The ADVENTURES of IBN BATTUTA

A Muslim Traveler of the 14th Century

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10 Malabar and the Maldives

> And in this land of Malabar there are Moors in great numbers . . . They are rich, and live well, they hold all the sea trade and navigation in such sort that if the King of Portugal had not discovered India, Malabar would already have been in the hands of the Moors, and would have had a Moorish King.[1]
>
> Duarte Barbosa

About 1340, 15 ambassadors representing Toghon Temur, the Mongol emperor of the Yuan Dynasty of China, arrived at the court of Delhi.[2] Commercial ties between China and the sultanate may have been the main business of the mission, since the Yuan emperors were pursuing a vigorous overseas trade policy. Ibn Battuta's explanation of the event is that the delegation came to seek permission of Muhammad Tughluq to have a Buddhist shrine constructed at a town about 80 miles east of Delhi.[3] The sultan declined to authorize the project, and this was the message he wished his special envoy to carry to Peking. Ibn Battuta claims that the sultan chose him for this honor because he knew his *qadi* loved "to travel and go abroad." This is hardly a convincing rationale for appointing an ambassador to the largest and most populous kingdom in the world. Perhaps Muhammad thought the peripatetic Moroccan would have the energy and motivation to persevere in the mission despite the hardships of a long sea voyage. And perhaps he wished to maximize the prestige of the embassy by selecting an Arab, a pious scholar of the Prophet's race, to represent him. (Ibn Battuta was an Arab in his literate culture, though Berber in ethnic origin.)

Whatever the reason, the ex-*qadi* was taking on a greater weight of official responsibility than he ever had before. Not only was he required to get himself to Peking and back, he also had to transport, and safeguard with his life, an entire caravan of royal presents for the Yuan emperor. The Chinese emissaries had earlier arrived in Delhi with 100 slaves and cartloads of fine clothing,

brocade, musk, and swords, compliments of Toghon Temur. Muhammad Tughluq naturally felt obliged to reciprocate with an even more magnificent array of gifts. The list included 200 Hindu slaves, songstresses, and dancers, 15 pages, 100 horses, and wondrous quantities of choice textiles, robes, dishware, and swords.

Ibn Battuta left Delhi at the head of his mission in late summer, probably 2 August 1341.[4] His companions included the 15 Chinese gentlemen, who were returning home, and two officials of the sultanate besides himself. One of them was Zahir al-Din al-Zanjani, a scholar of Persian origin. The other was a eunuch named Kafur, who held the title of *shurbdar*, or cupbearer, and had day-to-day responsibility for overseeing the slaves and the bullock carts laden with the imperial presents. Al-Tuzari was also along, as well as other unnamed individuals among Ibn Battuta's personal friends, old comrades, and concubines. Muhammad al-Harawi, one of the sultan's *amirs*, led a troop of 1,000 horse to escort the embassy from Delhi to the coast. The plan of travel was to march southward along the government trunk road to Daulatabad, then make for the western coast at Cambay (Kinbaya), the chief port of Gujarat. From there the mission would take ship for Calicut on the Malabar coast of South India. At Calicut they would board ocean-going junks to carry them across the Bay of Bengal to China. The landward itinerary from Delhi to Cambay was hardly the most direct route possible, as Daulatabad lay some 240 miles southeast of that port. Sultan Muhammad may have given his envoy official business in Daulatabad that the *Rihla* fails to mention, or perhaps he instructed the caravan to make an appearance there as a symbolic show of Delhi's continuing authority in the Deccan.

If Ibn Battuta had undertaken this mission eight or ten years earlier, that authority would have been relatively secure and the journey all the way to Gujarat accomplished in safety. By the 1340s, however, the conditions of travel, even under armed escort, had changed drastically. Seven years of famine, repeated rebellion, and disastrous government had left the rural areas of what remained of the empire more and more difficult to control. Hindu insurgency and brigandage had become endemic outside the walls of the garrison towns, even in the Ganges heartland. Traffic on the high roads connecting the major cities was even more susceptible to interference than when Ibn Battuta had his first encounter with Hindu dacoits on his way to Delhi in 1334.

The embassy had left the capital only a few days when it ran into

trouble and came near to losing its leader. Arriving at Koil (modern Aligarh), a city in the Doab plain about 75 miles southeast of Delhi, a report reached the company that a force of Hindu insurgents was laying siege to the nearby town of Jalali. Riding immediately to the rescue, al-Harawi's cavalry escort caught the rebels by surprise. Although outnumbered four to one, the troops made short bloody work of the assailants, killing, according to Ibn Battuta, all 4,000 of them and capturing their horses and weapons. The imperial force lost 78 men, including Kafur, the cupbearer. At this point Ibn Battuta decided that he should send a messenger to inform the sultan about what happened and ask him to dispatch a replacement for the unfortunate Kafur. In the meantime the mission would wait in Koil for a reply from Delhi. Since the district was apparently in a state of alarm and Hindu bands continued to raid the outskirts of Jalali, al-Harawi and his men joined forces with the local commander to undertake counter-insurgency sweeps through the local countryside.

Riding into the Doab one morning in the heat of August, Ibn Battuta and a party of his comrades intercepted a rebel band that was just then retreating after an attack on one of the villages near Jalali. The Muslims gave chase but in the confusion of the pursuit Ibn Battuta and five of his men became separated from their companions. Suddenly a force of Hindus on foot and horse sprang from a wood. The six men scattered and Ibn Battuta found himself alone. Ten of the assailants pursued him at full gallop across the fields, then all but three fell away. Twice he was forced to stop and dismount, first to pick a stone from his horse's hoof, then to recover one of his swords, which had bounced out of its scabbard. His pursuers closing in, he eluded them by driving away his mount and hiding at the bottom of a deep ditch.

When his enemies had finally given up trying to find him, he started off on foot to find his way back to safety. Going only a short distance, he was confronted again, this time by 40 bowmen, who promptly robbed him of his remaining sword and everything else he had with him except his shirt, pants, and cloak. The brigands then led him to their camp and put him under guard. Ibn Battuta did not speak any Hindi, but he succeeded in communicating with two Indo–Muslims in the camp who knew some Persian, telling them a little about himself but wisely concealing his status as an officer of Delhi. The two men let him know that, whoever he was, he was certainly to be killed, and it soon became

apparent that his three guards, one of them an old man, had been instructed to do the job whenever they were so disposed.

The assassins, however, seemed to lack resolve. After keeping their prisoner in a cave throughout the night, they returned in the morning to the robber camp, which was by this time deserted. Here they sat throughout the day, the captors working up the nerve to do their deed, Ibn Battuta sweating in mortal fear that each breath was to be his last. Then at nightfall three of the bandits suddenly returned and demanded to know why the prisoner had not been dispatched. The guards had no satisfactory answer, but one of the young brigands, perhaps admitting the pointlessness of executing a man who had already given up his possessions, suggested that as far as he was concerned the foreigner could go free. Jumping at this change of events, Ibn Battuta offered the man his expensive tunic in thanks, accepted an old blue loincloth in return, and bolted into a nearby bamboo forest.

Alive but alone again and completely lost in a fairly heavily populated district whose hostility toward representatives of Muhammad Tughluq was all too apparent, he wandered the countryside for six days, avoiding villages, sleeping under trees or in abandoned houses, and subsisting on well water and herbs. At one point he eluded a band of 50 armed Hindus by hiding all day in a cotton field. On the seventh day, exhausted and starving, he entered a village in desperation, but when he begged for something to eat, one of the locals threatened him with a sword, searched him, and stole his shirt.

