

# Two Arabic Travel Books

## Accounts of China and India

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Edited and translated by  
TIM MACKINTOSH-SMITH

and

## Mission to the Volga

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## الكتاب الثاني من أخبار الصين والهند

قال أبو زيد الحسن السيرافي: إني نظرتُ في هذا الكتاب يعني الكتاب الأول الذي ١،١،٢  
أُمرتُ بتأمله وإثبات ما وقفت عليه من أمر البحر وملوكه وأحوالهم وما عرفته من  
أحاديثهم مما لم يَدْخُل فيه فوجدت تاريخ الكتاب في سنة سبع وثلاثين ومائتين  
وأُمور البحر في ذلك الوقت مستقيمة لكثرة اختلاف التجار إليها من العراق.  
ووجدتُ جميع ما حُكي في الكتاب على سبيل حقٍّ وصدقٍ إلا ما ذُكر فيه من  
الطعام الذي يقدّمه أهل الصين إلى الموتى منهم وأنه إذا وُضِعَ بالليل عند الميت  
أصبحوا فلم يوجدوا دعوا أنه يأكله فقد كان بلغنا هذا حتى ورد علينا من ناحيتهم  
من وثقنا بخبره فسألناه عن ذلك فأكرهه وقال: هي دعوى لا أصل لها كدعوى أهل  
الأوثان أنها تكلمهم.

وقد تغيّر بعد هذا التاريخ أمر الصين خاصّةً وحدثت فيه ٢ حوادث انقطع لها الجهاز ١،٢،٢  
إليهم وخرب البلد وزالت رسومه وتفرّق أمره وأنا أشرح ما وقفتُ عليه من السبب  
في ذلك إن شاء الله.

السبب في تغيّر أمر الصين عما كان عليه من الأحكام والعدل وانقطاع الجهاز  
إليه من سيراف أن نابغاً نبغ فيهم من غير بيت الملك يُعرَف بانشوا ٣ وكان مبتدأ  
أمره الشطارة والفتوة وحمل السلاح والعيث واجتماع السفهاء إليه حتى اشتدت

١ إليها: كذا في ب. ٢ خ: فيها. ٣ ح و ر: يابشو.

## Accounts of China and India: The Second Book

Abū Zayd al-Ḥasan al-Sīrāfī said: I have examined this foregoing book (meaning the First Book), having been commanded to look carefully through it, and to verify the information I find in it about the affairs of the sea and about its kings and their various circumstances,<sup>83</sup> and to compare this information with other reports passed down about these kings, known to myself but not appearing in the book. I found the date of the book to be the year two hundred and thirty-seven [851–52]—a time when maritime business still ran on an even keel, on account of all the toing and froing overseas by merchants from Iraq. I also found that everything recounted in the First Book follows a truthful and veracious line. The only exception is the report about the food the Chinese offer to their dead and which, when they leave it by the corpse at night then find it gone in the morning, they allege the dead person has eaten. This tale had already reached our ears, but we did not know if it was true until someone we trusted as an informant arrived from those parts. When we asked him about the story, he dismissed it as untrue and added, “The allegation is just as baseless as that of the idolators who claim that their idols speak to them.”

2.1.1

*Abū Zayd al-Sīrāfī's  
evaluation of the  
First Book*

### The Changed Situation in China, and the Cause of It

Since that above-mentioned date, however, the situation has changed, in China in particular. Because of events that occurred there, the trading voyages to China were abandoned and the country itself was ruined, leaving all traces of its greatness gone and everything in utter disarray. I shall now explain what I have learned concerning the cause of this, God willing.

2.2.1

*The revolution of  
Huang Chao, and the  
Khānfū massacre*

The reason for the deterioration of law and order in China, and for the end of the China trading voyages from Sīrāf, was an uprising led by a rebel from outside the ruling dynasty known as Huang Chao. At the outset of his career he had been involved in armed banditry and hooliganism, causing general mayhem and attracting a rabble of witless followers. In time, when his fighting capacity, the size of his forces, and his lust for power had grown strong enough, he marched on the great cities of China, among them Khānfū: this

شوكته وكثر عدده واستحكم طمعه فقصده خانفو من بين مدن الصين وهي المدينة التي يقصدها تجار العرب وبينها وبين البحر مسيرة أيام يسيرة وهي على وادٍ عظيم وماء عذب فامتنع أهلها عليه فحاصروهم مدة طويلة وذلك في سنة أربع وستين ومايتين إلى أن ظفر بها فوضع السيف في أهلها. فذكر أهل الخبرة بأمورهم أنه قتل من المسلمين واليهود والنصارى والمجوس سوى من قُتل من أهل الصين مائة وعشرون ألف رجل كانوا تبوءوا بهذه المدينة فصاروا بها تجاراً وإنما عُرِفَ مقدار عدد هذه الملل الأربع لتحصيل أهل الصين بعددهم. وقطع ما كان فيه<sup>٢</sup> من شجر التوت وسائر الأشجار وذكرنا شجر التوت خصوصاً لإعداد أهل الصين ورقة لدود القز حتى تَلَفَ<sup>٣</sup> الدود فصار سبباً لانتقطاع الحرير خاصة عن بلاد العرب.

ثم قصد بعد تخریب خانفو إلى بلدٍ بلد فأخبره وعجز ملك الصين عنه إلى أن<sup>٢٠٢٢</sup> قارب مدينة الملك وتعرّف بجحّان فهرب الملك منه إلى مدينة بمذو متاخمة لبلاد التبت فأقام بها. ودامت أيام هذا النابغ وعظم شأنه وكان قصده ووكده خراب المدن وقتل أهلها إذ لم يكن من بيت ملك ومن يطمع في اتساق الأمر له فبلغ من ذلك مبلغاً فسَدَ به أمر الصين إلى وقتنا هذا.

ولم تزل تلك حال هذا النابغ إلى أن كتب ملك الصين إلى ملك التفرغز من بلاد الترك وبينهم مجاورة ومصاهرة ووجه إليه رسلاً يسأله كشف هذا الرجل عنه. فأنفذ ملك التفرغز ابناً له إلى هذا النابغ في عدد كثير وجموع وافرة فأزاله بعد حروب متصلة ووقائع عظيمة فرغم قوم أنه قُتل وزعم آخرون أنه مات.

وعاد ملك الصين إلى بلده المعروف بجحّان وقد أخبره عليه وعلى سبيل ضعف<sup>٢٠٢٢</sup> في نفسه ونقص في أمواله وهلاك قواده وصناديده رجاله وكهّاته. وغلب مع ذلك على كل ناحية متغلب منع من أموالها وتمسك بما<sup>٦</sup> في يده منها. فدعت ملك الصين الضرورة لقصور يده إلى قبول العفو منهم بإظهار الطاعة والدعاء له دون

١ خ: عشرين. ٢ فيه: كذا في ب. ٣ ح وخ ور: يلف. ٤ خ: المتاخمة. ٥ ب: صناديد. ٦ خ: بها.

city is the destination of Arab merchants and lies a few days' journey from the sea on a great river where the water flows fresh. At first the citizens of Khānfū held out against him, but he subjected them to a long siege—this was in the year 264 [877–78]—until, at last, he took the city and put its people to the sword. Experts on Chinese affairs reported that the number of Muslims, Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians massacred by him, quite apart from the native Chinese, was 120,000;<sup>84</sup> all of them had gone to settle in this city and become merchants there. The only reason the number of victims from these four communities happens to be known is that the Chinese had kept records of their numbers. Huang Chao also cut down all the trees in Khānfū, including all the mulberry trees; we single out mulberry trees for mention because the Chinese use their leaves as fodder for silkworms: owing to the destruction of the trees, the silkworms perished, and this, in turn, caused silk, in particular, to disappear from Arab lands.

After destroying Khānfū, Huang Chao marched on one city after another, laying waste to each. So powerless was the king of China to withstand him that the rebel eventually closed in on the royal capital, known as Khamdān;<sup>85</sup> the king fled it for the city of Bamdhū on the border of Tibetan territory, and set up his court there. The rebel's power, meanwhile, kept on growing from day to day. His whole aim and purpose was the destruction of cities and the slaughter of their inhabitants, for he did not belong to any royal lineage and therefore could not aspire to gain the throne itself.<sup>86</sup> Moreover, he took his destruction to such extremes that China has remained in chaos down to our own times.

## 2.2.2

*The progress and eventual defeat of the revolution*

For a time, the rebel's campaign went on unchecked. And then the king of China wrote to the king of the Taghazghuz—a people from the land of the Turks, to whom they are neighbors and kinsmen by marriage<sup>87</sup>—and sent envoys to him, asking him to free him from the curse of Huang Chao. In response, the king of the Taghazghuz dispatched one of his sons against the rebel at the head of a vast number of troops, and, after ceaseless fighting and many great battles, Huang Chao was eliminated. Some people claimed that he was killed, others that he died a natural death.<sup>88</sup>

The king of China then returned to his city known as Khamdān, only to find it left in ruins by Huang Chao and to find himself debilitated, his treasury depleted, and his captains, commanders, and capable officers all dead. As a consequence, all the provinces were taken over by warlords: they prevented the central government from gaining access to revenues and kept

## 2.2.3

*The breakup of China and the decline of its foreign trade*



السمع والطاعة في الأموال وما كان من الملوك ينفذ فيه. فصارت بلاد الصين على سبيل ما جرت عليه أحوال الأكاسرة عند قتل الإسكندر لدارا الكبير وقسمته أرض فارس على ملوك الطوايف. وصار بعضهم يعضد بعضاً للمغالبة بغير إذن الملك ولا أمره فإذا أناخ القوي منهم على الضعيف تغلب على بلاده واجتاح ما فيه<sup>١</sup> وأكل ناسه كلهم وذلك مباح لهم في شريعتهم لأنهم يتبايعون لحوم الناس في أسواقهم.

وامتدت أيديهم مع ذلك إلى ظلم من قصدهم من التجار. ولما حدث هذا فيهم التأم إليه ظهور الظلم والتعدي في نواخدة العرب وأرباب المراكب فالزموا التجار ما لا يجب عليهم وغلبهم على أموالهم واستجازوا ما لم يجز الرسم به قديماً في شيء من أفعالهم. فنزع الله جل ذكره البركات منهم جميعاً ومنع البحر جانبه ووقع الفناء بالمقدار الجاري من المدبر تبارك اسمه في الربانة والأدلاء بسيراف وعمان.

وذكر في الكتاب طرف<sup>٢</sup> من سنن أهل الصين ولم يذكر غيره وهو سبيل المحصن<sup>١٠٣٢</sup> والمحصنة عندهم إذا زنيا القتل وكذلك اللص والقاتل. وسبيلهم في القتل أن تشد يدا من يريدون قتله شداً وثيقاً ثم تطرح يداه في رأسه حتى تصيرا<sup>٣</sup> على عنقه ثم تدخل رجله اليمنى فيما ينفذ من يده اليمنى ورجله اليسرى فيما ينفذ من يده اليسرى فتصير قدماه جميعاً من ورايه ويتقبض ويبقى كالكرة لا حيلة له في نفسه ويستغني

١ فيه: كذا في ب. ٢ خ: وذكر... طرفاً. ٣ ح وخ: يصيرا.

hold of all the wealth that was in their hands. Because of the weakness of his own hand, necessity compelled the king of China to accept their excuses; for their part, the warlords feigned obedience to the king and pronounced the customary formulae of allegiance<sup>89</sup> but without actually obeying him in the matter of revenues or in other areas in which provincial rulers had formerly carried out the royal will. Thus China went the way of the Persian emperors when Alexander killed Darius the Great and divided Persia up among factional rulers.<sup>90</sup> Moreover the warlords, acting neither with the king's blessing nor at his bidding, supported each other in their quest for further power: when a stronger one besieged a weaker, he would conquer his territory, annihilate everything in it, and eat all the defeated warlord's people, cannibalism being permissible for them according to their legal code, for they trade in human flesh in their markets.<sup>91</sup>

On top of all this, they extended the hand of injustice against merchants coming to their land. And, in addition to the harm done to the merchants, Arab captains and shipowners began to be subjected to injustices and transgressions. The Chinese placed undue impositions on merchants, seized their property by force, and sanctioned practices in which the custom of former times would in no way have allowed them to engage. Because of this, God—exalted be His name—withdrawed His blessings altogether from the Chinese, the sea itself became uncooperative,<sup>92</sup> and ruin befell the ships' masters and pilots of Sīrāf and Oman, as ordained, in the course of events, by God the Ruler, may His name be blessed.

#### Various Practices and Manufactures of the Chinese

One aspect of judicial practice among the Chinese was mentioned in the First Book, but only that one, namely, that married men and women who commit adultery are put to death, as are thieves and murderers. The actual manner of execution is as follows. First, the hands of the man to be executed are firmly bound and pushed over his head, on to the back of his neck; then his right leg is forced through the space formed by his right arm, and his left leg through that formed by his left arm. This means that both his feet are now at his back, and his whole body is compressed and remains like a ball; there is no way he can free himself, and no need of anything to hold him in this position. When he is in this state, his neck becomes dislocated, the vertebrae of his spine are displaced from their supporting tissue, the joints of

2.3.1

*How criminals  
are put to death*

عن ممسك يمسكه. وعند ذلك تزول عنقه عن مركبها وتترايل خرزات ظهره عن بطنها وتختلف وركاه ويتداخل بعضه في بعض وتضيق<sup>١</sup> نفسه ويصير في حال لو ترك على ما هو به بعض ساعة لتلف. فإذا بلغ منه ضرب بخشبة لهم معروفة على مقاتله ضربات معروفة لا تتجاوز فليس دون نفسه شي<sup>٢</sup> ثم يدفع إلى من يأكله.

وفيه نساء لا يردن الإحصان ويرغبن في الزنا وسبيل هذه<sup>٣</sup> أن تحضر مجلس<sup>٢٠٣٠٢</sup> صاحب الشرط فتذكر زهداها في الإحصان ورغبتها في الدخول في جملة الزواني وتسأل حملها على الرسم في مثلها ومن رسمهم فيمن أراد ذلك من النساء أن تكتب نسبها وحليتها وموضع منزلها وتثبت في ديوان الزواني ويجعل<sup>٤</sup> في عنقها خيط فيه خاتم من نحاس مطبوع بخاتم الملك ويدفع إليها منشور يذكر فيه دخولها في جملة الزواني وأن عليها لبيت المال في كل سنة كذا وكذا فلسا وأن من تزوجها فعليه القتل فتودي في كل سنة ما عليها ويزول الإنكار عنها. فهذه الطبقة من النساء يرحن بالعشيات عليهن ألوان الثياب من غير استتار فيصرن إلى من طري<sup>٥</sup> إلى تلك البلاد من الغرباء من أهل الفسق والفساد وأهل الصين فيقمن عندهم وينصرفن بالغدوات. ونحن نحمد الله على ما طهرنا به من هذه الفتن.

وأما تعاملهم بالفلوس فالسبب فيه إنكارهم على المتعاملين بالدنانير والدرهم<sup>٢٠٣٠٢</sup> وقولهم<sup>٦</sup> إن لصا لودخل منزل رجل من العرب المتعاملين بالدنانير والدرهم لتهيا له حمل عشرة آلاف دينار ومثلها من الورق على عنقه فيكون فيها عطب صاحب المال وإن لصا لودخل إلى رجل منهم لم يحمل أكثر من عشرة آلاف فلس وإنما ذلك عشرة مثاقيل ذهب. وهذه الفلوس معمولة من النحاس وأخلاط من غيره معجونة به والفلس منها في قدر الدرهم البغلي وفي وسطه ثقب واسع ليفرد<sup>٧</sup> الخيط فيه.

١ ح: يضيق. ٢ شي: ساقطة في خ. ٣ خ: هذا. ٤ وحليتها: كذا في ب ولعل المقصود: وحليتها.

٥ ح و ر: تجعل. ٦ ب: كذى وكذى. ٧ ح: طرا؛ خ: طرا. ٨ وقولهم: ساقطة في ح وخ.

٩ ليفرد: قد يكون الصواب حسب ر ليفرز.

his hips are twisted the wrong way around, and all the parts of his frame are compressed into each other: thus his spirit becomes constricted, and if he is left in such a position for even a part of an hour, he will perish. If however he remains alive too long, he is then beaten with a particular wooden stave of theirs, a particular number of times, on the parts of his body where the blows will be fatal; the number of blows is never exceeded, but it is never less than enough to kill him. Then he is given over to those who will eat him.

Among the Chinese are certain women who do not wish to be virtuously married but prefer a life of sexual promiscuity. The practice is for such a woman to go to the office of the chief of police and declare her renunciation of the married life<sup>93</sup> and that she wishes to be entered into the list of harlots and to request that she be subject to the conventions customary for those of her kind. They have a number of conventions with regard to women wishing to lead a promiscuous life. For example, she must record in writing her ancestral descent, her physical appearance,<sup>94</sup> and her place of residence. She is then entered officially in the Register of Harlots, and a cord is placed around her neck from which is suspended a copper tag impressed with the ruler's seal. She is also presented with a written authorization that attests her entry into the list of harlots and states that she must pay such-and-such an amount of copper cash each year to the public treasury;<sup>95</sup> it also states that anyone marrying her is to be put to death. Thereafter, she pays her dues annually, and no opprobrium attaches to her. The women of this class go out in the evenings, dressed in all manner of attire, and unveiled.<sup>96</sup> They go to wanton and licentious foreigners who have arrived in the land, and also to the Chinese themselves, spending the night with them and leaving the following morning. We praise God for the guidance by which He has purified us from such temptations!

