118, 166, 169, 238, 293, 336.

²¹⁸ Ibid: 235, 237.

²¹⁹ Ibid: 347.

²²⁰ Ibid: 236, 238.

²²¹ Ibid: 103.

inhabited areas as opposed to the barren desert. Similarly, the term شَطٌّ *shatt*, 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.²²² In Iraq for example, the شَطٌّ *shatt* refers to the Shatt al-^cArab, “formed by the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers at the town of al-Qurnah,”²²³ the southern part of which constitutes the Iran-Iraq border, and then empties into the Gulf.²²⁴

The varying usage or definitions of the term شَطٌّ *shatt* 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 شَطٌّ *shatt* 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 شَطٌّ *shatt* would be incorrect; the correct

²²² In North Africa, *shatt* generally refers to the salt lakes, both on the high plains (at altitudes of more than 1,000 m/3280 feet), such as the *Shatt Tigrīn* in Morocco and the *Shatt al-Gharbī*, the *Shatt al-Sharkī* and the *Shatt al-Hudna* in Algeria; and at lower levels (sometimes below sea level), such as the *Shatt Malghīr* in Algeria and the *Shatt 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. *Shatt al-Jarīd* in Tunisia is considered to be the largest North African salt lake – originally, the term *shatt* 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*.

<http://forum.wordreference.com/showthread.php?t=330813> & <http://my.opera.com/neilsol/blog/2009/09/30/chott-sabkha-erg> (both accessed 01-11-2010).

²²³ <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/31417/Shatt-Al-Arab> (accessed 25-03-2011). The Shatt (previously called *Dijlat al-^cAwra’* – Naji & 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 Shatt al-^cArab 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 Shatt 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 Shatt al-^cArab 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 شطّ *shatṭ*) 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 فاسقطننا الريح الى جون اقمننا فيه ثلثا وثلثين
يوما²²⁵
(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 البحرّيين يحكى ان بلولوبيلنك – وهو جون في البحر – فيه قوم يأكلون الناس²²⁷
(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 [الناخذة], one of the principal notables of

²²⁵ Buzurg 1966: 30.

²²⁶ Idem, 1981: 18.

²²⁷ Idem, 1966: 125.

²²⁸ Idem, 1981: 73.

Sīrāf. The tale in question was recounted to al-Barkhatī’s maternal uncle, Ibn Anshartū who in turn heard it from his father, al-Barkhatī’s maternal grandfather, the protagonist of the tale. Buzurg emphasises the authenticity of his tales by describing al-Barkhatī as “a man of integrity, to whose word one paid heed, and to whom one entrusted one’s goods and children”,²²⁹ 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.”²³⁰ 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 ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad b. Bābīshād b. Ḥarām b. Ḥamawayh al-Sīrāfī, one of the principal shipmasters [الناخذة] 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 *jūn* جُون in early lexica are based around the concepts of darkness and light, and they do not fit in the context of the passage.²³¹ It has also been used in poetry to represent black clouds: *jawn ajash* جُون اجشُ, where *jawn* refers to black clouds and *ajash* to the sound that these black clouds make i.e. the sound of thunder.²³²

²²⁹ Ibid: 13.

²³⁰ Ibid: 19.

²³¹ Amongst the definitions for جُون *jawn* are white, black, black intermixed or tinged with red; the light; darkness; a plant, green or intensely green inclining towards blackness (Ibn Durayd 1926, II: 117; Ibn Manẓūr 2003, XIII: 121-125; see also Lane 1968, II: 490-491), a black horse or camel, and general black, blackish, darkness. Variations of the word follow in a similar thread: جَوْنَةُ *jawna* the sun i.e. the sun’s disk because it becomes black, or a blackish colour tinged with red at setting, or it may be because of its whiteness and clearness; جَوْنَاءُ *jawnā*’ the sun, because of its becoming black at setting; a cooking pot, called so because it is black (Ibn Manẓūr 2003, XIII: 121-125; Lane 1968, II: 490-491).

²³² Ibn Durayd 1926, III: 382.

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.²³³

Modern Arabic dictionaries such as the Hans Wehr's define جُون (*jūn*) as gulf, inlet and bay²³⁴, as do both the English translation of the Arabic text by Freeman-Grenville shown above, and the French translation by Devic, *une baie*.²³⁵ Dozy has جُون (pl أَجُون) as *golfe*, with جُونًا being synonymous with تقويرا *taqwīran*, *en côtoyant le golfe*, both in his dictionary and in his translation of al-Idrīsī's (d. 548 / 1154) text.²³⁶ Similarly, Blachère gives جُون *jawn* as *baie, golfe*,²³⁷ as well as جون stagnant, murky water; pond;²³⁸ while the *Muḥīṭ al-muḥīṭ* lists it as being synonymous with خور *khawr* (see below) and خليج *khalīj* [bay, gulf, canal²³⁹], 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.²⁴⁰

Steingass' and Richardson's Persian dictionaries define جون as the *jumna* or a large river in India (in Sanskrit called Yamunā).²⁴¹ Richardson gives the Arabic definitions which are more or less a repetition of those listed previously, adding *jūn* (pl of جون *jawn*) black.²⁴²

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 *Silsilat al-tawārīkh*, nor in *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, or in the *Arabian Nights*. It is however, frequently found in al-Idrīsī's geographical work *Nuzhat al-mushtāq fī ikhtirāq al-āfāq* (The Stroll of One Who Desires to Cross the Horizons), to mean 'gulf', as understood by the nineteenth-century scholars Dozy and De Goeje.²⁴³

²³³ Al-Fayyūmī 1872, I: 60. An unrelated definition is also listed by al-Fayyūmī: the diminutive form of the term, جوين *jawayn*, is a large district of Naysābūr (in the region of Khurāsān) to which the term has been ascribed to by some scholars.