Then on the eighth day salvation came. After having escaped from the Hindu village with nothing but his trousers, the fugitive found himself beside a deserted well. He was just cutting one of his boots into two pieces, after having lost its mate down the well while trying to draw water with it, when a dark complexioned man suddenly appeared, offered him some beans and rice, and revealed that he too was a Muslim. The man invited Ibn Battuta to accompany him and even insisted on carrying him on his back when the exhausted wanderer's legs gave out. Reciting a verse from the Koran over and over as they plodded along, Ibn Battuta finally fell asleep. When he awoke, his mysterious benefactor had disappeared, but he found himself in a village with a government officer in residence who warmly took him in, fed him, and gave him a bath and a suit of clothes.

Learning from his Muslim host that the village they were in was

only six or seven miles from Koil, Ibn Battuta immediately sent a message to his comrades. In a day or two a party of them arrived to collect their foot-weary ambassador, astonished and jubilant that he was still alive. He then learned that during his absence the sultan had sent an official named Sumbul to replace the dead Kafur and that the mission was to proceed on its way.

> I also learned that my companions had written to the sultan informing him what had befallen me and that they had regarded the journey as ill-omened on account of the fate which I and Kafur had met in the course of it and that they intended to return. But when I saw the sultan's injunctions ordering us to prosecute the journey I pressed them to prosecute it and my resolution was made firm.

Thus undaunted by his ordeal, he led his embassy on to Daulatabad without further incident. The caravan appears to have followed more or less the main government route to the erstwhile southern capital, a road fastidiously kept up to ensure rapid courier and military communication between Delhi and the Deccan. From the fortress city of Gwalior on the southern edge of the Ganges plain, the company trekked southwesterly across the Malwa plateau to Ujjain, the chief commercial entrepôt on the direct route from Delhi to Cambay. From there they crossed the Vindhya Hills, descending the steep southern scarp near Dhar to the Narmada River, the traditional historic dividing line between the cultural worlds of North India and the Deccan. South of the Narmada they crossed the wooded Satpura Range, probably by way of the Burhanpur Gap, the famous pass through which the armies of the Turks had repeatedly invaded South India. The last stretch of the journey took them from the Tapti River through the richly cultivated tableland of northern Maharashtra to Daulatabad.[5]

There the mission was the guest of Qutlugh Khan. He had been Muhammad Tughluq's governor of the Deccan provinces since 1335, commanding his territories from the spectacular citadel of Deogir set atop a granite, cone-shaped rock rising 800 feet above the surrounding plain. Defended by a perpendicular scarp 80 to 120 feet high on all sides, the castle could be reached only by passageways and staircases hewn out of the solid rock. An outer wall two and a half miles around enclosed the city of Daulatabad,

which lay to the south and east of the keep. Despite its abandonment as the capital of the empire, the town appears from the *Rihla*'s brief description to have been prospering from trade and from the tax revenues of the densely populated Maharashtra countryside. Yet not much more than two years after Ibn Battuta's visit, a band of army officers would rise in rebellion, seize the great fort, and in 1347 found another independent Muslim kingdom, the Bahmani. And so, as the Maghribi traveler made his way out of the Sultanate of Delhi, it progressively collapsed behind him.

The embassy probably stayed in Daulatabad only a few days, then continued northwesterly through Maharashtra, across the Tapti and Narmada rivers again, and thence along the eastern lowland shore of the Gulf of Cambay into the region of Gujarat.

The fair city of Cambay stood on the northern shore of the Mahi River estuary where it flows into the head of the gulf. Walking among the bazaars and imposing stone houses of the port, Ibn Battuta found himself for the first time in a decade in the familiar cultural world of the Arabian Sea. The sultanate had ruled Cambay since the early part of the century, but the soul of the city was more kindred to Muscat, Aden, or Mogadishu than to Daulatabad or Delhi. It was indeed one of the great emporia of the Indian Ocean. "Cambay is one of the most beautiful cities as regards the artistic architecture of its houses and the construction of its mosques," Ibn Battuta recalls. "The reason is that the majority of its inhabitants are foreign merchants, who continually build there beautiful houses and wonderful mosques — an achievement in which they endeavor to surpass each other." Many of these "foreign merchants" were transient visitors, men of South Arabian and Persian Gulf ports, who migrated in and out of Cambay with the rhythm of the monsoons. But others were men with Arab or Persian patronyms whose families had settled in the town generations, even centuries, earlier, intermarrying with Gujarati women and assimilating everyday customs of the Hindu hinterland. Ibn Battuta visited Cambay just at a time when these dark-skinned, white-shirted Gujarati traders were venturing abroad in increasing numbers, founding mercantile colonies as far away as Indonesia and creating a diaspora of commercial association that would continue on the ascendancy in the Indian Ocean until the time of the Portuguese.[6]

The ambassador spent a few days in the town as the guest of the governor and some of the religious lights, then led his company

back along the eastern shore of the gulf to the port of Gandhar (Qandahar) at the mouth of the Narmada. Owing to the shallowness of the upper gulf, Cambay could not accommodate sea-going ships, so it was normal practice for them to put in either at Gandhar or at another port, which lay directly across the gulf.[7] Agents of the sultan had apparently made advance arrangements with the local ruler of Gandhar, a Hindu tributary, to provide the delegation with four ships for the voyage down the coast to Malabar. As usual Ibn Battuta has virtually nothing to tell us about the architecture of these vessels. Certainly they were all two-masted "dhows" with stitched hulls, the same general type of ships Ibn Battuta had sailed along the coasts of Africa and Arabia. Three of them were ordinary cargo ships, but large ones, since they had to have room for the Great Khan's presents, including the 100 horses and 215 slaves and pages. The fourth vessel was a type of war galley. Ibn Battuta's ship, one of the three merchantmen, carried a force of 100 soliders to defend the mission against the Hindu pirates who habitually lay in wait along the western coast. Fifty of the warriors were archers. The others were black spearmen and bowmen, representatives of a long tradition of African fighting men taking service on the larger trading ships of the Indian Ocean.[8]

Embarking from Gandhar, the four ships put in briefly at two other gulf ports. Then, turning due south, the little fleet made for the Arabian Sea. If the time was about December, they ran briskly before the northeast monsoon under clear skies and a placid sea.

When Ibn Battuta visited the East African coast more than a decade earlier, he had found a series of petty maritime principalities competing with one another for long-distance trade between the sea basin and the uplands of the interior. Along the west coast of India the political pattern was similar. From the southern frontier of Gujarat to Cape Comorin at the tip of the subcontinent, he counted twelve trading states strung out along the narrow coastal lowlands. The Turkish sultans may have claimed suzerainty over some of these little kingdoms, but the peaks and ridges of the Western Ghats, which ran the length of peninsular India 50 to 100 miles inland, effectively prevented Delhi from exerting direct authority on the coast south of Gujarat, excepting sporadic intervention in a few of the more northerly ports.[9] From Delhi or Daulatabad, imperial cavalry could reach

the northerly coast, called the Konkan, only by squeezing their way through rugged woodland passes usually guarded by belligerent Hindu chieftains. The great ports of Malabar, on the southerly shore, were more easily accessible from the interior but much too far from the centers of Turkish power to make sustained military pressure feasible. No doubt Muhammad Tughluq pined to conquer the coastal territories, but in fact the commercial needs of the empire were better served by leaving the sea towns to carry on their business in peace.

The summer monsoons, blowing up against the Ghats, emptied heavy rains on the coastal lowlands, producing a lush tropical economy startlingly different from that of the interior plateaus. In medieval times the maritime towns exported rice, coconuts, gemstones, indigo and other dyes, and finished textiles. Among the spice exports, black pepper was king in the overseas trade. The forests of the steep western slopes of the Ghats, the only region of dense woodland anywhere around the rim of the Arabian Sea, produced the teakwood with which most of the oceanic trading ships were built. The major ports all had busy shipbuilding industries, and Indian teak was exported to the Persian Gulf, Arabia, and northeast Africa to meet the general needs of those wood-starved regions.