2.3.2

*The Register of Harlots*

Regarding their use of copper coins to transact business, the reason for it is that they look on people who use gold dinars and silver dirhams as mistaken. For they argue that, if a thief enters the house of one of the Arabs who use dinars and dirhams, it is quite possible for him to carry off on his back ten thousand dinars and the same quantity of silver, which would spell ruin for the owner of the money. If a thief enters the house of one of their people, however, he can carry off no more than ten thousand of the copper coins, which are worth only ten *mithqāls* of gold.<sup>97</sup> These coins are made of copper alloyed with a mixture of other metals. Each of them is the size of a *baghli*

2.3.3

*Chinese copper coinage*

وقيمة كل ألف فلس منها مثقال من ذهب وينظم الخيط منها ألف فلس على رأس كل مائة عقدة. فإذا ابتاع المبتاع ضياعاً أو متاعاً أو بقللاً فما فوقه دفع من هذه الفلوس على قدر الثمن وهي موجودة بسيراف وعليها نقش بكتبتهم.

وأما الحريق ببلاد الصين والبناء وما ذكر فيه فالبلد مبني على ما قيل من خشب ٤٣٢  
ومن قنا مشبك على مثال الشقاق القصب عندنا ويليط بالطين وبالعلاج لهم يتخذونه من حب الشهدانج فيصير في بياض اللبن تدهن به الجدر فيشرق إشراقاً عجيباً. وليس لبيوتهم عتب لأن أملاكهم وذخايرهم وما تحويه أيديهم في صناديق مركبة على عجل تدور بها فإذا وقع الحريق دفعت تلك الصناديق بما فيها فلم يمنعها العتب من سرعة النفوذ.

وأما أمر الخدم فذكر مجلاً وإتمامهم ولاية الخراج وأبواب المال. فمنهم من قد سبي ٥٣٢  
من الأطراف فخصي ومنهم من يخصيه والدّه من أهل الصين ويهديه إلى الملك تقرباً به إليه فأمر الملك في خاصته وخزائنه ومن يتوجه إلى مدينة خانقو التي يقصد إليها تجار العرب هم الخدم.

ومن سننهم في ركوب هؤلاء الخدم وملوك ساير المدن إذا ركبوا أن يتقدمهم رجال بنحش تشبه النواقيس يضربون بها فيسمع من بعد فلا يقف أحد من الرعية في شيء من ذلك الطريق الذي يريد الخادم أو الملك أن يمر فيه ومن كان على باب دار دخلها وأغلق الباب دونه حتى يكون اجتياز الخادم أو الملك المملك على تلك المدينة وليس في طريقه أحد من العامة ترهيباً وتجبراً وليلاً يكثر نظر العامة إليهم ولا يمتد لسان أحد إلى الكلام معهم.

dirham and has a hole at its center large enough to take the cord on which the coins are strung. The value of each thousand of these coins is a *mithqāl* of gold: a thousand are strung on the cord, with a knot tied after every hundredth coin. When anyone buys land or any sort of goods or even something as cheap as vegetables, he pays with these copper coins, according to the price of his purchase. They are to be found at Sirāf and bear a legend in Chinese characters.<sup>98</sup>

Turning to outbreaks of fire in China and the information reported in the First Book about buildings, the cities there are constructed, as stated, of wood and panels of woven bamboo, rather like the reed panels of our lands.<sup>99</sup> The structures are plastered with clay and with a substance peculiar to the Chinese, which they produce from hemp seeds and which turns milk-white: when walls are painted with this, it gleams with extraordinary brightness. The doorways of their houses have no thresholds, because their goods and treasures and all their possessions are kept in chests mounted on wheels, so they can be moved about. If fire breaks out, these chests and their contents can be pushed to safety, with no threshold to impede their swift exit.

2.3.4

*Their manner of saving their possessions in event of fire*

On the subject of eunuch slaves, which was mentioned summarily in the First Book, they function as overseers of taxes and as doorkeepers of the treasury. Some of them are of non-Chinese origin, captured in the borderlands, then castrated; others come from the native Chinese population and are castrated by their fathers, then presented by them to the ruler as a means of gaining favor. All matters to do with the ruler's own household and his treasuries, as well as with foreigners arriving in the city of Khānfū (to which the Arab merchants go), all this is the concern of these slaves.

2.3.5

*Eunuch slaves, provincial rulers, and their manner of riding in public*

It is a custom of theirs that when these slave officials and the rulers of all the various cities ride out in public, they are preceded by men with wooden instruments like clappers:<sup>100</sup> when they beat them, the sound can be heard from far away, and none of the populace remains on any part of the road along which the slave or the ruler intends to pass. Moreover, anyone who happens to be at the door of his house goes inside and shuts the door behind him until the slave, or the ruler in charge of the city, has passed by. Thus, not a single one of the common people is to be found along their route. The intention is both to impart a sense of fear and awe and to give the commoners no opportunity of gawping at their masters or daring to address them.

ولباس خدمهم ووجوه قوادهم فاخر الحرير الذي لا يُحْمَل مثله إلى بلاد ٦.٣.٢ العرب عندهم ومبالغتهم<sup>١</sup> في أثمائه. وذكر رجل من وجوه التجار ومن لا يُشْكُ في خبره أنه صار إلى خصي كان الملك أنفذه إلى مدينة خانقو لتخير ما يحتاج إليه من الأمتعة الواردة من بلاد العرب فرأى على صدره خالاً يشف من تحت ثياب حرير كانت عليه فقدر أنه قد ضاعف بين ثوبين منها فلما ألح في النظر قال له الخصي: أراك تديم النظر إلى صدري فلم ذلك فقال له الرجل: عجبت من خال يشف من تحت هذه الثياب فضحك الخصي ثم طرح كم قميصه إلى الرجل وقال له: اعد ما علي منها فوجدها خمسة أقيّة بعضها فوق بعض والخال يشف من تحتها. والذي هذه صفته من الحرير خام غير مقصور والذي يلبسه ملوكهم أرفع من هذا وأعجب.

وأهل الصين من أحذق خلق الله كفاً بنقش وصناعة وكل عمل لا يتقدمهم<sup>٢</sup> فيه ٧.٣.٢ أحد من ساير الأمم. والرجل منهم يصنع بيده ما<sup>٣</sup> يقدر أن غيره يعجز عنه فيقصد به باب الملك يلتمس الجزاء على لطيف ما ابتدع فيأمر الملك بنصبه على بابه من وقته ذلك إلى سنة فإن لم يُخْرِج أحد فيه عيباً جازاه وأدخله في جملة صنّاعه وإن أُخْرِج فيه عيب أطره ولم يجازه.

وإن رجلاً منهم صور سنبله عليها عصفور في ثوب حرير لا يشك الناظر إليها أنها سنبله وأن عصفوراً عليها فقيت مدّة وإنه اجتاز بها رجل أحدب فعابها فأدخل إلى ملك ذلك البلد وحضر صانعها فسئل الأحدب عن العيب فقال: المتعارف عند الناس جميعاً أنه لا يقع عصفور على سنبله إلا أمالها وإن هذا المصور صور السنبله قائمة لا ميل لها وأثبت العصفور فوقها منتصباً فأخطأ. فصُدّق ولم يثبت الملك صانعها بشيء. وقصدهم في هذا وشبهه رياضة من

١ عندهم ومبالغتهم: كذا في ب؛ وقد يكون تقويم خ على الصواب: من عندهم لمبالغتهم. ٢ ح وخ و ر: يقدمهم.

٣ ما: ساقطة في ب. ٤ ح: فسأل. ٥ ح: وأن.



These slave officials of theirs, and their prominent military commanders, dress in silk of exquisite quality, the like of which is never exported to Arab lands because the Chinese themselves pay such inflated prices for it.<sup>101</sup>

2.3.6

*The diaphanous silks of China*

One of the prominent foreign merchants, a man whose reports are beyond doubt, related that he went to meet a eunuch official whom the Great King had sent to the city of Khānfū to take the pick of certain goods of Arab provenance that he needed. The merchant noticed that on the eunuch's chest was a mole, clearly visible through the silk garments he was wearing, and guessed that the eunuch was wearing a double layer of silk. When he realized that the merchant had been gazing so intently, the eunuch said to him, "I see that you cannot take your eyes off my chest. What is the reason?" The merchant replied, "Because I am amazed at how a mole can be visible through these garments of yours." At this, the eunuch laughed and held out the sleeve of his robe to the merchant: "Count how many I am wearing!" he said. The merchant did so, and found that he was wearing five tunics, one on top of the other; the mole could be seen through them all. Furthermore, the silk described here was of the raw, unbleached sort; the kind worn by their rulers is even more extraordinarily fine.

Of all God's creation, the Chinese are among the most dexterous at engraving and manufacturing and at every kind of craft. Indeed, no one from any other nation has the edge on them in this respect. If a Chinese craftsman makes something with his own hands that he thinks no one else would be able to produce, he takes it to the gate of the ruler's palace, hoping that the excellence of his creation will gain him a reward. The ruler then issues instructions for the artefact to be displayed at the gate for a period of a year from the time of its receipt. If during this time no one finds fault with the piece, the ruler will reward its maker and enlist him as one of his recognized artisans; if however a fault is detected, the piece is discarded and the maker receives no reward.

2.3.7

*The precise work of Chinese craftsmen*

It is said that a certain Chinese craftsman depicted, on a silk robe, an ear of corn with a bird perched on it, in so realistic a way that no one viewing it would have any doubt that it showed an ear of corn with a bird on it.<sup>102</sup> When the piece had been on display for some time, a hunchback passed by and found fault with it. He was admitted into the presence of the ruler of the city; the craftsman was present too. When asked what was wrong with the piece, the hunchback said, "Everyone knows that a bird cannot perch on an ear of corn without making it bend; but the depicter of this scene has shown



يعمل هذه الأشياء ليضطرهم ذلك إلى شدة الاحتراز وإعمال الفكر فيما يصنع كل منهم بيده.

وقد كان بالبصرة رجلٌ من قريش يُعرف بابن وهبٍ من ولد هبار بن الأسود ١،٤،٢ خرج منها عند خرابها فوقع إلى سيراف وكان فيها مركبٌ يريد بلاد الصين. فنزعت به همتُهُ بالمقدار الجاري على أن ركب في ذلك المركب إلى بلاد الصين ثم نزلت به همتُهُ إلى قصد ملكها الكبير فسار إلى خمدان في مقدار شهرين من المدينة المعروفة بخانقو. وأقام بباب الملك مدةً طويلة يرفع الرقاع ويذكر أنه من أهل بيت نبوة العرب فأمر الملك بعد هذه المدة بإنزاله في بعض المساكن وإراحة عنته فيما يحتاج إليه. وكتب الملك إلى الوالي المستخلف المقيم بخانقو يأمره بالبحث ومَسْئَلَةُ التجار عما يدعيه الرجل من قرابة نبي العرب صلى الله عليه وسلم. فكتب صاحب خانقو بصحبة نسبه فأذن له ووصله بمال واسع عاد به إلى العراق وكان شيئاً فهِمًا.

فأخبرنا أنه لما وصل إليه وسأله<sup>٢</sup> عن العرب وكيف أزالوا ملك العجم فقال<sup>٣</sup> له: ٢،٤،٢ بالله جلّ ذكره وبما كانت العجم عليه من عبادة النيران والسجود للشمس والقمر من دون الله. فقال له: لقد غلبت العرب على أجل الممالك وأوسعها ريفاً وأكثرها أموالاً وأعقلها رجالاً وأبعدها صوتاً. ثم قال له: فما منزلة ساير الملوك عندهم فقال: ما لي بهم علم. فقال للترجمان: قل له إننا نعدّ الملوك خمسةً فأوسعهم مُلكاً الذي يملك العراق لأنه في وسط الدنيا والملوك مُحْدَقَةٌ به ونجد اسمه عندنا ملك الملوك وبعده

١ ح وخ: ومسألة؛ ر: ومسلة. ٢ ح: وسأله. ٣ فقال: كذا في ب.

the ear of corn standing straight up with no bend to it, and has then stuck the bird standing upright on top of it. That is his mistake.” The hunchback was deemed to have spoken the truth, and the ruler gave the artisan no reward. Their aim in this and similar situations is to train the makers of such pieces, so that each one of them will feel compelled to guard carefully against faults and to consider critically what he makes with his own hands.

### The Visit of Ibn Wahb al-Qurashī to the King of China

There was a man of Quraysh in Basra known as Ibn Wahb, a descendant of Habbār ibn al-Aswad. When the city was destroyed <sup>103</sup> he left it and ended up in Sīrāf, where he found a ship about to set sail for China. He was seized by a sudden desire that caused him, as was fated, to travel to China aboard the ship. On arrival he was again seized by a desire, this time to visit the Great King, so he made his way to Khamdān, traveling for about two months from the city known as Khānfū. He lodged by the palace gate for a long time, submitting written requests for an audience in which he stated that he belonged to the family of the Arabs’ prophet. Eventually the king commanded that he be given accommodation in one of the official guest houses, and that any needs he lacked should be supplied. The king then wrote to his appointed governor residing in Khānfū, instructing him to make investigations and inquiries among the Arab merchants about Ibn Wahb’s alleged kinship with the prophet of the Arabs, God bless him and keep him. When the governor of Khānfū wrote back confirming that this relationship was genuine, the Great King granted Ibn Wahb an audience and gave him a large amount of money, which he brought back to Iraq. This Ibn Wahb was a canny old man.

2.4.1

*Ibn Wahb admitted to the king’s presence*

Ibn Wahb informed us that, when he entered the king’s presence, the king asked him about the Arabs and how they had brought about the end of the Persian empire. “With the help of God, exalted be His name,” Ibn Wahb replied, “and because the Persians worshipped fire and bowed in prayer to the sun and the moon, instead of worshipping God.” The king said to him, “The Arabs have indeed conquered the most magnificent of empires, with the most extensive lands for crops and grazing, the greatest wealth, the most intelligent men, and the furthest-flung renown.” Then he asked Ibn Wahb, “How are all the kings ranked according to you Arabs?” Ibn Wahb replied, “I know nothing about them.” Then the king said to his interpreter, “Tell him that we count five kings as great. The one with the most extensive realm is

2.4.2

*How the Chinese classify world rulers*

ملكاً هذا ونجده عندنا ملك الناس لأنه لا أحد من الملوك أسوس منا ولا أضبط  
لملكه من ضبطنا لملكنا ولا رعية من الرعايا أطوع لملوكها من رعيتنا فمخن ملوك  
الناس. ومن بعدنا ملك السباع وهو ملك الترك الذي يلينا وبعدهم ملك الفيلة  
وهو ملك الهند ونجده عندنا ملك الحكمة لأن أصلها منهم وبعده ملك الروم  
وهو عندنا ملك الرجال لأنه ليس في الأرض أتم خلقاً من رجاله ولا أحسن  
وجوهاً. فهو لاء أعيان الملوك والباقون دونهم.

ثم قال للترجمان: قل له أتعرف صاحبك إن رأيته يعني رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله  
عليه. <sup>٢</sup> فقلت: وكيف لي برؤيته وهو عند الله جل وعز. فقال: لم أرَ هذا إنما  
أردت صورته. فقال: أجل. فأمر بسفط فأخرج فوضع بين يديه فتناول منه درجاً  
وقال للترجمان: أره صاحبه فأتيت في الدرج صور الأنبياء فحركت شفتي بالصلاة  
عليهم ولم يكن عنده أني أعرفهم فقال للترجمان: سلّه عن تحريك شفتي فسألني  
فقلت: أصلي على الأنبياء. فقال: من أين عرفتهم فقلت: بما صور من أمرهم  
هذا نوح في السفينة ينجو بمن معه لما أمر الله جل ذكره الما فغمر الأرض كلها بمن  
فيها وسلمه ومن معه. فضحك وقال: أما نوح فقد صدقت في تسميته وأما غرق  
الأرض كلها فلا نعرفه وإنما أخذ الطوفان قطعة من الأرض ولم يصل إلى أرضنا  
ولا أرض الهند. قال ابن وهب: فتهيبت الرد عليه وإقامة الحجّة لعلمي بدفعة ذلك  
ثم قلت: هذا موسى وعصاه وبنو إسرائيل. فقال: نعم على قلة البلد الذي كان به  
فساد قومه عليه. فقلت: وهذا عيسى على حمار والحواريون معه فقال: لقد كان  
قصير المدة إنما كان أمره يزيد على ثلاثين شهراً شيئاً يسيراً.

١ ح: ونجد. ٢ ح: عليه وسلم. ٣ ح: مما. ٤ ب: ينجوا. ٥ ح: ممن. ٦ خ: كان عمره يزيد على  
ثلاثين سنة.

he who rules Iraq, for he is at the center of the world, and the other kings are ranged around him; we know him by the name ‘the King of Kings.’ Next comes this king of ours,<sup>104</sup> whom we know by the name ‘the King of His People,’ for no other king is more astute a ruler than we nor more in control of his realm than we are of ours, and no other populace is more obedient to its kings than ours; we are therefore the Kings of Our People. After us comes ‘the King of Beasts,’ who is our neighbor the king of the Turks,<sup>105</sup> and after the Turks comes the King of Elephants, that is, the king of India, whom we know as ‘the King of Wisdom,’ because wisdom originates with the Indians. Finally comes the king of Byzantium, whom we know as ‘the King of Men,’ for there are no other men on Earth who are more perfect in form than his men, nor any of more handsome countenance. These five are the foremost kings. All the rest are beneath them in rank.”