²³⁴ Wehr 1993: 177.

²³⁵ Buzurg 1966: 30 & 125.

²³⁶ Al-Idrīsī 1969: 281; Dozy 1927, I: 236.

²³⁷ Blachère 1976, III: 1955.

²³⁸ Ibid: 1953.

²³⁹ Wehr 1993: 293.

²⁴⁰ Bustānī 1983: 139 –the entry reads قطعة من البحر تدخل دخولا عظيما في البرّ.

²⁴¹ Steingass 1930: 379.

²⁴² 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.

²⁴³ 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 متخّلين على وجه البحر ولا تلحق سبّاكنا 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: خُور pl خُور *khawr* (pl *khu'ūr*)

Textual Reference A

كان يسير في مركب فاشتدّت عليه الريح وأخذته الخبّ فلجأ إلى خور لاح له فدخله²⁴⁶
(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*.²⁴⁷ ([Freeman-Grenville] Tale XXIX: 29).

Textual Reference B

وإذا برجل قد وافا فقال لي قد دخلت الخور خشبة طويلة عليها اسمك²⁴⁸.
(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 it²⁴⁹ ([Freeman-Grenville] Tale XCIV: 85).

Context A

Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. °Amr 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 tusks²⁵⁰.

²⁴⁶ Buzurg 1966: 47-48.

²⁴⁷ Idem, 1981: 29

²⁴⁸ Idem, 1966: 145

²⁴⁹ Idem, 1981: 85

²⁵⁰ Ibid: 29

Context B

The second passage is taken from a tale related to Buzurg by ʿAbbās b. Māhān, *hunarman*²⁵¹ (*qāḍī* or judge) of Saymūr, West India, in which a merchant had fitted out a ship and sent an agent to go from Sindān or Saymūr²⁵² 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 خَلِيج *khalīj* [bay, gulf, canal²⁵³].²⁵⁴ It is also listed as being synonymous with غَوْر *ghawr*: low or depressed ground or land, between two elevated parts.²⁵⁵ Ibn Durayd states that *khawr* is (synonymous with) خَلِيج *khalīj* 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 خَوْر *khawr* and the Persian terms خوراب *kh'ur-āb* (impure, muddy water; the dam of a sluice) and خورابه *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 *qāḍī* (judge) (“This *hunarman* is like a *qāḍī* 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.

²⁵⁵ Al-Jawharī 2005: 322; 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,

سينيز: على نصف فرسخ من البحر فوق مهربان لها سوق طويل يدخل إليها
خور تجري فيه المراكب والجامع ناء عن السوق ودار الامارة متقابلة كثيرة
القصور.... جنابة: أيضا على خور

Sīnīz [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*...²⁵⁹

while in *Silsilat al-tawārīkh*, the term is translated as both “freshwater gulf”²⁶⁰ with reference to the Pearl River Estuary en route to Canton (China), and “bay”.²⁶¹

The presence of the term *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, where *khōr* is applied to denote “inlet”,²⁶² bay; in Qalhat and Sur (south east Oman), for example, it is used to mean a river estuary, an inlet, or harbour.²⁶³ *Khawr* or *khōr* is also frequently attached to place-names, for example *Khōr Quṣayyir* خور القُصَيْر and *Khōr Mūsā* خور موسى.²⁶⁴

²⁵⁹ Al-Muqaddasī 1906: 426; idem 2001: 347.

²⁶⁰ *Silsilat* 1811: 20-21; idem, 1995: 11:

" فإذا جازت السفينة الابواب و دخلت الخور صارت الى ما عذب الى الموضوع التي ترسى اليه من بلاد الصين وهو يسمى خانفو"
"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:

"القيرنج وهو ملك فقير فخور يقع اليه العنبر الكثير"

"...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 ambergrees."

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 *khawr* خَوْرُ and *jawn* جون (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.”²⁶⁵ It is a smaller body of water than a gulf (although there are exceptions to this rule); ²⁶⁶ 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.”²⁶⁷ 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 *khawr* خَوْرُ and *jawn* جون, 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: مراسى pl مرسا/ مرساة *marsā / mīrsāt (pl marāsī)*

Textual Reference A

وقدموا على الجزيرة مع شروق الشمس واصحت السماء واشرفوا على الجزيرة وتخيروا مرسا كنيينا²⁶⁸
(Buzurg [Devic]: 26).

Translation A

At daybreak, they drew near to an island. The sky brightened. They saw land, and chose a good *anchorage*.²⁶⁹ (Buzurg [Freeman-Grenville], Tale XIV: 16).

Textual Reference B

فلما عاينت الموضع علمت أننا قد وقعنا الى بلاد الزنج الذين يأكلون الناس فاذا وقفنا في هذا الموضع ايقنا
بالهلكة فتغسلنا وتبنا الى الله تعالى وصلينا على بعضنا بعضا صلوة الموت واحاطت بنا الدوانيج فادخلوا 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).

²⁶⁷ <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/249142/gulf> (accessd 27-02-2011).

²⁶⁸ Buzurg 1966: 26.

²⁶⁹ Idem, 1981: 16.

(Buzurg [Devic]: 51).

المرساة فدخلنا وطرحنا الاناجر ونزلنا مع القوم الى الارض²⁷⁰

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.²⁷¹

(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-Barkhaṭī, 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.”²⁷²

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.²⁷³

Context B

The second passage is taken from Ismāʿīl b. Ibrāhīm b. Mirdās (Ismāʿīlawayh)’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

²⁷⁰ Idem, 1966: 51.

