



From Jan Huygen van Linschoten, *Itinerario*, Amsterdam, 1596

# Travel Narratives *from the* Age of Discovery *An Anthology*

*Edited by*  
Peter C. Mancall

OXFORD  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

2006

Document 7

Ying-Yai Sheng-Lan—The Overall Survey  
of the Ocean's Shores (1433)

Ma Huan, *Ying-Yai Sheng-Lam: The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, trans. J. V. G. Mills (Cambridge, England: Hakluyt Society Extra Series no. 42, 1970), 77–85, 137–46, 173–78

Ma Huan was probably born around 1380 in a family from Kuei chi, about seven miles from Hang chou bay. Scholars know little about his life. He was in all likelihood of humble origin, but he gained sufficient education to be appointed to join some, but not all, of the voyages led by Cheng Ho (c. 1371–1435), the Ming admiral who led perhaps the most substantial fleet in the world at the time from China to the east coast of Africa. He returned from his final voyage in 1433. Eighteen years later he published *Ying-Yai Sheng-Lan—The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*.

The excerpts here testify to the range of Ming travel expertise and to Ma Huan's ability, often in a very few pages, to render telling portraits of the peoples whom he met and the places that he saw. The material here comes from his encounters with three very different places: Champa (in central Vietnam), Calicut, and Mecca. In each of these places he described the economy, especially local agricultural practices, and dominant religious patterns. His eye for detail is especially apparent in his description of keeping track of time in Champa or the architecture of the central mosque in Mecca. His writing tended to be less overtly judgmental than that of other travelers of this age. He was also a very precise writer, repeatedly providing the values of goods and the distances from one place to another. Though his text occasionally erred in statements of fact, as his modern editor J. V. G. Mills has pointed out in a superb series of gloss notes to the translation used here, such occasional inaccuracy does not detract from the obvious effort to provide a guide to others who would presumably follow in the future. Cheng Ho led seven expeditions from his initial departure in 1405 to his final return in 1433; Ma Huan accompanied him on three of them.

There are no known surviving copies of the original 1451 printing of the *Overall Survey*. For the text that follows, Mills used three variant editions, relying on one published around 1617 (known as "Version C"), but also referring frequently to an edition published in 1824 (known as "Version S"),

and on occasion to a third (and rarer) version composed sometime between 1451 and 1644 (known as "Version K"; the text here removes many of the brackets Mills used when creating a singular text with material from these variant editions). Ma Huan died around 1460. As Mills has noted, "His book was never widely read, he never achieved fame, and he had been forgotten before 1773, when the imperial library of the Ch'ien-lung emperor was being formed." It is a tragedy that the text was not better known for so many generations because its contents, as the excerpts here reveal, provide a necessary corrective to European and American notions about much of the world that was, for Ma Huan and Cheng Ho, the "West," not the "East."<sup>1</sup>



### The Country of Chan City [Champa, Central Vietnam]

This is the country called Wang she ch'eng in the Buddhist records. It lies in the south of the great sea which is south of the sea of Kuang tung. Starting from Wu hu strait in Ch'ang lo district of Fu chou prefecture in Fu chien province and traveling south-west, the ship can reach this place in ten days with a fair wind. On the south the country adjoins Chen la [Cambodia]; on the west it connects with the boundary of Chiao chih [Tonking]; and on both east and north it comes down to the great sea.

At a distance of one hundred *li* to the north-east from the capital, there is a port named New Department Haven. On the shore they have a stone tower which constitutes a land-mark. Ships from all places come here for the purpose of mooring and going ashore. On the shore there is a fort, named by the foreigners She pi-nai; they have two headmen in charge of it; and inside the fort live fifty or sixty families of foreigners, to guard the harbour.

Going south-west for one hundred *li* you come to the city where the king resides; its foreign name is Chan city. The city has a city-wall of stone, with openings at four gates, which men are ordered to guard. The king of the country is a So-li man, and a firm believer in the Buddhist religion. On his head he wears a three-tiered elegantly-decorated crown of gold filigree, resembling that worn by the assistants of the *ching* actors in the Central Country. On his body he wears a long robe of foreign cloth with small designs worked in

threads of the five colours, and round the lower part of his body a kerchief or coloured silk; and he has bare feet. When he goes about, he mounts an elephant, or else he travels riding in a small carriage with two yellow oxen pulling in front.