Then the king said to his interpreter, “Say to him, ‘Would you recognize your master if you saw him?’”, meaning the Prophet of God, God bless him.<sup>106</sup> I replied, “How can I see him, when he is with God, glorious and mighty is He?” “I did not mean that,” that king said. “I meant, if you saw his *picture*.” To which Ibn Wahb replied that, yes, he would. The king then told them to fetch a certain casket, which was brought out and placed before him. From it he took a scroll, saying to his interpreter, “Show him his master.” In the scroll I saw pictures of the prophets, and moved my lips in silent prayer for them.<sup>107</sup> The king had not imagined that I would recognize them, and said to the interpreter, “Ask him why he is moving his lips.” He asked me, and I replied, “I am praying for blessings on the prophets.” “And how come you can recognize them?” asked the king. “From the circumstances in which they are depicted,” I said. “This is Noah in his Ark, saving himself and his people when God, exalted be His name, commanded the waters to inundate the entire Earth and all its inhabitants but preserved Noah and his people.” At this the king laughed and said, “Noah you have named correctly. The inundation of the entire Earth, however, we do not acknowledge to be true. For the Flood only affected a part of the Earth; it did not reach either to our land or to India.” At this point, Ibn Wahb commented: I was afraid to contradict the king and challenge this statement, as I knew that he would only dismiss my arguments.<sup>108</sup> He then resumed his account: Then I said, “And this is Moses with his staff, and the people of Israel,” and the king replied, “So it is, although the land he occupied was a small one, and his people behaved wrongfully towards him.” Then I said, “And this is Jesus, mounted

2.4.3

*Portraits of the prophets*

وَعَدَدَ مِنْ أَمْرِ سَائِرِ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ مَا اقْتَصَرْنَا عَلَى ذِكْرِ بَعْضِهِ وَزَعَمَ أَنَّهُ رَأَى فَوْقَ كُلِّ صُورَةٍ لِنَبِيِّ كِتَابَةً طَوِيلَةً قَدَّرَ أَنَّ فِيهَا ذِكْرَ أَسْمَائِهِمْ وَمَوَاقِعَ بِلَدَانِهِمْ وَأَسْبَابَ نُبُوَّتِهِمْ. ثُمَّ قَالَ: رَأَيْتُ صُورَةَ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَلَى جَمَلٍ وَأَصْحَابُهُ مُحَدِّقُونَ بِهِ عَلَى إِبْلِهِمْ فِي أَرْجُلِهِمْ نَعَالٍ عَرَبِيَّةٍ وَفِي أَوْسَاطِهِمْ مَسَاوِيكَ مُشَدُّودَةٌ فَبَكَيْتُ. فَقَالَ لِلتَّرْجَمَانِ: سَلُهُ عَنْ بُكَايِهِ فَقُلْتُ: هَذَا نَبِينَا وَسَيِّدُنَا وَابْنُ عَمِّي عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ. فَقَالَ: صَدَقْتَ لَقَدْ مَلَكَ هُوَ وَقَوْمُهُ أَجَلَ الْمَمَالِكِ إِلَّا أَنَّهُ لَمْ يَعْلَمَنَّ مَا مَلَكَ وَإِنَّمَا عَالِيهِ مَنْ بَعْدَهُ. وَرَأَيْتُ صُورَ أَنْبِيَاءٍ ذَوِي عَدَدٍ كَثِيرٍ مِنْهُمْ مَنْ قَدْ أَشَارَ بِيَدِهِ الْيَمْنَى وَجَمَعَ بَيْنَ الْإِبْهَامِ وَالسَّبَابَةِ كَأَنَّهُ يَوْمِي فِي إِشَارَتِهِ إِلَى الْحَقِّ وَمِنْهُمْ قَائِمٌ عَلَى رِجْلِهِ مُشِيرٌ بِأَصَابِعِهِ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ وَغَيْرَ ذَلِكَ زَعَمَ التَّرْجَمَانُ أَنَّهُمْ مِنْ أَنْبِيَائِهِمْ وَأَنْبِيَاءِ الْهِنْدِ.

ثُمَّ سَأَلَنِي عَنِ الْخُلَفَاءِ وَزُرِّيهِمْ وَكَثِيرٍ مِنَ الشَّرَائِعِ وَوُجُوهِهَا عَلَى قَدَرٍ مَا أَعْلَمُ مِنْهَا ٤٤٤٢  
ثُمَّ قَالَ: كَمْ عَمُرُ الدُّنْيَا عِنْدَكُمْ فَقُلْتُ: قَدْ اخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ فَبَعْضٌ يَقُولُ سِتَّةَ آلَافِ سَنَةٍ وَبَعْضٌ يَقُولُ دُونَهَا وَبَعْضٌ يَقُولُ أَكْثَرَ مِنْهَا إِلَّا أَنَّهُ<sup>١</sup> بَيْسِيرٌ. فَضَحَكْتُ ضَحْكًا كَثِيرًا وَوَزِيرُهُ أَيْضًا وَقَفَ دَلًّا<sup>٢</sup> عَلَى إِنكَارِهِ ذَلِكَ وَقَالَ: مَا أَحْسَبُ نَبِيَّكُمْ قَالَ هَذَا. فَوَلَّتْ وَقُلْتُ: بَلَى هُوَ قَالَ ذَلِكَ فَرَأَيْتُ الْإِنْكَارَ فِي وَجْهِهِ. ثُمَّ قَالَ لِلتَّرْجَمَانِ: قُلْ لَهُ مِيزَ كَلَامِكَ فَإِنَّ الْمُلُوكَ لَا تُكَلِّمُ إِلَّا عَنْ تَحْصِيلِ أَمَّا مَا زَعَمْتَ أَنَّكُمْ تَخْتَلِفُونَ فِي ذَلِكَ فَإِنَّكُمْ إِنَّمَا اخْتَلَفْتُمْ فِي قَوْلِ نَبِيِّكُمْ وَمَا قَالَتْهُ الْأَنْبِيَاءُ لَا يَجِبُ أَنْ يُخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ بَلْ هُوَ مُسْلِمٌ فَاحْذَرُوا هَذَا وَشَبَّهَهُ أَنْ تَحْكِيَهُ وَذَكَرَ أَشْيَاءَ كَثِيرَةً قَدْ ذَهَبَتْ عَنِّي لَطُولُ الْعَهْدِ.

١ أَنَّهُ: سَاقِطَةٌ فِي ح. ٢ كَذَا فِي ب وَلَعَلَّ الصَّوَابَ: وَأَقْفَ وَدَلَّ.

on a donkey and accompanied by his disciples,” and the king replied, “His time was short, for his career lasted only a little more than thirty months.”<sup>109</sup>

Ibn Wahb went on to enumerate the circumstances depicted in the images of all the other prophets, but we have confined ourselves to mentioning only part of what he reported. He also maintained that he saw above each picture of a prophet a long inscription, which he supposed to include their names, the locations of their countries, and the causes of their prophethood. Then he said: I saw the picture of the Prophet Muḥammad, God bless him and keep him, mounted on a camel, with his Companions around him on their camels, with Arab sandals on their feet and tooth sticks stuck in their waistbands, and I wept. The king said to the interpreter, “Ask him why he is weeping.” And I replied, “This is our prophet and our master and my cousin, eternal peace be upon him.” The king said, “You are correct. He and his people gained possession of the most magnificent of kingdoms. But he never saw his possessions in person; only his successors saw them.” Ibn Wahb added: I also saw pictures of other prophets, a great multitude of them: some were shown gesturing with their right hands, the tips of their thumbs and index fingers placed together, as if the gesture were a sign of truth; others were shown standing on their feet and gesturing with their fingers to heaven; and there were yet other poses. The interpreter maintained that all these were their own prophets and those of the Indians.<sup>110</sup>

The king then questioned me about the caliphs, their appearance, and their mode of dress;<sup>111</sup> he also asked much about our laws and their various aspects, and I replied according to what I knew of them. Then he asked, “How old do you Arabs consider the world to be?” I replied, “The matter has been disputed: some have said six thousand years, some have said less than that, and some have said more, but only a little more.” This made him laugh a lot, and his vizier too, who stood beside him, showing his disapproval of what I had said.<sup>112</sup> Eventually he said, “I do not suppose that your prophet said this,” whereupon I blurted out,<sup>113</sup> “On the contrary, he *did* say that.” However, I saw again the disapproval on his face. He then said to his interpreter, “Tell him, ‘You must exercise discretion in what you say, for kings should be addressed only on the basis of properly acquired knowledge. You allege that you Arabs dispute this subject, whereas in fact you have only disputed what your prophet said. What is said by the prophets ought not to become a matter of dispute; rather, it should be accepted without question. Guard, therefore,

2.4.4

*A dispute over the age of the world*

ثم قال لي: لم عدت عن ملكك وهو أقرب إليك من داراً ونسباً فقلت: بما ٥٤٢ هـ  
حدث على البصرة ووقوعي إلى سيراف ونظري إلى مركب ينفذ إلى الصين وما  
بلغني من جلال ملك الصين وكثرة الخير به فأحببت الوقوع إلى تلك الناحية  
ومشاهدتها وأنا راجع عنها إلى بلادي وملك ابن عمي ومُخْبِرٌ بما شاهدته من جلال  
هذا الملك وسعة هذه البلاد وسأقول بكلِّ حسنٍ وأثني بكلِّ جميلٍ. فسره ذلك  
وأمر لي بالجايزة السنّية وبجلي على بغال البريد إلى مدينة خانقو وكتب إلى ملكها  
بإكرامي وتقديمي على جميع من في ناحيته من سائر الملوك وإقامة التُّزلُّ لي إلى وقت  
خروجي. فكنْتُ في أخصب عيش وأنعمه إلى أن خرجتُ من بلاد الصين.

فسألناه عن مدينة خمدان التي بها الملك وصفتها<sup>١</sup> فذكر سعة البلد وكثرة أهله ٦٤٢ هـ  
وأنه مقسوم على قسمين يفصل بينهما شارع طويل عريض فالملك ووزيره وجنوده  
وقاضي القضاة وخصيان الملك وجميع أسبابه في الشقِّ الأيمن منه وما يلي المشرق  
لا يخالطهم أحد من العامة ولا فيه شيء من الأسواق بأنهار في سككهم مطردة  
وأشجار عليها منتظمة ومنازل فسيحة.

وفي الشقِّ الأيسر ممّا يلي المغرب الرعيّة والتجّار والميرة<sup>٢</sup> والأسواق وإذا وضح  
النهار رأيت قهّارمة الملك وأسبابه وغلّمان داره وغلّمان القوّاد ووكلايهم من بين  
راكب وراجل قد دخلوا إلى الشقِّ الذي فيه الأسواق والتجّار فأخذوا وظائفهم  
وحياهم ثم انصرفوا فلم يعد أحد منهم إلى هذا الشقِّ إلا في اليوم الثاني.

١ ر: وصفها. ٢ خ: الميسرة.

against this and other such talk, lest you utter it again.” And he said much else besides, but it was so long ago that it has slipped my memory.

The king then said to me, “Why have you turned away from your own king, when he is so much closer to you than we are, both in abode and in blood?”<sup>114</sup> I replied, “Because of what befell Basra and because, when I arrived in Sīrāf, I saw a ship leaving for China. Also, because of what I had heard of the majesty of the king of China and of his bountiful goodness. All this made me long to travel to these parts and see them for myself. Now I shall return from here to my homeland, to the realm of my cousin, and I shall recount what I have witnessed of the majesty of this king and the extent of this country. I will have nothing but good to say, and I shall spare no fine word in my praise.” He was delighted by this response, and commanded that I be given a right royal gift, and that I should then be conveyed by post mule to the city of Khānfū. He also wrote to the ruler of Khānfū, instructing him to bestow his own largesse upon me, to give me precedence over all the other rulers in his province, and to provide me with everything a guest could need until the time of my departure. As a result I lived in the greatest possible luxury and comfort until I departed from China.

2.4.5

*The generosity of  
the king of China  
to Ibn Wahb*

We then questioned Ibn Wahb about the city of Khamdān, the seat of the king, and asked him to describe it. He told us of the city’s extent and of its large population<sup>115</sup> and said that it was divided into two sectors separated by a long, broad street. The Great King, his vizier, his troops, the chief justice, the king’s eunuchs, and all his relations dwell together in the right-hand sector, that is, on the eastern side. There is not a single member of the common populace to be found living among them, and no markets at all. The streets of this sector have streams flowing along them and are lined with trees planted regularly, and it has spacious residences.

2.4.6

*The city of Khamdān  
described*

In the left-hand sector, that is, on the western side, are to be found the general populace, the merchants, the provision stores, and the markets. At break of day you will see that the king’s stewards and his relations, together with the palace slaves, and the slaves and agents of the army commanders, some mounted, some on foot, have all crossed over to the sector where the markets and the traders are. They get their daily allowances of provisions and whatever else they need, then they leave, and not one of them will return to this sector until the following morning.



وَأَنَّ بهذا البلد من كل نزهة وغيضة<sup>١</sup> حسنة وأنهار مطردة إِلَّا النخل<sup>٢</sup> فَإِنَّهُ معدوم.

ومما حدث في زماننا هذا ولم يعرفه مَنْ تَقَدَّمَنا أَنَّهُ لم يكن أحد يقدر أن البحر الذي ١٠٥٢ عليه بحر الصين والهند يتصل ببحر الشام ولا يقوم في أنفسهم حتى كان في عصرنا هذا فَإِنَّهُ بلغنا أَنَّهُ وُجِدَ في بحر الروم خشبُ مراكب العرب المخروزة التي قد تكسرت بأهلها فقطعها الموج وساقطها الرياح بأمواج البحر فقفذته إلى بحر الخزر ثم جرى في خليج الروم ونفذ منه إلى بحر الروم والشام. فدل هذا على أَنَّ البحر يدور على بلاد الصين والسيلا<sup>٣</sup> وظهر بلاد الترك والخزر ثم يصب في الخليج ويفضي إلى بلاد الشام. وذلك أَنَّ الخشب المخروز لا يكون إِلَّا لمراكب سيراف خاصة ومراكب الشام والروم مسمورة غير مخروزة.

وبلغنا أيضاً أَنَّهُ وُجِدَ ببحر الشام عنبرٌ وهذا من المستنكر وما لم يُعرف في قديم الدهور. ولا يجوز - إن كان ما قيل حقاً - أن يكون العنبر وقع إلى بحر الشام إِلَّا من بحر عدن والقُلْزَم وهو البحر الذي يتصل بالبحار التي يكون فيها العنبر لأن الله جل ذكره قد جعل بين البحرين حاجزاً. بل هو - إن كان صحيحاً - مما يقذفه بحر الهند إلى سائر البحار واحداً بعد واحد حتى يُفضي به إلى بحر الشام.

١ ب: وغيضة. ٢ خ: النخل. ٣ ب: السيلا. ٤ ح: في بحر. ٥ إلا: كذا في ب ويبدو أَنَّهُ يجب حذف الكلمة ليستقيم معنى بقية الجملة.

Ibn Wahb added that in this city all kinds of delightful gardens and pleasant wooded glades can be found, with streams flowing through them. But there are no palm trees, for they do not exist there.

#### How the Seas Are Connected One to Another

Among the discoveries of this age of ours, unknown to our predecessors, is the previously unsuspected fact that the ocean onto which the Sea of China and India opens is connected to the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>116</sup> This is something people would not have credited until our own time, in which news reached us of the discovery in the Mediterranean Sea of planks from the sewn ships of the Arabs.<sup>117</sup> These ships had broken up and their crews had been lost; the waves had pounded their hulls to pieces, and these were then driven by winds and currents which cast the planks into the Sea of the Khazars. From there, the timbers floated through the Gulf of al-Rūm, finally emerging into the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>118</sup> This points to the fact that the ocean turns north around China and al-Silā, continues around the back of the lands of the Turks and the Khazars, then debouches through the Gulf of al-Rūm, arriving at the Levant, the reason being that these sewn planks are used only for Indian Ocean ships, and those of Sīrāf in particular. In contrast, the ships of the Levant and of Byzantium are nailed, rather than sewn, together. 2.5.1

News also reached us of ambergris being found in the Mediterranean Sea, a notion that would have been rejected, and indeed was unheard of, in past ages. For it would not be possible (assuming that the report is true) for the ambergris to have reached the Mediterranean Sea except via the Sea of Aden and al-Qulzum—this being the sea connected to the oceans in which ambergris is found—since God, exalted be His name, has placed a barrier between the two seas.<sup>119</sup> Instead, the ambergris (assuming again that the report is correct) must have been among the flotsam that the Indian Ocean cast into those other seas and that floated through them one after another, to arrive eventually in the Mediterranean Sea.

## ذكر مدينة الزابج

ثمّ نبتدئ بذكر مدينة الزابج<sup>١</sup> إذ كانت تحاذي بلاد الصين وبينهما مسيرة شهر ١٠٦٠٢ في البحر وأقلّ من ذلك إذا ساعدت الرياح. ومَلِكُهَا يُعْرَفُ بالمَهْرَاج ويقال إنّ تكسيورها تسع مائة فرسخ وهذا الملك مملّكٌ على جزائر كثيرة يكون مقدار مسافة مُلكه ألف فرسخ وأكثر. وفي مملكته جزيرة تُعْرَفُ بِسَرْبُرَة<sup>٢</sup> تكسيورها على ما يذكرون أربع مائة فرسخ وجزيرة أيضاً تُعرف بالرامني<sup>٣</sup> تكسيورها ثمانماية فرسخ فيها منابت البقم والكافور وغيره. وفي مملكته جزيرة كَلَه وهي المنصف بين أراضي الصين وأرض العرب وتكسيورها على ما يذكرون ثمانون فرسخاً وبكلّه مجمّع الأمتعة من الأعواد والكافور والصندل والعاج والرصاص القلعيّ والأبنوس والبقم والأفاويه كلّها وغير ذلك ممّا يتّسع ويطول شرحه. والجهاز من عمان - في هذا الوقت - إليها ومنها إلى عُمان واقع. وأمرُ المَهْرَاج نافذ في هذه الجزائر وجزيرته التي هو بها في غاية الخصب وعمارُها منتظمة.