²⁷¹ Idem, 1981: 31.

²⁷² Buzurg 1981: 13.

²⁷³ Ibid: 13-18.

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 $\sqrt{r. s. w.}$ or $\sqrt{r. s. y.}$, the word *marsā* is found in varying forms – *مرسا*, *مرسى*, *مرساة*, *مرسى*, and plural *مراسى* - in all of the early sources used for this study. The verb forms, Form I *رَسَا* *rasā* and Form IV *أرَسَى* *arsā* are defined as to be stationary, at rest, to be fixed, firm, steady, steadfast or stable.²⁷⁵ The term is explained in various contexts; when compounded with *قَدْمُهُ* *qadmuhū*, for example, it refers to someone being steadfast in war (lit. his foot stood firm).²⁷⁶ When compounded with the nouns *سَفِينَةٌ* *safīna* or *مَرْكَبٌ* *markab* (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 *فَارَسُوا بِمَرْكَبِهِمْ*, “they anchored”,²⁷⁹ or *فَارَسَتْ* *فَارَسَتْ* “the [Noah’s] ark anchored upon [Mount] al-Jūdī”;²⁸⁰ at other times, no mention is made of a ship as the verb itself is sufficient for one to understand the context: *رَسَوْنَا عَلَيْهِ* (وَكَلَّ مَحَلَّ) “we cast anchor” or “we anchored”.²⁸¹

From the same root come the nouns used for both anchors and anchorage. *Marsā* *مرسا* / *مرسى* 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’ān, 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

²⁷⁴ Ibid: 31.

²⁷⁵ Al-Fayyūmī 1872, I: 114-115; Ibn Durayd 1926, III: 434; Ibn Manẓūr 2003, XIV: 395; Al-Jawharī 2005: 405; also Lane 1968, III: 1086.

²⁷⁶ Ibn Manẓūr 2003, XIV: 395; Al-Jawharī 2005: 405; also Lane 1968, III: 1086.

²⁷⁷ Al-Jawharī 2005: 405; also Lane 1968, III: 1086.

²⁷⁸ Ibn Manẓūr 2003, XIV: 395; also Lane 1968, III: 1086.

²⁷⁹ Buzurg 1966: 47; idem, 1981: 28.

²⁸⁰ Al-Ṭabarī 1909, I-II: 96; idem, 1989, I: 367.

²⁸¹ *Alf layla wa layla* [nd.], III: 286; *Arabian Nights Entertainment* 1859, III: 15; *Book of the Thousand Nights* 1925, VI: 14.

²⁸² Buzurg 1981: 16; al-Muqaddasī 2001: 9, 12, 76.

²⁸³ Buzurg 1981: 53; *Silsilat al-tawārīkh* 1995: 19; al-Muqaddasī 2001: 11.

²⁸⁴ 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).

²⁸⁵ *Sūrat al-aʿrāf* vii: 187 & *Sūrat al-Nāziʿāt* lxxix: 42; trans. Ali 2002: 117 & 422:

يسألونك عن الساعة أيان مرساها “They ask you about the (final) Hour – when will be its appointed time?”

Also from the same root is the term مرساة *mirsāt*, the oldest literary Arabic term for anchor,²⁸⁸ listed as being synonymous with the Persian *langar*²⁸⁹ (an instrument) used to stay or still a ship,²⁹⁰ i.e. an anchor or أنجر *anjar*;²⁹¹ although, the *mirsāt* is said to be heavier or larger than the *anjar*.²⁹² Other than the fact that the *mirsāt* 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-^cAqabah; بروسي from Yemen; *barósi* in Soqotri and *brussi* in Tigré.²⁹³

Of the sources consulted, the term *mirsāt* “anchor” (pl مراسي) 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 *mirsāt* 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 *mirsāt*.

Similarly, the use of the term *marsā* مرسا / مرسي – referring more specifically to the maritime aspect implied by harbour rather than the economic one meant by the term

²⁸⁶ Jeffery 1938: 261-2.

²⁸⁷ *Sūrat hūd* xi: 41; trans. Ali 2002: 151 reads بسم الله مجريها ومرساها “In the name of Allah, whether it move or be at rest.”. Opinions vary on the reading of the *āya* as to whether to vocalise the م with a ḍamma or with a fatha, which would change the meaning of مرساها from رسي “to be at rest” to أرسى “being made to rest” i.e. God being the one to make it (the ark) run and make it rest. Ibn Manẓūr 2003, XIV: 395; al-Jawharī 2005: 405; also Lane 1968, III: 1086-7.

²⁸⁸ Agius 2008: 145.

²⁸⁹ Ibn Manẓūr 2003, XIV: 396; al-Jawharī 2005: 405.

²⁹⁰ Al-Jawharī 2005: 405.

²⁹¹ Ibn Manẓūr 2003, XIV: 396; also Richardson 1829: 1392; Steingass 1930: 1214; Lane 1968, III: 1086-7.

²⁹² Ibn Manẓūr 2003, XIV: 396; also Agius 2008: 146. *Langar* or *lanjar* from the Classical Arabic *anjar*, or *bāwra*) are the most commonly used types of iron anchors in the Arabian-Persian Gulf and Oman; a further anchor, the *simn*, is made from stone, see also Agius 2005(b): 181-182.

²⁹³ Glidden 1942: 70.

²⁹⁴ From the Persian *angar* – the anchor of a ship, see Richardson 1829: 179; also *langar* (anchor) from Sanskrit *nangara* (iron anchor) and *nangarasila* (stone anchor), see Agius 2008: 146 & 371.

²⁹⁵ Buzurg 1966: 51 – translated as *port* in the French.

²⁹⁶ Agius 2005(b): 181.