The hat worn by the chiefs is made of *chiao-chang* leaves, and resembles that worn by the king, but has gold and coloured ornamentation; and differences in the hats denote the gradations of rank. The coloured robes which they wear are not more than knee-length, and round the lower part of the body they wear a multi-coloured kerchief of foreign cloth.

The house in which the king resides is tall and large. It has a roof of small oblong tiles on it. The four surrounding walls are ornately constructed of bricks and mortar, and look very neat. The doors are made of hard wood, and decorated with engraved figures of wild beasts and domestic animals.

The houses in which the people live have a covering made of thatch; the height of the eaves from the ground cannot exceed three *ch'ih*; people go in and out with bent bodies and lowered heads; and to have a greater height is an offence.

As to the colour of their clothing: white clothes are forbidden, and only the king can wear them; for the populace, black, yellow, and purple coloured clothes are all allowed to be worn; but to wear white clothing is a capital offence.

The men of the country have unkempt heads; the women dress the hair in a chignon at the back of the head. Their bodies are quite black. On the upper part of the body they wear a short sleeveless shirt, and round the lower part a coloured silk kerchief. All go bare-footed.

The climate is pleasantly hot, without frost or snow, always like the season in the fourth or fifth moon. The plants and trees are always green.

The mountains produce ebony, *ch'ieh-lan* incense, Kuan yin bamboo, and laka-wood. The ebony is a very glossy black, and decidedly superior to the produce of other countries. The *ch'ieh-lan* incense is produced only on one large mountain in this country, and comes from no other place in the world; it is very expensive, being exchanged for its own weight in silver.

The Kuan yin bamboo resembles a small rattan stick; it is one *chang* seven or eight *ch'ih* in length, and iron black in colour; it has two or three joints to every one inch; it is not produced elsewhere.

Rhinoceros' and elephants' teeth are very abundant. The rhinoceros resembles a water-buffalo in shape; a large one weighs seven or eight hundred *chin*; the whole body is hairless, black in colour, and all covered with scale;

1. Ma Huan, Ying-Yai Sheng-Lan: "The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores" [1433], trans. J. V. G. Mills (Hakluyt Society, extra ser., 42 [Cambridge, 1970]), 34-41, quotation at 36.

the skin is lined, mangy, and thick; the hoof has three digits; and the head has one horn which grows in the middle of the bridge of the nose, a long horn being one *ch'ih* four or five *ts'un* [in height]. It does not eat grass, but it eats prickly trees and prickly leaves; it also eats large pieces of dry wood. It drops excrement which resembles the sumach-refuse of a dyer's shop.

Their horses are short and small, like donkeys. Water-buffaloes, yellow oxen, pigs and goats—all these they have. Geese and ducks are scarce. The fowls are small; the largest ones do not exceed two *chin* [in weight]; and their legs are one and a half *ts'un* and at the most two *ts'un*, in height. The cock birds have red crowns and white ears, with small waists and high tails; they crow, too, when people tame them up in their hands; they are very likeable.

For fruits they have such kinds as the plum, orange, water-melon, sugar-cane, coconut, jack-fruit and banana. The jack-fruit resembles the gourd-melon; the outside skin is like that of the litchi from Ch'uan [Szechuan]; inside the skin there are lumps of yellow flesh as big as a hen's egg, which taste like honey; inside these lumps there is a seed resembling a chicken's kidney; and when roasted and eaten, it tastes like a chestnut.

For vegetables, they have the gourd-melon, cucumber, bottle-gourd, mustard plant, onion and ginger, and that is all; other fruits and vegetables are entirely lacking.

Most of the men take up fishing for a livelihood; they seldom go in for agriculture, and therefore rice and cereals are not abundant. In the local varieties of rice the kernel is small, long, and reddish. Barley and wheat are both wanting. The people ceaselessly chew areca-nut and betel-leaf.