وذكر من يوثق بقوله أنّ الديكة إذا غرّدت في الأسحار للأوقات كتغريدها عندنا تجاوبت إلى مائة فرسخ وما فوقها يجاوب بعضها بعضاً لاتّصال القرى وانتظامها وأنّه لا مفاوز فيها ولا خراب وأنّ المنتقل في بلادهم إذا سافر وركب الظهّر سار إذا شاء فإذا ملّ وكلّ الظهّر نزل حيث شاء.

ومن عجيب ما بلغنا من أحاديث هذه الجزيرة المعروفة بالزابج أنّ ملكاً من ملوكهم ٢٠٦٠٢ في قديم الأيام وهو المَهْرَاج وقصره على ثلاث يأخذ من البحر - ومعنى الثلاث وإد كرجلة مدينة السلام والبصرة يغلب عليه ماء البحر بالمدّ وينضب عنه الماء العذب بالجزر - ومنه غدير صغير يلاصق قصر الملك فإذا كان في صبيحة كلّ يوم دخل

١ مدينة الزابج: كذا في ب وفي عنوان هذه الفقرة ويبدو أنّ المقصود: جزيرة الزابج. ٢ ح: بسيرة.

٣ ب: الراي. ٤ ح: المستقل.

## The Kingdom of al-Mihrāj

*Account of the City of al-Zābaj*

Next we will begin an account of the city of al-Zābaj,<sup>120</sup> because it is situated opposite China; the sailing time between the two lands is a month, or less than that if the winds are favorable. The king of al-Zābaj is known as al-Mihrāj; it is said that its extent is nine hundred *farsakhs*,<sup>121</sup> although this king also rules over many other islands, and his entire realm is spread over a distance of a thousand *farsakhs* and more. His kingdom includes an island known as Sarbuzah, whose extent is reported to be four hundred *farsakhs*; also an island known as al-Rāmanī, extending to eight hundred *farsakhs*, which is home to the places where sapan wood, camphor, and other such trees grow. In addition, his kingdom includes the peninsula of Kalah, the halfway point between the lands of China and the land of the Arabs, whose extent is reported to be eighty *farsakhs*. At Kalah is the entrepôt for commodities such as aloewood in its different varieties, camphor, sandalwood, ivory, white lead,<sup>122</sup> ebony, sapan wood, aromatics of all sorts, and other goods that it would take far too long to detail. The trading voyages from Oman go, these days, as far as Kalah, then return from there to Oman.<sup>123</sup> The authority of al-Mihrāj is obeyed throughout these islands. His island of al-Zābaj, which is his seat, is fertile in the extreme and is settled and cultivated in a most orderly manner.

2.6.1

*Islands in the kingdom of al-Mihrāj, and their products*

A trustworthy informant reported that, when the cocks of al-Zābaj crow at daybreak to announce the time as they do in our lands, they answer one another over a distance of a hundred *farsakhs* and more, relaying the call one to another, so continuous are the villages and so regularly dispersed. He reported, too, that there are no barren areas on the island, nor any signs of dilapidation. He also said that when anyone traveling around their land sets out on his mount, he goes as far as he pleases, but if he gets bored or his mount tires, he can break his journey wherever he wishes.<sup>124</sup>

One of the more extraordinary reports that has reached us from this island known as al-Zābaj tells of one of their kings—al-Mihrāj, that is—in days long past. His palace overlooked a *thalāj* leading to the sea, *thalāj* meaning the tidal reach of a river such as the Tigris of Madīnat al-Salām and Basra, which fills with seawater at high tide and through which freshwater trickles out when the tide is low. Connected to this was a small pool, immediately adjoining the royal palace. Every morning, the king's steward

2.6.2

*The Pool of the Kings, and the manner in which they hoarded gold*

قَهْرَمَانُ الْمَلِكِ وَمَعَهُ لَبْنَةٌ قَدْ سَبَكَهَا مِنْ ذَهَبٍ فِيهَا أَمْتًا<sup>١</sup> قَدْ خَنِيَ عَنِّي مَبْلَغُهَا  
فِي طَرَحِهَا بَيْنَ يَدَيِ الْمَلِكِ فِي ذَلِكَ الْغَدِيرِ . فَإِذَا كَانَ الْمَدَّ عَلَاهَا وَمَا كَانَ مَجْتَمَعًا مَعَهَا  
مِنْ أَمْثَالِهَا وَغَمَرَهَا<sup>٢</sup> فَإِذَا كَانَ الْجَزْرُ نَضَبَ عَنْهَا فَأَظْهَرَهَا فَلَا حَتَّ فِي الشَّمْسِ وَالْمَلِكِ  
مُطْلَعٌ عَلَيْهَا عِنْدَ جُلُوسِهِ فِي الْمَجْلِسِ الْمُطَّلِّ عَلَيْهَا . فَلَا تَزَالُ تِلْكَ حَالُهُ<sup>٣</sup> يَطْرَحُ فِي كُلِّ  
يَوْمٍ فِي ذَلِكَ الْغَدِيرِ لَبْنَةً مِنْ ذَهَبٍ مَا عَاشَ ذَلِكَ الْمَلِكُ مِنَ الزَّمَانِ لَا يُمَسِّ شَيْءٌ<sup>٤</sup>  
مِنْهُ . فَإِذَا مَاتَ الْمَلِكُ أَخْرَجَهَا الْقَائِمُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ كُلَّهَا فَلَمْ يَدَعْ مِنْهَا شَيْئًا وَأُحْصِيَتْ  
ثُمَّ أُذِيَتْ وَفُرِقَتْ عَلَى أَهْلِ بَيْتِ الْمَمْلَكَةِ رِجَالَهُمْ وَنَسَائِهِمْ وَأَوْلَادُهُمْ وَقَوَادِهِمْ  
وَعُودُهُمْ عَلَى قَدَرِ مَنَازِلِهِمْ وَرُسُومِهِمْ لَهُمْ فِي كُلِّ صَنْفٍ مِنْهُمْ فَمَا فَضَّلَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ  
فُضَّ عَلَى أَهْلِ الْمَسْكَنَةِ وَالضَّعْفِ . ثُمَّ دُوِّنَ عَدْدُ اللَّبَنِ الذَّهَبِ وَوزْنُهَا وَقِيلَ إِنَّ  
فَلَانًا مَلِكًا مِنَ الزَّمَانِ كَذَا وَكَذَا سَنَةً وَخَلَفَ مِنْ لَبَنِ الذَّهَبِ فِي غَدِيرِ الْمَلُوكِ كَذَا  
وَكَذَا لَبْنَةً وَإِنَّمَا فُرِقَتْ بَعْدَ وَفَاتِهِ فِي أَهْلِ مَمْلَكَتِهِ فَالْفَخْرُ عِنْدَهُمْ لِمَنْ أَمْتَدَّتْ أَيَّامُ مُلْكِهِ  
وَزَادَ عَدْدُ اللَّبَنِ الذَّهَبِ فِي تَرِكَّتِهِ .

وَمِنْ أَخْبَارِهِمْ فِي الْقَدِيمِ أَنَّ مَلِكًا مِنْ مَلُوكِ الْقَمَارِ وَهِيَ الْأَرْضُ الَّتِي يُجْلَبُ مِنْهَا<sup>١،٧،٢</sup>  
الْعُودُ الْقِمَارِيُّ وَلَيْسَتْ بِجَزِيرَةٍ بَلْ هِيَ عَلَى مَا يَلِي أَرْضَ الْعَرَبِ وَلَيْسَ فِي شَيْءٍ مِنَ  
الْمَمَالِكِ أَكْثَرُ عَدَدًا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْقَمَارِ وَهُمْ رِجَالٌ<sup>٦</sup> كُلُّهُمْ يَحْرَمُونَ الرِّثَا وَالْأَنْبَذَةَ كُلَّهَا  
فَلَا يَكُونُ فِي بِلَادِهِمْ وَمَمْلَكَتِهِمْ شَيْءٌ مِنْهُ<sup>٧</sup> وَهِيَ مَسَامِتُهُ لِمَمْلَكَةِ الْمَهْرَاجِ وَالْجَزِيرَةِ  
الْمَعْرُوفَةِ بِالزَّابِجِ<sup>٨</sup> وَبَيْنَهُمَا مَسَافَةٌ عَشْرَةَ أَيَّامٍ إِلَى عَشْرِينَ يَوْمًا عَرْضًا فِي الْبَحْرِ إِذَا  
كَانَتِ الرِّيحُ مُتَوَسِّطَةً .

١ أمْتًا: كَذَا فِي بَيْتِ أَيِّ أَمْتَاءَ جَمْعٌ مِنْ جَمْعِ كَلِمَةِ مَتْنِ الْوِزْنِ الْمَعْرُوفِ: خ: أَمْتَانِ . ٢ ح: غَمَرَهَا . ٣ ح: حَالُهُ .

٤ ب: كَذَى . ٥ ب: كَذَى . ٦ ب: رِجَالُهُ: ح: وَخ: رِحَالُهُ: ر: رِجَالُهُ: وَيُمْكِنُ قِرَاءَتَهَا أَيْضًا: رِجَالُهُ .

٧ مِنْهُ: كَذَا فِي ب . ٨ ح: هُنَا وَفِي بَعْدِ: الزَّابِجِ .

would bring an ingot of gold which he had caused to be cast, several maunds in weight (I was not told how many); as the king looked on, the steward would place the ingot in the pool. When the tide came in, the water covered this and the other ingots collected together with it, and submerged them; when the tide went out, the water seeped away and revealed the ingots; they would gleam there in the sunlight, and the king could watch over them when he took his seat in the hall overlooking them. He continued thus, his steward placing an ingot of gold in the pool every day for as long as that particular king lived, and not an ingot in the hoard would be touched. On the death of the king and subsequent kings, however, his successor would remove all the ingots, leaving not a single one. They would then be counted, melted down and shared out among the royal family, men, women, and children, as well as among their army commanders and slaves, each according to his rank and to the accepted practice for each class of recipients. Any gold left over afterwards would be distributed to the poor and needy. Finally, the number and weight of the gold ingots were recorded, so that it might be said that So-and-so's reign had lasted for such-and-such a number of years and that he had left such-and-such a number of gold ingots in the Pool of the Kings and that they had been shared out after his death among the people of his kingdom. The longer a king reigned and the more ingots he left on his death, the greater his glory in the people's eyes.

#### The Land of al-Qamār and the Stupidity of Its King

One of their accounts of the past concerns one of the kings of al-Qamār. This is the land from which Qamārī aloewood is exported; it is not an island, for it is situated on the continental landmass extending from the land of the Arabs. No other kingdom at all has a greater population than that of al-Qamār. They are men<sup>125</sup> who all regard adultery and all types of wine as prohibited, and nothing of this sort is to be found in their land and their kingdom. Al-Qamār is situated opposite the kingdom of al-Mihrāj and, to be precise, opposite the island known as al-Zābaj; the sailing time to cross the open sea between them is between ten and twenty days, given a moderate wind.

2.7.1

*Description of the  
land of al-Qamār*

It is said that the king in question ascended the throne of al-Qamār, in days long past, when he was still an impetuous youth.<sup>126</sup> One day he was sitting in his palace; this overlooked a flowing river of freshwater, like the Tigris of Iraq, and was a day's journey from the sea. His vizier was with

2.7.2

*The wish of the  
king of al-Qamār,  
and how al-Mihrāj  
heard of it*

فَقِيلَ إِنَّ هَذَا الْمَلِكَ تَقَلَّدَ الْمَلِكَ عَلَى الْقَمَارِ فِي قَدِيمِ الْأَيَّامِ وَهُوَ حَدَّثُ مُتَسَرِّعٍ وَإِنَّهُ ٢٠٧٠٢  
جَلَسَ يَوْمًا فِي قَصْرِهِ - وَهُوَ مُشْرِفٌ عَلَى وَادٍ يَجْرِي بِأَلَمَا الْعَذْبِ كَجَلَّةِ الْعِرَاقِ وَبَيْنَ  
قَصْرِهِ وَالْبَحْرِ مَسِيرَةَ يَوْمٍ - وَوَزِيرُهُ<sup>١</sup> بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ. إِذْ قَالَ لَوْزِيرِهِ وَقَدْ جَرَى ذِكْرُ مَمْلَكَةِ  
الْمَهْرَاجِ وَجَلَالَتِهَا وَكَثْرَةُ عِمَارَتِهَا وَمَا تَحْتَ يَدِهِ مِنَ الْجَزَائِرِ: فِي نَفْسِي شَهْوَةٌ كُنْتُ  
أُحِبُّ بُلُوغَهَا. فَقَالَ لَهُ الْوَزِيرُ وَكَانَ نَاصِحًا وَقَدْ عَلِمَ مِنْهُ السَّرْعَةُ: مَا هِيَ أَيُّهَا الْمَلِكُ.  
قَالَ: كُنْتُ أُحِبُّ أَنْ أَرَى رَأْسَ الْمَهْرَاجِ مَلِكِ الزَّانِجِ فِي طَسْتٍ بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ. فَعَلِمَ  
الْوَزِيرُ أَنَّ الْحَسَدَ أَثَارَ هَذَا الْفِكْرِ فِي نَفْسِهِ فَقَالَ: أَيُّهَا الْمَلِكُ مَا كُنْتُ أُحِبُّ أَنْ يَحْدِثَ  
الْمَلِكُ نَفْسَهُ بِمَثَلِ هَذَا إِذْ لَمْ يَجْرِ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَ هَؤُلَاءِ الْقَوْمِ لَا فِي فِعْلٍ وَلَا فِي حَدِيثٍ  
تَرَةً وَلَا رَأَيْنًا مِنْهُمْ شَرًّا وَهُمْ فِي جَزِيرَةٍ نَائِيَةٍ غَيْرِ مُجَاوِرَةٍ لَنَا فِي أَرْضِنَا وَلَا طَامِعِينَ فِي  
مُلْكِنَا وَلَيْسَ يَنْبَغِي أَنْ يَقِفَ عَلَى هَذَا الْكَلَامِ أَحَدٌ وَلَا يُعِيدَ الْمَلِكُ فِيهِ قَوْلًا.

فَغَضِبَ وَلَمْ يَسْمَعْ مِنَ النَّاصِحِ وَأَذَاعَ ذَلِكَ لِقَوَّادِهِ وَمَنْ كَانَ يَحْضُرُهُ مِنْ وَجْهِ  
أَصْحَابِهِ. فَتَنَاقَلَتْهُ الْأَلْسُنُ حَتَّى شَاعَ وَاتَّصَلَ بِالْمَهْرَاجِ وَكَانَ جَزَلًا مَتَحَرِّكًا مُحَنِّكًَا  
قَدْ بَلَغَ فِي السَّنِّ مَبْلَغًا مُتَوَسِّطًا فَدَعَا بَوْزِيرَهُ وَأَخْبَرَهُ بِمَا<sup>٢</sup> اتَّصَلَ بِهِ وَقَالَ لَهُ: لَيْسَ  
يَجِبُ - مَعْمَا<sup>٣</sup> شَاعَ مِنْ أَمْرِ هَذَا الْجَاهِلِ وَتَمَنِّيهِ مَا تَمَنَّا بِحَدَاثَةِ سَنَةٍ وَغَرَّتْهُ وَانْتَشَارَ  
ذَلِكَ مِنْ قَوْلِهِ - أَنْ تُنْسِكَ عَنْهُ فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ مِمَّا يَفُتُّ فِي عِضْدِ الْمَلِكِ وَيَنْقُصُهُ وَيَضَعُ  
مِنْهُ. وَأَمْرُهُ بَسْتَرُ مَا جَرَى بَيْنَهُمَا وَأَنْ يُعَدَّ لَهُ أَلْفُ مَرْكَبٍ مِنْ أَوْسَاطِ الْمَرَائِبِ  
بِأَلَاتِهَا وَيَنْدَبَ لِكُلِّ مَرْكَبٍ مِنْهَا مِنْ حَمَلَةٍ السِّلَاحِ وَشُجْعَانِ الرِّجَالِ مَنْ يَسْتَقِلُّ  
بِهِ. وَأَظْهَرَ أَنَّ يَرِيدَ التَّنَزُّهَ فِي الْجَزَائِرِ الَّتِي فِي مَمْلَكَتِهِ وَكُتِبَ إِلَى الْمُلُوكِ الَّذِينَ فِي هَذِهِ  
الْجَزَائِرِ وَهُمْ فِي طَاعَتِهِ وَجَمَلَتِهِ بِمَا عَزَمَ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ زِيَارَتِهِمْ وَالتَّنَزُّهِ بِجَزَائِرِهِمْ حَتَّى شَاعَ  
ذَلِكَ وَتَأَهَّبَ مَلِكُ كُلِّ جَزِيرَةٍ لِمَا يَصِلُحُ لِلْمَهْرَاجِ.

١ ح: ووزيرة. ٢ ح: مما. ٣ ح: مما. ٤ ح: و: جملة.

him, and they had been speaking of the kingdom of al-Mihrāj—of how magnificent it was, and how densely populated and cultivated, and of how many islands were under al-Mihrāj’s rule—when the king said to the vizier, “There is something I yearn for with all my soul and that I have been longing to see fulfilled.” The vizier, a wise counselor who already had experience of the king’s rashness, replied, “And what may that be, Your Majesty?” The king said, “I have been wanting to see the head of al-Mihrāj, the king of al-Zābaj, placed before me in a basin of brass.” The vizier realized that it was envy that had stirred this idea in the king’s soul, and he said, “Your Majesty, I would rather not have heard His Majesty saying such things to himself. For there is no current cause, either in deed or word, for any quarrel between us and those people, and they have done us no wrong. They are not neighbors to our land but live in an island far away from us, and they harbor no designs on our kingdom. It would therefore be inappropriate if these words of His Majesty’s were communicated to any other person, nor should His Majesty mention the matter again.”