فُرْضَة *furḍa*²⁹⁷ (see below), and has been used by Buzurg to mean anchorage, port and (مِرْسَاة *mirsāt*) harbour²⁹⁸ - has diminished considerably since the third-fourth / ninth-tenth century. Although still in use in modern times, even in place names (such as Marsā Maṭrūh, 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 مِينَاء *mīnā'* (a similarly comprehensive term used for harbour, port and anchorage), neither of which appear in the *‘Ajā’ib 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: فرض pl فُرْضَة *furḍa* (pl *furaḍ*)

Textual Reference

(Buzurg [Devic]: 104). ²⁹⁹ ويتحدّرون في مهران فيصلون الى فُرْضَة المنصورة في اربعين يوما

Translation

In this way they come down the Mihran [Mihrān] and reach the *port* of Manṣūra in forty days.³⁰⁰ (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. ‘Amr 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)³⁰¹ having travelled down the River Mihrān (the Indus River³⁰²) using makeshift rafts made from bags of grain treated with resin to make them waterproof.³⁰³

²⁹⁷ Soucek 1995, VII: 66.

²⁹⁸ Buzurg 1981: 16, 51, 53.

²⁹⁹ Buzurg 1966: 104.

³⁰⁰ Idem 1981: 60.

³⁰¹ 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 ‘Abbāsīd caliph. Now it is a ruined city approximately 19km south-east of Shāhdādpur, 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

Furḍa فُرْضَة from فرض is a mark made by notching or otherwise; a notch or an incision in something.³⁰⁴ 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.³⁰⁵ Ibn Manẓūr lists فُرْضَة *furḍa* as gap or breach in a river (bank), and specifies فُرْضَة النهر *furḍa al-nahr* as مَشْرَبُ الْمَاءِ مِنْهُ a drinking place, possibly, as above, the breach in the river from where one draws water. He also cites al-Aṣmaʿī's concurring definition of المَشْرَعَةُ *mashraʿa* drinking place.³⁰⁶

Furḍat al-baḥr فُرْضَة الْبَحْرِ is synonymous with مَحَطُّ السَّفِينِ *muḥaṭ al-sufun*, the place where ships are stationed near the bank of a river or near land, and the place where ships unload.³⁰⁷ 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, etc³⁰⁸] where ships ride at anchor; a harbour, dock, station for shipping”;³⁰⁹ and “the mouth of a river”.³¹⁰

Other than in the *ʿAjāʾib al-Hind*, *furḍa* is found more frequently in al-Muqaddasī's *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*. In the translation, for the most part, it is used to represent “port”.³¹¹ Its other definitions however include (in order of frequency) seaport;³¹² harbour;³¹³

(http://unesco.culture.free.fr/asia-new/html_eng/chapitre4218/chapitre4.htm accessed 25-06-2011)

³⁰² The Indus River, trans-Himalayan river of South Asia; at approximately 1800 miles in length, it is one of the longest rivers in the world. Only parts of the river are navigable and only using small craft and fishing boats (even less so since the advent of railways and expansion of irrigation works in the 1880s) <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/286872/Indus-River> (accessed 15-01-2011).

³⁰³ Buzurg 1981: 2. Al-Ḥasan spent a significant amount of time in India, and more specifically in Maṣūra; he states that he was in al-Maṣūra in the year 288/900.

³⁰⁴ Al-Jawharī 2005: 805; also Lane 1968, VI: 2374.

³⁰⁵ Al-Fayyūmī 1872, I: 59; Ibn Durayd 1926, II: 365; al-Jawharī 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 (*nahr*); Richardson defines it as an indent of a river where they draw water for the purpose of irrigation. Al-Fayyūmī and al-Jawharī specify فُرْضَة النهر rather than just فُرْضَة *furḍa*.

³⁰⁶ Ibn Manẓūr 2003, VII: 232. Al-Aṣmaʿī also cited in Lane 1877, VI: 2374.

³⁰⁷ Ibn Manẓūr 2003, VII: 232; al-Jawharī 2005: 806; also Lane 1968, VI: 2374.

³⁰⁸ Allen & Hawkins 1994:141.

³⁰⁹ Richardson 1829: 1082; Steingass 1930: 919.

³¹⁰ Steingass 1930: 919.

³¹¹ Al-Muqaddasī 2001: 77, 107, 146, 149, 150, 256, 258, 291, 307, 387, 391. Agius 2008: 174 also defines the term as small port town.

³¹² Al-Muqaddasī 2001: 76, 166, 192, 386.

³¹³ Ibid: 347.

docks,³¹⁴ export point;³¹⁵ point of departure (of travellers);³¹⁶ فرضة التجار *furḍa al-tujjār* place of assembly of merchants³¹⁷ and al-Furdha, the gap (in the region of Kirmān, south-central Iran).³¹⁸ It is also used by al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/ 922-3), in its plural form, to mean the city's loading quays³¹⁹ and a beachhead;³²⁰ the translator of the work writes that فرضة *furḍa* is a modern military term.³²¹

The term, of Arabic origins,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 *port* of Damascus, and has a fine harbour³²³

Judging by the definitions found in the lexica however, this distinction does not always apply. In any case, both terms فرضة and مرسا have been gradually replaced by the more comprehensive terms الميناء *minā*³²⁴ and بندر *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 فرضة *furḍa*, 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,

³¹⁴ Ibid: 180.

³¹⁵ Ibid: 261.

³¹⁶ Ibid: 186.

³¹⁷ Al-Muqaddasī 1906: 33; idem, 2001: 30.

³¹⁸ Idem, 2001: 383.