The natural landfall for ships making the long hauls across the Arabian Sea or the Bay of Bengal was southwest India. The largest and richest west coast towns were in Malabar, partly because of their relatively broad agricultural hinterland, their pepper crop, and their links to the populous interior of South India, but also because they served as the main transshipment centers for goods moving between the western and eastern halves of the Indian Ocean. Trade from the China Seas westward across the Bay of Bengal was carried mainly in Chinese junks. These great ships were structurally capable of sailing safely from one end of the Indian Ocean to the other, but the normal pattern, at least until the early fifteenth century, was for them to go only as far west as Malabar. There, goods in transshipment were carried in lateen-rigged vessels to all the countries of the Arabian Sea. Thus Malabar was the hinge on which turned the inter-regional seaborne trade of virtually the entire Eastern Hemisphere.

Almost all the transit trade of the west coast (as well as that of both Ceylon and the southeastern coast of India, called Coromandel) was in the hands of Muslims. The rulers of nearly all

the maritime states, however, were Malayalam- or Tamil-speaking Hindus. The populations of the hinterlands were Hindu as well, or, in the case of Ceylon, Buddhist. Arab and Persian merchants had been settling on those shores since Abbasid times, but by the later medieval period most west coast Muslims were racially Indian, notwithstanding some cherished strain linking them to the prestigious Arabo–Persian center. Moreover, the culture of the towns, like the ports of East Africa, represented a complex, long-simmering synthesizing of native and alien elements, that is, traits and practices responsive to the requirements of the Sacred Law inter-penetrating with local Hindu customs, styles, dress, and cuisine. The Hindu *rajas* of the coastal states left their Muslim subjects to worship as they wished, indeed encouraged it, since the rulers' power and wealth depended almost entirely on customs revenues and the profits of their personal transactions in the maritime trade. We may suppose that the government of these cities was nothing less than a working partnership between the *rajas* and the leading Muslim merchants.

For three days out of the Gulf of Cambay Ibn Battuta's four ships made good speed along the Konkan coast, the dark green wall and sheared-off summits of the Western Ghats looming off the port beam. Bypassing Chaul, Sandapur (Goa), and other busy ports which lay on little bays or the estuaries of rivers flowing from the mountains, the fleet finally put in at Honavar (Hinawr), a town on the stretch of coast known as North Kanara.

Derelict in modern times, Honavar in the fourteenth century was a thriving port with a typical Indo–Muslim coastal culture, its children, according to Ibn Battuta, dutifully attending a choice of 36 Koranic schools, its Muslim women wearing colorful saris and golden rings in their nostrils. Jamal al-Din Muhammad, the ruler of the town, was, exceptionally enough, a Muslim, though under vassalage to the Hindu king of the Hoysalas state, whose center was in the interior.[10] Ibn Battuta describes Jamal al-Din as one of "the best and most powerful rulers" on the coast, possessing a fleet of ships and a force of horsemen and infantry so impressive that he could command annual tribute from the ports of Malabar as "protection" against seaborne attack. In the three short days the mission rested up in Honavar and restocked the ships, Jamal al-Din fêted his distinguished visitor in the correct and predictable ways and introduced him to the local notables. But more than that,

a friendship of sorts seems to have been sparked between the two men. At least it was a relationship Ibn Battuta would be eager to draw on a few months later when he returned to the town under drastically different circumstances.

South of Honavar along the Kanara and Malabar coasts, the towns became progressively larger and more affluent. This was black pepper country and the land where the commercial dominions of the dhow and the junk made their crucial connection. Perhaps because the sailing season to China was still a few months off and the urban scene along the south Kanara and Malabar shores notably worth investigating, the embassy cast anchor and enjoyed the local hospitality at eight different ports, including Mangalore (Manjurur) and Cannanore (Jurfattan).[11]

Then, about three weeks out of Honavar, the little convoy arrived off Calicut to a warm official reception. The dignitaries of the city, both Muslim and Hindu, came out to meet the mission, Ibn Battuta says, with "drums, trumpets, horns, and flags on their ships. We entered the harbor amid great ovation and pomp, the like of which I have not seen in these parts." The ambassador and his associates were given houses as guests of the *zamorin*, or prince, of Calicut and settled in for three months of leisure, since no ships would embark for East Asia until March, that is, near the end of the northeast monsoon season.[12] In the meantime the *zamorin* made advance arrangements for the delegation to travel to China on a large ocean-going junk and one smaller vessel (or possibly more) that would accompany it. The Chinese envoys, who had been travelling with Ibn Battuta up to this point, were to make plans to return home on a separate ship.

Ibn Battuta saw 13 junks wintering at Calicut, their corpulent hulls and multiple soaring masts dwarfing even the largest lateen-rigged vessels in the harbor. These were the ocean liners of the medieval age, artifacts of the great technological leap forward achieved in China between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. Not only Ibn Battuta, but other travelers of the time, including Marco Polo, made clear their preference for sailing on junks over the creaky, sewn-together ships of the Arabian Sea. The shell of a junk was built of double-superimposed timbers attached with iron nails to several transverse bulkheads, dividing the hull into a series of watertight compartments that prevented the ship from sinking even if it were pierced below the water line in more than one place. A large junk might step five masts or more. The lug-type

fore-and-aft sails were aerodynamically more efficient and far easier to maneuver than the lateen type. They were made of bamboo matting stiffened with battens, or laths, which gave them their characteristic ribbed appearance. Unlike lateen sails, they could be reefed and furled with ease by means of a complex arrangement of sheets. The tautness, variety, and adjustability of the sails permitted a junk to make headway under almost any wind condition. Medieval junks were all equipped with stern rudders, the efficient way of steering a ship that was becoming known in the Mediterranean world only near the end of the thirteenth century.

Ibn Battuta was so impressed with Chinese ships that he even rouses himself in the *Rihla* to offer a word or two about their nautical design. He was most interested, naturally, in the comforts they offered traveling notables like himself. The dhows of the western sea were only partially decked or not decked at all, and if some vessels had a rudimentary cabin or two, most of the passengers were expected to brave the elements the whole time they were at sea. Owing to bulkhead construction, which distributed weight evenly on the hull, ocean-going junks could support as many as five decks, as well as numerous enclosed cabins for the convenience of the more affluent passengers. Some of the rooms even had private lavatories, a convenience far superior to the little seat hooked over the side of a dhow. Fire-fighting equipment, steward service, lifeboats, and common rooms for the passengers added to the comfort and safety of a voyage across the eastern sea. Ibn Battuta, man of private pleasures that he was, informs us that

> a good cabin has a door which can be bolted by the occupant, who may take with him his female slaves and women. Sometimes it so happens that a passenger is in the aforesaid residential quarters and nobody on board knows of him until he is met on arriving at a town.

He also claims that the crew of a sizable junk might number 1,000 men, counting both sailors and fighting marines. He may exaggerate, but within tolerable limits since Odoric of Pordenone, the Latin monk who traveled through South Asia earlier in the century, reports that he sailed out of Malabar on a junk with "seven hundred souls, what with sailors and merchants."[13] Ibn Battuta says that in his time junks were built exclusively in the southern Chinese ports of Canton (Kuang-Chou) or Zaitun

(Ch'üan-chou). Owing to the Yuan policy of encouraging foreign participation in the sea trade, however, the owners and captains of the ships, as well as the big merchants, were more often than not Muslims of Indian, Arab, or Persian descent.

Astonishing as they were in cargo capacity and technical efficiency, these "whales" of the sea, as the Chinese called them, could be simply too big and too rigid for their own safety if they chanced to blow into shallows or reef-infested waters. There was some truth in Ibn Battuta's remark that "if a ship nailed together with iron nails collides with rocks, it would surely be wrecked; but a ship whose beams are sewn together with ropes is made wet and is not shattered."