The king, however, was enraged at this and would not listen to his counselor. Instead, he made his wish public knowledge among the commanders of his army and those of his most prominent companions at court. Tongues wagged, word spread, and it eventually reached the ears of al-Mihrāj himself. The latter was a man of sound judgement, swift action, and considerable experience, and had reached middle age. He summoned his own vizier and informed him of what he had heard, saying, “With all this talk circulating about that idiot and about that wish of his, inspired by his youth and recklessness—indeed, with his very words being repeated everywhere—we must not refrain from action. For if we did, it would weaken the strong arm of our rule and leave it diminished and enfeebled.” He then instructed the vizier to keep what had passed between them secret but, at the same time, to make ready a thousand ships of middling size, all equipped for war, and to appoint an independent commander to each ship from among the arms-bearing men and brave warriors. The king, meanwhile, put it about that he intended to go on a pleasure cruise through the islands of his realm; he wrote to the local rulers in these islands, who were all loyal members of his circle, telling them of his decision to visit them and enjoy himself in their islands. Word duly spread of the intended tour, and the ruler of each island made preparations to give al-Mihrāj an appropriate reception.



فلما استتب أمره وانتظم دحل في المراكب وعبر بها والجيش إلى مملكة القمار . ٣٠٧٠٢  
وهو وأصحابه أهل سواكٍ دايم يفعل الرجل منهم ذلك في اليوم مرّاتٍ وسواكٍ  
كل واحد منهم معه لا يفارقه أو مع غلامه .<sup>١</sup> فلم يشعر به ملك القمار حتى هجم  
على الوادي المفضي إلى دار ملك القمار فطرح<sup>٢</sup> رجاله فأحدقوا به على سبيل غرة  
فأخذه واحتوى على داره وطار أهل المملكة من بين يديه . فأمر بالنداء بالأمان  
وقعد على السرير الذي كان يجلس عليه ملك القمار وقد أخذه أسيراً فأحضره  
وأحضر وزيره .

فقال لملك القمار: ما حملك على تمني ما ليس في وسعك ولا لك فيه حظ لو  
نلت<sup>٣</sup> ولا أوجه سببٍ يسهل السبيل إليه . فلم يُجْز<sup>٤</sup> جواباً . ثم قال له المهرج: أما  
أنتك لو تمنيت - معماً تمنيت<sup>٥</sup> من النظر إلى رأسي في طست بين يديك - إباحة  
أرضي ومملكها أو الفساد في شيء منها لا ستعملت ذلك كله فيك لكنك تمنيت شيئاً  
بعينه فأنا فاعله بك وراجع إلى بلدي من غير أن أمد يداً إلى شيء من بلادك مما  
جل ودق لتكون عظة لمن بعدك ولا يتجاوز كل قدره وما قسم له وأن يستغنم  
العافية من لبسته .<sup>٥</sup> ثم ضرب عنقه .

ثم أقبل على وزيره فقال له: جُزيت خيراً من وزير فقد صحّ عندي أنك أشرت  
على صاحبك بالرأي لو قبل منك فانظر من يصلح للملك من بعد هذا الجاهل  
فأقمه مقامه .

وانصرف من ساعته راجعاً إلى بلاده من غير أن يمدّ هو ولا أحد من أصحابه ٤٠٧٠٢  
يده إلى شيء من بلاد القمار . فلما رجع إلى مملكته قعد على سريرته وأشرف على  
غديره ووضع الطست بين يديه وفيها رأس ملك القمار وأحضر وجوه مملكته

١ وهو وأصحابه ... غلامه .: يبدو أنه قد حصل تحريف في هذه الجملة يجعلها كأنها دخيلة أو أنه قد سقط كلام ما  
كان يبرّر وجودها هنا . ٢ ح وخ و ر: وطرح . ٣ ر: يجر . ٤ ح: مما . ٥ كذا في ب ولعل المقصود:  
من لبسته .

When all was ready and in order, the king embarked with his fleet and sailed with it and his army across to the kingdom of al-Qamār. He and his companions are constant users of tooth sticks, every man cleaning his teeth with one several times a day; each man keeps his tooth stick with him and is never separated from it, or he keeps it with his slave.<sup>127</sup> The king of al-Qamār, meanwhile, had no inkling of what was happening, until, all of a sudden, al-Mihrāj burst into the river leading to the royal palace of al-Qamār. He landed his men, they surrounded the king of al-Qamār by surprise, and al-Mihrāj captured him and took over his palace. The king of al-Qamār's courtiers and officials fled before their master's eyes; al-Mihrāj, however, had it proclaimed that all would be under his protection. He then sat upon the throne<sup>128</sup> on which the captured king of al-Qamār had previously sat and had the captive and his vizier brought before him.

2.7.3

*Al-Mihrāj's punishment of the king of al-Qamār*

"Whatever drove you," he asked the king of al-Qamār, "to wish for something you were incapable of achieving, which would have brought you no good fortune even if you had attained it, and when there was nothing to make you set out on such a course in the first place?" To this the king of al-Qamār had no response. Al-Mihrāj continued, "Now, had you wished—along with your wish to see my head placed before you in a basin of brass—to make free with my land and take it over or to cause mischief in any part of it, then I would have done all that to *you*. But your wish was for something specific. So I shall now do this thing to you, then return to my country without laying hands on anything in your land, whether great or small. This is so you will be an example to warn those that come after you, so that no one should seek to exceed the bounds of his allotted abilities, and so that everyone should instead make the most of being free from such confusion."<sup>129</sup> Having said this, he had the head of the king of al-Qamār cut off.

Al-Mihrāj then turned to the executed king's vizier and said, "May God reward you for being so excellent a vizier. For I have ascertained that the advice you gave your master was sound—if only he had taken it. Consider now who will be fit to succeed that idiot as king, and install him in his place."

Al-Mihrāj then departed immediately on the voyage back to his country; neither he nor anyone from his force had laid hands on anything in the land of al-Qamār. When he arrived back in his kingdom, he sat upon his throne, surveyed his pool,<sup>130</sup> and had the basin of brass put before him in which the head of the king of al-Qamār had been placed. He then summoned

2.7.4

*The return home of al-Mihrāj*

وحدثهم بخبره والسبب الذي حمله على ما أقدم عليه فدعا له أهل مملكته وجزوه خيراً. ثم أمرَ بالرأس وغُسلَ وطُيَّبَ وجَعَلَه في ظرفٍ وردّه إلى الملك الذي قام بالأمر ببلاد القمار من بعد الملك المقتول. وكتب إليه: إنَّ الذي حملني على ما فعلناه بصاحبك بغيه علينا وتأديبنا لأمثاله وقد بلغنا منه ما أرادَه بنا ورأينا ردَّ الرأس إليك إذ لا درك لنا في حبسه ولا فخر بما ظفرنا به منه.

واتصل الخبرُ بملوك الهند والصين فعظمَ المهرجُ في أعينهم. وصارت ملوك القمار من بعد ذلك كلما أصبحت قامت وحولت وجوها نحو بلاد الزانج فنبجت وكثرت للمهرج تعظيماً له.<sup>١</sup>

وساير ملوك الهند والصين يقولون بالتناسخ ويدينون به. وذكر بعض من يوثق<sup>١،٨،٢</sup> بخبره أن ملكاً من ملوكهم جدَّر<sup>٢</sup> فلما خرج من الجدريّ نظَرَ في المرأة فاستقبح وجهه فأبصر ابناً لأخيه فقال له: ليس مثلي أقام في هذا الجسم على تغييره وإنما هو ظرفٌ للروح متى زال عنه عاد في غيره فقم بالملك فأني مزيلٌ بين جسبي وروحي إلى أن أنحدِر في جسمٍ غيره. ثم دعا بخنجر له مشحوذٍ قاطع فأمر به فحزَّ رأسه ثم أحرَق.

١ له: ساقطة في ح. ٢ ب: جدَّر.

the prominent men of his kingdom, told them the story of the head, and explained what had led him to undertake such a venture. On hearing this, the dignitaries of the realm prayed God to reward him for what he had done. The king then gave orders for the head to be washed and embalmed with perfumes; he had it placed in a casket, and sent it back to the new ruler who had succeeded the executed king on the throne of the land of al-Qamār. With it he wrote a letter: “I was induced to act as we did with your former master by his outrageous threat to us and by the need to punish such behavior in others; for we had been told of what he wished to do to us. We have decided, however, to restore his head to you, because keeping it locked up here would achieve no end and because the goal we have already gained through it can bring us no more glory.”

The news of al-Mihrāj’s deed reached the kings of India and China, and his importance swelled in their eyes. And, ever after, when the kings of al-Qamār rose in the morning, they would stand and turn their faces towards the land of al-Zābaj, then bow and prostrate themselves to al-Mihrāj, out of reverence to him.

#### The Belief of the Eastern Kings in the Transmigration of Souls

All the kings of India and China believe in the transmigration of souls and 2.8.1  
hold it as an article of faith. A trustworthy informant reported that one of their kings in these lands was afflicted by smallpox. When he had recovered, he looked in the mirror and thought how hideous his face had become.<sup>131</sup> Seeing one of his brother’s sons, he said to him, “It is not for the like of me to dwell in this body, now it is so changed. The body is, after all, a mere receptacle for the soul; when the soul passes out of it, it returns in another receptacle. You must be king in my place, for I shall now disjoin my soul from my body, until such time as I alight in another body.” He then called for a dagger of his that had a particularly sharp edge, and commanded that his head be severed with it. He was duly decapitated, then his corpse was burned.

## مرجعٌ إلى أخبار الصين

ذكر<sup>١</sup> بعض أمورهم

كان أهل الصين من شدة التفقد لأمرهم في قديم أيامهم وقبل تغيره في هذا ١،٩،٢ الوقت على حالة لم يُسمعَ بمثُلها. وقد كان رجل من أهل خراسان ورد العراق فابتاع متاعاً كثيراً وخرج إلى بلاد الصين. وكان فيه بخلٌ وشحٌّ شديدٌ فجري بينه وبين خصيٍّ للملك - كان أنفذه<sup>٢</sup> إلى خانفو (وهي المدينة التي تقصدها تجار العرب) لأخذ ما يحتاج إليه مما يرد في المراكب وكان هذا الخصي من أجل خدم الملك وإليه خزائنه وأمواله - مشاجرةً في أمتعة العاج وغيره امتنع من<sup>٣</sup> بيعها حتى شَرِقَ الأمرُ بينهما. وحمل الخصي نفسه على انتزاع خيار الأمتعة التي كانت معه واستهان بأمره.

فشخص مستخفياً حتى ورد خمدان وهو بلد الملك الكبير في مقدار شهرين من الزمان وأكثر فخرج إلى السلسلة التي وُصِفَتْ في الكتاب. وسبيل من حركها على الملك الكبير أن يُباعَدَ إلى مسيرة عشرة أيام على سبيل النقي ويؤمر بحجسه هناك شهرين ثم يُخرجه ملكُ تلك الناحية ويقول: إنك تعرضت فيه بوارك<sup>٤</sup> وسفكُ دمك إن كنت كاذباً وإذ كان الملك قد قرب لك ولأمثالك من وزرايه وملوكه من لا يعوزك الانتصافُ بهم. واعلم أنك متى وصلت إلى الملك فلم يكن ما تظلمت منه مما يجب في مثله الوصول إليه فليس دون دمك شيء لئلا يُقدِمَ على ما أقدمت كل من يهَمُّ بمثله فاستقل نُقلَكَ<sup>٥</sup> وامض لشأنك. فإن استقال ضُربَ<sup>٦</sup> خمسين خشبةً ونُيَّ إلى البلاد التي منها قصَدَ وإن أقام على تظلمه وصل. ففعل ذلك بالخراساني فأقام على<sup>٧</sup> ظلامته والتمس الوصول.

١ ح: وذكر. ٢ ح: أنفذه. ٣ ح: عن. ٤ تعرضت فيه بوارك: كذا في ب وقد يكون تقویرح على الصواب: تعرضت لما فيه بوارك؛ خ: تعرضت إلى ما فيه بوارك. ٥ خ: فاستقل نُقلَكَ (بتشديد اللام الثانية وفتحها). ٦ ح: ضربه. ٧ تظلمه ... على: ساقط في خ.

## Accounts of China Continued

*Various Matters Relating to the Chinese*

The Chinese used to monitor their own system—in the old days, that is, before its deterioration in the present time—with a rigor unheard of elsewhere. An example of this is the story of a certain man from Khurasan who came to Iraq, bought a large quantity of goods, and took them out to China. He was of a miserly and exceedingly avaricious nature, and a dispute arose between him and one of the Great King's eunuchs, who had been sent by his master to Khānfū (the city to which the Arab merchants go) to get various items the king required from among the goods imported on Arab ships; this eunuch was one of the king's most respected slaves and was in charge of the royal treasuries and other property. The dispute was over certain ivory and other goods, which the merchant held out against selling at the price offered until things reached a heated impasse, at which the eunuch took it upon himself to seize by force the pick of the merchant's goods, and treated him with contempt.

2.9.1

*The concern of their  
kings for investigat-  
ing merchants'  
complaints*

Following this, the Khurasani set out incognito and traveled to Khamdān, the Great King's capital, taking two months and more on the journey. On his arrival, he went to the chain attached to the bell that was described in the First Book.<sup>132</sup> Now, the procedure for anyone who pulls the chain to ring the bell hanging over the Great King is as follows. He is first removed to a place ten days' journey distant, by way of banishment, and ordered to be placed under detention there for two months. At the end of that period, the ruler of the province concerned brings him out of detention and says to him, "You have exposed yourself to the risk of your own perdition and the shedding of your blood, if it emerges that you have been lying. For the Great King has already given you and your like direct access to ministers and provincial rulers of his, through whom it is not difficult for you to obtain justice. You must be aware that, if you take your case to the Great King and it transpires that your complaint is not grave enough to entail an appeal to him, then the outcome will be nothing less than your death: this is to deter everyone else who might consider a similar course of action from daring to do what you have dared. Retract your complaint, therefore, so that we may release you; go back to your own business." If the complainant then withdraws his case, he is dealt fifty blows with a wooden stave and deported to his country of origin; if, however, he decides to pursue his complaint, he is admitted to

فَبُعِثَ بِهِ وَوَصَلَ إِلَى الْمَلِكِ. فَسَأَلَهُ<sup>١</sup> التَّارِجَمَانُ عَنْ أَمْرِهِ فَأَخْبَرَهُ بِمَا جَرَى عَلَيْهِ  
 مِنَ الْخَادِمِ وَانْتِزَاعِهِ مِنْ يَدِهِ مَا انْتَزَعَ. وَكَانَ الْأَمْرُ فِيهِ قَدْ شَاعَ بِخَانَقُو وَذَاعَ فَأَمَرَ  
 الْمَلِكُ بِجَبْسِ الْخُرَاسَانِيِّ وَإِزَاحَةِ عِلَّتِهِ فِي مَطْعَمِهِ وَمَشْرَبِهِ وَتَقَدَّمَ إِلَى وَزِيرِهِ فِي الْكِتَابِ  
 إِلَى الْعَمَالِ بِخَانَقُو بِالْفَخْصِ عَمَّا أَدْعَاهُ الْخُرَاسَانِيُّ وَكَشَفَهُ وَالصَّدَقَ عَنْهُ وَأَمْرَ صَاحِبَ  
 الْمِئْمَنَةِ وَالْمِيسِرَةِ وَصَاحِبَ الْقَلْبِ بِمِثْلِهِ وَهُوَ لَا الثَّلَاثَةَ عَلَيْهِمْ يَدُورُ بَعْدَ الْوَزِيرِ أَمْرُ  
 جِيُوشِهِ وَيُثَقُّ بِهِمْ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ وَإِذَا رَكِبَ بِهِمْ لِحَرْبٍ<sup>٢</sup> أَوْ غَيْرِهِ كَانَ كُلُّ وَاحِدٍ مِنْهُمْ فِي  
 مَرْتَبَتِهِ. فَكُتِبَ كُلُّ وَاحِدٍ مِنْهُمْ وَقَدْ كُشِفَ عَنِ الْأَمْرِ بِمَا وَقَفَ بِهِ عَلَى صِحَّةِ الدَّعْوَى  
 مِنَ الْخُرَاسَانِيِّ. فَتَنَابَعَتْ بِهِ الْأَخْبَارُ عِنْدَ الْمَلِكِ مِنْ كُلِّ جِهَةٍ فَأُسْتُخِصَّ الْخَصِيُّ فَلَمَّا  
 وَرَدَ قَبْضَ أَمْوَالِهِ وَنَزَعَ خَزَائِنَهُ مِنْ يَدِهِ. وَقَالَ لَهُ: كَانَ حَقُّكَ الْقَتْلَ إِذَا<sup>٣</sup> عَرَضْتَنِي  
 لِرَجُلٍ قَدْ سَلَكَ مِنْ خُرَاسَانَ وَهِيَ عَلَى حَدِّ مَمْلَكَتِي وَصَارَ إِلَى بِلَادِ الْعَرَبِ وَمِنْهَا  
 إِلَى مَمَالِكِ الْهِنْدِ ثُمَّ إِلَى بِلَدِي طَلَبًا لِلْفَضْلِ فَأَرَدْتُ أَنْ يَعُودَ مَجْتَازًا بِهَذِهِ الْمَمَالِكِ  
 وَمَنْ فِيهَا فَيَقُولَ: إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ بِلَادَ الصِّينِ وَغَضِبْتُ<sup>٤</sup> مَالِي. لَكِنِّي أَتَجَانِي عَنْ دَمِكَ  
 لِقَدِيمِ حُرْمَتِكَ وَأَوَّلِيكَ تَدْبِيرَ الْمَوْتِ إِذْ عَجَزْتُ عَنْ تَدْبِيرِ الْأَحْيَاءِ. وَأَمَرَ بِهِ فَجَعَلَهُ فِي  
 مَقَابِرِ الْمُلُوكِ يَحْرُسُهَا وَيَقُومُ بِهَا.