When men and women marry, the only requirement is that the man should first go to the woman's house, and consummate the marriage. Ten days or half a moon later, the man's father and mother, with their relatives and friends, to the accompaniment of drums and music escort husband and wife back to the paternal home; then they prepare wine and play music.

As to their wine: they take some rice and mix it with medicinal herbs, seal the mixture in a jar, and wait till it has matured. When they wish to drink it, they take a long-joined small bamboo tube three or four *ch'ih* in length, insert it into the wine-jar, and sit around; then they put in some water according to the number of persons, and take it in turns to suck up the wine and drink it; when the jar is sucked dry, they again add water and drink; this they do until there is no more taste of wine; and then they stop.

As to their writing: they have no paper or pen; they use either goat-skin beaten thin or tree-bark smoked black; and they fold it into the form of a clas-

sical book, in which, with white chalk, they write characters which serve for records.

As to the punishable offences in this country: for light offences, they employ thrashing on the back with a rattan stick; for serious offences, they cut off the nose; for robbery, they sever a hand; for the offence of adultery, the man and the woman are branded on the face so as to make a scar; for the most heinous offences, they take a hard wood stick, cut a sharp point to it, and set it up on a log of wood which resembles a small boat; this they put in the water; and they make the offender sit on the wood spike; the wood [stick] protrudes from his mouth and he dies; and then the corpse is left on the water as a warning to the public.

In the determination of time they have no intercalary moon, but twelve moons make one year. One day and night are divided into ten watches, which they signal by beat of a drum. As to the four seasons: they take the opening of the flowers as spring, and the falling of the leaves as autumn.

On the day of the New Year holiday the king takes the gall of living persons, mixes it with water, and bathes in it; the chiefs of every locality collect this gall and offer it to him as a ceremonial presentation of tribute.

When the king of the country has reigned for thirty years, he abdicates and becomes a priest, directing his brothers, sons, and nephews to administer the affairs of the country. The king goes into the depths of the mountains, and fasts and does penance, or else he merely eats a vegetarian diet. He lives alone for one year. He takes an oath by Heaven and says "When formerly I was the king, if I transgressed while on the throne, I wish wolves or tigers to devour me, or sickness to destroy me." If, after the completion of one whole year, he is not dead, he ascends the throne once more and administers the affairs of the country again. The people of the country acclaim him, saying "His-li Ma-ha-la-cha," this is the most venerable and most holy designation.

The so-called "corpse-head barbarian" is really a woman belonging to a human family, her only peculiarity being that her eyes have no pupils; at night, when she is sleeping, her head flies away and eats the tapering faeces of human infants; this infant, affected by the evil influence which invades its abdomen, inevitably dies; and the flying head returns and unites with its body, just as it was before. If people know of this and wait till the moment when the head flies away, and then remove the body to another place, the returning head cannot unite with the body, and then the woman dies. If the existence of such a woman in a household is not reported to the authorities, in addition to the killer the whole family become parties to an offence.

Again, there is a large pool connected with the sea, called "the crocodile pool"; if in litigation between persons there is a matter which is difficult to elucidate and the officials cannot reach a decision, they make the two litigants ride on water-buffaloes and cross through this pool; the crocodiles come out and devour the man whose cause is unrighteous; but the man whose cause is righteous is not devoured, even if he crosses ten times; this is most remarkable.

In all the mountains beside the sea there are wild water-buffaloes, very fierce; originally they were domestic plough-oxen which ran away into the mountains; there they lived and grew up by themselves, and in the course of long years they developed into herds; but if they see a strange man wearing blue clothes, they will certainly pursue him and gore him to death; they are most vicious.

The foreigners are very particular about their heads; and if anyone touches them on the head, they feel the same hatred against him as we in the Central Country feel against a murderer.

In their trading transactions they currently use pale gold which is seventy per cent pure, or else they use silver.

They very much like the dishes, bowls, and other kinds of blue porcelain articles, the hemp-silk, silk-gauze, beads, and other such things from the Central Country, and so they bring their pale gold and give it in exchange. They constantly bring rhinoceros' horns, elephants' teeth, *ch'ieh-lan* incense, and other such things, and present them as tribute to the Central Country.