And so he discovered as his grand embassy to China was suddenly aborted in tragedy off Calicut harbor. What exactly happened the *Rihla* does not make entirely clear. As the day for the mission to embark arrived, probably sometime in Feburary 1342,[14] a minor difficulty arose over accommodations. Chinese merchants, it seems, had reserved in advance all the best cabins on the large junk the embassy was to board, and the Sultan of India's ambassador was going to have to settle for a more modest room, one with no lavatory. Ibn Battuta had his luggage and entourage put aboard but then decided the following morning that the cabin was simply unsuitable and far too small. The ship's agent, a Syrian gentleman, suggested that the best solution might be for the envoy and his personal retinue to travel on the *kakam*. This was a somewhat smaller junk-type vessel that would accompany the larger ship, but it had good cabins available.[15] Ibn Battuta thought this compromise was all right and so ordered his servants, concubines, personal friends, and belongings to be transferred. However, Zahir al-Din and Sumbul, the other officers of the mission, remained on the larger vessel along with the slaves, horses, and presents destined for Peking. Meanwhile Ibn Battuta spent the day in Calicut attending Friday prayer.

Then that evening a storm came up. Calicut harbor was not a deep, sheltered bay but a shallow roadstead. Recognizing the danger of riding at anchor close to shore, the captains of the junk, the *kakam*, and a third large vessel quickly put out to sea. Throughout the night Ibn Battuta waited helplessly on the beach and the next morning watched in horror as the two larger ships went aground in the shallows, broke up, and sank. Some of the passengers and crew on one of the junks were saved, but no one

survived on the vessel he himself was to have boarded the previous day. On Sunday morning the bodies of Zahir al-Din and Sumbul washed ashore, the one with his skull broken in, the other with an iron nail piercing his temples. The slaves, pages, and horses were all drowned, and the precious wares either sank or washed up on the beach, where the *zamorin*'s gendarmes struggled to prevent the townsfolk from making off with the loot. Meanwhile, the captain of the *kakam* steered his ship safely out to sea and, not wanting to risk entering the harbor again, sailed southward down the coast. On board were Ibn Battuta's baggage, servants, and concubines, one of these women carrying her master's child.

Alone on the Calicut shore, the lofty ambassador found himself suddenly reduced to the status of a penniless *faqih*. He had nothing to his name, save his prayer rug, the clothes on his back, and ten dinars an old yogi had given him. But for all that, he was fortunate to be alive. And it seems he still had the company of al-Tuzari and perhaps one or two other companions. Even more hopeful, there was still a chance of catching up with the *kakam*. The vessel, he was told, was almost certain to put in at the port of Quilon (Kawlam) 180 miles down the coast before sailing away from India altogether. So, hiring a Muslim porter to carry his carpet for him, he made his way to Quilon, traveling this time by riverine craft that plied the lagoons and interconnecting canals paralleling the southern Malabar shore.

After ten miserable days in the company of the porter, who turned out to be a quarrelsome drunkard, he arrived in the city, not to the applause of the local *raja*'s court, but to a modest reception in a Sufi hospice, the usual refuge of an anonymous wanderer. Much to his surprise his old associates, the Chinese envoys, turned up while he was there. They had left Calicut somewhat before the sea tragedy had occurred, but they had also barely escaped with their lives when their own ship ran aground. The Chinese merchants resident in Quilon helped them out with clothes and assistance and later sent them home on another junk. The forlorn ex-ambassador, however, waited in vain for his *kakam* to show up and after several hopless days in the Sufi lodge decided to move on.

But where indeed was he to go? "I wanted to return from Quilon to the sultan," he remembers, "in order to tell him what had happened to the gifts. But I feared that he would condemn me, saying 'Why did you separate yourself from the presents?'"[16]

If the mission's two other officials, together with the slaves, horses, and magnificent wares all went to the bottom of the sea, why was the Maghribi so shiftless in his duty that he failed to go down with them? Knowing well that his wish to travel in private comfort with his slave girls was hardly a convincing explanation for not boarding the junk, and perhaps imagining his head affixed to a pole or his skin stuffed with straw hanging from the wall of Jahanpanah palace, he concluded easily enough that, no, he would not return to Delhi. He did, however, need a patron to restore him to a position of dignity and perhaps give him a job while he waited for news of the *kakam* or figured out some new plan. The closest and most likely seigneur was Jamal al-Din Muhammad, the pious Sultan of Honavar and the only Muslim ruler on the southwestern coast of India.

Returning to Calicut, he found there a fleet of ships belonging to Muhammad Tughluq himself. They were *en route* to the Persian Gulf to recruit more Arab notables for service in the sultanate. Ibn Battuta struck up an acquaintance with the chief of the expedition, a former chamberlain in the Delhi government, who advised him to stay away from the capital but invited him to accompany the fleet as far up the coast as Honavar. Ibn Battuta gladly accepted the offer and sailed northward out of Calicut sometime around 1 April 1342.[17]

If he expected Jamal al-Din of Honavar to elevate him at once to a high office on the strength of the imperial rank he had held the first time he visited the town, he was to be a bit disappointed.

> He quartered me in a house where I had no servant and directed me to say prayers with him. So I sat mostly in his mosque and used to read the Koran from beginning to end every day. Later on, I recited the whole Koran twice daily . . . I did this without a break for three months, of which I spent forty consecutive days in devotional seclusion.

While the Moroccan *faqih* quietly passed a steaming summer on the Kanara coast in a bout of spiritual renewal, Sultan Jamal al-Din busied himself plotting the violent overthrow of his neighbor, the *raja* of Sandapur. Wars between the little maritime states of the west coast do not appear to have occurred very often in medieval times. Conflict was terrible for trade, and in any case none of the petty princes had armies or fleets large enough to

sustain control over long stretches of the coast for indefinite periods of time. Yet a fortuitous opportunity to seize a neighboring port and milk its customs revenues might be too tempting to pass up. As the *Rihla* explains it, an internal struggle had broken out within the ruling family of Sandapur, a fine port located on an island in the estuary of a river about 90 miles north of Honavar. (In 1510 Sandapur would become Goa, capital of Portugal's seaborne empire in Asia.[18]) A son of the *raja* of Sandapur, scheming to wrest the throne from his father, wrote a letter to Jamal al-Din, promising to embrace Islam if the sultan would intervene on his side in the quarrel. Once victory was achieved, the new *raja* would marry the sultan's sister, sealing an alliance between the two towns. Forthwith, Jamal al-Din outfitted a war fleet of 52 ships, two of them built with open sterns to enable his cavalry to make a rapid amphibious assault on Sandapur beach.

Weary of inactivity and perhaps hoping to ingratiate himself with his patron by some more vigorous show of homage, Ibn Battuta had the idea of offering his services to the expedition. He claims that Jamal al-Din was so pleased with his proposal that he put him in charge of the campaign, though we may presume the office was more or less honorific. Preparations complete, the fleet set sail from Honavar on 12 October 1342.[19]

> On Monday evening we reached Sandapur and entered its creek and found the inhabitants ready for the fight. They had already set up catapults. So we spent the night near the town and when morning came drums were beaten, trumpets sounded and horns were blown, and the ships went forward. The inhabitants shot at them with the catapults, and I saw a stone hit some people standing near the sultan. The crews of the ships sprang into the water, shield and sword in hand . . . I myself leapt with all the rest into the water . . . We rushed forward sword in hand. The greater part of the heathens took refuge in the castle of their ruler. We set fire to it, whereupon they came out and we took them prisoner. The sultan pardoned them and returned them their wives and children . . . And he gave me a young female prisoner named Lemki whom I called Mubaraka. Her husband wished to ransom her but I refused.