وَمِنْ عَجِيبِ تَدْبِيرِهِمْ فِي قَدِيمِ الْأَيَّامِ دُونَ هَذَا الْوَقْتِ أَمْرُ الْأَحْكَامِ وَجَلَالُهَا فِي ٢٠٩٠٢  
 صَدُورِهِمْ وَاخْتِيَارِهِمْ لَهَا مَنْ لَا يَخَالُجُ قُلُوبَهُمُ الشُّكُّ فِي عِلْمِهِ بِشَرَائِعِهِمْ وَصَدَقَ  
 لِهَجَّتِهِ وَقِيَامِهِ بِالْحَقِّ فِي كُلِّ أَحْوَالِهِ وَتَجَنُّبِهِ الْإِغْمَاضَ عَمَّنْ جَلَّ مَقْدَارُهُ حَتَّى يَقَعَ الْحَقُّ  
 مَوْقِعَهُ وَيَكُونَ عَفِيفًا عَنْ أَمْوَالِ أَهْلِ الضَّعْفِ وَمَا يَجْرِي عَلَى يَدِهِ.

١ ح: فسأله. ٢ ح: بحرب. ٣ ح و ر: إذا. ٤ ح: وغضب.

the Great King's presence. This procedure was followed with the Khurasani; he persisted in his complaint and requested an audience.

He was thus duly dispatched and entered the king's presence. The interpreter questioned him about his case, and the Khurasani told him how the eunuch slave had mistreated him and had snatched his property out of his hands. Meanwhile, the affair of the Khurasani had already become public knowledge in Khānfū, and news of it had spread through the city. The king therefore ordered that the Khurasani be detained and supplied with all necessary food and drink; at the same time, he instructed his vizier to write to the government representatives in Khānfū, telling them to investigate the Khurasani's allegation and to ascertain the truth of the matter. He also ordered similar investigations to be undertaken by the commanders of the right and left wings of the army and the commander of the center; after the vizier, it is upon these three that control of the king's forces devolves: he trusts them with his life, and if he rides out with them to do battle or for some other purpose, each one of them rides with him, in rank. Eventually each one of these officers wrote independently to the Great King, having uncovered enough evidence about the matter to apprise himself of the truth of the Khurasani's allegation. Other similar reports on the case kept reaching the king from every quarter, and the eunuch was summoned. When he appeared, the king seized his property and deprived him of control over his own treasuries. He then said to him, "You deserve to be put to death. For you exposed me to the risk of losing face on account of a man who journeyed from Khurasan, on the border of my kingdom, and made his way to the land of the Arabs, and from there to the kingdoms of the Indians, and then came to my land, all in pursuit of honorable gain—and whom you then wanted to return by way of these same kingdoms, telling everyone in them, 'I was treated unjustly in China, and my property was seized by force'! But I am loath to shed your blood, if only because you have enjoyed my protection for so long. Instead, I shall appoint you to manage the dead, because you have failed in your management of the living." And the king commanded that the eunuch be given a position guarding and overseeing the royal cemeteries.

Another example of their admirable governance in the old days (but not in this time) was the status of the law and the high regard they had for it in their hearts. They would select someone to dispense the law only if they had no doubt in their minds about his knowledge of their legal code, the truth of his words, the correctness of his conduct in all his affairs, and his refusal to turn

2.9.2

*The chief justice  
of China*



فإذا عزموا على تقليد قاضي القضاة أنفذوه قبل تقليده إلى جميع البلدان التي هي أعمدة بلادهم حتى يقيم في كل بلد شهراً أو شهرين فيبحث عن أمر أهله وأخبارهم ورسومهم ويعلم من يجب قبول قوله منهم معرفةً يستغني بها عن المسألة<sup>١</sup>. فإذا سلك به هذه الأمصار ولم يبق في المملكة بلد جليل إلا وطئه رحل إلى دار المملكة وولي قضاء القضاة وجعل إليه اختيارهم فيلهم. وعلمه بجميع المملكة ومن يجب أن يقلد في كل بلد من أهله أو غيرهم علم من يستغني بعلمه عن الرجوع إلى من لعله أن يميل فيه أو يقول بغير الحق فيما سئل<sup>٢</sup> عنه. ولا يتهماً لأحد من قضاة أن يكتبه بشي قد علم خلافه أو يزيله عن جهته.

ولقاضي القضاة مُنادي<sup>٣</sup> في كل يوم على بابه<sup>٤</sup> يقول: هل من متظلم على الملك المستور عن عيون رعيته أم من أحد من أسبابه وقواده وسائر رعيته فإني أنوب في ذلك كله عنه لما بسط به يدي وقلدني يقول ذلك ثلاثاً لأن الملك في عقدهم أن الملك لا يزول عن موضعه حتى تنفذ الكتب من دواوين الملوك بالجور المصرح وأن يُهمل أمر الحكم والحكام؛ وأنه متى تحفظ من هذين الأمرين فلم تنفذ الكتب من الدواوين إلا بالعدل ولم يل الحكم إلا من يقوم بالحق فالملك منتظم.

فأما خراسان ومناخمتها لبلاد الصين فالذي بينها وبين الصغد مسيرة شهرين<sup>٥</sup> إلا أنه في مفازة ممتعة ورمال منتظمة لا ما فيها ولا أودية لها ولا عمارة بقربها فهو السبب المانع من هجوم أهل خراسان على بلادهم. وأما ما كان من الصين يلي<sup>٦</sup> مغرب الشمس وهو الموضع المعروف بمذو<sup>٧</sup> فهو على حدود التبت والحروب بينهم متصلة.

١ ح وخ: المسألة. ٢ ح: يُسأل؛ خ: سئل؛ ر: يُسَل [كذا]. ٣ ح: منادٍ. ٤ ح: ينادي على بابه.

٥ ح: تحنث. ٦ خ: على. ٧ ب وح و: بمذو.

a blind eye to the misdeeds of those of high status—their intention being that right be done wherever it is due, and that their judges should have no designs on the property of the vulnerable or on any sums passing through their hands.

When they decide to appoint a chief justice, they send him, before his appointment, on a tour of all the cities that are the chief ones in their land. The object is for him to stay in each city for a month or two, looking into the affairs of its inhabitants, hearing their reports, and learning about their customary practices; also, it is so that he can get to know directly which citizens are trustworthy in what they say<sup>133</sup> and will thus not need to ask intermediaries. When he has been taken around these provincial capitals and none of the great cities of the kingdom remains unvisited, he makes his way to the royal palace to be installed as chief justice; their selection of him is now confirmed, and he takes up their appointment. Moreover, he is now fully acquainted with the entire kingdom and with which of the citizens or others in each city should be appointed as provincial judges. This sort of personal knowledge saves him from having to seek advice on such appointments from those who, when questioned, may be biased or untruthful in their replies. Besides, none of his provincial judges will subsequently be prepared either to write reports to him containing anything contrary to the facts he knows, or to omit mention of such facts from their side.

Every day, the chief justice has a crier proclaim these words at his gate: “Does any of you have a complaint for the king who is veiled from his subjects’ eyes, or against one of the king’s relations or his commanders or any other of his subjects? For it is I who am deputed by him to deal with all such grievances, by virtue of the power he has placed in my hands and the office with which he has invested me!” He proclaims this three times. The reason is that, according to their understanding of the monarchy, the king will only be deposed when reports of flagrant injustice arrive from the offices of provincial rulers and when the king himself neglects the law and those who dispense it. Equally, they believe that, as long as the king guards against these two failings—with the result that official reports bring news only of just administration and that only those who act rightly are appointed to be judges—then the monarchy will maintain its proper harmony.<sup>134</sup>

Regarding Khurasan and its proximity to the land of China, between the latter and Sogdiana there is a journey of two months. The way, however, is via a forbidding desert of unbroken sand dunes in which there are no water sources and no river valleys, with no habitation nearby.<sup>135</sup> This is what

2.9.3

*China’s western borders and neighboring countries*

وقد رأينا ممن دخل الصين ذكر أنه رأى رجلاً حمل على ظهره مسكاً في رِقِّ<sup>٤،٩،٢</sup> وورد من سمرقند راجلاً يقطع بلدًا بلدًا من مدن الصين حتى صار إلى خانقو وهو مجتمع التجار القاصدين من سيراف. وذلك أن الأرض التي بها ظبا المسك الصيني والتبت أرض واحدة لا فرق بينهما فأهل الصين يجتذبون ما قرب منهم من الظباء<sup>١</sup> وأهل التبت ما قرب منهم. وإنما فضل<sup>٢</sup> المسك التبتّي على الصيني بحالتين أحدهما<sup>٣</sup> أن ظبي المسك يكون في حد التبت رعيه<sup>٤</sup> من سنبُل الطيب وما يلي أرض الصين منها رعيه ساير الحشائش. والحالة الأخرى ترك أهل التبت النواخ بحالها<sup>٥</sup> وغش أهل الصين لما وقع إليهم منها وسلوكهم أيضاً في البحر وما يلحقهم من الأنداء<sup>٦</sup> فإذا ترك أهل الصين المسك في نوافجه وأودعت البراني واستوثق منها ورد<sup>٧</sup> أرض العرب كالتبتّي في جودته.

وأجود المسك كله ما حكه الظبي على أحجار الجبال إذ كان مادة<sup>٨</sup> تصير في سرته وتجمع<sup>٩</sup> دمًا عبيطًا كاجتماع الدم فيما يعرض من الدما من إذا أدرك حكه وأضجرة<sup>١٠</sup> فيفرغ<sup>١١</sup> إلى الحجارة حتى يخرقه فيسيل ما فيه فإذا خرج عنه جفّ واندمل وعادت المادة تجتمع فيه من<sup>١٢</sup> ذي قبل. وللتبت رجال يخرجون في طلب هذا ولهم به معرفة فإذا وجدوه التقطوه وجمعوه وأودعوه النواخ وحمل إلى ملوكهم. وهو نهاية المسك إذ كان قد أدرك في نوافجه على حيوانه وصار له فضل على غيره من المسك كفضل ما يدرك من الثمار في شجرة<sup>١٣</sup> على ساير ما يُزرع منه قبل إدراكه.

١ من الظباء: ساقطة في خ. ٢ خ: فضل. ٣ كذا في ب: خ: إحداهما. ٤ ح: رعية. ٥ ح وخ و: في حالها. ٦ ح: الأنداء [كذا]: ر: الافداء. ٧ ب وح وخ و: وورد؛ ويجب حذف الواو الأولى ليستقيم المعنى. ٨ ح وخ: مادة. ٩ ح وخ و: ويجمع. ١٠ خ: وأفره. ١١ ب: فيفرغ؛ خ: فيفرغ. ١٢ خ: مثل. ١٣ ح: شجرة.

prevents the people of Khurasan from launching an assault on China. Turning to the part of China lying in the direction of the setting sun, namely the place known as Bamdhū, this is located on the borders of Tibet, and fighting never ceases there between the Chinese and the Tibetans.

We have seen one of the people who entered China, who reported that he saw a man carrying on his back a skin bag filled with Tibetan musk; this man had come on foot from Samarqand, passing through one Chinese city after another until he finally arrived in Khānfū, the meeting place of merchants coming from Sīrāf. This journey was possible because the land that is home to the gazelles that produce Chinese musk is one and the same land with Tibet: the Chinese catch the gazelles nearest to them, and the Tibetans those nearest to them.<sup>136</sup> Furthermore, the superiority of Tibetan musk to Chinese is due to only two factors. The first of these is the fact that musk gazelles in the Tibetan borderlands graze on Indian spikenard,<sup>137</sup> whereas those in the region neighboring China graze on other kinds of herbage. The second factor is the Tibetans' practice of leaving the musk pods in their natural state.<sup>138</sup> The Chinese, in contrast, adulterate the musk pods that they get hold of; there is the additional factor of their using the maritime route to export the musk and the exposure to moist vapors that this incurs. If the Chinese were to leave the musk intact in its pods and then place the pods in earthenware pots, sealing them securely, then their musk would be of the same quality as Tibetan musk when it reached Arab lands.<sup>139</sup>

2.9.4

*Musk and its origin*

The best musk of all in quality is that which the gazelle has rubbed onto stones in the mountains.<sup>140</sup> Musk is a substance that goes to the gazelle's navel and gathers there like uncoagulated blood, just as blood itself gathers in the superficial parts of boils. When the swollen pod "ripens," the gazelle rubs it against stones and chafes it until the musk starts to ooze out on to the stones; the gazelle eventually bursts it, and its contents flow out. When all the musk has come out, the pod dries up and scabs over, then the substance begins to gather in it as before. The Tibetans have men who go out in search of this musk deposited on stones and who have expert knowledge of it. When they find some, they pick it off the stone, gather it together, and pack it into empty musk pods; it is then taken to their kings. This is the very best musk of all, because it has ripened in its pods on the living animal. It is superior to other sorts of musk, in the same way that fruit ripened on the tree is superior to all other fruit that is picked before it is ripe.

وغير هذا من المسك فإنما يصاد بالشرك المنسوب أو السهام وربما قُطعت  
النواخج عن الظبي قبل إدراك المسك فيها وعلى أنه إذا قُطع عن ظبايه كان كرية  
الرايحة مدة من المدد حتى يجف على الأيام الطويلة وكلما جف استحال حتى  
يصير مسكاً. وظبي المسك كساير الطباء عندنا في القد واللون ودقة القوام  
وافتراق الأظلاف وانتصاب القرون وانعطافها ولها نابان دقيقان أبيضان في  
الفكين قائمان في وجه الظبي طول كل واحد منهما مقدار فتر ودونه على هيئة  
ناب الفيل فهو الفرق بينها وبين ساير الطباء.

ومكاتبات ملوك الصين لملوك أمصارهم وخصيانهم على بغال البريد مجرزة<sup>١</sup> ٥،٩،٢  
الأذنان على سبيل بغال البريد عندنا على سكك معروفة.

وملوك<sup>٢</sup> أهل الصين معما وصفناه<sup>٣</sup> من أمرهم يولون من قيام وكذلك ساير<sup>٤</sup> ٦،٩،٢  
رعيّتهم من أهل بلادهم. فأما الملوك والقواد والوجه فلهم أنابيب من خشب  
مدهونة طول كل خشبة منها ذراع وفي الطرفين ثقتان تتسع العليا للشفة فيقف  
على رجله إذا أراد البول ويباعدها عن نفسه ويسول فيها<sup>٥</sup> ويرغمون أن ذاك<sup>٦</sup> أصح  
لأجسامهم وأن ساير ما يعتري من وجع المثانة والبول من الاستحجار فيها إنما هو  
من الجلوس للبول وأن المثانة لا تطفو<sup>٧</sup> بما فيها إلا مع القيام لذلك.

والسبب في تركهم الشعور على رؤوسهم<sup>٨</sup> - أعني الرجال - امتناعهم من<sup>٩</sup> ٧،٩،٢  
تدوير رأس المولود وتقويه<sup>١٠</sup> كما يستعمل العرب وقولهم إن ذاك<sup>١١</sup> مما يزيل الدماغ  
عن حاله<sup>١٢</sup> التي خلق عليها وإنه يفسد الحاسة المعروفة. فرووسهم<sup>١٣</sup> مضطربة يسترها  
الشعر ويعني عليها.

١ ح وخ: مجرزة. ٢ وملوك: ساقطة في ح وخ ور. ٣ ح: مهما وصفناهم. ٤ وفي الطرفين ... ويسول  
فيها: ساقطة في خ. ٥ ح وخ ور: ذلك. ٦ ب: تطفوا؛ ح: تصفوا. ٧ ح وخ: رؤوسهم. ٨ ر:  
وتقويه (ولعلها المقصود). ٩ خ: ذلك. ١٠ ح: حالة. ١١ ح وخ: فرووسهم.

Except for this kind, all musk is from gazelles that are trapped in enclosures of nets staked upright or hunted with arrows, and often the pods are cut out of the gazelle before the musk in them has ripened. Besides, when it is cut out of the gazelles, it retains an unpleasant odor for a certain time, until it dries, this taking a long period of days; as it dries out, its substance changes and turns into musk. The musk gazelle itself resembles the other types of gazelle found in our lands, both in size and color, and has similarly slender legs and cloven hoofs, and horns that rise straight and then curve in a similar way.<sup>141</sup> However, the musk gazelle has a pair of slender white tusks, one on each side of its lower jaw, standing up in front of its face; the length of each is about the distance between the tips of a man's thumb and index finger when stretched apart, or less than that, and its shape is that of an elephant's tusk in miniature.<sup>142</sup> This is the difference between the musk gazelle and other gazelles.

The correspondence of the Great Kings of China with the rulers of their provincial capitals and with their eunuch officials goes on post mules. These have their tails clipped in the manner of our post mules<sup>143</sup> and follow recognized routes.

2.9.5

*Post mules*

Further to what we have already said in description of the rulers of the Chinese is the fact that they urinate from a standing position; so too do all those of their subjects who belong to the native population.<sup>144</sup> The rulers themselves, the army commanders and the other people of high rank use tubes of lacquered wood, each a cubit in length and with a hole at either end, the upper one big enough for the user to insert the head of his penis: when he wants to urinate, he stands on his feet, aims the tube away from himself, and urinates through it. They maintain that this method is healthier for their bodies, that the pain from bladder stones felt in the bladder itself and during urination is entirely due to the practice of squatting to urinate, and that the bladder allows its contents to well up and flow out only when one urinates standing.<sup>145</sup>

2.9.6

*The Chinese manner of urination*

The reason they let their hair grow on their heads—I mean the men—is the fact that they do not believe in “rounding” the heads of new-born babies and letting them harden, as is practiced by the Arabs.<sup>146</sup> They say that the practice is one of the causes of the brain becoming displaced from the position in which it was created and that it interferes with the normal faculties of sensation. As a result, their heads are covered in bumps, which their hair covers up and hides from view.