³¹⁹ Al-Ṭabarī 1964, V: 2432; idem, 1989, XIII: 14. The term is used in the description of the conquest of Iraq and Iran.

³²⁰ Al-Ṭabarī 1964, V: 2438; idem, 1989, XIII: 18.

³²¹ Idem, 1989, XIII: 14.

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.

³²³ Abū l-Fidā' *Taqwīm al-buldān*: 248 as cited by Soucek 1995, VII: 66.

³²⁴ Soucek 1995, VII: 66.

although al-Manṣūra is labelled a port town by Buzurg in the context of this one tale,³²⁵ al-Muqaddasī, who derives much of his description of the region of Sind from al-Iṣṭakhrī (fl. c. 340/ 951-2),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 *فرضة* *furḍa* (be it port, *محطُّ السفن* *muḥaṭṭ al-sufun* a station of/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: كَلَاء *kallā'*

Textual Reference

تذاكرنا امر اسمعيلويه بن ابراهيم بن مرداس فقيل لى انه وصل فى سنة سبع عشرة وثلاثمائة وكان وصوله منذ خطف من كله والى ان دخل بكلاء عمان ثمانية واربعين يوما³²⁷ (Buzurg [Devic]:132-3).

Translation

We were talking about Ismā'īlawayh b. Ibrāhīm b. Mirdās. Someone told me he arrived in 317/929, and that the duration of his voyage from Kala [in the Malay Peninsula³²⁸] until he entered the *port* of Oman was exactly forty-one days.³²⁹ (Buzurg [Freeman-Grenville], Tale LXXXV: 77.)

Context

The above is taken from a story recounted by Ismā'īlawayh 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.

³²⁵ It is also counted as being amongst the ports of Sind by Hourani (1995: 63, 70).

³²⁶ Al-Muqaddasī 2001: 384.

³²⁷ Buzurg 1966: 132-3.

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.

³²⁹ Buzurg 1981: 77.

Discussion of Term

The term كلاء *kallā'* from the root √ *k-l-*, is defined as harbour,³³⁰ or a station of ships, so called because it keeps the vessels safe (يكلأ من) from the wind;³³¹ or, according to Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā, because the wind there becomes lessened or slackened (الريح تكل فيهِ) *al-rīḥ takillu fīh*).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-Jawharī, this is the definition of مكلا *mukalla'* rather than كلاء *kallā'*.³³³ The first is linguistically a 'mīmat' (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-Jawharī further specify this mooring place as being the *sāḥil* of every river, as discussed earlier, although al-Jawharī cites al-Aṣma'ī in this respect.³³⁴ Synonymous with مكلا *mukallā'*,³³⁵ the verb form كالا *kala'a* means to guard, protect, preserve or keep safe (حرس *ḥafaza* حفظ *ḥarasa*), hence كلاء *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-Jawharī 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 (مُجْتَمِعُ السُّفُنِ *mujtama' 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 Ma'qil (down which ships came from Baghdād³³⁹) via the Nahr Bilāl b. Burda (canal dug in 729AD under the order of the governor of the time whom the canal

³³⁰ Agius 2008: 174.

³³¹ Ibn Durayd 1926, III: 266-267; Ibn Manẓūr 2003, I: 177.

³³² Ibn Manẓūr 2003, I: 177.

³³³ Ibn Manẓūr 2003, I: 177; al-Jawharī 2005: 920; also Lane 1968, VII: 2624.

³³⁴ Ibn Manẓūr 2003, I: 177; al-Jawharī 2005: 920.

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

"وأسواقها ثلاث قطع الكلاء على النهر، وسوق الكبير، وباب الجامع، وكل أسواقها حسنة"

"The markets are in three sections: *Al-Kallā'* ("a mooring for ships") which is along the canal, the Great Market, and the *Bāb al-Jāmi'* market. All these markets are quite good."

³³⁷ Ibn Manẓūr 2003, I: 177; al-Jawharī 2005: 920.

³³⁸ Ibn Manẓūr 2003, I: 178.

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 Gulf³⁴⁰), as well as the Shaṭṭ al-^cArab.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-Kallā' was able to take ships of a fairly large tonnage;³⁴³ Naji and Ali too, believe the word al-Kallā' 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 *kallā'* 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-^cArab'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 tonnage³⁴⁹ (shallow-draft ocean going vessels). Larger vessels would have stopped at the ports of either Ubulla, on the western bank of the Shaṭṭ al-^cArab³⁵⁰ 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 *kallā'* as a mooring place near the bank of a river fits the description of al-Ubulla and Baṣra. The *kallā'* of Oman however, mentioned by Buzurg and translated as “port” in the French and English translations,

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Naji & Ali, 1981: 299, 300, 305. Baṣra was, by the fourth/tenth century, an established trading centre, as well as a shipbuilding site. An interesting feature of the river-harbour *al-Kallā'* was its *sūqs* or markets; *al-Qayyārīn* housed sellers or manufacturers of asphalt or bitumen (Naji & Ali, 1981: 306), used by some boat builders to caulk their vessels in addition to or instead of shark or whale oil (For more information on the preservation of vessels see Agius 2002:173-176). A nearby market was home to the sellers of old (dismantled or wrecked) boats and ships (Naji & Ali, 1981: 306), thereby making the harbour quarter, with its market areas, an ideal place to build or repair ships, albeit those of a smaller size.

³⁴² Naji & Ali, 1981: 305– the authors cite al-Jāḥiẓ's *al-Buldān*, 1891-2: 503.

³⁴³ Pellat 1954-60, I: 1085.

³⁴⁴ Naji & Ali, 1981: 304.

³⁴⁵ *Book of the Thousand Nights* 1925, VI: 48.

³⁴⁶ Ibid: 69.