### The Country of Ku-Li [Calicut]

This is the great country of the Western Ocean.

Setting sail from the anchorage in the country of Ko-chih, you travel north-west, and arrive here after three days. The country lies beside the sea. Traveling east from the mountains for five hundred, or seven hundred, *li*, you make a long journey through to the country of K'an-pa-li. On the west [the country of Ku-li] abuts on the great sea; on the south it joins the boundary of the country of Ko-chih; and on the north side it adjoins the territory of the country of Hen-nu-erh.

"The great country of the Western Ocean" is precisely this country.

In the fifth year of the Yung-lo [period] the court ordered the principal envoy the grand eunuch Cheng Ho and others to deliver an imperial mandate to the king of this country and to bestow on him a patent conferring a title of

honour, and the grant of a silver seal, also to promote all the chiefs and award them hats and girdles of various grades.

So Cheng Ho went there in command of a large fleet of treasure-ships, and he erected a table with a pavilion over it and set up a stone which said "Though the journey from this country to the Central Country is more than a hundred thousand *li*, yet the people are very similar, happy and prosperous, with identical customs. We have here engraved a stone, a perpetual declaration for ten thousand ages."

The king of the country is a Nan-k'un man [Brahman or Kshatriya?]; he is a firm believer in the Buddhist religion [N.B., Ma Huan's mistake; the king was a Hindu]; and he venerates the elephant and the ox.

The population of the country includes five classes, the Muslim people, the Nan-k'un people, the Che-ti people, the Ko-ling people, and the Mu-kua people.

The king of the country and the people of the country all refrain from eating the flesh of the ox. The great chiefs are Muslim people; and they all refrain from eating the flesh of the pig. Formerly there was a king who made a sworn compact with the Muslim people, saying "You do not eat the ox; I do not eat the pig; we will reciprocally respect the taboo"; and this compact has been honoured right down to the present day.

The king has cast an image of a Buddha in brass; it is named Nai-na-erh; he has erected a temple of Buddha and has cast tiles of brass and covered the dais of Buddha with them; and beside the dais a well has been dug. Every day at dawn the king goes to the well, draws water, and washes the image of Buddha; after worshipping, he orders men to collect the pure dung of yellow oxen; this is stirred with water in a brass basin until it is like paste; then it is smeared all over the surface of the ground and walls inside the temple. Moreover, he has given orders that the chiefs and wealthy personages shall also smear and scour themselves with ox-dung every morning.

He also takes ox-dung, burns it till it is reduced to a white ash, and grinds it to a fine powder; using a fair cloth as a small bag, he fills it with the ash, and regularly carried it on his person. Every day at dawn, after he has finished washing his face, he takes the ox-dung ash, stirs it up with water, and smears it on his forehead and between his two thighs—thrice in each place. This denotes his sincerity in venerating Buddha and in venerating the ox.

There is a traditional story that in olden times there was a holy man named Mou-hsieh [Moses], who established a religious cult; the people knew that he was a true man of Heaven, and all men revered and followed him. Later the

holy man went away with others to another place, and ordered his younger brother named Sa-mo-li [the Samaritan] to govern and teach the people.

But his younger brother the holy man returned; he saw that the multitude, misled by his younger brother Sa-mo-li, were corrupting the holy way; thereupon he destroyed the ox and wished to punish his younger brother; and his younger brother mounted a large elephant and vanished.

Afterwards, the people thought of him and hoped anxiously for his return. Moreover, if it was the beginning of the moon, they would say "In the middle of the moon he will certainly come," and when the middle of the moon arrived, they would say once more "At the end of the moon he will certainly come"; right down to the present day they have never ceased to hope for his return.

This is the reason why the Nan-k'un people venerate the elephant and the ox.

The king has two great chiefs who administer the affairs of the country; both are Muslims.

The majority of the people in the country all profess the Muslim religion. There are twenty or thirty temples of worship, and once in seven days they go to worship. When the day arrives, the whole family fast and bathe, and attend to nothing else. In the *ssu* [9 to 11 A.M.] and *wu* [11 A.M. to 1 P.M.] periods, the menfolk, old and young, go to the temple to worship. When the *wei* [1 to 3 P.M.] period arrives, they disperse and return home; thereupon they carry on with their trading, and transact their household affairs.