Having acquitted himself well in this day-long holy war and even acquired part of the living spoils, Ibn Battuta remained at

Sandapur for about three months in the company of Jamal al-Din, who seems to have been in no hurry to turn the town over to his Hindu ally, the *raja*'s son. Then about the middle of January 1343[20] Ibn Battuta decided to take leave of his patron and travel back down the coast in search of information on the fate of the *kakam*. On this trip he visited once again most of the ports he had seen the previous year, including Calicut, and spent "a long time," perhaps a few months, in Shaliyat (Shalia), a famous Malabar weaving town.

Then, returning to Calicut, he came upon two of his own servants who had been aboard the *kakam* and had somehow made their way back to Malabar. The news was bad. The ship had sailed to the Bay of Bengal, apparently without stopping at Quilon, and after reaching Indonesia had been seized by an infidel ruler of Sumatra. The concubine who was carrying Ibn Battuta's child had died, and the other slave girls, as well as his possessions, were in the hands of this king. The mystery of the *kakam* finally settled in more tragedy, he returned immediately to Sandapur, arriving there in June 1343.[21]

However, any expectation he had of taking up an official career in the service of Jamal al-Din soon ended in yet another disaster. Sometime in August the deposed *raja* of Sandapur, who had escaped at the time of the invasion, suddenly reappeared with a Hindu force, rallied the peasants of the hinterland, and laid siege to the town. Most of Jamal al-Din's troops, apparently unaware of an impending attack, were scattered in the surrounding villages and could not get back into the city to defend it. Having attached himself to Jamal al-Din in victory, Ibn Battuta saw no reason to stick by him in defeat, a point of view in the best tradition of Muslim public men, for whom loyalty to one sultan or another was of no great importance. In the thick of the assault, he somehow managed to get past the siege line and headed down the coast again, perhaps this time by land. In a few weeks he reached Calicut, entering that city now for the fifth time.[22]

Sometime during the months following the Calicut tragedy, he decided to try to visit China on his own. His prospects for a career on the west coast of India were no longer encouraging, he could not return to Delhi, and he had no immediate urge to make another pilgrimage to Mecca. Moreover, he knew that he could find hospitality among the Muslim maritime communities all along the sea routes to the South China coast. He even had a potential

entrée to the Yuan government through the 15 Chinese diplomats, who were presumably then on their way home. His plan would be to make a brief tour of the Maldive Islands ("of which I had heard a lot"), continue to Ceylon to see the famous religious shrine of Adam's Peak, then cross over to the southeastern coast of India to visit the Sultanate of Ma'bar, whose ruler was married to a sister of Hurnasab, the ex-wife Ibn Battuta had left back in Delhi. From there he would go on to Bengal, Malaysia, and China.

After staying in Calicut for an unspecified time, perhaps some months, he met up with a sea captain from Honavar named Ibrahim and took passage on his ship bound for Ceylon and Ma'bar by way of the Maldives.[23] The idea of visiting this outlying tropical archipelago on his way to the Bay of Bengal was not such an erratic scheme as it might appear, even though the islands lay about 400 miles west and a bit south of Ceylon. Sea-going ships trading eastbound from the Arabian Sea could not sail through the Palk Strait that divided the subcontinent from Ceylon owing to the extremely shallow reef called Adam's Bridge that traversed the channel. Rather, they had to go around the southern tip of Ceylon. For traffic moving both east and west, the Maldive atolls were close enough to this route to be drawn into the international commerce between the western and the eastern seas. Shuttle trade between Malabar and the Maldives seems to have been very regular in medieval times. Moreover, the islands exported two commodities that were of major importance in the trans-hemispheric economy. One was coir, or coconut fiber rope, used to stitch together the hulls of the western ocean dhows. The other was the shells of the little marine gastropod called the cowrie, which were used as currency as far east as Malaysia and as far west as the African Sudan.

The people of the Maldives (Dhibat al-Mahal) were a brown-skinned fishing and sea-trading folk. They spoke Divehi, a language closely related to Sinhalese, evidence of ancient sea-borne migrations from Ceylon. About the middle of the twelfth century they had been converted from Buddhism to Islam. In the *Rihla* Ibn Battuta recounts the legend, told even today by old men of the islands, of Abu l'Barakat, a pious Berber from the Maghrib who rid the land of a terrible demon (*jinni*) and brought the people to the faith of the Prophet.[24] Each month the fiend had arisen from the sea and demanded a young virgin to ravish and kill. When Abu l'Barakat arrived in the islands and heard about the

situation, he offered to go to the idol house where the sacrifice took place and substitute himself for the girl. He seated himself in the temple and recited the Koran through the night. As he expected, the demon refused to approach him out of fear of the Sacred Word. When Abu l'Barakat repeated this feat a second time a month later, the king of the islands razed the infidel shrines and ordered that the new faith be propagated among his subjects. Behind the veil of this heroic myth may be discerned the coming and going of Muslim merchants in the Maldives from as early as Abbasid times and the incorporation of the islands into the commercial network of the western ocean. Since North African and Andalusian Muslims seem to have been more active in the India trade in the eleventh and twelfth centuries than they were later on, there was nothing implausible about a Berber turning up to introduce the faith.[25]

Approaching the Maldives from Malabar, Ibn Battuta may have blinked in wonder at the sight of tall coconut palms apparently growing directly out of the sea. He was to discover that the islands rise barely a few feet above the surface of the ocean and that not a single hill is to be found on any of them. Stretching 475 miles north to south like a string of white gems, the Maldives are divided into about twenty ring-shaped coral atolls. Each of these clusters of islands and tiny islets is grouped more or less around a central lagoon. With the help of a Maldivian pilot who knew his way through the dangerous reefs that surrounded the islands, Captain Ibrahim put ashore at Kinalos Island in the northerly atoll of Malosmadulu.[26] As usual, the visiting *faqih* immediately found lodging with one of the literate men of the place.

For all the tropical charm of the Maldives and their people, Ibn Battuta had no other intention than to play the tourist for a few weeks and get on with his planned itinerary. As soon as he arrived, however, he got fair warning that a different fate lay ahead. The islands were politically united, and had been since pre-Islamic times, under a hereditary king who ruled in a reasonably benign spirit in collaboration with his extended royal family and a small class of titled noblemen. The Maldives had no real towns, but the center of government was on the mile-long island of Male located about midway in the chain of atolls. At the time Ibn Battuta arrived, the monarch happened to be a woman, Rehendi Kabadi Kilege, called Khadija, the nineteenth in the line of Muslim rulers. Female succession to the throne was unusual in Maldivian history,

and in fact Sultana Khadija's administration was thoroughly dominated by her husband, the Grand Vizier Jamal al-Din (not the same man of course as the Sultan of Honavar). Aside from island governors and other secular officials, the queen appointed Muslim judges and mosque dignitaries and expected them to uphold the standards of the *shari'a*.

However, the man who held the position of chief *qadi* at that time was not given much credit for ability. No sooner had Ibn Battuta set foot on Kinalos and revealed himself to be a scholar of refinement and worldly experience than one of the educated men there told him he had better not go to Male if he did not want the grand vizier to appoint him as judge and oblige him to stay on indefinitely. Ibn Battuta was no doubt better qualified for this job than he had been for his magistracy in Delhi. Not only was Arabic, rather than Persian, the language of jurisprudence and literate prestige in the islands, but the Maliki *madhhab*, Ibn Battuta's own legal school, was practiced. The existence of a Maliki community in the Indian Ocean is odd, but if the men who introduced Islam to the Maldives were North Africans, they would have brought their Maliki learning with them. (In the sixteenth century the islanders would shift to the Shafi'i *madhhab*, which made more sense in the context of sustained maritime connections with Malabar and the other Muslim lands around the Arabian Sea.[27])

Anchoring his ship off Kinalos Island probably some time in December 1343,[28] Captain Ibrahim hired a small lateen-rigged boat of the sort the Maldivians used in inter-island trade and set off for Male with Ibn Battuta and several unnamed companions aboard. As soon as they arrived, they went the short walk to the wooden, thatched-roof palace to be introduced to Queen Khadija and Grand Vizier Jamal al-Din. Captain Ibrahim, who had been in the islands before, guided the other visitors in the peculiarities of Maldivian ceremonial:

> When we arrived in the council-hall — that is, the *dar* — we sat down in the lobbies near the third entrance . . . Then came Captain Ibrahim. He brought ten garments, bowed in the direction of the queen and threw one of the garments down. Then he bowed to the grand vizier and likewise threw another garment down; subsequently he threw the rest . . . Then they brought us betel and rose-water, which is a mark of honor with them. The grand vizier lodged us in a house and sent us a repast consisting

of a large bowl of rice surrounded by dishes of salted meat, fowl, quail, and fish.