³⁴⁷ *Alf layla wa layla* [nd], III: 285. *Book of the Thousand Nights* 1925, VI: 14.

³⁴⁸ *Book of the Thousand Nights* 1925, VI: 77.

³⁴⁹ Soucek 1993, VII: 66; Agius 2008: 67.

³⁵⁰ Soucek 1993, VII: 66. However Agius (2008: 67) states that it would have been difficult for very large ships (*junks*- Chinese ships) to lay anchor at Ubulla due to the low water level and coral reef.

³⁵¹ *Silsilat* 1995: 8; Soucek 1993, VII: 66; Agius 2008: 77.

was not a river harbour; although the text does not identify which port in Oman Buzurg and Ismāʿīlawayh 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”,³⁵² and the most important town on the Sea of China.³⁵³ 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;³⁵⁴ the town itself was situated along the shore of the sea,³⁵⁵ 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,³⁵⁶ 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 *كَلَلَا* *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 *kalaʾa* (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*.”³⁵⁷

Overall, in the literal sense, it appears that the term *كَلَلَا* *kallāʾ* is used to mean harbour i.e. a place of shelter for ships;³⁵⁸ 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.

³⁵² Al-Muqaddasī 2001: 30.

³⁵³ Ibid: 79.

³⁵⁴ Ibid: 27.

³⁵⁵ Ibid: 79.

³⁵⁶ Agius 2008: 85.

³⁵⁷ Arnold & Guillaume 1931 – etext downloaded from <http://arthursclassiconovels.com/islam/legacyofislam.html> (accessed 09-11-2010).

³⁵⁸ Allen & Hawkins 1994: 645.

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 'Ajā'ib al-Hind*, the *Silsilat al-tawārīkh*, al-Muqaddasī's *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, or medieval Arabic lexica- provided the most information regarding Indian Ocean maritime cultural terminology. Of the terminology selected, all but شرتا *shartā* 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 جون *jūn*, 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 *rīḥ* 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 *rīḥ* according to the definition found in the lexica, i.e. a gentle wind or breeze³⁵⁹ 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 *mirsāt* 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, كلاء *kallā'* is generally used to 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-Manṣūra 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-Manṣūra provides the researcher with a problem; many sources place this now ruined metropolis at Brahmanābād approximately 19km south-east of Shāhdādpur, 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-Manṣūra (*furḍa* فُرْضَة) 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-Manṣūra 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.

³⁶¹ UNESCO Collection of History of Civilisations of Central Asia: <http://unesco.culture.free.fr/asia-new/html> (http://unesco.culture.free.fr/asia-new/html_eng/chapitre4218/chapitre4.htm accessed 25-06-2011).

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 ʿAjāʾib 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, Ṣoḥār, those on the west coast of India, such as Sindān and Ṣaymūr, 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 Lāmūrī or Lāmūrī 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

¹ Buzurg 1981: 24.

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 شرتا *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 *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 *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

² Agius 2008: 174.

³ Buzurg 1981: 77.

⁴ Ibid: 31.

⁵ Al-Jawharī 2005: 405.

⁶ Ibn Manẓūr 2003, XIV: 396; also Richardson 1829: 1392; Steingass 1930: 1214; Lane 1968, III: 1086-7.

⁷ Buzurg 1981: 73.

⁸ Ibn Durayd 1926, II: 117; Ibn Manẓūr 2003, XIII: 121-125; also Lane 1968, II: 490-491.

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-Šīn 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 ma'rifat 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 *Alf 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 شَطٌّ *shatt* 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 Shatt al-^cArab in Iraq, rather than a riverbank.¹¹ Another form of anchorage, *furda* فُرْضَة is

⁹ Al-Fayyūmī 1872, I: 157; Ibn Manẓūr 2003, VII: 378; al-Jawharī 2005: 548; also Steingass 1930: 745; Lane 1968, IV: 1548.

¹⁰ Buzurg 1981: 69.

¹¹ Al-Muqaddasī 2001: 103.

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.¹² Buzurg uses the word in the context of al-Manṣūra on the River Mihrān (Indus),¹³ thus suggesting that the lexica, in this instance, provides the correct definition. Al-Muqaddasī however, uses it to mean “port”,¹⁴ harbour,¹⁵ docks,¹⁶ and export point;¹⁷ while Abū l-Fidā’ (d. 732/1331) uses it to mean “port, (as opposed to harbour).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.

¹² Al-Fayyūmī 1872, I: 59; Ibn Durayd 1926, II: 365; al-Jawharī 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 (*nahr*); Richardson defines it as an indent of a river where they draw water for the purpose of irrigation. Al-Fayyūmī and al-Jawharī specify فُرْضَةُ النهر rather than just فُرْضَةٌ *furḍa*.

¹³ Buzurg 1981: 60.

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

¹⁵ Ibid: 347.

¹⁶ Ibid: 180.

¹⁷ Ibid: 261.

¹⁸ Abū al-Fidā’ *Taqwīm al-buldān*: 248 as cited by Soucek 1995, VII: 66.

Appendices

Appendix A

Scanned image of Buzurg Ibn Shahriyār's (d.399/1009) *Kitāb 'Ajā'ib al-Hind* (The Book of the Marvels of India) (after *Livre des merveilles de l'Inde*, Devic, 1966).