The people are very honest and trustworthy. Their appearance is smart, fine, and distinguished.

Their two great chiefs received promotion and awards from the court of the Central Country.

If a treasure-ship goes there, it is left entirely to the two men to superintend the buying and selling; the king sends a chief and a Che-ti Wei-no-chi [chetty broker?] to examine the account books in the official bureau; a broker comes and joins them; and a high officer who commands the ships discusses the choice of a certain date for fixing prices. When the day arrives, they first of all take the silk embroideries and the open-work silks, and other such goods which have been brought there, and discuss the price of them one by one; and when the price has been fixed, they write out an agreement stating the amount of the price; this agreement is retained by these persons.

The chief and the Che-ti, with his excellency the eunuch, all join hands together, and the broker then says, "In such and such a moon on such and such

a day, we have all joined hands and sealed our agreement with a hand-clasp; whether the price be dear or cheap, we will never repudiate it or change it."

After that, the Che-ti and the men of wealth then come bringing precious stones, pearls, corals, and other such things, so that they may be examined and the price discussed; this cannot be settled in a day; if done quickly, it takes one moon; if done slowly, it takes two or three moons.

Once the money-price has been fixed after examination and discussion, if a pearl or other such article is purchased, the price which must be paid for it is calculated by the chief and the Wei-no-chi who carried out the original transaction; and as to the quantity of the hemp-silk or other such article which must be given in exchange for it, goods are given in exchange according to the price fixed by the original hand-clasp—there is not the slightest deviation.

In their method of calculation, they do not use a calculating-plate abacus; for calculating, they use only the two hands and two feet and twenty digits on them; and they do not make the slightest mistake; this is very extraordinary.

The king uses gold of sixty per cent purity to cast a coin for current use; it is named a *pa-nan*; the diameter of the face of each coin is three *fen* eight *li* in terms of our official *ts'un*; it has lines characters on the face and on the reverse; and it weighs one *fen* on our official steelyard. He also makes a coin of silver; it is named a *ta-erh*; each coin weighs about three *li*; and this coin is used for petty transactions.

In their system of weights, each one *ch'ien* on their foreign steelyard equals eight *fen* on our official steelyard; and each one *liang* on their foreign steelyard, being calculated at sixteen *ch'ien*, equals one *liang* two *ch'ien* eight *fen* on our official steelyard. On their foreign steelyard twenty *liang* make one *chin*, equal to one *chin* nine *liang* six *ch'ien* on our official steelyard. Their foreign weight is named a *fan-la-shih*.

The fulcrum of their steelyard is fixed at the end of the beam, and the weight is moved along to the middle of the beam; when the beam is raised to the level, that is the zero position; when you weigh a thing, you move the weight forward; and according as the thing is light or heavy, so you move the weight forward or backward. You can weigh only ten *chin*, which is equivalent to sixteen *chin* on our official steelyard.

In weighing such things as aromatic goods, two hundred *chin* on their foreign steelyard make one *po-ho*, which is equivalent to three hundred and twenty *chin* on our official steelyard. If they weigh pepper, two hundred and fifty *chin* make one *po-ho*, which is equivalent to four hundred *chin* on our official steelyard.



Whenever they weigh goods, large and small alike, they mostly use a pair of scales for testing comparative weights. As to their system of measurement: the authorities make a brass casting, which constitutes a *sheng*, for current use; the foreign name for it *tang-chia-li*; and each *sheng* equals one *sheng* six *ko* in terms of our official *sheng*. "Western Ocean" cloth, named *ch'e li* cloth in this country, comes from the neighboring districts of K'an-pa-i and other such places; each roll is four *ch'ih* five *ts'un* broad, and two *chang* five *ch'ih* long; and it is sold for eight or ten of their local gold coins.

The people of the country also take the silk of the silk-worm, soften it by boiling, dye it all colors, and weave it into kerchiefs with decorative stripes at intervals; the breadth is four or five *ch'ih*, and the length one *chang* two or three *ch'ih*; and each length is sold for one hundred gold coins.