Ibn Battuta had learned by experience that Muslim rulers whose kingdoms lay in the outer periphery of the Dar al-Islam were always avid to attract the services of *'ulama* with previous links to the great cities and colleges of the central lands. He had also learned that once a scholar developed a public reputation for pious learning, his royal benefactor might use more than simple persuasion to prevent him from moving somewhere else. In order to forestall any complications over his own timely departure, Ibn Battuta decided to say nothing to the Maldivians about his legal background and enlisted Captain Ibrahim to honor the secret. The sultans of Delhi had never had the slightest authority, symbolic or otherwise, in the Maldives, but the small-time nobility of the islands nevertheless looked upon the empire with fear and awe. Any former high official of the sultanate who turned up in the atolls would have to carry a heavy load of distinction and might even stir up a certain apprehension.

For about the first ten days of his visit Ibn Battuta managed to preserve his secret, as he and his companions explored the coconut groves of the island and enjoyed the hospitality of the government. But then a ship arrived from Ceylon carrying a group of Arab and Persian Sufis. Some of them happened to know Ibn Battuta from his Delhi years and immediately let the cat out of the bag. The Moroccan visitor, the queen and her court were told, had been an important *qadi* in the service of the mighty Muhammad Tughluq. The grand vizier was delighted at the news. Here was a celebrity who should be specially honored and must not be allowed to escape the islands too easily or too soon!

To his dismay, but also, the tone of the *Rihla* makes clear, to his vain satisfaction, Ibn Battuta was suddenly the center of attention. At first Jamal al-Din tried to flatter him into staying on Male with gifts and preferments. He invited him to the nightly feasts of Ramadan in the queen's palace. He gave him a piece of land and offered to build him a house on it. He sent him slave girls, pearls, and golden jewelry. Ibn Battuta accepted all this fuss with grim courtesy, but he was in no mood to revise his travel plans, even less so when he fell seriously ill for some weeks, possibly with the malaria that was endemic in the islands.[29] As soon as he recovered sufficiently to move about, he tried to hire passage on an outbound

ship, but Jamal al-Din made it impossible for him by obstructing the financial arrangements. Finally he had to conclude that the grand vizier was going to keep him on Male whether he liked it or not. Under such circumstances as these, it was better to negotiate his fate voluntarily than to be coerced into service. Presenting himself before Jamal al-Din, he gave his word that he would remain in the islands indefinitely, making the condition, however, that he would not go about Male on foot and that the Maldivian custom of allowing only the vizier to appear publicly on horseback (the queen rode in a litter) would in his case have to be set aside.

The brashness of this demand was the first sign that Ibn Battuta's sojourn in the Maldives was to be unlike any of his other traveling adventures. His years in India reveal plainly that he had political ambition. But there he had been a relatively small fish in a large, shark-infested pond. Among the ingenuous Maldivians, however, his prestigious connections to the sultanate gave him a status of eminence out of all proportion to the power he had actually exercised in Delhi. Once he agreed to stay in the islands, he seems to have determined to capitalize on his reputation and throw himself into politics. To be sure, the upper-class factional quarrels of this remote equatorial paradise had something of a comic opera quality about them in contrast to the majestic affairs of the sultanate or the Mongol kingdoms. Nevertheless, Ibn Battuta became a very big man in the Maldives for a few fleeting months, and he is at pains to have the reader of the *Rihla* understand that this was the case. Even though the account of his involvement is disjointed, incomplete, and ambiguous, he reveals more about his personal social and political relations there than he does in connection with any of his other experiences, including his years in Delhi. There is no reason to doubt that he became deeply enmeshed in the rivalries of the Maldivian nobility, even to the point where, if things had gone his way, he might have ended his traveling career there in a position of lasting power.

In February 1344, probably less than two months after his arrival, he married a woman of noble status.[30] She was the widow of Sultan Jalal al-Din 'Umar, who was the father (by another marriage) and a predecessor of Queen Khadija. This noblewoman also had a daughter who was married to a son of the grand vizier. Marriage among the governing families of the Maldives was as much a political tool as it was in any other kingdom in that age. Ibn Battuta, like other scholars who circulated among the cities and

princely courts of Islam, sought marriage as a way of gaining admission to local elite circles and securing a base of social and political support. By wedding this woman (whose name is never mentioned in the *Rihla*, though he says he found her society "delightful"), he allied himself to both the royal family and the household of the grand vizier.

Jamal al-Din had in fact urged the marriage on him and as soon as it was consummated invited his new cousin to fill the office of chief judge of the realm. Ibn Battuta pleads rather coyly in the *Rihla* that "Jamal al-Din compelled me against my will to accept the *qadi*'s post," but he hardly discouraged his own candidacy when he criticized the incumbent judge for being "absolutely no good at anything." Ibn Battuta makes it plain that once he got the job he used the office to wield considerably more power over other men than he ever had in his opulent sinecure in Delhi:

> All sentences proceed from the *qadi*, who is the most influential man with them, and his orders are carried out like those of the sultan or even more punctiliously. He sits on a carpet in the council-hall and has three islands, the income which he appropriates for his personal use according to an old custom.

In the absence of any independent observation, we cannot know how much he may have inflated his power in the islands for the benefit of admiring readers of the *Rihla*. He claims, in any case, to have gone about his judicial practice in the same spirit of orthodox zeal that had prompted him to expose the errant bath operators in that Nile town of Upper Egypt 18 years earlier. "When I became *qadi*," he reports triumphantly, "I strove with all my might to establish the rule of law," implying that the Maldivian bumpkins had much to learn about rigorous canonical standards and that he was just the man to rid the kingdom of "bad customs." Among his reforms, he ordered that any man who failed to attend Friday prayer was to be "whipped and publicly disgraced." He strove to abolish the local custom that required a divorced woman to stay in the house of her former husband until she married again; he had at least 25 men found guilty of this practice "whipped and paraded round the bazaars." At least once he sentenced a thief to have his right hand severed, a standard *shari'a* judgment that nonetheless caused several Maldivians present in the council hall to faint dead away. In one matter, however, the populace refused to conform to his idea of scriptural propriety. Most of the women, he relates,

> wear only a waist-wrapper which covers them from their waist to the lowest part, but the remainder of their body remains uncovered. Thus they walk about in the bazaars and elsewhere. When I was appointed *qadi* there, I strove to put an end to this practice and commanded the women to wear clothes; but I could not get it done. I would not let a woman enter my court to make a plaint unless her body were covered; beyond this, however, I was unable to do anything.

When the zealous magistrate was not hearing cases in the council chamber or ferreting out derelictions of Koranic duty, he was busy building up his network of political alliances with the chief families and making a high place for himself in the pecking order of power. Within a short time of his first marriage, he wed three more women, four being the most wives a man could have according to Islamic law. His second wife was the daughter of an important minister and great granddaughter of a previous sultan. His third was a widow of Queen Khadija's brother and immediate predecessor. His fourth was a step-daughter of 'Abdallah ibn Muhammad al-Hazrami, a nobleman who had just been restored to a ministerial position after having spent a period of time in exile on one of the outer islands for some unnamed transgression against the state. "After I had become connected by marriage with the above-mentioned people," Ibn Battuta tells us bluntly, "the vizier and the islanders feared me, for they felt themselves to be weak."