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ وَهُوَ حَسْبِي

الحمد لله ذي العزة والجلال، والانعام والافضل، خالق الامم اطوارا والاجيال،
ومتوعهم بفطرته في الاخلاق والاشكال، ومصرفهم بقدرته من حال الى حال،
ومعلمهم بحكمته ما يصنعون من غرائب الاعمال، فانقنوا واحكم وسدد
وقوم وقال وهو اصدق الغاييلين اقرأ وربك الاكرم الذي علم بالقلم علم
الانسان ما لم يعلم، شهدت آياته المختلفة في الاقطار، وعجايب
مصنوعاته في البراري والبحار، وبدائع محكماته في الآفاق والديار، انه
تبارك وتعالى فرد صمد احد قهار، فاعتبروا يا اولي الابصار، ارسل محمدا

a) Cod. والجيل.

b) Cod. فليقن.

c) Kor. 96: 3, 4, 5.

AU NOM DE DIEU CLÉMENT ET MISÉRICORDIEUX, ET MON SEUL REFUGE.

Louange à Dieu, à qui appartiennent la gloire et la majesté, la bienfaisance et la libéralité, créateur des peuples divers et des nations; qui, par sa puissance créatrice, leur a donné leur caractère et leur extérieur particulier; qui, par son pouvoir, les fait passer de condition en condition; et qui, par sa sagesse, les instruit dans les œuvres extraordinaires qu'ils ont à accomplir. Il édifie savamment, il affermit, il dirige, il redresse.

Il a dit, lui, le plus véridique de ceux qui parlent: „Lis: Ton seigneur est le plus généreux des bienfaiteurs, lui qui a instruit par la plume, qui a instruit l'homme de ce que l'homme ne savait pas” (Coran ch. XCVI).

Ses prodiges disséminés dans l'univers, les merveilles de ses ouvrages dans les plaines et les mers, ses œuvres admirables dans toutes les parties du monde, portent témoignage que le Créateur — qu'il soit béni! qu'il soit exalté! — est le Seul, l'Eternel, l'Unique, le Victorieux. Prenez-y garde, hommes doués de clairvoyance!

Il a envoyé son prophète Mohammed pour enseigner à toutes les créatures

Appendix B

Scanned image of the first four pages of the *Akhbār al-Šīn 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.



عشرين ذراعاً فشققنا بطنها فاخرجنا

منها ايضاً سمكةً من جنسها ثم شققنا
بطن الثانية فاذا في بطنها مثلها وكل
هذا حتى يضطرب يشبه بعضه بعضاً
في الصورة ولهذا السمك الكبير الذي
يدعى الوال مع عظم خلقه سمكة تدعى
اللسك طولها قدر ذراع فاذا طغت
هذه السمكة وبغت وأذت السمك في البحر
سَلَطت عليها هذه السمكة الصغيرة فصارت
في اصل اذنها ولا تفارقها حتى تقتلها
وتسليتزق بالمركب فلا تقرب المركب هذه
السمكة الكبيره مرقاً من الصغيرة كما وفي
هذا البحر ايضاً سمكة يحمي وجهها وجه
الانسان تطير فوق الماء واسم هذا السمك