2.9.7

*The reason Chinese men let their hair grow*

فأما المناح ببلاد الصين - وهم شعوب وقبايل كشعوب بني إسرائيل والعرب ٨٠٩٠٢ وبطونها يتعارفون ذاك بينهم - ولا يزوج أحد منهم قريباً ولا ذانسب ويتجاوزون ذلك حتى لا تتزوج القبيلة في قبيلتها مثال ذلك أن بني تميم لا تتزوج في تميم وربعة لا تتزوج في ربعة وإنما تتزوج ربعة في مضر ومضر في ربعة ويدعون أن ذلك أنجب للولد.

### بعض أخبار الهند

في مملكة بلهرا وغيره من ملوك الهند من يحرق نفسه بالنار وذلك لقولهم بالتناسخ ١٠١٠٢ وتمكنه في قلوبهم وزوال الشك فيه عنهم.

وفي ملوكهم من إذا قعد للملك طُخ له أرز ثم وُضع بين يديه على ورق الموز وينتدب من أصحابه الثلاثمائة والأربعمائة باختيارهم لأنفسهم لا باكره من الملك لهم. فيعطيه الملك من ذلك الأرز بعد أن يأكل منه ويتقرب رجل منهم فيأخذ منه شيئاً يسيراً فيأكله فيلزم كل من أكل من هذا الأرز إذا مات الملك أو قتل أن يحرقوا أنفسهم بالنار عن آخرهم في اليوم الذي مات فيه لا يتأخرون عنه حتى لا يبقى منهم عين ولا أثر.

وإذا عزم الرجل على إحراق نفسه صار إلى باب الملك فاستأذن ثم دار في الأسواق وقد أجمت له النار في حطب جزل كثير عليها رجال يقومون بإيقادها حتى تصير كالعقيق حرارةً والتهاباً ثم يعدو<sup>٢</sup> وبين يديه الصنوج<sup>٣</sup> دايراً في الأسواق وقد احتوشه أهله وقربته وبعضهم يضع على رأسه إكليلاً من الريحان يملأوه<sup>٤</sup> جمراً ويصب عليه السندروس وهو مع النار كالنقط ويمشي وهامته تحترق وروايح لم

١ ولا: كذا في ب؛ ولعل المقصود: فلا. ٢ ب: يعدوا. ٣ خ: ثم يُعدون بين يديه الصنوج. ٤ يملأوه: كذا في ب؛ ح: يملؤه؛ خ: يملأه.



Regarding the choice of spouses in China, the Chinese are made up of different peoples and tribes (just as the Israelites and Arabs are peoples and subtribes) all recognizing one another among themselves.<sup>147</sup> None of the Chinese, however, is ever married to a near relation or to anyone sharing the same immediate lineage; indeed, they take this even further, to the extent that members of a particular tribe will never marry within that tribe. The Arab equivalent would be for members of Tamīm never to marry within Tamīm, and for Rabī‘ah never to marry within Rabī‘ah; instead, Rabī‘ah would only marry spouses from Muḍar, and Muḍar from Rabī‘ah. The Chinese claim that this produces better-developed offspring.

2.9.8  
*Choice of spouses  
among the Chinese*

#### Further Accounts of India

In the kingdom of Balharā and those of other Indian rulers, there are people who burn themselves to death with fire. This stems from their belief in the transmigration of souls, which has so firm a place in the hearts, and from their desire to banish from themselves any doubts about it.

2.10.1  
*The Indians who  
burn themselves  
to death*

Certain kings of theirs, when they ascend the throne, have rice cooked for them and placed before them on banana leaves. The new king invites three or four hundred of his companions—they come of their own free choice, not under any compulsion from the king—and gives them some of the rice, having first eaten some himself; one by one they come up to him, take a little of the rice, and eat it. It then becomes obligatory for all those who have eaten some of this rice, when the king dies or is killed, to burn themselves to death by fire. This they must do to the last man, and on the very day of the king’s death, without delay, until not a single one of them remains, or even a trace of them.

If someone from the general populace makes up his mind to burn himself to death, he first goes to the gate of the king’s palace to ask permission to do so, then he goes around in the markets. In the meantime a fire has been kindled for him in a huge great pile of firewood; there are men in charge of this who stoke the flames until they blaze red-hot, as red as carnelian. The man then begins to run around the markets, preceded by people clashing cymbals and surrounded by members of his family and close kin. One of these now places on his head a wreath made from aromatic plants, fills the space in the center of it with burning embers, and sprinkles them with sandarac, which has the same effect on fire as does naphtha.<sup>148</sup> The man walks on, the crown



رأسه تقوح<sup>١</sup> وهو لا يتغير<sup>٢</sup> في مشيته ولا يظهر منه جزع حتى يأتي النار فيثب فيها فيصير رماداً.

فذكر بعض من حضر رجلاً منهم يريد دخول النار أنه لما أشرف عليها أخذ الخنجر فوضعه على رأس فؤاده فشقه بيده إلى عاتقه ثم أدخل يده اليسرى فقبض على كبده فجذب منها ما تهياً له وهو يتكلم ثم قطع بالخنجر منها قطعة فدفعها إلى أخيه استهانةً بالموت وصبراً على الألم ثم زج بنفسه في النار إلى لعنة الله.

وزعم هذا الرجل الحايكي أن في جبال هذه الناحية قوماً من الهند سبيلهم ٢، ١٠، ٢ سبيل الكيفية والجلدية عندنا في طلب الباطل والجهل وبينهم وبين أهل الساحل عصبية. وأنه لا يزال رجل من أهل الساحل يدخل الجبل فيستدعي من يصاربه على التمثيل بنفسه وكذلك أهل الجبل لأهل الساحل. وأن رجلاً من أهل الجبال صار إلى أهل الساحل لمثل ذلك فاجتمع إليه الناس بين ناظر ومتعصب فطالب أهل العصبية بأن يصنعوا مثل ما يصنع فإن عجزوا عنه اعترفوا بالغلبة. وأنه جلس عند رأس منابت القني<sup>٣</sup> وأمرهم باجتذاب قناة من تلك القني - وسبيله سبيل القصب في التفافه وأصله مثل الدن وأغلظ وإذا حط رأس القناة استجابت حتى تقارب الأرض فإذا تُركت عادت إلى حالها - فجذب رأس قناة غليظة حتى قربت منه ثم شذبها ضفائره شداً وثيقاً ثم أخذ الخنجر وهو كالنار في سرعتها فقال لهم: إني قاطع رأسي به فإذا بان عن بدني فأطلقوه من ساعته فساأضحك إذا عادت القناة برأسي إلى موضعها وتسمعوا قهقهة يسيرة. فعجز أهل الساحل عن أن يصنعوا مثل ذلك. ولقد أخبرنا بهذا من لا نتهمه وهو اليوم متعارف إذ كانت هذه البلاد من الهند تقرب من بلاد العرب وأخبارها متصلة بهم في كل وقت.

١ ب: يفوح. ٢ ح: يتغير. ٣ ح: القنا هنا وفيها بعد.

of his head ablaze and giving off the reek of burning flesh, but he does not alter his pace or show any fear, until at last he reaches the pyre, leaps into the flames, and is burned to ashes.

An informant who was present when one of these men was intending to enter the fire reported that, when he was on the point of doing so, the man took a dagger, placed the point of it at the top of his abdomen<sup>149</sup> and, with his own hand, ripped himself open down to below the navel. He plunged his left hand into his innards, grasped his own liver and pulled out as much as he could, speaking all the while, then sliced off a piece of the liver and handed it to his brother—all to demonstrate his contempt of death and his ability to bear pain—and finally launched himself into the flames and into God's damnation.

This same informant also maintained that, in the uplands of this region, live a group of Indians who, in their pursuit of the pointless and idiotic, resemble the Kanīfiyyah and the Jalīdiyyah in our lands, and that they and the coastal people are gang rivals. Men from the coast, the informant stated, continually go to the uplands and challenge the uplanders to match them in trials of endurance; similarly, the uplanders go and challenge the men of the coast. For example, an uplander went to the coastal people to issue such a challenge. A crowd gathered around him, some of them onlookers and some of them gang members. The uplander demanded that the gang members do what he was about to do; if they could not, they would have to admit defeat. The challenger then went and sat at the edge of some bamboo thickets and told the people to bend one of the bamboo stems downwards. Now, these bamboos are all tangled together like reeds, but their bases are as thick as large storage jars, or thicker;<sup>150</sup> if the top of a bamboo is pushed downwards, the stem will respond by bending nearly to the ground, and if it is let go, it will spring back to its upright position. So the top of a thick bamboo was duly bent down until it was by the man. He then tied his long plaited hair to the stem with a tight knot, took a dagger—theirs have blades that cut as swift as fire—and said to the onlookers, "I am going to cut off my head with this dagger. The moment it is separated from my body, let it go. And as soon as the bamboo has sprung back to its upright position, taking my head with it, I will laugh out loud, and you will hear a short burst of chuckling." The men of the coast were unable to emulate his act.<sup>151</sup> We have heard this account from someone we do not suspect of lying; indeed, the story is now common knowledge, because these regions of India are close to Arab lands, and such accounts reach the Arabs from there all the time.

2.10.2

*Rival gangs among the Indians, and their extraordinary challenges to each other*

ومن شأنهم إذا أخذت السن من رجالهم ونسايهم وضعفت حواسهم أن ٣،١١٠،٢  
يطالب من صار في هذه الحال منهم أهله بطرحه في النار أو تعريقه في الماثة  
منهم بالرجعة. وسبيل موتاهم الإحراق.

وقد كان بجزيرة سرنديب وبها جبل الجواهر ومغاص اللؤلؤ وغيره يُقدّم الرجل ١،١١،٢  
الهندي على دخول السوق ومعه الجزبي<sup>١</sup> وهو خنجر لهم عجيب الصنعة مُرَهَفٌ  
فيضرب بيده إلى أجل تاجر يقدر عليه يأخذ بتلايبه ويشهر الخنجر عليه ويُخرجه  
عن البلد في مجمع من الناس لا يتهيأ لهم فيه حيلة وذلك أنه متى أريد انتزاعه منه  
قتل التاجر وقتل نفسه. فإذا خرج عن البلد طالبه بالفدية وتبع التاجر<sup>٢</sup> من يفتديه  
بالمال الكثير. فدام ذلك بهم مدة من الزمان حتى ملكهم ملكٌ أمر بمن فعل  
ذلك من الهندان يؤخذ على أية حال كان فعِلَ ذلك فقتل الهندي التاجر وقتل  
نفسه. فجرى هذا على جماعة منهم وتلفت فيه أنفس الهند وأنفس العرب فلما وقع  
البأس انقطع ذلك وأمن التجار على أنفسهم.

والجواهر الأحمر والأخضر والأصفر مخرجه<sup>٣</sup> من جبل سرنديب وهي جزيرة ٢،١١،٢  
وأكثر ما يظهر لهم في وقت المدود يدرجه الما عليهم من كهوف ومغارات  
ومسائل مياه لهم عليها أرصاد للملك. وربما استنبطوه أيضاً كما تستنبط المعادن  
فيخرج الجواهر ملصقاً بالحجارة فيكسر عنه.<sup>٤</sup>

ولملك هذه الجزيرة شريعة ومشايخ لهم مجالس كجالس محدثينا يجتمع إليهم الهند ٣،١١،٢  
فيكتبون عنهم سير أنبيائهم وسنن شرايعهم. وبها صنمٌ عظيم من ذهب إبريز  
يُفرط البحرئون في مبلغ وزنه وهياكل قد أنفق عليها أموال عظيمة. وبهذه الجزيرة

١ ح وخ: الجزبي. ٢ التاجر: ساقطة في خ. ٣ ح: مخزجة. ٤ كذا في ب؛ خ: فتكسر عنه.

It is a feature of the Indians, when old age saps the strength of their men and women and their faculties become impaired, that someone in this state will ask his family to put him alive on a pyre or drown him in water, such is their trust in the return of their souls to another body. Their custom is to cremate the dead.

2.10.3

*Voluntary euthanasia among the elderly*

#### Accounts of the Island of Sarandīb and of the Region of al-Aghbāb, Which Faces It

In the island of Sarandīb (where the mountain of gems, the pearl fishery, and so on are situated) certain Indian men<sup>152</sup> used to make so bold as to go into the market armed with the *jazbī*, a type of dagger of theirs, superbly crafted and finely honed; they would lunge at the most eminent merchant they could get hold of, grab him by the collar, pull the dagger on him, then march him out of town—and all in the middle of a crowd of people who could do nothing at all to stop him, because, if they tried to snatch the merchant from him, the abductor would kill both his captive and himself. Once away from town, the abductor would demand a ransom from the merchant, and someone would come after the latter and pay a large sum of money to secure his release. These kidnappings went on for a period of time, until a king ascended the throne who gave orders that any Indian committing this crime should be captured, whatever the cost. This was acted upon, and the Indian kidnapper would kill the merchant and then himself. The same happened to a considerable number of them, and the lives of both the Indian kidnappers and the Arab merchants were lost as a result. Then, when fear had befallen everyone, the abductions ceased, and the merchants felt safe again.

2.11.1

*The abduction of merchants*

The source from which their red, green, and yellow gemstones emerge is the Mountain of Sarandīb.<sup>153</sup> Sarandīb is an island, and the gems mostly appear to the people at times when the tide is high: water causes the stones to tumble down to them out of their caves, grottos, and watercourses, and these places are kept under surveillance by the king. Also, they sometimes mine the gems in the same way that minerals are mined; they come out embedded in rock, which has to be chipped away.

2.11.2

*Gemstones and how they obtain them*

The king of this island has a code of religious law and a corps of legal scholars specializing in it: they hold sessions like those of our scholars of hadith, in which the Indians<sup>154</sup> gather to take down from the scholars' dictation the lives of their prophets and the laws contained in their legal codes.

2.11.3

*Religions in Sarandīb*

جمع من اليهود كثير ومن ساير الملل وبها أيضاً شَوِيَّةٌ والملك يسبح لكل فريق منهم ما يتشرع به.

وتحاذي<sup>١</sup> هذه الجزيرة أغبابٌ واسعةٌ - ومعنى الغب<sup>٢</sup> الوادي العظيم إذا أفرط<sup>٣</sup> ٤، ١١، ٢ في طوله وعرضه وكان مصبُّه إلى البحر - يسير المجتازون في هذا الغب المعروف بغب سرنديب شهرين وأكثر في غياض ورياض وهو معتدل. وفي فوهة هذا الغب البحر المعروف بهركند. وهو نزه<sup>٤</sup> المكان الشاة فيه بنصف درهم وما يشرب جمع من الرجال من الشراب المطبوخ من عسل النخل بحب<sup>٥</sup> الداذي<sup>٦</sup> الرطب بمثل ذلك.

وأكثر أعمالهم القمار بالديكة والنرد. والديكة عندهم عظيمة الأجسام وافرة<sup>٧</sup> ٥، ١١، ٢ الصياصي يستعملون لها من الخناجر الصغار المرفهة ما يُشدُّ على صياصيتها ثم تُرسل. وقمارهم في الذهب والفضة والأرضين والبنات<sup>٨</sup> وغير ذلك فيبلغ الديك<sup>٩</sup> الغالب جملة من الذهب.

وكذلك لعبهم بالنرد دائم على خطرٍ واسع حتى أن أهل الضعف منهم ومن لا مال له ممن يذهب إلى طلب الباطل والفتوة ربما لآعب في أنامله فيلعب وإلى جنبه شي قد جعل فيه من دهن الجوز أو دهن السمسم - إذ كان الزيت معدوماً عندهم - وتحت نار تحميه وبينهما فأس صغيرة مشحونة. فإذا غلب أحدهما صاحبه وضع يده على حجر وضرب القامر بالفأس أنملة المقمور فأبانها ووضع المقمور يده في الدهن وهو في نهاية الحرارة فيكويها. ولا يقطعه ذاك عن المعاودة في اللعب فرمما افترقا وقد بطلت أناملهما جميعاً.

ومنهم من يأخذ الفتيلة فينقعها في الدهن ثم يضعها على عضو من أعضائه ويشعل النار فيها فهي تحترق ورائحة اللحم تقوح وهو يلعب بالنرد لا يظهر منه جزع<sup>١٠</sup>.

١ ح وخ و ر: محاذي. ٢ كذا في ب هنا وفيما بعد: والمتعارف عليه الغب بالضم. ٣ ح: ترة. ٤ ح وخ و ر: النحل. ٥ الداذي: كذا في ب؛ وهو الداذي. ٦ ح وخ و ر: والبنات.

There is also a huge idol of pure gold, about whose weight sailors make stupendous claims, and temples on which huge sums of money are spent.<sup>155</sup> On this island, too, are large communities of Jews and followers of other religions, as well as Dualists. The king permits each of these denominations to live by its own laws.

Facing this island are some wide *ghubbs*, *ghubb* meaning the course of a large river, provided it is extremely long and broad and has an outflow to the sea. People going along the particular *ghubb* known as the Ghubb of Sarandīb can travel for two months and more through woods and meadows where the climate is moderate. At the mouth of this *ghubb* lies the sea known as Harkand. It is a salubrious place; a sheep costs half a dirham there, and the drink prepared from palm “honey” with fresh hypericum seeds costs the same.<sup>156</sup>

2.11.4

*The Ghubb of  
Sarandīb, and the  
blessings of that land*

Their most frequent occupation is gambling at cock fights and backgammon. Their cocks have large bodies and well developed spurs; in addition, the people make use of sharpened miniature daggers, which they lash on to the birds’ spurs before letting them loose. They gamble for gold, silver, land, slavegirls,<sup>157</sup> and other stakes, and a champion cock can be worth a huge amount of gold.