Despite the unity of Maldivian government, the political claustrophobia of tiny Male coupled with the fragmented geography of the kingdom encouraged both factional intrigues and dissidence.[31] The *Rihla* makes it apparent that the grand vizier, the de facto ruler, did not have the whip hand over his nobility and could not fully control the actions of political cliques. Ibn Battuta's recounting of the events that led to his precipitous departure from the islands is subjective and episodic and leaves the reader of the narrative straining to discern the deeper currents of the political drama. He leaves no doubt, however, that he had not been a figure in the royal court for very long before he began to make enemies. Vizier 'Abdallah, the minister who had returned from temporary exile, seems to have regarded him as an *arriviste* and a threat to his own position of power. The two men got on badly from the start, clashing over symbolic matters of precedence and

protocol that concealed a far more serious rivalry for influence in the kingdom. As Ibn Battuta explains it, and we will never know anyone else's side of the story, 'Abdallah and certain of his kinsmen and allies plotted to turn the grand vizier against his new *qadi*, and they finally succeeded. A nasty row broke out between Ibn Battuta and Jamal al-Din over a legal judgment involving a sordid affair between a slave and a royal concubine. The grand vizier accused Ibn Battuta of insubordination and called him before the ministers and military officers assembled in the palace.

> Usually I showed him the respect due to a ruler, but this time I did not. I said simply "*salamu 'alaikum.*" Then I said to the bystanders, "You are my witnesses that I herewith renounce my post as *qadi* as I am not in a position to fulfill its duties." The grand vizier then said something addressing me, and I rose up moving to a seat opposite him, and I retorted in sharp tones . . . Thereupon the grand vizier entered his house saying, "They say I am a ruler. But look! I summoned this man with a view to making him feel my wrath; far from this, he wreaks his own ire on me."

On the heels of this stormy confrontation, Ibn Battuta paid off his debts, packed up his luggage, divorced one of his wives (probably 'Abdallah's step-daughter), and hired a boat to take him to Captain Ibrahim's ship, which was at that moment in the southern region of the atolls. Yet far from washing his hands of the Maldive government and sailing off in an offended huff, he reveals, tantalizingly and obscurely, that he was playing for bigger stakes than merely the independence of his authority as *qadi*. Describing his departure from Male, he writes in the *Rihla*, as if adding a forgotten detail,

> I made a compact with the vizier 'Umar, the army commander, and with the vizier Hasan, the admiral, that I should go to Ma'bar, the king of which was the husband of my wife's [that is, Hurnasab's] sister and return thence with troops so as to bring the Maldive islands under his sway, and that I should then exercise the power in his name.[32] Also I arranged that the hoisting of the white flags on the ships should be the signal and that as soon as they saw them they should revolt on the shore.

Then he adds rather disingenuously, "Never had such an idea occurred to me until the said estrangement had broken out between

the vizier and myself." He also hints that Jamal al-Din had at least a suspicion of this astonishing plot, but the vizier's own political position had apparently weakened so much that he could not risk arresting his *qadi*. Whatever Jamal al-Din's fears may have been, the threat of an invasion was not entirely far-fetched, for the Chola empire of South India had conquered the islands in early medieval times.[33]

As it turned out, Ibn Battuta left Male without further incident and sailed in several days' time to Fua Mulak (Muluk) island, which lay near the southern end of the archipelago just across the equator.[34] Here Captain Ibrahim's ship awaited him. Ibn Battuta had sailed out of Male with three wives in his company, but he divorced them all in a short time. One of these women, the wife of his first Maldive marriage, fell seriously ill on the way to Fua Mulak, so he sent her back to Male. Another he restored to her father, who lived on Fua Mulak. He offers no explanation for his divorcing the third woman, though she was pregnant. He stayed on Fua Mulak for more than two months, and there he married, and presumably divorced, two more women. Quite apart from his political motives in taking a total of six wives during his sojourn in the islands, such transitory alliances reflected the custom of the country:

> It is easy to marry in these islands because of the smallness of the dowries and the pleasures of society which the women offer . . . When the ships put in, the crew marry; when they intend to leave they divorce their wives. This is a kind of temporary marriage. The women of these islands never leave their country.[35]

Ibn Battuta made a brief trip back to Male in the company of Ibrahim in order to help the captain iron out a dispute he had with the inhabitants of Fua Mulak. He did not, however, leave the ship while it was anchored in Male harbor. Then, after touching briefly at Fua Mulak once again, they set sail northeastward for the coast of Ceylon. The time was late August 1344.[36]

Notes

1. *The Book of Duarte Barbosa*, trans, and ed. Mansel Longworth Dames, 2 vols. (London, 1918–21), vol. 2, p. 74.

2. The *Rihla* is the sole record of this event. No evidence of the embassy has come to light in Chinese sources so far as I know, though Peter Jackson notes that a Yuan mission is known to have visited Egypt in 1342–43. "The Mongols and India (1221–1351)," Ph.D. diss., Cambridge University, 1977, p. 222. The envoys probably

arrived several months before IB left Delhi. On the dating of his departure see note 5.

3. Henry Yule identifies this town as Sambhal east of Delhi. *Cathay and the Way Thither*, 4 vols. (London, 1913–16), vol. 4, p. 18. Also MH, p. 150.

4. IB states that he left Delhi on 17 Safar 743 A.H., that is, 22 July 1342. Evidence suggests that IB did not remember the year correctly or that an error was made in copying the *Rihla*. A departure date of 17 Safar 742 (2 August 1341) makes more sense within the context of subsequent statements in the *Rihla* about chronology and itinerary. The fundamental problem with IB's chronology for the travels in India, the Maldive Islands, and Ceylon is that he claims to have left the Maldives (following the first and longer of two visits) in the middle part of Rabi' II 745 (late August 1344), that is, a little more than two years after leaving Delhi. His own statements about traveling times and lengths of sojourns in particular places, however, indicate that about *three* years elapsed between his leaving Delhi and his first departure from the Maldives. For the period of travels between these two events, the *Rihla* is not very helpful, since IB offers not one absolute year date. The Maldive departure date of 745, however, is probably accurate. In the space of a few months following that date, he arrived in the Sultanate of Ma'bar in the far southeastern corner of the subcontinent. There he witnessed and was involved in events surrounding the death of Sultan Ghiyath al-Din and the accession of Nasir al-Din. Numismatic evidence shows that this regnal change took place in 745 A.H. (The last coin of Ghiyath al-Din is dated 744; the first coin of Nasir al-Din is dated 745.) S. A. Q. Husaini, "Sultanate of Ma'bar" in H. K. Sherwani and P. M. Joshi (eds.), *History of Medieval Deccan*, 2 vols. (Hyderabad, 1973–74), vol. 1, pp. 65, 74. If IB's Maldive departure date is accurate, at least for the year, then we may hypothesize that the Delhi date should be pushed back a year to make room for three years of travel.

5. As it is set forth in the *Rihla*, IB's itinerary from Delhi to Daulatabad is erratic and illogical. Part of the explanation is probably that some of the stages have been placed in incorrect order. For example, he states that he visited Dhar before Ujjain, when it was almost certainly the reverse. Furthermore, he may have visited some of the places mentioned during earlier excursions out of Delhi which he does not report and whose descriptive information is woven into the account of the trip to Daulatabad. He indicates, for example, that he had visited Gwalior at some earlier time, though nothing is said about the circumstances of such a trip (D&S, vol. 4, p. 33). IB offers almost no help in deducing the chronology of his journey through the interior of India. Mahdi Husain calculates that he arrived in Daulatabad on 3 November. A general estimate of late autumn seems reasonable, but this author's precise town-to-town chronology for the entire range of IB's travels in India, the Maldives, and Ceylon is delusive, for it is based almost entirely on informed guessing and inferential evidence such as "normal" traveling times from one place to another. MH, pp. lxiv–lxvi.