As to the pepper: the inhabitants of the mountainous countryside have established gardens, and it is extensively cultivated. When the period of the tenth moon arrives, the pepper ripens; and it is collected, dried in the sun, and sold. Of course, big pepper-collectors come and collect it, and take it up to the official storehouse to be stored; if there is a buyer, an official gives permission for the sale; the duty is calculated according to the amount of the purchase price and is paid in to the authorities. Each one *po-ho* of pepper is sold for two hundred gold coins.

The Che-ti mostly purchase all kinds of precious stones and pearls, and they manufacture coral beads and other such things.

Foreign ships from every place come there; and the king of the country also sends a chief and a writer and others to watch the sales; thereupon they collect the duty and pay it to the authorities.

The wealthy people mostly cultivate coconut trees—sometimes a thousand trees, sometimes two thousand or three thousand—; this constitutes their property.

The coconut has ten different uses. The young tree has a syrup, very sweet, and good to drink; and it can be made into wine by fermentation. The old coconut has flesh, from which they express oil, and make sugar, and make a foodstuff for eating. From the fiber which envelops the outside of the nut they make ropes for ship-building. The shell of the coconut makes bowls and makes cups; it is also good for burning to ash for the delicate operation of inlaying gold or silver. The trees are good for building houses, and the leaves are good for roofing houses.

For vegetables they have mustard plants, green ginger, turnips, caraway seeds, onions, garlic, bottle-gourds, egg-plants, cucumbers, and gourd-melons—

all these they have in all the four seasons of the year. They also have a kind of small gourd which is as large as one's finger, about two *ts'un* long, and tastes like a green cucumber. Their onions have a purple skin; they resemble garlic; they have a large head and small leaves; and they are sold by the *chin* weight.

The *mu-pieh-tzu* tree is more than ten *chang* high; it forms a fruit which resembles a green persimmon and contains thirty or forty seeds; it falls of its own accord when ripe; and the bats, as large as hawks, all hang upside down and rest on this tree.

They have both red and white rice, but barley and wheat are both absent; and their wheat-flour all comes from other places as merchandise for sale here.

Fowls and ducks exist in profusion, but there are no geese. Their goats have tall legs and an ashen hue; they resemble donkey-foals. The water-buffaloes are not very large. Some of the yellow oxen weigh three or four hundred *chin*; the people do not eat their flesh; but consume only the milk and cream. The people never eat rice without butter. Their oxen are cared for until they are old; and when they die, they are buried. The price of all kinds of sea-fish is very cheap. Deer and hares from up in the mountains are also for sale.

Many of the people rear peafowl. As to their other birds: they have crows, green hawks, egrets, and swallows; but of other kinds of birds besides these they have not a single one, great or small. The people of the country can also play and sing; they use the shell of a calabash to make a musical instrument, and copper wires to make the strings; and they play this instrument to accompany the singing of their foreign songs; the melodies are worth hearing.

As to the popular customs and marriage- and funeral-rites, the So-li people and the Muslim people each follow the ritual forms of their own class, and these are different.

The king's throne does not descend to his son, but descends to his sister's son; descent is to the sister's son because they consider that the offspring of the woman's body alone constitutes the legal family. If the king has no elder or younger sister, the throne is yielded up to some man of merit. Such is the succession from one generation to another.

The king's laws do not include the punishment of flogging with the bamboo. If the offence is slight, they cut off a hand or sever a foot; if it is serious, they impose a money-fine or put the offender to death; and if it is very heinous, they confiscate his property and exterminate his family. A person who offends against the law is taken under arrest to an official, whereupon he accepts his punishment.

If there is perhaps something unjust about the circumstances and he does not admit the sentence, then he is taken before the king or before a great chief; there they set up an iron cooking-pot, fill it with four or five *chin* of oil and cook it to the boil; first they throw in some tree-leaves to test whether they make a crackling noise; then they make the man take two fingers of his right hand and scald them in the oil for a short time; he waits till they are burnt and then takes them out; they are wrapped in a cloth on which a seal is affixed; and he is kept in prison at the office.