2.11.5

*Gambling among the  
people of this land*

Similarly, their backgammon games are always played for very high stakes, to the extent that the indigent and penniless types among them, if they are the sort who go looking for ways to waste time and display their machismo, sometimes gamble their own fingertips away. This type of gambler, when he plays, keeps a container beside him into which walnut or sesame oil has been poured—olive oil is not to be found in their land—and beneath which a flame burns, heating the oil; between the two players lies a small, sharp ax. When one of them defeats his fellow player, the latter puts his hand on a stone, then the winner strikes one of the loser’s fingertips with the ax and chops it off. The loser then dips his hand in the oil, which is now extremely hot, and cauterizes it. Nor does this stop him going back to the game; indeed, the players sometimes part having both lost all their fingertips.

Some players will also take the wick of a lamp, soak it thoroughly in the oil, place it on one of their limbs, then set fire to it. The wick smoulders away and the smell of burning flesh wafts about, while the player continues his backgammon game apparently undismayed.

والفساد في هذا الموضع فاش في النساء والرجال غير محظور حتى أن تجار البحر ٦.١١.٢  
ربما دعا الواحد منهم ابنة ملكهم فتأثبه إلى غياضهم يعلم أبيها. وكان مشايخ أهل  
سيراف يمنعون من الجهاز إلى هذه الناحية وخاصة الأحداث.

وأمر اليسارة التي تكون ببلاد الهند - وتفسيرها المطر - فإنهم يدوم عليهم في ١٠.١٢.٢  
الصيف ثلاثة أشهر تباعاً ليلاً ونهاراً لا يمسك الشتاء عنهم بته. وقد استعدوا  
قبل ذلك لأقواتهم فإذا كانت اليسارة أقاموا في منازلهم لأنها معمولة من خشب  
مكتسة<sup>٣</sup> السقوف مظلة بمحشائش لهم فلا يظهر أحد منهم إلا لهم على أن أهل  
الصناعات يعالجون صنائعهم في هذه الأماكن هذه المدة. وربما عفت أسافل  
أرجلهم في هذا الوقت.

بهذه اليسارة عيشهم وإذا لم تكن هلكوا لأن زراعتهم الأرض لا يعرفون غيره ولا  
قوت لهم سواه إنما يكون في هذا الوقت في حرامات<sup>٤</sup> لهم طريحاً لا يحتاجون إلى  
سقي ومعانة ومعنى الحرامات منابت الأرض عندهم. فإذا انكشفت السماء عنهم  
بلغ الأرض النهاية في الربيع والكثرة. ولا يمطرون الشتاء.

وللهند عبادة وأهل علم يعرفون بالبراهمة وشعراء يغشون الملوك ومنجمون وفلاسفة ٢.١٢.٢  
وكهان وأهل زجر للفران<sup>٥</sup> وغيرها وبها سحر وقوم يظهرون التخيل ويدعون فيها  
وذلك بقنوج خاصة وهو بلد عظيم في مملكة الجزر<sup>٦</sup>.

وبالهند قوم يعرفون باليكرجيين<sup>٧</sup> عراة قد غطت شعورهم أبدانهم وفروجهم ٣.١٢.٢  
وأظفارهم مستطيلة<sup>٨</sup> كالحراب إذ كانت لا تقص إلا ما ينكسر منها وهم على

١ ح وخ: فاته. ٢ ح: لا تمسك السماء. ٣ مكتسة: كذا في ب؛ ولعل المقصود: مكتنة أي ذات كُنْ بارزة.

٤ ح: حرامات. ٥ خ: للفران. ٦ ح و ر: الجوز؛ خ: الحوز. ٧ ب: اليكرجيين. ٨ ب: مستطيلة.



Sexual immorality is rife in this place, among both women and men, and is not prohibited. It even happens that one of the seagoing merchants will sometimes invite a daughter of the king of these people to an assignation, and she will come to him in the forests, with the full knowledge of her father. The religious scholars in Sīrāf used to forbid their people from going on trading voyages to this region, and particularly the young men.

2.11.6

*The sexual immorality of the people of this land*

## General Accounts of India Continued

Concerning the *yasārah* that occurs in India, meaning the monsoon rain, it falls on their land continuously throughout the summer, for three consecutive months, night and day, the rainfall never letting up at all.<sup>158</sup> They lay in their basic provisions in advance of it, and, when the *yasārah* comes, they stay put in their houses, because they are solidly built of wood and have roofs which they keep swept with brooms<sup>159</sup> and which are thatched with certain types of native grass. No one ventures out, except for some pressing need; craftsmen, however, ply their trades in these places throughout the period of the rains. Sometimes the soles of their feet rot in this season.

2.12.1

*Monsoon rains and the cultivation of rice*

Their livelihood depends on this *yasārah*; if it fails, they perish. This is because they grow rice alone: they know no other crop, and have no other staple food. The rice grows only at this time in their *ḥarāms*, thrown down haphazardly, with no need for them to irrigate it or take care of it (*ḥarāms* meaning “rice fields” in their language). When their skies become clear at the end of the monsoon rains, the rice is at its most abundant and plentiful. In winter, no rain falls on their land.

Among the Indians are religious devotees and men of learning known as brahmans, as well as poets who frequent the courts of kings, astrologers, philosophers, soothsayers, and those who take auguries from the flight of crows and other birds.<sup>160</sup> In India there are also conjurors and illusionists who are masters of their art; they are particularly to be found at Qannawj, a large city in the kingdom of al-Jurz.

2.12.2

*Brahmans, conjurors, and others*

In India there is a group known as the *bīkarjīs*. They are naked, although their hair is so long that it covers their upper bodies and pudenda. They let their fingernails grow as long as spearheads, for they are never clipped, or only if they get broken, and they live a life of wandering. Each of them wears a cord around his neck from which a human skull is suspended. When one of them becomes unbearably hungry he stops at the door of one of the Indians,

2.12.3

*The bīkarjīs*



سبيل سياحة. وفي عنق كل رجل منهم خيط فيه جمجمة من جماجم الإنس<sup>١</sup> فإذا اشتدّ به الجوع وقف بباب بعض الهند<sup>٢</sup> فأسرعوا إليه بالأرر المطبوخ مستبشرين به فيأكل في تلك الجمجمة فإذا شبع<sup>٣</sup> انصرف فلا يعود لطلب الطعام إلا في وقت حاجته.

واللهند ضروب من الشرايع يتقربون بها زعموا<sup>٤</sup> إلى خالقهم - جلّ الله وعزّ عما<sup>٥</sup> ٤، ١٢، ٢ يقول الظالمون علواً كبيراً - منها أن الرجل يبتني في طرقتهم الخان للسابلة ويقيم فيه بقالاً يبتاع المجتازون منه حاجتهم ويقيم في الخان فاجرة من نساء الهند يُجري<sup>٥</sup> عليها لينال منها المجتازون وذاك عندهم مما يُثابون عليه.

وبالهند قباب يُعرفون<sup>٦</sup> بقباب البد والسبب فيه أن المرأة إذا نذرت نذراً وولّدها جارية جميلة أتت بها البد وهو الصنم الذي يعبدونه فجعلتها له. ثم اتخذت لها في السوق بيتاً وعلقت عليه سترًا وأقعدتها على كرسي ليحتاز بها أهل الهند وغيرهم من سائر الملل ممن يتجاوز في دينه فتمكّن من نفسها بأجرة معلومة. وكلما اجتمع لها شيء من ذلك دفعته إلى سدنة الصنم ليُصرف في عمارة الهيكل. والله جلّ وعزّ نحمده على ما اختار لنا وطهرنا من ذنوب الكفرة به.

فأما الصنم المعروف بالمولتان وهو قريب المنصورة فإنه يُقصد من مسيرة أشهر<sup>٥</sup> ٥، ١٢، ٢ كثيرة ويحمل الرجل منهم العود الهندي القامروي - وقامرون بلد يكون فيه فاخر العود - حتى يأتي به إلى هذا الصنم فيدفعه إلى السدنة لبخور الصنم. ومن هذا العود ما قيمة المئاة<sup>٧</sup> منه مائة دينار وربما ختم عليه فانطبع الخاتم فيه للدونة فالتجار يبتاعونه من هؤلاء السدنة.

وبالهند عباد في شرايعهم يقصدون إلى الجزائر التي تحدث في البحر فيغرسون<sup>٦</sup> ٦، ١٢، ٢ بها النارجيل ويستنبطون بها المياه للأجر وإن يجتاز بها المراكب فتنال منها.

١ ح وخ: الأنس. ٢ ح: الهند. ٣ ح ور: أشبع. ٤ ح: فيما زعموا. ٥ ح: يجري. ٦ يُعرفون: كذا في ب. ٧ خ: المن. ٨ ح: ما بقي.

and they rush out to him bringing cooked rice, for they regard his coming as a blessing. He eats the rice out of the skull, and when he has had enough he goes away and will not ask for food again until he feels the need for it.

The Indians have various sorts of religious practices by which they propitiate, or so they claim, their Creator—glorious is God, and exalted far beyond what the evildoers say!<sup>161</sup> One of these practices is for someone to build a roadside shop for travelers and to install in it a shopkeeper from whom passers-by can buy what they need and to install in the same shop an Indian woman as a prostitute. The builder of the shop pays her expenses, and passing travelers can enjoy her favors. This “benefaction” they consider an act for which they will be divinely rewarded.

2.12.4

*Roadside prostitutes and “idol prostitutes”*

In India there are also prostitutes known as “idol prostitutes.”<sup>162</sup> The reason for this is that, if a woman who has made a vow gives birth to a pretty baby daughter, she takes it to the *budd*—that is, the idol that they worship—and dedicates her daughter to it.<sup>163</sup> In time, she finds her daughter a room in the market, hangs a curtain over the door, and sits the girl on a chair in front of the curtain. This is so that Indians and others of all sects may call on her—those, that is, who allow themselves such license in their religion—and the girl will make herself available for a standard fee. Whenever her takings reach a certain amount, she hands them over to the idol’s sacristans to be spent on the fabric of the temple. And God, glorious and mighty is He, we praise for the guidance He chose for us and by which He purified us from the sins of the unbelievers!

Regarding the idol known as al-Mūltān, which is near al-Manṣūrah, devotees will travel for many months to visit it. A visitant will carry with him Indian aloewood of the Qāmarūnī variety (Qāmarūn is a region in which excellent aloewood is found) in order to bring it to this idol and present it to the sacristans for the censuring of the idol. This aloewood can be worth two hundred dinars a maund,<sup>164</sup> and it is sometimes so saturated with resin that one can press a seal ring into the wood and it will retain the impression. Merchants buy it from these sacristans.<sup>165</sup>

2.12.5

*The idol of al-Mūltān*

In India there are certain pious people whose religious practices include that of traveling to the islands that are created in the sea, planting coconut palms on them and providing sources of freshwater, all with a view to divine reward. If ships put into these islands, they can enjoy the benefits of the palms. Indeed, in Oman there are shipwrights who travel to these islands

2.12.6

*The blessings of the coconut palm*

وَبَعْمَانُ مَن يَقْصِدُ إِلَى هَذِهِ الْجَزَائِرِ الَّتِي فِيهَا النَّارِجِيلُ وَمَعَهُمْ آلَاتُ النِّجَارَةِ<sup>١</sup> وَغَيْرُهَا فَيَقْطَعُونَ مِنَ خَشَبِ النَّارِجِيلِ مَا أَرَادُوا فَإِذَا جَفَّ قُطْعَ الْوَاحِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ مَن لَيْفَ النَّارِجِيلِ مَا يَخْرُزُونَ بِهِ ذَلِكَ الْخَشَبِ وَيَسْتَعْمِلُونَ مِنْهُ مَرْكَبًا وَيَنْخَتُونَ مِنْهُ أَدْقَالًا وَيَنْسَجُونَ<sup>٢</sup> مِنْ خَوْصِهِ شَرَاغًا وَمَنْ لَيْفِهِ خَرَابَاتٍ وَهِيَ الْقُلُوسُ عِنْدَنَا. فَإِذَا فَرَّغُوا مِنْ جَمِيعِهِ سَخَّتِ الْمَرَائِبُ بِالنَّارِجِيلِ فَقُصِدَ بِهَا عَمَانُ فَبِيعَ وَعَظُمَتْ بَرَكَتُهُ وَمَنْفَعَتُهُ إِذْ كَانَ جَمِيعُ مَا يَتَّخِذُ مِنْهُ غَيْرَ مُحْتَاجٍ إِلَى غَيْرِهِ.

وَبِلَادُ الرِّبْحِ وَاسِعَةٌ وَكُلُّ مَا يَنْبِتُ فِيهَا مِنَ الدُّرَةِ وَهُوَ أَقْوَاتُهُمْ وَقَصْبُ السَّكَّرِ وَسَائِرُ<sup>١،١٣،٢</sup> الشَّجَرِ فَهُوَ أَسْوَدُ عِنْدَهُمْ. وَلَهُمْ مَلُوكٌ يَغْزُونَ<sup>٣</sup> بَعْضُهُمْ بَعْضًا وَعِنْدَ مَلُوكِهِمْ رِجَالٌ يُعْرِفُونَ بِالْمُخَرَّمِينَ قَدْ خُرِّمَتْ أَنْوْفُهُمْ وَوُضِعَ فِيهَا حَلَقٌ وَرُكِّبَ فِي الْحَلَقِ سِلَاسِلٌ فَإِذَا كَانَتْ الْحَرْبُ تَقَدَّمُوا وَقَدْ أَخَذَ بِطَرْفِ كُلِّ سِلْسَلَةٍ رَجُلٌ يَجْذِبُهَا وَيَصُدُّهُ عَنِ التَّقَدُّمِ حَتَّى تَسْفُرَ السَّفَرَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ وَإِنْ وَقَعَ الصِّلْحُ وَالْأَشُدُّ تِلْكَ السِّلَاسِلُ فِي أَعْنَاقِهِمْ وَتُرْكُوا وَالْحَرْبُ فَلَمْ تَقُمْ لَهُمْ قَائِمَةٌ وَلَمْ يَزَلْ أَحَدُهُمْ عَنْ مَرْكَبِهِ دُونَ أَنْ يُقْتَلَ.

وَلِلْعَرَبِ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ هَيْبَةٌ عَظِيمَةٌ فَإِذَا عَايَنُوا رِجَالًا مِنْهُمْ سَجَدُوا لَهُ وَقَالُوا: هَذَا مِنْ مَمْلَكَةٍ يَنْبِتُ بِهَا شَجَرُ التَّمْرِ لِلْجَلَالَةِ التَّمَرُ عِنْدَهُمْ وَفِي قُلُوبِهِمْ.

وَلَهُمْ الْخُطْبُ وَلَيْسَ فِي الْأُمَمِ كُتُوبًا يَتْلَوْنَ بِالسَّنَنِ. وَفِيهِمْ مَن يَتَعَبَّدُ وَيَسْتَتِرُ<sup>٢،١٣،٢</sup> بِجِلْدِ نَمْرٍ أَوْ جِلْدِ قُرْدٍ وَيَأْخُذُ بِيَدِهِ عَصًا وَيَقْبَلُ نَحْوَهُمْ فَيَجْتَمِعُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْهُمْ جَمْعٌ فَيَقِفُ عَلَى رِجْلِهِ يَوْمًا إِلَى اللَّيْلِ يَخْطُبُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَيَذْكُرُهُمْ بِاللَّهِ جَلَّ ذِكْرُهُ وَيَصِفُ لَهُمْ أُمُورَ مَنْ هَلَكَ مِنْهُمْ.

١ ح وخ و ر: النجار. ٢ وينسجون: في هامش ب بخط الناسخ، تصحيحاً لـ (يقتلون) في المتن. ٣ ب: يغزوا. ٤ وإن: كذا في ح وخ: ر: فإن؛ غير واضحة في ب. ٥ ح: له.

where the coconut palms are, bringing with them carpentry tools and other equipment. They fell as much coconut wood as they want; when it is dry, it is sawn into planks. Next, using the coconut fiber, they twist enough cordage to sew together the planks they have sawn, and use them to build the hull of a ship.<sup>166</sup> They then hew masts from the coconut wood, weave sails from its fronds, and use its fiber to twist what they call *kharābāt*, which are cables in our parlance. When they have finished all this, the ships are loaded with coconuts and sailed to Oman, where the nuts are sold. The blessings and advantages of the coconut palm are great indeed, for all these products come from it and do not need to be supplemented from any other source.

### The Land of the Zanj

The land of the Zanj is extensive. All the millet that grows there and is their staple food, as well as the sugar cane and other plants—all their varieties of these crops are black in color. They are ruled by kings who raid each other. These kings have warriors known as the Pierced Ones, whose noses are pierced and fitted with rings to which chains are attached. In time of war they advance; each chain, however, has a man holding on to the other end of it and tugging at it—this is to hold the warriors back from advancing until envoys have gone out to mediate between the two sides. If peace is made, there the matter ends; if not, the warriors are let loose with the chains bound around their necks, and battle is joined. Nothing can stand up to these fighters, and nothing less than death itself will cause one of them to desert his post.

2.13.1

*Crops, warriors, and the awe in which the Arabs are held*

The Zanj feel great awe in their hearts for the Arabs. If they catch sight of an Arab, they prostrate themselves before him and say, “This man is from a kingdom where the date tree grows!” This is because of the prestige that dates enjoy, both in their land and in their hearts.

The Zanj have a talent for sermons; indeed, no other nation has preachers like theirs, when they preach in their own tongues. There are those of them who devote themselves to a life of piety; wearing the skin of a leopard or a monkey and holding a staff, such a man will approach the people, and a crowd will gather around him. He will then stand there, remaining on his feet all day until nightfall, preaching to them, calling on them to keep God in their minds—may His honorable name be exalted—and describing to them the fate of their people who have died.

2.13.2

*Zanj preachers*