6. Gujaratis were well established in the East Indies in the fifteenth century and were probably arriving there in the fourteenth. M. A. P. Meilink-Roelofsz, "Trade and Islam in the Malay–Indonesian Archipelago Prior to the Arrival of the Europeans" in D. S. Richards (ed.), *Islam and the Trade of Asia* (Oxford, 1970), pp. 144–45.

7. *Duarte Barbosa*, vol. 1, pp. 134, 136, 138.

8. Simon Digby, "The Maritime Trade of India" in Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib (eds.), *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, England, 1982), vol. 1, p. 152.

9. P. M. Joshi, "Historical Geography of Medieval Deccan" in Sherwani and Joshi, *Medieval Deccan*, vol. 1, pp. 18, 20.

10. IB states that the suzerain of Jamal al-Din was a ruler named Haryab, but historians have disagreed as to whether this individual is Ballala III of the Hoysalas

or Harihara I of the Kingdom of Vijayanagar. See R. N. Saletore, "Haryab of Ibn Battuta and Harihara Nrpala," *Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society* 31 (1940–41): 384–406; also MH, p. 180n.

11. The location and identity of these ports, some of which no longer exist, are investigated in *Duarte Barbosa*, vol. 1, pp. 185–236, vol. 3, pp. 1–92; Yule, *Cathay*, vol. 4, pp. 72–79; and MH, pp. 178–88.

12. According to the fifteenth-century navigator Ibn Majid, the best time for sailing from the west coast of India to the Bay of Bengal was around 11 April, or from mid March through April. G. R. Tibbetts, *Arab Navigation in the Indian Ocean before the Coming of the Portuguese* (London, 1971), p. 377.

13. Yule, *Cathay*, vol. 2, p. 131.

14. Junks normally left the Malabar coast for China after mid March (see note 12). However, it seems likely that IB's vessels were planning to stop over at Quilon, a major port further down the coast, before departing for the Bay of Bengal. Moreover, the subsequent chronological clues IB gives suggest that his departure from Calicut was not scheduled for any later than about 1 March (see note 19).

15. IB does not describe this vessel. Joseph Needham suggests the name may be related to *cocca, coque*, or cog, which was a medieval ship of the Mediterranean and North Atlantic. *Science and Civilization in China*, vol. 4, part 3, *Civil Engineering and Nautics* (Cambridge, 1971), p. 469n.

16. My translation. D&S, vol. 4, pp. 103–4.

17. IB says that his second departure from Calicut took place "at the end of the season for traveling on the sea," meaning the weeks before the southwest monsoon came up in full force. Although the Malabar ports did not close down altogether until June, IB almost certainly left Calicut no later than about 1 April, since vessels bound for Arabia or the Persian Gulf had to reach their destinations before the monsoon reached full strength in those latitudes. Tibbetts, *Arab Navigation*, p. 375. Therefore, the sinking of IB's junk off Calicut must have taken place no later than about 1 March to make room for his trip to Quilon and back, which probably consumed at least 25 days. (He says it took him ten days to travel from Calicut to Quilon.)

18. Yule (*Cathay*, vol. 4, pp. 64–66) identifies Sandapur with Goa, although the evidence is not conclusive. *Duarte Barbosa*, vol. 1, pp. 170–72. IB presents the only account of Jamal al-Din's conquest of the city and its subsequent recovery by the *raja*.

19. IB states that the ships left Honavar on Saturday and attacked Sandapur on the following Monday, or 13 Jumada I 743 A.H. (14 October 1342).

20. IB declares that he stayed in Sandapur from 13 Jumada I until the middle part of Sha'ban, that is, about three months. 15 Sha'ban 743 corresponds to 13 January 1343. In connection with his first visit to Honavar, IB mentions that at some subsequent time he stayed with Jamal al-Din for eleven months (D&S, vol. 4, p. 70), but a sojourn of this length fits badly with the other meager chronological information IB provides concerning his India travels.

21. He says he arrived there in late Muharram, which is the first month of the Muslim year; 28 Muharram, that is, one of the last days of the month, calculates as 22 June 1343.

22. IB's date for his flight from Sandapur when it was under seige is 2 Rabi' II. That date in 744 A.H. corresponds to 24 August 1343. In his initial description of the west coast in the *Rihla*, he implies that at some point he traveled along the road that paralleled the Kanara and Malabar coasts. This may have been the time, since escape from Sandapur by sea would likely have been more difficult than by land.

23. IB says that he left Sandapur on 2 Rabi' II, and he implies that he arrived in the Maldives shortly before the following Ramadan. The intervening time was four to five months, presumably divided between his journey from Sandapur to Calicut, his stay in the latter place, and his ten-day sea voyage (as he recalls it) to the Maldives.

24. Clarence Maloney collected a version of the legend, very similar to IB's story, in the mid-1970s. *People of the Maldives* (Madras, 1980), pp. 98–99.

25. S. D. Goitein, "From Aden to India: Specimens of the Correspondence of India

Traders of the Twelfth Century," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 23 (1980): 43–66; "Letters and Documents on the India Trade in Medieval Times," *Islamic Culture* 37 (1963): 188–205; "From the Mediterranean to India: Documents on the Trade to India, South Arabia and East Africa from the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," *Speculum* 29 (1954): 181–97.

26. IB's Kannalus may be identified with Kinalos Island. *The Voyage of François Pyrard of Laval to the East Indies, the Maldives, the Moluccas and Brazil*, trans. and ed. Albert Gray, 2 vols. (London, n.d.; reprint edn., New York, 1963?), vol. 2, p. 438. François Pyrard was a French sailor who spent five and a half years in the Maldives in the early seventeenth century and subsequently wrote a lively and detailed description of the customs and manners of their inhabitants. The edition cited here also includes edited translations of earlier reports on the Maldives, including IB's narrative.

27. Maloney, *People of the Maldives*, pp. 219, 233.

28. IB implies that he reached the islands some weeks before Ramadan 744. That month began on 17 January 1344 (see note 23).

29. IB and subsequent travelers to the islands speak of the "Maldivian fever," which was almost certainly malaria. Maloney, *People of the Maldives*, p. 398. If IB became infected with malaria, he would probably have been seriously ill for a few weeks.

30. He dates his first marriage in the Maldives to the month of Shawwal, which began on 16 February 1344.

31. Maloney, *People of the Maldives*, pp. 191–96.

32. Mahdi Husain's translation reads "so as to bring back the Maldive islands under his sway" (MH, p. 214). "Bring back" is an accurate translation of the verbal noun *tarajju'i*, but the islands had not previously been invaded or ruled by the Sultanate of Ma'bar. See D&S, vol. 4, p. 160.

33. In the seventeenth century the King of Bengal would send a fleet of galleys to raid and sack the Maldives. Gray, *François Pyrard*, vol. 1, pp. 310–20.

34. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 465.

35. Pyrard also remarks on the high frequency of marriage and divorce in the islands. Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 150–55.

36. IB gives the date of his departure from the islands as mid Rabi' II 745 A.H.; 15 Rabi' II calculates as 26 August 1344. That would have been the late summer monsoon period and a plausible time to be sailing northeastward from the Maldives. Here my revised chronology, placing his departure from Delhi in 742 rather than 743, falls back into line with IB's own dating. His departure from the Maldives in 745 accords well with the dating of the subsequent visit to Ma'bar (see note 4). IB mentions that he lived in the Maldives for a year and a half (D&S, vol. 4, p. 114), but this statement does not seem compatible with the other chronological data he provides. A stay of about eight months, from mid Sha'ban 744 to mid Rabi' II 745, makes more sense.

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