Two or three days later, before the assembled crowd, they break open the seal and examine him; if the hand has a burst abscess, then there is nothing unjust about the matter and a punishment is imposed; but if the hand is undamaged, just as it had been before, then he is released.

The chief and other men, with drums and music, ceremonially escort this man back to his family; all his relations, neighbors, and friends give him presents and there are mutual congratulations; and they drink wine and play music by way of mutual felicitation. This is a very extraordinary matter.

On the day when the envoy returned, the king of the country wished to send tribute; so he took fifty *liang* of fine red gold and ordered the foreign craftsmen to draw it out into gold threads as fine as hair; these were strung together to form a ribbon, which was made into a jeweled girdle with incrustations of all kinds of precious stones and large pearls; and the king sent a chief, Nai-peng, to present it as tribute to the Central Country.

### The Country of the Heavenly Square [Mecca]

<sup>Mose</sup>  
This country is the country of Mo-ch'ieh. Setting sail from the country of Ku-li [Calicut], you proceed towards the south-west—the point *shen* on the compass; the ship travels for three moons, and then reaches the jetty of this country. The foreign name for it is Chih-ta [Jidda]; and there is a great chief who controls it. From Chih-ta you go west, and after traveling for one day you reach the city where the king resides; it is named the capital city of Mo-ch'ieh.

They profess the Muslim religion. A holy man first expounded and spread the doctrine of his teaching in this country, and right down to the present day the people of the country all observe the regulations of the doctrine in their actions, not daring to commit the slightest transgression.

The people of this country are stalwart and fine-looking, and their limbs and faces are of a very dark purple color.

The menfolk bind up their heads; they wear long garments; on their feet

they put leather shoes. The women all wear a covering over their heads, and you cannot see their faces.

They speak the A-la-pi [Arabic] language. The law of the country prohibits wine-drinking. The customs of the people are pacific and admirable. There are no poverty-stricken families. They all observe the precepts of their religion, and law-breakers are few. It is in truth a most happy country.

As to the marriage- and funeral-rites: they all conduct themselves in accordance with the regulations of their religions.

If you travel on from here for a journey of more than half a day, you reach the Heavenly Hall mosque; the foreign name for this Hall is K'ai-a-pai.

All round it on the outside is a wall; this wall has four hundred and sixty-six openings; on both sides of the openings are pillars all made of white jade-stone; of these pillars there are altogether four hundred and sixty-seven—along the front ninety-nine, along the back one hundred and one, along the left-hand side one hundred and thirty-two, and along the right-hand side one hundred and thirty-five.

This Hall is built with layers of five colored stones; in shape it is square and flat-topped. Inside, there are pillars formed of five great beams of sinking incense wood, and a shelf made of yellow gold. Throughout the interior of the Hall, the walls are all formed of clay mixed with rosewater and ambergris, exhaling a perpetual fragrance. Over the Hall is a covering of black hemp-silk. They keep two black lions to guard the door.

Every year on the tenth day of the twelfth moon all the foreign Muslims—in extreme cases making a long journey of one or two years—come to worship inside the Hall. Everyone cuts off a piece of the hemp-silk covering as a memento before he goes away. When it has been completely cut away, the king covers over the Hall again with another covering woven in advance; this happens again and again, year after year, without intermission.

On the left of the Hall is the burial-place of Ssu-ma-i, a holy man; his tomb is all made with green *sa-pu-ni* gem-stones; the length is one *chang* or two *ch'ih*, the height three *ch'ih*, and the breadth five *ch'ih*; the wall which surrounds the tomb is built with layers of purple topaz, and is more than five *ch'ih* high.

Inside the wall of the mosque, at the four corners, are built four towers; at every service of worship they ascend these towers, to call the company, and chant the ceremonial. On both sides, left and right, are the halls where all the patriarchs have preached the doctrine; these, too, are built with layers of stone, and are decorated most beautifully.



As to the climate of this place: during all the four seasons it is always hot, like summer, and there is no rain, lightning, frost, or snow. At night the dew is very heavy; plants and trees all depend on the dew-water for nourishment; and if at night you put out an empty bowl to receive it until day-break, the dew-water will be three *fen* [0.3 inches deep] in the bowl.