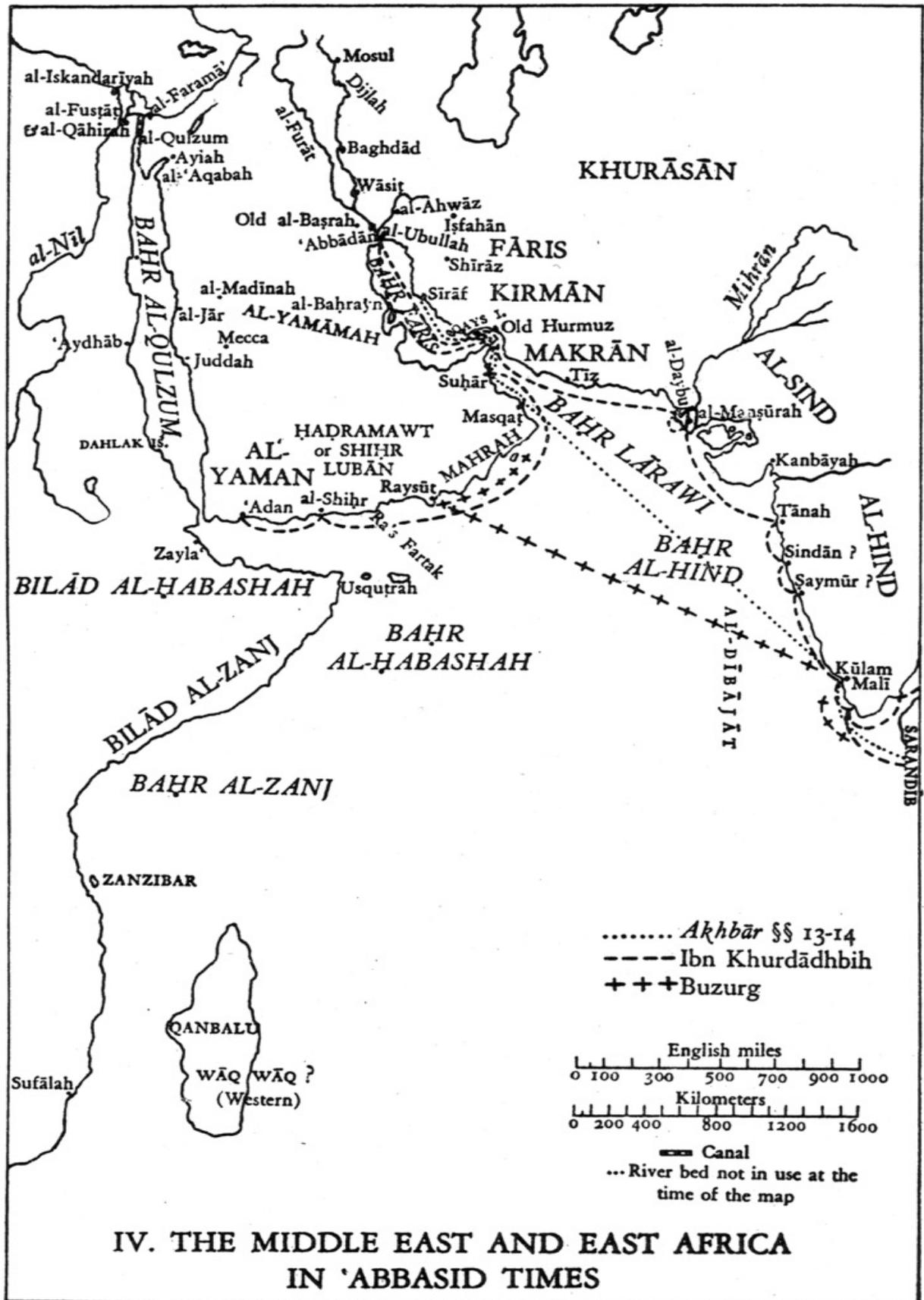
المج وسمك آخر من تحت الماء يرصد

حتى اذا سقط ابتلعه ويسمى هذا
السمك العنقوش والسمك كله ياكل
بعضه بعضاً **والبحر الثالث**
بحر هركند وبينه وبين بحر دلازوى
جزاير كثيرة يقال انها الف وتسعاية
جزيرة وهي فرق ما بين هذين البحرين
دلازوى وهركند وهذه الجزاير تملكها
امراة ويقع في هذه الجزاير عنبر عظيم
القدر فتقع القطعة مثل النبت ويحوى
وهذا عنبر ينبت في قعر البحر نباتا
فاذا اشتد هيجان البحر فذفه من قعره
مثل الفطرو الكماة وهذه الجزاير التي
تملكها المرأة عامرة بمخمل النارجيل

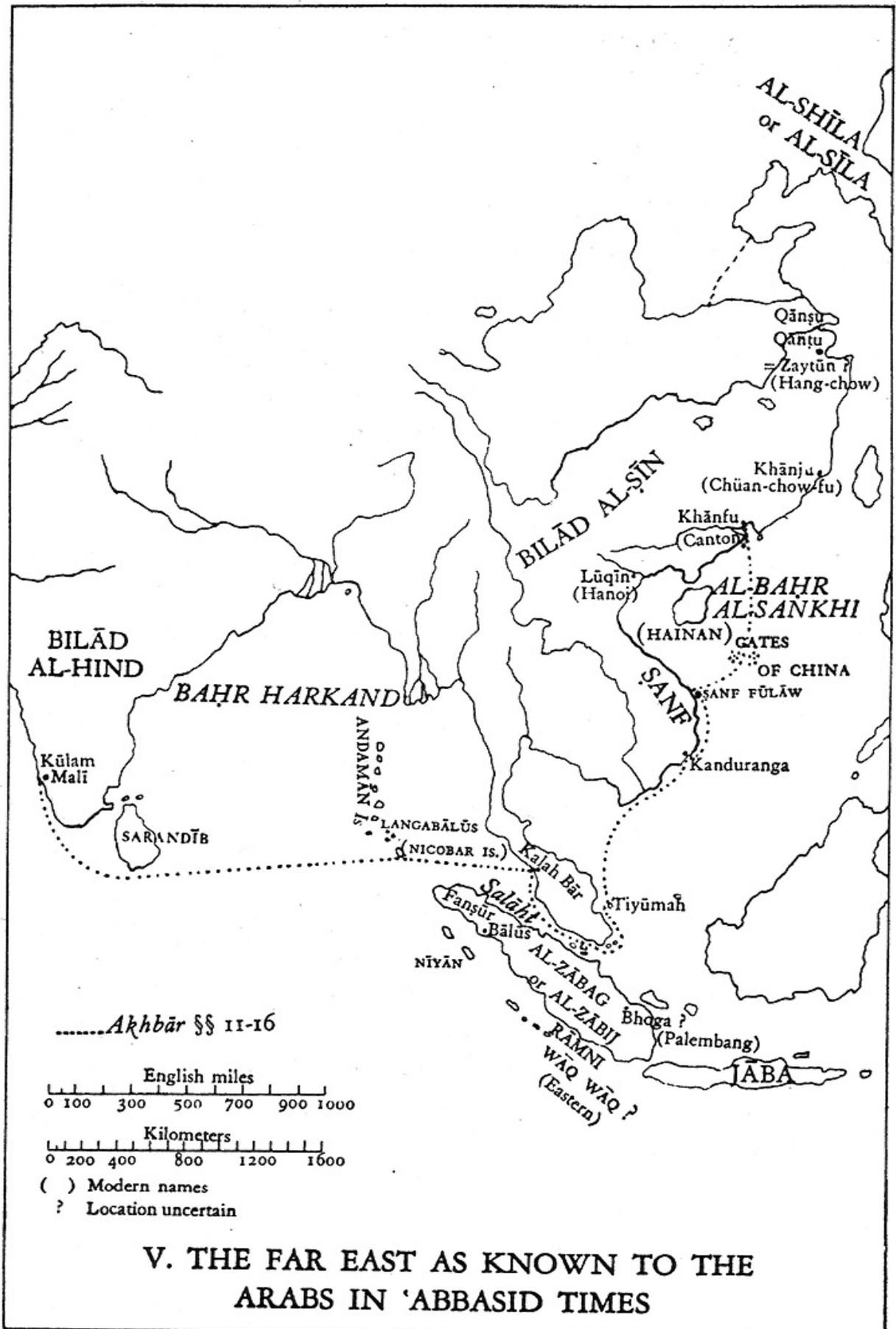
٨٠٠

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).



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