As to the products of the land: rice and grain are scarce; [and] they all cultivate such things as unhusked rice, wheat, black millet, gourds, and vegetables. They also have water-melons and sweet melons; and in some cases it takes two men to carry each single fruit. Then again they have a kind of tree with twisted flowers, like the large mulberry-tree of the Central Country; it is one or two *chang* approximately ten to twenty feet in height; the flowers blossom twice a year; and it lives to a great age without withering. For fruits, they have turnips, Persian dates, pomegranates, apples, large pears, and peaches, some of which weigh four or five *chin* [approximately five to six pounds].

Their camels, horses, donkeys, mules, oxen, goats, cats, dogs, fowls, geese, ducks, and pigeons are also abundant. Some of the fowls and duck weigh over ten *chin* [approximately 13 pounds].

The land produces rose-water, *an-pa-erh* [ambergris] incense, *ch'i-lin* [giraffe], lions, the "camel-fowl" [ostrich], the antelope, the "fly-o'er-the-grass" [lynx], all kinds of precious stones, pearls, corals, amber, and other such things.

The king uses gold to cast a coin named a *t'ang-chia*, which is in current use; each has a diameter of seven *fen* [approximately .8 inches], and weighs one *ch'ien* [approximately 3.73 grams] on our official steelyard; compared with the gold of the Central Country it is twenty per cent purer.

If you go west again and travel for one day, you reach a city named Mo-tina [Medina]; the tomb of their holy man Ma-ha-ma [Muhammad] is situated exactly in the city; and right down to the present day a bright light rises day and night from the top of the grave and penetrates into the clouds. Behind the grave is a well, a spring of pure and sweet water, named A-pi San-san; men who go to foreign parts take this water and store it at the sides of their ships; if they meet with a typhoon at sea, they take this water and scatter it; and the wind and waves are lulled.

In the fifth year of the Hsüan-te [period: 1430] an order was respectfully received from our imperial court that the principal envoy the grand eunuch Cheng Ho and others should go to all the foreign countries to read out the imperial commands and to bestow rewards.

When a division of the fleet reached the country of Ku-li, the grand eu-

nuch Hung [probably Hung Pao] saw that this country was sending men to travel there; whereupon he selected an interpreter and others, seven men in all, and sent them with a load of musk, porcelain articles, and other such things; and they joined a ship of this country and went there. It took them one year to go and return.

They bought all kinds of unusual commodities, and rare valuables, *ch'i-lin*, lions, "lion-fowls," and other such things; in addition they painted an accurate representation of the "Heavenly Hall" and they returned to the capital [Beijing].

The king of the country of Mo-ch'ieh also sent envoys who brought some local articles, accompanied the seven men—the interpreter and others—who had originally gone there, and presented the articles to the court.

#### Document 8

##### Narrative of a Journey to Hindustan (1442–1444)

By 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Samarqandī, "Narrative of a Journey to Hindustan," in *India in the Fifteenth Century*, trans. R. H. Major (London: Hakluyt Society, 1857)

*In June 1442, the Timurid leader Shahrukh sent 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Samarqandī to be an ambassador to Vijayanagara. Born in Herat in 1413, he left a detailed record of his journey to the Asian subcontinent and his return to Herat in 1445. His account shared similarities with European accounts of India. As the historian Joan-Pau Rubiés has noted, "While the Europeans established comparisons with Paris or Milan, 'Abd al-Razzāq referred to Herat, the Khorasani capital." Like European observers, Abdul-Razzaq took careful note of the structure of politics, the local economy, and the army's use of elephants. Much of the narrative focuses on the politics of the court at Vijayanagara, a reflection of the ambassador's interests in affairs at home.*<sup>2</sup>

*In 1462, 'Abd al-Razzāq was elected sheikh of the monastery of Mirza Shahrukh. He died there two decades later, having left behind a travel account that included details of his journey from Herat to Calicut, Magalore, Beloor, and Vijayanagara, and back home again. That return journey did not go*

2. Joan-Pau Rubiés, *Travel and Ethnology in the Renaissance: South India through European Eyes, 1250–1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 23–25.